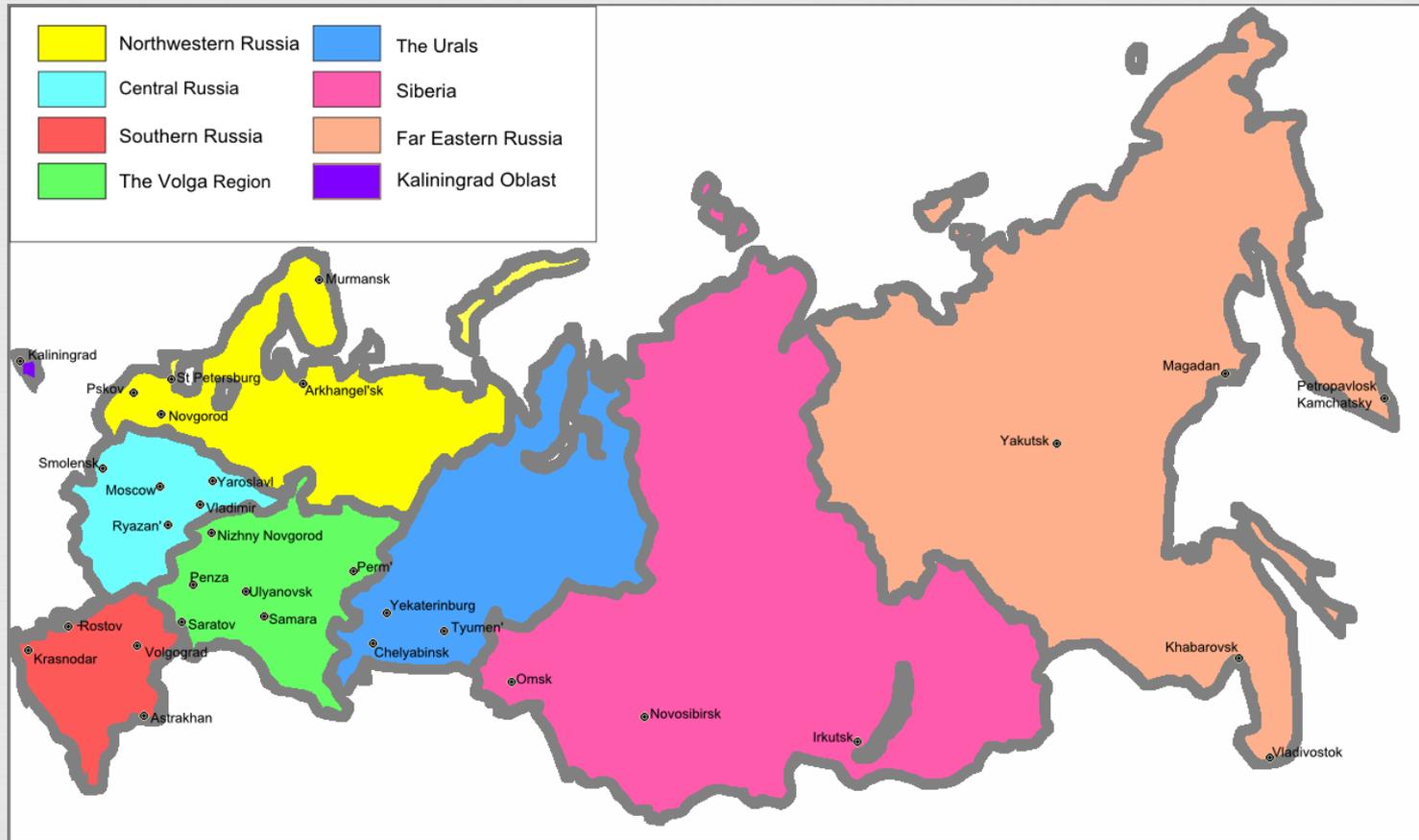




The Russian Federation

THE MAKING OF THE MODERN RUSSIAN STATE





□ Politics in Action

- ∞ The town of Pikalyovo came to be known as a power symbol during the economic crisis of 2009.
 - Economic difficulties of BasEl Cement Pikalyovo sparked protests when city's heating and hot water supply was interrupted and wages were not being paid.
 - Pikalyovo events exemplified the continuing interdependence of politics and economics in contemporary Russia.
 - Crisis required intervention of the country's top leaders.



