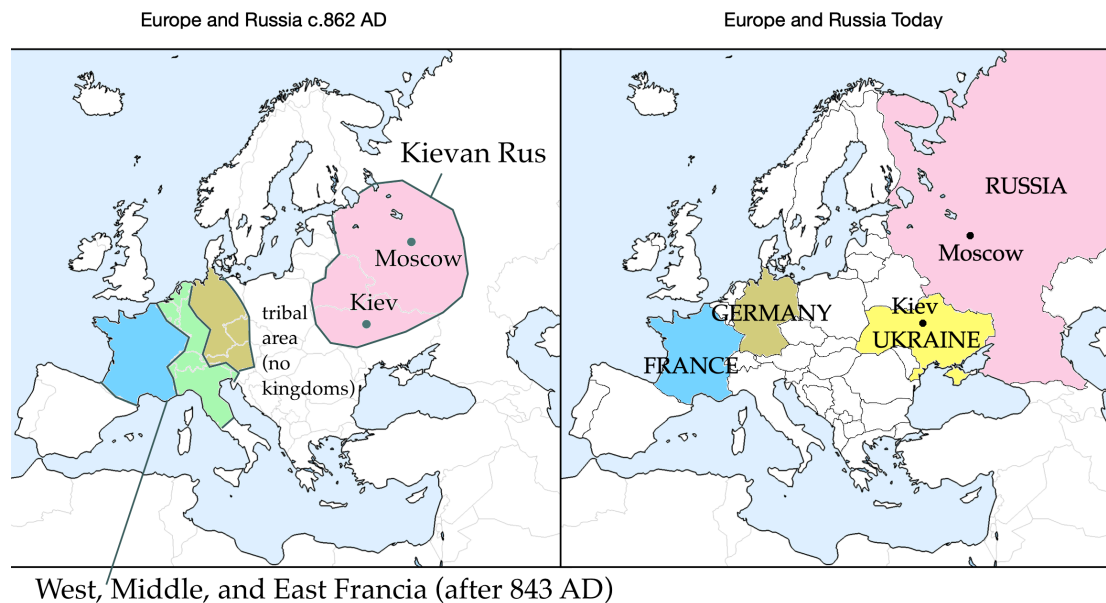


### C. The Rise of Mother Russia

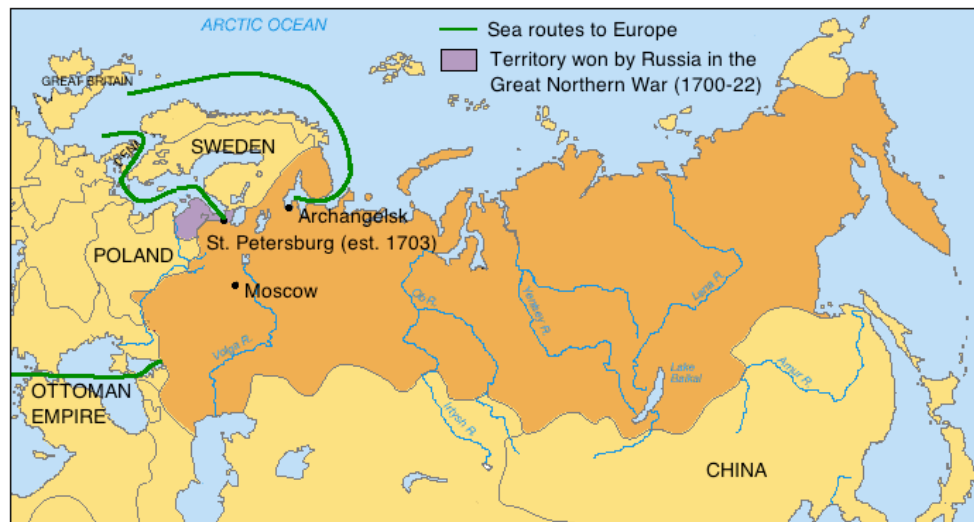
1. The story of how Russia became the country it is today begins far to the east of the Europe of Charlemagne.
2. Around the year **862 AD**, land occupied by a tribal people known as as a Slavs was invaded and conquered by Vikings (people from the northern region of Europe known as Scandinavia). The Viking leader Rurik established a new kingdom which he called “Kievan Rus.” (“Rus” is a viking word of unknown meaning, “Kievan” refers to its capital city, Kiev, which is the capital of Ukraine today.)
3. The result of the Viking conquest of the Slavs was a union of two peoples that succeeded over the long term, producing a “supernation,” in the sense of a combination of two peoples into one, with a large population, over a large area. (If Charlemagne’s union had succeeded we could image a similarly large and united “nation” of Europe to the west of Russia.)
4. In between Russia and Europe for hundreds of years was an unsettled tribal region. Russia’s cultural contact with Europe was minimal, and it evolved into a distinct culture on its own.



5. Russia’s isolation began to break down during the European period known as the “Age of Discovery” (known for the voyages of Christopher Columbus and others). Explorers seeking a “northern passage” over Asia to China arrived on the Arctic coast of Russia, and made their way to the city of Moscow, which had become the capital.
6. Trade between Europe and Russia remained limited after that, as the Arctic route was impassable much of the year due to ice. (Strangely, despite its large initial size, and

despite expanding eastward, Russia was essentially “landlocked” with regard to Europe, because the enemy kingdoms of Sweden, Poland, and the Islamic Ottoman Empire had come to occupy the regions between Russia and Europe where passage to Europe by sea was possible.)

- Russia’s isolation was eventually broken by its king (known in Russia as a “tsar”), Peter “the Great.” Peter admired European culture and wanted to make Russia into a European country. Seeking a sea route to Asia, Peter believed that Sweden was Russia’s most vulnerable rival, and attacked that country in the **Great Northern War of 1700-22**.



- Russia’s victory in the **Great Northern War** allowed the country to claim a stretch of coastline along the Baltic Sea. The new capital city of St. Petersburg was built there as a monument to Russia’ new ambitions as a European country.
- Being a part of Europe was desirable for the purpose of expanding trade and in order to partake in the cultural and technological advancement of Europe, which was surpassing all other cultures, but it also meant that Russia was entangled in the “balance of power” of Europe’s nations. This meant that Russia would have to pick sides whenever Europe’s nations would fight one another. By doing so, Russia would eventually become a target of European aggression itself, as in the World Wars, the terrible cost of which drove Russia to supernationalism.
- The basic structure of Russian history is thus summarized as follows:

