

# **CHAPTER FIVE**

## **Russia and the Newly Independent States**

# Russia and the Newly Independent States



Figure 5-1  
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# I. THE GEOGRAPHIC SETTING

- ▶ Constituted by 12 former republics of the USSR
  - Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia already discussed
- ▶ Russia contains more than 30 ethnic internal republics
  - Diversity hidden by single country

# A. Physical Patterns

- ▶ Undulating landforms from west to east
  - North European Plain
  - Ural Mountains
  - West Siberian Plain
  - Central Siberian Plateau
  - Pacific Mountains
- ▶ To south, no regular physical barriers
  - Caucasus, steppes, mountains of East Asia

# A. Physical Patterns

## ▶ Landforms

- North European Plain: western subregion
  - ▶ European Russia; most densely populated
  - ▶ Volga River – important for transportation
- Ural Mountains: border between Europe and Asia
  - ▶ Relatively low, not a barrier to movement
- West Siberian Plain: largest plain in the world
  - ▶ Oil reserves, permafrost

# A. Physical Patterns

## ▶ Landforms

- Central Siberian Plateau
  - ▶ Permafrost at varying depths
- Pacific Mountain Zone
  - ▶ Moderated by ocean, warmed by volcanic activity
    - Pacific Plate sinking under Eurasian Plate
- These two regions, together, size of USA
- Steppes and mountains to the south; area of cultural interpenetration

# Kamchatka



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# A. Physical Patterns

## ► Climate and Vegetation

- Harsh continental climate
- Protected from moderating oceanic winds by mountains to the south
- Agriculture focused in west, where precipitation is maximized
- Best soils are found in southwest
- Taiga found in northern Siberian vastness
  - Northern coniferous forest

# Climate Zones

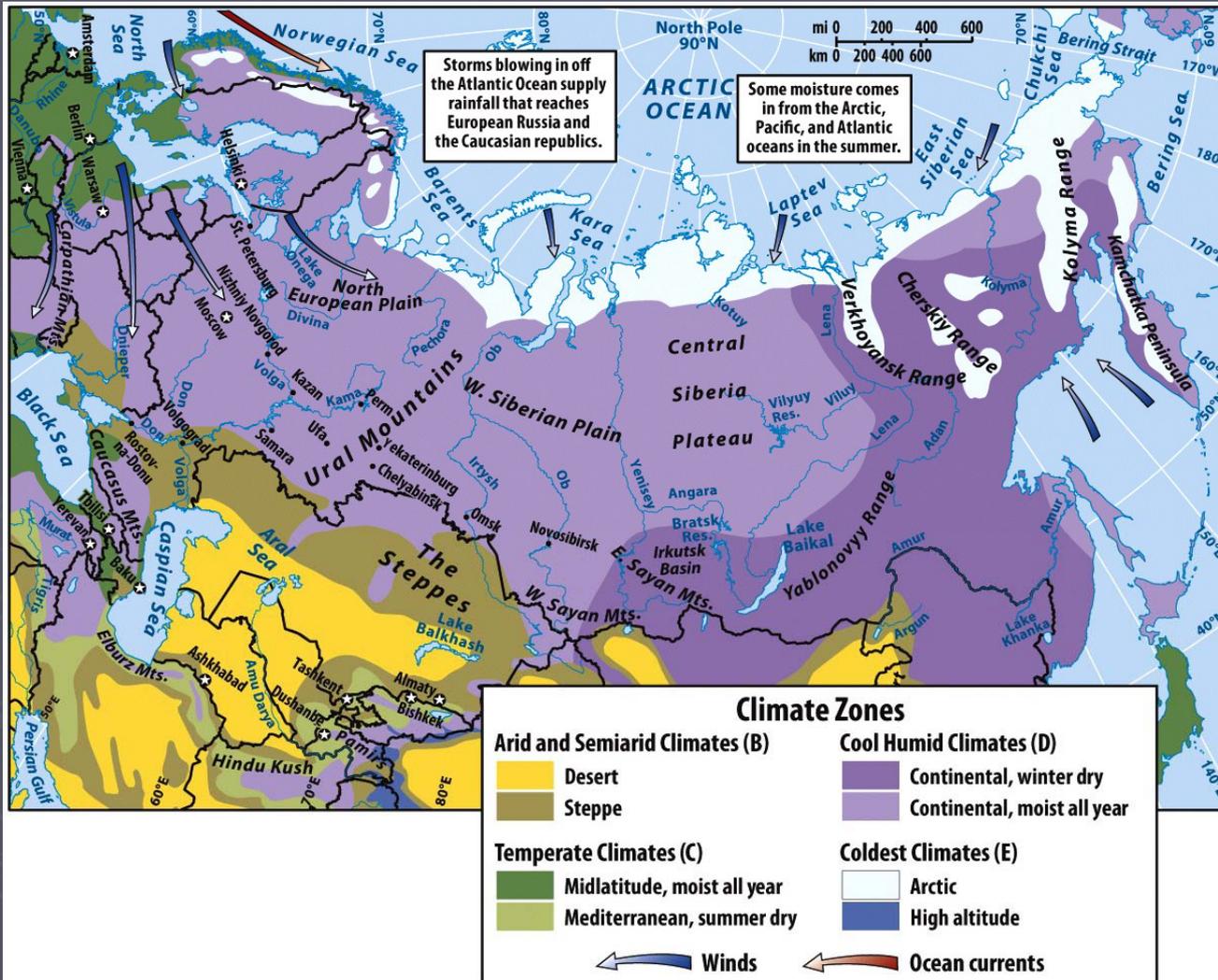


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# B. Human Patterns Over Time

- ▶ Historic trend has been centralization
  - Core area: European Russia, ethnic homeland for Russians
  - Other ethnic groups conquered by Russians
  - Later, Russian Empire became USSR
- ▶ New trend: de-centralization
  - Breakup of USSR

# B. Human Patterns Over Time

- ▶ The Rise of the Russian Empire
  - Slavs: farmers from Poland, Ukraine, Belarus
    - ▶ Occupied most of Eastern Europe
    - ▶ Controlled Volga River trade route
    - ▶ Kiev and Moscow: key urban areas; influenced by Byzantine traders (Cyrillic, Orthodoxy)
  - Conquered by Mongols
    - ▶ Moscow's elites became tax collectors; eventually rebelled and started expanding their own empire

# Independence Square, Kiev



Figure 5-9

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# B. Human Patterns Over Time

- ▶ The Rise of the Russian Empire
  - Similar to other European colonizers: resources appropriated, private property upheld over communal property
  - Different from other European colonizers: large numbers of Russians migrated in, surpassing indigenous populations
    - ▶ Central Asia: provider of cotton
  - Russian czar: lived in splendor
    - ▶ Serfdom remained in place until mid-1800s

