I. Introduction

1. Russia as we know it today is a country that is considered as superpower. It has a sophisticated history that engineered this country through centuries till it became Russia, as we know it today. Russia’s size is around 17.1 million km and it has a population of around 144 million people.

2. Every one wonders why Russia is simply amazing? For centuries the world has wondered what to believe about Russia. The country has been reported variously as a land of unbelievable riches and indescribable poverty, cruel tyrants and great minds, generous hospitality and meddlesome bureaucracy, beautiful ballets and industrial monstrosities, pious faith and unbridled hedonism.

3. These eternal Russian truths coexist in equally diverse landscapes of icy tundra and sun-kissed beaches, dense silver birch with fir forests and deep mysterious lakes, snow-capped mountains and swaying grasslands – those famous steppes. Russia is the land of ancient fortresses, luxurious palaces, swirly-spired churches and lost-in-time wooden villages.

4. This paper will highlight the main stages of Russia’s historical expansion along with other indicators that made this country an empire and will examine the fact that Russia is pursuing its historical imperial legacy again, to once more rise as a superpower in a new world order.

II. Facts

The original borders

5. Nordic Vikings who invaded from Scandinavia by navigating the rivers of Eastern Europe founded the first East Slavic state, Kievan Rus (a loose federation of East Slavic tribes in Europe). They adopted Christianity from the Byzantine Empire in 988 and began the blend of Byzantine and Slavic cultures that came to define Russian culture. Although technically large in its territorial size compared to the European states to the west, the Kievan Rus state quickly succumbed to the Mongol invaders in the 1230s when the Golden Horde raced westward and Russia was conquered by riders from the vast steppe to the East, which to some scholars was the genesis of Russia’s desire to spread eastward and conquer it.

6. As Mongolian control quickly weakened, a number of provincial centers in Novgorod and Pskov fought to inherit the legacy of Kievan Rus, but it was Moscow that came to dominate the former cultural center. Initially power was weak, and tribute was paid to the Tatar Khans.

The expansion into Eastern Europe (1500s-1600s)
7. It was under Ivan III (also called Ivan the Great) during the 15th century that Moscow rejected the customary tribute paid to Tatar grand Khan Ahmed, and while fighting the Turkic tribes to the east, began to unify all the provinces that were culturally Russian. This included a war won against the Republic of Novgorod. His son Vasili III continued the policies of his father and annexed the last surviving autonomous provinces of Pskov, Volokolamsk, Ryazan and Novgorod-Seversky, and most remarkably captured the Polish city of Smolensk.

8. During the 16th century, Ivan IV “the Terrible” was the first ruler of Russia to assume the title of tsar, and saw the conquest of Tartary and Siberia and the transformation of Russia into a multi-ethnic state. (1)

The expansion into Siberia (1600s-1900s)

9. Findings made in the late 1990s indicate that Siberia was inhabited as early as 300,000 years ago, rather than 40,000 years ago, as previously thought. In the historic period, S Siberia frequently served as the point of departure for several nomadic groups, such as Huns, Mongols, and Manchus, who conquered and lost immense empires. Among the political entities emerging after the breakup of the Mongol state of the Golden Horde in the mid-15th cent. was the Tatar khanate of Sibir.

10. Eastern expansion by Russia through the early 1600s saw eastern expansion across Siberia, but limited western gains and even losses as Poland, Lithuania and Sweden fought several wars with the Tsar. The most important growth was the conquest of the south that brought in the Cossacks.

11. But why Russia expanded into Siberia? What’s the importance of Siberia? The Russians’ arrival to Siberia in the 16th & 17th centuries represented a milestone in the history of the region. The exploration was driven by the search of furs and ivory by Cossacks who came down from the Southern Urals Mountains and the Pomors who arrived from the Russian North with the goal of trade extension into Siberia. During the Russian Empire times, Siberia was an agricultural province and served as a place of exile for many throughout centuries. The Trans-Siberian Railway was built in the 19th century; at the same time the industrialization of the region began and the vast reserves of mineral resources were discovered. By the mid-17th century the Russian people had established the borders of their country close to the modern ones, and explored almost all of Siberia, except for Kamchatka, which was conquered in the early 18th century.

(1) http://www.infoplease.com/encyclopedia/world/siberia-history.html

12. In 1900s the Stolypin (Prime Minister under the Tsar Nicholas II) resettlement programme was undertaken to ease the burden of overpopulation of the rural areas of Central Russia; cheap or even free land was offered to the agriculturalists as an incentive. As a result of this propaganda, the population of Siberia increased by 73% between 1897 and 1914. However, the well-off peasant families were heavily prosecuted during Stalin times of collectivization and many were exiled into low-populated, forest or swampy areas of Siberia. During the World War II Siberia was used as a place to urgently build ammunitions for the Russian army and for the evacuation of the enterprises, which later remained in Siberia and this led to further
industrial production in the area. Labour camps of Siberia were populated with exiled Germans of the Volga region as well as thousands of German and Japanese captive soldiers and officers at the end of the War. Siberia was also home to infamous Gulag; a governmental agency during the USSR era that was charged with regulating the labour force and administering imprisoning camps for criminals and political prisoners.

