



Human Geography of Russia and the Republics:

A Diverse Heritage

Russia's aggressive expansion between 1500 and 1900 created a vast nation with a diverse, and often turbulent, mix of peoples and cultures.



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Human Geography of Russia and the Republics:

A Diverse Heritage

SECTION 1 Russia and the Western Republics

SECTION 2 Transcaucasia

SECTION 3 Central Asia



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Chapter 16

Section-1

Russia and the Western Republics

- From modest beginnings, Russia expanded to become the largest country in the world.
- The rise and fall of the Soviet Union affected the world's political geography.



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Section-1

Russia and the Western Republics

A History of Expansion

Russia and its Neighbors

- Expansion adds variety of people, cultures, languages, religions
 - includes Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine to west
 - **Baltic Republics**—Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania



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A History of Expansion *{continued}*



Birth of Empire

- 9th-century Vikings settle near Kiev, adopt Slavic customs
 - settlement expands between Baltic, Black seas
- In 1200s, Mongol warriors—Tatars—invade, sack Kiev
- Tatars control region until Ivan the Great expels them in 1500s
- Russia expands to east until empire reaches Pacific ocean by 1700



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A History of Expansion *{continued}*

Russia Lags Behind Western Europe

- Rapid territorial growth is not matched by technological advancement
- **Czar**—or emperor—[Peter the Great](#) (1682-1725) modernizes Russia
 - moves capital from Moscow to St. Petersburg on Baltic sea
 - St. Petersburg provides sea access to Europe: “window to the West”
- Russia is slow to industrialize, trailing Europe by half a century
 - eventual industrialization brings harsh working condition, low wages
 - peoples’ unrest and anger with czars grows



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A History of Expansion *{continued}*

The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Union

- [Russian Revolution](#)—1917 revolt ends reign of the czars
 - V.I. Lenin’s Communist Party takes over government, economy
- Communist Party organizes diverse peoples of Russian empire
 - forms Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)
- [Joseph Stalin](#) takes over USSR, leads fight against Germany in WWII
- Relations between USSR and WWII Allies (including U.S., U.K.) worsen
 - after war, [pro-Soviet](#) governments installed in Eastern Europe



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A History of Expansion *{continued}*

The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Union

- In 1940s, tensions grow as U.S. fears worldwide Communist expansion
 - [Cold War](#)—U.S.-USSR conflict that never becomes open [warfare](#)
- In 1980s, Mikhail Gorbachev allows more [economic, political freedom](#)
 - leads to collapse of Soviet Union, end of Cold War in 1991
- Region divides into 15 independent republics
- Russia is largest, most powerful republic
 - has popularly elected president, two-chamber Federal Assembly



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Building a Command Economy

An Economic Dream

- In 1917, Communists follow ideas of Karl Marx, German philosopher
 - feel capitalism is doomed because few are wealthy, many are poor
 - predict communism—shared property, wealth—will replace it



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Building a Command Economy *{continued}*

A Harsh Reality

- Soviet leaders adopt a **command economy**
 - central government makes major economic decisions
 - controls the wealth: land, mines, factories, banks, transportation
 - decides what products, crops are produced; sets prices
- USSR increases industrialization, including farming
 - **collective farms**—large teams of laborers gathered to work together
 - thousands are moved to farms; by 1939, 90% of farms are collectives



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Building a Command Economy *{continued}*

A Harsh Reality

- Millions of citizens starve in famines caused, in part, by collectives
- In reality, only a few individuals benefit from the economic changes
- Stalin's police punish any protest
 - some estimate Stalin causes 14 million deaths
- In '90s, Russia tries to put economic control back in private hands



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A Rich Culture

Ethnicity and Religion

- Rich variety of ethnic groups due to centuries of expansion
- Russia has greatest diversity; 80% are Russian
 - 70 other peoples live in Russia: Finnish, Turkic, Mongolian
- Most Russians are Orthodox Christian (adopted in 900s)
 - persecution caused many Jews to emigrate to Israel, U.S.



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A Rich Culture *{continued}*

Artistic Genius

- Orthodox art, architecture includes onion-shaped domes, icons
- Cultural golden age begins after Peter opens communication to West
- 1700–1800s writers include Aleksandr Pushkin, Feodor Dostoyevsky
- Composers include Peter Tchaikovsky, Igor Stravinsky
- Famous ballet companies include the Kirov and Bolshoi
- Communist Party dictates official style of art called socialist realism
 - promotes Soviet ideals, shows citizens working for socialist society



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Tradition and Change in Russian Life

A More Open Society

- Since collapse of USSR, region is more open to outside influences
- More social, cultural opportunities in Moscow, St. Petersburg
 - books, periodicals, movies, music, clothes, international foods
- Native traditions, grain-based foods still survive
 - rye bread, kasha, vodka (from rye or wheat)



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Tradition and Change in Russian Life

Dachas and Banyas

- Only 1/4 of Russians live rurally, but countryside is cherished
- 30% of people spend weekends, vacations in dachas (country homes)
 - small, plain houses, often with vegetable gardens
- Banyas (bathhouses) are popular
 - cleaning ritual starts with 200-degree sauna
 - then a steam room, with birch twigs
 - finally, a plunge into ice-cold water, followed by drinking hot tea



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Dachas



Banyas



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Transcaucasia

- Transcaucasia has been a gateway between Europe and Asia.
- The Caspian Sea's oil and gas reserves have given the region great economic potential.



