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United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

Case No.: 200701753

MAR 25 2010

I refer to your letter dated March 11, 2007 regarding the release of certain Department of State material under the Freedom of Information Act (Title 5 USC Section 552).

We searched for and reviewed the self study guides that you requested and have determined that all except one of them may be released. They are on the enclosed disc. One of the guides is being released with excisions.

An enclosure provides information on Freedom of Information Act exemptions and other grounds for withholding material. Where we have made excisions, the applicable exemptions are marked on each document. With respect to material withheld by the Department of State, you have the right to appeal our determination within 60 days. A copy of the appeals procedures is enclosed.

We have now completed the processing of your case. If you have any questions, you may write to the Office of Information Programs and Services, SA-2, Department of State, Washington, DC 20522-8100, or telephone us at (202) 261-8484. Please be sure to refer to the case number shown above in all correspondence about this case.

We hope that the Department has been of service to you in this matter.

Sincerely,



for Margaret P. Grafeld, Director
Office of Information Programs and Services

Enclosures:
As stated.

63934 Federal Register/Vol. 69, No. 212
Rules and Regulations

Subpart F – Appeal Procedures

§171.52 Appeal of denial of access to, declassification of, amendment of, accounting of disclosures of, or challenge to classification of records.

- (a) *Right of administrative appeal.* Except for records that have been reviewed and withheld within the past two years or are the subject of litigation, any requester whose request for access to records, declassification of records, amendment of records, accounting of disclosure of records, or any authorized holder of classified information whose classification challenge has been denied, has a right to appeal the denial to the Department's Appeals Review Panel. This appeal right includes the right to appeal the determination by the Department that no records responsive to an access request exist in Department files. Privacy Act appeals may be made only by the individual to whom the records pertain.
- (b) *Form of appeal.* There is no required form for an appeal. However, it is essential that the appeal contain a clear statement of the decision or determination by the Department being appealed. When possible, the appeal should include argumentation and documentation to support the appeal and to contest the bases for denial cited by the Department. The appeal should be sent to: Chairman, Appeals Review Panel, c/o Appeals Officer, A/GIS/IPS/PP/LC, U.S. Department of State, SA-2, Room 8100, Washington, DC 20522-8100.
- (c) *Time limits.* The appeal should be received within 60 days of the date of receipt by the requester of the Department's denial. The time limit for response to an appeal begins to run on the day that the appeal is received. The time limit (excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and legal public holidays) for agency decision on an administrative appeal is 20 days under the FOIA (which may be extended for up to an additional 10 days in unusual circumstances) and 30 days under the Privacy Act (which the Panel may extend an additional 30 days for good cause shown). The Panel shall decide mandatory declassification review appeals as promptly as possible.
- (d) *Notification to appellant.* The Chairman of the Appeals Review Panel shall notify the appellant in writing of the Panel's decision on the appeal. When the decision is to uphold the denial, the Chairman shall include in his notification the reasons therefore. The appellant shall be advised that the decision of the Panel represents the final decision of the Department and of the right to seek judicial review of the Panel's decision, when applicable. In mandatory declassification review appeals, the Panel shall advise the requester of the right to appeal the decision to the Interagency Security Classification Appeals Panel under §3.5(d) of E.O. 12958.

The Freedom of Information Act (5 USC 552)

FOIA Exemptions

- (b)(1) Withholding specifically authorized under an Executive Order in the interest of national defense or foreign policy, and properly classified. E.O. 12958, as amended, includes the following classification categories:
 - 1.4(a) Military plans, systems, or operations
 - 1.4(b) Foreign government information
 - 1.4(c) Intelligence activities, sources or methods, or cryptology
 - 1.4(d) Foreign relations or foreign activities of the US, including confidential sources
 - 1.4(e) Scientific, technological, or economic matters relating to national security, including defense against transnational terrorism
 - 1.4(f) U.S. Government programs for safeguarding nuclear materials or facilities
 - 1.4(g) Vulnerabilities or capabilities of systems, installations, infrastructures, projects, plans, or protection services relating to US national security, including defense against transnational terrorism
 - 1.4(h) Information on weapons of mass destruction
- (b)(2) Related solely to the internal personnel rules and practices of an agency
- (b)(3) Specifically exempted from disclosure by statute (other than 5 USC 552), for example:
 - ARMEX Arms Export Control Act, 22 USC 2778(e)
 - CIA Central Intelligence Agency Act of 1949, 50 USC 403(g)
 - EXPORT Export Administration Act of 1979, 50 App. USC 2411(c)(1)
 - FSA Foreign Service Act of 1980, 22 USC 4003 & 4004
 - INA Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 USC 1202(f)
 - IRAN Iran Claims Settlement Act, Sec 505, 50 USC 1701, note
- (b)(4) Privileged/confidential trade secrets, commercial or financial information from a person
- (b)(5) Interagency or intra-agency communications forming part of the deliberative process, attorney-client privilege, or attorney work product
- (b)(6) Information that would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy
- (b)(7) Information compiled for law enforcement purposes that would:
 - (A) interfere with enforcement proceedings
 - (B) deprive a person of a fair trial
 - (C) constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy
 - (D) disclose confidential sources
 - (E) disclose investigation techniques
 - (F) endanger life or physical safety of an individual
- (b)(8) Prepared by or for a government agency regulating or supervising financial institutions
- (b)(9) Geological and geophysical information and data, including maps, concerning wells

Other Grounds for Withholding

- NR Material not responsive to a FOIA request, excised with the agreement of the requester

Self Study Guide: Russia



NATIONAL FOREIGN AFFAIRS
TRAINING CENTER
School of Professional and Area Studies
Foreign Service Institute
U.S. Department of State

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INTRODUCTION

The *Self-Study Guide : Russia* is intended to provide U.S. government personnel in the foreign affairs community with an overview of important Russian issues related to history, culture, politics, economics, security and international relations. This guide should serve as an introduction and a self-study resource. Russian affairs are far too complex and broad to be covered in any depth using only the text in this guide.

The reader is encouraged to explore the questions and issues raised in the guide by referring to the books, articles, periodicals and web sites listed in the appropriate sections. Most of the referenced material can be found either on the Internet or in the Foreign Service Institute or Main State Libraries.

The first edition of the *Self-Study Guide* to Russia was prepared by Dr. Martyna Fox, chair for Russian and Eurasian area studies at FSI. The views expressed in this guide are those of the author or of attributed sources and do not necessarily reflect official policy or position of the U.S. Department of State or the National Foreign Affairs Training Center.

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October, 2000

I. The Environment and The People

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The Land

Russia's vast and varied territory places it in a geographic category of its own. The country's size (16,995,800 square km) and location (well to the north and straddling Asia and Europe) have shaped the history of the Russian state and as well as the lifestyle and the culture of its inhabitants.

Geography



Land features

Although traditionally Russia has been divided into a European and an Asian part, from a topographical point of view there are far more features uniting the Eurasian landmass than dividing it. Russia comprises most of the Eurasian plain and abuts significant mountain ranges only along its frontiers: the **Caucasus** mountains in the south, the **Altai** Mountains along the border with China, the **Saian** Mountains near Mongolia, and finally, the **Verkhoiansk** and the **Kolyma** Ranges, which include Russia's twenty active volcanoes on the **Kamchatka** Peninsula. The **Ural** Mountains –the official dividing line between Europe and Asia –are just a chain of hills which never have been a barrier to human migration.

Network of rivers

Russia's extensive river system has facilitated the economic and political coalescence of the Russian state. The great rivers of the Eurasian plain mostly follow a north-south axis: the **Don** flows into the Black Sea, the **Volga**—known in Russian culture as the "mother of Russian rivers"—flows into the landlocked Caspian Sea, and the giants of Siberia: the **Ob**, the **Yenisei**, and the **Lena**, all empty into the Arctic Ocean. Because of the gentle gradation of the Eurasian plain rivers tend to be slow and highly navigable; even more importantly, they have a dense network of tributaries forming an interlocking system of waterways unique in Europe or Asia. Development of canals during the Soviet era further enhanced the river system's prominent transportation role.

Access to Open Seas

Historically, Russia has been a land power, that is a state deriving its resources from land, population and mineral wealth rather than from trade or access to open seas. However, over the course of its expansion Russia has gained access to two seas (the Baltic Sea in the northwest and the Black Sea in the southwest) and two oceans (the Arctic and the Pacific). These maritime outlets present geo-strategic as well as commercial challenges: they are either difficult to reach (Murmansk or Archangelsk in the White Sea for instance is ice-bound most of the year), lie within inland seas (Narva in the Baltic, Nikolaevsk in the Black Sea), or are distant from Russia's population and production centers (Vladivostok in the Far East).

Vegetation zones

The Eurasian plain is marked by distinct vegetation and soil zones, running in roughly horizontal bands from the Far East to Eastern Europe. In the extreme north, the arctic **tundra** is a zone of permafrost plains where the climate does not allow even for the grasses to survive. The tundra does support the lichens and with it herds of reindeer. It also holds great mineral resources –such as natural gas and oil.

South of the tundra lies the largest coniferous forest on the planet: the **taiga**. This zone –never narrower than 1000 km –stretches from the Gulf of Finland to Kamchatka. Even today it is thinly inhabited, due to a harsh climate and swampy soils. However, it has historically provided Russia's great natural resources of timber and precious furs. Below the taiga lies a relatively narrow but historically important zone of mixed forests, which includes the famous Russian birch tree stands. This area has been cleared and farmed since earliest times, and all of Russia's historical capitals - Kiev, Vladimir and Moscow, lie within it.

Further south, mixed forests give way to open grasslands, called the **steppe**. Its greatest resource is the famously fertile *chernozem*, or black earth, which in European Russia supports most agricultural output. Once the domain of Turkic-speaking nomadic herders, these grasslands are now entirely under cultivation.

Finally, the dry climate of the south turns the steppe into the semi-desert along the north-eastern rim of the Caspian Sea.

Climate

Russia's continental climate, with extreme temperatures both summer and winter (a record of -90°F was recorded in Eastern Siberia) is further complicated by Russia's northern location. Close to 70% of the Russian Federation's territory lies north of the 60° latitude on a level with Alaska. Winters are long, especially in Siberia where in some areas the frost-free season lasts only 45 days. Consequently, the growing season is relatively short throughout Russia, presenting a permanent challenge for agriculture. In European Russia the climate is somewhat mitigated by the flow of warmer air from the Atlantic. Interestingly, in the 20th century the percentage of the Russian population living in severely cold climate

has increased due to the emergence of extraction /industrial centers in Siberia and the Far North.

Rainfall

Rainfall in both European Russia and in Siberia is rather poorly distributed. Most of it falls to the north (contributing to the already extensive swamp areas between the tundra and the taiga), while too little falls to the south on the relatively richer soils of the steppes.

Soils and Agriculture

Almost 88% percent of Russian land is uncultivated, with 46% covered by dense forests or woodlands. In European Russia large swaths of forests and swamps produce a type of poor soil known as *podzol*. Regions more suitable for agriculture include the Volga region, Novorossiia and Western Urals, where *chernozem* and other "brown" soils prevail. In Siberia, a belt of *chernozem* extends to some portions in the south, where an attempt was made to develop intensive agriculture during the so called Virgin Land campaign of the 1950's.

The most important grains in Russia are wheat, barley, oats, and rye, although in the past 20 years Russia became a wheat importer because much of its arable land is devoted to fodder crops. Sugarbeets, flax and tobacco are also among the most important crops. Traditional vegetable crops consist of potatoes, cabbage, peas, carrots and onions.

Overall, because of the challenging climate and soil conditions, agricultural activity in Russia remains less efficient and harvests are less reliable than in the rest of Europe.

