Comparative Colonialism : Russia in the North Pacific and Central Asia

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Abstract

This article is a comparative analysis of Russian colonialism in the North Pacific and in Central Asia. The Russian Empire exhibited a similar overall approach to the colonization of both regions during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This paper compares the interests in both regions, the means of colonization, and the outcomes of these processes. Attention is paid in the article to the important roles which overland and sea exploration, settler colonialism, and other factors had in the process. Although the overall approach to colonization was similar, the outcomes of these processes led to quite distinct results. This research has been facilitated through a Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) Kaken grant, 18K00919.

Keywords: North Pacific, Central Asia, colonialism, settler colonialism, indigenous peoples

Introduction

Comparative studies of colonialism are a tool for world historians to make sense of how seemingly different historical situations relate, so that we can also draw some wider conclusions on the degree to which a series of events led to parallel or divergent outcomes in different colonies or settlements. We can also learn about the relative importance which colonial states had put towards colonization efforts in different regions of the world. This article examines how the Russian Empire approached colonization efforts during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in two distinct geographical regions: Central Asia and the North Pacific. These two regions have some obvious parallels and distinctions which make them fit for such a comparative analysis.

This paper will include brief discussions on the timelines for colonization, the motivations for gaining colonial control, the means by which colonial activity was carried out, the role of settler colonialism, the degree of resistance from indigenous peoples which was encountered, and the overall outcomes. It is argued that the two cases demonstrate the Russian Empire

in the two regions had similar interests in the two regions and employed a similar strategy for colonialism, but that the outcomes resulted in a very different power dynamic in Central Asia and the North Pacific by the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. This would mean that the Central Asia region would become more integral to the Russian Empire than the North Pacific region.

Timeline

The timeline for Russian colonization in Central Asia and the North Pacific region has some overlap. The Russian state had been involved in a long-term eastward expansion across Asia since at least the sixteenth century, when Ivan IV ("The Terrible") annexed the Tatar and Turkic Khanates of Siberia, Astrakhan, and Kazan. Central Asian sustained colonial efforts first began during the eighteenth century, as the Russians made extensive contacts with the Kazakh nations and were able to gain leverage with the leaders of the Kazakhs. By the first half of the nineteenth century, the Russian Empire gradually reduced the influence of the three Kazakh *juz* (hordes). The state also began to encourage initial Russian settlement of the steppe zone, providing them with land and assurances that more Russian (white) settlers would be following them to build Russian cities in the former Kazakh territories.

The middle of the nineteenth century, especially the period from the 1860s until the early twentieth century, was when the Russian military, in combination with scientific and geographic exploratory teams, steadily expanded Russian territorial control southward into Central Asia, which involved military conflict with oasis Muslim empires. A major catalyst for Central Asian territorial expansion was the Russian Geographical Society, founded in 1845 in St. Petersburg. There were still vestiges of resistance to Russian colonial rule in the early twentieth century, even at the time of the Russian Revolutions of 1917 and immediately thereafter, but by that time the Russification of the region through the building of cities, military forts, and colonial regimes like the one in Russian Turkestan meant that the infrastructural foundation of Russian Empire in Central Asia was solid by the time of the transition to Soviet rule, and organized resistance to the Russian and Soviet empires was insufficient. Although Central Asians still maintained a strong sense of cultural identity as Muslims with Turkic cultural traditions, their political allegiances were mostly unswaying towards the Russians by the time of the 1917 revolutions (Hofmeister 2016, 441-42). After Soviet takeover of Central Asia, resistance to Russian and Soviet authority mostly came

from Islamist elements, as was the case when the USSR launched an anti-veiling policy in Uzbekistan, which was met with significant resistance by the local Uzbeks (Northrup 2003, 70). But the era of Stalin saw a wholesale incorporation of Central Asia into the Soviet state and centrally planned economic structures.