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Section-2

Transcaucasia

A Gateway of Migration

A Variety of Cultures

- Transcaucasia includes Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia
- Area is historical migration route between Europe and Asia
 - trade routes near Black Sea lead to Mediterranean
 - routes from Caspian Sea lead to Far East
- Due to routes, today more than 50 different peoples live in region
- Variety of language families include Indo-European, Caucasian, Altaic
 - Arab geographers call area Jabal Al-Asun—“Mountain of Language”



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A Gateway of Migration *{continued}*

Migration Brings Religions

- Most people are Christian, Muslim due to proximity to southwest Asia
- Armenia and Georgia are among oldest Christian states in the world
 - Armenia's King Tiridates III made his state Christian in A.D. 300
- Muslims invaded southern Caucasus in 600s
 - today Azerbaijan is mostly Muslim

Conflict

- Ethnic tensions, in check under rigid Soviet rule, erupt after 1991
 - Georgian civil war; Armenia and Azerbaijan's territorial war



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A History of Outside Control

Czarist and Soviet Rule

- Russian Empire invades region in 1700s
 - in 1763 Peter the Great's armies take Baku, Azerbaijan's capital
 - in 1801 Russia annexes Georgia
 - by 1828 Russians control Armenian territory, plain of Yerevan
 - Transcaucasia is part of Russian Empire by late 1870s



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A History of Outside Control *{continued}*

Czarist and Soviet Rule

- Region is briefly independent after 1917 Revolution
 - by early 1920s, region controlled by Red Army—Soviet military
- Region suffers painful economic, political change under USSR
 - many die in famines triggered by farm collectivization
 - others perish due to their political beliefs
- Independent after 1991, republics struggle to rebuild economies



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Economic Potential *{continued}*

Agriculture and Industry

- Despite mountains, have much agriculture
 - humid subtropical lowlands yield tea, fruits, grapes (Georgian wines)
- Soviet-era factories still produce iron, chemicals, consumer goods
- Azerbaijan is oil-rich; pipelines are needed across Armenia, Georgia

Land of Flames

- Azerbaijan means “land of flames”
 - named so because fires seem to magically erupt from Caspian
 - fires due to underground oil, gas deposits



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Economic Potential *{continued}*

Dividing the Caspian Sea

- After Soviet breakup, five countries have claims on oil-rich Caspian
 - Azerbaijan, Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Iran
 - ownership depends on whether it's a lake or sea
- If a sea, each country owns resources on its own section of sea bed
- If a lake, all countries share most of the lake's oil wealth equally
- Azerbaijan has large offshore oil reserves, so it says it's a sea
- Russia has few offshore oil reserves, so it says it's a lake



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Modern Life in Transcaucasia

An Educated People

- Soviet educational programs raised region's literacy rate to 99%
 - population was mostly illiterate before 1917
 - workers were educated in order to perform modern industrial tasks

Hospitality

- A *supra* is a Georgian dinner party (the word means “tablecloth”)
 - includes cold dishes, hot courses, fruit, dessert
 - diners make many toasts (short speeches) before drinking



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Central Asia

- Soviet officials drew borders in Central Asia that are making it difficult for the region's new leaders to establish stability.
- Central Asians have preserved many cultural traditions despite decades of colonization.



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Central Asia

A Historical Crossroads

The Silk Road

- Central Asia today is five independent republics
 - Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan
- Around 100 B.C. caravans begin crossing region on horses, camels
 - **Silk Road**—trade route from Mediterranean from China
 - caravans carry silk, gold, ivory, jade, spices, linens, perfumes
 - 4,000-mile journey through cities like Samarqand, Bukhoro
- In 14th century, cheaper sea routes replace use of Silk Road



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A Historical Crossroads *{continued}*

The Great Game

- In 1800s, Britain, Russia compete to control area—the **Great Game**
 - Britain wants to protect its Indian colony from Russian expansion
 - young officers on both sides travel region in disguise
 - make maps, try to win local leaders over to their side
- By 1900, Russia controls Central Asia
 - USSR controls region from 1920s until 1991



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An Uncertain Future

Nuclear Testing

- Semey (Semipalatinsk), Kazakhstan, used for nuclear testing
 - from 1949 to 1989, 470 nuclear devices set off at “Polygon” site
- Residents’ exposure to radiation causes long-term health problems
 - rates of leukemia, thyroid cancer, birth defects rise

Petroleum and Prosperity

- Potential oil and gas wealth in Caspian, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan
 - new “Great Game” as foreign nations compete for oil profits



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Cultures Divided and Conquered

Soviets Form Nations

- USSR made 5 nations out of Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Tajiks, Turkmen, Uzbeks
 - drew borders to deliberately create ethnic minority groups
 - encouraged ethnic tensions to prevent opposition to Soviet rule
- For example, today Uzbeks form 24% of Tajikistan
 - Uzbek cities Samarqand, Bukhoro have large Tajik populations



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Cultures Divided and Conquered *{continued}*

Language and Religion

- Most are Muslim, speak languages related to Turkish
 - many still speak Russian; former official language of USSR



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The Survival of Tradition

Nomadic Heritage

- **Nomads**—people with no permanent home, few possessions
 - move themselves and their animals with the seasons
 - seek food, water, grazing land
- Soviets forced most of region's nomads into collective farms
- Some nomads remain in Central Asia's grasslands
 - in the summer, herders set up tents near Lake Song-Köl, Kyrgyzstan



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The Survival of Tradition *{continued}*

Yurts

- **Yurts**—nomads' light, portable tents made of felt with wood frames
- Interiors decorated with woven reed mats, wooden saddles, daggers
 - hand-woven carpets are famous for designs, colors

Preserving Traditions

- As nomadic lifestyle fades, some Kyrgyzstan shepherds house tourists
 - tourists pay to experience nomadic lifestyles, traditions
 - shepherd's families have new source of income



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