

III. Russian History 1.0

A. *Supernationalist* Russia

1. Russia is the largest country in the world in terms of area, straddling the entire Eurasian continent from Europe to the Pacific Ocean.
2. Although Russia has had extensive contact with various Asian cultures, its relationship with Europe has been the dominant factor shaping it into what it is today: a *supernationalist* country. This means the people feel an exaggerated sense of belong to the nation of Russia, and they are willing to attack other nations and hurt the people of other nations *because those people are not Russian*.
3. This stems mainly from the fact that Russia was twice attacked by supernationalist Germany in the World Wars. Since Russia became what it is today thanks mainly to the World Wars, Russian history is usefully represented by the same kind of model as we used for European history. The question is: what is the story of Russia that explains how it became supernationalist?

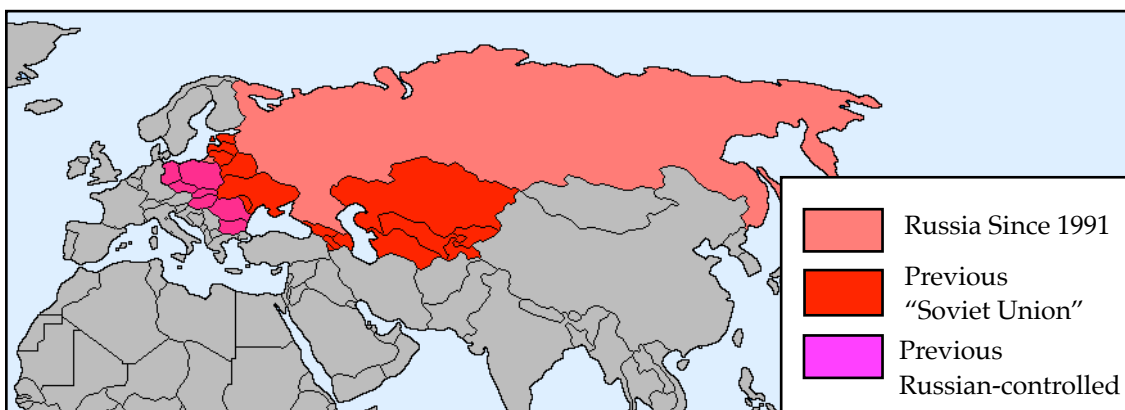


B. Russia Since 1991

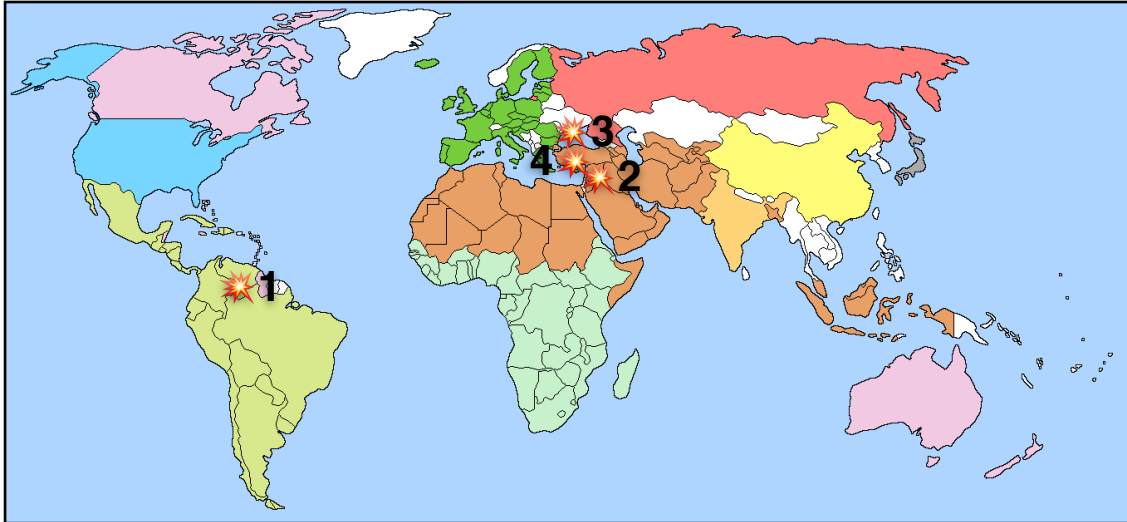
1. Making sense of Russian supernationalism can be difficult, especially for people from previous generations who think mainly about Russia being a communist country. (We'll learn about communism later this year.) Because Russian communism has ended, however, it is an association that does not give us the insight we need into what Russia is *today*.
2. Communist Russia was supernationalist and the Russia of today is still supernationalist. *Supernationalism* is the key aspect of Russian culture to understand. The difference is that in **1991** (when communism ended in Russia) all the "baggage" of the World Wars was also finally set aside, and Russia let go of its fear and hatred of Europe, allowing the parts of it that it had ruled since the World Wars, to regain their independence.
3. Because Russia had adopted the name "Soviet Union" for its empire, the events leading up to and including the fall of communism in **1991** are sometimes also referred to as the fall of the Soviet Union. It can also be thought of as the fall of Russian communism. It is important to recognize, however, that Russian supernationalism did not end there. Russia did abandon control of Eastern Europe and other parts of its empire in **1991**, but from that

point on, it still continued to use its military power for its own national purposes at the expense of others. In the approach to history we are using, it is useful to think of **1991** as the end of Russian supernationalism *in Europe*.

4. Today, the most notorious example of Russia using its military power in a supernationalist way is the military support of the dictator of Syria against his own people. Syria is a dictatorship in the Islamic Middle East whose rulers have all belonged to the same Al-Assad family for the last couple generations. These rulers are oppressive and corrupt. A civil war began against them in 2011 when the people rebelled. When the United States, as the world police power, decided not to get involved, Russia saw an opportunity to expand its cultural influence. It deployed its military to support the current dictator, Bashar Al-Assad. Russia is not trying to “make the world safe for democracy” or trying to serve any other kind of ideal. It is only intervening because Bashar Al-Assad is an ally of Russia, who allows the Russians to maintain a military base in the Mediterranean Sea and buys weapons from Russia. Russian leaders are only intervening in Syria to help themselves—*at the expense of the Syrian people*.
5. Russia has also sent military assistance to a dictator in Venezuela in the same way and for the same reasons.
6. After letting go of control of neighboring Ukraine in **1991**, Russia decided more recently to take back part of that country (called the Crimean Peninsula) by force.
7. Russia is also working hard to detach Turkey from its alliance with the United States by selling weapons to Turkey that are designed to destroy American military technology. This has nothing to do with what’s good for Turkey. It is only a ploy to make Turkey into a servant of Russia’s needs and wants.
8. Evidently, when we see the pattern of Russian action in Syria, Venezuela, Ukraine, and Turkey, it is clear that Russia may not be a supernationalist power over Europe anymore (except Ukraine), but it is still very much a supernationalist military superpower in other places.



Even though Russia gave up control of Eastern Europe and other parts of the “Soviet Union” in the lead-up to the fall of communism in **1991**, Russian *supernationalism* continued to be a cultural influence on the world.



Russia is still a supernationalist country. It uses its military power in places like Venezuela (1), Syria (2) and Ukraine (3) and is trying to convince Turkey (4) to break its alliance with the United States — all to try to have more cultural influence even though this hurts the people in those countries.