

# Information about russia the vastest country history essay



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Russia is the vastest country in the world, covering a total of 17, 075, 400 square kilometers straddling across two continents. It straddles across Asia and Europe, covering a portion larger than a ninth of the latter. Being such a vast country Russia has borders with around fourteen different countries. It borders the people's republic of China, Kazakhstan, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Belarus, North Korea and Ukraine on the southeast border. It shares borders with Lithuania, Finland, Norway, Estonia, and Latvia on the Northwest border and Poland through the Kaliningrad Oblast.

This vastness of this Russia as federation of county's is a result of a history riddled with war and loss of lives. This thesis will cover the expansion of the Russian frontier, the breaches and breaking upon the USSR and the overall effect of each of these events on the Russian people.

## **History**

Russia traces its history as a country back to 3rd-8th centuries BC when the East Slavs created a distinct region within the European nation. The nation was formed and governed for about a century by the Kievan Rus' started <https://assignbuster.com/information-about-russia-the-vastest-country-history-essay/>

areolation against the ruling warrior elite. These revolutionaries eventually disintegrated into many smaller states but the Mongol invasion put them under Mongolian rule as subjects. This Slavs eventually inhabited Russia from two directions, from Polotsk and from Murom.

In the era of the kievian Rus, a leader named Rurik was elected to rule the recognized territory of Novgorod. His successor was named Oleg, and he started the earliest expansion of the Russian frontier. He moved the military south to Kiev and established the state of kievian Rus'. In the 11th century, nomadic tribes started to attack the kievian Rus and this resulted in a massive immigration of the inhabitants to the north of the country, a heavily forested area. Constant fighting slowed down expansion as the ruling dynasty's power waned and was finally demolished by the Mongol invasion that lasted the era 1237 to 1240 and resulted in the deaths of half the population

The invaders created the Golden Horde, which took over Russian administrative units and ruled half of the country for about three centuries. The basis of modern Russia was established by the e division of Russia into the Mongo-invaded Suzdal and the Novgorod. The latter retained some autonomy and they led to successful expeditions to protect the Russian frontier. They repelled the Swedes in 1040 in what was known as the Battle of Neva and the Germanic crusaders in 1242 in the Battle of Ice.

This small federation of states was generally weak and detached and the emergence of the grand Duchy of Moscow as a powerhouse in the federation marked the beginning of power of the state. It managed to unite the

principalities of Russia to form 1 army which won a milestone battle against the invading Mongol- tartars in 1380. This marked the start of a gradual shift of the principality as the core of the Russian federation. Ivan III eventually fought off the Golden Horde and united the central and Northern parts under Moscow's dominion. He also led the war to capture Constantinople in 1453 and married the only surviving member of the Byzantine Empire dynasty, making the kingdom part of modern day Russia.

## **Period after 15th Century**

The first tsar of Russia Ivan IV expanded the size of the Russian Empire to nearly double its original by annexing three regions bordering the country. He led the annexation of all parts of the former Golden Horde, the Siberian khanate, Kazan and Astrakhan across the Volga river.

The loss of the Livonian War and the successful invasion and burning down of Moscow by the Crimean Khanate marked the first time the frontier around Moscow had been breached in modern day Russia. The invaders managed to invade and burn down the city, greatly diminishing the power of the Stardom as the rulers of Russia.

The frontier stagnated at this point, and there were invasions from the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1612. They invaded and took control of most of Russia, including Moscow. The people rose in revolt and the invaders were forced to retreat and relinquish power they had over the Russian people.

In what was known as the age of the Cossacks, military communities who are touted as the brawn of the new World. In the start of 1654, Boyden

Khmelnitsky, the leader of Ukraine asked for protection of his territory by <https://assignbuster.com/information-about-russia-the-vastest-country-history-essay/>

Aleksey, the Russian tsar at the time. This caused the eruption of the 2nd Russo-polish War over the dominance of Ukraine. The country was finally split into two using the River Dnieper as the boundary mark. The west of the country was Polish rule while the Eastern regions were now under Russian rule.

