

The northern coast of the Black Sea as a “frontier” and its role in shaping the society in Ukrainian history in the 16-18th century

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Abstract

The most significant characteristic of the northern coast of the Black Sea as “*southern steppe frontier*” was that the mass resettlement of the population to the southern border zone, where a voluntary border guard system was established, was mainly due to state policy and the fact that the region lacked a permanently settled population. The emergence of Cossacks was the result of a frontier-like lifestyle that evolved on Eastern European steppes. From the late 15th century, along the Dnieper, Volga and Don Rivers, in the southern borderlands, a unique community of free Cossacks was born, establishing a military democracy. To a certain extent, Cossacks could be considered a mobile frontier community with the same rights as the rest of the society. The three main differences between these Black Sea and the American frontier are: 1. *The populating process taking place in the northern basin of the Black Sea from the beginning of the 16th century preceded the military takeover of the region;* 2. *the feudal system prevailed in the region;* and 3. *at the end of the 18th century, the region lost its restricted autonomy.*

Keywords: northern coast of the Black Sea, frontier-like Cossack society, ‘intermediate social class’, Zaporozhian Sich, ‘autonomy of southern steppes’

In historiography, it has recently emerged as an important question whether the American term ‘frontier’ can refer to the southern borderlands of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Russia, having a common border with the Ottoman Empire. The definition of the word ‘frontier’, meaning borderland, is associated with *F. J. Turner*, who was the first in American historiography to highlight the importance from a national point of view of the settlers on the frontier migrating towards Western territories.¹ The frontier is a moving belt of sparsely inhabited borderlands at the boundary of a civilisation. The frontier is closely related to peripheral areas, greatly influencing the structure of the society and characterised by the freedom of territories partially integrated into the current social-economic system and the possibility of self-determination.²

¹ Turner, F. J. *The Frontier in American History*. New York, H. Holt and Company. 1920.

² Karácsonyi Dávid. *A kelet-európai sztyep és a magyar Alföld mint frontier területek*. In Földrajzi Értesítő 2008. LVII. évf. 1-2. füzet. 186. (185-211)

Historians started to apply Turner's definition of the term 'frontier' to historical European territories, too. One of the best examples to describe the application of this term to European areas can be read in *W. H. McNeill's* work entitled *Europe's Steppe Frontier: 1500–1800*.³ The author studied the history of the Eurasian steppes during the time period mentioned in the title, highlighting the fact that the valleys of the rivers in the region provided great conditions for agriculture; however, due to constant attacks by nomadic peoples, the inhabitants were forced to migrate to the northern woodlands. McNeill refers to the period between 1570 and 1650 as the "time of troubles" because the Ottoman expansion experienced a setback, and the Russian state managed to consolidate its power, leaving the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth between two fires. During this period, *as part of the defence system against Ottoman and Crimean Tatar attacks, more and more Cossacks settled down on the Polish side of the southern borderland. This process led to the differentiation of the frontier-like Cossack society.* According to McNeill, the Cossack settlers became a significant political force and the protectors of Christianity. However, the Cossack leaders were elected only for a given military mission; therefore, their society failed to meet the political requirements of an organised state. The historian says that, in Eastern Europe, two forms of local power existed: on the one hand, the hereditary aristocracy and, on the other, *the communities emerging in the borderlands – mostly the Cossacks – who could partly remain independent of the state framework surrounding them.*

Several American researchers have used the term 'frontier' to refer to 'southern Russia'.⁴ *M. Khodarkovsky* describes the 16–17th century Russian steppes as a moving, non-linear frontier that conserved multiple borderland-like properties from a political, military, administrative and religious point of view.⁵ In Russian⁶ and Ukrainian historiography⁷, the

³ McNeill, W. H. *Europe's steppe frontier 1500-1800*. Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press. 1964. 53.

⁴ Khodarkovsky M. *Russia's Steppe Frontier: The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500-1800*. Bloomington, Indianapolis, Indiana University Press. 2002.; Shaw D. J. B. *Southern Frontier of Moscow 1550-1770*. In *Studies in Russian Historical Geography*. London, New York, 1983. Vol. 1.

