**Will Russia be a rising state or a great Failure?**

The collapse of the Soviet Union lead to creation of the New Independent Republic. World politics dramatically changed in 1991 when Communism ended in Eastern Europe and Russia. These republics are trying to rebuild their economies and find the way toward the democratic regimes. The largest country in the post-Soviet borders Russia has inherited a legacy of the Soviet Union. Many features influence the Russian society and economy which are Russian media, Russia-US relations and the problems Russia faces in its transition to the democratic society with a market economy.

Russians are trying to reconstruct their economy and social system. Russia has many challenges and obstacles to overcome during their period of reconstruction. These obstacles include the destruction of the economic ties with its former suppliers and customers in the United Republics, corruption, war in Chechnya as well as “Checheny syndrome”. Russia will cope with these obstacles and finally rise as a world power with a market economy and strong democratic institutions. Its potential is based on its vast lands full of natural resources, great history, and, most importantly, the intellectual potential of the Russian people.

Russian territory has historically had a tremendous impact on the Russian economy, political situation, culture, traditions, and mentality of Russian people. Vast space has helped Russia many times to defend itself from other more developed nations. For example, Napoleon froze his army to death during his invasion to Moscow.

Russia is very rich in natural resources. Almost all the elements of periodic table are in Russia. Russia is rich in gold, silver, gas and oil, lumber, aluminum, uranium and many other valuable minerals. These resources can be very attractive prospects for future investments.

Historically, Russia has been regarded as a major world power. Slavic peoples settled in Eastern Europe during the early Christian era. Many converted to Christianity in the ninth and tenth centuries. In 988, Prince Vladimir declared Christianity the state's official religion. Early in the 13th century, Mongols conquered the Slavs and ruled for 240 years. The Slavs finally defeated the Mongols in 1480 to regain their sovereignty. In 1547, Ivan the Terrible (1533-84) was the first Russian ruler crowned Czar of Russia. He expanded Russia's territory, as did Peter the Great (1682-1724) and Catherine the Great (1762-96). The empire reached from Warsaw in the west to Vladivostok in the east. In 1814, Russian troops that had defeated France's Napoleon marched on Paris, and Russia took its place as one of the most powerful states on earth.

When Czar Nicholas II abdicated during World War 1, Vladimir Lenin, head of the Bolshevik Party, led the 1917 revolt that brought down the provisional government and put the Communists in power. Lenin disbanded the legislature and banned all other political parties. A civil war between Lenin's Red Army and the White Army lasted until 1921, with Lenin victorious.

In 1922, the Bolsheviks formed the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and forcibly incorporated Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine, Belarus and Central Asian republic into the union. The unification of Turkestan and separation of the United Republics gave a birth to the modern states of Uzbekistan, Kazakstan, Tadjikistan and Turkmenistan. During Lenin's rule, which ended with his death in 1924, many died as a result of his radical social restructuring. Under Lenin, a plan to rise the national economics of the United Republic as well as itself was implemented. If before Russia had below than 10% literacy level than after World War II due to reforms started by Lenin almost all population could read and write. Currently, Russian literacy level equals to 99%.

Lenin was followed by Joseph Stalin, a dictator who forced industrialization and collective agriculture on the people. Millions died in labor camps and from starvation. The Nobel Price laureate, Alexandr Soljenicin, in One Day of Ivan Denisovich characterizes this period as “the most devastating trial fallen on Russian soul”. While many historians argue that these sacrifices were necessary to meet the new challenges and make Russia equal to other developed nations and finally win the Second World War, Russian’s sacrifices were so large that even now Russia feels the consequences of that war. Germany invaded the Soviet Union in 1941, and World War II that was called “Great Patriotic War" in USSR eventually took more than 26 million Soviet lives. During the WWII the tremendous amount of industrial plants were relocated to east due to the German occupation of the Western part of the Soviet Union. Many new industries were developed in Uzbekistan during WW II such as plane and truck assembling, gas and oil industries. To supply the increased need for silk and cotton, Ferghana Canal was constructed.