Mineral and Natural Resources

Apart from some iron and coal deposits, most of Russia's extensive natural and mineral resources are to be found in Siberia. World-class deposits of natural gas and oil have been developed in Western Siberia in the Tiumen oblast. Coal, iron, gold, copper, tin, nickel, uranium and other non-ferrous metals, as well as Yakutia's extensive diamond fields, are located in Eastern Siberia. Another area of potentially great oil and gas deposits is under development in Sakhalin.

Among other natural resources, timber and paper have been among the top export items in Russia as has been another forestry product, precious furs. Finally, the Pacific fisheries have been a staple of economic activity for the port cities of the Far East.

Questions/Issues:

What impact did geography have on Russian history?

Reflect on this excerpt from Michael Florinsky's *History of Kievan Rus*. Do you agree with his

conclusions?

The historical destinies of nations, like the lives of individuals, are determined largely by their environment. It was no mere historical accident that the immense plain occupying one-sixth of the land surface of the globe became gradually absorbed within the political frontiers of the Russian state

... Unlike western Europe, the monotony of the Russian plain is not broken by ranges of mountains ...[and its] waterways ...greatly facilitated the unity of the Eurasian plain, worked against the establishment of independent political states and thus contributed to the eventual triumph of a centralized political system.

Natural resource development in the Soviet era was based on the needs of the state rather than on economic consideration. What is the likely impact of a free-market economy on the industrial cities of the Far North and Siberia?

Suggested Reading: Richard Pipes, "The Environment and its Consequences" in *Russia under the Old Regime*; Robin Milner-Gulland, "The Geographic Background" in *Cultural Atlas of Russia and the Soviet Union* (Facts on File, New York, 1991)

The People

Major Ethnic Groupings

The three major ethnic and linguistic groupings of the Russian Federation are the Slavic, the Turkic, and the Ugro-Finnic /Uralic peoples. They form the oldest ethnic core of the Russian state. In the past, their cultures and ways of life differed considerably. The earliest historical sources describe the Slavs as the settled, agricultural population of what is today Ukraine, Belarus and Western Russia. The Ugro-Finnic and Uralic peoples, by contrast, inhabited the dense forests to the north and east as hunters and gatherers. Finally, the Turkic speakers belong to different waves of nomadic herders who over the last two millennia have migrated from Far East Asia along the Eurasian steppes.

In the course of its expansion the Russian state also incorporated the Caucasian peoples of the north slopes of the Caucasus Mountains, the numerous but extremely small Paleo-Siberian groups in the Far North, and a number of largely urban ethnic minorities such as the Jews, the Armenians, the Germans and the Poles.

Slavic Peoples: Russian, Ukrainian, Belorussian, Polish

Turkic: Tatar, Bashkir, Chuvash, Kumyk, Tuvin

Ugro-Finnic: Karelian, Kalmyk, Komi, Mari, Mordvinian, Udmurt

Uralic: Samoyed, Buryat, Yakut

Paleo-Siberian: Chukchi, Evenki, Nentsy

Caucasian: Chechen, Ingush, Adygey, Cherkess, Kabardin, Avar, Lezgin

Ethnic Structure Today

Despite its long history as a multi-ethnic state, the Russian Federation today is more ethnically homogeneous than at any point in the last two hundred years. (That is of course due to the break-up of the USSR and political independence for most non-Russians). The following table depicts the ethnic structure of the Federation for 1991-1993:

Total Population: 147, 022,000

Russian 119, 866,000 (81.5%)

Tatar 5,522,000 (3,8%)

Ukrainian 4,363,000 (3,0%)

Chuvash 1,774,000 (1,2%)

Bashkort 1,345,000 (0.9%)

Belorussian 1,206,000 (0.8%)

Mordvinian 1,073,000 (0.7%)

Chechen 899,000 (0.6%)

German 842,000 (0.6%)

Udmurt 715,000 (0.5%)

Avar 544,000 (0.4%)

Jewish 537,000 (0.4%)

Buryat 417,000 (0.3%)

Yakut 380,000 (0.3%)

Kumyk 277,000 (0.2%)

The remaining nationalities average in size 0.1% of the overall population.

(Source, S. Batalen, ed. *The Newly Independent States of Eurasia. Handbook of Former Soviet Republics*(Oryx, 1993).)

Ethnic Identity: the non-Russians

In the wake of the break-up of the USSR the issue of ethnic and national identities within Russia received much attention, largely as a result of concerns over the stability and integrity of the Federation itself. But for both Russians and non-Russians living in these territories the question of national identity is complicated by their long history of cohabitation within the Tsarist and the Soviet states.

Until the 20th century, most nationalities identified themselves through language, religion, or the way of life, rather than by ethnic criteria. Levels of national consciousness also varied considerably and the Tsarist state strove to keep any such consciousness from becoming a coherent, political identity. Ethnic (and by definition, unchangeable) identity did not come to prominence until the Soviet era, when Stalin's administrative and federal structures solidified, and in some cases imposed, particular ethnic labels. [For discussion of Stalin's nationalities policy and the Soviet administrative structure see chapter on Ethnic Legacies of the Soviet Era].

Today, ethnic Russians form either the majority or the largest minority in all administrative units of the Federation, including the ethnic republics. This further blurs the issue of local identities. Consequently, there have emerged different (although sometimes overlapping) approaches to building a national identity within the federation. One strategy emphasizes ethnic and linguistic components. It is most successful in the largest ethnically-based republics, such as Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, and Yakutia. Another approach stresses a common cultural heritage, as do the Russians, but also the Jews. Finally, there are ethnic groups mobilized by the political and economic struggle with the center to control local taxes and resources: Tatarstan, Kalmykia, Yakutia.

Only in the North Caucasus have all three strategies been fused. In the areas where this has occurred –most prominently in Chechnya –the issue of political independence from Moscow has indeed come to a head.

Sample of Ethnic Balance in Russia's National Republics:

Bashkortostan population: 3,943,000

Bashkort 21.9%

Russian 39.3%

Sakha (Yakutia) population 1,094,000

Yakuts 33.5%

Russians 50.3%

Tatarstan population 3,642,000

Tatars 48.5%

Russians 43.3%

Chechnya/

Ingushetia** population 1,270,000

Chechens 57.8%

Ingush 12.9%

Russians 23.1%

(note: these figures reflect population levels before the 1994-96 and 1999 conflicts)

Altai population 191,000

Altai 31.0%

Russians 60.4%

Source: RFE/RL Research Report, vol. 2, no. 20 (May 1993)

Questions/Issues:

--Which of the territories and nationalities within the Russian Federation have been seen as potentially

raising the issue of independence from Moscow? What particular factors influenced each case?

Suggested Reading: M. Katz, *Handbook of Soviet Nationalities*

Ethnic Identity: The Russians

The rise of the Russian state was closely linked to the expansion of the empire, and both preceded the emergence of any modern Russian identity. For most of their history Russians lived in a multi-ethnic state. As the "imperial" people, the Russians did not tie their identity to a defined "core" territory but rather to the empire in general. Pride in the military and diplomatic achievements of the empire took the place of a sense of ethnic solidarity. Consequently, the Russians lagged behind their subject nationalities in the development of modern national identity.

The same dynamic also characterized the Soviet era. Despite the varnish of the ethnic brotherhood, the Russians found themselves falling into the old role of the "imperial people". They continued to settle throughout the Soviet Union, frequently inter-marrying and further undercutting their own territorial roots. They were also disproportionately "Sovietized" and deprived of access to their traditional culture. Thus the strongest basis for self-identification of the Russians today remains not an ethnic background but language, religion and common culture.

Questions and Issues:

-- Has the issue of Russian national identity been settled since 1991?

-- What impact can the Russian identity issue have on the direction of the country?

-- How can it influence its relations with the neighbors?

Suggested Reading: Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire*; Martha Brill Olcott and Valery Tishkov, "From Ethnos to Demos: The Quest for Russia's Identity" in *Russia after Communism*, ed. A. Aslund, M. Olcott (Carnegie Endowment, 1999).

Russian Culture

Russian Language and Alphabet

The Russian language (together with contemporary Belorussian and Ukrainian) belongs to the Eastern branch of the Slavic family of languages. Although still mutually intelligible, these Slavic languages have steadily diverged for the last seven centuries. Their common ancestor can still be seen in the Old

Church Slavonic –an ancient language preserved today in the Russian Orthodox liturgy.

The Russian alphabet is known as the Cyrillic alphabet. It was created in the 9th century by St. Cyril and Methodius, two Slavonic monks. They borrowed letters from the Greek, the Hebrew and from other Slavic languages to represent adequately the wide array of consonants characteristic for Russian. Today, the Cyrillic alphabet consists of 33 letters: 21 for the consonants, 5 for hard vowels, five for diphthongs and 2 for voiceless signs (soft and hard sign). As a result, Russian is a more phonetic language than English: by and large it is pronounced the way it is written. Cyrillic is not easily intelligible to Latin alphabet users. It is therefore strongly recommended that those traveling to Russia familiarize themselves with the alphabet before they set out.

Suggested Reading: Robin Milner-Gulland, "The Land and the People" in Cultural Atlas of Russia and the Soviet Union (Facts on File, New York, 1991)

Russian Orthodoxy

The Russian Orthodox Church celebrated the millennium of Kievan Rus' conversion to Christianity in 1988. The Russian Church has been and remains one of the chief national and cultural institutions in Russia. It has been credited with preserving a sense of Russian identity through the dark era of the Mongol Yoke. It has also played a paramount role in shaping Russian culture, bequeathing on it some of its most recognizable symbols: from the language (alphabet) and literature (early chronicles), to architecture (the onion-shaped dome), the visual arts (the icon) and music (choir music and church bells).

Most of the Church's history in Russia has been marked by political influence and protection by the state (until 1917, the Russian emperor was also the head of the Orthodox Church). But it also experienced periods of devastating internal schism (in 17th century, with the split of the Old Believers) and persecution (under Peter the Great). The Soviet era brought not only severe limitations on all church activities, but also wholesale prosecution and killing of priests, destruction of churches, seminaries, and monasteries.

Since 1991, the Russian Church -- the largest Eastern Orthodox church in the world -- has experienced a strong revival. The Russian state has returned most of the church property and officially recognized religious holidays. Furthermore, both the Duma and the government have expressed strong support for the Orthodox Church in its attempts to safeguard its place as the foremost of Russia's "historical" religions. Consequently, with 96.7 million nominal believers, the Russian Orthodox Church remains the largest and best organized denomination not only in Russia, but throughout the Former Soviet Union.

Questions and Issues:

The Orthodox Church in Russia has a long history of close cooperation with the state. How has this relationship played out since 1991?

Does the Orthodox Church deserve a special legal protection considering its persecution by the authorities during the Soviet Era?

Suggested Reading: Nathaniel Davis, *A Long Walk to Church. A Contemporary History of Russian Orthodoxy*(Westview, 1995).

Islam, Judaism, Buddhism

The Russian law on religious freedom passed in 1997 specifically distinguishes Islam, Buddhism and Judaism as "historic" religions of Russia, i.e. religions whose long presence and role within the Russian state confer a special, protected status.

Islam is the second largest religion in Russia. Although Russian Muslims are overwhelmingly Sunni, religious traditions and practices among them vary greatly. The two largest concentrations of Muslims in Russia are among the Turkic speakers of the mid-Volga regions (Tatarstan, Bashkortostan) and in the North Caucasus (Chechnya, Ingushetia, Daghestan, Kabardino-Balkaria). The tradition of secret islamic brotherhoods (the **Sufi**orders) are particularly strong in the North Caucasus, where Islam has become a potent cultural and political unifying force. In Tatarstan, by contrast, Islamic self-identification is more cultural in character. It needs to be stressed that both traditions have evolved quite distinctly from other strains of Islam, especially those in the Middle East.

Suggested Reading: Shirin Akiner, *Islamic Peoples of the Soviet Union*(KPI, London, 1986); Alexander Benningsen, *Mystics and Commissars, Sufism in the USSR*(University of California, 1985).