⁵ Khodarkovsky M. *Russia's Steppe Frontier*, 48-50.

⁶ Жуков Д. С. – Канищев В. В. Лямин. С. К. *Конкретно-историческое обоснование расчёта значений управляющих факторов динамики южнорусского фронта в XVII – середине XIX в.* In *Вестник Тамбовского университета. Гуманитарные науки*. Тамбов, 2015. Т. 20. Вып. 10. 16-30.; Мизиц Ю. – А. Кащенко. С. Г. *Проблема формирования русского фронта на юге России в XVI – первой половине XVIII. в в отечественной историографии*. In *Вестник Санкт-Петербургского университета. Серия 2: История*. 2011. No. 1.

⁷ Брехуненко В. *Козаки на степовому кордині Європи*. Київ: Інститут української археографії та джерелознавства ім. М. С. Грушевського, 2011.; Грибовський В. В. *Запорозжці і ногайці в контексті Великого Кордону*. In *Козацька спадщина. Альманах Нікопольського регіонального відділення Науково-дослідного інституту козацтва Інституту історії України НАН України*. Вип. 1. Нікополь–Запоріжжя: РА "Тандем-У", 2005. 95-131; Грибовський В. В. *Поняття "фронтир" і "азійський кордон" як інструменти дослідження українського степового порубіжжя XVII–XVIII ст.* In *Наукові записки. Збірник праць молодих вчених та аспірантів*. – Т. 25. – Київ: Інститут української археографії та джерелознавства ім. М. Грушевського НАН України, 2012. 109–136.; Леп'яко С. *Українське козацтво і теорія Великого кордону*. In *Козацька спадщина*. – 2005. №2. 49-65.; Чорновол І. *Компаративні фронтири: світовий і вітчизняний вимір*. Наук ред. Л. Зашкільняк. Український науковий інститут Гарвардського

term ‘frontier’ has been introduced only recently to refer to the northern basin of the Black Sea. Researchers have come to the conclusion that even though this ‘*southern frontier*’ became part of the state’s border, it was still very different from other territories in the country.⁸ It is described as a slowly-moving military border zone that constitutes a military-political, geographic (woodland and steppe), social and economic (settlements and nomadic lifestyle) borderline.⁹ *The most significant characteristic of the southern steppe frontier was that the mass resettlement of the population to the southern border zone, where a voluntary border guard system was established, was mainly due to state policy and the fact that the region lacked a permanently settled population.*¹⁰

From the late 15th century, the mostly uninhabited, southern Polish-Lithuanian territories – between the lower course of the Dnieper River and the northern part of the Black Sea’s basin – served as a refuge for fleeing peasants, impoverished town dwellers, and former members of the lower nobility, and offered them the possibility to live a ‘free life’.¹¹ Moreover, these territories allowed the formation of an ‘*intermediate social class*’ consisting of Cossacks. During this southern expansion, the Polish-Lithuanian rulers, and from the mid-17th century the Russians as well, on the one hand, attempted to eliminate the Cossacks’ privileges, but at the same time, wanted to assimilate them and acquire their services for state purposes.

From 1654 – after Ukraine submitted to Russian rule voluntarily – the Tsar firmly tried to limit the autonomy of the military-based Ukrainian Hetmanate, whose existence was an ‘irregularity’ within the Russian authoritarian regime, as much as possible. In the 1760s, the Russian rulers saw an opportunity to integrate East Ukraine: in 1764, the Tsar forced *Kirill Razumovsky*¹², the hetman of Little Russia, to renounce his title, and later, Catherine II of Russia officially abolished the Hetmanate.¹³ The Empress appointed *Pyotr Rumyantsev* as the governor of Ukraine, whose primary task was the gradual integration of Little Russia into the Russian Empire. In 1783, the Empress ordered the reorganisation of the Left-bank Cossacks, converting them into a regular unit of the Russian army. This meant that the Zaporozhian Host, consisting of 60,000 soldiers¹⁴, serving the Romanovs since 1654 and enjoying certain privileged rights, became nonexistent.

університету; Інститут критики; Інститут українознавства ім. І. Крип'якевича НАН України. Київ, Критика, 2015.

⁸ Папков А. И. «Фронтір» или «украина»: два подхода к изучению истории российской колонизации Днепро-Донской лесостепи в XVI-XVII вв. In Русь, Россия: Средневековье и Новое время. Вып. 5. Пятое чтения памяти академика РАН Л. В. Милова Москва: МГУ им. М. Г. Ломоносова, 2017. 178. (176-182)

⁹ Капелер А. Южный и восточный Фронтір Росии в XVI-XVII веках. In Ab Imperio 1/2003. 49.

¹⁰ Папков. «Фронтір» или «украина», 178-179.

¹¹ Авраменко А. Дискуссионные вопросы истории казачества в свете исторической географии. In Историко-географічні дослідження в Україні: зб. наук. пр. Нац. акад. наук України, Ін-т історії України. 2009/11. 55. (52-93)

¹² He was the last hetman of the Zaporozhian Host (1750–1764).

¹³ Kohut, Zenon E. *Russian Centralism and Ukrainian Autonomy. Imperial Absorption of the Hetmanate, 1760s–1830s*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press. 1988. 102.

¹⁴ By the 1720s, the number of soldiers of the Zaporozhian Host had decreased to 20,000.

The Russians pursued a similarly forceful centralisation policy against the *Zaporozhian Sich*¹⁵. The Russian leaders considered this territory the cradle of social discontent, which constituted an obstacle to Russian expansion. However, *since the Sich Cossacks played an important role in the protection of the southeastern borders of Russia, Russian leaders could not take any retaliatory measures against them.*

During the 16th and 18th centuries, the Zaporozhian Sich gradually changed its location,¹⁶ but its organisational structure¹⁷ remained unchanged. Eventually, various factors led to the end of the Sich. For example, the Zaporozhian Cossacks controlled vast lands with a very fertile soil type called chernozem¹⁸, which was important for Russian agriculture. Moreover, since 1709, when during the Great Northern War, a group of Sich Cossacks following Ivan Mazepa deserted and joined Charles XII¹⁹, the Tsar had shown no signs of confidence in the Sich Cossacks.²⁰ Thirdly, the plans of the Russians to extend the borders of their Empire included the occupation of southern territories and the coastal areas of the Black Sea. The Tsar aimed to integrate the latter into the Russian Empire and populate this scarcely inhabited region. *The partial independence of the Zaporozhian Sich and the autonomy of the Cossacks were contrary to Russian centralisation and integration policies.*

In the Russo-Turkish War of 1768–1774, the Zaporozhian Cossacks fought in the Russian army, greatly contributing to the Russian victory. According to the *Treaty of Kuchuk-Kainarji*²¹ – signed on 10 July 1774 –, the Ottomans ceded to Russia the forts of Kerch and Yeni-Kale in the Crimean Peninsula, the Kinburn Peninsula at the mouth of the Dnieper River, the territory limited by the Bug and Dnieper Rivers, the surroundings of Azov and Kuban and Great and Little Kabardia. The Sultan recognised the independence of the Crimean Khanate and granted official permission to Russian merchant ships to navigate through the straits controlled by the Ottomans. Moreover, the Ottoman ruler authorised Wallachia and Moldavia to become Russian protectorates and agreed to pay 4.5 million roubles as indemnity.

¹⁵ The Zaporozhian Sich, an autonomous stratocratic state, was founded in the 1540s by Cossacks settling down at the Dnieper Rapids. The existence of the Zaporozhian Sich was first mentioned in 1568 when, in a letter, Sigismund II Augustus wrote that the Cossacks not only sailed to the Dnieper Rapids occasionally but actually lived there. – Архив ЮЗР. І. Киев, 1859-1911. 4.

¹⁶ In 1709, Peter I accused Ivan Mazepa and the Zaporozhian Cossacks of treason and ordered the destruction of the Zaporozhian Sich. Later, the Sich Cossacks who had fled to Ottoman territories returned to serve in the Russian army and, in 1734, with the permission of Elizabeth of Russia, they established the New Zaporozhian Sich near Podpolniy, about 6 km from the former Zaporozhian Sich. Архів Коша Нової Запорозької Січі. Корпус документів. 1734–1775. Київ, Національна Академія Наук України, 1995. 39-45.

¹⁷ Its most important branch of government was the Sich Rada, which held its annual meeting on 1 January. Its functioning was based on the principles of military democracies. During the meeting, the members of the organisation elected their military leaders, including the ataman.

¹⁸ Маркевич, А. И. *Южная Русь при Екатерине II*. Одесса, Типография Л. Кирхнер, 1893. 8-9.

¹⁹ Чухліб Т. *Козаки і Монархи – Міжнародні відносини ранньомодерної Української держави 1648-1721рр.* Київ, Вид-во ім. Олени Теліги, 2009. 477-478.

²⁰ Инструкция азовского губернатора Василия Черткова относительно раздела б. Запорожских земель. Материалы для истории б. Запорожья. In Киевская старина. 1882 Т. III. 327-330.

²¹ Достян, И. С. *Значение Кючук-Кайнарджийского договора 1774 года в политике России на Балканах конца XVIII-XX веков.* In Век Екатерины II: Россия и Балканы. Москва, 1998. 45-50.

After the accomplishments of the first Russo-Turkish War, the Russian government believed that the time had come to abolish the Zaporozhian Sich's privileged situation. Since Russia obtained several ports along the coast of the Black Sea, Catherine II thought that the Zaporozhian Cossacks lost their importance in the protection of the southern borders of the Empire. This is the reason why, on 4 June 1775, the Russian troops returning from the Russo-Turkish War launched a surprise attack against the Sich Cossacks, destroying their centre to the ground. Following the Ukase of 1775²² issued by Catherine II stating the elimination of the Zaporozhian Sich, the fleeing Sich Cossacks left barren lands behind them.

G. A. Potemkin, the governor-general of 'New Russia', intended to eliminate the Zaporozhian 'traditions' definitively even though he was aware that they might need the Sich Cossacks' military force again to continue further Russian southern expansion towards Constantinople. After the governor visited the newly acquired territories in the South, he realised that the southern borders of the Russian Empire became vulnerable to constant Ottoman and Tartar attacks. Since the reinforcement of the southern fort system took more time than expected, the recruitment of some Ukrainian Cossacks meant a temporary solution. On 1 July 1783, with the permission of Catherine II, the governor issued a statement in which he wanted to "...recruit in the name of the Russian State those Cossacks who formerly served in the Zaporozhian Host..."²³ It is important to highlight the fact that the governor did not want to recruit Sich Cossacks in the first place, but the members of the former Zaporozhian Host who had already fought alongside the Russian army in previous battles. Meanwhile, due to conflicts flaring up with the Ottoman Empire again, the former Zaporozhian Cossacks repeatedly appealed to the Tsarist government, asking Catherine II to allow the restoration of the Zaporozhian Sich and designate a new centre.²⁴ G. A. Potemkin managed to recruit 5,300 of 'the most outstanding' Cossacks who were ready to defend the southern borders, serving the Russian state.²⁵ Led by Sydir Bilyi, the military unit called 'host of loyal Cossacks' was organised comprising mainly Cossacks who had fled after 1775. This military unit was allowed to use some of the symbols of power of the former Zaporozhian Sich.²⁶ Their task was to defend the southern borderlands, which, after the annexation of the Crimean Khanate in 1783, extended to the Kuban River.

After the end of the first Russo-Turkish War, Catherine II converted the Crimean Khanate into only a Russian protectorate; its integration did not start then. However, the Crimean Tatars did not tolerate their apparent independence, and, in 1781, they initiated an uprising led by Sahin Giray. The empress launched a retaliation campaign against them, and, in August 1782, ordered Russian troops to invade the Crimean Peninsula; then, on 8 April 1783, a manifesto was published, according to which the Crimean Khanate was integrated into the Russian Empire. Thanks to this, the Russian Empire occupied another coastal zone between the Taman and Kinburn Peninsulas. The Crimean Khanate became part of the

²² Скальковский А. О. *История Новой Січі, або останнього Коша Запорозького*. Дніпропетровск, Січ, 1994. 550.