In the east of the country, the Cossacks were hunting for the ivory and valuable fur in the regions of Siberia. From this period, Russian exploration and the subsequent changes to the frontier were as a result of trade expansion. Settlements of Russian natives sprung up in parts of Siberia and the pacific Coast. The conquest of Siberia in sixteenth century marked the beginning of fur trade. Agents were sent in Siberia to control the purchase of fur in exchange of European Wares and iron goods. Certain families involved in the trade established fur market in English and Dutch territories where fur merchants were based. In those territories the agents acted purchasing dealers for the Russian court. Russia and their prestige in fur business were allowed to establish forts and private army in Siberia to defend and expand their holdings. As stated by[1], in that context, they were able to conquer and rule over many territories within Siberia.

Rivalries among the indigenous population facilitated other native people under the leadership of Russian to expand their control to other distant groups. In Siberia, fur trade was also used to pay tributes to the Russian government although they also accepted other tributes of skin, grains and ivory. The conquered groups were divided into districts and were supposed to pay tribute to the government of Russia which were made inform of fur and to keep them from rebelling, the government used to entice them with <https://assignbuster.com/information-about-russia-the-vastest-country-history-essay/>

gifts and liquor. The hunters and trappers from Russia who searched for fur were not expected to venture in to the native hunting grounds. In fact, the officials were banned from engaging in private trade but with much corruption and degradation of social structure of natives trade went on as usual[2].

The presence of ready market for the fur industry and trade lend many both internationally and locally to desire fur trade thus intensively involving them into hunting which resulted into depletion of animal breeding population. Advancement in hunting traps, nets, and hunting dogs further influenced exhaustion of fur supplies. In a good hunting season the Russian hunters and natives harvested about half a million squirrels, ten thousand sables and more than ten thousand black foxes. The government in turn benefited a lot from the fur trade in such occasions which amounted to almost ten percent of the total state revenue. However, due to trade reduction and depletion of trade commodity the state revenue started to decline significantly until the supply became rare and the hunters and trappers started exploiting far sources of fur thus reaching Alaska and North American coast[3].

According to Backstroke[4], Fur and frontiers in far North were the main items that brought interactions between different people as a result of competition over who was in control of the industry. Fur trade marked the history of foreign trade in that the way people participated and altered trade in the region is clearly brought out. Furs and frontiers brought about extensive exploration, expansion and shift of commerce as well as lifestyle changes in native communities in Russia and other involved countries[5]. Fur and frontiers are not only important for understanding history but also for <https://assignbuster.com/information-about-russia-the-vastest-country-history-essay/>

studies, globalization, maritime commerce and exploration as stated[6].

Russian were involved in hiring of Danish, English and Chukchi explorers and so whaling ships came to the region from all over the world. Trading language that combined all the languages from different regions was adopted further demonstrating the effect of global trade even in technology[7].

For some time the fur trade was successful until a point where many people became greedy and aggressive. Trapping was embraced, and subsequent decline of beaver population followed, competition intensified among various firms who engaged in fur trade and also public preference shifted to fur clothing, particularly the hats and thus profitability reduced significantly. The fur trade declined sometime in the 18th century. Other businesses including lumbering and agriculture peaked steadily while other industries diverted their operations to far north of the border. Christian missions were also against the trade of fur and argued that the fur trade had its negative impact on the welfare of many people. In the tribes the traders were tolerated, but there were social and cultural impacts which came as a result of their activities like; introduction of diseases, easy procurement of material goods and food that made many to depend on trading posts, intertribal warfare increased due to availability of guns provided by the traders in exchange of furs[8].

Meanwhile, many Russian entrepreneurs and trappers toured Siberia by 17th century and most of them established permanent homesteads. According to George Simpson,[9]other persons like soldiers, exiles and forced migrants who were sent to Siberia by the government supplemented the number of <https://assignbuster.com/information-about-russia-the-vastest-country-history-essay/>

entrepreneurs and trappers making the number of Russians in Siberia to rise steadily by the 18th century. Consequently, the number of people who settled in Siberia began to adopt other activities like grain production for subsistence, mining and manufacturing which overtook fur trade[10].

The negative effects of fur trade on wildlife conservation and conflicts with tourism industry as well as opposition from animal rights organizations against fur trade lend to further decline in the fur trade industry. Therefore, the practice after 18th century was confined in fur farms and authorized wildlife hunting. Currently the fur industry has been substituted by synthetic imitations that serve the same purpose as fur thus assimilating the tradition of fur harvesting and trade[11].

