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AN UNPROCLAIMED EMPIRE: THE GRAND DUCHY OF LITHUANIA

FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF COMPARATIVE HISTORICAL SOCIOLOGY OF EMPIRES

Zenonas Norkus

ROUTLEDGE

An Unproclaimed Empire: The Grand Duchy of Lithuania

An Unproclaimed Empire: The Grand Duchy of Lithuania is an interdisciplinary study of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL) that is historical in subject but social scientific in approach. It is also the first study to apply this comparative and social scientific method to the GDL.

In this book, Zenonas Norkus draws on national historiographies and applies theories from comparative empire studies involving historians, sociologists, political scientists, anthropologists and scholars in the theory of international relations, allowing it to transcend differences in national viewpoints. It also provides answers to contested issues in the history of the GDL and raises a number of new questions, including whether the Grand Duchy was an empire or a federation, and why and when it failed.

By adopting this "imperial approach" of considering the GDL as an empire, this book brings something new to the research surrounding the Grand Duchy and is ideal for academics and postgraduates of early modern Lithuania, early modern Eastern Europe, historical sociology and the history of empires.

Zenonas Norkus is a Professor of Comparative Historical Sociology at Vilnius University. His previous publications include *Max Weber and Rational Choice* (2001) and *Which Democracy, Which Capitalism? Post-communist Transformation in Lithuania from the Viewpoint of Comparative Historical Sociology* (2008).

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An Unproclaimed Empire: The Grand Duchy of Lithuania

From the Viewpoint of Comparative Historical Sociology of Empires

Zenonas Norkus

Translation from Lithuanian by Albina Strunga

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Contents

Figures

Maps

Tables

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Abbreviations

A	adulthood date of empire
AD	anno domini
BC	before Christ
D	duration of an empire (D = F – A)
GDL	Grand Duchy of Lithuania
GDP	gross domestic product
E	emergence date of an empire
EU	European Union
F	date of failure of an empire
ENPP	effective number of parliamentary parties
HH_a	Herfindahl-Hirschman index for concentration of area
HH_p	Herfindahl-Hirschman index for concentration of population
IRS	international relations studies
HRAF	Human Relations Area Files
M	maximum stable area of an empire
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
N	number of cases in a population or sample
N_a	effective number of political bodies on Earth based on area
N_p	effective number of political bodies on Earth based on population
PLC	Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth
R	period of the rise of empire (R = A – E)
TI	Taagepera Integral
U.S.	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Introduction

This is the English version of the book that was published for the first time in Lithuanian – the mother language of the majority population of the small Baltic country (2.9 million people as of 2015, living in an area of 65,300 km^2), the Republic of Lithuania. It appeared on the political map of the world for the third time after the dissolution of the USSR in 1990–1991. Its second coming was in 1918, when the first Republic of Lithuania was established together with many more new nation states after the breakup of the Romanov, Habsburg and Ottoman empires in the wake of World War I. The book is about the ancient Lithuanian state known as the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which emerged in the thirteenth century, becoming by the end of the next century the largest (some 1,000,000 km^2) polity of medieval Europe.

However, "what is striking is not so much the extent of that expansion – which was remarkable enough – but its lasting nature" (Frost 2015: 20). A Baltic heathen dynasty and military-political elite that converted to Catholicism only in 1387 ruled the Grand Duchy, expanding into former Kievan Rus' lands with their Orthodox Ruthenian population. The conversion was part of a deal with the Kingdom of Poland over the dynastic union under the Lithuanian duke Jogaila (Jagiełło in Polish).[1] After nearly two hundred years under a common dynasty, in 1569 the joint state known as the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was created. It existed until its final partition by the neighbouring great powers Russia, Austria and Prussia in 1795.

To understand the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and even the very dissolution of the Soviet Union twenty-five years ago, knowledge of the lasting impact of the rise and expansion of the ancient Lithuanian polity is needed. The stabilisation of the eastern borders of the Grand Duchy in the late fifteenth-early sixteenth century was decisive for the emergence of three different Eastern Slavic nations (Russians, Belarusians and Ukrainians) instead of one Slavic (Ruthenian) ethnicity in Kievan Rus'. Among other things, I argue that, differently from many empires, (in)famous as "prisons of nations", the Grand Duchy served rather as a "cradle of nations".

Contemporary Lithuanians harbour traumatic historical memories of the disappearance of the very name "Lithuania" twice from the political map because of the imperialism of its neighbours. Many find the idea that their own country was once an imperialist power rather difficult to accept. They once studied and continue to study from school textbooks that tell the story of Lithuania as a perennial victim and martyr at the mercy of its more assertive neighbours. However, this book is not just a contribution to Lithuanian historical culture that intends to educate or re-educate the Lithuanian public. I conceived of it as a contribution to the international historical research on the history of the Grand Duchy. How, then, does my book differ from the available body of scholarly work, and why do I want my approach to be accessible to the broader international audience, publishing it also in English?[2]

During the Cold War that ended only around 20 years ago, to call a particular country an "empire" implied its condemnation, or the expression of disapproval of its politics and its very existence, as U.S. President Ronald Reagan did when he called the Soviet Union an "evil empire". The outbreak of nationalist and ethnic conflicts in Eastern Europe and the Balkans after the dissolution of the USSR and Yugoslavia changed the approach towards empires and imperialism. Some empires even started to arouse feelings of nostalgia – like the Habsburg Empire, earlier called "the prison of nations". Now many historians and political scientists view it as a rather successful example of numerous nations living together in one state, an example that current and future creators of a united Europe can learn from (Gellner 1998).

> In the era of multiculturalism, globalisation and the European Union, aspects of the Holy Roman Empire or of the Habsburg Monarchy in 1900 actually appear more appropriate than the Jacobin nation or the frenzied ethnic nationalism that devastated Europe in the first half of the twentieth century and could easily repeat its triumph in the huge, multi-ethnic polities of the twenty-first-century Asia.
>
> (Lieven 2001 [2000]: 414)

As the great German historian and sociologist Otto Hintze (1861–1940) argued, there would be no world history without empires: "imperialism is the main factor in the general principle of world history (*Weltgeschichte*), to which Ranke gave the scholarly meaning equal to or on a par with that of national histories" (Hintze 1964 [1928]: 211). Without imperialism and empires, we would not have the large nations whose history is the main subject of traditional national historiography. The historical process that historians have retrospectively described as "nation building" *ex ante* does not differ any from empire making. That is why we can also write the history of many failed empires as the history of a large nation's failed building, while many histories of overcoming "feudal fragmentation" or the making

of a "centralised state" can be re-written as histories of the building and transformation of empires. "In our view, empire is a research context rather than a structure, a problem rather than a diagnosis. Any society can be 'thought of' as an empire" (Gerasimov et al. 2005: 53).

The main aim of the book is to contribute to the research on the Grand Duchy by applying this new "imperial approach" – thinking of it as an empire. Mainstream historians, trained to remain as close to primary sources as possible, may find this approach difficult to grasp. The very description of a grand duchy as an empire appears oxymoronic. Can medieval Lithuania be called an empire, if its rulers did not consistently claim the dignity even of kings, let alone emperors? Therefore, nearly half of the book is dedicated to the explication of these grounds, by critically surveying theories of imperialism and empires in the contemporary social sciences – international relations studies, comparative politics and comparative historical sociology. On this basis, I craft the definition of empire which I then systematically apply to analyse the imperial features of the early Lithuanian state. The novelty of the book is its systematic analysis of the rise and demise of the medieval Lithuanian polity from the social science viewpoint, represented by the interdisciplinary research field known as comparative historical sociology of empires, or simply, comparative studies of empires.[3]

Why and how can a contribution of this kind be useful or interesting for historians of the Grand Duchy, the broader community of scholars engaged in Eastern European studies or even the broader international audience? The most important divisions in the available body of historical writing on the history of the Grand Duchy are those separating different national historiographies, each of them representing a distinctive perspective or claiming its part of the legacy. While Lithuanian historians tell the history of the Grand Duchy as that of the predecessor of the modern national Lithuanian state, the influential narrative in Russian historiography describes the Grand Duchy as a Western Russian state. According to the most widespread Polish view, the history of the Grand Duchy was, at least from the late fourteenth century, part of Poland's history as an episode of its eastward expansion. The national historiographies of the newly independent states of Belarus and Ukraine are new contenders for "ownership" of the history of the Grand Duchy.

Of the old and new claimants for the legacy of the Grand Duchy, some Belarusian historians are perhaps most aggressive in laying claim to the history of the Grand Duchy, many of them arguing that the Grand Duchy was an ancient Belarusian state. While at this time the authoritarian regime of Alexander Lukashenko suppresses nationalist zeal, one of the side effects of the coming democratisation of Belarus may be the change of the very name of this country (to "Litva") and its inhabitants (to "Litvins"). This may lead to a situation similar to the dispute between Greece and the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia over its correct naming, an issue that continues to deadlock Macedonia's accession to the EU. Aggravatingly, the coming

conflict over which country is "the true Lithuania" also implies the resurrection of the "Vilnius question", which poisoned Polish-Lithuanian relations during the interwar period. British historian Norman Davies, in his recent bestseller *Vanished Kingdoms*, familiarised the broader Western public with the Belarusian view of the Grand Duchy's history (Davies 2012: 229–308). A quotation from the even more recent book co-authored by another British historian and his younger Lithuanian colleague may convey the feeling of the tensions and passions involved:

> attempts to depict modern Belarusians as erstwhile Lithuanians are starkly reminiscent of the Esopian donkey masquerading as a lion. It is a pity that such [a] prominent scholar like Norman Davies has failed to recognise nationalistic fury raging behind a very thin veneer of (quasi) scholarly discussion.
>
> (Baronas and Rowell 2015: 77)

The current conflict in Ukraine teaches us a lesson as to how seemingly buried historical fault lines can re-emerge, and how a lack of historical education may backfire leading to political decisions with unexpected consequences involving huge human costs. A new interpretation of facts from the history of the early Lithuanian state grounded in the imperial approach (thinking of the Grand Duchy as an empire) may serve as post-nationalist historical education or re-education. However, it can accomplish this only because the comparative historical sociological analysis of empires provides a more enlightened approach to complicated issues of the past than traditional historiography was able to propose. This approach uses all the involved national historiographical traditions, but does not commit to any of them in particular. Let me explain in more detail why and how a comparative sociological *cum* historical analysis can achieve this feat.

In accordance with the established division of work between the scholarly disciplines, historians are more interested in the past, and sociologists look at the present. Both are primarily interested in the past or present of their "home" societies. However, this division is not and cannot be strictly implemented. On the one hand, the historiography called "contemporary history" (*Zeitgeschichte* in German), or history written "in hot pursuit of events", has existed and thrived since the time of Thucydides. On the other hand, in the broad nomenclature of sociology's sub-disciplines, the field of historical sociology has already been established for a good five decades. Its "founding fathers" were the American sociologists Barrington Moore Jr. (1913–2005), Reinhard Bendix (1916–1991), Charles Tilly (1929–2008) and many others (for a comprehensive list, see e.g. Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003, Mahoney and Thelen 2015).

The initiators of sociology as a scientific discipline included many history researchers and thinkers. Among them Max Weber (1864–1920) stands out in particular, whose legacy was the subject of my own earlier book

published in German (see Norkus 2001). I not only learned a lot from intensively reading Weber, but was also encouraged to try to do the same that the recently mentioned representatives of contemporary comparative historical sociology have been doing more or less successfully for many decades already: to take a "Weberian", i.e., historical sociological, look at a specific big topic in Lithuanian history.

In this book, which is not my first or last work in comparative historical sociology (see e.g. Norkus 2008; 2012; 2014), one such major topic is the imperial past of Lithuania. It is analysed in the framework of contemporary international relations and imperialism theories, applying that form of historical comparison which the famous contemporary German historian Jürgen Kocka calls "asymmetrical" (see Kocka 1999; also Kocka 2003). In the symmetrical comparison, researchers cast their attention on all the cases under consideration. In the asymmetrical variant, that attention is focused on one case. Evidence from other cases is used to substantiate descriptive or causal hypotheses about the main case.

Asymmetrical comparisons are widely (albeit often implicitly) used in historians' research practice. The historian simply cannot do without them, raising questions similar to those discussed in this book. For example: Did feudalism appear in Lithuania? If so, when did feudalism appear in Lithuania? What kind of feudalism was it? When did the state appear in Lithuania? What kind of state was it in the (e.g.) early fifteenth century? When did capitalism appear in Lithuania? What was interwar Lithuanian capitalism like? Was the political regime in Lithuania in 1926–1940 a fascist one?

These are historical-sociological questions, as answers to them depend not just on what we find in historical sources, but also on how the concepts of state, feudalism, capitalism, fascism, etc. are defined; on how the typologies of the phenomena subsumed under these concepts are constructed. When constructing and testing general theories that articulate these concepts, researchers use symmetrical comparisons. When they apply them to specific cases, they use asymmetrical comparisons. This book is just an attempt to apply asymmetrical comparisons to answer the most recent historical-sociological question in Grand Duchy's historiography: Was the ancient Lithuanian state an empire? If we answer in the affirmative, a set of other interrelated questions follows, which I shall also try to answer in this book: When did ancient Lithuania become an empire? What kind of empire was it? What became of the Grand Duchy empire (and when did this happen)?

Weber also pointed out many of the dangers and hurdles encountered in comparative sociology when researching historical matters (Weber 1992 [1930]: xl–xlii). When researching the distant past, sociologists lack what forms the basis of professional competency for a professional historian researching the selected aspect in the past of one country (sometimes one region or city) during a specific period. This basis is the linguistic, palaeographic and other skills necessary for independent work with so-called

primary (the oldest surviving) historical sources. They are gained only over long years of hard work.

Therefore, some historians (at the very least here in Lithuania) still identify real advances in learning about the historical past with the discovery of new textual and visual sources and their introduction into scientific circulation. In cases where such discoveries are unlikely (the use of archaeological material is a separate problem altogether), professional discussions between historians tend to focus on specific sentences and nuances in meaning in primary textual sources. Only experts who already know those primary sources almost by heart (and of course, in the original language) are competent to assess the force of such advanced arguments, grounded in the in-depth analysis of the surviving primary sources.

Such knowledge is demanded of a historian professionally researching Lithuanian history prior to the fifteenth century (or perhaps even the sixteenth century). This is entirely possible, as these sources are rather limited (see Jučas 2002). I also familiarised myself with many of them, firstly with those released in Lithuanian and thus accessible to the wider mass of readers (Dubonis 2005a; *Lietuvos metraštis* 1971; Petras Dusburgietis 1985; Latvis and Vartbergė 1991). I also considered it my duty to read those places in the volumes of the *Complete Collection of Russian Chronicles* that reported things important to the topic of this book (for example, about Vytautas' political plans on the eve of the Battle of the Vorskla River). However, it was not my intention to read all such sources, nor do I base my claims on the interpretation of primary sources, whose purpose would be to question separate claims about the history of the Grand Duchy that are accepted in that historiographical tradition and thus have the status of "historical facts".

My aim was to give a new interpretation of such facts (i.e., claims about which there is broad agreement amongst historians as to their accuracy), looking at them through the prism of contemporary theories of empires and imperialism. The literature that explicates these basic concepts are my theoretical sources. Speaking about "empirical evidence", the most important source of empirical information for my research was the output of historians' studies, which they themselves disrespectfully call "secondary sources". That is the historiography of the Grand Duchy's history. Primary sources do not contain any "historical facts": they constitute that instance to which professional historians appeal when they want to dispute one or another fact acknowledged in the historiographical tradition or to advance a new one. The historical facts are what the professional historians' community (meanwhile) agrees on. Readers, including researchers from other disciplines and even historians who are experts on other countries or periods, just have no other choice than to search for "historical facts" in historians' works themselves. I mean, of course, the works written by authors, who recognise themselves mutually as experts on the period or country in question.

The syntheses that professional historians write for the wider circle of readers (not just for their colleagues) contain most empirical material that

historians themselves call "historical facts". A historian who offers a synthesis to a trusting readership in which the event dates, the locations of battles and their outcomes, rulers' names, genealogy, years of rule, etc. are not actually facts would be no less villainous than the pharmacist selling to a naïve consumer medicine without any active ingredients. In a monograph – or especially in an article aimed at a narrow circle of experts – historians can and should allow themselves to dispute those facts in particular that are published in syntheses. It is hard to find historical facts that no one would have dared to doubt; there are marginal theories digging up even the most elementary historical chronology.

Syntheses of the history of the Grand Duchy (and other specialist literature as well, when needed) dedicated to the history of thirteenth–fourteenth-century Lithuania are the main empirical sources for this book. Instead of simplifying my situation, this actually made it more difficult. Even if trained historians can master the complete available primary textual and visual pre-fifteenth-century sources of the Grand Duchy's history (the best historians master complete primary sources even up to the sixteenth century), then complete mastery over "secondary sources" is unlikely. I used works that are widely accepted as being the most authoritative in the Grand Duchy's historiography (Łowmiański 1931–1932; Koneczny 1917; Paszkiewicz 1933; Kolankowski 1930; Ljubavskij 1915 [1910]; Presnjakov 1939, etc.), and reflect the results of the latest research (see Bumblauskas 2005; Frost 2015; Gudavičius 1999; Kiaupa 2006 (2004); Kiaupa, Kiaupienė and Kuncevičius 2000; Kiaupienė and Petrauskas 2009; Rowell 1994; Baronas, Dubonis and Petrauskas 2011; Baronas and Rowell 2015, etc.).

However, even if not all syntheses of the Grand Duchy's history (up to 1569) were considered, in my view, that is no great loss. Having started to read these syntheses, I soon found out that they repeat the same facts (and things that are repeated by all authors with established expert reputation in a field are indeed facts), and only the interpretations differ. That is why I do not think that the damage arising from overlooking one or another synthesis is greater than what we would experience wanting to find out what happened in yesterday's parliamentary session, yet without reading all the newspapers that covered it or watched all the news programs on different television channels. I was simply concerned with offering a new interpretation of well-known facts, using new theories and concepts as the source of light to illuminate them. This book is not a synthesis of the history of the Grand Duchy; it only outlines certain ideas that could be used for this kind of synthesis. Nor does it give a chronological narrative of the Grand Duchy's history. It does, however, answer a number of new research questions that arise when thinking of the Grand Duchy as an empire. Such thinking provides new answers for old questions, too.

I start, of course, with the obligatory historiographical overview of the uses of the concept of empire in the historiography of the Grand Duchy in

the first part of the book (*Translatio imperii* and Lithuanian History). This overview starts with a *Begriffsgeschichte*-style inquiry into the origins and transformation of the idea of empire in Western political thinking in the first chapter. The main observation is that, up to the nineteenth century, the history of the empire is about the claims to be viewed as the successor to the authority of the Roman Empire – the universal supreme political authority over the whole world or its central part. Being an empire in medieval or modern history meant continuing the history of the Roman Empire, adopting its rights and symbols, or at least being a comparable "second" or "third" Rome. This history continues with (as it then appeared) the terminal, complete discrediting of empires and imperialism in the twentieth century, which was nevertheless followed by their partial rehabilitation after the collapse of the USSR.

My historiographical survey in the second chapter finds rather few instances of the designation of the Grand Duchy as an empire in contemporary Lithuanian historiography.[4] An important exception is the book by the British historian (now working in Lithuania) Stephen C. Rowell, *Lithuania Ascending: A Pagan Empire within East-Central Europe, 1295–1345* (Rowell 1994). With certain reservations, the well-known Lithuanian historian Alfredas Bumblauskas has called the Grand Duchy an empire, too (Bumblauskas 2005: 106). Gintaras Beresnevičius, a distinguished scholar in religious studies, introduced the theme of Lithuania's imperialism into widespread intellectual circulation (Beresnevičius 2003), followed by the literary scholar, Algimantas Bučys (2008). However, the word "empire" occurs only in Rowell's book's title; in the text, the author does not use this concept when interpreting the evidence. The work of Beresnevičius and Bučys did not find any response among historians.

For Lithuanian historians, the main obstacle to thinking of the Grand Duchy as an empire are their habits of thinking entrenched in the basic (hermeneutic) tenet of classical or historicist historiography, which directs historians to be emic (see Goodenough 1970: 104–119; Harris 1980 [1979]: 29–45) – to stay as close as possible to the language and concepts used in primary sources.[5] The nobility of the Grand Duchy in the fifteenth–eighteenth centuries believed it was of Roman descent. However, with the exception of the sole episode when the ruler of the Grand Duchy Algirdas (1345–1377) called himself "emperor" (βασιλεύς) in a letter to the patriarch of Constantinople in 1371, his successors neither claimed to be successors to the Roman Empire (unlike rulers of Moscow from the late fifteenth century) nor were they recognised as such by their contemporaries. The ancient Lithuanian polity was only briefly (1251–1263) recognised by the Pope and Emperor of the *Sacrum Imperium Romanum* as a kingdom. In other times it was known as a grand duchy.

Writing about hermeneutic methodology, I base my ideas on the work of the German philosopher of history Jörn Rüsen (1986), who distinguished between the hermeneutic and analytical (social scientific) methodologies

in historical research. I am self-consciously "overselling" the social scientific approach: in order to maximally utilise its heuristic potential, and to provide the target for those thinking differently (more hermeneutically) to attack and to correct. By such "overselling," I also aim to demonstrate that the word "empire" is not just a label whose application depends more on the political views and one-off political goals of its users, but can be a fruitful and illuminating historical sociological "workhorse" concept. Therefore, the entire second part of the book is dedicated to a critical and constructive survey of the strategies for forming social science concepts and their applications in imperialism and empires studies.

Differently from the classical humanities, the concept formation practice prevailing in the social sciences was etic since their inception. The etic approach to concept formation not only allows, but also prescribes the analysis of social and cultural phenomena in terms not known by the actors participating in these phenomena. The concepts of "empire" and "imperialism" became a part of the social science vocabulary from the nineteenth century, whereupon they started to be applied to political bodies beyond the borders of Western civilisation. Contemporary comparative studies on imperialism and empires apply the non-Eurocentric concept of empires and imperialism, which no longer considers the ancient Roman Empire an archetype or prototype of empires. After all, there is no better designation for the polities created by the Inca and Aztec Indians, although they knew nothing of Rome or its grandeur.

In the social scientific framework, the fact that the rulers of the Grand Duchy did not go by the title of emperor and did not lay claim to Rome's legacy is not an insurmountable obstacle in considering the Grand Duchy an empire. In order to break the grip of the hermeneutic frame of mind, impeding us from thinking of unproclaimed and unacknowledged empires, the second part of the book (Empire and Imperialism: Methodological Strategies) starts with a logical-philosophical discussion of the dilemmas and methods in concept formation in comparative historical studies.

In the first chapter of this part, chapter three, I explain why the concepts of empire and imperialism are essentially contested. I also offer here a constructive strategy on how to resolve controversies over the concepts that plague comparative studies in imperialism, discrediting them in the eyes of researchers who base their studies on traditional hermeneutic methodology. Closer to the end of chapter three, I articulate a preliminary definition of an empire used further (in the book's third part) in the interpretation of the history of the Grand Duchy. I define empire as a sovereign polity that surpasses other polities from the same region and the same epoch in size, and that possesses any three of the following four attributes:

(1) it engages in broad territorial expansion;
(2) it is a hegemonic power in the inter-polity system or seeks to be one;[6]

(3) it is ethnically or culturally heterogeneous and has a politically dominant ethno-cultural minority;
(4) its territory divides into a dominant metropole and a subordinated periphery.

Empires exhibiting all four of these attributes are ideal-type or classical empires, while those lacking at least one feature are considered empires with adjectives. This definition encapsulates the analytical overview of imperialism studies literature in the second part of the book. In this overview, I distinguish between two axes of differentiation of the concepts of empire. On the first (methodological) axis, a hologeistic quantitative-statistical approach, which is most clearly exemplified in the works of the American researchers Rein Taagepera and Peter Turchin, represents one pole. The (dominant) qualitative-comparative approach is the opposite pole.[7]

The second (disciplinary) axis is limited by the two poles, too. The first of them is represented by those empire concepts where a polity is considered an empire due to its hegemonic power status in the global or regional inter-polity system; concepts at the second pole identify empires only in terms of the polity's internal political-territorial structure.[8] The first type of empire concepts dominate in international relations theory and history, theorizing empires from outside. Here the empire is defined as the opposite of the international (inter-polity) system known as "anarchy". Under the conditions of anarchy, the inter-polity system is composed of a number of sovereign, similarly weighted centres of power, whose relations are determined by the so-called "security dilemma". The regional, continental or global inter-polity system becomes an empire when one of its members annexes or subordinates other members of the system, making them internal parts of empire.[9]

Comparative politics and the history of constitutional law conceive empires from inside, gravitating toward the second pole of this disciplinary axis. They identify empires not based on their place or role in inter-polity systems, but according to the features of their territorial structure. The most important among these is the empire's territorial differentiation into a metropole, which is usually where the politically dominant ethno-cultural population group lives, and the periphery. The periphery itself differentiates into the "formal" and "informal" parts of the empire, extended by the sphere of imperial hegemony or suzerainty.[10]

My concept of empire combines both the external (international relations theory) and internal (comparative politics) perspectives. It is also compatible with more narrow definitions of empire, where additional features enhance the content (intension) of the empire concept. Such maximal concepts of empire are ideal-types (Gerring 2012: 136–137) that can be heuristically valuable as analytical tools for an imperial approach, applicable also in cases that are more or less different from few classical empires. At the same time, such an ideal-type or maximal strategy for concept formation also has its shortcomings, of which the greatest is the identification of empires with a particular

empire type or sub-type. The works of Michael Doyle (1986) and Thomas Barfield (2001) have been the most successful in avoiding these dangers.

I adopt Doyle's definition of imperialism in particular, which views it as "the process or policy of establishing or maintaining an empire" (Doyle 1986: 45). This concept of imperialism takes into consideration two things of fundamental significance. First, it allows one to highlight the divergence of subjective goals and objective outcomes. It is a universal feature of social life, but observers who infer actors' aims from the outcomes of their action ignore it. In many cases, an empire emerges not as the result of long-term "imperialist policy" in pursuance of the strategic goal of controlling a region or even the whole world. Rather, it comes into existence as the fruit of incremental ("little by little") opportunistic foreign policy actions, or as a side effect of policies seeking other goals (including resistance against the imperialism of other powers). Second, the concept of imperialism as a process directs us to search for the causes of the emergence of empires not just in those expanding metropoles, but also in those areas of imperial expansion where a society in crisis can no longer resolve its domestic problems, without external intervention.

The book's second part ends with an overview of theories that seek to disclose the general causes for the rise and fall of empires. It is brief and selective, because in my opinion there are two insurmountable obstacles in discovering the universal deterministic laws for the rise and fall of empires: (1) conjunctural multiple causality prevails in history; (2) social phenomena are not differentiated into natural kinds, which are a necessary basis of deterministic laws. The relatively small number of empires and the heterogeneity of their populations also compels one to take a sceptical look at the prospect of discovering statistical laws about the rise and fall of empires. Therefore, I limit the overview of cliometric theories to the selected contributions that can offer inspiring ideas to illuminate one specific case – the Grand Duchy.

This is the focus of the third part of the book (The Grand Duchy of Lithuania as an Empire). Here, I apply the imperiological concepts discussed in the second part and the definition of an empire given there to answer the following questions: Was the Grand Duchy an empire? What kind of empire was the Grand Duchy? When did Lithuania become an empire and when did it cease being one? Why did the polity that arose in the thirteenth century on the boundary between Baltic and Slavic tribal areas become an empire? What were the stages and final outcome of its transformation? Why did this empire ultimately fail? What was its historical significance ("mission")?

I explain the very emergence of the Lithuanian state in the mid-thirteenth century not as a defensive reaction against the military pressure of the German crusading orders, but as the outcome of tribal "precocious imperialism" (*überstürzter Imperialismus*), classically described by Otto Hintze (1962 [1928]). This imperialism started in the late twelfth century, when the Russian Rurikid princes struggling for supremacy in the Kievan Rus' inter-polity system implicated neighbouring Baltic tribes in these struggles.

After the collapse of this system, caused by the Mongolian invasion in the middle of the thirteenth century, Lithuanian imperialism produced a patrimonial empire which struggled to subordinate all the lands of the former Kievan Rus'. The dynastic union under the Jagiellonians with Poland in 1385, which accompanied the Catholic baptism of the formerly pagan metropole population, provided new resources to pursue this goal. The Grand Duchy was very close to achieving the subordination of all the former Kievan Rus' lands under the rule of Grand Duke Vytautas (1392–1430). Until the 1569 Lublin Union, the Grand Duchy's relationship with Poland remained one of strategic alliance. The Grand Duchy used it more frequently for its own goals than to the benefit Poland. Most importantly, the Grand Duchy remained completely sovereign in terms of real politics, because it pursued its own foreign and internal policies, while Poland had no decisive influence on the selection processes of who would govern the Grand Duchy.

Since its emergence, the ancient Lithuanian state was a multicultural and multi-ethnic polity with Baltic and Slavic populations. During the rule of Gediminas (1316–1341), Slavs became the increasing majority. This is the reason why many historians have considered the Grand Duchy as a "Western Russian", Ruthenian or Old Belarusian state. However, the minority status of a politically dominant ethno-cultural group is a common feature of empires as diverse as the Assyrian, Achaemenid or the British Empire. The Slavonification of parts of the Baltic population took place, but this was no simple Russification or Ruthenisation, but the emergence of a new multilingual, horizontal ethnic group encompassing the Catholic nobility of the Grand Duchy, proud of its allegedly ancient (mythical) Roman origins, and socially distant from both Baltic and Slavic commoners.

Until the middle of the fifteenth century, the prospect of Vilnius as a Second Kyiv was a real alternative to the prospect of Moscow as a Third Rome. In fact, Moscow became a semblance of Third Rome, pre-empting realisation of the first prospect. There was also the prospect of the enduring multi-polar power balance emerging in Eastern Europe, including the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Great Novgorod, Moscow and several lesser polities. However, mainly due to the Jagiellonians' pursuit of dynastic politics in Central Europe, the Grand Duchy missed at least three windows of opportunity that could have led to this prospect being realised. The last of them was the opportunity to re-establish the independence of Great Novgorod in 1480. These failures of Lithuanian statesmanship sealed the fate of early Lithuania as a great power and empire. However, the Grand Duchy and the then Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth lingered long enough for the formation processes of Belarusian and Ukrainian ethnicities in the former Kievan Rus' lands under their rule to kick in. Although the Grand Duchy (and the then Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth) had succumbed to the military pressure of the Russian Empire by the eighteenth century, neither this empire nor its successor, the Soviet Union, was able to assimilate it into the Great Russian nation. Paradoxically, the only chance to make this Great Russian chauvinist dream come true was the eventual victory of the Grand Duchy over Moscow

and the unification of all former Kievan Rus' lands under the power of the Lithuanian dynasty in the fourteenth or the early fifteenth century.

I close the book with the Concluding Generalisations, which provide a summary of the argument, focusing on the answers to questions formulated at the end of the second part and answered in the third.

Notes

1 Rendering personal and geographic names of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in English, I followed the guidelines recently proposed by Robert Frost (2015: xx–xxi). Where there are no standard English forms of geographic names (such as Cracow, Moscow, Warsaw, etc.), the modern place names in Lithuanian, Belarusian, Ukrainian, Polish and Russian are used – depending on where their contemporary state referents are located. Lithuanian forms are used for persons of ethnically Lithuanian origin, of pagan and then Catholic confession, while names of persons of Ruthenian origin and the Orthodox faith are transliterated mainly from the modern Belarusian form (except for Muscovites, whose names take the Russian form).

2 There is no strict correspondence between the English and Lithuanian editions. Firstly, I did slightly update the text, taking into account the most important new publications in the history of the Grand Duchy and comparative studies of empires released since the first edition, published in 2009. Next, where they were inessential, I dropped references or allusions to local Lithuanian discussions over particulars of the Grand Duchy's past, but inserted (mainly as chapter endnotes) short notes about persons or other particulars that are part of the common stock of knowledge shared by all Lithuanians or Lithuanian speakers, but not necessarily by outsiders.

3 Among its pioneers, the books of Michael Doyle and Samuel Eisenstadt deserve a separate mention: Eisenstadt 1993 (1963); Doyle 1986. For the most recent survey of this field, see *The Encyclopedia of Empire* released by Wiley-Blackwell (Mackenzie 2016).

4 The review of Polish historical scholarship on the Grand Duchy brings many more findings to light, including works like Koneczny 1917, Łowmiański 2006 (1999), Nowak 2008, 2010.

5 As pointed out by one of two anonymous reviewers of the book manuscript, most contemporary historians from the "old West" are not committed to the classical hermeneutic methodology. However, only very few among them specialise in the pre-1569 history of the Grand Duchy.

6 This concept is used instead of an "international system" or "inter-state system" (and "international society") to avoid anachronism impending over the application of the concept of an "international system" or "inter-state system" in the contexts where no modern territorial or nation states are present.

7 See: Taagepera 1978a; 1978b; 1979; 1997; Turchin 2003; 2006.

8 In the first sense, contemporary America can be called an empire, but not in the second sense, as the United States is a classic case of a federal state.

9 See: Watson 1992; Buzan and Little 2000.

10 See: Doyle 1986; Motyl 1999; 2001.

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Part 1

Translatio imperii and Lithuanian history

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1 *Translatio imperii* in outline

The claim that the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was an empire may sound absurd, i.e., the same as saying "this square shape is round". It appears that, in both cases, the predicate contradicts the subject. Actually, the Lithuanian state never even became a kingdom (if we don't count the brief period 1253–1263 of Mindaugas' Lithuania), let alone an empire!

Historians consistently following hermeneutic ("emic") methodology can consider the idea of the Grand Duchy as the rise and demise of an empire only as patently absurd. In this view, the empire is an ancient Roman invention and a part of their legacy. There are no grounds for calling a state an empire if its title, constitution, official discourse (especially diplomatic correspondence) or at least unofficial discourse (texts created by influential public opinion makers) make no mention of any sorts of claims on the legacy of Ancient Rome, or no attempts are made to match it. In the very least, this is signified by the transfer of the empire's name and its rulers' titles. By calling itself an "empire", a state joins in a symbolic relay race, known in Latin as *translatio imperii*. "In the most general meaning of the term, *Translatio* indicated the passage of an institution or of an honour from one place to another" (Folz 1969 [1953]: 85). The legacy that a state seeks to adopt by calling itself an "empire" can also be described as symbolic capital that may be used to resolve domestic and foreign policy problems.

Did the rulers of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania really never aspire to an empire's laurels? I shall try to answer this very question in this chapter, and at the same time illuminate its context – the history of European peoples' and dynasties' struggles over the succession of the Roman Empire up to the seventeenth century. The Peace of Westphalia in 1648 established the principle of equal sovereignty of all Christian rulers, acknowledging that in their domains they were sovereigns. As such, they had the supreme authority and rights claimed earlier by rulers calling themselves emperors, who considered themselves as the heirs to the rights and honour reserved for rulers of the Roman Empire.

In the original meaning of the word, *imperium* is the Latin for power, once held by the highest-ranking officers or magistrates of the Roman republic. It was used to distinguish this public government from the *dominium* (power)

which such officials and other Roman citizens had over their home folk – their family members and slaves. Over time, the meaning of *imperium* narrowed down to the power of the highest military commanders only. Thus, the word "emperor" did mean high military commander, and later, after the collapse of the republican order, it also became a title of honour for Rome's rulers. In the late Roman Republic, the saying *imperium populi Romani* started being applied to describe the supremacy of the Roman nation over other nations. Later, it meant the right to rule the whole world (*imperium orbis terrarum*) (Koebner 1961: 2–3).

Already Sallustius Crispus (85–35 BC) mentioned *imperium Romanorum* as the entirety of lands subject to Roman rule. This name became established in usage in the times of the Principate, said to date from 27 BC, when the Senate granted Octavianus (63 BC–14 AD), the victor of the civil war, the name Augustus, which became a part of the imperial title. The famous Roman commander and dictator Gaius Julius Caesar (100–44 BC) had adopted Octavianus as a stepson in his will. According to the naming rules in Ancient Rome, the adopted Gaius Octavius Turin became Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus.

In order to highlight his bond with the authority of his stepfather, Octavianus usually titled himself as "Emperor Caesar" or "Emperor Caesar Augustus". Adoption was a legal procedure that Rome's emperors used to transfer their power to heirs of their selection. Octavianus made use of it also, transferring the name Caesar to his relative: once adopted, Tiberius Claudius Augustus (42 BC–37 AD) became Tiberius Caesar Augustus. Later it was not just legitimate heirs, but also those who took power by force that adopted the name "Caesar".[1] Hence, it became a part of the imperial title, and having found its way into other languages (*Kaiser* in German, царь in Russian, etc.) it became a synonym for "emperor". Although Octavianus and his heirs ruled as absolute monarchs, by joining those powers of government that had been divided between the tribunes, consuls, censors and other elected officials, nominally they were just the "first citizens" (*princeps*) rather than actual monarchs. Diocletian (244–311) was the first to reject this continued fiction, titling himself *dominus* (lord). Another one of Diocletian's reforms was the "tetrarchy" – the division of the empire into four parts, ruled by four emperors. Now there could be more than just one emperor, yet only one empire.

Another important step was made in 395 when the empire was finally divided: now there was the Eastern Roman Empire and the Western Roman Empire. The first became known as the Byzantine Empire, based on the Ancient Greek city of Byzantium where Emperor Constantine (ruled from 306 to 337) founded a new capital for the as-yet undivided empire, calling it after himself (Constantinople). The title "Byzantine Empire" is an invention of later authors – probably the first to have used this term was Charles Montesquieu. The rulers and subjects of this state called it Βασιλεία Ρωμαίων – the "Roman Empire", or simply "Romania" (Ρωμανία). In the Eastern

Roman Empire, Greek was the dominant language. The Latin emperor's title "Caesar Augustus" was translated into Greek as *Kaisar Sebastos* (Καίσαρ Σεβαστός), while the word "emperor" became *autokrator* (αυτοκράτωρ) or *basileus* (βασιλεύς). In Ancient Greek, the word *basileus* once meant "king". Once the Roman emperor took this title, the meaning of this word was narrowed down: in Byzantine documents, only the ruler of one's country was given this title. Rulers of other countries were termed using the Hellenic form of the Latin *rex* – *rēgas* (ρήγας).

Schoolchildren need to memorise that the history of the Roman Empire ended in 476 when the Germanic military leader Odoacer (435–493), serving the Romans, overthrew the "last" emperor of the Western Roman Empire, Romulus Augustulus, and sent the emperor's insignias to Constantinople to the Eastern Roman Empire's Emperor Zeno (425–491). Actually, the Roman Empire survived in the imagination of Christians whose religion had been the official Roman confession since Constantine the Great. One of the products of the synthesis of the Christian and Roman cultural traditions was the so-called "theology of the empire", affording the Roman Empire sacred meaning (Demandt 1984). The student of Aurelius Augustinus, Orosius (385–420), constructed a universal history scheme, which had immense influence on European medieval historical thinking. As his point of reference, Orosius takes off from the prophecy found in the Old Testament's Book of Daniel, which says that before the apocalypse there will be four universal kingdoms: the gold, silver, bronze and iron: "And there shall be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron, because iron breaks to pieces and shatters all things" (Daniel 2:40). Orosius identified these kingdoms with Babylon (Eastern Empire), Carthage (Southern Empire), Macedonia (Northern Empire) and Rome (Western Empire).

As it was the last, the Roman Empire was perennial – it could end only with the end of time and humanity itself, i.e., with the onset of the apocalypse as prophesied in the Revelation to John. This scheme of history implied that the Roman emperor was the top secular authority – the reign of any other ruler was legitimate only if acknowledged as such by the emperor. It also implied that "empire" was a proper noun. If more than one ruler aspired to the emperor's dignity, then only one of them could be acknowledged as the true emperor – the one who had legitimately inherited the title and rights of the emperor of Rome. For all its claims and pretences, the emperor's authority was universal – absolutely all the remaining rulers of the world had to be subject to his power. Of course, those claims and pretences need to be distinguished from reality – the sphere of control of no hitherto existing empire has ever been truly universal (global). Yet, even in the case when imperial claims are limited to a particular region, the doctrine of equal sovereignty of all "civilised" states accepted in modern Western international law is incompatible with this idea of empire.

For Eastern Christians (Orthodox believers), until the fall of Constantinople in 1453 the survival of the Roman Empire was a completely obvious

and non-problematic thing: the state that historians still call the Byzantine Empire was for them the Roman Empire, or the "real" Roman Empire. It was a different case altogether with Western Christianity. In the eighth century Rome's popes created the doctrine of the transfer of supreme power (*translatio imperii*) (Demandt 1984: 71–89). This doctrine claimed that Rome's emperor, Constantine, in transferring his capital to Constantinople, had handed over the authority over Rome and the western part of the empire to the Roman popes – much like Diocletian had done before him, appointing co-ruling emperor-tetrarchs to separate parts of the empire. In accordance with this "donation of Constantine" (Kimsa 2000: 101–112), which was widely accepted as authentic until its demolition by Lorenzo Valla in the mid-fifteenth century, Rome's popes in turn had the right to transfer the emperor's authority to one of the Christian rulers of their discretion. This ruler would be at the same time appointed as the highest secular defender of "true" Christianity, becoming superior to any other Christian rulers whose authority was *regnum* (kingdom) at best, but not *imperium*.

Popes allegedly transferred these rights at first to the ruler of Constantinople, so long as he carried out his duty to defend the Roman popes from aggressors – Arian Ostrogoths and the Saracens. However, when the emperors of Constantinople lost their power or diligence to carry out their obligations, and failed to defend the pope from the offences of the Lombards who had caught Italy in a stranglehold since the late sixth century, the pope used his right to transfer the emperor's power to a more suitable Christian ruler. He took it from the Greeks and passed it onto the Franks. This happened when the Frankish king Charlemagne (reigned 771–814) was crowned emperor by Pope Leo III (pope in 795–816) on Christmas Day in the year 800, in Rome. Charlemagne's successor, Louis the Pious (reigned 814–840), was crowned emperor twice: first in 813, by his father, whilst he was still alive, and again in 816 when he was crowned by Pope Stephen IV (pope in 816–817), who had arrived in Rheims especially for the occasion.

When the sons of Louis the Pious partitioned the Carolingian Empire into three parts according to the Treaty of Verdun of 843, the countries today known as France, Italy and Germany began their evolution. At this time, the emperor's title and the accompanying duties of ensuring the Roman pope's safety went over to Lothair I, Louis' successor in the middle section containing Italy, and his heirs. The rule that became entrenched was that the ruler who reigned over Italy, where the "eternal city" of Rome is located, could lay claim to this title (Koebner 1961: 24). The King of Italy Berengar I of Friuli (murdered in 924) was the last Carolingian to receive the imperial crown.

After a break of almost forty years, on 2 February 962 in Rome, Pope John XII crowned Otto I (reigned 936–973), a representative of the Ottonian dynasty (also known as the Saxon dynasty), which had replaced the Carolingians on the German throne in the early tenth century, Roman Emperor. Otto had earned fame for his victory in Lechfeld in 955 where he

had put an end to the Hungarians' invasions that had devastated Western Europe. Coronation as emperor consummated the efforts of Otto I to win the throne of the Kingdom of Italy, which he inherited in 951 when he married the throne's successor, Adelaide of Italy (lived 931/932–999), and who received the Roman imperial crown together with Otto I in 962.

Thus, we arrive at the political body that eventually encompassed present-day Germany, Bohemia (now the Czech Republic) and a large part of contemporary Italy. It was known by the title "Holy Roman Empire" or the "Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation" (*Heiliges Römisches Reich Deutscher Nation* in German; *Sacrum imperium Romanum nationis Germanicae* in Latin) (Muldoon 1999: 21–45). Indeed, the name "German" in the empire's title became established only in the early sixteenth century, while it became "holy" thanks to probably its most eminent emperor Frederick I Barbarossa (emperor 1155–1190). According to Karl Ferdinand Werner, the concept of the Kingdom of Germany (*regnum Teutonicorum*) only appeared in the twelfth century: Otto I and his heirs believed they reigned over the East Frankish kingdom, inherited from the Carolingians (Werner 1980: 173). On the other hand, Charlemagne did not go by the title of Roman emperor, using only *Carolus Augustus imperator Romanum gubernans imperium* (Werner 1980: 169) – "Charles Augustus, Emperor ruling the Roman Empire". Only the Ottonians started consistently titling themselves as the "emperors of the Romans" (*Romanorum imperator*).

The title used by Charlemagne meant the challenge thrust at Constantinople's rulers, who had considered themselves the "true" emperors of Rome, was lessened somewhat. There was still a fair way to go to the Great Schism of 1054, when Western Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy ultimately took different paths, so it was still difficult to ignore the rights of the heirs of Justinian the Great (reigned 527–565). Leo III made use of a favourable opportunity: when he crowned Charlemagne emperor, a woman had taken the throne in Constantinople (797–802) – Empress Irene (lived 752–803), who had assumed power by overthrowing and blinding her own son. That is why, when offering the emperor's crown to Charlemagne, Leo III could consider the emperor's throne as having been vacant, and Charlemagne could avoid feeling like a usurper. Until "manly" order was reinstated in Constantinople, Charlemagne could expect that he would be recognised as the second Roman emperor, appealing to those times when there was not just one but two (West and East) or even four (from the times of the tetrarchy) Roman emperors. However, after a prolonged conflict, Constantinople's rulers only recognised Charlemagne's heirs as the "Frankish" not the "Roman" emperors (*basileus*). Men of letters that served him and the heirs of Otto I "returned the favour", stating that the rulers of Constantinople were only emperors of the "Greeks", as only an emperor who ruled over Rome could be called the true emperor of Rome.

An important outcome of these disputes was that they broke the semantic link between "emperor" and "ruler of Rome": an "emperor" stopped by

definition being the "ruler of Rome". If there can be Frankish and Greek emperors, why then can't there be French, Spanish and other emperors? Indeed, researchers on the idea of empire (Folz 1969 [1953]: 40–43, 53–58; Muldoon 1999: 54–58) found that rulers of polities existing in tenth-century Britain and on the Iberian Peninsula in the tenth and eleventh centuries were called "emperors" in medieval chronicles and documents. They were noted for exceptional military victories or for having conquered (or sought to have conquered) all the kingdoms and duchies of a certain region (the British Isles and the Iberian Peninsula respectively). In this way, they did become "kings of kings", or "dukes of dukes" ("grand dukes"), who considered themselves as complete sovereigns (at least as far as secular matters were concerned), i.e., rulers who did not recognise any authority to be above their own.

In certain early Anglo-Saxon texts, the Anglo-Saxon kings who united several or eventually all seven of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms (Wessex, East Anglia, Mercia, Northumbria, Kent, Sussex, Essex) under their reign went by the name *bretwalda*, whose etymology is a topic of debate: it could mean either "Brittany's ruler" or "broad-ruling" (Wormald 1983; Fanning 1991). Eventually some "*bretwalda*" started titling themselves as emperors. The first to be called "emperor" and *basileus* by his contemporaries in England was the king of Wessex Athelstan (reigned in 924/925–939), who not only united the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms and the lands of Vikings who had settled in England, but also subjugated Wales and Scotland, and married off his sisters to West Frankish and German kings. Documents of the English king Edgar I (reigned in 959–975) also use such formulae: "I, Edgar, *basileus*, of the Angles and of all the kings of the islands which surround Britain, Emperor and Lord of all the nations contained within its borders"; "I, Edgar, by the grace of God, august emperor of all Albion" (Folz 1969 [1953]: 43).

We can guess that this is a British echo of the coronation first of Charlemagne and his heirs, and later of Otto I: the Anglo-Saxon rulers imitated the continental rulers, simultaneously seeking to highlight that they did not recognise their superiority and considered themselves as equals. In one of his writs, Canute the Great (reigned in 1016–1035), who briefly united Denmark, England, Norway and a part of Sweden under his power, titled himself as emperor (Muldoon 1999: 55). Some contemporary historians refer to him as the "Emperor of the North" (Trow 2005).

If in England the title of emperor expressed the claim to rule over all the island of Great Britain (or at least all the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms), then on the Iberian Peninsula this title expressed the claim of conquering the whole Iberian Peninsula (Iberia or Spain).[2] Whereas certain British rulers had, for at least a brief period, managed to realise their claims, all that remained of the claim on the Iberian Peninsula, until the very end of the Reconquista in 1492, a program reminiscent of Algirdas' program of joining all of Rus' to Lithuania. Sometimes a larger, sometimes a smaller area was occupied by the Muslim Moorish states, with whom the Christian Iberian kings were waging a religious war. The first to call themselves "emperors" in the tenth

century were the kings of León – the mightiest Iberian Christian kingdom (Folz 1969 [1953]: 40–41, Muldoon 1999: 55–56).

> The title *imperator*, meaning 'king of kings', expressed a claim to political supremacy over the whole of Spain, whether Christian or Muslim, and proclaimed the responsibility of the kings of León to recover their heritage, to reconquer the ancient territory of *Hispania*, and to expel the Muslims from the peninsula.
>
> (O'Callaghan 1975: 121)

In the second half of the tenth century, the Reconquista became stuck – the Muslims started a counter-attack. The civil war in the Caliphate of Cordoba saved the Christian kingdoms. It ended with disintegration of the Caliphate into around 30 smaller states (*taifa*) in 1031. The Reconquista started anew. This time Alfonso VI (lived in 1040–1109), the King of León (from 1065) and Castile (from 1072), earned renown, when in 1085 he reconquered Toledo, the capital of the former Visigoth kingdom. In a writ dated to 1077 (the year of the famous Canossa drama), he titled himself as emperor for the first time (Folz 1969 [1953]: 54). Examples of the titles he went by are: *Dei gratia totis Hispaniae imperator* (Emperor of all of Spain by the Grace of God), *Imperator constitutus super omnes Ispaniae nationes* (Emperor of all the Spanish nations). The heirs of Alfonso VI also titled themselves as "Emperors of all of Spain". These heirs were his son-in-law the King of Aragon Alfonso I the Battler (lived in 1073/1074–1334), who called himself the "King and Emperor of Castile, Toledo, Aragón, Pamplona, Sobrarbe and Ribagorza", and his grandson, the King of León and Castile Alfonso VII (lived in 1105–1157), who in 1135 was crowned as the "emperor of all of Spain" in the cathedral of León.

We can be quite certain that Grand Duke Algirdas was guided by the same idea of "empire" as the tenth-century Anglo-Saxon rulers and the kings of León and Castile from the tenth to the twelfth centuries, claiming the dignity of empire. In fact, Algirdas was the only ruler of the Grand Duchy to title himself as emperor. He called himself thus (βασιλεύς) in a letter written in 1371 to the patriarch of Constantinople, where he complained over the misbehaviour of the Kyiv metropolitan Aleksij who resided in Moscow.[3] In the letter, there are two places (*Acta I*: 580) where we find: Ἀϖό τόν βασιλέα Λιτβών τόν Ἄλγερδον ("from the Lithuanian Emperor Algirdas"), ό βασιλεύς ό Ἄλγερδος ("Emperor Algirdas"). As was the case with his predecessors in Western Europe, Algirdas intended his title to communicate that he was a great conqueror, a duke of dukes, one who did not recognise any rule over him, and who therefore was equal to the emperor of Constantinople himself, and also claimed to bring under his power a certain political geographic region (Rus').

This was not the only document featuring Algirdas' imperial title. On Algirdas' seal we find the letters ABE that most likely mean Ἄλγερδος

Βασιλεύς Εὐγενέστατος (Strockis 2007: 2), i.e., "Algirdas, noblest emperor".[4] On a lead plaque dated to the fourteenth century (found in June, 2003) there is a text which the Lithuanian scholar in classical studies Mindaugas Strockis reconstructs as ΑΛΓΗΡΔ ΤΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ, i.e., "of Algirdas the emperor" (Strockis 2007: 2). In both cases, Strockis suggests translating the word βασιλεύς by using the Lithuanian word for "king" (*karalius*).

However, we can be almost certain that when titling himself as βασιλεύς, Algirdas specifically wanted to claim that he was more than just a "king". The clerks who knew Greek and worked in Algirdas' chancery would have known that the Byzantine diplomatic protocol of the day had "reserved" the word βασιλεύς for the ruler of Constantinople (i.e., the emperor). A word specially loaned from Latin was used in the titles of lower-ranking rulers, ρήξ (*rex*), which Algirdas also used in his letter, when referring to the dukes subordinate to him. As Strockis himself notes, in the Constantinople patriarch's documents Algirdas is called only "king", or "grand king": τῷ ϖυρσολάτρῃ ῥηγὶ τῶν Λιτβῶν – to the worshipper of fire, the king of Lithuania (*Acta I*, 524); ὁ μέγας ῥὴξ τῶν ϖυρσολατρῶν – grand king of the fire worshippers (*Acta II*, 117).[5] Had Algirdas acknowledged the superiority of the Byzantine emperor, and wished simply to say that he was the supreme ruler only amongst the dukes of the Grand Duchy, then his title would have used μέγας ρήξ (grand king or grand duke), but not βασιλεύς.

Of course, the British, Spanish and (we might add) Algirdas' Lithuanian ideas of empire discussed here were heterodox in terms of the dominant imperial discourse. Promulgated in the peripheries of Europe as it was then, in the core countries they could have been (perhaps, with a clement grin) viewed as a curiosity, explained by the simplest ignorance of the recent converts (in the case of Britain), pagans (in the case of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania) or provincials (Spain's case). It is known that the rulers of León and Castile sought to defend their rights to the title of emperor, arguing that the "donation of Constantine" did not apply regarding their lands. The Spaniards did not believe the pope should have the right to consider them as his fiefdoms, as they had recovered their lands from the good-for-nothing Saracens by force of arms. However, the papal curia never took these imperial pretences of the Iberian Peninsula's rulers seriously. It is typical that with the waning of the Iberian lands' relative cultural and political isolation (with the onset of their "Europeanisation"), imperial rhetoric also subsided in the official documents and chronicles of León and Castile. A similar thing had happened earlier in England when it finally united to form the Anglo-Saxon kingdom and was transformed following the Norman invasion of 1066 from a separate inter-polity system into a unit of the broader West and Central European inter-polity system.

The Anglo-Saxon and León and Castile kings' claims on an imperial title are not the only precedents for Algirdas' episode. Algirdas was not the only ruler in the Byzantine cultural and political field of influence, penetrated by the pagan Grand Duchy with its eastward expansion, who sought that the

emperor of Constantinople would recognise him as his equal. In 913, the early Bulgarian ruler Simeon the Great (reigned in 893–927) crowned himself as "emperor and autocrat of all the Bulgarians and Romans". However, after long fighting, Byzantium only recognised Simeon as the "emperor of the Bulgarians" (*basileus tōn Boulgarōn*), resolutely keeping the title "emperor of the Romans" for themselves. Simeon's ultimate goal was to ascend the throne in Constantinople himself (Obolensky 1971: 104–115; Fine 1994: 144–158). The rulers of the Bulgarian state restored in 1185 (Byzantium had annexed it in 1018) also titled themselves as "caesars" (tsars) and emperors, while the clerks in their service called their capital Tyrnov the "new Constantinople" (Obolensky 1971: 246). The Serbian ruler (1331–1355) Stefan IV Dušan crowned himself the "emperor and autocrat of Serbs and Greeks" in the city of Skopje in 1346 (Obolensky 1971: 253–257; Soulis 1984).

Contemporary medievalists who are increasingly less restricted by the conventions of hermeneutic methodology also call empires those political bodies where rulers or dynasties had never claimed being the most supreme secular authority for all Christians. Distinguished British historian John Le Patourel calls the conglomerate of domains under the rule of William the Conqueror the "Norman Empire" (Le Patourel 1976: 323–326). He grounds this claim on John Gilissen's classification of empires. According to this classification, grand empires are distinguished from the rest, which may be termed non-universal empires. The first are world powers, laying claim to universal hegemony. The second are

> grand powers (*grande puissance*) on a regional scale at the very least, and possess other necessary qualities: they are sovereign states, concentrate power, have a complex composition (*composition complexe*), seek hegemony at least within the region, have a larger territory than other states and have existed for a relatively long time.
>
> (Gilissen 1973: 863)

Le Patourel sees all of these features in the government of William the Conqueror and his descendants. A similar, even greater complex of domains came under the control of their descendants, the Anjou dynasty (House of Plantagenet), which John Gillingham calls the "Angevin Empire", basically because he cannot come up with a more fitting title for this and similar political bodies from Europe in the Middle Ages (Gillingham 1984. See also Crouch 1990; Powicke 1961 [1913]; Ramsay 1903; Petit-Dutaillis 1996 [1936]: 99–124). A historian committed to hermeneutic methodology would not be able to agree with such titles only because William the Conqueror and his descendants, the Anjou counts (Plantagenets), who became kings of England from 1154, were vassals of the French kings, the Capetians.

However, is it so impossible to imagine an empire that neither declares itself as one, nor is recognised as one by its contemporaries? I will tackle this question in the next chapter, and will be able to provide a thorough

answer only by the end of the second part. Meanwhile we still need to continue and conclude the survey of the idea of empire in the history of Western civilisation. Basically, this is the history of the devaluation and the value-neutralisation of this idea. On the one hand, an "empire", from being the most coveted and honoured title and rank, became a stigma or shameful label for some time. Yet on the other hand it was transformed into a social scientific concept, applicable even to those political bodies that neither claim to be empires nor were acknowledged as such by their contemporaries.

The relations between the popes and emperors were at the centre of West and Central Europe's political history between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. There were two main questions in contention. First was the investiture right to appoint Church officials (first of all bishops). Second was the rights of popes as rulers of political bodies going by the name of "Papal States" (their modern-day successor can be considered the state of the Vatican). One of the contested issues on the second front was the interpretation of "transfer of the empire". According to the popes' interpretation, they were the actual heirs to the Roman Empire. They believed Constantine the Great, the supreme universal secular authority and the first Christian Roman emperor, had granted them the empire. Since then, popes had been free to dispose over this authority at their discretion, transferring it to the nation or dynasty that best served the Church as a defender of Christianity. To recall, the first to have received this right were the Greeks (the rulers of Constantinople), later – the Franks and Germans.

To elaborate on these ideas, the popes and the men of letters in their service compared popes to the sun, and emperors to the moon, which only reflects the original source of light, and cited a section from the Gospel (Luke 22: 38), where two swords were mentioned.[6] Invoking this section, back at the end of the fifth century, the Roman pope Gelasius (492–496) proclaimed the "two sword" doctrine. According to this doctrine, appointing the Apostle Peter (whom the Catholic Church considers as the first pope) as His vicar on Earth, Jesus gave him two swords. One signified the supreme authority in the Church, the other the supreme secular authority. The theory implied that the pope's rule was higher than any other secular ruler's, including the emperor's. The new emperor attains *imperium* (the highest universal secular authority) only after receiving the crown from the Roman pope.

Emperors and their men of letters considered the "donation of Constantine" a forgery (as it indeed was), and claimed that an emperor's right to rule was determined by election at the meeting of Germany's prince-electors and coronation as the "king of Rome". They perceived the coronation of the elected emperor in Rome as just another ceremony that did not give the crowned person any additional rights or powers that he would not have previously possessed. In the "Golden Bull" passed by the Nuremberg Reichstag in 1356, which outlined the procedure for electing emperors, this principle was given constitutional confirmation – the Roman pope did not even rate a

mention. In the sixteenth century, the emperors of the Holy Roman Empire stopped holding their coronations in Rome, being satisfied with the title of *Electus Romanorum Imperator* (Elected Emperor of the Romans). Charles V was the last emperor to be crowned by the pope (1530).

Germany's dynasts based their rights to the crown of Roman emperor on the right of conquest, as did the conquerors of Constantinople, the Turkish Ottomans, who also started titling their sultans as "emperors of Rome" after 1453 (Werner 1987). The famous medieval chronicler Otto von Freising (1114–1158) depicted the empire transfer "relay" as such: from the Romans to the Greeks (Byzantium), from the Greeks to the Lombards, from the Lombards to the Franks, and from the Franks to the Germans. This is a list of peoples who had conquered Italy, including Rome and its surrounding areas. Italy's fertile lands, which until the sixteenth century had been the most developed region in Europe, were a traditional object of expansion for the Germanic tribes. When the "elected emperors of Rome" would embark on the journey to Rome, ending with the coronation ceremony, they would also use this as an opportunity to entrench their own seniority rights over many lesser Italian political units. However, only Otto III (reigned in 983–1002) had briefly (998–1002) established an administrative centre there.

One of the outcomes of the popes' victory against the Staufer (Hohenstaufen) dynasty in the mid-thirteenth century was the establishment of the popes' sovereignty in the Papal States. It is paradoxical, but the city that gave its name to the Holy Roman Empire found itself lying beyond its borders. The appearance of the term "German" in the empire's official designation (from the fifteenth century) can be considered not just a strengthening of German national self-awareness, but also an expression of the weakness of Germans' influence on Italy's politics. However, the less the election and policies of popes depended on the emperors of the Holy Roman Empire, the more they depended on the twists and turns of local Italian politics that created the conditions for interference from newly arising external powers.

One such new power from the early fourteenth century became the kings of France. The defeat of the Hohenstaufen (to the popes' benefit) blocked Germany's prospect of becoming a centralised state. Meanwhile, the French kings from the Capetian dynasty managed in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries not just to extend their royal domains, but also to consolidate their supremacy over the vassal lands. The kings of France (much like the Christian kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula) never acknowledged the supremacy of the Holy Roman Empire's emperors, as both French and German rulers were held to be equal successors of the Frankish Empire's (Charlemagne). Popes supported kings of France in these claims, who at the height of the popes' battles with the emperor rejected the latter's claims of being the supreme and universal secular authority. Thus Pope Innocent III in the *Per venerabilem* decretal (announced in 1202) asserted that in secular affairs the kings of France had no rulers above them, except for the jurisdiction of the popes themselves (Muldoon 1999: 97–98).

In the early fourteenth century, the kings of France, taking advantage of the Germans' retreat from Italy and the Roman aristocracy's battles over power in the Papal States, brought the popes under their tutelage for seventy years (1305–1377). In 1309, the Roman curia was even moved from Rome to Avignon, in the south of present-day France, under the pretext of better protection from offences by the feuding factions of the Roman nobility. This "Avignon captivity" developed into the Great Church Schism, when following the passing of Pope Gregory XI in 1378 two new popes were elected, one residing in Rome, the other in Avignon. Only the Conciliar Movement overcame this division in the Church. However, the participants and supporters of this movement assumed that the supreme authority in the Church resided not with the pope but with a council of the Church.

The decline of the popes' authority and power meant that the authority of the Holy Roman emperors could recover, as they had at least temporarily regained the role of leaders of the Christian world. Emperor Sigismund of Luxemburg, a contemporary of Jogaila and Vytautas, played an active role in calling the Council of Constance (1414–1418) and electing the first pope to be acknowledged in all the Catholic lands after an interval of 40 years, Pope Martin V (1417–1431).

From 1438 until the very end of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806, its crown went to the Habsburgs.[7] Executing a clever policy of dynastic marriages, they managed, through personal unions, to bring under their power not just a large part of the lands belonging to the Holy Roman Empire (Austria, Bohemia, the Netherlands), but also many lands that did not belong to it. In the battle of Mohács of 1526, with the death of the king of Bohemia and Hungary (1516–1526) Louis II Jagiellon, the Habsburgs also won the Hungarian throne.[8] The Habsburgs' power culminated in the times of Charles V (lived in 1500–1558). Having inherited the Netherlands, in 1516 he became the king of Spain (more precisely, of Aragon and Sicily, and the kingdoms of León and Castile), and in 1519 he was elected the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire.

The Spanish Conquistadors' gold and silver from the vanquished Americas gave Charles V, probably the first of the emperors of the Holy Roman Empire, the adequate resources for an attempt to transform the idea of a universal monarchy into reality. This attempt was foiled when France opposed him, forming an alliance with the Ottoman Turks, and when the Reformation divided the Holy Roman Empire into Catholic and Protestant camps. When Charles V abdicated in 1556, the eastern part of his domains came under the control of his younger brother Ferdinand I, who had taken over the Bohemian and Hungarian thrones from the earlier Jagiellonian rulers, and the western part went to his son, Philip II. The Habsburgs' further efforts concentrated on the eradication of the "Protestant heresy". These efforts reached their climax in the Thirty Years War (1618–1648).

The Peace of Westphalia that ended the Thirty Years War legally established the equal sovereignty of all the states that signed the treaty. That

meant that the emperors of the Holy Roman Empire put aside their claims to universal authority and supremacy in the Christian world. However, at the time such claims were already completely fictitious. Neither the kings of the French nor the kings of the Iberian Peninsula kingdoms ever acknowledged this supremacy while under the Habsburgs' rule; nor did the kings of England. When King Henry VIII (reigned in 1509–1547) fell out with the Roman popes and created the Anglican Church, solely under his subordination, he cited early Anglo-Saxon kings' claims to the title of emperor of Britain. In 1533, the English parliament with its famous *Act in Restraint of Appeals* proclaimed the country an empire. This was a declaration of its complete sovereignty in secular and church affairs:

> by divers sundry old authentic histories and chronicles it is manifestly declared and expressed that this realm of England is an empire, and so hath been accepted in the world, governed by one supreme head and king having the dignity and royal estate of the imperial crown of the same.
>
> (quoted in Muldoon 1999: 128)

Yet the rulers of medieval countries newly entering the community of European Christian polities could not afford to ignore the Holy Roman emperors' claims to supremacy. A Christian ruler could not simply crown himself king. The Germanic kings of the Great Migration of Peoples and the "dark" Middle Ages (Alaric, Chlodwig or Clovis, Theodoric, etc. between the fifth and tenth centuries) were the charismatic military commanders of their "peoples" (the Visigoths, Franks, Ostrogoths). They received legitimacy to rule from their armies' acclamations – that is, all those bearing weapons (Demandt 1995: 604–610; Wolfram 1979: 23–31, 249–253, 260–267).[9] At first, all free men belonged to that "people", who also happened to be warriors. Later, the king's electorate narrowed down to professional warriors (nobility), while candidates to be king could only be members of a single royal lineage.

Following the baptism of the barbarian "peoples", a necessary part of the king's coronation ceremony was his anointment by the pope or the pope's delegate, giving the new king sacral status.[10] In the tenth century and later, in Europe's northern (Scandinavia) and eastern (Bohemia, Poland, Hungary) peripheries, the rulers of newly baptised countries could only become kings upon receiving sanction from the supreme spiritual authority of the Christian world – the pope – or it and that of the supreme secular authority – the emperor.

The first ruler in this situation in Lithuania was Mindaugas, who was crowned at a time when the popes' power had reached its apogee (1253). The second ruler in this situation was Vytautas, who struggled to receive his crown (1430) during the Conciliar Movement period, when the papal institution was in crisis, and, amid the backdrop of its decline, the authority

of the emperors of the Holy Roman Empire was rising. The first coronation of a state's monarch was an important legal act of international politics by which the new monarch and the country personified by him would be recognised as a fully-fledged member of the Western Christian international community. This act provided the ruler and his country with a status outdone only by the universal powers of Western Christian civilisation – the Empire and the Church.

Algirdas was the only Lithuanian ruler who sought to be acknowledged as an emperor, yet those pretences were addressed not to Europe's West, but to Constantinople's emperor. As far as the Catholic West was concerned, the pagan Grand Duchy was beyond the boundaries of international law (see also chapter nine). Both the popes of Rome and Germany's emperors voiced their claims to universal power by donating the lands of the Grand Duchy to the Teutonic Order. This was what Louis IV of Bavaria did in 1337, giving the Teutonic Order the privilege to conquer the lands of Lithuania, Karšuva (*terra Carsoviae*), Samogitia and Rus' (Rowell 1994: 255).[11]

After the introduction of Christianity to Lithuania, the aspirations of the Grand Duchy rulers and magnates never overstepped the *regnum* (kingdom) status. In fact, we could consider the title "grand duke" (duke of dukes) a formal equivalent of the "emperor" (king of kings) title in Kievan Rus'. This was an inter-polity system created from the ruins of the political body called the "Rurikid Empire" by none other than Karl Marx in Chapter 4 of his *Revelations of the Diplomatic History of the 18th Century* (Marx 1857). The name "grand duke" or "grand prince" expressed seniority and precedence in the Rurikid lineage, which until the beginning of Lithuanian expansion into Rus' held the monopoly on taking the ducal seat in various lands. "Grand prince" was the title taken only by the prince who held the throne in Kyiv. In the late twelfth century, the Prince of Vladimir Vsevolod the Big Nest and his descendants in North East Rus' started titling themselves as "grand princes" (Poppe 1984: 432–433; 1989: 174–175).

In the times of the Tatar "yoke", the title "grand prince" was devalued. First, "grand prince" no longer meant a sovereign ruler, but just the senior vassal of the Golden Horde in Ruthenian lands. The khan could appoint and depose him at his discretion. Candidates for "grand prince" had to personally meet with the khan and receive his letter of appointment (*jarlyk*). Often, unsuitable candidates or grand princes who had run afoul of the khan were killed. Demeaning ceremonies that had to be followed when the prince came to meet with the khan or his delegates highlighted his dependent situation. This was how Jan Długosz described them:

> The prince, on foot, meets the delegates of the Tatar khan arriving at his residence, even if they are not themselves of noble origins and are coming to collect tributes or on other matters. The prince gives them a dish with mare's milk and must lick away any drops that fall on the horse's mane. He lays the finest of furs with sable lining under the feet

> of the Tatar who reads the Khan's letter translated into Russian, and must himself kneel along with all the other younger princes, nobles and his family to listen to the reading" (quoted in Bazilevič 1952: 120). Second, the Tatars granted the title of grand prince not only to the princes of Vladimir (even though this remained the supreme prince, above all the others), but also of Tver, Lower Novgorod, Riazan' and even to the small principality of Pronsk.
>
> (Gorskij 1996: 52)

It is no wonder that having just thrown off the yoke of the Golden Horde, Moscow's princes, having been appointed by the Tatars as the "grand dukes of Vladimir" from the mid-fourteenth century, with almost no interregna, were no longer satisfied with this title and started calling themselves "tsars". Ruthenian annals had hitherto used this word only when referring to the rulers of the Golden Horde and Constantinople. With this new title, the ruler of Muscovy expressed his claims to inherit both their rights. The widely known idea of "Muscovy as the third Rome" formed the core of its imperial ideology, which in the eyes of the Orthodox world became all the more compelling when, after the fall of Constantinople in 1453 and the Turkish conquest of the Balkans, the ruler of Moscow remained the only powerful Orthodox secular ruler in the world. The marriage of Ivan III with Sophia Palaiologina, the niece of the last emperor of Byzantium Constantine XI, and the introduction of "tsar" into the title of the ruler of Muscovy were symbolic actions communicating that he considered himself of no less equal in importance than the "Latin emperors".

Another vital element of Muscovy's imperial ideology was the legend created by Spiridon Savva, a monk who lived during the years of rule (1505–1533) of Vasilij III (1479–1553) and was once the Kyiv metropolitan, about Augustus' brother Prus, who was alleged as the progenitor of the Rurikid dynasty. Genealogically linking themselves, the Rurikids, to the first dynasty of Rome's emperors, they stated that they were nobler than the Habsburgs or any other German dynasts on the throne of the Holy Roman Empire, being the real heirs of the Empire not just as the only defenders of true Christianity but also as direct descendants of the Roman emperors.

Of course, much like every legend of imperial Moscow from the fifteenth to the sixteenth centuries, this legend targeted primarily the Gediminid rulers of the Grand Duchy. Muscovy's men of letters insinuated that they were descendants of the enslaved stableman of Vytenis, a vassal of Rostislav, the Rurikid prince of Smolensk. By implication, the Gediminids were usurpers of the Rurikids' patrimonial rights to all the Ruthenian lands. This legend most probably was also Muscovy's response to the tale about the Roman origins of the Lithuanians, which became the fundamental myth behind the historical self-perception of the Grand Duchy's ruling political elite (Kuolys 1992: 52–54; Narbutas 2004; Petrauskas 2004).[12]

Lithuania's nobles used the legend of Lithuanians' Roman origins not just to fend off Muscovy's pretences, but also to declare their superiority over the Poles, who considered themselves descendants of the ancient Sarmatians. Yet, the myth may also be considered in the much broader context of the disputes over the Roman Empire's succession, involving many other participants. One of the aspects of *translatio imperii* was the transfer of certain honours and rights from one nation to another. But what about the Romans themselves? Contemporaries by no means considered Romans an extinct nation. The inhabitants of Rome thought of themselves as Romans. There were even episodes when the commune of Rome (the community of city-dwellers) appropriated the right to crown the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire.[13] If Lithuanians were indeed descendants of the Romans, it would have been logical to lay claim to the legacy of the Roman Empire as well.

Alas, this was a stretch of the imagination too bold for the Grand Duchy's political elite. Even at the height of the Jagiellonians' power, when they held the thrones of not just Poland and Lithuania, but of Bohemia and Hungary as well, and competed against the Habsburgs, they never resorted to using the argument of their Roman origins in this contest. Not a single representative of the dynasty made claims to the throne of the Holy Roman Empire, even though the legend of Palemon would have suited perfectly to legitimise such claims. The claimed origins of the legendary ancestors of the Rurikids and Gediminids reflect differences in the scale of the ambitions of Muscovy's and the Grand Duchy's political elite from the late fifteenth and first half of the sixteenth centuries. If fictitious Prus was the brother of noble Augustus, then fictitious Palemon was merely a distant relative of the rascally Nero. In the first case, a clear claim is expressed regarding succession of the empire as the universal and supreme authority, with all its eventual implications. In the second case, however, there is a kind of acceptance of the honourable yet modest role of "younger sibling" in the strategic partnership with Poland, which culminated in the Lublin Union in 1569.

The Peace of Westphalia of 1648 brought to an end the history of the "empire" as a core idea of Western political ideology and international law (see also chapter four). By this time this idea already had new, negative meanings. Tacitus and other authors of antiquity who critically viewed the political regime of the Principate and Dominate recalled with nostalgia the "golden" ages of the early Roman Republic. These antique motifs were revived in the texts of Renaissance thinkers such as Leonardo Bruni (1369–1444) and Niccolo Machiavelli (1469–1527), considered by contemporary historians of political thought as the founders of "classic republicanism" (Pocock 1975: 194–211, 510; Skinner 1978). Following their predecessors from antiquity, they idealised the republican period of ancient Rome (for the unprecedented flourishing of "civic virtues") and compared it to the imperial period (the times of the Principate and Dominate) as an epoch of despotism and moral decline. Meanwhile, they explained the republic's decline (also following the antique authors) as the result of the politics of

conquest: the wealth of conquered lands had "spoiled" Rome's citizens, while the conquests themselves had created the conditions for fame-greedy generals to rise up and fight amongst themselves for the monarch's throne. In this way, the empire started being identified with despotism, autocracy and monarchy, although the examples of the late Roman Republic, Athens in 5 BC, and perhaps the contemporary USA show that a democratic and republican empire is indeed possible.

Later on, as part of the Western Orientalism discourse articulated in the Age of Enlightenment (Said 2006 [1978]), despotism became firmly associated with the "East", while the great Asian monarchies (the Turkish Ottoman, Mughal, Persia's Shah states and China) were labelled "empires". We come across this semantic transformation of "empire" in the widely read works of Charles Montesquieu (Montesquieu 1899 [1748], 1: 136–138, 252–255), which had a strong impact on constitutional law (the doctrine of division of power) in Western countries. The French thinker considered the empire as an "Asian" form of political organisation, whereas various "moderate" forms of rule dominated in Europe: democratic or aristocratic republics and non-despotic monarchies. "In Asia they have always had great empires; in Europe these could never subsist" (Montesquieu 1899 [1748], 1: 269).

After the peace treaties of Westphalia (1648) and especially Utrecht (1714), the idea of a "power balance" established itself in Western political thinking and international law, as a positive value incompatible with the hegemony of one of the larger states. The sinister scheming to create a "universal monarchy" (i.e. empire) became an accusation that the foreign ministers of the great Western powers and their departmental men of letters had to rebuff. In this way the word "empire" attained another shade of negative meaning, denouncing its referents as illegitimate and abnormal political bodies, in violation of international law based on the principle of the equal sovereignty of all Christian or civilised states.

At around the same time, a new usage of the word "empire" emerged (although it was related to the precedent and example of the Roman Empire) (Pagden 1995). The colonial expansion of European countries since the fifteenth century gave them overseas domains where the order of governance, laws and informal norms were in effect different to those that applied within Europe itself. The word "empire" lent itself nicely to describe composite political bodies composed of a European "metropole" and a colonial overseas "periphery", as their territorial structure was reminiscent of that which was familiar to contemporaries from the texts of ancient Roman authors. In ancient Rome, when its governance spread beyond the boundaries of the Italian Peninsula, its territory split into metropolitan Italy, where citizens of Rome and its "allies" (federates) lived, and the mercilessly exploited provinces ruled by Rome's governors (proconsuls). Possession of such overseas domains and thus being an "empire" became a matter of state prestige in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, even if in some cases

those domains were not on the other side of the Atlantic, but just across the Mediterranean or Baltic seas – the case of seventeenth-century Sweden (Gustafsson 1994: 49–53).

The history of Western colonialist expansion divides into two periods (Pagden 1995: 1–2; Abernethy 2000; Cohen 1973: 20–31). In the first period, its arrowhead was aimed at America and ended with the creation of new independent states in the late eighteenth–early twentieth centuries. The first to have won their hard-fought independence were Great Britain's colonies in North America, declaring their independence in 1776 and defending it with help from France in the War of Independence. The invasion of Napoleon I into the Iberian Peninsula in 1808 and the ensuing upheaval in metropoles prompted Spanish and Portuguese colonies in Central and South America to follow the North American example as well. One of them, Brazil, declared itself an empire in 1822, remaining so until 1889. Mexico, having just won its independence, called itself an empire, albeit just for two years (1822–1823).

Memories of the American War of Independence for a long time (though not perennially) tarnished the word "empire" with especially strong negative connotations in the American political imagination. On the Old Continent we can see a more ambivalent view. Antique decorations were in active use during the great French Revolution. The Jacobins and Girondins would fit themselves out in the costumes of Cato and the Gracchus brothers, Napoleon was dressed as the new Caesar and later as Augustus as well, donning the emperor's crown in 1804. His selection of title was inspired by recollections of history where Ancient Roman emperors were often generals lauded by the army, whose glory resulting from military triumphs was the most important if not the only basis for their claim to become legitimate rulers. However, the ancient Roman Empire was not the only historical source of inspiration for Napoleon's imperial self-presentation. Indeed, Napoleon I considered his empire a restoration of Charlemagne's, not the Roman, empire (Tulard 1980). Therefore, on August 6, 1806 he forced the last emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, the recently crushed Francis II Habsburg of Austria, to abolish this political body, that had until then existed as a nominal subject of international law. Following yet another defeat in war (1809), Austria's Habsburgs were forced to marry off their daughter Marie-Louise to Napoleon I, who titled their son born in 1811 the "King of Rome" – an ancient title afforded to elected emperors of the Holy Roman Empire.

Ambivalent historical memories aside, Napoleon I made the words "empire" and "imperialism" sound just as ambivalent. On the one hand, these words were associated with a victory fought for and won on the battlefield, on the other, they suggested a territorial expansion resting solely on military power, one that trampled legitimacy grounded in historical traditions. By calling states "empires" and statesmen "imperialists", post-Napoleonic public opinion-makers attributed to them "Napoleonic" and "Bonapartist" goals. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, it was

precisely expansive, predatory foreign policy that started becoming the most important connotation of "empire" and "imperialism" (Koebner 1961; Koebner and Schmidt 1964).

Nonetheless, such foreign policy was considered shameful in the nineteenth century and was condemned only so long as its target was other European, Christian countries. Colonial expansion continued: in the second half of the nineteenth century its second period commenced, the main arenas becoming African and Asian countries. An absolute majority of Europeans at the time accepted this kind of expansion, justified as the burden of civilising the "backward", "wild" lands which had to be borne by people of the white race. This meant that the positive connotations of "empire" remained strong in Western Europe. Russia proclaimed itself an empire in 1721 and gradually became universally recognised as such. Having rejected the title of emperors of the Holy Roman Empire, Austria's Habsburgs remained "Austrian emperors". With the final unification by Bismarck of Prussia in 1871, Germany too proclaimed itself an empire. Napoleon III restored the empire in France in 1852–1870. Maximilian Habsburg declared himself Mexican emperor in 1864, and with assistance from Napoleon III he briefly took control over this country. Japanese diplomats demanded that their ruler be titled "emperor" when, after centuries-long self-isolation, their country, the only one among the Asian countries, managed to join the globalised Western international community as an equal member in the second half of the nineteenth century. The largest political unit (38 million km^2) in world history that came under Great Britain's rule was proudly called "the empire on which the sun never sets" by its politicians and propagandists. They followed the example of the men of letters employed by Charles V Habsburg in the sixteenth century, who described in the same words his vast possessions scattered over the entire globe. In 1876, the Queen of England Victoria officially crowned herself "Empress of India".

The negative connotations of "empire" were strongest in Central and East Europe, where the most vicious enemy of empires and imperialism arose in the nineteenth century – ethnic nationalism. It was "the most vicious" because it heralded a new principle regarding a political community's legitimacy. It toughened the principle of "self-determination of nations", identifying nations with ethno-cultural groups whose most important distinguishing feature was language. From an ethnic nationalist viewpoint, empires are illegitimate political bodies, as their borders do not correspond to the territorial boundaries of different linguistic nations. Each "civilised" nation has the right to live in its own separate state, while empires were political bodies that trod on this right and were thus "prisons of nations".

A new turning point in the history of the idea of empire was World War I, when the words "empire" and "imperialism" for a while lost all hint of positive connotations. After 1917, "empire" and "imperialism" became catchwords of leftist and especially communist propaganda. This was the name

given to the greatest social evil at the time. "Imperialism caused World War I" was a popular response to the question on everyone's lips back then.

But after the dissolution of three empires (Russian, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman) during one year (in 1917–1918) it became evident that the principle of nations' right to self-determination, clear in theory, was difficult to put into practice due to the numerous ethnically mixed territories and due to incongruities between "historical borders" and the present-day boundaries of different ethnic groups' inhabited territories. It dawned that ethnically homogeneous states could only be created using methods that some empires had earlier applied – genocide and mass deportations. It is a paradox, but only Europe's last empire – the Stalinist Soviet Union – made true the dream of ethnic nationalists about the ethnically homogeneous state. In carrying out mass deportations it not only executed widescale ethnic demographic engineering, which was painfully experienced by the Lithuanian nation also, but also permitted and helped Central and East Europe's satellite state governments to do the same. In this way Poland became an ethnically homogeneous country after the deportation of Germans from its western and northern territories. Poles from Western Ukraine, Western Belarus and East Lithuania arrived in their place.

Now many historians and political scientists view the Habsburg Empire as a rather successful example of many nations living together in one state, from which the creators of today's and tomorrow's united Europe can take a lesson (Gellner 1998). All prisons are not the same. As the examples of the Habsburg Empire, Yugoslavia or even the Soviet Union show, prisons can even be recalled with a hint of nostalgia – and not just by those who once worked as supervisors there. A free and independent life after the downfall of the prison does not necessarily turn out successfully, and that prison is then remembered as a "homeland" which was brought down in the heat of the moment (after an argument with one's "brothers" and "sisters"). If the "prison" remains standing after several generations of the prison population, it can become a true "homeland" worthy of the greatest sacrifice.

Without such "prisons" we would not have many of the great nations. There were times when the populations of Brittany, Gascony and Provence did not yet consider themselves as "Frenchmen", and looked upon the king's officials much like twentieth-century or even contemporary Catalans or Basques looked down upon officials from Madrid. Even in the mid-nineteenth century, a good quarter of the population of France – a country which is otherwise considered a particularly successful case of "nation building" – did not speak French (Weber 1997 [1976]: 67). Already after Otto von Bismarck had united some of the German-speaking lands into the Hohenzollern empire with "iron and blood", strong local ("separatist") political forces demanded the restoration of independence of the Bavarian and Rhine lands after Germany's defeat in World War I. Their demands remained

unheeded mostly because the great powers had already decided differently.[14] Only the multi-national and ethnically heterogeneous polities where the task of nation building failed or was successful only to a certain degree that are remembered as "empires". Historians write the history of those empires that succeeded at nation building simply as the history of "overcoming feudal fragmentation".

All that remains is to repeat what was stated in the introduction: "empire" ceased to be a "dirty" word. These changes to "the spirit of the times" can at least partially explain why the following question has arisen in recent times in Lithuania's historical scholarship and mass media – "Was the Grand Duchy of Lithuania an empire?"

Notes

1 So when a ruler goes by the title "Caesar" or "tsar" he is proclaiming himself as "Caesar's adopted son".
2 Note that the whole Iberian Peninsula was called Spain until the sixteenth century, not just the territory of the present-day Spanish state.
3 See *Acta I*: 580–581. For a publication of the letter in English, see Meyendorff 1980: 288–289.
4 For a reproduction, see Gudavičius 1999: 129. Edmundas Rimša has doubts as to whether the seal actually belonged to Algirdas: Rimša 2005.
5 See Strockis 2003: 1–2.
6 The disciples said, "See, Lord, here are two swords." "That's enough!" he replied (Luke 22:38).
7 Charles VII Albert from the Wittelsbach dynasty was the only non-Habsburg emperor of the Holy Roman Empire in 1742–1745 due to the War of the Austrian Succession.
8 Louis II Jagiellon (lived in 1506–1526) was the only son of the King of Bohemia (reigned in 1471–1516) and Hungary (reigned in 1490–1516), Ladislaus II Jagiellon (lived in 1456–1516). He had married Mary Habsburg but they had no children. His sister Anna was married to the younger brother of Charles V, Ferdinand I, who succeeded the thrones of Bohemia and Hungary (actually, only a part of Hungary) after the death of Louis II.
9 A similar episode exists in Lithuania's history, dated in sources to 1398 when on the island of Salynas the nobles declared Vytautas the king of Lithuania.
10 The first time the anointment became part of the coronation ceremony is dated to 672 during the coronation of the Visigoth king in Toledo. The "anointment to be king" of the Frankish ruler Clovis that is sometimes mentioned in textbooks was in fact not a part of his coronation, but of his baptism ceremony.
11 Samogitia or Žemaitija is a historical and ethnographic region in the northwestern part of contemporary Lithuania. The region is also known in English as Lower Lithuania. The eastern boundary of medieval Samogitia was the Nevėžis River. Most contemporary authors identify Karšuva as southern part of Samogitia.
12 Mečislovas Jučas considered the legend of Palemon as the response of Lithuanian men of letters to the insinuations about the low origins of the Gediminids disseminated by Muscovy (Jučas 2000: 241). However, the idea about the Roman or Italian origins of Lithuanians was already being circulated in the fifteenth century, as documented by the legendary genealogy of Lithuanians in the work of Jan Długosz (1415–1480). In Długosz's legend, Duke Vilius arrived in an

uninhabited land – thus, all Lithuanians were said to originate from Italian émigrés. In the later legend of Palemon, the Roman origins of the ruling class and the dynasty are given more prominence.

13 See Folz 1969 (1953): 94–97, 152–155.

14 One of the better-known figures of the Rhine separatist (or was it independence?) movement after World War I was the first future chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, Konrad Adenauer. See Schlemmer 2007.

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2 The Grand Duchy of Lithuania as an empire in historiography

"Vytautas' empire vanished into the past like a bright meteor", wrote Zenonas Ivinskis in the preface of the *History of Lithuania*, a synthesis of Lithuania's history that remained incomplete (Ivinskis 1978: 6). In Algirdas Budreckis' 1981 monograph about the grand duke Algirdas, we come across the chapter "Algirdas' Empire" that rather comprehensively discusses the imperial characteristics of the Grand Duchy (Budreckis 1981: 288–297). The chapter "Vytautas' Empire" also features in Volume 15 of the *Lithuanian Encyclopedia* (published in the U.S. mainly by émigré scholars), in the article by Kazys Pakštas called "Area and Borders of the Lithuanian State" (Pakštas 1968: 452–454). And in the book by internationally famous Lithuanian scholar Algirdas Julius Greimas, *In Search of the Nation's Memory* (*Tautos atminties beieškant*) we read about "the expansion of the Lithuanian state that was even in a sense an expression of Lithuanian imperialism in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries" (Greimas 1990: 17).

Kazys Pakštas (1893–1960), a professor of geography at Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas, who had graduated in sociology from Fordham University (U.S.) in 1918 and defended a doctoral dissertation in geography at the University of Fribourg in Switzerland (1923), was a pioneer in the study of geopolitics in Lithuania. He seems to have been the first to describe the Grand Duchy as an empire in Lithuanian literature. In 1929, he published the monograph *Political Geography of the Baltic States* (*Baltijos respublikų politinė geografija*), where he argued that the name "Grand Duchy" was a misnomer for the ancient Lithuanian polity. "It is a misunderstanding to call Lithuania in the time of Vytautas Magnus a 'Grand Duchy'", he wrote. "Its territory and dignity completely corresponded to the name and dignity of a great empire" (Pakštas 1929: 181–182). Pakštas came back to this topic in his later publications, providing some new observations.

> The empire of Vytautas Magnus is a most remarkable and unique creation in the world, as far as the rule of a small pagan population over large Christian colonies is concerned, while in world history all we see is just the opposite phenomena.
>
> (Pakštas 2003 [1936]: 227)

His article on the territory and borders of the Lithuanian state, in Vol. 15 of the *Lithuanian Encyclopedia*, only repeated and summarised his earlier arguments.

It is much more difficult for contemporary Lithuanian historians to accept the idea of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania as an empire. Alfredas Bumblauskas (2005: 106) calls the Grand Duchy from Gediminas' times an empire, and even then only with reservations.[1] When discussing Lithuanian foreign politics from the mid-fourteenth to the beginning of the sixteenth century, Alvydas Nikžentaitis calls it "imperial" (Nikžentaitis 2005). In his article's subtitle, this adjective is enclosed in quotation marks; however, they do not appear in the article's body. Yet legal historian Jevgenij Machovenko claims that

> the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was a unique phenomenon in medieval Europe's history. According to the territory's size, the ethnic and religious composition of the population and the complexity of social relations, it was comparable to the empires of Byzantium, Charlemagne, Charles V and Russia. All of these empires had a metropole and colonies, which served its needs. The economically and politically stronger metropole would subordinate to its power, or more often conquer weaker state and societal organisms incapable of withstanding its expansion. The legal status of the metropole and its colonies was quite different. Being a truly enormous country, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, unlike other medieval countries of that size, was not an empire.
>
> (Machovenko 1999: 201)

Explaining the causes of this unique phenomenon, he refers to the voluntary accession of Slavic lands to the Grand Duchy. As a result,

> in the Grand Duchy there were no conditions for the making of an empire. Lithuania was not a metropole, but the core of the Grand Duchy, integrating separate lands into the united state. The relations between this core and the other lands did not have elements of oppression or exploitation.
>
> (Machovenko 1999: 201)

I shall argue that the Grand Duchy was not in fact a unique phenomenon, but rather a very typical empire. For now it will suffice to say that even then when a land being plundered by invaders did not resist by taking up arms (and with Lithuania's eastward expansion, this was by no means always the case), it does not yet mean that it became part of another state voluntarily. More importantly, we should search for causes for imperial expansion not just on the invaders' side. These causes might be related to the domestic political or social problems of the land they are invading, due to which

the groups entangled in this internal fighting search for support from their surrounding countries. There are also cases of "empire by invitation" (Lundestad 1986).

The eastern Slavic lands annexed to the Grand Duchy should by no means be called colonies (this title is more appropriate to overseas domains), but they were the empire's periphery. Machovenko himself shows this very clearly and in great detail, pointing out the difference in legal status between the core of the Grand Duchy (mostly Lithuanian) and its annexed domains. Speaking about "oppression" and "exploitation", first of all I would like to disagree with the author's assumption that imperialism can be explained by seeking economic benefit alone (Fieldhouse 1961: 200–208). Contemporary researchers do not agree even on Great Britain – did the economic benefit it extracted from its colonies, calculated using sophisticated econometric methods, at least cover the expenses of their conquest, rule and defence (Fieldhouse 1961: 207–208; Davis and Huttenback 1986)? What then about the other empires that did not have any profitable colonies like India? So far, no one has made such detailed calculations whether, for example, Central Asian countries "gave to" or "took" more from the Russian imperial centre whilst being the periphery of the Soviet empire. So far it is important only to note that even when they cause a loss (economically "exploit" the metropole), colonies and annexed lands remain the empire's periphery.

I doubt whether we could convincingly explain why "Lithuania's rulers had an interest in expanding their rule into the Slavic lands" (Machovenko 1999: 201), if we assume that there was no oppression or exploitation in relations between the Lithuanian dukes, their armies and nobles (who, of course, included not only ethnic Lithuanians) and the peasant populations of the Slavic lands. Would we assert instead that their expansion into the Slavic lands was led by the goal of implementing some kind of noble mission (like, for example, liberating their neighbours from the Tatar yoke)? Even if the Grand Duchy did carry out a similar mission in Rus' (I am in complete agreement with Machovenko on this matter), it was more likely an objective outcome of the Grand Duchy's expansion (that was determined by the state's position in international systems of the day), while the immediate reason was a somewhat more earthly (and thus) "low" aim.

Giedrė Mickūnaitė also denies the imperial nature of the Grand Duchy in an article written for an issue of *Ab Imperio* specially dedicated to the issue of the Grand Duchy's statehood (Mickūnaitė 2004). Here is her reasoning:

> Territorial expansion is a characteristic feature of medieval and, to some extent, of early modern Lithuania. Thus, one may legitimately probe questions of Lithuanian imperialism. However, the second part of the same definition holds that an empire is sustained by an imperial policy implemented throughout entire space (whether over land or sea), thus subjecting people and their territories to an emperor. It is my

> conviction that Lithuania never developed imperial policy and never was an empire.
>
> (Mickūnaitė 2004: 524)

The author's conviction most probably rests on her unease over the fact that acknowledgment of the Grand Duchy's imperial nature may be "politically incorrect". It does not concur with what she has said earlier: the Grand Duchy was both a large and a multinational state. Most importantly, Lithuania undoubtedly implemented imperial policy.[2] The aim of this policy in the fourteenth–fifteenth centuries was to bring all of Rus' under its power (Nikžentaitis 2005), and later, to keep its conquered lands at any cost and to take over Livonia.

Algimantas Bučys would by no means agree with Mickūnaitė: "meanwhile, the never before researched phenomenon of Lithuania's imperialism remains the virgin lands in Lithuanian historiography and literature studies" (Bučys 2008: 166). In *Barbarians vice versa Classics: The Centre and Periphery in a Writer's Strategies* (*Barbarai vice versa klasikai: centras ir periferija rašytojo strategijose*), whose title expressly advertises imperiological aspirations, he tries to cultivate the fertile soil that is Lithuanian imperial studies. In this seminal contribution, he reveals "Lithuania's imperial paradox", "Lithuania's imperial experience", "Lithuania's imperial elite" and "imperial thinking" (Bučys 2008: 166–171), which remain unnoticed (and cannot be noticed) so long as we look upon Lithuania as if it were a kind of Estonia: a proud yet eternal victim of stronger, violent and predatory neighbours.

Gintaras Beresnevičius (1961–2006) was the first to introduce the topic of Lithuania as an empire in the Middle Ages and even already in the period of the Migration of Peoples into broader intellectual circulation. He not only asserted the Grand Duchy's imperial nature as an obvious fact in his writings, but also affirmed Lithuanians' innate inclination towards imperialism and offered the grand vision (or myth) of contemporary Lithuania's mission in Europe that should help today's Lithuanians resolve the pressing and painful problems of identity they are facing (Beresnevičius 2003). Antanas Andrijauskas also calls the Grand Duchy an empire in his article, where he tries to prove the even more problematic thesis of the existence of a pagan Lithuanian civilisation (Andrijauskas 2006). Jonas Balčius is more cautious in saying essentially the same thing: "The Grand Duchy of Lithuania, at the peak of its might and prosperity, i.e., from around the second half of the fifteenth century, became increasingly similar to an empire, and its capital Vilnius – to a metropole" (Balčius 2005: 89–90).

Romualdas Ozolas (1939–2015), one of the architects of the restoration of the independent Lithuania in 1988–1991 and a prolific writer, had no doubts that the Grand Duchy was indeed an empire: "a pagan empire in the era of militant Christian rampancy was our grand historical triumph, a source of joy and inspiration even today" (Ozolas 2007: 518). Beresnevičius

also recommended searching for inspiration in Lithuania's imperial history, inviting Lithuanians to take the opportunity of Lithuania's joining the political structures of the Western world to "make an empire" in the lands of the former Grand Duchy, in Georgia and even in Central Asia: to become the bridgehead and condottiere vanguard of the eastward expansion of the EU and NATO. Ozolas aligned his points in a different way:

> the Grand Duchy is a gradually degrading great pagan empire which must give us answers to our questions of what must we do, and how we should live, if we want to avoid decline a second time, only this time – for good. The Grand Duchy and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth are a direct prototype of the European Union. We already know how that former European Union ended up, so let's study what occurred, but let's not imitate.
>
> (Ozolas 2007: 516)

Yet on what grounds can we speak about the Grand Duchy as an empire if we can hardly find any information in historical sources (the partial exception being Algirdas' episode discussed earlier) that the rulers of the Grand Duchy and its political elite would have proclaimed their state an empire? Even if Algirdas did name himself an emperor, there is nothing to suggest that contemporary rulers recognised it as one. In terms of the classical hermeneutic idiographic methodology for historical studies, this suffices as a reason to reject the very question of empire. It is thus no surprise that among German historians from the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries, who applied this methodology most consistently, nobody even suggests that the Grand Duchy was an empire.

However, the use of the empire concept in the political discourse or self-representation of a particular polity cannot be the only basis for classifying that political body an empire. Symmetrically, we cannot reject such classification because official speakers of the polity's government do not call it an empire or even vehemently reject such designations by outside observers. A huge admirer of Napoleon I, the dictator of the Central African Republic Jean-Bédel Bokassa declared his country an empire in 1976, crowned himself emperor and spent a sum equal to half his country's yearly state budget for the coronation ceremony. For a few years (until 1979), the Central African Empire existed on the political map of the world. Many countries recognised it as such, firstly France. I recall an image from a news program on television: having flown into Moscow, the emperor Bokassa embraced one of the leaders of the Soviet Union. But was his country actually an empire, and was its leader a "true" emperor?

The military leader of the Haitian slaves Jean-Jacques Dessalines was an emperor for not much longer than Bokassa. In 1804, following Napoleon's example, he also proclaimed himself emperor (but was killed in 1806). Yet at the time no other state even recognised Haiti's independence, much less

the Haitian empire. So were Central Africa and Haiti really empires? If we agree that these are rhetorical questions, then we must say that discursive self-representation (or ceremonial self-representation) of a political body as an empire is not a sufficient condition for this polity to be considered empire. "Soft" imperial claims must be grounded by some "hard" or objective social reality, defined in terms of economic and military power, state structure, policies, position, weight and its role in the international system.

On the other hand, a discursive self-representation as an empire is no necessary feature of an empire. We can find examples where the official state discourse is not imperial (rather, anti-imperialist), however there is wide agreement that it is indeed an empire. I have in mind primarily the Soviet Union that dissolved in 1991. Experts in modern imperial studies almost unanimously consider it as a classic example of an empire, although the Soviet Union perceived itself as the bastion of "the fight against global imperialism" and an ally of "national liberation movements". Nor is it wrong to call the Grand Duchy an empire because its rulers did not take the title of emperor. Otherwise, we should not call the Soviet Union an empire, as its rulers called themselves "General Secretaries", but not emperors. It was an empire that did not proclaim itself as such (rather, it vehemently denied being one), but was perceived as one.

We can have political bodies that both proclaim to be empires and are recognised as empires, but are not empires (e.g. Central Africa). We can also have political bodies that declare themselves as empires but are not recognised as such and are not at all empires (e.g. Haiti). Or, political bodies that deny being empires but are in fact, and are almost universally perceived as, empires (the Soviet Union). Why, then, cannot there be political bodies that are empires despite never proclaiming to be so, nor being acknowledged as such by their contemporaries or later observers?

The methodological problems we face here are in essence similar to those that arise in broader research on the emergence of the Lithuanian state. By consistently applying hermeneutic methodology, we have no right to talk about Lithuania as a state until it starts being called a state in historical sources. However, this word cannot be found in sources from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. By strictly abiding by hermeneutic methodology, we should not ask when did the state of Lithuania appear. The permissible question is when did the kingdom of Lithuania appear. Then we are allowed to debate whether this happened on July 17, 1251, when Pope Innocent IV ordered the Bishop of Chełmno to crown Mindaugas, or on July 6, 1253, or one or two weeks later (the precise date is actually debated), when the coronation ceremony actually took place. Then we should just state that Lithuania ceased being a kingdom after the murder of Mindaugas in 1263, as no Lithuanian ruler was crowned king after him. But then what did Treniota (1263–1264), Vaišvilkas (1264–1267), Švarnas (1267–1269) and Traidenis (1269–1282 [?]) rule over?

We do not know how they titled themselves, so, being proper historians, we would not know how to call that thing they undoubtedly ruled. So the concept of state that was flung out the front door (for being superfluous) with all its problems of definition nonetheless finds its way back in through the back door (see also chapter five and fifteen). In fact, Mindaugas' coronation did not signal the appearance of the Lithuanian state, but only its international recognition in Western Christian international society. In order for the state to be internationally recognised, it must already exist. When it lost that recognition, it did not cease to exist as a state (even one that was "illegitimate" or "pagan"). It is unlikely that Mindaugas ever proclaimed he was founding the Lithuanian state prior to his coronation, or whether he even knew what a state was. But if we can have unproclaimed and unacknowledged states, can we not have unproclaimed and unrecognised empires?

Regardless of whether they do this knowingly or not, all the scholars I discuss who call the ancient Lithuanian polity an empire respond to this question in the affirmative. Although the rulers of the Grand Duchy did not call their country an empire (except for Algirdas), some modern Lithuanian scholars (I will give more names) did in fact say so. What about the retrospective (historiographic) "international recognition" of the Lithuanian empire? Are there any foreign historians who consider the Grand Duchy an empire?

A political-ideological conjuncture affected the historical research on the Grand Duchy's statehood from the very beginning. It was also related to the changes in how empire was rated or quoted on the international public opinion markets. Because of these changes, at times the title "empire" is an asset for its owners, but at others a liability. Conditions of place and culture are also important: in some languages and cultures (e.g. the Anglo-Saxon), the word "empire" more often carries a positive or neutral connotation, while in others (e.g. many Central and East European vernacular languages) it is rather negative. These differences in connotation reflect different historical memories associated with the empire. Usually, these memories come not from the Middle Ages, but are shaped by the experiences during the Modern Ages and by contemporary (twentieth-century) history. They also shaped the attitudes of historians of the Grand Duchy on Lithuania's ancient history.

The first ones to have comprehensively researched the history of the Grand Duchy were Polish historians, who also include those who considered themselves "Polish-speaking Lithuanians". I only managed to find three, albeit very prominent, Polish researchers who use the empire concept when discussing the aspects of its history: Feliks Koneczny, Henryk Łowmiański and Andrzej Nowak. Feliks Koneczny (1862–1949) was a historian and philosopher of history who taught at Stephen Bathory University in Vilnius in the interwar years. In Volume I of *The History of Russia* released during World War I, when discussing the period 1380–1408, he called the Grand Duchy an "unrealised empire of Vilnius" (*niedoszłe carstwo wileńskie*).

According to Koneczny, by starting to title themselves as "tsars", Muscovy's rulers did not claim the legacy of the rulers of Constantinople, and, indirectly, those of Ancient Rome, but the rights of the khans of the Golden Horde. Muscovy was not so much a third Rome as a second Sarai. Vilnius could have become this kind of second Sarai, too, as after Algirdas' death the rulers of the Grand Duchy had some very real opportunities to implement his political program and bring all of Rus' under their control. In that case, they would have become "tsars of Vilnius", and the empire of Vilnius would have been created in place of the empire of Muscovy.