Nikita Khrushchev, who took over after Stalin's death in 1953, declared his intentions to build real communism within 20 years. Hard liners, people opposed to his reforms and policy of peaceful coexistence with the West, replaced Khrushchev in 1964 with Leonid Brezhnev. Until his death in 1982, Brezhnev orchestrated the expansion of Soviet influence in the developing world, ordered the invasion of Afghanistan, and built up the Soviet nuclear arsenal. This invasion proved to be a terrible mistake. The consequences of this invasion had a devastating impact on relations with the west and internal stability. Many millions of people lost their lives in there. Moreover, the long-term result of this invasion is the continuous civil war in Afghanistan and as a result instability in the region. When the next two leaders died in quick succession, a younger man, Mikhail Gorbachev, rose to power in 1986.

Gorbachev soon introduced the reform concepts of perestroika (restructuring) and glasnost (openness). Many of his reforms failed and the economy of the Soviet Union during its last years was deteriorating. The union quickly unraveled in 1991 after several republics declared independence. Russia's leader at the time was Boris Yeltsin.

In 1993, after Yeltsin dissolved a combative parliament, his opponents voted to impeach him and seized the "White House" (parliament building) in an attempted coup. Following street riots, the showdown turned violent and militants were forced from the building by tank fire. That victory and the approval of Yeltsin's new constitution were two highlights of an otherwise difficult term in office. Communists and ultra-nationalists mounted a strong challenge to him in the 1996 elections. Despite poor health, Yeltsin prevailed in the voting to become Russia's first ever freely elected president. A violent 21-month war with separatists in the Chechnya region tarnished Yeltsin's image at home and abroad. Finding a solution was complicated by internal rivalries, rebellious military commanders, and Yeltsin's failing health. Tens of thousands died before a cease-fire finally restored peace in August 1996. Russia withdrew its troops in 1997 and Chechens elected their own local leaders. They have de facto control over internal affairs until 200 1, when the two parties make a final decision on Chechnya's bid for independence. However, the war was not over.

The invasion of Chechen rebels to the Russian territory, Dagestan made Vladimir Putin, acting Prime Minister launch a new attack on Chechen rebels. Putin’s initial war successes brought his a success in the President’s elections in 2000. After becoming a president Vladimir Putin started a new wave of restoring the “constitutional order” in Chechnya.

Russian government made several attempts to resolve the difficulties between Russian and other Republics of CIS. In 1996, Russia and Belarus agreed to closely linking their societies without actually merging. The presidents of each nation then signed a union charter in 1997 outlining, among other things, how Russia and Belarus would cooperate and their ethnic groups. Also in 1997, Russia made peace with Ukraine, over ownership of the Soviet Union’s Black Sea naval fleet, helped a peace agreement in Tadjikistan, participated in international summits, and announced that it would no longer target nuclear weapons at former Cold War enemies.

Russia played an important role in Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Russia has peacekeeping forces in Tadjiskistan and much helped the restoration of peace in this republic. Russia helps the Tadjikistanian government to protect its borders of illegal drug and gun smuggling from Afghanistan. Russian peace keeping forces made a number of joint training with the military representatives from the Republics of Central Asia and NATO. Great Russian history shows that many times Russia had to face the difficult and challenging times and still was managed to survive as a nation and was not dissolved by foreign invaders. The problems in Russia are immese, but Russia will be able to cope with all its problems and will rise again as a great power on the world stage.

Russia’s population, the crux of Russian reform, of 148 million is shrinking annually by 0.7 percent. Ethnic Russians form 82 percent of the entire population. Other groups include Tartars (4 percent), Ukrainians (3 percent), Chuvashes (I percent), Byelorussians (almost I percent), Udrnurts, Kazaks, Buryats, Tuvinians, Yakutians, Bashkirs, and others. The capital and largest city is Moscow, with a population of more than 10 million. Other large cities (one to three million residents each) include St. Petersburg, Novosibirsk, Nizhniy Novgorod, Yekaterinburg, Saratov, and Samara. Most Russians still live in rural areas, but young people are moving to the cities. Russia's Human Development Index' value (0.792) ranks it 67th out of 175 countries. Serious gaps between rich and poor, skilled and unskilled, and healthy and ill are widening and threatening Russia's future development. Women earn only one-fifth of the nation's income. Migration of ethnic Russians from the republics of the former Soviet Union to Russia increased the total Russian population but not significantly enough to offset the gap between mortality and birth rates in Russia.

