

RUSSIA in Perspective

An Orientation Guide



Technology Integration Division
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DEFENSE LANGUAGE INSTITUTE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CENTER

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Profile

Introduction

The modern state of Russia is the result of over five centuries of territorial expansion initiated by a once modest principality known as Muscovy. As the Russian empire grew, it continued to absorb a large number of ethnic groups living on its ever expanding periphery. Today, over 120 ethnic groups are represented in the Russian Federation. An even greater number of ethnic groups were present in the Soviet Union until it dissolved in the early 1990s, when several regions of the old Russian empire became independent nations.¹



© Bogdan / Wikipedia.org
New Construction in Moscow

Even after losing territory to the 14 new nations that were created from areas outside the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, Russia has remained a staggeringly large country (Russia possesses more than one ninth of the world's total land area).² One could fit all of China, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nigeria, and Japan inside Russia's borders and still have some room to spare.³

Russia is a country of immense natural resources, but its harsh climate and challenging topography make large portions of it relatively inhospitable to human habitation. As a result, Russia has the lowest population density of any major nation in the world. To illustrate, consider that the seven nations listed above have a combined population of a little more than 3.3 billion people, nearly half of the world's population. Russia, on the other hand, has a population of about 140 million, or less than 4.5% of the total population of these seven nations.⁴

¹ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Russia: Main." 2008.
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia>

² The World Bank. "Country Brief 2008: Russian Federation." April 2008.
<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/ECAEXT/RUSSIANFEDERATIONEXTN/0,,contentMDK:21054807~menuPK:517666~pagePK:1497618~piPK:217854~theSitePK:305600,00.htm>

³ Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook*. "Rank Order - Area." 21 August 2008.
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2147rank.html>

⁴ Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook*. "Rank Order - Population." 21 August 2008.
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2119rank.html>

Facts and figures⁵

Location:

Northern Asia (the area west of the Urals is considered part of Europe), bordering the Arctic Ocean, between Europe and the North Pacific Ocean.

Area:

17,075,200 sq km (6,592,800 sq mi)

Border countries:

Azerbaijan 284 km (176 mi), Belarus 959 km (596 mi), China (southeast) 3,605 km (1,904 mi), China (south) 40 km (25 m), Estonia 290 km (180 mi), Finland 1313 km (816 mi), Georgia 723 km (449 mi), Kazakhstan 6,846 km (4,254 mi), North Korea 17.5 km (11 mi), Latvia 292 km (181 mi), Lithuania (Kaliningrad Oblast) 227 km (141 mi), Mongolia 3,441 km (2,138 mi), Norway 196 km (122 mi), Poland (Kaliningrad Oblast) 432 km (268 mi), Ukraine 1,576 km (979 mi) (2008 est.)



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons
Air Pollution

Natural hazards:

permafrost over much of Siberia is a major impediment to development; volcanic activity in the Kuril Islands; volcanoes and earthquakes on the Kamchatka Peninsula; spring floods and summer/autumn forest fires throughout Siberia and parts of European Russia.

Climate:

ranges from steppes in the south through humid continental in much of European Russia; subarctic in Siberia to tundra climate in the polar north; winters vary from cool along Black Sea coast to frigid in Siberia; summers vary from warm in the steppes to cool along Arctic coast.

Environment–current issues:

air pollution from heavy industry, emissions of coal-fired electric plants, and transportation in major cities; industrial, municipal, and agricultural pollution of inland waterways and seacoasts; deforestation; soil erosion; soil contamination from improper application of agricultural chemicals; scattered areas of sometimes intense radioactive contamination; groundwater contamination from toxic waste; urban solid waste management; abandoned stocks of obsolete pesticides.

⁵ Unless otherwise stated, information in this section comes from the following source: Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook*. "Russia." 21 August 2008. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rs.html>

Population:

140,702,094 (July 2008 est.)

Median age:

38.3 years (2008 est.)

Population growth rate:

-0.474% (2008 est.)

Life expectancy at birth:

65.94 years (2008 est.)

HIV/AIDS—adult prevalence rate:

1.1% (2001 est.)

Major infectious diseases:

degree of risk: intermediate

food or waterborne diseases: bacterial diarrhea and hepatitis A

vectorborne disease: Crimean Congo hemorrhagic fever and tickborne encephalitis

note: highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza has been identified in this country; it poses a negligible risk with extremely rare cases possible among U.S. citizens who have close contact with birds (2008).

Nationality:

noun: Russian(s)

adjective: Russian

Sex ratio:

at birth: 1.06 male(s)/female

under 15 years: 1.05 male(s)/female

15–64 years: 0.93 male(s)/female

65 years and over: 0.45 male(s)/female

total population: 0.8225 male(s)/female (2008 est.)

Ethnic groups:

Russian 79.8%, Tatar 3.8%, Ukrainian 2%, Bashkir 1.2%, Chuvash 1.1% other or unspecified, 12.1% (2002 census)



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons
Crowded street in St. Petersburg



© Inna Kazanskaya
Komi People

Religions:

Russian Orthodox 15–20%, Muslim 10–15%, other Christian 2% (2006 est.)

note: Estimates are of practicing worshipers; Russia has large populations of non-practicing believers and non-believers, a legacy of over seven decades of Soviet rule.



© Vladimir Menkov
Church of Holy Life-Giving Trinity

Languages:

Russian, many minority languages.

Literacy:

definition: persons age 15 and over who can read and write.

total population: 99.4%

male: 99.7%

female: 99.2% (2002 census)

Country name:

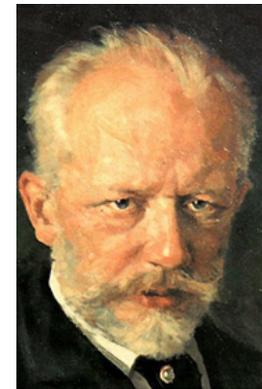
Conventional long form: Russian Federation

conventional short form: Russia

local long form: Rossiyskaya Federatsiya

local short form: Rossiya

former: Russian Empire, Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons
Tschaikowski

Government type:

federation

Capital:

name: Moscow

Administrative divisions:

46 oblasts (oblastey, singular - oblast), 21 republics (respublik, singular - respublika), 4 autonomous okrugs (avtonomnykh okrugov, singular - avtonomnyy okrug), 9 krays (krayev, singular - kray), 2 federal cities (goroda, singular - gorod), and 1 autonomous oblast (avtonomnaya oblast')

oblasts: Amur (Blagoveshchensk), Arkhangel'sk, Astrakhan', Belgorod, Bryansk, Chelyabinsk, Irkutsk, Ivanovo, Kaliningrad, Kaluga, Kemerovo, Kirov, Kostroma, Kurgan, Kursk, Leningrad, Lipetsk, Magadan, Moscow, Murmansk, Nizhniy Novgorod, Novgorod, Novosibirsk, Omsk, Orenburg, Orel, Penza, Pskov, Rostov, Ryazan', Sakhalin

(Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk), Samara, Saratov, Smolensk, Sverdlovsk (Yekaterinburg), Tambov, Tomsk, Tula, Tver', Tyumen', Ul'yanovsk, Vladimir, Volgograd, Vologda, Voronezh, Yaroslavl'

republics: Adygeya (Maykop), Altay (Gorno-Altaysk), Bashkortostan (Ufa), Buryatiya (Ulan-Ude), Chechnya (Groznyy), Chuvashiya (Cheboksary), Dagestan (Makhachkala), Ingushetiya (Magas), Kabardino-Balkariya (Nal'chik), Kalmykiya (Elista), Karachayevo-Cherkesiya (Cherkessk), Kareliya (Petrozavodsk), Khakasiya (Abakan), Komi (Syktyvkar), Mariy-El (Yoshkar-Ola), Mordoviya (Saransk), North Ossetia (Vladikavkaz), Sakha



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons
Government Bely Dom Moscow

[Yakutiya] (Yakutsk), Tatarstan (Kazan'), Tyva (Kyzyl), Udmurtiya (Izhevsk)
autonomous okrugs: Chukotka (Anadyr'), Khanty-Mansi (Khanty-Mansiysk), Nenets (Nar'yan-Mar), Yamalo-Nenets (Salekhard)
krays: Altay (Barnaul), Kamchatka (Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy), Khabarovsk, Krasnodar, Krasnoyarsk, Perm', Primorsk (Vladivostok), Stavropol', Zabaykal'skiy (Chita)
federal cities: Moscow (Moskva), Saint Petersburg (Sankt-Peterburg)
autonomous oblast: Yevrey [Jewish] (Birobidzhan)
note: administrative divisions have the same names as their administrative centers (exceptions have the administrative center name following in parentheses).

Independence:

24 August 1991 (from Soviet Union).

National holiday:

Russia Day, 12 June (1990)

Constitution:

adopted 12 December 1993.

Legal system:

based on civil law system; judicial review of legislative acts; has not accepted compulsory International Court of Justice (ICJ) jurisdiction

Suffrage:

18 years of age; universal.

Government:

chief of state: President Dmitriy Anatolyevich Medvedev (since 7 May 2008)

head of government: Premier Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin (since 8 May 2008); First Deputy Premiers Igor Ivanovich Shuvalov and Viktor Alekseyevich Zubkov (since 12

May 2008); Deputy Premiers Sergey Borisovich Ivanov (since 12 May 2008), Aleksey Leonidovich Kudrin (since 24 September 2007), Igor Ivanovich Sechin (since 12 May 2008), Sergey Semenovitch Sobyenin (since 12 May 2008), and Aleksandr Dmitriyevich Zhukov (since 9 March 2004).

cabinet: Ministries of the Government or "Government" composed of the premier and his deputies, ministers, and selected other individuals; all are appointed by the president.

note: there is also a Presidential Administration (PA) that provides staff and policy support to the president, drafts presidential decrees, and coordinates policy among government agencies; a Security Council also reports directly to the president.

elections: President elected by popular vote for a four-year term (eligible for a second term); election last held 2 March 2008 (next to be held in March 2012); note - no vice president; if the president dies in office, cannot exercise his powers because of ill health, is impeached, or resigns, the premier serves as acting president until a new presidential election is held, which must be within three months; premier appointed by the president with the approval of the Duma.

election results: Dmitry Medvedev elected president; percent of vote - Dmitry Medvedev 70.2%, Gennady Zyuganov 17.7%, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy 9.4%

Legislative branch:

Bicameral Federal Assembly or Federalnoye Sobraniye consists of the Federation Council or Sovet Federatsii (168 seats; as of July 2000, members appointed by the top executive and legislative officials in each of the 84 federal administrative units

- oblasts, krays, republics, autonomous okrugs and oblasts, and the federal cities of Moscow and Saint Petersburg; to serve four-year terms) and the State Duma or Gosudarstvennaya Duma (450 seats; as of 2007, all members elected by proportional representation from party lists winning at least 7% of the vote; members elected by popular vote to serve four-year terms).

elections: State Duma - last held 2 December 2007 (next to be held in December 2011)

election results: State Duma - United Russia 64.3%, Communist Party of the Russian Federation 11.5%, Liberal Democratic Party of Russia 8.1%, A Just Russia 7.7%, other 8.4%; total seats by party - United Russia 315, Communist Party of the Russian Federation 57, Liberal Democratic Party of Russia 40, A Just Russia 38.



© Kingpenguin1029 / Wikipedia
Kremlin Senate

Judicial branch:

Constitutional Court; Supreme Court; Supreme Arbitration Court; judges for all courts are appointed for life by the Federation Council on the recommendation of the president.

International organization participation:

Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, Arctic Council, ASEAN Regional Forum, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (dialogue partner), Bank for International

Settlements, Black Sea Economic Cooperation Zone, Council of the Baltic Sea States, Council of Europe, European Organization for Nuclear Research (observer), Commonwealth of Independent States, Collective Security Treaty Organization, Eurasian Economic Community, Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Group of 8, General Confederation of Trade Unions, International Atomic Energy Agency, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank), International Civil Aviation Organization, International Chamber of Commerce, International Criminal Court (signatory), International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, International Development Association, International Finance Corporation, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, International Hydrographic Organization, International Labor Organization, International Monetary Fund, International Maritime Organization, International Mobile Satellite Organization, International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol), International Olympic Committee, International Organization for Migration (observer), Inter-parliamentary Union, International Organization for Standardization, International Telecommunications Satellite Organization, International Telecommunication Union, International Trade Union Confederation, Latin American Integration Association (observer), Multilateral Investment Geographic Agency, United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara, Nonaligned Movement (guest), Nuclear Suppliers Group, Organization of American States (observer), Organization of the Islamic Conference (observer), Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Paris Club, Permanent Court of Arbitration, Partnership for Peace, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, United Nations, United Nations Security Council, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, United Nations Industrial Development Organization, United Nations Institute for Training and Research, United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea, United Nations Mission in Liberia, United Nations Mission in Sudan, United Nations Operation in Cote d'Ivoire, United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia, United Nations Truce Supervision Organization, World Tourism Organization, Universal Postal Union, World Customs Organization, World Federation of Trade Unions, World Health Organization, World Intellectual Property Organization, World Meteorological Organization, World Trade Organization (observer), Zangger Committee

GDP–real growth rate:

8.1% (2007 est.)

GDP–composition by sector:

agriculture: 10.8%
industry: 28.8%
services: 60.5% (2008 est.)



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons
APEC Gala Dinner

Labor force–by occupation:

agriculture: 10.8%

industry: 28.8%

services: 60.5% (November 2007 est.)

Telephones–main lines in use:

40.1 million (2005)

Telephones–mobile cellular:

150 million (2006)

Radio broadcast stations:

AM 323, FM 1,500 est., shortwave 62 (2004)

Television broadcast stations:

7,306 (1998)

Internet users:

25.689 million (2006)

Airports:

1,260 (2007)

Airports–with paved runways:

total: 601

over 3,047 m (1.89 mi): 51

2,438 to 3,047 m (1.51–1.89 mi): 197

1,524 to 2,437 m (0.95–1.51 mi): 129

914 to 1,523 m (0.57–0.95 mi): 102

under 914 m (0.57 mi): 122 (2007)

Military branches:

Ground Forces (SV), Navy (VMF), Air Forces (Voyenno-Vozdushniye Sily, VVS); Airborne Troops (VDV), Strategic Rocket Troops (Raketnyye Voyska Strategicheskogo Naznacheniya, RVSN), and Space Troops (KV) are independent "combat arms," not subordinate to any of the three branches; Russian



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons
Russian Army Bosnia

Ground Forces include the following combat arms: motorized-rifle troops, tank troops, missile and artillery troops, air defense of ground troops (2008).

Military service age and obligation:

18–27 years of age for compulsory or voluntary military service; males are registered for the draft at 17 years of age; service obligation - 1 year; reserve obligation to age 50; foreign citizens and dual-nationality Russians are precluded from contract military service (2008).

International disputes:

China

China and Russia have demarcated the once disputed islands at the Amur and Ussuri confluence and in the Argun River in accordance with the 2004 Agreement, ending their centuries-long border disputes.

Japan

There has been a sovereignty dispute over the islands of Etorofu, Kunashiri, Shikotan, and the Habomai group, known in Japan as the "Northern Territories" and in Russia as the "Southern Kurils." Occupied by the Soviet Union in 1945, now administered by Russia, and claimed by Japan, the area remains the primary sticking point to signing a peace treaty formally ending World War II hostilities.

Georgia

Russia and Georgia agree on delimiting all but small, strategic segments of the land boundary and the maritime boundary. OSCE observers monitor volatile areas such as the Pankisi Gorge in the Akhmeti region and the Kodori Gorge in Abkha.

Caspian Sea

Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Russia signed equidistant boundaries in the Caspian seabed, but the littoral states have no consensus on dividing the water column.

Norway

Russia and Norway dispute their maritime limits in the Barents Sea, and Russia's fishing rights beyond Svalbard's territorial limits within the Svalbard Treaty zone.

Finland

Various groups in Finland advocate restoration of Karelia (Kareliya) and other areas ceded to the Soviet Union following the Second World War, but the Finnish Government asserts no territorial demands.

Estonia and Latvia

In May 2005, Russia recalled its signatures to the 1996 border agreements with Estonia (1996) and Latvia (1997), when the two Baltic states announced issuance of unilateral declarations referencing Soviet occupation and ensuing territorial losses. Russia demands better treatment of ethnic Russians in Estonia and Latvia. Estonian citizen groups continue to press for realignment of the boundary based on the 1920 Tartu Peace Treaty that would bring the now divided ethnic Setu people and parts of the Narva region within Estonia. Lithuania and Russia committed to demarcating their boundary in 2006 in accordance with the land and maritime treaty ratified by Russia in May 2003 and by Lithuania in 1999. Lithuania operates a simplified transit regime for Russian nationals traveling from the Kaliningrad coastal exclave into Russia, while still conforming, as an EU member state with an EU external border, where strict Schengen border rules apply.

Ukraine

Preparations for the demarcation delimitation of land boundary with Ukraine have commenced. The dispute over the boundary between Russia and Ukraine through the Kerch Strait and Sea of Azov remains unresolved, despite a December 2003 framework agreement and on-going, expert-level discussions.

Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan and Russia boundary delimitation was ratified on November 2005 and field demarcation should commence in 2007.

United States

Russian Duma has not yet ratified the 1990 Bering Sea Maritime Boundary Agreement with the U.S.

Illicit drugs:

limited cultivation of illicit cannabis and opium poppy, and producer of methamphetamine, mostly for domestic consumption; government has active illicit crop eradication program; used as transshipment point for Asian opiates, cannabis, and Latin American cocaine bound for growing domestic markets, to a lesser extent Western and Central Europe, and occasionally to the U.S.; major source of heroin precursor chemicals; corruption and organized crime are key concerns; major consumer of opiates.



© Bogdan / Wikipedia.org
Cannabis Sativa

Geography

Introduction

Russia, the world's largest country, demonstrates remarkable geographic diversity. The nation spans two continents, contains more of the world's longest rivers than any other country, and exhibits topography ranging from below-sea-level basins (around the Caspian Sea) to towering volcanic peaks (in the Kamchatka Peninsula of the country's Far East).

Russia's largest population centers tend to be located in the west, in the more temperate, European part of the country. Nonetheless, the quest to develop the vast natural resources of the country's eastern, Asian regions, known collectively as Siberia, has resulted in the establishment of several large cities, some of which lie in some of the coldest areas in the world.



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons
Russia Geograph Map

Geographic Regions and Topographic Features

With a country as expansive as Russia, one can identify a large number of regions on the basis of their prevailing landforms. However, in a broad sense, the country can be categorized into eight main divisions.

Kola Peninsula

In the northwestern corner of Russia, adjacent to Finland and Norway, lies the Kola Peninsula. The Barents Sea, a part of the Arctic Ocean, lies to the north of the peninsula, and the White Sea, a bay of the Barents Sea, surrounds it to the south and southeast. The glacier-scoured surface of this region is rich in natural ores and minerals. Tundra vegetation, such as mosses, lichens, and small Arctic birches, is the only flora that can survive in the Kola Peninsula's severe climate. The primary city on the peninsula is Murmansk, an ice-free port on the Kola Bay inlet that leads into the Barents Sea and eventually the North Atlantic.⁶ Murmansk is the largest city in the world north of the Arctic Circle and is the administrative base of the Russian Navy's Northern Fleet.⁷

Russian Plain

Almost the entire European region of Russia consists of a rolling plain whose relative flatness is interrupted in places by glacial- and fault-created features. These



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons
Smolensk

⁶ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Kola Peninsula." 2008.
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/321311/Kola-Peninsula#>

⁷ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Murmansk." 2008.
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/398154/Murmansk#>

features include the Valdai Hills, which lie between Moscow and Saint Petersburg, the Smolensk Upland, whose ridgeline was followed by Napoleon in his Russian campaign of 1812, the Volga Uplands, and the Central Russian Upland.^{8, 9, 10}

The Russian Plain (also known as the East European Plain) is a huge region, extending from the Arctic Ocean in the north to the Caspian Sea and Black Sea in the south. Moscow and Saint Petersburg, the nation's two largest cities, are located in the northwestern and central regions of the plain, as are the Volga, Oka, and Don Rivers, which have served as important riverine transportation corridors throughout much of Russian history. In the southern region of the Russian Plain, near where the Volga River drains into the Caspian Sea, is the Caspian Depression, a below-sea-level area marked by sparse rainfall and the largest natural gas deposits in Europe.^{11, 12}

Caucasus Mountains

Between the Black Sea and Caspian Sea on Russia's southwestern border with Georgia and Azerbaijan are the Greater Caucasus Mountains, an impressive range whose ridge-line forms much of Russia's southern border in this region. Mount Elbrus, a 5,642 m (18,510 ft) high extinct volcanic peak, lies just north of Georgia; it is the tallest peak in Russia and in Europe as a whole. The largest cities in this region, most notably Nalchik and Vladikavkaz, are located at much lower altitudes in the northern foothills.



Ural Mountains

Running in a general north–south direction, the Ural Mountains are a chain of low mountains that have traditionally marked the boundary between the European and Asian continents. To the north, the range bends northwest along the Pay-Khoy Ridge and extends into the Arctic Ocean as the Novaya Zemlya archipelago. While the Ural Mountains have long marked a boundary within Russia, their relatively low elevation has kept them from



⁸ *The Europeans: A Geography of People, Culture, and Environment*. Ostergren, Robert Clifford and John G. Rice. "I. People and Environment [p. 48]." 2004. New York: Guilford Press.

⁹ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Smolensk Upland." 2008.
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/550079/Smolensk-Upland#>

¹⁰ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Russia: The Land: Relief: The Russian Plain." 2008.
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia#>

¹¹ *The Republics and Regions of the Russian Federation: A Guide to Politics, Policies and Leaders*. Orttung, Robert W., Ed. "Astrakhan Oblast [p. 37]." 2000. New York: M.E. Sharpe.

¹² MSN Encarta. Engelmann, Kurt E. "Caspian Depression." 2008.
http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761563320/caspian_depression.html

representing a formidable barrier to east–west movement of armies or commerce. Most of the ethnic Russian population in the region lives in the southern portion of the Urals in the large cities of Perm, Ufa, Yekaterinburg, and Chelybinsk.¹³

West Siberian Plain

East of the Ural Mountains lies one of the world’s largest regions of uninterrupted flatland. Known as the West Siberian Plain, this region is bordered by the Yenisey River Valley to the east, the Kara Sea (part of the Arctic Ocean) to the north, and the Kazakhstan border to the south. Much of the West Siberian Plain consists of poorly drained coniferous forest lands that are underlain by extensive oil and gas deposits.¹⁴ The best soils for agriculture, as well as the large cities of Omsk and Novosibirsk, are located in the far southern part of the plain. The Northern Siberian Lowland, an eastward extension of the West Siberian Plain, separates the Taymyr Peninsula on the Arctic Ocean from the Central Siberia Plateau.¹⁵

Central Siberian Plateau

Beginning east of the Yenisey River, the West Siberian Plain gives way to the Central Siberian Plateau, an upland region with an average elevation of 500–700 m (1,650–2,300 ft). The Central Siberian Plateau is bordered by the Lena River to the east, the Northern Siberian Lowland and Taymyr Peninsula to the north, and the Eastern Sayan Mountains and Lake Baikal region to the south.¹⁶ On the northwestern edge of the plateau, the volcanic Putoran Mountains rise as high as 1,701 m (5,581 ft), while the eastern edge of the plateau descends to the Central Yakut Lowland.^{17, 18} Major cities are few and far between on the plateau; the largest is Krasnoyarsk, an industrial city on the southern reaches of the Yenisey River.¹⁹

Taymyr Peninsula

The Taymyr Peninsula lies between the Kara Sea and the Laptev Sea, two arms of the Arctic Ocean. It is the most northern region in mainland Europe and Asia. Its central feature is the Byrranga Mountains, whose highest peaks reach 1,150 m (3,800 ft). To the

¹³ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Ural Mountains.” 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/619028/Ural-Mountains#>

¹⁴ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “West Siberian Plain.” 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/640348/West-Siberian-Plain#>

¹⁵ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Russia: The Land: Relief: The Central Siberian Plateau.” 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia#>

¹⁶ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Central Siberian Plateau.” 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/102661/Central-Siberian-Plateau#>

¹⁷ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Putoran Mountains.” 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/484384/Putoran-Mountains#>

¹⁸ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Russia: The Land: Relief: The Central Siberian Plateau.” 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia#>

¹⁹ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Krasnoyarsk.” 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/323289/Krasnoyarsk#>

south and north of the Byrranga Mountains lie tundra lowlands.²⁰ Human habitation on the peninsula is sparse due to the extreme climatic conditions.

Mountains of the South and East

Along Russia's southern borders with northeastern Kazakhstan, Mongolia, and northeastern China, there is an extensive and complex geographic region consisting primarily of mountain ranges. These mountains span northward into eastern Siberia and then jut southward along the Kamchatka Peninsula toward Japan.



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons
Altai Mountains

The Altai Mountains are located at the west end of this region, along Russia's borders with eastern Kazakhstan, a small section of northwestern China, and western Mongolia. Within this range, Mount Belukha rises to 4,506 m (14,783 ft), making it one of the highest points in the Asian region of Russia.²¹ Immediately to the east of the Altai Mountains are the Western Tannu-Ola Mountains, which are separated from the Western Sayan Mountains to their north by a narrow valley formed by the upper reaches of the Yenisey River.

Near Lake Baikal, the mountain ranges broaden out and begin to trend toward the northeast. The dominant ranges of this region are the Yablonovy and Stanovoy Ranges, which serve as a drainage divide between the Lena River and Amur River basins, the two longest rivers in eastern Siberia. Extending northeastward from the eastern end of the Stanovoy Range, the Dzhugdzur Range parallels the coast along the Sea of Okhotsk. Several ranges from the north merge toward the northeastern end of the Dzhugdzur Range, most notably the Verkhoyansk Mountains and the Chersky Range. East of these ranges and to the north of the Sea of Okhotsk, the Kolmya Mountains continue the general trend of the Dzhugdzur Range as they extend toward the far northeast. Other mountains beyond the Kolmya include the Koryak and Sredinny Mountains of the Kamchatka Peninsula, whose myriad volcanic peaks comprise the northwestern section of the Pacific Ocean's "Ring of Fire."²²

The largest cities in Russia's southern and eastern mountain regions lie along the Trans-Siberian Railroad, which has long served as the sole land transport connection between Russia's Pacific coast and the rest of the nation. Among them are Vladivostok (Russia's largest Pacific port), Khabarovsk, Irkutsk, Ulan Ude, and Chita.

²⁰ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Taymyr Peninsula." 2008.
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/584942/Taymyr-Peninsula#>

²¹ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Altai Mountains." 2008.
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/17446/Altai-Mountains#>

²² Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Russia: The Land: Relief: The Mountains of the South and East." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia#>

Climate

With the exception of the Caucasus region, the adjoining lower Don and Volga River basins, a few areas in southern Siberia, and the southeast maritime region along the Pacific Ocean, all of Russia lies north of 50°N latitude. By comparison, Alaska is the only portion of the United States that lies north of this latitude. As a result, most of Russia experiences long and cold to extremely cold winters and short and cool to mild summers. These characteristics are common to climates defined as “subarctic” (cool summers) or having a “humid continental mild summer.” A long strip of Russia lying along the country’s Arctic Ocean coast is characterized by a “tundra” climate in which the ground is permanently frozen and little vegetation is capable of surviving the extremely cold temperatures.

During the Russian winter, a large high-pressure cell forms along Russia’s southern border, directing wind to flow from the southwest in European Russia, from the south in Siberia, and from the northwest along the Russian Pacific coast.²³ As a result, average winter temperatures in Russia tend to show more variation as one moves from west to east (warmer in the west, colder in the east) than from north to south. In the far northeast, winter temperatures reach extreme lows in a region between the Verkhoyansk Mountains and the Chersky Range.²⁴ Oymyakon and Verkhoyansk, two villages in this so-called “pole of cold,” have both claimed the title for lowest temperature ever recorded outside of Antarctica, with figures of -68°C (-90°F) and -71°C (-96°F), respectively.²⁵



In the southern areas of the Russian Plain, as well as in scattered portions of southern Siberia, the climate is classified as “mid-latitude steppe,” which is comparable to that of the Great Plains of the United States and southern Canada. This climatic region corresponds closely with Russia’s grain belt.²⁶

Annual precipitation is modest throughout Russia and mostly confined to the summer season. In the Russian and West Siberian Plains, annual precipitation is highest in the northwest and generally declines as one moves toward the southeast part of this region,

²³ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Russia: The Land: Climate: Atmospheric Pressure and Winds.” 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia#>

²⁴ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Russia: The Land: Climate: Temperature.” 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia#>

²⁵ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Asia: Land: Climate: Air Masses and Wind Patterns.” 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/38479/Asia>

²⁶ Diversity amid Civilization: World Regions, Environment, Development, 2nd Ed. Rowntree, Les, Martin Lewis, Marie Price, and William Wyckoff. “Chapter 2. The Russian Domain [pp. 376, 378].” 2003. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

with the exception of the higher elevations of the Ural Mountains. Mountain elevations and regions along the Pacific coast are the wettest areas in the Russian Far East.²⁷

Rivers and Lakes

Russia has some of the longest rivers and largest river basins in the world. Specifically, the four largest river drainage basins in Asia (the Ob, Yenisey, Lena, and Amur) all lie mostly within Russia, and the largest European river drainage basin (the Volga) is completely within Russia, as well. The large Russian rivers can be classified by the bodies of water into which they drain.

Caspian Sea/Black Sea

The Volga River is the primary source of water for the Caspian Sea. It drains a large portion of the central and southern Russian Plain and has long been the country's most important inland waterway, carrying two thirds of all river traffic. The Volga's source lies in the Valdai Hills northeast of Moscow, and it receives the water of over 200 tributaries along its path to the Caspian. The Volga is a heavily engineered river system. A series of canals connect it to Moscow via the Moscow River, the White Sea (in the Arctic Ocean), and the Black Sea via the Don River. Furthermore, numerous large reservoirs on the Volga and its tributaries produce a hydroelectric generating capacity of about 11 million kilowatts.²⁸

West of the Volga River Basin, the Don River flows into the Sea of Azov, an arm of the Black Sea, which makes it the only navigable Russian river naturally accessible to the Mediterranean Sea (via the Straits of Bosphorus). Near Volgograd, the Volga River is linked to the huge Tsimlyansk Reservoir on the Don River via the 80 km (50 mi) Volga-Don Ship Canal.²⁹

Halfway between the Don's mouth (near the city of Rostov) and the Tsimlyansk Reservoir, the Don River is fed on its right bank by the Donets River tributary. Upstream from this confluence, the Donets River flows through eastern Ukraine, where it is a major source of water for Ukraine's Donets Basin industrial region.³⁰



²⁷ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Russia: The Land: Climate: Precipitation." 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia#>

²⁸ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Volga River."

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/632239/Volga-River#>

²⁹ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Volga River." 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/168926/Don-River#>

³⁰ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Donets River." 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/169086/Donets-River#>

Arctic Ocean

Most of the major rivers of Siberia flow generally south to north, emptying into various arms of the Arctic Ocean. The largest of these rivers are the Ob, Yenisey, and Lena, all of which are among the longest rivers in the world. The Ob is the principal river of the West Siberian Plain, and it has the world's 6th largest drainage basin. On its upstream stretch, it supplies the power for a large hydroelectric plant at Novosibirsk, Russia's third largest city and a major industrial center. The Ob's main tributary is the Irtysh, which itself is fed by several tributaries flowing from the eastern slopes of the Ural Mountains. The Ob's source is located in the Altai Mountains, near the western Mongolian border.³¹

On the eastern edge of the West Siberian Plain lies the Yenisey River, whose major tributaries flow into it from the Central Siberian Plateau to the east. One of these tributaries is the Angara River, which drains Lake Baikal, the largest lake entirely within Russia and the oldest and deepest body of freshwater on earth. Lake Baikal's tremendous depth 1,620 m (5,315 ft) makes it the world's most voluminous freshwater body—its waters represent roughly one fifth of all freshwater on the earth's surface.³² The largest city on the Yenisey River is Krasnoyarsk, which, like Novosibirsk on the Ob River, is situated near a large hydroelectric plant at a Trans-Siberian Railroad river crossing.³³



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons
Ob River

The Lena River separates the Central Siberian Plateau to the west from the various mountain ranges that lie to its east and south. The Lena's headwaters are found near Lake Baikal, from where the river sweeps northeast for much of its course, before bending back toward the northwest near Yakutsk. Yakutsk is an extremely isolated river port city that boasts the title of world's coldest city with a population of more than 100,000.³⁴ Ust-Kut, where the Baikal-Amur Mainline railroad crosses the Lena; and Lensk, a river hub for the diamond mines to its north; are the only other cities of any size along the river's 4,440 km (2,734 mi) path to the Laptev Sea.^{35, 36, 37}

³¹ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Ob River." 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/423582/Ob-River#>

³² Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Lake Baikal." 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/49177/Lake-Baikal#>

³³ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Krasnoyarsk." 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/323289/Krasnoyarsk#>

³⁴ The Independent. "Yakutsk: Journey to the Coldest City on Earth." 21 January 2008.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/travel/europe/yakutsk-journey-to-the-coldest-city-on-earth-771503.html>

³⁵ *Siberian BAM Guide: Rail, Rivers & Road*, 2nd Ed. Yates, Athol and Nicholas Zvegintzov. "Republic of Sakha [p. 256]." 2001. Hindhead, Surrey, U.K: Trailblazer Publications.

³⁶ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Lena River." 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/335790/Lena-River#>

Pacific Ocean

The high mountains that run along much of Russia's Pacific coast severely limit the number of significant rivers flowing to the world's largest ocean. The only major river that flows into the Pacific is the Amur River, which forms the Russian–Chinese border for almost 1,610 km (1,000 mi) from the point where the left-bank Shilka River and the right-bank Argun River meet to form the Amur proper.³⁸ The Argun itself



© Prince Roy / Flickr
Amur River

forms the Russian–Chinese border for 965 km (600 mi) before its confluence with the Shilka.³⁹ Near Khabarovsk, the largest city on the Amur, the river bends toward the northeast before eventually flowing into the Tatar Strait near Sakhalin Island. Khabarovsk is also the point at which the Trans-Siberian Railroad crosses the Amur River before turning southward toward the Pacific port city of Vladivostok.

³⁷ *Siberian BAM Guide: Rail, Rivers & Road*, 2nd Ed.. Yates, Athol; and Nicholas Zvegintzov. "BAM Mainline Routes [pp. 77, 78]." 2001. Hindhead, Surrey, U.K: Trailblazer Publications.

³⁸ MSN Encarta. "Amur." 2008. http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761564174/amur.html

³⁹ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Argun River." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/34022/Argun-River#>

Major Cities

City	Population 2002 (Census) ⁴⁰	Population 2007 (Estimate) ⁴¹
Moscow	10,126,424	10,442,663
Saint Petersburg	4, 661, 219	4,571,184
Novosibirsk	1,425,508	1,391,918
Nizhniy Novgorod	1,311,252	1,278,340
Yekaterinburg	1,293,537	1,315,097
Samara	1,157,880	1,138,994
Omsk	1,134,016	1,134,773
Kazan	1,105,289	1,115,993
Chelyabinsk	1,077,174	1,091,488
Rostov	1,068,267	1,051,630
Ufa	1,042,437	1,022,575
Volgograd	1,011,417	986,359
Perm	1,001,653	990,156

⁴⁰ Perepis2002.ru. "Table 1.4. Cities and Towns with Population of 50 Thousand People And More."
<http://www.perepis2002.ru/ct/doc/English/1-4.xls>

⁴¹ Dvor.jp. "2007年1月1日現在都市人口ランキング（1～500位）" http://dvor.jp/citytown-rank2007_1.htm

Moscow

From its modest beginning as a trading post on the Moscow River, Moscow has grown over the centuries to become one of the world's largest cities. Today, it is the political, educational, business, religious, and transportation center of Russia. The architectural centerpiece of the city is the Kremlin, a triangular fortress complex built upon a bend of the Moscow River. It is the ceremonial residence of the Russian president, and it has come to symbolize the center of Russian power, much as the White House and Downing Street have become synonymous with the leaders of the United States and the United Kingdom, respectively. Although it has achieved an important position in global affairs over the last 90 years and had been, in earlier centuries, an imperial capital, Moscow was not the capital of the Russian Empire from the early 1700s through 1917. During that time, Saint Petersburg, Russia's "window on the West," was the Russian capital.



© Sergey Nemanov
Moscow River

Moscow regained its status as a capital city during Soviet rule, and it grew significantly during the early years of the U.S.S.R. Between 1926 and 1939, the city's population doubled from 2 million to 4.1 million as industrial development expanded within the city.⁴² By 1960, Moscow initiated an urban development plan designed to limit the city's growth to the interior of the Ring Road, which encircled the city. By the 1980s, however, as the city's population reached 8 million, Moscow's urban expansion surpassed the Ring Road perimeter.^{43, 44}

Today, Moscow is as much a symbol of Russian capitalism as it was the center of Communist rule in earlier decades, and Russian economic power has centralized itself in the city. As of 2001, it contained roughly one fourth of Russia's wealth, up from one-tenth in the 1990s.⁴⁵ Recently, Moscow was recognized as the home of more billionaires than any other city in the world.⁴⁶ While the city is still an industrial center, much of Moscow's post-Soviet growth has come in the services sector; since the privatization of the Russian economy, Moscow has developed into a financial hub with an increasing number of retail businesses.⁴⁷ One manufacturing industry that has defied this trend is

⁴² Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Moscow: History: Moscow in the Soviet Period." 2008.
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/393409/Moscow#>

⁴³ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Moscow: History: Moscow in the Soviet Period." 2008.
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/393409/Moscow#>

⁴⁴ *Moscow*. Vorhees, Mora. "History: Post-Stalinist Moscow [p. 48]." 2006. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications.

⁴⁵ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Moscow: Economy." 2008.
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/393409/Moscow#>

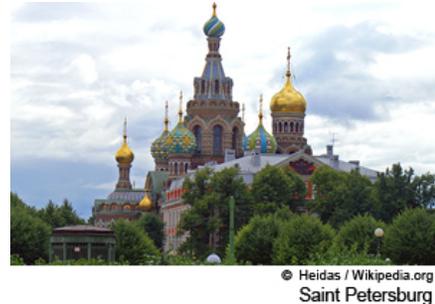
⁴⁶ RIA Novosti. "Moscow becomes World's Billionaire Capital – Forbes." 6 March 2008.
<http://en.rian.ru/russia/20080306/100793187.html>

⁴⁷ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Moscow: Economy: Finance and Other Services." 2008.
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/393409/Moscow#>

food processing, which has modernized its practices and attracted foreign investment. Today, one fourth of Moscow's industrial labor force works in this sector.⁴⁸

Saint Petersburg

In terms of size, economic clout, and historical and cultural importance, the only Russian city that remotely rivals Moscow is Saint Petersburg. The urban area developed around a swamp at the mouth of the Neva River, which was the source of several battles between Russia and Sweden throughout the 13th to 18th centuries. The Russians recaptured the area in 1703, and Russian tsar Peter the Great soon began construction of the modern city of Saint



Petersburg, which became the Russian capital in 1712.⁴⁹ During World War I, the city's name was "Russified" to Petrograd; later, in 1924, it was changed to Leningrad in honor of the famed Soviet leader. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the city's voters elected to restore the traditional name of Saint Petersburg.⁵⁰

Saint Petersburg's position at the eastern end of the Gulf of Finland gives it access to the Baltic Sea, thus making it Russia's largest port. Frequently referred to as Russia's "window on the West," Saint Petersburg exhibits a different layout than most other Russian medieval cities in that it lacks a distinctive city center, which would traditionally be a fortress, or "kremlin." Saint Petersburg's famed historical buildings are also more western European in design than those of similar or older age in other Russian cities, such as Moscow.⁵¹

In 1941, St. Petersburg, then known as Leningrad, suffered greatly during a nearly 900-day blockade by the German army. An estimated 660,000 people died from starvation or scurvy during this time, and the city did not return to its pre-World War II population of 3 million until over 20 years later. During the post-Soviet period, the city's economy has grown faster than the nation as a whole, fueled by an industrial sector that is second only to Moscow in output. Tourism has also become an increasing source of income for the city, and much of Saint Petersburg's industry has been moved away from the city center in order to preserve the uniqueness of its historical districts.⁵²

⁴⁸ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Moscow: Economy: Manufacturing ." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/393409/Moscow#>

⁴⁹ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Saint Petersburg: History: The Early Period: Foundation and Early Growth." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/518092/Saint-Petersburg#>

⁵⁰ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Saint Petersburg: "History: Evolution of the Modern City: The Soviet Period." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/518092/Saint-Petersburg#>

⁵¹ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Saint Petersburg: Character of the City." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/518092/Saint-Petersburg#>

⁵² Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Saint Petersburg: Economy: Finances and Other Services." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/518092/Saint-Petersburg#>

Novosibirsk

As its name implies, Novosibirsk, or literally, “New Siberia City” is one of the country’s newer metropolises. Today, it is Russia’s 3rd largest city. The modern metropolis came into being in 1893, when the small village of Krisvoshchekovo was chosen to be the site of the Tran-Siberian Railway’s crossing of the Ob River. From 1895 to 1925, the city was known as Novonikolayevsk, named in honor of Russia’s last tsar, Nicholas II. Novonikolayevsk’s early growth was halted during the Russian Civil War and its aftermath, when the Ob River Bridge was blown up; and roughly 60,000 of the city’s citizens died during typhus and cholera epidemics.⁵³



During the 1920s, Novosibirsk revived when it became a major transportation center for the Kutnetsk coal fields to the city’s east. Its importance as a transportation hub increased during the 1930s when railways linked it to the city of Almaty, in Kazakhstan.⁵⁴ Rapid industrialization occurred during World War II when many industries in European Russia moved to the Novosibirsk area for security purposes. In the 1960s, the town of Akademgorodok was developed just south of the city to house a number of scientific research institutions. This development made Novosibirsk, for a time, one of the premier scientific research centers in the Soviet Union. While some of Akademgorodok’s scientists have scattered since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the area still retains scientific and technological talent. The region has attracted investment from international firms such as IBM, Intel, and Schlumberger and has seen the establishment of several local software development companies.⁵⁵

While Akademgorodok promises growth for Novosibirsk’s high-technology sector, the city is still economically reliant on its industrial and manufacturing base. The local Novosibirsk Steel Works of Kuzmin is a key provider of alloyed steel products for all of Russia. Tin-smelting and gold-refining plants also operate in the region. Chemical products, processed food products, electrical equipment, machinery, textiles, and various consumer products are components of the city’s manufacturing sector.⁵⁶ To help power these industries, a large hydroelectric plant was built during the 1950s on the Ob River, creating what is now known as the Ob Sea.

⁵³ *Trans-Siberian Railway*. Richmond, Simon and Mara Vorhees. “Novosibirsk [p. 182].” 2002. Footscray, Victoria, Australia. Lonely Planet Publications.

⁵⁴ *Trans-Siberian Railway*. Richmond, Simon and Mara Vorhees. “Novosibirsk [p. 183].” 2002. Footscray, Victoria, Australia. Lonely Planet Publications.

⁵⁵ CNNMoney.com. Forrest, Brett. “The New Silicon Valley: Siberia.” 26 March 2007. http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/fortune_archive/2007/04/02/8403482/index.htm?postversion=2007032605

⁵⁶ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Novosibirsk.” 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/421276/Novosibirsk#>

Nizhniy Novgorod

Roughly 420 km (260 mi) east of Moscow, at the confluence of the Oka and Volga Rivers, lies Nizhniy Novgorod. The city's name, which literally means "Lower New Town," distinguishes it from another city named Novgorod (located near Saint Petersburg). Nizhniy Novgorod has a long history, dating back to the 13th century, and its strategic river location has made it both a trading center and an area known for shipbuilding. From 1932 to 1990, the city was known as Gorky, in honor of the writer Maxim Gorky, who was born in the city.



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons
Nizhny Novgorode

From 1817 to 1917, Nizhniy Novgorod was the location of Russia's most important trade fair, which attracted merchants from throughout Asia and Europe. As a result, the city quickly became one of the first manufacturing centers in Russia, and it has retained that identity to the present day. The production of civilian and military vehicles and vessels has been a significant component of the city's industrial sector. For example, the local Gorkovskiy Avtomobilny Zavod (GAZ) automobile factory is the largest producer of trucks, light commercial vehicles, and passenger cars in Russia.⁵⁷ Russian MIG fighter jets and other aircraft have long been produced at the Sokol aircraft plant in Nizhniy Novgorod. The city's Krasnoye Sormovo shipbuilding plant has constructed nuclear- and diesel-powered submarines for the Russian Navy and, more recently, for the Chinese Navy.^{58, 59} The Krasnoye Sormovo plant has also begun building oil tankers for export.⁶⁰ Because of its important role in military production, Nizhniy Novgorod was closed to foreigners for many decades during the Cold War, which is one reason Russian physicist and political dissident Andrei Sakharov was internally exiled there during the 1980s.⁶¹

Across the Volga River from Nizhniy Novgorod is the small city of Bor, which is primarily known for its production of safety glass for automobiles.^{62, 63} Bor's relative anonymity may soon disappear, however, if a proposal to build a USD 150 billion "Globe Town" there comes to fruition. This ambitious project would involve the construction of

⁵⁷ Basic Element. "Automobile Production: Group GAZ." 2008.

<http://www.basel.ru/en/structure/machine/auto/>

⁵⁸ Kaskus.us. RIA Novosti. "Russia Launches Production of New MiG-29M/M2 Fighter." 11 June 2008.

<http://www.kaskus.us/archive/index.php/t-905771.html>

⁵⁹ GlobalSecurity.org. "Kilo Class." 2008. <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/china/kilo.htm>

⁶⁰ U.S.-Russia Business Council. Wall Street Journal. Chazan, Guy. "Fueled by Oil Money, Russian Economy Soars." 13 March 2007. <https://usrbc.org/resources/russiannews/event/199>

⁶¹ *Russia and Belarus*, 4th Ed. Vorhees, Mara. "Volga Region [p. 407]." 2006. Footscray, Victoria, Australia. Lonely Planet Publications.

⁶² Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Nizhniy Novgorod." 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/416591/Nizhny-Novgorod#>

⁶³ U.S.-Russia Business Council. Wall Street Journal. Chazan, Guy. "Fueled by Oil Money, Russian Economy Soars." 13 March 2007. <https://usrbc.org/resources/russiannews/event/199>

a Manhattan-sized town within Bor's city limits, highlighted by a vast illuminated globe housing theatres, museums, and shopping centers.⁶⁴

Yekaterinburg

Yekaterinburg is the largest city in Russia's Ural region and the gateway to Siberia on the Trans-Siberian Express. Its history dates back to 1723, when it was founded as part of Peter the Great's campaign to develop the mineral riches of the Urals. The city was named after Peter's second wife, who later became Empress Catherine I upon his death. During



© Alex Kofman
Yekaterinburg

the Soviet era, the area was renamed Sverdlovsk after Yakov Sverdlov, a Bolshevik leader who authorized the execution of the Romanov imperial family in 1918.⁶⁵ Romanov, the last Russian tsar, and his family were murdered in the cellar of a merchant's house in Yekaterinburg in July of that year.⁶⁶ Communist Party officials ordered that the house be destroyed in 1977, but after the collapse of the Soviet Union, a huge memorial church was constructed on the site in 1993. It has since become a site of pilgrimage.

During the 1920s and 1930s, Sverdlovsk was developed as a major industrial center for the Soviet Union. One of the most well known of the numerous industrial facilities built in this era is the Uralmash (short for Uralsky Mashinostroitelny zavod, or Ural Machine-building plant), which over its long history has produced everything from mining and metallurgical industry equipment to armored tanks and drilling rigs. At its peak, the Uralmash employed 50,000 people, and although only a small percentage of that number now work there, the plant remains the city's largest commercial operation.⁶⁷ Food processing, gem cutting, and manufacturing of engineering products are other important industries carried out in the city.

During the Cold War, Sverdlovsk was also a Soviet center for chemical and biological warfare research. In one infamous episode in 1979, which only came to light in the 1990s, a biological weapons facility on the outskirts of the city accidentally released an aerosol of anthrax spores. The release affected 94 people, of which 64 died. The former First Deputy Director of the civilian department of the lab has estimated that tens of thousands could have been killed that day if the wind had been blowing toward Sverdlovsk.^{68, 69}

⁶⁴ United Press International. "Milan Architects Chosen to Design City." 26 March 2008.

http://www.upi.com/Business_News/2008/03/26/UPI_NewsTrack_Business/UPI-35321206567371/

⁶⁵ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Yakov Mikhaylovich Sverdlov." 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/576006/Yakov-Mikhaylovich-Sverdlov#>

⁶⁶ *Russia and Belarus*, 4th Ed. Vorhees, Mara. "The Urals [pp. 438-39]." 2006. Footscray, Victoria, Australia. Lonely Planet Publications.

⁶⁷ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Yekaterinburg." 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/652496/Yekaterinburg#>

⁶⁸ Public Broadcasting System. Frontline. "Plague War: The 1979 Anthrax Leak in Sverdlovsk." October 1998. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/plague/>

Environmental Concerns

Water Pollution

Russia continues to suffer from an infamous Soviet legacy of industrial, agricultural, and energy development practices that largely ignored environmental ramifications.⁷⁰ Perhaps most distressing is the damage that has been done to Russia's water resources. Numerous bodies of water within or on the borders of Russia are severely polluted. One of these environmentally damaged water bodies is the Volga River, which is one of Russia's most enduring and symbolic natural features, holding a place within the Russian collective consciousness similar to that of the Mississippi River in the United States. Large dams built along the Volga's course have created locations where slowed water flow allows for the accumulation of upstream contaminants from industries and agricultural runoff. At Astrakhan, near the Volga's delta on the Caspian Sea, runoff from farms and factories has caused algae blooms to flourish, thus depriving the river and wetland wildlife of necessary oxygen and "dramatically affecting the ecosystem of the river."⁷¹



Nuclear Environmental Threats

During the Cold War, the Soviet Union built several secret facilities that were engaged in the development of the country's nuclear arsenal and resources. Safety standards for the handling and disposal of radioactive materials at these sites were often lax; today, there is continuing concern about how nuclear materials are handled at the country's remnant nuclear development facilities. Russia also continues to operate 11 RBMK nuclear reactors near the cities of Saint Petersburg, Smolensk, and Kursk. This unique type of reactor, in which graphite rods are used to control the nuclear chain reaction, is considered less safe than other reactor designs. The reactor that led to the nuclear accident at Chernobyl was an RBMK reactor.⁷²



However, in regard to Russia's nuclear heritage, the greatest source of environmental concern has been the Mayak nuclear waste processing plant, which is situated in the eastern Urals, in the region between Yekaterinburg and Chelyabinsk, two of Russia's

⁶⁹ Public Broadcasting System. Frontline. "Interview: Dr. Kanatjan Alibekov." October 1998. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/plague/sverdlovsk/alibekov.html>

⁷⁰ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. "Country Profile: Russia." October 2006. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Russia.pdf>

⁷¹ Chicago Tribune. Rodriguez, Alex. "Russia's Toxic Rivers Running Out of Time." 8 July 2008. <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/chi-russia-rivers-09-jul09,0,1995108.story>

⁷² World Nuclear Association. "RBMK Reactors." May 2007. <http://www.world-nuclear.org/info/inf31.htm>

largest cities.⁷³ The area around Mayak, where plutonium was produced for the Soviet Union's nuclear weapons program, has been described by at least one authority as "the most radioactively contaminated area in the world."⁷⁴ In 1957, a waste-storage facility at the Mayak plant blew up, producing the second-worst nuclear disaster of all time, eclipsed only by the more-publicized Chernobyl nuclear accident, which occurred nearly 30 years later. Russian and Norwegian scientists have estimated that this and other releases of radioactive isotopes from Mayak have amounted to more than five times the combined equivalent radiation released from the 500 nuclear atmospheric tests that have been performed around the world, as well as the Chernobyl accident and the emissions from the controversial Sellafield nuclear plant, located in the UK.⁷⁵ Storage reservoirs near the plant have now accumulated 1.2 billion curies of radioactive waste, the equivalent of 22 Chernobyls.⁷⁶ One of these storage sites is Lake Karachai, where Mayak's wastes were first stored in 1951. The lake has now been covered with concrete in order to prevent its deadly sediments from eroding and blowing away in the wind. The lake is said to be so radioactive that one hour's exposure along its shoreline delivers enough radiation to ensure acute radiation sickness resulting in death.⁷⁷

Natural Hazards

The mountainous coastal regions of eastern Russia, particularly the Kuril Islands and the Kamchatka Peninsula, are susceptible to both massive earthquakes and volcanic activity. However, these events generally do not produce large numbers of Russian casualties due to the region's low population density. For example, in April 2006, a magnitude 7.7 earthquake, roughly equivalent in magnitude to the earthquake that destroyed San Francisco in 1906, affected only a few small coastal villages near the epicenter.⁷⁸



Elsewhere in Russia, the most costly natural disasters are tied to river flooding. Most recently, in the summer of 2002, Russia's northern Caucasus region, including adjacent

⁷³ BBC News, International Version. Ragozin, Leonid. "Russia Challenged by Nuclear Woes." 28 February 2006. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4759224.stm>

⁷⁴ New Scientist. Edwards, Rob. "Russia's Toxic Shocker – Bomb Factories Created the Most Radioactive Place on Earth." 6 December 1997. <http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg15621112.400-russias-toxic-shocker--bomb-factories-created-the-most-radioactiveplace-on-earth.html>

⁷⁵ New Scientist. Edwards, Rob. "Russia's Toxic Shocker – Bomb Factories Created the Most Radioactive Place on Earth." 6 December 2007. <http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg15621112.400-russias-toxic-shocker--bomb-factories-created-the-most-radioactiveplace-on-earth.html>

⁷⁶ BBC News, International Version. Ragozin, Leonid. "Russia Challenged by Nuclear Woes." 28 February 2006. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4759224.stm>

⁷⁷ WISE Amsterdam. WISE News Communiqué. "Soviet Weapons Plant Pollution." 2 November 1990. <http://www10.antenna.nl/wise/index.html?http://www10.antenna.nl/wise/341/3409.html>

⁷⁸ CTV. Associated Press. "Big Earthquake Hits Russia's Far Eastern Region." 20 April 2006. http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/story/CTVNews/20060420/quake_russia_060420/20060420?hub=S ciTech

areas along the Black Sea coast, suffered devastating flooding and landslide damage.⁷⁹ These catastrophic events were somewhat unusual in that, unlike many Russian floods, they did not occur in response to river swelling caused by runoff from melting snow. The Siberian rivers, in particular, are notorious for spring ice jams that can induce river flooding. If the jams grow too large or occur close to population centers, explosives are sometimes used to break the ice and free up the river's flow.⁸⁰ In the spring of 2001, for example, a squadron of Russian SU-24 supersonic bombers was called upon to eliminate an ice jam on the Lena River that threatened to flood Yakutsk, a city of 200,000 people.⁸¹

⁷⁹ American Red Cross. Anderson, Mason. "Relief Operation Underway for Russia Flood Victims." 2 August 2002. <http://www.redcross.org/news/in/flood/020802russiafloods.html>

⁸⁰ BBC News. "Floods Engulf Siberian Town." 18 May 2001. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/1335821.stm>

⁸¹ American Red Cross. Kriner, Stephanie. "Spring Floods Threaten City of 200,000 in Siberia." 21 May 2001. <http://www.redcross.org/news/in/flood/010521siberia.html>

History

Russia's vast expanses have been the stage on which some of the most famous events in human history have transpired. Many of these events have been epic battles of war, as Russian armies have waged numerous military campaigns to protect the nation's territory from foreign invaders. During such conflicts, Russian troops were often fortuitously assisted by the cold Russian winters and the long distances over which invaders struggled to maintain their supply routes. Napoleon, Hitler, and Genghis Khan all made deep incursions into European Russia over the centuries, but only the Khan dynasty was able to hold out for more than a few years.



© Orbit_77 / Flickr.com
Red Square, Moscow

Throughout its history, Russia's military strength also allowed it to greatly expand its empire. Once comprising only certain regions of modern-day western Russia, Belarus, and northern Ukraine, the Russian nation was initially only a fraction of its current area. As the Russian empire expanded, numerous regions became "Russified" in language and culture as they were incorporated into the Russian fold. Today, Russia retains a significant number of ethnic minorities as a legacy of its expansive reach.

Early History

Origin of the Russian State

Although various organized groups have lived in the territory now known as Russia since at least the second millennium B.C.E., much of the region's early history is unknown. Historians know that sometime during the early centuries of the first millennium C.E., Slavic tribes migrated into the northern Russian Plain, probably from a large region to the south that extends from the Elbe River to modern-day Belarus and western Ukraine.⁸² The East Slav ethnic groups that came to inhabit this region established a number of trading posts along the numerous rivers that lay between the Baltic and Black Seas. Among the most important of these were Kiev, the modern-day capital of Ukraine, and Novgorod, which is located on the Volghoz River, south of the modern-day city of Saint Petersburg.



© Vladimir Pletenev
Monument of Rurik's

By the ninth century C.E., these northern trading posts came under the dominance of armies led by Scandinavian invaders known as Varangians. Some historians point to the Varangians as the inspiration for the word *Rus* (after the dominant Varangian clan name),

⁸² Encyclopædia Britannica Online. Keenan, Edward Louis. "Russia: History: From the Beginnings to c. 1700: Prehistory and the Rise of the Rus." 2008.
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia/213966/History#>

from which *Russiya*, or Russia (meaning “land of the Rus”) derives. However, there are other schools of thought that assign a Slavic origin to the word *Rus*.^{83, 84}

The most influential of the Varangian princes who swept into the northern Russian Plain was Rurik. A semi-mythical figure, Rurik is thought to be the founder of a dynasty that would rule a collection of principalities in the East Slavic territories until nearly the beginning of the 17th century. Sometimes referred to as either Kievan Rus or the East Slavic principalities, the lands under Varangian control stretched from the northeastern slopes of the Carpathian Mountains in the southwest to the upper reaches of the Dvina River in the northeast. To the southeast of Kievan Rus, in the region between the Baltic and Caspian Seas, was the home of the Khazars. The Khazars formed a Turkic-speaking tribal confederation that fought a series of wars against Arab invaders in the seventh and eighth centuries. Their resistance effectively stemmed the expansion of Islam into Eastern Europe.⁸⁵

Kievan Rus

The period between the late 10th and mid 11th centuries saw the emergence and ultimate golden age of Kievan Rus power.⁸⁶ The Rurikid prince Svyatoslav, and later, his son Vladimir I, waged successful campaigns against the quarreling Varangian princes to the north. Kievan Rus also dealt the Khazars to the south a series of crushing blows beginning in 965. To the east, the forces of Vladimir I fought the Volga Bulgars, a Turkic group that had recently emerged from Khazar domination. The Bulgars, the ancestors of the Bulgars of modern-day Bulgaria, were based around the confluence of the Kama River and the middle Volga River. (This region is now part of the Republic of Tatarstan.) Unlike the Khazars, who had converted to Judaism sometime during the eighth century, the Bulgars were primarily Muslim.⁸⁷ On the other hand, Kievan Rus, which had been a predominantly pagan region during its early history, became Orthodox Christian in 988 after Vladimir I converted to the faith. This event marked the beginning of the Russian Orthodox Church, which thereafter played a dominant role in Russian life and culture.



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons
Vladimir Campaign on Korsun

⁸³ MSN Encarta. Lincoln, W. Bruce, Dominic Lieven, and Bruce Parrott. “Russia. VII. History. C. The House of Rurik.” 2008. http://encarta.msn.com/text_761569000__61/Russia.html

⁸⁴ *The New Cambridge Medieval History III*. Noonan, Thomas S. “19. European Russia, c. 500–c. 1050 [pp. 505-506].” 1999. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

⁸⁵ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Khazar.” 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/316553/Khazar#>

⁸⁶ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *A Country Study: Russia*. Kohut, Zenon E. and David M. Goldfrank. “Chapter 1. Historical Setting: Early History to 1917: Early History: The Golden Age of Kiev.” July 1996. [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+ru0014\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+ru0014))

⁸⁷ *The New Cambridge Medieval History III*. Noonan, Thomas S. “19. European Russia, c. 500–c. 1050 [pp. 503-505].” 1999. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Kievan Rus began to decline after the death of Prince Yaroslav in 1054, when the various Rus principalities began to form alliances with bordering states, and in some cases, challenged Kievan authority.⁸⁸ Foremost among these principalities was Novgorod, which broke away from Kiev in 1136. Novgorod eventually became the port for Russian trade with the powerful Hanseatic League, a German-founded organization that dominated Baltic and North Sea trade for several centuries.⁸⁹

The Mongol Invasion

By 1223, when a band of armies under the leadership of Mongolian warlord Genghis Khan first invaded the former Kievan Rus region, the principalities had warred among themselves for political and economic supremacy for several generations. Nonetheless, several armies of the East Slavic principalities and a force of Turkic Polovtsians from the south banded together to fight the Mongol forces; they were soundly defeated at the Battle of the Kalka River in what is now the western Ukraine.

Mongol rule accelerated the fragmentation of the former Kievan Rus territories. The western and southern principalities fell under the domination of their Polish, Hungarian, and Lithuanian neighbors to the west. Today, these regions form the heart of Belarus and Ukraine, respectively. The principalities to the east and northeast, on the other hand, are today the heart of European Russia.⁹⁰

The Golden Horde

The Mongols soon retreated toward Asia, but in 1237, Genghis Khan's grandson, Batu, led an army back to the Russian Plain. These invaders came to be known as Tatars in the East Slavic principalities, although the Turkic-speaking Tatars formed only a small number of Batu Khan's forces. Kiev was sacked during this second Mongolian foray into the East Slavic principalities and was slow to recover. Eventually the Russian Orthodox Church moved its Metropolitanate (i.e., residence of the Church's leader) from Kiev to Vladimir, a principality to the northeast of modern-day Moscow that had replaced Kiev as the seat of the East Slavic territories.



After the successful invasions of the East Slavic principalities, Batu Khan and his forces returned to the east and established a new khanate known as the Golden Horde, whose capital was located on the lower Volga River near the modern city of Volgograd. The

⁸⁸ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. Raeff, Marc and Dominic Lieven. "Russia: History: From the Beginnings to c. 1700: Kiev: The Decline of Kiev." 2008.
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia/213966/History#ref=ref421616>

⁸⁹ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Hanseatic League." 2008.
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/254543/Hanseatic-League#>

⁹⁰ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *A Country Study: Russia*. Kohut, Zenon E. and David M. Goldfrank. "Chapter 1. Historical Setting: Early History to 1917: Early History: The Mongol Invasion." July 1996. [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+ru0015\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+ru0015))

Golden Horde khans chose not to occupy their East Slavic principalities, preferring instead to rule them by proxy using loyal native princes. One of these local princes was Alexander Nevsky, who was made Grand Prince of Vladimir after his famed defeat of Swedish and German invaders in the Novgorod principality.⁹¹

The Rise of Muscovy (Moscow)

Nevsky's youngest son, Daniil, was given the relatively inconsequential principality of Muscovy (Moscow) upon the death of his father in 1263. Prince Daniil and his descendants were able to skillfully maneuver Muscovy to a position of prominence within the East Slavic principalities. In 1328, Daniil's grandson, Ivan I, known as Ivan Kalita ("Money Bags") for his remarkable tax-collecting skills, was named the Grand Prince of Muscovy, thus making Moscow the new center of the East Slavic principalities. During this time, the Russian church moved from Vladimir to Muscovy as well.⁹²



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons
Ivan III of Russia

Under Ivan III (ruled 1462–1505), also known as Ivan the Great, the Grand Principality of Muscovy was finally able to break from Golden Horde control and establish itself as the dominant power of what is today European Russia. Novgorod, which had successfully avoided becoming a Golden Horde vassal state, was annexed by Muscovy in 1478. Two years later Muscovy ceased paying tribute to the Golden Horde, which itself was wracked by civil war and in the process of dissolving into smaller, weaker khanates. During the 1480s, additional principalities surrounding Muscovy subordinated themselves to Muscovite rule. A long, inconclusive conflict with Lithuania also left some border areas under the domain of Muscovy. By 1505, the year of Ivan III's death, the Muscovy principality had tripled in size since the beginning of his reign. (At this point, the principality extended to the lower Ob River on the eastern side of the Ural Mountains.) Notably, during his prolonged reign, Ivan III was the first Muscovite ruler to adopt the title of "tsar."⁹³

The powers of the Muscovy rulers continued to consolidate at the expense of the *boyars* (Russian nobles) in the outlying principalities. In the increasingly remote Muscovy territories, a loyal, permanent army for the Muscovy Grand Prince was developed through a new form of land tenure. In this process, privately held land in conquered territories was confiscated by the Grand Prince and conditionally re-distributed to

⁹¹ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Saint Alexander Nevsky." 2008.
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/14193/Saint-Alexander-Nevsky#>

⁹² Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Ivan I." 2008.
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/298135/Ivan-I>

⁹³ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *A Country Study: Russia*. Kohut, Zenon E. and David M. Goldfrank. "Chapter 1. Historical Setting: Early History to 1917: Muscovy: The Rise of Muscovy." July 1996. [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query2/r?frd/cstyd:@field\(DOCID+ru0016\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query2/r?frd/cstyd:@field(DOCID+ru0016))

soldiers who pledged permanent service to Muscovy.⁹⁴ Ultimately, this new land-tenure system proved problematic for Ivan III's successors because it tended to decrease the agricultural productivity of the lands.⁹⁵

Ivan IV (the Terrible)

Ivan III's son, Vasily III, ruled Muscovy for 28 years following his father's death. This period was a relatively peaceful time during which the territorial gains of the previous reign were consolidated and the remaining Russian principalities that were not yet integrated into Muscovy were absorbed. At the time of Vasily's death, his oldest son, Ivan IV, was only three years old. During the next 13 years, Muscovite boyars served as regents until the young prince came of age. Their court intrigues helped develop in Ivan IV a dislike of nobles that would carry into his adult life.⁹⁶



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons
Ivan The Terrible

In 1547, Ivan IV was crowned "tsar and crown prince of all Russia," the first time that a Muscovite ruler was formally given this title.⁹⁷ His reign was a tumultuous one. Early on, it was marked by an expansion of the realm into the southern steppes and across the Ural Mountains, thus giving Russia access to the entire Volga River basin and opening a path to the rich resources of Siberia. During the latter stages of his rule, however, Ivan IV veered toward madness as he developed the persona that would earn him the moniker of "Ivan the Terrible." In 1565, he divided the Russian realm into two regions: one consisting of towns and cities directly under his control (the *oprichnina*) and another comprising areas administered by a council of boyars (the *zemschina*). Within the *oprichnina*, executions and confiscations of land and possessions were carried out by Ivan IV's bodyguards (*oprichniki*) against boyars, merchants, and peasants suspected of being disloyal to the tsar. The *oprichnina* episode, as the period of attacks on the boyars came to be known, led to chaos within the Muscovy realm and only ceased after invading Crimean Tatars razed Moscow in 1571. Eleven years later, Ivan IV killed his son in an act of rage that left Russia with no viable heir to the throne when he died in 1584.^{98, 99}

⁹⁴ *Medieval Russia, 980-1584*. Martin, Janet. "Muscovite Domestic Consolidation [pp. 271–272]." 1995. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

⁹⁵ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. Keenan, Edward Louis. "Russia: History: From the Beginnings to c. 1700: Rurikid Muscovy: Ivan III." 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia/213966/History#>

⁹⁶ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Ivan IV: Early Life." 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/298154/Ivan-IV#>

⁹⁷ MSN Encarta. Hellie, Richard. "Ivan IV Vasilyevich or Ivan the Terrible." 2008.

http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761561311/ivan_iv_vasilyevich.html

⁹⁸ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *A Country Study: Russia*. Kohut, Zenon E. and David M. Goldfrank. "Chapter 1. Historical Setting: Early History to 1917: Muscovy: Ivan IV." July 1996.

[http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+ru0017\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+ru0017))

⁹⁹ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Ivan IV." 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/298154/Ivan-IV#>

Boris Godunov and the Time of Troubles

Ivan IV's only other son, Fyodor I, became tsar after his father's death, but he was considered too feeble-minded to truly rule. Fyodor I's brother-in-law, Boris Godunov, quickly became the most influential regent and the *de facto* Russian ruler until Fyodor I's death in 1598. At that point, Godunov successfully maneuvered himself to the position of tsar, despite his lack of a direct bloodline to Fyodor I. In general, Godunov's years as a virtual ruler under Fyodor marked a period of government restoration after the disastrous final years of Ivan IV's rule.¹⁰⁰ He helped negotiate the Patriarchate of Moscow, thus making the Russian Orthodox Church officially independent of the jurisdiction of the Orthodox Church in Constantinople.



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons
Boris Godunov

A great famine from 1601–03 was followed by the emergence of a pretender to the Russian throne, known as False Dmitry due to his claim that he was Ivan IV's late son Dmitry, who had died in 1591. Supported by an army of Cossacks (former peasants turned cavalry soldiers who inhabited the southern steppes between the lower Don and Dnieper Rivers) and Polish supporters, False Dmitry moved northeast toward Moscow before being defeated by Godunov's troops. However, Godunov died shortly after this military confrontation, and the pretender to the throne was soon triumphantly ushered into Moscow and crowned the new tsar.^{101, 102}

Known as the Time of Troubles, the next eight years were a tumultuous period in Russian history. Battles for power between various groups of boyars and their favored candidates for tsar left the country in a state of anarchy. This period did not cease until a *zemsky sobor* ("assembly of the land"), consisting of boyars, church officials, and urban freemen, elected young Mikhail Romanov to be the new tsar in 1613.¹⁰³



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons
Time of Troubles

¹⁰⁰ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. Keenan, Edward Louis. "Russia: History: From the Beginnings to c. 1700: Rurikid Muscovy: Boris Godunov." 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia/213966/History#>

¹⁰¹ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. Keenan, Edward Louis. "Russia: History: From the Beginnings to c. 1700: Rurikid Muscovy: Boris Godunov." 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia/213966/History#>

¹⁰² Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *A Country Study: Russia*. Kohut, Zenon E. and David M. Goldfrank. "Chapter 1. Historical Setting: Early History to 1917: Muscovy: The Time of Troubles." July 1996. [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+ru0018\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+ru0018))

¹⁰³ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Zemsky Sobor." 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/656405/zemsky-sobor#>

The Romanovs

Few people at the time would have anticipated that Mikhail's Romanov's coronation would be a turning point in Russian history. Tsar Mikhail was himself not a forceful leader, but he and his successor, Aleksey (1645–1676), provided stability and continuity to a country that was reeling after the Time of Troubles. This was also a period of major territorial expansion, during which eastern Ukraine and much of eastern Siberia (including parts of the Pacific coast) came under Russian control.¹⁰⁴ Nonetheless, memories of the peasant revolts during the Time of Troubles contributed to harsh governmental restrictions on those without land tenure. In particular, the legal code of 1649 severely restrained the rights of Russian peasants, or serfs, effectively making them slaves. This would contribute to the social discontent that ultimately led to the Russian Revolution several centuries later.

Peter I (the Great)

Peter I, better known as Peter the Great, would prove to be the first great Romanov leader. A child of Tsar Aleksey's second marriage, Peter I was not directly in line for succession upon his father's death in 1676. Thus, his early life was largely spent outside the Russian court, and he played among children of lesser birth, frequently organizing them in war games. He also came in frequent contact with Western Europeans living in Moscow during this time. These experiences proved influential when Peter I inherited full rule of the state upon the death of his half-brother Ivan V in 1696.¹⁰⁵



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons
Peter the Great

One of Peter I's first acts was to create the Russian navy, which he sent down the Don River in order to capture the Black Sea port of Azov from the Ottoman Empire in 1696. (Fifteen years later, however, the port would return to Ottoman control after an ill-advised military excursion into Turkish territory.) Early military successes in the Great Northern War (1700–1721) against Sweden left Peter I's forces in control of sections of the Gulf of Finland, which leads to the Baltic Sea. In 1703, construction began on a fortress on the Neva River at the far eastern end of the Gulf. After the decisive victory against the Swedish forces at Poltava in 1709, the newly established city of Saint Petersburg (which surrounded the Neva River fortress) began to quickly grow.¹⁰⁶ In 1712, Peter I made Saint Petersburg, a city replete with Western European architecture, the

¹⁰⁴ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *A Country Study: Russia*. Kohut, Zenon E. and David M. Goldfrank. "Chapter 1. Historical Setting: Early History to 1917: Muscovy: Expansion and Westernization." July 1996. [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+ru0019\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+ru0019))

¹⁰⁵ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. Raeff, Marc. "Russia: History: The 18th Century: The Reign of Peter I [the Great; 1689-1725]: Peter's Youth and Early Reign." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia/213966/History#>

¹⁰⁶ *Russia & Belarus*, 4th Ed. Richmond, Simon. "St. Petersburg [p. 225]." 2006. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications.

capital as part of his drive for Westernization.¹⁰⁷ In 1721, after the successful completion of the Great Northern War, Peter I took on the title of emperor, thus inaugurating the Russian Empire. It was during this time that he became known as Peter the Great.¹⁰⁸

Peter's many state projects, including the construction of Saint Petersburg, the reorganization of governmental bureaucracy, and a modernization of the country's military organization, were financed by a bevy of taxes, including one on beards.¹⁰⁹ Metallurgical, naval construction, glass, and textile industries often using forced labor, were developed as a means of modernizing the Russian economy beyond its primitive agricultural roots.^{110, 111}

The Era of Palace Revolutions

Peter I died in 1725, and as he left no chosen successor, a tumultuous period marked by uncertain leadership, frequent coups, and puppet tsars followed. One exception in this era was the 20-year reign of Empress Elizabeth, Peter I's daughter. Like her father, Elizabeth desired to Westernize Russian culture. During her rule, the Academy of Fine Arts and Moscow State University were founded, state controls over economic matters were gradually loosened, and various political alliances were formed with European powers. (The latter development ultimately drew Russia into the Seven Years' War in 1757).^{112,113}



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons
Elizabeth Empress

The coup that brought Catherine II (the Great) to power marked the end of the Era of Palace Revolutions. Catherine was the German wife of Tsar Peter III, a nephew of Empress Elizabeth who succeeded her upon the Empress's death in 1762. Peter III proved to be very unpopular, particularly because he was raised in a German Lutheran

¹⁰⁷ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *A Country Study: Russia*. Kohut, Zenon E. and David M. Goldfrank. "Chapter 1. Historical Setting: Early History to 1917: Early Imperial Russia: Peter the Great and the Russian Empire." July 1996. [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+ru0020\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+ru0020))

¹⁰⁸ MSN Encarta. "Russia. VII. History of Russia. G.3. Peter I and Catherine II." 2008. http://encarta.msn.com/text_761569000_61/Russia.html

¹⁰⁹ *Russia & Belarus*, 4th Ed. "History: Peter's Legacy [p. 41]." 2006. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications.

¹¹⁰ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. Raeff, Marc. "Russia: History: The 18th Century: The Reign of Peter I [the Great; 1689-1725]: The Petrine State." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia/213966/History#>

¹¹¹ MSN Encarta. "Russia. VII. History of Russia. G.3. Peter I and Catherine II." 2008. http://encarta.msn.com/text_761569000_61/Russia.html

¹¹² Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *A Country Study: Russia*. Kohut, Zenon E. and David M. Goldfrank. "Chapter 1. Historical Setting: Early History to 1917: Early Imperial Russia: The Era of Palace Revolutions." July 1996. [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+ru0020\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+ru0020))

¹¹³ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. Raeff, Marc. "Russia: History: The 18th Century: Peter I's Successors (1725-1762): Elizabeth (1741-1762)." 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia/213966/History#>

environment and was therefore perceived as an outsider by many Russians. He reinforced this image through a number of actions, including the institution of Prussian drills upon the Russian military and the establishment of a military alliance with Prussia. This came at a time when Russia was on the verge of defeating Prussian forces in the Seven Years' War.¹¹⁴ It is believed by some that Catherine helped engineer the coup that removed her husband from power and transformed her from Empress Consort to Empress Catherine II of Russia.¹¹⁵

Catherine II

Unlike her husband, Catherine II proved dedicated to her adopted country. Her 34 years of rule saw a major expansion of Russian lands, including the incorporation of a large portion of Poland. (This occurred when Russia, Prussia, and Austria partitioned the weakened country among them during the latter part of the 18th century.) Some of these new lands included areas that were formerly part of Kievan Rus, but had come under western domination during the Mongol invasions.¹¹⁶ Perhaps even more strategic to Russian interests was the annexation of many of Ukraine's Black Sea coastal lands, including Crimea. Odessa was established as the key Russian port on the Black Sea; it later became a crucial outlet for Russia's 19th century grain trade.¹¹⁷



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons
Katharina-II- The Great

Many of Catherine II's internal reforms followed the policies initiated by Peter the Great. The nation was divided into provinces and districts based on population statistics, and the new local governmental entities were given expanded administrative responsibilities. The elite of Russian society increasingly reflected Western economic, intellectual, and cultural ideas and traditions, but much of the country's population was little affected by these changes. In particular, the nation's peasants continued to suffer under a serf system, which fueled resentments that occasionally boiled over into brief rebellions. In 1773–74, one such revolt led to a strengthening of the serf laws and an abolishment of the autonomy of the southern Cossack regions.^{118,119}

¹¹⁴ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *A Country Study: Russia*. Kohut, Zenon E. and David M. Goldfrank. "Chapter 1. Historical Setting: Early History to 1917: Early Imperial Russia: The Era of Palace Revolutions." July 1996. [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+ru0020\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+ru0020))

¹¹⁵ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. Oldenbourg-Idalie, Zoé. "Catherine II: Origins and Early Experience." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/99597/Catherine-II#>

¹¹⁶ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. Raeff, Marc. "Russia: History: The 18th Century: The Reign of Catherine II (the Great; 1762–96): Expansion of the Empire." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia/213966/History#>

¹¹⁷ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *A Country Study: Russia*. Kohut, Zenon E. and David M. Goldfrank. "Chapter 1. Historical Setting: Early History to 1917: Early Imperial Russia: Imperial Expansion and Maturation: Catherine II." July 1996. [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+ru0021\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+ru0021))

¹¹⁸ MSN Encarta. "Russia. VII. History of Russia. G.3. Peter I and Catherine II." 2008. http://encarta.msn.com/text_761569000__61/Russia.html

The Early 19th Century

After Catherine II died in 1796, her son, Paul I, briefly ascended to the throne. His capricious and unstable policies quickly created many enemies within the military and the Russian nobility. Paul I was assassinated in a coup in 1801 and replaced by his son, Alexander I, who ruled until his death in 1825. Militarily, Alexander's reign was a relative high point for Russia. Most notably, this period included the successful repulsion of Napoleon's invading forces in 1812, when the brutal Russian winter, combined with Russia's "scorched-earth" tactics, left Napoleon's forces disastrously exposed during their retreat from Moscow.



Nicholas I, Alexander I's younger brother, ruled for 30 years after his brother died in December 1825. Nicholas I initially encountered and ultimately prevailed against a failed coup attempt engineered by a group of military officers known as the Decembrists, who hoped to make Russia a constitutional monarchy. His response to the numerous nationalist revolutions that swept through Europe during his period of rule was to institute tight censorship controls over the populace and to create the Third Department, a secret security force that investigated and imprisoned "state criminals."¹²⁰ Nicholas I also used Russia's military to support the monarchies that were under siege in other parts of Europe, thus making him the symbol of reactionary autocracy across much of the European continent. Toward the end of his rule, Nicholas I's political miscalculations resulted in Russia single-handedly fighting the Crimean War against the Ottoman Empire, which had the support of French, British, and Sardinian forces. The Crimean conflict, which had not yet concluded when Nicholas I died in 1855, was a debacle for Russia, and its fallout ultimately strengthened the hand of Russian reformers in the coming years.¹²¹ It was also a very expensive war to finance, and it precipitated an economic crisis following its conclusion. As a result, Russia was later forced to sell its Alaskan territories to the United States for USD 7.2 million in 1867.¹²²

Reform Efforts

Tsar Alexander II, in contrast to his father, Nicholas I, was a reformer in spirit, at least in the early years of his reign. He lifted some of the censorship restrictions, modernized the army and communications system, and introduced a legal system based on European

¹¹⁹ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *A Country Study: Russia*. Kohut, Zenon E. and David M. Goldfrank. "Chapter 1. Historical Setting: Early History to 1917: Early Imperial Russia: Imperial Expansion and Maturation: Catherine II." July 1996. [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?fd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+ru0021\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?fd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+ru0021))

¹²⁰ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Third Department." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/592355/Third-Department#>

¹²¹ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Nicholas I." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/414059/Nicholas-I#>

¹²² *Russia & Belarus*, 4th Ed. "History [p. 46]." 2006. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications.

models. At the local level, a new system of provincial- and county-level elected assemblies, known as *zemstvos*, were given powers to levy taxes for use on roads, schools, and other social services.

Perhaps the most important reform, however, and certainly the most controversial, affected Russia's large peasant class. In 1861, despite strong protests from Russian landowners, Tsar Alexander II enacted the Emancipation Act, which effectively ended serfdom in Russia. As he stated to Moscow nobility in March 1856, "it is better to abolish serfdom from above than to wait until the serfs begin to liberate themselves from below."¹²³ Unfortunately, the benefits of the freedom given to the Russian peasants were somewhat negated by the compromises that were made in constructing its terms: former serfs were forced to pay "redemption payments" to the government to compensate the financial losses of their former landowners, and the plots of land that the peasants were then able to buy were often either overpriced (in the north) or very small (in southern areas where the land was more valuable).¹²⁴



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons
Coronation of Tsar Alexander II

Rather than reducing the threat of rebellion, the emancipation of the serfs seemed to escalate resentments against the tsar's authority. Youths from the cities, influenced by socialist ideas from the West, traveled to the countryside in the 1870s to incite the peasants to revolt. These early attempts at revolutionary action were ultimately put down by the government. Thereafter, a terrorist faction of revolutionaries known as *Narodnaya Volya* ("The People's Will") initiated several assassination attempts against Alexander II before they ultimately succeeded with a deadly bomb attack on the tsar in 1881.^{125, 126}

Alexander III

Tsar Alexander III, the son of Alexander II, accelerated the process of Russification during his 13-year rule. Schools began teaching solely in Russian, publications in certain foreign languages were forbidden, and some groups were subject to various forms of governmental persecution, including forced relocation. One group in particular—the Jews—had already been mostly confined to an



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons
Alexander III

¹²³ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. Seton-Watson, Hugh, Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, and Dominic Lieven. "Russia: History: Russia from 1801 to 1917: From Alexander II to Nicholas II: Emancipation and Reform." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia#>

¹²⁴ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. Seton-Watson, Hugh, Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, and Dominic Lieven. "Russia: History: Russia from 1801 to 1917: From Alexander II to Nicholas II: Emancipation and Reform." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia#>

¹²⁵ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. Seton-Watson, Hugh; and Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, Dominic Lieven. "Russia: History: Russia from 1801 to 1917: From Alexander II to Nicholas II: Revolutionary Activities." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia#>

¹²⁶ About.com. Zalman, Amy. "Narodnaya Volya (The People's Will, Russia.)" 2008. <http://terrorism.about.com/od/groupsleader1/p/NarodnayaVolya.htm>

area of the western Russian Empire on the orders of Catherine II. (This occurred from 1784 to 1793, following the partition of Poland.) Restrictions on Jewish settlements in this so-called Pale of Settlement became even tighter during Alexander III's rule.¹²⁷ Underlying the Russification policy was the fear that the expanding empire, which increasingly encompassed a wide assortment of ethnic groups practicing various faiths and languages, could not hold together unless it was unified by culture and language.

The regime of Alexander II is often described as a counter-reactionary response to that of his father. Some of the policies that were pursued or encouraged led to increasing radicalism within segments of the Russian populace. During Alexander III's reign, several of the reforms instituted by his father were either reversed or significantly restricted. In addition, a wave of violent attacks (*pogroms*) against Jews in the early 1880s reignited ethnic tensions that had subsided somewhat during the previous two decades. Harsh conditions in the factories of Russia's rapidly accelerating heavy industries spurred worker unrest. Despite a famine in 1891–92 that led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands in the southern rural areas of Russia, the government moved ahead on expansionist programs in Asia that resulted in extensive foreign loans and heavy taxation of Russia's peasantry. The most notable of these programs was the initial construction of the Trans-Siberian Railroad.^{128, 129}

Revolutions and Civil War

Prologue to Revolution

Alexander III died in 1894 and was succeeded by his son, Nicholas II, who would later be known as Russia's last tsar. Nicholas II inherited many festering problems from his father's reign, and he was neither ideologically inclined nor sufficiently strong-willed to pursue policies that might have led to different outcomes. Numerous political parties, many of a radical bent, formed in opposition to the government's policies and its lack of action to address pressing social conditions.¹³⁰



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons
Nicholas II marries Alix of Hesse

¹²⁷ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Pale." 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/439316/pale#ref=ref285758>

¹²⁸ Department of History, Loyola University, New Orleans. Lilly, David P. "The Russian Famine of 1891–92." 1995. <http://www.loyno.edu/history/journal/1994-5/Lilly.htm>

¹²⁹ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *A Country Study: Russia*. Kohut, Zenon E. and David M. Goldfrank. "Chapter 1. Historical Setting: Early History to 1917: Transformation of Russia in the Nineteenth Century: Witte and Accelerated Industrialization." July 1996. [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+ru0026\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+ru0026))

¹³⁰ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *A Country Study: Russia*. Kohut, Zenon E. and David M. Goldfrank. "Chapter 1. Historical Setting: Early History to 1917: Transformation of Russia in the Nineteenth Century: Radical Political Parties Develop." July 1996. [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+ru0026\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+ru0026))

In 1904, Russia entered yet another ill-advised war, this time with Japan. The Russians were defeated the following year, further fueling the dissatisfaction sweeping across the nation. In January 1905, government troops fired upon a crowd of striking workers marching toward the Winter Palace, thus triggering a revolt known as the Russian Revolution of 1905. Armed uprisings quickly spread across the empire. Later that year, the tsar, facing a general strike that threatened to create even further instability, issued the October Manifesto, which conceded basic civil liberties and the creation of a popularly-elected national parliament (known as the Duma). These concessions were “too little, too late” for some revolutionaries, but the army’s loyalty held and the insurrection was crushed in December.¹³¹

Several Dumas were elected and dissolved by the government over the next few years, as the two sides continued to quarrel over the extent to which the governmental reforms would be effected. At the heart of this conflict was the tsar’s unwillingness to concede autocratic rule. As the government increasingly modified the electoral system to ensure a more conservative Duma (one in closer alignment with the government’s positions), the Duma itself became less representative of Russian society.¹³²

World War I and the February Revolution

Russia was swept into World War I along with most of the rest of Europe. Unfortunately for Russia, however, its empire bordered three of the four Central Power nations (Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire). After some initial military successes at the beginning of the war, the Russian army suffered reversals in 1915. At this point,

Nicholas II traveled to the front to take personal control of the army, leaving the day-to-day government under the control of Tsaritsa Alexandra. Meanwhile, in Saint Petersburg, rumors swirled about the unusual influence over church and state wielded by Grigory Rasputin, a mystic faith healer who was treating the tsar’s hemophiliac son and heir, Alexei. Rasputin was murdered by a group of Russian nobles in December 1916, but before his death, he became a lightning rod for criticism against the royal family. This situation further weakened support for the tsar as the Russian Revolution approached.

The Russian Revolution of 1917 occurred in two stages. In February, the economic and social burdens borne by the Russian populace during the three years of World War I



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons
October Revolution First Day Postmark

¹³¹ MSN Encarta. “Russia. VII. History of Russia. G.9.a. The 1905 Revolution.” 2008. http://encarta.msn.com/text_761569000_61/Russia.html

¹³² Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *A Country Study: Russia*. Kohut, Zenon E. and David M. Goldfrank. “Chapter 1. Historical Setting: Early History to 1917: The Last Years of the Autocracy: The Stolypin and Kokovtsov Governments.” July 1996. [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+ru0028\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+ru0028))

coalesced into a leaderless, spontaneous series of riots and strikes.¹³³ Unlike the military response of 1905, however, the Russian army refused to intervene on behalf of the tsar, resulting in the almost immediate collapse of the imperial government. A Provisional Government consisting of Duma representatives was quickly formed and given a mandate to rule until a new government could be established by a democratic parliament in January 1918.^{134, 135}

The October Revolution

Two factions of Marxism existed in pre- and post-revolutionary Russia. The more radical group, the Bolsheviks, was led by Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov (better known by his pseudonym, Lenin). The Bolsheviks favored violent overthrow of the Russian government. A more moderate wing, represented by the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionary party, was the most powerful group in Petrograd (the name of Saint Petersburg after the beginning of World War I). Lenin, long an exile from Russia, returned to Petrograd in April 1917 and began extolling Russia's need for a *soviet* republic—in essence, a dictatorship of the proletariat masses that excluded the propertied classes. Ideally, such a government would replace the parliamentary democracy, which would, in Lenin's view, be a dictatorship of the propertied minority.¹³⁶



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons
October Revolution

In late October 1917, an armed group of Bolsheviks seized government buildings in Petrograd and overthrew the Provisional Government. By March of the following year, they consolidated control of the government, renamed themselves the Communist Party, signed a peace treaty with Germany that relinquished most of the Russian territories in the far western part of the old empire, and moved the capital to Moscow. Lenin, as head of the Party's Central Committee, was the governmental leader. Among the other prominent Communist Party officials was Leon Trotsky, who was given command of the hastily created Red Army. The Red Army fought against the "White" Russian opposition to Communist rule during the civil war that broke out in 1918 and continued to 1921. During the civil war, harsh economic and political measures were instituted, partly to support the Red Army effort and partly to quickly initiate the social engineering goal of a classless society.¹³⁷ (Such measures have since been collectively labeled "War

¹³³ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *A Country Study: Russia*. Skallerup, Thomas and James P. Nichol. "Chapter 2. Historical Setting: 1917 to 1991: Revolutions and Civil War: The February Revolution." July 1996. [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+ru0032\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+ru0032))

¹³⁴ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. McCauley, Martin and Dominic Lieven. "Russia: History: Soviet Russia: After the Monarchy." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia#>

¹³⁵ Emayzine.com. Mosely, Philip E. "Russian Revolution of 1917." No date. <http://www.emayzine.com/lectures/russianrev.html>

¹³⁶ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Vladimir Ilich Lenin." 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/335881/Vladimir-Ilich-Lenin#ref=ref360184>

¹³⁷ *Russia & Belarus*, 4th Ed. "History [p. 51]." 2006. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications.

Communism.”) By 1921, as the civil war came to a close, Lenin declared a New Economic Policy, which eliminated some of the most severe policies of the previous three years and re-instituted some forms of capitalism.

The Soviet Era

The Ascent of Stalin

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.) was established in 1922. That same year, Lenin, the architect of the Russian Revolution, suffered the first of several strokes that would remove him from day-to-day active control. As his health declined, a power struggle began as leading Communist Party figures maneuvered to succeed him. Lenin, for his part, voiced concerns toward the end of his life about Josef Stalin, the General Secretary of the Communist Party, who had used his position to appoint his supporters within the party structure. Stalin, a native Georgian, was, in Lenin’s opinion, not sufficiently sensitive to the non-Russian republics within the Soviet Union and had used heavy-handed tactics to force them to join.



Lenin died in January 1924. Trotsky, who to outsiders had appeared to be Lenin’s natural successor, was increasingly marginalized within the party, and by 1929 he had been forced into exile. Trotsky eventually relocated to Mexico, where he was assassinated by Stalin’s agents in 1940.¹³⁸ Stalin methodically eliminated his opponents for Party power by forming several alliances of convenience, and by 1930 he was fully in control of the Politburo, the Communist Party’s policy-making committee.

Shortly after consolidating power, Stalin instituted plans to rapidly increase the Soviet Union’s industrial might. An ambitious Five-Year Plan was initiated in 1929 to quadruple industrial output, particularly in non-consumer-related sectors such as power plants, mineral extraction, steel production, and railways.¹³⁹ Under the new plan, agricultural production was collectivized. This system required groups of farmers to pool their land and resources and to meet production quotas given by the state. The more prosperous peasant farmers, known as kulaks, generally resisted these new measures. Initially, the kulaks were either fined or their lands were expropriated, but the penalties for resistant kulaks quickly evolved into deportations to Siberia and other Arctic regions. The collectivization process resulted in a massive peasant migration to the cities, deadly

¹³⁸ *Russia & Belarus*, 4th Ed. “History [p. 53].” 2006. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications.

¹³⁹ *Russia & Belarus*, 4th Ed. “History [p. 53].” 2006. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications.

famines in grain-growing areas such as Ukraine, and a sharp decline in agricultural output in the country.^{140, 141}

Stalin's Purges

Stalin's reign in the 1930s and 1940s is widely associated with an ideological cleansing that became known as the Great Purge or Great Terror. During this period, a huge number of suspected disloyal Communist Party members, intellectuals, and other "enemies of the people" were either directly executed or sent to deadly work camps in Siberia. Most estimates of the total people killed during this purge number in the millions. Victims were often taken from their homes in the middle of the night by agents of the NKVD, a secret police organization that was a forerunner to the KGB. More visible were the "show trials" of ex-Bolshevik leaders who had fallen from favor, all of whom were later executed. Of the first nine full members of the Communist Party Politburo elected between 1919 and 1924, only two—Lenin and Stalin—were to die natural deaths. The remaining members were "purged" between 1936 and 1940.¹⁴²



World War II

In late August 1939, Germany and the Soviet Union signed a Nonaggression Pact containing secret protocols that divided the regions between Germany and the USSR into "spheres of influence." Under these protocols, Germany received much of Poland and Russia acquired the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania), certain regions of eastern Poland (which would be annexed to Ukraine and Belorussia), and Finland. After Germany invaded Poland from the west on 1 September, the Soviet Union later invaded from the east. Russia secured easternmost Poland and the other regions in its "sphere," with the



¹⁴⁰ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Union of Soviet Socialist Republics" The U.S.S.R. from the Death of Lenin to the Death of Stalin: The Party Versus the Peasants." 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/614785/Union-of-Soviet-Socialist-Republics#>

¹⁴¹ *Russia & Belarus*, 4th Ed. "History [p. 53]." 2006. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications.

¹⁴² Cyber USSR. Cunningham, Hugo S. "Politburo Members 1919 to approx 1940." 1998.
<http://www.cyberussr.com/rus/polit-hist.html>

exception of Finland, which largely fought the much greater Soviet forces to a draw.^{143,}
144

Ultimately, Germany ignored the Nonaggression Pact and invaded Russia in June 1941 in a blitzkrieg known as Operation Barbarossa. The Soviet Union suffered major losses of territory, military personnel, and equipment in the first months after the German invasion. Leningrad (now Saint Petersburg) was besieged for almost two-and-a-half years, with hundreds of thousands of lives lost in the process. To the south, Stalingrad (now Volgograd) was the site of a key battle that halted the German army in its push toward the oilfields of the southern Caucasus. Nearly two million German and Soviet troops died in what would be the deadliest battle of the entire war.^{145, 146} Eventually, the Soviet forces overcame the German army. As had happened many times in the past during foreign invasions of Russia, the severe Russian winter assisted the Soviet army's defense. The Soviet Union's heroic efforts during World War II helped unify the country in a way that probably no other event ever did.¹⁴⁷ Even today in post-Soviet Russia, it is referred to as the Great Patriotic War.

Post World War II

As German forces began crumbling during the latter stages of World War II, much of Eastern Europe was liberated by Soviet troops heading westward. This region would remain within the Soviet sphere of influence for the next four decades. The nations of Poland, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Albania, Yugoslavia, and the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) all adopted Communist governments under Soviet influence. They also eventually aligned themselves militarily in the Warsaw Pact, an eastern counterpart to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) of Western Europe and North America. The boundary between Eastern and Western Europe came to be known as the "Iron Curtain," a term first used by Winston Churchill in a 1946 speech.¹⁴⁸

Several events during the late 1940s heightened tensions between the two sides. In 1948, a blockade of West Berlin by Soviet forces in eastern Germany created a crisis in which

¹⁴³ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Union of Soviet Socialist Republics" The U.S.S.R. from the Death of Lenin to the Death of Stalin: Foreign Policy, 1928-1940." 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/614785/Union-of-Soviet-Socialist-Republics#>

¹⁴⁴ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *A Country Study: Russia*. Skallerup, Thomas and James P. Nichol. "Chapter 2. Historical Setting: 1917 to 1991: The War Years: Prelude to War." July 1996.

[http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+ru0040\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+ru0040))

¹⁴⁵ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Battle of Stalingrad." 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/562720/Battle-of-Stalingrad#>

¹⁴⁶ *Russia & Belarus*, 4th Ed. Vorhees, Mora. "Volga Region: Stalingrad [p. 424]." 2006. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications.

¹⁴⁷ *Russia & Belarus*, 4th Ed. Vorhees, Mora. "Volga Region: Stalingrad [p. 424]." 2006. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications.

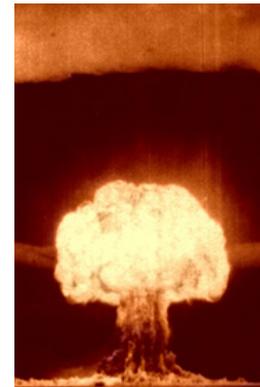
¹⁴⁸ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *A Country Study: Russia*. Skallerup, Thomas and James P. Nichol. "Chapter 2. Historical Setting: 1917 to 1991: Reconstruction and Cold War: Onset of the Cold War." July 1996. [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+ru0042\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+ru0042))

supplies had to be airlifted into the city for a year. Following the blockade, Germany was formally divided into two countries, one aligned with the West and the other with the East. In 1949, the Soviet Union exploded their first atomic bomb, ushering in an era of escalating nuclear arsenals in both the East and West.

Khrushchev and the Post-Stalin Thaw

Stalin died in 1953, allegedly of natural causes, although the exact circumstances are somewhat controversial. After his death, a power struggle between rival Politburo members ensued.^{149, 150} Ultimately, Nikita Khrushchev, a long-time Stalin ally involved with the purges in the 1930s, emerged victorious. Khrushchev, however, was no Stalin, as he made evident in a secret speech during the 20th Party congress in 1956, when, for the first time, Stalin was vilified for the crimes committed during his tenure. This speech marked the beginning of a so-called “de-Stalinization” period in the Soviet Union. During this time, prisoners in the Soviet Gulag—the work camps in Siberia that had become virtual death camps for millions—were released and the camps closed.

Khrushchev proved to be a modest reformer, although the Soviet system did not allow for major changes at that time. Nevertheless, the production of consumer goods increasingly became a priority after years of focusing on heavy industry. Khrushchev also pursued the decentralization of economic decision-making, a policy goal that many of his Party colleagues did not embrace. In the foreign policy arena, the Soviet Union became less confrontational and more open to coexistence with the West than during the later Stalin years. Despite this thaw in foreign relations, however, the Khrushchev years are remembered most notably for two highly publicized East-West confrontations—the Cuban missile crisis and the construction of the Berlin Wall.¹⁵¹ Relations with China, the Soviet Union’s neighbor and competing Communist superpower, declined precipitously during the Khrushchev era. Led by Mao Zedong, the Chinese government criticized the Soviets as “revisionists” due to their increasing willingness to negotiate with the West. A major demonstration of such was the Soviet government’s cooperation with the Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty in 1963, which banned nuclear testing in the atmosphere, outer space, and under water.¹⁵²



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons
Soviet Atomic Test , 1953

¹⁴⁹ BBC News, International Version. Krushelnycky, Leonida. “The Mystery of Stalin’s Death.” 24 February 2003. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/2793501.stm>

¹⁵⁰ *Russia & Belarus*, 4th Ed. “History [p. 57].” 2006. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications.

¹⁵¹ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. Gibney, Frank B. “Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev.” 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/316972/Nikita-Sergeyevich-Khrushchev#>

¹⁵² Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation, U.S. Department of State. “Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and Under Water.” No date. <http://www.state.gov/t/ac/trt/4797.htm>

Brezhnev, Andropov, and Chernenko

In 1963, a terrible grain harvest forced the Soviet Union to buy wheat from Canada.¹⁵³ At this point, Khrushchev had enough enemies within the upper reaches of the Party for this event to be the tipping point for his fall from power. Leonid Brezhnev, Khrushchev's eventual successor, proved less inclined to pursue a reformist agenda. Economic stagnation and increased repression were two of the hallmarks of his years in power. The Brezhnev era was also marked by a somewhat contradictory foreign policy with the West. While this period included the era of detente (relaxed relations between international superpowers) and the signing of the first Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT), the Soviet government continued low-level confrontation with the West via Soviet sponsorship of "wars of national liberation" in developing nations.^{154, 155, 156}



Brezhnev's health began to seriously decline in 1979, but he continued to be the face of Soviet rule until 1982. He was replaced by former KGB chief Yuri Andropov, who was responsible for suppressing dissent during the Brezhnev years. Andropov became ill almost immediately after completing his consolidation of power, and he was not seen in public from August 1983 until his death in February 1984.¹⁵⁷ Konstantin Chernenko, his 72-year-old successor, ruled for only a year before dying in office.

Perestroika and Glasnost

By the time of Chernenko's death, the chain of frail, aging Soviet leaders was becoming symbolic of the country's moribund economy. The day after Chernenko's death, the Politburo chose its youngest member, 54-year-old Mikhail Gorbachev, to be Chernenko's successor. After firmly grasping the reins of power, Gorbachev immediately began transferring reform-minded Party officials into high positions within the Party and government. One of these new emerging Party leaders was Aleksandr Yakovlev, who had effectively self-sabotaged his rapid ascent in the Party and been "exiled" to the Canadian ambassador post during the Brezhnev era.



¹⁵³ *Russia & Belarus*, 4th Ed. "History [p. 57]." 2006. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications.

¹⁵⁴ CNN.com. "CNN Cold War: Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev." No date.

<http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/cold.war/kbank/profiles/brezhnev/>

¹⁵⁵ *Russia & Belarus*, 4th Ed. "History [p. 57, 58]." 2006. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications.

¹⁵⁶ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Leonid Ilich Brezhnev." 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/79098/Leonid-Ilich-Brezhnev#>

¹⁵⁷ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Yuri Vladimirovich Andropov." 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/24180/Yury-Vladimirovich-Andropov#>

(He was exiled after writing an article criticizing Russian nationalism and anti-Semitism within the Party.)¹⁵⁸ Gorbachev, during a visit to Canada prior to his coming to power in Moscow, shared a particularly candid conversation with Yakovlev that would ultimately lead to Yakovlev's return to the Soviet Union and his later role as Gorbachev's senior advisor. Later, Yakovlev recalled this remarkable conversation:

At first we kind of sniffed around each other and our conversations didn't touch on serious issues. . . I somehow, for some reason, threw caution to the wind and started telling him about what I considered to be utter stupidities in the area of foreign affairs, especially about those SS-20 missiles that were being stationed in Europe and a lot of other things. And he did the same thing. . . He frankly talked about the problems in the internal situation in Russia. He was saying that under these conditions, the conditions of dictatorship and absence of freedom, the country would simply perish.¹⁵⁹

Two words—*perestroika* (“restructuring”) and *glasnost* (“openness”)—came to signify the thrust of the reforms that Gorbachev and Yakovlev later attempted (unsuccessfully) to apply to the Soviet system. *Perestroika* involved instituting market reforms to revive the ailing economy, but the reforms met resistance from the Party structure and failed to substantially move the country from a command economy to a mixed economy. Gorbachev's *glasnost* policy promoted an opening up of the political system to overcome the bureaucratic inertia that had become an obstacle to change. As a result, freedom of speech and democratic elections became part of Soviet society.

The Last Years of the Soviet Union

Gorbachev's reforms, particularly those concerning the economy, were generally viewed more positively in the West than they were in the Soviet Union. As the economy slipped toward chaos, Gorbachev found himself positioned between Party hard-liners who wished to return to a fully centralized command economy, and others, such as Moscow Communist Party leader Boris Yeltsin, who favored a full market economy rather than the “half-measures” that the partial reforms of *perestroika* had produced.¹⁶⁰ Meanwhile, reform movements in other nations of Eastern Europe arose and ushered in a wave of democratically elected non-Communist governments during the period of 1989–1990. Gorbachev agreed to the phased withdrawal of Soviet forces from these countries, thus marking the collapse of the Iron Curtain. Gorbachev was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize

¹⁵⁸ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Alexsandr Nikolayevich Yakovlev.” 2008.
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/651302/Aleksandr-Nikolayevich-Yakovlev#>

¹⁵⁹ Institute of International Studies, University of California-Berkeley. Kreisler, Harry. “Shaping Russia's Transformation: A Leader of Perestroika Looks Back: Conversation with Aleksander Yakovlev.” 21 November 1996. <http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/Elberg/Yakovlev/yak-con4.html>

¹⁶⁰ MSN Encarta. “Boris Yeltsin. III. Early Career.” 2008.
http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761562873/boris_yeltsin.html

in October 1990 for “his leading role in the peace process which today characterizes important parts of the international community.”¹⁶¹

After 1988, the power of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union waned and grew less centralized. A new democratically elected body, the Congress of People’s Deputies, was created to choose the members of the Supreme Soviet, a legislative body that in the past had simply consisted of selected Party members who were “elected” in non-contested elections. During the previous Soviet era, the Supreme Soviet mostly rubber-stamped the policy directives of the Politburo, but the new Supreme Soviet was assigned true legislative powers. In 1990, the Congress of People’s Deputies selected Gorbachev to fill the newly created position of Soviet President.¹⁶² A year later, a referendum in the Russian republic provided the nation with its first democratically elected president; Boris Yeltsin was elected (by a substantial majority) to this position in June of 1991.¹⁶³



In August 1991, an ill-planned two-day coup was staged by members of the Party’s old guard. After the coup leaders placed Gorbachev under house arrest at his Crimean dacha, it was announced that Vice President Gennady Yanayev would assume Gorbachev’s responsibilities as Soviet President. A turning point came on the second day of the coup, when Yeltsin rallied opposition against the coup leaders at the Moscow White House. Huge crowds opposed to the coup gathered in Moscow and Saint Petersburg, and key military units that had been ordered to storm the White House refused to take action.

End Game

Events that transpired in the wake of the unsuccessful coup were swift and monumental. Yeltsin announced that all Russian property in the Soviet Union was, from that point, under the control of Russia. He also banned the Communist Party in Russia. Numerous Soviet republics declared their independence from the Soviet Union, and by December 1991, the Soviet Union was reduced to a loose alliance of former-Soviet States, which included Russia and became known as the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Without a country to lead, Gorbachev resigned on Christmas Day. On the same day, the Russian flag replaced the Soviet hammer-and-sickle at the grounds of the Kremlin in Moscow.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ NobelPrize.org. “Press Release: The Nobel Peace Prize 1990.” 15 October 1990.
http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1990/press.html

¹⁶² Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Mikhail Gorbachev.” 2008.
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/238982/Mikhail-Gorbachev#>

¹⁶³ MSN Encarta. “Boris Yeltsin. III. Early Career.” 2008.
http://uk.encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761562873/Yeltsin_Boris_Nikolayevich.html

¹⁶⁴ *Russia & Belarus*, 4th Ed. “History [p. 61–64].” 2006. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications.

Post-Soviet Russia

Economic Troubles

Russia's political and economic evolution since its emergence from the Soviet Union has been rife with problems. The government's transition to a market economy was characterized by an economic contraction that spanned 1992 to 1997. The enormous challenges of privatizing a command economy that had existed for 70 years are hard to overstate. Price controls were lifted, leading to inflationary pressures. Crime and corruption became rampant. A new class of super-wealthy oligarchs built business empires by purchasing controlling interests in key formerly state-run industries, such as oil.¹⁶⁵ The nation's industrial base was forced to shift its emphasis from defense and heavy-industry production to consumer-oriented goods. The factories that survived from the Soviet era often proved noncompetitive in the world economy due to their obsolete technology, excessive labor forces, and inordinate transportation costs for both shipping and receiving.¹⁶⁶

As the economic plight of the average Russian declined precipitously, Yeltsin and his government were put under tremendous political pressure. The tension erupted in a parliamentary revolt in 1993, during which the government declared a state of emergency and the military fired on the parliament building.¹⁶⁷ Nevertheless, Yeltsin maintained political capital, and aided to a large extent by the Russian oligarchs, he was re-elected to a second term as Russian president in 1996.

Chechnya

Russia's early years during the post-Soviet era were also marked by conflicts in several administrative regions that desired greater autonomy or complete independence. Foremost among these was Chechnya, a region located along the northern flank of the Greater Caucasus Mountains. At that time, this region had already established a long history of conflict with both the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. For example, Stalin, during World War II, exiled all Chechens to Siberia after accusing them of collaborating with Nazi Germany.



© Rama / Wikimedia
Chechen fighter in Grozny

¹⁶⁵ The Guardian. Mueller, Andrew. "What a Carve Up!" 3 December 2005.
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2005/dec/03/tvandradio.russia>

¹⁶⁶ MSN Encarta. Engelmann, Kurt E., W. Bruce Lincoln, Dominic Lieven, and Bruce Parrott. "Russia. VII. History of Russia. J.4. Economic Crisis." 2008.
http://encarta.msn.com/text_761569000__61/Russia.html

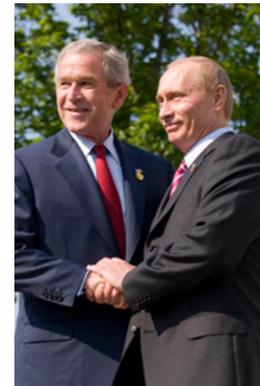
¹⁶⁷ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Russia: History: Post-Soviet Russia: The Yeltsin Presidency: Political and Social Changes." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia>

(The Chechens were later allowed to return to their homeland in 1957, following Stalin's death.)¹⁶⁸

In 1994, Russian troops entered Chechnya, which had seceded from the Russian Federation two years earlier. The Russian forces quickly became embroiled in a costly guerilla war, and they retreated from the area in 1997. A peace treaty was signed, but the ultimate status of Chechnya was left undecided. By 1999, Russian troops returned to Chechnya after the Russian government attributed a number of terrorist bombings in Moscow and other Russian cities to Chechen rebels. This stage of the conflict continued well into the regime of the new Russian president, Vladimir Putin. By 2008, the Chechen government was once again aligned with Russia, although attacks by the remaining resistance forces continued to periodically occur.¹⁶⁹

Putin and Medvedev

Vladimir Putin, a former Soviet foreign intelligence officer for the KGB, came to power in late 1999, when Boris Yeltsin resigned just before the conclusion of his second term as Russian President. Putin subsequently won two successive presidential terms of his own. Although he is currently no longer president, he continues to wield extensive power as prime minister under President Dmitri Medvedev, a Putin protégé who was elected in 2008. (Putin was barred from running for a third successive term under the Russian Constitution.) During Putin's presidency, the Russian economy demonstrated steady growth in gross domestic product, and many Russians credit his leadership for this turnaround. He also garnered public support for his high-profile campaign to prosecute some of Russia's richest oligarchs. There were, however, charges that Putin was exercising targeted revenge against those oligarchs who had turned against him.^{170, 171} Fears were also expressed that, unlike his predecessor, Putin was not as firmly committed to freedoms of speech and the press.¹⁷²



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons
Presidents Bush & Putin, 2007

Putin's relations with the West have been mixed. The bloody fighting in Chechnya was a magnet for Western criticism until the terrorist attacks against the United States on 11 September 2001.¹⁷³ Russia's subsequent cooperation in international efforts to combat

¹⁶⁸ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Chechnya." 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/108244/Chechnya#>

¹⁶⁹ ABC News. Reuters. "Russian Officers Killed in Chechnya Attack." 24 August 2008.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/08/24/2344999.htm>

¹⁷⁰ The Guardian. Mueller, Andrew. "What a Carve Up!" 3 December 2005.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2005/dec/03/tvandradio.russia>

¹⁷¹ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. Lieven, Dominic. "Russia: History: Post-Soviet Russia: The Putin Presidency: The Oligarchs." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia#>

¹⁷² Encyclopædia Britannica Online. Lieven, Dominic. "Russia: History: Post-Soviet Russia: The Putin Presidency: The Oligarchs." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia#>

¹⁷³ BBC News. "Regions and Territories: Chechnya." 12 March 2008.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/country_profiles/2565049.stm

terrorism received praise from many Western leaders, including U.S. President George W. Bush.