The first such opportunity presented itself to Jogaila. Koneczny provides his explanation why Jogaila signed the Treaty of Dovydiškės in 1380, where he promised Samogitia to the Teutonic Order and not to help the military of his uncle, the Duke of Trakai, Kęstutis. According to Koneczny, Jogaila made this deal to have free hands to act in the East. Jogaila was preparing to be baptised as an Orthodox Christian, which would have made him "the first Orthodox Church overlord after the Caesar of Byzantium, the most powerful Orthodox ruler, a true monarch over petty Rurikid princes" (Koneczny 1917: 407). If Vilnius had become an Orthodox city, then Muscovy would have become a second-rate principality. This would have led to the creation of the "most powerful realm in all of the East, but not the realm of Muscovy, but of *Vilnius*" (Koneczny 1917: 403).[3] In this realm, "half of Lithuania", having avoided the Crusaders' rule, would have been amalgamated into a Ruthenian sea, also becoming "the centre of Rus' and the Church" (Koneczny 1917: 403). The coup by Jogaila's uncle Kęstutis in 1381 disrupted the realisation of this program. When he reclaimed power as grand duke the next year, Jogaila turned East Europe's history toward a different trajectory, negotiating the Krewo Act with Poland.

The second window of opportunity for the Grand Duchy to become the "tsardom (empire) of Vilnius" opened when Vytautas became grand duke of the Grand Duchy (from 1392) and sheltered the "tsar" of the Golden Horde, Tokhtamysh, who had been defeated by Tamerlane. Vytautas found a way of becoming the tsar of all of Rus' without having to convert to Orthodoxy: "only Vytautas devised how he could himself become 'tsar' instead of the khan of Sarai and realise Algirdas' program [. . .] in a roundabout way" (Koneczny 1917: 426). Namely, by establishing his vassal on the throne of the Golden Horde's khan or by taking his place, Vytautas would have become the suzerain of all of Rus'. Vytautas managed to achieve (or, more likely, appeared to have achieved) something similar in the last years of his life. Following the death of his son-in-law, the Grand Prince of Moscow Vasilij I Dmitrijevič, he acted as the protector of his grandson, the Grand Prince of Moscow Vasilij II the Dark for four years (1426–1430), who was not yet of age.

Nevertheless, Koneczny speaks about the Grand Duchy as an empire more in the subjunctive mood, like a possibility that could have been realised had the program of the subjugation of all of Rus' been implemented. In addition, he thinks that in that case, any unifying links with Poland would

have been broken and Lithuanians, even remaining Catholic, would have become lost in the Russian (or Ruthenian) mass, despite the state's centre probably having remained in Lithuania. Thus, had Grand Duchy become an empire, it would have been the empire of Rus' with its capital in Vilnius. In the event of a victory at the Vorskla River,

> the lord of the Tatars, the *tsar of Wilno* would have later taken over Zales'e (Залесье) and ceased being a fief of the Polish crown, as he would have been too powerful for this. The union with Poland would have been broken and thus Catholicism in Lithuania would have faltered. And what would have become of Lithuanians in this kind of empire of Vytautas (*carstwie Witołda*)? An insignificant grain, and Vytautas would in fact be the tsar not of Lithuanians, but of Ruthenians.[4]
>
> (Koneczny 1917: 428)

Henryk Łowmiański (1898–1984), probably the most distinguished Polish expert on the Grand Duchy's history, unambiguously calls the Grand Duchy an empire in *Politics of the Jagiellonians* (*Polytika Jagiellonów*), his synthesis of the history of Poland and the Grand Duchy released in 1999, which spans the period of the Krewo Act (1385) and the Lublin Union (1569).[5] Unlike Koneczny, he used the word *imperium*, not *carstwo* (whose translation into "empire" may be contested), and he does not relate that term's suitability to the final success of Algirdas' (and Vytautas') program of the conquest of all of Rus'. In Łowmiański's view, by the time of Algirdas' death (1377), the Grand Duchy was already an empire without any reservations.

Depicting the situation in Lithuania at this time, Łowmiański wrote: "each Gediminid had the right to receive an appanage princedom (*prawo do zaopatrzenia dzielniczowego*), so the entire Lithuanian empire (*imperium litewskie*) consisted of areas ruled by the members of the ruling house, among which there was no harmony" (Łowmiański 2006 [1999]: 29). Some of these regions (the land of Kyiv) acknowledged the supremacy not just of Lithuanians, but of Tatars as well, others (Polatsk) were inclined to side with Livonia against the central government, while Briansk, Chernihiv and Smolensk were in Muscovy's sphere of influence. "Strong centrifugal trends in the empire of Lithuania" were in action because it was created "by mechanically joining the Ruthenian provinces with the Lithuanian centre" (Łowmiański 2006 [1999]: 38).

In his opinion, one of the causes for the making of the Krewo Act was the Lithuanian nobility's marked interest in finding an external prop to overcome these "centrifugal trends". They threatened its "basics of material existence" (Łowmiański 2006 [1999]: 38), because an important source of income of the Lithuanian nobility was still war booty and tributes from the Ruthenian provinces. In the view of the Polish historian, after the Krewo Act, the Grand Duchy ceased to exist as a state in the formal legal sense for several years – until the Astrava agreement in 1392. It provided a final

settlement of the violent power struggles between the two branches of the Gediminid House that had ravaged the Grand Duchy for more than ten years, breaking out after Jogaila secretly signed the Treaty of Dovydiškės with the Teutonic Knights mentioned above. When Jogaila, who was crowned King of Poland, accepted the oaths of allegiance of his relatives, the appanage princes, in 1386–1388, "the huge Gediminid empire was dissolved into composite parts which became provinces or fiefs of the Kingdom of Poland. The Polish state, without even drawing a sword, expanded into the East as far as Briansk" (Łowmiański 2006 [1999]: 38).

This kind of claim prompts the question: "did Lithuanians create an empire just so they could let it go, to Poland's advantage?" (Łowmiański 2006 [1999]: 60). In searching for an answer to this question, the Łowmiański argues that

> Lithuanians surrendered the Lithuanian empire, but instead they joined the ruling class of the greater Polish and Lithuanian state. They allowed the Poles to participate in expansion in the East, but with the assistance of the Lithuanian monarch they attained new positions in Poland.
>
> (Łowmiański 2006 [1999]: 60)

To be truthful, that influence was not as great as the Lithuanian nobility may have expected. Łowmiański rather convincingly argues that by agreeing with Jogaila's marriage to Jadwiga, the Gediminids and influential Lithuanian nobles did proceed from their experiences in Rus' that new lands could be subjugated not only by military force, but also by successful dynastic marriages. Most probably, they hoped that the results of Jogaila's marriage to Jadwiga would be no worse than that of his father's (to the successor of the Principality of Vitsebsk, Princess Maria) or of many other Lithuanian dukes marriages' (e.g. Liubartas). The failure of these hopes to come true (or their incomplete realisation) is what undermined their support for Jogaila's rival and cousin Vytautas, who restored the Grand Duchy's statehood.

Łowmiański does not discuss the question that immediately poses itself if we were to agree with his opinion that after the Krewo Act, the Grand Duchy, even briefly, had ceased to exist: did Poland become an empire after the Grand Duchy was incorporated into Poland? This is a question that is discussed in Polish historiography, however more in terms of the Lublin Union in 1569, which created the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Qualification of the Commonwealth as an empire proved to be difficult for Polish historians in the nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries, because they wrote the history of Poland as the history of a nation whose state had been partitioned by neighbouring states, of which two (Austria and Russia), and later all three (Prussia-Germany, after 1871) proudly called themselves empires. So framing the Commonwealth as an empire would have demeaned that moral advantage that was afforded by their status of victim of their neighbours' imperialism. That is why Polish historians traditionally

underline the federal democratic features of the Commonwealth, which are particularly distinctive compared to the absolutist empires that surrounded it by the time of the infamous partitions in 1772–1795.

By acknowledging the union with Lithuania as the most important event in Poland's medieval history, which opened the way for its geopolitical expansion into the East, Polish historians do not consider it an expression of Polish imperialism. The union was formed not on the grounds of attack but on defence, as neither Poland nor Lithuania were capable of resisting the Teutonic Order alone. Lithuania needed the union more than Poland, because the Grand Duchy was the outlaw of the Christian world at the time. In the West, Poland sought only to reclaim the lands that had been conquered by the Order. After it had partially achieved this goal following its victory in the Thirteen Years' War (1454–1466), it did not engage in any more offensive wars. Polish historians stress the peaceful nature of Poland's post-union expansion into the East and its defensive behaviour, which they contrast to Muscovy's aggressive policies. As the Poles did not conquer the Grand Duchy, but rather civilised and defended it, there cannot be any talk of Polish imperialism.

Oscar Halecki (1891–1973) developed this idea classically. He claimed that empires were great powers surrounding Poland and Lithuania, namely, the Habsburg, Ottoman and Muscovite monarchies, while the joint Polish–Lithuanian state embodied a federal political idea quite opposite to an empire (Halecki 1919–1920; 1937; 1980 [1952]; 1952). Halecki considered Jogaila as its progenitor, whose dynasty had the honour of being a pioneer of a political order that was new and ahead of its time. Neither Lithuania nor Poland can be considered an empire precisely because the Jagiellons had inadvertently promoted the new, advanced principles of a political commonwealth of many nations across wide territories.

Like other rulers of those times, Jogaila and his descendants pursued dynastic politics: they sought to provide their sons with thrones, and to marry off their daughters to "promising" princes (ones who had a chance to inherit the throne). As a side effect of this kind of dynastic politics, a new inter-state political system emerged, including the Grand Duchy and Poland, but also Bohemia and Hungary. The Jagiellonian states, maintaining complete independence in domestic affairs, coordinated their foreign policies, provided one another with military assistance and imbued the entire region with independent political, and potentially cultural, significance in terms of the development of international politics and European civilisation at the time. The federal system of the Jagiellons

> was much more than a union of Poland and Lithuania under the dynasty founded by Jogaila – in Poland called Jagiełło – a union which for two more centuries survived the extinction of that royal family in 1572. From the outset it included all Ruthenian lands, what now is called White Russia and the Ukraine and such a body politic extending

> from the Baltic to the Black Sea attracted smaller neighboring territories because of the possibilities of free, autonomous development guaranteed by its structure. On the Baltic shore the union was gradually enlarged through the inclusion of the German colonial states in Prussia and Livonia either directly or in the form of fiefs. In the Black Sea region, the Danubian principalities, particularly Moldavia, and temporarily Crimea also, were in the Union's sphere of influence. And at the height of the power of the Jagellonians, members of that dynasty were kings of Bohemia and of Hungary. The whole of East Central Europe, as far as it was free from the German, Ottoman, and Muscovite empires, was thus united in a political system which protected that freedom.
>
> (Halecki 1980 [1952]: 135)

As Halecki claims, the Jagiellonian federal system provided the political conditions for a more harmonious and creative diffusion of Western culture in East and Central Europe. Up until the formation of the Jagiellonian political system, that diffusion took place as a side effect of the German *Drang nach Osten*. The Jagiellons' competitors, the Habsburgs, whom Halecki calls an imperialist dynasty (unlike the Jagiellons), tried to continue that diffusion using the same methods (Halecki 1980 [1952]: 231). The Jagiellonians provided political conditions for "the progress and spread of Western culture in East Central Europe, not through German influence, now in decline, but through direct cooperation with the Latin world" (Halecki 1980 [1952]: 136), and also for the unique contribution of the lands united under their control to Western culture.

The implementation of the "Jagiellonian idea" on a regional scale ended with the catastrophe of Mohács in 1526. The death of Louis II Jagiellon, the childless King of Bohemia and Hungary, enabled the Habsburgs to ascend to the thrones of these Central European states. However, the realisation of the Jagiellonian idea continued, only within a narrower framework, spanning now only Lithuania and Poland. Halecki considers the Lublin Union of 1569 between Lithuania and Poland and the associated governmental reforms in Poland and especially Lithuania merely as stages in the centuries-old process of maturing and implementing federalism as the Jagiellonian political idea that was accomplished after the Jagiellon dynasty itself had already died out.

The question of the character of the political order within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth is rather actively debated in contemporary research as well. American historian John LeDonne calls the Commonwealth an empire in *The Grand Strategy of the Russian Empire, 1650–1831* (LeDonne 2004) which attracted rather lively international interest. LeDonne calls the Commonwealth the "Polish empire":

> the term *Polish empire* is seldom used and regrettably so. It is assumed that there was no Polish Empire because Poland was a republic and

> 'commonwealth'. A republic is a form of internal political organization, an empire a form of 'international' organization. There is no connection between the two terms. Russia and Turkey were autocracies and had empires; so had the British constitutional monarchy and the French republic. An empire results from the imposition by a given ethnicity of its rule over other ethnicities. Poland systematically polonized the Lithuanians, Bielorussians, and the Ukrainians. I do not see why they did not create an empire in the process. Its eastern marches refer to Lithuania, Bielorussia, and the Right-Bank Ukraine.
>
> (LeDonne 2004: 237)

Hans Jürgen Bömelburg and Robert J. W. Evans also invite us to discuss the imperial features of the Commonwealth, as they see similarities in structure between the Commonwealth and the Holy Roman Empire (Bömelburg 2007; Evans 2001: 28–29, 34). Contemporary Polish historian Andrzej Nowak criticises LeDonne's approach, failing to find some specific distinguishing features of an empire in the history of the Commonwealth (Nowak 2007: 67; Nowak and Szporluk 2007). However, he has no doubts that the Grand Duchy was an empire. Discussing the origins of the Russian empire, Nowak observes that

> most contemporary scholars date the beginning of that empire to the 1470s, when Moscow managed to gain control over and absorbed the enormous, multi-ethnic territories of the merchant republic of Novgorod. . . . Yet it is worth pointing out, that over the previous century it was not Moscow, but quite a different political centre, that has created a magnificent imperial structure in Eastern Europe. It was neither Poland, but Lithuania in fact.
>
> (Nowak 2008: 40)

Recent and current discussions of the imperial features of the Commonwealth that in one or another way focus on the issue of Polish and Ukrainian relations are not directly relevant to the central issue of this book: the imperial features of the Grand Duchy before the Lublin Union. The army of the Grand Duchy commanded by Jonušas Radvila (Janusz Radziwiłł) participated in suppressing Bohdan Khmelnycky's Ukrainian Cossack Uprising. Yet as of the Lublin Union (1569), no lands of present-day Ukraine belonged to the Grand Duchy, as from 1569 they became a part of the Kingdom of Poland. I refer to these discussions only because the description of the Commonwealth as a non-imperial polity prevailing in Polish historiography also affects how Polish historians perceive the history of the Grand Duchy.

Halecki's concept remains very influential in Polish historiography, and this is the reason why Polish historians generally avoid describing the Grand

Duchy as an empire. If the Grand Duchy had been an empire, Halecki's concept faces a difficult question: what happened to that empire after the union? Perhaps, after Lublin (when Ukraine was incorporated), Poland took over or inherited the empire from the Grand Duchy? The idea that after 1385 the Grand Duchy was incorporated into Poland does not avoid this difficulty either. If before 1385 the Grand Duchy had been an empire after all, then whence did it disappear once the Grand Duchy was "incorporated"? How could Poland "incorporate" an empire without itself becoming one? It appears that these difficult, perhaps even "dangerous," questions (for so many different interpretations of the union of Poland and Lithuania in Polish historiography) were the main reason why the intellectually very strong Polish historiography on the Grand Duchy never really made a more in-depth analysis of the internal structure of the Grand Duchy as a state. Instead, it adhered to a legalistic interpretation of the union treaties between Lithuania and Poland.

Although Russian historiography has thoroughly analysed the internal structure of the Grand Duchy (see primarily Ljubavskij 1892), it too failed to see imperial characteristics in the Grand Duchy, only for completely different reasons. I shall mention them here, continuing the discussion in my own analysis of the territorial political structure of the Grand Duchy (see chapters twelve and thirteen). Russian historians only started examining the history of the Grand Duchy in depth after the suppression of the uprising of 1863–1864 in Poland and Lithuania. The first works on this subject were a kind of "state commission". The order was to prove that the Russian Empire had more rights to the lands of the Grand Duchy than did Poland. That "commission" was executed by Mixail Kojalovič (2006 [1864]), Ivan Beljaev (1867; 1872), Pavel Brjancev (1889) and by the work of other Russian historians.[6]

These historians grounded Russia's rights to the former lands of the Grand Duchy on the thesis that the Grand Duchy was in fact a Western Russian state. In terms of this thesis, the Grand Duchy's expansion into the east and south was part of the unification process of Russian lands, in which West Russia and East Russia competed for priority over who would unite them, much like Austria and Prussia went head-to-head over who would be first to unite the Germans in the nineteenth century. As Russians cannot be imperialists over other Russians, then until the end of the fourteenth century there could not be any talk of imperialism in the Grand Duchy either. In this regard, speaking about the Grand Duchy as an empire would make about as much sense as calling the policy of the Capetians or Valois to bring Bretagne, Provence or Burgundy under their control the imperialism of Île-de-France (which was where the domain lands of the French kings were). This was not the imperialism of Île-de-France, but the unification of France, regardless of how great the ethno-cultural differences might have been between different lands in the country today known as France.

That is why Russian historians wrote about the peaceful expansion of the Grand Duchy into the eastern Slavic lands, expressing "the rather starry-eyed notion that Lithuanian expansion was almost thrust upon the grand duke by Ruthenian cities which preferred incorporation into the Grand Duchy to independence" (Rowell 1994: 93). According to Russian historiography, if imperialism existed in the times of the Grand Duchy, then it was not Lithuanian but Polish imperialism, starting its destructive work with the Polish-Lithuanian union. The Catholic baptism of the pagan part of the Grand Duchy in the wake of the Krewo Act brought religious and national oppression upon the Orthodox population of the Grand Duchy. The culmination of Polish imperialism was the early seventeenth century, when, making the most of the turmoil in Russia, Poland sought its final subjugation. The opera by Mixail Glinka *Ivan Susanin (A Life for the Tsar)*, depicting an episode from those times, is even today probably the most often performed work during Russian state celebrations, while "October Revolution" Day was replaced in the calendar of Russian state celebrations by the commemoration of Moscow's "liberation" from the Poles and Lithuanians in November, 1612. However, the narrative of the Grand Duchy as Western Russia is unable to provide a compelling account for how the Grand Duchy, being a "Russian" state, could be peacefully subordinated by Poland.

Later, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Russian historians turned their attention towards the differences in government in the "Western" (the Grand Duchy) and "Eastern" (Moscow) Russian states. The state of Moscow formed as a centralised absolute monarchy. Comparing it to the Grand Duchy, Russian historians described the early Lithuanian state as a federation and parliamentary estate monarchy (see also chapter twelve ahead). Russian historians had a rather ambivalent attitude towards these features of the Grand Duchy. On the one hand, the composite structure of the state and the rulers' dependence on the representative estate institutions appeared as fateful shortcomings in the Grand Duchy's structure, explaining why it was nonviable and "doomed by history", unlike the strong and vital state of Muscovy.

On the other hand, many Russian historians from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were not only Great Russian chauvinists in terms of their political views, but liberals representing the ideological stream whose political expression was the "constitutional democrats" (Kadet) party. It stood for the transformation of the absolute monarchy into a constitutional monarchy and the development of local self-government. In the ideological battle against the conservative monarchists who defended the "traditional" absolute monarchy as the only form of rule suitable for Russia, historians with Kadet political views searched for alternative political traditions in Russian history other than those destroyed or just suppressed by Muscovy's triumph. Two cases of these alternative, non-autocratic traditions were the medieval Russian city-republics of Novgorod and Pskov. Another and even

more relevant case of the non-autocratic tradition was the Grand Duchy. They considered the history of the Grand Duchy as definitive proof that neither parliamentarism nor constitutional monarchism, nor federalism were actually foreign to Russian political culture. The works of Matvej Kuzmič Ljubavskij (1892; 1915 [1910]) et al. represent this approach in the most impressive way, focusing on the history of the diet of the Grand Duchy and its territorial structure. Ljubavskij emphasises the Russian character of the Grand Duchy, highlights the significance of Kievan Rus' heritage in its history and, nonetheless, ultimately asserts the nonviability of the Grand Duchy as a state.

Similar motives lay behind Russian historians' short-lived interest in the history of the Grand Duchy during Boris Yeltsin's decade in power (Byčkova 1996; Dvorničenko 1993; Dumin 1991; Krom 1995, etc.). Whereas "tsarist" Grand Duchy's historians were more interested in highlighting the non-viability of the Grand Duchy, compared to the "strong and healthy" state of Muscovy, in some contemporary Russian historians' works we can spot a certain regret over losing the alternative perspective of historical development of Russia's statehood. This alternative would have stopped Russia from growing so distant from European civilisation, which is what happened when Muscovy won the role of unifier of the Eastern Slavic lands. As Karacuba and Kurukin write,

> in the early 1380s, the prospect of uniting the two 'sides' of the once united Rus' emerged – North East Muscovy and the South West, which was part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. How would this unification have turned out? It probably would have consolidated Rus' within half a century and liberated it from dependence on the Horde. But perhaps, it could have also strengthened representation of the estates, preserved regional characteristics, ensured access to the Baltic Sea much sooner than Peter I, and promoted the earlier inclusion of West European elements into everyday use and culture.
>
> (Karacuba and Kurukin 2005: 68)

Nevertheless, the assumption about the Ruthenian or Russian nature of the Grand Duchy remains. The issue of the Grand Duchy as an empire is therefore left beyond the horizon of the Russian perspective.

Some exceptions are some recent historical writings aimed at the broader public and not professional historians. Viktor Potapov includes the Grand Duchy on his list of "great empires of the world" Potapov 2008). Grigorij Ozerov in his "documentary narrative about the epoch of Vytautas the Great" (published in Lithuanian, but touting Great Russian chauvinism), laments that in the late fourteenth century, Lithuania "did not have far to go until it reached Muscovy – which occupied but a small area of land – only around seventy *versts*.[7] Lithuania was akin to a mouse that had swallowed an enormous elephant" (Ozerovas 2004: 34). That "mouse" was an

"unreasonably inflated state formation, which could be called a medieval empire without any exaggeration" (Ozerovas 2004: 35). To explain why Lithuania did not accept Orthodoxy, Ozerov searches for hidden traps laid by the Roman curia:

> The enormous Lithuanian empire, created by force by subjugating Russian lands, essentially remained the only pagan country in Europe. At the same time, it was an excellent bridgehead for the occupation of Rus'. The mouths of popes must have watered when looking at a map of the medieval European continent: Lithuania was so gigantic – from the Baltic to the Black seas.
>
> (Ozerovas 2004: 76)

The early Lithuanian state is called an empire already in the title of Stephen C. Rowell's 1994 book *Lithuania Ascending: A Pagan Empire within East-Central Europe, 1295–1345* (Rowell 1994; translated into Lithuanian in 2001). William Urban also finds it obvious that the Grand Duchy of Gediminas' times would have been an empire (Urban 2005 [1989]: 91, 197, 200). I am tempted to say that historians from the English-speaking cultural milieu have the least doubts as to the imperial character of the Grand Duchy. That is so maybe because the word "empire" harbours the least negative connotations in the English language, and because the history of English-speaking countries is least entwined with the history of Lithuania, except for serving as the most popular destination for emigration since the late nineteenth century. For this reason, these historians, as the least biased observers, are probably the best arbitrators in the case of the Grand Duchy as an empire.

What keeps Lithuanians themselves from seeing that which is rather obvious to observers from cultures that do not have "existential contact" with Lithuania's history?[8]

This is how Bučys responds to this question:

> forced into despair for centuries by Lithuanian poets' tales about the savagery and injustice of foreign oppressors (bearded 'fish-eating' Vikings, German Teutonic knights, Polish landlords, Russian officials, etc.), we created for ourselves and continue to foster a national martyr complex. Of course, on the other hand, perhaps sometimes it is useful to appear in the international (political and cultural) arena with the halo of a blessed angel above our heads. But why do we continue to pretend in our own backyard?
>
> (Bučys 2008: 166)

However, that is not the whole truth. Memories of "Lithuania from the Baltic to the Black seas" and fantasies of Vytautas on horseback, staring out

at the expanses of the Black Sea (Vytautas himself most probably never even reached the shores of the Black Sea) were very popular in prewar Lithuanian and in the historical consciousness of post-war émigrés.

It suffices to recall the sculpture of Vytautas the Great created by Vincas Grybas and erected in the Panemunė Park in Kaunas in 1932, a copy of which now stands on the main pedestrian avenue (Freedom Avenue) in the city (see Figure 2.1; Mickūnaitė 2008: 11–17). "Empire of Vytautas the Great" is what we read on a map depicting Lithuania's borders at the end of Vytautas' reign in the popular book about grand duke Vytautas by well-known historian Simas Sužiedėlis (1903–1985), published during the authoritarian rule (1926–1940) of Antanas Smetona in Lithuania (Sužiedėlis 1935: 147).

However in scholarly, "serious" prewar Lithuanian historiography, the question of the Grand Duchy's imperial character was never discussed. An important exception is the brief discussion of the ancient Lithuanian polity in the monumental (five volumes) yet incomplete *History of European*

Figure 2.1 Monument to Vytautas Magnus in Kaunas, Lithuania. Photograph by the author.

Culture (in Lithuanian) by famous Russian philosopher and historian Leonas Karsavinas (1882–1952), who since 1928 taught at Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas. In this discussion, he describes the rise of the Grand Duchy in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries as a case of the "primitive elemental imperialism" of the barbarian nations on the periphery of European civilizaton (Karsavinas 1998 [1936]: 64–76). However, although Karsavinas was highly esteemed in interwar Lithuania (not least because of his feat of learning Lithuanian in just two years), his area of teaching was universal history with no noticeable impact on the work of historians researching Lithuanian history.

The status of a small state, surrounded by powerful, predatory neighbours, did not encourage the memory of Lithuania as a country that once did to its neighbours what it was now trying to avoid for itself – occupation and annexation. Instead, Lithuanian public opinion-makers wrote much about the imperialist aspirations of their neighbour Poland. Of course, politicians, diplomats and jurists of prewar Lithuania invoked the Grand Duchy's legacy on the proper occasions. In speeches made during the anniversary year marking Vytautas' death (1930), Antanas Smetona did not forget to mention his reign across "the empire of Lithuania, from the Baltic to the Black seas" (Smetona 1935: 158).[9] However, Smetona's reminiscences on Vytautas' empire were directed more toward "fostering national spirit" among the youth than toward promoting a particular foreign policy program (as is the case in contemporary Lithuania). Tellingly, there are no more references to the imperial past of Lithuania in the speeches of Smetona after 1937, when Hitler's Germany started to resurrect "primordial imperialism" practically (Norkus 2014: 420).

In the very Act of Independence of February 16, 1918, it is not so much the restoration of the Lithuanian state that is given most significance, as the termination of state links that it had formed with other nations (to recall, at its terminal demise in 1795, the Grand Duchy was no longer an independent state). In order to provide a convincing (in the eyes of the international community) basis for the right of a new state to exist independently, the fact of the Grand Duchy's existence was not as important as the principle of national self-determination enshrined in international law by Woodrow Wilson in 1918, which is incompatible with imperialism or imperial ideology. That is why interwar Lithuania's historians were more inclined to depict Lithuania as a victim of history, eternally defending itself from the aggression of its militant neighbours, than to recall its own imperialist record.

Historiography from the Soviet period – be it Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian, or Soviet Lithuanian – had to embrace the Marxist-Leninist theory of imperialism, which reduced imperialism to a phenomenon specific to capitalist societies. Vladimir Lenin outlined this theory in his *Imperialism: the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (Lenin 2008 (1917). The title both expresses the main idea of the Marxist-Leninist concept of imperialism, and

at the same time frankly discloses the limitations of the Marxist-Leninist approach. Imperialism is a necessary phase in the development of capitalism, which comes when:

(1) Monopolies take control of national markets due to a concentration of capital;
(2) Bank capital merges with industrial capital, and the dominant capitalist class group becomes a financial oligarchy ("financial capital");
(3) Capital export takes on special significance (compared to export of goods);
(4) International capitalist monopolies appear which economically divide the world among themselves; and
(5) The territorial division of the world between the most powerful states in the world comes to an end: there are no more "free" territories for expansion.

For Lenin, empires were capitalist great powers that had colonies and "spheres of influence" – such as Great Britain and France of the early twentieth century.

In his view, imperialism was a feature that arose from the nature of a state's socio-economic system and position in the global international relations system. The imperialist character of a state did not depend on how its government defined the goals of foreign policy, or how the dominant ideological discourse justified these goals. In this regard, the Marxist-Leninist approach is opposite to the hermeneutic approach, blaming traditional historiography for limiting itself to the ideological images and illusions that historical actors nurtured about themselves. A large and powerful capitalist country in whose economy monopolies and financial capital dominate, and which exports capital to other countries and competes with other great powers, cannot carry out non-imperialist policy. That means that an empire can be a country whose rulers and ideologues (or some of them) heatedly and perhaps sincerely denied its imperial nature, representing that policy as "development assistance", "war on terror", "spreading civilisation" or "war on poverty".

In light of this concept of imperialism, research on the empires of Antiquity or the Middle Ages and imperialism must have appeared anachronistic and methodologically flawed, as "imperialism", according to the Marxist-Leninist approach, is a certain epoch or stage in world history. That is why speaking about pre-capitalist imperialism to a Marxist-Leninist is as suspicious an idea as capitalism in Ancient Rome or Ancient Greece.

Of course, not even Marxist-Leninists would deny that the Roman Empire was an empire and that its policies were imperialistic. However, they would place more importance on the fact that the researcher analysing empires and imperialism beyond the limits of a capitalist formation would risk "overlooking" the different "class essence" of the political

or "superstructure" phenomena that appear similar on the exterior. Such neglect of the differences in the socio-economic "essence" or "content" opens the door for the "non-historic" application of concepts suitable only in the capitalist context onto the feudal or slaveholder past. This was what Marxist-Leninists disparaged. Imperialism, to a Marxist-Leninist, is a phenomenon related to the global expansion of capitalism, during which the most developed capitalist countries resolve their internal problems by subjugating a socio-economically backward periphery. After they have completed the territorial division of the world, due to their own unbalanced development they cannot avoid waging war on one another, seeking a re-division of the world, so that the territorial division of the world into spheres of influence would correspond to the changed economic and military balance of power.

It is a paradox, but the conclusions on the statehood of the Grand Duchy reached by both consistent hermeneutic historicism and Marxist-Leninist futurism converge: it is illogical and anachronistic to call the Grand Duchy an empire. The joint impact of these two immensely influential approaches explains why no historian in the time of the Grand Duchy itself, in the interwar Republic of Lithuania, or in the postwar Soviet Union raised the question of the imperial character of the Grand Duchy. Some historians stopped short of asking this question due to their loyalty to the classical paradigm of history as a science – historicism, which demands staying close to the concepts found in the sources themselves. Others were afraid of trespassing beyond the canonical texts of Marxism-Leninism. There were also many cases where both types of obstacles applied.

During the Soviet years, a sense of political caution also induced Lithuanian historians to maintain their silence about the imperial features of the Grand Duchy. If Soviet-era history textbooks would have said that Gediminas, Algirdas and Vytautas were imperialists, that would have further restricted the already very narrow opportunities to revel in the Grand Duchy's legacy which existed then (Putinaitė 2007). Since the interwar period, the names of the ancient Lithuanian dukes have remained as the most popular choice among young parents looking for names for their male offspring. A Lithuanian Communist Party member who would have decided to name his son "Vytautas" or "Algirdas" would have demonstrated politically incorrect behaviour, had there been obliging resolutions of the party's Central Committee to denounce the ancient Lithuanian dukes bearing these names as "imperialists".

So what most impedes Lithuanians from thinking of the Grand Duchy as an empire (see Gerasimov et al. 2005: 53) are the habits of thinking acquired in Soviet times (when it was risky or dangerous to even think about such things). However, the Marxist-Leninist concept of imperialism that has stuck in the minds of many Lithuanians is just one of many sociological concepts of empires and imperialism (see Mackenzie 2016). From the viewpoint of many of them, it is rather obvious that the GDL was an empire. Contemporary

historians, anthropologists and historical sociologists, free from the hermeneutical scruples of historicist historiography, refer to political systems that have no direct or indirect ties with the Roman Empire and its legacy as empires. This list of empires includes the ancient Akkadian, Assyrian, Maurya, the Persian and Gupta great powers, the Inca and Aztec states in pre-Columbian America, the Moghul and Vijayanagara states in India, the states of Genghis Khan, his offspring (Genghisid) and of Timur established in Central Asia, not to mention China from the times of the Qin dynasty (221 to 206 BC) (see Mackenzie 2016). This helps to overcome the Eurocentrism that is latent in the hermeneutic methodology of traditional historiography.

An analytic overview of the uses of empire and imperialism in contemporary comparative imperial studies and theories of international relations follows in the next part of the book. Such an overview is necessary to answer the question of whether the Grand Duchy was an empire (and if so, what kind of empire?) in the up-to-date way that complies with the state of the art of contemporary social scientific research.

Notes

1 "Indeed, we usually consider states with the concentrated rule of the monarch or another central power to be empires, who manage to impose upon their subjects a particular language, religion and even way of life. These features are not very characteristic of the Lithuania of Gediminas or Algirdas. Quite the opposite, the Gediminids who took the ducal thrones of annexed lands usually themselves converted to Orthodoxy or adopted the language of that land" (Bumblauskas 2005: 106). I will address these (and other) doubts in chapter thirteen.
2 Unless the author inserted another meaning into the phrase "imperial policies", one known only to her.
3 Italics in the original.
4 In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, it referred to North East Rus' territories located between the Upper Volga and Oka rivers. They were called "Zales'e" ("Behind the forest") because their centres were separated from the other Rus' lands by a strip of deep forests.
5 In the opinion of the book's publisher Krzystof Pietkiewicz, it was written in 1942–1948 and was edited in the middle of the following decade (see Łowmiański 2006 [1999]: VIII). The author presented a series of lectures based on this material at the University of Poznan, but never published the text until his death.
6 For an overview of Russian historiography on the GDL, see Filjuškin 2004; 2008.
7 *Verst* – traditional Russian unit of distance, equal to around 1.067 km.
8 Here I am focusing on broad or popular historical culture in Lithuania. In chapter thirteen I will discuss what hindered scholarly historiography from perceiving the imperial features of the GDL.
9 See also Smetona 1935: 159, 161, 163, 167, 297, 329. The most probable source of inspiration for Smetona was Pakštas (1929). One of the leading ideologists of the ruling Nationalist (*Tautininkai*) party, Vytautas Alantas (1902–1990), the editor of the semi-official Lithuanian newspaper *Lietuvos aidas* in 1934–1939, elaborated on the "imperiological" digressions of Smetona in a collection of essays published just on the eve of the Soviet occupation (Alantas 1940). For discussion in more detail of the ideas of Smetona and Alantas, see Norkus 2014.

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Part 2

Empire and imperialism

Methodological strategies

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3 On the controversies over concepts and the ways to solve them

The overview of the spread of the idea of empire in Western culture showed that the most various political bodies proclaimed themselves to be "empires" or were perceived as empires by researchers. The range of the overview starts from the Anglo-Saxon state of the King of Wessex Athelstan in the tenth century, which, together with his vassal lands, covered all or almost all of the island of Great Britain, and ends with the conglomerate of territories under the authority of Charles V in the sixteenth century. His empire included the newly-conquered Aztec and Incan Empires in America. Conquistadors and their contemporaries called the Aztec and Incan polities "empires", even though the rulers of these countries had no knowledge of the Roman Empire, nor compared themselves to it (Pagden 1995).

Once political bodies beyond the boundaries of Western civilisation (or its "cultural sphere"; *Kulturkreis* in German) started being called empires, the number and variety of empires increased even further. Rulers of some political bodies beyond these borders translated their own "national" titles as "emperors", insisting on this translation as a matter of diplomatic protocol. In this way, the Negusa Nagast in Ethiopia and the Mikado in Japan became "emperors". One of the most well-known political scientists of the twentieth century, Maurice Duverger, edited *The Concept of Empire* (*Le concept d'empire*) (Duverger 1980) with the collaboration of experts on the history of particular empires, and produced a list of empires that includes the empires of Sargon (reigned ca. 2330–2280 BC) and of Akkad; the Assyrian and Achaemenid Empires; the empire of Alexander the Macedonian, of the Seleucids, the Ptolemies, the Romans and Carolingians; the Holy Roman Empire, the "Arabian Muslim" and Ottoman Empires; the empires of Charles V and Napoleon I; the Brazilian, Austro-Hungarian, British and Russian Empires (along with the continuation of the latter in the form of the Soviet Union); the Mongolian empires, and the empires of ancient India, China, South-East Asia, and pre-colonial Africa, of which Ethiopia is distinguished and discussed separately. Samuel Finer, in his monumental *The History of Government from the Earliest Times* (Finer 1997), starts the history of empires from the Neo-Assyrian Empire (745–612 BC), which

he considers the "inventor" of specifically imperial ruling techniques (such as the mass deportation of populations) (Finer 1997).[1]

Contemporary Russian author Viktor Potapov, in *Great Empires of the World* (Potapov 2008), aimed at a wide audience, adds the following empires to the list already furnished by Duverger: the Babylonian and Egyptian Empires, the Second Athenian Sea League, the Parthian, Byzantine, and Merovingian Empires, the empire of William the Conqueror, the Plantagenet and of Kyiv's Rurikid, the Aztec, Incan, and Mayan Empires, the Holy Roman Empire, the empire of Saladin and of Angkor (Cambodia), the Ghaznavid and Capetian Empires, the empires of Timur and Moscow's Rurikid, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the Bourbon Empire, Great Moghul, and the Spanish, Japanese and American Empires.

According to Potapov, dynastic and political regime changes make it difficult to count empires:

> If we consider Vladimir Monomakh's Rus' the first empire, the period of rule of the Rurikid's as the second, 300 years of the Romanov dynasty the third, then the USSR can be considered the fourth empire. All we must do is wait for Russia 'to awaken' and the age of the fifth empire will commence.
>
> (Potapov 2008: 637)

Here it is important not so much to hope that the expectations of Potapov and others like him will never come to pass, as to note that he does not even attempt to explicitly formulate his definition of an empire. Just what do the contemporary U.S. and the political body that the ruler of Akkad, Sargon, created in Mesopotamia more than four thousand years ago have in common? Even if we limit ourselves to the question of what Potapov's four mentioned Eastern Slavic empires have in common, a simple answer would not be forthcoming.

However, the answer to this question is of vital importance in analysing my topic. Obviously, the answer to the question of whether the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was an empire critically depends on how the concept of empire is defined. Due to the special significance of this issue, before starting to classify, analyse or systematise the definitions of empire found in literature, I would suggest looking deeper at the logic and methodology of the formation of social science concepts. Here we might hope not only to find the deepest sources of the disagreements over definitions of empire, but also the key for how to resolve them in a constructive way.

The situation a scholar of empire faces is not unique. What is art? What is religion? What is science? What is democracy? What is positivism? What is a state? What is feudalism? What is capitalism? These are questions that all scholars must examine anew, if they want their personal contributions to enrich philosophy, political science, history or another social science or field

of humanities. Walter Bryce Gallie has diagnostically described this problem in this way: unlike the natural sciences, the main concepts in social science and the humanities are essentially contested (Gallie 1955–1956).

> The term essentially contested concepts gives a name to a problematic situation that many people recognize: that in certain kinds of talk there is a variety of meanings employed for key terms in an argument, and there is a feeling that dogmatism ('My answer is right and all others are wrong'), skepticism ('All answers are equally true [or false]; everyone has a right to his own truth'), and eclecticism ('Each meaning gives a partial view so the more meanings the better') are none of them appropriate attitudes towards that variety of meanings.
>
> (Garver 1978: 168)

The concepts of empire and imperialism are just two further examples from the long list of essentially contested concepts.

In this regard, the situation of a social science or humanities scholar is very different than that of a natural sciences researcher (not to mention the eternally happy mathematicians). A chemist does not need to query how other chemists define the concepts of "oxygen", "sulphuric acid" or "lysergic acid diethylamide" and has no need to start a dissertation with the clarification of proper definitions. Controversies over concepts in the natural sciences arise perhaps only amid times of scientific revolutions, when the very view of nature changes.

As my book is not a philosophical treatise, it will suffice to point to a few distinctive features of the social and cultural reality which produces the disagreements over concepts. First, concepts are a part of the actual social and cultural reality, as it is made up of people who behave and think practically and theoretically, sharing stocks of knowledge that consist of specific concepts and statements. This is not the case with natural phenomena – meanings and values are not a part of their "fabric". As a common stock of knowledge, concepts and beliefs, culture is shared by members of a particular human group.[2] Therefore, a concept that sits well in the context of one culture may inadequately describe the realities of another culture (Sartori 1970). Historians know this difficulty well, disparagingly calling an "anachronism" the description of ancient social life using later or contemporary vocabulary.

On the other hand, only a fraction of them believe that phenomena belonging to a certain cultural or social context must be described using only that culture's concepts. What would European medieval history research be like without the concept of feudalism? Yet we do not encounter this concept in primary historical sources from the Middle Ages. Cultural anthropologists call such concepts (like feudalism) "etic", as opposed to "emic" (see e.g. Goodenough 1970: 104–119; Harris 1980 [1979]: 29–45). Emic concepts

are concepts used by members of culture or society (the "insiders"). Etic concepts are the researcher's constructs brought from outside. They are not a part of the vocabulary of the actual human actors whose social reality they describe. Different etic concepts can be used to describe the same emic social reality, while different scholars may define differently a particular etic concept. Decades pass, yet controversies over what in fact are feudalism, capitalism, democracy, etc. continue.

The cases of empire and imperialism place us in the same situation. As we already found (see chapter one), the idea of empire is one of the key concepts of political thinking in Western civilisation and in its twin, Byzantine Orthodox civilisation. In the context of these civilisations, empire is an emic concept. When European authors started applying it to describe countries belonging to different civilisations or political systems, it became etic. If it is true that the rulers of the Grand Duchy never called themselves emperors (apart from the possible exception of Algirdas), the concept of empire is etic when we apply it to the Grand Duchy. However the "sin" that we commit in doing so is no greater than the sin that historians commit discussing feudalism in the times of the Grand Duchy: its rulers, magnates or nobles did not know that they were feudals.

Historians use the concept of feudalism defined in one or another way in order to disclose certain similarities in socio-economic or political order between different countries (for example, France and England between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries, and Japan from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries). The populations of these countries would not have had the slightest idea of these similarities, not being aware of each other's existence. The concepts of "empire" and "imperialism" can be applied in exactly the same way to countries that did not call themselves empires or carried out an imperialist policy without knowing that they were imperialist, or even those who claimed that they were anti-imperialist (the case of the Soviet Union). However, what are those similarities that an adequate etic concept for "empire" and "imperialism" should bring out? Here we can again learn a lot from the situation about controversies over an adequate definition of feudalism (well known to historians). Some historians define feudalism as a particular kind of political legal system, and use the terms "senior", "vassal" and "fief". Marxist historians define it in terms of the relations of production, and use socio-economic terms accordingly – "surplus", "rent" and "non-economic coercion", etc. (see e.g. Strayer 1965).

The participants in such debates usually accuse one another of superficiality. The concept or definition under criticism is characteristically reproached for being nominal, as it only includes the secondary, superficial features of the phenomena. Such criticism suggests that a good definition must disclose the "essential" features. This idea of a good definition of a concept is known as essentialism. This approach assumes that the "real" or "in-depth" features hide below the superficial, more or less directly observable similarities and differences. Everyday concepts reflect only the superficial similarities

and differences (dolphins and seals are fish because they live in the water). Scientific concepts or scientific definitions must reveal the deeper features, reflecting the division of phenomena into natural kinds, as John Locke once called them (Schwartz 1977; Wilkerson 1995; LaPorte 2004). From an everyday, pre-scientific viewpoint, water is a transparent, tasteless, odourless liquid, suitable for quenching the thirst, while the formula H_2O, which is water's "real" or "true" definition, reveals the essential features of water as a chemical substance.

When we speak about social phenomena, we may ask whether purely "material" social phenomena exist – ones where there are no admixtures of meanings. Karl Marx believed in "social substance", identifying it with "relations of production". That is why the Marxist approach to the formation of concepts is consistently essentialist. Marxists believe that "natural kinds" exist in social reality. Behind the ideological covers that vary subject to culture or civilisation, there is always the structural essence of a social phenomenon, its H_2O equivalent – which an adequate definition of that phenomenon must reveal. The influential Marxist-Leninist concept of imperialism, which I discussed in the prior chapter, is based precisely on this essentialist philosophy.

However, many scholars doubt that essentialism is a suitable philosophy for the social sciences and humanities. They refer to a unique feature of social reality, usually called reflexivity. As meanings and significances are a part of the social and cultural "fabric", concepts created for cognitive purposes may have an impact on or alter this reality. There is no strict or impermeable boundary between emic and etic concepts. Concepts created purely for cognitive purposes find their way into broad usage, and become a part of the culture that researchers belong to, or occasionally even a part of the stock of knowledge of the "foreign" culture they are studying, and at the same time change it.[3] The same applies to those concepts that emerge from efforts to reveal the "essential" features of social reality, unmasking the "ideological illusions". Marxist-Leninist imperialism theory became an emic theory of a political practice whose subjective goal was the destruction of all empires, while its actual outcome was the restoration and expansion of the Russian Empire.

The etymology of "natural kind" itself suggests that such kinds are typical in nature, and that in the social and cultural reality made up from such artifacts it is possible to encounter only those kinds that John Locke called "nominal". Another feature, called historicity, further strengthens doubts over the existence of natural (or essential) kinds in social reality, arising from its reflexivity. A certain phenomenon or group thereof are historical not simply because they change ("nothing under the sun lasts forever"). They are historical, as far as human creativity is a cause (although not necessarily the only cause) of this change.

Creativity is what we encounter only in society and culture, but not in nature. As Karl Popper argued, criticising efforts to find the laws of history

validating a prediction of humanity's future, they are futile because this future depends most on future scientific discoveries (Popper 1957 [1944–1945]). However, we cannot know them without making these discoveries ourselves. The concept of the prediction of a scientific discovery is inconsistent, as a discovery cannot be predicted before it is actually made. The same applies for inventions. Because of discoveries and inventions, society and culture undergo radical innovations.

Such innovations force us to doubt whether it is possible to define concepts of social and cultural phenomena in a way that would reveal their essence. If in the process of change something essentially new can emerge out of a certain phenomenon (it is "historical" in the full meaning of the word), then it does not have a "nature" or "essence" that can be known ahead of time. That is why the only knowledge we have of that phenomenon is what we knew from its history until that point. But if we already know the "nature" or "essence" of a phenomenon, then by learning about its history (in the minimal sense – the sequence of events), we will not discover anything important or new about it. According to the aphorism attributed to Friedrich Nietzsche, humans are special in that they have neither an essence nor a nature, but only a history. However, the same can be said about democracy, capitalism, positivism, the state, and also about empires and imperialism. They too have no nature, nor essence, just a history. Until their history ends, it is impossible to say what the "essence" or "nature" of democracy or imperialism is, or what "real" democracy is, or "real" imperialism, as neither democracy nor imperialism are natural kinds.[4] Because of the historicity of democracy or imperialism, these concepts are open-ended concepts.

To be accurate, a scholar of any social or cultural phenomenon can follow the example of Hegel, who once was bold enough to declare that history had ended. Actually, in proclaiming that the history of art, democracy or imperialism had ended, we implicitly claim that the time for "Minerva's owl to take its flight" had come – to theoretically reflect their complete historical manifestations, and reveal their essence. Hegel applied this strategy to substantiate his claim of being the last philosopher – the creator of the philosophical system that embodied the ultimate philosophical truth, and therefore identified philosophy's real essence. In research on empires and imperialism, "Hegelians" are those researchers who say that in the modern world, empires and imperialism are already only things past and gone. Such "Hegelianism" remains quite influential after the collapse of the Soviet Union, described by some scholars as "the last empire" (e. g. Plokhii 2014).

However, not everyone is a "Hegelian" in research on empires. Many analysts claim that empires and imperialism did not disappear after 1991. In their view, we simply live in a world where only one state remains capable of implementing imperialist policy – the United States of America (e.g.

Babones 2015; Ferguson 2004). New impetus for this approach came after global political events following September 11, 2001, and especially after the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 to overthrow Saddam Hussein's regime. In the so-called "war on terror", the U.S. is acting in disregard of the international legal regime established after World War II. It was precisely these latest twists in international politics that made research on empires and imperialism, which could have appeared as "purely historical phenomena", suddenly relevant, even so far as making them fashionable in contemporary comparative social studies (see Mackenzie 2016).

Whether we perceive the modern U.S. as an empire depends on our definition of empire and imperialism and vice versa. If we perceive the U.S. as an empire, then we cannot consider territorial expansion via conquests a necessary attribute of empires: although the U.S. engages in war like no other modern state, the goal of those wars is not to expand its territory or to acquire new colonies. Yet many people, when they hear the word "empire", think about theoretical expansion. But even if we conceive this a necessary feature of empire, this does not mean that we must consider empires and imperialism as only history. Science fiction presents many models of human contact with extraterrestrial civilisations. Let's imagine that such contact will one day occur. How will relations between different celestial civilisations unfold? Who could deny that the realities of these relations would not force us to remember and to rethink the concepts of empire and imperialism?

This brief excursion into the fields of social ontology should suffice to understand why disagreements in social science and humanities over concepts are endemic and routine, while being rare, episodic and exceptional in the natural sciences. However, an even more valuable conclusion for this excursion would be to end with advice on how to resolve controversies over concepts. How are we to decide between different definitions if we reject the assumption that empire or imperialism has an "essence" that must be disclosed through "adequate" definition?

Rejecting the essentialist philosophy, we are left standing by a "shipwreck" only if we are loyal to this philosophy's twin sister in formal logic. This is the idea of a concept's good definition, which demands that all its attributes be listed, all of which are necessary, while as a whole they are sufficient to identify all cases included in the extension of that concept. The most usual kind of such a definition proceeds by pointing out the genus and the difference in species. The intension of a concept defined in this way contains the attributes shared by all cases (and only by them) belonging to the same species of a genus. In the case of an empire, a good definition should include the attributes that all the political bodies that fall under the concept of empire (and only they) share. It should draw a crisp and sharp boundary between those cases that are empires and those which are not. This idea of a good definition represents one of the two versions of the classical theory

of concept definition. (A classical theory is one that explicitly or implicitly bases itself on the mathematical crisp set theory.)[5]

The distinguishing feature of the crisp set theory is that it assumes the logical law of the excluded middle: if there is a certain set (class), then a certain individual either belongs to it, or does not. In other words, an individual either has or does not have a certain feature (attribute) that defines a certain set (class). When defining a concept, we specify its intension (content) and extension (scope). A concept's intension consists of features of which every one is necessary, though taken alone it is insufficient for an individual to make it into the concept's scope, while their entirety (conjunction) defines the necessary and sufficient conditions for belonging to the concept's scope. A concept's intension and extension are related by the law of inverse relation: the broader the concept's scope, the poorer its content; the richer the concept's content, the narrower its scope is.

What should be done if a scholar is faced with several different definitions of a concept? One of the luminaries in modern social science methodology, John Gerring, says that in this kind of situation one can choose between concept formation strategies that form a continuum, where one of the poles is the "minimalist" strategy and the other the "maximalist" (Gerring 2012: 131–138). Following the minimalist strategy, the scholar must compile a comprehensive list of definitions of their phenomenon of interest found in literature, and identify the attributes of the phenomenon that occur in these definitions. Then these attributes need to be classified by dimensions or aspects of the phenomenon defined. Next, those attributes that contradict one another need to be eliminated, as well as the idiosyncratic ones – those that are given by just one or another author. After all these eliminations, we are left with a minimal list of attributes that includes only those that are repeated in all the phenomenon's definitions found in literature. The resulting list is the minimal definition of the phenomenon.

The opposite of the minimalist is the maximalist strategy, which Gerring also calls an ideal-type definition, as in this case the definition is made up of a maximum list of attributes that defines the purest or extreme form of the phenomenon. The recently mentioned law of the inverse relation of the concept's content (intension) and scope or extension explains the difference between concepts produced by these strategies (see the solid line in Figure 3.1.): the content of minimal concepts is very poor, while their extension is wide; ideal-types, noted for their maximal content, are of a very narrow scope. In empirical reality there might not actually be any referents that exhibit all the attributes of ideal-type democracy, capitalism or imperialism.

Gerring's diagram (Gerring (2012: 123) suggests that his dichotomy of two strategies is ideally typological itself. Some of the concepts of the same phenomenon constructed by scholars may be closer to the minimalist pole, while other concepts are closer to the maximalist end of the spectrum.

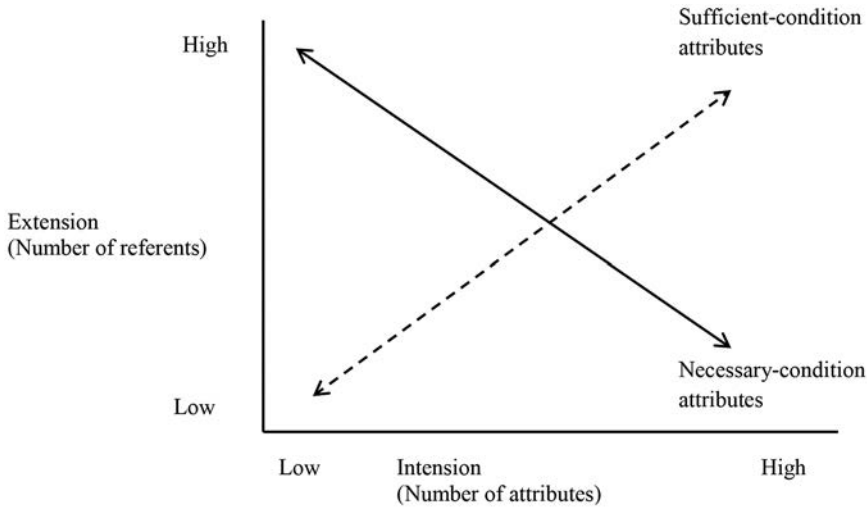

Figure 3.1 Intension and extension: trade-offs.

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Gerring does not actually say which strategy to choose, limiting himself to a list of criteria by which social science concepts can be assessed, regardless of whether they are more minimalist or maximalist. This list includes:

(1) Resonance, meaning the conformity of a definition with established usage. Resonance is lacking among neologisms, and concepts that are expressed using a word that already carries a mundane or specialised meaning distant from the newly-defined concept.
(2) Breadth and clarity of the linguistic domain within which the concept is used. Some concepts are used only by narrow linguistic communities of experts, while others (empire and imperialism are convenient examples) are used interdisciplinarily, but have traditions of somewhat different usage in different disciplines.
(3) Consistency, meaning the stability of the meaning throughout a work.
(4) Fecundity, measured by the number of attributes that the referents of a concept share.
(5) Differentiation that depends on the clarity of the contrast space of a concept; that is, how much it differs from the neighbouring concepts.
(6) Causal utility: does the concept help to formulate testable causal hypotheses?
(7) Operationalisation: how can an instance of the concept be recognised when it happens to be observed? (Gerring 2012: 107–134).

The perplexity arises because of the trade-offs between these criteria: concepts can attain some of these advantages only by sacrificing others. In this way, for example, causally useful concepts are not necessarily highly resonant with established usage or characterised by a broad linguistic domain. Quite the opposite: analytic utility is "bought" by paying the price of a narrow domain or poor resonance. Gerring does not even attempt to rank the above-mentioned quality criteria, yet without this kind of rating these criteria cannot act as guidelines for resolving controversies over the definition of "essentially contested concepts". However, his conception does help us discover another obstacle that thwarts a consensus in such controversies: different priorities of concept quality criteria prevail in different epistemic and linguistic communities.

In fact, the priorities of concept quality criteria may vary not only among individual researchers, but also among their groups (epistemic communities). Some research communities may consider resonance, broad domain or fecundity as most important. These are most likely to be the priorities of the classical humanities, with its characteristic educational dimension. However, in other disciplines (for example, in quantitative social research), the same criteria might be considered less important, compared to operationalisation or causal utility. This does not mean that resonance or fecundity are not values held dear by quantitative social researchers. Not just in life, but in science too, difficult decisions sometimes need to be made – achieving something only so far as that action does not preclude reaching another good thing.

The difference in concept quality criteria priorities can explain (but not substantiate) the selection of different maximal concepts (ideal-types) within the same field of research. Indeed, more than one ideal-type of capitalism, democracy, ideology or imperialism is possible. Depending on what kind of ideal-type of ideology (maximal ideology concept) is being constructed (and how), a classical or "pure" example of an ideology can be either Christianity or Marxism. One historian might consider Ancient Rome an example of a "classical" or "pure" ideal-type empire, while another might say the British Empire of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and a third might argue in favour of the Soviet Union after World War II. It is likely that the difference in concept quality criteria priorities is one of the reasons behind individual scholars' preferences for different ideal-types for the same phenomenon.

In some epistemic or problematic situations, when controversies arise over the definition of "essentially contested concepts", we might even find that in applying Gerring's recommended minimalist method to the competing definitions we are left altogether empty-handed. This will happen if there is no single attribute that occurs in all available definitions. Ludwig Wittgenstein anticipated this possibility in his famous comments in *Philosophical Investigations* on family resemblance. The philosopher notes that there are sometimes situations when not a single attribute is found that is common to all cases of a certain concept:

> Consider for example the proceedings that we call 'games'. I mean board-games, card-games, ball-games, Olympic games, and so on. What

> is common to them all? – Don't say: 'There *must* be something common, or they would not be called 'games' – but *look and see* whether there is anything common to all.
>
> (Wittgenstein 1986 [1953]: 31)

There are games for amusement, but that does not apply to chess or crosswords. Some have winners and losers and competition among the players, while other games do not (e.g. Solitaire). Some games can be played only by learning certain skills, others can be played without having any skills; one simply tries their luck (like throwing dice). "And the result of this examination is: we see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail" (Wittgenstein 1986 [1953]: 32).

In terms of the topic analysed in this book, it is very significant that Wittgenstein gave the concept of "a game" as an example of a social and cultural phenomenon. What might be added to Wittgenstein's reasoning is that since those times, many more games have been invented (for example, computer games appeared), and we cannot foresee what games people will play, or their offspring or the human-created creatures who will inhabit this Earth one thousand years from now. Thus games are an excellent example of a phenomenon that does not have an essence, as games have a (real) history. Wittgenstein uses the famous metaphor to name his discovered phenomenon:

> I can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities than 'family resemblances'; for the various resemblances between members of a family: build, features, colour of eyes, gait, temperament, etc. etc. overlap and criss-cross in the same way. – And I shall say: 'games' form a family
>
> (Wittgenstein 1996 (1986): 32)

How can classical concept formation theory account for the family resemblance phenomenon? To recall, this theory demands of an adequate concept definition to provide the set of necessary and sufficient features. A possible answer is that the word "game" is homonymous: "game" has many different meanings. Some games are games in one sense of the word, some games are altogether different. However, unlike the word "bank", for example, which means in English a financial institution, an edge of a river, a row of similar things, etc., the homonymy of the word "game" is not accidental. Yet there is no unique genus concept for game that would span all the versions of a game and all its possible cases: there is no unique sufficient set of necessary game attributes.

The situation we face in the case of empires and imperialism is the same as with games: "we see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing" (Wittgenstein 1986 [1953]: 156; see Beissinger 2006). We may be tempted to say that the words "empire" or "imperialism" are

homonymic words. Their many meanings are somehow close, similar. However, the phenomena named by these words do not share enough common attributes to subordinate all of them to one genus concept of empire or imperialism, in which we could discern a greater or smaller number of imperialism species.

Luckily, we do not have to simply state with resignation that there are many different concepts of empire and imperialism in the situation of family resemblances. Another logical reconstruction of the family resemblances phenomenon is possible that does not go beyond the boundaries of classical concept formation theory. A concept's intension is not necessarily the conjunction of necessary conditions specifying a sufficient condition of belonging to the concept's extension. A different intension structure is possible when the intension is composed not of the conjunction of attributes, but their disjunction (Andersen 2000; Bellaimey 1990; Goertz 2006: 39–41; Griffin 1974; Wennerberg 1967). In this case, none of the intension-composing attributes are necessary for belonging to the concept's scope, but each of the disjuncts describes a sufficient condition for that belonging. A certain condition is necessary for membership in the extension, if and only if it occurs across all the disjuncts. This is the case for concepts whose intension has the following structure:

(1) (A & B & C) ∨ (A & B & D) ∨ (A & D & E).

In the example above, attribute A is a necessary condition for belonging to the extension. It could also be the case that no repeating (necessary) condition exists. Nevertheless, individuals may be subordinated to the same concept, as Wittgenstein demonstrated in his famous example. Below is how the intension structure of such a concept might look:

(2) (A & B & C & D) ∨ (B & C & D & E) ∨ (C & D & E & F) ∨ (D & E & F & G) ∨ (E & F & G & H).

The intension of a concept of a historical phenomenon whose "essence" since the times of its discovery to today has changed so much that its present instances do not have any attributes in common with the earlier or original cases might display such a structure. This view of the concept's structure allows avoiding the essentialist ontological assumption dictated by the concept's definition over the necessary and sufficient conditions. This assumption implies that the "essence" of a certain phenomenon remains the same from the very first cases or examples of that phenomenon. The Wittgensteinian logical structure of the concept discussed here suggests the premises upon which both Ancient Assyria and the contemporary U.S. could be called empires, even if not a single common attribute could be found between the two.

Just as interesting is the following intension structure. It is typical of concepts that specialist literature calls "completely polythetic" (Bailey 1994: 24–26):[6]

(3) (A & B & C) ∨ (B & C & D) ∨ (A & C & D) ∨ (A & B & D).

In this case, the concept's intension consists of the attributes A, B, C, D; however, in order for a particular individual to be included in its scope, it suffices if it possess any three attributes from the complete list. An interesting characteristic of concepts with a "family resemblance" (disjunctive) structure is that the law of reverse-inverse relation of the concept's intension and extension does not apply. The enrichment of the concept's content with a new disjunct does not narrow but extends the extension of the concept. The dashed line in Figure 3.1 stands for such a relation between the intension and extension of polythetic concepts. The disjunction between the attributes is not exclusive. Therefore, an individual exhibiting all four attributes (A, B, C, D) would also belong to the scope of that concept. We can call this the "ideally typical" or "most distinctive" case. In addition, this kind of case may not exist in empirical reality, as Max Weber pointed out in his classic (but only informal) ideal-type characteristics (Weber 1982 [1904]: 156–214).

How can concept definition based on the family resemblance (disjunctive) model help to find a constructive solution to controversies over the definition of empire? I will only sketch here my proposal, completing this sketch in chapter thirteen after a critical survey of these controversies in the next chapters of this part. Applying concept definition model (3), an empire can be defined as a polity that has at least (any) three attributes from the four listed below:[7]

(1) It engages in broad territorial expansion;
(2) It is a hegemonic power in the international system or aspires to be one;
(3) It is ethnically or cultural heterogeneous and has a politically dominant ethno-cultural minority;
(4) Its territory divides into a dominant metropole and a subordinated periphery.

Polities noted to have all four attributes would represent an ideal-type empire. However, even if such polities did not exist, the empire concept would not be an empty set if there were still polities that:

(1) carried out broad territorial expansion, were hegemonic powers or aspired to become them in the international system, were ethnically or cultural heterogeneous and had a politically dominant ethnic group, but whose territory was not divided into a metropole and periphery; or

(2) did not carry out broad territorial expansion but were hegemonic powers or aspired to become them in the international system, were ethnically and culturally heterogeneous and had a politically dominant ethno-cultural group, and whose territory was divided into a metropole and periphery; or
(3) did carry out broad territorial expansion but were not hegemonic powers or aspired to become them in the international system, and were ethnically or culturally heterogeneous and divided their territories into a metropole and periphery; or
(4) carried out broad territorial expansion, were hegemonic powers or aspired to become ones in the international system, were not ethnically and culturally heterogeneous and did not have a politically dominant ethnic group, but whose territory was divided into a metropole and periphery.

The combinations of features demonstrated here define what are known in specialist literature as *diminished sub-types* (Collier and Mahon 1993; Collier and Levitsky 1997; Collier and Adcock 1999). They are "empires with adjectives", where the adjective denotes which ideal-type or classical empire attribute is lacking among the referents of this sub-type. So the definitions above specify the following diminished sub-types of empires: (1) territorially homogeneous empires; (2) peaceful empires; (3) non-hegemonic empires; and (4) ethnically and culturally homogeneous empires. Such diminished sub-types should be distinguished from classical sub-types, which are produced from the root concept not by subtracting, but by adding attributes to its intension. This operation also produces "empires with adjectives," too (e.g. continental and maritime empires), but these adjectives do not lead up the ladder of abstraction, expanding the extension of the root concept. In the classical sub-types, adjectives refer to additional attributes that enrich the intension of the root concept, narrowing its extension and leading down the ladder of generality.

I will discuss these sub-types in more detail in chapter thirteen, where I will provide a final definition of empire and explore its implications and ramifications. Meanwhile, I will only provide a few examples of diminished sub-types. The aim is to demonstrate the fruitfulness of the proposed approach and to answer the possible objection that some of these "diminished sub-types" are internally inconsistent. In fact, in nomadic empires we find a politically dominant ethnic group yet in many of these cases it is hard to identify a metropolitan territory (sub-type 1). The Late Roman Empire was a peaceful empire, when territorial expansion was no longer as important as withstanding attacks from barbarians (2). Ancient Japan was a non-hegemonic empire that (unlike China) never expressed claims to universal, and for a long time not even to regional hegemony (3).[8] Ancient China was ethnically and culturally homogeneous throughout most of its history (4).[9] Even if examples to illustrate all the analytically distinguished empire

sub-types could not be found, this would still not be considered a shortcoming of this definition. Rather, the advantage of deductive typology is that it allows highlighting certain logically possible cases that are absent in the empirical reality only by accident (perhaps only up until now).

The disjunctive or sufficient-condition attributes definition model does not cross the boundaries of classical concept definition theory, because the extensions of concepts with disjunctive intensions are crisp sets. Such concept formation does not require any special preparation demanding new knowledge or skills, in addition to those taught in a standard introductory course on logic. Non-classical concept definition theory is a different case altogether, whose logical mathematical basis is fuzzy sets theory. It rejects the assumption that for any individual and for any concept each individual either belongs or does not belong to the extension of each concept. That is why they are called fuzzy sets, as here a separate case can be member of particular set only "more" or "less" – a state can be more or less democratic; a polity can be more or less imperial; a Lithuanian can be a Catholic to a greater or a lesser extent, etc. (see e.g. Kosko 1993; Lee 2005; Ragin 2000: 153–333). Fuzzy set methods are most productive when applied to those fields of artificial intelligence research where the objective is to "teach" computers to imitate or simulate a human's everyday thinking.

In everyday, mass thinking, empires are considered in a non-crisp way. If in Lithuania we ask "the man on the street" whether contemporary Russia is an empire, harnessing questions in the format of the Likert scale, many would most likely respond that they "more likely agree than disagree", or "neither agree nor disagree". The researcher can interpret such answers in the sense that in people's "cognitive maps", Russia is more likely to belong rather than not belong, or to neither belong nor not belong to respondents' individual concepts of empire. Most experts would also most likely respond the same way, reasoning that Russia does exhibit certain imperial characteristics. Though, they are not as clearly expressed as they were in the past.

If we operate with concepts formed on the basis of non-crisp sets, perhaps we might catch two rabbits with the same trap? On the one hand, we would not have to turn away from everyday thinking (we would be speaking "to the ordinary person in ordinary language"). On the other hand, we would have concepts that reflect the peculiar nature of social reality where, because of the non-existence or scarcity of "natural kinds," there are a great deal of ambiguities and indeterminates, while clear and precise categorical divisions are created only artificially and are conventional, expressing the dictate of one or another instance of authority.

However, therein lies the paradox and difficulty: quantitative data is needed in order to apply non-crisp set methods productively. Social researchers and scholars in the humanities rarely have such data when they can only glean information from historical sources. Applying non-crisp set methods, this quantitative data is only translated into different languages, simultaneously simplifying and reducing it. Having just been forced out the door,

the problem of precision comes back in through the window. In order to consider empires and imperialism in a fuzzy (albeit productive) way, we should make use of the valid and reliable quantitative indicators measuring territorial expansion, the aspiration to dominate in the international system, ethnic and cultural heterogeneity and so on. Possessing data about the values of such indicators for specific countries, we could then say whether, for example, in the mid-fourteenth century the Grand Duchy (a) completely belonged, (b) more belonged than did not belong, (c) neither belonged nor did not belong, (d) belonged less than not belonged, or (e) did not at all belong to the group of states differentiated into a metropole and periphery. The selection of answers from this list would depend on the accepted threshold values for membership degrees in the fuzzy sets. Having found how strongly each attribute of an empire or imperialism was expressed in the Grand Duchy, we would be able to decide by the rules of fuzzy logic whether the Grand Duchy completely belonged, more belonged than not belonged, neither belonged nor did not belong, or belonged less than not belonged to the set of empires.

The problem is that there are (at least thus far) few quantitative indicators in literature that we could use to measure the attributes of empires. For example, major difficulties arise when attempts are made to find hegemony indicators in the international system. A hegemonic state can be identified when the power of members of the international system are compared. However, that power can be military, economic, or cultural (soft power), and it is no easy feat to work out how to sum and compare those forms of power.[10] In cases where such indicators exist, an unpleasant discovery is a shortage of primary data to apply them. An indicator for ethnic heterogeneity can be the percentage of the dominant (imperial) ethnic group in the total population, in one way or another quantitatively compared to the percentages of other ethnic groups. However, statistical data about the ethnic composition of populations of many ancient empires simply does not exist, and we must be satisfied with approximate expert assessments as to when the dominant group constituted the majority, and when it became the minority.

Thus far in social science literature there have been only a few mostly experimental attempts at applying non-classical concept formation methods. The results of those attempts have not proved to be superior to the results that have been attained working in the framework of the classical concept formation where each case either belongs or does not belong to the extension of the concept.[11] If we were to have the right amount and type of data to allow defining the degree of belonging for each case to a fuzzy empire set, that data would also suffice to construct a general imperialism index. Then an empire (or rather imperiality) would not be a qualitative category, but a variable measurable on an ordinal, interval or even ratio scale level.

Then we would no longer have to argue whether a particular polity is (or was) an empire or not. It would suffice to measure its degree of imperiality

at a certain point in time; to ask whether its degree of imperiality increased or decreased over a year, decade or century since the first moment it was measured, and to search for causes (other variable changes) as to why this happened. If we could measure the degree of imperiality at a ratio scale level (with a non-arbitrary zero degree of imperiality), then we could not only say to what extent the imperiality of the Grand Duchy increased during the years of Algirdas' reign (1377) compared to the last years of Gediminas' rule (1341). We would also be able to compare how many times that imperiality of the Grand Duchy was smaller than (for example) the imperiality of the British Empire in 1920.

Who knows, perhaps this might just be the bright future in store for empire and imperialism studies.[12] The findings of the application of the quantitative (statistical) methods in empire studies may not be very impressive (as the next chapter will demonstrate). However, the discussion of these findings will help to better understand the motivation behind the minimalist strategy and difficulties encountered when attempting to resolve controversies over the concept of empire applying this strategy.

Notes

1 See also chapter thirteen.
2 This does not mean that culture includes only those concepts and their derivatives that are in the individual stocks of knowledge of all respective group members. It is highly unlikely that many fourteenth-century Polish peasants had the faintest clue of what an empire was or how it differed from a kingdom, despite the Polish king and his court being fully aware of this difference. A division not only of labour but also of knowledge is characteristic within any complex society.
3 An important reservation is necessary. The statement about the permeable boundary between etic and emic concepts applies only to the the relationship between present-day social science and humanities concepts with the current and future social and cultural reality. The thoughts of modern economists and political scientists concerning the political and social reality of the present and past are a strong force that influences what that reality will be like in the future. However, until time travel becomes a feasible procedure, it is impossible to change the past (e.g., the Ancient Sumerian civilisation) by infiltrating it with concepts produced by modern Western civilisation.
4 Unless we were to be very old-fashioned essentialists and assert, together with Plato, that the essence of democracy, capitalism or imperialism existed (despite not yet being "embodied") already in the Pleistocene Era.
5 George Boole, Georg Cantor, and Gottlob Frege are its creators.
6 Incompletely polythetic are concept structures exemplifed by formula (1). They include at least one necessary condition of belonging to the concept's extension.
7 In the following chapters of this part I will explain in detail the selection and meaning of these attributes.
8 However, Ancient Japan carried out territorial expansion conquering Hokkaido and other surrounding islands, and exterminating their local populations. Generally, an empire not seeking hegemony in the international system though one implementing broad territorial expansion would be one that was expanding into uninhabited or sparsely inhabited territories to which no other state had laid any

claims. Up to a certain point in time, the United States was this kind of empire when it colonised the "Wild West".

9 When it was ruled by Chinese dynasties (not nomads from the steppes), the politically dominant ethnic group would also make up the absolute majority of the population.

10 The Vatican or Tibet's Dalai Lama hold no military power, but their soft power in international politics is superior to that of many of the African or Asian states with the power of their thousand-strong armies.

11 See first Ragin 2000, also the working papers published on the website *Comparative Methods for the Advancement of Systematic Cross-Case Analysis* (COMPASSS). After perusing this website, I did not find any applications of the fuzzy set methods in empire and imperialism studies. www.compasss.org/. Accessed on 05–10–2015.

12 It is unlikely that that future will come, as switching over to quantitative measurement does not mean that arguments over concepts suddenly become easier to resolve. The same concept can be measured by different indexes. Then we would need to argue over the validity and reliability of competing indexes.

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4 Cliometry of empires

The pioneer of quantitative imperiological research, and even now the unsurpassed leader, is American-Estonian political scientist Rein Taagepera (b. 1933). After completing his physics studies in the U.S. and Canada, Taagepera worked for some time as an industrial technology researcher with the DuPont Corporation. Taagepera then studied international relations and eventually became a professor in political science at the University of California, Irvine. Political scientists are most familiar with Taagepera's highly valued work on the quantitative indexes that measure various aspects of electoral systems, and their impact on political processes (Taagepera and Shugart 1989; Taagepera 2007; Taagepera 2008).[1]

It is not difficult to guess what moved the Estonian researcher, who as an eleven-year-old boy had to leave his homeland in 1944, to become interested in political science and try to apply the knowledge he had acquired in the exact sciences to imperiological research. Of all the empires that have existed, Taagepera was and remains most interested in the future of the Russian Empire. Testimony of this lies in his thorough study written in Estonia "The Finno-Ugric Republics and the Russian State" (Taagepera 1999). It expresses the hope that the Russian Empire's disintegration did not end in 1991 but would continue, breaking off ever new territories from the state that is today called the "Russian Federation" (Taagepera 1999). In this study, Taagepera applies the case research method, but for the purposes of this book's central question, his earlier works are of greatest interest, where he applied quantitative methods.

Taagepera's first publication as a political scientist was also the first attempt to apply quantitative methods in imperiological studies. "Growth Curves of Empires" (Taagepera 1968) compared four empires: Ancient Rome, the Ottomans, the U.S. and Muscovy-Russia. The main conclusion was that the logistic function $T(t) = 1/1 + e^{-1t}$ best describes the empire territorial growth process. The graph of this function resembles an S-curve. It is quite similar to an exponential function graph in the middle part, but flattens out in the top part when the process approaches the "saturation limit".[2]

Due to the very small (N = 4) number of cases researched, the results cannot be generalised in a statistically significant way. But Taagepera was

interested not simply in the dynamics of the territorial expansion of empires as such. Those dynamics mattered only as part of the evidence useful in predicting the duration of empires – thus also to estimate the probability and timing of the collapse of the Soviet empire, with restoration of the Baltic countries' independence as one of its outcomes. That is why Taagepera extended and continued his early work, trying to incorporate *all* of the empires that had ever existed into his population of research cases.

Work of such impressive scope associates Taagepera's research with the variety of comparative social studies that Raoul Naroll (1972) suggested calling "hologeistic". The prefix "holo-" indicates that, in these studies, the objects of quantitative (statistical) analysis are data that concern the features of whole cultural and social macro systems. The variables in such research represent features that can be attributed only to an entire society, culture or empire (for example: area, population, GDP, duration, etc.). The root of the word, "geist" (from the Ancient Γαῖα – Earth) indicates that the investigators doing hologeistic research purport to include in the study's population of cases all cases of interest to the researcher that ever existed (or perhaps also those that will exist only in the future) on Earth.

In truth, scholars determined to conduct such hologeistic research do not have to analyse data about all the cases of this population. They can use random sampling to select a sample from the total population of social and cultural macro systems. Then they must collect data only about the cases of the representative sample to statistically test a particular hypothesis or hypotheses about the relations between those variables that describe the attributes of societies or cultures from the total population. If the sample is sufficiently large, the correlation and regression coefficients can be statistically significant for the total population of cases.

The golden age of hologeistic research was the 1960s and 1970s. At this time, it was practised most broadly in cultural anthropology. Scholars most commonly used (and still use) the inter-university consortium "Human Relations Area Files" (HRAF) data base. This research organisation was founded in 1949 by Yale University to collect and systematise inter-cultural and international data. In the fields of sociology and political science, the most famous examples of hologeistic quantitative research from this time are the studies by Robert B. Textor (1967), Robert Marsh (1967), Ted Gurr (1970) and Rudolph J. Rummel (1972).

These studies were the source of inspiration for Taagepera's comparative hologeistic imperiological research. Direct predecessors were the hologeistic statistical studies by Robert L. Carneiro (1978; see also Carneiro 2004), Louis A. Marano (1973) and Raoul Naroll (1967) on the change in size and number of political bodies on Earth over time. They found that the average size of the territory and population of polities on Earth grows in the long run, while their total number decreases.[3]

The Roman Empire astounded contemporaries by its size and population: during the reign of Emperor Trajan, the period of its greatest extent, the

Empire encompassed around 5 million km^2 and had a population of around 88 million. However, these figures are not so great compared to the sizes of the largest states in the world existing today, especially their populations. The number of states (around 200) existing in the world at present is smaller than the number of polities within the territory of present-day Germany which, according to some authors, became nearly sovereign after the Peace of Westphalia of 1648.[4] It is very small if we compare it to those times and territories when hordes, clans, tribes and unions of tribes were the only forms of political organisation around.

Extrapolating the trends of a size increase in the largest polities and the general decrease of their number into the future, Marano (1973) predicted that a political unification of the world, when all land on Earth would come under the rule of a world government, would take place in around 3500. Carneiro stated that this would occur in 2300, while Naroll's "optimistic" view forecasted a 50% chance of this happening as early as 2200. One of his premises was that

> there will always be at least one state on Earth as large as the Soviet Union is today. For the foreseeable future, there seems no reason to expect the Soviet Union itself to shrink in size, or break up into fragments.
>
> (Naroll 1967; cited from Taagepera 1997:487–488)

The adjective "optimistic" appears in quotation marks because for a representative of a small nation – be they an Estonian or a Lithuanian – such prognoses may have been the source of pessimism rather than optimism. They must have appeared even more pessimistic in the 1970s when Taagepera, having just joined in the hologeistic research on political unification and territorial concentration processes on Earth, could only dream about the restoration of Estonia's independence.

Taagepera published his new results in a series of papers which covered the time from 3000 BC until the year 600 AD (Taagepera 1978a; 1978b; 1979). The paper discussing the period from 600 BC–600 AD closed with his promise (Taagepera 1979: 137) to soon publish a sequel on the period from 600 AD –1200 AD. Alas, Taagepera did not keep this promise. He only returned to the cliometrics of empires after 20 years. At that time he covered the period from 600 to the late twentieth century (Taagepera 1997), but his source of inspiration was different by then. The issue was no longer the future of the USSR but the possible collapse and demise of Russia that would open the way towards a revival of the disappearing Finno-Ugric nations in Russia (the Khanty and Mansi, Komi, Mordvins, Mari, etc.). At precisely that time, when Russia had lost the first Chechen War (1996), the hopes of Baltic scholars and politicians that Russia would continue to crumble were particularly strong.

What was the source of Taagepera's hopes in the 1970s, and then in the 1990s? He does not deny that territorial concentration (the growth in the

average territorial size of political bodies and the decrease of their total number) is a long-term process of universal history. Furthermore, he offers several quantitative indexes to measure the degree of concentration reached at a particular moment in time. One is the Herfindahl-Hirschman index $HH_a = \Sigma A_i^2 / A^2$, where A is the total area of dry land on Earth, and A_i is the area of a country. Applying this index to the modern world, we would have to divide the sum of squared areas of all states existing on Earth at present by the square of the total area of dry land (133 million km^2, excluding Antarctica). The maximum value of the Herfindahl-Hirschman index is 1. The greater the number of political bodies in the world, and the smaller they are, the closer the value of this index approaches zero. When counting these values, we can square and add not the areas of states but the percentage shares of their area on dry land, dividing the sum by 100^2. If two superpowers had shared the Earth amongst themselves equally, then $HH_a = 0.5$. If one had occupied 75% of dry land, and the other occupied 25%, then $HH_a = 0.625$; if the share of the first polity was to grow to 90% and the remainder under the second polity to decrease to 10%, then the HH_a would increase to 0.82. If four states divided the world amongst themselves equally, HH_a would equal 0.25; if the portions of dry land under their control were 50%, 15%, 15% and 20%, then $HH_a = 0.2925$. When the first share increases to 90% and the remaining three divide into pieces of 3%, 3% and 4%, the HH_a would jump to 0.8134, which is not so different from the situation for HH_a, when there are two states with portions of 90% and 10% apiece.

It is not so difficult to notice that the percentages of global dry land occupied by larger polities have a greater effect on HH_a values than do the percentages occupied by the smaller polities. This circumstance is especially evident in an equivalent of the Herfindahl-Hirschman index, the Laakso-Taagepera index, where $N_a = A^2 / \Sigma A_i^2$. Political scientists know this index best as the effective number of parliamentary parties (ENPP) index. When applied to parties, the total number of mandates squared is divided by the sum of squared numbers of mandates that parties won, or 100^2 is divided by the sum of the squared percentages of separate parties' mandates. When applied to measure territorial concentration, it may be interpreted as the effective number of political bodies on Earth based on area (N_a).[5] As this is a reverse of the HH_a, then we can find its values by dividing 1 by the respective HH_a value: $N_a = 1 / HH_a$. Where there is one state controlling the whole world, $N_a = 1$; two states equally sharing control of the world, $N_a = 2$; where their percentage parts are 75% and 25%, $N_a = 1.6$, and so on. According to Taagepera's calculations, in 1995 the Earth's N_a was equal to 24. He pointed out that "this figure does not mean that the twenty-four largest polities matter to an equal degree while others do not matter at all; it is a more abstract indicator of fragmentation" (Taagepera 1997: 485).

Political concentration can be measured not just by the distribution of land, but also by population distribution between polities. In this case,

population concentration indexes HH_p and N_p are used, which differ from HH_a and N_a in that, unlike the area of land on Earth, its total population is not a constant quantity. In order to calculate the values of all these indexes, we should use data about the area of all polities or their populations, which may be difficult to collect. However, Taagepera argues that

> little error is introduced when only the largest components are entered. This is extremely important for the present measurement of areas and populations of polities: small polities (on which information is often lacking) can be ignored. Concentration depends heavily on the size of the largest components.
>
> (Taagepera 1997: 478)

In his articles published in 1978–1979, Taagepera only measured area concentration.[6] In 1997, he also used N_p, which was calculated using data from Colin McEvedy's and Richard Jones' *Atlas of World Population History* (McEvedy and Jones 1978). He sought information about the area of polities and their dynamics in the Modern Age from statistical reference books. When researching earlier periods, his main source was historical atlases in which polities are depicted as differently coloured areas. Taagepera measured these areas using a tool of surveyors and draftsmen called a polar planimeter. The user of this tool traces the boundary of the territory on the map with a pointer and recalculates the resulting figures according to the map's scale. (A simpler instrument – a palette – can be used. This is a transparent plate with a network of squares on the surface.)

Taagepera made more or less speculative guesses as to the character, area and number of polities in those times and in those regions in the world that were otherwise left "white" in historical atlases. On the basis of the assessments of specialists in historical demography, that prior to the emergence of the first states (in around 3200 BC) there were approximately 14 million people on Earth, Taagepera reasoned that there could have been from 100,000 to 1 million separate political entities (Taagepera 1997: 485).[7] These could have been separate families, villages or tribes. Each one would have had an average territory ranging from 100 to 1,000 km^2.[8] The effective number of polities based on area N_a is always smaller than the total number. The effective number of polities based on population N_p cannot be greater than their effective number based on area N_a, because larger polities exist in places where there are more people. Thus N_a is the upper limit of N_p. The lower limit value of N_p is 1. This is the value of N_p in the politically united world. However, the N_p value can approach 1 even with a larger N_a. This would be the case if the absolute majority of the world's population would be concentrated in one relatively small polity, while numerous sparsely populated polities would divide the remainder of the dry land between them. For prehistoric times, Taagepera relates N_a to N_p by the equation $N_p = N_a^{-0.5}$.

Having made these presumptions about prehistoric times, Taagepera continued by simply measuring the territories of historic polities as they were depicted in historic atlases and calculated the N_a and N_p values for the periods reflected in the atlases. He discovered that both N_a and N_p were in continual decline since the beginning of written history. This is best demonstrated by regression equations whose graphs minimise vertical distances between graph line and data points.

Taagepera found that this feature was displayed by the following equations:[9]

$$N_a = 1300 \times e^{-0.019t}$$
$$N_p = 31 \times e^{-0.008t}$$

The graphs of these equations are shown in Figure 4.1. The first equation explains (in a statistical sense) 90% of the variance of N_a, while the second explains 68% of the variance of N_p. Both equation functions are exponential, which is why their true geometric equivalent is a curve. They are represented by lines in Figure 4.1. because a semi-logarithmic plot is used: the X axis (representing time) scale is linear, while the Y axis (standing for concentration indexes values) scale is logarithmic. A logarithmic scale was chosen for the concentration indexes due to the enormous difference between maximum (over 1 million) and minimum N_a values, where they would otherwise not fit onto a piece of paper.

Extrapolating the first (for N_a) equation, Taagepera claims that there is a 50% probability that the world will be politically united in the year 3800

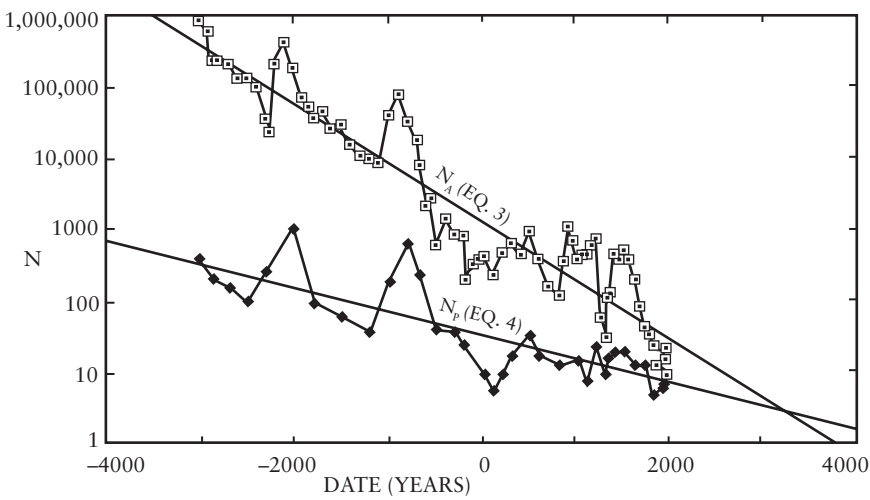

Figure 4.1 Effective number of polities, based on area and on population.

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(Taagepera 1997: 487). There would be also a 50% probability that in 3400 two polities will be left in the world. Based on the second (for N_p) equation, the effective number of polities should decrease to one in 4300. Taagepera's results are thus not so close to those of the "optimistic" futurologists who believe the world's political unification is due within the upcoming 200–300 years, but to those of "pessimists" (like Marano) who postpone it two millennia into the future (the truth might be somewhere in the middle). However, how can this kind of prognosis console an Estonia (or Lithuanian) patriot impatiently awaiting the collapse of Russia?

Taagepera does find a source of hope. Although in the long run N_a and N_p continue to decrease, this is the trend accompanied by strong fluctuations of the values of both indexes around the trend: sometimes they jump sharply above the value predicted by the equations for that moment in time, before falling below the line. These fluctuations reflect the rise and collapse of very large empires that particularly strongly affect N_a and N_p values. Even though empires do become increasingly larger over time, all the hitherto existing empires did collapse sooner or later. So why should it be any different with empires existing today? In Taagepera's view, Russia is much larger than a "normal" empire typical for its period, and has existed much longer than most of its contemporaries and predecessors. Thus he concludes that

> Russia could meanwhile continue to contract appreciably at the margins, following the pattern of its geographic predecessor, the Golden Horde. When all these mixed signals are taken into consideration, further slow contraction seems the likeliest course for Russia. A new increase in Russia's area, though possible, seems less likely. Polities that lose momentum rarely recover it.
>
> (Taagepera 1997: 492)

Those Lithuanians who go to bed with the fear that the next day they will wake up in a land reoccupied by Russia would benefit most from familiarising themselves with this conclusion. For my topic, of most interest is the comparative perspective that Taagepera's observations about the growth dynamics of empires opens. How did the "normal" size of empires change in history? How does the Grand Duchy look compared to its contemporaries? Is it at all special compared to other empires in terms of its duration or the dynamics of its rise, decline and collapse – to the extent this is reflected in the changes in land area and population statistics?

In order to find answers to these questions, we would have to solve a whole group of problems related to the measurement of the duration of an empire. But before starting, of course, we must answer the question: what, after all, is an empire? In his first imperiological publication, Taagepera defined an empire as "any state which tends to outgrow its original ethnic or political nucleus gradually and to a marked extent" (Taagepera 1968: 171).

Later he defined empire as "any large sovereign political entity whose components are not sovereign, irrespective of this entity's internal structure or official designation" (Taagepera 1978a: 113). This definition was imposed by the data he used. Information about a territory's size (area) is probably the only reliable quantitative information that we have at all about many ancient polities. That is why, for the purposes of statistical analysis, all that remains is to choose as minimal a definition as possible that denotes only two attributes of empires: sovereignty (the absence of a higher authority) and a large area.

The difficulties encountered with this minimalist definition (see chapter three; Gerring 2012: 131–138) will be discussed later in this chapter and in chapter thirteen. Meanwhile, I shall focus on the problem that arises if, let's say, a large area is truly a necessary feature of an empire. How large does the land area have to be for a sovereign polity to be recognised as an empire? The empires of the ancient East (e.g., Egypt) were no larger than states today that are not held to be empires (e.g., Argentina or France, or for that matter, contemporary Egypt). Taagepera solves this problem by tuning-up the "large polity" concept in terms of a particular historical epoch. The epochs themselves, which he calls "historical phases", are distinguished based on the largest states in a certain phase.

The first phase spans the period from 3000 to 600 BC. It begins with the emergence of the ancient Egyptian state when North and South Egypt united to create a polity which had a territory of around 250,000 km^2. During the period of its greatest expansion (at around 1450 BC), when Egypt subjugated Nubia, Palestine and Syria, its territory did not go beyond 1 ± 0.3 million km^2. States that appeared in Mesopotamia (the territory of present-day Iraq) were markedly smaller. Except for the polity of Akkad that existed in 2400–2200 BC, not a single territory ever came close to the 1 million km^2 limit. Nevertheless, a polity appeared in precisely this region that became the record-holder in the first phase. That was Assyria, which at the end of 8 BC and early 7 BC brought the entire Near East under its authority. Having conquered Egypt in around 670 BC, Assyria briefly expanded to 1.4 ± 0.3 million km^2. In the Far East, the polity ruled by the Xia and Shang dynasties that existed in 2200–1200 BC in the territory of what is now contemporary China reached a similar size.

Yet these records were held only briefly. Many of the polities that existed in Mesopotamia during the course of two and a half thousand years disappeared from the historical maps just as suddenly as they appeared. Taagepera offers the credible argument that an empire's historical significance depends not so much on its area at the time of its maximum expansion as on its maximum stable area and duration of existence. He defines these concepts introducing a new variable – the size-time integral I. Its units are square-kilometer-centuries km^{2}C, where C denotes centuries. The value of the integral can be found by measuring with a planimeter or palette the area of a geometrical figure that lies within the curve P(t), representing an

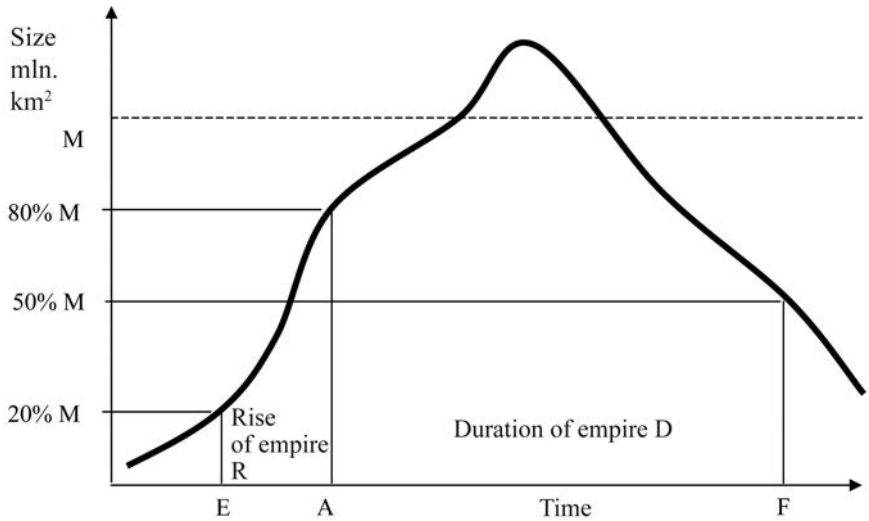

Figure 4.2 Dynamics of an empire's area and development phases according to Rein Taagepera. Constructed by author.

empire's change in area over time. I will refer to it henceforth as the Taagepera Integral (TI) in honour of this contribution. I will explain this and related concepts, using as an example, for didactic purposes, the life-cycle of a fictitious empire.

The maximum stable area of an empire M is the area for which the size-time integral I would be 5% smaller than its actual size. In Figure 4.2. it is represented by that part of the area bounded by the curve P(t) that is below the dotted line. Taagepera defines an empire's emergence date E as the moment when the polity's area first reaches 20% of its M. This is the threshold beyond which a polity becomes an empire. That moment when an empire's size reaches 80% of its maximum stable size is its adulthood date, A. The period between an empire's emergence E and its adulthood A is its period of rise R: R = A – E. The date for an empire's failure F is that moment when its area contracts for the first time after A to 50% of its maximum stable size. The period between an empire's adulthood and its failure is its duration, D. Thus D = F – A (Taagepera 1978b: 191).

Taagepera grounds these proposals in an appeal to the established terminological conventions existing in the technological and biological sciences, where similar curves are used for analysing the change over time of organisms, their populations or other systems. Taagepera's proposals also suggest ways to solve the problem plaguing comparative empire studies: how to distinguish an empire's failure from a crisis, when its area suddenly decreases but later returns to its previous size. Occasionally, the ruling dynasty, the

politically dominant ethnic group, or even the political or economic system may change during the crisis, but the empire can survive. But how can the case of an empire's failure and replacement by another (though it perhaps keeps the same title and the claims to its precursor's legacy) be distinguished from a case where an empire survives and overcomes a crisis (though perhaps having changed its name and symbolically distancing itself from its precursor)? More specifically, was the Soviet Union a continuation of the Russian Empire, or a new empire? Did the change in ruling dynasties in China signify the appearance of new empires, or was this simply a restoration and continuation of the same empire?

Taagepera resolves this problem with his proposal to consider two polities in the same area as different empires if the gap G over time between the failure of the first and the rise of the second lasted for longer than 30% of the duration of the first polity, i.e., if $G / D > 0.3$. This means that the answer to the question about an empire's continuity depends on its age. A long-lasting empire is more capable of revival even after a prolonged crisis than an empire which existed for but a short while.

Applying this criterion, tsarist Russia and the USSR would need to be considered as the same empire. Applying the same criteria, Taagepera does not consider the Achaemenid state and the territories briefly subjugated by the authority of Alexander the Macedonian as two different empires. He asserts that this would have been the same empire which ended up under the reign of a foreign conqueror, and then split up into several new empires under dynasties established by Alexander's generals. Although Assyria had conquered Egypt for a decade in the early seventh century BC, this break in the history of Egypt's statehood is held to be too short to consider Psammetichus I (reigned in 663–610 BC) the victor over the Assyrians, and his descendants (the 25th Dynasty) as the founders of a new Egyptian empire. Yet the Pharaohs of the 12th Dynasty (reigned in 1938–1700 BC) do qualify as such because more than 200 years passed from the failure of the Ancient Egyptian Empire (ca 2650–2150 BC) to the new unification of Egypt under the 12th Dynasty. According to Taagepera's calculations, this break comprises 54% of the duration of the Ancient Egyptian Empire, $D = F - A$ (Taagepera 1978b: 192).

By Taagepera's criteria, China during the times of the Qin and Han dynasties (300 BC–early third century AD) was the same empire. He describes in the same way the relation between the polities ruled by the Xia and Shang dynasties in the second millennium BC. However, the polities that emerged for a short time in the territories once ruled by the Han for four centuries are considered as new empires (but only those successor polities to the Han Empire that managed to expand up to 50% of the Han's maximum stable area M). The same applies to the empire that emerged in the seventh century when the Tang dynasty subordinated the lands once ruled by the Hans.[10]

Applying these concepts to the polities from the first phase (3000–600 BC), Taagepera finds that the Xia and Shang Empire had a TI value of 6.2 million km^2C. Only the sum of all the Egyptian empires' TI values (9.3 million km^2C)

surpasses this value. Due to their relatively short durations, total TI value of all the Mesopotamian empires was barely 5.4 million km^{2}C. As already mentioned, based on the maximum size of its territory, the absolute record-holder in the first phase of the history of empires was the New Assyrian kingdom which reached adulthood in around 700 BC and soon thereafter reached it maximum size of 1.4 ± 0.3 million km^2.[11] Taagepera considers its maximum stable area M 1 million km^2, and its duration D 80 years. Due to its relatively brief existence, its TI is only 1.7 million km^{2}C (Taagepera 1978b: 191–192).

Taagepera associates the beginning of the second phase of the history of empires, which lasted until the sixteenth century, with the rise of the Achaemenid Empire in 700–600 BC. The basis for this periodisation is the fact that, from the beginning of this phase, there is a sudden increase in the maximum, and – what is most important – the maximum stable size of the largest empires. Although this phase also saw much fragmentation, when there were no more very large empires, the area of the largest empires that were established at this time significantly surpasses that of the "champions" of the first phase at their moments of maximum expansion. The Achaemenid-Alexander the Macedonian-Seleucid Empire that rose over 90–120 years and reached its height in around 540 BC endured for about 320 years, and had a stable maximum area of 4.2 million km^2, while at the moment of maximum expansion (in around 500 BC) it covered around 5.5 million km^2.[12] Its long duration means that its TI (17 million km^{2}C, ten times greater than that of the third Assyrian Empire's TI) was also quite significant.

Taagepera further divides the second phase of the history of empires into three eras. This division is motivated by the fact that at the end of each of these eras we observe the fragmentation of the largest empires that had hitherto existed; when they begin (again), we see the emergence of new empires that surpass their precursors in terms of their maximum size and other indicators (first of all M and TI). The first era spans the millennium between 600 BC and 600. The second era covers the 600–1200 period. He calls it the Muslim era, as the rise of a new record-holding empire – the Muslim Caliphate – marked its beginning. The third he calls the Mongol era, using the same basis, dating it to 1200–1600. Taagepera sees the beginning of the third phase of the history of empires at 1600, and calls it the British-Russian era.

When distinguishing these phases and eras, Taagepera cannot get by using only the quantitative criteria of the area of the largest empires (or the three largest empires). According to the face value of these criteria, there is not such a great difference between the second and third phase as can be observed in the beginning of the second phase or between separate eras in the second phase. Only the British Empire (35 million km^2 in 1925) was larger than the Mongol Empire whose area at the height of its expansion reached 24 million km^2. Yet this size difference is not so great as the one

which distinguished the Mongol Empire, a record-holder for its era, from the champion of an earlier era, the Caliphate (around 11 million km^2), which in turn surpassed the Han dynasty's China, which was the largest stable empire in the 600 BC–600 era (around 6 million km^2).[13] That is why he supplements quantitative periodisation criteria with etiological (causal) criteria, pointing out certain differences in empire building and ruling technology which he identifies between the phases of the history of empires.

Primitive transport and communications technology were an insurmountable limit to empire expansion and internal consolidation during the first two phases. Until 600 BC

> the maximum empire size during Phase 1 (1.3 million km^2) corresponds to a mean range of control of about 650 km (assuming approximately circular countries). The maximum speed of messages (by horse, without systematic relays) would have been 100 km per day at most. Thus the central control tended to fade when the communication time with the capital exceeded a week.
>
> (Taagepera 1978a: 121)[14]

Achaemenid rulers overcame this limit by inventing the rudimentary techniques of bureaucratic government – especially the delegation of authority to individuals (satraps) who were not members of the ruler's family or house and thus could not aspire to challenge the incumbent ruler. This and other innovations, such as the local division of authority into civil and military, the rapid rotation of central government representatives in provinces, and the creation of a road network and postal service, could not completely neutralise tendencies toward fragmentation or feudalisation. However, they did markedly weaken these centrifugal forces. That is why the maximum and especially the maximum stable area of the largest empires grew so significantly in the second phase.

Relying on his data and calculations, Taagepera attacks some "often heard" (Taagepera 1978a: 108) opinions about empires. Most important among them is the "Eurocentric" (specifically "Roman-centric") thinking about empires. Its main manifestation is the belief that the empire was a Roman invention, or that Rome was the largest empire in history or only at its time (Taagepera 1978a: 126). In fact, the Roman Empire does not even feature among the top twenty largest empires (based on maximum area) that ever existed. If we were to speak just about its epoch (the first era of the second phase, from 600 BC–600), then it was only third among its contemporaries. In terms of maximum stable area M (4.2 million km^2) it was surpassed not only by the Hsiung Nu Empire in the second–third centuries (7 ± 1 million km^2), but also the Qin-Han (5.2 million km^2) and Turkic empires in the sixth century (5 ± 1 million km^2).[15] The Achaemenid-Alexander the Macedonian-Seleucid empires also had the same M-value as Rome.

The Roman Empire did stand out for its duration, though (four centuries based on Taagepera's methodology). That is why its TI (21 million km^2C) is somewhat larger than the previously mentioned ephemeral nomadic empires' TI (the TI of the Hsiung Nu and Turkic khaganates was 4 ± 1 million km^2C each). However, it is not larger than the TI of two of its contemporaries. The Qin-Han Empire's TI was 22 million km^2C. The Parthian-Sassanid Empire had the same TI, despite being somewhat smaller than the Roman Empire (M = 3.1 million km^2), but it surpassed the latter in duration (seven centuries). If we would compare empires based on population, then in the entire history of civilisation, the absolute leader has always been China – even during those periods when the political entities that existed in its territory were not leaders in terms of area. In fact, the percentage of China's current population (around 20%) in the total population of the world is the smallest it has ever been in world history. As Taagepera writes, "most of the time since 400 BC, the territory of the present PRC has contained more than a quarter of humankind. At times it has represented more than a third: 35 percent in 200 and as much as 37 percent in 1800" (Taagepera 1997: 489).

The Eurocentric deformation of history prior to the seventeenth century was related to the beginning of Europe's global expansion that began at precisely that time. It culminated in the nineteenth century with the partition of the world between Western countries. Taagepera explains this outbreak of European expansion by the enduring technological superiority of the West since early modern times. It empowered Europeans to project their power to a hitherto unimaginable degree. Only after the telegraph was invented in the mid-nineteenth century were earlier restrictions imposed by communication technology for the centralised administration of large territories overcome. However, the Europeans' superiority in maritime travel made it possible to create overseas empires already in the seventeenth century, which in terms of their area could compare to the largest empires from earlier times. Unlike a majority of these earlier empires (a partial exception holds for those empires that were founded in the Mediterranean Sea basin), European colonial empires were not continental, but "thalassocratic" – based on military sea power. Great Britain, which in the early nineteenth century won the battle between European states over command of the seas, created the largest empire that ever existed (as was mentioned earlier, its maximum area in around 1925 was approximately 35 million km^2).

