

“Before Russia was the Great Big Bear: Reflections on the Russian Empire in the Early Modern World”

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Abstract:

This talk proposes to schematize Russian imperialism in the early modern period, employing a chronological and regional approach. In an attempt to deepen and balance prevalent modern perspectives in which the Russian/Soviet empire is often characterized by inveterate aggression and bellicosity, this talk emphasizes the complex contexts in which Russia operated, its vulnerability, and various methods and tools of imperial rule in the early modern period (16 – 18th cc). Further, it emphasizes that during the early modern period Russia is most usefully considered in its Eurasian context, rather than in terms of an East-West axis.

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