

CHAPTER 18

The Rise of Russia

Chapter Outline Summary

I. Russia's Expansionist Politics under the Tsars

14th Century

Duchy of Moscow took lead in expelling Mongols

Ivan III (the Great)

nationalism

Orthodox Christianity

by 1480, independent state

A. The Need for Revival

Mongols

laissez-faire policy

Period of cultural and economic decline

literacy decreased

Ivan III

restoration of traditional rule

role overseeing church

Russia as the "Third Rome"

Ivan IV (The Terrible)

attacked *boyars* (nobles)

increased central power

B. Patterns of Expansion

Expansion into central Asia

into Siberia by 1500

Cossacks

peasants recruited to settle new lands

Land grants to nobles, bureaucrats

Trade with Asia increased

Islam tolerated

D. Western Contact and Romanov Policy

Intentional turn to West

Ivan III

embassies to Western states

Ivan IV

British began trading

Italian artists

worked on churches, Kremlin

Ivan IV dies without heir

Time of Troubles

boyars attempted to take power

Sweden, Poland took territory

Boyars chose Michael Romanov as tsar

Michael Romanov

restored order, expelled invaders

took part of Ukraine

border extended to Ottoman region

Alexis Romanov
church purged of Mongol-era innovations
“Old Believers” exiled

II. Russia’s First Westernization, 1690–1790

A. Tsarist Autocracy of Peter the Great

Policies

autocratic
reforms by fiat
secret police
conflict with Ottomans continued
Baltic port achieved
capital moved to St. Petersburg

B. What Westernization Meant

Bureaucratic changed

navy created
council of nobles ended
replaced by dependent advisors
provincial governors under central control
town councils under royal authority
laws codified

Economy

metallurgical, mining industries expanded
pressure to use serfs in manufacturing

Culture

nobles forced to shave beards
Western dress
education improved in math

Upper class only affected

C. Consolidation under Catherine the Great

Peter, dies 1724

weak rulers follow

Catherine (1762–1796), widow of Peter III

Pugachev peasant rebellion
excuse to expand central power

Westernization

Absolutism

nobles empowered over serfs
French Revolution causes reaction

Expansion

Crimea taken from Turks
Siberia
Alaska claimed
explorers into northern California
Partition of Poland

III. Themes in Early Modern Russian History

A. Serfdom: The Life of East Europe’s Masses

Enserfment under Mongols

to placate nobles
also to increase state control of peasantry

1649, serfdom hereditary

Later laws decrease peasants’ rights, mobility

- condition deteriorates in 18th century
- B. Estate Agriculture, Trade and Economic Dependence
 - 95 percent rural
 - Small merchant class
- C. Social Unrest
 - Call for reform by 1800
 - peasant unrest
 - landlords blamed for difficulties
 - Pugachev rising, 1770s
 - height of discontent
- D. Russia and Eastern Europe
 - Variations
 - Balkans
 - under Ottomans
 - influenced by Enlightenment
 - Several states lose autonomy
 - Poland
 - in Catholic sphere
 - weakness leads to Partition

Chapter Summary

Chapter Summary. The rise of the Russian Empire, unlike Western colonial empires, although altering power balances through Eurasia involved only limited commercial exchange. After freeing themselves from Mongol domination by 1480, the Russians pushed eastward. Some extension of territory also occurred in eastern Europe. Regional states, many differing from Russia, were present, with Lithuania and Poland rivaling Russia into the 17th century. Russia entered into new contacts with the West without losing its distinct identity.

The Early Tsars. Like many other rulers newly in power, the Russian tsars faced the challenge of legitimating their rule. They used their lineage, association with the long-dead Roman Empire, and a religious mission to validate their position. Descendants from Rurik, the legendary founder of Russia, gave their family the exclusive right to rule. Calling Russia the “third Rome,” and taking the title of caesar, linked them to the fame of the Roman Empire. Moreover, Ivan IV called himself the “khan of the north,” taking to himself the glory of the defeated Muslim Mongols. These claims were not only extremely ambitious, but also embodied contradictions, not least religious inconsistency.

Russia’s Expansionist Politics under the Tsars. During the 14th century the Duchy of Moscow took the lead in liberating Russia from the Mongols. Ivan III (the Great) gave his government a military focus, and utilized a blend of nationalism and Orthodox Christianity to create a large, independent state by 1480.

The Need for Revival. The Mongols, content to leave local administration in indigenous hands, had not reshaped basic Russian culture. The occupation reduced the vigor of cultural and economic life. Literacy declined and the economy became purely agricultural and dependent on peasant labor. Ivan III restored the tradition of centralized rule, added a sense of imperial mission, and claimed supervision of all Orthodox churches. Russia, asserted Ivan, had succeeded Byzantium as the “Third Rome.” Ivan IV (the Terrible) continued the policy of expansion. He increased the power of the tsar by killing many of the nobility (*boyars*) on the charge of conspiracy.

