WORLD REGIONAL GEOGRAPHY

By Brett Lucas
Regions
Post-Soviet Russia: Russia’s Changing Political Geography

- Problem of realm’s scale:
  - Territorial size, vast distances and remoteness:
    - **Distance decay**: how increasing distances between places tends to reduce interactions among them
    - Difficulty of Moscow’s location in the far west
  - Considerable variation in size of administrative units:
    - Territorially smallest in the Russian core area
    - Largest are in the far east
  - Population sizes vary:
    - Largest populations in the west
    - Sparsely populated in the east
Russia Permanently on Daylight Saving Time…

- Drastic differences in daylight at high latitudes:
  - In Moscow, daylight varies between January and July by 11 hours.

- Stress related to switching back and forth:
  - Medvedev argued that switching clocks twice a year was detrimental to people’s health.
  - Russian study found that after time changes, many adverse health-related phenomenon increased.

- 60 percent of all Russians supported this decision.
Post-Soviet Russia: 
Russia’s Changing Political Geography

The Soviet Legacy

- Soviet-era complex administrative structure
  - 83 entities in all
  - Varying degrees of power and autonomy from federal government

- Post-1991 government and Russian Federation Treaty
  - Soviet entities used to old system of privilege and authoritarian rule

- Needed quick transition or risked chaos
  - Democratization, market economy, privatization and more
Post-Soviet Russia: Russia’s Changing Political Geography

Unitary versus Federal Options

- Organizing political territory:
  - **Unitary state system**: centralized government and administration exercising power equally across the state
  - **Federal system**: national government represents common interests, yet allows entities to have their own laws, policies and customs in certain areas

- Russia chose a federal system:
  - Shares power with Republics and Regions
  - Allows elected regional leaders to represent their region’s interests in Moscow
Post-Soviet Russia:

Russia’s Changing Political Geography

Russia’s New Federal Structure

- 1992 signing of the Russian Federation Treaty:
  - Republics committed to cooperation in new federal system.
  - Some units refused to sign, but most eventually did.
  - Chechnya’s refusal to sign led to military intervention.

- 2000 Putin created new geographic framework:
  - Enhanced the power of Moscow over its regions and combined 83 units into 8 Federal Districts.
  - Regional governors would also be appointed.
Post-Soviet Russia: A Shrinking Population

- **Population implosion**: population declines as death rate exceeds birth or immigration rates.

- Reasons for shrinking population:
  - Post-Soviet uncertainty affects birth rates.
  - Death rate has skyrocketed:
    - *Life expectancy* has declined; especially for men.
    - Alcoholism, AIDS, smoking, suicide, accidents, and murder have all increased.
RUSSIAN REALM POPULATION DISTRIBUTION: 2012

One dot represents 50,000 persons

0 600 1200 Kilometers
0 300 600 Miles

Figure 2A-4
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Regional differences

- Migration within the realm
  - Worsens decline in some Districts
  - Lessens decline in other Districts

- End of Soviet population policies
  - People can leave difficult environments
  - Drawn to prosperous locations

Map Analysis Activity: Population Change

1. In what districts is population decline the greatest? Why?
Post-Soviet Russia: A Volatile Economy

- Emerging markets:
  - Increase in private property, upstarts, trade, foreign investment and stock exchanges
  - One of the BRICs, along with Brazil, India, and China

- Economically precarious:
  - Uneven economic patterns of foreign investment and benefits to society
  - State corruption and collusion with organized crime
  - Growth impacted by global financial crisis
Among the Realm’s Great Cities: Moscow

- Heart of Russia’s core
  - Focus of realm’s urban, political, economic and transportation systems
- Centered on old Moscow
- Sprawl beyond the center as a legacy of Soviet urban development
- Transformation into a global free market center:
  - Added a new architectural skyline
  - Increased expense of Moscow’s residential areas
The Russian Core

- Core area extends from western border of the realm to the Ural Mountains in the east.
- Including historical and industrial core cities:
  - Moscow
    - Megacity hub of commodity producers and exporters
  - St. Petersburg (Leningrad)
    - Russia’s second city, distant from domestic market and resources
The Russian Core: Central Industrial Region

- Oriented toward Moscow, the historic focus of the state
- Moscow maintaining its centrality:
  - The urban center “reaches” into the surrounding region.
  - Roads and railroads converge in Moscow from all over the realm.
Among the Realm’s Great Cities: St. Petersburg

- “Window on Europe”
  - Baltic Sea location
  - Peter the Great engineered a European look
- Site of the Russian revolution
  - During Communism, capital went to Moscow; city renamed Leningrad
  - Saw rapid industrialization and cultural neglect
- Postcommunist era
  - Revival of orthodox religion, urban restoration and booming tourism

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Подорож за кордон
інформація для українців, які змикаються за кордоном

ВАША
обізнаність –
це Ваші захист і сила

10 питань
роботодавцям
за кордоном

Святослав Вакарчук:
«Ви не для продажу.
зайстіть себе»

Вільне життя – вільний світ

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The Russian Core: Povolzhye: The Volga Region

- Povolzhye extends along Volga River valleys:
  - Industrialization of the region took off in WWII.
  - Canal links the Volga with Don River and Black Sea.
  - It has significant oil and gas reserves.
  - More canals, rail and road connections built to link the region to the Baltic.
The Russian Core: The Urals Region

- Mountains not high enough to be an obstacle to east-west surface transport
- Storehouse for metallic mineral resources
- Well-suited for industrial development
- Well-connected to Volga and Central Industrial regions
The Southeastern Frontier

The Kuznetsk Basin (Kuzbas)
- Primary region of heavy manufacturing:
  - *Double complementarity* at work as coal was sent west to the Urals and iron ore sent east to Kuzbas.
  - Iron ore deposits were found nearby and industry took off.

The Lake Baykal Area (Baykaliya)
- Dominated by isolation:
  - Activity is clustered around the railroads.
  - Mining, lumbering and some farming.
  - Surrounded by rugged, remote and forbidding country.
Siberia

- Symbolic of Russian environmental difficulty
- Vast distances, cold temperatures, difficult terrain, poor soils and limited options for survival
  - Rich in natural resources:
    - Precious minerals, metallic ores, oil and natural gas
    - Hydroelectricity
  - Virtually uninhabited and fragmented
    - Larger than the contiguous United States, yet only 15 million people
    - Most settlements found along region’s rivers
The Russian Far East

- Largest territorial Federal District
- In Soviet period, settled as a result of incentives
- Experiencing significant regional out-migration
- Abandoned by Moscow and no real international trade connections
- Oil and natural gas supplies
- Opens potential trade with China and Japan

Concept Caching: Petropavlovsk

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The Southern Periphery: Russia’s Internal Periphery

- Minority groups within the Russian state:
  - Eight ethnic republics
- Disadvantaged periphery:
  - Subjugated by the core
  - Lagging in social progress
- Physiographic transition zone:
  - Plains to mountains
  - Refuge for anti-Russian rule
    - Long history of resistance in Chechnya as Russian “terrorism”
Transcaucasia: Russia’s External Periphery

Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia

- Struggle for Russia to maintain influence and stability:
  - Georgia’s violent conflicts with Russia
  - Azerbaijan’s recalcitrant rerouting of its oil exports westward
  - Territorial conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia
  - Armenia surrounded by historically rooted tension
Transcaucasia: Russia’s External Periphery: An Uncertain Future

- Russia’s high price for stability:
  - Terrorism in the Russian Core
  - Problematic for the rest of Russia’s mostly immigrant Muslims

- Politically and culturally polarizing:
  - Increase in vigilante and xenophobic groups targeting immigrants