The timeline of Russian colonization in the North Pacific was similar to Central Asia in a broad sense. Tsar Peter the Great took a profound interest in exploration of the region. He ordered the first explorations of the area east of Siberia just prior to his death in 1725 (Lightfoot 2003, 15). During the eighteenth century ambitious maritime expeditions were carried out in attempts to map the area, especially with the goal of access to animal furs, which were a valuable commodity worldwide during the eighteenth century, as the world began to turn to the North Pacific as a source for animal furs, and as the market for fur production in North America began to experience challenges (Dolin 2010). Naval sea explorations began with the Danish explorer Vitus Bering's First Kamchatka Expedition of 1724, which had been commissioned by Peter I. Bering's mission expanded Russian and global knowledge of the North Pacific region. However, the Russian government was reluctant to offer praise for Bering's achievements, since he was not a true Russian (Frost 2003, 276). His expedition was followed up by another expedition a decade later called the Great Northern Expedition, which further expanded knowledge of the North Pacific and made him the first European to "discover" Alaska. His expeditions also charted the Arctic coast of Siberia and he established the first Russian settlement at Kamchatka. The news of his discoveries encouraged fur traders to the possibilities for that trade in the Aleutian Islands (which he also mapped) and Alaska, sites which became important later in the Russian overseas colonies.

Just as Russian colonization in Central Asia was facilitated by the Russian Geographical Society (and the Russian military), the Russian-American Company (abbreviated as RAC) steered much of the activity in the North Pacific. The RAC was founded in 1799 and was modeled upon similar state-supported organizations like the English East India Company (EIC) or the Dutch East India Company (VOC), both founded much earlier than the RAC (EIC in 1600, VOC in 1602). These organizations were supported by the selling of stocks to investors, and profits were made through the exploitation of resource wealth from English and Dutch colonial work in South Asia and Southeast Asia. For the RAC, ownership of the stocks shifted quickly after its founding from individual merchant stockholders to members of the Russian nobility elite, which gave the RAC a distinctly Russian imperial look, with power

vested in the nobles and not in the merchant classes. The organization was founded with the intent of profiting from trade and other potentially lucrative ventures, including of course the fur trade.

The RAC increased its activities in the Pacific region and North America during the first half of the nineteenth century. Alexander Baranov, who became Chief Manager of the RAC in 1799 and was in charge of Russia's colonies under RAC dominion until just prior to his death in 1818, exercised a lot of independence from the Russian administration in part because of problems of communication and isolation (Vinkovetsky 2011, 66). The RAC established a center of operations in Sitka, Alaska and gradually increased Russian settlement in the area, while also establishing Russian outposts in California (Fort Ross) and Hawaii on the island of Kauai, where the German doctor Georg Anton Schaffer established three Russian forts under RAC control. The overwhelming majority of inhabitants of what became known as Russian America, though, were indigenous peoples, with very few Russians even at the peak of settlement. The early nineteenth century also saw increased Russian interest in exploring the Kuril Islands for potential economic benefit. Vasily Golovnin was captured while exploring the Kurils and delivered to the Matsumae clan authorities in Hokkaido in 1811. He and members of his crew were held captive in Hokkaido until 1813 and later wrote an extensive account of his experiences there and his impressions of Japanese society (Golovnin 1973). Golovnin was a critically important individual in the Russian collective expansion of its understanding of the Pacific region, as well as the wider world. His 1817-1819 global circumnavigation mission offered a richly-detailed account of life in vast reaches of the planet, and was reflective of a period of intense involvement among Russian navigators like Golovnin in expanding their understanding of the world, in order to pave the way for future colonization or settlement opportunities, or so they wished (Bailey 2019, 7-14). Ultimately, the Russians relinquished a great deal of their northern Pacific territories, in no small part out of retreat in the face of an expansion of American political power in the Pacific, but also due to increasing British interests in the region. This culminated with the sale of Alaska to the United States in 1867, a decision long decried thereafter by Russian nationalists, but one which seemed reasonable at the time for Russia to check emerging British involvement in the region (Gershkovich 2017, 5).

Motivations for Colonialism

The Russian push for further colonization and settlement in Central Asia, particularly at mid-nineteenth century and for a few decades thereafter, was driven by factors which are common for colonialism worldwide (including economic power through the command of resource wealth and agricultural production). But a corollary reason for Russian colonial activity in the region was less usual for the time, which was for the acquisition of scientific and geographic information. The Russian scientific elite, mostly based around the capital of St. Petersburg, were intent on establishing Russia's position in global scientific communities. The leadership of the Russian Geographical Society was an important organization in organizing ambitious research expeditions to the interior of Eurasia, including the earliest missions in Kashgar and Mongolia.