(Read article in class page)



CHRONOLOGY of Soviet and Russian Political Development

1918–1928

Civil war, war communism,
and the New Economic
Policy

1929–1953

Stalin in power

1941–1945

Nazi Germany invades
Soviet Union; “Great
Patriotic War”

1965–1982

The Brezhnev era
and bureaucratic
consolidation

1915

1925

1935

1945

1955

1965

1975

1917

The Bolshevik
seizure of power

1929–1938

Collectivization
and purges

1956–1964

The Khrushchev era
and de-Stalinization

1953–1955

Leadership change
after Stalin’s death



1982–1985

Leadership change after Brezhnev's death

1991

Collapse of the USSR and establishment of the Russian Federation as an independent state

1998

Financial crisis and devaluation of the ruble

2000–2008

Putin presidency, with recentralization of state power

2007–2008

Parliamentary and presidential elections establishing dominance of United Russia and smooth transition to the presidency of Dmitry Medvedev

1985

1985–1991
The Gorbachev era and *perestroika*

1990

1993
Adoption of the new Russian constitution by referendum; first (multiparty) parliamentary elections in the Russian Federation (December)

1991–1999
Yeltsin presidency, with market and democratic reforms

1995

2000

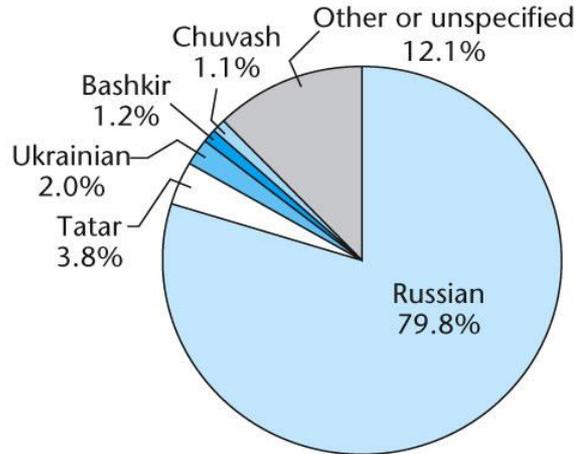
2005

2004
Beslan hostage-taking, southern Russia; Putin announces new centralizing measures

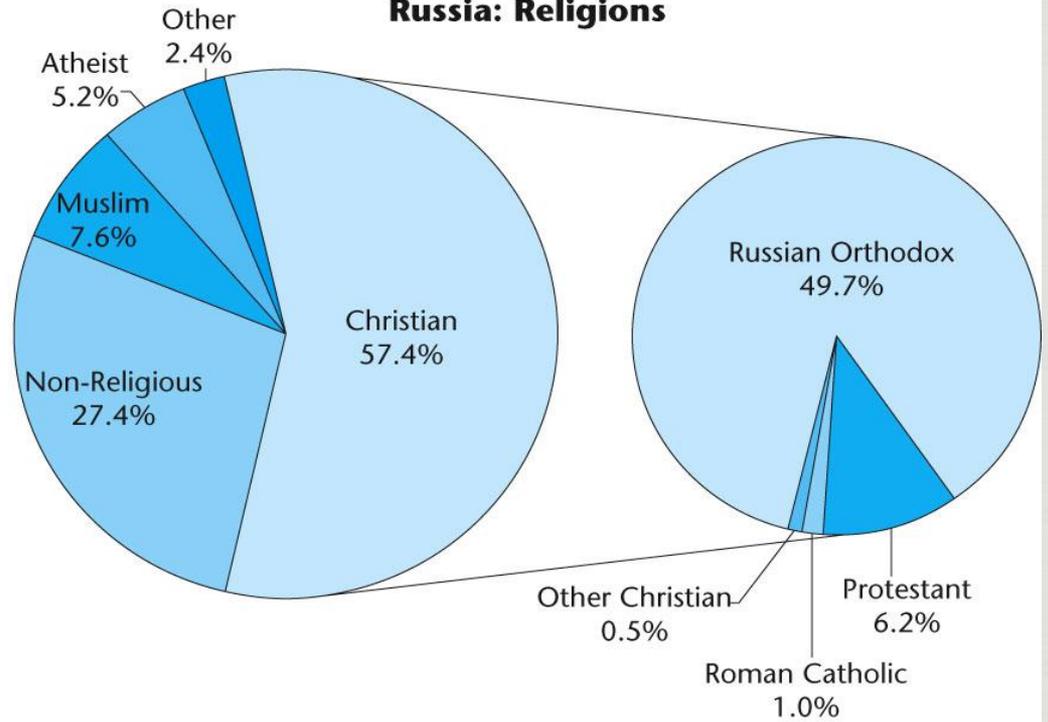
2010

December 2011–March 2012
State Duma elections and Presidential elections

Russia: Ethnicity



Russia: Religions



Russian Currency

Ruble

International Designation: RUB

Exchange Rate (2010): US\$1 = 30 RUB

100 Ruble Note Design: Sculpture on the portico of the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow



Table 8.1**Political Organization**

Political System	Constitutionally a presidential system
Regime History	Re-formed as an independent state with the collapse of communist rule in December 1991; current constitution since December 1993.
Administrative Structure	Constitutionally a federal system, with eighty-three subnational governments; politically centralized.
Executive	Dual executive (president and prime minister). Direct election of president; prime minister appointed by the president with the approval of the lower house of the parliament (State Duma).
Legislature	Bicameral. Upper house (Federation Council) appointed by heads of regional executive and representative organs. Lower house (State Duma) chosen by direct election, national proportional representation system with 450 deputies. Powers include proposal and approval of legislation, approval of presidential appointees.
Judiciary	Independent constitutional court with nineteen justices, nominated by the president and approved by the Federation Council, holding twelve-year terms with possible renewal.
Party System	Dominant establishment party (United Russia) within a multi-party system