Russian language belongs to Slavic group of languages and is the official language in Russia. Other Slavic languages are Ukrainian and Belorussian. It uses the Cyrillic alpha- bet, which consists of 33 letters, many of them unlike any letter in the Roman (Latin) alphabet. Non-Russians also usually speak Russian, especially in urban areas. Rural minorities more often speak their own languages at home or within For example, Tartars speak Tartar, Chuvashes speak Chuvash, and Udmurts speak Udmurt. These individual languages are only taught at schools in areas where the ethnic group is prominent. Ethnic Russians are not required to learn other local languages, but students are increasingly studying foreign languages (especially English, French, German, and Spanish). In Soviet Union Russian language was main language to connect Republics of the former Soviet Union to each other and establish the united territorial- economic complex. As a result Russian is widely spoken outside Russia itself. In Uzbekistan people speak Russian mainly in the cities while Uzbek language is dominated in rural areas. However, many so-called ethnic Russians or the Russian-speaking population residing in areas other than Russia feel abandoned by the break up of the Soviet Union. They tend to be closer to Russia than to their local states.

The Russian Orthodox Church is the dominant religion. After the October Revolution (1917), the Communists separated the church from the state (which were previously tightly bonded) and discouraged all religious worship. Soviet regime did not tolerate any independent way of thinking and many religious leaders were killed, jailed or sent to exile. Many churches were forced to close under Lenin. Mikhail Gorbachev was the first Soviet leader to officially tolerated and even supported religion. Yeltsin also embraced the church, which is rapidly regaining its influence. Churches other than the Russian Orthodox are scarce in rural areas, but nearly every major religion and many Christian churches have members in cities. Some Tartars and Bashkirs are Muslim, and some Tuvinians and Buryats are Buddhist. Despite the years of Communist rulings and oppression the religion played and important role in the rural areas. More and more Russian are getting more involved in religion now. Religion is thought to fill the spiritual gap in peoples souls and help them reevaluate their moral values.

Russia's long history of totalitarianism have denied its inhabitants opportunities to make their own decisions, whether ruled by a Czar or the Communist Party. Personal initiative, personal responsibility, and the desire to work independently were suppressed by the state, and one was expected to conform to official opinion and behavior. In the current climate, Russians are searching for new social values. The resulting confusion and chaos have led many people to wonder if the old ways were not better. Many people are tired of the economic instability, rapidly changing society, characterized by high prices, increasingly violent and rampant crime, loss of income and a reduced quality of life. However, many Russians, especially in the younger generation, are eagerly taking advantage of the open environment. Indeed, Russians are learning the value of discussion and compromise, personal creativity, and risk-taking. This long-term process carries hard lessons such as financial loss, political polarization, economic instability, and social disruption.

Friendship is extremely important in Russia. Russians are warm and open with trusted friends. They rely on their network of friends in hard times and will go to great lengths to help friends whenever possible. Although intensely proud of "Mother Russia" and its achievements, Russians are a basically pessimistic people and usually do not express much hope for a better life in the future (except among the youth). Even generally happy and optimistic Russians might not show their true feelings in public but rather express frustration with everyday life. A general feeling in Russia is that the "soul" of Russia is different from that of other countries, that development cannot take the same course as it has in Europe, for example. Russians often believe they must find a different path that takes into account their unique historical heritage and social structure. In general, Russians desire to be remembered not for the negative aspects of the Soviet period and its aftermath, but for Russian contributions to world literature, art, science, technology, and medicine.

Social customs in Russia are very similar to the United States. When meeting, Russians shake hands firmly and say Zdravstvuyte (Hello), Dobry Deny (Good day), Dobroye utro (Good morning), Dobry vecher (Good evening), or Privet (a casual "Hello"). Good friends say "hello" with the more informal Zdravstvuy or Zdorovo. Friends, but not strangers, might also ask Kak dela? (How are you?) and wait for a response. Russians are introduced by their full name (given, patronymic, surname). Surnames are not used without titles, such as Gospodin (Mr.) and Gospozha (Mrs.). The military, police, and some citizens continue to use the Soviet-era title tovarishch ("friend" or "comrade"). At work or in polite com pany, Russians address each other by given name and patronymic (the possessive of the father's first name). This is also the most appropriate form of address for a superior or a respected elder. Close friends use given names alone.

