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“Rivers as Battlefields: Ukraine’s Dnipro”

Josephson, Paul



Fig. 4. A 1968 postage stamp commemorating 50 years of the Soviet (Red) Army. Courtesy of the Russian postal service. Public domain.

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Wars turn the natural environment into battlefields. In economic wars, regions perceived as rich in resources become contested bounty for powerful predators, investors, state authorities, and eventually settlers. Wars follow transportation routes along rivers that reflect power relations in the movement of settlers, emissaries, and troops. In pursuit of energy, agriculture, and state

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power—and not only the ends of war—rivers are often sites of violent environmental change when they are straightened, blocked, or drained. And in the worst circumstances, soldiers transform entire ecosystems into war machines, even to the extent of setting fire to forests and fields, blowing up factories and power stations, and pouring toxic chemicals and fuels into rivers to poison the waters. (From the article)

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