# Russian Imperial Expansion

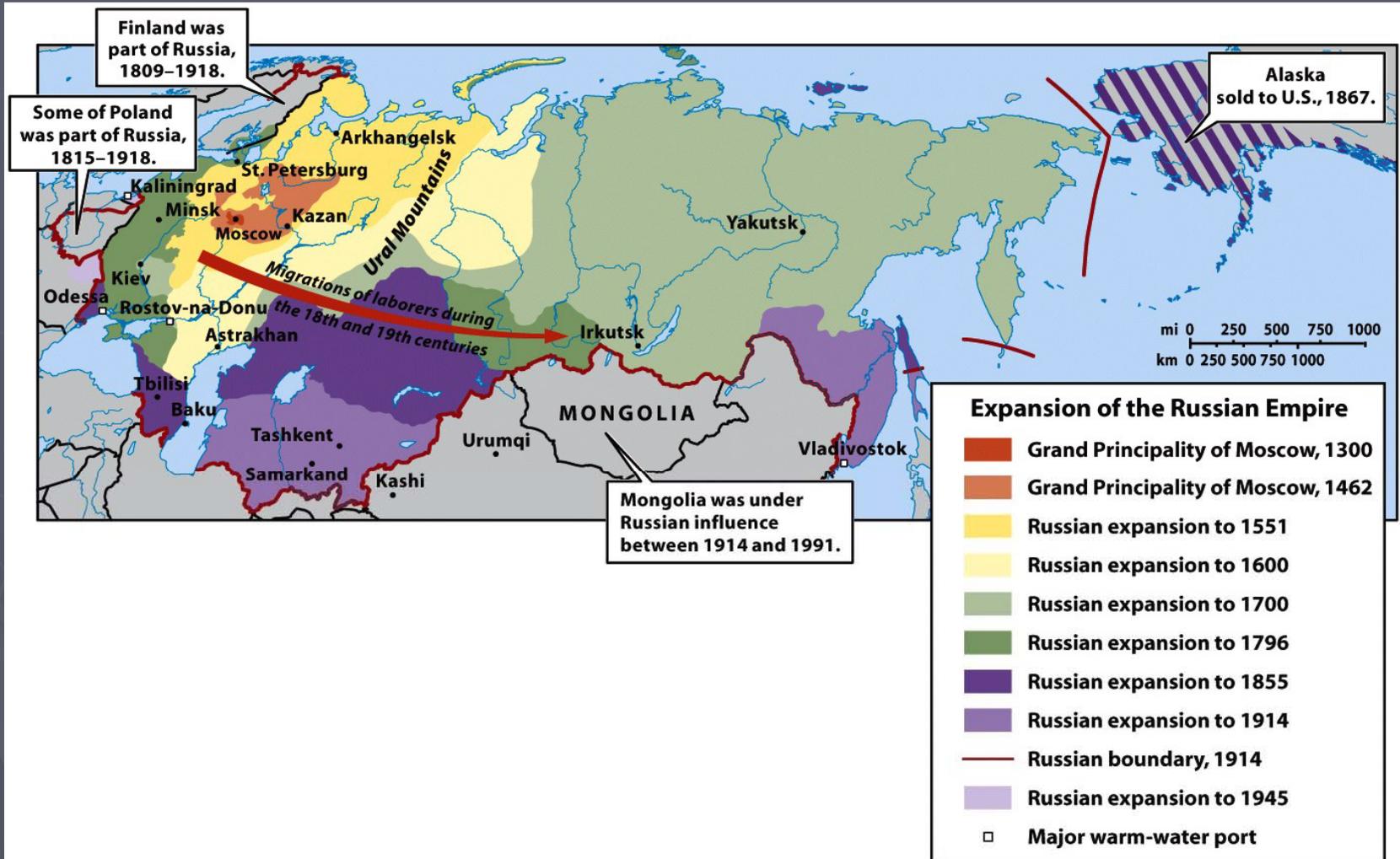


Figure 5-11

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# B. Human Patterns Over Time

- ▶ The Communist Revolution and its Aftermath
  - During WWI, czar overthrown, Bolsheviks take power
    - ▶ Communism: criticizes capitalism for centralization of production in a wealthy minority
  - Centrally planned economy instituted by Stalin
    - ▶ Government owned all land and means of production
    - ▶ Government directs all economic activity
    - ▶ Significant successes and failures

# B. Human Patterns Over Time

- ▶ World War II and the Cold War
  - Almost single-handedly won WWII
    - ▶ 23 million casualties
  - Created buffer of allied Communist countries
  - Cold War confrontation over ideology
    - ▶ Arms race, promotion of communism overseas
  - Steady drift away from hard-line communism
    - ▶ Dragged down by war in Afghanistan