Judaism –although named among the historical religions of Russia –has had a unique and difficult history in that country. Jews have been treated as both a religious and an ethnic minority. Roots of the Jewish community in Russia reach back to the rural population in today's Belorussian and Western Ukrainian territories (which the Tsarist authorities designated as the official Pale of Settlement for the Jews). However, the Holocaust in WW II destroyed these ancient Jewish communities, leaving as their only survivors the mostly Russian-speaking and assimilated urban dwellers. Consequently, Judaism in Russia today, although strongly reinvigorated, faces the challenge of rebuilding its religious institutions and reviving its traditions after decades of official non-existence.

Anti-Semitism, both official and unofficial, has also marred the history of Jewish-Russian relations. It ranged from violent pogroms in late Tsarist Russia, to professional discrimination and cultural persecution in the Stalin era. Today, open anti-Semitism remains limited to fringe nationalist groupings, although its occasional outbreaks have been public enough to be officially condemned by the Russian government.

Suggested Reading: Joshua Rothenberg, *The Jewish Religion in the Soviet Union*(Brandeis University, 1971)

Buddhism spread into Siberia from Mongolia. The largest Buddhist ethnic group in Russia are the Buriats of the Lake Baikal region, who adopted Buddhism in the 18th century. Despite the Soviet efforts to limit the number of lamas and monasteries, Buddhism has experienced a strong revival since 1991, making Russia the seventh largest Buddhist country in the world.

Shamanism is the original religion of the indigenous Siberian peoples. Its specific traditions vary from tribe to tribe, but generally shamanism features a spirit helper (shaman) who mediates between the visible and the spirit world. Many Shaman tribes have been forcibly converted to Eastern Orthodoxy (most notably the Yakut-Sakha), but they have managed to retain their tribal religious practices.

Other religious groups: The 1997 Duma law placed the **Catholic**, the **Uniate** (Eastern Rite Catholic) and the **Protestant** churches in the non-historical category of Russia's religious organizations. Although most of these denominations have been present in Russia for several centuries, they are associated with ethnic groups which have ties abroad: the Poles (Catholic), the Ukrainians (Uniate), and the Germans (Lutheran). In addition, such Protestant groups as the Baptists, the Pentecostals, the Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses have been harshly prosecuted because of their perceived missionary zeal.

Questions and Issues:

What has been the historical relationship between Russia and the Islamic world?

What has been Russia's (and Soviet Union's) attitude toward the so-called Islamic fundamentalism?

How does Russia balance its relationship with the Islamic countries and its relationship with the Islamic nationalities at home?

What are Russia's stated interests in the Islamic movements of Central Asia?

What has been the outcome of the 1997 law on religious organizations in Russia?

Suggested Reading: Michael Bourdeaux, ed. *The Politics of Religion in Russia and the New States of Eurasia* (ME Sharpe, 1995); John Anderson, *Religion, State and Politics in the Soviet Union and the Successor States* (Cambridge University, 1994).

Traditional Culture and Holidays

Traditional Russian culture is rooted in the rich peasant folklore and the Orthodox celebrations. It was above a culture of the village and of community life. Although severely damaged during the Soviet era, this traditional culture continues to express itself, largely through the celebration of holidays.

Until 1917, the holidays were of course religious. The most important – then as well as today – is

Paskha(Easter), with all-night church vigils, services, and festive processions. The Russian Easter also has many pre-Christian, "rite-of-spring" elements such as special foods and brightly decorated Easter eggs.

Due to the two-week difference between pre-1917 Julian and Western Gregorian calendars, **Rozhdestvo**(Christmas) can be celebrated either on the Russian Orthodox date (January 7), or on the Western date (December 25). During the Soviet era, the authorities encouraged the celebration of New Year, often with a Santa-Claus-like figure, Grandfather Frost. Thus the Russian "winter celebration" season is longer than in the West.

Among many secular holidays introduced during the Soviet era, **International Women's Day**(March 8) and **WWII Victory Day**(May 9) have shown few signs of diminishing popularity. The old Soviet holidays of May 1 (**Workers' Day**) and November 7 (**Great October Revolution**), although no longer officially recognized, still draw some celebrants. Finally, the new Russian official holidays like **Independence Day**(June 12) and **Constitution Day**(October 7) are merely seen as days off work.

As in the United States, the observed days of many holidays are changed in order to give workers an extended weekend.

Suggested Reading: Suzanne Massie, *The Land of the Firebird*

Role of High Culture and Literature

Historically, the culture of the vast majority of the Russian people was Slavic, peasant, traditional, and isolated from outside influences. Following the state reforms of Peter the Great and Russia's "opening to the West" in the 18th century, a narrow but important ruling elite (nobility, state officials) espoused West European culture and transplanted it to Russia. The true flowering of this culture took place in the 19th century, when Russian genius started to penetrate and modify the purely Western models.

This synthesis was visible in the visual arts and architecture, as well as in science and philosophy. But it was in music and literature that what the Russians call their "high culture" was born.

Starting with **Glinka** in the 1830's, Russian music was transformed by such creative giants as **Mussorgski**, **Rimsky-Korsakov**, and of course, **Tchaikovsky**. By the early 20th century, **Rachmaninov** and **Stravinsky** set the world standard for modern music. The meteoric rise of Russian music was mirrored by the achievements of the Russian ballet, as personified by the choreographic genius of **Marius Petipa**, and the dancing of **Anna Pavlova**. Again, in the early 20th century, the famous Ballets Russes created a musical, visual, and dancing sensation when performing in Western Europe. It is to these great traditions and achievements that today's **Bolshoi** Theater and the **Kirov** Ballet aspire.

Literature –both poetry and prose -- holds an especially revered place in the Russian culture. Russia's greatest poet is without doubt **Alexander Pushkin**, beloved precisely for his brilliant use of the Russian

language and Russian folk themes in Western poetic forms. His works are known universally and by heart throughout Russia; they represent one area of culture common to all inhabitants of that country. Better known in the West are the achievements of such Russian writers as **Leo Tolstoy**, **Fodor Dostoyevsky**, or **Anton Chekhov**. Intimate knowledge of their writings is a point of pride among educated Russians. They quite rightly consider these writers important contributors to world literature.

Overall, the Russian art encapsulates one of the great tensions in Russian civilization: openness to but also a wariness of foreign influences. Some of the greatest Russian achievements in art were spurred by encounters with new Western models. But it was precisely the transformation of those models into undeniably Russian works that makes those achievements worth anything in the Russian eyes

Questions and Issues:

What was the consequence of the split between the traditional (popular) and the Westernized (high) culture in Russia?

How does "Russia's window to the West"—St. Petersburg—reflect Western influences on Russian culture?

Suggested Reading: James Billington, *The Icon and the Axe: An Interpretive History of Russia* (Knopf, 1966); Solomon Volkov, *St. Petersburg: A Cultural History* (Free Press, 1999)

Soviet Popular Culture

After 1917, a chief ideological aim of the Soviet government was the destruction of the old "bourgeois" culture and the rise of a new Soviet civilization. The traditional Russian peasant culture was largely destroyed as that social class succumbed to collectivization, famine, and eventually, urbanization of the Soviet Union. The high culture of the pre-revolutionary era was treated more selectively. Some elements were destroyed during the 1920's and 30's, when Russia's old intellectual elite was lost in the purges. But other elements—either because they were deemed progressive or valuable for the prestige of the Soviet Union—were preserved and even cultivated. Ballet and classical music were consistently supported by the Soviet cultural authorities. So was most of Russia's great 19th century literature. However, all these remnants of the old Russian culture were consciously molded into a larger, Soviet "civilization," which was to be the pride of all Soviet citizens.

Another important task in building a new civilization was to create a genuinely accepted popular culture. Its most important vehicles were to be the cinema (and later television), sports, popular music, and other forms of public entertainment such as the circus or amusement parks, where the new Soviet holidays would be celebrated by the masses. Permeated by official propaganda and often appealing to the lowest common denominator, the Soviet popular culture nonetheless became a genuine social phenomenon. Its lasting power can be seen in the great popularity of exhibits focusing on the Soviet era art.

Questions and Issues:

What can explain the appeal to the present-day Russians of the Soviet era art and culture?

What has been their attitude to popular art from abroad (such as film, music) since 1991?

To what extent does traditional Russian culture survive in today's Russia?

Suggested Reading: Richard Stites, *Soviet Popular Culture, Entertainment and Society since 1900* (Cambridge Press, 1992).

The Russian Family

In the traditional Russian society extended families lived together, often comprising three or more generations. In the Soviet era, the ability to rely on one's family grew in importance, especially during times of hardship or heightened political oppression. Today, extended family arrangements can be found among 20% of the Russian population, but that is due more to the housing shortages than to cultural preference. Still, family bonds - especially between mothers and daughters - remain strong.

Most women worked outside the home during the Soviet period; they were also charged with taking care of home and family. This trend has not changed much since 1991. The rate of divorce continues to grow in Russia, creating a large segment of female-headed families dependent on the older generation.

Suggested Reading: Francine Duplessix-Gray, *Soviet Women: Walking the Tightrope* (Doubleday, 1989); *Women in Russia: A new Era in Russian Feminism* (Verso, 1994).

II. History and its Legacies

[|Early History](#) | [Imperial History](#) | [The Soviet Area](#) | [The Fall of the USSR](#)

Kievan Russia

Russia's early history was marked by migration, invasions, and domination by peoples of both Europe and Asia. Originally Slavic agricultural tribes had settled in East European territories, between the Black and the Baltic seas. [They would eventually split into the Western Slavs (Poles, Czechs, Slovaks), the South Slavs (Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Bulgarians) and the Eastern Slavs (Russians, Ukrainians and Belorussians).] Although constantly buffeted by waves of nomadic herders from inner Asia, the Eastern Slavs managed to establish several independent city states. By the 9th century Scandinavian Vikings (known as the **Varangians**) imposed a centralized political and economic control over the Slavic settlements along the **Dnieper** River, leading to the emergence of the first Russian state centered in the city of Kiev.

Throughout its brief existence Kievan Rus remained a loose federation of cities and principalities. Its wealth was based on trade between the Baltic Sea in the north and the Black Sea and Byzantium in the south. Consequently, Kievan Rus was open to a wide range of cultural influences. Its Viking ruling elite became quickly Slavized. With the adoption of Orthodox Christianity from Byzantium in 988, Kievan Rus witnessed an impressive growth in culture, architecture, literature and law. However, its relative political and military weakness left it exposed to a new wave of nomadic conquerors who were to inundate the Kievan state after 1236.

The Mongol Period

With the sack of Kiev in 1243, the Mongol-led armies of **Ginghis Khan** established complete control over all Eastern Slavic territories. The Mongol occupation –which was to last for more than two hundred years –was marked by ruthless exploitation of the subject population, great cost in human lives, and finally by a wholesale dislocation of the surviving Slavic population from the open steppes of the south to the isolated but better protected forests of the north-east. Under the protection of the Russian princes, new cities and settlements were built there; the most successful among them was Moscow which, by 1328, became the seat of the Grand Prince. It was under the ruthless yet determined leadership of the Moscow princes that the Northern Russian settlements built up enough military and political strength to overthrow the Mongol rule.

Muscovite Russia

With their own empire crumbling, the Mongols were powerless to stop the growing ambitions of **Muscovy**princes. By 1472, through marriage to the niece of the last Byzantine emperor, Ivan the Great inherited the title of **Tsar**(Caesar). By 1583, his grandson, Ivan the Terrible, was powerful enough to lead a successful military campaign to conquer the Mongols' own centers of power: the **khanates**of Kazan and Astrakhan. At the same time, Ivan established a centralized and autocratic system of rule at home, eliminating any potential threats to the power of the Russian Tsar. During his *oprichnina*, for instance, his trusted henchmen killed, tortured and terrorized old aristocratic families, they but also destroyed overly independent cities like **Novgorod**. Ironically, having eliminated competitors to his power, Ivan contributed to the early death of his only son thus bringing to a tragic end the ancient Riurik dynasty. Russia was left rudderless to face increasing dangers at home and abroad.