The Russian Geographical Society (RGO) utilized its missions into Central Asia as a means for demonstrating to the world that Russia's geographers and scientists could establish themselves as global leaders in the acquisition of information about territories and peoples in a relatively isolated region. Many RGO explorers and leaders of the organization recognized that western European nations like Britain and Prussia had been successful earlier in such missions, and that this established a cache for the state in international scientific and geographic circles. To further those ends, the RGO used explorers like Petr Semenov-Tian'-Shanskii, Chokan Valikhanov, Nikolai Przheval'skii, Grigorii Potanin and Aleksandra Potanina on many research missions across Central Asian spaces during the second half of the nineteenth century (Bailey 2019). Some of these missions resulted in follow-up military actions and acquisition of territories, such as the acquisition of the Russian colony of Turkestan (Brower 2003), while others did not result in follow-up military conquests. The missions which Przheval'skii, the Potanins and others carried out in Qing China-controlled territories did not lead to Russian colonial conquests. Certainly, though, Russia's leadership recognized the economic potential that Qing territories possessed (Kim 2016), so the approval of these missions initially was done with the understanding that future moves could be possible.

The Russians' motivations for colonization in the North Pacific were clearly economic, though as in Central Asia an avid interest in explorations for the sake of scientific or geographical knowledge was also a catalyst. There is general disagreement among Russian historians as to the instigator of increased Russian colonial activity in the North Pacific. Some

historians have argued that it was the tsarist state that drove colonial interests, while others argue that it was individual merchants and entrepreneurs, especially those associated with the RAC, who instigated Russian increased involvement during the eighteenth century (Grinev 2010, 4-5). The ideological nature of that debate among historians from Russia and the former Soviet Union is better to steer clear of given that it does not have much focus on the actual economic and historical circumstances. Suffice it to say that the consensus among scholars outside of the Russian/Soviet political orbit is that it was a combination of initiative from the government in St. Petersburg and on-the-ground actors, including the RAC elite, which drove exploratory and colonial involvement.

There is broad agreement among both Russian historians and global historians that another overwhelming factor that drove initial Russian expansion eastward and to the Pacific was the interests of *promyshlenniki* (hunters and traders of animal furs). They were certainly not elites, but they were driven by a quest for profit. The *promyshlenniki's* eastward advance across Siberia and the Far East during the seventeenth century had established many Cossack communities in the area (Bassin 1983, 244-45). There was also intense Russian interest in gaining access to food sources which could help to feed the increasing population of Russian settlers in Siberia and Russia's Far East. Ocean access would, they hope, help to feed the growing Russian Empire in the east (Gibson 1969, 221). By the late eighteenth century, Russia's hunting of sea otters had led to an alarmingly-fast decline of the animals' population in the North Pacific, as noted by international observers like the Englishman James Billings, who ventured to the area through Russian sponsorship beginning in 1785 and raised several alarms about Russia's devastating hunting practices and the implications which this had for animal life and the human inhabitants of the North Pacific (Jones 2006, 110-12). The Russians were not alone among Europeans and Americans in their avid hunting of sea mammals in the Pacific, but the degree to which the Russians decreased populations like that of the sea otter during the 1740s and 1750s is quite unparalleled, hunting them to the verge of extinction (Jones 2011, 590-91). The degree to which the Russians aimed to alter the natural environment of the North Pacific, through the hunting of sea mammals, sets their involvement there off from their overall approach in Central Asia.

It is also clear that the Russians soon realized that the North Pacific, though abundant in sea life, was not a very hospitable location for agricultural development and grain production (unlike some oases zones of Central Asia). But trade possibilities in the area were a factor. For example, Russian initial involvement in the Kurile Islands was seen as an

avenue for establishing trade relations with Tokugawa Japan (Ravina 2015, 283). However, the Tokugawa administration was less than enthusiastic about Russian moves southward, as evidenced in part by the arrest of Vasily Golovnin in 1811 on the island of Kunashir (Paine 2000, 39). Golovnin's mission, which resulted in a two-year imprisonment in Hokkaido, was evidence of another underlying factor in Russian exploration of the region, which was geographical and cultural interests. Russian interest in the North Pacific coincided with an era of increasingly risky and ambitious long-distance naval expeditions, many of which involved trans-Pacific and even circumnavigational journeys, which produced a great deal of knowledge about cartography, geography, and ethnography (McCartan 1963, 37).

