

Putin's Wars

The Rise of Russia's New Imperialism

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2. Pap Monism
3. Communism

Sometimes these legitimation theories overlap, but they will be represented here as different, sequential phases.

The first, Orthodoxy, is a religious legitimation theory, and it resembles, therefore, the religious legitimation theories that played a role in the early colonial expansion of Western Europe, especially of Spain. In Russia religion played an important role from an early stage. That role, however, was different from that in Western Europe, where Protestantism and Catholicism were not the religions of one state, but of groups of states. In 1453, after the fall of Constantinople, Russia had become the only Orthodox country in the world. This led to a deep sense of Russian religious uniqueness. Moscow began to call itself the "Third Rome," and a specific Russian movement emerged. Russia considered itself to be the only real source of salvation for mankind. The resemblance here with the young Soviet Union is striking. In 1917 Russia became, again, the only state in the world with its own great communism. As the only communist country in the world, it considered itself to be a beacon for mankind. The movement of the early communist era, expressed in the phrase "socialism in one country" was, in fact, a secularized version of the movement of tsarist, Orthodox Russia, expressed in the slogan *svyatoe Rus'*, "Holy Russia." To call your country "holy" is an immense pretension. "To see oneself as potentially 'a holy nation' is to link consciousness individually with collective sanctification."¹² But Russia was not the first to call itself "holy." In the West there existed a precedent—and a competitor—in the Holy Roman Empire, headed by the emperor of Austria.¹³ Both the emperor in Vienna and the tsar in Moscow pretended to be the legitimate heirs of the late Christian Roman Empire. The Holy Roman Empire in the heart of Europe, led by the Austrian emperor, however, was a weak and secularized construction, a conglomerate of German principalities that would finally be dissolved in 1806 under pressure from Napoleon. The tsars, on the contrary, stood at the helm of a centralized and strong military power, and they were able to conduct an uninterrupted policy of territorial expansion.

THE SYMBOLS OF CHURCH AND STATE

The Russian Orthodox religion gained in importance as a legitimation theory for Russian expansion, when, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Russia began its southward expansion into the territories of the Ottoman Empire. There Russia was no longer confronting " fellow Christians," such as the Protestant Swedes or the Catholic Poles, but a non-Christian, Muslim power. The peoples over whom the Ottomans ruled, Greeks, Bulgarians,