

# IGA-677 / RusNatSecPol / Lecture 3

## Colonial Expansion and an Unstable Frontier

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*"Russia was among the few world powers that neither had colonies in Africa or elsewhere nor participated in slave trade throughout its history."* - Russian Embassy in South Africa, December 2022

## Today's objectives

1. *Trace*: causes, consequences of Muscovy's territorial expansion
2. *Define*: colonialism, imperialism, and their many varieties
3. *Discuss*: challenges and contradictions of Russian colonialism

# Geography of Russian Territorial Expansion

## Historical Overview



Figure 1: Map of Eurasia in 600

Slavs begin to appear in archaeological, written records c 600 AD.

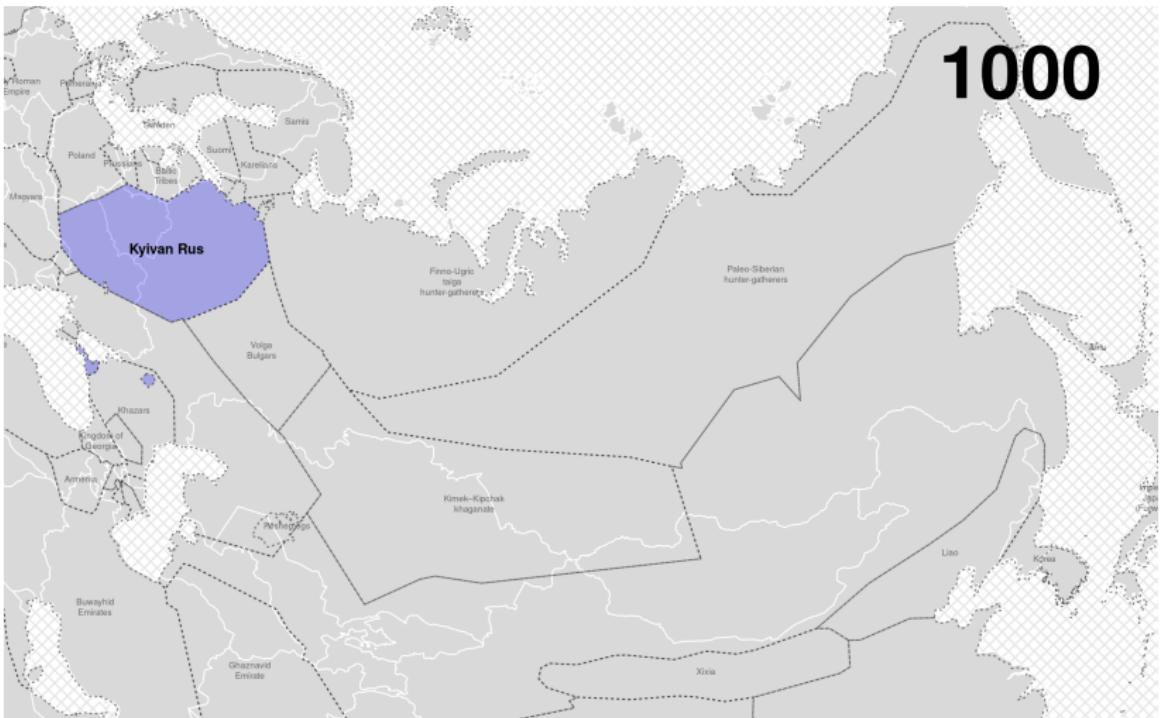


Figure 2: Map of Eurasia in 1000

Kyivan Rus (882-1240) became cradle of East Slavic civilization.