□ Geographic Setting

- ∞ Breakup of Soviet Union resulted in 15 newly independent states.
- Russian Federation: largest successor state and largest European country, spanning 11 time zones
- ∞ Underwent rapid industrialization and urbanization under Soviet rule
- ∞ Rich in natural resources: gold, diamonds, timber, oil and natural gas
- ∞ Ethnic diversity and scope make governing difficult.
 - ∞ Pockets of instability on borders
 - ∞ Regional sphere of influence disputed

Russian Federation, March 2010



* Yamal-Nenets (A Ok) and Khanty-Mansiisk (A Ok) are also part of Tyumen oblast.

** Nenetsia (A Ok) is also part of Arkhangel'sk oblast.

Critical Junctures

The Decline of the Russian Tsarist State and the Founding of the Soviet Union



∞ Autocratic system headed by tsar until 1917

∞ **Patrimonial state** ruling country and land

Patrimonial state – A system of governance in which a single ruler treats the state as personal property (patrimony).

The Bolshevik Revolution and the Establishment of Soviet Power (1917–1929)

☞ Bolsheviks were Marxists.

- Believed revolution reflected political interests of the working class (proletariat), although most leaders were intelligentsia.
- Slogan: “**Land, Peace, and Bread**”

☞ Strategy based on two key ideas:

- **Democratic centralism** – hierarchical party structure with leaders elected from below and strict implementation of party policy.
- **Vanguard party** – political party that claims to operate in the “true” interests of the group or class that it purports to represent, even if this understanding doesn’t correspond to the expressed interests of the group itself.

○ The Bolshevik Revolution and the Establishment of Soviet Power (1917–1929)

∞ Extended civil war, (1918–1921)

- Introduction of war communism – state control of key economic sectors
- **New Economic Policy** (NEP) (1921)
loosened state control over economy but not large-scale industry

Bolsheviks became more authoritarian through 1920s.

- Lack of democratic tradition and vanguard ideology
- Internal struggles after Lenin's death, leading to rise of Stalin
- Open opposition silenced by 1929



Bolshevik revolution started international isolation.

- Ceded Poland to Germany under **Brest-Litovsk Treaty** (1918)

○ The Stalin Revolution (1929–1953)

- ∞ Josef Stalin brought changes to every aspect of Soviet life.
- ∞ State control over all economic assets
 - Collectivization** of farms to prevent emergence of capitalist class.
 - **Collectivization** – Removal of agricultural land from private ownership and organized into large state and collective farms
 - Resulted in famine and death
 - People were uprooted from countryside to urban industrial life.
- ∞ Party subject to personal whims of Stalin and secret police
 - Resistance was evasive rather than active



- ∞ Citizen and economy were isolated from the outside world.
 - **Positive:** Served as protection from effects of the Great Depression
 - **Negative:** Failed to keep up with the economic and technological transformation in the west.
- ∞ Joined Allied Powers in 1941 in the **Great Patriotic War**
- ∞ Victory allowed absorption of new territories.
 - Replicated Soviet communism in them.
 - Countries with historic links to Western Europe forced to change to Soviet model through domestic resistance
 - **USSR emerges as superpower.**
 - Policies to contain expansion were implemented: Truman Doctrine, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and Warsaw Pact.

○ Attempts at De-Stalinization (1953–1985)

- ☞ Stalin's system of terror destroyed initiative and participation.
 - Unpredictability inhibited rational policy formulation
- ☞ 1953-mid 1980s: Regularization and stabilization of Soviet politics
 - Terror abated but political controls remained.
- ☞ Nikita Khrushchev (1956–1964)
 - Revitalized Communist party,
Secret Police (KGB) subordinated to
Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU)
- ☞ Internal structures centralized and elections uncontested



Attempts at De-Stalinization (1953–1985)

Leonid Brezhnev (1964–1982)



- Partially reversed de-Stalinization
 - Tightened cultural controls
 - Predictable repression
- ∞ Beginning in late 1970s, aging political leadership increasingly ineffective
 - Economic growth rates and opportunities for upward mobility declined.
 - Resources were diverted to military sector.
 - Liberalization in East Europe and telecommunications made shielding population from Western lifestyles and ideas difficult.