Means of Colonial Activity

The Russian Geographical Society's expeditions to Central Asia typically involved groups of explorers who traveled with the support of guides, interpreters, and local indigenous peoples. An expeditionary group could include geographers and scientists of different scientific specializations, including disciplines like geodesy, physical geography, hydrographers, zoologists, and botanists. Although these expeditions predated the advent of modern anthropological studies, ethnographic records were often recorded and many of these were quite detailed, offering new information for Russian and western literate audiences. Many of the scholar-travelers who attended the Central Asian expeditions had multiple scientific and geographic areas of specialization and used the expeditions, often sponsored by the Russian Geographical Society or other scientific bodies of the state, as an opportunity to collect research specimens and later publish detailed accounts of what they had discovered in Central Asia. Many hoped that their findings would bolster their position within the Empire or even help them to gain some sort of international scholarly notoriety.

A key distinction between the Central Asian and North Pacific expeditions was the means of travel for colonial geographers and scholars. The Central Asian expeditions were overland expeditions that were aided by the use of carts and draft animals, which were slow and extremely time consuming to conduct, given the vast land masses and diverse terrains of Central Asia. The employment of draft animals, including horses, oxen, camels, yaks, sheep, and goats had been an ingrained cultural characteristic of Central Asian indigenous peoples for many centuries, and the Russian imperial scholar-travelers soon realized that the use of draft animals was essential for economic survival and for transportation in the harsh climatic

and geographic conditions of Central Asia's vast spaces. Draft animals were used by the Russian colonial armies in order to facilitate colonial conquest and to transport armies and equipment into the region, since railroads arrived relatively late in the region, mostly after initial colonization efforts were already completed (Morrison 2014). Eventually, the building of railroads across Central Asian and Siberian spaces facilitated more settlement of Russian and European-descent peoples in Central Asian territories (Walke et al 2017, 8). But prior to the development of a railroad infrastructure, draft animals were the main means of locomotion in the region.

Scholars have traditionally viewed the intensity of the conquest of Central Asia as happening over a period of a couple of decades during the middle of the nineteenth century (Allworth 1994, 131-50). This "systematic conquest" has been reconsidered by scholars recently to be viewed instead as more of a fragmented process which was haphazard and less centrally planned than previously assumed. Each conquest of land and of former Central Asian nations like the Khoqand Khanate (Abashin 2014, 216-27) or the Bukharan Emirate (Malikov 2014, 193-95) had its own unique historical and political circumstances, and conquest was not simply a uniform process across Central Asian territorial space, but a complex process that involved the conquest and takeover of disparate sociocultural groups and societies.

For the Russian Empire in the North Pacific, there was also a lack of a unified or coherent plan of colonization and of exploration. Aside from Peter the Great, many of the Russian tsars of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century were reluctant to support both exploratory missions in the region and colonial ventures, mostly seeing the distant region as nonessential at best to the Empire's immediate concerns. Much of the instigation for exploration and colonial activity came from the leaders of the RAC, with only intermittent and reluctant support from the St. Petersburg colonial elite. This lack of initiative from Russia's tsars ultimately led to Russia's withdrawal from its Pacific colonies during the middle of the nineteenth century (Grinev 2015, 28).

A major challenge for Russian colonial ventures in the North Pacific, which was in contrast to their efforts in the oasis zones of Central Asia, was the overlapping of Russian territorial interests with that of the United States, Great Britain, and Tokugawa Japan. Contrary to past assumptions, Russian involvement in a "Great Game" rivalry with Great Britain for control of Central Asia has been very overstated. In reality, the Russian Empire's only chief concern in the region would have been the Qing Chinese, but at the time of

Russian expansion in Central Asia the Qing were focused more on their own survival rather than colonial expansion.

The North Pacific was a much more fluid region politically at the time of Russian interests there. By the early nineteenth century, Tokugawa Japan was demonstrating that they were acquiring geographical acumen that could rival that of other colonial powers in the world. One example of this was the expedition of Mamiya Rinzo（間宮 林蔵）. In 1808-09, Mamiya explored Sakhalin, known in Japan as Karafuto or Kita Ezo. His expedition resulted in the production of maps which exhibited that the Tokugawa was capable of producing relatively precise and scientifically complex cartographic representations. This development meant that the Tokugawa had what Mary Louise Pratt referred to as "imperial eyes," meaning that they were already intent on viewing territories beyond the main Japanese islands as zones of possible future conquest (Walker 2007, 298).