Hand gestures carry much significance in Russian culture. Pointing with the index finger is improper but commonly practiced. It is impolite to talk (especially to an older person) with one's hands in the pockets or arms folded across the chest. To count, a Russian bends (closes) the fingers rather than opens them.

Russians like to visit and have guests. Sitting around the kitchen table and talking for hours is a favorite pastime. One usually removes shoes when entering a home. Hosts generally offer refreshments, but guests may decline them. Friends and family may visit anytime without notice but usually arrange visits in advance. They make themselves at home and generally can expect to be welcomed for any length of time. Visits with new acquaintances are more formal.

Giving gifts is a strong tradition in Russia, and almost every event (birthdays, weddings, holidays, etc.) is accompanied by presents. For casual visits, it is common (but not required) for guests to bring a simple gift (flowers, food, or vodka) to their hosts. The object given is less important than the friend ship expressed by the act. Flowers are given in odd numbers; even numbers are for funerals. If friends open a bottle of vodka (which means "little water"), they customarily drink until it is empty.

Knowing the general attitudes is extremely important in Russia. Tankred Golenpolsky in his book Doing Business in Russia emphasized the need the right local partner in Russia by asking the following questions:

* Where should you invest your money?
* When should you invest your money?
* How much money should you invest?

Answering these questions correctly can assure success elsewhere, but not in Russia. In Russia, everything begins with selection of the right partner to work for you (Golenpolsky 27-28). Having the right partner with the wide network of people is extremely helpful for starting your own business in Russia. Therefore, it is extremely important to know and understand Russian attitude and behavior patterns in order to deal with Russians and successfully build the relations in Russian environment. Later, the authors give the following recommendations on choosing the right candidate who “must meet some basic requirements such as fluency in English and an education background comparable to his or her Western colleagues. He or she preferably should be married since this indicates a degree of stability and seriousness, and the spouse must be ready to fit into a new system of relationships -relationships that did not exist in the former Soviet Union. (Golenpolsky 29-30)

Although food is plentiful in the cities, many products are expensive. Hence, the average person eats imported fruits and vegetables infrequently. People on fixed and limited incomes (mainly the elderly) eat more bread and potatoes than any- thing else. Urban residents more often have meat and dairy products. Rural people have gardens. Urban dwellers usually grow vegetable gardens in the country or on plots near the city. Traditional Russian foods include borsch (cabbage soup with beets), pirozhki (a stuffed roll, eaten as "fast food"), golubtsy (stuffed cabbage leaves baked with tomato sauce and eaten with sour cream), and shi (soup with sour cabbage). Borsch is still one of the most popular foods in the country. Its ingredients (potatoes, cabbages, carrots, beets, and onions) almost complete the list of vegetables used in everyday life. Pork, sausage, chicken, and cheeses are popular, but they can be expensive. Russians drink coffee and mineral water; juice and soda are available. Vodka is preferred to wine.

Russians have little leisure time because of the hours they devote to getting food, working extra jobs, or taking care of their households. Urban Russians spend nearly all their spare time at their dachas (country cottages), if they have them, relaxing and growing fruits and vegetables for the winter. In the summer, people Re to gather mushrooms. Cities have relatively few nightclubs and entertainment usually ends before midnight, even in Moscow.

The country's favorite sport is soccer. Winter sports such as ice skating, hockey, and cross-country skiing are also particularly popular. Most families like to watch television in the evening. Russia has a grand and abiding heritage in cultural arts. The people highly appreciate theaters and movies, but these are available only in big cities. Rural people can watch movies at community recreation centers called dvorets kultury (palace of culture) or the smaller dom kultury (house of culture) New Year's Day is the most popular holiday in Russia. Almost everyone decorates fir trees and has parties to celebrate the new year. Grandfather Frost leaves presents for children to find on New Year's Day. Easter and Christmas observances, long interrupted by communism, regained their prominence in 1990. Christmas is on 7 January, according to the Julian calendar used by the Russian Orthodox Church. Women's Day is 8 March. Solidarity Day (I May, also known as May Day) is a day for parades. Victory Day (9 May) commemorates the end of World War II and is deeply important to most Russians.