## **Formation of Imperial Russia**

The Russian dominion was formally established under Peter the Great. He led the annexation of Ingra and Karelia back to Russian territory from Sweden. He also reacquired Livland and Estland, and increased the frontier to reach the coast and sea trade. In the years 1756-63, the empire took over control of Eastern Prussia and Berlin, but the two territories were returned back to Prussia.

Catherine II (1762-1796) extended Russian control in the region by including most of the remaining parts into the Empire. She led the pushing of the Russian frontier into Central Europe. She also led the attacks against the Ottoman Empire and the boundary was pushed to include the shores of the black Sea, the emerging power also took over territories in Transcaucasia.



Alexander I took over control Finland from Sweden in 1809 from Sweden and Bessarabia from the weakening Ottoman Empire. Around this time (1812) Russian explorers had already crossed the Bering Strait and colonized Alaska and had settlements in areas around modern day California

In 1812, the French ruler Napoleon tried to invade Russia but failed because of the Russian winter which greatly hampered the invasion towards St. Petersburg. The Russian military managed to push back the invaders and pushed into French territory.

During him Russo-Turkish war of 1877/78, the Russian army managed to liberate Bulgaria and incorporate it not the empire. This was the last war against the Ottoman Empire, and Russian territory remained relatively unchanged until World War I.

## **The First World War**

Russia entered the war in defense of its ally Serbia after the declaration of war by Austria. This exposed the Russian multiple frontiers and the Russian Army had to struggle to protect Russian territory while its allies fought in other frontiers. There were no major invasions of Russia during the war, but it exposed the Empire's vulnerability to attack from multiple frontiers due to its vast size. After the Bolshevik revolution however, the country lost the Finnish, Baltic, Polish and Ukrainian territories in the treaty that ended World War I.

The subsequent Russian socialist state under Lenin joined with three Soviet republics to form the USSR in a treaty signed on 30th December 1922. It

lasted for 69 years and incorporated 15 republics, with Russia being the largest in size and population.

Lenin's successor, Josef Stalin, managed to bring all these states to form one republic and increased its trading. Threats to the USSR reemerged with the rise of Adolf Hitler as the leader of Nazi Germany. The Empire of Japan and the USSR also fought between 1938-1939 over the Far East border. Stalin saw it fit to join powers with Germany and the two subdivided Europe into spheres of influence. As the Nazi tried to extend their territory, the USSR concentrated on regaining the former territories that had been part of the Imperial Russian Empire.

The largest invasion of Russia started in what was code named Operation Barbarossa, a surprise attack by Germany. With the help of the Russian winter and the might of the Red Army, the union managed to fight off the invasion and regain power over its frontiers. It went on the offensive and invaded Berlin. In all the areas of Eastern Europe that the red Army still had control over after the second world war, socialist regimes were put in place. These satellite states became part of the USSR, and most shared the communist ideology. This started the Cold War that eventually became the death of the USSR in 1991. The USSR disintegrated into 15 post-Soviet states.

## **Effects of the Changes on Frontier**

The many changes in frontier have exposed the Russian people to be and disease, because of the mere vastness of the land the limitations of transport, most inhabitants of territories near the frontier have caused the

wanton destruction to life and property. The total loss of Soviet soldier's lives in the Second World War alone was more than that of all previous wars combined.

The Russian frontier has been dynamic and its expansion has been caused by trade and military expeditions. Over a period of about a century, trading was the main activity among Russian as well as other natives who came in to contact with Russia's agents of fur trade. Consequently interaction among fur traders influenced Russia, economically, politically and socially. However, many people embraced the business of fur which led to depletion of the resource and thus fur trade started to decline till late in 18th century when people developed interest in other activities like agriculture, mining and manufacturing while fur based commodities were compensated by synthetic imitations. In the course of their search for the highly prized sea otter which was commonly used in China as a source of pelt for trade and also the northern fur seal, Russia expanded its market in to the North America particularly Alaska. Its aggressiveness in this trade saw Russia in between 17th and 19th century as the largest supplier of fur in the world. The trade on fur brought about vital developments in Siberia, Russia especially the far east of Russia and its colonies in America.