# The Cold War in 1980

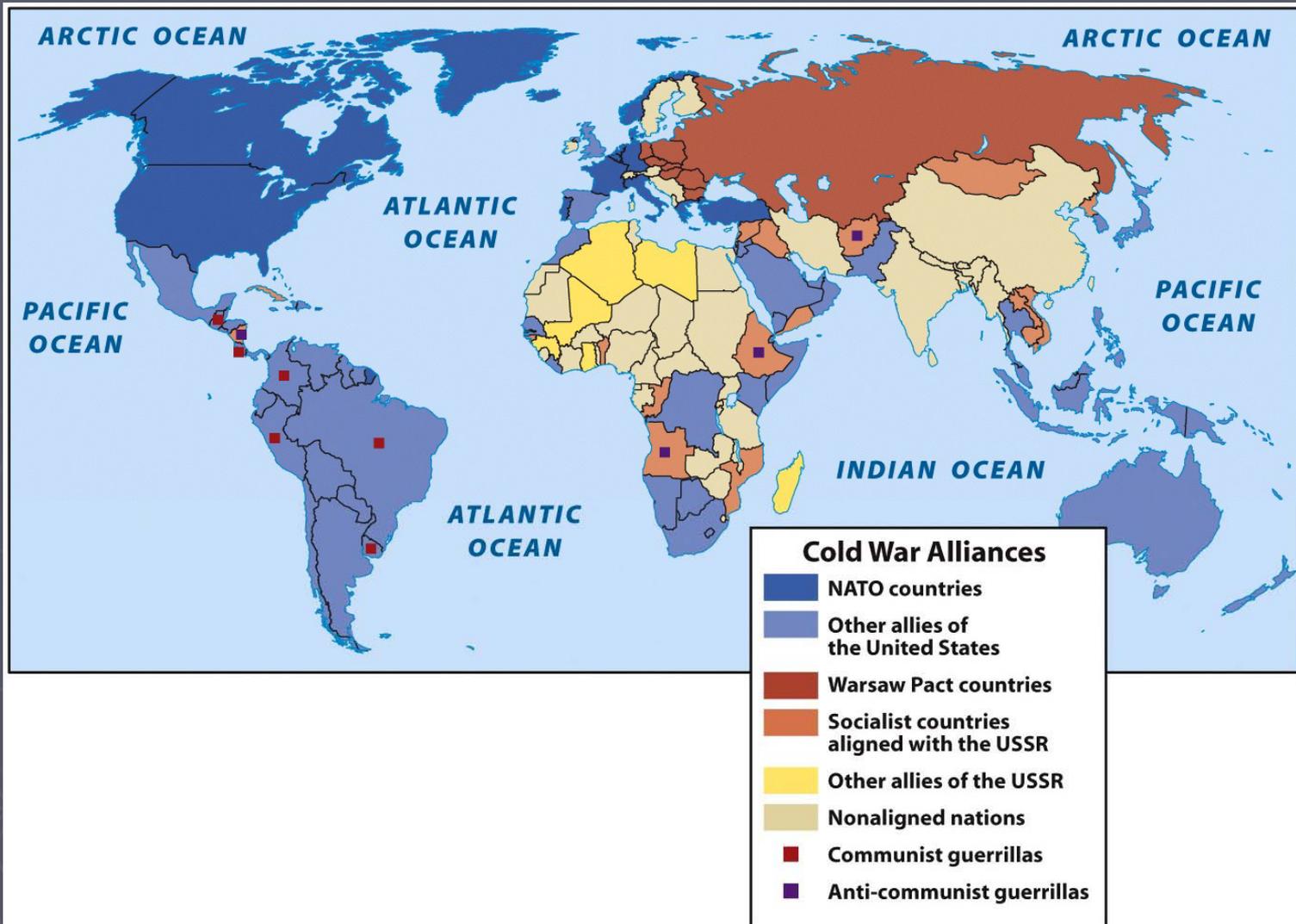


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# B. Human Patterns Over Time

- ▶ The Post-Soviet Years
  - Gorbachev: glasnost, perestroika
    - ▶ Failed to solve problems, stoked nationalism
  - Russia: major inheritor of USSR's mantle
  - 11 other new republics in this region
    - ▶ Haphazard transition to free market economies
    - ▶ Rollback of democratic reforms in Russia?

# C. Population Patterns

- ▶ European Russia: densest population in the region
  - Wedge from Odessa north to St. Petersburg and Novosibirsk (best farmland)
- ▶ Siberian settlement follows the Trans-Siberian Railway
  - Concentrated in a few cities