²³ Скальковский. *История Новой Січі*, 573.

²⁴ РГВИА. Ф.52. Оп.1/194. Д.304.Ч.1. Л.1,3.

²⁵ РГВИА. Ф.52. Оп.1/194. Д.304. 4.1. Л.8, 10-Юоб., 12, 18,25,32-34; Д.304. 4.2. Л.1-32; Д.311. 4.1. Л. 100-136.

²⁶ Bulawa, flag, bunchuk, seal with crest, mace with feather, kettledrums.

imperial administrative system as the *Taurida Governorate*²⁷, and Potemkin was appointed its governor-general.

As a result of the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula, New Russia and the Azov Governorate were no longer borderlands. For better governance, the Empress decided to unite these territories under the name of *Yekaterinoslav Governorate*. This act basically erased the differences between the administrative system of central Russian provinces and the recently occupied steppes and provinces situated along the coast of the Black Sea.

By autumn 1783, Russian diplomats concluded that “*the Ottomans will not question the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula unless other European countries have a different approach to this matter*”.²⁸ European superpowers did not feel the need to intervene in the Russo-Turkish conflict, and, on 28 December 1783, the Ottoman Porte officially recognised the Crimean Khanate as part of the Russian Empire. It was not a secret among Tsarist leaders that the Sultan made this statement under duress and that another war could break out at any time.

The interest of G. A. Potemkin and the Empress towards Sich Cossacks filled them with the hope that the Zaporozhian Sich could completely be restored together with its unique military-based organisational structure. They were waiting for the perfect moment to present their demands to the Empress. In 1787, Catherine II wanted to see with her own eyes the success of the colonisation of the new provinces and the economic development of the region.²⁹ With her spectacular tour, the Empress aimed to demonstrate Russia’s increased military and economic potential and, on the other hand, wanted to send a message to the Sultan that the Ottoman Empire should better abandon its expansionist politics. By 1787, a powerful Western European coalition had supported the Sultan in his desire to take revenge on Russia.³⁰ Taking advantage of Catherine II’s tour in Ukraine, the Cossack delegation could speak to the Empress personally, who gave the green light to their demands. In 1787, Catherine II issued a ukase restoring the institution of the Zaporozhian Cossacks, although with more limited rights than before and under another name.

Potemkin ordered Sydir Bily and Anton Golovaty to recruit a new army known as the ‘*Host of the Loyal Zaporozhians*’. Later, the army was referred to as the ‘*Black Sea Cossack Host*’ or simply the ‘*Black Sea Host*’. *The elimination of the words ‘Zaporozhian’ and ‘Cossack’ from the name of the army was a deliberate move of the Tsarist government because as the Ottoman threat decreased after the second Russo-Turkish War, Catherine II wanted to let the Cossacks know that she had no intention to authorise the restoration of the privileged Zaporozhian Sich.* Even though the host’s name changed several times, the

²⁷ The new governorate comprised the Crimean Peninsula, the steppes located north of Perekop and the Taman Peninsula.

²⁸ Ромм, Шарль-Жильбер. *Путешествие в Крым в 1786 г.* Ленинград, Издание Ленинградского государственного университета, 1941. 44.

²⁹ Шаманаев А. В. *Путешествия в Крым Екатерины II и Александра I и становление системы сохранения исторического наследия Северного Причерноморья.* In *Известия Уральского федерального университета.* Сер. 2, Гуманитарные науки. 2014. № 3 (130) 80. (79-89.)