Suggested Reading: Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Old Regime*(Scribners, 1974)

Imperial History

The Rise of the Russian Empire

After a prolonged period of civil strife, known in Russian history as the Times of Trouble, a new ruling dynasty was installed on the throne of Russia in 1613. The **Romanovs**would occupy that throne until

1917, and it was during their reign that Russia's greatest territorial growth took place. Among the most outstanding members of the Romanov dynasty was Peter the Great, who came to power in 1694. Focusing on the growing military and technological gap between his country and the rest of Europe, Peter launched a top-down, radical campaign to modernize Russia. Its government, the military, local administration, even education, were restructured to emulate Western models, even as the Tsar's own power grew more centralized and autocratic.

The reforms were to serve the purposes of Peter's activist foreign policy. Through a series of wars with Sweden, he gained access to the Baltic Sea and founded Russia's "window to the West," St. Petersburg. In wars against the Ottoman Turks and the Persians, he expanded Russia's territory to the south and south-east. At the end of his reign, Peter officially moved the capital from Moscow to St. Petersburg and declared the establishment of the Russian Empire.

Autocracy and Serfdom

Even though most of Peter's heirs followed his dreams of imperial expansion, they shared less in his enthusiasm for introducing Western-inspired innovations at home. Consequently, even while the territories of Russia grew at staggering rates, an essentially pre-modern social and economic system prevailed throughout the country. The most important element of Russia's social structure was the existence of **serfdom**, which legally bound a large proportion of peasants to the lands on which they worked. Their forced labor supported a large and wealthy class of land-owning nobility, which in turn owed their service and loyalty to the Tsarist state. Thus, Russia's autocratic regime depended directly on the perpetuation of an inefficient and unjust system of serfdom, which eventually would undercut its economic and consequently military power. This tension -- between the requirements of autocracy and the demands of the Great Power competition -- escalated in the 18th and 19th centuries. Catherine the Great, Peter's most talented successor, engaged in successful diplomatic and military actions against Great Powers of Europe. At the same time, she imposed ever harsher requirements on the peasant population, ruthlessly putting down their repeated rebellions. In the 19th century, even as he claimed for Russia the title of the "gendarme of Europe," Nicholas I adamantly rejected the calls for the abolition of serfdom. It was only a series of military defeats that pushed Russia's autocratic rulers to adopt a modicum of reforms. Following the disastrous Crimean War, Russia launched the so called Great Reforms, including the abolition of serfdom in 1861. After the stinging defeat in the war with Japan in 1905, Nicholas II introduced a limited constitutional government as well as a series of land and economic reforms. The experiment in liberalizing Russia's political system was cut short by the decision to enter World War I -- a step leading directly to the collapse of the Tsarist rule and the Bolshevik revolution of 1917.

The confluence of state and empire in Russian history has been blamed by many historians for the social, economic, as well as political ills that besieged that country on the eve of the revolution. Frequent wars -- be they defensive or offensive -- contributed to the extreme exploitation of the population to support the fighting state. Extensive and varied territories and restive subject populations encouraged the growth of a centralized and repressive state. The needs of the state in turn consumed the elite: their loyal service to

the autocrat rewarded them with land, but precluded independent economic activities. The bulk of the population –the peasants -- were left to carry the burden of the military, the huge administration, as well as the land-owners. In the end, these imperial burdens stunted the economic, political and national development in Russia, alienating the society from the Tsarist state. Growing ethnic tensions and resentment of the Russian rule added to this explosive mixture and eventually led to the implosion of the Tsarist Empire.

Questions and Issues:

What were the burdens of empire-building for the Russian society?

How were the Russian state and empire dependent on each other?

Suggested Reading: Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire*

The Soviet Era

The Bolshevik coup of 1917 opened a turbulent and fateful era in Russian history. The radical ideological ambitions of Lenin and his party led to an unprecedented experiment in building a new state, a new political and economic system, a radically new society, and a new civilization –all at the same time. This experiment, "conducted on the living body of the Russian people," was to bring a staggering human cost and a host of long-term legacies borne by Russia today.

Ideological and Political Legacies

Utopian or not, the early Bolshevik leaders took their ideological aims very seriously. The goal was to quickly and radically remake the traditional Russian society into a communist one, governed by the proletariat –the industrial working class. In order to achieve that aim in the absence of well developed working classes, the Bolsheviks relied on a small, highly disciplined, and determined party structure which was to act as the "vanguard" of the revolution. This decision had fundamental consequences for the political culture as well as the system of rule in Soviet Russia. For one, a distinct ends-justify-means mentality came to prevail among the builders of the Soviet state. Second, total political monopoly of the Communist Party was seen as a given. Furthermore, fanatical ideology brought with a conviction that in any situation there can be only one, ideologically-correct policy or answer to a problem, an attitude which by its nature denies the validity of political compromises. (Under Stalin this obsession with enforcing the party line would degenerate into show-trials and purges of "deviating" party members). All these elements created an inflexible political-administrative system well suited to a top-down system of command, but one singularly unresponsive to social and economic signals from below.

Questions and Issues:

Continuities between Tsarist and Soviet rule: A long-standing debate focuses on the features of the

Soviet political system which echo certain characteristics of the Tsarist state.

Did Marxism change Russia, or did Russia change Marxism?

Is it a fair comparison between the Tsarist and the Soviet model of authoritarian rule? What were the fundamental differences between them?

Suggested Reading: Richard Pipes, *Three "Whys" of the Russian Revolution* (Vintage Books, New York, 1997);

Social Transformation: Modernization and Urbanization

If Lenin was responsible for forging the Soviet political and ideological system, Stalin was responsible for forcibly remaking the Russian society to fit the Leninist blueprint. Taking reins over a country already ravaged by WW I, the Revolution, and four years of the Civil War, Stalin launched an ambitious program of modernization. His goals were two-fold: to fundamentally restructure the Soviet society and to put the Soviet Union on a par with the leading industrial powers.

Stalin began with agricultural **collectivization**: millions of free-holding peasants were either killed or sent to labor camps; the rest were ordered to join state-run collective farms. This assured complete government control over food production and supplies for the cities. In addition to those "class enemies" targeted by Stalin, the collectivization cost several million lives of peasants engulfed by the famine of the early 1930's. The back of Russia's peasantry was broken; and most of them had no choice but to move to the emerging urban and industrial centers.

The next two decades would witness some of the most intensive paces of **industrialization** in modern history. Focusing almost exclusively on heavy and military industry, Stalin imposed five-year plans of production which were to squeeze out every ounce of material and human resources from the country. An extensive network of labor camps –the **Gulag**–formed an important part of this economic system. The great purges, unleashed by Stalin in the 1930's on the Party as well as the government, the army, and the intellectuals, provided millions of camp laborers. (Others were killed outright in the prisons). Consequently, although its industry was now better developed than in the Tsarist times, the Soviet Union was in many ways weakened and ill prepared to face the invasion of Hitler's forces in 1941.

Questions and Issues:

Did Stalin's policies help or hinder the Soviet Union in its confrontation with Nazi Germany?

What was the impact of his purges on the Soviet Army?

What was the impact of the experience of WWII on the Soviet Union as well as on Stalin's policies?

Suggested Reading: Alexander Dallin, ed. , *Stalin and Stalinism*(Garland Publishing, 1992);

Post-War Era

In the post-Stalin era, the Soviet system never attained the degree of repression and fear present in the 1930's or early 50's. Nonetheless, Stalin's fundamental goals and policies were continued by his successors, **Nikita Khrushchev** and **Leonid Brezhnev**: further industrialization, development of a world class military-industrial sector, continued shift of the population from rural to urban areas, as well as construction a universal and uniform system of education and indoctrination. The only noticeable change occurred in the way the Soviet Union was governed at the very top: to avoid the potential dangers of another "cult of personality," the Soviet leadership relied on the unanimous decisions of the **Politburo**, rather than those of the First Party Secretary. This change contributed to the growing bureaucratic "stagnation" of the 1970's and 80's, but at the same time, it created a political arena for differences of opinion. **Mikhail Gorbachev** would exploit this new arena during his push for *perestroika* after 1985.

Questions and Issues:

Industrialization and modernization were the chief aims of Lenin as well as Stalin.

How did the economic and social system they established to accomplish these aims hamper the Soviet economy in the 1970's and 80's?

What are the chief legacies of the Soviet economic and industrial structure?

Suggested Reading: Geoffrey Hosking, *The First Socialist Society: A History of the Soviet Union from Within*(Harvard, 1985) and *The Awakening of the Soviet Union*(Cambridge, 1990); Clifford Gaddy, *The Price of the Past: Russia's Struggle with the Legacy of a Militarized Economy*(Brookings Institution, 1996).

Ethnic Legacies of the USSR

The Tsarist empire –famously called by Lenin "the prison of nations"–collapsed in 1917 when the weakened center could no longer suppress its subject nationalities' drive for independence. At first, the Bolsheviks encouraged and exploited these centrifugal forces. Having acquired power themselves, however, they opened a military campaign to bring Soviet rule to the very same nationalities that had bolted from the Russian empire. By 1924, the Bolsheviks succeeded in re-imposing Moscow's control over all but the Polish, Finnish, and Baltic territories. The Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics was officially brought into existence.

It was an economically and politically precarious union, however. Concessions to the national pride and aspirations had to be made by the center to preserve the USSR's fragile borders. Attributes of a sovereign national existence were extended to the largest ethnic groups; eventually, those would form the 15 so

called 'union' republics, which nominally had the right to secede from the Soviet Union. Other ethnic groups were also given distinct administrative borders within which, as the titular nationality, they were given special rights and privileges, such as education, newspapers or even local administration in their own language.

At the same time, the core of the Soviet ideology did not recognize ethnic or national identity as the fundamental organizing principle: eventually, the goal was to create a non-ethnic, Soviet identity. Uniform system of Soviet education was to be one institution working toward that goal. Meanwhile, to counter the ethnic heterogeneity of the Union, the central "Sovietizing" role was played by the Communist Party, the army, the KGB, and the centralized economy.

Thus, the Soviet system contained a fundamental tension between the totalitarian ideology and the centralizing needs of the state on the one hand, and the ethnically diverse territorial units on the other. Stalin balanced this system by fostering inequalities and tensions among neighboring ethnic groups; they had no recourse but to rely on Moscow for mediation or protection. But by the same token, any weakness in Moscow could easily upset this precarious ethnic balance. Under Gorbachev, the system came to be tested in precisely this way.

Territorial Units of the USSR

Union Republics: the largest ethnically-based republics, with external borders, flags, anthems and other attributes of sovereignty, and the formal right to secede from the USSR; with higher educational institutions in the language of the titular nationality; and with other ethnic/or administrative units subordinate to them.

Autonomous Republic: ethnically-based, constituent units of the union republics, no external border, lower level of educational institutions in titular language; often the titular nationality is not in majority.

Autonomous oblast'

Autonomous okrug: the smallest ethnically-based administrative units, titular nationality in minority, some level of control over national-cultural policy.

Oblast': A purely administrative territorial unit

Krai: An administrative territorial unit, may have a portion of external border and/or diverse ethnic territories.

With the exception of the union republics (independent since 1991), the Russian Federation has retained the territorial and ethnic structure of the Soviet era.

Source: Beyond the Monolith, ed. P. Stavrakis, J. DeBardeleben, (Woodrow Wilson Center, 1997)

Questions and Issues:

What were the best examples of Stalin's gerrymandering of ethnic borders?

How did these areas fare during the collapse of the Soviet Union?

Have any of the Stalin-drawn borders for territorial units below the union republic level been changed since 1991? How and why?

Suggested Reading: J. Chinn, R. Kaiser, "Nationalities Policy in the USSR" in *Russians as the New Minority. Ethnicity and Nationalism in the Soviet Successor States* (Westview, 1996); Nadia Diuk, A. Karatnycky, *New Nations Rising. The Fall of the Soviets and the Challenge of Independence* (Wiley, 1993).

The Fall of the USSR: Causes and Consequences

Economic Context: *Perestroika*

From his earliest 1985 campaigns against alcoholism and low worker productivity, Mikhail Gorbachev signaled a new and vigorous style of Soviet leadership. Coming to power after years "gerontocracy" and economic stagnation, Gorbachev was determined to modernize the Soviet Union and to stimulate its flagging economic performance. In order to achieve this aim, a *perestroika*—or restructuring—was required, not only in the industrial and agricultural sectors, but also in the way the centrally planned Soviet economy was managed. One of the greatest obstacles to *perestroika* was the overgrown, inflexible and corrupt bureaucracy. Gorbachev's answer to this problem was to lie in the decentralization of economic decision making.

Political Context: *Glasnost*

As laid out by Gorbachev, *perestroika* fundamentally threatened the entrenched power of the Soviet bureaucracy and its political elite, the *nomenklatura*. A growing challenge to Gorbachev's reforms was mounted by a coalition of party and KGB "conservatives." To undercut them, Gorbachev launched a campaign of political openness, or *glasnost*. It was to allow the public and the media to voice their true opinions, to expose corruption and abuses of power. Such public openness would be a powerful political tool against the anti-reform functionaries. But once released, the budding freedom of expression was difficult to limit or to manipulate. By 1989, *glasnost*'s spread to areas that were not supposed to be open to public discussion: the fundamental tenets of socialism, the injustices of the Communist system, even the re-emerging nationalist sentiments of the Soviet Union's minorities. Gorbachev thus found himself between the rock of bureaucratic resistance and the hard place of mounting public pressure for reform. His response was to broaden the concept of *perestroika* to include experiments with limited free market,

further decentralization, and political democratization. To that purpose, sweeping electoral reforms were introduced and, between 1989 and 1990, local, republic, and Supreme Soviet elections brought a very different kind of political actors to power throughout the Soviet Union. The confrontation between the new legislators and the Soviet functionaries was to be played out in the next two years.

National and Independence Movements

Perhaps the most important consequence of *glasnost*' was the ability of nationalist and independence movements within the republics to reach and mobilize their own populations. The most advanced and radical were the movements in the three Baltic republics, Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania. These independent countries were forcibly incorporated into the Soviet Union only in 1939-40, and consequently, had a more recent and stronger memory of a sovereign existence. In contrast to other national movements which at first focused on cultural and political "autonomy" within a reformed Soviet state, the Baltic activists pushed from the beginning for full national independence –and implicitly, for the break-up of the Soviet Union. With ethnic strife and protests spreading in the Caucasus, the Georgian, Armenian and Azerbaijani nationalists soon espoused similar goals of independence. The central authorities intervened by force in Vilnius and in Tbilisi; but although brutal, these interventions were half-hearted and only fueled further resentment of Moscow. Even in the Russian Federal Republic, where in June 1991 Boris Yeltsin was elected president, the sentiment shifted against upholding the power of the Soviet center. The republics –including Russia –now wanted to run their own affairs.

It was the danger of a break-up along the ethnic lines that led Gorbachev to negotiate the so called **New Union Treaty** in the summer of 1991. At the same time, the threat to the survival of the Soviet state (and thus of his own power) had caused him to move closer to the conservative wing. By August 1991, with Lithuania openly declaring independence, the conservatives decided that only a military/police coup could halt the dissolution of central power. When the coup failed (mainly because it could not dislodge Yeltsin and was not backed by the majority of the armed forces), the Soviet power structures imploded. Declarations of independence from all fourteen republics followed within a month; their full diplomatic recognition as sovereign states came at the end of the year as Mikhail Gorbachev resigned his post and the Soviet Union was formally dissolved.

Questions and Issues:

What role did Gorbachev and his attempted reforms play in the collapse of the USSR? What was the role of Yeltsin?

How were the ethnic, political and economic factors linked?

What was the specific importance of the international context, such as the defeat in Afghanistan, or the U.S. defense initiative?

Suggested Reading: Alexander Dallin, Gail Lapidus, eds., *The Soviet System: from Crisis to Collapse*

(Westview, 1995); Michael Dobbs, *Down with Big Brother. The Fall of the Soviet Empire*(Knapf, 1997).

III. The Russian Federation Today

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Presidential System

Under the constitution passed in 1993, the president of the Russian Federation wields strong executive power. The government answers to him through the prime minister who has to be confirmed by the legislature; the armed forces and the Security Council answer to him directly. The president also has wide powers of appointment, from the Central Bank governor to the chair of the Constitutional Court. Few of these appointments require parliamentary confirmation. The president also has at his disposal the so-called presidential administration, a political/ bureaucratic apparatus which rivals in size and influence the government. Finally, under Vladimir Putin, the positions of seven presidential representatives were created to supervise federal institutions in the designated super-regions. The president serves a four-year term and is limited to two consecutive terms.

The Legislature

With a strong executive, the legislature of the Russian Federation has proven to be a fractured and weak center of power. The 450-member lower house, the **Duma**, can only challenge the president when it musters a 2/3 majority of votes – a feat it has accomplished very rarely since 1993. Constitutionally, the Duma has the power of veto over the government's budget as well as the option of rejecting the president's choice of prime minister. If it does so three times (or passes a non-confidence vote twice) it can be dissolved by the president. In addition, the president is allowed to issue legally binding executive decrees, although only in areas not yet covered by Duma legislation.

The upper chamber – **the Federation Council** – includes ex officio regional governors and heads of regional assemblies, for a total of 178 members. The Council has the power to ratify international treaties. For the most part, the Council has been unwilling to challenge seriously the executive power.

The Judiciary

The independence of the judiciary was severely limited during the Soviet era, when the law was seen as designed to protect the interest of the state. Consequently, the authority of the Russian judiciary is still relatively weak. Its top institution, the Constitutional Court (with 19 judges) passes judgment on cases involving federal law, the constitution, statutes and state treaties. It also settles disputes over the competence of different state bodies and branches of power. In this arena, it has shown a modicum of impartiality. The Supreme Court is the highest authority on civil, criminal and administrative law. Business disputes are heard before a Supreme Arbitration Court.

Generally, Russia follows the continental model of civil and criminal law codes. Recently, some regional courts have experimented with the introduction of a jury trial system in civil cases.

Suggested Reading: Lilia Shevtsova, Igor Klyamkin, *This Omnipotent, Impotent Government. The Evolution of the Political System in Post-Communist Russia* (Carnegie Endowment, 1999).

The Power Ministries

The Soviet Union's chief "power" institution was the KGB. Although its legal powers and responsibilities were never clearly defined, it performed the function of intelligence gathering, counterintelligence, as well as domestic surveillance and suppression of political dissent.

In the wake of the August 1991 coup, in which the KGB chief Kryuchkov took a leading role, President Yeltsin decided to split the KGB into several agencies, thus removing the future threat of the KGB as a decisive political player. The successor agencies took over distinct functions:

Foreign Security Service (**SVR**) -- foreign intelligence operations

Federal Security Service (**FSB**)-- domestic political, military and economic counterintelligence, teltaps, paramilitary units, surveillance, transportation security

Federal Agency for Government -- Communications intelligence

Communications (**FAPSI**)(cryptography and intercept) and government communications

Intelligence Directorate of -- intelligence collection element of

Federal Border Service (**FPS**)the border troops

Federal Protection Service (**FSO**)-- government guards and bodyguards, counterintelligence

State Technical Commission (GTK) -- denial and deception programs, information security, technical counter-intelligence arms control

[Source: CIA, unclassified]

Role of Provincial Governors and Local Authorities

Beginning with the struggle between Gorbachev and Yeltsin prior to the fall of the USSR, central power in Russia devolved considerably to the regions. Since 1991 –and especially at the height of Yeltsin’s confrontation with the Duma in 1993 -- regional authorities have played a key role in the federal-level political struggles, often using the promise of support in exchange for additional rights and subsidies from the center. As a result, many regions have negotiated special bilateral agreements with Moscow which complement (and sometimes contradict) the statutes of the Federation Treaty of 1992. Resource-rich ethnic republics, such as Tatarstan or Sakha (Yakutia) have been the prime beneficiaries of these special arrangements. Today, fiscal burdens, control of local resources, level of subsidies and of political independence from the center vary so greatly from region to region in Russia that its system has been called an asymmetrical federation.

Since 1996, all regional governors have been elected through a direct vote. However, mirroring the balance of power at the federal level, most have built up strong executive powers at the expense of the local legislature. This state of political matters has proven to be all too conducive to corruption and abuse of power in many regions. President Putin’s recent efforts to re-establish the power of the central and federal authorities were depicted as aimed at precisely such local abuses.

Suggested Reading: *Beyond the Monolith. The Emergence of the Regions in Post-Soviet Russia*, eds. P. Stavrakis, J. DeBardeleben (Woodrow Wilson Center, 1997).

Domestic Politics

The Power of the Kremlin

From 1991, when he was first elected president of the Russian Federation, until his resignation in September of 1999 Boris Yeltsin dominated the domestic political landscape in Russia. Although under his watch important aspects of power devolved from the center to the regions, he laid the foundation for a strong presidential system in Russia. Yeltsin's struggle with the Communist-dominated legislature over the course of economic reform led to an armed confrontation in October of 1993. As a result of his victory, not only was the Duma disbanded and new elections called, but a new constitution –one tipping the balance of power in favor of the executive branch –was adopted by the end of the year.

This imbalance of power is often held responsible for the relative lack of accountability and transparency on the part of the Russian executive branch. While its size grew past the levels of the Soviet central bureaucracy, the Russian president's apparatus has come to be seen as the new, non-ideological but highly political, "party of power." In the run-up to the presidential elections of 1996, the party of power was widely perceived as cooperating with the emerging group of financial oligarchs to beat down the challenge of Gennadii Zhyuganov and the Communist Party. After Yeltsin's re-election, the dependency between the oligarchs and the Kremlin grew; it subsequently enmeshed Yeltsin's family and entourage –as well as a number of senior administration officials –in charges of corruption, favoritism, and inside-dealing.

With Yeltsin's health declining precipitously after 1996, Russia was left with a "super-presidential" system, but one in which the linchpin figure was missing from day-to-day governance. A quick succession of prime ministers and a collapse of the government's fiscal policies in August of 1998 bore witness to the instability of the political situation. Finally, in September 1999 Yeltsin and his advisers tapped the head of the Federal Security Service, Vladimir Putin, to become acting president. This solution was widely seen in Russia as the party of power's attempt to keep its hold on the executive apparatus and to protect its interests. The chief issue in Russian politics, therefore, is how long President Putin remains beholden to those who helped him come to power.

Main Political Parties

Political parties in Russia are weak and poorly organized. While to some extent this is due to the pernicious political legacies of the Soviet system, it is also true that current laws in Russia make political fundraising and party-building difficult. Furthermore, the size and fragmentation of the country make grass-root organization a challenge. Mobilizing supporters depends entirely on the mass media, most of which are either state-controlled or beholden to the political interests of their owners. (See section on the media below).

Consequently, the political party scene in Russia is both volatile and fragmented. For instance, within months of Vladimir Putin's appointment as acting president, his supporters were able to organize a brand new pro-Kremlin coalition, the **Unity Party**, which won the second largest number of Duma seats in the December 1999 elections. By the same token, unsuccessful election contenders tend to fragment or

disappear altogether from the political scene, as did Yegor Gaidar's **Russia's Choice** after the 1993 loss. Only three parties in Russia have proven to be relatively stable and electorally successful: the Communist Party, the Liberal-Democratic Party, and Yabloko. Still, even these stalwarts remain dependent on a political personality rather than grass-root strength or popularity of their programs. As the most poignant example, the Yabloko party's name is derived from that of its leader, Grigorii Yavlinskii.

The main political parties represented in the current Duma:

The Communist Party of the Russian Federation (114 seats)

Successor to the CPSU, launched in 1993 and led by Gennady Zhyuganov. CPRF remains Russia's largest party with over 500,000 members and 20,000 organizational 'cells'. Undercutting its power is the growing ideological and political incoherence and internal divisions among the social-democrats, Stalinists, and ultra-nationalists. Its estimated base of support (approx. 20 –25%) will continue to diminish as it relies on the oldest segments of the population.

Unity Party (73 seats)

The pro-Kremlin coalition founded in 1999; lacks a program and focused its campaign on the war in Chechnya and the need for strong authority in Russia. Leaders are Sergei Shoigu (Minister of Emergency Situations) and Alexandr Karelin.

Fatherland –All Russia (66 seats)

Centered around the former prime minister Yevgenii Primakov and Mayor of Moscow Iurii Luzhkov, it enjoyed strong support of regional leaders. However, its political ambitions were diminished by the ascent of the new party of power, Unity.

Union of Right Forces(29 seats)

A coalition of pro-reformist forces and successor to such parties as Russia's Choice and Democratic Choice of Russia. Its leaders include former prime ministers Sergei Kiriyenko and Yegor Gaidar, and former governor of Nizhny Novgorod, Boris Nemtsov. The Union is more pro-Putin than other reformist parties.

Yabloko (20 seats)

A liberal, Western-style party founded by Grigorii Yavlinskii in 1993. Supporting broad economic reforms, Yabloko was often the most outspoken critic of the policies of the Russian government.

Liberal-Democratic Party/Zhirinovskii Bloc(17 seats)

Headed by the flamboyant nationalist, Vladimir Zhirinovsky, the misnamed Liberal-Democratic Party has been a voice of ultra-nationalist sentiments, but tended to vote with the Kremlin on most issues. Its share of popular vote has diminished since 1993 (from 23% to 6%), but it has outlived most other parties in Russia.

Suggested Reading: Sarah Oates, "The 1999 Russian Duma Election," *Problems of Post-Communism* (June 2000); Michael McFaul, N. Petrov, "The Changing Role of Elections in Russian Politics" in *Russia After Communism*, ed. A. Aslund, M. Olcott (Carnegie Endowment, 1999).

Role of the Media

Despite a growing role of local and regional news outlets, in the sphere of politics Russia continues being dominated by the central, Moscow-based media. Here, too, the role of the electronic media –especially of the national television networks –has become disproportionate. The nature of the ownership and editorial policies of these crucial news outlets remains murky, however.

In the Soviet era, electronic and print media were state-owned and subject to strictest political oversight by the party apparatus. In the post-1991 period, most of these outlets were allowed to be privatized, although the Russian government retained the controlling stake in all national television networks (Gusinsky's NTV is an exception as it was a privately owned entity from the outset.) Many newspapers were initially bought out by their editors and employees; soon, however, they were under financial pressure. By 1996, key print and electronic outlets were controlled by the so-called oligarchs and their financial-industrial groups, and problems with editorial independence, credibility of reporting and the use of "compromising materials" escalated.

After Vladimir Putin's nomination as acting president, a serious confrontation with the oligarchs over the control of the media began to unfold. It was spurred both by the Duma and presidential election campaigns and by the press' coverage of the war in Chechnya. The ongoing struggle between the government and the oligarchs does not bode well for the interests of free and independent media in Russia.

Suggested Reading: Ellen Mickiewicz, *Changing Channels: Television and the Struggle for Power in Russia* (Oxford, 1997), N. Petrov, "Putin and the media: No love lost," *East European Constitutional Review* (Winter/Spring 2000).

The Oligarchs, FIGs and Business Groups

Trade-unions and broad-based business organizations have not fared well in the post-Soviet Russia. Following the pattern of the political parties, they remain under-developed and carry little political clout. By contrast, several business "empires" which emerged during the era of privatization have come to exercise a disproportionate role in Russian politics, finance, and economic policies.

These FIGs –financial-industrial groups –are generally dominated by either large banks or energy companies that have acquired stakes in industrial enterprises as a result of often murky privatization deals. Among the most powerful are:

Gazprom:RAO Gazprom (the natural gas monopoly), GazpromBank, media

Oneximbank:Svyazinvest (telecom), Sidanco (oil), Norilsk Nickel, Zil (autos), Izvestia (media); led by V. Potanin, Oneximbank managed the shares-for –loans program of 1995-96.

LogoVAZ:Sibneft (oil), Aeroflot, Logovaz (autos), stakes in TV6 and ORT; controlled by B. Berezovsky

Most:NTV, Moscow Radio Echo, Segodnya (newspaper), cable and satellite facilities. Led by V. Gusinsky

Alfa:Alfa Bank, oil, power generation, construction, aluminum.

Menatep: Yukos (oil), Rosporm holding company, stakes in ORT.

Lukoil:varied oil producing assets in Russia as well as within CIS.

After the financial collapse of August 1998, many of the powerful banks behind the FIGs have been undercut and struggle for survival. The energy-based groups, however, continue wielding significant influence.

NGO's and Civic Society

One more legacy of the Soviet system lies in its destruction of the horizontal links within the Russian society such as professional and trade unions, and civic and voluntary organizations. In their absence, the effort to build a vibrant and effective civic society faces an uphill battle. While Western government and non-government assistance has borne some fruit, the number of Russian non-governmental organizations remains low. They tend to concentrate on areas of the most immediate concern for the citizens: health, environment, social issues, education. Because venues for political pressure are few, Russian NGO's often take recourse in legal action. This becomes a challenge in itself due to the weakness of the legal system in Russia.

Suggested Reading: A. Aslund, M. Olcott, eds., *Russia After Communism*(Carnegie Endowment, 1999).

Economic Structure

Aims and results of economic reforms

The Russian Federation inherited an economic disaster, where short-term problems such as shortages, hyper-inflation and a GDP fall of 50% (1989-1996) vied for attention with long-term structural dysfunction. Among the most serious burdens left by the Soviet economic system were the predominance of heavy industry, a moribund agriculture, the disproportionate size of the military-oriented economy, industry and infrastructure designed with no concern for profitability or efficiency, and finally, pernicious bureaucracy which controlled the centralized system of command economy.

An attempt to tackle all these issues through a radical "**shock therapy**" was the initial goal of **Yegor Gaidar**, Yeltsin's Prime Minister in 1992. His most important aims included:

Liberalization of prices to restore the allocative function of the market;

Stabilization of currency to control inflation, assure affordable interest rates and a manageable budget deficit;

Internationalization of the economy by lowering trade barriers, subsidies, elimination of export licenses, opening up to trade and investment;

Structural reform with privatization, breaking of state monopolies, and building stronger ownership rights.

Gaidar was unable to adhere to this program of reforms due to the opposition from the Duma and from the managers of the threatened state sectors. The overall aims of his program were to be preserved over the next years, but neither the pace nor the radical reach of his initial proposals were maintained.

Questions and Issues:

What was the role of the international financial institutions in Russia? More than in any other transition economy, the role of the International Monetary Fund, and to a lesser extent, of the World Bank, have come under heavy political criticism both in Russia and in the West. While its participation in stabilizing the Russian currency and streamlining Russia's fiscal policy has been crucial, the IMF and its loans have also been blamed for reducing the financial pressure on the Russian government to continue a strong pace of reforms. The issue of international and U.S. assistance programs in the Former Soviet Union in general is the topic of a growing number of articles and books, reflecting continuing questions about the successes and failures of economic reforms in Russia.

Suggested Reading: N. Davies, N. Woods, "Russia and the IMF," *International Affairs* (1/1999), Janine Wedel, *Collision and Collusion: The Strange Case of Western aid to Eastern Europe* (St. Martin's, 1998).

Privatization

The process of privatization in Russia was and remains a monumental task which involves shifting one of the world's biggest economies from state to private ownership. It has been a chaotic, poorly managed, and opaque process, whose economic and political fall-out remain among the chief problems in Russia.

Privatization in Russia occurred in two distinct phases. The first phase relied on a system of vouchers which were issued to all citizens of the Russian Federation and entitled them to a share in privatized enterprises. This process led to dispersed ownership and buying-out of shares; as a result, control of most privatized entities remained in the hands of their management.

Between 1995 to 1998, the cash-strapped Russian government reverted to selling shares in the most valuable, state-owned enterprises in order to raise revenue. However, due to a high proportion of inside deals (look above at the section on the oligarch/party of power alliance before the 1996 presidential election) many industrial assets were sold at very low prices, or even in exchange for cash loans to the government (the shares-for-loans program). By 1997, intensifying competition between the FIGs for control of the remaining assets erupted into public scandals and mutual accusations of inside deals; as a result, the government improved the transparency of the process, opened it to foreign participation, and raised the prices of auctioned assets. The pace of privatization has slowed down since 1998 due to the financial and banking collapse.

Questions and Issues:

What are the assessments of the "shock therapy" and privatization programs in Russia?

Both reform programs have become targets of criticism in Russia and increasingly in the West for their lack of transparency, inability to build political and popular support, and above all, for insensitivity to their social impact. While valid, these criticisms must apply to the "gradualists" who controlled Russia's economic policies since 1993 as much as to Gaidar and other proponents of radical reform.

Suggested Reading: J. Blasi, M. Kroumova, *Kremlin Capitalism: Privatizing the Russian Economy* (Cornell, 1977); Anders Aslund, "Economic Reform vs. Rent Seeking" in *Russia After Communism*, ed. A. Aslund, M. Olcott, (Carnegie Endowment, 1999).