Taagepera argues that, as with any other instance of technological superiority at any time in history, this European superiority was only temporary. The Muscovite state managed to adopt innovations in European military technology in time, and became a leader in imperial expansion (rather than a target of it). Recall that Taagepera considers the state ruled by Muscovy's tsars, St Petersburg's emperors, the CPSU general secretaries and the post-1991 "presidents" to be the one and the same empire. Unlike many other imperiologists, he does not consider the countries of Central and Eastern Europe that came under its control after World War II a part of this empire,

"because these states remained formally distinct members of the international community (unlike Khiva and Bukhara in tsarist Russia or the Indian principalities in British India)" (Taagepera 1997: 482–483). That is why he puts the moment of Russia's maximum expansion at 1895, when the area of tsarist Russia reached 22.8 million km^2.

According to Taagepera, the second half of the twentieth century marked the onset of the "descending" phase of the world's political territorial concentration cycle that commenced in the seventeenth century. The change in the size of N_a gives the clearest testimony of this transformation. It dropped to its all-time minimum (N_a = 9) in 1925. By 1990, when the Europeans' thalassocratic colonial empires had disintegrated, it grew to 19, and jumped to 24 with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Taagepera notes that, in the modern world, there are many states whose size (not to mention their population) significantly surpass the largest states of the first phase as well as the first era of the second phase of the history of empires. However, it is difficult to envisage any kind of potential for internal fragmentation in most cases (e.g. Australia, Brazil, the U.S.). That is why a likely future scenario would be a new wave of territorial concentration, the only exception being Russia, because for its size and duration it seriously outweighs other empires of its time and has a strong potential for fragmentation. This is determined not just by its ethnic heterogeneity, but also by the economic pull exerted on many of the peripheries (first of all the Far East) by the Pacific Ocean space.

Further discussion of Taagepera's forecast and his analysis of the phases and eras of the history of empires would lead us astray from the topic of this book. Taagepera's observations about the second (Mongol) era of the second phase are most relevant, however, because the imperial history of the Grand Duchy is part of this era. What he says about the Grand Duchy in particular is of special interest. Knowing Taagepera's definition of empire, it is no surprise that he unswervingly considers the Grand Duchy one of the Mongol era's empires, as it was precisely in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries that the Grand Duchy was the largest state in Europe in terms of area. Figure 4.3. presents Taagepera's graphs of the territorial dynamics of empires from the Mongol era which, at a glance, allow a comparison of the Grand Duchy to other empires from its times.

Like other scholars in empire studies, Taagepera has the most difficulty with the identification of the Grand Duchy as an empire after its union with Poland. "If two states fuse, such as Lithuania and Poland around 1500, which one should we consider absorbed by the other?" (Taagepera 1978a: 112). On this occasion, I should note that it is most likely this difficulty that moves many scholars of empires and imperialism to exclude Lithuania or the joint Polish-Lithuanian state from their lists of empires. Taagepera does not offer a conceptual solution to this problem comparable to that for the problem of the duration of empires. As we can see from Figure 4.3., he gives an ad hoc solution to the specific case of Lithuania and Poland, asserting that Poland "absorbed" Lithuania. Yet he dates the beginning of the history

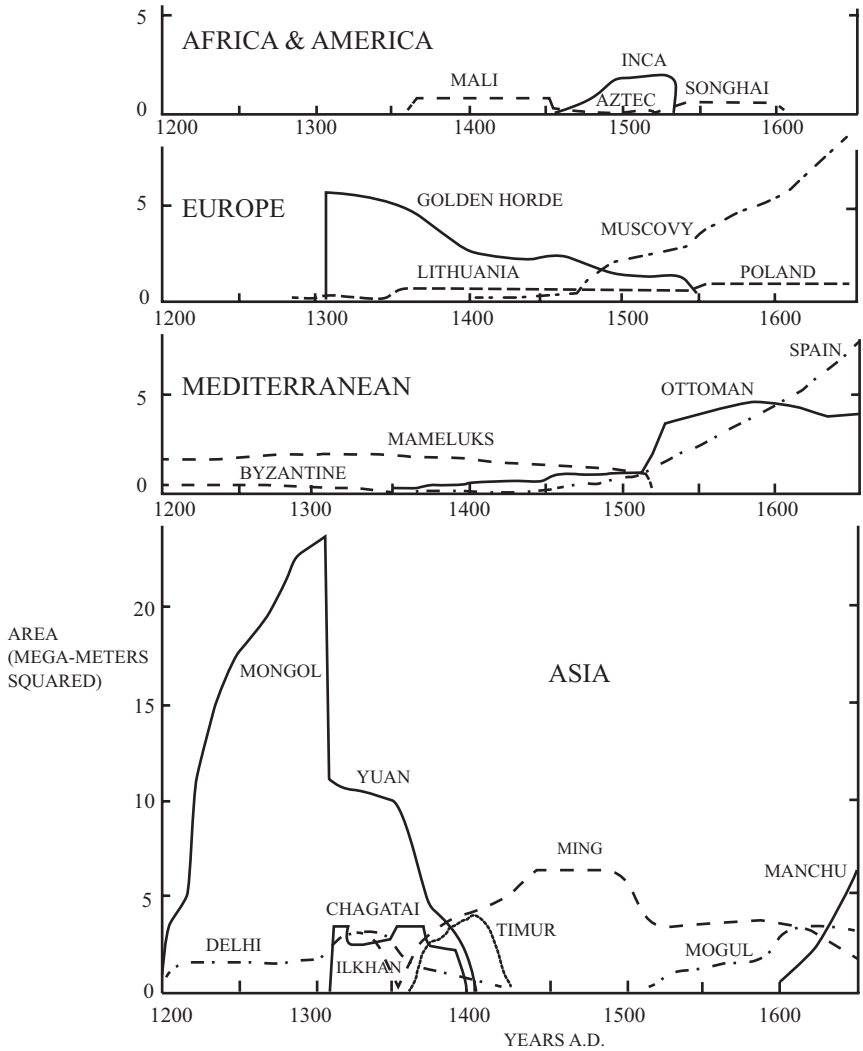

Figure 4.3 The Mongol era: expansion-contraction curves of areas of polities, years 1200–1600.

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of the empire that existed after this "absorption" (Taagepera calls it the "Lithuanian-Polish Union") at 1263, which is not a date from Polish history, but the year when Taagepera believes "Lithuania unified" (Taagepera 1997: 497).

This date could be called a "trembling" finger error, since 1236 is traditionally the beginning of Lithuania's statehood.[16] Something else that raises doubts is the area Taagepera gives for Lithuania: at 100,000 km^2, it is too small for 1263, and too large for 1236 (if a typing error was indeed at fault) (see chapter fifteen). According to Taagepera, in 1345 Lithuania subjugated Belarus, and as a result its area increased to 300,000 km^2. When northwestern Ukraine was annexed in 1380, the area of the Grand Duchy reached 700,000 km^2 (Taagepera 1979: 497). Further along, the year 1425 is singled out, when the area of the Grand Duchy reached 800,000 km^2. Taagepera dates the union with Poland at 1520, after which the state's area increased to 1 million km^2.[17] According to his chronology, in 1580 it grew to 1.05 million km^2 and reached its absolute maximum in 1650 (1.1 million km^2). In 1670 its area decreased to 0.9 million km^2, and a hundred years later (1770) to 0.8 million km^2. Following the First Partition in 1772 it decreased to 650,000 km^2. The last date given in Taagepera's chronology is 1795, when the "second and third partitions" took place (Taagepera 1997: 497).

Many of Taagepera's figures of the area of the Grand Duchy (and later of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth) differ from those which can be found in other sources. He tries to defend himself from this critique in advance, writing that

> no science based on measurement can be exact. Measurement always involves a margin of error. Calling physics an 'exact science' is a misnomer that has survived only because all physicists know what it stands for, namely, quantitative science striving for as precise measurements as the state of the art allows.
>
> (Taagepera 1978a: 111)

In fact, in determining the area of empires by Taagepera's method, a margin of error is unavoidable, as the further we look into the past, the fewer reliable landmarks for historical cartography can be found in historical sources. It is thus often the case that different atlases provide a different contour for the border of the same polity at the same given time. In a majority of the cases of ancient empires, it would be hazardous to specify these boundaries at all, since, precisely because of the fact that they were empires, they possessed wide and shifting frontier zones rather than borders.[18] Thus, Taagepera makes the reservation that an error of ±10% applies to all of his area data that are based on map measurements (unless a larger margin of error is given).

Taagepera, though schooled in the exact sciences, has a habit of giving rounded figures (1580 instead of 1582 and 1670 rather than 1667, when the truces of Yam Zapolsky and Andrusovo respectively were signed between the state of Muscovy and the PLC) and of merging dates (1795 instead of separately mentioning 1793 and 1795 as the years of the second and third partitions of the PLC respectively). Professional historians might not forgive

him for this, as in these cases errors appear without any clear reason. However, these errors are of interest as examples of the dangers that lie in wait for a physicist, chemist or even quantitative social scientist when they try to apply their knowledge and thinking habits to history, or to another one of the humanities. If Taagepera makes so many errors presenting fundamental chronological facts from the history of a brotherly Lithuanian nation, then to what degree can his factual claims about the ancient empires of the East or steppe nomads be trusted?

I would like to qualify these critical comments with two reservations. First, even a researcher who is exceptionally well read in history could hardly avoid the kind of mistakes that Taagepera makes. Practitioners of hologeistic statistical research unavoidably encounter the endemic depth-width dilemma: the more cases researchers include in the population or sample, the more they risk making an error about those cases of which they have the least knowledge. Second, even if there are many such errors in the sources, they may not undermine the credibility of the conclusions that result from the statistical analysis of this data. This is the case when these errors are random (non-systemic), while the probabilistic random sample or population is sufficiently large to get statistically significant findings. Taagepera's conclusion about the territorial concentration of polities as a mega-trend during the last five millennia of the history of humanity raises no doubts at all, regardless of how much "noise" (factual errors) there might be in his data. For my purposes, his criteria for the rise, adulthood, decline and duration of empires are of the utmost interest. I shall try to apply them in the third part. Unfortunately, Taagepera does not give his values for the TI, M, E, R, A, F or D for the Grand Duchy. I shall attempt to calculate them on my own, simultaneously correcting errors in Taagepera's data (see chapter fifteen).

Taagepera's papers are so important for the theoretical analysis of empires because they offer the most clear and consistent application of the strategy for concept formation in imperiological research, which is called minimalistic (see chapter three). Taagepera does not attempt to construct a quantitative concept for empire, although his methodology can be used for this aim. For him, empire is not a property measured at an ordinal or higher level, but a qualitative category: empires are the sub-sets of polities. By defining it, Taagepera takes guidelines from that version of classical concept theory which demands that a good definition specify the necessary and sufficient membership conditions in the extension of the concept. Nevertheless, what he delivers does not meet these requirements.

Taagepera chooses a definition of empire which includes only two attributes: sovereignty (absence of a higher authority) and a large area whose threshold size is in turn determined based on the average sizes from a certain epoch or era.[19] We could agree that size (and, of course, sovereignty) matters for empire, although a definition of empire based on the idea of "family

resemblances" is thinkable, where no single attribute is a necessary condition to be an empire (see chapter three). However, should we consider all large-sized sovereign states empires? In this event, countries such as Brazil, Australia, Argentina, Ukraine and India would all qualify as empires. But are they really empires?[20] Thus a large area (even when using a historically relative concept of size) and sovereignty are perhaps necessary attributes of an empire, but taken together they do not make up a sufficient condition of membership in the set of empires, because some large, sovereign states are not empires.

In addition, Taagepera's description is oriented towards the so-called continental empires and leaves a variety of polities that researchers call maritime empires outside the doors of the "empires' club" (except for maritime empires such as the British Empire, which gradually acquired huge land-based colonies). He includes one such empire – Rome's mortal enemy, Carthage – on his list of ancient empires, but at the same time he acknowledges that it might not actually match the empire concept he uses (Taagepera 1979: 124). Other scholars consider the Delian League, subordinated to Athens in the fifth century BC, or medieval Genoa and Venice, as well as Portugal in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as maritime empires (see Barfield 2001; Doyle 1986). Thus the area criterion should be treated more liberally, incorporating at least the internal seas under their control into the area of empires. But this, of course, is of little relevance when applying Taagepera's methodology to the issue of the Grand Duchy's imperiality.

Notes

1 Taagepera has lived in Estonia since 1991, where he takes an active part in the country's academic and political life. He was a political science professor at the University of Tartu (until 1998), a candidate in the presidential elections in 1992 (winning 23% of votes) and was one of the founders of the new political party *Res Publica*, which won the most votes in the parliamentary elections of 2003.

2 In the formula given, T stands for territory, t for time, and e is the so-called Euler number – the mathematical constant that is the base of the natural algorithm whose value is $e \approx 2.71828$.

3 In this research, "polities" refer not just to states but also to various associations of people (e.g., clans, clan unions, lands) that enter into wars against each other and hold court trials to resolve conflicts between their members. See chapters five and sixteen for a further explication of differences and relations between polities, states and empires.

4 Providing an exact number of states is difficult as not all factually independent polities have been internationally recognised, whereas some recognised states (for example, Somalia) are failed states that exist only "on paper," since they have dissolved into several practically independent and warring political entities. Many authors (e.g. Gotthard 2013) do not accept this view of the post-Westphalian treaty sovereignty of the constituents of the Holy Roman Empire. I thank one of my anonymous reviewers for this observation.

5 In this case, the square of the total dry land on Earth (or 100^2) is divided by the sum of the square if polity areas or by the sum of the squares of these areas' percentage shares.
6 For this he used Michaely's geographical concentration index $C = 100\% \times [\Sigma (A_i / \Sigma A)^2]^{1/2}$, which was slightly different from HH_a. He explained his preference in his article from 1997.
7 Unfortunately, Taagepera does not provide an explicit definition of "state" that allows us to differentiate between states and pre-state political entities.
8 If we were to divide the total area of land (around 133 million km^2) by a larger (1 million) or smaller (100,000) number of "separate polities" we would have a larger average area for such a unit. However, it should be kept in mind that not all land is suitable for human habitation.
9 The e symbol in these equations is the already mentioned Euler number – the base of a natural algorithm function, while t means time. It begins from the selected pre-historic time point about which assumptions are made on what the values of N_a and N_p could have been then.
10 In his text published in 1997, Taagepera defines the duration of an empire somewhat differently than has just been explained: "Recall that duration time (D) is defined as duration at more than 50% of the polity's stable maximum size" (Taagepera 1997: 490). If this is a recommendation to recall the definition (D = F – A, where A is 80% of the stable maximum size M) from the earlier article (Taagepera 1978b: 191–192), then all that remains is to conclude that Taagepera forgot all about it. But it might also be the case that he changed the definition of D (see. Taagepera 1997: 480). If he considers the duration of an empire the period when its area surpasses 50% of its stable maximum size M, then the empire durations calculated in earlier articles would need to be extended (especially of those empires that rose slowly). The period of an empire's territorial contraction without breaking its continuity would also come out as being longer. As a result, the number of empires would also have to be recounted. Some of the polities that existed in the same territory that were considered separate empires (according to the $G / D > 0.3$ criterion) should be reconsidered as periods in the history of the same empire, as D would be longer with no change to G (gap duration).
11 Resting on the $G / D > 0.3$ criterion, Taagepera identifies three Assyrian empires – the Old (first half of 2000 BC), the Middle (fourteenth–early eleventh century BC) and the New, or third (900–605 BC).
12 The maximum area of the territory subordinated to the authority of Alexander the Macedonian was slightly smaller – around 5.2 million km^2 (Taagepera 1979: 121).
13 Indeed, the area of the Han Empire at one time could have reached from 6.5 to 9.6 million km^2. However, it remained at this level for no longer than 20 years (see Taagepera 1979: 127; Taagepera 1997: 481).
14 Taagepera neglects the possibility of central rule over a large territory without a capital city – the variant where a ruler and his court are constantly on the move.
15 These are not the Huns who flooded Europe in the fourth and fifth centuries but their ancestors and predecessors in Central and East Asia. See Barfield 1989 to learn about this empire.
16 Taagepera gives Allen F. Chew's *An Atlas of Russian History* (Chew 1967) and Ramsay Muir's *Atlas of Ancient and Classical History* (1961) as his references.
17 The correct date is 1569, when the Lublin Union was formed, founding the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Before that, the Grand Duchy and Poland formed a dynastic union in 1385 with the Krewo Act .
18 See also chapters five and fifteen.
19 It should be added that Taagepera does not explicitly specify the threshold values of imperiality he uses.

20 Undoubtedly, they might contain ethnic minorities and separatist movements claiming to represent these minorities. Such movements label encompassing states which they contest as "empires". In Ukraine (not to mention India), such minorities and movements do indeed exist. These are not just the Russian-speakers of Eastern Ukraine that are dissatisfied with the policies of "ukrainisation", but also the inhabitants of Transcarpathian Ukraine, who call themselves "Rusyns" and seek to create an autonomous or even a separate state. However, separatist movements can emerge in small states too.

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5 The empire and the inter-polity system

Views from international relations studies

I will continue with the examination of those definitions of empire that are produced in the context of qualitative research. Two broad linguistic domains (Gerring 2012: 119–121) or scholarly language users' communities can be distinguished here. One is international relations theory (or international relations studies, IRS), and the closely related jurisprudence branch, known as international law. Then there is comparative politics which, in turn, is very closely related to another jurisprudence branch called constitutional law, or legal "state theory", since both fields associate international relations with international law. In this chapter I will survey the concepts of empire from IRS. In the following chapter, the ideas of scholars in constitutional law and comparative politics researchers shall be discussed.

IRS focuses on the specific external features of empires that characterise their relations with other polities, their foreign politics, and the role they play in international politics. The keywords in this idea of empire are "influence", "control", "hegemony" and "domination". Comparative politics focuses upon the intrinsic or constitutive features of their polities that characterise their internal structure. They are outlined by words such as "centre", "metropole", "periphery", "ethno-cultural heterogeneity", etc.

How these keywords are used to articulate the concept of empire depends on theoretical approach. Both IRS and comparative politics are theoretically pluralist fields. The main competing approaches in IRS are realism, constructivism, liberalism (institutionalism) and neo-Marxism. As in other social science disciplines, the academic "struggle for survival" urges scholars to accentuate the originality of their approach over any similarities they share with other conceptions. Thus, specialist literature makes the distinction between the many versions of realism – classical realism (Morgenthau 1948), neo-realism (Waltz 1979), structural realism (Buzan, Jones and Little 1993), etc. Such internal differentiation also characterises other theoretical approaches. For the purposes of this book, my primary interest lies in contemporary international relations theories, but only as a source of ideas for interpreting the history of the Grand Duchy. Therefore, I will not discuss any internal differences within the same approach.

The realists share the belief that conflict over the limited resources for survival is a perennial and insurmountable feature of the human condition.

In the very beginning of the modern age, Thomas Hobbes classically formulated this belief in the statement that "the war of all against all" defines the natural state of humanity. This is a condition where people are free to use the most effective means to achieve their goals – deception or physical force. However, so long as these means are used, people have neither the incentives nor the opportunities to engage in productive, wealth-creating activities: the desperate fight over the re-distribution of those scarce survival resources provided by nature swallows all their time and other resources. The social contract as a foundation of a state terminates this condition. The key obligation of all persons in the social contract is to cease using physical force as a means for achieving their goals and to transfer the monopoly rights to the use of physical force to the sovereign or state (Hobbes 1996 [1651]: 82–86, 111–122). Its most essential function is to maintain domestic order, i.e., to ensure the security of the state's citizens or subjects.

The state forces its fully-fledged citizens or subjects to no longer use physical force against one another, although such citizens or subjects themselves may preserve the right to use physical force against the people who are personally dependent on them – wives, children, slaves or serfs. Gradually, however, the use of physical force against others becomes increasingly restricted, as the state's monopoly over physical force becomes ever more comprehensively implemented. The most influential definition of the state, authored by Max Weber, expresses this kind of state concept: the state is a compulsory political organisation whose "administrative staff successfully upholds the claim to the *monopoly* of the *legitimate* use of physical force in the enforcement of its order" (Weber 1978 [1922]: 54).

The principle of statehood is hierarchy, while anarchy means equality of all parties. An actor in a hierarchy receives a promise of security or assistance to ensure this security in exchange for placing control over his behaviour in the hands of someone else. Under the conditions of anarchy, actors can trust only in their own powers. The more powerful one is, the safer they are. Because everyone wants to be safe, everyone seeks to acquire as much power as possible, or to defeat that same will in others. Thus the striving for security by all actors brings them to that "war of all against all" that Hobbes considered a distinctive feature of the state of anarchy.[1] The emergence of a state solves this problem within the singular state. However, so long as there is more than just one state, that solution can only be local. Globally, this problem is irresolvable, as having ensured domestic peace, "the war of all against all" becomes the principle behind the relations of states themselves.

Realist international relations theory seeks to disclose the laws of this anarchy between states. The most important one is the law of a power balance: when one member of an international system becomes so strong that it becomes a danger to its neighbours, the latter form a coalition which blocks the first member's attempts at changing the status quo. Once this attempt is subdued, the greatest source of danger becomes the most powerful member of the blocking coalition. In this case, a new coalition is formed

against the new powerful threat, and includes the former foe who might have just recently been defeated by the alliance of its adversaries. As in market competition, where every member seeks her own benefit and ensures the optimal use of resources, so too in the international system: the power balance mechanism ensures the security of its individual members. Careful and timely selection of suitable coalition partners means that even small and weak states can survive.

One of the greats of classical realism, Hans H. Morgenthau (1904–1980), defines imperialism as a state's foreign "policy devised to overthrow the *status quo*" (Morgenthau 1948: 34) – the power balance existing in the international system at a particular time. Morgenthau gives three typical situations that induce states to pursue an imperialist policy:

(1) Having won a war (regardless of who started it), the victor feels tempted to safeguard herself against revenge from the defeated for all times. The most reliable way of achieving this is liquidation (annexation) of the defeated side.
(2) Having lost a war yet remaining an independent actor in the international system, it is natural for a state to seek revenge – to push the victor from its position in the power hierarchy that it assumed after its victory.
(3) When a member of the international system weakens or fails, a "power vacuum" emerges, which more powerful members aim to occupy.

Further ahead, Morgenthau distinguishes three typical aims of imperialist foreign policy:

> the objective of imperialism can be the domination of the whole politically organised globe, that is, a world empire. Or it can be an empire or hegemony of approximately continental dimensions. Or it can be a strictly localised preponderance of power.
>
> (Morgenthau 1948: 36)

It is worth noting the difference between these aims and their realisation. A certain state may have globalist, continental or local imperialist aims, yet it might not possess the power to realise them. In such cases, imperialism remains a dream or goes no further than salon discussions. Even if the resources and political will required for seeking imperialist aims were to exist, that does not mean that this imperialist policy would necessarily be successful: the adversaries of the imperialist country might be even more powerful and succeed in blocking its aspirations.

Finally, Morgenthau distinguishes three methods for imperialism, each one characterised the means used to change the international system's status quo: military, economic and cultural. Military imperialism is "the most obvious, the most ancient, and also the crudest form of imperialism"

(Morgenthau 1948: 38). It is simply a military conquest. Economic imperialism is the alteration of the global, continental or regional power balance by means of foreign economic control. These include loans, foreign trade links (if the economically controlled country does not have any other destinations to which it can export its production) and capital investment. The most subtle (and from a long-term perspective, the most successful) imperialist policy method is cultural imperialism, because "it aims not at the conquest of territory or at the control of economic life, but at the conquest and control of the minds of men as an instrument for changing the power relations between two nations" (Morgenthau 1948: 40).

Successful cultural imperialism affects a change in the culture of target countries. When that success is complete, the entire population of the target country assimilates, losing its national and ethnic identity. The formula for identity "we the Dacians", or "we the Lithuanian Catholics" is replaced in its self-consciousness by the formula "we the Romans" or "we the Lithuanians, Soviet people, younger brothers of the Great Russian nation" or something along those lines. Yet this is possible only in the long-run perspective. Cultural imperialism achieves minimal success when a minority in sympathy with the imperialist country, enamoured with its cultural values or endorsing its ideology appears, which under certain circumstances can function like the imperialist country's "fifth column". Cultural imperialism "softens up the enemy, it prepares the ground for military conquest or economic penetration" (Morgenthau 1948: 41).

If a power balance mechanism works, then how do we explain the frequent success of imperialism and rise of empires? Realist theory points to two main causes. First, internal "shocks" or shake-ups might affect the system when, due to domestic causes, one (or more) member(s) of the inter-polity system experiences internal crisis (revolts, revolutions, civil war, unrest). An extreme case would be the collapse of the state into complete turmoil, when its social life reverts back to the condition of "Hobbesian anarchy".

This would naturally change the international system's status quo, leaving the failed state easy prey for its neighbours. Even a state clinging to the status quo cannot remain on the sidelines and observe how aggressive neighbours pull apart the failed state. If they were to subordinate or partition and annex the failed state, the aggressors would grow stronger, and the threat to the placid member's security would increase. The second cause for the unravelling of the power balance and the establishment of conditions leading to the formation of an empire is an external shock, where external forces destroy the power balance.

Up until now I have used the term "international system" in the singular. However, a truly global international system has existed on Earth only from the beginning of the modern age. International relations theory arose by generalising observations whose object was relations between European states after the Peace of Westphalia of 1648 that entrenched the principle of equal sovereignty of modern European states. When it is applied to

pre-Westphalian times, its very title of "international relations" theory sounds as anachronistic as the use of the word "atom" in theories of modern physics. According to its etymological, and also primary, meaning (in Ancient Greek philosophy), "atom" meant the smallest indivisible part of matter.[2] Hydrogen and oxygen atoms in modern physics are not these kinds of atoms. Similarly, in medieval Europe or in other pre-modern civilisations, it is difficult to find polities that would completely correspond to Weber's definition of a state presented earlier, much less nations in the contemporary sense. We can only speak about proto-states or proto-nations. Of course, applying international relations theory beyond the boundaries of post-Westphalian Europe and to pre-modern Europe, the "international relations theory" title can still be used, just like physicists did not reject using the term "atom" once it was established that atoms are divisible. However, in order to avoid anachronisms, it is better to call the object of international relations theory the inter-polity rather than the international system. This system consists of polities – groups of people (or members) ruled by political organs which also represent them in relations with similar groups.[3]

Contemporary states are polities. But polities are not just contemporary states and not just states. "Weberian" states became typical and standard constituent units of the European inter-polity system only in the modern age. This was the outcome of the fundamental change in the preceding inter-polity system that affected its members' identities (they became sovereign territorial states) and the "rules of the game" (Gilpin 1981: 39–44). Gradually, a sovereign territorial state identity became mandatory around the globe: only those collective subjects which possessed specific attributes (a government controlling a certain territory and its borders, a flag, an anthem, etc.) could aspire to legitimately belong to the international system. Yet it would be hard to deny that such entities as *Hezbollah* in Lebanon, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant or *Al Qaeda* (surviving as a self-fulfilling myth) are also its de facto members (despite being illegal, and not holding "citizenship rights").

Of course, both the narrower international system and wider inter-polity system concepts are only useful if membership in such systems can be empirically operationalised. Up until 1492, political entities that had existed in the Old and New World undoubtedly belonged to different inter-polity systems, if only because their populations had no idea of each other's existence. However, this knowledge alone would not have sufficed for them to belong to the same inter-polity system. Before the times of Alexander the Macedonian, Ancient Greeks and the inhabitants of India did not know about each other's existence. In the first ages AD, Ancient Romans and the Chinese not only knew about each other's existence, they also traded along the Silk Road. Infectious disease epidemics also travelled down the same routes, plaguing Europe and the Roman Empire several times (McNeill 1976). But can it be said that India, China, Central Asia or the Near East, or the southern or western parts of Europe, actually belonged to the same inter-polity system at the time?

What determines membership in the same inter-polity system? Noted British international relations theoretician Hedley Bull proposed a very influential answer to this question. According to him, states belong to the same inter-polity system if they are "in regular contact with one another, and where in addition there is interaction between them sufficient to make behaviour of each a necessary element in the calculations of the other" (Bull 2002 [1977]: 9–10). I would like to propose a more specific recipe using the vocabulary of game theory, a branch of rational choice theory whose object is a rational choice in a strategic situation. Polities A, B, C, . . ., belong to the same inter-polity system if most foreign and some domestic policy decisions of the governments of all these polities:

(1) can have positive or negative effects on the interests of other polities;
(2) seek reliable information about the interests of all the other polities when forming their foreign policies, and possess the potential to react to the policies of other polities;
(3) take into consideration the possible responsive actions of all the other polities' governments when making foreign policy decisions.

In other words, polities belong to the same inter-polity system if they are members of the same strategic interaction system. An analytical model for such a system is a game. My definition of an inter-polity system simply adapts the more general definition of strategic situation in game theory. According to this definition, the distinguishing features of the strategic situation are interdependence of actors' decisions (A) the outcomes of each decision depend on what the other actors choose; (B) actors' knowledge of that dependence; (C) the choice of actions guided by that knowledge and (D) knowledge of what other actors know. Thus, being a member of a particular inter-polity system means participating in the *one, same* game.

The proviso about "the-one-and-the-same" game is necessary, as one actor can participate in more than one game simultaneously. This is the so-called nested games phenomenon (Tsebelis 1999). An actor's decisions in each separate game in which she participates affect the decisions of her counter-parties in other games. In turn, her intermediate results in other games affect actors' choices in this game: they determine how much and what kinds of resources she can use. However, the player's counter-parties play without knowing what the counter-parties of the first actor in her other games are doing (because they are not able to find out, cannot find out on time, or are uninterested).

Figuratively speaking, this is not a group game at the same table but the case where the player plays several different simultaneous games at several different tables. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the military pressure exerted on the Grand Duchy at the Nemunas River by the Teutonic Order depended on how events in Palestine and Spain were unfolding. The military and political situation in these countries where Western

Christianity and Islam clashed affected the decisions of the Roman popes as to what crusades to announce in particular years and to which military theatre to send volunteering crusaders in the years after. However, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Europe's Christian countries, the Muslim states in Spain, the Near East and North Africa did not all belong to the same inter-polity system. There is no evidence to suggest that the grand dukes of the Grand Duchy would have known anything about or would have tried to coordinate their actions with the "Saracens" in Spain or the Near East. The Teutonic Order's war against the Grand Duchy was one of several wars that Christian Europe engaged in against pagans and other heretics in different peripheries, and it was not on one front line of the same war. When a part of the Teutonic Order's forces were still at war against the Saracens in Palestine in the second half of the thirteenth century, the Order was a common enemy of Lithuania's rulers and Egypt's Mamluk state as well as other Near East Muslim polities, though Lithuania was not an ally of these polities.

Polities that belong to the same system maintain regular diplomatic ties and participate in the same wars: either as allies or opponents, depending on which system member they perceive as the greatest threat at a particular time. Of course, potential aggressors or allies are first of all geographic neighbours. However, one of the most effective ways of neutralising a potential threat from a neighbour is to form an alliance with a neighbour who is not an immediate neighbour of the country under threat. The rogue neighbour then faces the threat of a two-front war (West and East, or North and South) against two geographically distant allies. If we observe such a pattern repeating in the relations of a certain group of states, we find rather convincing evidence of all parties belonging to the same inter-polity (international) system (Tilly 1992: 161–191).

The scale and limits of the inter-polity system depends on many circumstances: geographical location, the condition of communication and transport technology. Communication and transport technology is important in how far it allows polities to project their military power (i.e., to raise a realistic military threat against other polities). Fateful turning points in the evolution of these technologies were the domestication of horses, and later camels, and the construction of ships suited to ocean crossings jointly with the attainment of navigation skills on the open sea. Once horses and camels were domesticated, the steppes and deserts ceased being natural obstacles shielding agrarian civilisations from external threats. The era of "steppe imperialism" commenced. Advances in shipping technology served as a basis for the rise of European "maritime imperialism", which joined many of the pre-existing inter-polity systems into one global international system. Its precursors were the maritime imperialisms of the Ancient Greeks that consolidated the lands along the shores of the Mediterranean and Black seas into one system, and of the Scandinavian Vikings later, which carried out the same role in Northern Europe.

Inter-polity systems that existed prior to the modern age were not global. Even when the global international systems are already formed, regional and continental international subsystems stand out within their borders. Although all states are mutually interrelated in the modern world, there are but a few that hold interests or who could project their power across all continents and regions. Great Britain was this kind of state in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the U.S. and the Soviet Union in the second half of the twentieth century, and the U.S. alone in the contemporary world. The weaker a state's economic, military and cultural power, the narrower its sphere of foreign policy interests. States whose interests – and power to defend them – comprise at least a continent-sized inter-polity (sub)system may be called great powers.[4] Some scholars also distinguish secondary great powers, whose spheres of interest and power are limited to a certain region. These are regional great powers, which are located at the top of local power hierarchies. American researcher Douglas Lemke (2002: 91) identifies Egypt and Israel in the Near East, India in South Asia, Vietnam in South East Asia, Senegal in West Africa and Nigeria in the Gulf of Guinea, etc. as regional great powers in this way.

Political journalists sometimes call global great powers (or superpowers), or even continental and regional great powers, empires. However, there needs to be a differentiation between the concepts of "great power" and "empire". All empires are global, continental or at least regional great powers. However, a great power is not necessarily an empire. From the viewpoint of realist international relations theory, an empire is a great power that has already destroyed ("swallowed") a regional, continental inter-polity or even (some time in the future) a global international system. Realists also designate as empires great powers that only raise the threat of the inter-polity system's collapse. An empire emerges in place of the collapsed smaller or larger sized inter-polity system. Empires themselves may be classified as regional, continental or global, depending on the scale of that inter-polity system which the empire overthrew or whose stability it endangers. When it has annihilated a regional or even a continental inter-polity system, an empire faces other empires which have also behaved in the same way or threaten to do so in other regions or continents. Thus the empire remains a great power in the broader scaled inter-polity system. In the view of realists, the title of 100% or complete empire would best suit a global empire or a global state, one that "solves" the Hobbesian problem of order on a global scale.[5]

Once this kind of empire emerges, the inter-polity system itself would no longer exist as an object of international relations theory. This would also be the time when foreign policy and diplomacy would end as specific kinds of social action: at least until contact is established with extraterrestrial civilisations. As realists, we should expect that the same laws that applied for inter-polity systems on Earth will apply for interstellar relations systems also. Therefore, we would fear that the fate that awaits the Earth's empire

contacting extraterrestrial empires will essentially be no different than what happened to the Incan and Aztec Empires once Europeans "discovered" the New World.

Although an actual global empire has not yet existed, the creation and dissolution of multitudes of regional empires or their transformation into other kinds of polities – having become parts of larger scale (continental and global) inter-polity systems – is a historical fact. In fact, historians who are employed by empires that have not dissolved but have been transformed into other kinds of political entities (modern nation states) do not narrate histories of their nations as those of the failure of local or regional international systems. Instead, they craft grand narratives starting with the image of "feudal" or another kind of fragmentation, followed by the creation of a "centralised state" or a "unification" of the French, German, etc. nations. In fact, nations did not exist before empires. Empires created nations which transform themselves into nation states provided they last for many generations. From the realist viewpoint, in all these cases the process did repeat in a fractal way that shall one day bring humanity into one, global state through the collapse of the multi-polar or bi-polar power balance system.[6]

Classical realism emphasises inter-polity systems' stability, and the ability of the power balance mechanism to protect it from collapse. At present this kind of approach is increasingly accused of Eurocentrism. Critics claim that the longevity of the international system that existed in Europe in 1648–1945 was an exceptional and atypical phenomenon, explained by special, exclusive circumstances (Kaufman 1997; Kaufman, Little and Wohlforth 2007; Wohlforth, Little et al. 2007). All hitherto existing international systems collapsed as they turned into empires. Each of the large historical empires was the descendant of an inter-polity system that once existed in its territory.

The China of the "Warring States" epoch (465–221 BC) was once an inter-polity system composed of seven states. It became an empire when one state (the Qin) overpowered and annexed the others. Classical Greece (from the sixth to the fourth centuries BC) was also an inter-polity system in terms of realist theory, when it consisted of numerous city-states competing for influence. It failed when all of them came under Macedonia's control, which then used the unified Greek forces to conquer the neighbouring Achaemenid (Persian) Empire. Its rise in the sixth century BC was just another collapse of the Near East's inter-polity system. Before the Persians, all the lands of the Near East were already repeatedly "united" in the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires (Liverani 2001).

Analysing and comparing the self-destruction processes of inter-polity systems, contemporary realists claim that there are no guarantees that polities threatened by the rise of a stronger neighbour will necessarily join forces together to try to stop or block the rogue state's imperialist policy. The weaker members with an interest in such a collective good actually find themselves in a prisoner's dilemma. Each of the weaker interested parties wish that the

rising power's hegemonic or imperialist policy would suffer a rebuff. However, an even greater interest lies in seeing a course of events where the costs of the war with this imperialist polity would fall on other members of the system. So every polity threatened by a rising empire cherishes the hope of remaining on the sidelines in order to make use of the advantages offered by the *tertium gaudens* situation.[7] The polity that manages to avoid entangling itself in a war with the imperialist polity leaves itself a window of opportunity to enter the conflict later on, once other participants have weakened, and then to sway its outcome – to change the power balance – to its advantage. However, when each member of an inter-polity system tries to pass the costs of blocking an imperialist polity onto others, the imperialist polity can take this opportunity to tackle each one in turn.

Aside from this "buck-passing" mechanism, an inter-polity system's transformation into an empire can be brought on by the "bandwagon" mechanism, when the weaker polities do not side with other potential victims of the imperialist polity but endeavour to ally with it, seeking their part in the "spoils of war". The imperialist polity can exploit this mechanism by carrying out a *divide et impera* policy that once again allows it to disrupt any unions turned against it and to tackle its victims one by one.[8]

The realist theory approach dominated during the Cold War. Its appeal, seemingly, lay in its offering a common-sense and objective portrayal of the international policy situation of the time. The situation grew more complicated once the Soviet Union collapsed. In the realist approach, the unipolar domination of the U.S. (which has lasted for more than twenty years now) in the global international system is puzzling and abnormal. If we base our analysis on realist assumptions, in the future we should expect that the global international system will either collapse when the U.S. quashes the sovereignty of states still conducting independent domestic and foreign policy (such as China, Russia and Iran), transforming itself into the true global empire, or that a new superpower (probably China) will rise to challenge the U.S.'s hegemony, or that an international coalition opposing the U.S. will emerge (Layne 1993; Mearsheimer 2001).[9]

As neither prospect is acceptable to many (especially "good") Europeans, over the last twenty years we have observed an increase in the popularity of alternatives to the realist approach. The most radical of these is constructivism, which in IRS stands for a culturalist (or idealist) explanation of social phenomena in the inter-polity systems. The keystone of constructivists is the statement "that the most important structures in which states are embedded are made of ideas, not material forces. Ideas determine the meaning and content of power, the strategies by which states pursue their interests, and interests themselves" (Wendt 1999: 309).

If the governments of polities belonging to the inter-polity system believe that other polities are enemies seeking to conquer them, then in that system a "Hobbesian culture of anarchy" dominates, so called by the most famous contemporary constructivist, Alexander Wendt. A culture such as this is a self-fulfilling prophecy. If a polity perceives other polities as potential

aggressors, it seems rational to behave according to the principle of "kill or be killed". Noticing the neighbouring polity's preparations "to kill", any other polity is left only with the option of defence by attacking first. Pre-emptive attack confirms the anticipations of the attacked polity about the aggressive intentions of its neighbours. When a Hobbesian culture of anarchy dominates, all members of the inter-polity system are revisionists in that they seek to implement imperialist policy by liquidating all external foes and by becoming empires themselves. If such aspirations are not manifest in actual policies, it is not because they are unjust or immoral, but because the polity is too weak to play the imperialist policy game and is thus its object rather than its subject.

However, unlike neo-realists, constructivists do not consider this kind of behaviour of polities as natural or determined by the very nature of the inter-polity system. States can perceive each other quite differently – not as enemies, but as rivals or friends:

> The posture of enemies is one of threatening adversaries who observe no limits in their violence toward each other; that of rivals is one of competitors who will use violence to advance their interests but refrain from killing each other; and that of friends is one of allies who do not use violence to settle their disputes and work as a team against security threats.
>
> (Wendt 1999: 258)

Wendt has named the culture of anarchy in which states perceive each other as rivals after John Locke, although Hugo Grotius, the classic scholar of international law, might be a better eponym. Alternatively, this kind of culture can be called "Westphalian", since according to Wendt it assumed supremacy in relations between European states after the Peace of Westphalia (1648). Then sovereignty became not just a factual characteristic of the most powerful states but also an institution of international law, enshrining even militarily weak states' right to exist.

The principle of "kill or be killed" in state relations has been replaced by the principle "live and let live". War remains a justified form of defending state interests, yet it has its limitations. The Lockean culture of anarchy justifies a war over strategic advantage or territory, but not a war that seeks to annihilate a rival state. However, it is only by such wars (or at least according to Wendt) that an empire can be created – a universal state unifying in its borders or subordinating the entire inter-polity system.[10] Thus, so long as the Lockean culture of anarchy dominates, the building of an empire is made an illegal foreign policy. If an imperialist state nonetheless emerges (such as France under Napoleon I), an opposing coalition is created that seeks to reestablish the status quo at least partially. Indeed, the banning of imperialist policy in Locke's culture of anarchy was not universal from the very beginning. Once the technological superiority of European states became apparent in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, they started to

expand overseas, making up for the restrictions on territorial expansion in continental Europe laid down by Westphalian international law. Gradually they partitioned almost all the non-European world among themselves.

According to Wendt (1999: 279–297), after World War II, when decolonisation had ended, the principles of the Lockean culture of anarchy were universally applied. Even the completely weak (failed) and collapsed states in Africa or Asia no longer have any reasons to fear annexation by a stronger neighbour. Even if the most powerful states in the world do meddle in their domestic affairs, it is only because they want to help to restore them as "normal" Westphalian territorial states, capable of controlling their borders (stopping the flood of "illegal migrants" from leaving) and of maintaining internal order.

Wendt sees a third anarchy culture arising in contemporary international politics, which he calls the Kantian culture, after German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), whose perpetual peace project offered the vision of a future global "federation of free states" (Kant 1991 [1795]: 125–130). According to Kant, "this would mean establishing a federation of peoples. But a federation of this sort would not be the same thing as an international state" (Kant 1991 [1795]: 102). Wendt's interpretation is that Kant's perpetual peace is "good" anarchy. As with Hobbesian anarchy, it does not feature a central government or hierarchy (all states are equal). Differently from Lockean anarchy, in Kantian anarchy all states have guarantees not only of survival but also of freedom from violence. War or the threat of war ceases being a justified means for states to settle their conflicts. If there is a threat to one state's security, the principle "all for one, and one for all" applies.

Wendt sees the strongest manifestations of the Kantian culture of anarchy in the mutual relations of the Western states that formed the NATO bloc in 1949. At the time of its appearance, NATO was in effect no different than earlier military-political state alliances. Its aim was to counterbalance the common threat posed by the Soviet Union and its satellites. However, NATO remained in place even once this threat disappeared. Wendt explains the vitality of NATO by the birth of the new anarchy culture in relations among allies, differentiating between alliance and friendship between nations (Wendt 1999: 298–299).

States that are partners in alliance still look upon one another as potential rivals or aggressors. When a common threat disappears, the alliance can fall to pieces quite easily, or it can be replaced by a new alliance that one of yesterday's allies can make with the former common foe. According to Wendt, during NATO's long period of existence, its members have turned from simple partners into friends, internalising norms of Kantian anarchy. They cannot even imagine the use of violence to resolve internal conflicts, while threats to their friends' security are viewed as threats to their own security, even when those threats do not in any way actually impinge on their own security. Wendt associates the bright future of humanity with NATO's friendship of nations becoming universal.

As my book is not about the prospects of all humanity, I will not delve deeper into who is right – Wendt (as fine as he may sound), or the analysts who spot a renaissance of imperial structures in contemporary international politics (e.g. Lopata and Statkus 2006). A realist Russian or Chinese scholar could suspect that constructivist theories themselves might actually be another weapon of Western cultural imperialism ("cheap talk") to "soften" geopolitical bodies that persist in opposing the U.S.'s hegemony, quelling them with lullabies about the dawn of a fundamentally different world, whilst actually implementing traditional *Realpolitik*.

Constructivism has the least to offer for research on the Grand Duchy's imperial history. First, it is not just an idealist, but a neo-idealist theory, as it is not the influence of ideas in general on international politics that is so critical for Wendt and his like, but the impact of international relations theories on their object. In the view of constructivists, politicians who during their university studies had the "outdated" realist theory hammered into their heads are probably the most important obstacle to the establishment of the Kantian culture of anarchy. Its time will come when students who have digested constructivist, or at least institutionalist (see further), international relations theory will become top officials in foreign affairs ministries (the institutionalist theory will be briefly introduced in this chapter below). In fact, the impact of international relations theories on international politics is to be expected, since we observe frequent "personal unions" between academic political science and practical politics. Political scientists with significant academic achievements (e.g. Henry Kissinger, Condoleezza Rice or Zbigniew Brzezinski) increasingly often become foreign ministers or their equals. However, in the deeper past, the science of international relations did not yet exist, thus the phenomenon that so attracts the attention of constructivists also did not exist: how does some scholarly theory create or change this object?

Second, Wendt himself claims that the further back into the past of humanity we go, the fewer manifestations of Lockean and especially Kantian culture of anarchy we can see. As Wendt notes, in pre-Westphalian times the dominant logic behind the formation of polities' collective identities was natural selection, which benefited polities that had internalised the Hobbesian world view (Wendt 1999: 321–344). As they believed that they lived in a Hobbesian world ("kill or be killed"), the leaders of polities could do nothing but behave in a Hobbesian way, thereby making the world Hobbesian: a world whose realities are best reflected in realist theory or models based upon it. Thus, what emerges from Wendt's own assumptions is that realist theory or explanatory models created on its basis are what best suit pre-Westphalian times, even though, strictly speaking, it is not a true theory.[11]

Third, he makes the wrong assumption that the list of Hobbesian, Lockean and Kantian cultures of anarchy comprehensively includes all forms of international (or inter-polity) political culture. This is the result of

Eurocentrism, something which Wendt is unable to avoid. In actual fact, in pre-modern times, it was not anarchy cultures that dominated in all civilisations but hierarchy cultures, yet he makes no mention of them at all (I shall return to this shortcoming in Wendt's theory). This historical insensitivity stops constructivism from displaying its potential in the study of history.[12]

Therefore, we find many useful concepts and questions in the third influential international relations theory approach, which is called institutionalism, or liberalism.[13] A group of researchers known as the English school are its most famous representatives in contemporary international relations theory.[14] Its distinguishing feature is its focus on the autonomous role of international law in international politics. In a realist approach, international law is not real law. "Real" law consists of norms and contracts guaranteed by the sovereign (state). As Hobbes stressed, "covenants, without the sword, are but words, and of no strength to secure a man at all" (Hobbes 1991 [1651]: 111). Thus real law operates only within states themselves, while the "state of nature" survives in their mutual relations, where deception (propaganda) and brute power rule. In the situation of a conflict between states there is no judge to whom to complain if one side feels it has been wronged. Even if states in conflict agree to appeal to a third state to arbitrate in their conflict, the state that is recognised as being right must still implement this court's decision itself, if its opponent does not comply.

Institutionalists do not agree with the claim that "if there is no state, then there is no law". As social beings, humans have never lived in the condition of "war of all against all". They lived in larger or smaller communities, in which membership meant the acceptance of certain unwritten or written rules (norms). Norms of both state-issued (formal) and spontaneously formed customary law are indeed only norms, because their violation did not somehow overturn their validity. They are important in that they draw a distinction between what is right or just and what is not, and to appeal to the remaining members of the community when one of their circle fails to act by those norms, thus impinging on the other members' interests.

In the institutionalist approach, norms analogous to those of customary law are established over time in relations between polities as well. It is often the case that they betray their allies by negotiations with a common enemy behind the group's back. Yet the fact that such negotiations always take place in secret shows that such behaviour is understood as wrong. Brute power can triumph against laws, but that does not mean that laws mean nothing at all – even when there is no one who can effectively defend them. Even for an assailant holding an absolute "hard-power" (or physical force) advantage, it is important not just to defeat (and subjugate) a victim, but to represent the act of aggression as a justified action for which the victim is guilty.

The group of polities that commits to common international law norms is the international (or inter-polity) law community. One of the major

authorities of the English school, Hedley Bull, recommends calling this community the "international society" or the "society of states".

> 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.
>
> (Bull 2002 [1977]: 13)

It is important to note that Bull understands the "society of states" concept not as an alternative to the international (inter-polity) system but as its complement. The boundaries of inter-polity societies and inter-polity systems by no means always correspond. Although the international system provides the basis for international society, not all of the polities that belong to a particular inter-polity political system belong to the same inter-polity society. The states that signed the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 all belonged to the same society of European Christian states. However, the Russian Empire, the Ottoman Empire (Turkey) and (perhaps) Iran belonged to the European international system of those days but did not belong to European international society. Evidence of the Ottoman Empire's membership in the European inter-polity system lies in the important role that Christian France's alliance with the Muslim Ottoman Empire played in France's struggles against the Spanish and Austrian Habsburgs, who in turn tried to establish an alliance with Persia. Russia was accepted into the European society of states in the early eighteenth century, yet it had acted as a member of the European inter-polity system earlier (Watson 1984). Turkey became a member of the European society of states in 1856 when the Treaty of Paris was signed, ending the Crimean War (1854–1856) (Naff 1984).

A global international system already existed in the nineteenth century, yet not all of its members belonged to the international society at the time. European international society law did not apply to the interactions of its members with polities considered as second-rate or "uncivilised" (for example, with the political entities in Africa). The "outsiders" could be made European colonies, their territories could be divided into spheres of interest, etc., yet that kind of interaction was forbidden when dealing with the full members of international society. In the wars against "savages" and "barbarians", the rather broad and strict international treaties (the Geneva and Hague conventions) adopted before World War I that regulated military activities no longer applied – just as, these days, they are no longer applied to those labelled with the "terrorist" tag.

In Bull's view, international society in the true sense of the word began to form only after the Peace of Westphalia, when international law appeared, based on the principle of coexistence of equal sovereign states (Bull 2002 [1977]: 26–40; 1984: 117–126). "Some past international societies – the Greek city-state system, the system of Hellenistic kingdoms that arose after

the death of Alexander, the ancient Indian system of states – were without the institution of international law" (Bull 2002 [1977]: 137), he notes. Other representatives of the English school (Wight 1977; Watson 1992) take a broader view. The Ancient Greeks made a strict distinction between wars waged against barbarians, and those against Greeks themselves. Here, different rules applied, where the most important was the prohibition against enslaving Greeks. Common institutions existed – the Olympic games, the Oracle of Delphi – which were used to find a peaceful resolution to conflicts between the city-states (as is commonly known, warfare between the Greeks would cease during the Olympic games).

Of course, these rules would often be broken; however, the same applies to contemporary international society law (e.g. war law). The Ancient Greek city-states (later, the Hellenistic monarchies) were members of one inter-polity society, because they shared one inter-polity law. However, the inter-polity system to which the Greek city-states belonged was much broader. It included the Achaemenid Empire, Carthage, Macedonia – all polities that did not belong to the Greek inter-polity society (Macedonia might be a partial exception because of its early Hellenisation).

Similar phenomena occurred elsewhere, too. Wars without any rules happen – first of all, during the initial contact of different civilisations (e.g. in the wars of the Spanish Conquistadors against the Incas and Aztecs), or when going to war against "savages", "barbarians" (considered not quite human), or "terrorists". However, a set of custom rules generally becomes established in war without which maintaining diplomatic contact between the warring sides would be impossible: the prohibition of killing or taking hostage envoys or messengers. When the universal religions of salvation emerged, their codes of ethics made a distinction between war among believers of the same faith (more or less sinful) and "holy" wars undertaken against those from another confession, in which the prohibitions that apply against "one's own kind" are invalid. That is why, up until the modern age, boundaries between international societies generally coincided with the boundaries between civilisations, as defined by the history of conflict between the universal religions of salvation. Each of these civilisations was a separate international law community and a separate security complex (Buzan 1983: 105–114). Having dismissed the assumption that international law exists only where equal sovereignty among all members of international society is acknowledged, we find another point of reference from which the phenomenon of empire can be discussed.

In that case, the Peace of Westphalia should no longer be considered as the beginning of international law as such, but as a revolution in international law that signalled the transition from pre-modern imperial inter-polity law to modern equal sovereignty international law. The principle of equal sovereignty among all members of international society (if only among the "recognised" or "fully-fledged") is the international law analogue of the axiom of universal equality of all state subjects or citizens under national

law. However, this axiom was an alien idea to pre-modern legal thinking. Therefore, it also knew nothing about equal sovereignty among all polities. According to contemporary (post-Westphalian) international law, empires and imperialism are unjust phenomena. However, this does not mean that they are unjust in terms of any inter-polity law: if, of course, we do not agree with Wendt and his ilk and restrict the content of this concept in a Eurocentric way, and assume that all polities handled their relations in the spirit of a Hobbesian culture of anarchy before 1648.

If modern Western political and legal thinking were based on the axiom of inherent human equality, their pre-modern Western and non-Western precursors proceeded from the opposite axiom of the inherent inequality of people and nations. This axiom legitimated their division into estates or castes that form a natural hierarchy, at the top of which there is the religiously legitimated ruler, the beacon and source of law, who has the right to bestow rights and privileges upon lower-ranked members of the hierarchy. This axiom of natural inequality applied in mutual relations between polities as well. Members of pre-modern inter-polity societies were not equal and free "citizens" (i.e., sovereign states), but differently ranked polities (cities, states, lands, duchies, etc.). A polity with supreme authority presumably sat at the top of this hierarchy. The ruler of this supreme polity claimed exclusive status by taking the title of "king of kings" ("grand king"), "duke of dukes" ("grand duke"), etc.

The polity that successfully lays claim to this exclusive status in international society is its suzerain or hegemon. The idea of the highest authority in the entire inter-polity society, or even in the whole world, is an essential element of pre-modern inter-polity law, and is also its distinctive feature. Martin Wight (1977: 23–45) called state-systems with polities claiming this highest authority "suzerain state-systems", and differentiated them from the modern European "sovereign state-system". According to Wight, before the seventeenth century there were only two systems of states that were similar to the modern European state-system: the system of Greek city-states (and the later Hellenistic monarchies as well) and China during the "Warring States" epoch (465–221 BC). All other historical state-systems were suzerain state-systems.

The "suzerain state-system", meanwhile, is imperial. It is an international (inter-polity) society in which the suzerainty of one member holds, not the principle of the equal sovereignty of all members. China's emperors, the Muslim caliphs, and the emperors of Rome and Byzantium laid claim to this status. The pre-modern Western European inter-polity law community (e.g. the medieval West European international society) was unique in that there were two ferociously competing authorities – the secular (the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire) and the religious (the pope) – at the top of its polity hierarchy.

Of course, the gap between law and reality (force) can be enormous. It was never the case that claims of supremacy were easily acknowledged. As was

already said in the first part of the book, in the inter-polity society composed of Catholic medieval European polities, the kings of England and France did not acknowledge the supremacy of the Holy Roman Empire's emperor. However, that non-recognition did not imply denial of the hierarchic structure of Christian international society. Kings who considered themselves equals of the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire saw that equality only in terms of a privilege valid for their kingdom or dynasty alone, considering others ("ordinary kings", i.e., kings not having this privilege) as "lower" than the emperor. Even if all kings were to aspire towards this privileged status, the emperor's distinction remained, as equality to the emperor (having sovereign rule over their realms) was understood precisely as a privilege, not as an implication of the universally valid principle of all rulers' equal and identical sovereignty.

The members of a suzerain inter-polity society recognising the supremacy of an imperial polity can be related to this polity in very different ways. One of the most famous representatives of the English school, Adam Watson, uses the concepts of the empire's core area, dominion, suzerainty and hegemony sphere in his analysis of these relations. Hegemony means that "some power or authority in a system is able to 'lay down the law' about the operation of a system, that is to determine to some extent the external relations between member states, while leaving them domestically independent" (Watson 1992: 15). A hegemonic polity in the inter-polity society or system can be recognised in that it usually takes on the role of a mediator or peacemaker in the event of a conflict between its other members, and its word is deemed final.

A hegemon's status or role in inter-polity societies is similar to what cultural anthropologists call a *big man* in customary law communities. This was the most influential figure in the community to whom other members appealed for protection and help. The assistance they received made them into the do-gooder's debtors. Their duty was to come to their patron's assistance when he entered into a conflict with other "big men," or when he exacted punishment on those recipients of his assistance who ended up being ungrateful or disobedient – those who avoided repaying the good deed done to them. So those receiving assistance ended up as clients, even if they could have their own second-order clients themselves.

Similar relationships were established between polities as well. The American scholar Stanley J. Tambiah, who pioneered the analysis of the ancient inter-polity systems, international law and Buddhist world view of present-day Indo-China, called these inter-polity systems "galactic polities" (Tambiah 1976: 102–131). They can be compared to galactic systems that consist of bodies with different masses that draw into their orbits "satellites" that can have their own satellites (clients), and so on. This "hierarchy in anarchy" (Donnely 2006) is precisely what ensures order in a particular inter-polity society, transforming the never-ending "war of all against all" that Hobbesians (realists) consider an inter-polity system's natural state into

institutionalised conflicts. This institutionalisation brings with it the distinction between a "just" and "unjust" war, the existence of some rules of war, as well as the possibility to request mediation or resolution of the conflict.

Wendt committed a grave error in limiting the entire variety of possible political cultures in inter-polity systems to three "cultures of anarchy". Taking a broader outlook, the type of political culture that dominated in the pre-modern inter-polity systems was not a "culture of anarchy" but the imperial "culture of hierarchy" that had its own unique characteristics in different civilisations. The political thinking and action characteristics ("kill or be killed") that he attributed to the Hobbesian culture of anarchy are found foremost in relations between polities that belong to different civilisations. However, in the relations of polities from the same civilisation, the straightforward "law of conquest" did not apply. Expansion had to be justified using arguments of dynastic legitimacy. These arguments used to be shaped by the image of the community of dynasts from the same religious confession. In that community, one of the dynasties would claim to be most honourable as the guardian of a unique religious, civilisational or political legacy. Surely Wendt (along with other American international relations scholars) does not believe that only the rule of "kill or be killed" applied in those earlier times where he envisaged the domination of a "Hobbesian culture of anarchy" in relations between rulers connected by blood ties? He comes across as never having heard about the politics of dynastic marriages so common in Europe of the Middle Ages (and the early modern age), politics that determined the contours of its political map. International relations theories offer an impressive illustration of "scholarly idiotism" that is the outcome of the researchers' division into specialist disciplines each with their own conventions ("paradigmatic beliefs").

Kindred or intermarried dynasties cannot simply seek to expropriate ("kill") their relatives so long as they behave as "younger brothers" or "sons" should. The principle of relations between rulers sharing common confessions, and more so for relations between sanguine relatives, was "Lockean" – "live and let live" – but only on the condition that the others live as they should given their position in the hierarchy of Christian, Muslim or Buddhist polities. This did not imply a ban on using force to solve conflicts (it does not exist in the Lockean culture of anarchy as depicted by Wendt either), but only required the distinction between "holy" religious wars and feuds between believers of the same confession or relatives. Rulers who warred against their own kind as if they were at war with other believers would draw infamy upon themselves, even if they proved to be unrivalled conquerors (such as Tamerlane in the Islamic tradition). These rulers were usually labelled as "usurpers", which meant the denial of legitimacy by the norms of international society's imperial "culture of hierarchy".

Treaties imposing unequal terms institutionalised relations between a polity-patron and its clients (satellites). One polity (client) acknowledged another's supremacy and promised not to conduct a foreign policy deemed

unacceptable to the patron. In this case, hegemony develops into suzerainty, which can be defined as a hegemony that exists not only in the de facto form but de jure as well (Watson 1992: 15; Wight 1977: 24). In turn, polities that recognise the suzerainty of a state-patron can become its dominions over time. This concept

> covers situations where an imperial authority to some extent determines the internal government of other communities, but they nevertheless retain their identity as separate states and some control over their own affairs. Examples are recent Soviet relations with eastern Europe, where the states were formally independent, the relation of the emperor Augustus to Herod's kingdom and the relation of the British raj to the Indian princes.
> (Watson 1992: 15–16)

A polity's transformation into a dominion can be an outcome of the imperial centre's efforts to entrench its hegemony, i.e., to safeguard against a client's betrayal – their secession or change of patron. However, that transformation can be caused by internal power struggles within the polity-client itself. Even if there are no political forces that aspire to free themselves of the empire's hegemony or suzerainty, political conflicts can still flare up over power or other domestic policy issues. At times, conflicting parties can only compete against one another over which is the better friend of the imperial centre. Carrying out the role of the supreme arbitrator in resolving conflicts between polity-clients, the imperial centre cannot refrain from becoming involved also in those cases when a civil war or the threat of one flares up inside one of the client polities. When the "galactic polity's" centre assumes the right to decide which of the conflicting political forces will govern the polity-client, it becomes its dominion. If this is not enough to maintain order and peace within, the polity's statehood can be completely abolished. The former client polity becomes an administrative unit under the direct rule of the empire.

According to the realist approach, only in such cases of annexation of all members of the inter-polity system by one of its members can we speak about the collapse of this system, or its disappearance into the black hole of the regional, continental or global empire (some time in the future). The English school's use of the term "empire" takes on two meanings. An empire in the narrow sense is a polity that is the centre of attraction or core of a suzerain state system or "galactic polity". In the wider sense, all the polities drawn into its military, political and cultural sphere of influence also belong to that empire. Depending on how close the relations are between the imperial centre (metropole) and these polities, the empire can be differentiated into a core (metropole), the core's dominions, and the polities subordinated to its suzerainty and sphere of hegemony (see Figure 5.1).

Of course, this kind of imperial process can take place along two directions: the empire can grow and become stronger, drawing new polities into its sphere of hegemony and suzerainty, transforming polities that already

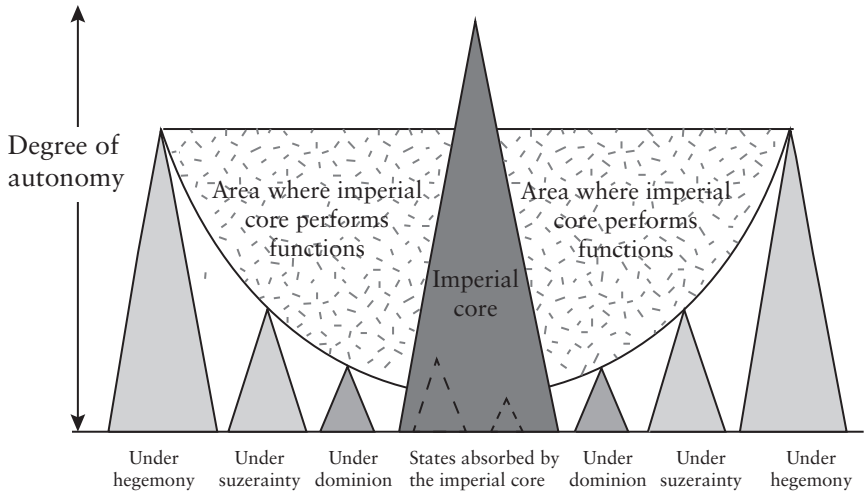

Figure 5.1 The "international" structure of empires.

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acknowledge the metropole's suzerainty into dominions while incorporating existing dominions into the metropole and placing them under direct rule. This process can also move in an opposite direction where the empire disintegrates, weakens, contracts and eventually collapses. That means that while the polities that belonged to the empire's spheres of suzerainty and hegemony become completely independent, the dominions attain total independence in internal affairs and eventually the empire's centre starts to crumble. Were this process to near its logical conclusion, the inter-polity society would find itself in the policentric "Hobbesian anarchy" state. But then it would not be an inter-polity society, merely an inter-polity system as is described by the realist power balance model.

From the institutionalist viewpoint, this pre-legal status of inter-polity relations is neither natural nor stable. It is more likely a purely theoretical extreme case that might only be observed for a brief time if the inter-polity society were to completely disintegrate. The more it approaches this extreme state, the stronger the forces become that restore the inter-polity social order which, in almost all cases in Westphalian Europe, was of an imperial order (of a suzerain state-system) type. Sometimes the imperial centre becomes so strong that it is no longer content to be arbitrator or peacemaker, but seeks to appropriate and redistribute to its benefit an ever larger portion of the resources of its dominions or the polities subjugated to its suzerainty. Then opposition against it also increases, as the cost of domestic security and inter-polity peace becomes intolerably great.

> There is in state-systems an inevitable tension between the desire for order and the desire for independence. Order promotes peace and prosperity, which are great boons. But there is a price. All order constrains the freedom of action of communities and in particular their rulers.
>
> (Watson 1992: 14)

Watson and other authors write about the "pendulum effect" (Watson 1992: 22) or "imperial cycle" (Gilpin 1981: 110–115) typical of pre-modern inter-polity societies. It encompasses a sequence of phases, from total disintegration into numerous independent polities, to their complete integration into a centrally administered political body, after which follows a return to its initial state. Taagepera's findings about the territorial concentration and de-concentration cycles in political world history (see chapter four) provide evidence that imperial cycles or the "pendulum effect" in fact exist.

However, Taagepera also noted that at the highest and lowest point of each subsequent cycle, the size of the greatest empires is always larger and larger. In fact, imperial cycles do not exactly repeat one another. In terms of its territory, an inter-polity society that has restored itself in the ruins of its predecessor can significantly surpass this forerunner. The polities into which an empire disintegrates do not necessarily coincide with the political bodies that it had once conquered. Protracted subjection can have irreversible consequences on the ethnic and cultural identity of the subordinated polity populations. Thus there can be no cultural, ethnic or linguistic continuity between the post-imperial and pre-imperial polities. On the other hand, memories of the earlier empire can be an important factor favouring the reintegration processes of a polycentric inter-polity system in its place. New empires appropriate the history, symbolism, "historical rights" and names of the older ones, comprehending themselves as their continuation or restoration as the "new", "second" or "third" empire. Probably the finest example of the symbolic continuity of an empire or of its repeated resurrections is the transfer of the Roman Empire's legacy (*translatio imperii*) that I discussed in the first part of the book.

The imperial cycles do not repeat perpetually – an empire that has disintegrated once (or more times) and restored itself can successfully be transformed into another type of (non-imperial) state. Typical examples are the histories of those inter-polity systems that became modern-day China and (perhaps) Russia. What is most important is that the era of imperial cycles in world history might actually have ended – "hegemonic cycles" are their replacement. Actually, the English school claims that in the seventeenth century the collective hegemony of the great powers did replace imperial hegemony. Originally, the sphere of this collective hegemony was the inter-polity system and society of continental Europe, which later spread to embrace the global political society and system.

Institutionalists define as a "great power" one without whose consent international law norms cannot be instituted or altered or their violators punished. Each empire is a great power precisely because it is the source and

supervisor of the international law valid in a certain civilisation, or even in the whole world. Presently, Western international law is valid throughout the entire world. This body of law institutionalised the status of a great power after World War II, when the United Nations (UN) organisation was founded. As a matter of common knowledge, in the contemporary world permanent members of the UN Security Council hold great power status. However, this great powers club had de facto already formed and operated some time earlier – since the signing of the Peace of Westphalia or, at the latest, since the Treaty of Utrecht (1714). Today, there are great powers (e.g. Japan, India, Brazil) that are such de facto but (so far) not de jure.

Some IRS scholars believe that even in the post-Westphalian epoch only one great power possesses the status and role of a real hegemon. They consider the struggle over this status the main content of this epoch's international politics. Great Britain won this status in the nineteenth century (after the Napoleonic wars). Germany tried to rob it of this status twice in the twentieth century. It failed because of the U.S.'s intervention in World War I and World War II. Since 1945, the latter has become the hegemon of the international political system, although this status was (unsuccessfully) contested by the USSR. After 1991, there have not been (and might never be) any other powers in the world capable of contesting the U.S. for this status.

This view is held by a variant of realist international relations theory, called hegemonic stability theory (see Gilpin 1981), and by Immanuel Wallerstein's neo-Marxist capitalist world system theory, whose influence reached its apogee in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Wallerstein 1974; 2000). They share the assumption that international politics should be analysed in the context of international political economy. This is how they differ from the contemporary realist (so-called neo-realist) theory, whose leading representative, Kenneth Waltz, aims to craft a *pure* international politics theory, analogous to pure (neoclassical) economics.

This *pure* (or abstract) theory seeks to lay bare that particular "essence" of international relations constituted by the anarchic character of the international system and each state's goal to survive (to be safe). This essence is understood as an invariant that does not change, regardless of the cultural, social or economic processes underway in the states themselves, in the civilisation they belong to or in their ideology. Realists think it is wise to abstract from all these things, as the most important factor that determines international politics is the structure of the international system, which is the distribution of power among the great powers, typologically described by the concepts of multi-polarity, bi-polarity, and uni-polarity. Waltz accuses theories that try to explain international politics not by the international system structure but through cultural, economic or other causal factors of being reductionist (Waltz 1979: 60–78).

Theories that offer an alternative to contemporary realism consider this "pure" form of international relations theory to be impossible or outright flawed. They seek to explain international politics not through itself (*per se* or immanently) but by the forces and structures in which it is embedded.

The recently discussed constructivist and liberal conceptions consider cultural and social processes (transnational forces) as such embedding forces that transcend borders between polities. Political economic theories search for such forces in the economic sphere, assuming that the most important factor in international politics is the development of economic ties between countries into the depth and breadth and the character of the international division of labour.

This approach is developed most consistently in the already mentioned capitalist world system theory of Wallerstein (see also: Chirot and Hall 1982; Chase-Dunn and Grimes 1995). Intriguingly, creatively reworking Marxist theory, it turns the basic claims of Lenin's imperialism theory upside down. Both Wallerstein and Lenin were Marxists, but they offered diametrically opposite political economic interpretations of empires and imperialism. According to Lenin (see chapter two), imperialism is a phenomenon typical of late capitalism (its "highest and last" stage). While according to Wallerstein, empires are a form of political organisation that existed prior to the emergence of capitalism (in the sixteenth century), surviving until the nineteenth century in those parts of the world that had not yet been incorporated into the capitalist world system. So Lenin's view of imperialism is radically modernising, while that of Wallerstein – radically traditionalising.

Wallerstein's theory is politically economic, as he explains the change in the forms of organisation of an inter-polity system by transformations in economy. He considers the starting point of this change to be the appearance of "mini-systems", or local social systems whose economic foundation is a subsistence economy. As inter-local trade develops, large economic spaces welded together by such trade appear – Wallerstein called them "world-economies", a term borrowed from French historian Fernand Braudel (*économie-monde* in French). The trade in low weight, expensive "prestige goods," whose consumers are top elites, does not make locations linked by such trade parts of the same world-economy. For the Roman Empire, these goods would have been the amber collected from the shores of the Baltic Sea and the silk transported all the way from far-away China. In the Middle Ages, an attribute of the "royal dining table" would have been the spices brought in from the East. While living without these prestige goods would have been quite possible, members of the ruling elite had to consume them in order to demonstrate their exclusive social status.

Trade in such prestige goods could have also connected lands that did not belong to the same world-economy. A world-economy is formed when a division of labour develops between separate areas of one geographic region, and when trade begins not just in the expensive goods of elite conspicuous consumption, but also in supplies meant for consumption by a wider sector of the population (salt, grains), and in war-related or craft-production items (horses, iron). A world-economy has its centre. This is a city or location to which all the most important trade routes of the region lead, where

wholesale trade takes place and where traders make credit and other financial deals, settling their transactions without using hard currency.

Wallerstein argues that economic commonality creates the basis for political commonality: the local mini-systems unite into trans-local political entities that struggle for the political subordination of the entire world-economy. When one succeeds in this goal, a world empire is established, which Wallerstein defines as a political unit comprehending the whole world-economy. Until that time, its government must heed the interests of capitalists, the small group that controls the most valuable and fungible "freely floating resource" – money. Capitalists can escape overly high taxes or abuse by the military-political elite by "floating" this resource into a competing, safer, neighbouring political unit.

However, when a world-economy becomes an empire, there is no safe haven left for monetary capital to float to, and the military-political elite can expropriate capitalists by fiscal measures. The preponderance of the military-political elite, based on the power to impose confiscatory taxes, is actually the dark side of "imperial peace" (*Pax Romana*, etc.) that remains unnoticed by authors who praise empires for ensuring domestic security in larger territories. Once capitalists are expropriated, the economic foundation of the empire's unity is destroyed and trade links between separate parts of the world-economy go into decline. Local separatism increases, the quelling of which demands additional resources. As taxes grow, the resistance of the taxed peripheries also increases, again requiring more funds for its suppression. A vicious downward spiral forms that sooner or later will lead to the world-empire's disintegration from within, or will make it too weak to resist incursions by "barbarians" or the "external proletariat" that it could have easily withstood earlier. Once the world-economy re-emerges, the "imperial cycle" may be repeated.

Wallerstein considers these very imperial cycles the content of world history until the sixteenth century, when the capitalist world system appeared in Europe. An inter-polity system including great powers competing for hegemony is a mandatory framework for the operation and survival of the capitalist world system. As long as no one of them becomes an empire, they are all forced to serve the interests of internationally mobile capital. They must compete to attract it by providing the most favourable conditions and by implementing policies that best meet capitalist interests.

The group of countries that can compare to the hegemon in terms of economic development and state capabilities form the core of the world capitalist system. Wallerstein distinguishes this core from the periphery, which plays the role of supplier of the raw materials or primary products in the system of international labour division. Core countries, meanwhile, specialise in industries based on the most advanced technologies at the time that create the largest added-value. A typical feature of periphery capitalism is the reliance on forced labour (slaves, serfs), while the periphery's political organisation is marked by weak states, and colonial or semi-colonial dependence.

Those capitalist world-system states that sustained overseas colonies until the mid-twentieth century are reminiscent of ancient empires. However, in Wallerstein's view, their similarities are only superficial, since the colonial empires created by European countries were not separate world-economies, but remained integrated in the world market.[15] Direct political control of the periphery countries, and their transformation into colonies of the core countries, is not necessary for the capitalist world system to function. The economic dependence of periphery countries on the core allows the core countries to control the foreign and most important domestic policies of peripheral countries even when the latter are formally politically independent. It is not imperialism but hegemonism that is the feature of the contemporary international relations system that is necessary for the reproduction of the capitalist world system.

Thus, the neo-Marxist Wallerstein eventually draws conclusions that are reminiscent of Joseph A. Schumpeter's claims about imperialism raised immediately after World War I (Schumpeter 1991 [1918–1919]). Entering into polemics with Lenin and other Marxists who considered colonial expansion and the world's division into spheres of influence to be fundamental features of "the highest stage of capitalism", the great Austrian economist claimed that this policy is a throwback to pre-capitalist times. According to Schumpeter, "imperialism is the objectless disposition on the part of a state to unlimited forcible expansion" (Schumpeter 1991 [1918–1919]: 143). The most important stakeholders in imperialism are not capitalists but military professionals. In pre-capitalist societies they were the politically and socially dominant social strata.

He accounted for the imperialist policies of nineteenth-century European states, most clearly manifested through colonialism, by the political influence of the then still very strong aristocracy, whose representatives made up a large part of Europe's diplomatic and officer corps (especially generals and admirals). Pre-capitalist times were defined by imperialism, as war was the only means by which new lands could be conquered to provide for the military elite (feudal landlords), whereas the status of ruling dynasties depended on the number of their subjects and size of their armies. In the modern age the strongest force in favour of imperialist policy was the "war machine" elite – the higher-ranking officers from the regular armies and navies – for whom war was an opportunity to earn distinction and to rise in the ranks.

Under the conditions of advanced capitalism, business people are the dominant class whose rise depends on success in market exchange. Peace and free trade are the most important prerequisites for such exchanges. Thus the imperialist policy of colonial expansion or the fight for spheres of influence is not a manifestation of the "essence of capitalism". Its true manifestation is promotion of free trade and security. A great power or group of such powers that no longer engage in colonial expansion but gear their foreign policy to make the globe safe for the free movement of capital in search of the most profitable investment are no longer empires but hegemons of the international system.

So who is right? Is it the contemporary international political economy analysts who believe that empires and imperialism have not faded from the contemporary world, but have merely changed their "external appearance"? Or is it those who see only hegemonism and spheres of hegemony in today's world, and consider imperialism a legacy from pre-modern times that ultimately disappeared after the decolonisation of the mid-twentieth century and the collapse of the Soviet Union? Or is it those (like Wendt) who see "NATO's friendship of nations" as the future of our world, whose coming is only delayed by the paranoid leaders of Russia and xenophobes within the NATO nations themselves? Alas, discussion of these questions would lead us astray from the topic of this book.

In my opinion, analysing the issue of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania as an empire, the theories that sound most promising are those which consider empires as a pre-modern form of statehood, and which relate imperialism to the international politics of pre-capitalist times. These are primarily the studies by scholars of the English school. They invite us to ask: did the expansion of the Grand Duchy display features of imperial expansion as denoted by Buzan, Little and Watson? Does the territorial organisation of the Grand Duchy display the characteristic structural features of an imperial inter-polity society? Was there an inter-polity society (or societies) where it sought hegemony, whose members the expanding Grand Duchy made into its dominions and subordinated to its suzerainty? Realist theory (first of all, its contemporary neo-realist version) prompts no less important questions: to which inter-polity system did the Grand Duchy belong? What was its structure? If a power balance is a "normal" condition of an inter-polity system, then what determined the success of the Grand Duchy's imperial expansion, what set its limits and what caused the changes in the Grand Duchy's international (inter-polity) status? Finally, international political economy theory invites us to ask whether areas directly or indirectly subordinated to the authority of the Grand Duchy comprise a separate world-economy in Braudel's and Wallerstein's sense.

I shall try to offer answers to these questions in the third part of this book. Meanwhile, theories of empire that form comparative politics and constitutional theory still need to be surveyed as part of the heuristic propaedeutic for thinking of the Grand Duchy's history in imperial terms (see Gerasimov et al. 2005: 53).

Notes

1 Of course, partisans of anarchism as a political philosophy would not agree with this view of anarchy, as they conceive it as a perfect society.
2 In Ancient Greek ἄτομος means "indivisible".
3 Application of physical force as a last resort in order to influence the behaviour of the group's members is a distinctive feature of political governance.
4 As we shall see, the institutionalist approach presents a somewhat different description of a great power: it is a state with veto-power whose approval is necessary to change international law or to exact punishment on its violators.

5 Some realists conceive the global empire in a more narrow sense, considering this to be a state which takes on the roles of keeper of the peace or a policeman on a global scale, acquiring colonies, military bases and clients across all continents to serve this purpose. Deepak Lal considers nineteenth-century Great Britain as the first global empire of this kind (Lal 2004: 46–53).
6 The defining feature of fractal structure is self-similarity: a part has the same or similar structure as the whole. A snowflake is an exemplary case of fractal structure: looking at a snowflake through a magnifying glass, we see that is consists of geometric shapes which themselves have the geometric shape of a snowflake; a fern leaf consists of segments, which have the shape of the leaf itself, etc.
7 Rejoicing third (Latin).
8 Divide and conquer (Latin).
9 Some authors argue that the U.S. is already such an empire (Babones 2015).
10 According to other authors, there is "imperialism by invitation", so empires can expand peacefully, drawing on their overwhelming superiority in economic or soft (cultural) power. See chapter eight and Doyle 1986.
11 The claim that even a false theory can be a "good" one should not shock readers who are even slightly familiar with the philosophy of science. Newton's laws of mechanics are wrong because their assumptions contradict the special and general principles of Albert Einstein's theory of relativity. However, explaining the movement of objects of small mass at low speeds, their predictions comply with those derived in relativistic mechanics.
12 Such insensitivity is rather common in the works of international relations theoreticians (especially constructivists). It should not come as any surprise because constructivism experienced the very strong influence of post-modern philosophy and social theory. Mildly speaking, this does not encourage respect for either history or its sources, or a serious approach to the notion of "historical fact" itself.
13 Strictly speaking, a distinction should be made between classical liberalism or institutionalism in international relations theory (with Kant as its pioneer) and the contemporary version, known as neo-liberalism or neo-institutionalism. This neo-liberalism should not be confused with economic neo-liberalism. My presentation of international relations theories is intended only as a source of ideas for interpreting the history of the Grand Duchy; I will not discuss differences between the currents of institutionalism.
14 This title not only communicates that researchers under this banner are Britons, but it also indirectly disengages the school from neo-realism, whose most famous representatives are Americans.
15 German sociologist Stefan Breuer calls nineteenth- and twentieth-century European colonial empires "pseudomorphoses" (Oswald Spengler's term) of classical or ancient empires: Breuer 1998: 134–136; Spengler 1981 (1918–1922): 784.

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6 The empire from the viewpoint of constitutional law and comparative politics

Comparative politics and constitutional law focus not on the system of polities or states, but on the state as such. When classifying states, lawyers and political scientists make use of several classical categories. Plato and Aristotle long ago distinguished the republic and the monarchy as forms of rule. In turn, both these forms divide into many further subcategories: republics can be parliamentary, presidential or semi-presidential; monarchies can be constitutional, estate-based, absolute, patrimonial, etc. Contemporary political science focuses on the differences between political regimes. A political regime can be democratic, authoritarian or totalitarian; and each of these regimes have several further varieties (Linz 2000).

There are two recurring fallacies, committed by authors conceiving of empire either as a form of rule or as a political regime. In the first fallacy, an empire is considered a special kind of monarchy, assuming that there are no empires without emperors. The second fallacy is the view that empires are authoritarian or totalitarian. Both of them go back to an author no less famous and influential than Charles Montesquieu, who considered the empire an "Asian" despotic monarchy (Montesquieu 1899 [1748], 1: 136–138, 252–255, 269). In fact, as hierarchic conglomerates of numerous polities, empires can include political entities that vary greatly in their form of rule and their political regime. A majority of the ancient empires were "kingdoms of kingdoms", or "duchies of duchies", where the ruler of one (central, core or "supreme") kingdom or duchy subordinated a number of "ordinary" kings or dukes. Nevertheless, the empire's core could also have been a republic that dominated not just other republics, but also monarchies.

An example was the Roman republic, formerly the metropole of the empire that included for some time not just subordinate city-states, but also Hellenistic monarchies that became vassal states of Rome. France was a democratic republic from 1870. However, it had an enormous colonial empire that was not ruled democratically and encompassed many countries where traditional monarchic authoritarian political structures remained (Tunisia, Morocco, Laos, etc.). The empire of Great Britain displayed the greatest variety of forms of rule and political regimes. Even though the empire's metropole became, unarguably, a bastion of liberal democracy after the

electoral law reforms of 1867, the same cannot be said about its colonies, where the British applied a system of so-called "indirect rule" (see chapter thirteen) that left untouched the entire local government order that existed prior to their overlordship. Ultimately, even the tsarist Russian Empire, which was an authoritarian absolute monarchy, included within its borders the Kingdom of Poland that was, in 1815–1830, a constitutional monarchy, and Finland, which became a parliamentary democracy with universal suffrage in 1906.

Another classical category of state is based on the form of its territorial structure, differentiating between unitary, federal and confederal states. This classification is the latest of all three classical categories of states. Ernst Deuerlein, the author of probably the most fundamental work about the history of the idea of federalism, begins that study with an examination of the work of seventeenth-century jurist and political philosopher Johannes Althusius (1557–1638) (Deuerlein 1972: 33–37). Canonical writers on federalism are Charles Montesquieu and the Founding Fathers of the United States who drafted its Constitution passed in 1787: Alexander Hamilton, James Madison and John Jay. There is also Alexis de Tocqueville (1805–1859) who, in his famous work about democracy in America (Tocqueville 2007 [1834–1840]), explained to Europeans the uniqueness of the American state's structure. In the first half of the nineteenth century, mostly German authors wrote about the forms of state territorial structure, discussing alternative ways and constitutional forms for the pending unification of Germany (Dreyer 1987). Their unique contribution is the distinction between federation and confederation. Based on the pioneering observations made by Tocqueville, they made this distinction by comparing the structures of the U.S., Switzerland, and the Dutch Republic of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[1]

Does this mean that federations did not exist in Antiquity, or were authors from this time not so observant? Based on the studies of Victor Ehrenberg (1965), a historian of Antiquity, Deuerlein affirms that at least one federation did exist then: this was the Achaean League (281–146 BC) that encompassed around 60 cities on the Peloponnese. However, in the post-classical (Hellenistic) period, Greek philosophers lost interest in questions of politics, thus a more thorough discussion of the topic of state structure was only forthcoming in the modern age (Deuerleien 1972: 19), even though material for the analysis of this topic was around in the Middle Ages.[2] This would be not just the still-existing Swiss confederation, which dates its history to 1291, but also the Hanseatic and other less well known medieval city leagues (the Lombard League, the Swabian League and the League of the Rhine).

Eighteenth-century scholars of the state (first of all Montesquieu) were interested in the federation as one way of solving the problem of implementing democracy in a large state (Montesquieu 1899 [1748]). One of the "axioms" of the political theory legacy from Antiquity affirms that democracy can

only exist in a small state where general meetings of all citizens are actually possible. As we know, another solution to this problem turned out to be effective in practice: representative democracy. Federations of city-states with direct democracy can be another solution.

From the nineteenth century, sometimes called the "age of nationalism", onward, the federation is discussed as a solution to another question: what kind of state structure can ensure the conditions for a democratic regime to operate in a multinational or culturally heterogeneous state? It is precisely in this context that scholars compare the federation with the empire as its (negative) alternative. As one of the greats of comparative historical sociology and the comparative history of constitutional law, Otto Hintze, once claimed, "federalism and imperialism are opposites" (Hintze 1964 [1928]: 215). If a federation is a state based on the free will and equality of all its constituent nations, then an empire is a "prison of the nations", where one ethnic or cultural group prevails over the others.

Of course, this is simply a metaphor that has become a journalistic cliché, not a definition that would satisfy a constitutional legal scholar. However, having opened up the works of the classics of this discipline (Heller 1983 [1934]; Kelsen 1966 [1925]) or textbooks in constitutional law, we find that, when analysing the forms of state territorial structure, their authors limit themselves to the dichotomy of a federal and unitary state, or the trichotomy of a unitary state, plus a federation and a scholars confederation.[3] This should come as no suprise, as state law theoreticians are more concerned with contemporary states or their legal documents – their constitutions. In today's world, there are no or almost no states that describe themselves as empires in their constitutions (except for passing curiosities like the Central African Empire under Jean-Bédel Bokassa). Nor was this mentioned in the Soviet Union's constitution, even though there is almost universal agreement that it was indeed an empire.

Another more important reason is that empires, or a majority of them, like monsters, simply do not fit into the definitions of a state as outlined by scholars of constitutional law. As a result, they can resort to either ignoring empires or to claiming that they are not ("normal") states at all. So says probably the most authoritative state law authority, Heidelberg University professor Georg Jellinek (1851–1911), who, in his major study *General State Theory*, dedicated several pages to the "state of states" (*Staatenstaat*, Jellinek 1921 [1900]: 748–750). According to Jellinek, this is a combination of the "senior state" (*Oberstaat*) with a number of "subordinated" states (*Unterstaaten*). This is none other than an empire, yet Jellinek (who had also been the subject of a state calling itself an empire, incidentally) does not use the term "empire". He concludes with a short comment about "states of states":

> from the viewpoint of the contemporary understanding of state they are completely anomalous politically, because no common life interest

> bonds the two states by internal unity.[4] Among the states of Western civilization (*Gesittung*), they belong to the past.
>
> (Jellinek 1921 [1900]: 750)

What Jellinek says is correct. However, the political history of the West and other civilisations – a traditional object of professional interest for historians – is primarily the history of such "monster states" that contemporary experts in constitutional law so despise that they do not want (or are too fearful) to even talk about them. Does this mean that constitutional law is a discipline that is completely sterile and silent when it comes to the issue of empires and imperialism?

We can take pleasure in the joyous exception that allows us to answer this question in the negative. That joyous exception is the work of the famous pre-war Lithuanian lawyer and statesman Mykolas Römeris (1880–1945).[5] Römeris' *The State and its Constitutional Law* (*Valstybė ir jos konstitucinė teisė*) occupies the most important position in his scholarly legacy. Two volumes of its first part (*The State*) were released in 1934–1935 (Römeris 1995 [1934]; Römeris 1995 [1935]). The first volume of the second part (*Constitutional Institutions*) came out in 1939 (Römeris 1995 [1939]), bearing the title "Sovereignty". For a long time, scholars believed that with the onset of Lithuania's Sovietisation in 1940, Römeris abandoned working on *The State and its Constitutional Law*.

Interest in the great Lithuanian jurist's legacy revived after the restoration of Lithuania in 1990. It was discovered that the Manuscripts Department of the Vilnius University Library preserved manuscripts that Römeris had written during the war (mostly at the professor's country seat in Bagdoniškis, currently in the Rokiškis District). Professors from Mykolas Römeris University (MRU) in Vilnius, Mindaugas Maksimaitis and Egidijus Jarašiūnas, found among them the unfinished third part of *The State and its Constitutional Law*. In 2008, this part was released by the MRU publishing house (Römeris 2008). One of the two manuscripts found at Vilnius University Library bore the title *The Unitary State and a Composite State and Compounds of States*.[6] However, this title, along with several of the first lines of the text, were crossed out in the manuscript. That is why the editors took the liberty to slightly modify the title, publishing the third part of Römeris' magisterial *The State and its Constitutional Law* under the title *The Unitary State and State Compounds*.[7]

In this text, Römeris distinguishes at first a unitary state from state compounds (*valstybiniai junginiai*), and then divides state compounds into three types: an empire, a confederation and a federation. As a constitutional law scholar, Römeris is most interesting precisely because he distinguishes not the three canonically accepted forms of state territorial structure (unitary state, federation, confederation) but four, adding empire to the list. According to Römeris, scholars who discern only three forms of territorial structures (unitary state, federation and confederation) make an "obvious

mistake" because "they either 'do not notice' an empire, which is an unpardonable mistake for a classifier, as it is a very distinct form, or apparently they place it under a federation or confederation. However this placement is clearly wrong" (Römeris 2008: 10).

Of the four forms of state territorial structure he identifies, Römeris gives a more detailed account only of the unitary state, federation and confederation. The manuscript ends abruptly at the point where, logically, he would have continued with his analysis of an empire. However, what the author says at the beginning of the text, where he presents the classification principles for the forms of state structure, suffices to explain his approach. As Römeris' work is accessible only in Lithuanian, I will discuss this approach in more detail than I do the ideas of other scholars who might also be sources of inspiration for looking at the past of the Grand Duchy as the history of an empire. Besides that, in his other work, Römeris himself occasionally also designates the Grand Duchy an empire, comparing it with the Republic of Lithuania established in 1918 as a modern national state (Römeris 1937: 19–20, 192). So, the theoretical discussion of empires in his uncompleted *The State and its Constitutional Law* provided systematic explication of reasons for this unconventional designation.

Römeris commences his characterisation of forms of state territorial structures with the unitary state.

> A unitary state has only one source of power. It is a monolith of territorial power. That is why it features a united central government from which all the power dispositions emanate, and as a territorial unit it is also unitary: it has one government, one territory and one nation (*populus*).
>
> (Römeris 2008: 6)

Empire, confederation and federation are three types of state compounds. Römeris begins his explication of these concepts with a description of an empire or imperialist bloc of states: it is

> a compound of two or several states based on the principle of *super*- and *sub*ordination, or, where one participant of this compound is superordinate to another or others that are subordinate. There is no equality among the participants of this type of compound: one state has supremacy, it controls the compound and disposes of it, while other states joined into the bloc are in the disposition of the first state, and are its dominions.
>
> (Römeris 2008: 7)

"Superordination", more specifically, can mean hegemony, vassalage, protectorate status, etc. Subordinated territorial units may be states – "the most rudimentary, embryonic states" – or not states at all, and be "only passive

amorphic objects of the dominant foreign state's rule and exploitation, known as colonies" (Römeris 2008: 7–8).

Meanwhile, only states can make up a confederation. The distinguishing features of a confederation are equality among its members, their sovereignty and the absence of a central government with the right and authority to pass decisions that are obligatory for the members of the confederation, even when their governments do not approve of those decisions. The common centre, if one exists at all,

> is not an overruling body, but more of a service centre having just the amount of authority and competency to carry out the functions it is charged with by its members, and it cannot *motu proprio* expand its competency or increase its authority. Here the centre with its authority and competency is purely derivative and aimed to serve its members.
> (Römeris 2008: 8)

Römeris also considers personal and "real" unions as confederations.

According to Römeris, a federation is a mixed or intermediate form of state structure between a unitary state and a confederation. If a confederation is a union of states (*Staatenbund* in German), then a federation is a joint state (*Bundesstaat*), having a centre with imperative authority over its component territorial political units. Whereas the principle of a confederation is coordination, subordination is characteristic of a federation, as with an empire. However, if in an empire all the remaining members of the compound are subordinated to the conquering or otherwise overpowering territorial member (the state), then in a federation, members are subordinated to a centre of their own creation, which is afforded more or less sovereign powers. A federation is like a two-tiered pyramid where the first tier represents the federation members, and the second the common state. In an empire, that second tier is the "supreme state" as identified by Jellinek, or the metropole to which other states or territories (colonies) are subjugated. In a federation, no single territorial unit has this exclusive metropole status.[8] In this regard, a very telling fact is that when a state is reorganised on a federal basis, its capital is rarely ever the actual centre of its economic or cultural life. Federal offices are located in a provincial city which is "neutral" with respect to its historical division into regions and metropolitan cities (e.g., Bonn in the German Federal Republic before German reunification in 1990), or this kind of city is founded especially for this purpose (as in the U.S., Australia, and Brazil).

In an empire, the government of the metropolitan territorial unit also rules the territories and territorial bodies subjugated to it, because this kind of territorial body, along with the national group that inhabits, it is superior to others.

> It is precisely in an empire that the nation of the enslaved state is subordinated to alien domination by the ruling state's nation. In a federation

> there is no subordination among its members. Instead, they are subordinate to their joint state construction, which makes up a kind of second top state tier in which they both (or several) cooperate equally (paritetically). Here the dominating state construction (the joint state), despite subordinating the lower tiers, is actually derived from them. Lordship and subordination are phenomena of state domination at the top and of statehood at the bottom. Yet there is no enslavement between the original members of the compound. The original lower state constructions are all equally subordinated to the common top-tier superconstruction in which all original members of the compound merge into one ruling joint state.
>
> (Römeris 2008: 13)

In a federation, its members' representatives definitely participate in the federal central government, and their participation is mandatory for any changes in the federation's constitution. In an empire, subordinated states and territories are excluded from the government over the imperial centre or metropole.

An essential feature of a federation is that its constituent territorial political bodies are equal, and are its members by parity: even in cases where the size of their territories, populations or economies differ significantly. If a separate territory is set aside where the federal government offices are concentrated (as with the Federal District of Columbia in the U.S., where its capital, Washington D.C., is located), then it is either not a separate member of the federation, or it is a member that does not dominate over the remainder.

> A joint state (federation) differs from a unitary state in that with the exception of specific common state functions, its territorial units (members) display the features of a state and execute state functions that lie deep in their own power and are not delegated by a common centre. A joint state differs from a confederation in that in a federation the common centre is not just dependent on the compound's members, serving them and lying at their disposal. It was transformed into a dominant centre considering the members to be at its disposal and being capable of exacting punishment, restrictions, and taking as much competency and power from them as it likes.
>
> (Römeris 2008: 9–10)

The constituent territorial parts of a federal state must display at least the elementary manifestations of statehood; the territories of a unitary state cannot have them, however, while the peripheries of empires may have them but not necessarily. Römeris urges his readers not to confuse the question of whether a state is unitary or federal with another, completely different, question: is it centralised or decentralised? A unitary state can also be decentralised. In such unitary states, the local government might have

broad-ranging powers, including administrative or even political autonomy. The latter means the right to issue legislation (Römeris gives the Klaipėda Region of 1923–1939 in interwar Lithuania as an example). However, in a unitary state, a central government commissions or delegates the functions and competencies to local government, while in a federation the ultimate possessors of those functions and competencies are the federation members themselves.

A federal centre receives, takes or appropriates more or fewer functions and competencies from its members, leaving them with "what it does not take (leaves, but does not commission, delegate or lend)" (Römeris 2008: 22). In a federation, the competency and authority of its members is joint, while the centre's is attributive or assigned:

> At the heart of a federation there lies a certain sense or conception of its members' statehood, its original source of authority. According to this conception, the source of that statehood springs from its members, not from the centre. The members are the source from where *it is drawn and where that which was not taken is left*. Members are *not given anything*, because they do not need to be given anything, they *do not receive anything* from the centre because they *naturally and originally already have everything they need*. This is, in my view, the clearest relict or rudiment of members' sovereignty that signifies the original statehood of the members in a federation, affording them at least a character of a 'state fragment'.
>
> (Römeris 2008: 114)

Another distinction made by Römeris is also interesting – the one he makes between centralisation and decentralisation on the one side, and concentration and deconcentration on the other (see Römeris 2008: 39). The concentration-deconcentration divide denotes the difference between two forms of centralisation. When centralisation is concentrated, then the government heads and centre hold the initiative and decisive power, while the lower or peripheral organs of the state apparatus are left with the function of executors only. Under deconcentrated centralisation, the initiative and decision power is handed over to the bottom and peripheral apparatus organs, while the top and centre limit themselves to *post factum* supervision and sanctions.

Compared to the ideas presented in contemporary works about federalism, Römeris' distinctions and definitions are neither old nor outdated. On the contrary, Römeris' work offers even more theoretical signposts for analysing the Grand Duchy's statehood than can be found in the papers of modern federalism theorists. That is because today's authors, when discussing the uniqueness of a federation as a form of state territorial structure, turn all their attention towards its comparison with a unitary state. The authoritative description of federalism by the American political

scientist William H. Riker states that "federalism is a political organisation in which the activities of government are divided between regional governments and a central government in such a way that each kind of government has some activities on which it makes final decisions" (Riker 1975: 101). Specific features of the division of power between the regional and central governments may vary. In any case, foreign affairs and defence remain in the hands of the central federal government. In these fields, the federal government can make decisions at its own discretion, without the approval of the subjects of federation. If there are no fields in which the federation's subjects do not hold the right to veto, this is no longer a federation but a confederation.

Like Römeris, contemporary theorists of federalism indicate that a federal state structure and decentralisation of the state government must be differentiated (Kavalski and Zolkos 2008: 2). Probably the best indicator of decentralisation is the distribution of tax revenue between the centre and local municipalities. The larger the percentage of tax revenue that is at the disposition of the local municipalities, the greater the degree of decentralisation. However, the value of this indicator can be high in unitary states, and low in federal states. Thus, there can be a unitary state where a decentralised allocation of public resources dominates, and a federal state where the centre and not the federation's members extracts and allocates these resources. There can be unitary centralised, unitary decentralised, federal decentralised and federal centralised states. It is important to note that in the case of a federation, powers should be distributed between many centres among which "none is 'higher' or 'lower' in importance than any other, unlike in an organisational pyramid" (Elazar 1997: 239). Römeris describes the same feature of a federation, too, noting that the members and centre of a federation are mutually equal and are not subordinate to one another.

Secondary features of modern democratic federal states are bicameralism (two houses of parliament) with a strong upper house that represents the federation's members, an inflexible constitution that is difficult to change, and active constitutional courts. In federations, the lower and upper houses of parliament are usually incongruent. That means that elections to the lower and upper houses differ in their proportionality. Incongruence is an unavoidable outcome of the federation members' equality and paritetic representation in the central (federal) government bodies.[9]

Incongruence usually occurs in those federal states whose members differ in their population, but where the same number of representatives is elected to the upper house from each of the component states. An extreme degree of incongruence is typical in elections to the U.S. Senate, for example, where 10% of the population living in the smallest states elects around 40% of the senators (Lijphart 2012: 195). All of these secondary features of modern federation are interrelated: it is hard to imagine a federal state structure without bicameralism and an inflexible constitution, as only an inflexible

constitution that is difficult to change can ensure realistic guarantees of autonomy for the federation's subjects. In turn, active constitutional courts are required to interpret this kind of constitution.

The value of modern constitutional law concepts for historical studies is limited because they focus on modern states. In fact, these concepts even have limited value for analyses of modern state structures. Texts of constitutions are the main source of constitutional law theory. However, the actual structure of a polity can differ from that which is outlined in its written constitution. In this case, a formal constitution is merely an external facade hiding the "real" state structure. Probably the most prominent case of disparity between the actual and formal constitutional state structure is the Soviet Union.

Soviet constitutions (from 1936 and 1977) contain all the essential features of a federal state. More so, the Soviet constitution declared the right of union republics to secede from the USSR, which is a distinguishing feature of a confederation, not a federation. Nevertheless, the real or actual structure of the USSR was neither federation nor confederation, but empire. In addition, the Soviet empire also included states that were formally independent in terms of international law (Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, etc.). Relations between the U.S. and the Central American "banana republics" of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were not much different, because the final word on all their domestic and foreign policy matters rested with the heads of private American companies that set up huge tropical fruit plantations there, and not with the U.S. government.

Unlike constitutional law scholars, political scientists always distinguish between formal and real structures of power and authority. When applying this distinction to empires, political scientists do not restrict themselves to legal documents but focus on actual power relations between the "centre" and the "periphery", and associate those relations with the different economic, political and cultural levels of the constituent parts of a an empire's composite polity, and with their internal structural differences as well. Johan Galtung's very influential "structural" definition of empire exemplifies this approach quite well: an empire is "a system that splits collectivities and relates some of the parts to each other in relations of harmony of interest, and other parts in relations of disharmony of interest, or conflict of interest" (Galtung 1971: 81).[10] Galtung insists that imperialism is not just a kind of international relations, but "*a combination of intra- and inter-national relations*" (Galtung 1971: 84). That is why this definition is discussed in the context of comparative politics. Moreover, Galtung conceives of imperialism as not a purely political but a composite relation that can encompass not just the political control of the periphery but also economic dependence, control of the information space, cultural influence, etc.[11]

When formulating this definition, Galtung differentiates first between the "centre nation" and the "periphery nation(s)". Second, he further

differentiates the centre (metropole) and periphery into the centre's centre and the periphery's centre. The centre of the centre and periphery centre comprise the government, elite and dominating classes, while the peripheries of the centre and of the peripheries are groups excluded from the control of resources that grounds a privileged economic, social and political status. Empires are characterised by the following structure of relations between the centre and periphery (Galtung 1971: 83):

(1) a harmony of interests exists between the centre's (the metropole's) centre and the periphery's centre;
(2) there is greater disharmony of interests between the periphery's centre and the periphery's periphery than between the centre's (metropole's) centre and the centre's periphery;
(3) a disharmony of interests exists between the centre's periphery and the periphery's peripheries.

The thrust of Galtung's argument is that an empire's periphery is not necessarily a land conquered under military action and ruled by military force. Even in the case of conquest, control over the conquered country can be stable and enduring only if the conquerors find or create a social group there that has shared interests with the central government or the power elite. That periphery elite might initially consist of immigrants from the metropole. This was the case in Spain's colonies in Latin America. Descendants of the first immigrants formed a separate interest group (the Creoles) who no longer identified with the metropole. However, the periphery centre did not necessarily consist of Creolised arrivals from the metropole. They could have been local elites for whom "collaboration" with the metropole was an optimal strategy for protecting their status in the peripheral societies.

Galtung's concept of empire suggests that an empire can also emerge by means other than military conquest. An internal crisis might prompt the periphery's elite to search for stronger political protection from abroad by a stronger polity and to be satisfied with the role of the centre's local agents ("collaborators"). The greater the internal conflicts in the polity, the more likely it is to become an object of imperial control. And conversely: the relative internal harmony of interests within a polity makes it capable of imperial expansion – at least so long as it is not just the centre elite that wins, but also its social periphery. The periphery's social periphery cannot win in any case. It is exploited by its own centre, and the centre's centre, and the centre's periphery.

