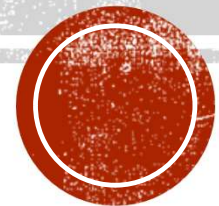


# BACKGROUND GUIDE

**RUSSIA**



# INTRODUCTION

1. **Geography:** Russia is the largest country in the world, spanning 17.1 million square kilometers across Europe and Asia. It borders 14 countries and touches 12 seas.
2. **Capital City:** Moscow is the capital and the largest city, serving as the political, economic, and cultural hub. Saint Petersburg is another major city known for its history and architecture.
3. **Terrain:** Russia's terrain includes vast plains, forests, tundras, and mountain ranges like the Urals and Caucasus. It has the world's largest freshwater lake, Lake Baikal.
4. **Climate:** The country experiences diverse climates, from Arctic conditions in the north to temperate zones in the south. Winters are harsh in most regions.
5. **Population:** Russia has a population of approximately 146 million, making it the ninth most populous country globally. The majority reside in the western part of the country.
6. **Language:** Russian is the official language and is widely spoken. It is also one of the six official languages of the United Nations.
7. **Symbolism:** The Russian tricolor flag represents unity (white), peace (blue), and strength (red). The double-headed eagle in its coat of arms symbolizes its European and Asian identity.



# HISTORY

1. **Early History:** Russia's origins trace back to the Kievan Rus, a federation of Slavic states in the 9th century. It later evolved into the Tsardom of Russia under Ivan the Terrible.
2. **Russian Empire:** Under Peter the Great and Catherine the Great, Russia expanded significantly, becoming a major European power in the 18th century.
3. **Soviet Union (1917–1991):** Following the Russian Revolution, the USSR was established as a socialist state. It became a global superpower during the Cold War.
4. **Post-Soviet Era:** The USSR dissolved in 1991, leading to the establishment of the Russian Federation. Boris Yeltsin became its first president, initiating economic reforms.
5. **Modern Era:** Vladimir Putin has dominated Russian politics since 2000, shaping the nation's foreign and domestic policies. Russia remains a global power.



# POLITICAL SYSTEM

1. **Government Type:** Russia is a federal semi-presidential republic. The president is the head of state, while the prime minister is the head of government.
2. **Legislature:** The Federal Assembly consists of two houses: the State Duma (lower house) and the Federation Council (upper house). It oversees lawmaking.
3. **Executive Branch:** The president has significant powers, including appointing ministers and issuing decrees. The prime minister manages economic policies.
4. **Judiciary:** The Constitutional Court ensures laws align with the Constitution. The Supreme Court oversees civil, criminal, and administrative cases.



# ECONOMY

1. **Global Standing:** Russia is the world's 11th largest economy by nominal GDP and the 6th largest by purchasing power parity. It is rich in natural resources.
2. **Key Industries:** Energy is a cornerstone of Russia's economy, with major exports like oil, natural gas, and coal. Other industries include defense, metallurgy, and agriculture.
3. **Trade and Exports:** Russia's main trading partners include China, the European Union, and Turkey. It exports energy products, machinery, and food items like wheat.
4. **Challenges:** Sanctions, reliance on energy exports, and a shrinking workforce pose economic challenges. Efforts are being made to diversify the economy.



# FOREIGN POLICY AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. **Global Role:** Russia is a permanent member of the UN Security Council and plays a key role in global security and diplomacy. It is also a major arms exporter.
2. **Relations with Europe and the West:** Relations with NATO and the European Union have been strained, particularly after the annexation of Crimea in 2014.
3. **Strategic Alliances:** Russia strengthens ties with countries like China and India through organizations like BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).
4. **Regional Influence:** Russia exerts influence in post-Soviet states, focusing on military, political, and economic integration. It leads initiatives like the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU).



# SOCIETY AND CULTURE

1. **Cultural Heritage:** Russia has a rich cultural history, with contributions to literature (Tolstoy, Dostoevsky), music (Tchaikovsky), and art (Kandinsky). Its traditions are deeply rooted in Orthodox Christianity.
2. **Demographics:** Ethnic Russians form the majority, but Russia is home to over 190 ethnic groups, including Tatars, Ukrainians, and Bashkirs.
3. **Education:** Russia has a robust education system, especially in science and engineering. Its universities, like Moscow State University, are globally recognized.
4. **Cuisine:** Russian cuisine includes dishes like borscht, pelmeni, and blini. Vodka is a cultural staple, often associated with Russian hospitality.



# CURRENT ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

1. **Demographic Decline:** Russia faces a declining population due to low birth rates and high mortality rates. Policies encourage larger families and immigration.
2. **Sanctions and Isolation:** Western sanctions over geopolitical conflicts impact the economy. Russia seeks to strengthen self-sufficiency and pivot towards Asia.
3. **Climate Change:** Melting permafrost in Siberia threatens infrastructure and ecosystems. Russia is balancing resource extraction with environmental concerns.
4. **Geopolitical Tensions:** Ongoing conflicts, including the Ukraine crisis, challenge Russia's international relations. It continues to assert its influence in global affairs.

