

## P-5 COUNTRY PROFILES

### RUSSIA

#### General Information

<i>Official Name:</i>	Russian Federation
<i>Capital:</i>	Moscow
<i>Population:</i>	140,702,096
<i>Major Languages:</i>	Russian
<i>Major Religions:</i>	Russian Orthodox, Muslim, and Christian
<i>Regional/Economic Organizational Membership:</i>	APEC, ASEAN, APPF, CIS, Interpol, NACC, OSCE, G-8 Member, ICC, IAEA, START I and START II, WHO, SCO, Paris Club, WTO, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNIDO, UNITAR, UNMEE, UNMIL, UNMIS, UNOCI, UNOMIG, and the UNTSO, etc.

#### Governmental System

Russia's legislature, the Federal Assembly, is bicameral, consisting of the Federation Council (the upper house) and the State Dumas (the lower house). The Federation Council has 178 seats that are filled by top executive and legislative officials from 89 federal districts. The State Dumas has 450 seats, with half of the representatives being elected by proportional representation (from parties winning at least 5% of the national vote) and the other half being elected directly from single-member constituencies (all of them are elected for four years). Russia has many political parties. They include the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, Motherland Bloc (now separated into two different parties – Motherland Party and Party of Motherland), Union of Right Forces (SPS), United Russia, Yabloko Party, and the Communist Party of the Russian Federation. Russia's party identification and cohesiveness is extremely low. Only three parties consistently receive over 5% of the vote, which is necessary to get seats in the legislature; they are the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) (which advocates socialism and Russia's old system of government), the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR), and United Russia.

In the political system established by the 1993 constitution, the president wields considerable executive power that has carried over from Russia's Soviet roots. The President is elected by popular vote for a four year term. The president nominated the highest state officials, including the Chairman of the Government and the Chairman of the Central Bank of the Russian Federation, who must be approved by the State Dumas, and all the judges of the Constitutional Court, the Supreme Court, and the Supreme Arbitration Court, who must be approved by the Federation Council. Also, the president serves as head of the nation's armed forces and as the premier representative of Russia in dealing with other countries.

In contrast to the president's power, Russia's judicial system is weak. The highest judicial

system consists of three courts: the Constitutional Court, the Supreme Court, and the Supreme Arbitration Court. The 1993 constitution empowers the court to arbitrate disputes between the executive and legislative branches and between the regional and local governments. The court is also authorized to rule on violations of constitutional rights, to examine appeals from various bodies, and to participate in impeachment proceedings against the president. Although the Russian government has begun to reform the criminal justice system and judicial institutions, judges are only just beginning to assert their constitutionally mandated independence from the other branches of government.

## **Foreign Policy**

Russia has numerous topics on its foreign policy agenda. First of all, China and Russia have finally demarcated the once disputed island in the Argun River and at the Amur and Ussuri confluence. This had previously been a border dispute for centuries. However, there is sovereignty dispute over the islands of Kunashiri, Shikotan, Etorofu, and the Habomai group. These are known by Japan as the “Northern Territories” and as the “Southern Kurils” in Russia. These islands were occupied by the USSR in 1945 and are now administered by Russia. Japan lays claim to the land, and this issue remains the primary sticking point to signing a peace treaty formally ending WWII.

One volatile situation for Russia is the conflict with Georgia. In August 2008, a military conflict began over two Georgian breakaway regions. After sending troops into these regions, the Kremlin declared its recognition of the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. This ignited anger in the West, giving some credibility to the possibility of a new Cold War.

In the past few years, the Russian Federation has been angered by a US plan to develop an anti-missile system in Eastern Europe. Russia has responded by saying it may point its own missiles at the defense shield installations.

Russia believes that combating international terrorism is an important foreign policy task and will usually support any way of stopping it. Russia also participates in activities to help eliminate natural and man-made disasters and to assist with humanitarian aid to poverty-stricken nations. The Russian Federation has taken an active role working with regional organizations, such as the European Union and the African Union.

## **Issues Summary**

Issue 1: Peacekeeping, Peacemaking, and Peacebuilding → Though being one of the Permanent Five members of the Security Council, Russia is not in the top ten donors of money to peacekeeping operations. As of September 2008, Russia only contributes around 282 Peacekeeping Troops to the United Nations. However, Russia’s stance is that peacekeeping and making regions stable is an important goal of the UN.

Issue 2: Sanctions → Russia is generally opposed to sanctions. Since it is trying to develop relations with countries around the world and is located near several places of conflict, economic sanctions would eventually help the already weak (but strengthening) economy of the Russian

Federation.

Issue 3: Terrorism → Russia is highly opposed to terrorism and usually supports any resolution to condemn this type of action. In 2004 terrorist attacks in the town of Beslan killed hundreds of school-children, making terrorism a personal threat in the Motherland.

Issue 4: Nonproliferation → Russia is seeking the preservation and observance of the 1972 Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems. It is pushing for a worldwide comprehensive ban on nuclear weapons and the non-proliferation of missiles and missile technologies. Russia has vowed, along with the United States, to reduce its own nuclear stockpile to no more than 1500 missiles. Russia was also active in the Six Party talks with North Korea in trying to end that conflict concerning North Korea's weapon program.

Issue 5: Human Security → As with terrorism, Russia places human security high on its list of important foreign policy tasks and will fight for anything that betters human rights.

Issue 6: Genocide → As a leading member of the UN, the Russian Federation finds genocide to be a horrible act and will not stand for it. Russia supports any resolution that tries to help those suffering from possible genocide.

Issue 7: Sustainable Development and Climate Change → The Russian Federation is a signatory of the Kyoto Protocol, an agreement between 182 countries to work towards the reduction of greenhouse emissions of developed countries.

Issue 8: Democratization and Elections Monitoring → Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation has taken on Democracy as its official governmental system. However, many concerns have been raised concerning the way Russia's government is run. The Communist party is still one of the most popular in all elections. Also, the judicial and legislative branches seem to be of less power than the executive branch. For example, after the 2004 terrorist attacks in Beslan, President Putin proposed restructuring all three branches and strengthening federal powers in order to better counter terrorist threats.

Issue 9: Security Council Reform → Russia has been pushing for reform to the U.N. Charter, specifically for changing the seats on the Security Council. Russia believes that countries that are playing key roles in developing and maintaining peace in different regions need more representation. This mainly means more African countries, along with other regions of instability.

### **Relationship with the United Nations**

Russia only donates a few hundred troops for peacekeeping, and is not in the top ten of financial donors for peacekeeping missions. However, Russia does have a good record of paying its dues in a timely manner. Russia tends to side with members in the AU, EU, and is a leader of the CIS. As a permanent member to the Security Council and a founder of the United Nations, Russia is often looked up to as a leader in different issues.

## **Relationships with other United Nations Security Council Members**

China: In most issues, Russia and China will pair, especially against the United States. China is a valuable trading neighbor to Russia, and Russia will definitely want to keep that economic boost. Russia and China recently settled a border dispute over a group of islands at the confluence of the Amur and Ussuri Rivers, strengthening these two countries' bond.

Viet Nam: Russia and Vietnam have strong trading and diplomatic relations, being neighbors to each other.

Indonesia: Being in the same region of the world, these two countries naturally have a tendency to work together. They are both members of APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum). With Russia's hurt economy, it needs all the trade partners possible to strengthen its markets.

France: Usually, Russia and France will agree on issues, especially those dealing with taking active roles in peacemaking. Both are members of the Council of Europe and are G-8 members, strengthen their ties together.

United Kingdom: Diplomatic ties have suffered between Russia and the United Kingdom for various reasons. The U.K. usually sides with the United States, especially on issues of terrorism and proliferation. There have also been reports of spying between the two countries. One recent event was the death of former KGB officer Alexander Litvinenko in 2006. He was poisoned in London by radioactive Polonium-210 and died three weeks later. When Russia refused to extradite Andrei Lugovoi to face charges in this death, the UK expelled four Russian diplomats. Shortly thereafter, Russia expelled four British diplomats. The UK has also criticized the Kremlin on the Georgian conflict.

Italy: Italy and Russia have enjoyed relations for awhile. Italy has the largest Communist party in the Western world, whereas the Russian Communist party is a major party in the government. Italy imports Russian gas, and other economic trade occurs between the two Member States.

Libyan Arab Jamahiriya: Russia has a history of supporting African nations in their development. Libya and Russia share economic trade. Russia also tries to have an active role in helping the African Union.

Burkina Faso: Being a poor African nation, Russia will side with Burkina Faso in helping out the continent in terms of peace, health, and security.

South Africa: Due to South Africa's policy of apartheid, many countries in the world shut off all economic trade, military support, and other boycotts were put into effect. Due to this, South Africa was shut off from outside powers. Only with the end of apartheid did South Africa once again have relations with the rest of the globe. Russia began full diplomatic relations with South Africa in 1992. Russia will most likely work with South Africa in all issues, especially those concerning the continent of Africa.

Belgium: Both of these countries are members of the Council of Europe. They will work together on issues concerning the continent of Europe and will agree on most issues.

Croatia: Russia and Croatia several bilateral trade and economic cooperation treaties.

United States: The United States and the Russian Federation have always been on rocky terms since the end of World War II. In the past, both Member States have excessively vetoed the other's proposals to the Security Council. At the end of the Cold War, the number of vetoes drastically decreased, though some tension still remains due to differences in opinion, especially on issues concerning terrorism and proliferation. Russia tends to vote against the U.S.

Panama: These two countries are still developing relations with each other since the collapse of the USSR. Both have diplomatic embassies and share some trade.

Costa Rica: As with Panama, the Russian Federation is still developing relations with this South American country. Both have had diplomatic relations since 1944. They share some trade and have no major conflicts with each other.