Main Economic Actors

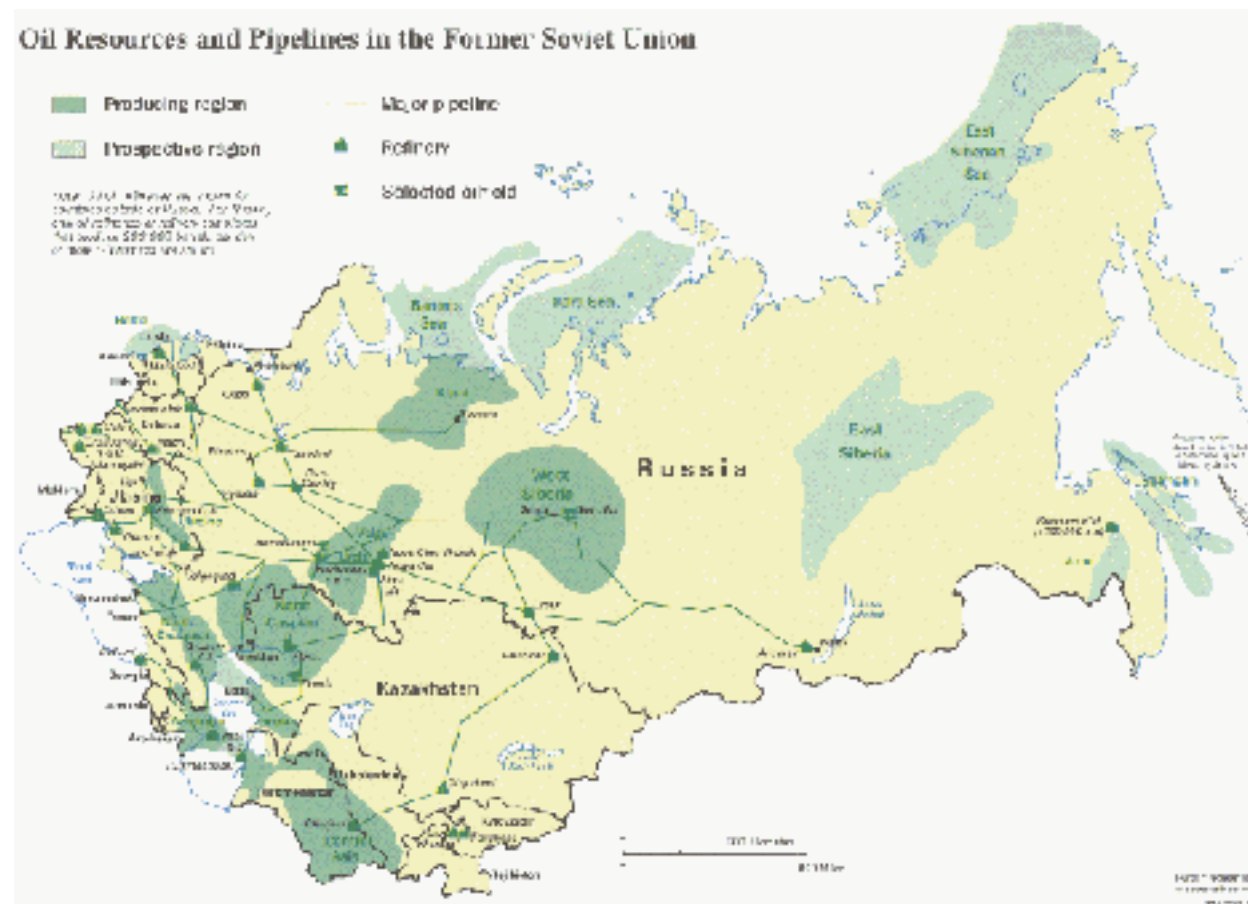
Energy Industry

Russia's exceptional endowment in natural resources helps it account for 10% of world's proven reserves of oil (and 10% of world's production of oil); 30% of world's production of natural gas, and 10% of hard coal. In addition, relatively few enterprises control the extraction and transportation of energy resources. For this reason, Gazprom (which owns production sites as well as all gas pipelines), Lukoil, and a handful of other energy producers play a disproportionate role in the Russian trade and economy.

By contrast, the huge coal mining sector remains in profound crisis, due to inefficiency, lack of investment, and physical deterioration of plants.

Extraction Industry

Statistics for Russia's metal and mineral industries are almost as impressive as in the energy sector. Russia holds 14% of world's iron ore and 15% of the non-ferrous ores. Production is even more concentrated: Norilsk Nickel produces about 1/3 of world's nickel and 40% of its platinum. The diamond giant Almazay Rossii-Sakha controls 25% of world production. The collapse of domestic demand for these metals and minerals has led to sharply increased exports abroad.



Manufacturing

The manufacturing base in Russia remains energy-intensive, technologically backward and heavily skewed toward defense industries. Many enterprises have become competitive (especially in the better-capitalized auto industry and in arms manufacturing), but for the most part they continue the pattern of value-subtracting production. In the wake of the August 1998 collapse of the ruble, some areas of light industry (food and paper processing) have been able to benefit from export substitution, providing a brighter spot in the industrial landscape of Russia.

Construction

Chronic housing shortage has been a staple of Soviet life. The pent-up demand for housing construction has been hampered however by a slow privatization of the construction companies. By 1997, privately-held companies accounted for 48.7% of the construction industry. Nonetheless, the building booms that have touched Russian cities, most notably Moscow, make construction industry one of the better positioned sectors in Russia.

Financial Services

The first non-state banks were formed in 1988 as the so-called cooperatives. In the early 1990's, during the prolonged triple-digit inflation, these banks experienced explosive and poorly regulated growth, reaching the number of 2,500 by 1994. Most of them began having difficulties after Russia's currency was stabilized and easy speculative profits ended. The devaluation and default of August 1998 further wrecked the sector, forcing more than half the banks into liquidation. The restructuring of the banking sector is to take place under the supervision of the Russian Central Bank and the new Agency for Restructuring Credit Organizations.

Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing

The legacy of Soviet collectivization is an inefficient, mismanaged and undercapitalized agricultural sector, still completely dependent on state support. Land reform has been stalled in the Duma (land still cannot be treated as normal commodity in Russia). Meanwhile, the area under cultivation continues to shrink, and yields on major crops have declined: for instance, the output of grain declined by 59% (1990-98), that of potatoes by 29%. The harvest of 1998 has been the worst year yet. Under such circumstances, any attempt to streamline the subsidies and reward financial success in the sector has had to be put on hold for political reasons.

After a decline in production, the forest-product industry is in much better position due to a healthy growth in the export of timber, cellulose and paper.

Source :The Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Profile: Russia, 1999/2000*

Suggested Reading: The Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report: Russia*

Structural Challenges:

In the wake of the 1998 financial collapse, the Russian economy has shown stronger growth as a result of weak ruble and historically high prices of oil. Underlying structural problems remain to be solved.

Among them are:

Unreformed industrial sector: inefficient, value-subtracting enterprises are subsidized, bankruptcies not enforced; investments is sorely lacking;

State budget and fiscal policies: despite cuts in social sectors, federal budget remains too large in relation to the GDP;

Tax code: inconsistent and unfair tax code promotes evasion, poor tax collection remains a grave fiscal problem for the government;

Barter and non-payment among enterprises: barter has reached 50% among Russian enterprises, 40% in their tax payment; such de-monetization of the economy is highly inefficient and builds additional debt.

Business environment: corporate governance is not transparent, ownership rights are often unclear and difficult to protect legally; this is one of the chief obstacles to increased direct foreign investment in Russia;

Shadow Economy: is growing as recovering enterprises and individuals seek to evade punishing taxation; this also includes a sizable proportion of strictly illegal activities.

Suggested Reading: Barry Ickes, Clifford Gaddy, *"Beyond Bailout: Time to Face Reality About Russia's 'Virtual Economy'"*, Brookings Institution (December 1998); The Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report: Russia* (<http://www.fggm.osis.gov/EIU/cr9ru400>)

Society

Health and Demographic Trends

The Russian Federation faces a serious demographic crisis. The combination of low birthrate (8.6 per 1000 in 1997) and high mortality rate (13.8 per 1000 in 1997) have raised the specter of a precipitous decline in Russia's population (the population has declined from 148.7 m in 1992 to 147.1 m in 1999). The roots of this crisis clearly reach back to the Soviet era, but its specific causes have been properly documented and studied only after 1991. In particular, scholars following demographic and health issues in Russia point to such factors as the falling life expectancy of males (58 in 1999, due to alcohol and tobacco-related deaths, heart disease, and cancer), worsening reproductive health of women (which contributes to higher infant mortality and poor health of the newborns), and high rate of infertility and/or abortion. A combination of severe environmental pollution, poverty and deterioration of health and social safety systems have all been blamed for these alarming trends.

The population remains mostly urban (73.9%), although a large proportion of these urban dwellers live in small, isolated towns. The Russian population is also aging: the proportion of those below 15 year fell from 24 to 22 % between 1991 and 1997; while that of population above 64 rose from 19 to 20%. Consequently, the number of pensioners has risen by 14% in the same period, reaching 262 per 1000 population. It is that part of the population who has borne the brunt of the economic decline and the falling standard of living.

Poverty, Social Safety and Healthcare

A collapsing economy and long periods of inflation have had a devastating effect on the living standards in Russia. Some 20% of the population had fallen below the official poverty line by 1997; the financial collapse of August 1998 brought that number to 28%. The average wage fell additional 40% in that year. Moreover, income inequality grew throughout the 1990's. The average income of the top 10% was 13.4 times that of the bottom 10% in 1998, as opposed to 3.5 times in the Soviet era. The only silver lining to these official statistics may lie in underreporting of income by most families to avoid taxes, and in their ability to produce their own food on the wide-spread private garden plots.

The social safety net remains unreformed. It is organized along egalitarian lines of the Soviet era and does not rely on need-based criteria. It continues to include extensive housing and energy subsidies, as well as health care (20% health insurance tax was introduced in 1994). The large state-funded health care system, however, has been seriously damaged by severe budget cuts and general deterioration of infrastructure. Staff in state medical facilities are underpaid and often hit by wage arrears; as a result, patients are required to pay bribes for a modicum of medical care.

Suggested Reading: Judyth Twigg, *Russian Health Status in the 1990's: National Trends and Regional Variation*(NCEEER Paper (Title VIII), June 2000)

Environment

Environmental degradation has been one of the most serious concerns to emerge after the collapse of the Soviet Union. As with health issues, environmental problems had not begun in 1991; however fuller reporting and a partial lifting of secrecy surrounding the Soviet-era nuclear, chemical and biological programs has moved these problems to the center of public, if not official, concern.

Among the most serious aspects of environmental degradation in Russia are:

Water: limited potability of fresh water supplies due to bacterial and chemical pollution; heavy metal pollution in rivers now impacting open seas (especially the Arctic Ocean);

Air pollution: especially in large industrial cities, heavy lead, solid particles, CFS, sulfur dioxide and other dioxins due to ineffective (or absent) scrubbing equipment;

Soil pollution: overuse of pesticides and fertilizers, heavy chemical pollution;

De-forestation: serious forest cover loss due to clear-cutting in Siberia;

Bio-Chemical hazards: concerns over improper storage of bio-chemical materials by the former military/industrial facilities;

Nuclear hazards: concerns over safety of the nuclear power industry, secure storage of nuclear material and safe disposal of nuclear wastes (submarines, etc.)

In 1997, the Ministry of Environmental Protection was abolished and its tasks were given to the Ministry of Natural Resources, which is also responsible for overseeing the extractive and mining industries.

Suggested Reading: *The Environmental Atlas of the Russian Federation*, ed. Murray Feshbach (1997).

Education

Despite social stresses, the population of the Russian Federation remains relatively well educated. By 1998, there were 3.25 million students in Russia and 880 institutions of higher learning. Since 1991, many of them became private and focus on commercially oriented qualifications. At the same time, a decade of national economic decline has hurt the quality of Russian state education. Teachers have been among the hardest hit by wage arrears, large numbers of the highest-caliber professors leaving the public for the private sector.

Women's Issues

Women have been hit the hardest by the economic decline and social stresses. A high proportion of women-led households is below the poverty level. Level of health in general, and reproductive health in particular, show alarming declines due among others to sharp increase in the cases of sexually transmitted diseases. Among the most troubling aspects of women's social situation is the growth of human trafficking in women and girls in Russia. Controlled by organized crime groups, trafficking in women has increased throughout the 1990's and has become a prominent human rights and consular issue in Europe and, increasingly, the U.S.

In the political arena, few women's rights organizations exist; Women of Russia –the most prominent among them –failed to clear the 5% vote threshold in the 1999 Duma elections. The most active women's group today is Soldiers' Mothers. Its focus has been on the war in Chechnya and the treatment of the conscripts in the Russian army.

National Security

National Security Concept

An official and revised National Security Concept was signed as a decree by Vladimir Putin in January 2000. This document –outlining broad guidelines rather than concrete policy prescriptions –is notable for several reasons:

Threat assessment continues to focus on domestic factors, especially economic crisis, social problems,

and lack of law and order. This, combined with the separatist drive in Chechnya (classified as terrorism), is seen as the main threat to the territorial integrity of the Federation.

Enhanced role of the state is stressed in economic as well as political/social spheres, and in areas such as strengthening the rule of law and combating corruption and crime.

Opposition to the unipolar world system is a chief diplomatic Russian goal. The unipolar world -- i.e. the U.S.-dominated international system and institutions -- are seen as a threat to the multipolar world of "collective management" in world affairs; Russia will actively cooperate with states that oppose "U.S. hegemony" and "arbitrary U.S. /NATO use of force".

Reliance on nuclear weapons is required to compensate for the severely weakened Russian conventional force. The new concept relaxes the criteria for the use of nuclear weapons compared to the doctrines of 1993 and 1997.

Continued stress on **arms control and nuclear non-proliferation** regimes, including adapting old agreements and developing new ones to reflect "the new conditions in international relations."

