

C. The Baptism of Rus

1. The first rulers of Russia were Vikings with their own gods, but in **988 AD** Vladimir “the Great” decided to become a Christian, and just like when Clovis became a Christian and all the Franks had to do it too, all the Russians had to become Christian like their king.
2. The version of Christianity in Eastern Europe is different than in Western Europe, however. It is known as “Orthodox Christianity,” whereas in western Europe, the most common version is called “Roman Catholic Christianity.”

D. Isolated Russia and the Mongol Occupation (1240-1480)

1. In the year **1240**, invaders known as the Mongols swept across Asia into Europe as far as Poland. They conquered Kyiv and the whole area that we call “Ukraine” today.
2. Russia’s leaders moved north, and adopted Moscow as their new capital.
3. The Mongol occupation of eastern Europe continued until **1480**, when the prince of Moscow Ivan “the Great” assembled his army to defy the Mongols at the Ugra river near Moscow. The Mongols decided to retreat, so the “Great Standing at the Ugra River” marks the end of Mongol control over Russia.

E. Russia Joins Europe

1. After the Mongols retreated, Russia was still isolated from the rest of Europe. It was blocked by Sweden, Poland, and the Muslim Ottoman Empire.
2. Russia’s isolation was eventually broken by its king (known in Russia as a “tsar”), Peter “the Great.” Peter admired European culture and wanted to make Russia into a European country. Seeking a sea route to Asia, Peter believed that Sweden was Russia’s most vulnerable rival, and attacked that country in the **Great Northern War of 1700-22**.



3. Russia's victory in the **Great Northern War** allowed the country to claim a stretch of coastline along the Baltic Sea. The new capital city of St. Petersburg was built there as a monument to Russia's new ambitions as a European country.
4. Being a part of Europe was desirable for the purpose of expanding trade and in order to partake in the cultural and technological advancement of Europe, which was surpassing all other cultures, but it also meant that Russia was entangled in the "balance of power" of Europe's nations.

F. Russia in the "Balance of Power"

1. At first, since it was so far to the east, Western Europe did not care much about Russia, but then during the reign of Catherine "the Great," Russia defeated the Ottoman Turks in the *Russo-Turkish War (1768-74)* which re-united Ukraine and Russia and which brought Crimea under Russian control for the first time in Russia's history. This meant that Russia now had access to the Black Sea.
2. Russia also became more important by taking control of Poland in the *War of the Polish Succession*, when the Polish king died. This drew the attention of Austria and Prussia (northern Germany), however, who did not want Russia to get too strong and to get nothing for themselves. Russia, Prussia, and Austria thus agreed to devour Poland in three partitions from 1772 to 1795, where each of them would get their "fair share." By the end of this process Poland no longer existed and Russia was truly recognized as a major power in the European "balance of power."
3. Thus, when the kings of Europe became alarmed by the French Revolution, starting in 1789, where the French people began the process of overthrowing their king and adopting a modern democracy, Russia decided to participate in the wars to prevent the revolution from succeeding. This would have unexpected results...