More recently, the issue of potential NATO membership for former CIS countries lying adjacent to Russia's borders—most notably, Georgia and Ukraine—has increasingly strained Russia's relations with the West. In 2008, Russian troops entered South Ossetia and Abkhazia, two breakaway Georgian regions. According to the Russian government, the military campaign was launched to protect the Russian peace-keeping forces and the non-ethnic-Georgian citizenry in South Ossetia. The Georgian government disputed these claims and alleged that the Russian attack was unprovoked. Many in the West saw the Georgian incursion as a heavy-handed use of force designed to intimidate and signal Russia's limited willingness to accept further alliances between the former Soviet republic and its allies in the West. The short Georgian war fueled fears that Russia and the U.S. and its NATO allies could enter into a new era of Cold War-like geopolitics.

Economy

Introduction

Russia's economy has grown significantly in recent years as rising levels of oil and gas production and increasing prices for these commodities have spurred several years of strong GDP growth. The energy industries have also come under increasing government control during this period, as the result of a series of sometimes controversial actions by the Putin government to reassert sovereignty over Russian natural resources and lessen the influence of both foreign and Russian private interests. With the government once again in effective charge of its economic engine, the country has been able to use its resources to exert itself in matters of foreign economic policy.¹⁷⁴



Industry and Manufacturing

Russia's industrial output declined precipitously during the early post-Soviet years and is still struggling in many subsectors to achieve production levels comparable to the Soviet era. Industrial production dropped 45% between 1990 and 1998, with consumer goods, metallurgical, and textile industries suffering especially. As a further indication of Russia's industrial decline, the percentage of the nation's gross domestic product (GDP) from industry declined from 50% to 37% between 1991 and 2005.¹⁷⁵ However, Russian industry has made a modest rebound in the last three years as foreign investment has once again begun flowing into the country.

Excluding industries such as mining and energy resources development, most of Russia's industrial production comes from heavy industries and is primarily located in western Russia and the Ural Mountains region. With the exception of Novosibirsk, Tomsk, Irkutsk, and a few other cities, most of Siberia is relatively unindustrialized and survives on forestry, oil and gas extraction, and mining. To the west, the larger cities, such as Moscow, St. Petersburg, Nizhniy Novgorod, and Yekaterinburg, are where most of the processing industries are located; these urban areas have done relatively well compared to smaller cities. The Soviet model of industrialization often led to clusters of related industrial enterprises in



¹⁷⁴ CNN.com. Hooper, Simon. "Russia: A Superpower Rises Again." 13 December 2006. <http://edition.cnn.com/2006/WORLD/europe/12/12/russia.oil/index.html>

¹⁷⁵ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress: "Country Profile: Russia." October 2006. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Russia.pdf>

the same urban area, and this lack of industrial diversification has hurt some of the smaller and medium-sized cities during the post-Soviet era.¹⁷⁶

Russia manufactures a wide range of products, although not all of these are competitive on the world market. Machine-building industries include steam boilers and turbines, automobiles and farm machinery, equipment for the oil and gas industry, shipbuilding, machine tools, automation components, and durable consumer goods (e.g. refrigerators and other appliances).¹⁷⁷

Russia's large defense industry suffered during the early post-Soviet years as the country's defense budget shrank, but segments of it have been making a comeback in recent years as the national defense expenditures have once again begun to rise. Nonetheless, a shortage of skilled workers, aging production facilities, and production quality issues have made it difficult for many Russian military-equipment suppliers to meet their defense orders.¹⁷⁸

Agriculture

Russia's harsh climate makes much of its land unsuitable for farming. Less than 8% of Russia's land is farmed; most of this land is within the so-called "fertile triangle," a region that encompasses most of southern and central European Russia and small stretches of land in southwest Siberia.¹⁷⁹ Overall acreage devoted to farming has been steadily decreasing since the late 1980s. Farming production is still dominated in Russia by the remnants of the Soviet-era, state-run collective farms. Private farms tend to be much smaller and consist of less productive land.



© Kevin Hamm
Russian farm equipment

More than half of Russia's farmland is devoted to grains (wheat, barley, rye, oats), with fodder crops, including most of Russia's corn yield, grown on another one third or so of Russian farmlands.¹⁸⁰ Sunflower seeds are the dominant oilseed crop, and sugar beets are

¹⁷⁶ MSN Encarta. Parrott, Bruce. "Russia. V. Economy of Russia. D. Manufacturing." 2008. http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761569000_11/Russia.html

¹⁷⁷ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. Vodovozov, Sergey Arsentevich; and Richard Hellie, John C. Dewdney, Olga L. Medvedkov, Yuri V. Medvedkov. "Russia: Economy: Manufacturing: Machine Building." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia#>

¹⁷⁸ RIA Novosti. Petrov, Nikita. "Russian Defense Industry Still Faces Problems." 9 January 2008. <http://en.rian.ru/analysis/20080109/95840754.html>

¹⁷⁹ MSN Encarta. Parrott, Bruce. "Russia. V. Economy of Russia. G. Agriculture." 2008. http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761569000_11/Russia.html

¹⁸⁰ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. Vodovozov, Sergey Arsentevich; and Richard Hellie, John C. Dewdney, Olga L. Medvedkov, Yuri V. Medvedkov. "Russia: Economy: Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing: Agriculture." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia#>

grown for sugar processing. Potatoes and other vegetables are grown mostly on small private household plots.¹⁸¹

Russia's farm production varies widely from year to year owing to its sensitivity to weather conditions. Approximately 13% of planted winter grains will die before harvest in an average year. Severe winters increase this percentage significantly; whereas, mild winters lead to record harvests.

While some grains (mostly wheat and barley) and sunflower-seed oil are export crops, Russia's most valuable agricultural contribution to its trade balance is the wood and wood products from its vast forest reserves, the largest in the world.¹⁸² Only Canada generates more positive trade revenue from its forest products than Russia does.¹⁸³ Russia's forests constitute about one fifth of the world's total, representing an area nearly as large as the continental U.S. The Russian cold climate, however, inhibits rapid regrowth in logged areas. Nearly one third of Russia's original forests have already been harvested, a situation that led to legislation in the 1990s to slow down the rate of deforestation.¹⁸⁴

Fishing is another important segment of the Russian agricultural sector. Nearly one third of the world's canned fish and one fourth of its fresh and frozen fish are produced by Russia's fishing fleets and canneries.¹⁸⁵ Over half of Russia's fishing catch comes from the Pacific Ocean.¹⁸⁶

Banking and Currency

The Russian currency is the ruble (currency symbol: RUB), which is not to be confused with the ruble of the Soviet Union days. The latter currency was eliminated in 1993 as a means of separating Russia's currency from those of the former Soviet republics, thus enabling the Russian government to better control its supply. In 1995, inflation



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons
Russian coin

¹⁸¹ Foreign Agriculture Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. "Russia: Agricultural Overview." 5 September 2003. http://www.fas.usda.gov/pecad2/highlights/2005/03/Russia_Ag/index.htm

¹⁸² Encyclopædia Britannica Online. Vodovozov, Sergey Arsentevich; and Richard Hellie, John C. Dewdney, Olga L. Medvedkov, Yuri V. Medvedkov. "Russia: Economy: Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing: Forestry." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia#>

¹⁸³ International Trade Centre/World Trade Organization. "Trade Performance HS: Exports and Imports of Wood and Articles of Wood, Wood Charcoal of Azerbaijan (2006, in USD Thousands)." 2008. http://www.intracen.org/appli1/TradeCom/TP_TP_IC.aspx?IN=44&YR=2006&IL=44 Wood and articles of wood, wood charcoal

¹⁸⁴ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. Vodovozov, Sergey Arsentevich and Richard Hellie, John C. Dewdney, Olga L. Medvedkov, Yuri V. Medvedkov. "Russia: Economy: Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing: Forestry." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia#>

¹⁸⁵ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. Vodovozov, Sergey Arsentevich and Richard Hellie, John C. Dewdney, Olga L. Medvedkov, Yuri V. Medvedkov. "Russia: Economy: Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing: Fishing." 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia#>

¹⁸⁶ MSN Encarta. Parrott, Bruce. "Russia. V. Economy of Russia. I. Fishing." 2008 http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761569000_11/Russia.html

drove the exchange rate to over 5000 RUB per U.S. dollar (USD), which led to the institution of controls on how much the ruble's value could float. The financial crisis of 1998, however, forced the government to loosen these controls. Inflation once again caused the value of the ruble to tumble, but not as badly as it had been before 1995.¹⁸⁷ As of October 2008, the ruble was at an exchange rate of a little over 25 RUB per USD.¹⁸⁸

Russia's banking industry has developed rapidly out of necessity to keep pace with the restructuring of Russia's monetary system. Under the Soviet Union's command economy, money was more a tool for accounting than anything else. The monetary value of goods and services was set by the government rather than the market forces of supply and demand, and artificial barriers were created to keep the ruble out of international circulation.

After Russia became an independent country, the Central Bank of Russia (CBR) took control of the nation's money supply and the regulation of the commercial banking industry. Thousands of private banks quickly sprang up as the CBR, trying to kick-start the private financial sector, offered lending rates far below the inflation rate. Many of these private banks later failed when the CBR instituted more rational lending practices. Russian banks have had a difficult time attracting private deposits because many Russian people continue to distrust banks in general and keep their savings, often converted to dollars, within their homes.¹⁸⁹ However, in recent years deposits from the private sector have increased significantly, signaling a greater confidence in the Russian banking industry. The passing of legislation in 2003 that introduced a Deposit Insurance Agency for banks has been instrumental in helping to address some potential depositors' concerns about the security of bank deposits.^{190,191}

Trade

Russia's trade balance has been positive every year since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, primarily because of the large amount of export revenue that comes from its energy resources.¹⁹² Roughly 63% of Russia's export revenue in 2006 came from oil, gas, and coal.¹⁹³ Most of Russia's oil exports go to various parts of Europe either by pipeline

¹⁸⁷ MSN Encarta. Parrott, Bruce. "Russia. V. Economy of Russia. B. Currency, Banking, and Taxes. 2. Currency and Exchange Rate." 2008. http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761569000_10/Russia.html

¹⁸⁸ CoinMill.com. "Russian Ruble (RUB) Currency Exchange Rate Conversion Calculator." 29 September 2008. http://coinmill.com/RUB_calculator.html#USD=1

¹⁸⁹ MSN Encarta. Parrott, Bruce. "Russia. V. Economy of Russia. B. Currency, Banking, and Taxes. 1. Banking Reforms." 2008. http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761569000_9/Russia.html

¹⁹⁰ Kommersant. Grishina, Tatyana and Maksim Builov. "Banking 2000-2004." 7 June 2004. http://www.kommersant.com/tree.asp?rubric=3&node=27&doc_id=480923

¹⁹¹ Johnson's Russian List. Moscow Times. Naumenko, Larisa. "Fledgling Deposit Insurance Plan Takes Off." 2 November 2005. <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/9285-25.cfm>

¹⁹² RussiaExport.net. NAG Consulting Company/Intrade. "Foreign Trade of Russia." <http://www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~chegeo/index2.htm>

¹⁹³ International Trade Centre/World Trade Organization. "Trade Performance HS: Exports and Imports of Russian Federation (2006, in USD Thousands)." 2008.

http://www.intracen.org/appli1/TradeCom/TP_TP_CI.aspx

or by ship from the large oil ports at Primorsk on the Baltic Sea and Novorossiysk on the Black Sea. Most Eastern European countries receive the majority of their natural gas imports from Russia, while Western European nations such as Germany, Italy, and France get at least 20% of their natural gas imports from Russia.¹⁹⁴

Non-energy mineral resources are also a major contributor to Russia's trade surplus, especially iron and steel, aluminum, nickel, and copper. Other important export products providing a surplus are wood and wood products, fertilizers, organic chemicals, jet engines, nuclear reactor plants, raw diamonds, and wheat.¹⁹⁵ Russia's largest markets for exports are the Netherlands, Italy, Germany, China, and Ukraine.¹⁹⁶

Unlike Russia's main exports, most of which are natural resources, Russia's biggest imports by revenue are manufactured items, including various types of machinery, automobiles and tractors, electrical equipment, pharmaceuticals, and plastics. Several agricultural categories—especially meat and fruit—are also significant contributors to Russia's imports.¹⁹⁷ Germany, China, Ukraine, Japan, and Belarus are the leading importers of goods into Russia.

Russia's trade with the former Soviet republics, most of which are now part of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), underwent a period of transitions during the 1990s. For a while, the prices of goods traded continued to reflect the artificially low rates in place during the Soviet era, but over time many goods have reverted to market values. However, the structure is not in any way systematic; price values can still vary widely from one former Soviet republic to another.¹⁹⁸ For example, prices paid by CIS countries for Russian oil and natural gas are generally lower than the standard European prices.¹⁹⁹



¹⁹⁴ Energy Information Administration, U.S. Department of Energy. "Russia: Natural Gas." May 2008.

<http://www.eia.doe.gov/cabs/Russia/NaturalGas.html>

¹⁹⁵ International Trade Centre/World Trade Organization. "Trade Performance HS: Exports and Imports of Russian Federation (2006, in USD Thousands)." 2008.

http://www.intracen.org/appli1/TradeCom/TP_TP_CI.aspx

¹⁹⁶ International Trade Centre/World Trade Organization. "Trade Performance HS: Exports and Imports of Russian Federation – 00 All Industries (2006, in USD Thousands)." 2008.

[http://www.intracen.org/appli1/TradeCom/TP_TP_CI_P.aspx?IN=00&RP=643&YR=2006&IL=00 All industries&TY=T](http://www.intracen.org/appli1/TradeCom/TP_TP_CI_P.aspx?IN=00&RP=643&YR=2006&IL=00>All industries&TY=T)

¹⁹⁷ International Trade Centre/World Trade Organization. "Trade Performance HS: Imports of Russian Federation (2006, in USD Thousands)." 2008.

http://www.intracen.org/appli1/TradeCom/TP_IP_CI.aspx?RP=643&YR=2006

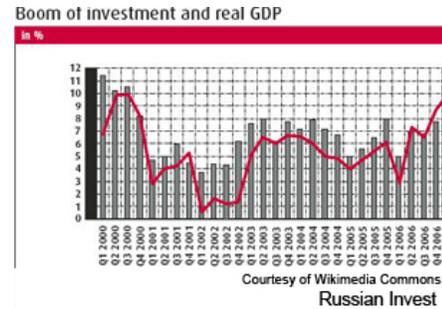
¹⁹⁸ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. Vodovozov, Sergey Arsentevich and Richard Hellie, John C. Dewdney, Olga L. Medvedkov, Yuri V. Medvedkov. "Russia: Economy: Trade." 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia#>

¹⁹⁹ RIA Novosti. Gazeta. "Russia's Loyal Allies Should Not Expect Large Economic Dividends." 18 September 2008. <http://en.rian.ru/analysis/20080918/116938574.html>

Investment

Russia experienced many years of stagnant and even negative amounts of foreign direct investment (FDI), with more money flowing out of the country than into it. But in recent years inward flows of international investment have surged, reaching a record USD 52 billion in 2007.²⁰⁰ More than 30% of this FDI in 2007 went into Russia's oil and gas sector.²⁰¹ Some of the rest of the "foreign" investment, however, may be Russian money being repatriated back to Russia. The fact that some of the largest percentages of European FDI coming into Russia from Europe are from Cyprus and Luxembourg, very small countries known as "offshore" financial centers that have been the largest recipients of outward Russian investment in recent years, would seem to support this conclusion.^{202,203}



A combination of three factors is expected to dramatically slow the flow of foreign money into the Russian economy, at least in the short term. First, there were sharp drops in the Russian stock market beginning in May 2008. Then in July 2008, the Russian government placed new caps on the allowable percentage of foreign ownership in Russian mineral exploration companies, restricting non-Russians to no more than 5% ownership in such enterprises. Finally, additional concern exists about Russia's foreign relations with the U.S. and Western Europe in the wake of the August 2008 war with Georgia.^{204, 205}

Energy and Mineral Resources

Energy

Russia's economic engine is its energy sector. The nation is the world's leader in natural gas reserves and natural gas exports. It holds the second largest coal reserves and has the eighth largest oil reserves as well as being the second largest oil exporter.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁰ Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. de Souza, Lucio Vinhas. "Foreign Direct Investment: Russia and the EU." 9 April 2008. www.oecd.org/dataoecd/12/43/40578459.pdf

²⁰¹ Energy Information Administration, U.S. Department of Energy. "Russia: Background." May 2008. <http://www.eia.doe.gov/cabs/Russia/Background.html>

²⁰² Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. de Souza, Lucio Vinhas. "Foreign Direct Investment: Russia and the EU." 9 April 2008. www.oecd.org/dataoecd/12/43/40578459.pdf

²⁰³ Deutsche Bank. "Russia's Outward Investment [p. 5]." www.dbresearch.com/PROD/DBR_INTERNET_EN-PROD/PROD000000000224964.pdf

²⁰⁴ The Times Online. Halpin, Tony and Carl Mortished. "Russia Halts Big Foreign Holdings in Minerals." 10 July 2008.

http://business.timesonline.co.uk/tol/business/industry_sectors/natural_resources/article4305593.ece

²⁰⁵ Business Week. Bush, Jason. "Georgia War Hits Russian Investment." 27 August 2008.

http://www.businessweek.com/globalbiz/content/aug2008/gb20080827_184469.htm

²⁰⁶ Energy Information Administration, U.S. Department of Energy. "Russia: Background." May 2008. <http://www.eia.doe.gov/cabs/Russia/Background.html>

Most of Russia's proven oil reserves of 60 billion barrels are located in western Siberia, between the Ural Mountains and the Central Siberian Plateau. Over 70% of Russia's oil production is exported as crude oil via the state-owned pipeline company, Transneft. Oil production has increased from its low point in the mid 1990s, but still is less than its peak in 1988.²⁰⁷ The Russian government levies very high taxes on exported oil, with slightly lower rates for older fields, which has led oil companies to try to squeeze as much oil as possible out of mature fields rather than develop untapped Russian oil reserves.²⁰⁸

Russia's natural gas industry is dominated by Gazprom, the state-owned company that produced 85% of Russia's natural gas in 2007. Despite Gazprom's near-monopolistic dominance, however, future growth in Russia's natural gas production is expected to come from independent companies, assuming that they are able to secure access to Gazprom's transmission system.²⁰⁹



Despite its extensive gas production, Russia has found itself in something of a gas crunch. Large domestic demand, extensive delivery contracts to foreign purchasers, and limited development of new fields has caused Gazprom to purchase discounted gas from Turkmenistan. In addition, it continues to honor the below-market prices it had historically offered to Russia's CIS neighbors.²¹⁰

Russia is the world's fifth largest producer of coal. During 2006, the nation itself consumed more than 80% of this production, with the remainder being exported.²¹¹ The government plans to increase Russia's number of coal-fired power plants and thus shift even more of the nation's coal towards domestic use. Currently, roughly 25% of Russia's electricity is generated at coal-fired plants, but the government hopes to raise that percentage to 40% by 2020, thereby making more natural gas available for export.²¹²

Russia also plans to increase its supply of electricity from nuclear plants. The country currently has 31 nuclear power plants, but most of them are aging.

²⁰⁷ Energy Information Administration, U.S. Department of Energy. "Russia: Oil." May 2008. <http://www.eia.doe.gov/cabs/Russia/Oil.html>

²⁰⁸ The Economist. "Trouble in the Pipeline." 8 May 2008. http://www.economist.com/business/displaystory.cfm?story_id=11332313

²⁰⁹ Energy Information Administration, U.S. Department of Energy. "Russia: Natural Gas." May 2008. <http://www.eia.doe.gov/cabs/Russia/NaturalGas.html>

²¹⁰ Washington Post. Victor, Nadejda M. "Russia's Gas Crunch." 6 April 2006. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/04/05/AR2006040501954.html>

²¹¹ Energy Information Administration, U.S. Department of Energy. "Russia: Natural Gas." May 2008. <http://www.eia.doe.gov/cabs/Russia/Coal.html>

²¹² Jamestown Foundation. *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 4, No. 113. Blagov, Sergei. "Russia Considers Increasing Coal Use to Facilitate Gas Exports." 11 June 2007. http://www.jamestown.org/edm/article.php?article_id=2372221

Minerals

Few if any nations can match Russia's mineral wealth and diversity. Russia produces a large percentage of the world's supply of minerals. The nation is the world's leading producer of nickel, most of which is mined near the northern Siberian city of Norilsk, one of the world's largest cities above the Arctic Circle.²¹³ Only China produces more aluminum than Russia.²¹⁴



United Company RUSAL is the largest aluminum and alumina producing company, generating nearly one eighth and one sixth of the world's supply of these products, respectively.²¹⁵ In iron production, Russia is fifth in the world, although its iron ore tends to be of low grade and its steel industry is hampered by long distances between the iron mines and the steel works.²¹⁶, ²¹⁷ Russia is also among the world's top five producers of lead, copper, and uranium ores.²¹⁸

Russia is also the world's largest producer of rough diamonds, both gemstones and industrial.²¹⁹ The diamond industry in Russia is controlled by ALROSA, which produces 20% of the world's rough diamonds.²²⁰ Most of the diamond mining sites are in Sakha Yakutia Republic in the rugged northeastern part of Russia.²²¹

Standard of Living

The standard of living in post-Soviet Russia varies significantly from region to region. During the Soviet era, there was a perpetual shortage of many consumer goods while many Communist Party elites lived in relative luxury, but for the vast majority of Russians the income disparity between the richest and poorest groups was relatively small. The extremes on the income scale have drifted significantly apart since

²¹³ U.S. Geological Survey, Department of the Interior. Levine, Richard M.; and Glenn J. Wallace. "2005 Minerals Yearbook: Commonwealth of Independent States [p. 7.12]." <http://minerals.usgs.gov/minerals/pubs/country/2005/myb3-2005-am-aj-bo-gg-kz-kg-md-rs-ti-tx-up-uz.pdf>

²¹⁴ Worldwatch Institute. Gardner, Gary. "Aluminum Production Continues Upward." 8 November 2007. <http://www.worldwatch.org/node/5458>

²¹⁵ United Company RUSAL. "Key Facts and Figures." 2008. <http://www.rusal.ru/en/facts.aspx>

²¹⁶ U.S. Geological Survey, Department of the Interior. Levine, Richard M.; and Glenn J. Wallace. "2005 Minerals Yearbook: Commonwealth of Independent States [p. 7.11–7.12]." <http://minerals.usgs.gov/minerals/pubs/country/2005/myb3-2005-am-aj-bo-gg-kz-kg-md-rs-ti-tx-up-uz.pdf>

²¹⁷ U.S. Geological Survey, Department of the Interior. "Iron Ore." 2008. http://minerals.usgs.gov/minerals/pubs/commodity/iron_ore/mcs-2008-feore.pdf

²¹⁸ MSN Encarta. Parrott, Bruce. "Russia. V. Economy of Russia. E. Mining." 2008. http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761569000_11/russia.html

²¹⁹ IndexMundi. U.S. Geological Survey, Department of the Interior. "Natural Diamond: World Production, by Country and Type." 2008. [http://www.indexmundi.com/en/commodities/minerals/diamond_\(industrial\)/diamond_\(industrial\)_t5.html](http://www.indexmundi.com/en/commodities/minerals/diamond_(industrial)/diamond_(industrial)_t5.html)

²²⁰ ALROSA. "ALROSA Profile." 2008. <http://eng.alrosa.ru/profile/> [retrieved 2 October 2008]

²²¹ U.S. Geological Survey, Department of the Interior. Levine, Richard M.; and Glenn J. Wallace. "2005 Minerals Yearbook: Commonwealth of Independent States [p. 7.12]." <http://minerals.usgs.gov/minerals/pubs/country/2005/myb3-2005-am-aj-bo-gg-kz-kg-md-rs-ti-tx-up-uz.pdf>

privatization began.²²² Much of Russia's wealthy and middle class live in Moscow, St. Petersburg, and other large Russian cities that have fared well in maintaining their employment base. The poor are generally in rural areas and in smaller cities that suffered significantly when their local industries could not survive in the post-Soviet economy.

On the United Nation's Human Development Index (a general measure of a nation's wellbeing based on GDP per capita, educational and literacy levels, and average life expectancy) Russia ranks 67th out of 177 countries. The nation is actually ranked higher than this on several criteria (literacy rate, educational level, GDP per capita), but its overall value suffers because of an average life expectancy that is more comparable to some of the much poorer countries of Asia, Africa, and South America. Interestingly, the low life expectancy is primarily a problem experienced by Russian men. The ratio of life expectancy for Russian women relative to Russian men is the highest in the world.²²³ Russia has an exceptionally high rate of deaths related to cardiovascular disease—four times that of Western Europe—and there is a high rate of alcoholism as well. One study found that 30% of male deaths and 17% of female deaths over the last 20 years were related to alcohol.²²⁴



Tourism

Foreign travel to Russia for tourism and business has rebounded significantly since a sharp drop that occurred in the immediate post-Soviet era. Many Russian visitors, however, are from former CIS countries who travel to Russia to visit friends or family or to make quick cross-border shopping trips.²²⁵ In 2006, Russia received 20.2 million foreign visitors, which made it the world's tenth most popular destination for foreign travelers. These visitors generated USD 7 billion in international tourist receipts, which left Russia in 30th place overall, lagging behind countries such as Croatia and Switzerland that had far fewer foreign visitors. This positive contribution to the Russian balance sheet was



²²² MSN Encarta. "Russia. III. People and Society of Russia. G. Social Structure." 2008. http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761569000_7/Russia.html

²²³ United Nations Development Programme. Human Development Report 2007. "Russian Federation: The Human Development Index—Going Beyond Income." 2008. http://hdrstats.undp.org/countries/country_fact_sheets/cty_fs_rus.html

²²⁴ Johnson's Russian List. Moscow Times. Abdullaev, Nabi. "Boosting Population a Vague Science." 11 July 2008. <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/2008-130-5.cfm>

²²⁵ WaytoRussia.net. "Understanding Russia through Numbers: Interesting Russian Statistics." 2005. <http://www.waytorussia.net/Features/Stats/>

more than offset, however, by the USD 18.8 billions spent by Russians traveling outside the country.²²⁶

Russia's most famous tourist attractions are in Moscow and St. Petersburg, the nation's two largest cities; most foreign tourists arrive in Russia at one of these two cities. Other tourist attractions include Novgorod and the Golden Ring of Kievan Rus' cities near Moscow, the Black Sea coast, and Lake Baikal in Siberia.²²⁷

Transportation

While the areas of European Russia adjacent to major population centers have a relatively dense transportation network, Russia's vast expanses to the east are not covered nearly as well. Railroads are the primary arteries to the main economic and urban areas in Siberia and the Far East; they carry most of the nation's freight and half of the nation's passenger travel. Most famous of the many rail routes is the Trans-Siberian Railroad, which connects eastern and western Russia via a route that extends across southern Siberia. A more recently built alternative to the Trans-Siberian Railroad is the Baikal-Amur Mainline (BAM), which also connects to Russia's Pacific coast, taking a more northerly route.