Suggested Reading: Stephen Blank, "Preconditions for a Russian RMA: Can Russia Make the Transition?" *National Security Studies Quarterly* (Vol VI, issue 2, 2000)

Armed Forces

Russia remains the world's second largest nuclear power, but its conventional force has declined dramatically in almost all areas. While the Russian armed forces still rely on universal draft, they have shrunk from the 1992 levels of 2.7 million to 1.24 million in 1997. In the Defense Ministry's blueprint for military reform, a smaller and better equipped professional army is foreseen, but the additional funds required for such a wholesale restructuring are lacking and in recent years even the budgeted levels have often not been disbursed. As a result, the military personnel have often faced shortages of equipment, fuel, electricity, and even food.

This pattern of "benign neglect" of the armed forces, established under President Yeltsin, may change under the Putin administration. The successful military prosecution of the conflict in Chechnya was one of his priorities; consequently, he has officially committed to increasing the funding for the armed forces, including funds for the military reform as well as purchase of new equipment and weapons systems. These plans, however, clearly hinge on the economic turnaround in the country.

Russian Military Forces in 1997:

Army: 420,000

Navy: 220,000

Air Force: 130,000

Air Defense: 170,000

Strategic Nuclear Forces: 149,000

Paramilitary: 583,000

Reserves: 20,000,000

Source: International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 1998/99*

Suggested Reading: Roy Allison, "The Russian Armed Forces: Structures, roles and policies" in *Russia and Europe*, ed. V. Baranovsky (1994)

Suggested Resource: *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* (Frank Cass, London)

Arms Control and Nuclear Non-Proliferation

According to the new National Security Concept, arms control –especially non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction –holds a prominent place in Russia's security policy. Russia is intent on halting its decline as a world power and to that effect is eager to preserve its status as one of the five "official" nuclear powers. It is also true that Russia's exports of dual-use and nuclear technology to such states as Iran, Iraq and India puts these official statements into question. [See section below on weapons and nuclear technology exports.]

At the same time, Russian policy makers have recognized that both its domestic resources and international conditions have changed drastically since 1991. As Nikolai Sokov from the Center for Non-Proliferation Studies put it, "the agreements concluded during or immediately after the Cold War were adequate for a superpower, but are awkward for Russia today. Some are too restrictive on Russia, while others insufficiently restrict Russia's neighbors and rivals." Consequently, Russia "intends to adapt the existing arms-control agreements to the new conditions" and "develop, as necessary, new agreements." (START III treaty would seem to fall into this category).

Suggested Reading: Nikolai Sokov, "Russia's New Concept of National Security," *East European Constitutional Review* (Winter/Spring 2000).

Weapons and Nuclear Technology Exports

With orders from the Russian military at a historical low, the Russian defense industry has turned to exports to ensure the survival of their production and research/development capacities. As a result, Russia has become the second largest arms exporter in the world, focusing above all on China, India, the Near East and South-East Asia. Its exports range from small firearms to the state-of-the-art weapons systems, including Sukhoi 27 and nuclear submarines.

Along with the conventional arms trade, a number of Russian institutions (including the Ministry of Atomic Energy) have been involved in dual-technology and nuclear technology sales, which have called into question Russia's commitment to non-proliferation and caused the U.S. to threaten sanctions against

Russian parties involved in those deals. While some of such export contracts may have been due to simple financial considerations, others –like the exports to Iraq and India -- reflect Russia's foreign policy priorities.

Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation



Russia and the CIS

The rise of 15 independent states out of the territories historically controlled by Moscow has presented the greatest discontinuity and challenge for Russian foreign policy. In numerous statements, presidents Yeltsin and Putin stressed that "integration" of the territories of the former Soviet Union and preservation of a Russian sphere of influence are a vital national interest of the Federation. Neither president has suggested the use of military means; rather, further economic, political and defense integration is presented as the chief objective.

At the same time, Russia has had little or no means of economic or political leverage in the region to achieve such ambitious goals. The Commonwealth of Independent States has proved to be a better forum for resisting regional Russian initiatives than for pushing them through. Although a large number of CIS agreements have been signed, they remain unenforced due to lack of agreement on any common mechanisms. And, in a sign of Russia's decreasing influence within the CIS, six countries (Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Moldova) have created an unofficial coordinating group to promote

their economic and security interests vis a vis Russia and other international players.

The History of the CIS

July 1991: Gorbachev attempts to negotiate the New Union Treaty among the 15 Soviet republics to replace the existing Union

August 1991: Unsuccessful hard-liners' coup, aimed against N.U.T.

Fall 1991: All fifteen republics declare independence

December 8, 1991: Yeltsin (Russia), Kravchuk (Ukraine), and Shushkevitch (Belarus) announce in the Belovezhska agreement the creation of the Commonwealth of Independent States as a "coordinating body."

December 21, 1991: CIS is joined by the non-Slavic republics: Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan; Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Moldova. Georgia and the Baltic states decline to join.

1992: Minsk becomes the official site of the CIS "coordination center."

In light of the difficulties in using the CIS as a tool of its regional policy, Russia has turned to bilateral relations with the immediate neighbors as well as other former Soviet republics. Here, Russian foreign policy-makers have more points of leverage at their disposal. Peace-keeping forces and regional security issues play a key role in Russia's relations with Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Moldova. Energy dependence is a prominent issue in Russia's relations with Ukraine and Belarus. Increasingly, then, Russia's relations with its neighbors cannot be defined in group terms, but must be analyzed on a case-by-case basis.

Suggested Reading: M. Olcott, A. Aslund, *Getting It Wrong: Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States* (Carnegie Endowment, 2000).

Multilateral Relations

Integration into the global economic system and a desire to maintain "a multipolar world" form two distinct objectives of Russian foreign policy in the arena of multilateral relations.

In its relations with the G7, the European Union, and the International Financial Institutions, Russia has stressed its desire to enter the WTO in order to boost its international trade and foreign investment. However, full integration has been hampered by Russia's insistence on protecting domestic producers and on regulating foreign firm operations. It has also been undermined by continued barriers to some Russian exports in Europe and the U.S. As a result, Russia has discussed a shift of its economic priorities

from the West to the CIS.

In the area of traditional diplomacy, Russia has raised the banner of resistance to the "unipolar world" dominated by the U.S. and NATO. It stresses that such multilateral organizations as the United Nations' Security Council and the OSCE have lost control over the international use of force, with the Kosovo intervention used as the most vivid example. Consequently, Russia sees "the collective management" of international affairs as seriously threatened. To halt this tendency, Russia has increasingly cooperated with China, India, Iran, and other nonaligned countries.

Questions and Issues

How did Moscow's foreign policy making evolve after the Soviet collapse?

Russian foreign policy establishment has experienced serious changes and challenges since the end of the Soviet Union. The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs became more transparent and sensitive to domestic public opinion under its first minister, the liberal and pro-Western Andrei Kozyrev. Since his departure in 1995, however, the Ministry saw a resurgence of the traditional great power-based diplomacy, especially under the leadership of Yevgenii Primakov and his hand-picked successor, Ivan Ivanov.

At the same time, the decision-making process in Russia has seen

unprecedented influence of domestic economic and political actors. In particular, energy producers (Lukoil, Gazprom) with interests abroad, arms exporters, the nuclear industry, and even some regional leaders, have been able to shape the debate on issues relevant to their interests. This growing role of the independent economic actors may temper statist impulses of Vladimir Putin's foreign policy.

Suggested Reading: Celeste Wallander, "Ideas, Interests, and Institutions in Russian Foreign Policy" and other essays in *The Sources of Russian Foreign Policy After the Cold War*, ed. C. Wallander (Westview Press, 1997)

Relations with the United States:

Relations with the United States have lost their elevated and exclusive character of the Cold War era. While Russia has sought to avoid serious disagreements with the U.S., it has increasingly put its geo-strategic interests ahead of a special bilateral "partnership."

From Russia's perspective, the United States remains a crucial interlocutor in arms control, monetary and trade issues. In the area of diplomacy, by contrast, Russia insists on placing the U.S. in a multilateral context, where Russia's relations with other countries may leverage its weakened position vis a vis the U.S. This is seen as the rationale behind Vladimir Putin's European tour in the wake of the U.S. debate on the Missile Defense Initiative; as well as the main driving force of Russia's expanding partnership

with China.

Among the most important issues on the Russo-American agenda are:

Security structures in Europe and the second wave of NATO expansion;

Arms Control: START III and national missile defense initiative;

WTO, trade access and direct foreign investment.

Suggested Reading: P. Stavrakis, "After The Fall: U.S.-Russia Relations"; Thomas Graham, "Reflections on U.S. Policy Toward Russia," *East European Constitutional Review* (Winter/Spring, 2000)

Russia and Europe

In contrast to its relations with the U.S., Europe's relative importance in Russian foreign policy has increased since the Cold War. Changes in European security structure and economic/political integration on the continent are of direct interest to the Russian Federation. Since 1991, the enlargement of NATO, the proposed expansion of the European Union, and finally, the NATO intervention in Kosovo, have all caused serious tensions.; however, Russia remained engaged through a variety of older and new mechanisms, such as NATO observer status or participation in the Contact Group.

Economic factors -- from debt restructuring (via the London and the Paris Clubs) to trade and investment -- have also come to greater prominence in the Russian-European relations.

Suggested Reading: Russian Policies on Central and Eastern Europe: An Overview" in *European Security* (Autumn 1999); Stephen Blank, ed., *NATO after Enlargement: New Challenges, New Missions, New Forces* (Institute for Strategic Studies, 1998).

Russia in Asia

In the Soviet era, Russian involvement in Asia was extensive and deep: from the troubled relationship with China and an active role in the Korean conflict, to close ties in South-East Asia and a warm relationship with India. Today, Russia's foreign policy in the region has been hampered by its weak economic position. The centerpiece of Russia's Asia policy is the deepening partnership with China. It is built on extensive weapons exports and cooperation in multilateral diplomacy. However, as both sides acknowledge, economic ties between the two countries have been slow to develop while long-term demographic trends create more areas of potential problems (such as legal and illegal Chinese migration into Primorskii Krai in the Far East).

Relations with Japan have also been a disappointment, especially in the economic area. Japanese direct investment, as well as levels of government assistance, have been low due to the unresolved territorial

dispute with Russia over the South Kurile Islands.

Weapons trade is also the chief component of Russia's relations with the Koreans, and to some extent, with India. On October 3, 2000, the two countries signed a strategic partnership agreement which stressed their dedication to elimination of nuclear weapons and close cooperation at the U.N. However, as long as India perceives Russian policy as tilted toward China, the latter's long-term hope of a Russo-Indian-Chinese "strategic triangle" will remain weak.

Suggested Reading: Sherman Garnett, ed. *Rapprochement or Rivalry? Russia-China relations in a Changing Asia* (Carnegie Endowment, 2000).

IV. Resources

Readers' Guides for Russia, Russian Culture, and

Russian Foreign Policy are available at the School of Professional and Area Studies/FSI.

Works of Reference:

The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Russia (Cambridge University Press, 1994)

An Ethnohistorical Dictionary of the Russian and Soviet Empires (Greenwood, 1994)

Suggested Periodicals:

Asia Week Magazine

Current History

East European Constitutional Review

European Security

Foreign Affairs

Foreign Policy

Orbis: A Journal of World Affairs

Post-Soviet Affairs

Post-Soviet Geography

Problems of Post-Communism

Russian Review

Russian Social Science Review

Slavic Review

Web Resources

For a broad array of web sites relating to Russia and to the USG policies and programs in the region see

the Russia Page on the FSI/School of Professional and Area Studies Intranet Page:

On the Student Internet Computers, click here: 10.0.2.2./spas/as/euro_rus/russia.htm On FSI openet, click here: fsi.state.gov/spas/as/euro_rus/russia.htm