Alexander Motyl makes Galtung's definition of an empire (imperialism) more concrete in the following way: an empire is

> a hierarchically organised political system with a hub-like structure – a rimless wheel – within which a core elite and state dominate peripheral

> elites and societies by serving as intermediaries for their significant interactions and by channelling resource flows from the periphery to the core and back to the periphery.
>
> (Motyl 2001: 4)

In the political structure pertinently called an "empire", a metropole and periphery can always be discerned, whose population and their elites comprehend one another as "the others", "foreigners", "strangers" and "natives". Motyl stresses that at least two peripheral political societies must belong to this kind of structure: an empire is not known for having one periphery, but many peripheries.

Unlike Galtung, Motyl draws attention not to exploitation in the metropole's relations with its subjugated societies (nor does he deny it) but to resource redistribution. This does not mean that resources taken from one of the peripheral lands are used to improve the well-being of another periphery. The centre simply uses those resources taken from some peripheries to expand and entrench its own authority in other peripheries. For example, it uses military forces recruited in one periphery to subdue resistance in another periphery. An essential feature of an empire (which distinguishes it from a federation) is the absence of direct links between the peripheries belonging to the same empire. Federations do not have a divide between the metropole and peripheries, and central government offices are organised so that the regions can coordinate and align their interests and actions amongst themselves in their relations with the central government. The hub of an empire's wheel is the metropole; the spokes are its relations with single peripheries. The wheel rim that is encountered in federations though missing in empires are state structures in which the members of a federation can work together to coordinate their positions in the interaction with the federal centre. This usually takes place in the upper house of parliament to which representatives from the federal lands are elected, thereby receiving the opportunity to participate in shaping the federal centre's policies. Representative organs might exist in the empire's peripheries but their representatives are excluded from making the centre's policies. Making these policies is the metropole's privilege.

Samuel Finer, whose *The History of Government from the Earliest Times* (Finer 1997) is probably the most authoritative standard work in the history of government in English (Von der Muhll 2003), conceives of the empire as one of four types of states. He distinguishes nation-states, city-states, generic states and empires. A nation-state is a modern type of state. The other forms are pre-modern. "Generic states" is a residual category for those pre-modern states that are neither city-states nor empires, as well as those contemporary states that lack all the attributes of a nation-state. They are: (1) "territorially defined populations each recognising a common paramount organ of government" (Finer 1997, Vol. 1: 2). Serving this

organ is (2) a specialised staff divided into the military and civil government branches. Further on, a nation-state is (3) sovereign; (4) its population makes up a community (*Gemeinschaft*), which is created through the consciousness of belonging to the same nation, and (5) the solidarity that arises from this consciousness manifests in the common participation in the burden of civic duty and the distribution of the benefits of citizenship. An empire is a great power that has arisen through military conquest, where "an identifiable ethnic or communal group, and/or a core territorial unit (which might be a state-generic, national, or, indeed, a city-state) exert dominion over other ethnic, territorial, or communal groups" (Finer 1997, Vol. 1: 8).

Nevertheless, the most significant work in empire studies from the last three decades remains the study by Michael W. Doyle (1986). This American political scientist (and for some time Assistant Secretary-General and Special Advisor to United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan) conceived of imperialism and empires by trying to combine both international relations theory and comparative politics approaches. In this regard, his theory is similar to Galtung's theory of imperialism that was discussed briefly above. However, Doyle does not focus on contemporary imperialism in the way Galtung does, but covers ancient empires as well (primarily from Antiquity). In addition, unlike Galtung, Doyle foregrounds political relations between the imperial centre and the peripheries subordinated to it. Another two merits of Doyle's theory are that (1) he analyses empires in terms of the dynamics of their change and (2) that this analysis overcomes a very widespread superstition that empires emerge only as the results of a concerted foreign policy aimed at "making an empire", consistently pursued over a long time. I will discuss these two advantages in the last chapter of Part II, while this one will end with a presentation of Doyle's definition.

According to Doyle,

> empire, then, is a relationship, formal or informal, in which one state controls the effective political sovereignty of another political society. It can be achieved by force, by political collaboration, by economic, social, or cultural dependence. Imperialism is simply the process or policy of establishing or maintaining an empire.
>
> (Doyle 1986: 45)

Doyle points out that empires can be either formal or informal, or a mixture of two parts: those political societies that are controlled formally belong to the formal empire, while the other harbours those that are controlled informally.

In the first case, controlled territories have the status of a protectorate, colony or province, and are incorporated into the controlling state. Examples would be the Russian, Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires on the

eve of World War I. However, imperial control can be informal: the controlled political societies may be sovereign in a formal sense ("on paper"), although in fact their domestic and foreign policy is controlled by another state. As an example, Doyle presents the Athenian *arche* (fifth century BC, also known as the Delian League) that was formally a military political alliance of independent Greek city-states under Athens' leadership. An imperial state usually possesses not just a formal, but also an informal empire. An example could be Great Britain from the nineteenth century, which had a widespread formal empire and at the same time controlled the foreign and domestic policies of the many formally independent Latin American countries. At the end of the nineteenth century it was replaced by the U.S. in this role. Doyle's definition of an informal empire also suited the Soviet Union's relations with the so-called "socialist camp" countries.

Not a single new Communist Party first secretary of Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria or any of the other "socialist" countries in Eastern Europe (except Yugoslavia and Albania) could be appointed without Moscow's approval. That is why these countries belonged to the informal empire of the USSR. The imperial character of Great Britain's and the U.S.' relations with Latin American countries in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is revealed via their frequent interference in the domestic political processes of these countries, leading to the overthrow of dictators who had fallen out of favour and the elevation of new, more suitable, figures. In all these cases, local placemen rule a country, coordinating all of the more important decisions with the centre or with its representative on the ground. The representative of an imperial state might be just its ambassador or even simply a representative from one of the companies or banks to which the controlled country is indebted.

The control can vary in terms of its degree, which manifests in the range of issues over which the metropole makes final decisions, and in the character of the possible punishments or sanctions that loom in the event of disobedience. The threshold of imperial control is crossed when a foreign polity decides who will take top authority positions in the government of the controlled polity. The sphere of control can spread further, encompassing more and more domestic policy issues that must be coordinated with the metropole. The metropole, meanwhile, can be satisfied with only a favourable foreign trade regime. Yet it can also seek to control appointments to lower-ranking offices (especially in the military) or even go so far as to control the periphery's "historical memory policy" – to decide to which figures monuments should be erected and where and how history should be presented in school history textbooks, and so on.

The spread of the sphere of imperial control actually depends on the leverage the metropole exerts. Measuring the degree of control in the dimension of possible rewards or punishments, the scale of punishment starts from acts in an information war directed against the disobedient periphery whose aim is to harm its international reputation. If they (or the

threat of such measures) do not work, economic pressure may be applied. Ultimately, difficult periphery country leaders can be removed by military coup, "special operations", or even a military intervention. The threat of military force is most convincing when the metropole has military bases and troops positioned in a formally independent allied country. The scale of personal costs that leaders of "disobedient states" may experience is similarly wide: "a ruined reputation", exile, the use of brute, physical force and ultimately death.

Doyle also recommends differentiating between imperial subordination, meaning formal or informal control of the periphery's domestic policy, and hegemony. The hegemonic state controls the foreign policy of a polity belonging to its sphere of hegemony, however it is incapable of or does not seek to influence its domestic policy processes. Explaining the difference between an (informal) empire and hegemony, Doyle compares the Athenian *arche* from the times of the Peloponnesian War with the anti-Athens coalition led by Sparta. Athens' relations with its allies displayed the features of imperial control because Athens actively interfered in their domestic policy struggles (where the opposing sides were the democratic and aristocratic parties) by "democracy promotion": helping the supporters of democracy to take and maintain power. Sparta, meanwhile, did not attempt to change the political order in the city-states of the anti-Athenian coalition.

The main problem associated with the "hegemony" concept is the question of how to differentiate between relations that link the hegemonic state with the polities from its sphere of hegemony and alliance relations that exist between truly independent states. Doyle describes relations between independent states using an equal or symmetrical mutual dependence concept (Doyle 1986: 44). However, when there are huge power differences between allied countries, it is hard to talk about symmetry in their relations. We may use criteria such as the voluntary or involuntary character of this alliance, its compatibility or incompatibility with the interests of a country possessing less power, and so on.

The difficulty with these criteria is that the fact of the alliance's voluntarism or the content of the country's "real" interests might be hard to determine. The involuntary character of an alliance is more or less obvious when one political community becomes another's "ally" after a defeat in a war, as was the case during the Roman republic's expansion in the Italian Peninsula (from the sixth to the third centuries BC). The definition of a political society's interests is the object of contest in its domestic political struggles, where the groups or parties participating in these struggles might violently disagree. Therefore, they can also disagree over alliances with foreign states that might best serve "public", "national", or just "common" interests. Nonetheless, at least in those cases where there is broad agreement on such matters among the ruling elite and especially the broader masses (for example, when help and security is nearly

unanimously requested from a powerful neighbour), there are good reasons to talk about a "real alliance" despite the disparity in power. The forced alliance of a weak country with a powerful state that does not meet the former's interests involves its inclusion in the powerful state's sphere of hegemony, and then eventually into its informal empire which may end with formal incorporation.

In my opinion, the real character of political relations between states of different powers is revealed in emergency or extreme situations, where, according to German political theorist Carl Schmitt (1996 [1932]), the very essence of the political phenomena is disclosed. The character of relations between a weak and a powerful state can usually be identified only in retrospect when situations unfold in which their interests diverge, and the weaker state takes steps that its neighbour does not approve of. Does the more powerful alliance partner in such a situation use its superior power leverage to turn the course of events in a direction beneficial to its interests? If the answer is yes, then an "extreme situation" highlights the truth that the alliance was never "real" or "only" an alliance. If no, then it becomes clear that the alliance was a "real" alliance – but only after its termination or "divorce" from former allies. However, such "extreme situations" might never eventuate, which means these relations might remain ambivalent even in the eyes of historians with the advantage of retrospective knowledge.

The Schmittian criterion is useful when solving another problem as well: how does a real federation differ from a "facade" or merely nominal federation? In such case, behind the federation's constitutional legal form, one of the federation members exacts control over the remaining members, relegating them to the periphery of empire. It may seem that this is the correct answer to the question: a federation is a voluntary or consensual joint state of culturally or territorially different population groups, while in an empire we come across "non-consensual control over culturally distinct populations" (Beissinger 2005: 17).[12] A polity is an empire if the cultural groups it encompasses consider their membership to be illegitimate or forced.

The problem is that members of "culturally distinct" populations living within the borders of the same state might disagree over the character of this state not only with representatives of other ethnic groups, but also with their own co-ethnics or co-nationals. Some might be proponents of the status quo, while others might be in favour of the creation of an independent state or of joining another state. Advocates of Basque independence consider modern Spain, which has given Basque inhabitants widespread territorial autonomy, no less an empire than the Soviet Union was in the eyes of Lithuanians who dreamt about the restoration of their independence, or how Kashmiri separatists see India. The important difference, of course, is that in the case of the Basques only a minority is in favour of independence, while in Lithuania this was the will of the majority.

Yet the "majority's will" criterion is not very suitable when researching even quite recent times. On the one hand, when a historian conducts research of times long passed they cannot use survey or referendum data to ascertain the will of the majority. Further, the application of contemporary criteria for belonging to a political society where all adult men and women are included can be anachronistic not just because the entrenchment of female suffrage is an historically new and culturally non-universal phenomenon. In pre-modern societies people who did not enjoy personal freedom were not considered members of political society (the "political nation"). The problem can be resolved by applying Schmitt's emergency-situation methodology again: the "true character" of relations between different cultural groups living in the same state are best revealed in these groups' behaviour in extreme situations.

This refers first of all to situations of war (especially defeat) and political disintegration. Does a certain "culturally different" population remain loyal to a state when it must go to war against another – especially one where the majority population in the adversary country is composed of people who are closer to it culturally than its co-citizens? In the situation of a defeat in war or a state's failure, does the "culturally different" population grab the opportunity to secede or does it remain loyal to the existing political compound to which other "culturally different" populations also belong? Until such extreme situations eventuate and the question of secession remains an abstract possibility, it would be difficult to give a firm answer to the question of the imperial character of a particular multinational state formation. Jack Donnely presents a somewhat different version of the same criterion: federations are created "from the bottom", by agreement of its members; empires are created "from the top", joining by force one political entity into another's composition (Donnely 2006: 141).

When these criteria are applied, we cannot forget that once a longer time has passed and many generations have changed, a "foreign" or "alien" political community can become their "own" or "native". After several generations, membership in a state formation can switch from being involuntary to voluntary, as the identity of the earlier imperial periphery population will have had time to change. Schmittian "emergency situations" disclose best whether this is already the case. In fact, even having survived a trial "emergency situation", an empire's transformation into a federal state formation is not necessarily an irrevocable process. For example, in Great Britain Scottish nationalism and separatism have been revived again in the late twentieth century, regardless of the seemingly ideally harmonious co-existence of Britons and Scots that saw them fight shoulder-to-shoulder in numerous wars won together (including the last two world wars). It appears that the complete irrevocability of the abovementioned transformation can be guaranteed only through the total cultural assimilation of the population of the "prison of nations". On the other hand, it happens very frequently that precisely the "conquered" and "enslaved" prisoner population assimilates

their conquerors, supervisors and guards (see chapter seven). Situations also occur – as in the Grand Duchy (see Part III of this book) – in which the agent of assimilation is the culture of a group that is neither the conqueror nor the conquered.

Notes

1 There are studies in the prehistory of modern federalism, including the research by famous Grand Duchy history expert Juliusz Bardach (1970). Yet these authors all start from the late Middle Ages and early modern age, and limit themselves only to Western civilisation. See also Bardach and Izdebski 1980; Froschl 1994; Hoetzsch 1934 (1933).

2 Of course, the word "federation" is of antique origins. *Foedus* means "alliance" in Latin. The Romans called citizens from Italian political communities under their domination "federates" (allies). The alliances that linked Rome to these communities were not alliances among equals, they were involuntary, and entrenched its imperial rule, unlike actual membership in a federal state. The "federates" had significantly fewer rights than did Roman citizens. By gradually granting federates rights of citizenship, all of Italy was eventually incorporated into Rome.

3 This body of literature is very wide-ranging. However, in those contemporary syntheses of state theory and textbooks that I did manage to scan through, I did not find empire discussed as a separate theme. Where it was mentioned, it featured only in a brief historical review of forms of statehood in Western civilisation, yet not in the parts dedicated to a systemic theoretical analysis. See Ermacora 1970; Fleiner-Gerster 1980; Kriele 2003 (1975); Pernthaler 1996 (1986).

4 Jellinek has in mind relations between the "senior state" and vassal states.

5 Römeris (or Michał Pius Römer) was a professor at the University of Lithuania in Kaunas (renamed Vytautas Magnus University in 1930) in 1922–1940) and Vilnius University in 1940–1945. He served three terms (1927–1928, 1933–1936 and 1936–1939) as the rector of the University of Lithuania. He was a member of the Lithuanian Supreme Court (in 1921–1928) and represented Lithuania at international court proceedings. Römeris was born into a Polonised family of Baltic-German (Livonian) origin, and was among the few representatives of the ancient Lithuanian nobility who took the side of Lithuania in the dramatic and traumatic years 1918–1920, when Lithuania and Poland went to war over the ancient capital of the Grand Duchy, Vilnius. See Motieka 1996; Sawicki 1999; Solak 2004. Sadly, there is still no biography or study on the work of this outstanding scholar and politician published in English.

6 In Lithuanian: "Unitarinė valstybė ir sudėtinė valstybė bei valstybių junginiai".

7 In Lithuanian: "Unitarine valstybė ir valstybiniai junginiai".

8 Römeris himself does not use these terms.

9 Without using the term "incongruence" Römeris also discusses this feature of the representative institutions of federal democratic states: Römeris 2008: 87–89.

10 Galtung provides this definition not for an empire, but for imperialism. Presenting it as a definition of empire, I am taking into consideration the critical comment by Alexander Motyl that the range of relations discussed by Galtung would be better termed empire rather than imperialism: "imperialism is a policy, whereas political relationships constitute a polity" (Motyl 2001: 12). Actually, this comment also deserves some correction: as I will argue in the next chapter, it is more adequate to define imperialism not only as a policy, but also as a process, as empires can also be "inadvertent".

11 Galtung makes the interesting remark that imperialism is not always "perfect" (see Galtung 1971: 100–101). In the case of this "perfect" imperialism that he saw in the relations of modern Western states (first of all, the U.S.) with many Third World countries, the empire's centre is more economically and culturally advanced than the periphery. The most technologically advanced industries are concentrated in the centre, it controls the content of the periphery's mass media (construction of a virtual reality), and it imposes the "right" economic and political development goals (to become a Western liberal democratic state, etc.). However, the imperial centre certainly does not always possess all the possible advantages. Galtung saw this kind of case in the Soviet empire. In a "perfect" empire, the periphery is merely a source of raw materials for the empire, and it imports advanced technological products from the centre. Yet the Soviet empire included countries such as East Germany and Czechoslovakia that were more advanced economically than its metropole. They imported raw materials from the metropole and exported high technology products. Here, too, Russian Soviet culture could not have looked like the embodiment of the highest achievements of civilisation as it might have to the Central Asian nations. Especially since these satellites neighboured Western countries, the imperial centre could not implement thorough control of the information space along its western periphery. As I shall discuss in the next part (chapter sixteen), such incongruence between the metropole and periphery was especially typical of pre-modern empires (the most eloquent example being the so-called nomadic empires). That is why Galtung's assumption that all possible asymmetries in two countries' relations (economic, political, military, information, cultural) could serve as a basis for one to become an imperial centre, and the other – a periphery, seems unfounded. The asymmetry of military power is the most important one to keep in mind.

12 Mark Beissinger's definition says in effect the same thing that the already mentioned "popular" or "media" description of empire says – "an empire is a prison of nations".

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7 Definition and typology of empires

This review of imperialism and empire theories can and should be concluded with a definition of empire which will serve as the framework for my analysis of the case of the Grand Duchy in the third part of this book. The definition is based on the "family resemblances" methodology discussed in chapter three. It is an enlarged and more specific version of the formulation that I have already provided for didactic purposes.[1] Thus, an empire is:

(A) a sovereign polity,
(B) significantly larger in size than other polities in the region and epoch and has any three of the features from the list below:
(C) engages in broad territorial expansion;
(D) is a hegemonic power in the international system or aspires to be one;
(E) is ethnically or cultural heterogeneous and has a politically dominant ethno-cultural minority;
(F) its territory divides into a dominant metropole and a subordinated periphery.

From this list, only sovereignty and a large territory are necessary features of an imperial polity. The necessity of sovereignty for an empire requires no further commentary. I would only add that what is in mind here is real sovereignty implying sufficient power and political will to pursue independent domestic and foreign policies, but not that sovereignty that was granted to all polities recognised as independent states according to Westphalian international law. This was just a piece of legal fiction that one of the most famous theorists in contemporary international relations studies, Stephen Krasner, called, not without reason, "organised hypocrisy" (Krasner 1999). In the Westphalian international system this fiction hides the real sovereignty and hegemony of but a few great powers. Such a fiction is unheard of in the international law of suzerain (imperial) inter-polity systems, because in such systems there was a hierarchical centre that could legitimately claim supremacy. However, the formal suzerainty of the caliph, the emperor of Constantinople or the Holy Roman Empire, the Roman pope or the khan of Karakorum can also be just a legal fiction or "organised hypocrisy", hiding the actual

sovereignty or even ("illegitimate") domination in the inter-polity system of the real hegemon. Weaker suzerains may deem such sovereignty or domination as "illegitimate", but must tolerate it as a matter of real politics.

Taagepera makes strong arguments as to why the size of a territory matters so much for empires. No less strong are the arguments of another contemporary imperial studies researcher, Peter Turchin, who draws attention to the links that relate territorial size to other features of empire:[2]

> the key variable is the size. When large enough, states invariably encompass ethnically diverse people; this makes them into multi-ethnic states. And given the difficulties of communication in pre-industrial times, large states had to come up with a variety of ad hoc ways to bind far-flung territories to the centre. One of the typical expedients was to incorporate smaller neighbours as self-contained units, imposing tribute on them and taking over their foreign relations, but otherwise leaving their internal functioning alone. Such a process of piecemeal accumulation usually leads to complicated chains of command and the coexistence of heterogeneous territories within one state.
>
> (Turchin 2006: 3)

Turchin writes about the outcomes of territorial expansion. However, even smaller polities can be expansive, and not all of them become empires. An expansive polity becomes an empire only after crossing a certain threshold, which can be found by applying Taagepera's methodology (see chapter four). Alternatively, a shortcut approach can be used: we can simply state that a polity becomes an empire from the moment the size of its territory significantly surpasses those of its neighbours. Either way, it would be beneficial to agree that there are no "small empires". Otherwise, polities whose overwhelming expansion annexed, turned into dominions, or subjugated other polities in its region under its suzerainty or hegemony should be considered "empires by birth": i.e., they should be considered empires even during the early phases of their histories when they were perhaps but small city-states (as in the case of Ancient Rome). But then there would be no way of determining why some small polities become empires while their neighbours do not.

Territorial expansion causes differentiation into a metropole and a periphery, and an increase in ethnic and cultural heterogeneity, which remain distinguishing features of an empire even when its territorial expansion ceases, or it loses its hegemonic status (though not necessarily its claim to hegemony) in the inter-polity system. These aspirations are expressed in ideological doctrines that provide reasons for claims to universal authority or in the titles of the rulers ("great king"; "grand duke"; "great khan" or "khagan", etc.). Nonetheless, even if the largest state in a region does not make such claims, it qualifies as an empire if it does not miss opportunities to expand territorially. After ceasing to expand and claim hegemony, the largest polity

in a region remains an empire as long as it remains an ethnically and culturally heterogeneous state with a politically dominant minority and retains an imperial territorial political structure, whose most characteristic feature is differentiation into a metropole and a periphery.

This concept of empire is then not fully polythetic.[3] The intensions of fully polythetic concepts are overlapping attribute disjunctions where not a single attribute occurs across all the disjunctions. In my proposed definition, however, there are two attributes (real sovereignty and a large territory) that are considered necessary for an empire. The following formula (where the letters stand for the attributes of an empire discussed above) displays the logical structure of my definition:

(A & B & C & D & E & F) v (A & B & C & D & E) v
(A & B & C & D & F) v (A & B & C & E & F) v
(A & B & D & E & F).

The first disjunct (A & B & C & D & E & F) which includes all the attributes of an empire gives an ideal-type definition. As Weber wrote, such ideal-types can be useful even when their intensions have so many attributes that there are no empirical cases or instances of these types. This is not the case with this particular definition, because many polities display all six attributes (the Assyrian, Persian, Roman, Chinese, Ottoman, etc.). That is why such empires can be termed not just as ideal-typical, but also as classical empires. Non-classical empires are represented by cases which, for the lack of one or another attribute, "diverge" from this ideal-type. The remaining disjuncts represent possible "deviations from the ideal type". Each defines one or another empire's diminished sub-type.[4] They are "empires with adjectives" (discussed in chapter three), where the adjective describes the attribute of an ideal-typical or classical empire that is absent in the referents of the sub-type. I introduced these sub-types in the methodological chapter (chapter three) that discussed the methodological issues of concept formation:[5]

(A & B & C & D & E): territorially homogeneous (no division into metropole and periphery) empires;
(A & B & C & D & F): ethnically and culturally homogeneous empires, no politically dominant ethno-cultural minority;
(A & B & C & E & F): non-hegemonic empires;
(A & B & D & E & F): peaceful empires.

The "diminished" sub-types of empires are especially useful in the analysis of empire dynamics. Over time, a specific polity can at times come very close to being an ideal-type empire, and at others diverge from it (before collapsing or being transformed into a polity that is no longer an empire). However, there is another method for constructing empire typologies: by supplementing the intensions of a basic empire concept or of its diminished

sub-types with new attributes that differentiate empires, stepping down the ladder of generality. In this way, numerous classical sub-types of empires can be distinguished. This procedure allows me to incorporate the distinctions already made in specialist literature into my typology of empires

This procedure also aids in detecting and rectifying a common mistake. Authors who apply too narrow a definition of empire commit this mistake, considering as attributes of all empires those features that are characteristic only to some sub-type of empires. This is a frequent mistake in historians' works. They generally avoid making explicit definition of the concepts they use, and thus unavoidably adopt the usage of the word "empire" (or for that matter "democracy", "feudalism", etc.) that is dictated by the associations of that word(s) with particular paradigmatic referents of the relevant concept in the cultural linguistic traditions to which their everyday language belongs. Such a fallacy is endemic in the historiography of the Grand Duchy, too (see chapter thirteen). In the remaining part of this chapter, I shall discuss several classical sub-types of empire.

Alexander Motyl (2001; see also chapter five above), elaborates on his analysis of empires' territorial political structure, classifying empires into continuous, discontinuous or mixed, depending on their geography. In continuous empires, peripheral societies are in the direct neighbourhood of the metropole. Seas, oceans or territories of other polities separate peripheral societies from metropoles in the discontinuous empires. Empires are mixed if some of their peripheral domains are in the direct neighbourhood of the empire, while others are geographically distant (Motyl 2001: 18–19). In terms of Motyl's own metaphor of empire, the wheel without a hub, the spokes in a continuous empire are very short, in a discontinuous empire they are very long, and in a mixed they are of different lengths (see Figure 7.1).

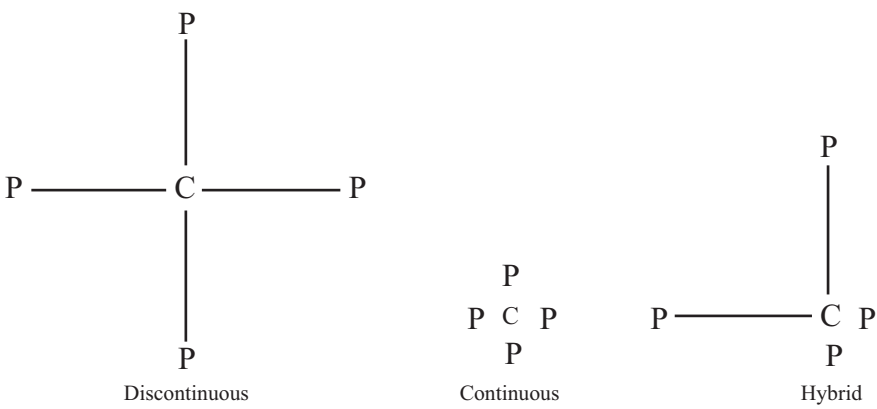

Figure 7.1 Types of empires.

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Discontinuous empires are usually maritime empires, while continuous ones are continental. Nevertheless, this classification of empires into maritime or continental (as well as "continental maritime") has a different basis. Here, the classification refers to the kind of military and communication establishment needed to create or maintain an empire. A discontinuous continental or mixed empire is also possible. Such was the complex of domains ruled by the Anjou (Plantagenet) dynasty in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries that covered England and most regions of modern France. Some contemporary medievalists call it the Angevin Empire (Aurell 2003; Gillingham 1984; Powicke 1961 [1913]; Petit-Dutaillis 1996 [1936]: 99–124). A similar territorial structure was characteristic of the Austrian Habsburgs' domains from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries also: wide strips of territories controlled by other rulers separated some of their domains from the metropolitan centre (e.g. that part of the Netherlands that is Belgium today).

A Marxist who has resolved to ignore Lenin's works (yes, there were some who did; see e.g. Etherington 2014 [1984]), where the word "imperialism" was reserved for identifying the "highest and last" stage of capitalism), could classify empires based on the dominant mode of production in their metropoles into slave-holding, feudal, capitalist and socialist (they did exist).[6] If we apply the influential sociological classification of societies according to the dominant subsistence mode (Lenski 1994), empires can be agrarian, nomadic stock-raising, industrial, trading and (perhaps) post-industrial. Readers educated in sociology can continue with the empire typology construction exercise started here, applying all the economic, social and political system typology ideas they know of. For my part, I will discuss only those empire typologies that are used as a basis for tentative generalisations about the dynamics of empires by some authors. Among them, typological ideas that might be useful in the analysis of the Grand Duchy and its dynamics are of foremost interest.

The distinction between bureaucratic and patrimonial empires drawn by the pioneer in comparative historical sociological empire studies, Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, is of special interest. He made this distinction in the wider context of the political sociological typology of political systems. Eisenstadt distinguishes between (1) primitive political systems; (2) patrimonial empires (the Carolingian, Achaemenid, Parthian); (3) nomadic or conquest empires (the Mongol Empire and the Arab Caliphate in the times of the first caliphs), which he also calls "dualistic nomad-sedentary empires"; (4) city-states (Athens, or early republican Rome); (5) feudal systems (medieval Europe, Japan, and probably elsewhere); (6) centralised historical bureaucratic empires; and (7) various types of modern political systems (democratic, autocratic, totalitarian, "underdeveloped") (Eisenstadt 1993 [1963]: 10).

This classification is not comprehensive, as Eisenstadt was most concerned about just one of these types of political systems – centralised

historical bureaucratic empires. Eisenstadt gives several cases of this subtype of empire, qualifying the inclusion of some cases with the reservation "possibly".

Centralised bureaucratic empires are (1) ancient empires such as Ancient Egypt and Babylon, and "possibly" the Incan and Aztec empires; (2) the Chinese Empire from the times of the Han to the Qing dynasties inclusively; (3) the Sassanid Empire in Iran and "partly" the Achaemenid and Parthian Empires; (4) the Roman Empire and the Hellenistic empires; (5) the Byzantine Empire; (6) the Gupta, Mauryan and Mughal empires in India; (7) the Arabian Caliphate during the reigns of the Abbasid and the Fatimid dynasties; (8) "the West, Central, and East European states, from the fall of the feudal systems through the Age of Absolutism" (Eisenstadt 1993 [1963]: 11); and (9) the conquest empires – "the various political systems established in non-European countries as a result of European expansion, and conquest" (Eisenstadt 1993 [1963]: 11). This is primarily the Spanish-American Empire and the British Empire in India.

Patrimonial empires are special in that they do not yet exhibit the divide between the state as a public, trans-personal institution and the ruler's or his family's personal domains ("patrimony"). A patrimonial empire may be divided and given away much like any other private wealth, although often this might demand the approval or agreement of all the influential family members acting as a collective owner (the Gediminid Grand Duchy of Lithuania may be an example). This concept of a (patrimonial) state is expressed in a motif often repeated in the fairy tales of many nations about a king who gives away half (or less) of his kingdom as the dowry of his daugthter to a brave knight or his son-in-law.

This, in Eisenstadt's opinion, is evidence of a relatively low differentiation of the social fabric to which he, along with other representatives of structural functionalism, relates evolutionary progress in society. Another expression of this progress is a separated and independent religious sphere. The manifestation of this separation on the level of ideas is the metaphysical distinction between this world and the transcendent world. The segregation of secular and religious authorities can express the separation of the religious sphere at the institutional level. Eisenstadt associates the emergence of bureaucratic empires with the appearance of free-floating resources which can be mobilised and concentrated in the hands of their rulers. These resources include money, recruits and labour that can be mobilised for the construction of castles, pyramids, shrines, etc., and moved from one part of the empire to another.

In patrimonial empires, the ruler administers his patrimony helped by his house and court servants who carry out his case-by-case orders. In bureaucratic empires, a difference appears between such private or home servants and state or public officials who specialise in performing only certain functions of public government (tax collection, war-making, maintenance of public order, administration of justice). According to Eisenstadt, in

patrimonial (and feudal) systems there is no clear territorial centralisation, while social, political, and economic hierarchies are closely parallel, if not identical – it is never or hardly ever the case that an individual's status in the social (prestige), governmental or wealth hierarchy would differ. Therefore, patrimonial empires display a "relatively small articulation of the political sphere as organizationally distinct and as featuring autonomous goals" (Eisenstadt 1993 [1963]: 23).

Edward Luttwak (1976) makes another important distinction based on the work of one of the leading historians of Greece and Rome of the twentieth century, Ernst Badian (1958; 1968). Luttwak distinguishes between hegemonic and territorial empires. Michael Mann, another famous scholar in comparative empire studies, also applies this distinction in his work, only using slightly different terminology: he calls hegemonic empires "empires of domination" (Mann 1986: 130–178, 231–249). Jan Zielonka, in turn, calls territorial empires "Westphalian" (Zielonka 2006). A common idea lies behind these differences in terminology: hegemonic empires are based on an indirect system of rule. They are more like a hierarchically structured inter-polity system, as depicted in the works of theoreticians from the English school (see Figure 7.1) rather than a territorial state with relatively clear borders. A swarm of client polities, each of them preserving their own laws, surrounds the imperial polity. Actual governance is left in the hands of local dynasts (of course, only if and so long as they are acceptable to the imperial centre). The territorial empire, meanwhile, is based on direct rule that is carried out by the central government's representatives in each locale. The pluralism and particularism of local laws are eliminated and laws valid throughout the entire empire are introduced.

A hegemonic and territorial empire can represent two development phases of the same imperial polity. In the time of the Late Republic and the Principate, Rome was a hegemonic empire (Luttwak 1976: 20–30). At this time the metropole (Italy), the provinces and the sphere of suzerainty were clearly differentiated within its territory. The sphere of suzerainty included numerous client-states, especially in the empire's east and south (Mauritania, Cappadocia, Pontus, Judea under Herod, etc.). The client-states had to bear the costs of border defence against barbarian attacks (at critical moments, Roman forces would be sent to assist), while the imperial centre had a large strategic reserve at its disposal. This reserve was used to intimidate clients, to secure their loyalty and to expand in selected directions. Rome only became a territorial empire in the second century when it finally abandoned territorial expansion in favour of a "preclusive defence" strategy (Luttwak 1976: 111–117). Client-states were transformed into Rome's provinces. In modern times, too, some of Europe's states, when organising the governance of their overseas colonies (Great Britain), preferred the hegemonic empire mode, while others (France) ruled most (but not all) of their overseas colonies directly.

Some contemporary authors go too far, considering indirect rule a distinguishing attribute of all empires. One such author is the famous researcher of the evolution of forms of political organisation, Charles Tilly, who writes:

> An empire is a large composite polity linked to a central power by indirect rule. The central power exercises some military and fiscal control in each major segment of its imperial domain, but tolerates the two major elements of indirect rule: (1) retention or establishment of particular, distinct compacts for the government of each segment; and (2) exercise of power through intermediaries who enjoy considerable autonomy within their own domains in return for the delivery of compliance, tribute, and military collaboration with the center.
>
> (Tilly 1997: 3)[7]

This is a clear example of the mistake I have just mentioned, when attributes typical to only a certain sub-type of empire are applied to all empires. However, as we shall still discover (see chapter thirteen), the opposite mistake happens when only directly ruled, large multinational polities are considered empires.

The empire typology offered by the famous contemporary expert in the history of the Central Asian steppe's nomadic peoples, American historian and anthropologist Thomas J. Barfield, is especially interesting and valuable (Barfield 2001; see also Barfield 1989). He first of all distinguishes between "primary empires" and "shadow empires". Primary empires are the precursors of modern great powers, since empires were responsible for creating culturally homogeneous population masses, providing the basis for large modern national states. In addition, primary empires invented and perfected those bureaucratic ruling techniques without which it is impossible to even superficially control large masses of people over wide territories. Barfield considers Assyria, the Achaemenid Persian, Roman, Chinese, Spanish and Ottoman empires and the Incan and Aztec empires (on the condition that the Spanish invasion interrupted their empire building) as examples of "primary" empires.[8]

Barfield considers the attributes that define a "primary empire" to be an empire's (grossly enlarged) sub-type: this

> is a state established by conquest that has sovereignty over subcontinental or continental sized territories and incorporates millions or tens of millions of people within a unified and centralized administrative system. The state supports itself through a system of tribute or direct taxation of its component parts and maintains a large permanent military force to protect its marked frontiers and preserve internal order.
>
> (Barfield 2001: 29)

Barfield adds another five attributes to these features that further narrow down the scope of the primary empire concept:

(1) They are properly organised to control and administer economic, political, religious and ethnic diversity. This organisation makes them sustainable – the empire does not collapse together with its founder or founding dynasty. Its elite manages to assimilate the members of conquered nations – even after changes to the composition of the personal elite by recruiters of different ethnic, regional or religious origins, a continuity of state structures remains. Practises characteristic of such empires are the relocation of entire population groups from one part of the empire to another (deportations), colonisation of its fringes, etc.
(2) Empires create transportation systems that ensure links between the military and economic centre (metropole) and the periphery. Classical examples are the road systems of the Ancient Persians, Romans and Incas, and canals in China.
(3) Empires have sophisticated communication systems allowing them to administrate subordinate regions directly from the centre (this does not mean that the empire governs its entire territory in this way). They include a regular state postal system, like the Ancient Persians had, archives, chancelleries, a *lingua franca*, and efforts to introduce a standard measurement system.
(4) Empires have relatively stable borders (*limes*) after the end of the phase of active expansion. In some directions, their stabilisation depends on encounters with other empires or strong great powers; in others, it depends on particular geographical or environmental boundaries (mountains, steppes, etc.). Territorial expansion can also cease as part of a "grand strategy".
(5) Empires have a particular imperial idea or "imperial project", which ultimately becomes a body of common values that surpass any local differences.

"Shadow" empires are secondary phenomena that appear in response to the formation of imperial states in the neighbourhood or prior to the primary ones. They copy or repeat them in some way. Such empires lack part of even a majority of the attributes of primary empires. As Barfield puts it, "they were 'shadows' in that they took on the form of empires without all of their substance. They were in some way parasitic on a larger system, although under exceptional conditions they could transform themselves into self-sustaining primary empires" (Barfield 2001: 33–34).

Barfield identifies four types of shadow empires. First are "mirror empires". The empires created by nomadic tribes that wandered the Eurasian steppes from the third century BC along China's border areas are prime examples. They were a response to the formation of the Chinese Empire and existed at the expense of its resource exploitation. When the Chinese Empire would crumble, the steppe parasite on the other side of the Great Wall of

China would follow suit. Only one of these many mirror empires actually transformed into a real or primary empire. This was the Mongol Empire created by Genghis Khan.

Second are maritime trade empires, examples being the network of Phoenician city-states and the Athenian *arche* from Antiquity and Portugal in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Medieval Venice and Genoa are close to being this type as well.

Third are "vulture empires". They emerge on the borders or the peripheries of failing empires, when the subordinates, clients or ally-satellites of a failing empire take over all or part of its territory. The failed empire's cultural legacy plus its administrative structure is also usually adopted. As an example, Barfield mentions Ancient Egypt when it was ruled by dynasties originating from Nubia, and several episodes in China's history when dynasties of non-Chinese origins restored the empire's unity. The most important of these was the last (Qing) dynasty (1644–1912), whose power base was Manchuria, a region that the Chinese had hitherto ruled indirectly.

Fourth are "empires of nostalgia", based on the memory of already failed empires, which appropriate their traditions and symbols, yet do not possess any attributes typical of a "real" empire. Barfield gives as examples the Carolingian Empire, which had no permanent capital, transport or communication networks, and political formations in Ethiopia whose dynasts laid claim to the "imperial" title even in those periods of the country's history when Ethiopian statehood was on the verge of extinction.

Notes

1 It would not have been right to offer a final version at the beginning, before the concepts used in the definition were discussed in detail. So only the discussion of Taagepera's works allowed highlighting difficulties related to the concept of an empire's size and the "minimalist" definitions of empire in general.
2 This author defines an empire as follows: "an empire is a large, multi-ethnic territorial state with a complex power structure" (Turchin 2006: 3).
3 "A type is defined as fully polythetic, if no characteristics are possessed by every case in the type" (Bailey 1994: 27–28).
4 To recall (see chapter three), in the case of "diminished sub-types", the point of reference is an ideal-type concept. Where additional adjectives carry a negative meaning, certain attributes are excluded from its content.
5 In this chapter, I explained why some of these sub-types are only seemingly inconsistent, providing empirical examples.
6 Serafim Juškov considered Kievan Rus' from the times of Vladimir the Great (ruler of Kievan Rus' in 980–1015) and Yaroslav the Wise (1019–1054) a "feudal empire" (similar to Charlemagne's empire) (Juškov 1939: 166–167, 176; 1950: 79–80). Contemporary neo-Marxist Benno Teschke uses the same term when writing about Europe's early Middle Ages (Teschke 1998).
7 It is no surprise that Charles Tilly unwaveringly calls the Lithuanian-Polish state an empire: "between the Roman and British juggernauts, Europe itself saw great Norman, Lithuanian-Polish, Swedish, Burgundian, and many other empires before consolidated states came to dominate the continent" (Tilly 1997: 2–3).
8 Authors who all too narrowly define the empire concept usually identify it with "primary" empire.

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8 Cliodynamics of empires

The search for a definition of empire and the construction of a typology are by no means ends in themselves. For most scholars of empires this is simply preparatory work along the way to implementing much more ambitious projects. The goal generally is a nomological or causal empire theory that discloses the laws or general causes of the rise and fall of empires. Those causes are necessary, sufficient (or necessary and sufficient) conditions under which polities become empires and then collapse or transform into different types of polities. When we know those causes, we can answer the question – why did one particular polity become an empire, while another did not? Why did one empire exist for a long time, while another rapidly collapsed? The prospect of predicting the rise and fall of empires is even more attractive, while state leaders can expect advice on how to become an empire or to remain one. An empire theory that lends itself to meeting all of these objectives would be a theory of the historical dynamics (cliodynamics) of empires – the general causes of their rise and fall.

This kind of project can be realised in two ways. Hypothetical laws of the rise and fall of empires can be deterministic ("given the conditions x, y, z, a polity always becomes an empire") or statistical. The hypothetical statistical "law" of empire cliodynamics can be just the regression equation $Y = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + \ldots + b_nX_n + e$. In this equation Y is (e.g.) the duration of an empire in years, while $X_1, X_2, \ldots, X_n$ are variables that can affect its duration. A theory that seeks to disclose the causes of the rise and fall (or longevity) of empires should help to compile a list of those variables. If when analysing data about historical empires we would find that the theory's independent variables and the dependent variable Y are related by the statistically significant regression coefficients b of the non-negligible magnitude, then this finding would be a (provisional) confirmation of the theory.

Both of the nomological versions of the cliodynamics project meet with serious obstacles. Application of statistical analysis methods is problematic because of the rather small population (N) of empires: statistically significant results are unlikely. This N will be somewhat larger using a relatively "thin" definition of an empire, one that posits only few conditions for the polity in order for it to appear on the list of empires. Therefore, the pioneer

of cliometric empire research, Taagepera, defined empires as simply the very largest polities of their epoch (see chapter three).[1]

However, the more the population of empires is expanded, the more cases are included about which we cannot attain reliable information. This problem is even more challenging because a statistical analysis provides the most interesting results when it operates with variables measured at higher than the nominal level. But where can the researcher realistically expect to find out data on what the infant mortality rate, or Gini coefficient values for, say, the Parthian or Kushan empires were? In order to cope with this problem somehow, the researcher is forced to limit the scope of her research to only some specific type of empire, using available data. But when N is sharply reduced, the problem of the statistical significance of the analysis results rears its head again.

Researchers searching for deterministic laws about the causes of the rise and fall of empires soon realise that, regardless of what hypothesis is raised, their opponents will not take long to find and present contradicting examples. This problem is not so critical for scholars in search of statistical laws. They can react to such cases by saying that they are interested only in general causes. The action of these causes is modified by incidental and special circumstances that in separate cases may overwhelm the general causes that transpire only if a relatively large number of cases are studied. In addition, they may doubt the reliability of data on the counter-examples, suspecting measurement errors ("noise") when collecting that data. That is why it is so important for the quantitative or statistical approach that the N of empires should be as large as possible.

A small N population of cases is more convenient for scholars in search of deterministic laws, as a smaller population of cases reduces the probability that there might be cases contradicting their hypothesis among them.[2] This may be one of the reasons why researchers who prefer the qualitative, case-oriented approach tend to use "thick" or "rich" definitions of empires. They set very demanding criteria for belonging to the empires' club. Then, on closer inspection, their hypothetical generalisations turn out to be not about all empires, but only about ideal-typical empires or about some kind of "enlarged sub-types" of empires.

Taking this path, researchers soon come dangerously close to a situation where their generalisations, without any exceptions or reservations, apply for only one case. Usually, this is the Roman Empire, and the comparative empire studies research becomes simply a demonstration of certain similarities and analogies between this empire and some selected polities. This fault is evident in maybe the most widey known imperiological conceptions of Oswald Spengler and Arnold Toynbee, where an empire is considered a kind of "autumn" or "winter" phase of great cultures or civilisations, during which they cease to be creative and live surrounded by the "internal" and "external proletariat" (Spengler 1981 [1918–1922]: 1081–1107; Toynbee 1957: 4–75).

Most probably, the maximum goal of comparative nomological imperiology – to discover the general causes of the rise and fall of *all* empires – is out of reach altogether. Empires are not natural kinds, while contemporary philosophy of science considers the "natural kindedness" of a phenomenon or a group thereof as a possibility condition for the nomological (or nomothetic, to use an old-fashioned neo-Kantian term) theory of that phenomenon. The population of cases, which match the definition of empire proposed in chapter seven, is in fact very heterogeneous. This makes it difficult to expect to come across any even vaguely interesting deterministic or even statistical generalisations. And it is worth remembering that truly universal laws of empires (if such do exist) should be valid for all future empires on Earth, and even for the empires of any extra-terrestrial civilisations.

However, there is no serious a priori reason to consider the search for a generalisation valid for only certain empire *types* a hopeless and futile task. Even if the actual findings raise doubts and do not withstand criticism, they may still contain or suggest ideas and observations that may prove worthwhile for a study aimed at learning about the causes of the rise and fall of an individual empire – like this book, where one of my aims is to find out the causes of the rise and fall of the medieval Lithuanian Empire.

Therefore, I will not delve deeper into the general methodological problems of the nomological comparative cliodynamics of empires, nor will I provide a thorough or systematic review of cliodynamic theories of empires. Instead, I will very selectively discuss the ideas of only those authors who do not concentrate all their attention on modern European imperialism and the empires it has created, but who also analyse the dynamics of pre-modern empires, or even limit themselves to this task exclusively. Only such works could offer sources of inspiration for learning about the imperial history of the Grand Duchy. Unfortunately, most authors in empire and imperialism studies focus on the causes of the emergence and dynamics of European colonial empires in the modern age. For my purposes, this wide body of literature is relevant only so far as its ideas can be generalised or applied beyond the chronological and geographic scope intended by its authors.[3]

From the theories constructed and tested using the qualitative comparative approach, Michael Doyle's work still stands out the most amid the available literature (Doyle 1986). Importantly, before advancing his own ideas, Doyle tries to summarise the available explanations regarding the rise of empires. He singles out three different answers to the question as to why precisely this polity, and not another, becomes a centre of imperialist expansion or (if that expansion was successful) the metropole of an empire.

Metro-centric theories look for causes in demographic, economic, political and other processes that take place in societies whose polities carry out expansion and become metropoles. They conceive of imperialism as a means by which metropolitan societies resolve their domestic conflicts or other problems. This approach is represented not only by the Marxist-Leninist theory of imperialism (see chapters two and five), which

considers imperialism to be the terminal or ultimate manifestation of the "essence of capitalism" in the most advanced capitalist countries. Opposing Schumpeter's theory, which claimed that the imperialism of Europe's great powers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was an atavist reversion to the pre-capitalist epoch, it is also a version of the metro-centric approach.

An alternative to metro-centric empires and imperialism are peri-centric theories. They focus on the processes that take place among the "victims" of imperialism – the peripheries of the empires – and consider them the most important cause of the rise of empires. These processes can be endogenic or they may be induced by cultural or trade contact with other societies. An empire starts to form when political societies that have domestic problems implicate other societies in their domestic affairs. This can be the attempts by those losing internal political struggles to receive the support of a neighbouring state; swathes of refugees flooding a neighbouring (future metropolitan) polity, causing economic, cultural and other problems there; or the actions of criminals, bandits, pirates and other evil-doers (once simply called "barbarians") in the neighbouring failed, failing or as yet unformed state. Like it or not, in such cases the stronger state is forced to interfere and "bring order" into such territories that do not yet have or no longer have the agencies capable of implementing a legitimate violence monopoly.

A well-known work representing the peri-centric approach is Ronald Robinson's and John Gallagher's explanation of nineteenth-century British imperialism (Gallagher and Robinson 1953; Robinson and Gallagher 1961). The goal of foreign policy conducted by the British liberal political elite in the first half of the nineteenth century was not to create an empire, but to promote and defend free trade. When British traders suffered at the hands of local bandits or rulers who would confiscate their goods or simply refuse to pay their debts, the country's government could not resist the public's pressure to use the British navy and army to punish the wrong-doers. It did not take long for the British government to realise that the peace required for free trade to take place could not be maintained while the "turbulent" and "rebellious" regions from which the bandits and pirates attacked were not subjugated (see also Thomson 1994). For the same reasons, the frontiers of the territories already under control had to be pushed further and further each time, so that no territories "not controlled by anyone" would remain, where robbers, bandits and other dangerous forces impeding free trade could find a safe haven.[4]

Taking into consideration peri-centric explanations of the specific cases of imperial expansion, Doyle defines imperialism not just as the policy of some states, as the authors of metro-centric theories usually do. Instead, Doyle defines imperialism as "the process or policy of establishing or maintaining empire" (Doyle 1986: 45). Imperialism is a process because in many cases future empires did not commence their territorial expansion by implementing pre-formulated and devised plans for conquering the world, a continent

or region. Without a doubt, there are numerous such cases as well, when empires appear as an outcome of the realisation of this kind of "grand strategy". The Mongol Empire is the best example. Genghis Khan sought to conquer the entire world, and obligated his descendants to finish the work he had started. The irony of history is that such aspirations often fail before their executors even create a political body that could go by the name of empire, even when we apply a very broad and liberal definition of empire. At the same time, at least two of the most famous and largest empires – the Roman and British – were created not as the products of some "grand strategy", but most likely unintentionally or even against the will of the governments of the polities which finally became the metropoles of empires. They just repeatedly found themselves in situations where the occupation of overseas territories appeared as the lesser of two evils.

The notion that empires are the result of a purposeful and concerted policy exaggerates the abilities of governments carrying out imperial expansion to control the actions of their subjects and to foresee the outcomes of their own actions. Military maritime expeditions dispatched by the British government did not make decisive contributions towards the formation of the British Empire. Instead, the actions of private entrepreneurs and their groups (trade companies) who acted at their own risk and expense were a much more important force. British state institutions often had to legalise (retroactively and with little enthusiasm) the outcomes of such fortune-hunters' actions in distant lands and to assume the costs of military defense of these new domains (Robinson and Gallagher 1961: 1–26, 462–472; Seeley 1914 [1883]).

Following the triumph against Carthage in the Second Punic War (218–201 BC), the Roman Senate sought to restrict its sphere of authority to the Italian Peninsula and Sicily. However, Rome's military power made it a very attractive ally for the Hellenistic monarchies in the eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea. These monarchies had fought one another for over a hundred years. Caught up in their mutual wars by various diplomatic intrigues, Rome had to take over the responsibility for the outcomes of its victories against Macedonia, taking over from this demolished great power as protector over the Greek city-states. In this way, it also became involved in their feuds (Badian 1968; Garnsey and Whittaker 1978; Holleaux 1921; Eckstein 2007). In both cases, empires were not created because the power elites of polities conducting the expansion had the foresight and determination to pursue the goal set in advance, but most likely by "absent-mindedness": these elites gave too little thought to the long-run outcomes of their opportunistic responses to the challenges of their current foreign policies. "Nothing great that has ever been done by Englishmen was done so unintentionally, so accidentally, as the conquest of India" (Seeley 1914 [1883]: 207). In both these cases we can say that imperialism was a process manifested through the conquering of ever-new territories and their subjugation to the metropole's control, but it would be inaccurate to talk about

imperialism as a directed policy or a "grand strategy" that would have been the cause of this process.

Even the Russian Empire's expansion, one of the driving forces of which was without a doubt the imperial "Third Rome" ideology, was most successful where the tsar's government made the least intrusions. Its main goal was to unite under its authority all the former lands of Kievan Rus', and thus it engaged in bloody and not always successful wars with the Grand Duchy and then the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Yet the most rapid and most effective agents of expansion were in fact peasants fleeing the metropole, escaping exploitation under serfdom, who became organised in self-governing Cossack armies on the state's fringes (Seaton 1985). It was such runaways from their own state's government that brought Siberia under Russian control, and even a significant part of North America (Alaska, which was Russian until 1867), changing the power balance in the southern steppes where nomads had dominated until the sixteenth century.

Until the very end of the eighteenth century, when the tsarist government finally managed to bring the Cossacks under its firm control, the imperial government viewed them more as an annoying source of concern and a danger to internal order and stability, rather than as an avant-garde of imperial expansion. That is practically what they were – but not as the executors of a policy prearranged by the Russian government or premeditated and implemented by themselves, simply because of the circumstances at the time. In the bitter struggle for survival, the only support along the state's frontiers for the anarchists who had fled the tsar's government were representatives of that same government who did not care so much about pushing the borders further into the taiga or the steppe. Instead, their objective was to capture the runaways flooding these areas who did not want to serve the tsar as ordinary peasants or draftees. Once they got into trouble, the government's representatives could dictate their own conditions to the vulnerable Cossacks.

An empire can also be formed as the result of a war of liberation against an already existing empire (even though Doyle does not mention this possibility). That war's initiator can be a polity or nation suffering under the empire's yoke, and its goal can be liberation, rather than conquest or subordination. However, in order for the war of liberation to be successful, the recaptured lands need to be administered and organised, and any available resources extracted from them to use in the struggle. Those subjects of the empire that remain loyal to the earlier masters need to be liberated, and then ruled by force. If the liberation and emancipation struggle is successful, then a new empire is formed from the ruins of its precedessor, which, like it or not, adopts its legacy (as a vulture empire; see Barfield 2001: 36–38).

Doyle calls the third approach in explaining empires and imperialism "systemic", as it attributes imperialism to the very nature of the international relations system, as depicted in realist and neo-realist international relations theories. As was already mentioned, they consider the "normal"

state of the international relations system a power balance between two or more great powers. However, it can be destabilised by exogenic "shocks" when, due to internal causes, one of the states that make up the system weakens or dissolves (as happened with the Soviet Union), or when new member states join it from outside (see chapter five). States expand in the interests of enhancing their own security, as under the conditions of anarchy the only guarantee of security is a greater power. Letting an opportunity for expansion provided by the internal crisis of a neighbour pass runs the risk that another state will jump at it, while the first state will end up as merely another victim of this state's expansion. This is another instance of imperialism as a process, not a policy, as territorial expansion is carried out by a polity which *ceteris paribus* prefers the stability of its actual borders.

Doyle adds to this list of causes of the rise of empires another kind of cause that he did not encounter in existing research. These are "transnational forces" that radiate from the metropolitan societies. They draw other societies into the metropolitan society's sphere of influence and make them ready for political subordination. They can also be described by the "soft power" concept so popular today in international relations theory (Nye 2004), which Doyle himself refrains from using. "Soft power" refers to the economic, cultural and technological advantages of a more advanced country that give it international standing, weight and appeal even when such a country has no overwhelming "hard" military power. Transnational forces are a "transnational extension of the domestic society of the metropole" (Doyle 1986: 129), enabling it to influence the peripheral society even before subjugating it to its political control.

In the case of Europe's imperial overseas expansion, merchants seeking private gain were one type of agent representing transnational forces. Their activities entangled backward societies in trade exchanges with the future metropoles. New goods destroyed the actual power balances existing in peripheral societies, creating new elites who became a source of local support for the Europeans. New goods also ignited internal conflicts whose external impacts urged or even forced Europeans to subordinate those communities politically as well. Christian missionaries who, rather than seeking private monetary gain, sought to spread the word of the Gospel produced similar outcomes. Trade and the spread of religious ideas were the most important transnational causes of imperial expansion in pre-modern times as well.

Doyle devotes most of his attention to the causes of the rise of empires: why do some polities start to expand, while others do not? Why do some become subjects of that expansion, while others – objects? He offers the following answer: an empire emerges when three things happen simultaneously. The future metropolitan society crosses the "hegemony threshold", the future peripheral societies cross the "subordination threshold", and, in addition, there is also "a transnational society, based in the metropole and

capable of extending itself to societies about to become subject to imperial rule" (Doyle 1986: 73). Thus, he does not consider the causes of empires and imperialism that are pinpointed in metro-centric and peri-centric theories to be real alternatives. Each one of them gives a cause of imperial expansion that is necessary though insufficient without another one: transnational forces that make peripheral societies ripe for becoming the objects of imperial expansion.

Doyle's list of three types of necessary causes of imperialism does not mention changes to the power balance in the international system. This is probably so because, in Doyle's view, it is not these changes that determine the distribution of roles between the objects and subjects of imperialism. They are determined by internal factors relating to the society's internal order and level of development. The state and changes in the international power balance do matter for explanation of the scale and success of the expansion. A metropolitan society can cross the "hegemony threshold", and there might be enough attractive expansion objects amongst its neighbours or overseas, yet it might never become the core of a large empire if it has more powerful opponents in the international system that are strong enough to put the revisionist state "in its place".

So when does a (future metropolitan) society cross the hegemony threshold?

> A metropole is constituted from three determinative elements: first, a strong, united, central government; second, a thorough sense of public legitimacy or community, widely shared among the governing population, whether elite or mass; and third, a substantial degree of social differentiation.
>
> (Doyle 1986: 128–129)

The most important attribute of such a society ripe for imperial expansion is a strong, central government capable of mobilising the resources created by social differentiation for imperial policy. A society that does not have or no longer has these attributes finds itself beyond the "subordination threshold". So long as it is on this side of that threshold, it fights tooth and nail to resist foreign imperial expansion if it occasionally becomes its target (even though it may lose this battle). Transnational forces do not weaken or divide it, but strengthen and unite such a society. If it does find itself beyond the subordination threshold, it appeals for protection and patronage from a stronger polity (an "elder brother").

In his analysis of the question of an already formed empire's further destiny, Doyle underlines that the duration of empires varies greatly. At the same time, he seems to suggest that it would be wrong to appeal to the same causes to explain the fall of empires of both a short (those which did not outlive their founding rulers) and a long duration, during whose history not just rulers but whole dynasties changed. Jane Burbank and Frederick

Cooper are right to ask why authors who consider the fall of empires a natural thing forget that many empires lived a great deal longer than the national states and nations that exist at present. For example, the Roman and Ottoman empires endured six hundred years each, and the eastern offshoot of the Roman Empire lasted one thousand years. "By comparison, the nation-state appears as a blip on the historical horizon, a state form that emerged recently from under imperial skies and whose hold on the world's political imagination may well prove partial or transitory" (Burbank and Cooper 2010: 3).

Many newly rising empires expand very rapidly, reaching over one or two generations those borders that remain in place or retreat only with time. This stage of expansion is often related to the activities of a charismatic military leader or ruler. An empire can expand explosively or exponentially, because it can use the resources of already subjugated peripheries for its further expansion. However, the further an empire expands, the greater the costs involved in maintaining control over the subordinated territories. Motyl notes that empires face the same problem that was the "Achilles heel" of totalitarian states from the twentieth century.

The attempt to control the life of all of society from one centre overloads it with information that the centre is incapable of adequately evaluating and processing. Therefore, the quality of decisions made by that centre gradually declines, increasing the possibility of misguided military and political decisions.[5] In pre-modern times, this situation was further complicated by increasing communication problems. Due to the long time it took for news from the periphery to be passed to the centre (and back), the centre could not effectively manage affairs (primarily, military concerns) which demanded a quick reaction. The solution to this problem invented already in the Achaemenid Empire was the delegation of authority. However, the delegation of authority to the empire's officials in the faraway periphery allowed them to gradually consolidate their power, searching for support from the local political community, and even to become de facto independent. Attempting to restore its power, the centre went to internal war that could eventually end with the empire's disintegration.

Unlike Motyl, Doyle does not perceive these problems as insoluble. He highlights the so-called "Augustan threshold" in the evolution of empires. Ancient Rome, as a classic empire, reached this threshold when, following the conquest of the Mediterranean Sea countries, the inadequacy of its political structure as a city-state under the new conditions became all too evident. This led to an internal crisis in the first century BC – civil wars that almost destroyed the just recently created empire. Far from all empires are capable of crossing this threshold, which is why the histories of some are so short. In the case of Rome, the problem was successfully resolved in the times of the civil war's victor, Augustus Octavianus. Augustus' reforms not only ensured the sustainability of the Roman Empire, they also empowered it to continue with its external expansion.

As has already been mentioned several times, the boundaries between the metropole and the periphery, between the empire's core and its areas of domination, suzerainty and hegemony, can all shift. A hegemonic empire can transform into a territorial empire. After becoming part of a formal empire, a peripheral political society can gradually merge with the metropole's society. Such processes take place the quickest at the elite level, though eventually the cultural differences between the lower classes can also disappear. A classic case and example is the romanisation of Rome's provinces. Only a century after the conquest of Spain, senators of Spanish origin were already in attendance at the Roman Senate. "In the third century most senators were not Italians. From Trajan onwards most emperors came from the provinces and the eternal city celebrated its millennium in AD 247 under the rule of an Arab sheikh" (Brunt 1965: 274).[6] Much earlier (212) Emperor Caracalla declared an edict giving all the free inhabitants of the Roman Empire the rights of a Roman citizen.

Doyle, giving this development in the Roman Empire a generic significance, distinguishes the "Caracallan threshold" in empire evolution, beyond which empires cease being empires in the strictest sense of the word.

> At this point an empire no longer exists, and the many peoples have become one. In the case of Rome the many were assimilated into a common despotism, but the continuing and intriguing moral attraction of the otherwise reprehensible international domination of empire lies in the possibility that all might be assimilated to a common liberty.
>
> (Doyle 1986: 137)[7]

It is worthwhile again to repeat the question of whether all contemporary large states, perhaps except for those that arose in the overseas territories populated by European colonists, did not emerge from empires that had crossed the "Caracallan threshold".[8] Inhabitants of Provence and Brittany, not to mention the German-speaking population of Lotharingia and Alsace conquered by Louis XIV, did not consider themselves members of the French nation from the very moment when they found themselves under the rule of the French king. In pre-modern times, all or almost all large states were empires, while large nations that later became the basis for national states were created by imperial states, in those cases where assimilation processes in empires were successful or history gave them sufficient time to be completed. It is the creation of large political societies (nations) that can be considered as the historical mission of empires and imperialism (Barfield 2001:33; Hintze 1964 [1928]: 211).

Doyle only claims that some long-lasting empires did manage to cross the Augustan and even Caracallan thresholds. He neglects to ask why some empires did succeed in crossing these thresholds, while others did not. This means that he ignores the second part in the classical agenda of comparative empire studies, which includes questions about causes of the demise

of empires. It is probably no accident that these questions in particular are the focus of Russian-American researcher, University of Connecticut professor, Peter Turchin, born and educated in the USSR (Turchin 2003a; 2006; Turchin and Nefedov 2009).[9]

Similar to the Estonian Taagepera, the Russian Turchin (son of the famous Soviet dissident, physicist Valentin Turchin) entered the social sciences with a natural sciences background. He is one of the most highly regarded specialists in population dynamics in the world (Turchin 2003b). This is a sub-discipline of biology which applies mathematical models to analyse the causes of changes in the population size of various animal kinds. He seeks to use a mathematical apparatus and the modelling skills he has honed in this field to answer both of the two big questions of empire cliodynamics: why do empires rise, and why do they fall?

In searching for an answer to the first question, Turchin limits himself to agrarian empires and those that Barfield classified as secondary empires. These are empires, preceded by or coexisting with older empires, which are an essential causal factor in the emergence of new empires. The exclusion of the question of how and why the earliest empires emerged in a particular world region would ordinarily be seen as the shortcoming of a theory aspiring to explain the rise and decline of empires. However, for my purposes, this is actually an advantage, because the Grand Duchy was a secondary empire.

Turchin uses ideas adopted from the great fourteenth-century Arab traveller and thinker, a contemporary of Algirdas and Vytautas, Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406), as a key to explain the emergence of empires. Ibn Khaldun used them to summarise his observations on the development of relations between the centres of civilisation in North Africa and in the Near East and their surrounding desert and semi-desert Bedouin nomadic populations. The centres of civilisation were cities located in the oases, connected via the trading network. Bedouin tribes captured these centres, and dynasties founded by their leaders established their rule here. This rule would last around three or four generations, then their place would be taken by a new wave of "unspoilt-by-civilisation" newcomers from the deserts or steppes (Ibn Khaldun 1969 [1377]); see also Khoury and Kostiner 1990).

Explaining the causes of barbarians' superiority against agents of civilisation, Ibn Khaldun used the term *asabiya* for which today's English translators propose "group feeling". Ibn Khaldun wrote that this group feeling "means (mutual) affection and willingness to fight and die for each other" (Ibn Khaldun 1969 [1377]: 123). Turchin reinterprets Khaldun's term, defining *asabiya* as "group-level capacity for collective action" (Turchin 2003a: 45). He explicitly relates this concept to contemporary discussions about the conditions for collective action. A famous theorem proven in game theory (the branch of broader rational choice theory) sparked this discussion. According to this theorem, in social situations of a "prisoner's dilemma"-type rational actors will defect rather than cooperate to produce

public goods that are in their common interest. This and related theorems hold for situations where actors have mixed incentives to conflict and to cooperate. On the one hand, all actors would benefit from cooperating. However, at the same time, each of them is tempted to heap the costs of this cooperation onto other actors and take a free ride, withholding her contribution but using the fruits of efforts made by cooperating participants (Olson 1965; Coleman 1990).

Turchin joins scholars who believe that the resolution of the cooperation problem is conditional on the availability of social capital, or more precisely, of "bridging" social capital (see Putnam 1993 for the most famous contribution). In Turchin's view, the capacity to act collectively

> is a result of a complex mix of individual behaviours: the proportion of solidarists in the group and the strength of their solidarism, the denseness and nature of social networks within which individuals are embedded, the ability to detect and punish free-riders (including higher-level norms that detect and punish those who do not punish cheaters), and the self-organization capacity (for example, selecting and obeying the leader).
>
> (Turchin 2003a: 48)

Turchin prefers the term *asabiya* because, to him, the term "social capital" sounds anachronistic when applied to ancient "pre-capitalist" societies. "Putnam's social capital is asabiya for modern democratic societies, with an emphasis on its non-military aspects" (Turchin 2006: 325). The *asabiya* concept meanwhile emphasises those aspects of social capital thanks to which a group can resolve the problem of collective action by going to war in common defence in the face of an enemy or, conversely, by attacking itself. "Thus, asabiya appears to be essentially the agrarian societies' equivalent of social capital (at least as the latter is defined by Putnam and co-workers)" (Turchin 2003a: 43).

Turchin considers the most important condition for the rise of premodern agrarian empires the creation of ethnic groups with high *asabiya*. "Note that the theory views polity formation and ethnogenesis as two aspects of the same dynamic process" (Turchin 2003a: 76). Another widely known Russian theorist, Lev Gumilëv (1912–1992), offered similar reasoning, relating the emergence of new ethnic groups to the appearance of a large number of "passionaries" – individuals prepared to sacrifice themselves for the common good, amid the inert mass of individualists and egoists (Gumilëv 1989). Yet Gumilëv explained this phenomenon as the rather mysterious effect of cosmic forces on people, repeatedly occuring in some geographic regions. Turchin, meanwhile, explained it by specific life conditions at "metaethnic fault lines". He locates them in the frontier zones of already existing empires and civilisations, where they bordered the "barbarian world" or other empires and civilisations.

Those life conditions are special in that very intensive selection takes place there whose object is not individuals but groups. These selection forces weaken in the centres of civilisations where "rational egoists" who think only about their own personal well-being have more chances to "make it big". Meanwhile, under austere border conditions an individual can survive only if the group to which she belongs survives. These are places where ethnocide, culturcide and genocide occur most intensively. This is also the place of the most intensive ethnogenesis (Turchin 2003a: 76). Among those groups fighting tooth and nail for existence, it is the most cohesive groups that have the best chances for survival, i.e., the ones with the most *asabiya*, which can ensure that during critical situations their members choose self-sacrificing behaviour that is ruinous to themselves individually, yet serves in the interests of the group's survival and advancement.

A group can resist or challenge already existing states or empires, only if its size surpasses both a lineage and tribe, and which includes not only true blood relatives. According to Turchin, such collectives are ethnic groups whose members are bonded by "a sense of ethnic identity that consists of the subjective, symbolic, emblematic use by a group of people of any aspect of culture, in order to create internal cohesion and differentiate themselves from other groups" (Turchin 2003a: 34). Differences in language, religion, diet and other customs usually serve as markers to differentiate between ethnic groups. A frontier milieu is a particularly conducive environment for the formation of new ethnic groups as here such differences are especially pronounced. The inhabitants of a neighbouring empire usually have time to form a wider (yet lower *asabiya* level) metaethnic group spanning many ethnic groups, united by profession of the same religious faith or identification with the values of "civilisation".

That is why Turchin locates places of intense ethnogenesis right at the "metaethnic fault lines", and not simply along the lines of ethnic differences: metaethnic fault lines are places where linguistic and other differences between neighbouring ethnic groups are sharpened by the boundary separating "barbarians" and "civilisation", or divide between different civilisations.

> Only those semi-peripheries where imperial frontiers coincide with metaethnic fault lines should be the sources of aggressive challenger states. Furthermore, the more intense the ethnic differential and the longer the frontier occupies the region, the more likely that a challenger would emerge and be successful at building a large territorial empire.
>
> (Turchin 2003a: 62)

Thus new ethnic groups with high *asabiya* at the metaethnic fault lines are centres of new empires' formation. These new ethnic groups can include pre-existing tribal or lineage communities, though only as sub-ethnic or sub-sub-ethnic groups, whose loyalty now lies with the new ethnic identity. An

old empire representing a civilisation whose population's – and especially its elite's – *asabiya* decreased due to civilised, primarily urban, life (this was observed by Ibn Khaldun and even earlier authors when comparing the "barbarian" and "civilised" people) is a natural object of aggression and expansion for "aspiring polities". However, so long as the old neighbour is strong, that expansion can take place in another direction, expanding where it faces least resistance and thus accumulating resources to attack its civilisation-fatigued neighbour. Turchin calls this phenomenon the "reflux effect" (Turchin 2003a: 73).

As it takes over the legacy of the old empire, the new empire created by aggressive barbarians or semi-barbarians might view itself as a continuation of its predecessor at the level of symbolism and ideology, and also emulate its practices and policies. So it could qualify as a "vulture empire" using Barfield's terminology. Yet eventually it might suffer the same fate as the empire it inherited and "consumed". However, over that period the boundary between civilisation and the barbarian periphery has time to shift: the barbarian periphery and its population has time to become part of a wider "metaethnic group", while the metaethnic fault line along which new hubs of imperial expansion form can end up in a completely different place. This does not apply if the metaethnic fault line divides two civilisations. However, if the "barbarian periphery" no longer exists, then the possibility of new empires emerging is the greatest along such juncture lines between civilisations.

Turchin aims to test his metaethnic frontier territory theory using quantitative statistical analysis and thus show that a programme of empire cliodynamics as an exact and strict science is quite a serious enterprise indeed. He divides the European continent into fifty "cultural regions" ranging from 100,000 to 200,000 km^2 in area. Turchin's Europe includes the space that borders the Urals in the east, and the Atlantic Ocean and connected seas, plus the Anatolian Peninsula, in the west and south. Each region is assessed using a frontier intensity index whose values range from 0 (minimum) to 9 (maximum).

The overall value of the frontier intensity index is the sum of four sub-index values – (a) religious differences, (b) linguistic differences, (c) way-of-life differences, and (d) the pressure of war. Regions that border Muslim or pagan countries receive three points for religious differences; those that lie along the frontiers of the major branches of Christianity (Catholics and Orthodox believers after 1000) get two points; and those where members of different "sects" of the same faith are across the border between regions (Catholic and Orthodox believers before 1000) – one. If a region borders only regions of the same religion, then the value for the religious differences sub-index is zero. The linguistic differences sub-index receives such a value if populations in the neighbouring regions speak the same language. This index receives a value of one if the languages belong to the same language group (Germanic, Roman, Slavic), and two if the languages belong to different language groups or families.[10] The largest value for the way-of-life

differences sub-index (two) goes to regions where farmers live in one, while nomadic livestock-raising people live in another. A value of one goes to those agriculturalist regions where there is a tight network of cities and a high literacy level, while their neighbour is a backward rural agrarian periphery (and vice versa). When measuring the pressure of war, two points go to regions where intensive war activity takes place on their borders, resulting in the partial or complete genocide of some separate ethnic groups and depopulation. One point goes to regions if frequent wars among them have no serious demographic effects. Finally, zero points go to regions that interact peacefully or sometimes engage in "elite wars" that have practically no impact on the population at large.

Turchin's theory's dependent variable is the size of the polity formed in the region at the period of its greatest territorial extension. He distinguishes a large (imperial) polity from its smaller counterparts by choosing an area of 100,000 km^2 as its threshold. This is not so much, especially since in another work (e.g. Turchin 2009) he postulated that an empire cannot be smaller than 1,000,000 km^2. However, the 100,000 km^2-threshold appears quite convincing at least over the years 0–1000. He dichotomises the frontier intensity index variable, asserting that a region can be classified as a frontier region (a generator of *asabiya*) if the frontier intensity index is equal to five or larger over no less than the three centuries.

Metaethnic frontier theory predicts that if a region is at the frontier, then it is likely that a large polity (empire) will emerge here, and if it is not, then the emergence of an empire is unlikely. Observations where a region is at the frontier but no empire arises are also compatible with his theory. As his argument goes, if there is another frontier region in the neighbourhood, then it can become the centre of empire formation and conquer the first region, thus preempting an analogous process in its neighbourhood. The emergence of empires in non-frontier regions contradicts and refutes the theory. Table 8.1 presents this data. In this table, rows stand for an empire's presence and absence, while the columns mean location at the frontier or further away. If this theory were completely false, then the cases would be equally distributed across all the cells. Their actual distribution is shown in Table 8.1, where the top part covers Europe in 0–1000, and the lower the period 1000–1900.

In the first period, Turchin finds only one case that would contradict the metaethnic frontier theory's predictions: the Duchy of Aquitaine that split from the Merovingian state in the sixth century and was joined to the Carolingian Empire in the eighth century. In the second period there were more of these anomalies. The formation of the Polish state in the tenth and eleventh centuries, for one: although Poland was already then experiencing pressure from the Christianised Germanic peoples, ancestors of contemporary Poles were the neighbours of the future Germans for a shorter time than Turchin's theory requires (no less than 300 years). The object of German pressure during the times of the creation of the Polish state were not Poles but Polabian

Table 8.1 Results of the empirical test of the frontier model: (a) Europe 0–1000 CE. Test of independence (Sokal and Rohlf 1981: 373): $G_{adj} = 27.1$, $P \leq 0.001$. (b) Europe 1000–1900 CE. Test of Independence: $G_{adj} = 22.1$, $P \leq 0.001$. Republished with permission of Princeton UP, from *Historical Dynamics: Why States Rise and Fall* by Peter Turchin, Princeton: Princeton UP, 2003, p. 84 © Princeton UP, 2003; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

	(a) 0–1000 C.E.	
	No frontier	Frontier
No empire	34	4
Empire	1	11
	(b) 1000–1900 C.E.	
	No Frontier	Frontier
No empire	19	6
Empire	3	22

Slavs. Another two anomalies are the Duchy of Burgundy that arose in the late fourteenth century and the unifier of Italy, the Savoia. Yet there are not so many such anomalies that the theory of statistics would forbid rejecting the zero hypothesis.

The most important alternative that the "metaethnic fault line" theory must contend with is the "positional advantage" theory prevalent in geopolitical literature.[11] It claims that polities established on the marchlands of a geographic region have better chances for territorial expansion. The sea or other natural obstacles (impassable mountain ranges, etc.) protect them from attacks on at least one front. Middle polities, meanwhile, which need to defend themselves on all fronts along their perimeters, find expansion much more difficult, and it is they who are attacked much more often. Therefore, they are eventually partitioned between neighbours possessing a safer territorial expansion base. Turchin constructs another index – the vulnerability index – and then applies this index to measure the vulnerability of fifty regions he distinguished.

This index has the maximum value of four for regions that have land borders on all sides. If a region borders the sea or an ocean on one side, its index value is three, two if from two sides, etc. Islands are found to be the least vulnerable (their index value is zero). In other continents, mountains can also be an important factor structuring the geopolitical space. However, Turchin argues that Europe is different. "A major geographical feature of Europe is the plain running from south western France through northern France, Germany, Poland, Belarus and Ukraine, and Russia. There are no significant mountain chains interrupting this plain" (Turchin 2003a: 90). That is why, when assessing vulnerability, he considers only seas and oceans. Polities

themselves (taking into account only the largest ones in each region) are grouped into three classes: small (< 100,000 km^2), medium (from 100,000 to 300,000 km^2), and large (> 300,000 km^2). If successful territorial expansion would actually depend on having a marchland position, then there would be more large polities among those considered less vulnerable, and small polities would dominate among those that are more vulnerable. However, Turchin's data shows that Europe's large states are equally distributed across regions exhibiting all the levels of vulnerability (Turchin 2003a: 90).

He also attacks the influential geopolitical argument explaining the fall of empires by their over-extension. The dissolution of the Soviet Union did give a boost to the credibility of this argument among the experts. Just a few years prior to its collapse, the aforementioned geopolitically educated sociologist, Collins, published a prediction for its future demise (forty to fifty years down the track), based on the geopolitical argument of its over-extension (Collins 1986: 187–203; Collins 1995; Collins 1999: 37–69). According to this argument, when it expands its controlled territory an empire simultaneously increases its resources for future expansion. However, due to the increasing distances involved, the costs of "power projection" from the metropole also increase. In addition, the favourable marchland position is lost – an empire must fight an increasing number of opponents and competitors. Thus expansion starts to "falter" – wars are lost, international prestige declines, and its government loses its internal legitimacy. However, the zealots of geopolitics prefer to forget that at around the same time Paul Kennedy used the same argument to ground his forecast of the coming decline of the U.S. in his best-selling book (Kennedy 1987). As a matter of common knowledge, the course of later events refuted this prediction. The power of the U.S. did not decline, on the contrary: having been one of the two "superpowers" in the world, it had become the only "hyperpower".

Turchin detects several logical gaps in the geopolitical explanation of the fall and collapse of empires which he highlights its reformulation in the form of a mathematical model (system of equations). The prediction of the collapse of empires could be derived from that model only if it were possible to identify the mechanisms that "postpone" the growth of the costs of expansion: at first an empire grows, while the costs must only be repaid later. If those costs increase immediately (and Turchin sees no grounds why this assumption should be dropped), this model implies not the collapse of empires, but only that their territorial expansion gradually slows down and comes to a halt at the equilibrium point where the marginal utility from further expansion is equal to its marginal cost. In addition, the geopolitical explanation is incapable of accounting for the cliometric finding made by Taagepera – that many empires did not collapse suddenly after they reached their maximum point of expansion. Instead, they contracted for a long time after that expansion peak. This contraction phase is often longer, not shorter, than the expansion or rising phase.

Turchin prioritises the model of state collapse of the American sociologist Jack Goldstone. He constructed this model looking for an explanation of the "general crisis of the seventeenth century". China, the Ottoman Empire and many of Europe's countries went through this crisis, manifested in revolutions, civil wars and state collapses in the middle of that century in a surprisingly synchronized way (Goldstone 1991; Collins 1999: 19–37). This explanation elaborates the idea that, in the evolution of agrarian societies, long-duration cycles repeat every two or three hundred years, whose cause is recurring over-population due to the limited supply of fertile land and unduly slow advances made in technology (the situation changed fundamentally after the Industrial Revolution at the end of the eighteenth century). These are the old and well-known ideas of Thomas R. Malthus that were systematised by David Ricardo when he constructed the classical "growth limits" model (Norkus 2001: 404–409). Goldstone supplemented them with his own insight that the problem of over-population hurts the ruling elite no less than the peasant masses, when the former's rapid increase in offspring exceeds the increase in the number of "spots at the top", causing educational credentials (diploma) inflation. As a result, taking positions of the same level demands an ever stronger exertion. A large number of ambitious, educated young people who cannot find what to do with themselves appear – potential leaders of rebellion and initiators of other protest movements (the counter-elite).

In his later work, Turchin tried to find patterns typical of the Malthusian demographic cycle in the histories of Ancient Rome, plus England, France and Russia of the middle and the early modern ages (Turchin and Nefedov 2009). I shall not delve into these ideas as it is difficult to see how they might help to explain the rise and demise of the ancient Lithuanian Empire. The Grand Duchy (like most of Eastern Europe) was sparsely inhabited and lagged far behind Central and Western European countries in terms of population and density. The relatively high population density in Central and Western Europe was one of the causes of German expansion into Eastern Europe (*Drang nach Osten*) in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The Teutonic Order's conquests changed the East European political map for a longer time in the areas where German peasants' agrarian colonisation accompanied them. On the other hand, it was those most densely populated areas in Europe that suffered the greatest losses during the mid-fourteenth century's plague pandemic (1348–1350) and later plague outbreaks.

There is no data to suggest that the Grand Duchy (or Poland) was affected (see Benedictow 2006). Therefore, the plague changed the strategic power balance in Central and Eastern Europe to the benefit of the Grand Duchy and Poland. The plague epidemic had little immediate influence on the course of the Grand Duchy's war with the Crusaders (after 1360, the Crusaders' attacks intensified and broke through the Nemunas River defence line). Nevertheless, we could ask whether its long-term outcomes perhaps

ensured the significance of a "fateful battle" for the victory at Grunwald. The Teutonic Order's earlier military defeats did not have such monumental consequences, whilst the migration of German peasants and craftsmen into their conquered lands continued. It decreased already in the early fourteenth century (see Kasiske 1934). This can also explain the changes in the treatment of prisoners of war: whereas earlier only women were taken prisoner, in the times of Algirdas, Kęstutis and Winfried von Kniprode the desire to have more farmers outweighed the fear of any possible resistance on the part of male prisoners.[12]

The Grand Duchy remained a rather sparsely populated country also after the end of military action on its western borders (Łowmianski 1998; Ochmański 1986: 252–262). Although the population of the Grand Duchy (especially of ethnic Lithuania) increased rapidly in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, available data does not confirm the hypothesis that there was an oversupply of the elite, much less of farming peasants.[13] Relentless Tatar attacks in the southern regions of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania halted population growth there. However, it could be that the "Malthusian" causes performed some role during the "Deluge" in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the seventeenth century.[14]

There is another general explanation for the total crisis and collapse of large and complex political systems, well known to specialists but hardly applicable to the fall of the Grand Duchy as an empire (Tainter 1988). It is rather similar to the Malthusian explanation. Joseph Tainter argues that empires suffer crises when the marginal cost of the increase in complexity of the social structure exceeds its marginal utility. Translating this into somewhat simpler Marxist terminology, this would mean that complex political structures collapse when the still relatively primitive agrarian infrastructure or "base" can no longer maintain the overly effuse superstructure represented by the religious and secular (feudal) elite, whose demand for prestigious consumption items is satisfied by urban craftspeople.

Tainter's theory of the decreasing productivity of an increasingly complex social organisation (or an unbearably complex and heavy superstructure) can be empirically relevant in explaining the fate of empires that embodied the political unity of relatively highly developed civilisations. Lithuania's progress in becoming civilised over the course of a couple of centuries, from its conversion to Christianity to the end of the sixteenth century, was quite impressive (Baronas and Rowell 2015). However, its social structure remained relatively poorly differentiated, while its network of cultural, political and other institutions was hardly developed, even taking into account the significant increases in the country's economic resources from the sixteenth century onward (Gudavičius 2002 [1998]).

That is why we must search elsewhere (and not so "deeply") for causes for the Grand Duchy's failure as an empire by the middle of the sixteenth century. I shall tackle this question at the end of the next part. First, I must

answer the questions that the surveyed empire theories prompt about the history of the Grand Duchy: was the Grand Duchy an empire? When did it become an empire? Why? What kind of empire was it? Why did ancient Lithuanians succeed in building an empire, and why did this empire ultimately fail? I will also answer the question which is discussed most hotly in the context of the "partition" of the Grand Duchy's legacy: whose empire was the Grand Duchy?

Notes

1 Postulating that the empire threshold, measured in terms of the size of its territory, is 1 million km^2, Peter Turchin compiles the list including over 60 empires for the period 3000 BC–1800 AD. See Turchin 2009: 202–203. However, many cases in this list can be considered phases of the same empires.
2 Methods and techniques of the qualitative comparative analysis (see e.g. Ragin 1987; Norkus and Morkevičius 2011; Schneider and Wagemann 2012) can be viable alternatives working with small N. However, I have not been able to spot any noteworthy studies applying these methods in the comparative research on empires.
3 For the anthology of most important work see Cain and Harrison 2001; for the most recent survey of the state of art see Mackenzie 2016.
4 It is not difficult to notice that today's Western states are in a similar situation, becoming involved in a "war on terror". They might prefer to leave underdeveloped countries fraught with violent domestic conflicts in the hands of destiny (unless they harbour major natural-resource deposits). However, they are forced to interfere in the internal affairs of these countries once the states collapse (no government remains capable of controlling its territory), because such countries become bases for terrorism, smuggling, piracy and other criminal activity as well as sources of illegal migration.
5 See Motyl 2001: 46–53. Motyl bases his claims on the analysis of the information problems of totalitarian regimes by the famous American political scientist Karl W. Deutsch (1963), where he substantiated the forecast of their unavoidable decline.
6 Emperor Philip the Arab (reigned 244–249).
7 My definition of empire proposed in this book does not imply that an empire ceases to be an empire after crossing the Carallacan threshold. It just becomes an "empire with adjectives": an ethnically and culturally homogeneous empire. The Roman Empire, incidentally, never became such an empire because its Greek eastern part and its Latin western part were different. And it never managed to assimilate certain ethnic groups at all (like the Jews).
8 For example, the U.S., Australia and Brazil.
9 Readers can find a great deal of useful stuff on the cliodynamics of empire at Turchin's website http://peterturchin.com/cliodynamics (accessed on 21.07.2016).
10 Turchin does not allocate a larger value for belonging to different language families. He does not think that the language communication difficulties experienced between people speaking different languages from different groups of the same language family would be any smaller than those felt by people speaking languages from different language families. For those who have never studied a relevant foreign language, understanding other people in both cases is not possible.
11 American sociologist Randall Collins (1999: 37–69) has summarised and systematised the observations of many scholars in geopolitics who championed this idea. See also Parker 1998.

12 I thank Prof. Alvydas Nikžentaitis for this observation.
13 Testimony of this lies in the rapid settlement at this time of the wasteland left after the war against the Crusaders that separated Samogitia and the Lithuanian lands from the territories controlled by the Teutonic Knights and the Knights of the Sword. See Mortensen and Mortensen 1937–1938; Jablonskis 1979: 131–139.
14 In Polish and Lithuanian historical memory, this term (Polish: *Potop*, Lithuanian: *Tvanas*) refers to a series of coincident and overlapping wars with rebellious Ukrainian Cossacks, Russia, and Sweden in the mid-seventeenth century that nearly destroyed the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

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Part 3

The Grand Duchy of Lithuania as an empire

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9 Old Lithuanians as imperialist liberators

What can we (and should we) say about the Grand Duchy of Lithuania as a polity, looking at its history from the viewpoint of comparative imperial studies? First of all – was it an empire? Yes, it was – if we base our answer on the definitions of empire summarising contemporary literature in this field given above. The Grand Duchy was an empire because it had the two necessary alternative attributes of an empire; for a long time it had three, and even briefly (at times from Algirdas to Vytautas, from the 1350s to 1430) all four. Three suffice to qualify as an empire. The first four sections of this, the last part of the book, will be devoted to validate this claim, answering the questions that unavoidably arise: if the Grand Duchy was an empire, why did so few scholars realise this? When did the early Lithuanian state become an empire and when did it cease being one?

I will start with the two necessary attributes of empire: was the Grand Duchy a sovereign polity? Was its size imperial? No one doubts the sovereignty of the pagan Lithuanian state, but the question of its sovereignty between the Krewo Act of 1385 and the Lublin Union in 1569 is a different matter altogether. The statehood of the Grand Duchy in this period is an old and unending topic of discussion among the Grand Duchy's historians. Its history has been thoroughly surveyed in a book by Mečislovas Jučas (2000) and recently by Robert Frost (2015). For the purposes of this book, the minutiae of the legal definition of the political bond between the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Kingdom of Poland do not matter. Even historians who claim that, legally, the Grand Duchy was a fiefdom of the Polish crown do not deny the actual or de facto sovereignty of the Grand Duchy during the times of Vytautas and the next grand dukes.

Whatever might have been written in the repeated union treaties of the Grand Duchy and Poland, the Grand Duchy's ruling elite pursued independent foreign and domestic policies and ensured continuity of government without any edicts from Poland, independently selecting grand dukes of the Grand Duchy. That independence reached so far that at one stage (in 1492 when Grand Duke Alexander was elected) even the personal union of the Grand Duchy and the Kingdom of Poland had been severed. Polish dignitaries persistently complained that union treaties were not being

implemented. This is just one additional testimony of the Grand Duchy's *actual* sovereignty. It only adds to substantiate the unarguable fact of the independence of the Grand Duchy's domestic and foreign policies and the lack of external influence on the decisions of who would take up the top positions in the Grand Duchy's government. The Grand Duchy remained a sovereign independent state until 1569. The mere stating of this fact suffices to give a positive answer to the question of whether the Grand Duchy had the first of the necessary attributes of an empire.

It has been universally acknowledged that, in the second half of the fourteenth century, the Grand Duchy became the largest polity in Europe – even if only in terms of its territory. It could have been as large as 1 million km^2 (see chapter fifteen) – the area some researchers consider the minimal threshold for a mega-empire (Turchin 2009: 191–192). The Grand Duchy's territorial size can be ascertained by measuring its area during the last decade of Vytautas' reign (1420–1430) so that it would include the principality of Riazan', which became his vassal state for a short time, and by "nudging" its borders eastward around the higher reaches of the Oka River and including today's Ukrainian and Russian territories on the left bank of the Dnieper River, whose political dependence was not clear even in the mid-seventeenth century (see chapter fifteen).[1]

However, the 1 million km^2 threshold is not universally accepted – it is an arbitrary benchmark. Many of the larger polities of that same region whose "imperiality" is widely accepted do not meet this criterion (for example, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Austria under the Habsburgs or seventeenth-century Sweden). Turchin himself, who suggested the "size qualification for empire" of 1 million km^2, is not consistent on this issue. As we read in chapter eight, when testing his metaethnic fault line hypothesis, he reduced this "qualification" down as far as 100,000 km^2. Otherwise, the sufficient number of cases needed to ensure the statistical significance of his hypothesis simply would not be found in Europe. He would have to be satisfied with two or three cases in Europe (which could still include the Grand Duchy), but this would be too few cases for a statistical analysis.

Taagepera's provision is more reasonable: to not stipulate one universal qualifying threshold size, but to apply it in relative terms, considering the epoch and region. It is not the absolute size of the territory that is important, but its relative size. Relative size becomes apparent when a polity is compared to other polities from the same region during the same period. In terms of medieval Europe, the Grand Duchy was a very large state. Perhaps it was not only Lithuania that deserved the title of "empire" in medieval Europe in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but why not classify its largest polity as an empire? If the territorial agglomerations under William the Conqueror and the Plantagenets, significantly smaller in size and weaker in cohesion compared to the Gediminid compound, are called "empires" on account of their impressive territories (for Western Europe at the time) (see chapter one), then why not the Grand Duchy?

These and other historians base their proposals to classify the Norman and Plantagenet (Angevin) possessions as empires on the implied argument that these feudal domain conglomerates that were larger than their contemporaries would simply remain nameless otherwise. A consistent hermeneutic approach demands that these territorial compounds should go by a term from the political and legal lexis of the Middle Ages. Yet no such term exists in the medieval lexis. These are neither kingdoms, nor counties, nor duchies, but compounds of these forms whose political unity raises no doubts – especially in those times when these territories were under the authority of a strong dynast. This kind of argument suits the domain compound of Gediminas and Algirdas quite well, especially since it is not known what the rulers themselves called the compound they ruled (the title *Magnus Ducatus Lithuanie* was established only in around the mid-fifteenth century).[2] Pedantically speaking, calling this compound the "Grand Duchy of Lithuania" even when there is no evidence of this title in sources from that period is no less a crime against the hermeneutic canon than calling it the "Lithuanian Empire".

Judging by the territory's size, as Taagepera does (see chapter four), the title of empire suits the Grand Duchy better than another medieval European polity that was universally acknowledged as an empire: the Holy Roman Empire. Alfredas Bumblauskas writes: "Lithuania during the times of Vytautas came closest to a state that we could call an empire" (Bumblauskas 2005: 164). It should just be added that Lithuania came considerably closer to being "a state that we could call an empire" than the Holy Roman Empire was at these times.[3] By this time, Voltaire's famous saying that is was neither holy, nor Roman, nor an empire was already quite apt.

It is difficult to distinguish between a periphery and metropole in the Holy Roman Empire, unless we consider the metropole the patrimonial lands of the ruling dynasty at a given time, lands which change along with the dynasties. This is one of the reasons why the Holy Roman Empire did not have a capital city. In fact, it could not have one, as according to the "imperial succession" theory, the capital city had to be Rome. Yet the papal residence was already in Rome, and the pope aspired to be not only the highest religious authority in the Catholic Christian world but also the ruler of the state seeking independence from the emperor – the Papal state in Italy with its capital in Rome (see chapter one). The Grand Duchy is a more straightforward case in this regard. The Holy Roman Empire did not have imperial transport (with a radial structure) or communication systems, or other attributes that Thomas Barfield considers characteristic of "primary empires" (see chapter seven). Actually, the title "nostalgic empire" is a somewhat better fit for the Holy Roman Empire than for its predecessor, the Carolingian Empire, to which Barfield gave this title. But Lithuania from the times of Gediminas, Algirdas or Vytautas was most definitely not a "nostalgic empire".

The enormous Grand Duchy's territory by the fifteenth century (see Map 9.1) was the result of its broad territorial expansion. The question

Map 9.1 The GDL circa 1450. Published with permission of Dmytro Vortman. © Dmytro Vortman 2016.

still being discussed in historiography is the character and causes of that expansion. As was already mentioned (see chapter two), tsarist Russian historiography, which considered the Grand Duchy a western Russian state, accentuated the peaceful and voluntary ascension of the Russian lands to the Grand Duchy, which allegedly took place mostly via dynastic marriages.

Criticising the idea of the voluntary ascension of Ruthenian lands to the Grand Duchy, Stephen C. Rowell notes:

> The theory that Lithuania expanded thanks to the good will of the Rus'ian princes is a Russian fallacy as old as Ivan the Terrible. It is a subtle anti-Lithuanian myth popular in nineteenth-century historiography which portrays the Lithuanians as benefactors from the Muscovite direction (Ivan's propagandists depict Gediminas' expansion into Kiev as a task set by Ivan Kalita of Moscow) or Rus'ian preference to govern the pagans apparently from below rather than submit to the Mongols.
> (Rowell 1994: 94)

All I could add to Rowell's remark is that, during the most intense time of the Grand Duchy's territorial expansion, the Ruthenian lands were not sovereign but subordinate to the Golden Horde. Thus, their "voluntary" ascension to the Grand Duchy would have been impossible. One rising empire (the Grand Duchy) took them from another, declining, empire (the Golden Horde).

The Golden Horde did not rule the Ruthenian lands directly, but via its collaborators – the Rurikids. Rus' split into "Tatar Rus'", subordinate to the Rurikids and their elder – a Tatar-appointed grand prince of Vladimir – and "Lithuanian Rus'", ruled by the Lithuanian dukes. In those places where the local Ruthenian princes opposed the Lithuanians, they defended not so much their own interests as the interests of their Tatar from the Lithuanians, who actually entered their lands as defenders and liberators from the "Tatar yoke". Such was the description of Tatar rule in Russian historiography, where no words were spared to describe their oppression and atrocities.

Of course, the rulers of the Grand Duchy did not descend upon the Ruthenian lands in order to provide "international assistance" to their neighbouring Slavs. The accession of Ruthenian lands to the Grand Duchy could only be called "liberation" in an "objective" sense, one that historians enjoy searching for retrospectively in events from the past. I say "objective" (in quotation marks) because "liberation" is not a purely descriptive term. Changes to political subordination that, from the perspective of one value system, appear as a "liberation" appear as a "seizure" from another. If those Ruthenian lands that the Grand Duchy subordinated had not first endured attacks and submission to the Mongol Tatars, then only the most ardent Baltophiles among contemporary Lithuanians would have called the Lithuanians' armed advances "liberating".

In fact, Jonas Balčius says just that, adding that "the militarism of ancient Lithuanians was usually not offensive in nature, but defensive, or let's say: emancipatory" (Balčius 2005: 39). He continues:

> it is necessary to understand and accept that from the Lithuanians' side, their campaigns into the 'historic Slavic lands' was not merely military,

> imperialist expansion – or bluntly, the occupation of foreign lands. Keeping in mind that these were the territories inhabited by Balts for thousands of years, the Baltic past of the Lithuanian ethnie served as the instinct, that, figuratively speaking, led even the dumbest horse back to the pastures of his birth.
>
> (Balčius 2005: 40).

Balčius guesses that, in the second half of the thirteenth century and even in the fourteenth, there could have still been Baltic islands (for example, the Galindians south of Moscow) living in areas colonised by Eastern Slavs long before. He suggests that the Lithuanian armies encroached on these lands in order to assist their brethren.

This idea of the Grand Duchy's expansion into the east as a liberation of the ancient Baltic lands and the Baltic tribes still remaining there (not just from the Tatars but also from the colonial Ruthenian rule) is difficult to substantiate because the Grand Duchy forged its way also into lands never before settled by Balts (like those near the Black Sea). Also, no sources testify that the Lithuanian dukes would have protected the local Balts, or used them in attempts to "re-Balt" the already overwhelmingly Slavonified population or to colonise the occupied lands with émigrés from the Baltic Grand Duchy's lands. There is no way of denying that the Lithuanian dukes and the warriors they brought with them who settled in the Ruthenian lands did quickly become Slavic (yet this does not mean that this process was as smooth and rapid in the Lithuanian metropole).

Subjugation of the Ruthenian lands to the early Lithuanian state could be called their "liberation" because a broad consensus exists in the historical cultures of all three of the present Eastern Slavic nations that the Mongol Tatar invasion and rule was an absolute evil, which the subordinated populations of Rus' was unable to get rid of alone.[4] As will be shown later on in this chapter, this kind of approach is severely exaggerated. It could be said that given the circumstances, a majority of the Ruthenian population did not have any other choice between belonging to "Tatar Rus'" or "Lithuanian Rus'". In this situation, subordination to Lithuania appeared to be a lesser evil; thus, Lithuanian rule meant liberation.

However, Rus' was a large territory, and Tatar rule was not present everywhere to the same degree. The Lithuanians met with the least opposition from the local political communities (if they survived at all) in those Ruthenian lands that lay closer to the Tatar-inhabited steppes. Here Tatar rule meant not only the tributes collected for them by local princes, but also frequent cavalry raids and the *jasyr* (kidnapping and selling the local population into slavery). Lithuanians were welcomed here as liberators, though hopes that they would defend them against the Tatars were not necessarily, or not immediately, vindicated. Indeed, there is some evidence that for some time in the fourteenth century many lands of Southern Rus' could have been under a Lithuanian-Tatar condominium, with Lithuanian dukes taking over

the role of local agents of the Golden Horde from the deposed Rurikids (see the next chapter).

Yet Lithuania's expansion met with strong opposition in places where Tatar attacks were just a theoretical possibility, and their suzerainty was nominal or expressed only irregularly through the payment of tributes via intermediaries (the grand princes of Vladimir). The distant Tatar government did not necessarily appear as a worse evil compared to the neighbouring Lithuanian rule, as a third (and best) possibility was quite real: the preservation of de facto independence. Such was the situation of the Ruthenian northern republics (Pskov and Greater Novgorod). If we do not count the Muscovite princes who acted as vassals of the Golden Horde and defended Tatar interests, it was the former republics that opposed the Grand Duchy's expansion the most, balancing all the while between the Grand Duchy and "Tatar Rus'" (see Jablonowski 1955: 19–20).

Thus, liberation was the "objective" outcome of Lithuania's expansion. This only means that some historians, guided by a particular value system, could perceive Lithuanian expansion in this way. It could be comprehended in this way also by a majority of the population in many Ruthenian lands.[5] However, liberation (of either the Ruthenians from the Tatars, or the autochthon Balts from the Ruthenians or the Tatars) was not the goal of Lithuania's rulers carrying out their expansionist, imperialist policy. Their aims were "lower" and more "down-to-earth": to provide the ruler's sons (Gediminas and Algirdas had very large families) with domains equalling those held by dynastic family members in neighbouring countries; to supply the ruler's treasury with war booty and tributes that inhabitants of the subjugated lands had to pay; and to provide for warriors and to increase their numbers, thereby bolstering the early Lithuanian state's military power.[6] These goals did not differ from the "foreign policy" goals of other medieval rulers, who were above all warlords.

Herbert Spencer drew a divide between military or early societies and industrial or modern societies (see Spencer 1896, 2: 568–642; Lenski 1984 [1969]: 297–345). In the first (Marxists call them slave-holding or feudal societies), war was the "normal" state, while peace was merely a truce between two wars. In our times, the opposite applies, as growth in economic productivity has become the key to the welfare of the elite of industrial (now already post-industrial) society. Innovations in the technology of production and its organisation are the main means to achieve this goal. This does not mean that all modern societies are equally peaceful: some have more residual characteristics of military societies, some have less. As was already explained in the survey of imperialism theories (see chapter five), the author of one of the most influential imperialism theories, Joseph Schumpeter, proposed a "Spencerian" explanation of nineteenth- and twentieth-century imperialism in Western countries (especially Germany and Great Britain). He said that this imperialism was the result of the still very strong influence of the old aristocracy firmly established in military

and foreign affairs departments. In premodern times, military societies dominated. The economic foundation of premodern societies was traditional agriculture. Economic productivity increased at a very slow pace, thus the elite in such societies could only improve their welfare by increasing their number of subjects. The quickest way of increasing their number was through the seizure of land and populations from other, weaker rulers. Weak, and thus peaceful, states became victims of the stronger states' aggression, especially if they were not protected by any kind of international law regulations.

The Rurikids who sat at the "tables" of Ruthenian lands, having been recently crushed by the Tatars and forced to admit their suzerainty, were the weakest neighbours of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century pagan, and therefore independent, Lithuania.[7] The Grand Duchy had direct contact with Tatars only when penetrating into the south and southwestern Ruthenian lands. In the further north-lying lands, Tatars only sometimes supported their vassals the Rurikids, ravaging Lithuanian-held lands during occasional forays. Many Rurikid princes went over to the Lithuanian side, recognising the suzerainty of the Grand Duchy's rulers and thus entrenching their political ties with their new masters as per the usual way for the times – through dynastic marriages.

The Smolensk princes fiercely opposed the Lithuanians' liberating campaigns into the Golden Horde-controlled Ruthenian lands. As we know, the insurmountable obstacle preventing Lithuanians from controlling all of Rus' was the resistance of the most loyal servants of the Golden Horde – the Muscovite princes. Taking the opportunity afforded by the steppe empire's disintegration, already in the fifteenth century (after the first unsuccessful attempt in the late fourteenth century) they disengaged from their former suzerains. Ultimately, the "Tatar yoke" remained, only now it was the yoke of Tatar Muscovy upon Rus', the Tatars and other lands occupied by the Muscovite Empire, including Muscovy's former foe – Lithuania.

The concept of the Grand Duchy's expansion as a conquest that liberated Ruthenian lands from the Golden Horde's rule is most suited to explaining its achievements in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. Less credible would be the application of this concept to the Ruthenian territories in the immediate neighbourhood of Lithuania that fell under its occupation the earliest. They are Black Rus', Polatsk, and, to a lesser extent Turaŭ, Pinsk and Vitsebsk. It is unknown whether these lands ever paid tribute to the Golden Horde. Most likely, Lithuania seized Black Rus', perhaps even Polatsk, earlier than the Golden Horde could manage to express such claims. The chronicles of Polatsk (maybe also of Navahrudak) perished, so our knowledge about the specific historical events of this process is very poor. Either way, there is no data to suggest that Lithuania would have assumed control of these lands by means of military conquest. This circumstance is highlighted in particular in contemporary Belarusian historiography, which uses it to substantiate the idea of the emergence of the

Lithuanian state out of the "symbiosis" of Balts and Slavs and similar concepts (see Kraŭcėvič 2000 [1998]).