13. Although Russian traders from Novgorod crossed the Urals as early as the 13th cent to trade in furs with native tribes, the Russian conquest began much later. Tsar Ivan IV’s capture of the Kazan khanate in 1552 opened the way for Russian expansion into Siberia. In 1581 a band of Cossacks under Yermak crossed the middle Urals and took the city of Sibir (near modern Tobolsk), capital of the Sibir khanate, which gave its name to the entire region. Russia’s conquest of the Tatar khanate was completed in 1598 (see Tatars), and during the 17th cent. Russia annexed all of W Siberia.

14. The Cossacks rapidly penetrated eastward by land and on riverboats, building a string of small fortresses and charging tribute for Moscow from the sparse population in the form of precious furs. By 1640 they had reached the Sea of Okhotsk, an arm of the Pacific Ocean, and soon afterward they collided with Chinese troops. By the Treaty of Nerchinsk (1689), Russia abandoned to China the region later known as the Far Eastern Territory (Russian Far East), which was ceded to Russia only from 1858 to 1860. The Chinese still have claims over parts of the border, including islands in the Ussuri River.

15. Russian settlement of Siberia was spurred by groups of zemleprokhodtsy (literally, "crossers of land"), who came mostly from N European Russia and traversed the easy portages linking the east-west Siberian river systems to pioneer new forts and trading communities. A colony of the Russian Empire, Siberia was administered by a colonial office based first in Moscow and later (after its founding in 1703) in the new Russian capital of St. Petersburg.

16. Although military governors collected tribute, they interfered little with native Siberian customs and religions; while the smaller, weaker ethnic groups succumbed to Russian influence, larger tribes such as the Kazaks and Yakuts thrived and reaped material benefits under Russian administration. Siberian furs constituted an important source of wealth for Russia and figured prominently in Russian trade with Western Europe. These furs, along with customs duties levied on all Siberian raw materials acquired by Russian entrepreneurs, more than reimbursed the state for the costs of its Siberian conquest and administration.

17. With the decline of the fur trade in the early 18th cent., mining became the chief economic activity in Siberia. The state was the chief entrepreneur, but wealthy private families were also involved. Silver, lead, and copper mining began around 1700; gold mining did not develop until the 1830s. Forced labor in the mines, often using convicts, proved generally unproductive; the gold miners were usually free laborers. Siberian agriculture was stimulated in the late 16th and 17th cent. by the needs of the Russian military and administrative personnel stationed there.

18. From the early 17th cent. Siberia was used as a penal colony and a place of exile for political prisoners; among the latter there emerged (especially after the exile of leaders of the Decembrist Conspiracy of 1825) a small but vocal Siberian intelligentsia, who agitated for an end of Siberia's colonial status. Meanwhile, Russian colonizers continued to push southward, establishing forts along the steppe to thwart nomadic raids. Newly emancipated (1861) Russian serfs were allowed to take free
possession of Siberian land, but they received little state assistance and suffered intolerable hardships.

19. Russian settlement of Siberia on a large scale began only with the construction (1892–1905) of the Trans-Siberian RR, after which the eastward migratory movement reached major proportions. P. A. Stolypin, the interior minister under Nicholas II, made a special effort to reduce rural overpopulation in European Russia by encouraging Siberian colonization. The railroad also enabled European Russia to obtain cheap grain from W Siberia and butter from the Baraba Steppe. The railroad's needs spurred the development of coal mining and the opening of repair shops. Before the Russian Revolution, however, Siberia contributed only a minute fraction of Russia's industrial output, mainly in the form of gold.

20. During the Revolution, Siberia played a key role in the Russian civil war of 1918–20 (see Russian Revolution). An autonomous Siberian government formed in early 1918 was soon superseded by the regime of the counterrevolutionary Admiral A. V. Kolchak, who made his capital at Omsk. The White forces were aided by contingents of czarist political exiles and by the Czech Legion, a group of Austrian army deserters who had hoped to fight alongside the czarist army. In Aug., 1918, a U.S., British, French, and Japanese expeditionary force joined the anti-Bolshevik units in Siberia. The main purpose of this allied expedition was probably to prevent German use of Siberian resources in World War I. Most of Siberia was in White hands by late 1918, but Czar Nicholas II and his family were murdered by the Bolsheviks at Yekaterinburg (formerly Sverdlovsk) that year. Early in 1920, Admiral Kolchak's government collapsed, and he was executed.

21. Under the Soviet government, Siberia, especially the Ural-Kuznetsk complex, underwent dramatic economic development. Under the First Five-Year Plan (1928–33), forced labor was instrumental in mining coal and building the iron and steel complex of the Kuznetsk Basin. In addition, part of the agricultural colonization of Siberia was carried out by the forced resettlement of large segments of the Russian rural population, notably the expropriated kulaks (wealthier peasants). As a result, Siberia's population doubled between 1914 and 1946. Forced labor was also employed extensively in the E Siberian gold mines. Parts of the vast Siberian concentration and forced-labor camp network established by Stalin may still exist, but many of the political prisoners were released by Mikhail Gorbachev.