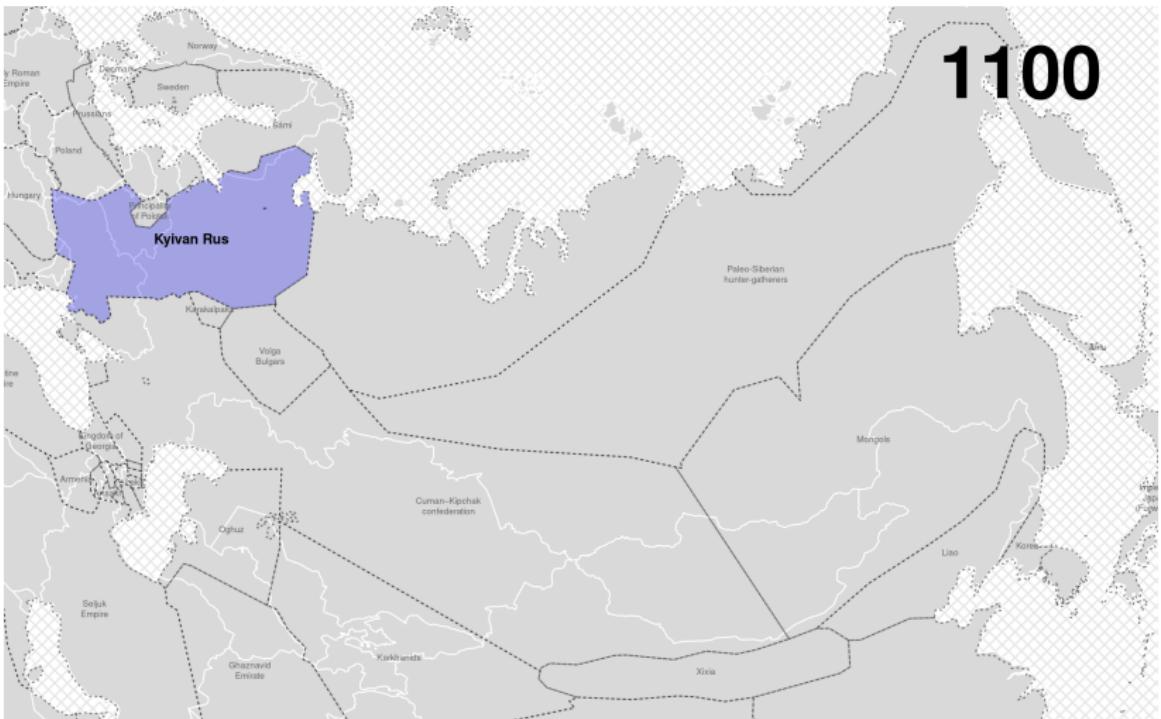


Figure 3: Map of Eurasia in 1100

Initially surrounded by nomads (south, east), principalities (west).



Figure 4: Map of Eurasia in 1200

Mongol occupation of Kyiv begins 1241. Kyiv destroyed in 1299.



Figure 5: Map of Eurasia in 1300

Small town of Moscow emerges as seat of new principality in 1263.



Figure 6: Map of Eurasia in 1400

Tokhtamysh vassalizes Moscow in 1382, unites Blue, White Hordes.



Figure 7: Map of Eurasia in 1500

Moscow regains sovereignty, expands into neighboring principalities.



Figure 8: Map of Eurasia in 1600

Ivan IV becomes 1st Tsar in 1547, expands into Kazan, Siberia.



Figure 9: Map of Eurasia in 1700

Peter I becomes Tsar in 1696, focuses on western frontier.

