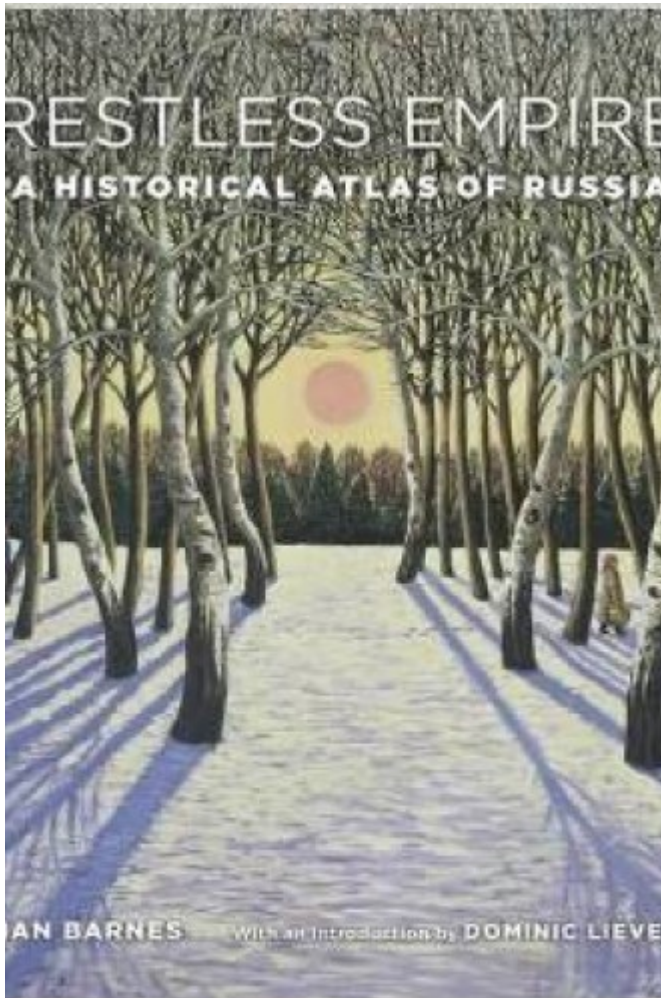


Restless Empire, by Ian Barnes

Books in the [June 24, 2015](#) issue

In Review



Restless Empire

By Ian Barnes

Harvard University Press

This beautiful book tells the story of Russia through maps, beginning with the Slavic migrations from 900 to 500 BCE and ending with what the author calls the “Shadow Empire” of the Russian Federation and the assertions of Vladimir Putin that parts of

Moldova and Ukraine constitute a “New Russia.” In between, maps show the shifting boundaries of empires, the roles of serfs and Jews, and the wars that challenged and shaped Russian self-understanding. Barnes, who died just before finishing the manuscript, can’t explain Russian thinking about the meaning of its territory and its menacing eye on its neighbors, nor can he predict how the story will end, but he superbly illuminates the complexity and the diversity of this mysterious country.