# Population Distribution

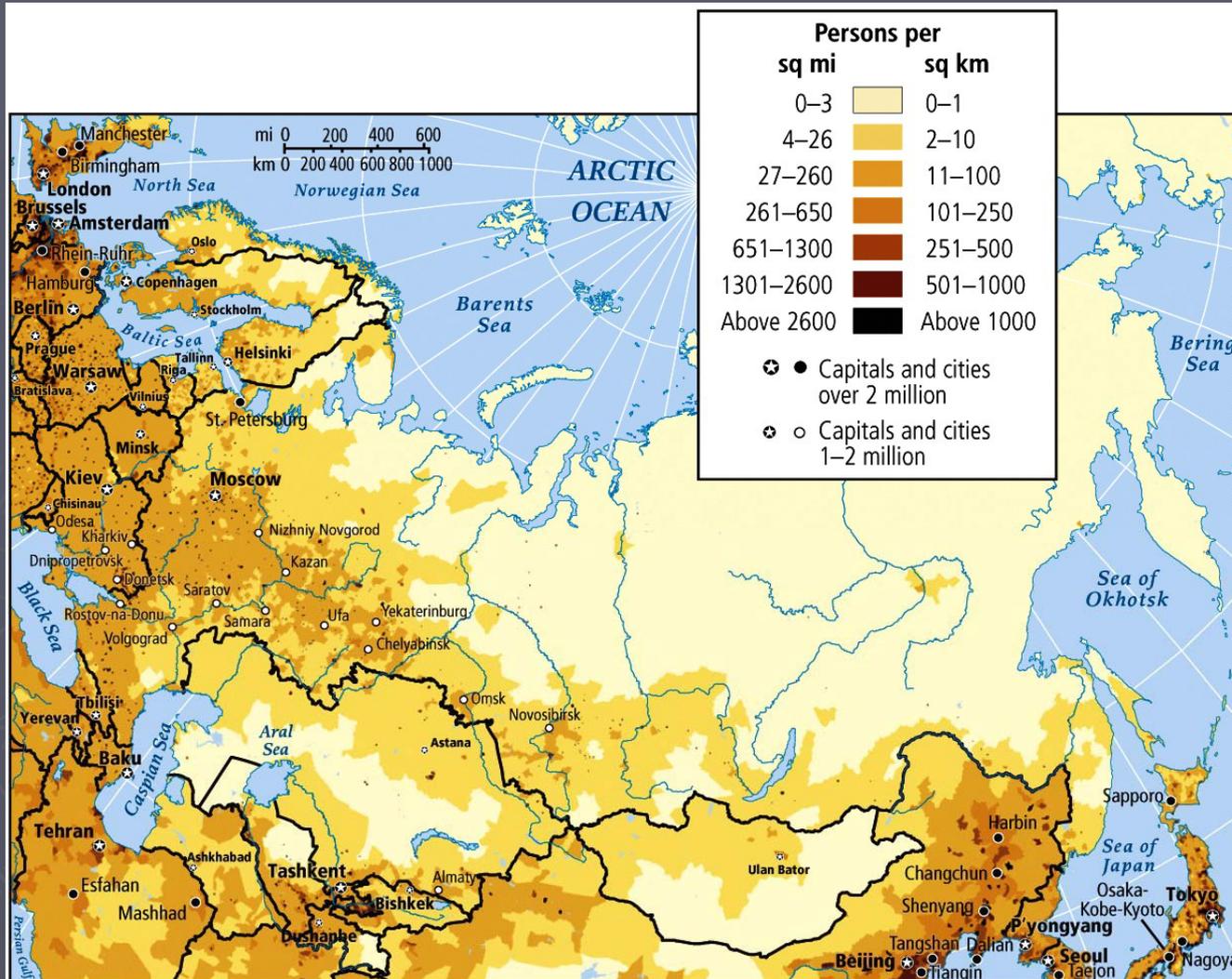


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# C. Population Patterns

- ▶ Recent Population Changes
  - USSR: Relatively high standard of living and well-being
    - ▶ Post-1991, rapidly deteriorating
  - Decline in life expectancy (esp. men)
    - ▶ Physical and mental stress from lost jobs and social disruption
    - ▶ Alcoholism
    - ▶ Nutritional deficiencies
  - Women choosing not to have children