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons
Russian Train

Even though Russia is the largest country in the world by a factor of more than 2, its road system ranks at only sixth among nations.²²⁸ Terrain and climate make the building and maintenance of roads prohibitively expensive in some areas. Medium-sized cities such as Yakutsk are inaccessible by road or rail during parts of the year. In the case of Yakutsk, the sole road leading to the city becomes completely impassable during summer rainstorms and is frequently included in listings of the world's worst roads.²²⁹

The vast distances of Russia make air travel the preferred form of transportation within the country for those who can afford it. Aeroflot-Russian Airlines, the offshoot of the former Soviet national airline and in effect the national carrier of Russia, is the largest of the many airlines that now serve the Russian market.²³⁰ As elsewhere in the world, many of these airlines have been struggling to survive as oil prices and other costs make

²²⁶ United Nations World Tourism Organization. *UNWTO World Tourism Barometer*, Vol. 5, No. 2.

“Outbound Tourism: International Tourism Expenditure 2006 [p. 11].” June 2007

http://www.unwto.org/facts/eng/pdf/barometer/unwto_barom07_2_en.pdf

²²⁷ MSN Encarta. Parrott, Bruce. “Russia. V. Economy of Russia. K. Tourism.” 2008.

http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761569000_12/Russia.html

²²⁸ MSN Encarta. Parrott, Bruce. “Russia. V. Economy of Russia. L. Transportation.” 2008.

http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761569000_12/Russia.html

²²⁹ SSQQ.com Archer, Richard. “The Russian Highway from Hell.” January 2007.

<http://www.ssqq.com/ARCHIVE/vinlin27c.htm>

²³⁰ Kommersant. “Thousands of Russian Firms to be Re-Named.” 10 January 2008.

http://www.kommersant.com/p-11889/Rename_Aeroflot

profitability a difficult task. In August 2008, AirUnion, an alliance of regional carriers representing Russia's third largest airline, was forced to ground flights when fuel suppliers cut off deliveries. It is not certain whether the airline will survive its current economic crisis.²³¹

Russia's rivers—particularly the Volga—are also important means of transportation in some regions. In remote regions of Siberia, rivers are often the only means of transportation, although they flow mostly northward and thus do not aid in east–west movement of goods and people.²³²

Business Outlook

Many of Russia's macroeconomic indicators are exceptionally positive. Fueled by soaring revenues from its energy corridor, Russia's economy has been growing at a consistently high rate since the end of the 1998 financial crisis. During that time, the Russian economy has been averaging a 7% annual increase in GDP, and since 2001, the federal budget has been running surpluses averaging 3% of GDP. By the end of 2007, the government had stockpiled USD 470 billion of foreign currency reserves, the third largest such amount in the world. As investor confidence about Russia's economic prospects has increased, foreign direct investment in the Russian economy more than tripled from 2005 to 2007.²³³



© Patrick Beek
Stock Market

Despite this success, however, the economy of Russia still faces some fundamental issues. Inflation has been increasing, reaching 12% by the end of 2007. The nation's reliance on resources makes it highly vulnerable to price swings in the world commodities markets. Much of Russia's manufacturing base is still outdated and in poor condition, making it unlikely to compete in the world economy if Russia enters into the World Trade Organization (WTO). While it is a growing source for consumer lending, the banking industry is still relatively small and underfunded matched with comparable economies around the world. Investor confidence continues to be a concern because of corruption, lack of a strong rule of law, and political and economic favoritism by the government.²³⁴

²³¹ International Herald Tribune. Associated Press. "Russia's AirUnion to Resume Normal Flights." 28 August 2008. <http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2008/08/28/business/EU-Russia-Airline-Delays.php>

²³² MSN Encarta. Parrott, Bruce. "Russia. V. Economy of Russia. L. Transportation." 2008. http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761569000_12/Russia.html

²³³ Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook*. "Russia." 2 October 2008. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rs.html>

²³⁴ Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook*. "Russia." 2 October 2008. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rs.html>

The Russian stock market has also recently plummeted. By October 2008, it had dropped nearly 60% since reaching its peak in May of the same year.²³⁵ Analysts cite several reasons for the drop, including the geopolitical uncertainty introduced by Russia's military incursion into Georgia; the increasing state control of Russia's strategic industries, particularly oil and gas; a general climate of distrust by foreign and domestic investors in Russia's oil and mineral industries; and a significant drop in oil prices beginning in summer 2008.²³⁶

International Organizations

World Trade Organization (WTO)

Russia is the world's largest economic power that has not yet entered the World Trade Organization. The nation applied for membership in 1993, but trade and tariff disputes with Poland, Sweden, Finland, and the United States have slowed its accession to the world's most important trade organization.²³⁷ By early 2008, there were signs that Russia was moving closer to WTO membership approval; however, the August 2008 military actions in Georgia have caused speculation that Russia's entry into the WTO could be jeopardized. Russia's response to such speculations has been to suggest that it will back off from agreements previously made in its WTO negotiations with member nations.²³⁸

Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)

Formed in the wake of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Commonwealth of Independent States is a broad-based organization that includes all the former republics of the Soviet Union except the Baltic states of Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania. Ukraine is not officially a member of the CIS, having never ratified the original CIS treaty. In 2008, Georgia gave a notice of withdrawal to leave the CIS after the South Ossetian war with Russia.



After the CIS was formed, early attempts were made to promote economic integration among members; however, the CIS has been largely unsuccessful in developing anything comparable to the European Union or other regional economic unions. Many years of discussions by the CIS Economic Council to create a CIS Free-Trade Zone have yet to lead to an agreement. The Eurasian Economic Community (EEC), a smaller group that

²³⁵ The Economist. "Bang, Crash: What Russia's Stockmarket Collapse Means for Russia and for its Neighbours." 18 September 2008. http://www.economist.com/displayStory.cfm?story_id=12273869

²³⁶ Brookings Institution. Gaddy, Clifford G. "Russia's Stock Market Fall: It's All About Oil." 16 September 2008. http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2008/0916_oil_gaddy.aspx

²³⁷ International Herald Tribune. Castle, Stephen. "EU Says Russia Could Join WTO This Year." 25 January 2008. <http://www.iht.com/articles/2008/01/25/business/rustrade.php>

²³⁸ International Herald Tribune. "Russia to Exit Some WTO commitments." 25 August 2008. <http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2008/08/25/business/EU-Russia-WTO.php>

includes Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, has also had discussions about forming a customs union. In January 2008, three EEC members (Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan) signed nine trade agreements that, it is hoped, will serve as the foundation for a more inclusive economic union.²³⁹

²³⁹ Jamestown Foundation. Eurasia Daily Monitor, Vol. 5, No. 22. Blagov, Sergei. "Moscow Signs Series of Agreements Within Eurasian Economic Community Framework." 5 February 2008. http://www.jamestown.org/edm/article.php?article_id=2372777

Society

Introduction

“And what Russian does not love riding fast? Is it not in his soul to long for a whirlwind, to let himself loose, to say sometimes, “to hell with it all”?”

Dead Souls (1842)
Nikolai Gogol²⁴⁰

Gogol’s satirical masterpiece *Dead Souls* introduced the analogy of both Russia and the Russian soul as a “flying troika,” a sleigh drawn by three horses, dashing forward in a hazardous and intoxicating journey through time and space. Certainly few societies have seen as many major upheavals and experienced as wild a ride over the last few centuries as has Russia. From the Westernization policies of Peter the Great to the Bolshevik revolution to post-socialist economic shock therapy, Russian society has periodically experienced ground-shaking events that have rearranged the political map and redefined the cultural and social landscape. But to Russians, some things have remained relatively unchanged, even during periods of near social chaos. It is the collective foundation of national identity, existing even within a country of significant ethnic and linguistic diversity, that defines the Russian culture.



Ethnic Groups and Language

Russia is a country with over 100 ethnic groups speaking a myriad of languages. Nevertheless, ethnic Russians represent nearly 80% of the population, with no other group making up more than 4% of the population. Most ethnic Russians speak only in their native tongue, whereas most non-Russians speak Russian as their second language or, in some cases, their primary language.²⁴¹

Tatars are the largest ethnic minority in Russia, representing about 3.8% of the nation’s population. For many centuries in Russia, the term “Tatar” was used loosely to denote any group of Asian, Muslim, or Turkic descent.²⁴² However, Tatars are more precisely thought to be the descendants of Turkic–Mongolian tribes that migrated many centuries ago from Southern Siberia into the Volga–Urals region. These invaders known as the Golden Horde intermixed with, and converted to Islam, the pre-existing Volga Bulgar

²⁴⁰ *The Russian Context: The Culture Behind the Language*. Boyle, Eloise and Geneva Gerhart, Eds. “Quoting Russian Prose: Gogol [pp. 224–225]. 2002. Bloomington, Ind: Slavica Publishers

²⁴¹ MSN Encarta. Engelmann, Kurt E. “Russia. III. People and Society of Russia. D. Language.” 2008. http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761569000_5/Russia.html#s18

²⁴² NUPI Centre for Russian Studies. “Ethnic Groups: Tatars.” http://www2.nupi.no/cgi-win//Russland/etnisk_b.exe?Tatarian

population.²⁴³ Today, Tatars are the majority ethnic group in the Republic of Tatarstan, where Tatar is an official language.²⁴⁴

Ukrainians are the third largest ethnic group in Russia, making up about 2% of the population. Like the Russians, Ukrainians are a Slavic people whose population is spread all across modern Russia. Their percentage of the total population is highest in western Siberia and parts of Russia's Far East.²⁴⁵



© spellwriter / flickr.com
Ukrainian woman

Bashkirs represent 1.2% of the population of the Russian Federation. Their homeland is the Republic of Bashkortostan, located to the southeast of Tatarstan between the Volga River and the Ural Mountains. Even here, however, the Bashkirs (29.8%) are a minority to Russians (36.3%) and only narrowly outnumber Tatars (24.1%).

The Chuvash (1.1% of the Russian population) homeland is the Chuvash Republic, immediately northwest of Tatarstan. Like the Tatars and Bashkirs, the Chuvash are a Turkic-speaking people in origin, but unlike these two groups, the Chuvash are predominantly Orthodox Christian rather than Muslim.

Russia's most fiercely independent ethnic group are the Chechens (0.9%). During World War II, Stalin deported all Chechens to Siberia. More than a decade later, the Chechens were rehabilitated and resettled back in their homeland. Members of this Northern Caucasus group waged a separatist war with Russia during much of the 1990s and early 2000s.

Religion

During the Soviet era, religious institutions in Russia were actively suppressed. Practicing religion and being a member of the Communist Party were considered incompatible activities. Today, religion is once again practiced freely within the Russian nation, but 70 years of religious oppression have greatly reduced the percentage of Russians who are actively religious.

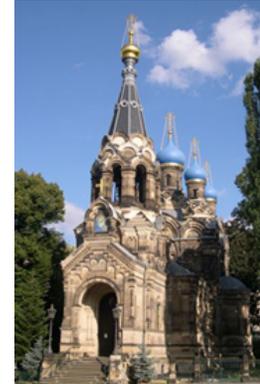
²⁴³ Tripod.com. From *The Volga Tatars, a Profile in National Resilience*." Rorlich, Azade-Ayshe. "1. The Origins of the Volga Tatars." Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

<http://members.tripod.com/~Grozniyat/fadlan/rorlich1.html>

²⁴⁴ Kazan State University. Tatarstan on the Internet. "General Information about the Republic of Tatarstan." http://www.kcn.ru/tat_en/tatarstan/index.htm

²⁴⁵ All-Russia Population Census 2002. "4.2 National Composition for Regions of the Russian Federation." 2004. <http://www.perepis2002.ru/index.html?id=87>

Russian Orthodox Christianity is the largest religious denomination within the nation, with roughly one sixth of the population being regular churchgoers of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) and nearly 100,000 professing a nominal relationship to the church.²⁴⁶ Russian Orthodox Christianity is by far the most common religion among Russian citizens of Slavic origin (e.g., Russians, Ukrainians). Russia's Turkic groups, such as the Tatars and Bashkirs, are predominantly Muslim, as are some of the ethnic groups of the Northern Caucasus, such as the Chechens. Altogether, it is estimated that 14 to 23 million Muslims live within the Russian Federation.²⁴⁷



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons
Russian Orthodox Church

Between 1.5 and 2 billion Tibetan Buddhists live in Russia. Russia's Buddhists are found primarily in three southern republics: Tuva and Buryatia, both of which lie along the Russian–Mongolian border, and Kalmykia, far to the west near the lower reaches of the Volga River.²⁴⁸

Russian Jews have undergone several periods of discrimination and repression in both the Russian Empire and the Soviet era. During the Gorbachev regime throughout the 1980s, a reform policy allowing greater freedom for Jews to emigrate to Israel and other countries seriously reduced the Russian Jewish population.²⁴⁹ Today, it is estimated that 600,000 Jews live in Russia, mostly in Moscow and St. Petersburg, although the most recent Russian census places the population at 230,000.^{250, 251}

In a marshy region of the Russian Far East, the Jewish Autonomous Region, popularly known as Birobidzhan, was established by Josef Stalin in 1934 as a location where Jews from modern-day Belarus and Ukraine could relocate and pursue their cultural traditions within a socialist framework. However, no massive migration of Russian Jews ever

²⁴⁶ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Russia: People: Religion." 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia>

²⁴⁷ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State. 2007 Report on International Religious Freedom. "Russia. Section 1. Religious Demography." 14 September 2007.

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2007/90196.htm>

²⁴⁸ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State. 2007 Report on International Religious Freedom. "Russia. Section 1. Religious Demography." 14 September 2007.

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2007/90196.htm>

²⁴⁹ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Russia: People: Religion." 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513251/Russia>

²⁵⁰ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State. 2007 Report on International Religious Freedom. "Russia. Section 1. Religious Demography." 14 September 2007.

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2007/90196.htm>

²⁵¹ All-Russia Population Census 2002. "4.2 National Composition for Regions of the Russian Federation." 2004. <http://www.perepis2002.ru/index.html?id=87>

occurred, and purges and (more recently) emigration have reduced the Jewish population there to a few thousand (1.2% of the Region's population).^{252, 253}

Cuisine

The cuisine of Russia reflects a medley of influences inherited from an empire spanning two continents, from the *plov* (pilaf) of Central Asia to the walnut- and spice-laden dishes of Georgia. French influences, introduced in the 19th century, include thick meat sauces, elaborate salads, and cream-filled tortes that serve as dessert for many Russian meals.²⁵⁴

The Russian *zavtrak* (breakfast) typically includes *bliny* (pancakes) with either sweet or savory fillings, *kasha* (porridge) made with buckwheat or other grains, and *syrniki* (fried cottage-cheese cakes). A common condiment for these foods is *smetana* (sour cream), which accompanies many favorite Russian dishes.²⁵⁵

Traditionally, the main Russian meal is *obed*, which is served in the afternoon any time between 1:00 and 5:00 P.M.²⁵⁶ It begins with either *zakuski* (appetizers) or soup. The *zakuski* may include a wide range of items including salads with mayonnaise-based dressings, caviar, cold meats, sliced sturgeon, pickled cabbage, and mushrooms draped with *smetana* (sour cream). Some of the salads include fish or meat: two of the more popular ones are *seledka pod shuboy* (literally, "salted herring in a fur coat") and *salat olivye* (which includes chopped meat, cheese, and vegetables). Common soups include *borshch* (made from beetroot with vegetables and sometimes meat), *shchi* (made with cabbage or sauerkraut), and *solyenka* (a thick concoction of meat or fish, potatoes, and pickled vegetables).



© Peter Isotalo
Russian Borscht.

Main courses generally include meat or various types of fish, such as pike, sturgeon, salmon, and chub. Some of the more common meat dishes are *pelmeni* (meat dumplings), various types of fish (pike, sturgeon, salmon, chub), *bifstroganov* (beef slices in a thick cream sauce), and *shashlik* (lamb kebabs, a popular food transplant from the Caucasus region).

²⁵² Swarthmore College. "Stalin's Forgotten Zion: An Illustrated History, 1928–1996."

<http://www.swarthmore.edu/Home/News/biro/>

²⁵³ All-Russia Population Census 2002. "4.2 National Composition for Regions of the Russian Federation." 2004. <http://www.perepis2002.ru/index.html?id=87>

²⁵⁴ *Insight Guide: Russia, Belarus and Ukraine*, Updated 3rd Ed. "A Taste of Russia [p. 82]." 2004.

London: Apa Publications

²⁵⁵ *Russia & Belarus*, 4th Ed. "Food and Drink [p. 107]." 2006. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications

²⁵⁶ Russian Foods for Kiwis. "The Russian Table." 2005. <http://www.russianrecipes.co.nz/russian-table.html>

The *uzhin* (evening meal), which is generally between 7:00 and 10:00 P.M., often consists simply of *zakuski* and black tea.²⁵⁷ At this meal, shots of freezer-cold vodka are often consumed with the salty or savory *zakuski* dishes.²⁵⁸

Arts

Few countries have artistic legacies comparable to Russia. From dance to theater to music to the visual arts, Russian artists have made legendary contributions to their fields. While artistic creativity was stifled to a great extent during the Soviet era, some Russian artists continued to freely express themselves through their art, often at great personal risk.

Literature

From the 19th century onwards, Russian writers have made huge contributions to world literature, but one writer stands alone in the heart of many Russians. In poetry and drama, Aleksandr Pushkin (1799–1837) established himself as the nation’s earliest and foremost literary figure and remains a highly influential figure for Russian artists to this day. A 1999 poll of Russians—asking which Russian had made the greatest contribution to world history—found Pushkin in second place, behind Peter the Great and ahead of Vladimir Lenin.²⁵⁹ Pushkin’s seminal works include the drama, *Boris Godunov*, written while Pushkin was in exile, and never performed on stage until over 30 years after his death, and *Eugene Onegin*, a verse novel that later became the basis of one of Russian composer Tchaikovsky’s most famous operas.²⁶⁰



© Andrew Butko
Pushkin Statue

Other 19th century writers whose works are still widely read or performed worldwide to this day include the satirist Nikolai Gogol (1809–1852) *Dead Souls*, *The Government Inspector*; the novelists Ivan Turgenev (1818–1883) *Father and Sons*; Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821–1881) *The Brothers Karamazov*, *Crime and Punishment*; Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910) *Anna Karenina*, *War and Peace*; and the dramatist Anton Chekhov (1860–1904) *The Seagull*, *Uncle Vanya*.

Between 1900 and 1930, several Russian novelists and poets such as Andrei Bely (1880–1934) *Petersburg*; and Alexander Blok (1880–1921) *The Twelve*, embraced abstraction and mysticism in a style that collectively became known as Symbolism. Other

²⁵⁷ MSN Encarta. “Russia. III. People and Society of Russia. H. Way of Life.” 2008.

http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761569000_7/Russia.html

²⁵⁸ Los Angeles Times. Perry, Charles. “An Era of Opulence in Russian Vodka.” 20 February 2008.

<http://www.latimes.com/features/food/la-fo-vodka20feb20,1,1337219.story>

²⁵⁹ BBC News. Parsons, Robert. “Pushkin Fever Sweeps Russia.” 5 June 1999.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/from_our_own_correspondent/361169.stm

²⁶⁰ Boris Godunov Online Exhibition. Princeton University. Emerson, Caryl. “Pushkin.”

<http://libweb.princeton.edu/libraries/music/boris/gallery.php?cat=1>

Russian poets of this era, such as Osip Mandelstam (1892–1938) *Stone*; and Anna Akhmatova (1889–1966) *Poem Without a Hero*, took a more concrete, verbally precise approach known as Acmeism. All these writers who lived to see the Stalin era, and others such as Boris Pasternak (1890–1960) *Doctor Zhivago*, found themselves either censored or persecuted during a period when Social Realism became the only accepted Soviet literary style. Pasternak, along with Alexander Solzhenitsyn (1918–2008) *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, was eventually awarded a Nobel Prize for Literature. Pasternak, however, ultimately refused the award under intense pressure from Soviet authorities. Solzhenitsyn did not leave the Soviet Union to receive his Prize, fearing he would not be allowed back into the country.

Music

Like Russian literature, Russian classical music bloomed during the 19th century. Mikhail Glinka (1804–1857) is generally credited as being the father of a distinctive Russian style of classical music and opera, one built on the folk music of the Eastern Slavs who inhabited the region that would eventually become Kievan Rus' and later Muscovy. Shortly after Glinka's musical breakthrough, a so-called "Group of Five" contemporaneous composers—Modest Mussorgsky (1839–1881) opera *Boris Godunov*, *Pictures at an Exhibition*, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844–1908) *Scheherazade*, "The Flight of the Bumble Bee" from *The Tale of Tsar Saltan*, Alexander Borodin (1833–1887) opera *Prince Igor*, Mily Balakirev (1837–1910) *Russia, Islamey*, and César Cui (1835–1918) children's opera *Puss-in-Boots*—emerged, and they continued to look to Russian legends and history and Russian folk music for inspiration.

While not included within the Group of Five, their contemporary, Pyotr Tchaikovsky (1840–1893), also displayed distinctly Russian elements in his music, although less so than his contemporaries. His symphonies (*No. 6 in B Minor*), operas (*Eugene Onegin*, *The Queen of Spades*), ballet scores (*The Nutcracker*, *Swan Lake*, *Sleeping Beauty*), and piano concertos (*No. 1*) are among some of the most well-known pieces in the modern classical music canon.



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons
Tchaikovsky

The generation of Russian composers following Tchaikovsky included Sergei Rachmaninov (1873–1943) and Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971), both of whom fled Russia after the 1917 Revolution. Rachmaninov is best known today for his works written for the piano, although he also composed several orchestral works, including three symphonies. Stravinsky (ballet *The Firebird*) was an innovative composer whose music for the ballet, *The Rite of Spring*, shocked European listeners with its originality and modernity when it was first performed in 1913.²⁶¹

²⁶¹ *Insight Guide: Russia, Belarus and Ukraine*, Updated 3rd Ed. "The Music Makers [p. 119]." 2004. London: Apa Publications

Other composers continued to work within the Soviet Union, but increasingly found themselves under state criticism. In 1948, three of the Soviet Union’s better known composers—Dmitry Shostakovich (1906–1975) opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*); Sergei Prokofiev (ballet *Romeo and Juliet*, children’s story *Peter and the Wolf*); and Aram Khachaturian (“Sabre Dance” from ballet *Gayane*)—were among several composers who were denounced by the Soviet Central Committee as artists whose works show “clear manifestations of formalistic distortions and antidemocratic tendencies . . . that are alien to the Soviet people and their artistic tastes.”²⁶²

Traditional Dress

In 1700, Peter the Great issued an edict requiring all Russians to wear Western European clothing, with the exception of peasants and the Russian Orthodox clergy. Russian peasants continued wearing traditional folk costumes until the early 20th century, but since then all Russians have dressed similar to their Western counterparts, if a bit warmer and more distinctively in the cold Russian winter.²⁶³ The classic Russian winter fur hat with fold-up ear flaps is known as an *ushanka* and is typically made out of sheepskin and rabbit fur.

Traditionally, the festive costume for women peasants in Russia was a *sarafan*, a brightly colored, jumper-like sleeveless dress made with wide straps. The *sarafan* was worn over a *rubakha*, a long-sleeved shirt with or without embroidered design motifs, and was braided around the waist by sashes with long, loose ends. The *kokoshnik*, a tiara-like headdress tied at the back with ribbons, often accompanied the *sarafan*. *Kokoshniks* were often elaborately decorated with mother-of-pearl, delicate needlework, and brightly colored stone, and were worn with shawls. Numerous variations existed on this basic style, depending on the geographical location and the marriage status of the woman.²⁶⁴



© James Cridland
Russian Traditional Dress

Russian peasant men also wore a *rubakha* that either hung loose like a smock or was tucked into the pants. Men’s trousers were typically bound into leg wrappings or were tucked into high boots made of felt or leather. The most common form of outer wear for men was the *kaftan*, a long, loose-fitting robe with tight sleeves that overlapped in the front and was fastened at the side.²⁶⁵

²⁶² *Shostakovich: A Life*. Fay, Laurel E. “9. ‘Victory’ (1945-1948) [p. 158]” 2000. Oxford, Engl: Oxford University Press

²⁶³ Ufa Institute of Technology, Bashkir State University. “Russian Costume: Beginning of Fashionable Epoch.” <http://www.bashedu.ru/konkurs/kirsanova/English/club/russian.htm>

²⁶⁴ Ufa Institute of Technology, Bashkir State University. “Russian Costume: Russian Sarafan, Head-Dress.” <http://www.bashedu.ru/konkurs/kirsanova/English/club/russian.htm>

²⁶⁵ *Russian Folk Art*. Hilton, Alison. “Materials and Forms: Textile Arts and Costumes [p. 88].” 1995. Bloomington, Ind: Indiana University Press

Folk Culture and Folklore

While dance in Russia is, to many, epitomized by classical ballet and the country's many famous ballet troupes, folk dancing has an even longer heritage within the country. Around the world, wherever there are communities of Russians, there are inevitably Russian folk dancing groups as well. Some of these dances are associated with groups within Russia who have long lived at the margins of Russian society, such as the Roma (gypsies), Jews, and Cossacks. Ukraine, for many centuries at least partly included within the Russian empire, also has a strong folk dance tradition. Russian folk dancers perform to traditional music played on a *garmoshka* (buttoned accordion), *balalaika* (triangular-shaped guitar), gypsy seven-string guitar, and other instruments.



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons
Ruslanova

Russia also has a rich heritage of folktales, many of which are familiar to people outside Russia because they are the basis of many famous Russian ballets and musical stories. Ironically, many of these folk stories are now better known to most people in their revised artistic forms than as the original stories. One example is the story told in the ballet *The Firebird*, which is based on a synthesis of the two peasant tales “Prince Ivan, the Firebird, and the Gray Wolf” and “Kastchei the Immortal.” Other examples include *The Snow Maiden*, *Peter and the Wolf*, *Petrushka*, and many others.

Sports and Recreation

Russian athletes have long been known for their prowess in international sporting competitions such as the Olympics. More recently, they have been becoming stars in sports for which Russians were rarely notable a few decades ago. Most remarkable of these may be tennis, particularly women's tennis, in which the rankings of the world's Top 10 players have included since 2006, Russians Dinara Safina, Elena Dimentieva, Maria Sharapova, Svetlana Kuznetsova, Vera Zvonareva, Anna Chakvetadze, and Nadia Petrova.²⁶⁶ On the men's side, top players since the mid 1990s have included Yevgeny Kafelnikov and Marat Safin, both of whom have won two Grand Slam events, and, more recently, Nikolay Davydenko. Boris Yeltsin, the former president, an avid tennis player and fan, is widely credited for having played a significant role in Russia's upsurge in the sport.²⁶⁷



© Akademan / Wikipedia
Maria Sharapova

²⁶⁶ ESPN.com. “Women's Tennis WTA Rankings.” 6 October 2008.

<http://sports.espn.go.com/sports/tennis/rankings?year=2008&type=2&sport=WOMRANK>

²⁶⁷ Tennis.com. Alvanipour, Sarah. “Obituary: Russia, Tennis Lose Boris Yeltsin.” 4 May 2007.