The business week is 40 hours, with Saturdays and Sundays off. Offices generally are open from 9:00 A.M. to 6:00 p.m. They close at lunchtime (1:00 P.m.). Prices in stores are not negotiable, but prices are flexible on the streets, where an increasing number of items is sold. Capitalism is booming in Russia and a new generation of entrepreneurs is beginning to thrive. Numerous small businesses and joint ventures with foreign firms are finding success, and employees are buying state-run factories and working to make them profitable. Under communism, there were no incentives for bureaucrats to perform well or even be nice to clients, so the usual answer to any question was "No." This practice is still found in society, but "no" is no longer final. One must simply bargain and be persistent to get what one desires.

Russians prefer having social interaction before discussing business. Trying to do business on the phone without seeing the prospective business partner is ineffective. One often spends a lot of time in meetings before even a small deal can succeed. The business climate is characterized by the high level of uncertainty in Russia. However, any companies successfully adapted to the Russian environment. In the Rising Russia the following industries are of particular interest for foreign investors: gas and oil refinery and export of oil, pharmaceutical, food and food-processing industry, aluminum extraction and manufacturing. Leasing and franchising opportunities exist in agricultural sector where the government established a policy encouraging farmers to obtain the modern equipment. The number of contracts were signed with car manufacturing plants such as Vojskiy Avtomobiliniy zavod and Moskovskiy zavod. Russia welcomes the foreign investors but has a number of difficulties in it such as corruption and organized crime, difficult environment in business and tax laws, unsuitability of local currency and unstable political situation due to the war in Chechnya. However, the new Russian government took active steps toward the Chechen populations supporting the international terrorists and the terrorists who were fighting the Russian troops.

The First Chechen war cost a lot to the Russian government. The second war was more successful than the first one but still Russians are in the active process of guerrilla war with Chechen bandits. These challenges can stop potential investors from using the opportunities of 150 million people market.

Russia is a federation of autonomous republics and regions. Vladimir Putin succeeded Boris Yeltsin as a president. The president is strong and has power to dissolve parliament, set foreign policy, and appoint the Prime Minister. The Federal Assembly has two houses, a 176-seat Federation Council and the 450-seat State Duma. The Constitutional Court is Russia's highest. The voting age is 18. An array of political parties is represented in the Duma. The actual party names are less important than their alliances. Communists form the largest block, but not a majority, and nationalists and liberals form other substantial voting blocks. Recently, new Russian president implemented the measures for strengthening his power and ability to react and influence the national economy but many there are critics.

Russia's natural resources give it great potential for economic growth and development. Natural gas, coal, gold, oil, diamonds, copper, silver, and lead are all abundant. Heavy industry dominates the economy, although the agricultural sector is potentially strong. Russia's economy is weak and unstable. Liberal reforms designed to attract foreign investment and privatize the economy led to higher unemployment, high inflation (above I 00 percent), and lower production. Organized crime and corruption weigh heavily on the economy's ability to perform. Real gross domestic product per capita is $4,828. Poverty is increasing as fast as wealth. The currency is the ruble (R). Nearly all transactions are made in cash.

Education is free and mandatory for everyone between ages six and seventeen. In 1994, new curriculum guidelines were introduced to encourage choice and innovation over previous approaches to teaching, but many public schools are unable or unwilling to implement the reforms due to lack of money and clear local leadership. However, a few are embracing new ideas and even teaching basic market economics to young children. Students attend primary, middle, and high school. They can specialize in their last two years. Private schools offer a high-quality education to the wealthy and influential. Education is highly valued, and Russia's literacy rate is 99 percent. More than five hundred universities, medical schools, and technical academies are found throughout the country. Russians have a distinct advantage of a high-standard education and they are actively using their intelligence. Russian large intellectual potential and a system of educating brains even with its drawbacks has produced a number of talented people who can work at least at the same level as their Western counterparts. Unfortunately, this educational potential is not fully utilized by the current condition of the Russian economy. The facts on Russian immigration to such developed countries as Canada, Australia, New Zealand or United States confirms this fact. (http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/newcomer/welcome/index.html). The educational potential of the nation is probably the most important factor that can bring the nation to the family of the high-industrialized nations.

Russia with its rich heritage of music, theatre performance, poetry is a distinct expression of the Russian media history. Currently, together with the old ways of communications such as cinema, theatre, newspapers and TV new avenues of the human interaction are rapidly developing. Internet brought by the introduction of Western communicative abilities is changing the Russian youth. Russian students are not isolated from rest of the World due to the Internet. However, the introduction of this powerful source of information exchange mainly affected the large cities where there are enough resources. Countryside does not have a full access to the Internet and can not enjoy the full advantage of Internet using. The scope of media coverage in very wide in Russia. Russians commented on the Olympic Games, War in Chechnya or situation in the Near East.

Russian media is the most advanced among the CIS media in terms of the connections with the foreign media sources. Russians have to create a new media channels to deliver messages. They do not have such strict censorship like Republics of the Central Asia or Caucasus. The Russians reformed TASS and have a closed connection with CNN News, Reuters. MTV, a Musical channel established a Russian speaking music channel. Russian media played a great role in covering the news and war operations in Chechnya and was one of the major reasons why Russians pressured the government to stop the massacre. Russians receive news from abroad mainly by TV (ORT- Obchestvennoe Rosiyskoe Televidine), (RTR-Rossiyskoe TeleRadiove Vechyanie), TV-4, TV-6. Eduard Sagalaev together with CNN, headed by Ted Turner arranged NTV and NTV+ for broadcasting on Moscow and St. Petersburg. The second source of Information are the various newspapers in Russia. Most of them were originated during or after the era of Perestroyka. However, many remained from the Soviet Era but changed their profile to be more “readable”. Before the newspapers only printed what they were allowed to print on political or economic topics. They could touch sports or weather occasionally. Now newspapers can criticize the government and give their comments on the economic situation in Russia. Radio is usually listened in the countryside or where people do not have televisions.

Unlike people in America, many Russians use the public transportation and do not have cars except in Moscow and St. Petersburg. However, due to the high traffic, people prefer use subways to get to their work place. As a result, radio does not enjoy such popularity like here in the States.

The last, but most flourishing, medium is Internet. It enjoys the relatively lower costs of information exchange. Many newspapers have their web sites where they place the information, news and current events. Russian youth are becoming more and more exposed to the Internet. Internet getting to the colleges and homes. The example of Russia organized search engines are www.rambler.ru, www.lib.ru. Larger resources are allocated on the information databases such as www.news.ru, www.omen.ru, which specializes on music and entertainment. Russians made an advance step in terms of the amount of servers but they are closely followed by Ukraine and Kazakhstan.

Despite the rapid development of the Russian media there are still some challenges and problems the media faces. Russian government was not pleased with the way Russian reporters disclose the situation in Chechnya, Kursk, fire in Ostankino and other major events where they government was not acting at its best. Amnesty International reports on the arrests and interrogations of the Russian reporters in Chechnya by the Russian military. The reporters are being killed and the government does not want to do anything about it.

Russians are facing another dilemma. The society has mixed feelings about their identity and their role in CIS and the World. This reflects on the ability of the Russian media to cover the news. They can not figure out what is more important for the Russian society and what is not. The difficult relations with West are a special circumstance of the Russian society. Russians do not want to be portrayed as “losers” to the West. In fact, in his speech at the West Point conference a chief editor of “Foreign Policy” Zakartia said that Russians did not lose the cold war. They want to change their system and life better. They do not think that the West won it. He argued that thinking in such way and failing to cooperate with Russia made the United States lose the Russia. This relationship prevents the Russian media from showing the real attitude of Western democracies on the events because the media do not want to be portrayed pro-Western. The Russians are making steps toward democratization of their society and political system and it has a reflection on the Russian media. The Western nations should provide the full support to this movement while understanding the situation in Russia and the challenges Russian go through.

After the collapse of the Communist regime left Russia with an inefficient economy, regional conflicts and problems with the neighboring countries. Russia wants to become a democratic society with a developed market oriented economy. It has a large potential especially in human resources. Russians are educated, talented and bright people who are willing to work hard if they are paid well. Russia has a vast variety of natural resources that can attract foreign capital. Russians are welcoming foreign investments. All these conditions will surely have an effect and lead Russia to the family of the most-developed nations in the world. It might take long time but it will surely happen.

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