³⁰ England aimed to have monopoly in the Middle East; moreover, Prussia and Sweden were also in favour of Ottoman expansions, the latter hoping that Russia’s weakening would pave the way for them to gain control over the Baltic region. Supported by other nations, the Sultan decided to attack Russian ships near the Kinburn Peninsula in August 1787.

cavalry and infantry units played a crucial role in the battles fought against the Ottoman sultan.³¹

When the second Russo-Turkish War broke out (1787–1792), G. A. Potemkin suggested to Catherine II the possibility of restoring the *Zaporozhian Host*³² to serve the Russian state without granting them the previous political privileges they enjoyed, but the Empress did not allow it. Thanks to the Treaty of Jassy³³ signed on 29 December 1791, the coastal region of the Black Sea, extending from the Southern Bug to the Dniester River, became part of Russia. The occupation of the northern coast of the Black Sea consolidated Russia’s strategic position, opened new maritime routes and promoted the population of the Southern Russian territories and their economic development.

It is worth noting that the ‘Black Sea Host’ emerged during the second Russo-Turkish War and consisted of former Zaporozhian Cossacks: they acquired the organisational structure of the Sich but did not have a designated central territory.³⁴ Between 1787 and 1791, as part of the Russian army, they greatly contributed to victories for which³⁵, in 1792, Catherine II issued two decrees – on 30 June³⁶ and 1 July³⁷ – granting collective autonomy to Black Sea Cossacks and laying the foundations for the creation of the organisational structure of the ‘*Black Sea Host*’. Even though the existence of their own ‘military leadership’ – ataman, judge, scribe – gave them the impression of a ‘military democracy’, the Cossack’s ‘freedom rights’ were limited by the fact that they were subjects to the Governor of the Taurida Governorate.

During the Russo-Turkish Wars, the implementation of the tsarist administrative system in the newly acquired Russian territories had already begun. The ‘*Governorate of New Russia*’³⁸, established in 1764, served as an example. New Russia was first governed by General Melgunov, who was substituted by G. A. Potemkin in 1774 upon the orders of the Empress. At the time when the Governorate of New Russia was organised, the importance of this administrative system for military and border policy was evident. However, after the

³¹ The Cossacks hoped that, in exchange for their military services, the Russian government would give them the newly-acquired region of Ochakov to settle down there. They were so sure that they would get these territories that they established themselves there even before the region was officially granted to them. However, the Empress did not allow it, first of all, for political reasons, and, secondly, because influential Russian aristocrats also wanted to obtain these fertile lands. As a result, in 1792–1794, Black Sea Cossacks were forced to move to the region of the Kuban River. Eventually, this region turned out to be quite advantageous for them to maintain the traditional ‘Zaporozhian lifestyle’.

³² In 1783, Catherine II commanded the dissolution of the autonomous Zaporozhian Host led by the hetman that, in accordance with the Pereiaslav Agreement of 1654 (March Articles), consisted of 60,000 people, but by the 1720s, their number decreased to 20,000.

³³ Фелицын, Е. Д. *О материалах для истории войны с Турцией 1788-1791 гг., хранящихся в Кубанском Войсковом архиве*. In Зап. Одес. о-ва истории и древностей. 1896. Т. XIX. 28-34.

³⁴ Дмитренко И. И. *Сборник исторических материалов по истории Кубанского казачьего войска: Т. 1. Кубанский край. Кавказская линия. Черноморское войско казачье. Хоперские казаки: 1737-1801 гг.* Санктпетербург, типография Штаба Отд. Корпуса Жандармов, 1896 Т. 3. 6.

³⁵ Фелицын. *О материалах для истории войны с Турцией*, 28-34.

³⁶ ПСЗРИ Т. XXIII. 342-343.

³⁷ ПСЗРИ Т. XXIII. 346.

³⁸ Дружинина Е. И. *Северное Причерноморье в 1775-1800*. Москва, Изд-во АН СССР, 1959. 53.

first Russo-Turkish War, the province lost its role as a borderland, while a new fortification system was being built in Azov and Taganrog, as well as in the recently occupied territories limited by the Bug and Dnieper Rivers. On 14 February 1775, Catherine II issued a ukase establishing the *Azov Governorate*³⁹, and, following the elimination of the Zaporozhian Sich, on 20 October 1775, another decree was issued determining the exact borderline between the two governorates.⁴⁰