<http://www.tennis.com/backcourt/general/backcourt.aspx?id=77060>

While tennis' popularity is on the rise, the two top spectator sports in Russia continue to be football (soccer) and ice hockey. The Russian Premier League consisting of 16 teams is the nation's leading division in football and has, until recently, been dominated by clubs from Moscow (Spartak, CSKA, Lokomotiv). Zenit St. Petersburg, which is now majority-owned by the Russian gas giant Gazprom, broke the Moscow stranglehold by winning the Russian Premier League championship and the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) Champions Cup in 2007.²⁶⁸

The Russian national ice hockey team, while not nearly as dominant in international competitions as the old Soviet Union team, is still among the leaders of national hockey in the world. Since 1990, most top Russian hockey players have played in the high-paying North American National Hockey League (NHL), although the recently formed Kontinental Hockey League, backed by several large state-owned Russian companies such as Gazprom, has set out to sign back some of the better Russian players.²⁶⁹

When not watching sports, one favorite Russian leisure activity is spending time in the *banya*, a kind of Russian bath house that is noted for its super-hot *parilka* (steam room).²⁷⁰ This Russian tradition is enjoyed by both sexes, but women and men seldom attend together unless it is a family *banya*.²⁷¹

Gender Issues

Numerous studies and articles have been presented comparing the status of women in modern-day Russia with that of women during the Soviet era. One consistent finding is a much smaller percentage of women are in the Russian parliament and in local government bodies than was the case in the past.²⁷²

One can also argue, however, that true power came from the top during the Soviet era, and the Politburo and Central Committee of the Communist Party, the highest levels of Soviet leadership, have had relatively few women members throughout its history.^{273, 274}



© Kevin Hamm
Russian Women in St. Petersburg

²⁶⁸ UEFA.com. Nisenboim, Eduard. "Gazprom Fuels Zenit Dream." 19 January 2007.
<http://www.uefa.com/magazine/news/kind=134217728/newsid=497842.html>

²⁶⁹ Globe & Mail. McCarthy, Shawn. "New Russian-Based League Flexes Its Muscles." 22 May 2008.
<http://www.globesports.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20080522.wsptmedvedev22/GSStory/GlobeSportsHockey/home>

²⁷⁰ *Russia & Belarus*, 4th Ed. "The Culture: Lifestyle: The Banya [p. 71]." 2006. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications

²⁷¹ Geocities.com. Rychkova, Cheryl. "The Banya." <http://www.geocities.com/mushkah/Banya.html>

²⁷² *Insight Guide: Russia, Belarus and Ukraine*, Updated 3rd Ed. "The Women of Russia [p. 77]." 2004. London: Apa Publications

²⁷³ Time.com. "Heroines of Soviet Labor." 6 June 1988.
<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,967614-1,00.html>

²⁷⁴ *Paradoxes of Gender*. Lorber, Judith. "The Visible Hand: Gender and the State [pp. 269–270]." 1994. New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press

Equality for women was certainly trumpeted during the Soviet era, but the reality was quite different. Women did comprise a large percentage of the workforce, but these positions were frequently in non-technical factory jobs and low-status professions. In addition, women often received lesser pay for identical positions, even though this discrepancy ran counter to Soviet ideology.²⁷⁵ Household chores, including the tedious task of shopping for food and other goods that inevitably involved standing in several long lines because of shortages, was also primarily the woman's responsibility.^{276, 277}

Since the breakup of the Soviet Union, there is general agreement that opportunities for women in the workplace have advanced, particularly for younger women with college degrees. On the other hand, middle-aged, unskilled Russian women have felt the economic pinch, which explains why roughly two thirds of Russia's unemployed are women.²⁷⁸ Russian women are now marrying at a later age than in the past, when lingering early-marriage traditions and the preference given to married couples for state-issued housing supplied motivations for many young Russian couples to wed.^{279, 280} Marriage rates also have decreased and divorce rates have increased during the post-Soviet period.²⁸¹

²⁷⁵ Time.com. "Heroines of Soviet Labor." 6 June 1988.

<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,967614-1,00.html>

²⁷⁶ *Russia & Belarus*, 4th Ed. "The Culture: Women in Russia [p. 83]." 2006. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications.

²⁷⁷ Time.com. "Heroines of Soviet Labor." 6 June 1988.

<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,967614-1,00.html>

²⁷⁸ *Russia & Belarus*, 4th Ed. "The Culture: Women in Russia [p. 83]." 2006. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications.

²⁷⁹ Time.com. "Heroines of Soviet Labor." 6 June 1988.

<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,967614-1,00.html>

²⁸⁰ Princeton University. Zakharov, Sergei V. "Recent Trends in First Marriage in Russia: Retarded Second Democratic Transition." 2005. <http://iussp2005.princeton.edu/download.aspx?submissionId=52306>

²⁸¹ *Social Capital and Social Cohesion in Post-Soviet Russia*. Rimashevskaya, Natalia. "Family and Children During the Economic Transition [p. 80]." 2003. Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe

Security

Introduction

Anybody who has played the board game Risk[®] may recall that Russia is subdivided into six “countries” (Kamchatka, Yakutsk, Irkutsk, Siberia, Ural, Ukraine) that border on nine other countries. Real life is clearly much different than board games, but the complexity of Russia’s bilateral relations and security challenges is at least symbolically illustrated by the Risk[®] map. Only China has as many neighboring countries on its land borders as does Russia (both with 14). In addition, Japan and the United States share maritime borders with Russia, making it the only Asian country that borders North America.

Many of Russia’s neighbors are part of a region that is still sometimes referred to as the “near abroad,” a term reflecting the period in which these bordering nations were republics, like Russia, in the Soviet Union. Some of these new nations, such as the Baltic states, have since aligned themselves closely with the West and have clearly rejected being considered part of the Russian sphere of influence. Others, most notably Ukraine and Azerbaijan, have in recent years developed closer relations with Europe and the United States, but still retain economic and some political ties with Russia. Georgia, too, was once in this latter category, but its recent military conflict with Russia has, for the time being at least, brought to a halt most of the formal ties between it and Russia.

With only a few exceptions, oil and natural gas play an important part in Russia’s strategic relationship with its neighbors. A key element of these relationships concerns the transport to market of these valuable fuels. As one of the leading oil and natural gas exporters in the world, Russia faces difficult challenges in getting its hydrocarbon products to market. Between the oil and gas fields in Siberia and major world markets in Europe and Asia lie vast expanses of land. The nearest year-round, ice-free ports are often thousands of kilometers away. Thus, it is not surprising that within the last eight years, as most of Russia’s oil and gas resources have returned to state control, Russia’s foreign and energy policies have become increasingly intertwined.²⁸²

Military

Russia’s armed forces consist of three main branches: the Ground Forces (395,000 personnel in 2005), Air Force (160,000), and Navy (142,000).²⁸³ Three other non-subordinate military units are the Strategic Missile Forces, which are responsible for Russia’s



© Doug Langham
Russian sailors peering out port holes

²⁸² International Studies Association. Newnham, Randall. “Oil, Carrots, and Sticks: Russia’s Energy Resources as a Foreign Policy Tool.” March 2008.
http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/2/5/0/9/2/pages250924/p250924-1.php

²⁸³ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. “Country Profile: Russia.” December 2006.
<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Russia.pdf>

land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs); the Airborne Troops, the Russian paratroop force; and the Space Troops, responsible for anti-ballistic missile monitoring and defense systems. Russian Ground Forces are divided into six military districts (Moscow, St. Petersburg, Urals, Siberia, North Caucasus, Far East), while the Navy consists of four fleets (Baltic, Pacific, Northern, Black Sea) and one flotilla (Caspian Sea).²⁸⁴ Overall, the Russian military continues to heavily rely on a Cold War strategy emphasizing a significant nuclear-attack deterrence capability.²⁸⁵

The Russian government has expressed a desire to convert its military forces of roughly 1.1 million active military personnel into a professional force.²⁸⁶ Russia's declining population since the mid 1990s has resulted in a decreasing pool of draftees and a declining quality of fitness for service.²⁸⁷ In an effort to make military service a more attractive proposition, policies were put in place to increase the pay and benefits for those who contracted for professional military service, and tours of duty were decreased from 18 months to a year for conscripts. The government has also announced plans to develop a non-commissioned officer (NCO) corps, but recruitment efforts for these positions have faced difficulties.²⁸⁸

Russia's defense expenditures have expanded greatly during the past eight years as rising oil and gas revenues have increased the government coffers.²⁸⁹ Russia's defense budget is USD 40 billion in 2008, 20% higher than in 2007 even though the military continued to downsize its personnel.²⁹⁰ In September 2008, the Russian parliament approved a 2009 budget that included a 25.7% increase in defense spending to total USD 58 billion²⁹¹

In August 2007, Russian strategic nuclear bombers restarted the Cold War practice of carrying out long-range patrols on a regular basis. These regular sorties had been discontinued for many years after the collapse of the Soviet Union owing to budget cutbacks.²⁹² In a highly publicized incident, two of these long-range bombers landed in

²⁸⁴ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. "Country Profile: Russia." December 2006.

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Russia.pdf>

²⁸⁵ Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Russia." July 2008. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3183.htm>

²⁸⁶ Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Russia." July 2008. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3183.htm>

²⁸⁷ GlobalSecurity.org. "Military Reforms of the Russian Federation." 20 August 2007. <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/russia/military-reform.htm>

²⁸⁸ Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Russia." July 2008. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3183.htm>

²⁸⁹ U.S. Today. Associated Press. "Russian Defense Budget May Rise 25% in 2009." 19 September 2008. http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2008-09-19-Russia-defense_N.htm

²⁹⁰ GlobalSecurity.org. RIA Novosti. "Russian Defense Spending to Grow 20% in 2008, to \$40 bln." 26 February 2008. <http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/news/russia/2008/russia-080226-rianovosti02.htm>

²⁹¹ U.S. Today. Associated Press. "Russian Defense Budget May Rise 25% in 2009." 19 September 2008. http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2008-09-19-Russia-defense_N.htm

²⁹² World Politics Review. Weitz, Richard. "Russian Bombers Rehearse Nuclear Attacks Against the United States." 20 August 2007. <http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/article.aspx?id=1048>

Venezuela in September 2008 to carry out training exercises over nearby neutral waters.^{293, 294}

U.S.–Russian Relations

While the Cold War has been over for more than 17 years, relations between Russia, the most powerful remnant of the Soviet Union, and the United States continue to generate intense scrutiny in think tanks and strategic institutions around the world. The two countries continue to share strategic interests on a number of important issues, such as counterterrorism and reduction of nuclear arsenals. Both countries are party to ongoing talks concerning the de-nuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and are two of the four “Quartet” members involved in current Middle East peace talks.²⁹⁵



The two nations interact bilaterally on a regular basis and through the NATO–Russia Council. These relations, as recently as 2005 were characterized as showing “more cooperation, more confidence and better transparency” by Russia’s Minister of Defense, but several subsequent developments have stalled such progress.

The first of these bilateral conflicts involves missile defense.²⁹⁶ The United States, fearful of a missile attack from Iran (partly as a result of Russian arms sales to Iran) pulled out of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in 2002 and announced plans to install a missile defense system in Eastern Europe, a geographical location that Russia claimed would weaken their deterrence capability.²⁹⁷ After the United States signed an agreement with the Czech Republic in July 2008 to host the system’s radar equipment, Russia threatened to use military force to prevent it from being deployed.²⁹⁸

One month later, Russian forces entered South Ossetia, a region within Georgia that was the site of one of the Caucasus’s “frozen conflicts” (ethnic disputes over independence or autonomy that have long been at an impasse). Russian troops continued on toward the Georgian capital of Tbilisi before finally pulling back to South Ossetia. Russia subsequently recognized the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, another area

²⁹³ CBSNews.com. Associated Press. “Venezuela Welcomes Russian Bombers.” 10 September 2008. <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/09/11/world/main4438101.shtml>

²⁹⁴ Christian Science Monitor. Orozco, José; and Sara Miller Llana. “Cold War Echo: Russian Military Maneuvers With Venezuela.” 12 September 2008. <http://www.csmonitor.com/2008/0912/p01s05-woam.html>

²⁹⁵ Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. “Background Note: Russia.” July 2008. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3183.htm>

²⁹⁶ U.S. Department of Defense. “News Transcript: Secretary Rumsfeld Joint Media Availability With Russian Defense Minister Sergey Ivanov.” 11 January 2005. <http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=1647>

²⁹⁷ *Caucasian Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 2, No. 2. Shirin, Rashad. “US Missile Defense Shield and Russia: Second Cold War as a Farce.” Spring 2008. [http://cria-online.org/Journal/3/US Missile Defense Shield and Russia – Second Cold War as a Farce by Rashad Shirin_done.pdf](http://cria-online.org/Journal/3/US%20Missile%20Defense%20Shield%20and%20Russia%20-%20Second%20Cold%20War%20as%20a%20Farce%20by%20Rashad%20Shirin_done.pdf)

²⁹⁸ Times Online. Charter, David. “Russia Threatens Military Response to US Missile Defence Deal.” 9 July 2008. <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/europe/article4295309.ece>

of Georgia entwined in a “frozen conflict” with the Georgian government, and has begun the process of setting up permanent military bases in these territories.²⁹⁹ The Russian actions prompted strong protests by U.S. officials and the withdrawal from Congressional consideration of the U.S.–Russia Agreement for Peaceful Nuclear Cooperation.³⁰⁰

Relations With Neighboring Countries

North Korea

Russia’s shortest border is with North Korea, and none of Russia’s neighbors are as geographically distant from Moscow as this Communist nation on the northern end of the Korean peninsula. Despite its position on Russia’s far eastern margin, however, North Korea and Russia have a long, intertwined history, going back to North Korea’s formation. According to Soviet records (but not to “official” North Korean historical accounts) North Korea’s current leader, Kim Jong Il, was actually born in a Soviet military camp near the Far Eastern city of Khabarovsk in 1942 when his father, Kim Il Sung, was receiving military and administrative training by the Soviet Army.³⁰¹ Following World War II, the elder Kim was chosen by Moscow to form a government in Soviet-controlled Korea. Kim would later get Soviet leader Stalin’s approval for an invasion of the southern part of Korea. Russia’s support, however, extended only so far, and Kim ultimately turned to China for military protection after the U.S.-led counteroffensive forced a retreat during the Korean War.^{302, 303}

For nearly four decades, the Soviet Union was a steadfast supporter of the Pyongyang government and supplied the impoverished country with significant amounts of aid.³⁰⁴ During the later years of the Gorbachev era, however, the Soviet Union’s foreign policy started leaning toward South Korea and away from North Korea, and this process accelerated during the early years of the Yeltsin administration after the Soviet Union’s collapse. Trade between the two countries (mostly Russian exports to North Korea) dropped from USD 3.2 billion in 1988 to less than USD 100 million by 1995.³⁰⁵

²⁹⁹ New York Times. Goble, Paul A. “Russia’s New Bases.” 18 September 2008.

<http://topics.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/09/18/russias-new-bases/>

³⁰⁰ Congressional Research Service. Nichol, Jim. “Russia-Georgia Conflict in South Ossetia: Context and Implications for U.S. Interests [p. CRS-25].” 22 September 2008.

<http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL34618.pdf>

³⁰¹ NPR News. Sheets, Lawrence. “A Visit to Kim Jong Il’s Russian Birthplace.” 12 February 2004.

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=1671983>

³⁰² Time.com. Chua-Eoan, Howard G. “The Last Hard Lines Kim IlSung 1912-1994.” 24 June 2001.

<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,164768,00.html>

³⁰³ CNN.com. *Cold War*. “Kim Il Sung: North Korean Leader.” 1998.

<http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/cold.war/kbank/profiles/kim/>

³⁰⁴ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. “Country Profile: North Korea [p. 8].”

³⁰⁵ James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies, Monterey Institute for International Studies. Moltz, James Clay. “Russian Policy on the North Korean Nuclear Crisis.” 23–25 April 2003.

<http://cns.miis.edu/research/korea/ruspol.htm>

Relations between Russia and the two Koreas were reassessed in Moscow during the late 1990s, and a more balanced approach between the two nations has resulted during the last decade.^{306, 307} Russia is once again one of the major trade partners of North Korea, although this trade mostly consists of Russian energy imports into North Korea, and the trade between the two nations is still relatively insignificant when compared with that between North Korea and China.³⁰⁸ Since 2003, Russia has also been one of the six nations involved in negotiating North Korea's nuclear disarmament.

China

Russia and China, the world's largest country and most populous country, respectively, are titans on the global geopolitical front. During the Cold War, they were the symbols of world Communism, although relations between the two countries were often strained during this period.



© Ryan Cordell
China's border

More recently, however, the two nations, both permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, have had more cooperative relations. In 2001, Russia and China signed a Treaty of Good Neighborliness, Friendship, and Cooperation. Three years later they settled their last remaining territorial disputes concerning small islands in the Amur, Ussuri, and Argun Rivers—the three rivers that collectively define most of the border area between the two nations.³⁰⁹

Economic relations between Russia and China continue to strengthen, in large part driven by China's increasing need for energy resources. In 2007, total trade between the two countries reached USD 48 million and is expected to increase by an additional 25% in 2008.³¹⁰ Russia has begun plans to build a natural gas pipeline, from Western Siberia to Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in western China, that is expected to be completed by 2010. An even higher capacity pipeline from the Russian Sakhalin Island gas fields to

³⁰⁶ James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies, Monterey Institute for International Studies. Moltz, James Clay. "Russian Policy on the North Korean Nuclear Crisis." 23–25 April 2003.
<http://cns.miiis.edu/research/korea/ruspol.htm>

³⁰⁷ Center for Northeast Asian Policy Studies, The Brookings Institution. Vorontsov, Alexander. "Current Russia—North Korea Relations: Challenges and Achievements." February 2007.
http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2007/02northkorea_vorontsov.aspx

³⁰⁸ International Trade Centre/World Trade Organization. "Imports of Korea, Democratic People's Republic of – 00 All Industries (2006, in USD Thousands)." 2008.
http://www.intracen.org/appli1/TradeCom/TP_IP_CI_P.aspx?TY=I&IN=00&RP=408&YR=2006

³⁰⁹ The Jamestown Foundation. *Global Terrorism Analysis*, Vol. 4, No. 24. Daly, John C. K. "Energy Concerns and China's Unresolved Territorial Disputes." 7 December 2004.
<http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2372940>

³¹⁰ China Daily. "Sino-Russian Ties Set to Strengthen." 30 July 2008.
http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2008-07/30/content_6888112.htm

the Heilongjiang Province in northern China is also in the works and is scheduled to come online in 2016.³¹¹

Both Russia and China see the Central Asian republics as within their own economic sphere and thus vie for influence in that region.³¹² The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)—consisting of China, Russia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan—has become the most important regional organization for promoting these interests. The SCO was originally founded as an intergovernmental security organization for cooperation in fighting terrorism, separatism, and other security threats, but over time it has broadened into a forum for fostering economic cooperation as well.³¹³

Mongolia

Mongolia lies between Russia to the north and China to the south, and for much of the past few centuries it has been dominated by one or the other of these powerful nations. From 1921 to 1990, the country had a Communist government and was dominated by the Soviet Union. Soviet loans and aid helped the country develop much of its energy and transportation infrastructure during this time. Since the Soviet breakup, Mongolia has been treading a difficult path of trying to emerge from the shadow of its more powerful neighbors. It has done this, in part, by cultivating strong relationships with counterweight nations such as the United States and Japan.³¹⁴



© Nicholas Lan
Border with Mongolia

Economically, Mongolia has become very dependent on China, which supplies over 27% of Mongolia's imports and receives over two thirds of Mongolia's exports (mostly mineral and energy resources such as copper, zinc, molybdenum, and coal).³¹⁵ Several Russian state-owned conglomerates have large minority ownership stakes in joint-venture mining companies, such as Erdenet, Mongolia's largest copper and molybdenum

³¹¹ China Briefing. Roque, Joyce. "China Wrestles With Russia for Control of Central Asia." 14 April 2008. <http://www.china-briefing.com/news/2008/04/14/china-wrestles-with-russia-for-control-of-central-asia.html>

³¹² China Briefing. Roque, Joyce. "China Wrestles With Russia for Control of Central Asia." 14 April 2008. <http://www.china-briefing.com/news/2008/04/14/china-wrestles-with-russia-for-control-of-central-asia.html>

³¹³ China View. Xinhua. "Shanghai Cooperation Organization Playing Ever Bigger Role." 18 August 2008. http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-08/28/content_9727926.htm

³¹⁴ Washington Post. Cody, Edward. "Feeling the Squeeze of China and Russia, Mongolia Courts U.S." 12 February 2006. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/02/11/AR2006021101224.html>

³¹⁵ International Trade Centre/World Trade Organization. "Exports and Imports of Mongolia – 00 All Industries (2006, in USD Thousands)." 2008. http://www.intracen.org/appli1/TradeCom/TP_TP_CI_P.aspx?IN=00&RP=496&YR=2006&IL=00 All industries&TY=T

producer, and Mongolrostsvetmet, the leading Mongolian fluorspar mining company.^{316,317}

Even though Mongolia's trade ties with Russia have declined, Russia's nationally owned oil company, Rosneft, does continue to supply Mongolia with virtually all of its oil imports.³¹⁸ It also uses Mongolia's railroads to supply oil to China. The rail line running from the Russian to the Chinese border makes up most of Mongolia's rail network and was completed in 1949 as part of a Soviet–Mongolia joint venture.^{319, 320} Russia's Federal Railway Transport Agency continues to hold a 50% interest in the rail system.³²¹

Kazakhstan

Russia's longest border—twice as long as any other—is with Kazakhstan. The two nations have had generally close relations since becoming separate nations after the Soviet Union's collapse, their relationship cemented by the large percentage of Kazakhstan residents (30%) who are ethnic Russians.³²² Trade relations between the two nations are extensive, and Russia is Kazakhstan's leading trade partner.³²³ Both countries are also members of several regional alliances, including the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Nonetheless, Kazakhstan has fostered a somewhat independent



© Kit Seeborg
Kazakhstan's border/Altai Mountains

³¹⁶ Reuters. “Russian Tech gets Erdenet Stake, Eyes Udokan, Zinc.” 4 July 2008.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/rbssMiningMetalsSpecialty/idUSL042038020080704>

³¹⁷ U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Department of the Interior. Tse, Pui-Kwan. “The Minerals Industry of Mongolia [p. 15.5].” October 2007. <http://minerals.usgs.gov/minerals/pubs/country/2006/myb3-2006-mg.pdf>

³¹⁸ International Trade Centre/World Trade Organization. “Exports and Imports of Mongolia – 17 Mineral Fuels, Oils, Distillation Products, Etc. (2006, in USD Thousands).”

http://www.intracen.org/appli/TradeCom/TP_TP_CI_P.aspx?IN=27&RP=496&YR=2006&IL=27

Mineral fuels, oils, distillation products, etc&TY=T

³¹⁹ The World Bank. “Transport in Mongolia.” 2008. <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/EASTASIAPACIFICEXT/EXTEAPREG/TOPTTRANSPORT/0,,contentMDK:20767661~menuPK:2069306~pagePK:34004173~piPK:34003707~theSitePK:574066,00.html>

³²⁰ The Jamestown Foundation. *China Brief*, Vol. 5, No. 10. Blagov, Sergei. “Mongolia Drifts Away From Russia Toward China.” 5 May 2005.

http://www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=408&issue_id=3322&article_id=2369706

³²¹ The Jamestown Foundation. *China Brief*, Vol. 5, No. 10. Blagov, Sergei. “Mongolia Drifts Away From Russia Toward China.” 5 May 2005.

http://www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=408&issue_id=3322&article_id=2369706

³²² Central Intelligence Agency. The World Factbook. “Azerbaijan.” 9 October 2008.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kz.html>

³²³ RIA Novosti. “Kazakhstan Seeks to Export Oil via Russia.” 22 September 2008.

<http://en.rian.ru/world/20080922/117029137.html>

path from Russia, especially when it comes to energy resources, its primary economic engine.

Kazakhstan has the most extensive Caspian Sea oil and gas reserves of any of the countries bordering this hydrocarbon-rich region. Currently, much of Kazakhstan's oil is exported via pipeline and rail through Russia. However, in the future, an increasingly large share of Kazakhstan oil is expected to bypass Russia altogether, either by trans-Caspian barge to Azerbaijan and then westward by pipeline to Turkey, or by an eastward pipeline to help fuel the fast-expanding Chinese economy.^{324, 325} The Azerbaijan-to-Turkey pipeline, known as the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) because of its route, was widely promoted by U.S. government officials; it has become a symbol of the larger geopolitical aspects of the Central Asian oil and gas reserves, an arena in which Kazakhstan plays a major role. Kazakhstan sees its political and economic interests best served by an inclusive policy toward its neighbors and world powers, and thus has pursued a "multi-vectored" approach in its relations with Russia, China, and the United States.³²⁶

Recently, Kazakhstan was chosen to become chair of the influential Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) beginning in 2010.³²⁷ This decision was both ground-breaking and controversial. Kazakhstan will become both the first non-European and first former-Soviet nation to take the one-year OSCE chair. Many Western European countries and nongovernmental organizations initially felt that Kazakhstan's mixed record on democratic reforms made it a poor choice to be the lead nation for an organization that monitors human rights and fairness in elections. There were also concerns that Kazakhstan would follow Russia's desire to weaken the OSCE's Office for Democratic Reforms and Human Rights.³²⁸



US NAVY photo
Russian Navy KA-27 Helix helicopter

Azerbaijan

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Azerbaijan was quick to cut many of its ties with Moscow. It was the first Soviet region to declare independence, to distribute

³²⁴ Energy Information Administration, U.S. Department of Energy. "Kazakhstan: Oil." February 2008. <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Kazakhstan/Oil.html>

³²⁵ UpstreamOnline.com. "Beijing Digs in With Kazakh Pipes." 9 April 2008. <http://www.upstreamonline.com/live/article152009.ece>

³²⁶ EurasiaNet.org. EurasiaNet. "Foreign Minister Confirms Kazakhstan's Multi-Vectored Policy." 3 October 2003. <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav100303a.shtml>

³²⁷ AsiaNews/Agencies. "Kazakhstan Steering a Middle Course Between Russia and the West." 24 September 2008. <http://www.asianews.it/index.php?l=en&art=13307#>

³²⁸ The Jamestown Foundation. *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 4, No. 226. Socor, Vladimir. "Kazakhstan to Chair the OSCE: Splitting the Russian-Led Bloc?" 7 December 2007. http://www.jamestown.org/edm/article.php?article_id=2372645

its own currency, and to evict Soviet soldiers from its territories. The Russian Cyrillic alphabet, which was used for the written Azerbaijani language during the Soviet era, was rejected and replaced with a modified Latin script. Initially, Azerbaijan's government also refused to ratify the CIS charter. Azerbaijan's rush to establish its independence from Russia stemmed from several likely causes. Perhaps these included memories of 1920, when the first independent Azerbaijan Republic was conquered by the Bolsheviks, as well as the Nagorno-Karabakh War, which forged a strong sense of nationalism within Azerbaijan.³²⁹

Relations between Russia and Azerbaijan have improved since the early 1990s, although there are still some outstanding issues between the two countries. One such issue has been Russia's increased military presence in Armenia, a result of the closure of its military bases in Georgia. It is estimated that about 3,500 Russian troops are now deployed in Armenia, a nation that remains in a military and political standoff with Azerbaijan because of its support for the breakaway Azerbaijani region of Nagorno-Karabakh.³³⁰

Cross-border ethnic tensions also periodically stress Russian-Azerbaijani relations. Representatives of some of the ethnic groups in northern Azerbaijan—most notably, the Lezgins, Avars, and Tsakurs—have attracted attention with statements condemning “forced assimilation” in Azerbaijan.³³¹ Each of these ethnic groups has a significant population in Russia's Dagestan Republic as well. There are suspicions in Azerbaijan that the separatist feelings have, in some cases, been intentionally stirred by Moscow as a means to exert influence on Azerbaijan.^{332, 333}

Economically, Russia is the largest source of imported goods and products for Azerbaijan.³³⁴ Prior to 2007, when production began in the Shah Deniz natural gas field in the Caspian Sea, Russia provided Azerbaijan with a large percentage of its natural gas imports. Since then, however, Azerbaijan has ceased importing gas from Russia, and in a

³²⁹ *Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 7, Nos. 2, 3. Murat, Gul. “Azerbaijan: Relations after 1989 [pp. 55–57].” Summer/Fall 2008.