The contemporary imperialism theories discussed in Part II of this book (see primarily chapter seven) cast aside any grounds for speculation on this issue. The approach that identifies imperialism with conquest, and considers the number of killings as the best indicator for forced subordination of a periphery territory, implicitly rests on a "metrocentric" theory of imperialism. It merely provides fodder for tabloid imperialism stereotypes that became especially widespread in the historic cultures of many twentieth-century nations in making. They needed to find examples of "heroic resistance" against foreign imperialist aggressors from the past that could inspire similar present and future heroic deeds.

The real history of imperialism abounds with examples of how the rulers of polities that ultimately became peripheries of empires begged their neighbours for intervention and protection. The reasons were quite simple: battles for the throne within the ruling dynasty itself, and attacks from even more threatening neighbours, against which these polities could not defend themselves. The mechanism behind early Lithuania's expansion into the eastern Slavic lands was not so different in its initial stage. The fact that there was no major resistance to Lithuania's expansion here shows only that processes of internal crisis were underway in Rus'. This crisis manifested in the internal conflicts whose opposite sides called for external intervention, or at least were quietly satisfied by the invaders who had solved problems that were otherwise unmanageable. I have in mind the processes of political and territorial fragmentation in the Kievan Rus' lands that manifested in ferocious fights between the Rurikids themselves over "tables" of Ruthenian lands and districts (*volost';* во́лость).

In the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, when ancient Lithuanians were drawn into that inter-polity system that historians call Kievan Rus', it consisted of at least eight lands having practically sovereign polity status, which were ruled by eight separate dynasties – different branches of the Rurikid lineage (see Gorskij 1996; Fennell 1983; Xrustalev 2004). These lands were Polatsk, Volhynia, Smolensk, Chernihiv, Pinsk-Turaŭ, Rostov-Suzdal and Riazan'. Reporting a more precise number is difficult as over time each of these lands was divided amongst a larger or smaller number of appanage principalities, which grew increasingly independent. This was how, in the early thirteenth century, the duchies of Vitsebsk, Minsk, Drutsk and Navahrudak split from Lithuania's neighbour, the duchy of Polatsk.

This fragmentation was urged on by the customary "constitutional law" of the Rurikid inter-polity system that allowed each representative of that dynasty to receive a princely "table": a land or district (*volost'*) which one had to rule while "living off" the tributes collected from its population. That law provided for a "rotation" of princes: the eldest representative was considered the most senior member of the lineage. It was his right to sit at the most coveted table of the Kyiv prince. After his death, his younger

brother would assume this position, while the eldest son would only become the lineage's head when all his uncles had died out. Sons who were of age and were waiting their turn "at the top" (waiting for their uncles to die) had to be content with the tables of appanage principalities created especially for them. These principalities had to be handed over to their younger brothers when their turn at the helm of a fully-fledged principality finally came. A similar succession law held within the younger branches of the lineage, whose representatives only had a theoretical possibility of reaching the peak of the lineage hierarchy (in the event that all the representatives of the senior branch were killed or died out).

Yet this system could only operate smoothly in theory. The eldest and often also the younger sons of the prince who sat at the table of Kyiv or another comfortable and respectful table rarely even considered transmitting the seat of their deceased father to their uncles. Lineage members who had ascended a step higher did not want to surrender their tables to their younger brothers, but instead aimed to hand them down to their own sons, or to simply maintain control themselves, appointing their own vicegerents. Wars would arise over such violations of inheritance laws and princely coalitions supporting opposing sides would clash. Already in the late eleventh century (after the congress of Rurikid princes in Ljubeč in 1098), the rotation of princes stopped across all of Rus'. Separate dynastic branches of the Rurikid lineage assumed control and succession rights over only those lands under their rule at the time. They did or could have become centres for the formation of sovereign states.

However, aside from the eight Kievan Rus' lands mentioned here that, from the beginning of the twelfth century, became the patrimonial lands of separate branches of the Rurikid lineage, there were at least another four lands where the rotation of princes still applied. They were the senior land of Kyiv, where representatives of all branches of the Rurikid lineage had the right to receive their stakes, while the most senior table of the Kyiv duke had to "theoretically" go to the eldest representative of the Rurikid lineage. Another land was the principality of Perejaslavl to the southeast of Kyiv, as well as Greater Novgorod, where the elements of republicanism grew stronger in the political structure of the day. When the prince of Halych, Vladimir Jaroslavič, was killed in 1199, bringing one of the branches of the Rurikid lineage – the Halych Rostislavičs – to an end, the table of the Halych land also became a "pan-Ruthenian" table.[8]

A fierce fight between the strongest branches of the Rurikid family went on over control of these lands – the Chernihiv Olegovičs, the Volhynia Iziaslavičs, the Smolensk Rostislavičs and the Suzdal Jur'evičs were the usual contenders. This fight reached its peak on the eve of the great Mongol Tatar invasion: "Battles over 'pan-Ruthenian tables' erupted in Ruthenian history from the beginning of the thirteenth century, however, in the last decades before the Mongol Tatar invasion military action continued almost ceaselessly, localised mostly to the lands of Southern Rus'" (Gorskij 1996: 24).

The Tatar invasion of Rus' in 1237 did not stop this in-fighting: the seat of Kyiv saw six princes from 1235 until 1240.

Michael Doyle's concept of the "imperial expansion" threshold in the peripheries gives the best description of the political conditions in Kievan Rus'. He uses this concept to describe the internal social processes and conflicts that make a society an object of imperial expansion from outside. It is crossed when a society finds itself incapable of resolving internal conflicts on its own, and when complaints, political refugees and emigrants, begging for intervention and assistance in fighting for "justice", flood neighbouring countries. In other words, when a certain society is incapable of resolving the "Hobbesian problem" of internal order, the losing side in the "war of all against all" can do nothing else but search for salvation in the arms of a more capable and thus stronger neighbour.

This is precisely what happened during the twelfth and late thirteenth centuries in Kievan Rus'. The invasions from their neighbours became more frequent, because they were usually invited by the Ruthenian dukes themselves, or initiated as part of their own mutual wars. The Cuman (Kipchak) khans, who intermarried with many branches of the Rurikid lineage, were often drawn into fights over the thrones of the principalities of Kyiv and Perejaslavl. The kings of Hungary and Poland also participated in the battles over the Halych lands, where the main warring parties were the Volhynia Iziaslavič and Chernihiv Olegovič families.

Along the northwestern border of Kievan Rus' the Lithuanians took on the role of the neighbour invited to intervene, who had hitherto belonged to the sphere of Kievan Rus' hegemony (Kibin' 2014). Here it was represented by the Polatsk land that differed from other lands of Kievan Rus' in two regards (see Alekseev 1966; Danilevič 1896; Dovnar-Zapol'skij 1891). First, it maintained the greatest distance from any pan-Ruthenian affairs, and its separation into a separate, independent political unit, which some Belarusian historians even consider the proto-state of Belarus, was the most advanced (compared to other lands in Kievan Rus'). The Rurikid branch that ruled it originated from Iziaslav, the son of the Kyiv prince Vladimir. He was the son from Vladimir's marriage to Rogneda (Ragnhild), whom the Kyiv prince married by force, having defeated and killed her father, the semi-legendary prince of Polatsk, the Scandinavian Rogvolod (Ragnvald), who was not a Rurikid. The Polatsk princes did not enter into battles over the "tables" of Kyiv or other pan-Ruthenian lands, and avoided joining the coalitions that formed to fight in such wars.

Yet this does not mean that no internal wars took place in the Polatsk land itself, or that other Rurikid dynasties did not interfere in the affairs of the Polatsk Iziaslavičs. Quite the opposite. The second feature of the Polatsk land was that here the process of internal fragmentation into appanage principalities had probably progressed the furthest (compared to other lands). This means that, of all the lands of Kievan Rus', the Lithuanians had a neighbour who was the most ripe for external intervention and subjugation.

Having ceased participating in the (already faltering) pan-Ruthenian rotation of princes, Iziaslav's descendants were doomed to fighting amongst themselves for increasingly smaller duchies, involving Lithuanians and representatives from other Rurikid dynasties in their battles (see Baranauskas 2000: 151–165). Of them, the neighbouring Smolensk Rostislavičs, were most active, and they eventually assumed control over Vitsebsk (see Gorskij 1996: 53).

This kind of finale is logical and hardly avoidable once neighbours are involved in one's internal affairs. Rushing to their neighbours for assistance, the losing Rurikids' first concern was to muster up an army or have at their disposal a military contingent with whose assistance they could recover their lost seat. Yet matters did not end there. Patronage relations could sometimes develop, whereby there was a duty to offer military assistance in return if the stronger neighbours found themselves in trouble. These relations could be entrenched and formalised via marital relations, allowing descendants to claim their stake of the deceased relative's patrimony (also in Ruthenian lands). Ultimately, having had their fill of war booty and feasting, the assisting warrior force could decide not to return home at all, but (as per the example of the ancient Scandinavian Varangians) simply remain and assume authority themselves. If necessary, nominal authority could be left in the hands of a "legitimate" Rurikid prince, now no more than a marionette of the interventionists.

The Halych land had come under the de facto control of the Hungarian kings for several years in the early thirteenth century by these or similar means when the Hungarian kings intervened in the Ruthenian princes' fighting over their inheritance. The dukes of Lithuania and the Nalšia lands entrenched their influence in many of the principalities in the Polatsk lands in the early thirteenth century in an analogous way. I mean here the land Lithuania (Lithuanian *Lietuva*, Russian Литва, Belarusian Літва) which was located between the rivers Neris (Vilija) in the north, Nemunas in the south and west, and Western Berezina (Lithuanian *Vakarų Beržūna*, Belarusian Заходняя Бярэзіна) in the east, in the territory of contemporary Lithuania and Belarus. Nalšia was Lithuania's neighbouring land to the north of the Neris River, covering the eastern part of contemporary Lithuania as well as contiguous areas in contemporary Belarus (see Map 3.2 and chapter sixteen below). The land Lithuania was the original core area of the burgeoning Lithuanian state, which was called by that name.

Historians studying the emergence of the Lithuanian state note that Ruthenian chronicles reporting Lithuanian raids mention that their targets were Ruthenian lands further away from Lithuania. Many of them targeted the lands of Greater Novgorod, which was a neighbour of Polatsk, but not of Lithuania. "For a long time it was hard to comprehend how Lithuanians could conduct such long-range military campaigns crossing enemy lands" (Ivinskis 1978: 122). One possible answer is that

Lithuanians did not plunder the Polatsk lands only because there was nothing left to plunder here.

A more credible answer says that Lithuanians launched many of these attacks as allies of Polatsk. Greater Novgorod and Polatsk became enemies in the late twelfth century, competing over control of the Ruthenian trade with German cities. This trade followed two traditional routes. The older route went across the Gulf of Finland, along the Neva and Volkhov rivers, with a half-way point on the island of Visby where Danes and Swedes acted as mediators. Seeking to manage without their services, in the second half of the twelfth century the German merchants started using the Daugava (Western Dvina) river route that led to Polatsk.[9] Thus, the subjugation of Polatsk became Greater Novgorod's major concern (see Koneczny 1917: 204). Polatsk responded with raids by Lithuanian shock troops.

The third answer (which does not actually contradict the first two) is that already in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries the rule of the Rurikids over the majority of the Polatsk principalities (especially in Black Rus') was merely a facade. They were already the marionettes of the Lithuanian dukes or their allied placemen. Yet the Lithuanian dukes only started to unreservedly take their places at the "tables" earlier held by the Rurikids (or in place of them) in Mindaugas' times, in the 1240s–1250s. This is the time of the incorporation of Black Rus' (Navahrudak, Slonim, Vaukavysk) into the burgeoning Lithuanian state.

In terms of the law of that inter-polity society to which the Kievan Rus' lands belonged, the ascension of Lithuanian dukes to the Ruthenian princes' thrones or tables was akin to a revolution. Individual representatives of the Rurikid lineage and its branches engaged in bloody battles to win one or another district or land. They could without any scruples band together military contingents of steppe nomads, Lithuanians, Hungarians or Poles to fight on their behalf in these battles. Nonetheless, these were merely "family" arguments over the fair division or use of property that belonged to the entire clan – governance in the Ruthenian lands. The Rurikids acted in solidarity, defending their clan's monopoly rights to rule over the Ruthenian lands. Until the mid-thirteenth century, the image of a non-Rurikid prince ruling in the Ruthenian lands was beyond the legal imagination for the times. Even a baptised Lithuanian duke (or Cuman khan) could not hold legitimate authority in the Ruthenian lands until then. How did it happen that it became possible to "legalise" the perhaps already existing de facto Lithuanian rule in the Polatsk lands, and later the removal of the Rurikids from "tables" in other lands as well?

A likely answer to this question could be the Mongol Tatar invasion of 1237–1242, which demolished the entire existing inter-polity system, transforming it into a periphery of the enormous Mongol Empire. In fact, the crumbling of the Kievan Rus' inter-polity system briefly paved the way for Lithuanian territorial expansion. Yet only very briefly, in the 1240s. When

the Mongol Tatars made their domination over the seized lands orderly, they became the major obstacle to Lithuanian territorial expansion in the lands of Kievan Rus' and the major adversary of Lithuania (more details follow in the next chapter).

Following this Mongol Tatar attack, Kievan Rus' as a separate regional inter-polity system ceased to exist. A majority of its lands became part of the huge Mongol Empire, stretching from the Danube to China. At first, they tried to implement direct rule in the Ruthenian lands, conducting a population census and appointing their vicegerents (*baskaks*), whose main duty was tax collection. However, from the late thirteenth century, this form of rule changed into what then appeared a less costly and simpler form of indirect rule.

Russia was simply peripheral to the Golden Horde's interests. The Mongols replaced the rulers of other sedentary areas like Khwarezm and Bolgar with Mongol officials but left Russia, like Armenia-Georgia, in the hands of native princes. The profits would not have offset the expenses of direct administration. The Mongols wanted to extract maximum benefit at minimum cost; any interpretation of their actions that does not proceed from this assumption is probably misguided. (Halperin 1985: 30)

Like other Tatar subjects, the Ruthenian princes had to serve their new overlords with weapons in hand as well: whole contingents were called up to join in military campaigns.

Did the Mongol Tatars claim to hold authority in the entire Ruthenian lands, or only part of them? The right answer, it appears, would be that they could lay claim to all those Ruthenian lands earlier held by the Rurikid princes.

> Sometimes historians ignore the fact that the Horde based its 'right' to rule over the whole East European space on the conquest of all the Ruthenian lands within the boundaries of the ancient Ruthenian state. That meant that the khans of the Golden Horde considered Vladimir-Muscovy, and Halych and Lithuanian Rus' as equally subordinate territories.
>
> (Grekov 1963: 24)

The old Ruthenian customary law that foresaw all the Rurikid princes' subordination to the clan's elder applied. Now this elder was the Tatar-appointed grand prince of Vladimir. Belonging to the Rurikid clan meant at least formal and symbolic subordination to his authority, and also acknowledgement of the Mongol Tatar's suzerainty. The Romanovič dukes of Halych and Volhynia tried to avoid such subordination in southwestern Rus', but eventually their efforts proved to be in vain – in 1259 they finally had to recognise the Golden Horde khan's suzerainty. Then the Halych-Volhynia dukes became regular participants in Tatar attacks on Lithuania, Poland and Hungary.

The Tatars did, however, bring something to Rus' that it had always lacked before the imperial subordination: relative internal peace. This claim comes from none other than the classic figure of Russian historiography, Vasily Klyuchevsky (1841–1911). Discussing the significance of the "Tatar yoke" in Ruthenian history, he says that "many of the difficulties which the Princes of Northern Rus' created for themselves and their fatherland were to a certain extent removed or lightened by the relations in which the Tartars stood to the country" (Klyuchevsky 1911 [1902], 1: 308).[10] Comparing them to the southern princes of Kievan Rus' from earlier times, Klyuchevsky states that among the northerners only few "gave a thought to old clan or territorial traditions . . . lacking in all sense of kinship or duty to society at large" (Klyuchevsky 1911 [1902], 1: 308). Therefore, their "social consciousness of so atrophied a kind was incapable of rising beyond the mere instincts of self-preservation and plunder" (Klyuchevsky 1911 [1902], 1: 308–309). Klyuchevsky claims that on the eve of Tatar attacks, that which we call an "inter-polity society" had disintegrated: all that remained was an inter-polity system with its Hobbesian "kill or be killed" logic (see chapter five). "Indeed, had those rulers been left to themselves, they would soon have torn their patrimony of Rus' into petty shreds of appanages between which the sword was never sheathed" (Klyuchevsky 1911 [1902], 1: 309).

In this situation, Tatar suzerainty came as a real salvation. The Tatar khan's

> authority invested those various petty, mutually hostile appanages with at least a *semblance* of unity . . . More than once the threat of that potentate's wrath served to deter squabbles, or his discretion to forestall or arrest a disastrous feud. In fact, the Khan's authority was the blunt Tartar knife which cut the knots of the tangled skein in which the stupidity of Vsevolod's posterity frequently entwined the affairs of the country.
>
> (Klyuchevsky 1911 [1902], 1: 309, 366)

All that remains to be added to Klyuchevsky's description is that, throughout the rest of Rus', a no less effective instrument for solving analogous problems was the Lithuanian battle axe.

It proved to be even more effective, as those Rurikids who did keep their tables in Lithuanian Rus' no longer needed to fight over what remained the major prize to compete for in Tatar Rus': the honour and rights of the grand prince. All of that was now the concern of the Lithuanian dynasty. In Tatar Rus', meanwhile, this battle continued. Only now it was the Tatar khan's word that determined upon whom the honour of being the Tatars' senior henchman would be bestowed, with all the accompanying rights and duties. Internal feuding still took place over inheritance of the patrimonial rights within the separate Rurikid lineage branches. In these battles, the Tatars (unlike the Cumans) did not so much provide military contingents as act

as the final arbitrators. "It not infrequently happened that a Prince, when wronged, appealed to the Khan, and sometimes with success" (Klyuchevsky 1911 [1902], 1: 309). The *jarlyk* – an act issued by the Tatar khan – was supreme proof of the legitimacy of the prince's authority or patrimonial rights. In this way, the Rurikids went from being sovereign masters of Ruthenian lands as a collective to a political class serving as the Mongol Empire's local agents-collaborators. Liberating Rus' from the Mongol Tatar yoke was not possible without first liberating it from the Rurikids' authority. That is precisely what the Lithuanians did, attaching Ruthenian lands one by one to the free Lithuanian Rus', and taking seats at the tables of those lands, seats that had previously been held by generations of Rurikids.

Many Ruthenian lands had strong local communities where, in the resolution of the most critical problems, the assembly (*veche*; вече) of all free men inhabiting the central city of a land had the final word (see Frojanov and Dvorničenko 1988; Dvorničenko 1993: 30–76; Zernack 1967). A traditional matter discussed by the *veche* was the expulsion of an unsuitable prince, or his replacement by another, better contender, usually an old rival of the former. But until the first decades of the thirteenth century, the Ruthenian city, land or district (*volost'*) community, having invited a prince who was not a Rurikid, would not only have become a target for attack by the wide coalition of the other Rurikids. It could have also expected other, social and religious, penalties: it would have been ex-communicated, excluded from the inter-polity (international) society to which Kievan Rus' belonged, and suffered sanctions imposed by its members. The lives and property of that community's members would also have been left without legal protection, and that ultimately would have rendered the newcomer non-Rurikid prince's warrior retinue helpless. Thus, up to a certain point in time, the violation of the Rurikid clan's monopoly on providing the "princely" services of protection and judicial activity would have been too risky or costly. This was a cost and risk that even the larger and stronger land communities could not afford.

As it happened, local land and district communities probably had a "pro-Lithuanian" party, interested in swapping the Tatar agent Rurikid for a Lithuanian duke. It is no accident that Lithuanian expansion was most successful in those lands of Kievan Rus' where Tatars posed the greatest threat and where land communities were the strongest. These were the earliest Eastern Slav colonised lands in the Dnieper River basin area. Meanwhile, in North Eastern Rus', where Ruthenian immigration developed only in the twelfth century, these communities were relatively weak, as the agrarian colonisation of these lands took place under the supervision of the princes. Thus, they had particularly strong patrimonial rights to these lands (a land, city or district rarely ever rose up to drive out a prince and invite a new one). Here, there were no internal social forces that could support the "pro-Lithuanian" party.

It was natural that the Rurikids and Tatars would have common interests, as the Mongol khans did not appoint Tatars in place of the Ruthenian

princes. Unlike the Lithuanians, the Tatars were not occupants. That meant they did not settle near or among Ruthenians. They remained on the steppes and would rule the Ruthenian lands from a distance through their local agents, the Rurikids. And the latter in turn used this status to entrench their own lineage branch's patrimonial rights to a (dining) table in a particular land and would accordingly restrict or eliminate a land's rights to replace princes. In the lands that fell to Lithuanian authority, the Rurikids had to "make room" and give up their seats to the "liberators", the Lithuanians. It was not just the Rurikids who suffered: the most important prop for the new prince's authority in a new location was his military retinue, which had to be maintained by seating the warriors "to feed" in those districts (*volost'*) and manors where the military servants of the recently evicted Rurikid had just sat. Thus, the new arrivals liberated the "people" of the Ruthenian lands not only from the Tatars, but also from their own exploiters, the Rurikids, and from the yoke of their henchmen (unless they managed to join the new power's side in time).

Most likely, legalisation of the Lithuanian dukes' authority was made possible not just through the transformation of the Kievan Rus' lands into an indirectly ruled periphery of the Mongol Empire, but through the crisis that had previously struck the inter-polity society to which Kievan Rus' belonged. Not one but two inter-polity societies existed in Europe in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. One included the Catholic European countries that had accepted the Roman pope's supremacy and the authority of the Holy Roman emperor, who by then more frequently came into conflict than cooperated with the popes. The countries of South Eastern and Eastern Europe belonged to the Orthodox Christian inter-polity society. Here, top authority was held by the Byzantine emperor, while the Constantinople patriarch was his subordinate (except during succession crises, when patriarchs had the chance – and faced the challenge – to play an autonomous political role).

Boundaries between the inter-polity systems and the inter-polity societies at the time did not correspond (see chapter five). Religious differences determined the latter, while the first depended on the ability, determined by geography and prevailing military technologies, to effectively project military power over a greater or smaller distance, plus the rulers' perceptions of threats and strategic calculations. From the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries, Kievan Rus' and the Byzantine Empire belonged to different inter-polity systems. Neither the Ruthenian princes nor the Byzantine emperors had any interest in the coalitions fighting those same wars, nor did they have sufficient power to participate as allies or foes. Belonging to the same inter-polity society as Byzantium, Kievan Rus' was then a separate inter-polity system that included not only the patrimonial lands of eight or nine Rurikid dynasties, but also the "pagan" polities of the Lithuanians and the Cumans (Kipchaks), as well as the Hungarian kings and Polish potentates.

In the early thirteenth century, the Orthodox Christian inter-polity society collapsed and never recovered. The Crusaders were responsible. In 1204, Venetians who had battled against Byzantium for domination in the eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea directed the ships which were to bring Crusaders to the Holy Land to the walls of Constantinople. Having conquered Constantinople, the Crusaders established their Latin Empire here, while the pope appointed a Catholic patriarch in Constantinople. Byzantium's Orthodox believers did not recognise him and, after an interregnum lasting several years, when several competing Orthodox bishops claimed the dignity of the patriarch of Constantinople for themselves, one eventually took hold as the single and therefore "real" patriarch. However, lacking the secular government's support and resources, the authority of the Constantinople patriarch was rather weak.

> The establishment of the Latin Empire in 1204 and the Mongol invasion of Eastern Europe signalled the end of Byzantium as a political, economic and military power. Even after the recapture of Constantinople by Michael Palaiologos in 1261, the empire was to remain a minor state with its commerce monopolised by the Genoese and with the new nation-states of Serbia and Bulgaria, as well as Latin principalities, established on its former territories in the Balkans.
>
> (Meyendorff 1981: 46)

Taking the opportunity offered by the Constantinople patriarch's weakness, in 1204–1261 the rulers of Serbia and Bulgaria won autocephalous church status for branches of the Orthodox Church in their lands. Besides just the Constantinople patriarch, now there was also the Bulgarian and Serbian patriarchs. For the first time in the history of the Kyiv metropole, local Ruthenians (instead of Greeks sent from Constantinople) were made metropolitan bishops of the Orthodox Church in the Ruthenian lands. Now the most powerful Ruthenian princes, not the Constantinople patriarch or the Byzantine emperor, had the decisive influence over their appointment. If until 1204 Constantinople, with its patriarch and emperor, was as much an authoritative centre of symbolic power to Kievan Rus' as Rome was to Catholic Europe, then precisely at the time of the fiercest internal fighting – the Mongol Tatar invasion and the collapse of the inter-polity system that followed – that centre evaporated.

The basis of the Kyiv metropolitans' church authority was not just the credentials of the Constantinople patriarch, but also the *jarlyki* issued by the Golden Horde's khans. Urging them to pray for the pagan Tatar tsar, there were no grounds for objecting that it was no longer Rurikids that assumed their places at the tables of Ruthenian dukes, but Lithuanians – especially since the Lithuanian dukes who did so also agreed to baptism, thereby offering the hope that the grand dukes who ruled the pagan Grand Duchy's metropole would eventually follow suit.

Notes

1 For more about the eastern borders of the Grand Duchy, see Ljubavskij 1892; also, Natanson-Leski 1964; Rhode 1955; Temušev 2013.
2 See Skurvydaitė 2005: 45. See also Adamus 1930.
3 In some periods, the area of the Holy Roman Empire could have reached as much as 900,000 km^2. However, it was markedly smaller in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, as at that time Italy had completely escaped the rule of the Holy Roman emperors. Of course, its area can be enlarged to include the Order's domains in Pomerania, Prussia and Livonia. However, there is no firm basis for such enlargement. When the Crusaders got into deep trouble in the fifteenth century and insisted that they were fiefs of the Holy Roman Empire, calling on the help of the emperor and other German potentates, the empire never fought on their behalf. The same story was repeated at the start of the Livonian War in the sixteenth century when Livonian knights called on the empire's help to fend off Muscovy's attack, claiming they were part of the Holy Roman Empire.
4 The exponents of the so-called "Eurasian" approach in the geopolitics and history of Russia (Lev Gumilëv, Georgij Vernadskij, etc.) dissent from this consensus. However, they have never dominated in Russian historiography or historical culture.
5 We can only guess on this point, as there are insufficient sources. The authors of Ruthenian chronicles (monks) hated both Tatars and Lithuanians for being "pagans", but perhaps Lithuanians were tolerated more than Tatars. See Baronas 2004.
6 It is generally hard to find examples of liberation for reasons other than such "lower" aims, in which case liberation would simply be a side effect.
7 The term *stol* (стол) found in Ruthenian chronicles will be translated as "table", not "throne" as is sometimes done. "Table" (or "dining-table") gives a better reflection of the essence of the matter – even more so that a majority of the Ruthenian duchies were so small and so miserable that the word "throne" would sound too pompous.
8 They must be distinguished from the Smolensk Rostislavičs, as the Halych Rostislavič branch originated from the grandson of Jaroslav the Wise, Rostislav Vladimirovič (1038–1066), while the Smolensk Rostislavičs were descendants of the grandson of Vladimir Monomakh, Rostislav Mstislavič (c. 1110–1167). See Gorskij 1996: 6.
9 Western Dvina is the Slavic name for the river called Daugava by Latvians. The start of German use of the Daugava route determined the political destiny of Lower Daugava, populated by the ancestors of contemporary Latvians. Following the Lübeck merchants who founded a trading post near the mouth of the Daugava River in the 1180s came the German knights, who started to conquer Lower Daugava in the very beginning of the thirteenth century.
10 Klyuchevsky has in mind northern Rus'. That part of Rus' which came under Lithuanian rule was left beyond the scope of his famous course of lectures on Russian history, which is cited here and further on.

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10 The Grand Duchy in the pursuit of hegemony

Aims and achievements

Attempting to demonstrate that early Lithuania carried out broad territorial expansion is almost like breaking through an open door (see Map 9.1). What does require explanation is the mechanism of that expansion: who opposed it (apart from the Tatars) in the Ruthenian lands, who was its "fifth column", and what did it mean to the object to that expansion? All these topics were discussed in the previous chapter. This chapter shall present an analysis of the limits of the Grand Duchy's expansion: what were they and who defined them? To find an answer, we need to understand the inter-polity systemic structures to which early Lithuania belonged.

Until the beginning of the thirteenth century, it belonged to the inter-polity system known as Kievan Rus' or Rurikid Rus'. The Lithuanian confederation of lands joined this system from its periphery as a new yet very active and aggressive member. As was already mentioned, Rurikid Rus' also belonged to the Byzantine Orthodox inter-polity society, of which Lithuania was not a member. In the first half of the thirteenth century, Lithuania's new neighbours in the west and north were colonial German polities – the Teutonic Order and Livonia, which became a vassal state of the Crusaders in 1237. They were also outposts of the European Catholic inter-polity society at the time. That society had to expand further into the East, by conquering and converting the pagans of the Baltic Sea's eastern shores.

With the beginning of the crusades against Lithuania, a regional inter-polity system formed on the eastern shore of the Baltic whose members were Lithuania, the Teutonic Order, Livonia, Pskov, Volhynia-Halych (until 1340), Poland and Mazovia. Pskov only separated completely from Greater Novgorod in the mid-fourteenth century, so before then it only represented this Northern Rus' republic. Greater Novgorod itself was more embroiled in another regional inter-polity system – the Scandinavian, or Northern European – as its greatest conflicts of interest (over control of the Finnish and Karelian lands) rested with Sweden and Norway. Thus it rather frequently established alliances with the Hanseatic League and Denmark (see Šaskol'skij 1987a; 1987b; Rydzevskaja 1978; Kazakova 1975). As far as we know, up until the sixteenth century Lithuania did not maintain any significant political contacts with the members of this regional inter-polity

society, even though the Vikings were rather active on the eastern side of the Baltic in the ninth and tenth centuries.

Two special "inter-local" or "international" actors belonged to both systems, and represented the medieval international Catholic Christian society's universal powers – the Roman pope and the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire.[1] Both groups of Lithuania's neighbours were strategic systems. The identities of their members, their capabilities and interests were mutually known or so inter-connected that one member's achievements or failures had perceived effects for the others. Polities belonging to the same inter-polity system were players in one large strategic game. However, some players could participate in other games at the same time. Their partners in the first system had no knowledge about these parallel games or had no power to interfere (see chapter five).

Although Lithuania bore the stigma of paganism until 1387, its growing military potential made the Grand Duchy an attractive ally to those neighbours who faced a greater threat from other members from the same system, rather than from Lithuania itself. Probably the best indicator of alliances and strategic partnerships in those times were dynastic marriages. In theory, Christian rulers could not establish dynastic ties or alliances with pagan rulers, yet in practice there were quite a lot. Lithuanian duchesses married not only Ruthenian Rurikids, but also rulers of Mazovia (like Traidenis' daughter Gaudemunda, who in 1279 married the duke of Płock in Mazovia Bolesław II and received the Christian name Sophia) and Poland (like Gediminas' daughter Aldona, who in 1325 married the son of the Polish king Władysław Lokietek, Casimir III, and was baptised as Anna).

Nothing of the sort could take place in Lithuania's relations with the Crusaders – and not only because the monastic state was not a dynastic polity.[2] They were not engaged in a regular war with Lithuania, but a holy, ideological war. Thus, "the Order could not make any alliance or perennial peace with good-for-nothings; only a truce" (Forstreuter 1962: 11). After the Christianisation of Lithuania, when such unions became "ideologically possible", until the Battle of Grunwald, the Order made such alliances only with particular Lithuanian dukes (ones they hoped to turn into their henchmen), trying to exploit the Lithuanians' conflicts to their own benefit. In this regard, Lithuania's relations with Livonia were like an ironic mirror image of the Teutonic Order's relations with Lithuania. Here, it was Lithuania that often made use of the internal tensions in Livonia for its own purposes, where the Livonian Order, the city of Riga, the archbishop of Riga, plus the heads of the Dorpat (Tartu) and other Livonian bishoprics were in frequent conflict. Mindaugas had already exploited these internal disagreements in Livonia, while Vytenis and Gediminas were regular allies of the city and archbishop of Riga against the Livonian Order and its protector, the Teutonic Order, whose main territorial base became the conquered Prussian and western Lithuanian lands.

The Teutonic Order was in principle and in terms of ideology an enemy of Lithuania's existence as a state. Yet it never managed to exact on Lithuania what it ultimately did to its younger partner, Livonia: its liquidation as a state. Livonia established itself in territories that were one of the areas of Lithuania's twelfth-century expansion. Modern Lithuanians are accustomed to consider their ancestors as victims of "Crusader" or "German" aggression, as the Grand Duchy's war against the Teutonic Order in the West was a defensive one. However, if the Crusaders and Knights of the Sword had not settled in Prussia or Lower Daugava, the Prussian and especially today's Latvian and Estonian lands would have also become objects of the Lithuanian dukes' expansion and annexation, as were Polatsk, Vitsebsk, Smolensk and other Ruthenian lands.

The Lithuanian conquest of Lower Daugava was already underway in the early thirteenth century. The Germans managed to subjugate the Baltic tribes (the ethnic substrate of today's Latvians) with such speed and ease because they considered baptism and "civilised" German rule (with advance knowledge about the expected tributes and duties) a lesser evil than the unending marauding campaigns of the Lithuanians. The dukes of the Grand Duchy probably would have found it more difficult to subordinate the fearsome Prussians – they would have resisted the Lithuanians as ruthlessly as the Samogitians defended themselves against the Germans.

It is not just the campaigns of Treniota or Traidenis that provide the evidence that such pan-Baltic expansionist goals were not foreign to Lithuania's rulers (see Łowmiański 1932, 2, 357–358). The conditions for Lithuania's baptism that Algirdas and Kęstutis raised with the emperor in 1358, mentioned in the Hermann von Wartberge chronicle, are additional testimony (Wartberge 1863: 72). Their conditions stipulated that all of Sambia, Courland, Semigallia (Žiemgala, Zemgale), and part of Latgallia (Latgala, Latgale) had to be joined to Lithuania. The western border of the Grand Duchy had to follow the Alna River from Masuria as far as Pregel, then along the Pregel River to the Curonian Lagoon, and along the Baltic coast until the mouth of the Daugava River. The Grand Duchy's northern border had to follow the Daugava River until the Aiviekstė stream, then run in a northeastern direction until Lake Lubāns and Rus'. A well-known episode from Vytautas' negotiations with the Crusaders in Salynas (near Kaunas) in 1413 reveals that this was not just a flight of fantasy but a depiction of the "cognitive map" of the imagined Gediminid possessions. The Grand Duchy's ruler essentially repeated the same demands, claiming almost all the Prussian lands as far as the right bank of the Vistula River's tributary, the Osa, as his patrimony (Bumblauskas 2005: 145).

Lithuania's statesmen had forgotten their "pan-Baltic" project by the fifteenth century, or recalled it only as if it were "pure history". This is evident from the fact that the Lithuanian ruling elite made no effort to make use of the favourable situation during the war between the Teutonic Order and Poland in 1454–1466 and join Klaipėda (Memel) (see Dundulis 1968;

1971: 131–141). However, when a similar situation unfolded in Livonia in the mid-sixteenth century, Lithuania acted quickly. The addition of a larger portion of Livonia (see Tyla 1986; Varakauskas 1982; Stancelis 2000) was the final success in Lithuania's expansion and the "swan song" of Lithuanian imperialism; as in the subsequent Livonian War, Lithuania was no longer capable of resisting Muscovy. The ruling elite now had to search for assistance in the habitual way when threatened with complete defeat – they had to ask Poland for support. Yet, this time, the cost of that support was the final surrender of state independence (though not statehood as such).

Livonia's annexation did not have or no longer had anything in common with the pan-Baltic idea. "It was not Latvia that was joined to Lithuania, but Livonia" (Gudavičius 1999: 615). It is important to note that Lithuania tried desperately to subordinate all of Livonia (thus, even present-day Estonia), which meant war not just against Rus', but Sweden as well. Henryk Łowmiański suggests that, had it been satisfied with the Daugava line, Lithuania could have avoided war not just with Sweden, but with Muscovy as well (Łowmiański 2006 [1999]: 562–563). Thus, by the sixteenth century, Lithuania sought to seize much more in Livonia than what Algirdas and Vytautas demanded in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Then "a moderate claim was made upon the German colonial territories: feudal German landlordships and their network of church organisations would have been foreign in the Lithuanian state structure: their dosage had to be limited" (Gudavičius 1999: 134).

Łowmiański writes that when forming the Krewo Act, the Gediminids could have (mistakenly) hoped that the marriage of their lineage head with the heir to the Polish throne and Catholic baptism would open similar paths to power and influence in Poland as marriages to Rurikid brides and Orthodox baptism had for Jogaila's ancestors (including his father, Algirdas) (see Łowmiański 2006 [1999]: 60–61). However, even if such hopes existed, it did not take long to understand that these dreams were too brave. Lithuania was too weak to engage in hegemony and imperial expansion in the West.

The most it could strive for and attain here was a higher status when joining Europe's inter-polity (international) Christian society. That meant baptism, the establishment of separate church provinces (bishoprics, or even better – archbishoprics), and kingdom status. Mindaugas succeeded in exploiting the Livonian Order's internal bickering to meet these goals (though only at a very high cost). After Mindaugas' baptism, Lithuania "could not be harmed by any neighbouring Christian states. Raising a sword against his state was akin to attacking the property of the Apostolic See" (Stakauskas 2004 [1934]: 87). Although in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the Grand Duchy surpassed Mindaugas' kingdom in size and military power, it did not have a higher status in the international Christian society. The unions with Poland did not abolish the real sovereignty of Lithuania, but in international

law Lithuania was merely the younger partner of the Polish kingdom. The most obvious evidence of this inequality, reflected in political symbolism, was its status as a "grand duchy", not a "kingdom". Lithuania was never a great power in the inter-polity system to which its western neighbours belonged (perhaps except for the last decade of Vytautas' rule when he tried to exploit the conflict between the Hussites and Emperor Sigismund to serve his aims). It did become a great power in the East, as there it was part of a different inter-polity system.

Why did Lithuania, having lost its "first class" seat on the "Europe train" (a metaphor used by Gudavičius), hesitate to board for so long, rejecting several quite realistic opportunities for conversion to Christianity in the fourteenth century, only to board at the very last moment – and this time, just in "second class"? The likeliest answer is that, until a certain time, there were more feasible and attractive alternatives on offer. Why seek to become only a second- or third-class ruler (king) in the medieval European ruling hierarchy (after the Roman pope and the Holy Roman Empire's emperor), if in another international society one could hope to become a king of kings, or prince of princes, i.e., an emperor?

Alvydas Nikžentaitis, when analysing Lithuanian foreign policy in the mid-fourteenth century, distinguished its three main goals: (1) make peace with the Teutonic Order; (2) adjoin the Baltic lands that came under its rule; (3) subordinate all of Rus' to its authority (see Nikžentaitis 1990; 1991; 2005).[3] All that remains to be said is that of all these goals, the Lithuanian rulers at the time placed most importance on the third one: they were even prepared to sacrifice the first two goals. In the mid-fourteenth century, Algirdas ignored at least two opportunities for Lithuania's conversion to Catholicism, without which peace with the Teutonic Order, which was waging a "holy war", was impossible. The reason is that this kind of baptism would have interfered with Algirdas' plans in Rus' (see Baronas and Rowell 2015: 149–174).

Nikžentaitis' analysis can be detailed, highlighting that, from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries, Lithuania did not belong to one but two different inter-polity systems. This statement just translates into the vocabulary of the international relations theory the claim of some Russian (Sergei Solov'ëv) and then Soviet (Lev Čerepnin, Vladimir Pašuto) historians that the Grand Duchy was a "barrier" stopping the Germans from surging into the East, and Tatars from reaching Central Europe (see Jučas 1964: 46, 47–48).[4] Until the very end of the fifteenth century, or even the mid-sixteenth, Central and Western Europe on the one side and Eastern Europe on the other belonged to different inter-polity (strategic power balance) systems. These were also different worlds in terms of communication, because the most powerful actors in each of them could neither know, nor were very interested in knowing, what was happening in the other. William Urban might be exaggerating somewhat when he writes that, in the fourteenth century, "Germans and Poles cared little for Rus' affairs" (Urban 2005 [1989]: 131),

but the fact remains that the European rulers so intent on making Lithuania Christian could not really tell which ruler – Kęstutis or Algirdas – was the grand duke of the Grand Duchy.

Although the rulers of the Grand Duchy managed to organise two large offensive military operations each year during the mid-fourteenth century – one against the Teutonic Order and another in Rus' lands – no data exist to suggest that there would have been any kind of alliance between the Teutonic Order and the Tatar khans or the Horde's henchmen, the Muscovite princes, or attempts to coordinate military action against the Grand Duchy in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The situation changed only in the fifteenth century when the rising Muscovite state formed a coalition against the Jagiellonians that included the Crimean khan (indirectly, also, his suzerain the sultan of Turkey) and the Habsburgs (see Bazilevič 1952: 239–281). This coalition was neither sustainable nor long-lived. Therefore, it is a controversial issue whether the Muscovite state had already by then become a regular part of the European inter-polity system. It more likely became one only during the years of the Livonian War, when it tried to conquer a larger part of the Baltic coast and thus started searching for allies in Europe against the Grand Duchy and Sweden.[5]

However, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Tatar Rus' was certainly not a part of the European inter-polity (international) relations system, remaining a distant, outlandish backwater to Catholic Europe, where the latter had neither any interests nor any power to achieve anything.[6] Simultaneously at war with the Crusaders and engaged in campaigns into Tatar Rus' lands, the Lithuanian dukes were playing at multiple tables that differed not just in terms of the players, but also in terms of the potential wins or losses to be made. When playing two very different games, the rulers of the Grand Duchy as a "barrier state" had to be proficient in Central and West European politics, and in "steppe politics" – wars between Eurasian polities and their internal power struggles. Early Lithuania's belonging to two different power balance systems was clearly reflected in its own state structure.

I have in mind the so-called dyarchy, which certain historians have noticed in early Lithuania's political order, considering it the distinguishing feature of medieval Lithuania's political system (Gudavičius 1999: 74; 2002 (1985)). Unlike other (or typical) states from that time and of a similar development level, Lithuania did not have one but two rulers (a monarch and a sub-monarch), representatives of the same ruling lineage, of whom one was the eldest (Butigeidis and Butvydas (Pukuveras), Vytenis and Gediminas, Kęstutis and Algirdas). The dyarchy tradition helped reach a compromise between Vytautas and Jogaila too. How then could this feature of the early Lithuanian state's order be explained?[7]

Most telling is the fact that manifestations of this dyarchy are noticed whenever Lithuania intensified its expansion into Ruthenian lands (after a relative pause during Traidenis' rule (see Dubonis 2009), and that its

contours were clearest when that expansion was most intense (during the reign of Algirdas and Kęstutis). The best explanation for the dyarchy is Lithuania's belonging to two different regional strategic power balance systems. Not only in the times of Algirdas and Kęstutis, but earlier as well, the division of authority and territories between two dyarchs was determined by their fields of responsibility in foreign politics: one would traditionally be the Western "front" commander and foreign affairs minister while the other dealt with the East.

What did the inter-polity system in which the Grand Duchy eventually became a great power – and aspired to become an empire – look like? This system had three main "players" (great powers). First, there was the Golden Horde – the *ulus* of Genghis Khan's eldest son Jochi and his grandson, Batu. It became a separate state in 1260, after the death of the Mongol Empire's last great khan, Möngke, who had more than nominal authority over all its *uluses* (see Allsen 1987). The system's second great power was the Ilkhanate ruled by the descendants of Ghengis Khan's other grandson, Hulagu (ca. 1217–1267), with its centre in modern-day Iran. The third great power was distant Egypt, ruled by the Mamluk emirs. Egypt was one of the targets of Mongol Tatar invasion. In 1260, the Mamluks managed to defeat Hulagu's army. Defending Egypt from Hulagu's successors, they formed a strategic alliance with another Tatar empire – the Golden Horde.

In the times of Ghengis Khan's great-grandson Berke (reigned in 1257–1267), the Golden Horde fought over Transcaucasia with the Ilkhanate. The opponents were also divided over religion until the fourteenth century when the Ilkhanate finally converted to Islam (before then, some leaned towards Buddhism, and others towards a heterodox Nestorian Christianity). Already in Berke's times, the ruling dynasty and a majority of the Golden Horde's elite became Muslims, professing a common faith with Egypt's Mamluks. They played the most important role in eliminating the Crusader states in Palestine. After the destruction of Baghdad, the Mamluks sheltered the Abbasid caliphs. Nominally, caliphs held the highest rank in the Muslim inter-polity society's hierarchy that the khans of the Golden Horde also recognised.

War with the Ilkhanate (in an alliance with Egypt's Mamluks) was the main foreign policy focus of the Golden Horde, then Lithuania's southern and eastern neighbour (by way of Tatar Rus'). Aside from Lithuania, among the lesser (second-rank) players of that same strategic system was the Byzantine Empire, restored under the Palaiologos dynasty. Both the Golden Horde and Egypt sought to form an alliance with it, as the only way of maintaining communication was via the Byzantine-controlled Black Sea straits. However, Byzantium was also interested in establishing good relations with the Ilkhans, for they were its natural allies against other second-rank players in the system. These were the Muslim Turkish Seljuq polities squeezed between Byzantine and the Ilkhan domains on the Asia Minor peninsula. One of these polities had already started rising and growing in

strength from the late thirteenth century, establishing the beginnings to the future Ottoman Empire.

The creation of the Mongol Empire also signalled a crisis in the Muslim inter-polity society that had existed within the boundaries of the Caliphate founded by Muhammad's descendants. Its symbolic beginning could be 1258, when the Mongols seized and looted Baghdad, the residence of a majority of Muslim (Sunni) spiritual leaders – the caliphs from the Abbasid lineage. Baghdad was also the cultural and economic centre of the Muslim civilisation. To the Muslims of those times, the fall of Baghdad was as much a global catastrophe as the seizure and looting of Rome by the Germanic barbarians once appeared to Western Christians. The crisis ended in the mid-fourteenth century. The Muslim inter-polity society not only recovered, but consolidated and expanded when the "barbarians" of the Muslim civilisation, the Mongol Tatars, converted to Islam.

What were the goals and opportunities of the rulers of Lithuania in this second inter-polity system, which it entered as a rather insignificant second- or even third-rank player? Lithuania tried to make use of the demise of Kievan Rus' as an inter-polity system already during Mindaugas' times. Mindaugas sent Vykintas, Tautvilas and Gedvydas to conquer Smolensk, while he descended on Briansk and collaborated with the princes of Volhynia-Halych, who still tried to avoid the Golden Horde's suzerainty, in their campaigns into the Horde's already captured lands. Geographically speaking, the area of the Lithuanians' military campaigns in the mid-thirteenth century was no different from that of the reigns of Gediminas or Algirdas. However, the territorial results of these efforts were rather more meagre: Lithuania had authority only over the lands of Black Rus' and perhaps the principality of Minsk. The Lithuanian dukes were not even firmly established in Polatsk: in the early fourteenth century it was ruled for some time by a Rurikid under the protection of the Livonian Order (Dubonis 2014: 68–69).

The Golden Horde quickly and effectively blocked this first attempt at broad imperial expansion. In return for its attempted expansion into Ruthenian lands, which the khans considered a field of their suzerainty, Lithuania was punished with Burundai's raid in the winter of 1258–1259. Participants in this reprisal were not only the princes of Halych-Volhynia, who had just recently finally acknowledged Tatar authority, but probably also other Ruthenian princes from vassal lands. Artūras Dubonis gives a cautious hypothesis that one of the outcomes of Burundai's revenge campaign was Lithuania's subordination to the Golden Horde's hegemony (Dubonis 2006). That would have meant that the Golden Horde's khans had control over Lithuania's foreign policy: Lithuania's rulers could no longer attack enemies of their own selection but had to be at peace and on good terms with whomever the khan identified, and attack those he ordered or allowed them to attack. On the other hand, Mindaugas' last campaign into Briansk in 1263 would hardly have been sanctioned by the Tatars.

We could agree that it was precisely Burundai's raid that determined the failure of Lithuania's first attempt at baptism. Having surrendered Samogitian, Selonian and other lands (which, in fact, Mindaugas did not actually rule) to the Livonian Order and the newly-established Lithuanian bishopric, the Lithuanian king expected to make up for these losses in the East.[8] Here Pope Innocent IV had not only confirmed Mindaugas' authority in the already conquered Ruthenian (thus, Christian) lands, but also in those that he would conquer in the future (see Stakauskas 2004 [1934]: 87). Thus the Pope as supreme authority in Christian inter-polity law at the time legalised the Lithuanians' expansion into territories that the Rurikids held as the exclusive property of their own lineage.[9] Burundai's raid demonstrated that Tatar claims on having the highest authority in all Ruthenian lands were not just empty words. Once Burundai's raid demonstrated how unrealistic Mindaugas' program of eastward expansion in the name of Catholicism actually was, his authority went into crisis. At the same time, the victory of the Samogitians (whose lands he had "donated" to the Livonian order) at the Battle of Durbe (13 July 1260), and the Great Prussian Uprising that started that same year, provided crediblity to the alternative (pan-Baltic) program of the making of the Lithuanian Empire. Its implementation saw the last campaigns of Mindaugas himself, then those of Treniota and Traidenis (see Dubonis 2009).

Whatever the causes, Lithuania's territorial expansion into Ruthenian lands, which became particularly wide-ranging in the 1240s–60s, ceased for around four decades when the Rurikid inter-polity system collapsed at the hands of Tatars. A new international order replaced it on the eastern frontiers of Lithuania: the suzerain inter-polity system of the Golden Horde (see this chapter, above). The Lithuanians' campaigns into Ruthenian lands were in violation of the *Pax mongolica* order, for which they could suffer crushing repressions not just at the hands of the Tatars, but also in the face of the Ruthenian princes' forces, mustered by the Tatars themselves. Lithuania suffered such punishment in 1275, 1282, and 1289 (see Batūra 1975: 168). Subdued by the Golden Horde, Lithuanians were forced to keep quiet in the East, and to attack Poland and German colonies instead, which also happened to suit the Tatar empire's strategic interests.

Nonetheless, Lithuania avoided even the nominal suzerainty of the Golden Horde – except for the short year of Švarnas' reign (1269). By this time, the Romanovičs of Halych-Volhynia had already been vassals and loyal assistants of the Golden Horde, advancing upon Poland, Hungary and in other directions together with the Tatars. The expansion and consolidation of their authority in Lithuania, plus the spread of Orthodoxy here, which Vaišelga facilitated, signalled more than just Lithuania's admission into the Golden Horde's sphere of influence. It could have also become a part of its "external empire" – it could have been governed by rulers whose ultimate source of legitimacy would have been the *jarlyki* of the Golden Horde's khan.

This does not mean that a political entity similar to the Grand Duchy would not have appeared in its de facto territory of expansion. Had the Ruthenian party (Vaišelga-Švarnas) been the victor in the internal feuding that arose in Lithuania after Mindaugas' death, and the (newly Orthodox) Volhynia Romanovičs become entrenched in Lithuania, their ensuing expansion and boundaries and the new state's contours would hardly have differed from those we know of from the history of the Grand Duchy. Yet it would not have been the Grand Duchy, but the Grand Duchy of Ukraine (GDU) (anachronistically speaking), with its metropole in present-day Western Ukraine and its capital in Lutsk or Volodymyr-Volynsky.

The pause in eastward expansion, when Mindaugas' intentions of expansion under the flag of defending the Christian West from the Tatars failed, did not last very long. The Mongol Tatars' potential to project their military might decreased the further their possible targets lay from steppes and forest steppes. The Ruthenian territory that lay north of the steppes and forest steppes was still covered then in expansive wetlands and deep forests, with more densely-populated agrarian "pockets of civilisation" scattered among them and administrative centres – castles (cities) – established near larger rivers or their confluences. Larger Tatar cavalry forces could only reach these areas in winter when they could travel along frozen river ice. Yet making attacks and trying to establish their authority not just in North East, but in West and North West Rus' (the lands of present-day Belarus, Pskov and Novgorod) was not worth the Tatars' efforts. It made more sense to concentrate their forces on defending their interests in other directions. Lithuania's expansion interfered with those interests, but they were not vitally important. Losing campsites suitable for nomads to spend winters somewhere on the Mugan plain (in present-day Azerbaijan) was more critical than any uncollected tributes from Pinsk or Briansk.

Even though tributes paid to Tatars weighed heavily on the weak Ruthenian economy, they only made up a fraction of the income flowing into the Golden Horde's treasury, compared to the tributes that came in from Khwarezm, the Middle and Lower Volga regions (especially Volga Bulgaria), Crimea, the North Caucasus and Transcaucasia, and war booty from campaigns into the Balkans and Poland (see Halperin 1985: 30). The battle with the Ilkhan (Hulagid) Empire in Transcaucasia claimed the Golden Horde's main forces and resources. The rulers of the Golden Horde secured control of the Ruthenian lands mostly through diplomatic means, juggling the regalia of the grand prince of Vladimir by seizing them from a Rurikid prince who had just managed to gain a stronghold and giving them to one of his many contenders and supporting the latter (if the need arose) with military force sent in from the metropole. They also helped solve local "family feuds" inside branches of the Rurikid lineage ruling specific lands. Many of the Tatar attacks on Ruthenian lands in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries that chroniclers and many later Russian historians complained about

took place upon the initiative and at the invitation of the Rurikid princes themselves, in order to resolve their traditional feuds.[10]

However, in West and North West Rus', the Tatar khans were too distant or unreliable a force (due to being preoccupied with more important matters) compared to long-time neighbours, the Lithuanians. That is why Lithuania not only retained its hegemony around the middle reaches of the Daugava and Dnieper rivers, but also succeeded in extending it up the Dnieper, surrounding the Smolensk lands from the north. The Golden Horde was most likely uninterested in what went on in these distant lands where the territorial interests of Greater Novgorod, Pskov, Smolensk and Lithuania crossed. The research of probably the most famous contemporary Russian expert in the history of medieval Novgorod, Valentin Janin, revises considerably the accepted chronology for Lithuania's entrenchment in this region to an earlier date. Janin claims that even the distant Rzhev land (around the upper reaches of the Volga), which fell to Muscovy after Algirdas' unsuccessful campaigns there in the second half of the fourteenth century, was "appropriated by Lithuania at the turn of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, in any case – between 1285 and 1314" (Janin 1998: 53).[11]

The "Kyiv problem" remains an object of discussion. As is known, both the Bychowiec Chronicle (*Lietuvos metraštis* 1971, 68–71) and Maciej Stryjkowski (in his *Chronicle of Poland, Lithuania, Samogitia and All of Ruthenia*) mention Gediminas' campaign on Kyiv in around 1323. When the Kyivan prince Stanislav was defeated, Gediminas occupied the city and appointed his placeman. Back in the late nineteenth century, Ukrainian historian Vladimir Antonovič criticised this information as unreliable and postponed the subjugation of Kyiv to Algirdas' times until the second half of the fourteenth century (Antonovič 1878: 52–65). Nikolai Daškevič challenged Antonovič in 1885, bringing the date back again, though not to 1323, but to the beginning of the 1330s (Daškevič 1885: 40–64). This discussion continues in Grand Duchy historiography (see Batūra 1975: 176–210).[12] Understandably, the most active participants at present are Ukrainian historians (see Vasilenko 2006).[13]

Considering the situation at the time within the Golden Horde's suzerain inter-polity system, it is highly unlikely that Lithuania would have been able to pose such an open challenge to that system's suzerain in the 1320s. This would have meant the subjugation of an important centre (at least symbolically) like Kyiv without the knowledge of the Golden Horde's khan. Once the Golden Horde recovered from the internal war in the late thirteenth century, during which Nogai was crushed, it internally consolidated for some time, while military action on the "southern front" (against the Ilkhan Empire) calmed down.

Whereas it is difficult to imagine the Grand Duchy's sovereignty in the Kyiv lands during the times of the powerful Golden Horde khan Uzbeg (reigned in 1312–1341/1342), a Tatar and Lithuanian condominium in these lands (see Šabuldo 2004) is quite possible. It was not so important

for the Tatars who would administer lands they considered their own. So long as the Lithuanian duke did not delay presenting the traditional tribute, and brought the same military force at his suzerain's request as traditionally required, changes to the local authority were not critical to the empire's centre in Sarai. Especially if this was a place the Tatar cavalry could reach easily and restore the status quo when needed, and install other princes in this seat. On the other hand, if a condominium did exist in Kyiv, this explains why the Golden Horde backed Lithuania in the war over Halych and Volhynia in 1340–1344, launching campaigns into Poland that proved very effective in the course of the war. The condominium model that "worked" so well in Kyiv was applied in Volhynia as well. The subjugation of Volhynia to Poland's rule would mean its ultimate slipping out of the Golden Horde's control.

The ideas of Soviet Russian historian Igor Grekov are less credible and acceptable. He claims that the Grand Duchy's territorial expansion in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries was a conscious policy of the Golden Horde's khans, aiming to create a strong barrier against the Teutonic Order and Poland, and to counterbalance Muscovy.[14]

> It appears the Horde then supported the Lithuanian dukes' territorial program in the south west Ruthenian lands, because it was simultaneously creating a balance of political powers it so needed in Eastern Europe, on one side – it blocked the grand principality of Vladimir from growing too strong, on the other – it neutralised the Order's and Poland's victories in the lands of Lithuania itself and in West Rus'.
>
> (Grekov and Šaxmagonov 1986: 123)[15]

The Order did not have any significant triumphs in the Lithuanian lands during Gediminas' times, while the wars between Poland and Lithuania over Halych-Volhynia, which the Golden Horde considered its own domain and thus saw fit to intervene, only began in 1340. In these wars, the Tatars supported the Lithuanians, though not as their placemen. Given the circumstances, a condominium in Podolia and Volhynia (where Lithuanians held de facto authority, while the Golden Horde maintained only nominal suzerainty) was the most the Horde could achieve. The situation was different in the principality of Vladimir, where there was no shortage of contenders in the fight for authority, which the Golden Horde could manipulate and thereby "balance" the situation.

The main powers here were the princes of Tver and Muscovy. Sometimes the princes of Suzdal and Lower Novgorod (at first this principality's centre was in Gorodec) also aspired to be the Tatars' senior placemen in Tatar Rus' – the grand princes of Vladimir. At first, the princes of Tver had the most success in this fight. Yet later, Ivan Danilovič, known as Ivan Moneybag (prince of Muscovy 1325–1340, grand prince of Vladimir 1331–1340) managed to win the Tatar's favours. Probably the most important argument

that won him the acceptance of khan Uzbeg were the complaints from the Muscovite princes that the princes of Tver maintained close ties with Lithuania. At the time, this could have been simply an act of defamation (see Klug 1985: 113–119). Later though, Lithuania did become an ally of the Rurikids of Tver, who split into the Muscovy-friendly Kashin and the pro-Lithuanian Mikulin branches, in the further battle over supremacy in "Tatar Rus'".

The Grand Duchy's expansion in the first half of the fourteenth century did not proceed as per the far-sighted plan of the Golden Horde's ruling elite, to carefully create a counterbalance to the growing power of Muscovy. It took place against the Horde's will, even though its opposition was not very determined or consistent, as Lithuania's expansion did not infringe on any critical interests of the steppe empire. Lithuanian historian Edvardas Gudavičius has suggested the best image to describe the Grand Duchy's expansion at this time – "a hyena stepping in the footprints of a tiger" (quoted in Bumblauskas 2005: 106). The Lithuanian "liberators" received the Ruthenian leftovers: whatever the Tatar tiger could not or did not want to consume. During the times of Gediminas (and Uzbeg), that hyena still had to flee terrified whenever the tiger roared, and was really only a liberator-opportunist, grabbing what was left in its path and what it was capable of overcoming. The Lithuanian liberating imperialism of those times was more like an opportunistic process provoked and encouraged by "pericentric" factors (see chapter eight), rather than a policy based on a "grand strategy" whose guiding star was a specific "imperial idea".

The driving metrocentric force behind its territorial expansion was the Lithuanian military aristocracy's insatiable appetite for war booty (the Lithuanian nobility of these times was still mostly composed of warriors rather than landholding managers of manors), plus the interests and dynastic resources of the happy father Gediminas. These resources were numerous daughters who could be married off to dynasts from neighbouring polities, thus entrenching the Lithuanian victories or bolstering political alliances. The main dynastic interest was to provide his even more numerous sons with appanage duchies. The victims of this Lithuanian imperialist process were the Rurikid princes who lost their lands; the winners were not just the Gediminids, but their military servicemen as well (who were not only Lithuanians). Other winners were the "ordinary" people of the conquered Ruthenian lands to whom the authority of their Lithuanian liberators meant an end to the Rurikids' feuding, and, at the same time, less frequent attacks from their assistants, the Tatars.

Metropolitan Lithuania was also a winner. Although the territorial defence of ethnic Lithuanian lands from the Crusaders' raids was conducted almost solely by the local population – first of all in Samogitia (Žemaitija), the target of a majority of these attacks – without military forces from the Ruthenian lands the large-scale retaliatory campaigns into Prussia and Livonia would have been impossible. Most valuable were the bowmen – Ruthenian warriors who had military skills that the Lithuanians

were rather late in acquiring. Probably a number of them were used in the castles along the Nemunas line of defence, which protected the state's territorial core for almost a hundred years.[16] Ultimately, use of resources from the Ruthenian lands helped lighten the burden of taxes and tributes to provide for the ruling elite of the young state, which would have otherwise fallen in its entirety on the shoulders of the ethnic Lithuanian (Baltic) population. Samogitia remained free of this yoke until the the beginning of the fifteenth century.[17]

Lithuanian imperialism only went from being an opportunistic process to a directed policy with an "imperial idea" in the times of the duumvirate, dyarchy or tandemocracy of Algirdas and Kęstutis. There is no doubt that its main architect and executor was the senior partner of the tandem, Algirdas. The most important document testifying to the emergence of the Lithuanian "imperial idea" are the famous conditions for Lithuania's baptism that Algirdas formulated in 1358 in response to the suggestion of the Holy Roman Empire's Charles IV to convert to the Catholic faith. Algirdas demanded not just the return of a larger portion of the conquered Baltic lands to Lithuania, but also sought to have the Order moved to the Ruthenian borderlands to fight the Tatars, while "all of Ruthenia (*omnis Russia*) must belong to the Lithuanians" (Wartberge 1863: 72).

What Algirdas demanded was "an ideal model for Lithuania's accession to Europe, and a no less ideal model for the success of Lithuania as great power" (Gudavičius 1999: 134). Gudavičius scolds Algirdas for his unrealistic demands of the West that delayed Lithuania's Christianisation by a good 30 years and impeded accession to the European inter-polity society under conditions more favourable for Lithuania than was possible later. Yet was Algirdas' behaviour determined by his "general-like" narrow-mindedness, or his exaggerated reliance on military force? With the murder of the Golden Horde's khan Jani Beg at the hands of his son in 1357, a period of turmoil lasting 20 years broke out in the Tatar empire during which around 20 khans replaced one another. This period finally opened the way for Lithuania's expansion into the steppe and forest steppe band where earlier Lithuanians could appear, but could never become entrenched. After the victory at the Blue Waters in 1363 (or 1362), the Lithuanian and Tatar condominium in South and South West Rus' came to an end.

The Grand Duchy was now no longer a hyena lurking behind the Mongol Tatar tiger, but a lone forest steppe wolf out hunting independently. Even if Algirdas' policy was "general-like" (according to Gudavičius' memorable description), it was on a Napoleonic scale. This was probably the only Lithuanian ruler (Vytautas shall be discussed later on) whose policy meets with all the imperialist policy standards. Not accepting any authority or laws above his own, except for the right of conquest and trusting only in military force, Algirdas behaved like a true emperor.

The few surviving documents from Algirdas' times regarding his claims to the title of the Byzantine emperor are a good reflection of his policy's details.

During Gediminas' times, in addition to carrying out territorial expansion, the Grand Duchy also engaged in a wide-scale diplomacy of alliances and compromises with its neighbours. During Algirdas' reign, the Grand Duchy attacked on all fronts and almost all the treaties signed in his times with the neighbouring lands were only for temporary truces. The Grand Duchy's international isolation was a result of its imperial loneliness. Such is the fate of any polity that does not acknowledge any equals, and thus looks upon its neighbours only as potential booty there for the taking. Russia is plagued by such imperial loneliness to this day. The Muscovite princes who created it succeeded where Algirdas and his descendants had failed. If we were to speak about aims and policies, rather than results, then the Grand Duchy in Algirdas' times, in terms of its hegemonic policy and aims, was an empire, and Algirdas was Lithuania's emperor.

Success in Algirdas' imperial project would have meant the restoration of the Rurikid Empire. Of course, it would have become the Gediminid Empire. Describing it as the restoration of the Rurikid Empire, I mean that Vilnius' Rus' would have been much more similar to its predecessor Kievan Rus' than to the Muscovite Empire. Lithuanians would have repeated the role that the Normans (Varangians) once played in Eastern Slavic history (in the ninth and tenth centuries) (Paszkiewicz 1954: 252–254). Had this project been successfully implemented in Algirdas' times (after Lithuania's baptism in the times of Vytautas, a different situation applied), the Lithuanian ruling elite would have been swallowed up in the Orthodox sea. This might have happened to the whole population of ethnic Lithuania, with the probable exception of the Samogitians (Žemaitijans).

In 1358, Algirdas ignored a realistic opportunity for Lithuania's conversion to Catholicism, as the realisation of the imperial project in the East would have proven to be quite more difficult if conducted by Catholic rulers of Lithuania. The fact that the Catholic Gediminids would have had a harder time conquering "all of Rus'" is obvious, but conversion to Orthodoxy would not have lightened Lithuania's situation on the "Western front", either. It is a paradox, but nonetheless credible, that Orthodox baptism would have also interfered with implementation of the imperial program in the East had it occurred too soon, before military victory against the Grand Duchy's competitors had been reached.

> Pagan Lithuania did not become Catholic for so long because its rulers wanted to become Ruthenians. Not just any Ruthenians, but the rulers of all of Rus', as Algirdas openly declared in 1358 . . . Yet it was too dangerous for the Lithuanian ruler to rush into Orthodox baptism. Had he converted to Orthodoxy, there was a real danger that he would simply have become one of the many Ruthenian princes, recognising the grand prince of Muscovy as his most senior brother, and the metropolitan residing in Muscovy as his father.
>
> (Baronas 2004: 15)

Algirdas was not the only contender who wished to rule over all of Rus'. The Muscovite princes, who had managed to win the Tatars' favour since the times of Ivan Kalita and thereby remained strong, also exploited the period of turmoil within the Golden Horde. That turmoil equalled de facto independence for the Muscovite princes, which they used to entrench Muscovy's superiority in Tatar Rus'. They sought to transform the title of the duke of Vladimir from a "transferable prize" issued and then snatched away by the khan's *jarlyk* into their patrimonial right, and to make the princes of the other Ruthenian lands (including even the "grand" ones) vassals to themselves alone, and not to the grand duke of Vladimir or the khan. To use the terms of the West European feudal vassalage laws, they wished to mediatise them: to ensure they would be only their subjects, and not subordinate to anyone "above their heads", not even to the khans of the Golden Horde. Mixail II of Tver (1333–1399), Algirdas' brother-in-law, opposed these aspirations. The Muscovites ousted and replaced him with a more acceptable prince from the Kashin branch of the Tver princes' lineage.

Mixail received Algirdas' support and tried to not only recover the principality of Tver but also to assume the highest authority in all of North East Rus', struggling to get the *jarlyk* of the grand prince of Vladimir. Mixail succeeded at the first aim thanks to Algirdas' campaign into Muscovy in 1368. The second remained unrealised. A majority of historians see as a cause for this the military failure of the second (1370) and third (1372) campaigns Algirdas made into Muscovy. Muscovy held a military advantage and pressure from the Crusaders in the West meant that the odds were not in Algirdas' favour. The author of a comprehensive study on the history of the principality of Tver, German historian Ekkehard Klug, highlights the inconsistency and lack of determination in Algirdas' support for his brother-in-law, especially evident during the second campaign. How can this be explained?

> Lithuania could have been against Tver taking the place of Muscovy. Once it became the Ruthenian centre of power, Tver had to make defence of the Suzdal land from the West its main priority in policy, if only for its geographical location. This would have unavoidably led to a clash with Lithuania, as Algirdas sought to extend his sphere of influence further into the East. In other words, Tver's situation as a 'middle power' (*Mittelmacht*) was very important to Algirdas, as it restricted Muscovy's supremacy in the North East and could serve as his outpost in Suzdal Rus' due to its dependence on Lithuanian support. However, Tver's domination in Suzdal Rus' was as of little interest to Lithuanians as it was to Muscovites.
>
> (Klug 1985: 163)

Klug's explanation is rather convincing. Algirdas might have made the same calculations: to create a balance between Tver and Muscovy in North

East Rus', he took for himself the role of arbitrator or "balancer" (as per the Tatar example), thus drawing the entire region into Lithuania's sphere of hegemony.[18] Later on he could expect to expand Lithuania's influence in North East Rus' by taking from the Tatars their role of presiding over Rurikid feuds over the inheritance of patrimonies and their division. Step by step, Lithuanian clients (ideally, Rurikids intermarried with Gediminids) could be seated at the "tables" of the North East Rus' principalities (including Muscovy itself), and their domains could be transformed into parts of the informal empire of Lithuania. The Grand Duchy's expansion in Western Rus' took place according to this model. Yet this time, Algirdas' calculations (if they indeed existed) were not justified.

Lithuania's weakness was not so much a lack of military as "soft" power. The Orthodox international society brought down in 1204 never recovered. One of the reasons was the short-sighted church policy of the Byzantine patriarchs, whose goal was to preserve the unity of the Kievan Rus' church province. Had the short-lived (1316–1330) Orthodox metropolitan province in Navahrudak survived (or been transferred to Vilnius), Lithuanians would be writing in Cyrillic today and the first Lithuanian catechism would have been published in this script. Both the religious and political map of contemporary Eastern Europe would be different. Had there been even more such metropolitanates (from 1303 to 1347, a separate metropolitan province existed in Halych, albeit with long breaks, and was re-established there in 1370–1371 by the King of Poland Casimir the Great), more Eastern Slavic nations would have emerged from the lands of Kievan Rus'.[19]

The preservation of the unity of the Kievan Rus' church province was a rational policy in terms of the interests of the Byzantine Empire, so long as the head of that province was a Greek sent from Constantinople. In the times of Kievan Rus', the word of the Kyiv metropolitan meant a great deal when resolving the Rurikids' conflicts mentioned earlier (chapter nine) – since he was not their relative, he could act as a suitable, impartial arbitrator. In this role, the metropolitan took into consideration the opinion coming from Constantinople, and he was the most important (if not the only) leverage the Byzantine emperor had at his disposal. Thus, apart from just imagining he was the suzerain of Rus', he could also have a real (though not decisive) influence on Kievan Rus' politics.

Although the most influential Rurikid princes pressured the Byzantium patriarch and emperor to appoint "one of their own Ruthenians" as the metropolitan, until the thirteenth century Constantinople almost always managed to defend tradition. With the demise of the Byzantine Empire and the ensuing significantly weaker authority of the Constantinople patriarch, this situation changed. Often, he could do nothing but confirm as metropolitans Ruthenian hierarchs who had arisen under not quite clear circumstances during the disorder of a Mongol Tatar attack. Later (even in those cases when the metropolitan of Kyiv was once again a Greek), the opinion

of the Horde's khans proved to be more of a deciding factor than the judgement coming from Constantinople.

From the early fourteenth century, Kyiv's metropolitans resided in North East Rus' (in Vladimir-on-Klyazma, then Moscow) and soon became political instruments of ascending Muscovy. During the period of the most active Lithuanian expansion into Ruthenian lands, the metropolitan – and de facto regent due to the young age of the future Dmitrij Donskoj, the successor of Muscovian prince Ivan the Fair who died in 1359 – was the Muscovite Aleksij, who took a savagely anti-Lithuanian stance. In ex-communicating Algirdas' subordinate Ruthenian princes and releasing them from their oaths to their "pagan" suzerain, Aleksij was little different from the Roman popes who released bulls inviting Catholics on crusades against Lithuanians and threatened to impose Church penalties on the Catholic rulers who politically collaborated with them.

When he had come of age, Dmitrij used the control of the Vladimir Orthodox Church metropolitan to politically isolate his rival Mixail II of Tver' and to prevail over Lithuania in the struggle for the control over North East Rus'. Algirdas understood that without the control of the Orthodox Church he could not expect to subjugate North East Rus', nor entrench the Grand Duchy's authority in the already annexed Ruthenian lands. Thus he went to great efforts to ensure that the next Kyiv metropolitan would be "his" candidate, Cyprian the Bulgarian. Yet when Constantinople finally realised it was becoming but a tool of Muscovy's politics, and did not even wait for Aleksij to die before appointing Cyprian as his heir, it was too late: the Muscovite princes already believed that the Constantinople patriarch's competency extended only so far as confirming a candidate sent from Muscovy.

The Golden Horde's Tatar empire was by no means a corpse at this stage, either. The Tatar warlord Mamai prevailed in internal feuding in the 1370s. He was not of the Genghisid clan, therefore he ruled on behalf of his protégé khans. One of his main goals was to reinstate Tatar rule in North East Rus'. A confrontation with Algirdas would have ensued, had the latter been able to break Muscovy's power in the wars of 1368–1372. A condominium between the Grand Duchy and the Golden Horde could have been imagined as an intermediate compromise, similar to the one that had become established in Kievan Rus' during Gediminas' times, and later (until the 1360s) spread to Podolia and the Lithuanian-occupied Volhynia lands. The prospects for such a condominium were most realistic in 1380 when Mamai organised a major campaign as punishment for his disobedient vassal, Dmitrij, and to restore imperial order in North East Rus'. Jogaila's late arrival on the Kulikovo battle field meant that this opportunity to block Muscovy's rise was also missed.

The victory at Kulikovo in 1380 entrenched Muscovy's perennial domination in Tatar Rus'. Following this battle, there were no occasions where a Rurikid who did not belong to the dynasty of Muscovian princes would dare to lay claim to the *jarlyk* of the grand prince of Vladimir, or that the Tatars

themselves would have made such offers. Yet it did not signal the end of the Horde's rule in Tatar Rus'. The Genghisid Tokhtamysh united the Golden Horde following Mamai's defeat on the Kulikovo battle field. Tokhtamysh's victory brought an end to the internal turmoil in the Golden Horde that had lasted for over two decades. After a successful attack in 1382, he reinstated the Golden Horde's suzerainty in North East Rus'. However, there could be no discussion of swapping a prince of Muscovy on the throne of the grand principality of Vladimir with a representative from another Rurikid branch. After the lessons learnt from Tver, no one appeared who would want to argue the Muscovites' claims that the grand principality of Vladimir belonged to them as a matter of patrimonial right.

Tokhtamysh prevailed in the internal war with the support of the ruler of Central Asia, Tamerlane. He rose to power in territories that belonged to another Mongol Empire *ulus* – that of Chagatai (Genghis Khan's second son). Like Mamai, Tamerlane was not a Genghisid, so he too ruled under the name of a protégé, a nominal Genghisid khan. Tamerlane sought to extend his authority across all the lands held by the Mongol Tatars in the thirteenth century. When Tokhtamysh disobeyed Tamerlane, the latter organised two major campaigns against the Golden Horde, and completely crushed his opponent. Tamerlane placed his henchman Temür Qutlugh upon the khan's throne. In 1398, Tokhtamysh was forced to seek refuge in the Grand Duchy, where Vytautas had already established himself as the grand duke in 1392, after the prolonged feuding with his cousin Jogaila which ensued soon after Algirdas' death in 1377.

During this feuding, the Grand Duchy's territorial expansion ground to a halt and Lithuania's very statehood was at risk. The Polish ruling elite, exploiting the fact that Lithuania's state structures were not as highly developed as their own, tried to annex Lithuania. Whereas the kingdom of Poland was already an institutional territorial monarchy with trans-personal governing institutions, Lithuania was state bound together by personal unions between rulers (*Personenverbandstaat*; see also chapter sixteen) that was embodied only in the person of the ruler himself and his relations with other specific individuals. However, the annexation failed and could not succeed for the same reason that it could be attempted. The social and state structures that allowed the Polish state to function did not yet exist in Lithuania or its subjugated lands. Yet, it did already possess social forces (the Grand Duchy's metropolitan centre nobility), who had a vested interest in preserving Lithuania's independence.[20] Without their support and loyalty it would have been completely impossible to hold authority in the Grand Duchy, even if Polish garrisons were placed in its strategic centres. Vytautas achieved victory with the support of this specific social force.

The union with Poland, which after 1392 was simply a strategic partnership between two states, provided Lithuania with new resources to pursue its imperial eastern policy. At the same time, new opportunities appeared, not just for the implementation of Algirdas' program, but also to strive

much further. Having placed Tokhtamysh back on the Golden Horde's throne and made him his henchman, Vytautas could hope to make his son-in-law Vasilij I, who already was grand prince in Muscovy and Vladimir, his puppet too, because technically he was a vassal of the Golden Horde khan. As he had already converted to Catholicism, Vytautas could hardly claim the seat of the grand prince of Muscovy and Vladimir for himself, as is outlined in Russian chronicles about the deal struck between Tokhtamysh and Vytautas.

> Let us fight against khan Temür Qutlugh, you and your men, and I, with a mighty force, with countless princes, with Lithuania, the Poles, Germans, Samogitians, Wallachs, Podolians. I shall let you rule the entire Horde . . . and give me the seat of Muscovy's grand prince . . . Greater Novgorod and Pskov, Tver and Riazan' are mine as it is, while the Germans, I'll take on myself.
>
> (*PSRL* t. 27, 1962: 338)

The Nikon Chronicle provides the most comprehensive account of Vytautas' plans (*PSRL* t. 11, 1965 [1897]: 172–174), which allegedly revolved around world domination, and not just the creation of a regional, but a universal empire. The chronicles mention not only the lands under the Golden Horde's rule and all of Rus', but also authority over the Germans, Poles and other unidentified countries. Unlike other sources, the mutual investiture of Tokhtamysh and Vytautas was not mentioned here, only the Tatar khan's impending vassalage to Vytautas. The author of a well-known biography on Vytautas, Josef Pfitzner, was inclined to believe the Nikon Chronicle's information.

> Plans for universal rule (*universale Weltherrschaftspläne*) were clearly evident here, as he alleged to be the ruler of all lands appointed by God, one even the Horde's khan had to obey [. . .]. There were fantastical imperial plans that would not have sounded at all utopian in the East, having in mind how authority was won and implemented. Even Tatars themselves ruled a greater part of Ruthenia without maintaining military garrisons.
>
> (Pfitzner 1930: 152)

Nevertheless, the arguments of American Ukrainian historian Jaroslaw Pelenski are rather more persuasive. He considers the report about Vytautas' aims to create a universal empire in this source, which is a late and thus relatively less reliable part of the Russian chronicle tradition, as a document of the imperial ideology of Muscovy as the "Third Rome" (see Pelenski 1998; also see Pelenski 1974: 139–143, 161–170). The Nikon Chronicle emerged from the Muscovian church writers' milieu, which was very involved in creating this ideology. Vytautas was the ruler of a state that happened to

be the main obstacle for the realisation of Muscovy's expansionist plans. However, he was also one of the ancestors of Muscovy's rulers (father to the mother of Vasilij II, Sophia), which is why writers could have imagined that they were the successors to his rights and his goals. Thus, the Nikon Chronicle

> formulated Vytautas' domestic and foreign policies in such way as to make them understandable and acceptable to Russians in the age of Vasilij III and Ivan IV. In fact, Vytautas' domestic and foreign policy programs almost matched those planned and partly carried out by the two Russian tsars.
>
> (Pelenski 1998: 141)

But, even if attribution of the goal to create a world empire to Vytautas was merely a retrospective projection of Muscovy's own imperial ideology into the Grand Duchy's past, there is no doubt that Vytautas aspired to much more than Algirdas, whose "maximum program" for his eastern policy was limited to the conquest of all of Rus'. Vytautas also sought to take over the role of suzerain and hegemonic power that the Golden Horde had played in the East European inter-polity system from the second half of the thirteenth to the fourteenth centuries. The Grand Duchy was meant to replace the Golden Horde as a suzerain power in the same suzerain state system (see chapter five).

The result of the deal between Vytautas and Tokhtamysh was Vytautas' famous crusade into the South Rus' steppes in 1399, which ended in the catastrophe at the Vorskla.

> Yet the Vorskla may have made a difference. If it had gone the other way, Vytautas might have separated from his cousin Wladyslaw of Poland, undone the union of Krewo, and reunited the Russians round Vilnius or Kyiv rather than round Moscow. Tamerlane was not the only factor in the development of fifteenth century Russia, but his impact cannot be ignored.
>
> (Adshead 1993)

However, we could hardly agree with Samuel Adshead (or Feliks Koneczny, whose assessment of the meaning of the Vorskla defeat has already been mentioned), when he considers the Grand Duchy's dissociation from the Western inter-polity society an unavoidable outcome of the victory at the Vorskla.[21] Nor can we agree with Georgii Vernadsky, one of the originators of the "Eurasian" interpretation of Russian history, who claims that Mongol Tatar rule was not a "yoke", but an element of the internal identity of Russian civilisation. According to Vernadsky, "the Mongols saved Russia from the Catholics by defeating Grand Prince Vitovt of Lithuania at the battle on the river Vorskla in 1399" (quoted in Halperin 1982: 485).

Rejection of Catholicism and conversion to Orthodoxy simply made little political sense to Vytautas, as it would have given the Teutonic Order the basis they desired for continuing the war against Lithuania. More importantly, after the Christianisation of Lithuania, the imperial project of the Grand Duchy was not limited to these two aims: to subjugate all the Ruthenian lands and take over the Golden Horde's suzerain rights in the East European inter-polity system. The claim made by Samuel Eisenstadt about empires could now be applied to the Grand Duchy's imperial project. They "embraced some wider, potentially universal political and cultural orientation that went beyond that of any of their component parts" (Eisenstadt 1968: 41). The Gregory Tsamblak episode in the second half of Vytautas' reign, when the grand duke aspired not only to establish a separate Lithuanian Orthodox Church province, but also to join it via a church union with the Roman Catholic Church, was not incidental (see Sužiedėlis 1988 [1930]: 111–114). A successful church union was the key to ensuring the state's integrity throughout the whole Grand Duchy, and later, throughout the existence of the joint Polish-Lithuanian state.

Under the circumstances at the time, for the representatives of the local Ruthenian elite, membership in the Orthodox Uniate (Eastern Catholic) Church was just a transfer station on the way to Catholicism and assimilation into the Lithuanian nobles' nation as part of the Polish macro-nation (Gudavičius 2002 [1994]: 67–68 2002: 187–188). Those regions of the Polish-Lithuanian state where the church union never played this role never integrated into its political organism. The union's potential to carry out this role was always restricted by Muscovy's support for those Orthodox believers who were against the alliance. Therefore, the church union never created unique resources of "soft power". However, if after the political subordination of all of Rus' the Grand Duchy would have become independent of Poland's support in the fight against Muscovy, then the cultural role of the church union could have been different.

The union of the Orthodox and Catholic churches – even the synthesis of two cultural traditions (Byzantine Rus' and Western Latin) – could be potentially considered as the imperial idea of the Grand Duchy that could have been realised providing the Grand Duchy would have subordinated all the Ruthenian lands. However, the necessary condition for realisation of such a synthesis was the elimination of all forces that were politically interested in preserving the separateness of Orthodoxy. The state of Muscovy was that force. One of the reasons why the Byzantine church and emperor, who desperately sought support from Catholic countries in the fight for survival against the Turkish Ottomans, baulked at the union was the strict opposition coming from Muscovy and the church hierarchs under its control. Had that opposition evaporated, the chances of a church union would have increased significantly. The danger that Lithuania would have been engulfed in a Slavic sea would have remained (that danger did not disappear with the union with Poland), though it would not have been an anti-Western Slavic sea.

Nevertheless, the Vorskla defeat did not yet mean the ultimate failure of Lithuanian imperialism. In the battles over the Golden Horde's legacy of 1396–1399, Vytautas' real adversary was Tamerlane, as Edigu and Temür Qutlugh were merely his placemen and clients. Although there were more pressing opponents at the time, even in the case of Vytautas' victory Tamerlane would not have necessarily agreed with Tokhtamysh's recovery of the Golden Horde's throne. Yet, from a long-run perspective, Tamerlane, like it or not, performed the role of Vytautas' strategic partner in the history of the Golden Horde (see Šabuldo 2001).

After all, it was actually Tamerlane's campaigns that broke the imperial back of the Golden Horde, destroying Sarai and other cities that served as the metropolitan centres of this empire. Whilst those centres were still alive and functioning (in the first half of the fourteenth century, Sarai was an enormous city for its times, covering an area 12 km^2 in size), the Golden Horde was not a classical nomadic empire "ruled from the saddle". It did have functionally specialised central offices that were directed by "ministers", a ruler's chancery with archives and other more than elementary attributes of statehood (see Spuler 1943: 300–361; Halperin 1985; Kul'pin 1998). The Golden Horde never recovered after Tamerlane's blow. After the death of Tamerlane (1405) and the expulsion of his protégé, the warlord Edigu, it finally started to crumble into smaller political units.[22]

This signalled the demise of the hitherto existing regional inter-polity system, or, the fall of the Golden Horde as a suzerain state system. A polycentric regional inter-polity system formed in its place in the second half of the fifteenth century. It was set by the treaty between Casimir and Vasilij II of 1449 where Lithuania essentially renounced further territorial expansion into Ruthenian lands. The new system consisted of three great powers: Muscovy, the Grand Duchy and the Ottoman Empire. It also included products of the fragmentation of the Golden Horde – the Great Horde, the khanates of Crimea and Kazan, as well as other ephemeral steppe polities, and, at the beginning of this period, Ruthenian lands that had not yet been subjected to Muscovy (Tver, Greater Novgorod, Pskov and Riazan'; see also chapter seventeen).

In the interim, two decades after the Battle of Grunwald, when the Golden Horde's power had completely evaporated, conditions were ripe to finally realise Vytautas' imperial program of seeing the Grand Duchy as the successor of the Golden Horde. The Grand Duchy assumed the role of hegemonic power in the inter-polity system created by the Golden Horde in the thirteenth century. Vytautas controlled the Golden Horde, making khans of the Genghisids who were his placemen. When Vytautas' grandson Vasilij II became the grand prince of Muscovy in 1425, Vasilij I entrusted the latter to Vytautas' custody until he was of age. This could have suggested that Vytautas was very close to his ultimate triumph. Lithuania's status as the hegemonic power in the East European inter-polity system and that of great power in the Central European inter-polity system was clearly and

convincingly demonstrated in the famous Congress of Lutsk of 1429. Lithuania's efforts to resolve the conflict between Bohemia and the Holy Roman Empire, which started after Jan Hus was burned for heresy at Constance in 1416, was just another manifestation of this status.

> In the late 1420s, Vytautas started behaving like a ruler of an independent great power. All of Eastern Europe came under his sphere of influence. Pskov, Novgorod and Riazan' acknowledged his suzerainty, and even Muscovy found itself within his protectorate (Vytautas became the guardian of his grandson, the future Vasilij II). Among Vytautas' placemen there were also Tatar khans.
>
> (Bumblauskas 2005: 144)

However, the grand duke of the Grand Duchy achieved all of this whilst nominally the vassal or vicegerent of Jogaila as the king of Poland and the supreme duke (*supremus dux*) of the Grand Duchy in Lithuania, and by using resources and leverage to gain influence that the union with Poland provided. It had its own far-reaching aims regarding the Grand Duchy, and thus, it was stridently against Vytautas' coronation. His crowning would have meant international, legal, de facto recognition and the entrenchment of Lithuania's sovereignty in the Western Christian inter-polity society. If we consider as the most important indicator of imperial hegemony its reflection in international law (keeping in mind that, in the fifteenth century, there was no international law that applied to different civilisations), then Lithuania remained "five minutes short of an empire". If we were to consider the polity's de facto position within the international relations system, then the Grand Duchy rather consistently strived (from the middle of the fourteenth century to 1449) after hegemony in one of the two inter-polity systems to which it belonged, and ultimately held on to this achievement for around ten years (1420–1430).

Indeed, Lithuania's imperial greatness was very short-lived and fragile. Vytautas' coronation would not have saved the Grand Duchy from a succession crisis or the internal war that flared up after his death. It is not so important that after Vytautas the Grand Duchy basically renounced its hegemonic aspirations in Eastern Europe, but that it managed to survive at all during that crisis. It demonstrated that it was not so ephemeral a political entity as the polities created by Tamerlane and other no less able creators of empires.

Even after renouncing its hegemonic aims in Eastern Europe, the Grand Duchy still did not pass up opportunities to carry out territorial expansion until the end of its existence as an independent state. Lithuania never accepted the territorial losses inflicted in the East in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In 1534, it attacked the state of Muscovy in an attempt to recover lands it had lost (first of all, Smolensk), starting the not very successful "Starodub war". The most obvious expression of the still-vital

imperial expansionism of the late Grand Duchy was its attempt to conquer all of Livonia, thus strengthening its position on the shores of the Baltic Sea.

Notes

1 Lithuania's position and opportunities in this society were analysed in the monograph by Juozas Stakauskas that has yet to be surpassed, released in inter-war Lithuania (see Stakauskas 2004 [1934]). However, Stakauskas limited himself to Lithuania in Mindaugas' times and did not analyse Lithuania's changing position in another inter-polity system – that of Eastern Europe and the Eurasian steppes, to which it also belonged. These questions, which Stakauskas overlooked, will be the main focus of this chapter.

2 This feature of the Teutonic Order's state explains many of its "modern" characteristics to which contemporary authors draw attention (see e.g. Boockmann 1981). Other advanced European states only attained them in the seventeenth or even the eighteenth centuries, when the idea that a state was not the property of a ruler or his dynasty, and that he was simply the most senior state servant, finally prevailed.

3 The lists of these aims given in different publications by this author differ somewhat, so only the recurring positions shall be referred to here.

4 They even admitted that until a certain period (until Muscovy gained strength), that barrier performed a "progressive" role in history.

5 Denmark and (with numerous reservations) England became such allies of Muscovy. Adam Watson, one of the most distinguished experts in modern European international relations history, claims that two state systems stood out in European international relations in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The centre of the first system was the Mediterranean Sea, and its basis was the French, Ottoman and Habsburg triangle. The other centre was the Baltic Sea, where the main "players" were Sweden, Poland and Lithuania, and Muscovy. France worked to draw Sweden into alliances against the Habsburgs, however, its most vital interest was control over the Baltic Sea. The state of Muscovy only became a member of the European Christian international society in the eighteenth century. See Watson 1984: 64–65.

6 The myth in Soviet historiography about the "threat from the West" (i.e., Catholicism) that faced North Eastern Rus' after the Mongol invasion and the exaggerated significance of the border conflicts between Pskov, Novgorod, Sweden and Livonia – actually minor skirmishes, known by the titles of the "Battle of Neva" (1240) and the "Battle on the Ice" (1242) – are part of the Alexander Nevsky cult constructed in the times of Peter I. No place exists on the globe that the Roman Curia has not aimed to convert to Catholicism. However, we should distinguish between this abstract aim and the capabilities and specific political opportunities allowing its implementation. The Roman popes had neither in Rus' in the thirteenth century. Russian historians themselves are now de-constructing the cult of Alexander Nevsky. See Nesterenko 2006.

7 Gudavičius indicated that "parallels between the monarchs and sub-monarchs can be found in Rus' (the sons of Vladimir, Yaroslav and Msitislav), in Poland (Bolesław II the Bold and Władysław I Herman, Bolesław Wrymouth and Zbigniew), in Hungary (Andrew and Béla, Solomon and Géza), and in the Merovingian dynasty" (2002 [1985]: 132). He believes that these examples show that Lithuania is not an exception demanding a separate explanation. However, if his examples are only occasional episodes of a dyarchy (often being unstable), then in the case of Lithuania we have to make do with phenomena that recur over several generations. That allows it to be treated as a part of local "political

culture" or unwritten (custom) "constitutional law", which is a problem requiring explanation. Many Grand Duchy's history experts (e.g., Zigmas Kiaupa, Stephen C. Rowell) reject the dyarchy idea. We can ask though, perhaps this phenomenon could be better described by the terms "tandem of rulers" or "tandemocracy" rather than a dyarchy?

8 Selonia (Latvian Sēlija, Lithuanian Sėla) is an historical region encompassing the south eastern part of contemporary Latvia on the left bank of the Daugava River and north eastern part of contemporary Lithuania.

9 To recall (see chapter nine), the Eastern Christian inter-polity society was destroyed by crusaders seizing Constantinople in 1204.

10 Lithuania's situation was made a little easier in the 1290s when the Golden Horde found itself in the grip of an internal war. It arose when Tokhta Khan (reigned in 1291–1312) decided to end commander Nogai's influence within the Golden Horde. Nogai was not a Genghisid and had no right to become khan himself. Tokhta and his forerunners were the placemen of Nogai, who ruled over the Golden Horde's western lands. Tokhta resolved to "restore justice". This war played itself out over the Tatar Rus' lands, as some Ruthenian princes supported Tokhta, while others backed Nogai, who was defeated in 1299 and killed.

11 The historiographical tradition indicates the year 1356. See Janin 1998: 53–54.

12 In his book, Romas Batūra gives a comprehensive survey of this discussion as far as the 1970s. He defends the reliability of the Lithuanian chronicle-writing tradition.

13 Feliks Šabuldo (1987) pushes back Lithuania's rise in Kyiv and in other lands of present-day Ukraine, whilst Olena Rusina (1998) updates it to later time.

14 For criticism of this view, see Nikžentaitis (1989: 84–85).

15 This view is presented in a book aimed at a wider circle of readers. However, these same ideas appear in two monographs by Grekov (1963; 1975).

16 Ruthenian archers were amongst the defenders of Kaunas Castle in 1362. See Gudavičius 1999: 136.

17 I discuss the impacts of empire building on metropolitan Lithuania in greater detail in the penultimate chapter (sixteen) of this book.

18 Called also Zales'e (Зале́сье) in sources. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, it referred to territories located between the Upper Volga and Oka rivers.

19 Evidence for this retrospective prediction is the Balkan Slavic (and not just Slavic) example, where it was in fact the regional Orthodox metropolitanates that provided the cultural and literary seedbeds of future nations. However, the Orthodox Bulgarian and Serbian kingdoms and principalities were overtaken by the Turkish Ottomans already in the fourteenth century.

20 See Petrauskas 2003.

21 See chapter two.

22 Edigu was not a Genghisid, thus he could rule the Golden Horde only under the guise of his placemen khans.

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11 Whose empire was the Grand Duchy?

One of the reasons why empires rarely survive crises of succession or internal wars is their cultural and ethnic heterogeneity. If an empire never develops into a culturally and ethnically homogeneous polity, then any one of these crises could prove to be very fateful, or even its last. The ethnic and cultural heterogeneity of the Grand Duchy is obvious, and acknowledged by all researchers of the Grand Duchy. Its most important expression was the ethnic difference between Slavs and Balts, which was further enhanced by the religious divide: the Balts were pagans, while the Slavs were Orthodox Christians. A large, if not the largest, part of Grand Duchy's Slavic Orthodox believers (especially from the territory of present-day Belarus) were Slavonified Balts. The baptism into the Orthodox faith was probably the most important path towards Slavonification. Acceptance of Catholicism in 1387 played a very important (and most likely fateful) role in preserving the ethnic distinctiveness and uniqueness of the ancestors of present-day Lithuanians. An ancient element of the Grand Duchy's ethnic landscape were the Tatar, Jewish and Karaite minorities.

From the sixteenth century, the ethnic boundary between Balts and Slavs no longer coincided with the religious boundary between Orthodox and Catholic believers. Catholicism spread among Orthodox believers as well, intensive migration occurred from Poland (especially to Podlasie), and Polonisation started in ethnic Lithuania, primarily among the nobility. The genesis of Belarusians and Ukrainians as separate Eastern Slavic peoples also took place. Grounds for these processes were linguistic and ethno-cultural differences between separate Ruthenian sub-ethnies that had appeared back in the times of Kievan Rus', due to its differentiation into separate, practically sovereign, lands. Another reason could have been the legacies inherited from the tribal era, when the Slavic population in the future territory of Kievan Rus' and the Grand Duchy differentiated into the Krivichi, Dregovichi and other tribal unions.

All of these ethno-cultural processes are well-researched in the early twentieth-century historiography of the Grand Duchy (see Jakubowski 1912; Jablonowski 1955; Backus 1957; Marzaljuk 2003; Plokhii 2006 et al.). They did not reduce (as happens in empires that succeed in transforming into great

national powers) but rather increased the ethnic and cultural variety in the Grand Duchy. They are important to the topic of this book insofar as they are a significant aspect of the "case" of the Grand Duchy as an empire.

The imperial interpretation of the history of the Grand Duchy contradicts the view that it was just a "western Russian" state, which was semi-official doctrine in tsarist Russian historiography (see chapter two). Another version of this view states that, even if the Grand Duchy was not a "western Russian" (or "western Rus'") state, then in any case it was still an "Eastern Slavic" or "Slavic" state, as the Balts (Lithuanians) only constituted a minority in its total population. This minority was also gradually decreasing due to the Grand Duchy's territorial expansion and the rapid assimilation of its political elite. Even if the progenitors of the ruling Gediminid dynasty and the Grand Duchy's magnate families were Balts, by the fourteenth century, in terms of their language, culture and way of thinking, they were already Ruthenians or Belarusians (a precise diagnosis depends on the nationality of the historian concerned with proving the Slavic nature of the Grand Duchy).[1]

The quantitative domination of Slavs in the Grand Duchy's population, starting from Gediminas' times, raises no questions. Yet I cannot agree with the claim that, at the time of the Grand Duchy's greatest territorial expansion in the fifteenth century, Balts made up only a tenth of the total population. This claim has been uncritically derived from the portion of present-day Lithuania's territory in the total area of the Grand Duchy. The population density of the Grand Duchy, however, was very irregular (the southern parts of present-day Ukraine were hardly inhabited by a sedentary population), whereas ethnic Lithuania was among the more densely populated areas (apart from the fringes in the Trans-Nemunas region – *Užnemunė* – the edges of Samogitia and northern Lithuania that the Teutonic Order devastated).[2] In addition, ethnic Lithuania's eastern boundaries stretched much further than they do now, encompassing many territories of the contemporary Republic of Belarus. Even further eastward there were still some Baltic islands, though the smallest number of these were found near those political and economic centres of the Ruthenian lands where the Grand Duchy imperial power bases were located.

More importantly, the relative shares of Slavic and non-Slavic elements amid the economically and politically dominant professional military ("feudal") class and the peasant class it dominated (using Marxist terms), who always made up an absolute majority in an agrarian society, were far from equal. According to Henryk Łowmianski's calculations, who used data from the Grand Duchy's military census of 1528 (which did not include the palatinates of Kyiv or Bratslav) and other sixteenth-century sources, the population of the Grand Duchy at the time was over 2.7 million (Łowmianski 1998: 210). There were 100,000 nobles (*szlachta*), the greatest number being from the Podlasie palatinate, colonised by the Mazovian *szlachta*, the Samogitia eldership, the Trakai and the still mainly Lithuanian

Navahrudak and Vilnius palatinates (see also: Ochmański 1986: 213–222; Blaszczyk 2002: 164–165). There are no grounds to believe that, in the early fifteenth century, the number of military servicemen from ethnic Lithuania was any smaller (most likely, the opposite applied).

Yet the most important fact for the issue of the Grand Duchy as an empire is that the Grand Duchy's "feudal" social top layer, called *pany* (lords or magnates) in sources, or the "Grand Duchy's ruling elite" (using political sociology terminology), was still almost exclusively of ethnic Lithuanian origins in the fifteenth century (see Petrauskas 2003; 2016). Although not all the 47 nobles who participated in the famous Horodło heraldic adaptation of 1413 belonged to the Lithuanian ruling elite's "mandatory government group" that always accompanied Vytautas and participated in the signing of international treaties, not a single Ruthenian noble was among them (Łowmiański 1983: 415).[3] During Vytautas' reign, there simply were no Ruthenian Orthodox believers in the Grand Duchy's ruling elite. Grand duke Švitrigaila's attempt to include such nobles in his inner circle was one of the causes of the coup in 1432 (see also chapter fifteen).

Greater numbers of representatives from the Orthodox Slavic lands (primarily, Volhynia) won acceptance into this inner circle of the ruling elite only in the sixteenth century. The most well-known example is the Grand Duchy's grand hetman Kostiantyn Ostrozky (c 1460–1530). However, this case of an Orthodox believer who showcased and defended his Orthodox and Ruthenian identity was unique in the Grand Duchy. His contemporaries perceived how exceptional it was, complaining that the established order of "Vytautas' times" was being violated. This order allowed only Lithuanian Catholics to hold the top state positions. A more typical trajectory for upward mobility among the Slavic-origin nobles from the Grand Duchy's peripheries followed these stages: entry through the "gates" of the elite group with service in the Grand Duchy's chancery, then conversion to Catholicism and marriage to a daughter or widow from one of the Grand Duchy's old (and gradually dying) Lithuanian elite houses. Finally, the genealogy was invented, tracing the ancestry of an aspiring Ruthenian newcomer to ethnically Lithuanian ancestor. This is what the Chodkiewiczs did, claiming their descent from Bareika – a Lithuanian warrior who allegedly was dispatched by Gediminas to Ruthenia to fight Tatars and remained there after the victory (Kirkienė 2008: 71–72). Sapiegas, whose real Ruthenian ancestors lived in the Smolensk land, claimed their descent from Gediminas' son Narimantas, abusing their unlimited access to the Grand Duchy state archives to forge documents (Petrauskas 2016: 136–137) etc.

Thus, the relative share of people of ethnic Lithuanian ancestry (real or claimed) was greater the higher up the group or layer was in the social and power hierarchy. Then the quantitative domination of Slavs in the Grand Duchy – the main evidence pushed by supporters of the idea of the Grand Duchy as an eastern Slavic state – proves the very opposite of this idea. The distinguishing attribute of empires is not just the ethnic and cultural

heterogeneity of the population as such, but the conspicuous presence of the politically dominant ethnic group in the population as a whole.

To be more specific, a multi-ethnic polity cannot be classified as an empire if the politically dominant ethno-cultural group is not a minority in the total population – unless the lack of this attribute were compensated by the presence of the three other alternative attributes in my definition of empire.[4] The smaller percentage of a politically dominant ethnic group there is in the total population, and the greater it is among the ruling elite, the more it resembles an imperial polity. In the Soviet Union, Russians did not make up an absolute majority in the population, yet only they were appointed to the highest posts in the central government (especially in the military and the secret police). In addition, the Soviet Union also possessed the remaining three alternative imperial attributes: it engaged in broad territorial expansion, aspired to become a hegemonic power in the international system, and was divided into a dominant metropole and a subordinated periphery, which was differentiated into formal (non-Russian Soviet republics) and informal (nominally sovereign vassal states) parts.

Classic examples of empires in which a politically dominant ethno-cultural group constituted a small minority were Achaemenid Persia, and the Mongol and British empires. In the case of the British Empire, the size of the Indian population alone exceeded the population of Great Britain several times over. However, no Indian nationals were accepted into the top administrative posts in India, much less into government structures in the metropole. The relative percentage of Persians and Mongols in their enormous empires was even smaller. A similar pattern applies for the empire of Alexander the Macedonian and in its successors, the Seleucid and Ptolemaic empires, where Greeks became the ruling minority.

This does not necessarily imply a division of tasks based on ethnicity, where the politically dominant minority completely monopolises administrative and military affairs. In the Grand Duchy, clerks were usually Ruthenians. The Mongols made wide use of the services of Chinese officials for certain administrative functions (primarily record-keeping and tax administration). Yet this did not mean that the empire they created ceased being the Mongolian Empire. Empires usually applied a system of indirect rule in their peripheries, leaving the hitherto existing traditional ruling system with its elites and social hierarchies in place. The newcomers from the metropole simply formed another new social layer. As far as possible, empires also seek to fight wars using men from their subjugated lands, only using their elite units from the metropole as a strategic or tactical reserve to be thrown into battle in emergencies. This was the case in the ancient Assyrian and Achaemenid empires, and in that of Genghis Khan. In the modern age, the British conquered India, the largest periphery of its empire, practically using just Indians themselves. Until the second half of the nineteenth century, the British only made up a fifth of the colonial army in India (see Seeley 1914 [1883]: 231). Indian army units were widely used in British colonial and other kinds of wars beyond India's borders as well.