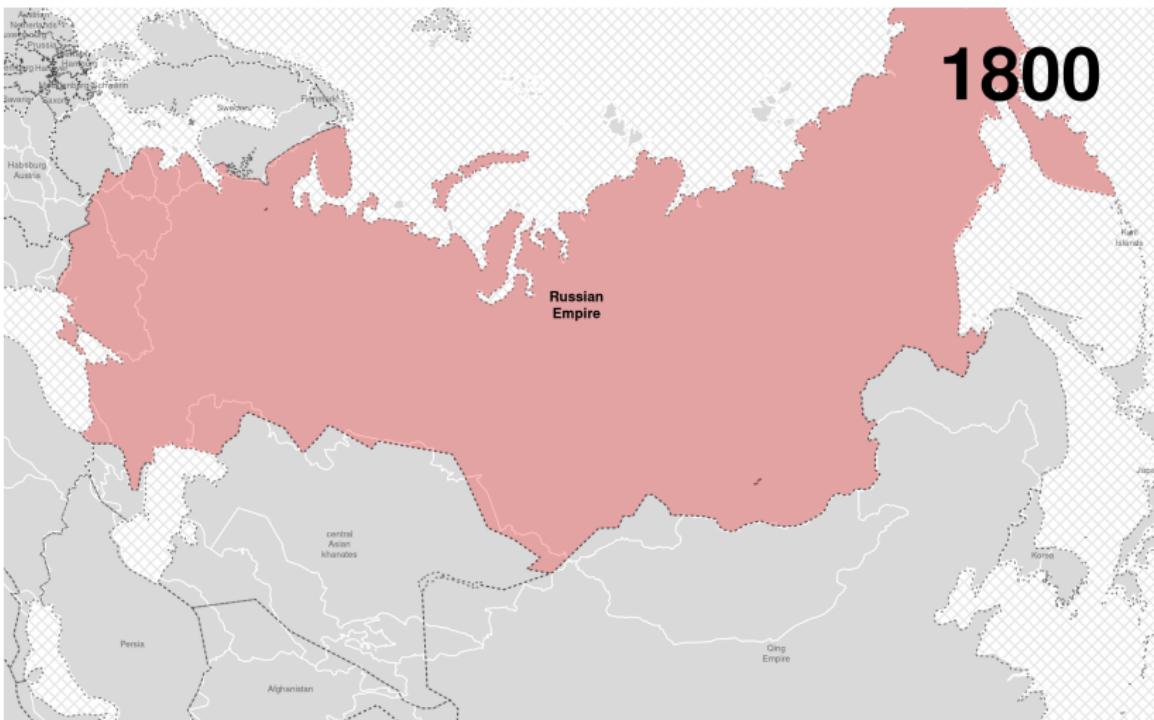


Figure 10: Map of Eurasia in 1800

Empire annexes rest of ex-Kyivan Rus by 1754, heads to Caucasus.

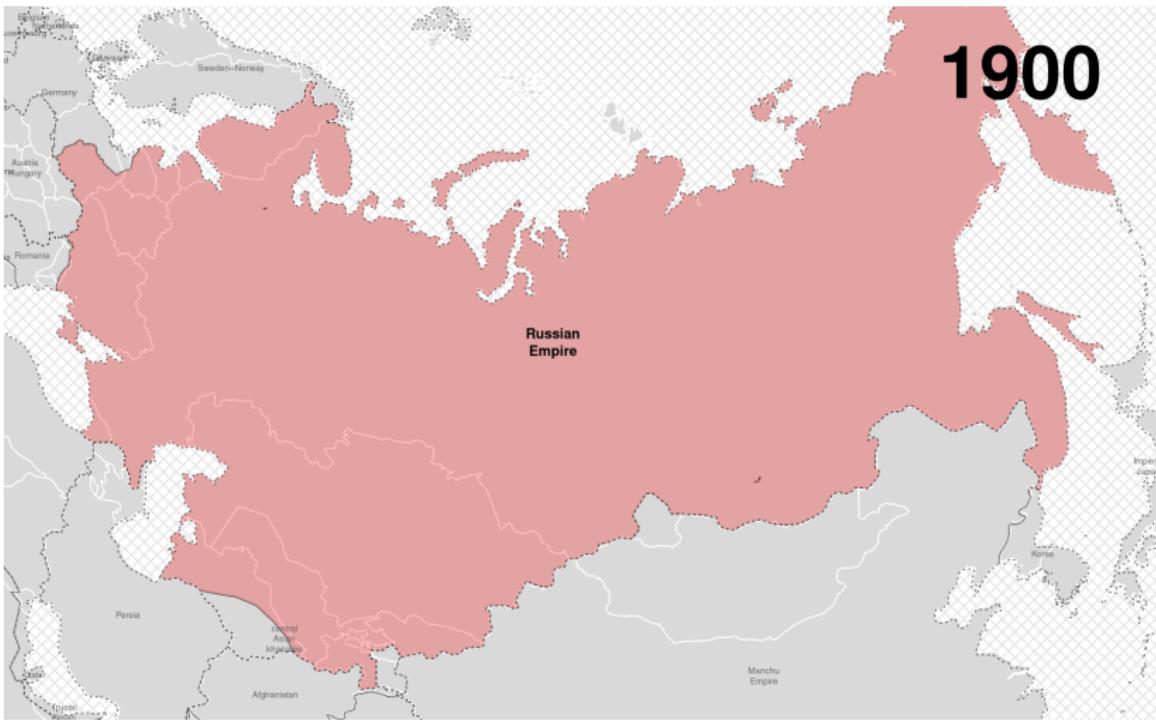


Figure 11: Map of Eurasia in 1900

By 1900, Empire reaches maximum territorial extent (sans Alaska).

## Territorial Conquest as Grand Strategy

## Recall the Elements of Grand Strategy from Lecture 0

### 1) Perceived threats

- territorial threats from neighboring states  
(other principalities, Crimean Khanate, Poland-Lithuania)
- security threats from non-state actors  
(nomads, Cossacks)
- domestic security challenges  
(peasant uprisings, revolts by nobles/servitors)
- other?