22. Siberia's economic development increased dramatically during World War II with the transfer of many industries from European USSR to the other side of the Urals, where they would be less vulnerable to German seizure. Siberian grain was essential in enabling the Soviet Union to resist the German wartime onslaught despite the loss of valuable agricultural areas in W USSR.

23. Postwar industrialization of Siberia continued at a rapid pace, with special concentration on SW Siberia and the Lake Baykal region. Siberian agriculture, which suffered during the Stalinist collectivization campaign, was revived in the mid-1950s by Premier Khrushchev's "virgin lands" program, focusing on cultivation in the steppes of SW Siberia and N Kazakhstan. The Seven-Year Plan (1958–65) emphasized construction of large thermal and hydroelectric power plants in Siberia and elsewhere.

24. The resulting destruction of natural areas and the gross waste of resources led to strong environmental opposition. Centered on the issue of the polluting of Lake Baykal, Siberian environmental groups became some of the first organizations to challenge the Communist party's decisions openly. Indigenous peoples also protested the destruction
of their autonomous regions. With the fall of the USSR, Siberia became more open to foreign travel and trade, while local Siberians sought to distance themselves from the Russian government in Moscow. The region also suffered population losses that were more substantial than those suffered by Russia as a whole. (2)

The expansion into Caucasia (1700s)

25. Peter the Great founded the Russian Empire in 1721, and through him and later Catherine the Great saw Russian territorial expansion spread East to the Pacific, into Ukraine, and began the push south into Central Asia.

26. As always, it’s hard to track exact borders over an exact timeline. What we do know is that by the mid-19th century, Russia was by far the largest power on the globe, with its reach spreading to Alaska and more of North America (including Fort Ross in California), Central Asia, the Caucasus, Ukraine, Finland, and Sakhalin Island. This, however, was the pinnacle.

The expansion Into the Central Asian kingdoms (1800s)

27. Moscow sold Alaska to the United States, compromised with the British and created Afghanistan, and by the Great War saw some recession from its mid-19th century territorial peak. And then during the Great War, Russia saw massive internal disorder followed by revolution that resulted in the end of monarchy and a central government of Communist ideology.

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR/CCCP), 1922-1991

28. The USSR was a constitutionally socialist state that dominated Eurasia from 1922 to 1991. Its geographic boundaries varied with time, but after the last major territorial annexations of the Baltic states, eastern Poland, Bessarabia, and certain other territories during World War II, from 1945 until dissolution the boundaries approximately corresponded to those of late Imperial Russia, with the notable exclusions of Poland, most of Finland, and Alaska. The establishment of constituent or “union republics” by 1956 played a real role in the fracturing of the USSR in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

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(2) http://www.thewashingtonreview.org/articles/the-kremlins-strategic-plans-for-siberia.html

Russian Federation (1993-)

29. And finally, under the leadership of President Boris Yeltsin, the republics of the Soviet Union declared independence, the Soviet Council dissolved, and Russia became an independent republic.
III. Analysis

Russia’s significant potentials even from one region only

30. If we take Siberia as an example, it is typically perceived as a far-removed wilderness of tundra and forests covered with snow, frozen all year round. It stretches 13 million square kilometers long representing 10% of the world’s territory. However, to say that it is not heavily populated would be a great underestimation - with only 3 people per square kilometer it ranks one of the lowest populated regions in the world. Such results are not surprising considering its long winters and short summers that result in tough survival conditions. In addition, in the post-Soviet era Russia has been paying more attention to developing its European portion of the country despite Siberia’s richness and diversity in its natural resources. The following areas are among potentials for exploration in Siberia based on their competitive advantages: (4)

- Grain: Siberia’s rich virgin soil could advance Russia’s export possibilities of wheat in the world even further. Russia became one of the major exporters of wheat after the collapse of the USSR that used to be a grain importer. It could replace the US in such markets as China, South Korea and Japan because the territorial proximity and vast availability of water resources through Siberian rivers will drive down the cost of production significantly; a new bunker is intended to be built for grain processing in Siberia, potentially turning Siberia into a “bread basket”.

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(3) http://cominganarchy.com/2008/01/24/the-geography-of-russia-through-history/
(4) http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/media/3392/Russian-expansion

- Other industries requiring heavy water supply to be developed are woodworking, pulp and paper mills as well as chemical industries, which, in turn, could prove lucrative for Asia-Pacific countries.
- Development of railroad routes to use as transit potential: South Korea expressed interest in joining construction project of railroads linking Vladivostok and
Khabarovsk while simultaneously upgrading the link between North Korean economic zone Najin and Russia’s Khasan.

- The Valdai Club and its foreign partners are interested in developing Northern Sea Route for its more intense use.
- Mineral and metal-rich Siberia is already home to oil, diamonds, gas and coal producers and in April 2013, Russia announced a billion-dollar investment in the region. Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev ordered the government to devise a "Far East Development Program" totaling $16 billion to develop Siberia and its environs by 2018, saying it was a top priority for Russia. (5)

31. However, all of these projects are overshadowed by a new deal of historical proportions signed recently between Russia and China which expects to build the new pipeline through Siberia in conjunction with China. