Major Geographic Qualities

- World's largest territorial state
- Northernmost large and populous country in the world
- A former empire and colonial power
- A comparatively small (140.6 million) and concentrated population that is declining
- Clustered development
- Multicultural state
- Minimal ice-free ports

Size, Location, and Spatial Relationships

- **Latitudinal extent**
  - Northernmost point: Rudolf Island in Franz Josef Land (82° north)
  - Southernmost point: Southern corner of Dagestan (41° north)
- Russia makes up 76.6% of the total territory of the former USSR (almost twice the size of the U.S.).

Russia’s Climate

Affected by 3 environmental conditions:

1. Latitudinal position (far north)
2. Continental position (far away from moderating oceans)
3. Except for northeastern Siberia, no major mountain barriers to block Arctic air masses

Climate as a Limiting Element

- **Agriculture**
  - Short growing seasons
  - Drought prone
  - Erosion (accelerated via snow melt)
- **Settlement patterns and transportation**
- **Industry**
  - High energy consumption
  - Specialized, expensive equipment and facilities
- **Logistics**
  - Permafrost in far north
  - Spring and fall mud

Russia and Climate Change

- Historic quest for warm-water ports
- Reduction in size of ice cap
- Effects on
  - Trade routes
  - Native peoples
  - Access to resources
Arctic Geopolitics

Physiographic Regions

• **Russian Plain**
  - Eastward continuation of North European Lowland
  - Core area (Moscow Basin)
• **Ural Mountains**
  - 3,200 kilometers (2,000 miles) long (north-south)
  - Yield a variety of minerals
• **West Siberian Plain**
  - World's largest unbroken lowland
  - Permafrost in the far north

Physiographic Regions (continued)

• **Central Siberian Plateau**
  - Sparsely populated
  - Temperature extremes, permafrost
• **Yakutsk Basin**
  - Mountainous
  - High relief
• **Eastern Highlands**
  - Ranges, ridges, precipitous valleys, volcanic mountains
  - Lake Baykal
• **Central Asian Ranges**
  - Rise above the snow line,
  - Glaciated
• **Caucasus Mountains**
  - Extension of the Alpine system

Russian History

- Core: Region around Moscow
- Colonialism, imperialism in search of wealth, power
- Russification

- Czar Peter the Great's forward capital

Soviet History

- **Soviet legacy**
  - Revolution (1905-1917)
  - V. I. Lenin (Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov)
  - Capital: Petrograd to Moscow (1918)
  - Continuation of Russian empire and Russification

Forward Capital

Capital city positioned in actually or potentially contested territory, usually near an international border, confirming the state's determination to maintain its presence in the region.
Command Economy

- An economy in which the means of production are owned and controlled by the state and in which central planning of the structure and the output prevails
- Objectives
  - Speed industrialization
  - Collectivize agriculture
- Features of the Soviet economy
  - Production of particular manufactured goods in particular places (but often going against basic economic geography)
  - Economic interdependence of the republics

Current Organization

- Russian Federation (1992)
- 89 political units
  - 21 republics
  - 11 autonomous regions (Okrugs)
  - 49 provinces (Oblasts)
  - 6 territories (Krays)
  - 2 autonomous federal cities

Russia’s Federal Districts

Changes in Daily Living

- Revival of religion
- Failure of the pension system
- Rise of oligarchs
- Crime and corruption
- New freedoms
Population Challenges

Decline:
- Low birth rates
- Rising death rates

Estimated 2050 population: 100 million

Regions of the Russian Realm

Russia’s Core

- Central Industrial Area
- The Volga Region
- The Urals Region

Oil and Gas Regions

- Eastern Frontier
  - Kuznetsk Basin (Kuzbas)
  - Lake Baikal Area (Baykalya)

Siberia

- Vast (larger than continental U.S. but less than 15 million people)
- Challenging
- Resource potential
- Forests expanding
Far East
- Remote
- Pacific Rim frontier?
- Primary industry is fishing
- Future trade with Japan?
- Significant population decline

Transcaucasia
- Former Soviet republics
- Now separate countries
- Georgia
- Armenia
- Azerbaijan

Caucasus
- Very mountainous and fragmented
- Ethnically very diverse; tensions
- 2008 Russian invasion into parts of Georgia

Chechnya
- In support of Russian control
  - Fighting after independence was granted in 1991
  - Chechens illegally installed a separatist leader
  - Attacks on Russians
  - Chechen terrorism

- Why Chechnya deserves independence
  - Fought against the Russian imperialists two centuries ago
  - Soviets rearranged the borders to include non-Chechen homeland
  - Massive persecution during Stalin's reign
  - 1991 declaration of independence