During the first decade of his rule in South Russia, Potemkin's actions were mostly military-related: his main task was to organise the defence of Southern Russian provinces, a vast area extending from the borders of Poland to the Black Sea. As a consequence, the military policy of the governor in the region centred around the creation of an efficient military unit. Initially, *the Zaporozhian Cossacks did not want to join the Russian regular army and, after the destruction of the Sich, many of them fled to Ottoman territories*. Because of this, Potemkin concentrated on strengthening the local irregular military forces and building the southern fortification system. The control over the entire region along the Dnieper and Don Rivers opened up new opportunities for Russian foreign trade. Trade in the Black Sea did not give the desired results at first: it was obstructed by the Porte's hostile behaviour and the lack of a tsarist commercial fleet. Despite unfavourable circumstances, trade in the region started to develop slowly, that is, *during the period between the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca (1774) and the annexation of the Crimean Khanate to Russia (1783), the region of the Northern basin of the Black Sea experienced significant positive changes*.⁴¹

Besides boosting long-distance trade activities, the Russian government made great efforts to populate the newly annexed territories. Thanks to spontaneous and organised migration, the number of inhabitants in South Russia experienced a significant growth: at the beginning of the 1770s, there were about 100,000 Cossacks living in the territory of the former Zaporozhian Sich and about 170,000 in New Russia; however, by 1782, the population of the Azov Governorate and the Governorate of New Russia had doubled, counting 530,000 people in total.⁴²

In conclusion, we can state that the emergence of *Cossacks was the result of a frontier-like lifestyle that evolved on Eastern European steppes*. From the late 15th century, along the Dnieper, Volga and Don Rivers, in the southern borderlands, a unique community of free Cossacks was born, establishing a military democracy. To a certain extent, Cossacks could be considered a mobile frontier community with the same rights as the rest of the society.

Migration towards the basin of the Black Sea started as early as the beginning of the 16th century and was motivated mainly by the *'autonomy of southern steppes'*. Before the populating process could begin, however, Russians had to expel the Ottomans and Crimean Tatars from the steppe borderlands and integrate this region into the Russian Empire. As

³⁹ The Azov Governorate included part of New Russia (Bakhmut region), the territories gained according to the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca, and the area controlled by the Don Cossacks.

⁴⁰ Дружинина. *Северное Причерноморье в 1775-1800*, 56.

⁴¹ Sashalmi Endre. *Az orosz Balkán-politika vallási gyökereinek kérdéseihez: a nyikoni reformoktól a kücsük-kajnardzi békéig (1774)*. In *A Balkán és a keleti kérdés a nagyhatalmi politikában*. Budapest, Hungarovox Kiadó, 2005. 40.

⁴² Auerbach, H. *Die Besiedelung der Südukraine in den Jahren 1774-1787*. Wiesbaden, Otto Harrasowitz Verlag, 1965. 118.

mentioned above, following a number of unsuccessful attempts, this process succeeded only in the late 18th century. From the 18th century, as the threat of Ottoman expansion ceased and the Russian Empire extended its borders to the coast of the Black Sea, causing the Eastern European steppes to lose their ‘frontier-like’ status, the tsarist government consistently attempted to suppress Cossacks completely.

The creation of the Black Sea Cossack Host in the southern borderlands of the Russian Empire can be considered a ‘*temporary need*’. The tsarist government found it difficult to tolerate the existence of the Host and only agreed to partially restore the privileges of former Sich Cossacks until their services were needed to defend the southern borders. Thanks to the creation of the Black Sea Cossack Host, the Zaporozhian traditions and the ideals of the old military democracy were revived – although with restricted privileges. This means that the geopolitical interests of the Russian Empire temporarily overrode the tsarist government’s disapproval of the Zaporozhian ‘democratic traditions’. *After the successful termination of the second Russo-Turkish War, the tsarist government no longer required the services of the Cossack military forces*, as according to the Treaty of Jassy of 1792, Catherine II could maintain control over the Crimean Khanate annexed to Russia in 1783, and took control of the northern coast of the Black Sea. The occupation of significant ports on the coast of the Black Sea consolidated Russia’s status as a superpower and its position in the territories east to the Caucasus Mountains and on the Balkan Peninsula.