The Russian Empire also needed to consider the colonial interests of both Britain and the United States in the North Pacific, both of which were at or near the height of their military and colonial acumen. If one also considers the wider implications of Russian involvement in the Pacific, then the Spanish also needed to be considered as a potential rival. As the RAC expanded eastward and southward in its colonial arc from the North Pacific and Alaska to potential interests in places as far away as Hawaii and even California, it became evident that the Russians may have waded too deep into a game of colonial rivalry which they were largely unprepared for.

Settler Colonialism Compared

Until the middle of the nineteenth century, Central Asia was considered too dangerous of a territory for Russians to settle and was only a location for Cossack military encampments and the temporary movement of explorers and scientists across Central Asian space. In 1889, a government statute allowed for Russian settlement to begin south of the Ural Mountains for the first time. Settlers could apply for permission to settle in Central Asia, in the territories in the north of present-day Kazakhstan. This was followed by an 1896 Resettlement Administration (*Pereselencheskoe Upravlenie*) which orchestrated a large-scale movement of peasants from European Russia to Siberia, Central Asia, and Russian Turkestan (Morrison 2017, 317). Over the course of the following two decades the European Russian population in Central Asia greatly increased. This also corresponded with the rise of

a nationalist backlash in Central Asia among indigenous peoples, which was best exemplified with the Basmachi Revolt, which was a Turkic peoples movement against both Imperial Russia and the fledgling Soviet state during the late nineteen teens and twenties, with some areas continuing their resistance to Russian control until the mid-nineteen thirties (Broxup 1983, 57). The Russian colony of Turkestan was particularly successful in its integration of the Russian European population in Central Asia. The Governor-General of Turkestan, K.P. von Kaufman, was able to somewhat successfully transition Turkestan from a military encampment to a European-style development, complete with a capital city in Tashkent (Sahadeo 2007, 1-2).

The *promyshlenniki* were the first settlers in the Far Eastern territories from European Russia. Some of them were of mixed ancestry, but many were also Russian or European descendants. Russians established settlements in what became known as Russian America between 1733 and 1867, with the capital of the colony at Sitka, Alaska. These settlements were sparse, and relied heavily upon indigenous laborers to operate, including Aleutian Islanders. The RAC, the Russian Orthodox Church, and the Russian imperial state worked together to oversee Russian America, but oversight was infrequent and distant, which meant that the success of the settlements was heavily dependent on the local administrators, like Alexander Baranov, who became the first governor of the colonies (Khlebnikov 1973).

Russian involvement in the Kuril Islands began in the eighteenth century, which overlapped with Tokugawa Japan's interests which were already present for a long time prior. The Japanese Tokugawa had established a presence in the Kurils through the Matsumae clan by at least as early as the mid-seventeenth century. The Tokugawa mapping efforts of the Kurils were made with the initiation of the Tokugawa map project, known as the *Shōhō Kuniezu* (正保国絵図)which began its cadastral surveys and mapmaking in 1644. It has been speculated that Dutch and Portuguese earliest maps of Ezo and the Kurils were based upon Japanese maps. At the same time, Japanese also relied upon Dutch and European sources for their own mapping of the region, so a cross-cultural mapping of the region was ongoing during the seventeenth century (Kiss 1947, 108-09).

Nonetheless, the territorial understanding of the islands was vague for both sides at least until the Treaty of Shimoda in 1855, which divided the islands into a sphere of both Russian and Japanese control. The island of Sakhalin, also of joint Russian and Japanese interest, was left undecided by the Shimoda treaty. The 1875 Treaty of St. Petersburg later revised these terms, effectively ceding control of the Kurils to Japan, and Sakhalin to the Russians.

The shifting nature of political control in the Kurils and Sakhalin meant that for much of the nineteenth century human populations of these areas were a mix of Russians, Japanese, Ainu, and indigenous peoples. Throughout the North Pacific, though, settlements were sparsely populated. This was because, unlike the oases zones of Central Asia, agriculture was difficult if not downright impossible to develop, which made human habitation tenuous at best.