Patterns of Expansion. Territorial expansion focused on central Asia. Russians moved across their region’s vast plains to the Caspian Sea and the Ural Mountains. By the 16th century, they moved into western Siberia. Peasant adventurers (*cosacks*) were recruited to occupy the new lands. Loyal nobles and bureaucrats received land grants in the territories. The conquests gave Russia increased agricultural

regions and labor sources. Slavery existed into the 18th century. Important trading connections opened with Asian neighbors. The Russian advance, along with that of the Ottomans to the south, eliminated independent central Asia as a source of nomadic invasions. Russia became a multicultural state. The large Muslim population was not forced to assimilate to Russian culture.

Western Contact and Romanov Policy. The tsars, mindful of the cultural and economic lag occurring under Mongol rule, also began a policy of carefully managed contacts with the West. Ivan III dispatched diplomatic missions to leading Western states; under Ivan IV, British merchants established trading contacts. Italian artists brought in by the tsars built churches and the Kremlin, creating a distinct style of architecture. When Ivan IV died without an heir early in the 17th century, the Time of Troubles commenced. The boyars tried to control the government, while Sweden and Poland seized territory. In 1613, the boyars chose a member of the Romanov family, Michael, as tsar. The Time of Troubles ended without placing lasting constraints on the tsar's power. Michael restored internal order, drove out the foreign invaders, and recommenced imperial expansion. Russia secured part of the Ukraine and pushed its southern border to Ottoman lands. Alexis Romanov increased the tsar's authority by abolishing the assemblies of nobles and restoring state control over the church. His desire to cleanse the church of changes occurring during the Mongol era created tensions because conservative believers resisted changes to their established rituals. The government exiled these "Old Believers" to Siberia or southern Russia.

Russia's First Westernization, 1690–1790. By the end of the 17th century, Russia, although remaining more of an agricultural state than most leading civilizations, was a great land empire. Peter I (the Great) continued past policies, but added a new interest in changing the economy and culture through imitation of Western forms. Peter traveled incognito to the West and gained an interest in science and technology. Many Western artisans returned with him to Russia.

Tsarist Autocracy of Peter the Great. Peter was an autocratic ruler; revolts were brutally suppressed. Reforms were initiated through state decrees. Peter increased the power of the state through recruitment of bureaucrats from outside the aristocracy and by forming a Western-type military force. A secret police force was created to prevent dissent and to watch over the bureaucracy. Foreign policy followed existing patterns. Hostilities with the Ottomans went on without gain. A successful war with Sweden gave Russia a window on the Baltic Sea, making it a major factor in European diplomatic and military affairs. Peter made St. Petersburg his capital, reflecting the shift of interests.

What Westernization Meant. Peter's reforms influenced politics, economics, and cultural change. The bureaucracy and military were reorganized on Western principles. The first Russian navy was created. The councils of nobles were eliminated and replaced by advisors under his control. Provincial governors were appointed from the center, while elected town councils were under royal authority. Law codes were systematized and the tax system reformed to increase burdens on the peasantry. In economic affairs, metallurgical and mining industries were expanded. Landlords were rewarded for utilizing serfs in manufacturing operations. The changes ended the need to import for military purposes. Cultural reforms aimed to apply Western patterns to Russian traditional ways. Nobles had to shave their beards and dress in Western style. Peter attempted to provide increased education in mathematics and technical subjects. He succeeded in bringing the elite into the Western cultural zone. The condition of upper-class women improved, but peasant women were not affected. The first effort in Westernization embodied features present in later ventures in other lands. The changes were selective; they did not involve ordinary people. No attempt was made to form an exporting industrial economy. For Peter, Westernization was intended to encourage autocratic rule. Finally, the changes occurring brought resistance from all classes.

Consolidation under Catherine the Great. Several decades of weak rule followed Peter's death in 1724. Significant change resumed during the reign of Prussian-born Catherine (1762–1796), widow of Peter III. She used the Pugachev peasant rebellion as an excuse to extend central government authority. Like Peter, Catherine was a Westernizer and brought Enlightenment ideas to Russia, but centralization and strong royal authority were more important to her than Western reform. She gave new power over serfs to the nobles in return for their service in the bureaucracy and military. Catherine continued patronage of Western art and architecture, but the French Revolution caused her to ban foreign and

domestic political writings. Russian expansionist policies continued. Territories, including the Crimea on the Black Sea, were taken from the Ottomans. Catherine pushed colonization in Siberia and claimed Alaska. Russian explorers went down the North American coast into northern California. In Europe, Catherine joined Prussia and Austria to partition Poland and end its independence. By the time of her death, Russia had completed an important transformation. Russia's tsars over three centuries had created a strong central state ruling over the world's greatest land empire. New elements from the West had entered and altered Russia's economy and culture.

Themes in Early Modern Russian History. Russian society was very different from that of the West. Serfdom and a deep-rooted peasant culture did not mesh with Westernization efforts. The Russian nobility, through state service, maintained a vital position. In both Russia and eastern Europe, a minority of great landholders lived in major cities and provided important cultural patronage. Smaller, incompletely Westernized landowners lived less opulent lives.