# Population Pyramids

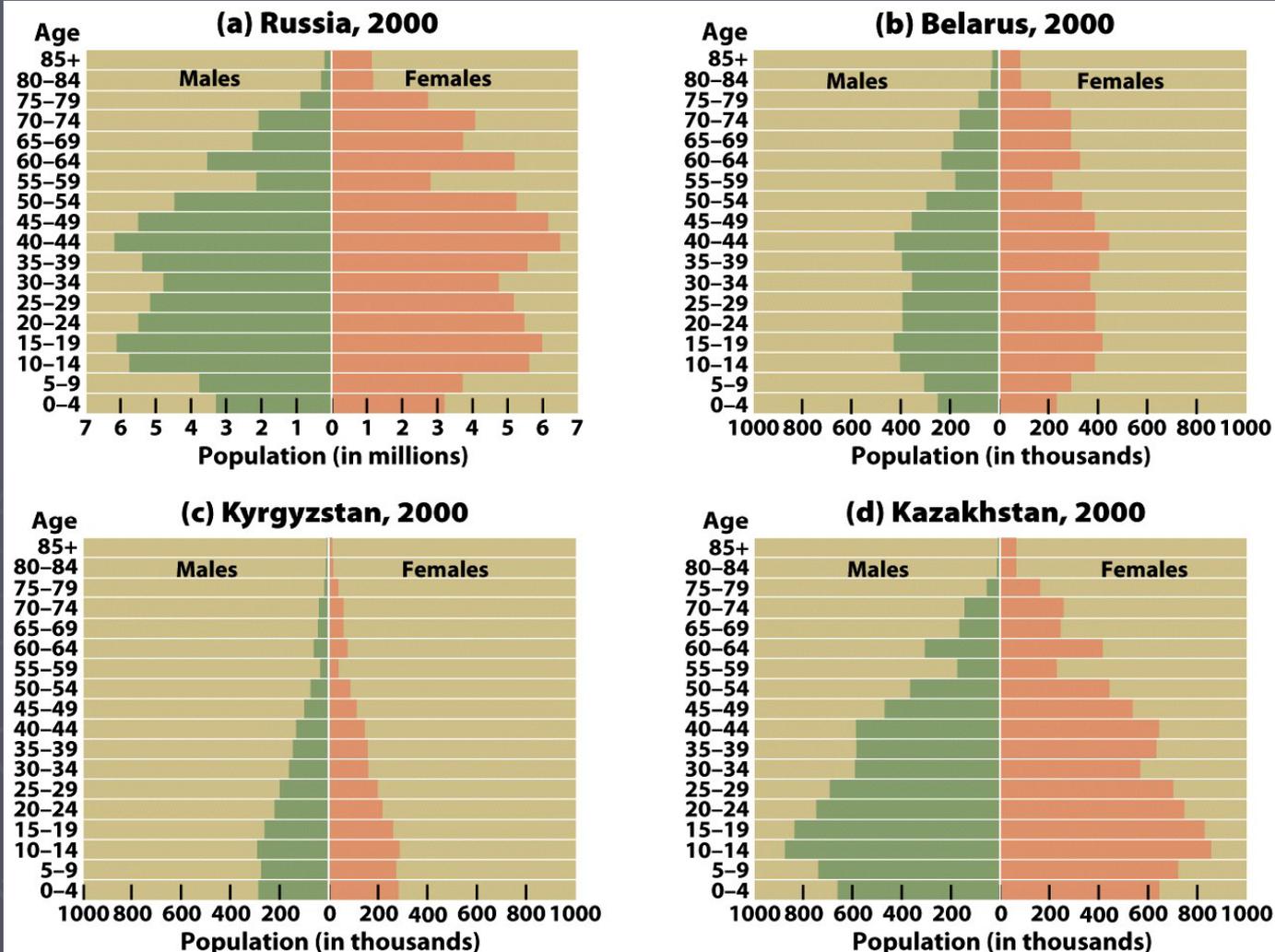


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# II. CURRENT GEOGRAPHIC ISSUES

- ▶ Soviet experiment: to reform quickly and totally a society and its institutions
- ▶ Now, a new experiment: shifting to democracy and a free market economy
  - As in Bolshevik Revolution, great uncertainty as to outcomes

# A. Economic and Political Issues

- ▶ The Former Command Economy
  - Successfully eradicated abject poverty, basic needs met
  - Still, because of inefficiencies, scarcities and gluts
    - ▶ No competition, therefore inefficient production methods
    - ▶ Products of poor quality and overpriced
    - ▶ Lack of technological innovation outside of military, space exploration

# A. Economic and Political Issues

- ▶ Soviet Regional Development Schemes
  - Central government in charge of locating industry
    - ▶ Spread throughout vast territory to boost standards of living in distant areas
    - ▶ Also, protected from enemy attack
  - Cost of transport made industry inefficient
  - Many industries incapable of being sustained after breakup of USSR

# Industrial Regions and Land Transportation



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# A. Economic and Political Issues

## ▶ Transport Issues

- Water transport: cheapest
  - ▶ However, Soviet rivers generally run north-south
  - ▶ Few oceanic ports
- Land transport: best option
  - ▶ Hindered by permafrost, swampy forests, complex upland landscapes, limited car ownership
- Therefore, USSR (2.5x size of USA) has 1/6 the roads
- Importance of Trans-Siberian Railway, air transport (expensive)

# A. Economic and Political Issues

- ▶ Reform in the Post-Soviet Era
  - Privatization: government-owned industries sold to private companies or individuals
    - ▶ Intended to maximize efficiency
    - ▶ Importance of supply and demand for prices
  - Price controls: Initial scarcity during privatization led to massive profits
    - ▶ Squeezed those who might become entrepreneurs
    - ▶ Suffering until supply able to meet demand
  - Oligarchs: early profiteers, now powerful

# A. Economic and Political Issues

- ▶ Foreign Direct Investment
  - Foreign investors bringing in money
    - ▶ Afraid of over-dependence on oil and natural gas
- ▶ The Growing Informal Economy
  - Extension of old communist-era black market
  - So large now it skews economic statistics
  - Tax-free, does not benefit entire country
  - Undermines government authority

# A. Economic and Political Issues

- ▶ High energy prices end debt crisis
  - Russia owed 90% of GDP in 1998
  - Defaulted in 2000, rescheduling contingent on economic reforms
  - By 2008, debt expected to be 12% of GDP
- ▶ New Trading Partners
  - Shift away from intra-regional trade to EU, other Asian countries (India, China)