Resistance from Indigenous Peoples

The Russian Empire faced significant opposition in Central Asia during the second half of the nineteenth century. Part of this was based on the fact that several states existed in the region (Khiva Khanate, Bukharan Emirate, and Kokand Khanate) and a variety of ethnic groups with strong cultural ties, like the Turkmen, made conquest far from simple. The three Central Asian states only submitted to Russian authority during the 1870s, while Khiva and Bukhara continued to exercise a small degree of autonomy until 1920. The Turkmen submitted to Russian authority as late as 1881, following their defeat in the Battle of Geok Tepe (Pierce 1960, 41-42). There were cultural and religious reasons for Turkic Central Asian people's resistance to Russian colonial authority. There was little evidence of a strong pan-Turkic nationalist consciousness until Russian incursion in Central Asia, but the military conquests of the middle of the nineteenth century did stir anti-Russian sentiment and led to a more pronounced expression of Muslim and Turkic identity. This in turn meant that the Russian administration needed to take cultural considerations into account as they made their Central Asian colonial policies during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Their policies focused on the integration of Muslims into the Russian Empire through policies which projected a sense of religious toleration for Muslim practices (Crews 2006, 9-10).

The indigenous response in the North Pacific to Russian incursions was varied. Indigenous peoples such as the Ainu, the Kamchadals, the Itelmens, Koryaks, Chukchis, Aleutian Islanders and others had lived in the North Pacific region for many centuries prior to Russian colonial interest in the area. One disadvantage which the North Pacific indigenes had in comparison to their Central Asian counterparts was a lack of previous exposure to complex societies. Their contacts with settled peoples began relatively late, which put them at a tremendous disadvantage technologically and epidemiologically once Russian colonial interests were piqued in the region. As Russians and their European Russian cousins moved into North Pacific spaces, they brought with them Orthodox Christianity, vodka, firearms, and

a more developed immune system, all of which made the indigenous peoples susceptible to conquest or manipulation. As fur traders, hunters, and fishermen, as well as RAC operatives moved into the North Pacific, displacement, subjugation, and a high mortality rate of the indigenous peoples was a common outcome. Vasily Golovnin noted that when he visited Sitka (Novo Arkhangelsk was its name at the time) during his global circumnavigational mission, that the indigenous Alaskans continued to live their lives alongside the Russian settlers in a traditional manner, but that now they had firearms, and were not afraid to use them against the Russians from time to time (Golovnin 1979, 122). Many of the indigenous peoples of the North Pacific displayed opposition to Russian intrusion in the region. Some were also able, because of their isolated geographical location in part, to exercise a degree of autonomy from the Russian administration. The Chukchis of northeastern Siberia in the North Pacific, for example, were reindeer herders whose territory was seen as having few resource interests for the Russians. This allowed them a degree of autonomy, in part because of their geographic isolation (Znamenski 1999, 19). Although the Central Asians also benefited from some degree of autonomy, the sheer distance of the North Pacific from Russian centers of political power allowed for a degree of "freedom" rarely found in global colonies. The Russian North Pacific territories were also unique in that they were overseas colonies of what was essentially a land empire (Vinkovetsky 2011). This meant that for the RAC colonies at least the Russian administration would leave the day-to-day affairs of the state to the RAC administrators on the ground, rather than the directives from the Empire. This also meant that, conversely, there was little in the way of financial or infrastructural investment in the North Pacific settlements, which made life more precarious for the Russian and European settlers themselves.

Conclusion

The broad outlines of Russian colonization in Central Asia and the North Pacific had many similarities. The incentives for Russian colonization were primarily economic in both cases, though strategic (political power, or military influence) concerns were also important. The movement of settlers into the two areas happened in divergent ways. For Central Asia, the main thrust of Russian settlement happened as a result of state directives, rather than individual initiatives. For the North Pacific, there was a more mixed set of causes, a combination of state and institutional actors. The relative size of the settler populations in the

two areas were also quite different, with Central Asia's Russian settler population far larger than that of the North Pacific even at the peak of RAC involvement. The relative position of the two colonial zones in importance to the Empire was also heavily skewed towards Central Asia, which became more integral to the Soviet economy especially. The North Pacific's distant location, as well as the blurry lines of colonial demarcation for Russia's claims on the region, meant that Russian colonial subjects received scant attention and economic resources. The back-and-forth nature of Russia's hold over its North Pacific possessions during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries also meant that there was markedly less "Russification" of the region than what was seen in Central Asia, especially by the time of Josef Stalin. The North Pacific colonies became, in short, a more haphazardly run and tenuously controlled area of the empire than Central Asia.

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