Serfdom: The Life of East Europe's Masses. Before the Mongol conquest, Russia's peasantry had been relatively free. From the 16th century, the government encouraged the development of serfdom as a means of conciliating the nobility and of extending state control over peasants. A 1649 act made serfdom hereditary; other 17th- and 18th-century laws tied serfs to the land and augmented the legal rights of landlords. Serfs were almost slaves; they were bought, sold, and punished by owners. Peasant conditions were similar in eastern Europe. Peasants labored on large estates to produce grain for sale to the West. Western merchants in return brought the serfs' owners manufactured and luxury items. Peasants did have some rights; village governments regulated many aspects of life. Most peasants remained poor and illiterate; they paid high taxes and performed extensive labor services in agriculture, mining, and manufacturing. Their condition deteriorated throughout the 18th century.

Trade and Economic Dependence. There were few large cities in Russia; 95 percent of the population was rural. Artisans also were few since most manufacturing was rural. Small merchant groups existed, but most trade was handled by Westerners. Peter the Great's reforms increased trade, yet the nobility managed to prevent the emergence of a strong commercial class. Russia's social and economic system had strengths. It produced adequate revenue for the expanding empire, supported the aristocracy, and allowed significant population growth. Commerce was carried on with independent central Asian regions. There were important economic limitations. Agricultural methods remained traditional and peasants lacked incentives to increase production solely for the benefit of landlords. Manufacturing suffered from similar constraints.

Social Unrest. By the end of the 18th century, Russian reformers were criticizing their nation's backwardness and urging the abolition of serfdom. Peasant discontent was more significant. Peasants remained loyal to the tsar, but blamed landlords for the harshness of their lives. Periodic rebellions occurred from the 17th century, peaking with the Pugachev rising of the 1770s. The tsar and nobility triumphed, but peasant discontent remained a problem.

Russia and Eastern Europe. Regions west of Russia formed a fluctuating borderland between west and east European interests. In the Ottoman Balkans, trade with the West spread Enlightenment concepts. Poland and the Czech and Slovak areas, on the other hand, were a part of the Western cultural orbit. Copernicus was a major figure in the Scientific Revolution. Some eastern regions were joined in the Protestant Reformation. Many of the smaller states lost political autonomy. Hungary and Czech Bohemia were incorporated into the Habsburg Empire. The largest state, Poland, was linked to the West by shared Roman Catholicism. By 1600 Polish aristocrats weakened the central government and exploited peasants. Urban centers and a merchant class were lacking. The kingdom was partitioned by its powerful neighbors.

Thinking Historically: Multinational Empires. During the early modern period, Russia created the longest-lasting multinational empire. The Mughal Empire ended during the 19th century; the empires of the Ottomans and Habsburgs disappeared early in the next century. Special characteristics of the Russian Empire were the presence of a large core of ethnic groups prepared to spread widely and establish new settlements, and Russian ability to adopt Western techniques. During the period of empire creation, the importance of the western European, culturally more cohesive nation-state was confirmed. Such states

included minority ethnicities, but developed methods to achieve national unity. Since the 19th century, there have been serious clashes between national loyalties and multinational empires. Most of the latter have collapsed.

GLOBAL CONNECTIONS: Russia and the World. The rise of Russia, from a world history viewpoint, was a crucial development of the early modern era. The vast extent of the empire, different in structure from those being formed by Western nations, influenced military and diplomatic matters from central Asia to Europe.

KEY TERMS

Ivan III (the Great): Prince of the Duchy of Moscow; responsible for freeing Russia from the Mongols; took the title of tsar (caesar).

Ivan IV (the Terrible): confirmed power of tsarist autocracy by attacking the authority of the boyars; continued policy of expansion; established contacts with western European commerce and culture.

Cossacks: peasant-adventurers with agricultural and military skills, recruited to conquer and settle in newly seized lands in southern Russia and Siberia.

Time of Troubles: early 17th-century period of boyar efforts to regain power and foreign invasion following the death without an heir of Ivan IV; ended with the selection of Michael Romanov as tsar in 1613.

Romanov dynasty: ruled Russia from 1613 to 1917.

Alexis Romanov: Second Romanov ruler; abolished assemblies of nobles; gained new powers over the Orthodox church.

Old Believers: conservative Russians who refused to accept the ecclesiastical reforms of Alexis Romanov; many were exiled to southern Russia or Siberia.

Peter I (the Great): tsar from 1689 to 1725; continued growth of absolutism and conquest; sought to change selected aspects of the economy and culture through imitation of western European models.

St. Petersburg: Baltic city, made the new capital of Russia by Peter I.

Catherine the Great: German-born Russian tsarina; combined receptivity to selective Enlightenment ideas with strong centralizing policies; converted the nobility to a service aristocracy by granting them new power over the peasantry.

Partition of Poland: three separate divisions of Polish territory between Russia, Prussia, and Austria in 1772, 1793, and 1795; eliminated Poland as an independent state.

Pugachev rebellion: unsuccessful peasant rising led by cossack Emelyan Pugachev during the 1770s; typical of peasant unrest during the 18th century and thereafter.