Calling a polity where the politically dominant ethnic group also constitutes the majority of the population an empire is problematic because there can also be ethnic minorities (and territorial minorities) in unquestionably national states. Finland is one example, which has Swedish and Sami (Lapps) minorities. Another is contemporary Lithuania, where Lithuanians make up 80% of the population: people of Polish nationality dominate in the Vilnius region, where in some districts they make up the absolute majority of the population. If we try to imagine a contemporary Lithuania ruled by Poles (some 7% of the total population) from its "metropole" of the Vilnius region, we would arrive at an approximate model of national political relations in the Grand Duchy (only replacing Poles with Lithuanians). It is precisely for this small quantitative share of the politically dominant Lithuanian minority amid its total population that the imperial physiognomy of the Grand Duchy is so distinctive – more so than tsarist Russia or the Habsburg monarchy, where the percentages of Russians and Germans were significantly larger. The Grand Duchy was an Eastern Slavic state only in the sense that the Mongol Empire was Chinese, and the empire of Great Britain was Indian: Eastern Slavs made up the largest number of its subjects.

Once they found themselves in a different linguistic and cultural environment, the Lithuanian dukes and their armies of ethnically Baltic origins were exposed to ethno-cultural assimilation mechanisms, which could only be neutralised by a written tradition that had not parted from the spoken language. Modern Lithuanians uphold this tradition. For them, the perception of their linguistic separateness and their commitment to the Lithuanian language as an unconditional value forms the core of their national identity. Ancient Lithuanians meanwhile (along with other ethnic groups without a specific written language or native literature) did not view their linguistic separateness as something to be treasured or fostered, but as an annoying hurdle impeding communication. Thus, their "own" language was easily abandoned once they entered Slavic surroundings. On campaigns and in battles, when soldiers from different ethnic groups must fight shoulder to shoulder, it is not the language which commanders use to give orders that is important, but that those orders are understood. However, indifference towards their "native language" did not necessarily imply a rejection of Lithuanian identity. This strength of this identity was not based so much on their having their "own" language as it was on their collective oral memory, whose content consisted of genealogical accounts (regardless of how much they corresponded with the "actual" genealogical facts).

A powerful assimilation mechanism was mixed marriage, especially when the children's ethno-cultural identity depended more on the mother's language and religion than the father's. From the beginning of Lithuanian expansion into Slavic lands, it was men who ventured and settled in the East – dukes and their armies. Their wives were Orthodox Ruthenian women, thus their sons – or at least their grandsons – spoke Ruthenian as their native language. The home environment of the aristocracy left in ethnic Lithuania was also Ruthenian. The most valuable war booty in those times was young

and able-bodied women. Of course, not all Lithuanian children had Ruthenian wet-nurses, as mentioned in one historic source, yet this would have been the case already in the home environment of the tribal warlord dukes, once campaigns of plunder into Rus' commenced in the twelfth century.[5]

Knowing this, we should not be surprised that much of the Lithuanian aristocracy became Slavic or Orthodox, but that this process was so slow, even at the highest echelons where the numbers of these Ruthenian wet-nurses or mistresses were greatest. Jogaila's example is very telling indeed. Born of a Ruthenian mother and raised in a Ruthenian and Orthodox environment, he grew up to be a Lithuanian pagan. When they took their ducal seats of Ruthenian lands that had earlier been ruled by the Rurikid princes, pagan dukes would be baptised, but this was a "political" baptism that came with its own cost. It was as if members of the ruling dynasty who had accepted an Orthodox baptism were de-classed, or pushed out from its highest echelons. In this context we can understand Vytautas' complaint to the Crusaders, that after the first reconciliation in 1384, Jogaila had forced him to accept an Orthodox baptism before giving him the Orthodox Lutsk land to rule over (see Pfitzner 1930: 71). The astonishment of Kurt Forstreuter is understandable, when he writes:

> even more surprising than the failure of the West's mission, which, like something foreign and partly by force, was executed from the outside, is the weak influence of the Eastern Church, with whose members Lithuanians lived within one state, on Lithuanians. Paganism obviously particularly suited the Lithuanian nation's character.
>
> (Forstreuter 1962: 9)

The Church Slavic language was used for state record-keeping in the Grand Duchy. This was not the "Old Belarusian language", but the *lingua franca* of the Byzantine civilisation's Slavic periphery. It was also adopted in the chanceries of the Grand Duchy, as there were no clerks who could write in any other language or their services were too expensive. This language was also unavoidably influenced by the everyday language spoken at the places from which the clerks themselves originated. In the fifteenth century, this was mainly the dialect of people from the Volhynia (see Stang 1935; Zinkevičius 1987: 119–120). In the sixteenth century, dialects from the territories of present-day Belarus started to dominate, and only then can we start to talk about the beginnings of the formation of a Belarusian literary language.

Even some authors who considered the Grand Duchy a Slavic, or even "western Russian", state acknowledge that there was friction and competition in its aristocracy between ethnic Lithuanians and Orthodox Ruthenians (see Lappo 1924: 122). Authors as varied as Augustinas Voldemaras (Vol'demar 1910), Myxaĭlo Grušev'skiĭ (1907: 183) and Łowmiański (1983: 389–390, 413–415) wrote about this phenomenon.[6] Anyone who

believes that the Grand Duchy was a "western Russian" or Belarusian state should read the famous document of sixteenth-century political ideas in the Grand Duchy written by Mykolas Lietuvis (Michalon Litwin),[7] *On the customs of Tatars, Lithuanians and Muscovites* (*De moribus Tartarorum, Lituanorum et Moschorum*): "we are studying the Muscovites' lore, which has nothing ancient and cannot educate morally, as the Russian language is foreign to us, Lithuanians, that is, Italians, hailing from Italian blood" (Mykolas Lietuvis 1966: 49).[8] If we take the much earlier (pagan) times, then the Gediminids could be ready to become Orthodox and Ruthenian in return for reigning over all of Rus' (see Baronas 2004). Yet there is no doubt over the refusal of the most influential members of the dynasty to take such a step until that goal had been reached. After baptism, the assimilation process started to take place in the opposite direction, when some Ruthenians converted to Catholicism, which in those days meant becoming Lithuanian.

After the introduction of Catholicism in Lithuania, which reliably protected Lithuanians from becoming Ruthenians (but not from Slavonification), another pattern manifested itself in the evolution of ethnic relations in the Grand Duchy, which has been noticed in the socio-linguistic history of a majority of empires. The linguistic difference was used as a marker for differentiation from one's "own" populace. The tsarist Russian aristocracy spoke French amongst themselves in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; the conquerors of India, the Greater Mughals (who were in fact of Turkic origin), despite considering themselves descendants of Genghis Khan's Mongols, widely used Farsi (Persian) in the palace court for both clerical and "polite conversation" purposes (Peers 2006: 18, 44). The Turkish Ottoman Empire's elite were fluent in Arabic, although in a political sense Arabs were considered "second-rate" subjects of the sultan (much like Ruthenians in the Grand Duchy). The ruling elite becomes like a separate sub-ethnie within the primary ethnic group. The legend (myth) of the Roman origins of the Lithuanians expressed the self-consciousness of this kind of sub-ethnic group, which formed in the Grand Duchy as well. It served as the grounding narrative of the national identity of the Grand Duchy's ruling elite (see Smith 1986: 24–25).

Although this myth (like a majority of narratives about the origins of the elite of other empires) was a fantastic story in the factographic sense, it did have very real, practical political consequences.[9] First of all, it forged a clear and deep divide between the Lithuanian metropolitan ruling elite and nobility on the one side and the nobility of the Slavic peripheric lands (especially those claiming Rurikid descent) on the other. It provided an ideological foundation for the defence of the Grand Duchy's independence not just from Muscovy, but from the "Sarmatian" Poles as well. Subsequent effects of this myth were a flourishing of literature in the "native" Latin of Lithuanian magnates in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Ulčinaitė 2001), as well as occasional suggestions that Latin should replace the clerical Slavic Church language in the Grand Duchy's record-keeping.

It would have been shameful for the Lithuanian imperial aristocracy to appear to be communicating in a language perceived as broken Latin (even when this language, i.e. Lithuanian, was their real native tongue) and ruined by the impact of the "vulgar" Ruthenian language. Its members probably considered the Lithuanian-speaking common populace simply Romanised Ruthenians, because the most popular version of Palemon's legend claims that only the nobility hailed from the Romans. Learning broken Latin, instead of "proper" Latin, would have been an even more unattractive endeavour. As far as fluency in proper Latin was so difficult to achieve, then speaking another foreign language (Polish) served ideally as a marker to differentiate the aristocracy from commoners. Polish was also convenient because of the strengthening political and social connections with Poland's nobility. So speaking Polish became a means of social self-aggrandizement for the Lithuanian nobility, just as today some young Lithuanians might speak with a slight English accent, or write SMS messages without bothering to use Lithuanian diacritics.

In this way, the Lithuanian ethnie differentiated into two – the vertical, encompassing all layers of society, whose geographical area of settlement drew increasingly westward (yet was not limited to the territory of present-day Lithuania in the sixteenth century), and the horizontal, which included the mostly Polish- and Ruthenian-speaking magnates and gentry (*szlachta*) of the Grand Duchy.[10] Ruthenian was spoken in a mixed environment where there were often Ruthenians who could speak neither Lithuanian nor Polish, or, even less so, Latin. Some of the Grand Duchy's nobility (first of all, the Samogitian *szlachta*) still belonged to both the vertical and the horizontal Lithuanian ethnies even in the nineteenth century. The vertical Lithuanian ethnie became the ethnic substrate of the modern Lithuanian nation, which started to form only in the nineteenth century. The horizontal Lithuanian ethnie, also known as the Lithuanian political nation, eventually became the Lithuanian sub-nation of the Polish macro-nation (see Gudavičius 2002 [1994]).

Notes

1 See examples: Grušev'skiĭ 1907: 94–99; Ermalovič 2003 (2000); Presnjakov 1939.
2 Territory of contemporary Lithuania to the west of the Nemunas River.
3 See Banionis 1993. I thank Prof. Zigmantas Kiaupa for this reference.
4 This criterion cannot be applied uncritically. Empires that survived for a long time and managed to overcome more than one crisis are characterised by a change in the ruling elite's personal composition. It is open to especially distinguished outsiders from the ethnic or cultural groups of the periphery. A good example is the elite of tsarist Russia, which accepted into its ranks Baltic Germans from lands subjugated by Peter I, Georgian aristocrats, and Tatar khans or morzas. This composition can change so drastically over an extended period of time (as was the case in the Roman Empire), that there may no longer be any houses of the original elite. They might be replaced by houses whose ancestors originated

from the imperial periphery. Such was also the case in the Grand Duchy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

5 *On the origins of Tatars* by an anonymous author (1255): "the Lectavi (Lithuanians), Ietwesi, and Nalsani are easily baptized because they have been brought up from the cradle by Christian nurses" (Colker 1979: 715–716). "Ietwesi" are Yotvingians, and "Nalsani" are "Nalshians" – inhabitants of the original Lithuania's neighbour lands.

6 Grušev'skiĭ attributes anti-Ruthenian attitudes only to the Samogitians (Žemaitijans). In his opinion, Kęstutis was the most staunch exponent of their attitudes in the Grand Duchy. It is from this context that Grušev'skiĭ explains Vytautas' consistent policy to promote Catholics, even though it made his strategic goal – to conquer all of Rus' – all the more difficult to reach.

7 According to Jerzy Ochmański (1986: 134–157), this was the pen name of Venclovas Mikalojaitis (Wencław Mikołajewicz).

8 First publication: *Michalonus Lituani De moribus Tartarorum, Lituanorum et Moschorum fragmina X multiplici historia referta et Iohan. Lasicii Poloni De diis Samagitarum, caeterorumq. Sarmatarum, et falsorum Christianorum, item De religione Armeniorum. Et de initio Regiminis Stephani Batorii.* Nunc primum per. I. Iac. Grasserum, C.P. ex Manuscripto authentico edita. Basileae: Conradus Waldkirchius 1615, pp. 1–41.

9 In the same way, the aristocracy of neighbouring Poland did not originate from the Sarmatians, as it believed. The Norman origins of the Ruthenian princes did correspond with a factual historical truth (despite there being Russians in the eighteenth century who no longer wished to acknowledge it). However, there is no difference between the effect that pure myths (stories that bear no facts), half-myths (stories which hide factual truths) or accounts based solely on real facts have on human behaviour, if all are equally strongly believed. As the Thomas theorem, so well known to sociologists, says, "if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences".

10 See Smith 1986: 76–91 about horizontal and vertical ethnies.

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12 The metropole and peripheries of the Grand Duchy

Unlike the topic of ethnic and religious relations within the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, about which there is plenty of work, the question of the Grand Duchy's imperial territorial structure remains an under-researched area. Therefore, this is a topic demanding more thorough analysis than the ethno-cultural structure of the Grand Duchy, or its foreign policy in the inter-polity relations systems of the day. After Vytautas' death, this policy exhibited increasingly fewer characteristics that international relations theories attribute to imperialism and empires (if we do not count the annexation of Livonia, which can also be treated as prevention of Muscovy's imperialism).

The Grand Duchy by this stage was not attacking but defending itself from "revisionist" Muscovy in the inter-polity system where it was no longer the hegemonic power. If we were to diagnose imperialism only based on foreign policy and the position held in the inter-polity system, then the Grand Duchy's imperialism petered out after Vytautas' death. Zenonas Ivinskis made this point, calling Vytautas' empire a "bright meteor" (see Ivinskis 1978: 6). Many other historians think similarly, without delving too deeply, when the question of the Grand Duchy as an empire arises. It is difficult to deny the imperialism of the Grand Duchy in Vytautas' times. But, did the Grand Duchy as an empire outlive Vytautas?

If we ask whether the territorial political organisation of the Grand Duchy was imperial in character, the issue of the Grand Duchy as an empire can be extended quite far chronologically. An empire that yearns for peace nevertheless remains an empire. So, did the Grand Duchy have a metropole and peripheries? Indeed, it had more than one periphery, so Alexander Motyl's condition that an empire must have more than one political society whose foreign and domestic affairs it controls (see chapter six) is thoroughly substantiated. This attribute of empires is closely related to the other attribute just discussed – the ethnic and cultural heterogeneity of empires and the political domination of one ethnic (minority) group. The metropole is usually the territory where the majority of this dominant ethnic minority group lives.

Nevertheless, an empire's differentiation into the metropole and periphery on the one hand, and its ethnic and cultural heterogeneity on the other, are associated only by an empirical, not an analytical, link. An imperial ethnie may be a thin layer of foreigners, unequally distributed across the empire's territory and not constituting a majority anywhere. This is the situation of the horizontal politically dominant ethnies. The politically dominating minority ethnie may be a majority in its original homeland, but that land does not even need to be part of the empire, and, even if it is, then it is not necessarily the metropole. This was the situation of the Normans (Varangians) in the Rurikid Empire, and of the Greeks in the Seleucid and Ptolemaic empires. The metropole of secondary empires (see chapter seven) may become an economically or culturally more advanced area or land after its conquest by foreign intruders (especially if it contains centres of previously existing empires, which act like magnets, drawing the conquering barbarians to them), while their own ethnic homeland can persist as one of the peripheries from the whole empire.

This happened in the Turkish Ottoman Empire, whose metropole became the mostly Greek-inhabited Constantinople and its surrounding area. Meanwhile, the area inhabited by the imperial Turkish ethnie, Anatolia, was merely one of the empire's peripheries. Mongolia also went from being the metropole to a periphery, when Kublai khan (nominally, the senior among Genghis Khan's descendants) transferred his capital from Karakorum to Beijing. Mecca and Medina and the entire Arabian peninsula, where Islam originated, were left only as the religious centres of the Islamic Empire (the Caliphate), and became political peripheries. Damascus (in the times of the Fatimids) and Baghdad (in the times of Abbasids) and their surrounding areas became the new metropoles.

What about the Grand Duchy? If it had a metropole and peripheries, then where was that metropole? This question has never been raised in the Grand Duchy's historiography due to the firmly entrenched belief that the Grand Duchy was a federation. This thesis has been advanced and substantiated in pre-revolutionary Russian historiography, in the works of Mitrofan Dovnar-Zapol'skij (1867–1934) and Matvej Ljubavskij (1860–1936). Ljubavskij's magisterial work, *The Regional Division and Local Governance of the Lithuanian-Russian State at the Time of the First Statute of Lithuania: Historic outlines*, published in 1892, is especially important. It focused on the territorial structure of the Grand Duchy. Ljubavskij repeated the main conclusions of this work in the more widely read historical synthesis of the Grand Duchy, *History of the Lithuanian-Russian State until the Lublin Union* (Ljubavskij 1915 [1910]: 82–94). Contemporary Russian historian Aleksander Filjuškin, when speaking about the latest Grand Duchy historiography, claims that "in their own assessments of the federal structure of the Grand Duchy, Russian authors usually referred to classical pre-revolutionary historians' works, adding very little that was new" (Filjuškin 2008: 105). Thus, it would be correct to concentrate primarily on those classical works.

When he discusses the territorial division of the Grand Duchy in the times of great dukes Casimir, Alexander and Sigismund the Old (1440–1544), Ljubavskij claims that, during this period, the Lithuanian-Russian state "had a federal character, which it held on to until the very end of its independent existence" (Ljubavskij 1915 [1910]: 87–88). His main argument held that the lands that made up the Grand Duchy were not typical administrative units as the palatinates (*voevodstva;* воеводства) (later, the governorates – *guberniya*; губерния) of tsarist Russia were, but political entities exhibiting the features of states to a greater or lesser degree.

Deservedly known as the pioneer of Grand Duchy historical geography, Ljubavskij first of all identifies the so-called "main area" of the Grand Duchy – "i.e., the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the narrow sense, with some of its augmentations from the second half of the thirteenth and first half of the fourteenth centuries" (Ljubavskij 1915 [1910]: 82). This core consisted of (1) the Lithuanian land in the truest sense of the word (Ljubavskij does not give a more detailed location), (2) Rus' "in the very narrow sense, encompassing the cities and districts (*volosti*) along the Berezina River and its tributaries, the middle reaches of the Dnieper and Sozh rivers, and the middle reaches of the Pripyat' River", and (3) the Brest land (except for Podlasie) (Ljubavskij 1915 [1910]: 82).

Ljubavskij's "Rus' in the very narrow sense" is also called "Lithuanian Rus'" in historical literature (Gudavičius 1999: 390). In terms of the tsarist Russian administrative divisions of the early twentieth century, the entire "main area" of the Grand Duchy included the eastern part of the Kaunas governorate, and the governorates of Vilnius, Hrodna, Minsk and Mahiliou. In terms of the Grand Duchy's territorial divisions, it spanned the duchies of Trakai and Vilnius, which, following the union of Horodło in 1413, became the Trakai and Vilnius palatinates. Apart from this "main area", Ljubavskij also distinguished eight lands as political units of the Grand Duchy: Samogitia, Podlasie, Polatsk, Vitsebsk, Volhynia, (Eastern) Podolia, Kyiv and Smolensk, which the Grand Duchy lost in 1514.

He considered appanages as separate political entities, too. There were particularly many in the east of present-day Belarus (Mscisłaŭ) and in the south, called Polesie (Belarusian Палéссе, Russian Полéсье). These were the duchies of Slutsk, Pinsk, Kletsk, Kobrin and Haradzets. "All of these duchies were separate political worlds, small states within a state that only recognised their own ruling dukes, and the grand duke of Lithuania – only through these rulers" (Ljubavskij 1915 [1910]: 84). Each appanage duke could act completely independently in internal affairs, where his authority was limited only by customary law or restrictions set out in the grand duke's credentials according to which the appanage duke or his successor was "given" the appanage.

> Almost the entire order was reproduced in miniature in an appanage that could be seen in the earlier duchies and in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania itself: they had palatines (of Kobrin and Grushev in the Kobrin duchy),

> vicegerents and chamberlains (Lithuanian *tijūnas* or Ruthenian *tivun*), the same kind of court, the same taxes and duties.
>
> (Ljubavskij 1915 [1910]: 94)

The same order existed in the appanage of Belsk in the north of the Smolensk land, in the principalities of Starodub and Novgorod-Siversky, and the principalities in the upper reaches of the Oka River (Novosil, Belyov, Odoev, Vorotynsk, Karachev, etc.). Ljubavskij affirms that the principalities along the upper reaches of the Oka "should not even be referred to as states within the Lithuanian-Russian state, but rather allied domains associated by mutual agreements that if violated, would result in a breakdown of relations" (85).

However, in attesting to the federal character of the Grand Duchy, Ljubavskij has in mind not so much the manifestations of statehood and autonomy in the fiefdoms and patrimonial lands of the Grand Duchy that survived until the sixteenth century. He focuses on the previously mentioned eight lands (Samogitia, Podlasie, Polatsk, Vitsebsk, Volhynia, Eastern Podolia, Kyiv and Smolensk), advancing six arguments to prove that they were autonomous states federated with the main area of the Grand Duchy. I will start with the exposition of these arguments, and continue with the presentation of views of other scholars. The chapter closes with the presentation of the view that the Grand Duchy was a typical empire according to its territorial structure. In the next chapter, I demonstrate why this view provides a better account for historical evidence than the received "federalist" view. And so, according to Ljubavskij, the Grand Duchy was a federation, because:

(1) Boundaries between separate lands were not purely administrative but more similar to political borders. This is how Ljubavskij interpreted the promise made in Casimir's privilege given to the Smolensk land to return districts (*volosti*) that had been "ripped away" in the times of Vytautas and Švitrigaila. Also, the promises contained in the privileges given to Kyiv and other lands allowed only local magnates to rule over counties and cities, rather than any "foreigners". Ljubavskij suggests that the boundaries of the Grand Duchy's lands from the early sixteenth century were in effect the same as the boundaries that existed between the Ruthenian Rurikid principalities before they became part of the Grand Duchy. He interprets their stability as the trace or the remainder of the independence of these principalities. Thus, once they became part of the Grand Duchy, the principalities from Kievan Rus' times did not simply melt away without a trace, but preserved their political separateness. This is where Ljubavskij sees an essential difference between the Grand Duchy and the state of Muscovy in terms of their territorial structure as political bodies. Once they had annexed the former appanages, Muscovy's grand princes would rip them apart: pieces would be handed out to the palatines, boyars or lesser servicemen sent down from the centre to rule or to "live off" them, completely ignoring their former

boundaries. Even if those boundaries remained, they would serve purely administrative, but not political, purposes (Ljubavskij 1915 [1910]: 86).

(2) The subordination to the grand duke of the free population of the Grand Duchy's lands or the ruler's political subjects (military servicemen or nobles) had a "territory-based character" (Ljubavskij 1915 [1910]: 86). This means that they were not subordinated to the ruler directly, but served him as the "landsmen" of a particular land. The grand duke could not induce a noble military serviceman to serve beyond the boundaries of his homeland without his consent. In this regard, the position of the nobility differed fundamentally from the servicemen of the grand prince of Muscovy. In their case, the grand prince could transfer the nobility around his domains as he pleased. Upon receiving a complaint, the grand duke of Lithuania could not call a defendant to his court against the latter's wishes: only by travelling to a particular land in person could the grand duke make any one of its inhabitants stand trial. "In such cases, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Lithuania itself, appears like an alien, foreign state where there was a common ruler, and where individuals called up to stand trial could do so only voluntarily, by way of a mutual agreement" (Ljubavskij 1915 [1910]: 87).

(3) At least two lands (Polatsk and Vitsebsk) received the privilege that the ruler's vicegerent would not be appointed without their approval. In return for their refusal to support Mykolas Žygimantaitis in 1441, the Samogitians received an even greater privilege – the right to elect their own elder (Lithuanian *seniūnas* or Ruthenian *starosta*) and even their district (*valsčius*) chamberlains (*tivuns*). The nobility of the Kyiv land also tried to claim a similar privilege: when the appanage prince of Kyiv Semën Olelkovych died in 1471, the local nobility demanded the appointment of his brother Myxailo as prince. When grand duke Casimir and the Council of Lords of the Grand Duchy appointed Martynas Goštautas as the Kyiv vicegerent, he could only take up his position once the opposition of the local nobility had been broken by force.

(4) Ljubavskij claimed that the aristocracy of the Grand Duchy lands would assemble, from time to time, at diets (parliaments) of particular lands where they would elect certain officials, pass judgement at courts, allocate taxes, military service and other duties, and engage in activities "very similar to the issue of various laws" (Ljubavskij 1915 [1910]: 90).

(5) Up until the passing of the First Statute of Lithuania (1529) and later on (amending this law codex), a separate customary law applied in different lands of the Grand Duchy with which officials from the centre appointed by the ruler (either with the local nobility's approval or without) also had to comply.

(6) Finally, "lands were not excluded even from decisions on matters of foreign policy, even if it would appear that such issues were only within the scope of central authorities" (92). As an example Ljubavskij mentions the demand made by Lithuanian delegates in 1456 to Casimir that Poland should return western Podolia to Lithuania, a demand that according to

the Russian historian was actually passed by the diet (Lithuanian *seimas*, Ruthenian and Polish *sejm*) of the Grand Duchy. Another two examples are Casimir's discussions (according to Ljubavskij) with the diet in 1478 about war against Muscovy over Greater Novgorod; and deliberations over the creation of an appanage in Kyiv for the young duke Sigismund (the future grand duke Sigismund I "the Old") at the diet of the Lithuanian land in 1496 (92).

Ljubavskij believed that the manifestations of statehood and autonomy of the Grand Duchy lands he discussed were a legacy of the pre-Lithuanian period of their histories. He also claimed that the surviving features of their separate statehood are explainable by the process by which they came to be part of the Grand Duchy. To him, these lands' parliaments were none other than a continuation of the *veche* – assemblies that were called in Kievan Rus' cities, and continued later on in Tatar times in Pskov and Novgorod until their annexation by Muscovy. A frequent issue at such assemblies was the dethroning of a particular "unsuitable" prince and the invitation of a new one (usually a relative of the dethroned) (see chapter nine). Ljubavskij recalls this political tradition from Kievan Rus' to explain the privileges of lands to accept no princes or vicegerents without their consent, going even so far as to elect the grand dukes of the Grand Duchy themselves. "Vytautas, Žygimantas Kęstutaitis and Casimir became grand dukes upon being elected by the dukes, lords and nobles of the Lithuanian land" (Ljubavskij 1915 [1910]: 87). Like almost all other pre-revolutionary Russian historians, he too goes to great lengths to stress the voluntary subjugation of the Ruthenian lands to the Grand Duchy.

That subjugation meant only that a Rurikid prince of a certain land would be replaced by an appanage prince appointed by the Grand Duchy's ruler (Gediminas or Algirdas). The only thing the lands of the Grand Duchy had in common was the same supreme ruler, while the internal order in each land remained unchanged. Ljubavskij claims that this kind of "accession" to the Grand Duchy used to be formalised in treaties that confirmed the local laws and rights of the new member of the Grand Duchy federation. While not a single "accession treaty" has survived, Ljubavskij argues that the surviving privilege documents issued to various provinces by Alexander and Sigismund I "the Old" are none other than renewals and confirmations of the obligations of the Grand Duchy ruler given in these initial "accession treaties" (see Ljubavskij 1892: 26).

The peaceful and voluntary entrance of Ruthenian lands into the composition of the Grand Duchy gives the best explanation of the federal character of its state structure. Ljubavskij perceived and described the upheaval that Vytautas introduced in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries when he replaced the Gediminid appanage dukes who ruled the Grand Duchy lands with vicegerents that he had appointed at his own discretion, who did not belong to the ruling dynasty. Yet, due to the dynastic feuding that erupted after Vytautas' death, which almost destroyed the Grand Duchy

as a state, and later, the struggles with Muscovy over who would rule the Ruthenian lands, the federal character of the Grand Duchy, existing since its very inception, remained unchanged.

> Apart from tradition, politics were also at play – the aim of the dominant Lithuanian land to paralyse land separatism amid the tense fighting with the Muscovite state and Tatars. During these struggles, there was often hesitation and breaches of loyalty in the areas of Rus' subject to Lithuania, and, running ahead of any separatist moves, Lithuania would try to appease them by confirming their rights and privileges. [. . .] That is why the Lithuanian-Russian state continued to maintain its federal character, which it acquired following its territorial assemblage.
> (Ljubavskij 1915 [1910]: 82)

Indeed, Ljubavskij admits that not all Ruthenian lands entered the Grand Duchy in such a voluntary manner. According to Ljubavskij, a particular land's status in the Grand Duchy in the early sixteenth century betrays this (Ljubavskij 1892: 1–2, 12–13, 26–27). Lands that voluntarily became part of the Grand Duchy were those that had privileges confirmed by the dukes of the Grand Duchy (Polatsk, Vitsebsk, Smolensk, Kyiv, Volhynia and Podolia). Meanwhile, the Ruthenian lands belonging to "Lithuania in the true sense of the word" were most likely made Lithuanian by force. They include territories usually called Black Rus' (Navahrudak, Slonim, Vaukavysk), Lithuanian Rus' and Podlasie. Lithuanian colonisation took place in some locations as well – first in the Braslau (Belarusian: Браслаў, Lithuanian: Breslauja) surroundings that had once belonged to Polatsk (see Ljubavskij 1892: 3). Ljubavskij considers the division of some middle sub-Dnieper localities into the "Vilnius" and "Trakai" sides surviving in the early sixteenth century as a trace of this conquest: when in 1345, after Algirdas and Kęstutis overthrew Jaunutis, they decided to divide all newly conquered areas in half (Ljubavskij 1892: 13–14). Lands that became part of the Grand Duchy by conquest either entered its "main area" (Lithuanian Rus'), or did not make up a separate political entity at the time of its annexation (Podlasie and the territory of the former principality of Chernihiv that did not survive the Tatar destruction of Kievan Rus').

Dovnar-Zapol'skij (1901) takes a more general and abstract view of federalism in the Grand Duchy, seeing it more as a principle of its entire social organisation, not limited just to the Grand Duchy's state territorial structure. To him, the federal character of the Grand Duchy meant the domination of the contract as a principle of social order, both in political and social organisation.[1]

> A state is organised on uniquely federal foundations. Contracts act as a link between its separate parts and the highest authority. Such contracts are made between the grand duke's authority and appanage princes,

> and with separate lands that come under the state's jurisdiction, preserving their local laws. But if the contract principle dominates, then it infiltrates not only governance relations.
>
> (Dovnar-Zapol'skij 1901: 28)

Like Ljubavskij, Dovnar-Zapol'skij explains the Grand Duchy's federal structure by the voluntary accession of a majority of its lands into its composition. Upon "entering" the Grand Duchy, individual Ruthenian lands would negotiate the promise of the Grand Duchy's ruler not to alter the long established local order, recording its main rights in a statutory declaration. Elements of the Grand Duchy's territorial structure were not only lands but also appanages, where the princes had sometimes entered alliances with the ruler of the Grand Duchy (primarily along the upper reaches of the Oka River), or in other cases were fiefdoms granted by the ruler for life (in the basin of the Pripyat' River and in the Middle sub-Dnieper region). As a matter of common knowledge, such state structure is described as feudalism.

Dovnar-Zapol'skij insists that the term "federal state" is more suitable in describing the political order in the Grand Duchy than a "feudal state":

> Without denying the influence of feudal concepts in the earliest times in the Lithuania of the true sense, they cannot be applied to describe relations between dukes in the Lithuanian-Russian state. Here was no elaborate general scheme of personal relations between the vassals and the sovereign; next, the patrimonial nature of the duke's authority and its confusion with the principle of statehood, as was the case in ancient Rus', would have been in contradiction to the conditional character of feudal landholding. This is why the term "federal state" has more rights to be applied to the Lithuanian-Ruthenian state order.
>
> (Dovnar-Zapols'kij 1901: 85)

Together with Ljubavskij, Dovnar-Zapol'skij considers the right of certain Grand Duchy lands to conduct their own foreign policy a very distinctive sign of the Grand Duchy's federalism. Both authors give the same example – the treaties of the city of Polatsk under Lithuanian rule with the city of Riga (Dovnar-Zapol'skij 1901: 36). Ljubavskij most likely adopted this argument from Dovnar-Zapol'skij, as it features in a later historical synthesis of the Grand Duchy written by Ljubavskij (Ljubavskij 1915 [1910]), though not in his study published in 1892 on the territorial division and local government in the Grand Duchy (Ljubavskij 1892). Both historians consider the existence of local laws an expression of the Grand Duchy's federalism as well. Although no written documents attesting to this have survived, the instructions to judge "according to your laws" repeated in privileges granted to lands suggest that local laws did exist. Also, the stipulation found in the treaties between Polatsk and Riga that inhabitants of Polatsk had to be judged according to "their own" laws – i.e., the laws of Polatsk – when in Riga can serve as evidence that such a law did indeed exist (see Dovnar-Zapol'skij 1901: 27).

Ljubavskij considered the federal state the most primitive state form, implicitly assuming that a "real" state was unitary and centralised, while the measure of progress in state building was the degree to which a particular state compound approached this ideal.[2] This assumption is made very clear in the statement at the end of his list of the main territorial units in the Grand Duchy in the early sixteenth century:

> all the component parts of the Lithuanian-Russian state were still so loosely connected, and contained so many signs of their earlier political uniqueness, that even during the period of analysis, Lithuanian Rus' *was still a political federation* [italics are my own – Z. N.], preserving this character since its emergence in the era of appanages of the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries.
>
> (Ljubavskij 1892: 2)

Ljubavskij's views on the federation as a primitive form of state should not be surprising, given his "pro-Muscovite" conviction that, of the two paths taken in state building – those of the western and of the eastern Russian state – the progressive path was the one that followed the Muscovite state. The Grand Duchy's federalism allegedly was merely a structural fault that eventually determined its decline and fall.

It is also unsurprising that he attributes the federalism of the Grand Duchy to the Lithuanians' general civilisational and cultural backwardness – he alleges they did not have any independent ideas regarding state building. This is one of Ljubavskij's most important conclusions concerning the general characteristics of the Grand Duchy's territorial structure:

> The survival of the ancient local political organisation [. . .] was related to the fact that the Lithuanian rulers did not have any original, creative aspirations as far as state building was concerned, which in turn was determined by the ruling tribe's relative political weakness and backwardness.
>
> (Ljubavskij 1892: 61)

In any event, the structures of the early thirteenth-century Lithuanian state were more primitive than those encountered in Kievan Rus' at this time. He attributes the later progress of the Grand Duchy to the adoption of the Kievan Rus' legacy.

Dovnar-Zapol'skij was an avid supporter of the Russian Empire's constitutional reform granting autonomy to its regions. When the empire collapsed in 1917, he became one of the founding fathers of the Belarusian national state. So it is not surprising that his attitude towards the federal statehood of the Grand Duchy was quite opposite. Like Ljubavskij, he identified the specific content of the ancient past in Ruthenian lands, which the Lithuanian dukes pledged to uphold, with the political and legal structures of the territorial principalities in Kievan Rus'. Yet, he did consider the Grand

Duchy's political structures to be more advanced than those the Lithuanian dukes discovered in the lands of Kievan Rus':

> We face only a confusion of public and private law concepts here, one that is generally typical for a low level of state development in a nation. Both elements – the public and private – merge so far that the public legal functions attain the character of private law, and vice versa, private relations take on the appearance of public law.
>
> (Dovnar-Zapol'skij 1901: 51)

That means that the princes of Kievan Rus' considered ruling over a state as their private property, while tax revenue was deemed to be their own private income. The head of state was not so much the state's ruler (*gosudar'*, государь), as its lord and master (*gospodar'*, господарь) (Dovnar-Zapol'skij 1901: 55). Privatisation of public authority was only limited by the strong degree of autonomy in the lands and especially in the cities: a prince who ignored the wishes of the local community risked being driven out and replaced by another "better" prince. "The joint Lithuanian-Russian state adopted this confusion of the patrimonial and public legal principles from ancient Rus', with the second element clearly dominating" (Dovnar-Zapol'skij 1901: 52).

Domination of the "state principle" in the Grand Duchy was due to two causes. The first cause had the strongest effects in ethnographic Lithuania, which lived under a perennial state of war. This meant that most of the population's tributes and duties (castle construction and defence, universal conscription in the event of an enemy invasion) directly served the state's needs, not those of the duke, his family or close circle. The second cause had the strongest effects in the sphere of relations between the Grand Duchy's ruler and the Ruthenian lands subordinate to him. This cause

> took root in the very way the state was formed, especially in its federal structure. Even from the purely theoretical viewpoint, there is no doubt that a federal state is built with state purposes in mind. In such a state, relations between the top authority and the constituent parts have a public character. The supreme authority claims for itself only the sphere of public rights and duties, leaving patrimonial rights in the hands of the local elements. That is what happened in this case: in relations between the lands and the appanage principalities, the grand duke was the ruler (*gosudar'*, государь). Thus, these taxes and duties that were heaped upon the constituent parts of the state took on a public character quite early on, and in practice, not just in theory, they all went towards the entire state's needs.
>
> (Dovnar-Zapol'skij 1901: 54)

The territorial state structure of the Grand Duchy and its evolution has not been researched in Lithuanian historiography, because modern Lithuanian

historians have traditionally been interested and continue to display an interest in only those lands of the Grand Duchy that were ethnically Lithuanian. A partial exception is Edvardas Gudavičius' magisterial *History of Lithuania. From Ancient Times to the Year 1569* (Gudavičius 1999). The fourth section of chapter three (on the transformation of Lithuania's military monarchy into the nobility's estate state) begins with a sub-section about the federal territorial structure of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (Gudavičius 1999: 383–396). Gudavičius' discussion of this topic basically concurs with Ljubavskij's works. Apart from the state's core, Gudavičius distinguishes six main Ruthenian lands within the Grand Duchy: Polatsk, Vitsebsk, Volhynia, Kyiv, Podolia, Smolensk, and the "eastern frontier conglomerate" lost at the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (Gudavičius 1999: 388). Unlike Ljubavskij, he does not consider the post-Vytautas appanage duchies fully-fledged elements of the Grand Duchy's state structure. He makes only a partial exception for the conjunctural appanages to provide for Švitrigaila and the refugee dukes from Muscovy, created in the lands of the ancient duchy of Chernihiv. "These duchies grew into the territorial structures ruled by the state's vicegerents as major land-holdings, not as territorial autonomous units" (Gudavičius 1999: 388).

There are a further two differences in Ljubavskij's and Gudavičius' pictures of the Grand Duchy's territorial structure. First, Gudavičius includes in the core of the Grand Duchy not only the Trakai and Vilnius palatinates, but also the Samogitian eldership.

> Although the duchy of Samogitia (sources designate the eldership as a duchy from 1441–1442) did not officially belong to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the narrow sense, it and the palatinates of Vilnius and Trakai actually made up the Lithuanian state centre. The relatively poor but numerous Samogitian nobility did raise significantly the percentage of Lithuanian nobles in the total number of this estate. The Vilnius and Trakai palatinates were leaders in terms of the output, the formation of an estate structure, and in the field of political relations.
>
> (Gudavičius 1999: 396)

Second, he does not consider the federal structure of the Grand Duchy as the primary and "primitive" state structure it had since the very beginning of its expansion into Ruthenian lands. Rather, it was the product of historical development, one that may be called federalisation. "Across the entire Lithuanian state, starting with the sixteenth century, a young, estate-based federation of lands developed with a core of three Lithuanian palatinates holding clear political hegemony" (Gudavičius 1999: 396).[3]

What were the territorial political organisations of the Grand Duchy before then? Gudavičius has this to say about Gediminas' times: "Alongside the extended Lithuanian state, a whole political system started being created in Rus', with rather significant satellites – Pskov in the north and Kyiv in the

south" (Gudavičius 1999: 103). Further ahead, he explains: "Pskov, Kyiv and Smolensk were the most important Lithuanian protectorates, pillars for its political system in Rus'" (Gudavičius 1999: 103). As shown in the review of contemporary empire and imperialism concepts found in international relations and comparative politics literature (see chapter five), political systems that include "satellites" and "protectorates" are none other than empires.

Some historians of the Grand Duchy (probably recognising the unsuitability of the "federation" concept in terms of the Grand Duchy realities) use the terms "conglomerate" or "conglomerate of lands" (see, for example, Jakovenko 2005 [1997]: 140). The "conglomerate" concept is not used in political science. The word "conglomerate" as a term describing the structure of the Grand Duchy is no more informative than John's response – "it's some kind of animal" – to Peter's question – "what's that?"– when they come across a brown, horned, overgrown calf-sized four-legged creature in a forest clearing. As was mentioned on several occasions (see chapters one and nine), a tradition has become established in West European medieval historiography to call any of the less stable "conglomerates" of domains controlled by William the Conqueror and his descendants (the Norman Empire), and the Plantagenets (the Angevin Empire) "empires". The "conglomerate" created by Gediminas and his descendants is actually much more worthy of this title, primarily because it was much more enduring than the Norman or Angevin (Plantagenet) empires and left a much deeper trace in the history of Eastern Europe, shaping the trajectories of the political borders of its present-day states.

> The emergence and expansion of the Lithuanian state into a large-area great power (*Grossmacht*) is a unique phenomenon in East European history. Over the course of almost one hundred and fifty years, a pagan nation, little influenced by other cultures, subjugated a space comparable to other empires (*Reichen*) from the Late Middle Ages. More importantly: this state (*Staat*) was not a powerful conqueror's and ruler's personal great empire (*Grossreich*), swiftly conquered by the sword and one that disintegrated just as swiftly. It created a *sui generis* organisation, which, despite all its shortcomings, demonstrated a characteristic tenacity (*eigentümliche Festigkeit*).
>
> (Rhode 1955: 325)

The reasons for the Grand Duchy's "characteristic tenacity" cannot be understood without turning our attention to those attributes typical to "empires without adjectives" (Thomas Barfield's "primary empires"). They are easily recognised in the Grand Duchy's structure, yet are more difficult to discern in the unproclaimed feudal empires of Western Europe that historians have already "recognised" (where, for instance, was the metropole of the "Plantagenet Empire" and who made up its politically dominant ethnic group?).

Just what happened with the Gediminid imperial conglomerate in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and what finally became of it is a debatable question. We could agree with Gudavičius that the Grand Duchy did eventually become a federation, only that probably happened some time later than the early sixteenth century. I shall return to this question later on. For the time being, it is important just to note that it turned into a federation from an empire, not a "conglomerate", and to explain why it began as an empire, and not a federation. Ljubavskij and Dovnar-Zapol'skij have opposite views of a federation: one perceives it as a primitive form of state structure, the other (along with Halecki (1980 [1952]) describes it as an advanced form of state structure. However, they both implicitly presume that the antithesis of unitary state and federation (or perhaps the triad of a unitary state, a federation and a confederation) exhausts the variety of state territorial structures. Halecki does not make this assumption, because he considers an empire the opposite of a federation, not of an unitary state. However, he does make another mistake: his understanding of empire is too narrow, identifying it with one of its versions, which can be called a "Westphalian" or territorial empire (see the next chapter).

If we are guided by a more comprehensive classification of forms of state structures, one like that given in the works of Mykolas Römeris (see chapter six), there is no sufficient reason to consider the Grand Duchy a federation. There was no parity or equality between the lands that formed the Grand Duchy. Ruthenian lands were not given equal representation in the organs of the Grand Duchy's central government or the ruling elite. A relationship of subordination existed between the Grand Duchy lands: the other lands of the Grand Duchy were subordinate to the metropole, or the Grand Duchy region, which Ljubavskij himself called "the main historical core of this state". The remaining lands were "annexes" of this core, as Aleksander Presnjakov (1939: 110) and other historians of the Grand Duchy historians called them.[4] An "annex" is not an equal member of a composite state, as is the case with a federation.

Supporters of the federalist view of the Grand Duchy themselves provide rich evidence testifying to the hierarchic or subordinate (but not coordinate) relationship structure between the Grand Duchy lands. Ljubavskij claims that his so-called "main area" "held the dominant position in the Lithuanian-Russian state" (Ljubavskij 1915 [1910]: 82). It was the most densely populated and had more inhabitants than any other of the Grand Duchy lands. This was where the grand duke's manors were concentrated (although they did exist in other Grand Duchy lands as well). This was also where the majority of the ruling Lithuanian aristocracy (the Goštautas, Radvila and Zaberezinskis lineages) had their manors. This area stood out for its governance and court procedures as well as "its customs and its Lithuanian laws" (Ljubavskij 1915 [1910]: 82). "In other words, in the period being discussed, the Lithuanian land had political hegemony and representation in that complex set of lands and domains that was the grand

duchy: thus, it gave its name to the entire state" (Ljubavskij 1892: 7). The Lithuanian land, whose power and resources were used to create the Grand Duchy, "naturally occupied a politically dominant and privileged position in it" (Ljubavskij 1892: 61).

This region's exclusive position was enforced by the prohibitions placed on the construction of new Orthodox churches there after Catholic Christianisation. Also, Orthodox believers could not hold top offices (the only exception being Kostiantyn Ostrozky, for his personal merits). Because of this prohibition, members of the local elites from other Orthodox lands of the Grand Duchy could not join the ruling metropolitan group of the Grand Duchy, whose personal composition more or less coincided with the Council of Lords of the Grand Duchy from the fifteenth century (Valikonytė 1972; Korczak 1998; Petrauskas 2005). The palatines of Trakai and Vilnius (former duchies) took the highest, most influential positions in this group. Until the end of the fifteenth century, lineages of ethnically Lithuanian descent such as the Goštautas, Astikas, Radvila, Kęsgaila, Zaberezinskis and Sakas (Sakavičius) held both the latter two offices and dominated in the Council of Lords. Only after the end of the fifteenth century did outsiders from the Ruthenian periphery start to infiltrate the ruling metropolitan group, starting with the Chodkiewicz, Sapiega and Bohovitynovych houses (see Bumblauskas 2005: 218–219; Kirkienė 2008; Petrauskas 2003; 2016). Yet the condition or price for this promotion was conversion to Catholicism, establishment of family ties with the old magnates of the Grand Duchy and acquisition of landholdings in the "main area" of the Grand Duchy.

Looking at the territorial structure of the Grand Duchy from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries through the prism of concepts used in contemporary comparative research on empires, we discover all the elements characteristic of a typical empire. Aside from the metropole, it had its peripheries, which happened to be called by the Ruthenian word for "periphery" – "*ukraina*" (украина). For the Grand Duchy, the "*ukraina*" was not just those lands that eventually became the territorial core of the country presently known as "Ukraine". At least until the sixteenth century, a separate "political society" with its own ruling elite (see Saviščevas 2010), autonomy, regional self-consciousness or identity, and local laws existed in Samogitia, which in other aspects (see chapter sixteen) should be attributed to the Grand Duchy's metropole.[5] A separate political society can also be discerned in Volhynia from this same period:

> The many magnates and nobles of Volhynia had a special position, as the central authority could not ignore their interests. This region enjoyed the least interference into distribution of landholdings and local offices, the domains of the local Ruthenian princes, the Gediminids and the Holshansky lineages survived.
>
> (Gudavičius 1999: 389)

Local political societies found it difficult to consolidate in the Kyiv and Podolia lands that were under constant attack from the steppes. However, such societies did indeed exist in the Vitsebsk, Polatsk and Smolensk lands (Jurkevičius 2014; Polexov 2014), which staunchly defended their ancient privileges. These peripheral annexes did not maintain any mutual relations at all, yet they were united into one state structure as subjects of the same imperial centre in the Lithuanian metropole. The conglomerate of principalities around the upper reaches of the Oka River can be referred to as an "informal empire" or suzerainty sphere of the Grand Duchy. As is very characteristic of empires in pre-modern times, the Grand Duchy did not have a clear border in the East until the end of the fifteenth century, when the informal empire or suzerainty area gradually faded into a sphere of hegemony. At various periods in the Grand Duchy's history, this hegemony sphere included not just some of the principalities along the upper reaches of the Oka, but also Tver, Riazan', Pskov and the Great Horde. The Grand Duchy's sphere of hegemony reached its largest extension under Vytautas, when it briefly encompassed all of Eastern Europe (Bumblauskas 2005: 144).

Notes

1 Contemporary social theorists distinguish four principles of social order: community, market, contract and hierarchy. See Lichbach and Seligman 2000: 13–52.
2 Ljubavskij also classifies personal unions as federal states – political compounds whose territorial parts are held together only by a common ruler. See Ljubavskij 1892.
3 When he mentions the "three Lithuanian palatinates", Gudavičius probably refers to the Samogitian eldership as a palatinate, but not to the Podlasie palatinate founded in 1513–1514, which included the counties (Lithuanian *pavietas*, Polish *powiat*) of Bielsk Podlaski, Drohiczyn and Mielnik; especially as "in a military sense, this palatinate remained under the jurisdiction of the Trakai palatinate" (Gudavičius 1999: 393).
4 Including Ljubavskij himself. See Ljubavskij 1900: 104.
5 Another problem with Samogitia is that it was among the relatively more backward lands of the Grand Duchy in terms of socio-economic development. In chapter sixteen I discuss the question of how and why the building of an empire can stop socio-economic development in all or in part of its metropole, preserving social structures from pre-imperial times.

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13 Why has it been so difficult to identify the Grand Duchy as an empire?

The claim that the Grand Duchy was an empire raises the question of how it could be that the finest specialists in the Grand Duchy's history did not see that the Grand Duchy was indeed an empire. Undoubtedly, the main hurdle was the classical hermeneutic (and simultaneously Eurocentric) methodology of history, which even renders the question of whether the Grand Duchy was an empire as meaningless. This was the starting point of this book. As "everyone knows", the Grand Duchy did not even become a kingdom (if we do not count the short episode from Mindaugas' times), so considering it an empire seems even more ambitious. This conviction, when firmly impressed in the mind of a specialist in the Grand Duchy's history, acts as a major obstacle that shuts out the idea of the Grand Duchy as an empire.

Habits of mind deeply entrenched in the national historiographies that displayed an interest in the Grand Duchy proved to be additional obstacles to this idea. This was already discussed in the historiographical survey of this topic (chapter two). For Russians, the obstacle was seeing the Grand Duchy as a "western Russian state", which for some of them was also the lost alternative of a "better" (non-imperial) Russia. Great Russian chauvinism contributed to this blindness, where any suggestions of a Lithuanian Empire were – and still are – completely ridiculous. German historians were quite chauvinist until 1945 as well. This chauvinism, combined with the especially strong hermeneutic historicist tradition, resulted in a steadfast axiom: there was and could only be one empire in Europe in the Middle Ages, the German *Reich*. The Poles' obstacle was the favoured role of their country as the innocent victim of neighbouring states' imperialism, and the popular idea of "Jagiellonian federalism". The role of victim of imperialism also plagued the Lithuanians, only they considered Poland as simply another imperialist neighbour. In the Soviet years, there was also the unwillingness to lose Lithuania's national historical heroes – the grand dukes. Were Moscow to "register" them as imperialists, Lithuanians would not have been able to take pride in their illustrious campaigns.

Nonetheless, the blinkers that have been placed on the eyes of historians by their national identities or the socio-political realities of their societies and classical hermeneutic methodology are not the only hurdles to

seeing the Grand Duchy as an empire. Primary sources on the history of the Grand Duchy offer no evidence that Lithuanians or their neighbouring contemporaries would have called the Grand Duchy a federation in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. However, this did not stop the federalist Grand Duchy structure theory from appearing and taking hold. Neither concept – the federation nor the empire – is taken directly from sources, but rests on what the distinguished Polish historian and history methodologist Jerzy Topolski called historians' non-source-based knowledge (*wiedza pozaźrodłowa*) (Topolski 1976 [1974]: 401–427). The concept of the Grand Duchy as an empire is only acceptable if it can account for those facts that the federation concept's proponents profess, and if it has some other additional advantages.

I consider one such additional advantage the fact that, when looking at the Grand Duchy as an empire, its historical facts can be understood from a broader, non-Eurocentric perspective of universal and global history. The imperiological interpretation of the Grand Duchy's history also enriches our understanding of empire and imperialism, as the Grand Duchy as an empire has some unique, perhaps even exceptional, features. When the history of the Grand Duchy is researched as an episode in global empires and imperialism history, imperialism and empires can and must be viewed over a much broader spectrum, one that reveals their inherent variety. An enormous epistemic hurdle in the way of the Lithuanian, Polish or Russian historian in recognising the Grand Duchy as an empire is that it is consciously or unconsciously compared to the Eastern neighbour and deathly foe – the state of Muscovy. It declared itself the "third Rome" already at the end of the fifteenth century, its ruler was a "tsar" (i.e., Caesar), and, by the early eighteenth century, also an emperor. "The Russian Empire" was the official and internationally recognised name of this state from 1721 to 1917. If the historian's comparative vision is limited to contrasting the state of Muscovy and the Grand Duchy, and if the presumption is made that Muscovy was an empire *par excellence*, then it is difficult to realise that the competition between the Grand Duchy and Muscovy was indeed a battle between two (albeit very different) empires.

The imperial character of the Grand Duchy as a state becomes obvious if we do not limit ourselves to this contrast (so deeply entrenched in the Lithuanian consciousness), but include more empires in the field of comparison. This is being done in contemporary comparative studies of empires, where empires are not just political entities that lay claim in one way or another to the legacy of the Roman Empire. The concepts of empire used in this body of research are broad enough to embrace also the polities that were beyond the European sphere of consciousness up until the modern age and vice versa (e.g., the Aztec and Incan empires, whose rulers knew nothing about the Roman Empire). From such a broader view, we soon realise that the Russian Empire represents only a certain version of empires, called a "territorial empire" in contemporary literature, and should be distinguished from the other variety – "hegemonic empires" (see chapter seven).

A particular imperial political entity, if it survives for a long time, can represent both these types of empire, only at different periods. In its Late Republic and Early Principate periods, the Roman Empire was hegemonic. It had a metropolitan core (Italy), provinces ruled by vicegerents (proconsuls), and a whole swathe of satellites (client states). Gradually, it transformed itself into a territorial empire. On the eve of the Western Roman Empire's collapse (when Germanic kingdoms started becoming established in its territory, which recognised Rome's suzerainty, even if only nominally), the features of a hegemonic empire started to re-emerge.

Compared to Muscovy, during the entire history of the Grand Duchy, the features of a hegemonic empire always prevailed over those of a territorial empire. Muscovy, becoming an empire from the conquest of the Kazan Khanate in 1552 at the latest, and the subordination of Greater Novgorod in 1478 at the earliest, was built as a territorial empire from the very beginning – as an unitary, concentrically centralised state.[1] Indeed, because of communication problems, the huge frontier regions (primarily inhabited by Cossacks) enjoyed broad de facto autonomy. However, as soon as the first opportunity presented itself, the Russian tsars tried to obliterate the political peculiarities of the subjugated lands, turning them into governorates ruled directly from the centre. By 1914, only four areas of the Russian Empire were not directly governed: the Grand Duchy of Finland, the khanates of Bukhara and Khiva and the land of Uriankhai (the present-day Autonomous Republic of Tyva). At this time, the initially very wide, yet systematically narrowed autonomy of the Baltic Germans in the former Livonia that Peter I joined to the Russian Empire in 1721 had not yet been completely liquidated.[2]

A hegemonic empire is typified by an indirect system of rule. As I have already shown, some scholars of empire researchers go too far and consider it an essential attribute of all empires (Tilly 1997: 3). In the modern age, Great Britain was the most consistent in applying an indirect system of rule. Russia would introduce direct rule as soon as it could, but eventually left indirect rule only in those places where it was bound by international treaties or it lacked sufficient administrative, financial or military resources. The opposite applied to Great Britain where direct rule would only be introduced as a measure of last-resort: in those places where, after all efforts and experiments had been made, there were no suitably influential and strong collaborators. They were expected to control the land (essentially, this meant being able to sustain a lasting internal peace) without the interference of the British army, itself mostly consisting of units of "coloured" inhabitants from other colonies.

Great Britain could apply this system in the most consistent and successful way in its largest colony, India.[3] It was divided into the areas ruled directly by the British themselves, and indirectly ruled principalities. The rulers of these principalities, the *rajas* (princes) and *maharajas* (grand princes), were related to the United Kingdom's monarch by a so-called subsidiary alliance. According to such an alliance treaty, the prince had to dissolve his own

army, accept and maintain the British military garrisons, and admit a British representative – a resident – to his court. On the eve of India's declaration of independence, there were over 500 such principalities. Each one had its own laws, ministers, courts and administrative organs in whose activities the British did not interfere.

The British ruled over many other colonies in the same way, which had the status of vassal states or protectorates. Another adaptation of the classical indirect system of rule was applied to a group of "kingdoms" (Ankole, Buganda, Bunyoro, Toro) in the territory of present-day Uganda. As in India, here the British controlled foreign policy, established their garrisons in strategically important locations and controlled succession to the "king's throne", but without interfering in matters of internal rule. Thus, the British created and ruled their empire in the ancient *Lithuanian* way – without destroying the past or introducing anything new. Innovations appeared in the British colonies of their own accord (from the grass-roots level) once they joined the world's capitalist market, which in turn led to economic, social and cultural changes.

In an empire based on a system of indirect rule, we find a division of power that is externally reminiscent of a federal state structure. This surface similarity is very striking when the Grand Duchy is compared with Muscovy, and it is what confuses researchers of the Grand Duchy who consider it a federation. In fact it was an empire, though not a Russian but a British type of empire, based on a system of indirect rule. A typical policy of the Muscovite Empire was the deportation of the local elites, who were transferred to other areas and replaced with service personnel sent from the centre. This kind of policy was widely implemented in the early sixteenth century when the Smolensk land was subordinated to Russia. The attempts of the left-bank Ukrainian Cossacks' to preserve their autonomy were also thwarted in the same way. This was the autonomy that Russian tsar Aleksej Mixailovič promised them when the Pereyaslav council (*rada*) decided to join the state of Muscovy in 1654. The grand dukes of the Grand Duchy created their empire in the way the British later would (or vice versa) – by looking for agreement with local ruling elites and leaving the order of internal governance untouched. At the same time, the accession of Ruthenian lands, which Ljubavskij identified as members of a federation, into the Grand Duchy's composition was only as "voluntary" as the treaties between the Indian *rajas* and the British were "voluntary": they chose the lesser evil under the circumstances of a military and political power balance that rendered military resistance pointless. Collaboration with the British ensured the preservation of their existing social privileges. In addition, they could hope that their descendants would be able to assert themselves in a somewhat wider social space than that offered by the narrow local politics of their principality.

All of the attributes Ljubavskij assigns the Grand Duchy's territorial state structure, based on which he qualifies the Grand Duchy as a federation,

completely "fit" the concept of the Grand Duchy as a hegemonic or British type of empire based on the system of indirect rule. The peripheral areas of this kind of empire have political borders, not administrative boundaries. Their incorporation into the "British" (or "Lithuanian") Empire did not mean the abolition of their political separateness. It did introduce the *Pax Britannica* (or *Pax Lituanica*); now Ruthenian appanage princes, Indian *rajas* or Ugandan "kings" did not resolve feuds over territories or succession of authority through war, but by appealing to the Grand Duchy's grand duke, or the arbitration of the Lithuanian or British vicegerents.

Once Buganda (in Uganda) or Kolhapur (in India) became a protectorate of Great Britain, neither its local elite, nor the ordinary population, attained the same rights as the English or Scottish population. They remained members of their traditional political societies, directly subordinate to their earlier local rulers. In the same way, once they came under the Grand Duchy's authority, representatives of the Ruthenian nobility in the Polatsk, Vitsebsk or Volhynia lands never became equals of the nobility serving the Trakai and Vilnius dukes. They were always first nobles from Polatsk, Vitsebsk or Volhynia, and only then subjects of the grand duke. Liubavskij highlights the right of certain lands of the Grand Duchy to reject palatines or other central officials they deemed unsuitable. However, this did not mean that the elite of these lands could elect a palatine or elder who did not have the approval of the central (metropolitan) authority.

An Indian *raja* who did not please the British resident had no chance of inheriting the throne from his father. However, if there were two or more candidates, each going out of his way to prove he was the greater "Westerner" and reporting on his competitor to the British, the imperial centre or its representatives would interject only if they believed in one of the slanderer's tales, or if there was a danger that the feuding of local henchmen, collaborators and marionettes would eventually break out into riots threatening the imperial peace. The Vilnius imperial centre was in a similar position when the most influential Ruthenian landlord houses competed against each other over supremacy in the "annexes". In the same way, the grand duke would also resolve the arguments among the Rurikids' (or side branches of the Gediminid line itself) over the succession of authority in the vassal appanages. Of course, particularism of law is a consequence of an indirect system of rule, which Ljubavskij also noted when searching for manifestations of the Grand Duchy's federalism.

Do the facts that the peripheral lands of the Grand Duchy made foreign policy decisions, pointed out by Ljubavskij and Dovnar-Zapol'skij, contradict the view that the Grand Duchy was an empire? In fact, both historians report only one such fact: the trade agreements between Polatsk and Riga. These treaties referred only to narrowly defined economic matters and are not in themselves proof that the Polatsk land had an independent foreign policy. The imperial centre simply delegated or ordered it to reach an agreement with Riga on these matters that were not of state-wide significance,

especially as the "experts" or most interested parties were Polatsk traders themselves. Neither Trakai nor Vilnius could boast of having a ministry of foreign affairs, much less a foreign trade department in those days. Foreign trade was not a strong point of either the Grand Duchy rulers (perhaps except for Gediminas), or their "team members", who were military men. Dmitrij Volodixin, a contemporary researcher on the history of the Polatsk land, points out probably the most important aspect here: the treaties that Polatsk negotiated would only become valid once Vilnius "ratified" them. "It was Vytautas who took away the ancient right from city governments to authorise international treaties: Polatsk retained its ancient *veche* right to make treaties, but only once they were ratified by Lithuania's grand dukes did they become legally valid" (Volodixin 1992: 5).

Other facts pointing to the participation of land representatives in forming foreign policy that Ljubavskij and Dovnar-Zapol'skij identified (the demands of the Lithuanian delegation to Casimir in 1456 that Poland return western Podolia to Lithuania, and discussions about war against Muscovy following its seizure of Novgorod) reveal something quite different than what the Russian historians intended. In fact, the Council of Lords took matters of foreign affairs into its own hands from the middle of the fifteenth century. In some cases, representatives from the peripheral lands were invited to the council's meetings, and they became quite similar to a Grand Duchy's diet. However, it was the nobility from the "main area" of the Grand Duchy that dominated in these diets. But even the metropolitan nobility participated at these diets only as observers to be informed about the decisions already made by the Council of Lords, where its oligarchic heavyweights – the military governors (palatines) of Trakai and Vilnius, who also held the top central and the palace court offices (those of chancellor, hetman, marshal, treasurer, etc.) – had the greatest influence. It was precisely this narrow group that formulated the Grand Duchy's foreign policy from the middle of the fifteenth century. Only the aristocracy from the Grand Duchy's metropole had the right to elect the ruler of the Grand Duchy – a fact that Ljubavskij and Dovnar-Zapol'skij mistakenly consider another piece of evidence proving the federal character of the Grand Duchy.

Thus, we must look upon historical facts, proceeding from more carefully and explicitly defined concepts of empire and federation (with the assistance of Römeris and today's federalism and imperialism scholars). Then, when we reconsider the evidence which many historians provide as proof of the federal structure of the Grand Duchy, we cannot overlook the conclusion that these facts show something quite different – the imperial, not federal, character of the Grand Duchy.

Granted, there is one way of attempting to avoid this conclusion. Someone could doubt whether the concepts of "empire" or "federation" are at all applicable to the early Lithuanian state. Perhaps the Grand Duchy was neither a federation nor an empire, but something else altogether? According

to such an argument, both these concepts are applicable only to modern "Weberian" states, also known as sovereign territorial states (see chapter five). This kind of state is defined by having a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence in a certain territory. It has precisely defined (linear) borders within which the state enacts the said monopoly. Such a state recognises that other states hold the same kind of monopoly within their own borders and treats them as co-equal subjects in international law. This is an institutional state, conceived as a trans-personal corporate legal actor, clearly differentiated from its ruling monarch or dynasty. It is instead understood as a "public institution" with its own "state interests", ones that differ from the interests of the monarch or ruling dynasty. This kind of state idea was established in international law in 1648 with the Peace of Westphalia that ended the Thirty Years' War. The treaty lends its name to such "Westphalian states".[4]

Yet in the Middle Ages "there were no sovereign states or international law community in the sense that there are in the modern age" (Brunner 1984 [1965]: 39). In the case of medieval European rulers, it is rather hard to determine when their decisions were about internal or foreign policy matters (not implying that this divide is completely pointless).[5] Can Römeris' classification of the forms of territorial state structure be applied to medieval states that were not "territorial compounds" (*Territorialverbände* in German), but "associations of persons" (*Personenverbände*), consisting of landlords who were related to one another as lords and vassals, and who wielded both private (house) and political (public) powers in their domains? There are reasons for such doubts. However, they affect primarily the "federation" concept when it is applied to pre-modern political entities, as Halecki does when he calls the totality of countries whose thrones were held by Jagiellonians in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the "Jagiellonian federation".

I cannot agree with those authors who claim that a federation is an eighteenth-century invention, and consider the U.S. the first real federation (not Switzerland, which is usually called a confederation). The Grand Duchy became a federation after the governance reforms implemented in 1564–1566. On the eve of the Lublin Union, following Poland's example, it became a nobility (*szlachta*) republic consisting of autonomous counties (*powiats*), which in effect were this federation's subjects.[6] But the Grand Duchy was not a federation in the fifteenth or first half of the sixteenth centuries (much less so in the fourteenth century), even though processes of social, economic and especially cultural integration did take place between the metropole and the periphery, creating the conditions for its federalisation at the end of the sixteenth century.

The truth is that the Grand Duchy of the fifteenth and first half of the sixteenth centuries does not have many of the features typical of "Westphalian" (institutional territorial) states. This applies especially to the fourteenth

century when it could be called a patrimonial state or polity – the patrimony of the Gediminids, similar to the Frankish state in the times of the Merovingians. Only in the mid-fifteenth century do the first glimmers of such a state concept appear, when it is no longer considered a private Gediminid domain, and when loyalty to the dynasty, much less to only one of its representatives, no longer coincides with loyalty to the state as such (Rowell 1997). However, the patrimonial and feudal features of the Grand Duchy's statehood in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries should not stop it from qualifying as an empire. Rather, they are additional grounds for this kind of qualification. "Patrimonial empires" are distinguished in contemporary comparative historical sociology as a special variety of empires (Eisenstadt 1993 [1963]: 10–12).

In pre-modern times, hegemonic empires were generally more typical than territorial empires. An indirect system of rule allows empires to expand very rapidly, as the main burden of the newly-seized territories is to provide the empire with new military contingents who are used to conquer new territories. The population of lands subjected to indirect rule could be taxed (their rulers would pay tributes to the central imperial treasury) while the metropole could avoid costs associated with tax collection (Badian 1968: 90). In this way, the empire could take the absolute upper hand in the power balance against its neighbours. "Peaceful" or "voluntary" obedience was then the only rational choice for those "generic states" and especially city-states that found themselves in its neighbourhood (Finer 1997, Vol. 1: 6–13 or chapter six). These pre-modern political entities were neither as large nor as militarily powerful as empires, but surpassed them in terms of their degree of internal cohesion (Strayer 1970: 10–13). Empires rise when one city-state or land ("generic state") subjugates its neighbouring city-states and lands to indirect rule (which then can eventually become direct rule), itself becoming a metropole.

However, while it empowers rapid external expansion and enables political control of large territories without modern transport or communication, this indirect system of rule also proves to be a source of structural fragility for empires. It preserves the cultural uniqueness and political separateness of the conquered regions, creating the conditions for each such territory to restore complete political independence as soon as a political crisis strikes the empire's metropole (usually associated with the succession of supreme authority), or when the empire suffers military defeats (usually, at the hands of other empires). Unlike city-states, whose citizens identify with it and are prepared to fight to the death for its survival, an empire cannot secure the loyalty of the majority of its population (Strayer 1970: 11). An indirect system of rule leaves most of the resources under the control of the local ruling elite (landlords). That is the price the imperial centre must pay for this elite's cooperation. That cooperation, however, is conditional and lasts only so long as the elite on the periphery, who retained their ethnic and cultural separateness, does not find a more attractive alternative.

The aim to increase the share of resources appropriated by the centre is what prompts the change from the indirect system of rule to direct rule. Whilst it is costlier, it is also more effective: not only because it allows the centre to extract more resources, but also because it makes possible cultural and linguistic unification, which over a long period of time creates the most solid long-term foundations for the state's territorial unity. The product of replacing indirect rule with direct rule is a sovereign territorial state, which became the dominant form of political organisation in Europe from the seventeenth century. The largest and strongest sovereign territorial states were created in those European countries where the processes of cultural exchange, economic integration, and political rapprochement among heterogeneous territories subordinated to the one imperial authority took place the quickest and were most successful. They are France, England and Spain. Nations were built here already in the early modern age, while former empires eventually turned into nation states.[7] They combined the advantages of ancient city-states and empires, equalling the first in terms of their cohesion, and the second in terms of their area and military power (Strayer 1970: 11).

Empires in which processes of internal cultural unification faltered or were delayed faced, first, the competition of sovereign territorial states, and, later, nation states, because they all were members of the same globalising European inter-polity system. This competition placed them under pressure to reform themselves, taking an example from their more successful rivals. These were the Habsburg, the Muscovite, and on a lesser scale (only from the beginning of the nineteenth century), the Ottoman empires. They also acquired features typical of sovereign territorial states, and thus became territorial empires. The advances in transport and communications technologies favoured such reforms: railroads and the telegraph suddenly compressed time and space, removing the most difficult obstacles to centralised administration in a large polity from the metropolitan centre. The reforms included concerted Russification and Germanisation as cultural and linguistic homogenisation policies, as well as the unification of legal and administration systems.

Some authors call empires in transformation, after the sovereign nation state example, "Westphalian empires" (Zielonka 2006: 11–14). This is a late form of empire, distinguished by the fact that an indirect system of rule is mostly replaced by direct rule. Scholars from the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, who were contemporaries or subjects of such empires, perceived this form as the paradigmatic case for empires, while pre-Westphalian empires appeared as federations, though they were simply another type of empire. The concept of empire and imperialism presented in my book is sufficiently broad to encompass both types.

The introduction of direct rule met with the opposition of local ruling and social elites. Famous contemporary nationalism scholar Michael Hechter considers this opposition of the local elites to the transformation of indirect

rule into direct rule as the main cause for the rise of nationalism as a political movement in the nineteenth century (Hechter 2000). Hechter's nationalism theory is an alternative to Ernest Gellner's influential nationalism theory, which causally attributes the rise of nationalism to industrialisation (Gellner 1983). Hechter argues that, when facing the danger of losing power and privileges, local elites or their separate fractions would search for support from the masses, thus politicising the linguistic, religious and cultural particularities of the peripheral societies.

Given the favourable conjuncture of world politics, after World War I Westphalian empires in Central and Eastern Europe disintegrated into smaller, culturally and linguistically more homogeneous political entities – sovereign national states. One of them was the national Lithuanian state, proclaimed in 1918 and restored in 1990. For most of its population, the words "Russia" and "empire" are still synonyms. That is why they find it hard to imagine that Lithuania itself could have once been an empire, only a different one, more reminiscent of the British Empire. Its former colonies (important exceptions including Ireland and the U.S.) are now members of the Commonwealth of Nations. A similar structure could one day unite the nations of Eastern Europe that share a common imperial past under the Grand Duchy.

Notes

1 The tribute-payers of Greater Novgorod were the numerous Finno-Ugric tribes and peoples whose remnants still exist in Russia's north to this day. That is why this North Rus' republic has the rather distinctive features of an empire (Budreckis 1981: 215).

2 Until the twentieth century, the Russian Empire had neither the resources for – nor the interest in – administering the many small peoples of hunters and reindeer-breeders spread across the Siberian taiga and expanses of polar tundra, satisfying itself with the collection of a tribute (*jasak*).

3 See first of all Ramusack 2004; also, Judd 2004; Peers 2006.

4 There are authors who date the appearance of such a state to a much later time. They claim that the foreign policy of many European countries (except for England) remained dynastic even in the eighteenth century. See Teschke 2002; 2003; Gerstenberger 1990.

5 Discussions over the applicability of neo-realist international relations theory to medieval European politics continue. See Ruggie 1993; Teschke 1998; Fischer 1992; Hall and Kratochwil 1993; Fischer 1993.

6 About this reform, see: Frost 2015: 473–476; Kiaupa 2006 (2004): 9; Machovenko 1999: 34–44, 70–84.

7 A precise chronology is still an object of discussion. There are authors who place the end of this process in continental Europe in the nineteenth century, when universal conscription was introduced, along with universal (primary) education and the press, and when the rate of urbanisation accelerated (Weber 1997 [1976]). Our image of this process is complicated further by the fact that some of these states became the metropoles of colonial empires soon after the process of state formation was complete. Besides, in England and Spain, cultural homogenisation in the metropole remained incomplete, with Wales, Catalonia and the Basque Country preserving their separate cultural and political identities.

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14 The Grand Duchy as an empire with adjectives

Understandably, historians may compare the Grand Duchy to more than just Russia to conclude that the former was not an empire. Any of the more prominent star empires or groups thereof can serve as a standard or exemplary empire for research purposes. As is known, the Roman Empire is the favourite benchmark of historians – a real superstar empire. In such cases, the maximum or ideal-typical concept of empire is used (see chapter three). Compared to the ideal-typical empires, the Grand Duchy pales and fades, looking like what distinguished Lithuanian historian Zenonas Butkus called "a straw empire".[1] But a "straw empire" is nonetheless an empire, especially as in the Middle Ages, when there were other even less "bright" cases (like the recently mentioned Plantagenet or Angevin Empire).

Metaphors aside, by using ideal-typical or maximum concepts for empire we can detail the characteristics of the Grand Duchy as an empire, considering it as a case of one or another "diminished" empire type. To recall, "diminished" empire types lack one or more of the ideal-typical attributes of an empire. The definition of empire used in this book can be useful at this point. According to this definition, an ideal-type empire is a sovereign polity that surpasses its neighbours in terms of the area of its territory, and has all the four attributes typical of empires. The Grand Duchy did have all four from the mid-fourteenth century to Vytautas' death in 1430 – with reservations for the nominal suzerainty of Poland's king Jogaila, also the supreme duke (*supremus dux*) of the Grand Duchy, over his vassal Vytautas, the grand duke (*magnus dux*) of the Grand Duchy. During the other periods of its existence, it was an "empire with adjectives", lacking one or another imperial attribute. Once it adopted a policy of strategic defence, it became a peaceful empire almost until the years of the Livonian War (1558–1583), no longer engaging in wars where it struck first.[2] When it started to tolerate Muscovy's rulers titling themselves "rulers of all of Rus'" (Sirutavičius 2002: 13–15), it withdrew its regional hegemonic aspirations even at the political rhetoric level (its days of real hegemony ended from Vytautas' times), remaining solely a regional, non-hegemonic empire.

We can gather together more types of "empires with adjectives" from other ideal-typical empire concepts, which include even more attributes. Such attribute-rich concepts of empire make the set of "empires without adjectives" even more narrow. From the variety of such strict and narrow empire concepts, we singled out and discussed in more detail Barfield's concept (chapter seven). As far as I can gather, of the five attributes of "primary" empires Barfield mentioned, the Grand Duchy could really only lay claim to two.

First of all, it was a stable empire, one that did not fall after the death of its creators. That fall often means an empire's disintegration into an interpolity system consisting of polities ruled by the founder's descendants, all competing for the imperial legacy. This kind of disintegration is especially likely in patrimonial empires, which have no or almost no formal institutional structures, while the empire itself is an alliance of individuals associated with the ruler and his family through personal loyalty links. The Grand Duchy was precisely this kind of empire during the first two centuries of its existence. Its "characteristic tenacity" (Rhode), its ability to survive, to overcome the succession crises suffered by patrimonial states after a ruler's death, was exceptional, especially when compared to its predecessor, the Rurikid Empire, whose legacy the early Lithuanian Empire sought to overtake. The trajectories of development of the patrimonial hegemonic empires established by the seafaring Vikings (Normans) and the land-based Vikings (Lithuanians) in the same region were opposite.

The Rurikid patrimonial empire very soon turned into the anarchic interpolity Kievan Rus' system, while the Gediminid Empire transformed into an institutional state, even attaining certain features of a territorial empire. The ancient Lithuanian state even managed to outlive the dynasty that made it an empire, as the Grand Duchy's statehood remained even when it became a constituent part of the federal Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. At first the Grand Duchy's ruling elite was limited to the ruling dynastic line, which perhaps included some remnants of the ancient ducal families that intermarried with the ruling dynasty (the Giedraičiai – Giedroyc – and Alšėniškiai – Holszanski – lines). Gradually (most likely during Vytautas' times), its core became the ethnic Lithuanian magnate families, distinguished for their military service and personal loyalty to the ruler, who were not blood relatives of the Gediminids.

The Grand Duchy's ruling elite demonstrated characteristics typical of the ruling elites of "primary empires", accepting into its inner circle increasing numbers of the landlord magnates from the subordinated Orthodox peripheries and assimilating them. What I have in mind is not ethno-cultural but political cultural assimilation. As the Lithuanian metropolitan aristocracy differentiated itself from the vertical Lithuanian ethnie, the identity core of this new horizontal Lithuanian ethnie became its belief in its Roman origins, not its Romanised Slavic dialect (this was how the rural Balts were perceived by the Lithuanian ruling elite). By the second

century AD, in the Roman Empire, a majority of senators (and later, the emperors themselves) were from once-conquered provinces. Similarly, in the state of Muscovy, in the late sixteenth century it was the Tatar descendant Boris Godunov who rose to the tsar's throne. So, too, the magnate lineages from the Orthodox peripheries (the Chodkiewicz and Sapiega lines) became part of the inner circle in the Grand Duchy's ruling elite. By the sixteenth century, they were staunch patriots and loyalists of Lithuania, no less than the surviving magnate lineages of ethnically Lithuanian origin (the Goštautai or Radvilas). Some of them even claimed descent from Lithuanian military colonists, settled in the Ruthenian peripheries in the fourteenth century.

The Grand Duchy did find ways to manage and administer its economic, religious and ethnic variety – to solve that problem that the governments of ancient polities faced after subjugating wide territories inhabited by people with nothing in common (like Lithuanians, Turkmens and Yakuts in the former Soviet Union). As was recently explained, methods of indirect rule dominated in this regard, giving the Grand Duchy a "liberal" British physiognomy (chapter thirteen).

Nevertheless, the rulers of the Grand Duchy also resorted to the means of internal consolidation and control which the ancient Assyrians were the first to systematically implement (Oded 1979). The same means later became a "trademark" method applied by Muscovy's rulers. It involved deportation of the ruling class or even entire ethnic groups from the newly subordinated or rebellious territories. The exiles, finding themselves in a hostile, usually outright adverse, environment far from their homeland, had to rely on the central imperial government as their only real protection. Exiles themselves could become the central government's local backbone. This was especially typical in those cases when the minority in exile was granted privileges that the local population was not. Empires do not just transfer subjugated populations from one location to another, but also people from its metropole, thereby colonising less densely inhabited frontier zones and creating bases and strongholds for military-political control over the peripheries and for further expansion.

Gudavičius believes that this was how an ethnically Lithuanian island appeared far from ethnic Lithuania, in Obol'cy (Обольцы in the Vitsebsk region of Belarus). Algirdas had transferred entire villages there from ethnic Lithuania for provision of his armies venturing further eastward (Gudavičius 1999: 143). This explanation for the appearance of this Lithuanian island (and maybe even of some others) in the Ruthenian lands is more believable than the conjecture that they were remnants of autochthonous Balt settlements. This was the opinion of Jerzy Ochmanski (see Zinkevičius 1987: 60). Zigmas Zinkevičius suggests an intermediate approach:

> Perhaps it was only privileged individuals who were transferred there, who even before the introduction of Christianity lithuanianised the

> locals who spoke in similar Baltic idioms. It is hard to believe that in those days ordinary peasants would have been relocated somewhere far away in the East. At least, there is no evidence to suggest this happened in historical sources. The deployment of warriors and people from the ruling strata to lands subordinated to Lithuania is something quite different.
>
> (Zinkevičius 1987: 60)

However, it is difficult to consider Obol'cy a Baltic island left over from early times, as this is a place on the ancient road from Vilnius to Smolensk and Moscow. Baltic islands had a better chance of survival in more remote areas, further away from the military-political centres and main roads of the time. I cannot agree with the claim made by Zinkevičius, that sources suggest only soldiers and officials were transferred from place to place in the Grand Duchy. In fact, there are sources testifying that already quite earlier on (in the times of Traidenis) refugees from Prussia, Sūduva (Yotvingia), and later Žiemgala (Semigallia), were settled not just in ethnic Lithuania, but also in the lands of Black Rus' subordinated to the still young Lithuanian state.

Artūras Dubonis researched precisely this practice of settling the military servicemen of the Grand Duchy's rulers in villages (military colonies) near the boundaries of the ruler's domains or just beyond them (in Samogitia and the Panemunė defensive castle system zone).[3]

> The largest resettlements of Lithuanians must have occurred from the end of the thirteenth century to the first decade of the fourteenth century. The movement of whole ethnic groups, or people in general, was entirely at the will of the grand duke of Lithuania. On the other hand, this resettlement of the population – there was a major shortage of people in Lithuania – could have led to a reduction in population density in some places in Lithuania in the fourteenth century.
>
> (Dubonis 1998: 67)

The *volosti* (districts) of the Panemunė stretch of castles were settled with such military colonists, called *leičiai* in sources.[4] Later, they were brought under the jurisdiction of the Samogitia eldership.

The most well-known example of imperial "demographic engineering" in the Grand Duchy's history was, of course, the settlement of Tatars and Karaites in ethnic Lithuania near its capital of Vilnius when Vytautas was in power. The replacement of Lithuanian *leičiai* with Tatar *leičiai* is a typical outcome of the early Lithuanian state's "imperialisation". The rulers of empires in the East formed such elite military units from ethnic minority representatives (for instance, the Mamluks in Egypt and the Janissary detachments in the Turkish Ottoman Empire). Similarly – and maybe even following "Eastern" examples – the Grand Duchy's cavalry of "its own"

Tatars served as a grand duke's personally loyal counterweight to "its own" aristocracy or an army formed from "its own" men.

Another attribute shared by the Grand Duchy with primary empires (in Barfield's sense) is the relative stability of its borders once territorial expansion ceased. It is this attribute that allows empires to leave a lasting trace in history – they exert an influence on the cultural and political evolution of the former peripheries even after their "death". The western and northern borders of today's Lithuania are not very different from the western and northern borders of the Grand Duchy.[5] Its eastern borders were less stable, coming under attack from Muscovy from the late fifteenth century. Yet the line where Muscovy's attack was temporarily halted in 1514 after the battle of Orsha is the ethnic and political border of the Russian and Belarusian lands even today. The earliest beginning of the Belarusian and Ukrainian nations' ethnic uniqueness goes back to the times of Kievan Rus', when the ethno-cultural and political uniqueness of the Polatsk, Halych and Volhynia lands was also very strong. However, the incorporation of these former Kievan Rus' lands into the Grand Duchy's empire provided the right political conditions for their populations to evolve into separate Eastern Slavic nations. The very historical memory of their belonging to the Grand Duchy remains an important component in contemporary Ukrainian and especially Belarusian identity.

Numerous ancient empires fell, leaving behind only the memory of having been a "prison of nations". Those that did not fall, and became large nation states, were ethnic and cultural graveyards or melting pots where ancient nations and cultures disappeared almost without a trace, having become the "ethnic substrate" of new nations. Similar amalgamation processes took place in the Grand Duchy also, where the products of "high culture" created through the Polish language had an increasingly stronger influence on cultural life from the early fifteenth century onward. Their consumers were the ruling elite (the magnates, the *pany*; primarily the clergy), and later the broader nobility (*szlachta*), too. Nevertheless, the complicated ethno-cultural processes that took place in the Grand Duchy did not end with universal Polonisation, but with the creation of several modern nations (Lithuanians, Belarusians and Ukrainians). That is why the Grand Duchy goes down in history not as a prison of nations or a melting pot, but as a cradle of nations. This is probably the most important distinctive feature of the Grand Duchy as an empire.

Barfield's other primary empire attributes (chapter fifteen) are more difficult to detect in the Grand Duchy's history. This might be because aspects of the Grand Duchy's past that are important in order to identify these attributes remain under-researched. According to the influential view (see Introduction), comparative studies of empires is an approach or research program that can also be applied to "non-traditional" objects, ones that do not have the reputation of being an empire in traditional historiography (Gerasimov et al. 2005: 53). It could be that this approach has the most to

offer in the case of such non-traditional objects. By looking at a polity as if it were an empire for the first time, we may spot in its history something new, or perceive as significant those aspects or historical facts that never appeared to be important. In this respect, imperial historiography does not differ from those truly or allegedly "outdated" approaches in historical studies that were once very innovative, highlighting facts and sources that once appeared second-rate or worthless.

For example, Marxist sociological theory once inspired historians to research manor inventories, the best surviving source to learn about that which Marxists considered most important in history: relations between manor lords and the peasants dependent on them – the "feudal" mode of production. Meanwhile, historians who associate themselves with the "new cultural history" very eagerly search for sources about symbols and rituals of power in rulers' courts from the same period (for example, coronation ceremonies; e.g., Wortman 2006). These aspects are of no interest or importance to Marxists, as from their viewpoint they only offer information about the epiphenomenal, idiosyncratic and ephemeral ornaments of the political and ideological "superstructure".

The new questions raised in comparative imperial studies might be the most important contribution this "imperial approach" makes to learning about history. After all, answers can always be disputed (that is why history is akin to science). The content of those questions depends most on the very concept of empire and imperialism. An ideal-typical or maximum concept of empire means that more questions can be raised that are themselves more varied than what is possible with the minimal concept. Here, the most important thing is to identify as precisely as possible which cases belong to the empire population, so that a data set can be created encompassing all empires or a sample thereof. With such a data set, researchers can test at least a few quantitative hypotheses about "all" empires. For historical studies with their classical interest in unique cases, ideal-typical empire concepts may just be more interesting and fruitful, because they may shed new light or provide a new focus on the past.

Another important attribute of primary empires that Barfield distinguishes is a developed transport system, securing the centre's (metropole's) regular traffic with the periphery. In the case of continuous continental empires (in Motyl's sense; see chapter seven), their infrastructure is a road system, which has a radial structure with the metropolitan city in the centre. Classic examples are the road systems in the Achaemenid, Roman, Byzantine and Incan empires. An internal waterways system can serve as its complement or substitute, where the essential element are canals or portages connecting rivers (China, the Russian Empire). I did not find any specialist studies concentrating on the road network of the Grand Duchy. The object of such research should be not only a geography of roads (the most easily identifiable), but the seasonal particularities of how this system functioned, transport speed, the kind of freight being transported and routes taken, plus

the economics of this transport: the supply and demand of these transport services, their structure and how these demands were met.

These questions are important not just as far as Barfield's concept is concerned, but also to the ideal-type theory of empires and imperialism, which is part of Immanuel Wallerstein's capitalist world system analysis. He considered empires as the political superstructures of economic worlds. Among experts in the history of the Grand Duchy, Rowell paid most attention to its economic infrastructure, namely, the trade routes crossing its territory. Most probably, this is not just a coincidence, as he is also the historian who most consistently claims that the Grand Duchy was indeed an empire. He notes that the Grand Duchy's rulers ensured peace across large territories. This peace opened long-distance trade routes that would have been closed off under conditions of political anarchy.

In his view, the role of early Lithuanians in Eastern Europe can be compared to the role that the Romans once played with their *pax romana* or the Mongols. At the height of their power (from the second half of the thirteenth to the first half of the fourteenth centuries), goods could be safely transported from China to Crimea, crossing the immense steppes stretching from Mongolia to the Black Sea. At around the same time, Lithuanians controlled significant sections of the ancient "road from the Varangians to the Greeks", so critical to the livelihood of Greater Novgorod, and its branch along the Daugava River leading to Riga.[6]

> Like the Ottomans in Byzantine Asia Minor, the Tatars in Rus' and other warrior societies, the Lithuanians left their subject people in peace in return for armed service and payment of taxation. We can speak of a *pax lituanica* which safeguarded the commercial routes between the Baltic and Tatar Black Sea, northern Germany and Rus'.
>
> (Rowell 1994: 294)

Nevertheless, there is no data to suggest that the imperial statehood of the Grand Duchy was based on a separate economic world whose borders would impose some "natural" limits on territorial expansion. As mentioned already in chapter five, the "economic world" in the sense of Braudel and Wallerstein is a region whose parts are interconnected by a territorial division of labour and inter-local trade exchange. Trade just in luxury (prestigious consumption) goods does not make trading regions parts of the same economic world. Indicators for the formation of an economic world are bustling trade and financial centres like the Champagne fairs in medieval Europe, and later the cities of Bruges and Antwerp, along with considerable inter-local trade in bulk goods and staple commodities.

Important transit trade routes crossed the territory of the Grand Duchy. However, there were no trade or financial centres that could compare to Greater Novgorod, Cracow or even Riga. Vilnius surpassed both Riga and Tallinn in size in the sixteenth century. However, it achieved this as

a political imperial city (Keene 2005), not as the centre of an economic world. When, how and to what extent the Grand Duchy got involved in the early capitalist world system emerging in the sixteenth century is a very open question, and is only just starting to be researched (Žiemelis 2005; 2006). Progress in this research can help to answer another question – what urged the Grand Duchy to resume territorial expansion in order to seize all of Livonia, after a break lasting over a hundred years? Why did the Grand Duchy adopt a passive stance when Muscovy seized Tver and Greater Novgorod, but with every last ounce of its strength seek to prevent Muscovy's capture of Narva, Revel or Riga? (See also the last chapter in this book).

Once it has been established that the Grand Duchy was an empire without an imperial road system or an economic world, which would have ensured an economic foundation for the political unity of its lands, we find that its communications – information circulation – system was also less than spectacular. Spaces lacking a road system are hardly conducive to the formation of a satisfactorily functioning communications system. As historians claim, a majority of the roads connecting the Roman Empire's provinces with the metropole were not intended for the transport of goods, but for the army to march along, and to facilitate the movement of postal couriers (Luttwak 1976). Information transfer, and goods or human traffic are different things altogether. This was the case already before the nineteenth century, when technologies were invented to transfer information in other ways than just through people travelling from one place to another. What is important when assessing communication systems is not only the speed of information transfer, but also how information is stored, whether it is operatively processed and whether the reaction to new information by the receivers is timely and adequate.

I already presented Motyl's explanation of the imminent decline and ultimate fall of empires, based on Karl Deutsch's (1963) analysis of the weaknesses of totalitarian regimes (chapter seven). According to Motyl, the probability of mistaken decisions in an imperial centre increases as an empire expands, because the information streams grow together with an empire's size, becoming ever more difficult to handle. *Ceteris paribus*, or given the available communication and information processing technology, the larger an empire, the larger the relative share of inadequate decisions of the central government. The threat that the government will eventually grow detached from reality increases. The detachment means that government responds not to actual events, but to delayed, fragmented and distorted representations of these events. In order to neutralise this trend, the governments of sustainable empires spare no efforts or funds to create a working communications system as soon as they can. So Barfield has good reason to consider a regularly operating state postal system, archives, chanceries, a *lingua franca* for administrative correspondence and efforts to standardise the measurement system as attributes of a primary empire. The Mongol Empire created

by Genghis Khan differs from its predecessor nomadic steppe empires in that it had these arrangements and technologies (and is thus worthy of being called a "primary" empire). Muscovy inherited them from the Tatars, as we know from the Tatar origins of the ancient Russian words for postal service (*jam, jamskaja služba, jamščik* – ям, ямская служба, ямщик).

The Grand Duchy's communications system cannot compare to these examples from its neighbours and competitors. Since Vytautas' times, there is evidence about the "substations" (Lith. *pastotė*) service (which until a certain time did not differ from the postal service) imposed on the Grand Duchy's peasants. Most likely, the subordination of a particular land to the authority of the Grand Duchy's ruler included the introduction of a substation service (if one did not already exist). Historical sources still wait for researchers willing to explore how the communications system of the Lithuanian Empire was organised and operated. Thus far, we get something of a picture by reading the works of historians who examined these sources looking for information about a related but different topic: the organisation and operation of the Grand Duchy's diplomatic service (Banionis 1998). Yet it is possible that a fair amount of valuable information can be found in local history (of cities and towns, and separate locations) and its sources. Other promising sources are documents and other evidence related to the customs system (not just that of the Grand Duchy).

More is known about the central government offices system, as the product of its operation has survived – the Lithuanian Metrica.[7] Despite not being particularly impressive, the Grand Duchy did have a functioning central chancery, mandatory for an empire. The language used for these administrative purposes was originally the Church Slavic language, because it was the working language of the only literate subordinates of the Grand Duchy's rulers, the Orthodox clergy.[8] As was already noted in chapter eleven, the use of a "foreign" language for administrative purposes in the Grand Duchy was nothing peculiar or exceptional. Instead, this practice was typical among many other ancient empires. Note too, the universal use of the "dead" Latin language in medieval Europe.

Central Grand Duchy's government offices remained under-developed, as the statehood of the Grand Duchy evolved along the lines of federalism, not along those more typical of the transformation of a hegemonic empire (based on indirect rule) into a territorial empire. Egidijus Banionis noted that "the Grand Duchy, covering an enormous territory, essentially remained uncentralised" (Banionis 1998: 36). From its days as a hegemonic, indirectly ruled empire to its later transformation into a federation, the Grand Duchy as a political organism managed to rather successfully perform without the aforementioned primary empire attributes. Of course, the reservation is necessary that future research on the Grand Duchy's transport and communications systems could provide a basis for a review of this claim.

A review is less likely on the question of whether the Grand Duchy had an imperial idea, and if so, what that was. A primary empire has an

imperial ideology at whose core lies a certain universalist idea or project substantiating its rulers' claims to universal authority or distinction. It explains why they are not ordinary kings of kings or dukes, but rather the kings of *all* kings, or the rulers of at least all the Christian (or just the "real" Orthodox Christians) or all the Muslim rulers. The rulers of the Grand Duchy did not have this kind of imperial idea or such universal claims to suzerainty. For most historians, this is (and will probably remain in the future) the main obstacle to acknowledging the Grand Duchy as an empire. However, the absence of such claims only meant that the Grand Duchy was neither a universal nor a primary (or, in the common parlance, "first-rate") empire.

The Grand Duchy did have an imperial idea, but it was a second-rate imperial idea, typical of Barfield's so-called "vulture empires". They emerge in the frontiers of declining empires or in their peripheries, when a fallen empire's subjects, clients or allied satellites subjugate a portion of its territory (including the former metropolitan area). The Grand Duchy was a vulture empire that sought to conquer Kievan Rus', the remnant of the ancient Rurikid Empire. This was Algirdas' imperial idea. Vytautas extended it to the seizure of the entire legacy of the Golden Horde. The Gediminids failed to realise either of these ideas. Muscovy's rulers, however, did succeed, but that is another story.

I disagree with the leading Lithuanian scholar in the comparative analysis of cultures, Antanas Andrijauskas (2006), when he projects the famous evolution of civilisation schemes of Oswald Spengler (1981 [1918–1922]) and Arnold Toynbee (1957: 4–75) onto the history of the Grand Duchy. In these schemes, an "empire" or "universal state" is a late phase in "cultural" (Spengler) or "civilisational" (Toynbee) development. In fact, some "primary empires" did emerge in this way, but even then, not all of them. If a sign of "civilisation" is considered the existence of "some wider, potentially universal political and cultural orientation that went beyond that of any of their component parts" (Eisenstadt 1968: 41), or simply the appeal of its values or way of life to the surrounding "barbarians", then all of this was missing among pagan Lithuanians. There is a lot of source information about how quickly they adopted the Rus', Polish or German way of life, but we have no knowledge about processes that might have occurred in the opposite direction.

Its lack of "soft power" was the main weakness of the Grand Duchy as an empire. Primary empires get soft power by an outwardly perceived higher level of culture or civilisation, making the metropole not just the centre of an empire's military or economic power, but also its most important centre of culture. Intellectuals from the peripheries are drawn to its intense cultural and spiritual life. These kinds of resources started appearing in Lithuania after its Christianisation, but these were resources adopted from Poland. Their appropriation and transfer along the eastern peripheries gradually

altered the identity of the Grand Duchy's political nation (the horizontal ethnie), transforming it into the identity of *gente lituanus, natione polonus* – the identity of members of the Lithuanian sub-nation within the Polish macro-nation (see Gudavičius 2002: 187–188).

The Lithuanian political nation's assimilation into the Polish political nation took place very rapidly in the seventeenth century within the joint state of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Its imperial or quasi-imperial project became the idea of serving as *Antemurale Christianitatis* (bastion of Christianity). Once the Counter-Reformation triumphed, Christianity was identified with Catholicism. With this interpretation, the imperial idea of the Commonwealth as *Antemurale Christianitatis* did not serve as a connecting beam, but a dividing barrier precluding the integration of Orthodox Ukraine. Had Protestantism taken the upper hand during the Reformation in the Grand Duchy, East European international politics could have taken a completely different turn. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth would have had to resist only Russia, not Russia and Sweden – the pre-eminent Protestant North European empire of the seventeenth century. The antagonism between the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Sweden was not just the result of their conflicting interests over Livonia, but also the claims of the Catholic branch of the Vasa dynasty to the Swedish throne. Had these claims been realised, the Jesuits would have found their way to Scandinavia.[9]

Notes

1 Personal communication with Zenonas Butkus.
2 After Vytautas death, there were numerous Muscovite-Lithuanian wars, but only one of them was initiated by the Grand Duchy. This was the so-called Starodub War (1534–1537). However, even the Starodub War can be called an offensive war only with reservations, as its aim was to reclaim lost territories from Muscovy. In addition, the Grand Duchy started this war by refusing to extend the truce, not by actually terminating a permanent peace treaty.
3 Area along the right bank of the Nemunas River between today's cities of Kaunas and Jurbarkas.
4 See Dubonis 1998, which provides the analysis of this social group in the Grand Duchy. The closest equivalent to *leičiai* in the social structure of medieval Western Europe may be the ministerials.
5 The only important change is that part of Lithuania Minor (the Klaipėda Region) was joined to Lithuania proper in 1923.
6 Due to the decline of Byzantium in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, that road was no longer as important as the Volga River. Thus, it was more important for Greater Novgorod to maintain good relations with the princes of Muscovy than with the Grand Duchy.
7 A collection of legal documents from the fourteenth to the eighteenth centuries from the Chancery of the Grand Duchy.
8 A few scribes with working knowledge of Greek, Latin, and even Tatar languages were employed at the grand duke's court from the fourteenth century, too, but they were used only for international diplomatic correspondence.

9 For more about the Reformation in the Grand Duchy, see: Bumblauskas 1987; Lukšaitė 1999, Pociūtė 2008, and others. To read about the confessional and power-political factors at play in North European international politics in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see: Derry 1979, Kirby 1990, Nordstrom 2000.

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15 On the dates of birth and death of the Lithuanian empire

Everything that has existed had not just an end, but a beginning as well. The claim that the Grand Duchy was an empire entails research questions about its beginning and end. On 6 July, contemporary Lithuanians celebrate the beginning of the Lithuanian state, commemorating the crowning of Mindaugas as the first and only king of Lithuania in 1253. Perhaps the national holiday calendar needs to be updated with two other dates: to celebrate the beginning of the empire, and to mourn its end? Three variants are possible for the "day of mourning". The first would be 28 March. This was the day when the last Gediminid ruler of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and King of Poland, Sigismund Augustus, promulgated the incorporation of Podlasie and Volhynia to Poland in 1569 (Gudavičius 1999: 638). Two months later, the Grand Duchy lost the palatinates of Kyiv and Bratslav, entering into the Lublin Union on 1 July 1569 without the Ukrainian lands.

The second possible date for mourning the lost empire could be 31 August: on this day in 1449, representatives of the Grand Duchy's ruler, Casimir, and the Grand Prince of Muscovy Vasilij II signed a treaty by which the Grand Duchy renounced its imperial idea – to conquer all of Rus'. In my view, it would be most apt to make 14 July the new national day of mourning for Lithuanians. On 14 July in 1471, the Muscovite army crushed the forces of Greater Novgorod at the Shelon' River. This nearly coincided with the 61st anniversary of the victory on the battlefield in Grunwald on 15 July 1410 against the Teutonic Order. Not a single soldier from the Grand Duchy's army fell in the Shelon' River battle, but on that day the Grand Duchy suffered a crushing defeat on par with its triumph in Grunwald (see also chapter seventeen below).

Once Muscovy subjugated Greater Novgorod, the power balance in Eastern Europe swung in its favour. As a result, the Grand Duchy paid with a series of painful military defeats in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, losing a third of its territory. This day should not just be a day of mourning, but of shame as well. That summer, the Grand Duchy did not behave like an imperial great power should, one that had for centuries struggled to rid Rus' of Tatars and their henchmen, the Muscovite princes. When it refused to perform the duties of an East European great power, for many

centuries (perhaps even for all time), the prospects of another, democratic Russia were obliterated on the battlefield.

I shall return to the two last shameful dates marking the end of the Grand Duchy as an empire in the last chapter. Let us first tackle its beginning, a somewhat more difficult task – primarily because the Grand Duchy was an "informal" empire, where not a single ruler claimed the title of emperor (with some exceptions made for Algirdas). Nevertheless, the issue of the beginnings of the Grand Duchy as an empire is discussed in historical literature, only in different terms than those used in this book. This claim can be substantiated by the observation that historians offer different answers to the question: when did the early Lithuanian state become a "grand duchy", and its rulers "grand dukes"?

Not all authors who answer this question raise it explicitly. Up to a certain time, they call Lithuania's rulers simply "rulers" or "monarchs", while later on they refer to them as "grand dukes" and to their state as the "grand duchy". These terms are regularly used in relation to the times of Gediminas and his heirs. However, there are occasions when Mindaugas' Lithuania is also called the "Grand Duchy of Lithuania". In the six-volume *History of Belarus*, Vjačaslaŭ Nasevič boldly states: "it could be that it [the Lithuanian state – Z. N.] started being called the Grand Duchy of Lithuania from the times of Mindaugas" (*Gistoryja Belarusi* 2008, t. 2: 75).[1] How easily scholars forget the same principles of hermeneutic methodology that are lovingly recalled to criticise the idea of the Grand Duchy as an empire. In the strict hermeneutic sense, the Grand Duchy could not be called a grand duchy earlier than when Lithuania's rulers started giving themselves the title of "grand duke", and, in an even stricter sense, only after the rulers were titled as such by the rulers of neighbouring lands as well. If we abide strictly by the sources, the title of the Grand Duchy can be used only from the middle of the fifteenth century onward. Jan Adamus makes this suggestion, accusing historians of anachronism who call the Lithuania of the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (Adamus 1930: 318).

But who would agree that the early Lithuanian state from the times of Gediminas, Algirdas and Jogaila was not even a grand duchy? In fact, authors who do not adhere strictly to sources when answering the question about the transformation of the Lithuanian polity into a grand duchy are more interested in another question. They want to know about the beginning of Lithuania as an empire: when did Lithuania's rulers become kings of kings ("grand kings"), or dukes of dukes, i.e., emperors? (for instance Jellinek 1921 [1900]: 748–750). When we look more closely at the reasons historians use when selecting one or another date for the beginning of Lithuania as a grand duchy, we soon discover that they explicitly or implicitly apply one of the criteria of imperiality that were explained in detail in Part II of this book.

When the beginning of Lithuania as the Grand Duchy is dated to Gediminas' times, the criteria for a "grand" duchy comes from the territory's size

or its position in the international relations system: thus, Lithuania became a grand duchy when, in terms of its size and influence in international politics, it equalled its largest and most powerful neighbours. When the date when Lithuania became a grand duchy is pushed back on the timeline, then the criteria for ethnic and cultural heterogeneity is implicitly applied: Lithuania became a grand duchy when it first subordinated Ruthenian lands. Recalling Motyl's provision that in an empire, a metropole must rule over at least two different peripheries (chapter six), we could also ask – when did at least two different Ruthenian lands come under Lithuania's authority? In this event, the empire threshold was crossed when Lithuania's rulers finally took control over not just Black Rus', but at least one other former Rus' principality – Polatsk, Minsk or Turaŭ-Pinsk.

As was already shown in the second part of this book (chapter seven), some attributes of empire can serve as substitutes for others. In the definition of an empire that was "filtered" from specialist empire studies literature, the only necessary attributes for an empire were sovereignty and a large area. In order to reach a "complete set", these two attributes can be supplemented by any three of the remaining four attributes. Working with this definition, we should ask the question when did the early Lithuanian state cross the size threshold? Taagepera's criteria may be used to answer the question of how to detect the most important thresholds in an empire's territorial dynamics: an empire's emergence (E; when an empire's territory reaches 20% of its maximum stable size, M), adulthood (A; 80% of M) and failure (F; 50% of M). Taagepera's own quantitative analysis of thresholds for the evolution of the Grand Duchy as an empire is not satisfactory, not only because it is factually inaccurate, but also because Taagepera defines the object of his analysis as the Lithuanian-Polish empire, not the Lithuanian Empire (chapter four).

When we try to correct Taagepera's analysis, we soon encounter the drawbacks of exact (cliometric) methods, which are the reverse of their advantages: exact methods work well when reliable and precise data is available. However, most of the issues related to the chronology of the early Lithuanian state's territorial expansion are still objects of discussions that will hardly ever end with unambiguous conclusions. Most of the uncertainties arise over the chronology from the second half of the thirteenth to the early fourteenth centuries. The "Kyiv issue" is especially difficult: up to forty years divides the range of dates different historians have given for the subjugation of the Kyiv land (Batūra 1975: 176–120). The chronology for the addition of Polatsk is similarly uncertain (Aleksandrov and Volodixin 1994).

However, the Grand Duchy is not an exception in this regard. The same problems surface when searching for data about the early periods of other ancient empires. Contemporary observers were less attentive to polities that did not stand out from other polities in any way (not yet, at least) than to neighbouring great powers, which were viewed as threats. That is why the

first time a rising empire is mentioned in sources is when it is already a great power, whilst its early history remains in darkness.

It is worthwhile reminding readers (see also chapter four) that it is in principle impossible to measure the *exact* territorial size of a majority of ancient empires. First, a majority of ancient polities did not have precisely defined (linear) borders. It suffices to take a look at Mindaugas' acts (in this case, it is irrelevant which ones were real, and which ones were fakes produced by the Crusaders), according to which one or another Lithuanian land was signed over to the Livonian Order (Dubonis 2005: 69–70, 79–85). Apart from one (partial) exception – Mindaugas' writ of 17 August 1261 regarding the gifting of Selonia (Sėla) – there are not really any more detailed descriptions of the boundaries of the lands being given away. Second, empires cannot really have defined borders, so long as their territorial expansion phase is still underway. They do not have borders but undefined boundaries (*limes*) or "frontiers" – wide bands of settlement whose subordination was not defined.

These characteristics are very distinct in the case of the Grand Duchy (Bucevičiūtė 2015; Čelkis 2014). Up until the fifteenth century, it was separated from its neighbours on all sides by either uninhabitable areas or condominiums. Lithuania was separated from the Teutonic Order's domains and Livonia by especially wide uninhabitable areas of undefined authority. These boundaries were only more accurately defined as part of the Treaty of Melno of 1422. A band of districts subordinate to two authorities, whose legal status was rather comprehensively researched by Valentin Janin (1998: 48–59), separated the domains of the Grand Duchy and Greater Novgorod. The Grand Duchy's boundaries around the higher reaches of the Oka River were also left vague, where the further East one looked, the more Ruthenian principalities were encountered that "served both sides" – the rulers of Lithuania and Muscovy. In the fourteenth century, the Grand Duchy's boundaries in the south and southeast were completely undefined, the Kyiv land was a condominium of Lithuania and the Golden Horde for a long time, as were Podolia and Volhynia (Šabuldo 2004). There were probably no strict agreements about the division of the uninhabitable areas in the south and southeast with the Tatar khans, as the very idea of such division was foreign to the "political culture" behind Tatar foreign policy.

After the fall of the Golden Horde, when several Tatar political entities (mainly the Great Horde and Crimea) fought one another for supremacy, their khans continued to consider themselves the suzerains of all of Eastern Europe. They treated the rulers of the Grand Duchy and Muscovy as merely the governors of lands under Tatar suzerainty. These rulers had to pay for the right to administer the "Tatar lands," otherwise the Tatars believed they could extract tributes themselves, by looting these lands and taking part of their populations captive. It is a paradox, but the Grand Duchy only attained a stable and definable southern border in 1569, when it lost its southern lands in present-day Ukraine just before the signing of

the Lublin Union. Due to all these circumstances, the application of Taagepera's method for studying the imperial dynamics of the Grand Duchy can only give approximate results.

Yet in this regard, the case of the Grand Duchy is not exceptional. Taagepera's recommended 10% margin of error applies for all the following measurements of the size of the Grand Duchy until the sixteenth century and even later. There is another difficulty that arises over the history of the Grand Duchy's relations with Poland, which were unique in many senses. The calculations for thresholds of imperial territorial dynamics (E, A, F) are grounded in the concept of the Taagepera Integral (TI) and the maximum stable empire size (M), explicated in chapter four. According to the definitions of these concepts, the values of TI and M depend not just on how the beginning of an imperial polity's history is dated, but also on where its final point is placed.

In the case of the Grand Duchy, there are two main alternatives for this kind of dating. First, the history of the Grand Duchy can be concluded with the Lublin Union in 1569, when its history as a separate actor (subject) in the international relations system ended. As we know, several years before the Lublin Union, in 1561, the Grand Duchy annexed a large part of Livonia, and soon afterwards, in 1563 (though only de facto, not de jure), it lost Polatsk. If we end the history of the Grand Duchy in 1569, then after suddenly shooting upwards in 1561, the TI curve just as suddenly breaks off in 1569. The Grand Duchy would disappear at the moment of its failure, with no preceding contraction period. Then it should appear as a very untypical empire, because a majority of empires contract before they fail, and after their failure (as Taagepera defines it) they survive for a longer or shorter time as smaller non-imperial or post-imperial polities.

Second, along with a majority of historians of the Grand Duchy, we may claim that the statehood of the Grand Duchy did not evaporate when it became a part of the federation or confederation with the Polish crown (Jučas 2000; Vansevičius 1988). In this case, its history can be extended until 1791 – when the Four-Year Diet (1788–1792) of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth passed its constitution in May 1791 – or until 1795, as is accepted in the Lithuanian historiographical tradition. Due to this difficulty, the TI and its derivative variable values (E, A, F, as well as the rise and duration of the Grand Duchy as an empire R and D) shall be calculated twice: first, assuming that the Grand Duchy as a state ceased to exist in 1795; second, that this happened already in 1569. When this has been done, we will be able to check whether the conclusions are robust: are they dependent on changes in assumptions about the end date of the Grand Duchy?

In my own calculations on changes to the Grand Duchy's territory according to Taagepera's method, I will draw upon the standard authoritative sources in Grand Duchy historical geography. The most important sources are the articles by Lithuanian geographer Kazys Pakštas for Vol. XV of the *Lithuanian Encyclopaedia* called "The area and borders of the

Lithuanian state" (Pakštas 1968), and the contribution "Territory, administrative division" by the Belarusian historian Vjačaslaŭ Nasevič for the *Encyclopaedia of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania* published in Belarus (Nasevič 2007). However, their indications contain so many gaps and contradictions that I could hardly come up with the curve of the early Lithuanian state's territorial changes needed to measure the TI, had I not supplemented or tested their results with my own measurements. I used the electronic planimeter *Digiplan 305* produced by the German HAFF company. I made my measurements using maps created by the Vilnius University Cartographic Centre that are an appendix in Gudavičius' *History of Lithuania* (Gudavičius 1999), and the maps that feature in the magisterial *History of Lithuania* edited by Adolfas Šapoka (Šapoka 1989 [1936]).[2] It would have been impossible to limit myself to the cartographic material in the first work alone because (unfortunately) to this day only the first volume of Gudavičius' work has been published, which chronologically spans the history of the Grand Duchy only up to 1569. I also consulted maps published in the Belarusian *Encyclopaedia of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania* (*Vjalikae knjastva Litouskae* 2007 [2005], t. 1–2).

Most uncertainties arise over the boundaries of the Lithuanian state in its early period. Nasevič claims this area for thirteenth-century Lithuania: 27,000 km^2 for Samogitia (Žemaitija); 64,000 km^2 for Lithuania "proper" (present-day Aukštaitija, Dzūkija and today's West Belarusian lands then inhabited by Lithuanians); 23,000 km^2 for Black Rus' (Navahrudak, Slonim, Vaukavysk, Hrodno); 114,000 km^2 in total (Nasevič 2007: 34).[3] This figure most likely reflects the boundaries of Mindaugas' state, given in the map featured on Nasevič's website, "Lithuania in the mid-thirteenth century".[4] Here, Lithuania includes also the Skalvian, Nadruvian, and a majority of the Yotvingian lands, as well as the Selonian territory as far as the Daugava River.[5] When calculating the TI for the Lithuanian Empire, I shall accept this estimate that Nasevič proposes for 1250.

Kazys Pakštas offers a similar area for the "Lithuania proper" (including Black Rus') – 120,000 km^2 (Pakštas 1968: 451). He also claims that, at the end of Mindaugas' rule, the Polatsk and Minsk lands (70,000 km^2) had also come under Lithuania's authority. Besides that, he includes the "land between the Bug and Narew rivers, in total, around 20,000 km^2". According to his conclusion, "in Mindaugas' times, the maximum area of Lithuania could have been around 200,000 km^2" (Pakštas 1968: 451), even though all his given figures add up to 210,000 km^2. All these claims are probably based on another famous monument in the Grand Duchy's historical cartography – the political map of Lithuania in the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries in the authoritative book edited by Adolfas Šapoka, where the lands of Polatsk and Minsk, and the "land between the Bug and Narew rivers" (the future Podlasie) are marked as constituent parts of Mindaugas' state. In the map appendix to the book by Gudavičius (1999), however, the Polatsk and Minsk lands are depicted as "lands under the influence of

the Grand Duchy, ultimately subordinated during the times of Vytenis", while the subordination of the Drohiczyn land (Podlasie) is dated to after Mindaugas' reign.[6] The areas of the Polatsk and Minsk lands according to my measurements are significantly smaller (47,000 km^2) in comparison with Pakštas' claims. The area of Drohiczyn is also smaller – 8,100 km^2 (a map from Šapoka's book is used). Thus, the maximum area of Mindaugas' state (1263) should be 175,000 km^2 (without the Drohiczyn land) or 183,000 km^2 (including the Drohiczyn land).[7] The first of these figures (175,000 ± 17,500 km^2) will be used hereafter to calculate the TI of the Grand Duchy.

The Lithuanian state could not expand during the internal fighting in the years after the death of Mindaugas. The very scarce historical sources about the reigns of Traidenis, Butigeidis and Butvydas suggest that the state most likely suffered territorial losses, rather than expanded. It was pressured by Volhynia in the south. In 1275, Volhynia had reclaimed Drohiczyn, which Traidenis had briefly conquered, and by 1289 it had also conquered Vaukavysk. In the west, the Crusaders conquered Nadruvia and Skalvia in 1274–1277. Yet their subjection to Lithuania at all does raise doubts, mainly regarding its central government's weak response to the Order's affronts, which was limited to the acceptance of refugees. In the north, in 1290–1291, the Livonian Order ended its more than ten-year-long conquest of Semigallia (formerly under Lithuania's authority), but in 1281 the Lithuanians managed to gain control over Dünaburg (Daugavpils; until 1313). If we assume that, during this whole time, Lithuania's rulers remained as suzerains in the Polatsk and Minsk lands, the area of the Lithuanian state in 1290 can be estimated at 160,000 km^2 ± 16,000 km^2 (based on the map in Gudavičius' book). Lithuania entered the fourteenth century having subjugated Ceklis (the present-day districts of Plungė, Kretinga and Skuodas in Lithuania), but due to the Livonian Order's intrigues, it briefly lost control of Polatsk (until 1307) . Thus, the total area of the state did not change much (151,000 ± 15,000 km^2).

When Vytenis was still in power (1296–1316), Lithuania's area started to increase again – first in the direction of the upper reaches of the Daugava and Volga rivers, where Tatars and their Ruthenian satellites posed the least resistance to the Lithuanians' expansion. Valentin Janin's research (Janin 1998; see also chapter ten) suggests that Lithuania entrenched itself in the watershed region of the Daugava and Volga rivers back in the times of Vytenis (Janin 1998: 53). This means that, at the same time, the Vitsebsk land was also within Lithuania's hegemony sphere, being ultimately subordinated in 1320. Thus, the area of the Lithuanian state then could have been around 218,000 km^2 ± 21,800 km^2. During another decade, under Gediminas (1316–1341), the lands of Kletsk, Slutsk, Turaŭ and Pinsk had come under Lithuania's authority, too (until 1330). They had been under Lithuania's sphere of hegemony, with short intervals, already from the times of Mindaugas. The same happened to territories controlled by Volhynia after the extermination of the previous inhabitants, the Yotvingians. These

lands were colonised by immigrants from Mazovia, transforming it into a land known as Podlasie. When these new areas are counted, the territory of the Grand Duchy in around 1330 reached 282,000 km^2 ± 28,200 km^2.

The greatest triumph in territorial expansion from the times of Gediminas was the annexation of Volhynia in 1340, when its prince became Gediminas' son, Liubartas. According to the planimeter measurements made on the map in Gudavičius' book, the area of Volhynia was 69,000 km^2. Liubartas could have also reigned over Halych for some time. In the political map of the Grand Duchy in 1345–1430 compiled by Viktor Temušev (1975–2011), that was published in the *Belarusian Encyclopaedia of the Grand Duchy*, part of Halych is marked as a territory over which the Grand Duchy and Poland feuded.[8] Nevertheless, the decision to incorporate Halych into the domains of the Grand Duchy, even for a short time, has little basis in fact. Gudavičius says that the status of Halych in this period has not been sufficiently clarified (Gudavičius 1999: 126). What is most important is that even if Halych had been under the Grand Duchy's authority, that subjugation was short-lived, and nominal (as actual power was in the hands of the local Ruthenian aristocracy). Already in 1349, taking opportunity of the Grand Duchy's defeat in the battle of Strėva (1348), Poland attacked Lithuania and occupied not only Halych, but also a larger part of Volhynia and Podlasie. Fighting over these lands, with intervals and to varying success, lasted for two decades. According to the peace treaty of 1366, the area of Volhynia that remained under Lithuania's authority was 39,000 km^2. In 1370, Lithuanians reclaimed some of these lands. In this way, over two-thirds of the territory of Volhynia (45,000 km^2) remained subordinate to Lithuania. The boundary between its western part, under Poland, and its eastern part, ruled by Lithuania, stayed unchanged up until the Lublin Union.[9]

Add the entire territory of Volhynia to the indicated area of 282,000 km^2 and we have 351,000 ± 35,000 km^2 – the size of the territory of the Grand Duchy at the end of Gediminas' reign. It coincides with the size Pakštas indicated (350,000 km^2), and is a bit larger than what we get when we measure Gediminas' empire area in the boundaries charted in the map in Šapoka's book (317,000 km^2) (including those territories that are marked as "contested territories"). However, the difference disappears if, following Janin, the lands along the upper reaches of the Daugava River are included (another 31,000 km^2). This is the area at the juncture of the Tver, Smolensk and Greater Novgorod domains.

The area of the Grand Duchy at the beginning of the 1340s should be significantly enlarged, having accepted the solution to the "Kyiv problem" where the addition of the ancient Rus' capital to the Grand Duchy is dated to the 1320s or 1330s. However, in these decades the condominium between the Golden Horde and the Grand Duchy in Kyiv was most likely in place (Šabuldo 2004). The Gediminid ruler established in Kyiv probably acted as the same kind of Tatar henchman ("vassal") as the Rurikid before him. The Grand Duchy could not have attained complete authority in the

Kyiv land before the victory at the Blue Waters (1363), which allowed it to take control over Podolia as well.

If the chronology of the conquest of Kyiv is dated to an earlier time, it would be consistent to do the same with the territory along the right bank of the Dnieper River (the cities of Mahiliou, Babruysk, Rahachow and Rechytsa in today's Belarus). The same applies to the chronology of the addition of its opposite bank to the Grand Duchy, as it is difficult to imagine the firm hand of Lithuania's authority in Kyiv without also having control over the waterways leading to the city. These sub-Dnieper River areas are known in historical geography as the Sub-Dnieper districts of the Grand Duchy (49,000 ± 4,900 km^2, according to my measurements). In the map in Gudavičius' book, they are marked as having been part of the Grand Duchy already in Gediminas' times. Yet maps in Šapoka's book and the *Belarusian Encyclopaedia of the Grand Duchy* consider it, like the Kyiv land, booty only from Algirdas' times (1345–1377).

Although the early hegemony of the Grand Duchy in the Sub-Dnieper region does not raise any doubts, this territory's division into districts belonging to the duke of Vilnius, and others subordinated to the duke of Trakai, testify to its ultimate conquest probably in the beginning of the dyarchy of Algirdas and Kęstutis (mid-fourteenth century). If we accept this presumption, the territory of the Grand Duchy in around 1350 would have been around 400,000 ± 40,000 km^2.[10] This area does not include the small principality of Mstislau (5,000 km^2), which was seized from the Smolensk princes in around 1358.[11] At almost the same time (1355), the boundaries of the Grand Duchy were pushed further northwest, where the territories at the juncture of the Greater Novgorod and Tver lands (11,000 km^2), along the upper reaches of the Volga River, came under its authority (until 1377). Thus, towards the end of the 1350s, we can consider that the area of the Grand Duchy would have been 416,000 ± 41,600 km^2.

After the victory at the Blue Waters, the territory of the Grand Duchy increased to 611,000 ± 61,000 km^2. This growth was due to the large lands of Kyiv (132,000 km^2) and Podolia (63,000 km^2). Poland claimed the lands of Podolia too, launching a protracted conflict over their control.[12] Other acquisitions from the second half of Algirdas' reign were Briansk (24,000 km^2), in around 1370 when Algirdas appointed his son Dmitrij as prince of Briansk (Gorskij 1996b: 89–91, 96), and the lands of Chernihiv and Novgorod-Siversky (45,000 km^2) at the same or a later time. When the total area of the Grand Duchy is measured at the end of Algirdas' reign, we must take into account the territorial changes in Volhynia, where 24,000 km^2 from its total area of 69,000 km^2 came under Poland's authority (after 1370), and in Podolia, where Lithuania lost 15,000 km^2 of its western part. Thus, the area of the Grand Duchy at the end of Algirdas' rule was 640,000 ± 64,000 km^2. This is less than the "over 700,000 km^2" that Pakštas indicates (1968: 452), but a little more than what Nasevič suggests (630,000 km^2). The difference can probably be explained in that Pakštas most likely followed the map

in Šapoka's book (it is reprinted in Pakštas' article), where the territory of the Grand Duchy is depicted as reaching the Black Sea already in Algirdas' times.

Territorial losses also accompanied the period of internal instability between Algirdas' death in 1377 and the consolidation of Vytautas' power in the 1390s. The Grand Duchy lost for all time the lands it ruled in 1355–1377 along the upper reaches of the Volga River (11,000 km^2). The lands of Eastern Podolia interchanged between Polish and Lithuanian rule. In the heat of fighting against Vytautas in 1391, Jogaila transferred Podlasie to the duke of Mazovia in exchange for military assistance, a large part of which (all except for Drohiczyn) Jogaila returned to Lithuania in 1408. It came back to Mazovia briefly (after the murder of Žygimantas Kęstutaitis) before returning to the jurisdiction of the Grand Duchy (now with Drohiczyn) in 1444. We shall ignore such short-term perturbations of the Grand Duchy's western boundaries when calculating the TI and the values of variables derived from it. However, something that cannot be overlooked is the loss of Samogitia (23,300 km^2) in 1382–1409.[13]

Samogitia was sacrificed on numerous occasions, allowing the rulers of the Grand Duchy to have their hands free for territorial expansion in the east. Before the end of the fourteenth century, this expansion had resulted in some new achievements. In 1398, the Grand Duchy reached the Black Sea, where the Tavan Castle was built not far from the mouth of the Dnieper River (see Gudavičius 1999: 199). After its defeat at the Vorskla, Lithuania could have weakened its hold over the large, almost uninhabited Yedisan area at the Black Sea coast between the lower reaches of the Dnieper and Dniester rivers, or it could have become part of a condominium with the Tatars. Yet this does not appear as a sufficient reason for postponing this area's addition to the Grand Duchy, as it is also difficult to find unambiguous or definitive chronological information in other sources.

The Smolensk princes had acknowledged the suzerainty of the Grand Duchy for a while already in Gediminas' times (Gorskij 1996a: 40). Later, they would sometimes march together with Algirdas against Muscovy, at other times seeking Muscovy's support against Lithuania. The ultimate annexation of Smolensk can be dated to 1404. The earlier date of 1395 is also possible, when Vytautas replaced the Smolensk princes with his governor. Nevertheless, the struggle for Smolensk was not over yet, as one of the outcomes of the Vorskla defeat was an uprising in 1400, which saw the return of the Rurikid Jurij Ivanovich to power in Smolensk, who was only deposed after several military campaigns.

The victory at Grunwald did not only return Samogitia (23,300 km^2) to Lithuania for all time, but it also allowed Lithuania to strengthen and entrench its authority in the east.[14] Lithuania's stronger position in the upper reaches of the Oka River should be dated to the 1410s. The first time this area came under the Grand Duchy's sphere of hegemony was back in Algirdas' times, and again when Smolensk was captured. Over time, Lithuania's

strongholds in the upper reaches of the Oka River area became the directly ruled cities of Liubutsk and Mcensk (Gudavičius 1999: 388). After the peace of 1408 with Muscovy and Vytautas' increased standing after the Grunwald victory in 1410, the ruler of the Grand Duchy became the top arbitrator in the minor feuding between the Rurikids over these lands, infighting over the inheritance of fragmenting patrimonial domains. According to my definitions (see chapter six) this amounted to inclusion into the sphere of the Grand Duchy's hegemony, and then into the periphery of its informal empire. One of the consequences of Vytautas' much stronger influence on Tatar internal politics in the 1420s would have been the eastward shift of the Grand Duchy's boundaries as far as the Samara and Oskol Rivers in today's left-bank Ukraine. Ever since the times of Matvey Liubavski, they have been indicated in historiography as the eastern boundaries of the Grand Duchy within contemporary Ukraine's left-bank territory.[15]

When measuring with a planimeter, the area of Yedisan is 88,000 km^2, the Smolensk land is 49,000 km^2, the principalities in the upper reaches of the Oka are 45,000 km^2, while the steppe area between the Psiol River in the west, the Samara in the south and the Oskol in the east is 102,000 km^2. The entire area of the Grand Duchy in the last years of Vytautas' reign (1425–1430) was 928,000 ± 93,000 km^2. This figure is almost the same as what Pakštas identified: "making the necessary corrections, the true area of Vytautas' empire in 1430 should be 930,000 km^2 or a little more" (Pakštas 1968: 452). We shall henceforth use this rounded figure from Pakštas. It is much larger than the one given by Nasevič– 687,000 km^2 (Nasevič 2007: 35). The difference arises because Nasevič decided not to include the steppes near the Black Sea in the Grand Duchy's territory, as they were "almost uninhabited" (Nasevič 2007: 35).

Nasevič's argument fails to convince, because in that case the territories of present-day Russia or Canada should omit the polar tundra areas, likewise for the desert zones of Australia or Libya. It also remains unclear how Nasevič, indicating the area of the Grand Duchy to the precision of a thousand kilometres, managed to mark the line dividing "almost uninhabited" territories from those that were sufficiently densely populated to be counted towards the state territory of the Grand Duchy. The maximum area of the Grand Duchy could be "expanded" to reach 1,000,000 km^2, provided its boundary were to be pushed eastward (as far as the headwaters of the Don River). In fact, the location of this boundary was never truly clear, and Tula, which I have not included, actually did belong to Lithuania for some time. The inclusion of the principality of Riazan', which did acknowledge the Grand Duchy's suzerainty at the end of Vytautas' reign, would serve the same purpose.

But that would be as arbitrary as Nasevič's decision to take away its glory of being a state reaching from the Baltic to the Black seas, if even for a few decades. Let us be "satisfied" with Pakštas' 930,000 km^2. Taagepera's recommended 10% margin of error allows avoiding arbitrariness and finding a

compromise between the different calculations of the Grand Duchy's maximum area. It completely compensates for the inaccuracies in our existing information and the absence of linear borders.[16] Thus, it can be said that the Grand Duchy could have been a "millionaire", but we cannot claim this as established fact. We can only hope that, in the future, research on the Grand Duchy's historical geography will find ways of reducing this error.

However, Nasevič is most likely correct in considering the territory of the Grand Duchy in the last decade of Vytautas' reign as its maximum area. Immediately after his death (1430), the Grand Duchy lost Western Podolia (21,000 km^2). Then the area of the Grand Duchy stabilised for several decades to around 910 000 ± 91,000 km^2. We can forego minor and sometimes only temporary changes to the western border of the Grand Duchy in Poland's favour in this period. The Grand Duchy lost Yedisan in the south in 1485. The sultan of the Ottoman Empire needed these lands along the Black Sea coast to ensure land contact with the Crimean khanate, his vassal from 1475 (Pakštas 1968: 454).

The eastern boundaries remained stable for a long time after Vytautas' death. Making the most of the internal wars in the state of Muscovy in the 1430s and 1440s, the Grand Duchy even subjugated some of the smaller domains that previously did not have an obvious suzerain. Larger conflicts began when Muscovy seized Greater Novgorod, where it violated the Grand Duchy's fiscal rights in the boundary belt districts (*volosti*) attained back in the fourteenth century. The sparks of an unproclaimed borderline war smouldered even before the death of the king of Poland and grand duke of Lithuania Casimir (1492), that turned into an open war and ended in a surrendering agreement in 1494 (Temušev 2013). By this agreement, the Grand Duchy conceded to Muscovy all of its land seizures (87,000 km^2) and encouraged it to continue along the same path.[17]

Further on, just the dry statistics of the Grand Duchy's territorial losses will be given: until 1503 the Grand Duchy lost another 210,000 km^2, but it reclaimed Ljubeč in 1508. It lost Smolensk in 1514 along with another 56,000 km^2, as recorded in the truce settled with Muscovy in 1522. The total amount of territorial losses in wars against Muscovy reach 353,000 km^2 (more than a third of Vytautas' territory). If Yedisan, which was captured by the Ottomans (Pakštas estimates its area to have been 92,000 km^2, not the 88,000 km^2 I measured), and Western Podolia (21,000 km^2), which was lost much earlier, are counted, then from its maximum territory of 930,000 km^2 around 1430, by 1522 only 470,000 km^2 remained (496,000 km^2 according to Nasevič, and 485,000 km^2 according to Pakštas). During the unsuccessful Starodub War of 1534–1537, the Grand Duchy lost Sebezh and Zavoloch'ye, but reclaimed Homel and a rather large surrounding territory. Thus, its total area increased, and could have reached 490,000 km^2 on the eve of the Livonian War.

The "swan song" of Lithuanian imperialism followed – the conquest of Livonia. After Livonia surrendered to Sigismund Augustus in 1561, all

of present-day Latvia and at least half of Estonia belonged to the Grand Duchy. Pakštas calculated this to be 85,000 km^2 (Pakštas 1968: 457). That means that the Grand Duchy's territory briefly increased to 575,000 km^2. Yet a catastrophe was to follow: Lithuania lost Polatsk and its surrounding territories in 1563 (until 1579). I measured this to be an area of only 12,000–15,000 km^2. However, the Muscovites had the Grand Duchy's army under pressure in Livonia and surged towards the Grand Duchy's metropole. It sought salvation in a union with Poland, on the eve of which it lost Podlasie and the Ukrainian provinces – a total of 170,000 km^2 (Pakštas' calculations).

Only 320,000 km^2 remained of the Grand Duchy according to Pakštas. Nasevič mentions a smaller figure: 292,000 km^2 (Nasevič 2007: 38).[18] This difference between the sizes that Nasevič and Pakštas calculate can be accounted for if we guess that Nasevič probably refers to the factual territory of the Grand Duchy in 1569 without the lands Muscovy had by then conquered (Polatsk), while Pakštas might have still included part of Livonia. I believe that the loss of Polatsk, which did last for quite a long time, should be noted accordingly. That means the area of the Grand Duchy immediately after the Lublin Union would have been 305,000 km^2. The size of the territory actually controlled by the Grand Duchy in 1569 was larger, because at this time it did still include a majority of Livonia. In 1572–1576 the Muscovites pushed the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth's forces back as far as the Daugava River. However, the energetic efforts of the new ruler, Stephen Bathory (1576–1586), did deliver military success.

A detailed look at the changes in area of the Lithuanian-controlled territory in Livonia as the front lines of this war moved back and forth is neither possible nor necessary (as far as calculating the TI is concerned). Let's just say that until 1569, most of Livonia was under the Grand Duchy's control, except for the city of Riga, the islands of Hiiumaa and Saaremaa. This control did not extend also to Livonia's northern part near Tallinn, that Swedes and Muscovites captured at the very beginning of the war. The remaining part under the Grand Duchy's control makes up the 85,000 km^2 that Pakštas mentioned. After 1569, Livonia became a condominium of Poland and the Grand Duchy (Sliesoriūnas 2015: 78–81).[19] That is why around half of Livonia's area (42,000 km^2) can be added to the 305,000 km^2 that remained under the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth's authority after the treaties signed with Muscovy and Sweden, ending the Livonian War. With the inclusion of this new imperial periphery, the area of the Grand Duchy would have been 347,000 km^2 immediately after the Lublin Union (when the Muscovite-occupied Polatsk land had still not been recaptured), and 365,000 km^2 by the end of the Livonian War (including Polatsk, which Muscovy returned, and the small Velizh land).

In 1618, with the assistance of Poland, Lithuania recaptured Smolensk and many other lands that it had lost in the early sixteenth century. Their total area according to the conditions of the Deulino truce was up to 74,000 km^2

(according to my measurement of the map in Šapoka's book). That would mean an increase in the total size of the Grand Duchy's area to almost 440,000 km^2 – or 397,000 km^2 if we do not count half of the Livonian territory that was part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Nasevič offers a similar figure (380,000 km^2) for the Grand Duchy's area after the Deulino truce of 1618 as well. In Livonia in 1629, the Commonwealth had already lost southern Estonia, Vidzeme and Riga after unsuccessful wars with Sweden. According to my measurements, these losses diminished the size of the Grand Duchy to 405,000 km^2. Only half (7,000 km^2) of the Livonian palatinate (Inflanty; presently the Latgale region in Latvia) is added to the main Grand Duchy's territory (including the lands temporarily reclaimed from Muscovy). To recall, since 1569 the Grand Duchy was confederated with the Kingdom of Poland, jointly ruling the lands of former Livonia. Therefore, from the total area of the Livonian palatinate (14,000 km^2) we should notionally subtract the Polish share.

The duchy of Courland is no longer counted – while it was nominally a common vassal of the ruler of the Grand Duchy and Poland, after 1629 it had become a de facto independent buffer state between the Commonwealth and Sweden (Bues 2001). The duchy of Courland did not just have independence in terms of its internal affairs, but also conducted its own foreign policy whose aim was to protect its neutrality in conflicts between the Commonwealth and Sweden. It even acquired overseas colonies (the island of Tobago near the north east shore of South America and Gambia in Africa). They should also be included (applying the reasoning provided at the end of the former paragraph: half their area) in the territory of the Grand Duchy if we decided to consider Courland part of the Grand Duchy.

After the 1632–1634 war with Muscovy and the "correction" of the border to the benefit of its eastern neighbour, the Grand Duchy again suffered territorial losses (Serpeisk, Trubchevsk and Novgorod-Siversky), a total area of 30,000 km^2 according to Nasevič (Nasevič 2007: 39). Pakštas probably discounted them in advance when he stated that in 1618 the Grand Duchy increased by only 56,000 km^2, growing from 320,000 to 376,000 km^2 (Pakštas 1968: 457). Besides that, the 376,000 km^2 figure clearly does not include the common lands shared with Poland in Livonia. The figure of 56,000 km^2 is only acceptable if it refers to the area that after the recapture in the 1610s remained under the authority of the Grand Duchy until the 1654–1667 war with Muscovy. In this case, the entire area of the Grand Duchy in 1654 can be calculated as the sum of the area of the Grand Duchy in 1582 (320,000 km^2), half of the area of Latgale (7,000 km^2) and the territory recaptured in the east according to Pakštas (56,000 km^2). The total sum (around 381,000 km^2) is very close to what Pakštas provides (376,000 km^2).[20]

After the Andrusovo truce with Muscovy in 1667, Pakštas states that the area of the Grand Duchy would have been 320,000 km^2. It is uncertain whether he took into account the border correction between the Grand

Duchy and Poland's domains in the Sub-Dnieper region, and the amendments to the borders with Muscovy in the Grand Duchy's favour in 1678, when the districts of Sebezh, Nevel and Velizh were returned, as Nasevič does. He claims that in 1678 the area of the Grand Duchy was 306,000 km^2 (Nasevič 2007: 39). This figure is important in measuring the Grand Duchy's TI, as afterwards the Grand Duchy's borders remained the same for an entire century. When the Grand Duchy's border in the map found in Šapoka's book (1989 [1936]) is measured, leaving out the Livonian (Inflanty) palatinate, the result is 299,000 km^2. Add half the area of that palatinate's territory and we get the same number that Nasevič mentions. I shall use it in further calculations.

According to Pakštas, after the first partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Grand Duchy lost 85,000 km^2 (or 87,000 km^2 according to Nasevič), and was left with 250,000 km^2.[21] However, Nasevič mentions that the remaining area of the Grand Duchy should be much smaller – only 219,000 km^2. The differences between the figures Nasevič and Pakštas give probably arise because Pakštas included Courland in the Grand Duchy's territory in 1772. However, by then the duchy of Courland was already under the de facto control of Russia. So let's use Nasevič's figure. During the First Partition, the Grand Duchy lost Latgale (Inflanty). As a result, all the difficulties in assessing the Grand Duchy's area arising from Latgale's status as a common domain of both the Grand Duchy and Poland are also gone. Nasevič does not give the Grand Duchy's area after the Second Partition (1793), though Pakštas does: 132,500 km^2.

All of these changes are reflected in the graph depicting the dynamics of the Grand Duchy's area, where the horizontal axis denotes time, and the vertical axis shows area (see Fig. 15.1). I drew the graph by joining all the points of reference explained above. As was already mentioned, until the fifteenth century, the Grand Duchy's expansion in the east was a continual process (albeit, with "ebb" periods), where it is rather difficult to discern with great precision the chronological markers by specific peace treaties and truces. If such treaties did exist, they have either not survived to our days, or defined no precise (linear) borders. That is why, when drawing the graph's line for this period, the points discussed earlier were simply joined by a straight line. Further on, there are more angles in the graph line as we find treaties punctuating Grand Duchy border changes, and the borders themselves are demarcated with greater accuracy. Nevertheless, area statistics remain approximate until the end of the seventeenth century. I hope that it will not be long before historians of the Grand Duchy will conduct more specialist research to eliminate the shortage of accurate information about the historical geography of the Grand Duchy's borders, which becomes obvious when we try to apply cliometric methods in the research of its history.

I measured the area under the graph of the dynamics of the Grand Duchy's territory from 1250 to 1795, getting approximately 250 cm^2. After recalculating this figure according to the graph's scale, we find the TI of the early

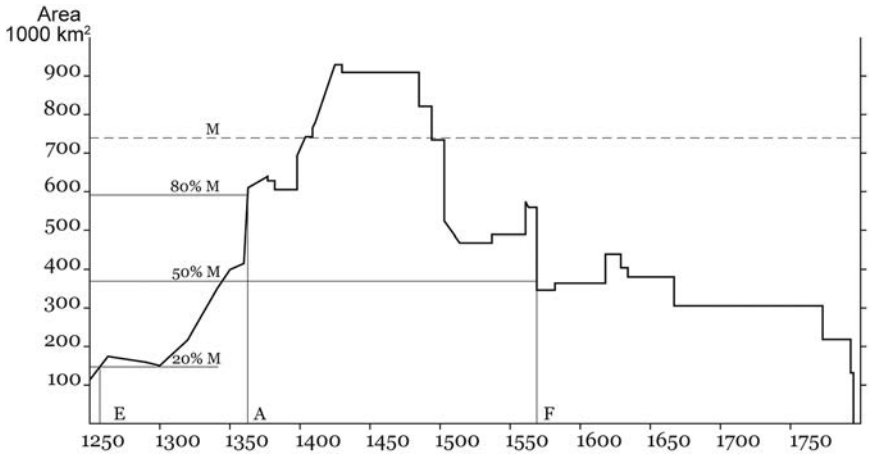

Figure 15.1 Dynamics of the area of the ancient Lithuanian state in 1250–1795. E – empire's emergence, A – adulthood, F – failure, M – maximum stable area. Constructed by author with the assistance of Tomas Mrazauskas and Antanas Voznikaitis.

Lithuanian state: 2.5 million km²C. We must recall (see chapter four) that large polities that existed for a short time have a small TI, while a comparatively small yet stable polity (one that existed for a longer time) can "make" a large TI.[22]

When this result is compared to Taagepera's figures (1978: 191), we discover that the TI of the Grand Duchy surpasses almost all the empires from the first phase in the history of empires (3000–600 BC), except for the semi-legendary Xia and Shang empires in China (6.2 million km²C) and the new Egyptian Empire (4.4 ± 1.3 million km²C). The TI of the Grand Duchy is not especially impressive compared to the TI of the Roman Empire (21 million km²C; Taagepera 1979: 134). However, if we do not compare the Grand Duchy to "record-breakers" from the second phase (600 BC–600 AD), then it would be nowhere near the bottom of the list, but could compare to Ptolemaic Egypt (2.5 million km²C) and surpass Bactria (2.4 million km²C).

Of course, from the perspective of hologeistic comparisons, the early Lithuanian Empire should be compared to its contemporaries – that is, empires from the third phase (after 600), second era (1200–1600) as Taagepera himself does (see Figure 4.3).[23] Unfortunately, he does not provide his data about the TI for empires from this period. When we look at his graphs of their territorial expansion (see Figure 4.3), we can gather that the Grand Duchy was indeed one of the smaller empires.

Subtraction of 5% of its area from the TI integral gives us the Grand Duchy's maximum stable area (M): around 740,000 km². This was its area in the beginning of the fifteenth century, when it had added lands near the

Black Sea and Smolensk (but still did not have Samogitia). 20%, 80% and 50% of these areas is 148,000 (E), 592,000 (A) and 370,000 (F) km^2 respectively.[24] The first important conclusion to be made based on these numbers is that the early Lithuanian state started turning into an empire in Mindaugas' times (ca 1260), as its area was already over 148,000 km^2. Regardless of the territorial losses from the second half of the thirteenth century, its area was probably never smaller than the first of these three threshold sizes that Taagepera distinguishes in the history of empires.

The Grand Duchy crossed the second (adulthood) threshold between 1360 and 1365, when it conquered the Kyiv and Podolia lands. These chronological conclusions would probably not change even if another solution to the "Kyiv problem" were considered (one that pushed the dating back to an earlier time). A sufficient area to reach the adulthood (A) threshold is achieved when the area not only of the Kyiv, but also that of the Podolia lands is included in calculations. Accepting Taagepera's definition for an empire's rise time (A – E), we can state that this phase in the Grand Duchy's history lasted for 100 ± 10 years. Meanwhile, the duration of the "adult" or "mature" empire of the Grand Duchy would be 200 ± 10 years (F – A). 1569 is indeed the year of the Grand Duchy "failure", as a reduction to 50% of its maximum stable area (M) suffices to call this a fall. That is precisely what happened in 1569 when the area of the Grand Duchy decreased to 320,000 km^2 (Pakštas), 292,000 km^2 (Nasevič), 305,000 or 347,000 km^2 (my estimates: first excluding and then including half of Livonia under the rule of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth).

Would these conclusions be any different if 1569 were held to be the end of Lithuania's statehood? When the respective area is measured in Figure 3. 1., we find that the TI of the Grand Duchy would then be 1.71 million km^{2}C.[25] Its maximum stable area increases to 790,000 km^2 (this would have been possible in around 1415–1420), E increases to 158,000, A to 632,000, and F to 395,000 km^2. These new numbers may surprise readers, and rightly so. After all, a cliometric analysis is worthless if it fails to provide observations or insights that at first glance appear counter-intuitive. In fact, there is no paradox here: the maximum stable area of a short-lived empire increases, but the actual period when the empire is of this size decreases in duration. It takes longer to reach such a larger area, but it is also lost at a faster pace, which is what higher adulthood and failure threshold values signify.[26]

These new A-, E-, F- and M-values entailed by ending the history of the statehood of Lithuania in 1569 do not mean that we must reject the conclusion that the imperial history of the early Lithuanian state started in Mindaugas' times. Indeed, after Mindaugas' death (1263), the area of the Grand Duchy contracted from 175,000 ± 17,500 km^2 to some 151,000 ± 15,000 km^2 in around 1300. However, according to Taagepera's criteria, this temporary contraction below the first threshold value does not demand moving the emergence threshold to a later date. Meanwhile, adulthood would need to be dated to a somewhat later time (by the end of Algirdas' reign). That is

why the duration of the Grand Duchy's rise period as an empire becomes slightly longer (up to 110 ± 10 years), while the period of its duration (F – A) accordingly decreases (down to 190 ± 10 years). When these results are compared to Taagepera's findings, we find that the Grand Duchy belongs to the group of empires whose rise took relatively longer (Rome's rise lasted for 140 years, while the Hun Empire's rise took only 60 ± 20 years), and (perhaps) therefore they were more stable.[27] "Bright" or not, the Grand Duchy was no meteor, compared to many of the empires created by steppe nomads.[28]

Statisticians do have ways of working out which newborn happens to be the 600,000th resident of Vilnius, or the 3,500,000th Lithuanian, but I have less faith that historians, applying Taagepera's methods, will ever manage to calculate the birthday of the Lithuanian Empire. The pre-Vytautas and Vytautas-era figures for the dynamics of Lithuania's area can be questioned quite easily. The enormous margins of error pose an insurmountable obstacle in identifying a precise date when its territory first exceeded 20% of M. There is not much hope that future research will reduce these margins to any extent. However, even if the time when the area of Lithuania did cross the E threshold were precisely identified, this date could only be noted as the birthday of the Lithuanian Empire with reservations. Taagepera's empire definition does not require them, but they are necessary in terms of the working concept of empire outlined in this book.

According to my empire definition (see chapters three and seven), 20% of the maximum stable area (plus sovereignty) is just a necessary, though not yet a sufficient condition for being an empire. Lithuania's imperial birthday could be celebrated only if we were certain that at least three of the alternative four empire attributes were also satisfied at the suggested date.[29] Mindaugas-era Lithuania and post-Mindaugas Lithuania did not have them. The Golden Horde stood in the way of Mindaugas' attempts at compensating for the transfer of Lithuanian territories to the Livonian Order by engaging in territorial expansion into the East (see chapter ten). So long as the Horde remained a strong power, the rulers of the Grand Duchy could not even dream of hegemony in Rus'. Even though post-Mindaugas Lithuania always ruled Ruthenian lands that recognised its suzerainty or hegemony, the Lithuanians (actually, the Balts) still made up the majority of the population. This, too, is uncharacteristic of an empire. A metropolitan core, approximately coincident with the ruler's domain, was in the making, though there is no real evidence as to how it formed, consolidated or developed. Zenonas Ivinskis, who was one of the co-authors of the *History of Lithuania* edited by Šapoka, claims that Traidenis (1268/69–1282?) "was a *ruler* of the purely *national* and *pagan Lithuania*, i.e., his prime concern was ruling over and defending all the Lithuanian lands, he showed less concern over additional conquests" (Šapoka 1989 [1936]: 61).

If that is true (and it hardly is), it means that Traidenis was not an imperialist, and the Lithuania of post-Mindaugas times was still not an empire or

a "grand duchy", yet it probably did not lose Taagepera's imperial qualification.[30] It most likely only acquired the set of at least three alternative imperial attributes in Gediminas' times, when territorial expansion into the East gained momentum. Lithuanians (Balts) became a minority, while the bulk of the territory they inhabited (together with the Ruthenian territories that had been subjugated the earliest and integrated into the ruler's domain) became the directly-ruled territorial state centre (metropole) – one that was clearly distinguished from the indirectly-ruled peripheral lands (such as Polatsk and Vitsebsk). In the early fourteenth century, the rulers of the Grand Duchy intently tried to bring Samogitia under direct rule as well, but it appears they must have abandoned these goals later on.

Thus, Lithuania became an empire like Gediminas' empire. This conclusion is neither surprising nor new (Stephen C. Rowell and William Urban reached the same conclusion), which is why it is most likely correct.[31] I could only add that, until the 1440s, it was primarily an empire of Gediminas, or the Gediminids, not of Lithuania. It became Lithuania's empire when it crossed Doyle's "Augustan threshold" – when it acquired a form of institutional state organisation, giving it long-lasting sustainability. The ruler's personal characteristics and his personal relations with his relatives and court ceased being a matter of life or death for the state's continuity. When it crossed this threshold, the Grand Duchy's empire did become a transpersonal institutional entity, separate not just from the ruler's persona, but also from his dynasty or lineage. Chronologically, this threshold was crossed during the two decades following Vytautas' death (1430–1447). Unlike Taagepera's thresholds for E (emergence), A (adulthood) and F (failure), it can only be detected using qualitative analysis.

Until a certain time, the Grand Duchy was the Gediminid patrimonial domain, one that the members of his house ruled over together, obeying the will of the most energetic and authoritative offspring of Gediminas (or a tandem thereof), who personally ruled the metropolitan lands. Because holding rule over these lands was the main condition for supremacy within the Gediminid progeny, Lithuania always had a territorial core, even when it was a "personal alliance" type of state (*Personenverbandstaat*).[32] In these times, "Lithuanian-ness" meant belonging to a group of people who considered themselves the subjects or servants of the ruling dynastic house, and having a common homeland – a territory of their origin.

Because of the specific circumstances surrounding the emergence of the Lithuanian state, which shall be discussed in the next chapter, this metropolitan territory encompassed Ruthenian lands as well already in the late thirteenth century. They had been politically subjected to the Lithuanian monarch during the decades of the state's creation (1240–1260). The first generation of military servicemen that Mindaugas had permanently settled there viewed Navahrudak or Slonim as a foreign, conquered land. For their descendants, however, it would have been their homeland Lithuania, much like it was for their distant descendant Adam Mickiewicz.[33] Although

reliable sources concerning the landholding and governance for these lands exist only from the fifteenth century (entries made in the Lithuanian Metrica), it may be presumed that, already in the late fourteenth century, there were no fundamental differences between these "Inner Lithuanian" lands, still ruled by Rurikids in the thirteenth century, and Mindaugas' homeland of "Outer Lithuania".[34]

Arvydas Norkūnas suggests this designation, calling Black Rus' and other Kievan Rus' lands still largely inhabited by Balts between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries "Inner Lithuania", and distinguishing it from "Outer Lithuania": territories populated by the pagan Baltic tribes (2001: 138). He draws an analogy between the separation of territories inhabited by Baltic tribes into the part that was ruled by the Rurikids, Orthodox and Slav-colonised by the thirteenth century, and the pagan part that avoided their rule, and the division of Mongolia in the early twentieth century. Mongolia was divided into Inner Mongolia that was subject to China (now colonised by Chinese and sinicised) and the autonomous Outer Mongolia, which was the precursor of the contemporary independent Mongolian state. By the late fourteenth century, both "Outer" and "Inner Lithuania" belonged to the domain of the Grand Duchy ruler's that was divided into the duchies of Vilnius and Trakai in the mid-fourteenth century, which were directly ruled by the Grand Duchy's "dyarchs". The majority of the manors of the Grand Duchy's military aristocracy and its military-political elite could also be found there.

Subjugation to the Grand Duchy's authority hardly affected landholding relations in other former Rus' lands where the local "political societies" formed back in the times of Kievan Rus' still existed. In these indirectly ruled lands, the Grand Duchy's central authority was manifested only through its representative appanage dukes, the Gediminids. The strength of this authority depended on the cohesion of Gediminas' progeny. As with other patrimonial states, the greatest threat to the Grand Duchy's existence were crises over succession – the struggle for superiority within the ruling house, and thus, the highest authority in the state. During interregnums, territories of the Grand Duchy that had been under the authority of its vassals the Rurikids were in a legal sense left beyond its boundaries as a state. The only association linking them to the Grand Duchy remained an oath of personal loyalty to a deceased ruler.

The low level of statehood in the Grand Duchy was also exhibited in the famous wording of the Krewo Act about the "adjoinment" or "incorporation" (*applicare* in Latin) of the Grand Duchy to the Kingdom of Poland. It had real practical consequences – vicegerents and Polish military garrisons sent by Jogaila from Poland appeared in the lands of the Grand Duchy. However, the enormous differences in political, economic and cultural levels in the two polities made the actual incorporation of the Grand Duchy into Poland impossible in the fourteenth century. The opposition of the Lithuanian metropolitan nobility was another obstacle, one Poland's political

elite had neither the resources nor sufficiently strong interest to suppress. The result of this compromise was a regime of Vytautas' personal rule from 1392 to 1430, at the end of which the Gediminids' imperial dreams were for a short time realised.

Vytautas' main innovation was the removal of his overly Orthodox and slavonified Gediminid relatives from the "tables" of the Ruthenian lands. They were replaced by vicegerent Catholics. Vytautas selected them from the Grand Duchy's metropolitan nobility who had no kinship relation to the ruling house. In his famous ideal-typical morphology of legitimate domination, Max Weber singled out one version called "sultanistic patrimonialism" (Weber 1978 (1922): 231–232, 1006–1069). During the years of Vytautas' reign, its features did become apparent in the political structure and ruling practice of the Grand Duchy. This was an authoritarian ruling regime whose head had "despotic" control (meaning, he ignored written and unwritten tradition), was surrounded by officials he had personally promoted "to the top" from the lower ranks of the social hierarchy, and kept a "personal guard" for his own security, usually assembled from military units consisting of foreigners who stood out from the mass of "his own" nationality's military forces. The Tatars settled in the surrounds of the metropolitan centres (Trakai and Vilnius) became Vytautas' "guard", while Gediminid princes were replaced in his inner circle by military servicemen of lesser origin who proved their personal loyalty during the period of internal power struggles in 1382–1392. Vytautas consolidated their newly elevated social status by generous land and tributary population appropriations.

Sultanistic patrimonialism stands out from other forms of traditional domination in that it adheres least to tradition (and thus has the greatest ability to change it) and lends instability to the ruler's own position. A typical end to a ruler's career under the conditions of sultanistic patrimonialism is a coup within his court and a violent death. Only the cleverest of rulers, or those who have earned unparalleled personal standing, manage to avoid such an end. Vytautas was this kind of ruler. The attempts of both his heirs – Švitrigaila (1430–1432) and Žygimantas Kęstutaitis (1432–1440) – to rule using Vytautas' methods ended in violent coups. The first lost his throne, the second – his life. In both cases, the initiators of the coups were the ruler's own close officials, whose positions were under threat of the sultanistic rotation of the highest ruling elite (demotion or violent liquidation of the old, and promotion of the new) that had already begun (in Švitrigaila's case) or was merely expected (in the case of Žygimantas Kęstutaitis).

The new narrow social circle of magnates of ethnic Lithuanian origins that replaced the Gediminids at the top of the social power hierarchy in Vytautas' times sought to entrench and make their positions heritable. The first written legal documents testifying to this were the privileges of Vilnius and Horodło of 1387 and 1413 (see Petrauskas 2003). This social group became a social and political force, whose influence and interests propelled the patrimonial monarchy's transformation into an estate-based patrimonialism.

Both state coups in the 1430s were the result of this force's opposition to the attempts of Vytautas' heirs to perpetuate his sultanistic patrimonialist regiment. Švitrigaila did this by admitting Orthodox believers from Ruthenian lands into his inner circle, thereby violating the Horodło act whereby only Catholics received political rights. The assassins of Žygimantas Kęstutaitis, Švitrigaila's rival and heir, suspected their lord of preparing a violent rotation in the top elite by harnessing the lower-ranking ethnic Lithuanian nobility (most likely the Samogitians).

After Kęstutaitis' murder, there was no one left to oppose the transformation of the Grand Duchy's political order into an estate monarchy. In this transformation, the Lithuanian magnate houses that managed to preserve their privileged positions during the tumult of the 1430s appropriated the highest state positions. The economic, social prestige and political power opportunities these positions offered did become hereditary, while the houses of incumbents banded together to make a closed social group whose new entrants had to first overcome high social barriers. Without the common consent of the remaining magnate houses, who had collectively monopolised these opportunities, the ruler could not eliminate any member (family) of this implicit "power cartel" and replace him at his arbitrary sovereign will with an outsider who did not belong to this circle.

The Grand Duchy became an estate-based monarchy, although the estate group, which embodied "society" or the "political nation" and stood alongside the ruling dynasty as the second carrier of the Grand Duchy's statehood, was initially very narrow, making the Grand Duchy a magnate oligarchy. Importantly, although the entrance barriers to the elite were very high, they were not insurmountable. The most reliable path into this narrow circle of the "chosen" was service in the Grand Duchy's chancery and marriage. "Promising" provincials had to demonstrate their abilities in the chancery, acquire landholdings in metropolitan Lithuania and prove their loyalty as clients to the magnate houses who had been their patrons. Then they could eventually expect the hand of one of that house's brides, which was the entrance "ticket" to the real elite.

This transformation of the political order in the Grand Duchy's imperial metropole was manifested in the exorbitantly increased role of the Council of Lords, which in the years of Casimir Jagiellon's (1440–1492) reign acted as the de facto government of the Grand Duchy. The privilege issued by Casimir's heir, Alexander (1492–1506), in 1492 legally entrenched the de facto situation, declaring the Council's earlier acquired powers – to issue legislation and resolve foreign policy matters – to be formal "constitutional laws". Another unwritten right it acquired was the right to elect the ruler himself. The ruler could only be a Gediminid (from the late fifteenth century – only a Jagiellon). The Grand Duchy (unlike the Kingdom of Poland) was still a patrimonial domain of this house. However, now it was the magnates who not only had actual power, but also the right to decide which representative of the house would become the grand duke. Earlier, in the

fourteenth century, this was the privilege of the members of that same house or dynasty. The magnates' selection would be ratified at a diet where a wider circle of military servicemen and church dignitaries would also be invited. Until the very beginning of the sixteenth century, the Grand Duchy's diets were practically congresses of its metropolitan nobility, because the Grand Duchy's annexes were represented mostly by the central government's top appointed officials (palatines, castellans) in these peripheries. Members of the local Orthodox political societies had only limited opportunities and interest to participate in the diet assembling in the state's political centre.

Their interest in participation was limited because, until the middle of the sixteenth century, the diet of the Grand Duchy had no real power – it was assembled merely to inform the broader circles of the nobility about the decisions that the Council of Lords and the ruler had already made and to ratify them together. Yet, the fact that the necessity of information and ratification was acknowledged shows that, aside from the magnate class, another, wider estate group was gaining strength – the lesser nobility (*szlachta*). It took over the role of the Grand Duchy's "political nation" from the magnates later in the sixteenth century (see Gudavičius 2002 [1997]; Kiaupienė 2003; Byčkova 2012: 224–243). In the second half of the sixteenth century, when after suffering defeats in the Livonian War the Grand Duchy found itself in a deep crisis, the *szlachta* took over the political initiative. It became the driving force behind the federalist reforms of the territorial structure of the Grand Duchy on the eve of the Lublin Union, and behind the realisation of the union itself.

This estate emerged from the layer of the Grand Duchy's society whose duty to the ruler was military service. At first, anyone could join who had sufficient resources to go on campaign at the ruler's behest and afford his own arms and battle steed. Thus, this layer was initially open to all economically-sound and free subjects of the ruler fit to go to war. From the second half of the fifteenth century, it gradually turned into a noble estate: a closed, ascriptive social group, separated from the others by the birth barrier (one could only be born and not become a noble at his choice). As the network of cities developed, promoted by the reception of the Magdeburg law, another estate started to form – the burghers. However, unlike in Western Europe (but quite similar to Poland), this estate did not attain political rights. The Grand Duchy remained a single-estate monarchy.

The crystallisation of society's estate structure was one of the three aspects of the transformation of the Grand Duchy's political regime into an estate monarchy. The second was the emergence of the top government institutions, which were distinct from the ruler's court. Examples of these kinds of institutions became the Council of Lords itself, the diet, the offices of hetman, chancellor, treasurer, palatine and some other posts. Their emergence, evolution and functions have long been researched in Polish and Russian historiography (Ljubavskij 1900; Malinovskij 1904–1912; Kutrzeba 1921 [1913]; Bardach 1970, etc.). Recently, Lithuanian historians have also

made progress in such research, not limiting themselves purely to the formal (legal) aspect of these institutions (see Petrauskas 2004; 2005a; 2005b).

The third aspect is the ever clearer distinction between the state as a corporate trans-personal actor or institution standing for "public interest" on the one hand and the private (dynastic) interests of the ruler and his dynasty, as temporary state servants, on the other. Evidence of this is the liquidation of appanage duchies still remaining in the Grand Duchy's composition in the fifteenth century and the equally determined opposition of the Council of Lords (1495) to the suggestion made by Poland's Jagiellons to provide for the youngest son of the king, Sigismund (the future grand duke of the Grand Duchy and king of Poland, Sigismund II the Old), by creating a separate appanage duchy for him in Kyiv. The deep change in public opinion towards attempts by the ruling dynasty's representatives to seek support from foreign states in dynastic power struggles also shows a similar trend.

In the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, this was an accepted practice for "family conflicts" in the ruling house (see Rowell 1997). Its champion was Švitrigaila, who would frequently "flee" into the arms of almost all of the neighbouring countries' rulers. After all the brutality of the civil war of the 1430s, and having reconciled with his relatives, he finally ended his days peacefully and honourably as an appanage duke of Volhynia. By the second half of the fifteenth century, it was considered treason for members of the ruling dynasty to use such methods in power struggles. Myxailo Olelkovyč was one such culprit, ending his days in 1481 on the block with his accomplices when he tried to side with Muscovy in defence of his "dynastic rights" when he missed out on inheriting the appanage principality of Kyiv.

Historians have already more or less thoroughly examined these and other trends in the Grand Duchy's social and political development in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. They are only important to the topic of this book as comparative imperial history provides the viewpoint for a fresh look at these rather well-known developments. In fact, the internal crisis of the 1430s, recently anatomised by Sergey Polexov (2015), provides a clear-cut case of passing the Augustan threshold in the typical development of empires, according to Doyle's analysis (see chapter six or Doyle 1986). The elites of empires that have already exhausted their potential for territorial expansion face this threshold when they must find out how to control and administer the cultural and political variety in their midst. An empire incapable of coping with this challenge splits into smaller political entities very soon, as happened to the enormous Mongol Empire. Barely more than 30 years after the passing of its founder, it had irrevocably divided into "*ulus*" at permanent war with one another.

The prototype of the Augustan threshold is the civil war that arose in the Roman republic in the first century BC, its later phase being the battle for the legacy of "Rome's Vytautas" – Caesar. One of its possible outcomes was the secession of the Greek or Hellenised eastern part (ruled by Antonius).

An empire that succeeds in overcoming the Augustan threshold finds forms of political organisation that entrench a compromise of interests amid the metropolitan ruling elite, as well as between this elite and the most influential power elites in the provinces. Those forms guarantee a long period of internal stability, when long-run internal and transnational cultural, social and political integration forces do their slow work. In foreign policy, an empire in this period reverts to strategic defence, including preventive wars to destroy or check polities that pose a threat to the empire's domination in the region.

Both sides that fought in the internal war of the 1430s aspired for power across the entire Grand Duchy, not its division. Lines of ethnic and confessional division between the two camps were not completely unambiguous. Both contenders to the grand duke's position were Catholics, and Švitrigala's circle included ethnic Lithuanians. However, he did find most support in the Orthodox peripheries. The main reason was that the Ruthenian landlord elite was no longer satisfied only with local autonomy, which Vytautas' reforms cut back on. The Ruthenian aristocracy sought to win the same rights as the Catholic Lithuanian aristocracy, and to attain at least equal influence in all state matters. This was met by the determination of Lithuanians to preserve their political domination, the outcome of which was the state coup itself. Tellingly, the new ruler, Žygimantas Kęstutaitis, was reluctant to make concessions as per Poland's example, which in 1432 extended the Orthodox aristocracy's rights in the Halych and Western Podolia lands that had been subjugated already in the fourteenth century.

Only under the increasing threat of military defeat did Žygimantas, in 1434, grant the Orthodox nobility equal civil rights. However, this privilege did not extend to political rights – the taking of top offices entitling participation at the meetings of the Council of Lords remained a privilege of the Catholics alone. Nevertheless, even such limited concession brought victory to the Lithuanian camp, as the principality of Muscovy was embroiled in its own internal dynastic war, in which Vytautas' grandson Vasilij II (1415–1462) struggled for the seat of grand duke with his uncle Jurij of Zvenigorod and his two sons, Vasilij the Cross-Eyed (Kosoj) and Dmitrij Šemjaka. Thus, Muscovy could not exploit the internal troubles in the Grand Duchy for its own purposes. A greater threat to the Grand Duchy's territorial integrity was then posed by part of Poland's ruling elite (Zbigniew Oleśnicki's circle) pursuing a "minimalist" program of Polish expansion into the east. They schemed to take away from the Grand Duchy Volhynia and other attractive territories for Polish agrarian colonisation, leaving the remainder to the hands of fate. A similar threat did feature in the aims of the nobility of the Grand Duchy's Ruthenian lands to enter into a separate union with Poland. Poland's partners in this union would have included Halych, Volhynia, Kyiv and other lands currently within Ukraine's territory.

This threat was ultimately neutralised with the creation of a separate appanage for Švitrigaila, after he was defeated in the domestic war.

Otherwise, the Poles could have used him as a tool for a new destabilisation of the Grand Duchy. This did not halt but only slowed down the process of liquidating appanage duchies that Vytautas began, which marked the Grand Duchy's transformation from a hegemonic into a territorial empire. Nevertheless, in the end the Grand Duchy did not become a territorial empire but a federal estate monarchy. The Grand Duchy could become a federal state because its political nation expanded – alongside the magnates, the nobility (*szlachta*) rose up and fought for their equal rights after the Polish example. This nobility now included Orthodox military servicemen from Ruthenian lands.

It is a paradox, but the loss of a good third of the Grand Duchy's territory in wars against Muscovy in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries did facilitate the emergence of the integral nobility estate, including both metropolitan Catholic Lithuanian and peripheral Orthodox Ruthenian elements. Lost lands were located the furthest from the centre, and were thus difficult to integrate into the Grand Duchy's political organism. The weakest links the Grand Duchy's central government made were with the principalities ruled by Rurikids along the upper reaches of the Oka River. They belonged only to the Grand Duchy's "informal empire", or to its sphere of suzerainty. One of the main concerns these smaller principalities threw at the imperial centre in Vilnius was their unending feuding over succession rights among the offspring of the Rurikid families. Even though the final word in these arguments depended on the grand prince or his vicegerent in Smolensk, in a legal sense, these lands were Rurikid patrimonies, not fiefdoms granted by the Grand Duchy ruler (Krom 1995: 65–68).

The Grand Duchy lost them in the borderline war with Muscovy, which started a few years before Casimir's death in 1492 (Temušev 2013). Some of the principalities in the upper reaches of the Oka River region refused to swear allegiance to the new ruler of Lithuania, grand duke Alexander (1461–1506), choosing instead the authority of the Muscovy's grand prince, Ivan III (1440–1506, ruled from 1462). Immediately afterwards, they started attacking their neighbours, who still recognised the Grand Duchy's suzerainty. Receiving no military support from the Grand Duchy central authority that was promised in the Grand Duchy's vassal contracts, these neighbours had no other recourse but to follow the steps of their attackers. Aleksander was betrayed by Semën Ivanovič, the son of an exile from Muscovy, the prince Ivan Andreevič of Mozhaisk. Vasilij Ivanovič, the grand son of the rebellious Dmitrij Šemjaka, also repaid his Lithuanian hosts for refuge in this way. By the time of defection, they had appanage rights and ruled the Novgorod-Siversky and Chernihiv lands. Gediminid prince Semën Bel'skij was another prominent defector to Muscovy.

These renegades complained about religious oppression, not about the lack of military support from the Grand Duchy. They claimed that the Grand Duchy's grand duke schemed to convert them to Catholicism by force. Of course, their Lithuanian suzerain had no such plans. The real

motives for their betrayal were Muscovy's tempting promises to give them higher, more honourable positions within the circle of Muscovy's grand prince. As Orthodox believers, they could never have expected anything similar were they to remain simply the governors of the Grand Duchy's peripheral lands. Even these positions were threatened by the admittedly slow efforts of Vilnius and its vicegerents to strengthen the influence of the central authority in the peripheries (Backus 1957; Jablonowski 1955; Krom 1995). In the short term, the hopes of many of these defectors were realised (Kollmann 1987). However, their sons and grandsons became victims of Ivan the Terrible's waves of terror.

The Grand Duchy's string of failures culminated with the loss of Smolensk in 1514. It could not be recaptured even after the victory at the Battle of Orsha in the same year, which did halt Muscovy's westward expansion for several decades. However, the territorial limits of expansion that was feasible at this time became apparent already some time earlier. As Mixail Krom (1995) has shown, Muscovy's aggression was successful only in those Ruthenian lands that were relatively weakly integrated in the Grand Duchy's political organism.

The Smolensk nobility, pressured by the city's mob, finally opened the gates to the Muscovy's army. Yet the inhabitants of Vitsebsk, Orsha, Krychaw, Polatsk and other cities lying further in the west defiantly opposed the Muscovites. When they were conquered, they would rebel, seeking a return to the Grand Duchy's sovereignty. In this respect, the events of the rebellion of Myxail Glinskij (1507–1508) were very telling. Although the Muscovite army, which had ventured deep into the Grand Duchy's territory, came to his aide, he did not receive the support of the local Orthodox Ruthenians. In fact, Glinskij's rebellion can be considered as an extreme situation (in the sense of Carl Schmitt; see chapter six), disclosing the real character of the polity under stress. It demonstrated that the Grand Duchy had come close to the "Caracallan threshold" – the elites of the political societies of the Grand Duchy's metropole and peripheries had merged into one elite body, even though the lower estates remained divided along the lines of their ethnic and religious differences. "This was a critical test for estate integration across the entire Lithuanian state – one it successfully passed" (Gudavičius 1999: 510).

In many of the lands that had come under Muscovy's authority (primarily, Smolensk), the new rulers managed to ensure their loyalty using only the traditional method – deportation of the local landholding elite to the depths of the Muscovy state, and the instalment of servicemen from these depths in their place. Thus, these lands belonged to the Grand Duchy by this time voluntarily, not by force, while Muscovy did not "liberate" but overthrew them. The local elite (despite still being mostly Orthodox) already perceived the Grand Duchy as "their" state, and themselves as "Litvins". This was how Muscovy's aggression stopped at a boundary that today roughly corresponds with the eastern border of Belarus. It remained there for over 200 years, for some time (1618–1667) shifting back into the East.

The formation of a united noble estate, its core exhibiting many of the characteristics of Anthony Smith's horizontal ethnie (Smith 1986: 76–91), in the Grand Duchy's lands, which cover the territories of present-day Lithuania and Belarus, created the social conditions for the Grand Duchy's federalisation. The Grand Duchy became a federation on the eve of the Lublin Union, after the internal governance reforms were implemented as per Poland's example in 1564–1566. It became a nobles' republic, consisting of autonomous *powiats* (counties), which were the subjects of this federation (Kiaupa 2006 [2004]; Machovenko 1999: 34–44, 70–84). The Grand Duchy's nobility can be considered a new (horizontal) ethnie because all its members – Orthodox, Catholics and Uniates alike – considered themselves as Lithuanians (Litvins; литвин): "Lithuanians adopted the Belarusian language, in turn, the Belarusians adopted the Lithuanian self-consciousness" (Gudavičius 2002 [1994]: 65). [35]

However, we should not exaggerate the degree of integration of the economically, socially and politically privileged social layers of the Grand Duchy's metropole and peripheries, which was reached in the middle of the sixteenth century. When the reforms of the Grand Duchy's territorial structure were being implemented, transforming it into a federation of *powiats* after the example of Poland, it was the Podlasie nobility, consisting mainly of immigrants from Mazovia, that showed the greatest enthusiasm. However, its loyalty to the Grand Duchy was relatively meagre – the separation of Podlasie from the Grand Duchy to incorporate it into Poland not only took place with its approval, but also at its own initiative. There were no manifestations of Lithuanian patriotism in the Ukrainian (now, in the "anachronistic" sense) lands of the Grand Duchy either. Quite the opposite, the local Orthodox aristocracy was in favour of being joined to Poland.

The Volhynia magnates, considered by Lithuanian opponents of the Lublin Union as the main culprits for the catastrophe that befell Lithuania (Pelenski 1998: 176–177, 187), were especially active. They believed that their new metropole (Poland) would provide more effective and successful defence of their lands from Tatar attacks than the Grand Duchy's central government was able to offer. In addition, they hoped to rise up higher on the hierarchical ladder in Poland than in Lithuania, where the Lithuanian magnates maintained a firm grip on the central government offices (Pelenski 1998: 176). Thus, there were no local political forces in Volhynia that opposed its accession to Poland.

This was the proof à la Carl Schmitt that they were not an integral part of the Grand Duchy at the time, or loyal federal subjects – only the Grand Duchy's imperial periphery. The territorial changes that took place in the Grand Duchy on the eve of the Lublin Union actually feature the characteristics of an empire's disintegration. This disintegration meant the loss of the imperial periphery. The Grand Duchy can no longer be called an empire after the Lublin Union: not just because it lost its sovereignty when it became the younger partner in the federation or confederation with Poland, but also

because it no longer carried out its independent foreign policy. Next, in the post-union Grand Duchy, which approximately covers the states of present-day Lithuania and Belarus, it became impossible to distinguish regions that could qualify as a metropole and periphery.

Nevertheless, it is still difficult to affirm that the Grand Duchy really crossed the Caracallan threshold. First, ethno-cultural integration processes affected only the socially and politically privileged social layers – no more than 10% of the total population. Second, its further progress was halted by the renewed political significance of religious differences as the Catholic Counter-Reformation gained pace in the late sixteenth century. This discord critically contributed to the catastrophe of the mid-seventeenth century that broke the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth's backbone, namely, the uprising of the southern periphery (in Slavic – the "*ukraina*") against its metropole – the Grand Duchy's senior federal partner, Poland. The treaty of Hadyach, signed with the Ukrainian Cossacks at the height of the war against Russia in 1658, foresaw the reformation of the Commonwealth into a three-nation federal republic (Jakovenko 2005 [1997]: 373–376). However, this structural reform that could have offered a solution to the political problems arising over the Commonwealth's ethnic and cultural heterogeneity was never realised.

Notes

1 Nasevič refers to Kraŭcėvič 2000 (1998): 160. However, to support his claim, Aljaksandr Kraŭcėvič only offers the phrase *super faciem regem Luthawiae* – Mindaugas' title in the pope's letter to the bishops of Courland and Oesel. Its translation into "grand duke" is very liberal.

2 This book provides the synthesis of Lithuania's history from a modern Lithuanian nationalist viewpoint, considered semi-official in the last years of the inter-war Republic of Lithuania. Forbidden under the Soviet regime, it remained immensely popular among the educated Lithuanian public and was reprinted in 1989 in 100,000 copies.

3 Aukštaitija is a historical and ethnographic region of Lithuania mentioned in historical sources since the fourteenth century. It is located east of Samogitia, encompassing the central and eastern parts of the territory of contemporary Lithuania. Aukštaitija is composed of the Deltuva, Nalšia, Neris, Sėla and Upytė lands, mentioned in thirteenth-century sources (see Map 16.1). Verbatim translation of "Aukštaitija" into English is "Higher Lithuania". Dzūkija is an historical and ethnographic region in the south and south east of contemporary Lithuania. The original land of Lithuania, which was the core area of the formation of the Lithuanian state, included that part of Dzūkija which is located on the eastern bank of the Nemunas River.

4 See http://vln.by/node/133. Accessed on 22.07.2016. This map is not suitable for taking measurements, as the scale given, 1:4 000 000, does not correspond to the actual distances: according to Nasevič's map, the places where Vilnius and Kaunas are today lie 140 km apart. In reality, this distance is only 100 km.

5 Skalvia and Nadruvia (Skalva, Nadruva in Lithuanian) were Baltic lands in the lower reaches of the Nemunas and the headwaters of the Prieglius River (Pregel in German; Pregolya in Russian), now in the Klaipėda region of modern Lithuania,

and Kaliningrad oblast' of the Russian Federation (see Map 16.1). Some authors classify the Baltic inhabitants of these lands as Prussian tribes, while other (mainly modern Lithuanian sources) classify them as Western Lithuanian tribes along with Samogitians (Žemaitijans). Yotvingians or Sudovians (Lithuanian: Jotvingiai, Sūduviai) were a Baltic people ethnically close to Lithuanians and Prussians. Their area of settlement corresponded mostly to the Podlasie Voivodeship of contemporary Poland, portions of Lithuania on the left bank of the Nemunas River and a part of the Hrodna Province of Belarus. In the first half of the thirteenth century they were pressured by neighbouring Ruthenians, Poles and the emerging Lithuanian state. The Teutonic Order became another one of their enemies after the conquest of Prussia.

6 This is a part of the original Yotvingian territory. The Ruthenians, Poles and Crusaders all participated in their extermination.

7 The map of Mindaugas' Lithuania in Zigmas Kiaupa's book suggests a similar assessment. See Kiaupa 2006 (2004): 26.

8 Viktor Temušev (Russian: Темушев, Виктор Николаевич; Belarusian: Цемушаў, Віктар Мікалаевіч) was a leading Belarusian expert in historical geography, whose untimely death from cancer was an irredeemable loss for historical scholarship on the Grand Duchy. See Temušev 2013. On Halych, see *Vjalikae knjastva Litouskae* 2007 (2005), t.1: 11. Its area was 33,000 km^2.

9 Here and further on, the map from Gudavičius 1999 is used for measurements (unless indicated otherwise).

10 Nasevič (2007: 34) claims that the area of the Grand Duchy in the mid-fourteenth century was "more than 300,000 km^2". In fact, we can consider it as having been even larger – 400,000 km^2, including the Kyiv and perhaps even Podolia lands under the Grand Duchy-Tatar condominium.

11 Measured using the map in Gudavičius' book. According to Temušev's map, its area is significantly larger – 20,000 km^2.

12 Measured according to the map in Gudavičius' book. The total area of Podolia is 63,000 km^2. Its western part, which came under Poland's authority in 1366, made up 15,000 km^2. It returned to the Grand Duchy in 1411, before being lost again in 1430 when Poland also snatched up the region surrounding the South Bug River headwaters, still under the Grand Duchy's control in 1366–1413 (in total 21,000 km^2). The area of Eastern Podolia that remained under the Grand Duchy's authority in 1430–1569 was 42,000 km^2.

13 This is the area of the Samogitian eldership according to Pakštas. See Pakštas 1968: 457. Vytenis Almonaitis has thoroughly researched the frequent changes to Samogitia's political situation after 1382, when Lithuania's rulers signed it over to the Teutonic Order for the first time. He proved that during some periods between 1382 and 1410, Samogitia was practically an independent political entity, subordinated to neither the Teutonic Order nor the Grand Duchy. See Almonaitis 1998.

14 At the same time (1411), Western Podolia (15,000 km^2) was returned to Lithuania. The territory of Samogitia slightly changed between thirteenth and fifteenth centuries. This explains the difference between the present figure (23,300 km^2) and the former one (27,000 km^2), provided by Nasevič (2007: 34) for Samogitia in the middle of thirteenth century.

15 See Pakštas 1968: 452; also, the political map of the Grand Duchy in the fundamental work by Ljubavskij (1892).

16 Linear borders of ancient political entities that appear in historic maps are, strictly speaking, an anachronism.

17 Here and henceforth, it is not my measurements that are given, but those of Pakštas (unless indicated otherwise).

18 When measuring the area of the Grand Duchy according to the map in Šapoka's *History of Lithuania*, my result was 304,000 km^2. The result according to the map in Gudavičius' book was 308,000 km^2. In both cases, this area included not just the Polatsk land, but also the Velizh land that was added to the Grand Duchy in accordance with the Yam Zapolski truce with Muscovy of 1582 (around 3,000 km^2). In Šapoka's book, it has been (mistakenly) included within the contour outlining the border from 1569–1582.
19 Readers may well ask why the Kyiv and Volhynia lands were not treated the same way, as they were also part of the Grand Duchy and Golden Horde condominium prior to the Battle at the Blue Waters. However, the Grand Duchy and Poland's condominium in Livonia and the Golden Horde's condominium in Southern Rus' were two completely different matters. Lithuania and Poland ruled over Livonia as two subjects of a federal or confederate political entity, while the Grand Duchy and the Golden Horde did not constitute one political compound.
20 This figure can also be qualified by the error margin, although not one as large as in pre-Vytautas' or Vytautas' times. In the seventeenth century, the Grand Duchy already had linear borders, yet they were not accurately demarcated along their whole length (least of all, in the East).
21 See Pakštas 1968: 458. He probably also included Courland, then under the control of Russia.
22 The TI of a polity that existed for 1,000 years and had an area of 100,000 km^2 is 1 million km^{2}C. The same TI would apply for a "gigantic" polity that had spanned 10 million km^2 but had existed for only 10 years.
23 Recall that Taagepera had called it the "Mongol era".
24 A 10% margin of error applies to all the figures given.
25 Those who read chapter four closely would have noticed that the large yet relatively short-lived Neo-Assyrian empire had the same TI. The TI of the Neo-Babylonian empire, which entered the historical memory of Western civilisation because it featured in the Bible (despite also being short-lived), had an even smaller TI: only 0.4 million km^{2}C. See: Taagepera 1978: 191.
26 Little would change even if the empire's adulthood threshold A were reduced to half of M, perhaps as Taagepera is inclined to do in his article published in 1997. When M = 740,000 km^2, adulthood would demand an area of 370,000 km^2, but when M = 790,000 km^2, the A threshold is 395,000 km^2. It is unlikely that these thresholds could have been crossed in Gediminas' times, unless we accept the "early" solution to the Kyiv problem.
27 Unfortunately, Taagepera published his calculations of E-, A-, F- and M-values only for some empires from the 600 BC–600 AD period. See Taagepera 1979: 134.
28 "Vytautas' empire shot into the past like a bright meteor". So wrote Lithuanian historian Zenonas Ivinskis (Ivinskis 1978: 6).
29 Another occasion to remember the Lithuanian empire could be the year or date it "came of age" (80% M). The anniversary of Kyiv's liberation from Tatar rule, or the victory at the Blue Waters would make good celebration dates. Unfortunately, even specialists denote the year of this battle with a one year margin of error (Batūra 1975: 310), while the circumstances behind transfer of Kyiv to the Grand Duchy's rule are even foggier. One thing is clear – that "coming of age" was reached during Algirdas' reign, so perhaps the Lithuanian empire may be recalled by commemorating the date of his death.
30 Simply, the international political situation at the time (a strong Golden Horde and its vassal, the principality of Volhynia-Halych) did not provide any room for additional expansion.

31 See the historiography survey (chapter four).
32 On the differences between territorial (*Territorialstaat*; *Flächenstaat*) and personal alliance (*Personenverbandstaat*) type states, see: Mayer 1956 (1939): 289–294, 311–313; Mitteis 1962 (1940): 3–6.
33 Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855), a principal figure in Polish Romanticism, was born near Navahrudak, in the former Black Rus', now part of Belarus. Mickiewicz called Lithuania, not Poland, his homeland. His ancestors were ethnic Lithuanians, but Mickiewicz himself did not speak Lithuanian.
34 A collection of fourteenth–eighteenth-century legal documents of the Chancery of the Grand Duchy.
35 This account of the ethno-cultural changes that prepared the Grand Duchy for federalisation by the leading Lithuanian historian claims that a Lithuanian political (noble) nation formed, with three sub-nations: Samogitians, Aukštaitijans and Belarusians. However, the ethno-cultural change did not stop at this point. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, this new internally differentiated nation itself became a sub-nation of the Polish macro-nation. See Gudavičius 2002 (1994): 65; 66–67; 2002: 186–187.

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16 Lithuanian imperialism and the birth of the Lithuanian state

The statehood of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, its political problems and history of the Grand Duchy after 1569 are not this book's topics.[1] Neither is the emergence of the early Lithuanian state, which is probably the cause of the most heated disagreements among Belarusian and Lithuanian historians. Yet, it cannot be overlooked either. Empires are born of imperialism – the process of the territorial expansion of polities that eventually become empires. It is not necessarily the outcome of a specific long-term policy. A "grand strategy" with the aim of regional, continental or even global hegemony together with the policies of military, political, economic and cultural imperialism to achieve this aim usually only emerges once the quantitative (Taagepera's) imperial threshold is crossed. When Algirdas proclaimed the strategic goal of the Grand Duchy's foreign policy to conquer all of Rus', Lithuania was already an empire. It did not become one by consistently pursuing a pre-meditated grand aim, but by Gediminas and his predecessors making the most of the favourable conditions to provide for their many sons.

A polity becomes an empire when it crosses a certain tangible threshold. Taagepera's suggested quantitative criterion (20% of maximum stable area) can be enhanced with the qualitative criterion that is recommended in this book: displaying at least three of the four alternative attributes for an empire. This method can determine, albeit approximately, the birth date of an empire, but not of the imperialism that created it. Before an empire emerges, imperialism as the process that created it must already exist. Taagepera's methods do not determine its start. In his analysis of imperialism, Doyle distinguished three qualitative thresholds in its dynamics. Unlike the second (Augustan) and third (Carracallan) thresholds, the first threshold has no name. It can be named after the empire analyst himself: the Doyle threshold. Taagepera's threshold E (when a rising empire reaches 20% of its maximum stable size) indicates when imperial expansion reaches significant territorial results. Doyle's threshold indicates when imperial expansion begins. According to him, this happens when an expansive polity's internal socio-political cohesion significantly surpasses that of its neighbours. When the former increases, and the cohesion of its neighbour declines, a force capable of carrying out

territorial expansion, and objects or victims of that expansion appear (it does not suffice to meet only one of these two conditions).

In fact, it is quite noticeable that the Grand Duchy expanded only in those directions where its internal cohesion was greater than that of its neighbours. Its superiority was not absolute. Internal political crises, which make a polity vulnerable to external expansion and intervention, occured in Lithuania as well: the political battles that arose after the murder of Mindaugas and after Algirdas' death, for example. "When the clan was united, Lithuania was strong" (Rowell 1994: 294). Lithuania differed from its neighbours only in that such crises were not permanent, but exceptional, extreme and abnormal states that would be resolved relatively quickly. Thus it was better at attacking, and at defence when being attacked itself. Defence was the only option with the Teutonic Order, until an internal crisis developed within the Order itself after the Battle of Grunwald. Disagreements arose between it and the Prussian burgher and land-owning estates. Yet, by that time, only Poland made use of this opportunity, and not Lithuania.

Rowell's comment concerns the greater cohesion (compared to its neighbours) of the already established patrimonial Lithuanian Empire. It determined the successful continuation of its territorial expansion, underway for quite a while. When we look for Doyle's threshold, we search for a special set of conditions that determined the start of expansion. We have already discussed the crisis that befell Kievan Rus', causing it to drown amid all its internal fighting in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. Every Rurikid who could try to save himself did so alone, calling on the help of his neighbours from the Cumans, Hungary, Poland or Lithuania. Ultimately, it was the Mongol Tatars who came (uninvited) to help Rus' climb out of its own pit. Then it was left to the Lithuanians to help Rus' free itself of the Tatars (see chapter nine).

Why did the Lithuanians not require external help to free themselves of the anarchy of the war of everyone against everyone else, whereas the Ruthenians, superior in terms of social and cultural development, were in such dire need? The idea of the "advantages of backwardness", "honed" by one of the most renowned twentieth-century economic historians, Alexander Gerschenkron, can help to find an answer to why backward countries can sometimes "help" their more advanced neighbours resolve internal political problems arising from their own superiority. This concept was born out of an analysis of economic development problems (Gerschenkron 1962).

Gerschenkron asked how and why the "lagging" states of Germany and Japan managed not only to catch up with Great Britain, the pioneer of the Industrial Revolution, but also overtake it. What could countries dreaming to repeat their success learn from Germany and Japan? Gerschenkron's main idea is that lagging behind can become an advantage in economic development, if the new, advanced technologies created by the "frontrunners" can be adopted precisely when their own development starts to falter due to the morally and even physically out-dated mass of capital.

I would like to argue that the "advantages of backwardness" phenomenon can be observed even before the Industrial Revolution, and not just in technological and economical, but also in socio-political development. Peripheral ethnic groups that were economically and politically lagging behind the centres of civilisation made use of it numerous times. They managed to adopt the contemporary *war* technology of the centres of civilisation, and (due precisely to their backwardness) surpassed the leaders in terms of their social capital, and thus, their internal cohesion. The great Arabian sociologist Ibn Khaldun noticed and described this circumstance by the *asabiya* concept discussed earlier. He used it to explain how and why "barbarian" desert nomads and steppe clans managed to conquer the centres of Asian civilisation (see chapter eight). They could boast of conquests, though it is unlikely that prior to their triumph they had already formed a political compound that could be called a state.

This condition needs to be highlighted, as some historians consider the frequent marauding campaigns of Lithuanians in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries into Rus' and the Sub-Daugava region (before the first subjugation of Ruthenian lands) a sign that the Lithuanian state already existed (Baranauskas 2000: 167–178; Jablonskis 2005). In their opinion, Mindaugas can be considered the founder of a monarchy as an established form of rule, but not of the state itself. If they are right, we would have to say that the Lithuanian state appeared first, which then embarked on imperialist expansion. Its beginning can be dated to the first wide-scale campaigns of plunder, or (more believably) to the first subjugations of Ruthenian lands. But perhaps imperialism is possible prior to a state or without a state as well?

The answer depends much on how the object of debate is defined. First – on the very definition of a state. Some contemporary historians do not even consider the majority of the medieval polities of Central and Western Europe, including the Holy Roman Empire, to have been states (Althoff 2000: 230–247; Goetz 1999: 180–185; 2003: 284–292). In fact, many of them (perhaps only except for England after the Norman conquest of 1066 and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies created by the same Normans) would not qualify as states if Weber's oft-mentioned definition is used. It says that a state is a political corporation of coercion, whose "administrative staff successfully upholds the claim to the *monopoly* of the *legitimate* use of physical force in the enforcement of its order" (Weber 1978 [1922]: 54).

Medieval Europe's rulers did not have at their disposal administrative staffs capable of implementing a monopoly of legitimate physical force, neither did they seek to hold such a monopoly. This fact is uniquely expressed in a cliché still found in history textbooks, that a "feudal anarchy" was characteristic to those times. Otto Brunner analysed this phenomenon in great detail in his classic work (Brunner 1984 [1965]), which demonstrates that the resolution of conflicts between individual landholders, their relatives or even village communities by weapons (*Fehderecht*) was legal. It suffices to recall the phenomenon of duels between aristocrats in Europe as far

as the modern age (and among rural teens in Lithuania and elsewhere even today), then considered the "court of God" (and thus a legitimate means of resolving conflicts). Peace was the utmost concern of bishops, as being servants of the Church meant spreading the teachings of Christ, they could not really use force to defend their own material interests. The most they could actually achieve was to limit armed "domestic" battles at certain times of the year. After forty or more days of serving their lord, his vassals had the right to fight their "own private wars" against the vassals of the same or another ruler, and, under certain conditions, even against the lord himself.

Even if conflict were resolved in court, it was the winning side that had to see that the verdict was actually implemented. This is why free but economically and militarily weaker parties had to search for protection from a more powerful lord. However, an individual could have several different protectors, performing duties for each one in return for their protection (today's equivalent would be double and triple citizenship). If these duties and rights were associated with a particular territory, not an individual, then those rights were often given to several different lords (today's equivalents would be a condominium and co-ownership).

The domains of the lords themselves formed a mosaic of lands scattered far and wide, whose configuration and subjection depended on accidents of inheritance and dynastic "marriage politics". That is why there was never a clear distinction between "domestic" and "foreign" policy matters – especially since international law in those times had no knowledge of the sovereignty of a ruler below the pope and the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire (although some lower-ranked rulers did lay claim to such sovereignty, declaring themselves as "emperors", albeit only in their "own kingdoms"; see chapter one).

In acknowledging that a "Weberian" state did not yet exist in medieval Europe, we do not need to agree that no states as such existed at all. Some modern critics oppose Brunner, saying that when discussing Europe of the early Middle Ages, we should ask not whether a state existed then, but how much of a state existed? (Goetz 2003: 288; Kortüm 2006: 607–616).[2] To end my discussion of the methodological problems of the definition of social science and humanities concepts, I did dream about a time when researchers, rather than arguing about what an empire is, would actually measure the degree of imperiality for specific cases, using the quantitative imperiality index (see chapter three). Much the same goes for the history of the state – can we imagine or hope for a future when researchers will not argue whether a certain country was a state at a certain time, but just measure its degree of statehood in a given year?

However, so far there are no scales of imperiality, statehood, or imperial statehood in specialist literature. Furthermore, I do not purport to propose an intermediate solution to the question of statehood of the same kind, which I suggested when defining an empire (see chapters three and seven). I can only add that states, like empires, probably comprise a set, whose

members share Ludwig Wittgenstein's family resemblance relation. Weber's definition is suitable only for some states, exemplifying a "maximum" state concept (ideal type). It is hard to say whether a state has any necessary (essential) attributes (as sovereignty and a large territory are for an empire), or if any one attribute can be substituted by the (non-strict) disjunction of the remaining attributes.

In my view, the most serious contenders for membership in the list of necessary attributes for a state are (A) a professional ruling staff (not only the ruler), which consists of persons (statesmen) engaged solely in governance or war and who make their living this way, and (B) regular tax collection. Taxes need to be distinguished from occasional feasts or tributes (gift-receiving, which the guest must reciprocate in kind) given to the warlord leader of an alliance of tribes or lands, making a visit in person with his retinue. I doubt whether the *pasėdis*, an ancient Lithuanian duty placed on the peasantry to provide food, fodder and gifts to a noble and his retinue, can be considered a form of taxation. As we all know (perhaps not historians, though), a respectable guest brings gifts, yet perhaps they might not be as valuable as the host's expenses for the feast. We might see the first statesmen as "professional guests" who outwit the hosts they call upon by giving them gifts they had just themselves received at their last call. Yet the first "professional guests" probably gave their hosts light-weight yet precious gifts they had brought back with them from their campaigns of plunder (which might have originally been the frequent "paying of visits").

These two attributes are inter-related, since statesmen cannot be maintained without tax collected on their behalf. Contemporary discussions on the emergence of the state distinguish between two types of states. Primary "pristine states" appear in an environment where there had hitherto not been any states (Ancient Sumerian, Egyptian, Mohenjo-daro and other civilisations), while secondary states emerge as less developed societies surrounding these primary (pristine) states (Carneiro 1970; Fried 1967: 227–242; also: Claessen and Skalnik 1978; 1981; Claessen and van der Velde 1987; Krader 1968; Service 1975; Hall 1994). It is likely that the first statesmen in humanity were priests. Yet in secondary states, these men were already professional warriors (the military elite). In both cases, the precondition for the emergence of a state is a certain economic level, reached when the transition is made from a foraging existence – taking what one needs from nature – to a production-based way of life (agriculture and the raising of livestock).

Nonetheless, production alone is insufficient: it too must be developed to the degree that production output would exceed the amounts needed for survival of the producers themselves. This surplus is used to maintain those who do not participate in material production: they do not work the land, herd livestock or weave textiles. As one of the pioneers of global history, William McNeill writes, once people adopted agriculture and the sedentary way of life, farmers found themselves between two millstones. Microparasites (rats, locusts) would destroy part of their harvest, and some would

even feed off farmers directly (fleas, intestinal parasites). The remainder of farmers' harvests would be appropriated and swallowed up by macro-parasitic statesmen (McNeill 1980).

The farmer's way of life is far from attractive (compared to hunting, which even today is considered a luxury form of entertainment reserved for the elite). Thus people resort to sedentary agriculture only when no other option remains due to population growth. For a farmer, stuck between two such millstones, religion (famously called by Karl Marx "the opiate of the people") offers some respite from his dour existence – this could come in the form of promises of a better life after death, compensating his current despair. Common folk in early civilisations were generously fed such promises by their statesmen soothsayers. However, it would not be long before competitors would appear – people from the surrounding lands that still lived under the pre-state anarchic conditions, for whom the centres of civilisation were an attractive object to be looted and conquered.

War was not an invention of civilisation, but a natural state of primitive society (Edgerton 1992). However, it was not separate individuals that fought in wars (as Thomas Hobbes suggested), but social groups: tribes, alliances of tribes and chiefdoms. These wars were much more brutal than wars of civilisation. The purpose of war for people who do not create a surplus, or who are so attached to their freedom that they reject any notion of labouring (i.e., being slaves), can be either to drive their enemies away from their hunting and fishing grounds, or to eliminate them altogether (except for young women and very young children).

The advantage of civilisations was a large population. Primary states were faced with a serious threat only when nomadic stock-raisers or semi-nomadic tribes capable of mobilising at least somewhat larger military contingents appeared in their vicinity. Once horses were domesticated, the era of steppe and nomadic imperialism began (Chaliand 2003 [1998]), whose victims were all primary states (a partial exception applies to Egypt). Then, with the introduction of iron tools which facilitated slash-and-burn argiculture, steppe imperialism was complemented by barbarian imperialism. The Germanic tribes were probably best known for this in Eurasia's west during the times of the Great Migration of Peoples.

I do not use the concepts of "steppe" and "barbarian imperialism" as metaphors. One of the reasons I use the term "polity" and not "state" in my draft of empire and imperialism theory is because the agents or subjects of imperialism can also be socio-political organisms for whom the title "state" is unsuitable, at least so long as we agree that a professional staff of macro-parasitic statesmen and taxes are necessary attributes of a state. I shall remind readers that, according to Doyle, imperialism is just "the process or policy of establishing or maintaining an empire" (Doyle 1986: 45). To record a case of imperialism, it is enough that at least one of the two (or three, if we ask Motyl) participants in that process would be a state. Imperialism exists when one state conquers and subordinates other states. When a state subordinates

tribes or ethnic groups that are themselves not yet states (they do not have professional organised statesmen or taxes), this is also imperialism. However, the term imperialism also applies when an ethnic group or an alliance thereof that is not a state conquers and subordinates an already existing state or states, thereby creating an empire.

There is no imperialism when two or more polities are at war with one another – neither of which exhibits any minimal (necessary, much less sufficient) attributes of statehood – destroy one another, drive one another out of their respective territories or force the payment of a tribute. In this sense, there is no imperialism without a state and before the existence of a state.[3] But after the first state emerges, imperialism also appears. It is important (and perhaps new to some) that in relations between states and polities that are not states, states are not all or always imperialist actors. They can also be victims of the collective political actions of non-state ethnic groups or their alliances. The actors of that action can be former non-state victims of imperialist states. Thus, victims that oppose the already existing states or try to liberate themselves from their oppression create their own states – often, empires as well. This is one of those cases when an anti-imperialist fight for liberation turns into imperialism (see chapter eight).

In fact, primary states and the secondary conqueror states that are created in their place maintain "international relations" not only among themselves but also with those ephemeral entities lurking in their peripheries – tribes, chiefdoms, their alliances, and alliances of alliances. They are another wave of conquerors, but until a certain time they themselves are the objects of the imperial expansion carried out by polities exhibiting a higher level of statehood. The fact that such non-state and pre-state socio-political entities can be the subjects of international relations, where the other subject is a political entity with the necessary attributes of a state, is demonstrated not just in the American treaties with Native Indian tribes, but in Lithuania's history as well.

Volhynia did not sign the truce of 1219, reported in the famous fragment of the Galician-Volhynian Chronicle (Dubonis 2005: 108–109), with the Lithuanian state, but with the confederation of Lithuanian lands. Of course, those historians who push back the emergence of the Lithuanian state to pre-Mindaugas times, will reject this example. More so, they would probably consider the very signing of this truce as additional evidence of the pre-Mindaugas state, as (according to the definition) only states can reach such peace agreements. However, in 1380–1410, Samogitia (Žemaitija) acted as an independent subject in international relations, nominally subject at times to the Grand Duchy, at others to the Teutonic Order, and de facto independent for the majority of this period. Today's Lithuanian tourism industry should advertise Samogitia abroad not just as being the last remaining island of paganism in Christian Europe, but also as the Promised Land of all of Europe's anarchists. This was the place where a political community based on anarchist foundations existed for the longest time. Vytenis Almonaitis

writes that, in the periods February 1397 to March 1401, and May 1404 to January 1406, Samogitia was "a separate, independent, yet essentially completely unrecognised political entity" (Almonaitis 1998: 180). Thus, it is not just states that can participate in international (inter-polity) relations, but even "political entities".

For strong primary and secondary imperial states, a barbarian periphery is economically interesting first of all as a region for slave "hunting". Once the transition from foraging to production has been made, the "Others" (representatives of other tribes, nations, religions, etc.) cease being just annoying competitors for limited valuable natural resources and become valuable objects for economic exploitation. In those places where states representing civilisation do not go on slave-hunting expeditions into the neighbouring "barbarian" countries, slaves are bought from the client and vassal polities being established in their border areas who attack their neighbours. This is how the frontier environment that Peter Turchin describes is created (see chapter eight). Here, due to the pressure exerted by neighbouring imperial states and other peripheral polities that have not yet crossed the statehood threshold, an intensive group-based selection takes place, resulting in especially intensive ethno-genesis processes. New ethnies emerge here as joint war-activity collectives, for whom the memory of joint victories (in legends, tales, epics), and sometimes even defeats (if they were not crushing), offer inter-generational sustenance (Wenskus 1961).

So long as the internal cohesion of primary states or their successors remains high, these new border zone ethnic pre-state polities are drawn into their sphere of influence as imperial peripheries. However, a crisis in the metropole (mainly internal wars arising due to succession crises), taking place under the conditions of accelerated peripheral development (because of its proximity to a civilised empire), allows the appearance of barbarian peripheral "precocious imperialism" (*überstürzten Imperialismus*; Hintze 1962 [1929]: 101), identified by the famous German historical sociologist Otto Hintze.[4] This is a phenomenon where a polity yet to cross the statehood threshold already crosses Doyle's imperial threshold: it commences expansion into a by-gone metropole in which the state has already failed. The expansionist polity becomes an empire before it can acquire the above-mentioned minimum attributes of a state. If that empire does not collapse immediately, barbarian "precocious imperialism" creates not just an empire, but a state political organisation needed to control and exploit (not just loot) the conquered territories.

Hintze himself used the concept of "precocious imperialism" to explain the emergence of feudalism as an economic and political system.

> From the example of the Frankish state and the Roman-Germanic world, we see the interaction of two different factors in the emergence of feudalism. First, a sociological process often repeated in history with a certain regularity – the transition from an unstable tribal and dynastic

> order to the stricter order of a state and society (usually occurring when a sedentary way of life has been completely and utterly established). Second, the global historical conjuncture of the Frankish state's contact with the civilisation and culture of the dying Roman Empire, which directs this process away from its natural, regular course and fatefully turns it into a sudden and immediate imperialism. It skips several stages, seeking no less than the subjugation and control of this enormous global empire, or at least its western part, the youthfully brutish warring tribes having heroically exerted all their might.
>
> (Hintze 1962 [1929]: 100)

In aspiring to be the heirs to the Roman Empire, yet lacking its social maturity, the states that arose from its ruins paradoxically combined imperial universalism and feudal particularism. They became their precursor's shadow empires or "vultures" (in Barfield's sense). According to Hintze, feudalism appears when the conquering ethnic group, yet to create its own state, tries to subjugate territories where elementary, or sometimes even rather developed state structures already existed (territorial divisions, a population accustomed to paying taxes to the lowest ranked officials appointed with their collection). The personal composition of state government structures changes as a result (the positions of tax collectors and supervisors are taken by foreigners). State structures themselves undergo severe degradation, but nevertheless remain in place.

In a subsistence or barter economy, which did not allow the maintenance of a permanent army or a corpus of officials paid a money salary from the treasury, new rulers are forced to rely on "rule by personal measures". This entails organising the state on a foundation of personal ties between the ruler and his assistants (statesmen). Due to the personal character of this kind of authority, it is not "objectified" (*versachlicht* in German), which is typical of a "Weberian" state, where the military and civil, fiscal and legislative etc. functions of government are separated, and allocated to specialised officials. Rather, the authority is reified (*verdinglicht*) – "public" political government and "private" landlord's rights for a given territory are melded into one whole.

That is why the state divides into many landlordships (*Grundherrschaften*), where the highest political officials are also landowners, while the political authority itself attains the appearance of private patrimonial rule, like that enjoyed by the head of the household in his own home. The ruling "apparatus" of each such landlord (even the highest ranked – the state's ruler) is his household – his "court" – while the highest positions in the state (actually, the "lordship") are also filled by the ruler's domestic servants, who are defined as having responsibility for handling particular everyday affairs (pantler, cup-bearer, equerry, etc.).[5] Nevertheless, the compound of such political landlordships is the state, since it displays the necessary attributes of one: a layer of professional officials (even though the "public"

functions of state rule are not distinguished from the "private" household management functions), and taxes that producers and merchants who do not belong to the layer of statesmen-macro-parasites must pay, either in the form of money, in kind or labour.

Feudal states, as a version of secondary states, probably formed where the acting subjects of "precocious imperialism" were barbarian polities that had not even attained the minimum attributes for statehood. However, the lifestyle of their full members was essentially no different from the lifestyles of broader populations in the civilised countries they had conquered. More specifically, these were "barbarians" for whom working the land was not a socially degrading, second-rate activity. Of course, in all barbarian or pagan nations whose primordial world view had not been "spoiled" by the doctrines of "religions of salvation" focused on the afterlife, the most honoured income was war booty. Nevertheless, in Europe, the barbarians' most important war booty was land suitable for agriculture. A majority of the fully-fledged members of the barbarian polities that appeared in the territory of the crumbling Roman Empire did not become professional statesmen of the feudal state. Rather, they remained farmers whose privilege, distinguishing them from the autochthons, was their freedom from having to pay taxes. Yet, upon being summoned, they had to go to war.

Agriculture and war are two activities that are rather difficult to combine, so gradually this layer of free soldiers-farmers disappeared. It was replaced by the feudal hierarchies of professional landholding soldiers. The situation was different in the nomadic livestock-raising polities. Across the enormous space from Manchuria to the Hungarian *puszta*, they were the main agents of "nomadic imperialism", strongly influencing the political history of agrarian centres of civilisation in Eastern and Central Asia, and in the Near East. In those cases when nomads changed their way of life, taking up land cultivation and thus mixing with the autochthon population, Hintze noticed the same processes of the formation of a feudal state as the Germanic "precocious imperialism" caused in Western Europe. The Arabs became the Franks of the Near East; later, this role was played by the Turks, who conquered the crumbling empires of the Caliphate and Byzantium. They crossed the statehood threshold only at the time of this conquest, and because of this conquest (so that they could rule that which they conquered) (Hintze 1962 [1929]: 97–98, 106–108).

Relations between the barbarian nomadic peripheries and agrarian civilisation unfolded differently in Central and Eastern Asia. Here, the nomads' social degradation (in terms of their own values) – the transition to agriculture – was a less frequent occurrence than in Europe and the Near East. In Central Asia, the nomadic "metropole", through the regular collection of tributes, conducted "remote" exploitation of agricultural oases located amid the steppes and deserts. The same means of operation was used in the Golden Horde's relations with Tatar Rus'. This was not a direct system of rule. So that it would function smoothly, the goal was not to change but

simply to entrench the hitherto existing state structures in the subjugated lands, creating another (parasitic) supervisory level above them. The prior macro-parasitic elite of statesmen remained in their previous posts. Only now, having become the vassal of a steppe suzerain lord, the revenue they collected had to be shared between two authorities, putting farmers under double oppression.