³³⁰ Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress. Nichol, Jim. “Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia: Security Concerns and Implications for U.S. Interests [pp. CRS-52, CRS-53].” January 2008. <http://ftp.fas.org/srg/crs/row/RL30679.pdf>

³³¹ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Fuller, Liz. “Analysis: Do Azerbaijan's Ethnic Minorities Face Forced Assimilation?” 26 June 2008. <http://rfe.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2008/6/D136B60F-F907-4CC7-8297-A5C3B290D008.html>

³³² The Jamestown Foundation. *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol.5, No. 135. Melikishvili, Alexander. “Russia Resurrects the Lezgin Issue in Azerbaijan at Moscow Conference.” 16 July 2008. http://www.jamestown.org/edm/article.php?article_id=2373231

³³³ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Fuller, Liz. “Analysis: Do Azerbaijan's Ethnic Minorities Face Forced Assimilation?” 26 June 2008. <http://rfe.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2008/6/D136B60F-F907-4CC7-8297-A5C3B290D008.html>

³³⁴ International Trade Centre/World Trade Organization. “Imports of Azerbaijan - 00 All Industries (2006, in USD Thousands).” 2008. http://www.intracen.org/appli1/TradeCom/TP_IP_CI_P.aspx?TY=I&IN=00&RP=031&YR=2006

reversal, is now negotiating to sell some of its Shah Deniz natural gas to the Russian energy giant Gazprom.³³⁵

Georgia

Russia's relationship with Georgia, its neighbor on the eastern side of the Black Sea, has moved from strained to confrontational. In response to ongoing conflict between South Ossetia and Georgia, on 8 August 2008, Russia launched large-scale air attacks on the Georgian region of South Ossetia and other regions of Georgia. These attacks were quickly followed by advances of Russian ground troops into South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and eventually nearby areas in Georgia beyond these regions.³³⁶ Roughly two weeks later, Moscow officially recognized the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. To date, only Nicaragua has followed Russia's lead by extending formal diplomatic recognition to the two regions, although Belarus, Venezuela, and Cuba have publicly supported Russia's actions and positions.³³⁷ On 29 August 2008, Georgia responded to Russia's recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia by breaking diplomatic relations with Russia.³³⁸



© Onnik Krikorian
Russian roadblock in Gori, Georgia

Prior to this military intervention, Russian forces had been serving as peacekeepers in both South Ossetia and Abkhazia, regions that had fought separatist wars against the Georgian government in the early 1990s. Georgian officials considered Russia a non-neutral party to the separatist conflicts within the Georgian regions, especially when Russia reportedly granted Russian citizenship and passports to most residents of the region.^{339, 340}

Even before the events of August 2008, Georgia and Russia had constantly been at odds. After the so-called Rose Revolution of 2003, current Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili vowed to return South Ossetia and Abkhazia to Georgian control. He initiated steps to align Georgia economically and politically with the West. Perhaps most objectionable in Russia's eyes were Saakashvili's efforts to bring Georgia into the NATO military alliance. In 2006, Moscow banned key Georgian exports such as wine, mineral

³³⁵ RIA Novosti. "Gazprom, Azerbaijan Agree to Start Talks on Azeri Gas Sales 2." 3 July 2008. <http://en.rian.ru/business/20080703/112925248.html>

³³⁶ Congressional Research Service. Nichol, Jim. "Russia-Georgia Conflict in South Ossetia: Context and Implications for U.S. Interests [p. CRS-5]." 22 September 2008. <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL34618.pdf>

³³⁷ International Herald Tribune. Reuters "Nicaragua Recognizes Independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia." 4 September 2008. <http://www.iht.com/articles/2008/09/04/america/georgia.php>

³³⁸ Agence France- Presse. "Georgia Breaks Relations With Russia." 29 August 2008. <http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5g8JlulsM3ioTtotqyf621zaYjwwg>

³³⁹ Congressional Research Service. Nichol, Jim. "Russia-Georgia Conflict in South Ossetia: Context and Implications for U.S. Interests [p. CRS-2]." 22 September 2008. <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL34618.pdf>

³⁴⁰ BBC News. "Country Profile: Georgia." 28 August 2008. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/country_profiles/1102477.stm

water, fruits, and vegetables into Russia and also closed all direct transportation links between the two countries except those that linked Russia with South Ossetia and Abkhazia.³⁴¹ From 2005 to 2006, Russia's share of Georgian exports went from nearly 18% to less than 8%.³⁴² As a result, Georgia businesses have been actively searching for new markets for their products in the European Union.³⁴³

Ukraine

Ukraine has long had ties to Russia, back to the days of Kievan Rus.' Much of the eastern portion of the country, including the industrial heartland centered on Donetsk, continues to favor close relations with Russia. This area has a very large Russian minority population.³⁴⁴ The Crimean Peninsula actually has a Russian majority population and is a designated



© Susan Astray
Ukraine border crossing

Autonomous Republic within the country. Sevastapol, a major port at the tip of the Crimean Peninsula, still hosts Russia's Black Sea fleet through a lease arrangement that will expire in the year 2017. The Russian Navy, in anticipation of the future withdrawal from the Sevastapol port facilities, is building a new home for the fleet in Novorossiysk, scheduled to be completed in 2012.³⁴⁵ Meanwhile, Russian officials continue to reiterate their desire to negotiate an extension of the Sevastapol lease, despite Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko has called for a pre-2017 Russian withdrawal from Sevastapol.³⁴⁶

One issue that continues to muddy the waters concerning the status of the Sevastapol naval base and Russian-Ukrainian relations, in general, is Ukraine's stated goal of becoming a member of NATO. Similar to the situation in Georgia, Russian officials have reacted strongly against such a move. After a NATO summit in April 2008, shortly after NATO's Secretary-General stated his confidence that Ukraine and Georgia would eventually join the NATO alliance, Russian President Putin voiced in strong language

³⁴¹ Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Georgia." February 2008. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5253.htm>

³⁴² International Trade Centre/World Trade Organization. "Exports of Georgia - 00 All Industries (2006, in USD Thousands)." 2008.

http://www.intracen.org/appli1/TradeCom/TP_EP_CI_P.aspx?IN=00&RP=268&YR=2005&IL=00 All industries&TY=E

³⁴³ Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Georgia." February 2008. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5253.htm>

³⁴⁴ BBC News. Charles, Jonathan. "Angry Mood in Eastern Ukraine." 25 December 2004.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4125157.stm>

³⁴⁵ Moscow News. RIA Novosti. "Russia's New Black Sea Base Complete by 2012." 13 July 2007.

<http://mnweekly.ru/news/20070713/55261987.html>

³⁴⁶ RIA Novosti. "Russia May Discuss Black Sea Fleet Base Extension 'Closer to 2017'." 22 October 2008. <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20081022/117888875.html>

Moscow's concern about such a move: "The appearance on our borders of a powerful military bloc... will be taken as a direct threat to the security of our country."³⁴⁷

Despite the fact that Ukraine is pursuing a foreign policy oriented toward integration into European and Euro-Atlantic organizations and structures, it retains strong economic ties to Russia. Russia is by far the largest market for Ukrainian exports, and over 30% of Ukrainian imports come from Russia, more than from any other country.³⁴⁸ This figure includes over one half of all Ukrainian energy imports.³⁴⁹

Belarus

Of all Russia's neighbors, it is unlikely that any has closer political and economic ties to Moscow than does Belarus. Ruled for nearly a decade and a half by the autocratic Alexander Lukashenko, who has become rather unwelcome in the West and is actually banned from traveling to the United States (a similar ban on travel to the European Union was lifted in October 2008), Belarus has long tied itself closely to its much larger neighbor to the east. This relationship has helped it to survive economically. Over 60% of Belarus's imports come from Russia, including virtually all of its oil and natural gas. However, Russia has shown increasing impatience with the status quo relationship between the two countries. In December 2006, Belarus was surprised by a doubling of the prices it pays Russia for its natural gas, which it had long purchased from Moscow at significantly below-market prices.³⁵⁰



US NAVY photo
Russian Tu-95 Bear long rang bomber aircraft

The gas price hike has been widely interpreted as a signal of shifts in Russian policy toward the Lukashenko regime.³⁵¹ The Belarus economy, which retains a largely state-owned industrial sector, has depended for many years on heavy discounts on Russian oil and gas imports, some of which were later profitably re-exported by Belarus.³⁵² As Belarus's oil and gas discounts have been progressively decreased by Russia, the

³⁴⁷ GlobalSecurity.org. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. "NATO: Russia Agrees to Transit Accord While Reiterating Expansion Objections." 2008.

<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/news/2008/04/mil-080404-rferl02.htm>

³⁴⁸ International Trade Centre/World Trade Organization. "Exports and Imports of Ukraine - 00 All Industries (2006, in USD Thousands)." 2008.

http://www.intracen.org/appl1/TradeCom/TP_TP_CI_P.aspx?TY=T&IN=00&RP=804&YR=2006

³⁴⁹ International Trade Centre/World Trade Organization. "Imports of Ukraine - 27 Mineral Fuels, Oils, Distillation Products, Etc (2006, in USD Thousands)." 2008.

http://www.intracen.org/appl1/TradeCom/TP_IP_CI_P.aspx?IN=27&RP=804&YR=2006&IL=27
Mineral fuels, oils, distillation products, etc&TY=I

³⁵⁰ The Independent. Karmanau, Yuras. "Belarus Criticizes Russia Over Gas Price Rise." 4 January 2007.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/belarus-criticises-russia-over-gas-price-rise-430697.html>

³⁵¹ German Marshall Fund of the United States. UPI. Shepherd, Robin. "The Lost Leader of Belarus." 9 February 2007. http://www.gmfus.org/publications/article.cfm?id=271&parent_type=Pv

³⁵² Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Belarus." February 2008. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5371.htm>

Belarusian government has been forced to borrow from outside sources, including Russia, to finance the national budget.³⁵³

While Belarus and Russia have initiated some aspects of a political and economic union between the two countries, Lukashenko has in recent years alternated between avidly embracing such a confederation and then dismissing it during periods when Moscow has employed economic pressure on Belarus.^{354, 355, 356} Some analysts have speculated that Belarus' continued delay in formally recognizing South Ossetia and Abkhazia, together with its easing off on some of its internal political oppression in order to help thaw relations with European Union countries, are levers that Lukashenko is using as countermeasures for Russia's strong economic impact on Belarus.³⁵⁷

Poland

Poland, a former Soviet-bloc nation, has re-oriented itself toward the West since independence. It adjoins the Kaliningrad exclave of Russia, but does not share a border with the main part of Russia. Relations between the two countries have declined sharply in recent years. In April 2008, a senior Polish official described the bilateral relations between the two countries as "icy," reflecting several high-profile spats between the two nations. These include a temporary Russian embargo on Polish meat and other agricultural imports, a veto by Poland of new negotiations for a European Union-Russia partnership agreement, and an agreement by Poland to host the U.S.'s interceptor missile defense shield.^{358, 359}



© Paul Philippov
Crossing from Poland to Russia

Despite the strained relations between the two countries, Poland remains highly dependent on Russia for its oil and natural gas needs. Brief disruptions in these supplies during 2004 and 2006 have encouraged the Polish government to proceed with plans for energy diversification. To date, the only concrete step taken by the Polish government has been to stockpile emergency reserves of both fuels. Plans are in the design stage to

³⁵³ Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Belarus." February 2008. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5371.htm>

³⁵⁴ World Politics Review. Gurtovnik, Marianna. "A Russian-Belarus Union on the Horizon?" 10 December 2007. <http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/Article.aspx?id=1449>

³⁵⁵ *New Europe: The European Weekly*, Issue 788. "Medvedev, Lukashenko Discuss Economy, Union." 30 June 2008. <http://www.neurope.eu/articles/88380.php>

³⁵⁶ Spiegel. Reuters. "Tensions Rise Between Russia and Belarus." 17 October 2006. <http://www.spiegel.de/international/0,1518,443017,00.html>

³⁵⁷ Russia Today. Andersen, Derek. "South Ossetia's Hopes Lie With Belarus." 14 October 2008. <http://www.russiatoday.com/features/news/31874>

³⁵⁸ RIA Novosti. "'Ice Period' Ensues in Poland-Russia Relations – Deputy PM." 24 April 2008. <http://en.rian.ru/world/20070422/64138933.html>

³⁵⁹ Russia Today. "Poland Backtracks Over Veto Threat." 10 April 2008. <http://www.russiatoday.com/news/news/23295>

build pipelines that would transport Norwegian gas via Denmark, and Caspian Sea oil via a pipeline running from the Ukrainian Black Sea port of Odessa.³⁶⁰

Lithuania

Like Poland, Lithuania—the first republic to break away from the Soviet Union in March 1990—shares a border with only the Kaliningrad exclave of Russia. Lithuania became part of the European Union (EU) in 2004, and as part of the negotiations for its accession into the EU, a transit policy was negotiated with Russia for travel through Lithuania to and from Kaliningrad.³⁶¹

Despite its recent inclusion into the EU, Lithuania still maintains strong economic ties with Russia, its leading trade partner.³⁶² Over 93% of its oil and natural gas imports come from Russia, although much of its crude oil imports from Russia are later re-exported after being refined at the Mazeikiai refinery, the only refinery in the Baltic state.³⁶³

Latvia

Unlike Lithuania, its Baltic neighbor to the south, Latvia has a large minority population (nearly 30%) of ethnic Russians. Latvia and Russia have had difficult relations since Latvia became independent. During the 1990s, Latvia viewed ethnic Russians and other minority groups who had moved there during the Soviet era as “illegal immigrants.” This action eventually sparked Russian retaliation in the form of reduced oil pipeline flows to the main Latvian oil terminal at Ventspils on the Baltic Sea.³⁶⁴ By the beginning of 2006, over 40% of the ethnic Russians living in Latvia were still listed as “non-Latvian citizens,” even though naturalization pathways had been put into place for ethnic Russian Latvians since the early 1990s.³⁶⁵



© Graham Chandler
Russian Mi-24 attack helicopter

The oil-delivery reductions from Russia in 1998 led to even greater drops in the 2000s. Eventually, a new Russian oil terminal on the Baltic Sea, at Primorsk, resulted in a

³⁶⁰ Institute for the Analysis of Global Security. Kopysc, Adam. “Poland’s Energy Security: Dealing With Russia.” 29 February 2008. <http://www.iags.org/n022908.htm>

³⁶¹ Centre for European Policy Studies. “Kaliningrad’s Borders and Transit to Mainland Russia: Practicalities and Remaining Bottlenecks.” http://enarpri.org/wp.php?article_id=264

³⁶² International Trade Centre/World Trade Organization. “Exports and Imports of Lithuania - 00 All Industries (2006, in USD Thousands).” 2008. http://www.intracen.org/appl1/TradeCom/TP_TP_CI_P.aspx?IN=00&RP=440&YR=2006&IL=00 All industries&TY=T

³⁶³ Energy Information Administration, U.S. Department of Energy. “Baltic Sea Regional Factsheet: Oil.” July 2006. <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Baltic/Oil.html>

³⁶⁴ American University. “Case No. 505: Russia and Latvia Oil Dispute.”

³⁶⁵ Latvijas Universitate. *Latvian-Russian Relations: Domestic and International Dimensions*. Muiznieks, Nils. “Government Policy and the Russian Minority [p. 17].” 2006. www.politika.lv/index.php?f=1069

cessation of all Russian crude-oil pipeline traffic to Ventspils in 2003.³⁶⁶ While oil shipped by rail made up for some of the lost oil shipments, the port is still shipping significantly less oil than it did prior to the pipeline closure.³⁶⁷

Like its other Baltic state neighbors, Latvia is now a member of the EU and has reduced its trade relations with Russia. Nonetheless, Latvia still imports significant amounts of raw materials, such as oil, natural gas, timber, and metals, from Russia. Latvia's exports to Russia including machinery, food, textiles, metal goods, and pharmaceuticals represent over 10% of its total worldwide exports.³⁶⁸

One glimmer of hope in the generally frosty state of relations between Latvia and Russia came in March 2007, when the nations' two prime ministers signed an agreement ending a border dispute that had lasted since 1991.³⁶⁹ The new agreement later went into effect in December after being ratified by the Latvian Constitutional Court.³⁷⁰

Estonia

Estonia, similar to its southern neighbor Latvia, established citizenship regulations after becoming independent in 1991, regulations that effectively excluded any ethnic Russians that had moved to Estonia during the Soviet era. (All the Baltic states were independent nations prior to occupation by the Soviet Union during World War II.) Ethnic Russians living in Estonia could apply for Estonian citizenship through a naturalization process that involved, among other things, demonstrating facility with the Estonian language. The current ethnic Russian population of Estonia is only slightly smaller in percentage than that of Latvia (25.6%). As of 2000, the year in which the most recent census took place, nearly 40% of these ethnic Russians were neither Estonian nor Russian citizens.³⁷¹



© Peter Van den Bossche
Castles on Estonia's border

Russia and Estonia do not have a treaty formally demarcating their mutual border. Such an agreement was tentatively reached in 1996, but both sides delayed signing until 2005. Shortly thereafter, Russia withdrew from the accord, arguing that a provision added by

³⁶⁶ Energy Information Administration, U.S. Department of Energy. "Baltic Sea Regional Factsheet: Oil." July 2006. <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Baltic/Oil.html>

³⁶⁷ Reuters. "Ventspils Oil Terminal Doubles Throughput in H1." 19 July 2007. <http://uk.reuters.com/article/oilRpt/idUKL1978953820070719>

³⁶⁸ Moscow News. Billing, Rebeccah. "Latvian Exports to Russia on the Rise."

³⁶⁹ BBC News, International Version. Sheeter, Laura. "Russia, Latvia Sign Border Deal." 27 March 2007. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6498049.stm>

³⁷⁰ RIA Novosti. "Latvian-Russian Border Treaty Comes into Effect. 18 December 2007. <http://en.rian.ru/world/20071218/92995784.html>

³⁷¹ Statistics Estonia. "Population, 31 March 2000 by Sex, Place of Residence, Ethnic Nationality and Citizenship." 2008. <http://pub.stat.ee/px-web.2001/Dialog/Saveshow.asp>

the Latvian parliament before signing attempted to allow the Latvian government to stake claims to lands on the Russian side of the Latvian border town of Narva.^{372, 373}

Until 2007, Estonian ports were used to export Russian oil for other destinations, but a political conflict between the two countries over the relocation of a Soviet war memorial in downtown Tallinn led to a sharp decrease in Russian oil transiting through Estonia.³⁷⁴ With Russia pursuing a policy of shipping more of its energy exports through its own ports, it is unlikely that Estonian shipments of Russian oil will ever return to anywhere near their previous levels.³⁷⁵

Shortly after the war memorial dispute broke out, several Estonian government offices were overwhelmed with internet traffic in a cyber-attack that Estonian officials initially said was carried out by Russian governmental agencies. Russia denied this claim, and NATO and European Commission experts were unable to find any evidence linking the Russian government to the Estonian computer attacks.^{376, 377}

Finland

During the Cold War, Finland pursued a policy of strict neutrality in the geo-global standoff. The position was dictated by post-World War II treaties and agreements with the Soviet Union that limited the size of the Finnish military, obligated Finland to resist any attacks by Germany or its allies through Finland, and formalized Finland's desire to stand apart from any conflicts between the world's superpowers. After the Soviet Union's dissolution, the Finns established good bilateral relations with Russia, again avoiding confrontation by not raising territorial claims on Finnish regions that were ceded to the Soviet Union in the post-war period.³⁷⁸

Finland has continued to avoid entering into the NATO military alliance since the break-up of the Soviet Union. In 1994, Finland did join the NATO Partnership for Peace program, and it became a member of the European Union in 1995. Currently, Finland continues to carry out strong trade relations with Russia, although Russia's decision to impose an 80% tariff on Finnish imports of Russian timber stirred a minor crisis in 2008. Finland, which uses Russian wood for its paper and other wood-processing factories,

³⁷² EurActiv.com. "Russia Withdraws From Border Treaty With Estonia." 5 September 2005. <http://www.euractiv.com/en/enlargement/russia-withdraws-border-treaty-estonia/article-143852>

³⁷³ RIA Novosti. "Brussels Avoids Taking Sides in Estonia-Russia Border Dispute – MP." 2 September 2005. <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20050902/41281452.html>

³⁷⁴ BBC News, International Version. "Estonia Memorial Move 'Blasphemy'." 27 April 2007. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6599937.stm>

³⁷⁵ Reuters. Lannin, Patrick; and David Mardiste. "Interview: Estonia Sees End to Russian Oil Transit in Future." 12 September 2008.

³⁷⁶ RIA Novosti. "Estonia Has No Evidence of Kremlin Involvement in Cyber Attacks." 6 September 2007. <http://en.rian.ru/world/20070906/76959190.html>

³⁷⁷ The Guardian. Traynor, Ian. "Russia Accused of Unleashing Cyberwar to Disable Estonia." <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/may/17/topstories3.russia>

³⁷⁸ Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Finland." September 2008. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3238.htm>

retaliated by threatening to invoke transit fees on goods transported on Finnish roads to Russia. The Russian–Finnish trade conflict could also delay Russia’s application for membership in the World Trade Organization if not resolved.^{379, 380}

Norway

Russia and Norway share the world’s second-most-northern land boundary (only a portion of the Finland–Norway border is further north). Both countries are among the top three oil exporters in the world (only Saudi Arabia exports more), and oil is at the heart of their nearly 40-year-long negotiations over their 322 km (200 mi) maritime boundary in the Barents Sea.^{381, 382} The 176,000 sq km (68,000 sq mi) region under dispute is thought to contain rich oil and natural gas deposits.



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Border with Finland

Another point of friction between the two countries has been the continuing high-level sulfur dioxide emissions from a nickel-smelting plant near the Norwegian border. In 2001, the Norwegian government offered USD 53 million to Kola GMK, the Russian company that owns the plant, for use in upgrading the plant’s pollution controls, but to date the money has not been spent. In June 2008, however, a Kola GMK official announced that the nickel smelter would likely be closed in the future and production moved 200 km (124 mi) to the southwest. The announcement came a day after talks between the foreign ministers of Norway and Russia, in which the Kola plant pollution was an agenda item.³⁸³

Despite these boundary and environmental disputes, relations between Norway and Russia have been generally good since the end of the Soviet era in 1991. Trade between the two nations has been on the rise, although neither country is a key economic trading partner for the other.³⁸⁴

Terrorist Groups

Terrorist activity in Russia has declined significantly in recent years. In 2003, 561 terrorist acts were



© Adam Baker
Your Call Ties the Terrorists Hands

³⁷⁹ Reuters. Suoninen, Sakari; and Tarmo Virki. “Finland’s Russian” <http://www.reuters.com/article/rbssPaperProducts/idUSL27199315>.

³⁸⁰ World Cargo News. “Finnish-Russian Timber Dispute Sideline by Georgian War.” 23 August 2008. <http://www.worldcargonews.com/htm/w20080823.017599.htm>

³⁸¹ RigZone.com. Dow Jones Newswires. “Barents Sea Dispute on the Agenda at Norway-Russia Talks.” 9 June 2008. http://www.rigzone.com/news/article.asp?a_id=62765

³⁸² Energy Bulletin. Agence France-Presse. “Norway, Russia Jealously Eyeing Virgin Oil Fields.” 6 June 2004. <http://www.energybulletin.net/node/532>

³⁸³ Johnson’s Russia List. Moscow Times. Antonova, Maria. “Balancing Growth and Environment.” 25 July 2008. <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/2008-138-20.cfm>

³⁸⁴ ITAR-TASS. “Trade Turnover Between Russia and Norway May Reach 2 Billion Dollars This Year—Zubkov.” 22 October 2008. <http://itar-tass.com/eng/level2.html?NewsID=13198865&PageNum=0>

carried out in Russia, but during the first nine months of 2007 the number of terrorist activities had declined to 38. The North Caucasus region, where two wars against Chechen separatists occurred during the 1990s and early 2000s, has experienced the majority of recent terrorist attacks. Chechnya, which is now relatively calm, has seen a decline in violence, but the adjoining republics of Ingushetia and Dagestan have seen increases. Mass attacks against civilian targets have declined in the region, with targeted violence toward local police and governmental authorities having largely replaced them.^{385, 386}

Following the death of Chechen terrorist leader Shamil Basayev in 2006, an amnesty program was put in place for Chechen guerillas who had not performed “grave crimes.” The government reported that about 500 individuals came forward, although no prominent separatist leaders were among them. Basayev was responsible for carrying out or helping organize several high-profile terrorist attacks between 1991 and his death. One of these was the September 2004 seizure of a school in the North Ossetian town of Beslan, which ultimately led to the death of 331 people, including 156 school children.^{387, 388} The Beslan massacre was the last in a string of deadly civilian-aimed terrorist attacks and hostage-taking operations that cumulatively killed hundreds of Russian people.^{389, 390} Since then, only sporadic bombings of buses and trains have occurred, mostly in North Caucasus cities, but few have resulted in more than a handful of civilian deaths.³⁹¹

Other Security Issues

Organized Crime

The term “Russian mafia” now appears in nearly every account of the somewhat lawless period that followed Russian independence in 1991. To be sure, the existence of organized crime gangs did not spring up overnight. Born in the *gulags* (prison camps) of the Soviet era, the *vory v zakone* (“thieves in law”) developed networks to provide hard-

³⁸⁵ Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, U.S. Department of State. *Country Reports on Terrorism 2007*. “Chapter 2: Europe and Eurasia Overview: Russia.”

<http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2007/103707.htm>

³⁸⁶ The Jamestown Foundation. *North Caucasus Weekly*, Vol. 8, No. 21. Smirnov, Andrei. “No Terrorist Acts in Russia Since Beslan: Whom to Thank?” 24 May 2007.

http://www.jamestown.org/chechnya_weekly/article.php?articleid=2373424

³⁸⁷ BBC News, International Version. “Obituary: Shamil Basayev.” 27 July 2006.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4727935.stm>

³⁸⁸ TimeEurope.com. McAllister, J. F. O.; and Paul Quinn-Judge. “Defenseless Targets.” 5 September 2004.

<http://www.time.com/time/europe/html/040913/story.html>

³⁸⁹ CNN.com. “Timeline: Russia Terror Attacks.” 2 September 2004.

<http://edition.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/europe/09/01/russia.timeline/index.html>

³⁹⁰ The Jamestown Foundation. *North Caucasus Weekly*, Vol. 8, No. 21. Smirnov, Andrei. “No Terrorist Acts in Russia Since Beslan: Whom to Thank?” 24 May 2007.

http://www.jamestown.org/chechnya_weekly/article.php?articleid=2373424

³⁹¹ Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, U.S. Department of State. *Country Reports on Terrorism 2007*. “Chapter 2: Europe and Eurasia Overview: Russia.”

<http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2007/103707.htm>

to-find luxury items for those Soviet citizens who could afford them. These illegal activities were carried out in the shadow of the Soviet system, with the assistance of corrupt Communist Party officials and lower level *appartchiks* (government bureaucrats).³⁹² Conspicuous consumption by its purveyors was avoided so as stay off the radar of the KGB.^{393, 394}

During the post-Soviet era, the *vory* have, to some extent, been superseded in Russian criminal life by a class of educated white collar criminals who have been able to establish links with big business and government leaders as well as with the more traditional criminal types represented by the *vory*. The period of economic privatization in the 1990s created opportunities for these white collar criminal groups to move their shadow-economy assets into formerly state-owned enterprises, thus establishing them with a high-level economic platform with which to interact with and influence political officials. Physical intimidation, the traditional technique for criminal gangs to coerce others, was also used by the white collar crime groups, although they were more likely to recruit former athletes, police officers, and military personnel as their “enforcers” rather than *vory* or other hardened criminals.³⁹⁵



Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons
Gang members are arrested

By virtually all accounts, the violent, brazen displays of criminal behavior that Russian gangs carried out during the 1990s abated during the Putin era. Many point to this reduction in criminal violence as one of the key aspects of Putin’s enduring popularity in Russia. Nonetheless, a recent increase in contract killings has shown that while Russian gangs are no longer as dominant as they once were, they are still active. Experts estimate that 30% of the Russian economy is still controlled by criminals, some of whom work in local and national political circles.³⁹⁶

³⁹² National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice. Finckenauer, James O.; and Yuri A. Voronin. “The Threat of Russian Organized Crime [p. 5].” <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/187085.pdf>

³⁹³ BBC News. “The Rise and Rise of the Russian Mafia.” 21 November 2998. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/special_report/1998/03/98/russian_mafia/70095.stm

³⁹⁴ International Herald Tribune. Schwartz, Michael. “Vory v Zakone Has Hallowed Place in Russian Criminal Lore.” 29 July 2008. <http://iht.com/articles/2008/07/29/europe/moscow.php?page=2>

³⁹⁵ National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice. Finckenauer, James O.; and Yuri A. Voronin. “The Threat of Russian Organized Crime [p. 5].” <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/187085.pdf>

³⁹⁶ The Telegraph. Blomfield, Adrian. “Russian Mafia Killings Threaten Putin Legacy.” 26 February 2008. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/1579733/Russian-mafia-killings-threaten-Putin-legacy.html>