### 2) Proposed remedies

- strategic depth / buffer zone
- settler colonization of “new territories”
- political, economic engagement with West
- isolation / economic self-sufficiency
- Russification / conversion to Orthodox Christianity
- other?

### *Discussion:*

Which of these were more important than others, and when?

# Challenges of Russian Colonialism

## What is “colonialism”?

*colonialism* is a form of intergroup domination, where

- a) dominant group seeks to control territory, behavior of subaltern group
- b) settlers from dominant group migrate to territory of subaltern group

*imperialism* is group domination without permanent settlement (a, not b)

### Strategies of intergroup domination:

1. *extermination*: dominant group seeks to eradicate subaltern group through violence, displacement (e.g. Tasmania, Caribbean islands)
2. *assimilation*: dominant group forces subaltern to adopt former's culture, language, religion (e.g. South America, Middle East)
3. *co-existence*: dominant and subaltern groups live side-by-side, with no wholesale acculturation or eradication (e.g. Kenya, Algeria)

### *Discussion:*

Why might a colonial power choose one of these strategies over another?

## Russian imperial/colonial administration

1. Governorates (least autonomy)
  - main administrative division
  - governor appointed by Tsar
  - governor has almost no autonomy
2. General-governorates / Viceroyalties
  - introduced in late 1700s to administer new borderland territories (e.g. Poland, Caucasus)
  - Tsar appoints viceroy (namestnik)
  - viceroy has extraordinary, plenipotentiary powers
3. Vassals (most autonomy)
  - used in far-flung territories (e.g. Bukhara, Khiva, Moldavia)
  - local rulers have autonomy over internal affairs
  - no autonomy in foreign relations



Figure 12: Gen Ermolov

## Comparison: 13 American colonies

### 1. Royal colonies (least autonomy)

- king appoints (military) governor
- lower house of legislature elected
- governor has complete authority over regional governance
- if military governor, also manages administration of mil occupation

### 2. Proprietary colonies

- king grants land to “proprietor”
- lower house of legislature elected
- upper house, governor appointed by proprietor

### 3. Charter colonies (most autonomy)

- self-government by royal charter
- lower, upper house elected
- governor appointed by legislature



Figure 13: Gen Gage

## Demography

## An over-extended empire

- *dilemma:* how to colonize frontier without depopulating the interior
  - up to 50% of population lost to famine, war in 1598-1613 (Smuta)
  - serfdom accelerates in response
  - frontier always underpopulated
  - most colonial settlers were “runaway people” (fugitive serfs, deserters, criminals)
- *solution:*
  - strict state control of resettlement
  - assignment of land to servitors
  - punishment, then legalization of illegal settlers
  - reliance on forts, defensive lines to hold on to new territories
  - pro-natalist social policies
  - Russification, conversion of locals



Figure 14: Time of Famine

# Legibility

## What is “legibility”?

1. breadth, depth of state's knowledge about its citizens, their activities
2. rendering of this information in standardized forms (maps, registries)

## Why is legibility important?

- legibility → state capacity
- allows state to monitor, enforce compliance with laws, regulations
- facilitates tax collection
- facilitates military mobilization
- facilitates public goods provision

Why was this a challenge for Muscovy?



Figure 15: Muscovy, c 1720

## “Who are these people?”

- *problem:* illegibility of empire
  - no regional surveys, maps commissioned until 1699
  - population censuses limited in geographic, thematic scope
  - mostly illiterate population
  - few surnames outside aristocracy
- *solution* (mostly under/after Peter I):
  - mapping of new territories
  - assimilation of conquered peoples
  - Russification of place names
  - assign surnames based on:
    - father's name (Ivanov)
    - occupation (Melnik)
    - toponyms (Vysotskiy)
    - animals (Medvedev)
    - personal characteristics
  - new census enumeration strategies

Figure 16: Census, 1897

## Russia as a “subaltern empire”

Why do many Russians view their country as imperial, not colonial?

What is “internal” or “self-”colonization? Is this a valid category?

What are some commonalities/differences between Russian and Western colonial expansion?

# NEXT MEETING

*The Seeds of Revolution* (Th, Sep. 14)

- how this whole system fell apart (or did it?)
- things to consider:
  - was the 1917 revolution inevitable?
  - what were the main social, political, economic forces that contributed to the Empire's collapse?