

Locator - Russia
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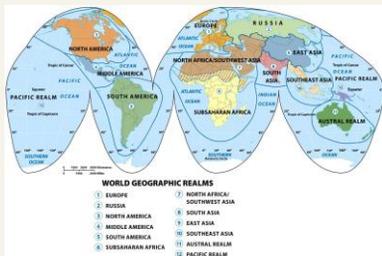
Figure 5.1
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The Russian Realm

Two transition zones mark the margins.



Physical Geography of the Russian Realm: Physiographic Regions

The Russian Plain (1)

- Continuation of North European lowland
- Russia's core area
- Ural Mountains (2)
 - North-south mountains not tall enough to hinder transportation
 - Divides Russia in two vast expanses of low relief:
 - Russian Plain to the West
 - Siberia to the East



- Russian Plain as the Eurasian **heartland**:
 - Center of great landmass
 - Major influence on history
 - Potential vulnerability



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Physical Geography of the Russian Realm: Physiographic Regions

Siberia

- West Siberian Plain (3)
 - World's largest unbroken lowland where rivers flow northward, like the Ob River
- Central Siberian Plateau (4)
 - East of the Yenisey River
 - Higher relief
 - Most sparsely populated areas in the habitable world



- Yakutsk Basin (5)
 - Moderate topography drained by the Lena River
- Eastern Highlands (6)
 - Remote jumble of ranges

Physical Geography of the Russian Realm: *Physiographic Regions*

Kamchatka and Sakhalin

- Pacific Ring of Fire
 - Kamchatka Peninsula
 - Volatile volcanism
- Sakhalin Island
 - Prevalent earthquakes
 - Oil and gas reserves

The Southern Perimeter

Central Asian Ranges (7)

- High relief location of Lake Baykal



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Caucasus Mountains (8)

- Barrier and zone of conflict for Russia and neighbors

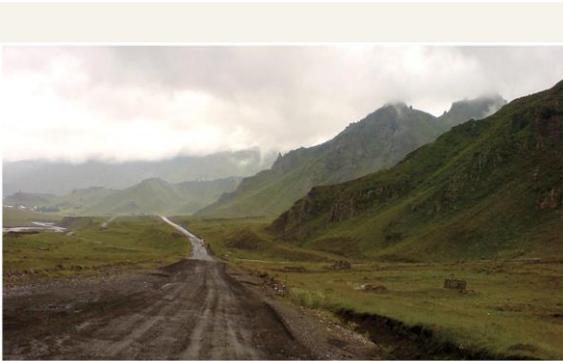


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Physical Geography of the Russian Realm: Harsh Environments

□ Climate context: **continentality**

- Inland climatic environment remote from moderating and moistening maritime influence

□ Environmental effect:

- **Permafrost**: water in the ground permanently frozen
 - High latitude ecology
 - **Tundra**: bare ground and rock with lichen, mosses and low grass
 - **Taiga**: “snowforest” of coniferous trees



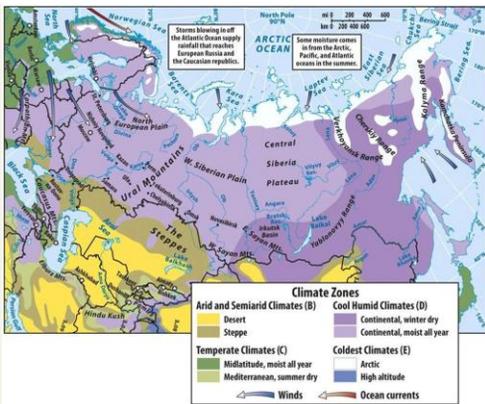


Photo Essay 5.1
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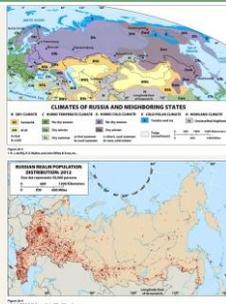


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Physical Geography of the Russian Realm: *Harsh Environments*

Map Analysis Activity: *Comparing Climate and Population*

1. What areas on the map are absolutely not suited to agricultural activity? Why?
2. Beyond climatic constraints on farming, what else influences the realm's population distribution?



Physical Geography of the Russian Realm: *Harsh Environments*

Climate Change and Arctic Prospects

- ❑ Lengthy northern coastline on the Arctic Ocean
 - Mostly frozen throughout the year
- ❑ Global warming and possibilities for the future
 - Melting of Arctic Ocean's ice cover, opening up of Arctic ports and even passage through the Bering Strait
 - Shrinking the area of permafrost
 - Improvement of agriculture on the Russian Plain
 - New oil and gas reserves
 - Expanding the Russian geographic realm northward

Physical Geography of the Russian Realm: *Harsh Environments*

Ecologies at Risk

- ❑ Global warming and environmental disruption:
 - Animal and human communities have adapted to the harsh prevailing climate conditions of the arctic.
- ❑ New oil and natural gas exploration:
 - Offshore environments could also face dangers as these new resources become exploited.
- ❑ Globalization forces are infiltrating a part of the world long protected by distance and nature.



Figure 5.1g
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Water Issues

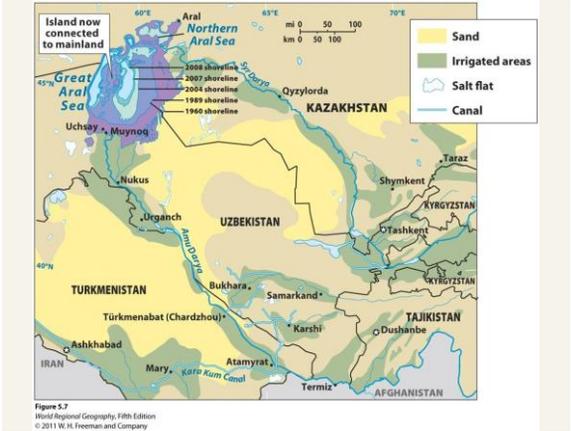
❑ River Systems

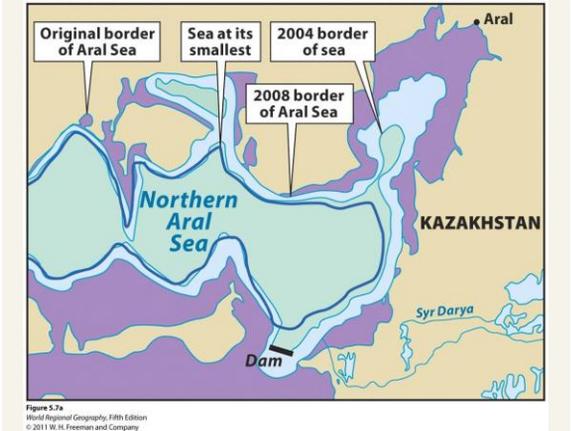
- ❑ Dnieper River is the principle river of the Ukraine, used as a transport conduit to the World Ocean and a energy resource (hydroelectric dams)
- ❑ Volga River is the chief waterway of European Russia used for transport, it is also a site for many hydroelectric power plants
- ❑ The Ob, Yenisy, and Lena Rivers are all located east of the Urals, and flow from south to north into the Arctic Sea

Water Issues

❑ Rivers, Irrigation, and the Loss of the Aral Sea

- ❑ Syr Darya and Amu Darya rivers have long been used for irrigation of commercial cotton agriculture
- ❑ Diverting the water of these two rivers for agricultural use was the cause of the loss of the Aral Sea, once the forth largest lake in the world
- ❑ The loss of the Aral Sea has been described as the largest man made ecological disaster on earth
- ❑ The loss of the Aral Sea has also impacted climate change as well as human health
- ❑ Efforts to increase water flows to the sea have been effective, in 2006 the water level in the sea had risen 10ft





Russian Roots

- 1000 years ago: Slavic settlement, or *Rus*
- Established in present-day Ukraine and southwestern corner of the Russian Plain
 - Location had physical landscape favorable to settlement and agriculture
 - Many "Russians" today see Ukraine as their historic heartland
- Eventually spanned ecological regions, of northern forests and southern **steppes**, or semiarid grasslands

Building the Russian Empire: Czarist Russia

- Peter the Great led a modern, European-style state:
 - St. Petersburg built as a **forward capital** on edge of Swedish-held Finland on the Baltic
 - Developed as Russia's leading port for trade
 - Researched shipbuilding for Russia to become a naval power



- Other czars continued to conquer peoples and territory:
 - Russian colonists settled southeastern frontiers and beyond

Russians in North America

- Russians were the first white settlers in Alaska:
 - Fur traders, in search of sea otter pelts
 - From Siberia, crossing the Bering Strait
 - Moved south along the Pacific coast, stopping just north of San Francisco
- Russian departure:
 - Competition with American, Canadian, and British hunters who were destroying sea otter populations
 - Russia sold off its North American holdings in 1867

Building the Russian Empire: Nineteenth-Century Expansion

- Extension into Eurasia continued:
 - South- and westward
 - Central Asia
 - Including Muslim peoples given some autonomy
 - Trans-Siberian Railroad and occupation of Manchuria
 - Threatened Japan and sparked war in 1904
 - Defeated by Japan, losing some territory



- Expansion through **imperialism**
 - Necessary because of the limitations of Russia's site



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Building the Russian Empire: *Nineteenth-Century Expansion*

- Russian expansionism annexed and incorporated many nationalities and cultures.
- Russia controlled as much as 100 different nationalities.
- The Russian Revolution was a struggle among Russian citizens:
 - Communities won out, creating the Soviet Union.
 - Colonized people were given autonomy and identity, yet strengthened political and economic subjugation.

The Soviet Union: *The Political Framework*

- Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)
 - Based on ethnic identities
 - Divided into 15 Soviet Socialist Republics (SSRs)
 - Broadly corresponded to a major nationality's territory
 - Within the SSRs, smaller minorities were designated Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics (ASSRs)
 - Below that were Autonomous Regions



- Complicated, cumbersome and poorly designed political framework

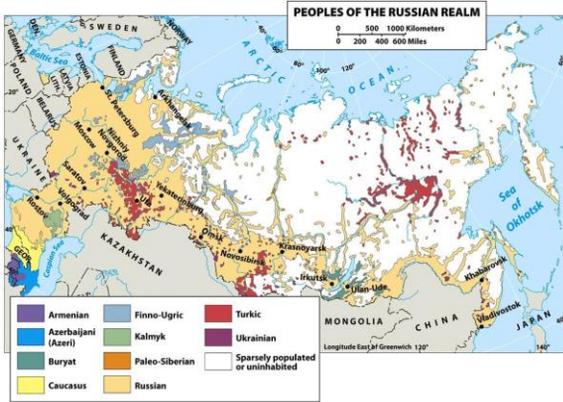


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The New Russia: A Complex Cultural Mosaic

Map Analysis Activity: Comparing Peoples, Cities and Surface Links

1. What physical and human-made features correspond with the patterns of the Russian realm's peoples?
2. What other geographic features not mapped help to explain the patterns of culture and settlement?



The New Russia: Cities Near and Far

- Comparatively low rates of urbanization
 - Transcaucasus region even less urbanized
- Urban network
 - Moscow and St. Petersburg anchor the Russian core
 - Historic urban centers
 - Post-czarist industrial cities along the Volga River



- East of the Urals, cities thin out
 - Russian Far East: past naval power
 - Kamchatka Peninsula: urban desertion
- Capitals of Transcaucasia



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The New Russia: *The Near Abroad*

- Collapse of Soviet Union
 - Loss of Eastern European **satellite states** under Soviet political dominance and former Republics
- **Near Abroad**: former Soviet Republics and a new Russian sphere of influence
 - Russia's policy of intervention in any threat along its borders or against Russian minorities

What do you think?

- Does Russia have the right to intervene in other Near Abroad states, regardless the reason? Why?

Regional Issue:

How Far Do Russia's Right in the Near Abroad Really Go?

In Favor of Strong Russian Influence

- It is necessary to protect Russia and its allies in the Near Abroad.
- History of strong Russian influence was beneficial to countries of the Near Abroad.
- Conflict is directed at Russia, just as much as Russia is blamed for conflict.

Opposed of Strong Russian Influence

- Experience of Russians in the former republics was never good.
- Russia's influence in the Near Abroad was all colonialism, except in name.
- Nothing is gained from assertive Russian violence in the Near Abroad.

A Realm in Transition

- Russian Federation:
 - Still bears the marks of the Soviet era
 - Strives for good relations with the Near Abroad
 - Maintains cohesion and further economic well-being
- Possibly questionable future of the Russian Federation:
 - As a state that borders 14 other countries and 4 other realms
 - Challenges to manage its massive territory and diversity
