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.
A Diverse Heritage

SECTION 1  Russia and the Western Republics
SECTION 2  Transcaucasia
SECTION 3  Central Asia
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.
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
A History of Expansion \textit{(continued)}

\textbf{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
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](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_III_of_Russia) (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
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
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
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
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
Building a Command Economy \textit{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
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.
A Rich Culture \( \textit{continued} \)

**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
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)
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
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.
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-Alsun—“Mountain of Language”
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
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
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
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
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
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
• 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.
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
A Historical Crossroads \textit{continued}

The Great Game

- In 1800s, Britain, Russia compete to control area—the \textbf{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
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
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
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
Chapter 16

Geography

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
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