In Eastern Asia, the nomads of China and Manchuria, who never made up more than two or three million, faced a compactly settled mass of a hundred million Chinese peasants. There were simply no ecological niches left for nomads to live amidst them and preserve their way of life. When China was ruled by ethnic Chinese or sinicised dynasties, nomadic "mirror empires" would form at its borders. The Chinese were left to choose between enduring their attacks, or buying their way out by paying annual tributes to the ruler of nomads. Yet as the Chinese emperor claimed suzerainty over the whole world and could not possibly pay tributes to any other party, they would be given in the form of generous gifts to a nominal vassal – regardless of whether he considered himself one (Rossabi 1983; Hymes and Schirokauer 1993). Here the empire's political crisis would also involve the peripheral barbarians in the metropole's affairs in China. With the outbreak of a civil war (a "peasant uprising"), one or sometimes even both sides sought the help of the nomadic cavalry (Eberhard 1952).

As in other similar cases, the interventionists often remained, forming the nucleus of a new ("non-Chinese") dynasty that would rule all or a part of China. The new dynasty's tribesmen decisively opposed any attempts at being treated the same as the rest of the population. They rejected the payment of taxes and the forced adoption of a sedentary way of life (not to mention working the land). Eventually, a solution was found: the empire's territory was divided into an agrarian region populated by the Chinese and ruled by Chinese officials (Mandarins), and a nomad "reservation". Chinese peasants were forbidden from settling here, while members of the empire's conquering and ruling ethnic group interchanged between performing military service in the Chinese "mainland" and returning to enjoy their habitual nomadic life (Barfield 1989: 104–105, 172–173, 180–182, 219).[6]

In both cases (Central Asia and China), in nomadic empires the politically dominant ethnic group never paid taxes. On the contrary, the most important obligation of the ruling dynasty was to make regular offerings of gifts to their subjects. The source of these gifts was the tribute collected from sedentary farmers and merchants engaged in transit trade. If we agree that taxes are a necessary attribute of states, some doubts may arise over whether nomad empires may be considered states at all. Can a political entity that does not exact taxes from its subjects, but rather maintains them, be called a state? Of course, we could respond that this population group that never paid taxes was indeed the corps of professional statesmen of nomadic empires, living off the backs of tax payers. However, most were not priests (considered by simple-minded atheists to be just professional

swindlers), or violent or bureaucratic extortionists (statesmen), but simply livestock rearers, ready to go to war at any time. War booty and rulers' gifts were an important, though not the main, source of earning a living.

Necessary attributes of statehood are somewhat easier to spot not so much in the mutual relations of nomads themselves, but in the agrarian enclaves of the empires they created (in Central Asia), and in the agrarian hinterlands that were administered by local collaborators who had direct rule over these territories (in China and Russia). The political superstructure itself, i.e., the nomads who subjugated these enclaves and hinterlands, was often organised as an alliance of tribes, where one tribe or clan (to which the ruler's dynasty belonged) was the most senior and respected. The others occupy a higher or lower position in the hierarchy, legitimised by genealogical myths. This position determined the scale of the gifts received from the top ruler (Kradin and Skrynnikova 2006: 320–393).

The phenomenon of nomadic imperialism and empires is an important obstacle to the use of the "state" concept as a generic concept for empires, and in the definition of an empire as a certain type or version of a state. Nomadic empires occupy or subjugate states and exploit their resources. However, the politically dominant ethnic groups of such empires or the "metropoles" they inhabit do not constitute the kind of political systems that may be called states. The state character of the Mongol Empire raises the least doubts, although there are some who contest its statehood (Kradin and Skrynnikova 2006: 490–508). The Golden Horde was also a state at its height, yet not in its condition after the strikes by Tamerlane (and Vytautas the Great). Barfield's so-called "mirror empires" comply least with statehood criteria – they are simply huge tribal alliances, whose leaders received gifts (subsidies, tributes) each year from China, most of which were distributed amongst their tribesmen.

This phenomenon of empires that are not states is not just an exotic *casus*. In a sense, imperialism and statehood are based on opposite principles. States do not exist without taxes, which are meant to provide a comfortable life for statesmen, yet they also ensure a provision of certain public goods. The strongest impulse for imperialists is to make all the goods of statehood free of charge: the desire to live in a state that does not collect taxes, but rather, distributes gifts. In other words, to seek liberation from the burden of statehood, placing its costs on others, and keeping its fruits for oneself.

One of the most important concerns for Rome's emperors was to ensure the supply of grain and other produce from the provinces to the capital, where they were distributed for free among the citizens of the imperial metropole. The most ardent supporters of the imperialist policies of Athens and Rome were proletarians – citizens who had no property or assured income yet enjoyed full political rights, and who lived on state subsidies and allowances. This was possible only for so long as the state financed its expenses from the revenue collected from the tributes of other states or polities. So another ideal-typical definition for an empire can be constructed by

adding a seventh attribute to the six attributes of empire already discussed (see chapter seven): members of the politically dominant ethnic group (or citizens of the metropole) are free from paying taxes. In this kind of "ideal empire", where the metropoles or politically dominant minorities live solely on the exploitation of the peripheries, statehood would exist only in the peripheries, but not in the central political formation (if we agree that taxes are a necessary attribute of a state). Nomadic empires are most similar to such "ideal empires", which showered their fully-fledged citizens with gifts yet did not collect taxes from them. However, they were expected to repay these gifts by going to war at first call.

These comparisons and digressions should suffice to lead into the questions that arise when we look at the question of the emergence of the Lithuanian state from a viewpoint of comparative empire studies. Did the Lithuanian state form first, and later create an empire via conquests or "peaceful" and "voluntary" occupations and annexations in the Ruthenian lands, liberating them from another, worse evil – the grip of the Mongol Tatar empire's? Or perhaps the Lithuanian state itself was a by-product of "precocious imperialism", which early Lithuanian pre-state polities carried out (as in Western Europe and in some regions of Asia that Hintze discusses)? Maybe ancient Lithuanians (like Eurasia's nomads) created an empire whose metropole was not a state, despite the annexation of lands (as an object of indirect rule) where state structures already existed?

The first approach should be most acceptable to those who, for one or another reason, give priority to internal causes when explaining the emergence of the state. Both those historians who push back the emergence of the Lithuanian state to the late twelfth century (Baranauskas 2000; Paszkiewicz 1933: 44–49), as well as those who traditionally associate the creation of the Lithuanian state with Mindaugas (Gudavičius 1998; 1999: 46–51), foreground domestic causes in their explanations. Soviet historiography has most consistently favoured this kind of explanation, as it had to comply with the Marxist view of the causes of state emergence: the division of society into antagonistic classes and the beginning of class struggle.

According to this explanation, classically formulated by the Soviet Russian historian Vladimir Pašuto (1959), the Lithuanian state appeared as an apparatus serving the class of exploiters – Lithuanian feudal lords – to keep their "own" Lithuanian, exploited peasant farmers under control. If the role of external causes is recognised, then it is associated with the colonial expansion of German feudal lords into the Baltic lands. Members of the Lithuanian feudal class in-the-making could observe the fate that struck their Baltic "class brothers" in Prussia and the Sub-Daugava River region in the early thirteenth century, where the newly arrived Germans expropriated them or, in the best case scenario, made them their pawns (Nazarova 1990). As the story goes, the perception of this fate moved the Lithuanian feudal lords to unite so as to put up a better defence from the Teutons. It just so happened that, immediately afterwards, a serious problem befell the

old, friendly Lithuanian neighbour in the East, Rus' – the Tatar Mongol invasion and yoke. The Ruthenian feudal lords in the lands neighbouring Lithuania tried to save themselves from this yoke by asking for help from their old friends, the Lithuanian feudals, in return for fairly sharing the rent extorted from the local peasant Ruthenians. Once it had expanded eastward, the early Lithuanian state became a Lithuanian-Russian (or Russian-Lithuanian) state. This lasted for as long as the fateful Krewo Act did not interrupt its "normal" development, which led to its unification with the state of Muscovy.

A Marxist should reject the view that the Lithuanian state was the product of "precocious imperialism" or of an alliance or confederation of Lithuanian tribes or lands (that still was not a state) as just another application of the "theory of conquest", condemned by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in *The German Ideology*.[7] Without a doubt, it is not acceptable as a universal theory for the state's emergence. It is clearly unsuitable for explaining the appearance of the above-mentioned "primary states". Yet all universal theories for a state's emergence are inadequate. The course of a singular historical process depends on causal conjunctures, where both internal and external conditions interact (and in different proportions in different cases).

The main problem is that many historians misunderstand the "conquest theory", identifying it with the scenario of state emergence exemplified by the making of the Livonian state in the early thirteenth century: predator foreigners arrive from countries where the state already exists and conquer lands that are socio-economically backward. Such a blunt and primitive application of the "conquest theory" as an explanation for the rise of the Lithuanian state is found in the works of the Belarusian historian Mikola Ermalovič (1991 [1989]; 2003 [1990]; 2003 [2000]). He claims that the Lithuanian state appeared when, in the thirteenth century, Black Rus' consummated its centuries-long process of conquering the Baltic lands.

According to Ermalovič, the land called Lithuania (Litva) was among those Baltic territories that were not yet completely subjugated in the late twelfth century – a strip east of Navahrudak and Slonim between already Slavonic lands, stretching from Zaslavl in the northeast, to present-day Ivacevichi in the southwest. These were the lands of origin of Duke Mindaugas. When he lost the contest for power in his homeland, he found refuge in Navahrudak, where he was invited to take the seat of duke. Yet, in fact, in Rus', up until the "Tatar yoke" and much later, it would have been as difficult to imagine the invitation of a non-Rurikid to the local duke's "table" as the election of a black president in America in the nineteenth century (see chapter nine). Of course, it appears to have been of no consequence to Ermalovič. In return, Mindaugas conquered not only his homeland for Navahrudak, but also other ethnically Baltic lands (Nalšia, Deltuva and Samogitia, et al.).[8]

The new state received the name of one of the conquered lands, as was the case in the other two nearby states that the Germans had conquered at roughly the same time – Prussia and Livonia – which were also named

after the conquered nations. All three of the new Baltic states from the early thirteenth century – Livonia, Prussia and Lithuania – were the products of conquest, only in the first two cases the conquerors were Germans, and as for the last case they were Belarusians. Ermalovič pushes back the chronology of the formation of the Belarusian nation as far as he can, placing it around the time when the Polatsk duchy separated from the other Kievan Rus' lands. According to Ermalovič, Lithuania was an empire, but it was a Belarusian empire, where the first objects of conquest and imperial rule were the Baltic lands.[9] The only land to have escaped the intensified assimilation of the Balts following the Belarusian conquest was Samogitia – the true predecessor of contemporary Lithuania. To avoid confusion between the early Grand Duchy's metropolitan nation – which today calls itself "Belarusian" and were called Lithuanians in the Middle Ages – and contemporary Lithuanians, it is best they go by different names: the first should be called "Litvins" (литвины), the second – "Lietuvis" (летувис).[10]

It is both easy and difficult to disagree with Ermalovič's ideas, as he takes a very liberal approach towards universally acknowledged facts in the Grand Duchy's historiography. While he does acknowledge that Mindaugas was a Balt, he considers Gediminas (and his descendants) Slavs. In fact, the Slavonification of the Gediminids appointed to rule over Ruthenian lands did take place, but Gediminas himself died a pagan, as did his sons grand duke Algirdas and duke Kęstutis, who ruled over "Lithuania proper" and Samogitia. Ermalovič's story about three generations of Belarusian Orthodox Gediminids can provide no sensible account for the Catholic baptism of "Lithuania proper" in 1387, which was followed by that of Samogitia only in 1413.[11] Nor can his concept explain how the Grand Duchy's chronicle-writing tradition (Jučas 2002) emerged where the Slavic origins of the Grand Duchy's nobility was categorically rejected in favour of its allegedly Roman descent, while the Lithuanian right to rule Ruthenian lands was grounded on their reconquest from Tatar authority. Because of these "crude" contradictions between Ermalovič's claims and universally acknowledged facts in Grand Duchy historiography, his ideas are not accepted in modern Belarusian academic historiography.

There are even more important reasons why mainstream Belarusian historiography did not endorse Ermalovič's "grand narrative" (Lindner 1999). Ermalovič's consistent, sharp Belarusian nationalist ideas go against the policy of the pro-Russian, authoritarian Alexander Lukashenko's regime when it comes to writing history. The keystone of that policy is the postulate of the Eastern Slavic nations' brotherly alliance, whose senior brother is Moscow. By taking the Grand Duchy away from the "*Lietuvis*", Belarusian nationalists would have to consider the Grand Duchy's wars with Moscow Belarusian wars, not the brotherly Russian nation's wars to liberate Belarusians from a foreign (Polish-Lithuanian) yoke. While this approach can be freely published in Belarus (Saganovič 2001; Taras 2006; 2010; Novosel'skij 2012; Goldenkov 2009; 2010; Panucevič 2014; Kraŭcėvič 2000 [1998]; 2013; 2014; 2015 etc.), before the recent Russia-Ukraine "hybrid war"

it could not claim recognition as the "politically correct" or mainstream approach. Ermalovič's ideas might find a better reception in the future free and democratic Belarus, whose birth, so awaited in Lithuania, by no means promises a smooth resolution of the case of the Grand Duchy's legacy in favour of the "*Lietuvis*" side.

So far, more moderate concepts prevail in the question of the Lithuanian state's emergence among Belarusian academic historians. They explain it in terms of a "political alliance" (Kraŭcėvič 2000 [1998]: 141) or a "symbiosis" (Nasevič 1993: 60) of both ethnic groups, rather than a Belarusian (or Ruthenian) conquest of Baltic lands. Nonetheless, the core of the new state is often held to be Black Rus', with Navahrudak as its capital. The political domination of the Lithuanian (Baltic) nobility is sometimes acknowledged: "Lithuania dominated in a political sense, just as unarguably as Rus' dominated in the cultural sphere" (Nasevič 1993: 60). Belarusian historians likewise do not miss the opportunity to highlight the Belarusification of the Lithuanian Grand Duchy's political elite, and search for Belarusians in the entire history of Kievan Rus' and the Grand Duchy (Arloŭ and Saganovič 1999; Saganovič 2001). There was a time (in the interwar Republic of Lithuania) when Lithuanian historians of Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas just as earnestly searched for Lithuanians in the history of the Grand Duchy (Šapoka 1989 [1936]).

Hintze's barbarian "precocious imperialism" and Turchin's metaethnic frontier theory, discussed in chapter eight, are important in that they present a version of the state's genesis through conquest that provides an adequate explanation of the facts about which Ermalovič and similarly minded Belarusian authors speculate. This is, first of all, an approximate chronological coincidence of political processes in Lithuania culminating in Mindaugas' coronation as king of Lithuania in 1253, with the beginning of the removal of Rurikids from the "tables" of the Ruthenian lands and their replacement with Lithuanians. This time is known in the Lithuanian and Polish historiographical tradition as the annexation of Black Rus' by Lithuania. What was that annexation's significance for the formation of the state in ethnic Lithuania? Under the title "ethnic Lithuania" I mean here foremost the Balt-inhabited land on the left bank of the Neris River, which was called by this name at the turn of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and which eventually became the core of the domain controlled by future rulers of the Grand Duchy (see Map 16.1).

Henryk Łowmiański has gone into the most detail in his analysis of this question in the Grand Duchy's historiography. In his conception we find, shall we say, an outline of the sophisticated version of the conquest theory (Łowmiański 1932, v. 2, 328–370). Łowmiański concentrates his attention on two closely related questions, which are in fact fundamental. First – how and when did the members of the gangs under warlords from Lithuanian lands go from being amateur violent pillagers, who sometimes ventured on campaigns of plunder seeking to "boost" their agrarian income, to professional "statesmen" soldiers? Their leader was no longer just one of the "big

men" in the lands organised on an egalitarian basis, safeguarding his status with frequent feasts and gifts, but the master and ruler of those lands and of the military cadres themselves (the patrimonial monarch).

Second, how did one of these land or tribal dukes succeed at replacing the duty to distribute war booty as gifts (receiving only a fine feast in return) among his landsmen or tribesmen with the obligation of previously free and equal co-landsmen or co-tribesmen to pay him taxes, which went towards the upkeep of his team of professional team military servicemen (the rudimentary state apparatus)? Like many historians who have researched the topic of the emergence of the Lithuanian state, Łowmiański relates it to Mindaugas' actions, but he places the most important events at a later date. According to the viewpoint prevailing in historiography by the time Łowmiański published his landmark work, the Lithuanian state emerged on the eve of the Mongol Tatar invasion of Rus' (see, for example, Šapoka 1989 [1936]: 50). The year 1236 remains the broadly accepted date, probably symbolically associating the emergence of the Lithuanian state with the famous victory over the Livonian Brothers of the Sword at The Battle of Saule, where Mindaugas played no role whatsoever.

Łowmiański postponed the most important events in the formation of Lithuanian statehood to 1240–1260. Two of Mindaugas' innovations were fateful. First, making the most of the upheaval in the Rurikids' political system as a result of the Mongol Tatar invasion, Mindaugas did not send teams of Lithuanian soldiers to Rus' just to plunder and return with the booty. Instead, he sent them to remain there, replacing the deposed Rurikids and their servants amid Ruthenians (many of whom were relatively recently Slavonified Balts) already accustomed to the burden of taxes and tributes. Some teams of warriors that had been deployed too far away or too soon (even to Smolensk) were defeated and driven out, their leaders Tautvilas and Vykintas standing against Mindaugas at the fore of the political opposition. Yet Mindaugas was successful elsewhere (in Black Rus', where his son Vaišvilkas led the occupation of Ruthenian lands). Thus, he won an advantage over his competitors in the other ethnically Lithuanian lands (Nalšia, Deltuva, Samogitia, etc.; see Map 16.1): he had a contingent of professional warriors maintained by the fiscal resources of the Ruthenian lands. The first professional soldiers of the Lithuanian army, and at the same time statesmen, were members of the occupying military force who served in Lithuanian garrisons deployed in Ruthenian lands.

Yet these forces were not enough to help Mindaugas handle his opposition, which called foreign interventionists to come to their aid. Mindaugas managed to rebuff the opposing coalition by forming an alliance with the grand master of the Livonian Order Andreas von Stirland. In return for "donating" lands only nominally subordinate to himself to the Livonian Order, and becoming baptised, Mindaugas received the royal crown, i.e., international recognition of his authority and of the Lithuanian state in the Western Christian inter-polity society, as well as the military assistance to

achieve victory in the Lithuanian domestic war. Łowmiański conceives all events during Mindaugas' struggles for power in 1240–1250 as parts of this kind of war. The Lithuanian state was born of this war. It broke out between the forces of the state-in-the-making, represented by Mindaugas and his warriors, who no longer wished to till the soil and so lived off the resources of the occupied Ruthenian lands, and the tribal egalitarian societies of ethnic Lithuanian lands, trying to shed the yoke of taxes and tributes being hung about their necks.

Mindaugas won this war. The Lithuanian state born in the 1250s appeared to be sufficiently strong to survive the crisis arising after the death of its first ruler. No one (except for the Samogitians) managed to shake off the ruler's yoke of taxes and tributes for maintenance of professional military servicemen. Łowmiański notices certain similarities between the tax systems in Livonia and the lands among the first to become part of the Grand Duchy. He guesses that the Livonian Order offered Mindaugas both military and "technical organisational" help to put the young state's fiscal office in order (Łowmiański 1932, t. 2, 282, 362–368). It and the professional military core force embodied the bare essence of state as a coercive government that had risen above society.

Łowmiański outlines this conception of the Lithuanian state's appearance in the last chapter of his famous work about the beginning of the Lithuanian state and society (Łowmiański 1932, v. 2, 232–370). This chapter was omitted from a collection of his work on the Grand Duchy's history (Łowmiański 1983). He probably retracted his delineation of the Livonian Order's role in the genesis of the Lithuanian state in his still unsurpassed work (Łowmiański 1932). In fact, the particularities of the Grand Duchy's tax system he noted in ethnic Lithuania can also be explained another way, as Łowmiański's student, Jerzy Ochmański, did. Łowmiański considered the *dėkla* (agricultural produce tax) the equivalent of Livonia's grain tribute. But Ochmański argues that "the fact that this tribute went by the genuinely Lithuanian name of *dėkla* prompts another possible, if not more convincing assumption that *dėkla* might not be a borrowed term, but simply an analogy" (Ochmański 1986: 76).[12] Yet Łowmiański in his later work did not abandon his main idea for the appearance of the Lithuanian state itself, as testified by a claim he made in his book released in 1983, followed by a referral to his above-mentioned study on the genesis of the Lithuanian state: "The state of Lithuania was not born from defence against the Order, but amid the backdrop of expansion into Rus'" (Łowmiański 1983: 278).

The heart of the matter can be clarified drawing on the penetrating explanation of Edvardas Gudavičius as to why Lithuanians failed to conquer the Sub-Daugava region's lands in the thirteenth century. Gudavičius claims that

> this land could only be conquered by settling loyal landholders at the castles and guaranteeing their subsistence through the constant

> exploitation of the local peasants. The German feudals did precisely that. This was the basis of their 'innovation' they spread: the local population paid the outstanding accounts, some (Prussians, Yotvingians) even sacrificing their ethnic existence.
>
> (Gudavičius 1989: 168)

Later, he poses a rhetorical question:

> what permanent garrisons could the confederation of Lithuanian lands or the just recently emerged Lithuanian state have positioned in castles in Latgale or Courland in the first half of the thirteenth century, if even later its own territories were defended according to the ancient system of particular lands, where castles were guarded by rotating teams coming from the castle's neighbourhood? What permanent exploitation of the local communities could this state have organised, when in Lithuania itself the occasional 'visits' of the duke and his warriors in communities (*pasėdis, kieminėjimas*) had not yet been completely replaced by a regular tithe?
>
> (Gudavičius 1989: 168–169)[13]

In the first (or perhaps the second) half of the thirteenth century, the Lithuanian dukes were still unable to settle their loyal, landholding military servicemen in the castles and to ensure their subsistence through the regular exploitation of the local peasants in their native Lithuanian lands. They could do this in the subjugated neighbouring Ruthenian lands, though, where there were castles and peasants used to having to pay regular tributes and duties. These lands could either be simply plundered, or the dukes could make use of the existing system of exacting tributes through regular exploitation of the producers and settling their military garrisons there (which included many collaborating Ruthenians).[14] Those warlords or tribal dukes in ethnic Lithuania who were the first to make use of the second opportunity ended up becoming the founders of the Lithuanian state. This was a state that emerged as a machine for the conquest and exploitation of the neighbouring Eastern Slavs; only later was it used as a tool for social revolution. While it did destroy the tribal order in the ethnic Baltic lands (including the extermination of other tribal dukes and warlords), it was also a means for defending these lands against the German aggressors.

It was the Normans who had accustomed the Slavs to paying tributes to foreigners settling in their former tribal land centres. Now these already Slavonified Norman statesmen were replaced by foreigners from Lithuania, who in turn became Lithuania's first professional statesmen. Then these same figures carried out a revolutionary upheaval right nearby, in their Lithuanian homeland just on the other side of the forest expanse. They abolished the internally crumbling tribal organisation of society, replacing it

with a state organisation whose attributes were professional statesmen and taxes. This revolution first occurred in the eastern Lithuanian lands around the middle of thirteeenth century, while Vytautas concluded the process in Samogitia in the fifteenth century.

We can highlight the uniqueness of the formation of the early Lithuanian state by comparing it to similar processes of state genesis. I will limit the scope of this comparison to cases of state genesis in the gradually eastward-drifting metaethnic frontier of the Roman Empire, which after its fall became the frontier of Christian Western civilisation. In the late twelfth century, Lithuania also found itself on this frontier, only it was not a frontier of Western but of Eastern Christian (Byzantine) civilisation. The baptism of the Ruthenians deepened and highlighted the earlier existing ethnocultural boundary between Balts and Slavs. If we measure the depth of the metaethnic fault that divided the Baltic and Slavic lands using Turchin's index (see chapter eight), the very largest possible value (3) must be given to its religious component. The value of the linguistic sub-index is similarly large (maximal) at 2. After all, Balts and Slavs belong to different language groups, whose speakers cannot communicate with each other without learning a foreign language.

The lifestyles of Baltic and Slavic tribes were basically the same (sub-index value of 1), yet that should by no means suggest a peaceful coexistence, as similar lifestyles cause competition for the same natural resources. In his very concise analysis of the Lithuanian state's emergence (as one of the 25 positive cases in the period from 1000 to 1900), Turchin uses Soviet Russian sources that stress the concord between the Baltic and Slavic tribes and project the cliché of the voluntary accession of the Ruthenian lands to the Lithuanian state to earlier times, when that state did not yet exist (Turchin 2003: 190, 217). That is why he codes the military activity sub-index with a 1 (military activity having no demographic consequences). His total index values for the Slavic and Baltic frontier equal 7, only two points below the maximum value.

This value should most probably be at least one point higher, because the claim that the military tensions on the Baltic and Slavic border had no demographic consequences is doubtful. What happened to the Baltic tribes who, still in the sixth century, lived compactly around the middle reaches of the Dnieper and the upper reaches of the Oka rivers? It is unlikely that they assimilated into the foreign Slavic masses, after peacefully leaving them the best settlement areas in river valleys and near lakes.[15] In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the territory of the future core of the Lithuanian state was separated from the neighbouring Slavic lands by wide stretches of forest (Łowmiański 1983: 51–54). Due to the constant fighting here, these forests were as much a wasteland as the areas in Lithuania's west and north that separated the more densely populated territories of the Grand Duchy and the Teutonic Order and Livonia in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Map 16.1 Lithuania circa 1220. Published with permission of Dmytro Vortman. © Dmytro Vortman 2016.

Juliusz Latkowski expounds on the information from Russian chronicles about Lithuanian campaigns in the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and is surprised that

> a country no wider than 30 miles sends its armed troops so far and in two different directions. Astonishment arises from this, I would say, resilience of Lithuania, the endurance of her warriors and their unfailing powers. [. . .] It appears that Lithuanian dukes lived in harmony and often cooperated, because otherwise a Lithuania paralysed by internal feuding would not have been able to express itself so strongly externally, or become such a significant force.
>
> (Latkowski 1892: 9–10)[16]

Although he does not use this term, Latkowski is actually writing about social capital. Its accumulation explains why one of the many lands inhabited by Balts suddenly grew resilient and became a powerful spring, bouncing back at the Ruthenians who had hitherto terrorised the Balts. Some historians consider the emergence of the state as a cause of this resilience of the Lithuanian land in the second-last decade of the twelfth century (Baranauskas 2000: 161–178).

However, this resilience or internal consolidation, which was the source of the early Lithuanian pre-state imperialism, can be explained in another way, namely, by the processes of ethno-genesis spurred on by a more or less accidental success in military resistance to Ruthenians.[17] Success in turn released a positive feedback mechanism. The greater success the initially small and weak local village community alliance had in fighting against the bullying Ruthenians, the more other villages were willing to join and become "Lithuanians". (Recall the alliance of three mountain villages that gave rise to Switzerland.) The further this alliance spread, the stronger and more militant it became, perhaps to serve as an example to some of the more distant (non-neighbouring) Balt-inhabited territories. It appears that Rimvydas Petrauskas was of a similar opinion in one of his latest publications:

> the ethno-genesis of Lithuanians cannot be understood as the alliance or growing together of the older 'Lithuanian' tribes – Samogitians, Aukštaitijans, and Lithuanians. It is more likely that this should be viewed as the integration of separate territories and warring gangs that did not even necessarily share the same ethnic origins, and the founding of a political unit that acquired the name of Lithuania.
>
> (Petrauskas 2008: 163–164)[18]

Latkowski searches for the social capital that made the emerging Lithuanian ethnic group so resilient among the military elite's (dukes or warlords) relations. However, it is likely that the dukes themselves appeared as a new social layer of warlords in the hitherto egalitarian farmer communities after the success of the first military campaigns of the new ethnie. Afterwards, the main force of plundering attacks into the Ruthenian lands probably became the teams of volunteer warriors led by charismatic warlords (dukes), as Łowmiański claims as well. Yet the scale and frequency of these campaigns is hard to explain without assuming that it was not just warlord dukes and their warriors, mainly young, unmarried and often "problematic" men, who ventured on such distant campaigns. It appears that a large portion of married and independently farming men also went. Earlier (and much later too, in the times of the Lithuanian state, when all free men were under the "chase" – *vytis* – duty) this was the case too, but only in defence from invaders, not in order to arrange attacks.[19] This was why Lithuanians surpassed other Baltic ethnies and the neighbouring Ruthenians in terms of

belligerence and numbers, where only princes and their professional warrior retinues participated in distant campaigns.

The military organisation of medieval Scandinavia, which in turn was probably a remnant from Viking times (Lebedev 1985: 57), can provide the analogy to help understand how social capital could transform ordinary and rather sparsely settled farmers into a powerful military force ready to venture out on distant campaigns. A unit of that organisation was called a *mangörd* – a group of three farmsteads. One master (or two) would leave on a campaign, while the remaining two (or one) would see to the farms. This arrangement could only work with a great deal of mutual trust and solidarity among neighbours, especially if they were not kin. It appears that something similar to this arrangement spontaneously appeared in those Baltic lands whose population not only defended themselves against Ruthenian attacks but would launch their own as well.

The success of those attacks helped the new military elite – the land dukes – to consolidate their positions. Their authority as "big men" extended only to particular lands (such as Deltuva, Lithuania, Nalšia, Neris or parts thereof, see Map 16.1).[20] The emergence of the state itself was a much later process, when one such duke (probably Mindaugas) started to act "against the rules", discovering a way (reconstructed by Łowmiański) of maintaining groups of professional military loyal only to him. These were no longer future farmers, the village youth temporarily getting by with acts of plunder ahead of marriage and responsibility. These were now professional warriors (for life), who lived off the regularly paid tributes (taxes) from lands subjugated to their ruler's authority. Mindaugas used these teams of warriors to drive out or destroy his contenders (many of whom were his relatives). In the domestic war from which the Lithuanian state was born, a large part of the social capital accumulated since the beginning of Lithuania's resilience was destroyed as well.

Turchin fails to differentiate between the empire and the state. Therefore, he does not consider the possibility that the new aggressive ethnic or metaethnic group that had appeared on the metaethnic frontier and had created an empire, conquering and then exploiting more developed territories through the pre-existing state structures could not itself create a state organisation within its own metropole. In fact, the income received from the subjugated, more developed territories – tributes that were collected by their vassal rulers and passed on to their less developed yet more militant neighbours – could be spent by the tribal, egalitarian structures preserved in the political society of the conquerors themselves. In other words, the creation of an empire could slow down the social or political development of these conquerors, instead of accelerating it. The most telling example is the above-mentioned "reservations" created by the Jurchen and Manchurian dynasties that ruled China for their tribesmen. Here they could live under artificial conditions of primal communal "communism" at the expense of Chinese farmers, thus maintaining the social cohesion that was the source of the nomadic cavalry's military superiority.

We can suspect that the creation of empire had a similar slowing effect on the social, political and economic development of the ethnic Lithuanian lands of the Grand Duchy. As the Grand Duchy had an empire, Samogitia remained a land that never really experienced serfdom (Kiaupienė 1988). Of course, the rulers of the Grand Duchy did not distribute the tributes they collected in Rus' among the population of the ethnic Lithuanian lands, as Rome's emperors did in Rome, or Ögedei and the grand khans did around Karakorum. Yet having the resources of the peripheries (Ruthenian lands) at their disposal, the Grand Duchy's rulers were not forced to pressure the population of the ethnic Lithuanian lands with taxes. This is why feudal exploitation structures developed so slowly in Lithuania's western lands. Their formation was slowed by the creation of an empire in the east. The further west one went, the more the population of the Lithuanian lands could enjoy the modest public goods a government offered, without having to pay the full price. The Samogitians succeeded in living this way for the longest time, where state structures did not appear until the early fifteenth century.

Once state structures had been introduced in Lithuania's Aukštaitija, Lithuania's rulers tried to do the same in Samogitia at the turn of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, creating the "centre's" military colonists' villages and burdening its inhabitants with taxes. Yet, facing the local Samogitians' opposition and even the threat of their siding with the Teutonic Order, the Grand Duchy's rulers suspended these state-building processes.

> The early lands structure was kept in Samogitia for the entire or almost the entire fourteenth century. Throughout this period an obvious difference remained between the relatively dense network of the grand duke's castles and farmstead clusters in the southern part of today's Aukštaitija (including Dzūkija) and their sparse presence in the north.
>
> (Gudavičius 1989: 169)

Tax revenue from the western Lithuanian lands was no longer so necessary to the Grand Duchy's rulers following its expansion into the East and the increase of its exploitation of Lithuanian lands where state structures existed the earliest (along the boundary of ethnographic Lithuania with Rus'). The only duty to the state that remained in Samogitia (and perhaps in many of the northern regions of Aukštaitija along the Livonian border) was universal military service, which the land's inhabitants had to carry out either way, defending themselves from the Crusaders' raids almost every year. When the estate structure of the Grand Duchy formed in the fifteenth century, a particularly large portion of Samogitia's inhabitants could claim (and were granted) nobles' rights because of the universal military service duty.

The Samogitians would hardly have been able to resist the Crusaders without the support of the Grand Duchy's central government. Its resources went towards the creation and maintenance of the Panemunė castle system,

which carried out the most important role in defending the empire's western boundary. In addition, when required, or perhaps even regularly, Samogitia received grain subsidies from the centre. During the years of the Crusaders' supremacy, they were already the single most vital element of the decimated land's economy.[21] Samogitia gained the most from the inter-regional redistribution of resources across the Grand Duchy, so typical of empires. That is why it can be considered as part of the metropole of the Lithuanian Empire, despite not being part of the Grand Duchy rulers' domain. Of course, it is difficult to claim that Samogitians exploited the inhabitants of other areas of the Grand Duchy because they received subsidies that were both direct and indirect (freedom from taxation). They paid for their freedoms and privileges in blood. Yet this was also the price to be paid for imperial welfare by the privileged or politically dominant ethnies in other empires or the populations of metropolitan centres. In return for tax-exempt status and their enjoyment of the fruits of the empire – they received their share by redistributing the surplus product collected from the empire's peripheries – the inhabitants of the metropolitan centres (and sometimes they alone) bore the heaviest military service burden.

We can thus identify the same phenomenon in relations between the Grand Duchy's metropole and its periphery, whose purest form is evident in nomadic empires (but not exclusively): exploitation of the peripheries preserved pre-state political and pre-class (in the Marxist sense) socio-economic structures in the metropole. Admittedly, in the case of the Grand Duchy, this phenomenon was evident only in its western part, and the causal mechanism itself was somewhat different. The preservation of tribal social structures in nomadic reservations was a concerted policy of the Qing and other Chinese dynasties, so as to protect the military fist whose assistance would ensure that the regions inhabited by Chinese peasants would remain under their authority. Samogitia did not keep its archaic socio-political structure for so long because the Grand Duchy's rulers sought to maintain a reservation of "military democracy" from which they could gather all the "bellicose barbaric" warriors to conquer the Ruthenian lands. Both Kęstutis and Vytautas would conscript Samogitians to march upon the Ruthenians. However, the main purpose of the Samogitian "military democracy" reservation was to defend the empire's western border. In this sense, the sources of the vitality of the early Samogitian order are similar to those that determined the revival of military democracy in the socio-political organisation of the Don and Zaporozhye Cossacks.

In other ethnic Lithuanian lands, the consequences of "precocious imperialism" were more similar to those that Hintze discusses in his theory for the appearance of feudalism. The first outcome of this kind of imperialism in Western Europe was the creation of the so-called "barbarian kingdoms" from the Roman Empire's ruins. In both cases we see how less civilised and warring pagans politically subordinated the majority population of a more civilised Christian land, being forced to gather in a "personal alliance"

(*Personenverbandstaat* in German) type of state to enact the conquest and maintain authority.[22]

Some of these "barbarian kingdoms" existed so briefly that they did not have the time to "mature" sufficiently for tax burdens to be loaded onto their subjects, belonging to the politically dominant ethnic group. Their only duty was military service, while the population from the conquered lands had to pay the taxes. However, a majority (except for the aristocracy) were not military or government professionals but farmers who had settled in the conquered lands, mixing in with the earlier inhabitants, and thus becoming assimilated. As they settled further and further away, no political or other ties remained with their distant homeland except for legendary oral history narratives (Wolfram 1979).

Unlike the Germanic peoples who created "barbarian kingdoms", Lithuanians did not move into the Ruthenian lands whole villages at a time. They were not the starters of the "wandering avalanches" in the sense of Reinhard Wenskus (Wenskus 1961). "In the early history of Lithuania, there is no sign of military campaigns similar to the migration of the peoples phenomenon: no Lithuanian group ever tried to establish its own colony independent of the metropole" (Baranauskas 2000: 163). Possible exceptions are the Lithuanian recolonisation of the Braslau land (Браслаў, Lithuanian: Breslauja) already settled by the Slavic Krivichi tribes, the settlement of refugee Balts in the lands of Black Rus' or the founding of the Lithuanian colony in Obol'tsy. However, these actions were undertaken by the already established government of the Lithuanian state, not migration processes that had political consequences, like the "migration of the peoples" that created "barbarian kingdoms".

Of all the "barbarian kingdoms", the circumstances behind the emergence of the Lithuanian state are most reminiscent of the appearance of the Frankish kingdom, itself the outcome of Roman Gaul's conquest (Geary 1988; Kaiser 2004; Wood 1994; Zöllner 1970). The conquerors came from the lands of the Rhine's lower and middle reaches which bordered Roman Gaul.[23] After the conquest of Roman Gaul, the original territory of the Frankish tribes was the part of the Frankish kingdom, known as Austrasia, and did not become just a distant legendary homeland. Even though, unlike the Lithuanians, the Franks did settle the conquered lands of Gaul in entire villages, Austrasia did not grow empty.[24] Its social and political life, however, did start to be organised in accordance with kingdom-wide examples.

In Gaul itself, the Franks did not attempt to destroy the past and introduce novelties. Had they done so, they would not have been able to exploit the autochthon farmers the same way the Roman state did. Thus, the polity which the Frankish kings ruled was a state, albeit a more primitive (patrimonial) version compared to the previously existing Roman one. Due to their conquest of Gaul, the Franks did not take long to surpass their neighbouring Germanic ethnies in terms of their level of political and social organisation. These Germanic peoples (primarily the Saxons) maintained a tribal social

organisation. Due to this advantage, the Franks started to expand their state into the east, incorporating less advanced Germanic tribes as they went, much like Lithuanians did in the times of Mindaugas, Lithuania's own Clovis. Some tribes resolutely opposed this takeover: in Germany the Allemanni (in present-day Southern Germany; Hartung 1983) and especially the Saxons, and the Samogitians in Lithuania. But in the Frankish case, the Frankish kings did not need the Saxons to act as a barrier protecting their state from the east. Thus, in Saxonia, no deal of this kind was possible, that probably already in Gediminas' times politically regulated relations between Samogitia and Lithuania, leaving the older social organisation in place in Samogitia. Moreover, it was even bolstered by subsidies from the imperial centre.

The main force behind this unification of ethnically related Germanic tribal peoples into one state was the Frankish warriors who were planted on the necks of the recently-conquered peasantry of Gaul. As in the lands of Rus' conquered by the Lithuanians, some of the old Roman Gaulish nobles were accepted into Frankish statesmen's ranks. These were members of the Roman Gaul elite who sided with the enemy in time, becoming their local henchmen and collaborators. Without them, the conquerors would have found it difficult to operate the entrenched governance routines for their purposes. At first, Roman aristocrats who sought to survive and thus collaborated (as the Rurikids and other local elites had done in the Ruthenian lands) were treated like second-grade pawns. They hurried to establish marital relations with the newly arrived Frankish elite. The children born of Roman mothers and nursed by Gaulish nurses were better at speaking Latin dialects, influenced by the Germanic tongue than their fathers' Frankish. After many centuries, these dialects eventually became the French language. The difference between the social organisation in the western and eastern Germanic lands remained for a long time, much like that between "Lithuania proper" and Samogitia in the Grand Duchy after Mindaugas.[25] However, in the tenth century, the Samogitia of the Frankish state – Saxony – became the centre of the consolidation of the German feudal state (for a long time called the Kingdom of East Franks or East Francia).

Of course, this analogy does have its limits. The post-Clovis Frankish kingdom, unlike post-Mindaugas Lithuania, did not apostatise from Catholicism. The Lithuanian-conquered Ruthenian lands were by no means equal in their economic or social development to Roman Gaul. However, that is why the political and economic centre of the expanding Grand Duchy was not transferred from the ethnic homeland into the conquered lands, as was the case with the Frankish kingdom. Only Aachen – the Franks' Vilnius – was established in the ancient Frankish lands (Austrasia), under the reign of another Frankish dynasty (Carolingian), from where they commenced the conquest of Roman Gaul.

In research on the emergence of the Lithuanian state, a comparison of ancient Lithuanians and the nomadic seafarers – the Scandinavians – is more prevalent than a comparison with the Franks. Sometimes the extent of this comparison

is a mere statement of the similarity between the Lithuanians' twelfth-century campaigns of plunder into the Sub-Daugava regions and Ruthenian lands on the one hand, and the outbreak of Norman attacks on Western Europe in the ninth century on the other. However, the Norman campaigns of the ninth and tenth centuries were more likely to have been the last episode in the Great Migration of Peoples (Baranauskas 2000: 163). The Normans eventually started to move permanently to Normandy and East Anglia to live as free peasants; they were not just the entrant war-dog layer "living off" the tributes collected from the local population, as was the case with the settlement of Lithuanian warriors in the Ruthenian lands. This situation is most like that of their predecessors, the Varangians, who created the Rurikid Empire at the turn of the ninth and tenth centuries, in which the state structures of Kievan Rus' were formed. As I mentioned earlier (chapter ten), Henryk Paszkiewicz makes this comparison most consistently. Basically, he considers the Grand Duchy or the Gediminid Empire (until its union with Poland) the second edition of the Rurikid Empire (Paszkiewicz 1954: 185–254).

In the ninth century, the Vikings subdued the Eastern Slavic society that was organised based on tribal relations and still lacked state structures (Korpela 2008). In turn, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the Lithuanians gained authority over lands where such structures already existed, having been created by the Normans that had long since been Slavonified. In this regard, the situation of the Lithuanian dukes and their armies was more similar to that of the Normans during their late phase of expansion when they conquered England and Southern Italy. England's conquest in 1066 is also similar to the subordination of the Ruthenian lands in that the Normans carried it out from a geographically close territorial base – from Normandy in Northern France, which had been colonised during the first waves of invasion in the ninth and tenth centuries, making it their new homeland.

The consequences of the Norman and early Lithuanian conquests are also similar: state structures appeared where they had not existed before (Kievan Rus' after the Norman conquest), and strengthened where they had existed (in the same Kievan Rus' after the Lithuanian conquest). In Norman-occupied England and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, the king's authority was stronger than in any other country in Western Europe. As Dovnar-Zapol'skij mentioned (chapter twelve), when the Ruthenian lands were subjected to the Lithuanians' authority, their level of political development increased. The divide between the private authority of the patrimonial dukes as masters (*gospodar'*, господарь) and their political authority as the political rulers of lands (*gosudar'*, государь) became more pronounced (Dovnar-Zapol'skij 1901: 55). Regardless of how we might judge his opinion, it is clear that the authority of the Lithuanian dukes in the Ruthenian lands was much stronger than that of their predecessors, the Rurikids. We may consider the Grand Duchy in the fourteenth century a loose "conglomerate"; its political cohesion, however, was significantly greater than that of the "conglomerate" known as Kievan Rus'.

However, there is one important difference that imposes a limit to the analogy of Lithuanians as the "land-based Vikings". The driving force behind the Viking campaigns of 793–1066, in which as many as nine stages can be distinguished (Lebedev 1985: 14–22), was initially bands of economic and later political emigrants; only towards the very end did the states formed in Scandinavia and beyond its borders provide the impetus. The economic emigrants were bondsmen (farmers, peasants) and their sons, who no longer found room for themselves in traditional Scandinavian society because its ability to absorb demographic expansion was limited by the harsh environmental conditions. That is why Scandinavia became one of the epicentres of at least two major waves of the migration of peoples. There is no clear evidence of such "demographic explosions" in the Baltic lands, and there are no signs of the economic migration of farmers. The political emigrant Vikings were *konungs* ("kings") who had lost internal political battles that took place as part of the formation of states in the Scandinavian countries. They were fleeing either the wrath of the victors or the relatives of contenders they had slain seeking blood revenge.

The circumstances of the arrival of some Lithuanian dukes (such as Daumantas in Pskov) in Ruthenian lands were similar to those that forced many Vikings over the seas (including to places as bleak as Iceland and Greenland). Yet he is probably the only Lithuanian "viking" whose role in the land that accepted him is comparable to that of Germanic and Viking bands that served the Roman and later Byzantine emperors. Their job included the defence of their masters from other Germanic or Viking bands' attacks. Many of the Lithuanian soldiers who settled permanently in the Ruthenian lands from the thirteenth century did so not as refugees who had lost battles for supremacy in ethnic Lithuania, but as military colonists. They were sent to these outposts by Lithuania's rulers or tribal warlord dukes, who were about to become the rulers of Lithuania.

Some of the first kings of the Scandinavian countries were Vikings who had returned to their homelands. After many years overseas, they deposed incumbent rulers with the help of their military glory gained whilst away, their plundered wealth or military escort from abroad. Harald Hardrada was one such Norwegian king, whose tumultuous lifetime saw him become the commander of the Byzantine emperor's personal guard, and the son-in-law of the Kievan Rus' prince Yaroslav the Wise, and to reach renown as a *skald* (bard). The analogy between the creation processes of the monarchies of Scandinavia and Lithuania would be complete if Wilhelm the Conqueror or the Rurikids, having become established in their conquered lands, would have devised a way to subjugate their homeland of Scandinavia, too. Yet by the time a generation of Normans had emerged who were so strong in their overseas positions to have even considered such a conquest, Scandinavia to them had become a semi-legendary, ancient homeland. Plus, they were surrounded by many other more lucrative objects of conquest. Lithuania's case was different. Both the creation of the (monarchic) state and

the subordination of the first Ruthenian lands took place within the same generation. Also, their homeland of Lithuania did not lie across the seas, but just on the other side of a wide forest expanse.

Notes

1 See Niendorf 2006; Kiaupa 2012; Sliesoriūnas 2015 for the most recent accounts.
2 For a critique of Brunner's concept, see Algazi 1996.
3 There are those who think otherwise. Richard Thurnwald writes about the "imperialism" (yet in quotation marks) of primeval peoples (*Naturvölkern*) *in relation to one another*, and associates the emergence of the state with this kind of imperialism. See Thurnwald 1934: 95–96.
4 Hintze's feudalism concept has drawn criticism (see Borgolte 2002). In fact, we may doubt some of the ways Hintze applies his "precocious imperialism" idea (especially in the interpretation of Russian history). However, this does not mean it cannot be useful in other cases Hintze himself has not examined.
5 In the court of the most senior landlord (the ruler), these duties might be merely honorary titles given to his vassals ruling their appanage lordships (helped by their own household retinue).
6 The last such reservation was Manchuria (in today's North East China), whence the last nomadic people and its dynasty to have conquered China originated (the Qing, reigned in 1644–1911). Until the late nineteenth century, the Chinese were forbidden from settling in Manchuria. Due to this barrier on Chinese colonisation, the relatively scarce arrivals from Russia could subordinate the Siberian expanses and the Amur land covered by dense forests, which were unsuitable for nomads yet would have suited Chinese agricultural colonisation.
7 The classics of this theory are Ludwig Gumplowicz 1902 (1892), Franz Oppenheimer 1990 (1907) and Richard Thurnwald 1934.
8 Lithuanian historians locate the Deltuva land in the Aukštaitija historical region in the territory of Anykščiai, Molėtai, Ukmergė and Širvintai districts of contemporary Lithuania. See Map 16.1.
9 The reservation is required that he does not use this term himself.
10 Ermalovič did not invent this distinction. See Bumblauskas 2008 for its origins. "Lietuvis" means "a Lithuanian" in the Lithuanian language and is the innocuous (but sometimes proud) self-designation of contemporary Lithuanians in their native language. When used in the Belarusian nationalist discourse, it takes the meaning of a "fake Lithuanian", i.e., a "Samogitian who stole his name from the true Lithuanians/Litvins (i.e., Belarusians)".
11 To recall, for Ermalovič and his ilk "Lithuania proper" is the ancient name for Belarus.
12 Of the more recent literature on this topic, Darius Baronas (2008: 249) accepts Łowmiański's hypothesis about the Livonian Order's knights in their role as the irreplaceable "instructors" of Mindaugas in creating the Lithuanian state.
13 Gudavičius refers to the feudal duties of Lithuanian peasants in the sixteenth century and even later, which historians consider archaic relics from the distant past. *Pasėdis* refers to the duty of a peasant household to provide his lord and his retinue with food, fodder and gifts (in addition to the regular duties and tributes) when he paid a chance visit on the peasant's household. *Kieminėjimas* refers to a lord's sojourn in a specific locality for a longer time, living from the many *pasėdis*.
14 The question of what this social order should be called is a separate matter, one there is simply no possibility of discussing further here. In contemporary

literature, creatively continuing the Marxist tradition, the concept of a tributary mode of production is gaining popularity. The authors contributing to this literature suggest a distinction between "mode of production" and "mode of exploitation". See Haldon 1993; Wickham 1994.

15 Arvydas Norkūnas (2001) presents a rather convincing reconstruction of Baltic and Slavic tribal relations in prehistoric times.

16 It is unclear what mile Latkowski had in mind (a Polish mile is around 5.8 km; a long mile is around 11 km). It is possible that he is referring to only the core of the future Lithuanian state – the land Lithuania (Litva). See Baranauskas 2002, Kiaupa et al. 2000: 54–56 and Map 16.1.

17 Gintaras Beresnevičius (2003) claims the existence of this kind of pre-state imperialism as well, only he puts its emergence perhaps a little too far back in history, as far as the times of the Great Migration of Peoples. Yet he is right to consider Lithuanians born imperialists, meaning that the Lithuanian ethnie did not exist prior to the first successful campaigns of plunder against the Ruthenians. Lithuanians were born of these battles. They arose from those Balts who dared to be the first to attack the Ruthenians and who succeeded in returning victorious more often than not.

18 To recall, Aukštaitija was a historical region of Lithuania (mentioned in historical sources since the fourteenth century) east of Samogitia. Aukštaitija is composed of the Deltuva, Nalšia, Neris, Séla and Upytė lands, mentioned in thirteenth-century sources (see Map 16.1). Juxtaposing Lithuania with Aukštaitija and Samogitia (Žemaitija), Petrauskas refers to the land of Lithuania as of the twelfth–thirteenth centuries located east and north of the Nemunas and south of the Neris, which was the core area of the formation of the Lithuanian state. Along with the larger part of the historical-ethnographic region of Dzūkija in contemporary Lithuania, the land of Lithuania encompassed parts of the territory of contemporary Belarus north of the Nemunas and west of the Western Berezina rivers.

19 Military mobilisation of all free men to defend an invaded territory.

20 Most historians locate the Neris land, mentioned in historical sources from the thirteenth century, at the lower reaches of the Neris River, neighbouring Samogitia in the west, Deltuva in the north and Lithuania (in the original sense) in the south and east (see Map 16.1).

21 When the Samogitians found themselves under the Teutonic Order's authority, one of their most significant and consistent complaints and reasons for rebellion was that not only did the Order no longer pay them subsidies (unless we consider the gifts sometimes given to influential figures subsidies), but they also tried to burden the Samogitians with taxes.

22 Without making this kind of state, immigrants become simply another demographic mass, changing the ethnic structure in their places of arrival, though not the system of political subordination. This happened to the Slavs who colonised the Balkan Peninsula in the sixth and seventh centuries.

23 This is not Franconia, which spanned the territory of present-day Germany's Hessen and the northeast part of Bavaria. It became part of the Frankish state after the Roman conquest of Gaul. Franconia could have been the homeland of the Franks before they moved or were pushed to Austrasia.

24 In actual fact, the nature of the migration during the times of the Great Migration of Peoples in general and the circumstances of the Frank settlement in Gaul in particular remain an object of discussion (Kaiser 2004: 100–108). Some scholars doubt that the migration involved whole populations, arguing that only bands of warriors moved into new areas. These bands could be ethnically heterogeneous themselves. Only the victims of attacks (the Romans) considered the offenders

one ethnic group. They in turn could become one ethnic group if the attacks were successful. A myth of common origins and other stories with no foundation in facts were then invented to maintain that unity, as without them it would have been impossible to survive in a hostile vanquished environment. Later historians, however, frequently accept these myths as facts. See Wenskus 1961: 272–428, 512–541; Gillett 2002; Garipzanov et al 2008.

25 I mean here the difference between the territories of present-day France and Western Germany. The Slavic-inhabited lands east of the Elbe River (now East Germany), were conquered and colonised by Germans only in the twelfth century.

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17 The unaccomplished mission of the Lithuanian empire

There is no reason to mourn the failure of the imperial projects of Algirdas, who dreamed of conquering all of Rus', or of Vytautas, who sought to succeed the legacy of the Golden Horde. Their success would have probably thwarted the emergence of the modern ethno-linguistic Lithuanian nation. However, lacking the chance to make these schemes come true after Vytautas' death, his successors could achieve much more than just delay the realisation of the plans of Ivan III for three hundred years, and thus create the political conditions for the ethno-genesis of the Belarusians and Ukrainians.[1]

Tsarist Russian and Soviet historiography claimed that the unification of all the Eastern Slavic lands under Moscow's authority was an "historically necessary", "unavoidable" and "progressive" process, and many Russian historians continute to claim to this after 1991.[2] Actually, this claim has no basis. It is contradicted by the existence of the independent Belarusian and Ukrainian states. The best way of opposing this Russian historiographical imperialism is to ask whether the process of the unification of Russians into one state and the very emergence of this nation was also "historically necessary" and "progressive"?

Chauvinist Russian historians tell the history of Muscovy's conquests in the second half of the fifteenth century as the story of "Russia's unification", anachronistically comparing them to the political unification of the German and the Italian nations of the mid-nineteenth century. However, they had been readied for this by a long run of economic and cultural integration processes that had no analogies in fifteenth-century North East Rus'. As in the case of other nations, the Russian nation's existence is not a precondition of its history, but an outcome, whose character and geographical boundaries depended on the conjunctures of political history, which had numerous alternative outcomes. In the fifteenth century, a Russian political nation did not yet exist in North and North East Rus'. A common language and literature do not refute this statement. A common language and culture do not stop several different German, English and French speaking political nations and states from existing in Europe and beyond its borders. The emergence of the Russian political nation was the

side effect of the subordination of all the North East Rus' lands to the one authority of the state of Muscovy.

In fact, although the post-Vytautas Grand Duchy could not make Algirdas' dream come true, it could preserve the East European inter-polity system. Once the short-lived hegemony of the Grand Duchy came to a close after Vytautas' death, a multi-polar structure emerged, based on the antagonism of the Grand Duchy and the state of Muscovy. Besides them, there were at that time more players, each carrying out their independent foreign policy – Greater Novgorod, Livonia, Pskov, Tver and Riazan'. This inter-polity system also included the Tatar polities in the making, having split from the Great Horde, which gradually became mere residuals of the Golden Horde's fragmentation. The khanates of Crimea (Vozgrin 1992), Kazan (Xudjakov 1991 [1923]), and Astrakhan (Zajcev 2004) were these new break-away political bodies.

The five Ruthenian members of the East European inter-polity system in the middle of the fifteenth century were old political organisms with statehood traditions that had proven their vitality on numerous occasions. Among the younger Tatar polities, the Kazan khanate, founded in around 1440 at the confluence of the Kama and Volga rivers, had the most potential. It was precisely at this location that a Muslim Volga Bulgarian polity had existed for centuries prior to the Mongol Tatar invasion. It used to control the Volga waterways and blocked Slavic colonisation in the Kama River basin and east of the Volga. Unlike the other Tatar polities (a partial exception is Crimea), a majority of the population in the Kazan khanate (including the Tatars) were farmers, thus it had serious potential for economic and demographic development. Vivid testimony of this is the survival of a Tatar island still resisting Russian assimilation in the lands of the former Kazan khanate.

By the last years of the Grand Duchy's independence (1569), the wide variety of this East European inter-polity system had been simplified down to just three players: Muscovy, the Grand Duchy and the Crimean khanate, which had by then long been (since 1475) a vassal of the Turkish Ottoman Empire. Lithuania had at one stage tried to quash this inter-polity system, incorporating its members. Now Muscovy sought this ultimate imperial goal (and eventually, it succeeded). However, this system could have been saved. The Grand Duchy could have done this, because up until the very fall of Greater Novgorod in 1471, it was the most powerful polity in this system, having only in 1449 acknowledged parity with Muscovy and agreed to partition their respective spheres of influence. The collapse and extinction of this system swallowed by the centre of the Russian Empire was no less (and no more) unavoidable than the collapse of the many other inter-polity systems that have existed in the history of the world.

The West and Central European inter-polity system avoided this kind of collapse for three hundred years. This collapse was only as unavoidable as

World Wars I and II were unavoidable. Yet many historians do not agree that these man-made catastrophes were unavoidable in fact (Ferguson 1999; Mombauer 2002; Fromkin 2004, etc.). According to this revisionist view, the particular errors of judgement of specific political actors and their poor (though perhaps subjectively rational) decisions did not allow for preventing these wars, causing the collapse of Europe's modern inter-polity system. Also, there were alternatives to the fall of many other inter-polity systems to have existed here and in other regions. The burgeoning popularity of so-called alternative or counter-factual history in recent decades, and its gradual "legalisation" in academic historiography (Demandt 1986 [1984]; Ferguson 1997; Tetlock and Belkin 1996; Tetlock; Lebow and Parker 2006, etc.) provide vivid testimony of the growing influence of the revisionist view.[3] The unavoidable rise of Moscow is a myth that retrospectively rationalises the course of history, whose ideological function is completely obvious.

During a comparatively short time, from 1440 to 1480, the Grand Duchy, being the most powerful polity in the East European inter-polity system, had at least four opportunities not just to preserve but also to increase this system's internal political variety. The Grand Duchy could not pursue an active foreign policy in 1432–1440. During the internal war of these years, it became a field of activity of its neighbouring powers. Yet by the 1440s it did recuperate its agency as a great power, whereas Muscovy was gripped by a second phase of internal war (1445–1451), known in Soviet historiography as the "feudal war".[4]

In this war, the succession rights to Vytautas' grandson Vasilij II (1415–1462) as Muscovy's grand prince were contested by his uncle Jurij (1374–1434), and then by Jurij's sons, Vasilij the Cross-Eyed (d. 1448) and Dmitrij Šemjaka (1410–1453). Although the Lithuanian favourite was Vasilij II as a closer relative, in terms of the Grand Duchy's state interests it was completely irrelevant who the victor would be. Either one would have continued Muscovy's self-assertive expansionist foreign policy once in power. However, in around 1448–1449, the situation changed. When he lost the fight for the grand prince's authority, Dmitrij Šemjaka altered his political goals. "Leaving Muscovy, he started to build an independent state in the north, which included Ustyug, Galych, Viatka. Perhaps Šemjaka also intended to unite with Greater Novgorod, and incidentally, establish closer ties than the Novgorodians desired" (Zimin 1991: 202).

Dmitrij called on the assistance of all his potential allies, including the Grand Duchy. However, the young grand duke of Lithuania and king of Poland, Casimir, chose to capitulate to Vasilij II on 31 August 1449. This is as "black" a day in Lithuania's history as 23 August 1939, when the infamous Molotov-Ribbentrop pact sealed the fate of the Baltic States. By this deal, Casimir not only abandoned the imperial eastward expansionist aims of Algirdas and Vytautas (they were no longer feasible), but also repudiated any semblance of great-power politics, whose aim would have

been to preserve the strategic balance on the eastern boundary of the Grand Duchy. In the agreement, the rulers of Muscovy and Vilnius promised not to support one another's enemies. This was of relevance to Casimir as well, because his competitor for the throne of the Grand Duchy, Mykolas, the son of Žygimantas Kęstutaitis, continued the struggle for power by searching for assistance and allies in the Tatar steppes and in the Ruthenian lands. However, Casimir, then already elected the King of Poland, was in an infinitely stronger position than Vasilij II. Casimir did not even exploit his superior bargaining power to negotiate better conditions for Lithuania. According to the agreement, Greater Novgorod remained in Muscovy's sphere of influence, and the Grand Duchy was left with the less significant Tver. Yet certain "loopholes" remained in the agreement that allowed Muscovy to interfere in Tver's affairs.

Left with no allies, Dmitrij Šemjaka lost in 1453 as well, before being poisoned in Greater Novgorod. No insurmountable trend for the unification of North East Rus', let alone "all Eastern Slavs", as claimed by Russian and Soviet historiography, could be observed in the fifteenth century in Russian and Soviet historiography. A social and ethnic divide existed between the southern and northern parts of "Tatar Rus". The southern parts were located along the upper reaches of the Volga River, where the largest centres were the competing cities of Tver and Muscovy. The northern lands included the Greater Novgorod domains and the cities of North East Rus' that supported Dmitrij Šemjaka, as identified by Aleksander Zimin (Ustyug, Galych, Viatka, etc.).

The difference between them was just as significant as the one that divided the lands of the Grand Duchy that supported Švitrigaila and Žygimantas Kęstutaitis during the domestic war in the 1430s. In the case of Rus', that difference was not based on ethnicity or religion, but on a socio-economic foundation. In the north, there were strong traditions of autonomy for cities and land *veche* (assemblies), whereas they had long since been absent in the south because of the powerful authority of the patrimonial princes. Even when the northern lands were annexed by Muscovy, serfdom was only relatively weakly established there. By the fifteenth century, it had already served as the economic foundation of the maintenance of the landholding military servicemen who made up the power basis of Muscovy's rulers. Tatar raids never reached the north, and the only knowledge the peoples of these lands had of the "Tatar yoke" was from the tributes Muscovy's grand princes and their agents collected for the Tatar suzerains. This made them hated all the more so, much more than the never-before-seen Tatars. The people of the northern lands had strong reasons to believe they would be better off left to run their own lives.

Zimin's claim that one of the possible outcomes to the fifteenth-century "feudal war" between Muscovy's princes was the emergence of at least two states in the former "Tatar Rus'" refers to an idea that Nikolaj Nosov raised somewhat earlier (Nosov 1969: 5–13). The latter claimed that

> in the late fifteenth-early sixteenth centuries, a battle between two development trends for the country raged in Rus'. The question arose, what path would Rus' take: the proto-bourgeois path that was developing in the north with its salt mining industry, or the path of serfdom? The North stood against the Centre, until it was finally brought under its heel.
>
> (Zimin 1991: 209)

Zimin furthers Nosov's idea:

> Muscovy's battles against Galych, Viatka and Ustyug during the years of upheaval foretold this antithesis. Muscovy with its serfdom, peasantry and monks was opposed by the elemental force of the mining industry's people (salt boilers, hunters, fishermen) and free peasants [вольница]. Because of the fall of Galych, Tver and Novgorod perished next and then the bloody glow of *oprichnina* arose.
>
> (Zimin 1991: 210)

The best outcome in terms of the Grand Duchy's state interests would not have been the victory of any one of these "two versions of Rus'", but the survival of both (or more). If it were not for the resources of the north, serfdom-based Muscovy could not have posed any serious threat to the Grand Duchy, or the Kazan and the Astrakhan Tatar khanates on the middle and lower reaches of Volga. "Unlike the Mongol Empire or the Golden Horde, the Kazan khanate was not a nomadic empire, and should not be confused with them" (Taagepera 1999: 54). As these Tatar polities grew stronger and expanded, they would have had to engage in hostilities with each other and the Crimean khanate more and more often. Therefore, it is unlikely that they could have ever posed such a threat to the Grand Duchy as the Crimean khanate alone did, when Muscovy's rulers managed to bring it to their side.

Without having defeated either the Kazan khanate, nor Galych-Greater Novgorod, the state of Muscovy hardly would have been able to conquer the entire Ural region, which could only be reached comfortably along the Kama River and its tributaries. Similarly, it is unlikely that Muscovy's influence could have extended beyond the Urals to reach just the northern part of Western Siberia (the lower reaches of the Ob River), whose inhabitants paid tributes to Greater Novgorod. There would have been less danger to the consolidation of another one of the products of the Golden Horde's fragmentation – the Siberian khanate (Faizraxmanov 2007). It was destroyed by Russian Cossacks in the late sixteenth century. The lands of Eastern Siberia and the Far East would have remained free to be politically integrated into the geopolitical space, whose natural centre was located in China. Russia (or more precisely, two or three Russias) would not have become an empire stretched over two continents, but would have

remained or become a more-or-less normal European state (in terms of size and internal order), something its pro-Western liberals and democrats dream about to this day.

The Grand Duchy's inability or lack of will to make use of the opportunities that arose with the "feudal war" in Muscovy by no means conclusively stopped the preservation of East European inter-polity system, thus creating the international conditions for the triumph of "proto-bourgeois" (and proto-democratic) trends in the northeast lands of Rus'. The agreement of 1449 had little significance as well – more important was the political will to abide by this treaty or not. Muscovy never kept its word, remembering the agreement of 1449 only when it suited its needs. It already violated it in 1450, when Mykolas was given refuge. Not seeing any further benefit to be gained, in 1452 Muscovy had the last Kęstutaitis murdered. The Grand Duchy exacted "revenge" on Muscovy for giving shelter to Mykolas, generously distributing lands to refugees leaving Muscovy who were fleeing the wrath of Vasilij II (Prince Ivan of Mozhaisk, the son of Dmitrij Šemjaka also named Ivan, and others). However, by the early sixteenth century, their descendants betrayed the Grand Duchy, defecting to Muscovy's side.

A more serious violation of the 1449 agreement was the alliance agreement of Vasilij II with the prince of Tver Boris Aleksandrovič of 1454 (Łowmiański 2006 [1999]: 236–237). From then until 1485 when his son, the last grand prince of Tver Mixail Borisovič, realised too late that he had to defend his state's independence and fled to Lithuania, Tver was already within Muscovy's sphere of influence. At the call of Muscovy's ruler, Tver's military marched on joint campaigns. Their first target was Greater Novgorod, which had supported Dmitrij Šemjaka in the last stage of his battle. Now it faced the revenge of Muscovy's ruler. In the same way that it had ignored the conditions of the 1449 agreement, in 1456 Muscovy brought another principality, Riazan', into its sphere of hegemony. According to the treaty of 1449, it had to remain an independent "buffer polity" (Crummey 1987: 79).[5] Both Tver and Riazan' were called "grand principalities". So nominally (according to the Ruthenian political terminology) they were sovereign and independent states. However, the future of Eastern Europe did not depend on these relatively minor "grand principalities", but only on who would control the truly great Greater Novgorod.

Greater Novgorod was the main and most important bastion of the future hope of another, alternative, proto-bourgeois and proto-democratic Rus' (Birnbaum 1993; Isačenko 1973). Ever since its early history, this was the part of Rus' most closely linked to Western and Northern Europe with economic and cultural ties (Birnbaum 1996: 15–40). From the early times of Kievan Rus', a city-state democracy consistently developed in Novgorod. Its main institutions were the popular assemblies of Greater Novgorod's city dwellers (*veche*), and the *posadniki* (mayors)

elected from among the merchant and land-owning elite (the nobility), as well as church dignitaries.[6]

The significance of the princes in this system continued to decrease from 1136, as the *veche* would decide who was invited or deposed (Birnbaum 1981: 86). By the early fourteenth century, when, due to its imperial expansion, the Grand Duchy became a regional great power and regular political relations were established between it and Greater Novgorod, the princes were relegated to being military servicemen of the city-republic. Their situation did not differ much from the *condottieri*, or hired military commanders, in city-states of the Late Middle Ages (like Florence and Pisa). They did not even have the right to live in Novgorod itself. Eventually, they lost judicial powers as well, which had been an important source of income. The *condottieri* of Italy received a negotiated sum of money for their military service. Somewhat differently, the Greater Novgorod princes received the income from the districts (Russian: волость) and "suburbs" (пригород) – cities politically subordinated to Greater Novgorod, which they received for "alimentation" (кормление) for the time of their service.

One of these "suburbs" – Pskov – eventually shed this subordination and became an independent city-republic from the mid-fourteenth century, with a political order very similar to Greater Novgorod's (perhaps only less oligarchic). Pskov and Greater Novgorod feuded rather often; sometimes the feuds would break out into war. More often than not, though, the two maintained a military and political alliance, with Greater Novgorod helping Pskov defend itself from Lithuania and Livonia (Dubonis 1999). Due to Pskov's role as a buffer zone, which set Greater Novgorod free from the burden of being a member of the Central European inter-polity system, Greater Novgorod's aristocracy tolerated the "separatist" suburb's independence. The inhabitants of Pskov could be at war with the Germans, while at the same time the merchants of Novgorod could quietly continue trading with them (Fleischhacker 1959 [1938]: 24).

The main foreign policy interests of Greater Novgorod regarded its relations with the Scandinavian kingdoms of Sweden and Norway. Greater Novgorod was in permanent conflict with them over who would have authority over the Finno-Ugric tribes (the future Finns and Karelians). The tributes (primarily luxurious furs) collected from them and the other minor northern peoples were among the most important sources of income for the aristocracy of Greater Novgorod and its suburbs. The Novogorodians needed the invited princes-in-service with their military retinues to act as commanders, to organise defence and counter-attacks against the Swedes. In the thirteenth century, the Swedes had seized southern Finland from Greater Novgorod, and were threatening to take control over the mouth of the Neva River and impose custom taxes on Greater Novgorod's trade with Hanseatic cities.

From the fourteenth century, Lithuanians started being invited to serve as these commander-princes. Pskov began doing so already in the second

half of the thirteenth century when the runaway Daumantas proved his excellence in this role. However, this did not mean that the Grand Duchy earned any kind of influence in the foreign or domestic policies of Greater Novgorod. According to Janin, from the end of the fourteenth century Greater Novgorod appointed two princes-in-service at a time, who had to keep each other in check (Janin 1998: 96–99). The invitation of a duke from Lithuania, and a prince from Tatar Rus' was not a manifestation of the battle for power by the local agents of two external powers. Instead, this was an instrument Greater Novgorod devised to balance between the strongest neighbouring polities and exploit their rivalry to serve its own interests. Those two powers were Lithuania and the second-strongest polity in North and North East Rus' (after Greater Novgorod). After the execution of Tver in 1327 by the joint Tatar-Muscovite forces, that power eventually became Muscovy, whose princes became nearly permanent holders of the title of grand duke of Vladimir.[7]

This policy was successful for around one and a half centuries. Even though the city was never devastated by Tatars, Greater Novgorod did have to acknowledge the suzerainty of the Golden Horde (thanks to the efforts of the famous Aleksander Nevsky) and thus, too, the authority of the most senior representative of the Tatar government in Rus' – the grand prince of Vladimir (Birnbaum 1981: 97). The prince of Vladimir would appoint his vicegerent to Novgorod (usually someone of non-princely origins). However, the vicegerent did not hold any authority but simply acted as the prince's diplomatic agent in the city-republic. From the early fourteenth century, a council of lords was the de facto government of the city-state. Its most influential figures were Novgorod's archbishop, archimandrite, the chiliarchus and the *posadnik* (from the early fifteenth century, the number of *posadniki* gradually increased).

Until the second half of the fifteenth century, Greater Novgorod was completely independent in its domestic and foreign policy affairs. "When Novgorod did sign treaties regarding foreign policy with the grand princes of Muscovy, then these were in the capacity of an equal alliance" (Fleischhacker 1959 [1938]: 19). The suzerainty of the grand prince of Vladimir meant only that the inhabitants of Novgorod had to use them as intermediaries when handing over tributes intended for the Tatars (even though the princes constantly sought to have a greater impact). Otherwise, Novgorod would face a military campaign to "exact failed payments", and Tatar troops could be called to join in. That threatened a catastrophe for the city, one its government strived to avoid, ultimately being forced to give as much as the Tatar extortionist agents demanded. There were another two forms of leverage the grand princes of Vladimir could hold in relations with Greater Novgorod. One was control over the upper reaches of the Volga, an important trade route for Novgorod towards the Caspian Sea. The second was the city's dependence on grain imports. After the descendants of Ivan Kalita managed to retain the title of grand prince of Vladimir,

they even started treating suzerainty over the Novgorod lands as their own patrimonial right.

Nonetheless, the people of Novgorod were not so afraid of Muscovy in the fourteenth century. The Novgorodian pirates – called *ushkuiniks* (ушкуйники in Russian) – raided the lands of the upper reaches of the Volga and its tributaries that were subordinate to the Muscovite princes on numerous occasions. The Greater Novgorod government denied all responsibility for these military expeditions, despite the fact that they were secretly organised by the magnates from its ruling elite. Greater Novgorod and Muscovy also often fought over the lands around the upper reaches of the Northern Dvina River. At that time, the Lithuanian pagan threat seemed (and indeed was) more likely to encroach upon Greater Novgorod's independence than Muscovy. Since the late fourteenth century, Novgorodians perceived the now-Catholic Grand Duchy, with its claims to take under its authority "all of Rus'", as an even greater threat. In both cases, they found it much more beneficial to acknowledge Muscovy's suzerainty, as it meant Muscovy's princes were obliged to defend Greater Novgorod from Lithuania.

The Grand Duchy came closest to realising its aims in terms of Greater Novgorod in 1397–1398. Then, Vytautas embroiled Muscovy in a war with the city-republic, and also reached an agreement with the Teutonic Order over a division of zones of interest: Pskov went to the Germans, Novgorod went to Vytautas. Thus, the great city found itself in a position where it was forced to acknowledge the Grand Duchy's suzerainty (Gudavičius 1999: 195–196, 200). The catastrophe at the Vorskla River negated all these gains. After 30 years, Vytautas again tried to realise the grand imperial policy aim of the Grand Duchy by organising a military campaign against Greater Novgorod in the summer of 1428. The Novgorodians successfully resolved the conflict in the way that it typically dealt with Muscovy – they paid Vytautas an enormous contribution. The ruler of the Grand Duchy could have also expected recognition of his suzerainty or hegemony, which is what tributes signified in "international relations" practices of the time. However, the Novgorodians themselves did not accept that the one-time payment of a tribute to the Grand Duchy implied the recognition of its suzerainty. Eventually, the character of the city-republic's political links with the Lithuanian Empire was left undefined and ambiguous.

Several years later, domestic wars that had sparked up in Lithuania and in Muscovy offered Greater Novgorod at least a couple of decades of complete independence. Its support for the losing side (Dmitrij Šemjaka) towards the end of Muscovy's "feudal war" indicates that the city's authorities did understand where the greatest threat now lay. A strategic situation unfolded wherein the Grand Duchy became the only guarantee of Novgorod's independence. However, during the already mentioned campaign of Muscovy against Novgorod in 1456, the Grand Duchy remained completely passive. Aleksander Czartoryski (one of Žygimantas

Kęstutaitis' killers and the son-in-law of Dmitrij Šemjaka) did join the Novgorod side as a prince-in-service. However, he did not do this as a political representative of the Lithuanian government, but as Greater Novgorod's mercenary. The defeated Novgorodians were forced to accept what the treaty of Yazhelbitsy Muscovy had dictated, which not only confirmed the "ancient" rights of the Muscovy prince, but expanded them, giving him judicial rights. These rights enabled Muscovy to incite internal unrest in Novgorod, to interfere in domestic political battles and to play the role of the supreme arbitrator.

Lithuania's passive stance can be explained in that its ruler Casimir, who was also the king of Poland, was totally consumed with Poland's war against the Teutonic Order (1454–1467). The Grand Duchy did not participate in this war, thus missing an historic opportunity to reclaim Lithuania's western lands. Some historians explain Lithuanian non-participation by the preoccupation of its ruling elite with "old feudal expansion into the east, its goal to become entrenched in the Ukrainian, Belarusian and Russian lands" (Dundulis 1968: 128). Unfortunately, this time this old expansionist aim was only expressed in (ultimately also unsuccessful) attempts to reclaim Western Podolia from Poland and some other lands on its borders by blackmailing the strategic ally with war, which would amount to an alliance with the Teutonic Order. This was a shameful double fiasco on the part of the Grand Duchy as a great power in terms of its foreign policy. Lithuania's lords, who de facto single-handedly ruled the Grand Duchy after Casimir's election as king of Poland in 1447, did not pass their political maturity and statesmanship exams.

They failed (now together with Casimir) even more miserably in 1470, during the internal political crisis in Greater Novgorod. While it did not create the opportunity for implementing the Grand Duchy's old imperial policy goal (to bring Greater Novgorod under its hegemony or even to make it a part of the Grand Duchy's informal empire), it provided the chance to save the East European inter-polity system from collapsing. Patriotically-inclined nobles of Greater Novgorod, referred to as the "Lithuanian party" in chauvinist Russian literature, assembled around the widow of the *posadnik* Isaac Boreckij, known as Martha "the Mayoress" (Russian: Марфа Посадница, *Marfa Posadnica*), and her sons, and took the initiative to bring Greater Novgorod into a military-political alliance with the Grand Duchy.

The agreement foresaw the Grand Duchy's duty to grant Greater Novgorod military assistance and guarantee Orthodoxy against any potential pressure to adopt Catholicism (Manusadžianas 1999). Greater Novgorod got by with just a very general acknowledgement of the Grand Duchy's suzerainty. This was not an act of annexation to the Grand Duchy. In fact, annexation was not in the Grand Duchy's interest, although the Grand Duchy's government could have negotiated even more benefits. Casimir did not sign the agreement. There is no evidence that any negotiations took place.[8]

In early November 1470, Myxailo, the brother of the vicegerent of Kyiv Semën Olelkovyč, arrived in Novgorod. Both were Orthodox believers and from the branch of the Gediminid lineage that was respected in Ruthenian lands, claiming the status of hereditary appanage princes of Kyiv. Actually, Myxailo Olelkovyč was well-suited to representing the Grand Duchy's political interests in Novgorod.

It is uncertain whether he arrived of his own initiative, or if Casimir sent him. The first version is more likely, as when Semën died in December, Casimir did not appoint Myxailo as the new Kyiv vicegerent, but the Catholic Martynas Goštautas, son of the influential Jonas Goštautas. This could have been punishment for Myxailo's independent actions. Casimir probably perceived them as attempts to strengthen the positions of the Kyiv Gediminid branch who then could claim the throne of the Grand Duchy. Whether he was insulted by Martynas Goštautas' appointment, or Casimir directly recalled him, or he simply understood that the ruler of the Grand Duchy and Poland was not going to send military support, Myxailo left Novgorod in March 1471 .[9] The great republic was left at the mercy of Ivan III.

The Battle of Shelon' took place on July 14 in the same year. Greater Novgorod's defeat had fateful consequences for the strategic balance of the East European inter-polity system. In this sense it could be compared to the triumph at Grunwald exactly 61 years ago (less one day). Ivan III conquered the Novgorod lands and deported the local elite, replacing them with military servicemen brought in from Muscovy's lands. Thus, the power balance swung in his favour. At the Grand Duchy diet that assembled in March-April 1478, Casimir shamefully talked the Lithuanian lords and nobles out of going to war, even though they had finally gathered up the determination to fight. He was obviously more concerned with his dynastic affairs in Central Europe. Upon the death of the King of Bohemia, George of Poděbrady, Casimir jumped at the chance to place his eldest son Ladislaus in the vacant throne, involving Poland in fruitless and meaningless wars (the Habsburgs were the only winners in the end) with the ruler of Hungary, Matthias Hunyadi (Corvinus), who also sought the Bohemian throne (Trimonienė 1996: 51–63).

The grand feat of liquidating the Novgorod republic demanded a great deal of time from Ivan III. The task was completed only in 1478 when the grand *veche* bell, a symbol of Ruthenian democracy and freedom, was taken away to Muscovy. 1480 offered another (last) chance at halting the rise of Muscovy. The Great Horde made a brief comeback, and its khan Ahmed sought to restore the suzerain rights which Muscovy had for a long time dismissed. The brothers of Ivan III – the prince of Uglich Andrej Bol'šoj, and the prince of Volokolamsk Boris – rebelled against him. They called upon the assistance of Ahmed and Lithuania. So, in the summer of 1480, Ahmed and all his forces marched up to where the lands of Muscovy, the Grand Duchy and those under Tatar control met to wait for the Lithuanian army. Exactly

one hundred years before then, in 1380, Ahmed's predecessor Mamai lost at the Battle of Kulikovo when he decided not to wait for Jogaila's army, which was located but a day's march from the battleground. Ahmed waited for the Lithuanians for three months in 1480. The Lithuanians never arrived.

A victory for the joint Lithuanian and Tatar forces would have been almost guaranteed. Afterwards, restoring the recently liquidated republic of Greater Novgorod would not have been difficult. Upon their return from exile, the Novgorod lords and other citizens of the republic would never have forgotten or forgiven the Muscovites, and would have gone on to become a separate Eastern Slavic nation. The Grand Duchy would have won a loyal and reliable ally, who would have come to its aid in further relations with Poland. The remaining Muscovy lands could have been partitioned between Ivan III and his brothers in a gesture of good will. The weight of these new principalities as subjects of inter-polity relations would not have been much greater than the still-existing principalities of Tver and Riazan'. Had the Grand Principality of Muscovy been partitioned justly and rightly, the hitherto nominal status of Tver and Riazan' as sovereign "grand principalities" would have become real. The configuration of the political map of Eastern Europe would not have differed much from the variety of colours that pleases the eye when one looks at a political map of Central and Western Europe after the desolate expanses of imperial Russia. In its territory, there would be many relatively small states. Only the Grand Duchy and the democratic, thus relatively peaceful, Greater Novgorod would have stood out. The Grand Duchy would have remained the largest state in Europe.

History in the fifteenth century threw Lithuania a six on the dice of fate four times. Alas, there was no fifth time. In the last decade of the fifteenth century, Lithuania fought in wars with Muscovy, paying the full price (and even more) for its wasted opportunities. After it lost a third of its territory, the victory at the Battle of Orsha in 1514 finally stopped Muscovy's aggression. However, this was but a temporary win for the Grand Duchy. The ideological foundations for the state of Muscovy rested on the unification of "all the lands of Rus'" under the authority of Muscovy's tsar. Also, the Muscovites believed that they had inherited the rights of the "tsars" of the Golden Horde and the emperors of Constantinople. This made the conflict between the Grand Duchy and the state of Muscovy a fight to the death. In seeking to put a bar on any further strengthening of Muscovy, the Grand Duchy embarked on the preventive conquest of Livonia in the 1560s. However, it no longer had the power to succeed at this feat: the power balance in the East European regional inter-polity system had irreversibly turned in Muscovy's favour.

Upon reading the last two paragraphs, it would be a rare (especially Russian) reader who would not doubt that I am a harsh, perhaps even pathological Russophobe. Nothing of the sort. Muscovy's imperial idea ultimately failed no less miserably than did the imperial idea of Algirdas-Jogaila-Vytautas ("all of Rus' must belong to Lithuania"). Muscovy's rulers had

the best luck at realising their claims to the legacy of the Golden Horde, becoming the "white tsars" of a stretch of the Eurasian steppe. Yet even here a sizeable portion of the Horde's former lands finally slipped out of the authority of Muscovy's empire. The most telling failure in Muscovy's imperial program, forged during the times of Ivan III, is evident in the existence of the independent states of Belarus and Ukraine in the Grand Duchy's former territories.

The idea of complete unity among all Eastern Slavs that is still so treasured by many Russians (at least until the Maidan revolution of 2014 in Ukraine) could have been realised only if Algirdas or Vytautas had managed to unite all the former lands of Kievan Rus' under their authority. In that case, we would not see three Eastern Slavic nations and their states in today's Eastern Europe. There would be one huge Russian nation living in one state. That nation would have probably completely assimilated its founders, the Lithuanians (except perhaps for the Samogitians), just as the German Franks melted away without a trace into the Roman French nation. The making of this kind of nation was a strategic national policy aim in tsarist Russia during its last decades. It lived on as a dream of Russian nationalists in the Soviet Union. It remains a desire of the most ardent contemporary Russian chauvinists.

A number of very earnest and respected modern Russian historians let their minds experiment by imagining how Eastern Europe might have looked had the Mongol Tatar invasion never occurred. Denis Xrustalev (2004: 10) hypothesises that without their (and the Lithuanians') "assistance", three or four Eastern Slavic nations and states would have emerged from the former lands of Kievan Rus'. Anton Gorskij (1996: 112–114) believes that there would have been between two and four. These would have probably been North East Rus' (with the lands of Greater Novgorod and Smolensk), and either a conglomerate of the Halych and Volhynia lands with Kyiv, or a compound of the Chernihiv and Kyiv lands: depending on who (Volhynia or Chernihiv) would have triumphed in the battle over Kyiv. Actually, there are three (Belarus, Ukraine, Russia), and I claim that, had the Grand Duchy prevailed over Muscovy, there would have been one nation. So why should a Russian patriot or chauvinist be angry?

Most importantly, a history of Russia without a Mongol Tatar invasion is somewhat harder to imagine than the subjection of all Ruthenian lands to Lithuania's authority (like after the victory at the Battle of Vorskla). It would be just as nice to imagine the more far-sighted policies of the Grand Duchy in the second half of the fifteenth century, consistently defending the independence of Greater Novgorod (and Pskov). The history of Rus' without the Mongol Tatar yoke is a very abstract possibility. Quite conversely, the Lithuanians' chances of liberating all of Rus' from the Tatars and their local placemen, and unifying it at the same time, were very real.

Most of the blame for the failure of chauvinist Russian dreams to become reality lies with the princes and tsars of Muscovy and its Orthodox clergy

(such as Metropolitan Aleksij) glorified by Russian nationalists and chauvinists. It was their harsh opposition that defeated the efforts of the Lithuanian rulers, the only ones capable of realising these dreams. A member of the modern Lithuanian nation may well feel only gratitude to Muscovy's rulers that they stopped early Lithuania's statesmen from sacrificing the Lithuanian nation as it exists now on the altar of a Kievan Rus' restoration. Had the Grand Duchy's rulers subordinated all the Ruthenian lands, Vilnius would have become a second Kyiv. History, however, would probably never have foreseen the emergence of the modern Lithuanian nation and its national state.

A true Russian patriot should not be insulted by the prospect of a larger (than three) number of Eastern Slavic nations that would have become a reality had fifteenth-century Lithuanian statesmen had enough forethought and political will to prevent the collapse of the East European inter-polity system. Contemporary Russia cannot become a "normal" or European country (the dream of many a Russian), because it remains an empire. The imperial character of Russia's statehood frustrates all attempts at its democratisation. This is the main lesson to be learned from Russia's two failures (1917 and 1991–1998) at democratisation.

As soon as a real (not a fake) democratisation begins in Russia, empire-destroying centrifugal tendencies also take hold. Under the conditions of true democracy, the political forces in Russia's regions that also seek autonomy and ultimately state independence can act freely. Importantly, such forces can be expected to emerge not only in its "autonomous republics" (where they are already present), but also in the purely Russian regions. After all, the purely Russian Vladivostok is further away from Moscow than Philadelphia in Pennsylvania or Boston in Massachusetts is from London. In the second half of the eighteenth century, the two latter American states became the centres of the English colonists' rebellion against their homeland or forefathers' homeland (also, the British Empire's metropole). The rebellion was victorious, and therefore went down in history as the American War of Independence. The Russian patriot faces a truly difficult dilemma: Western-type liberal democracy, or the preservation of a "united and undivided" Russian state (empire)? The ancestors of modern Lithuanians and Belarusians could have saved the Russian patriots from this tragic dilemma, had they acted in time to stop the rise of the Russian Empire. They could have saved the future Russians from the burden of empire by bearing that burden a little longer themselves.

The temporary stabilisation of the Grand Duchy's eastern border in the early sixteenth century created conditions that allowed the formation of the Belarusian ethnie to continue. The successful integration of the future Belarusian lands into the Grand Duchy's metropole by the eve of the Lublin Union gives contemporary Belarusians a solid reason to consider the Grand Duchy as also having been "their" state. It is as much "their" state as the Frank-conquered Romanised descendants of the Gauls, the French, consider the Frankish Empire "their own", or as the Germans consider the Frankish

Empire "their own" due to the ethnic affinity between the Franks and their own ancestors. Yet we must remember that most of the lands of today's Germany (first of all Saxony) ended up part of the Frankish state only after wars not much more gruesome than those that Mindaugas and his successors had waged, forcing the Baltic tribes, who eventually became the Lithuanian nation, to live in their own state.

Notes

1 Of course, the historical significance of the Grand Duchy is certainly not limited to this. See Hellmann 1958.
2 It is unfortunate that the most respected Lithuanian historians submit to this "grand narrative", writing about "the unstoppable process of the unification of Rus'" (Gudavičius 1999: 323). As Gudavičius states, "the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, concentrating its efforts in the east, could delay this process by several decades, but it was unable to stop it" (Gudavičius 1999: 323). Even if this were all the Grand Duchy really could have achieved (as we shall read later, even some Russian historians disagree with this opinion), then it was still the best thing to do.
3 Thanks to the "legalisation" of alternative history, history studies are in the process of redefining and reinventing themselves not only as an explanation for why everything happened as it did (or even why it could not have happened differently), but also as an exploration of lost possibilities hiding within certain historical conjunctures.
4 Its first phase took place in 1431–1436.
5 Vasilij II became the guardian of the children of the deceased prince of Riazan'. However, the Muscovites practically ruled Riazan' once the children had reached adulthood as well. All the princes of Riazan', until its formal annexation in 1520, were obedient executors of Muscovy's orders and requests.
6 For the political order in Greater Novgorod and its development, see: Birnbaum 1981: 82–100; Leuschner 1980; Zernack 1967: 126–196; Bernadskij 1961; Janin 1977: 230–239). It should come as no surprise that Soviet historians usually highlighted that Greater Novgorod was not a democracy, but an oligarchy of a narrow noble "caste" (see, for example, Janin 1981: 213), implying that the liquidation of its statehood was no big loss. Of course, the democracy that existed in Novgorod should not be idealised either – most power lay with the oligarchic layer of magnate landowners and merchants from whom the highest government representatives would be elected. However, in their battles for power, particular factions within the elite could and had to appeal to the common folk, whose voice did count in this regard. Every free citizen of the city could call for a *veche* to assemble, simply by ringing the *veche* bell.
7 To recall, (see chapter nine), this title involved seniority in Tatar Rus'.
8 The treaty itself has not been discovered in the Grand Duchy's archives, while the text known to historians is but a draft version compiled by the Novgorodians themselves.
9 Ludwik Kolankowski offers another version, which clearly aims to redeem Casimir's good name: Myxailo Olelkovyč arrived in Novgorod upon the order of Casimir and "deserted" this post when he found out that he had not been appointed the prince of Kyiv (Kolankowski 1930: 347–348). This version fails to convince in that Olelkovyč was not punished for his "desertion". Incidentally, he was found guilty and sentenced to death in 1481, but this was for a plot Myxailo devised in 1480–1481 (with Ivan Holshansky and Fëdor Bel'skij). In 1480

Martynas Goštautas was promoted to palatine of Trakai. Again, as in 1471, Jan Chodkiewicz was appointed to fill the vacancy left in Kyiv, not Myxailo. It is ironic that Myxailo, who in 1470 took steps, probably of his own initiative, that could have saved Novgorod's independence and thus stopped the rise of Muscovy, was himself searching for the support of Ivan III against Casimir in 1480.

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Concluding generalisations

What can be said about the early Lithuanian state, compared to polities that are called empires in contemporary comparative empire studies and international relations theory?

The Grand Duchy was an empire because in the second half of the fourteenth century it became the largest state in Europe. Until its conversion to Catholicism in 1387, it did not recognise any international or inter-polity jurisdiction above its own, i.e., it was completely sovereign. As the last island of paganism in Europe, it was outside all the inter-polity societies (hierarchically structured international law communities) existing at the time, condemned to imperial solitude. Having become a member of the Western Christian inter-polity society, the Grand Duchy acknowledged the authority of its universal powers – the Roman pope and the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. Until the union of Lublin in 1569, it upheld its de facto sovereignty in terms of independent domestic and foreign policy.

Personal or dynastic unions with the Kingdom of Poland did not undo that sovereignty either, as the Grand Duchy's ruling elite used union ties to serve the aims of its policy more often than the ruling class in Poland could. Without the union with Poland, it is unlikely that the Grand Duchy could have been capable of continuing its imperial expansion into the East in Vytautas' times, or keeping the Ruthenian lands for so long. Thus, the union did not weaken, but increased the Grand Duchy's power (Kolankowski 1930: 37). Henryk Łowmiański's claim that Poland only benefited in the formal legal sense from the Krewo Act, when politically speaking, Lithuania was in fact a greater winner (Łowmiański 2006 (1999): 60–61), applies also to many other of the later unification acts up until 1569.

Of course, Poland's formal legal victories cannot be considered fictional, because they did gradually lead to the Lublin Union which created a joint state in which Poland had the dominant role in every respect. Lithuania, or factions of its ruling elite that tried to solve one or another urgent Lithuanian political problem with ever-new union treaties, only ever won anything in the short run. In the long run, this process eventually led to the loss of Lithuania's independence. The dynamics of this process reminds us of the "dialectics" of present-day Lithuania's integration into the European

Union. For that reason alone it cannot be viewed only in a negative light. Not then, nor now has Lithuania been able to withstand pressure coming from the East on its own. On the other hand, we should not forget that there have been Polish historians (not only in the "People's Poland" of 1948–1989 when this happened to be the official doctrine) who considered Poland's Eastern policy after the Krewo Act as detrimental to the country's "fundamental" national interests. According to them, support offered to the Grand Duchy hindered any hopes at crushing the Teutonic Order definitively. This would have involved the reclamation, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, of Poland's western lands as compensation for the loss of the eastern lands (that ended up being "granted" to Poland in 1945 by Stalin). This territory would hardly have become Polish if it hadn't been for the union with the Grand Duchy.

An exceptional size (in a regional and epochal context) and (de facto) sovereignty are just the necessary though not sufficient attributes of an empire, as polities that are not empires can also possess them. The Grand Duchy was an empire because, in addition to these necessary attributes, it displayed three, and sometimes (from 1350s to 1430) all four alternative empire attributes. Of them, any three (along with the necessary attributes) make up a sufficient set of distinguishing features of an empire (a "critical mass"). The first two attributes distinguish empires as an international policy phenomenon. They have broad territorial expansionist and hegemonic aspirations in the global, continental or at least the regional inter-polity system.

The Grand Duchy's foreign policy exhibits both of these attributes up until the very middle of the fifteenth century. The exceptional size of the Grand Duchy was the outcome of its broad territorial expansion. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the Grand Duchy belonged to two different regional inter-polity systems. One – the Central European system – was part of the wider European Christian inter-polity society. The second was the Eastern European inter-polity system, whose hegemonic power was the Golden Horde. This hegemonic power joined the Islamic inter-polity society in the second half of the thirteenth century. In the first system, the Grand Duchy was in a position of strategic defence, abandoning in the course of time its aim of unification of the Baltic lands under its authority. In the second system, the Grand Duchy contested the Golden Horde over the right to rule all the Ruthenian lands. Until the Mongol Tatars' invasion of Eastern Europe, these lands constituted a separate inter-polity system that took the place of the dissolved Viking Rurikid Empire. If we would consider (together with tsarist and the bulk of the contemporary Russian historiography) Tatar rule as an absolute evil, then "objectively" the early Lithuanian state's expansion into Ruthenian lands was a war of liberation.

The former Kievan Rus' split into the free Lithuanian Ruthenia, where the Belarusian and Ukrainian nations started to form, and Tatar Rus',

where the Rurikid dynasties contested each other for the "honour" of being the most senior vassal of the Golden Horde (the dignity of the grand prince of Vladimir). Muscovy's princes won this contest, winning the benevolence of their Tatar suzerains for their zeal in collecting tributes in the Ruthenian lands, and for their consistently anti-Lithuanian policy. Only in the second half of the fourteenth century, when political turmoil paralysed the Tatar metropole for a longer time, enabling the Grand Duchy to consolidate its grip over the lands of present-day Ukraine, did the Muscovite princes attempt to rid themselves of the yoke of the Golden Horde. However, victory on the battlefield at Kulikovo in 1380 only further entrenched the supremacy of Muscovy's princes in Tatar Rus', leaving the Golden Horde's suzerainty untouched. The decline of the steppe empire, whose power Tamerlane broke irreversibly in the late fourteenth century, enabled the Grand Duchy to briefly (in the 1420s) take over the role of the hegemonic power of Eastern Europe's regional inter-polity system from the Golden Horde.

The internal war after Vytautas' death did not allow the Grand Duchy to consolidate this role. The second half of the fifteenth century in the Grand Duchy was marked by a lack of political will because of the differences between the dynastic interests of the Jagiellonians and the state interests of the Grand Duchy. As a result, the Grand Duchy missed out on several opportunities to preserve the multi-polar inter-polity system which was in the making in Eastern Europe in the mid-fifteenth century. This system could have become pendant to the inter-polity system that emerged in the sixteenth century in Western and Central Europe and then endured several centuries. These blunders in the Grand Duchy's foreign policy paved the way for Muscovy's rise, which eventually brought down the Grand Duchy itself. Muscovy's rise was not unavoidable: the multi-polar inter-polity Eastern European system could have endured in Central and Western Europe had the Grand Duchy's political leadership consistently defended the cradle of Russian democracy, Greater Novgorod, and the independence of the khanate of Kazan, populated by sedentary Tatar farmers. Although the Grand Duchy renounced hegemonic aspirations in Eastern Europe, up until the end of its existence as an independent state it nonetheless did not miss opportunities to push through an imperialist policy of territorial revisions. Namely, it sought to reclaim Smolensk, which it had lost in the early sixteenth century, and tried to take over Livonia, thus entrenching itself on the shores of the Baltic Sea.

Another two distinguishing attributes of empires refer to their ethno-political and territorial structures. Empires encompass ethnically and culturally heterogeneous populations with a politically dominant ethno-cultural minority, while their territory splits into the politically dominant metropole and its subjugated peripheries. Both of these attributes are very distinct in the history of the Grand Duchy. Once the early Lithuanian state became an empire, the Lithuanians (more precisely, their military nobility) became

the politically dominant minority. Its territory divided into peripheries and a metropole that spanned ethnic Lithuanian lands and the Ruthenian lands that had been annexed already in the thirteenth century, lying in the territory of present-day Belarus. Peripheries were under indirect rule, leaving them with a broad domestic autonomy.

Most historians of the Grand Duchy confuse indirect rule with federalism, calling the Grand Duchy a federation. Their mistake disregards the idea of federation established in constitutional law theory. The great Lithuanian legal scholar Mykolas Römeris (1880–1945) explicated this idea most thoroughly. The fundamental attribute of a federation is the equality of its territorial subjects, not subordination to one (the metropole), as was the case with the Grand Duchy. The exponents of the Grand Duchy as a federation also make another mistake: their concept of empire is overly narrow. It identifies all empires with territorial empires, which really represent only one variety of empire. One of the more distinctive examples of such an empire would be the Muscovite (later, the Russian) Empire of the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries. The Grand Duchy exemplifies a different type of empire, the hegemonic empire (or empire of domination), which is best represented in the modern age by the British Empire that ruled many of its subordinated territories (first of all, on the Indian subcontinent) indirectly.

The Grand Duchy may be also called a secondary vulture empire. This characteristic applies to the Grand Duchy the concepts from the ideal typological theory of empires by Thomas Barfield. The Grand Duchy was not a primary empire because it did not have a developed imperial transport or communication system. The territories under its domination did not form an integrated economic world (in the sense of Fernand Braudel). Its imperial ideas were rather limited – the conquest of all of Rus' (Algirdas and Jogaila), and hegemony in Eastern Europe (Vytautas). Seeking these goals, Lithuanian rulers aspired to become heirs to earlier (the Rurikid) or declining contemporary empires (Golden Horde's).

However, the Grand Duchy's ruling elite did manage to control and exploit the economic, political, religious and ethnic diversity in its empire, to stabilise its borders and to co-opt members of peripheral Ruthenian elites or their offspring into its composition, thus ensuring the sustainability of their empire. All of these achievements explain why this state left such deep imprints in history, and why they could not be erased by the Muscovite Empire – the Grand Duchy's mortal enemy – which conquered all of Eastern Europe. The Grand Duchy became the cradle of two Eastern Slavic nations – the Belarusians and the Ukrainians. Although Muscovy did succeed in destroying the Grand Duchy, it never managed to achieve the most important objective of its imperial program: to bring the entire population of the former Kievan Rus' under its authority for all time, and to transform them into one nation. This Great Russian chauvinist dream could only have been realised by the rulers of the Grand Duchy, had they been able to implement

the Gediminid's imperial ideas in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. The side effect of the success in realisation of this program would most likely have been assimilation of the entire or almost all of the Baltic ethnic substrate, from which the modern Lithuanian nation formed in the nineteenth century. That is why today's Lithuanians can only be proud of the Grand Duchy's imperial history, but have no grounds to lament the "failures" of the imperialist policies of Algirdas and Vytautas. What they can have regrets over is the complete inability of the Grand Duchy's leadership in the second half of the fifteenth century to perform the duties imposed on them by its status as a great power: to check the rise of Moscow as a new imperial power.

Estonian political scientist Rein Taagepera crafted cliometric criteria to detect the critical thresholds in empire history. They are an empire's emergence, adulthood and failure. I have corrected Taagepera's errors in his assumptions and data, and supplemented his quantitative criteria with qualitative criteria for the Augustan and the Caracallan thresholds suggested by Michael Doyle. Applying Taagepera's criteria, the early Lithuanian state's transformation into an empire can be dated to Gediminas' times, its adulthood to Algirdas' times, and its failure to the eve of the Lublin Union, when the Grand Duchy lost its southern peripheries in the territory of present-day Ukraine. In its history between maturity and fall, the empire of the Grand Duchy encountered another two thresholds: the Augustan and the Caracallan. It crossed the Augustan threshold in 1430–1447 when it proved its vitality in an extreme civil-war situation and attained the type of state organisation that ensured the Grand Duchy's long-term sustainability. Following the territorial loses of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, it approached the Caracallan threshold as well, beyond which the populations of the metropole and peripheries merged into one political nation.

This political nation formed in the Grand Duchy when the new horizontal Lithuanian ethnie (in the sense of Anthony Smith) emerged, excluding common people of the vertical Lithuanian or Baltic ethnie and including military servicemen from the Ruthenian peripheries. The formation of the Grand Duchy's political nation ended on the eve of the Grand Duchy's fall as an empire. This process created the conditions for a fundamental transformation of the territorial structure of the Grand Duchy from an empire to a federation of counties (*powiaty* in Polish). This transformation also took place on the eve of the Lublin Union. The Grand Duchy continued to exist in this form as one of the two constituent parts of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

Empires are not simply the subjects of imperialism, but also its creations. Therefore, the history of Lithuanian imperialism is much older than the history of the Lithuanian empire. Its roots reach far back into pre-state times – to the second half of the twelfth century, when processes of ethno-genesis commenced along one metaethnic fault line that divided the Baltic and

Slavic lands. Their product was a new, warring ethnie – the Lithuanians. They set out on large-scale raids of plunder and looting, and subjected the neighbouring Ruthenian principalities to their hegemony.

It is likely that the state of Lithuania is also the product of this imperialist expansion. It emerged from the Ruthenian territories captured by one Lithuanian duke (Mindaugas) where primitive state structures (like a fiscal system) already existed. Mindaugas settled his professional military servicemen here and used them then to create state structures in the Baltic lands. The use of the resources of the conquered Ruthenian lands for feeding the embryonic state apparatus slowed down the creation of state structures in the Baltic lands. Thus, the social capital (*asabiya*) typical of certain pre-classic societies, which offered the "advantages of backwardness" in the military field (a large number of men able to go to war from a relatively small population), was for a long time protected from erosion over a large part of the metropole. The creation of an empire in the East enabled Lithuania to maintain a military pre-state democracy ("good" anarchy) reservation in Samogitia to defend the empire's western borders.

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Index

Numbers in italics refer to figures