Perestroika and Glasnost (1985–1991)

☞ **Mikhail Gorbachev** (1985)

- Reform program focused on economic growth and political renewal without undermining Communist party.

Perestroika (economic restructuring)

Decentralization and rationalization of economic structures

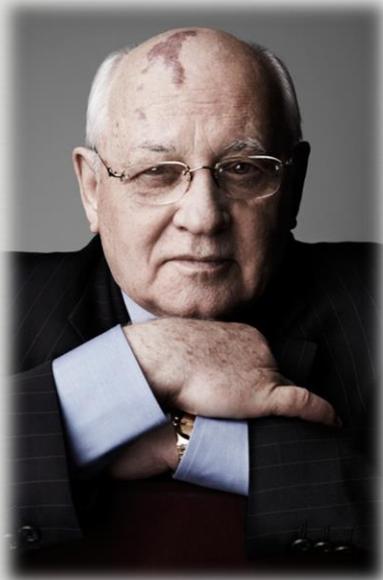
Glasnost (openness)

Easing of controls on public debate

Demokratizatsiia (limited democratization)

“New Thinking”

- Received Nobel Peace Prize in 1991
 - Halted Military buildup, ratification of arms control agreements, and lifting of many controls on international contacts



Collapse of the USSR and the Emergence of the Russian Federation (1991 to the Present)

- ∞ **Boris Yeltsin** added as nonvoting member of the Politburo in 1985 and became president in 1991 through **direct popular vote**.
- ∞ August 1991 conservative coup d'état temporarily removed Gorbachev from leadership.
 - Yeltsin rallied opposition to coup and declared himself champion of democratic values and Russian national interest.
- ∞ December 1991 Yeltsin joined Ukraine and Belorussia leaders.
 - Declared end of Soviet rule and formation of Commonwealth of Independent States



- ∞ Russian Federation became independent.
 - Yeltsin proclaimed commitment to Western-style democracy and market reform.
 - Controversial and hard to implement
 - October 1993 Yeltsin disbanded parliament and called new elections and constitutional referendum.
- ∞ Yeltsin unable to stop corruption, crime, social decline.
 - Conflict to prevent Chechnya independence
 - Financial crisis 1998
- ∞ Yeltsin nominated **Putin** as prime minister.
- ∞ Yeltsin resigned 1999 and Putin elected president.

∞ After September 11, 2001

- Putin benefited from high gas prices that poured revenue into Russia.
- First economic growth in a decade in 1999
- High levels of popular support

∞ Putin transitioned to hand-picked successor in 2008.

∞ Since 2000, Russia drifting toward **soft authoritarianism**

- **Soft authoritarianism** – a system of political control in which a combination of formal and informal mechanisms assure the dominance of a ruling group or dominant party, despite the existence of some forms of political competition and expression of political opposition.



- ∞ Putin expressed solidarity with the United States in the struggle against terrorism.
 - Reinforced by terrorist attacks in Russia
 - Withheld support of Iraq due to concerns about increasing American influence
 - Additional conflict points emerged
- ∞ Hillary Clinton visits with Russia after Obama inauguration to call for a reset of international relations.
- ∞ Putin and Donald Trump have a questionable relationship that has still to be defined.



○ Historical Junctures and Political Themes

- ∞ International support high, following Soviet collapse
 - Russia's status as world power undermined by Western organization expansion
 - Economic recovery and European dependence on Russian oil and gas renewed Russia's international influence.
 - Russia had difficulty asserting itself as a respected regional leader.
- ∞ Russian Federation mired in economic collapse and political paralysis
 - By late 1990s, public disillusioned and distrustful of leaders

- œ Since 2000 economic growth has returned
 - Increased public confidence although still skeptical of market economy
 - Survived 2008 financial crisis through plans such as **Reserve Fund** and **Prosperity Fund** (generated from high oil and gas revenues)
 - Still facing major issues: inadequate levels of foreign investment, capital flight, continuing high levels of inequality, and decline in agriculture
- œ Russians seek new forms of collective identity.
 - Russian identity uncertain because of loss of superpower status and widely accepted ideology
 - Differing collective identities due to internal divisions

○ Implications for Comparative Politics

- ☞ Transition from authoritarianism to democracy affected by:
 - ☞ Tradition of strong state control
 - ☞ Intertwined politics, economics, and ideology
- ☞ Four transitions initiated simultaneously in early 1990s: **democratization, market reform, redefinition of national identity, and integration into world economy**
 - ☞ Difficult to separate political and economic power
 - No private wealth
 - Corruption and crime used to maintain former privileges
 - ☞ Citizens faced economic decline and ideological vacuum.
 - Susceptible to appeal for state control and nationalism
 - Current backsliding from democracy reflects pursuing so many transitions at once.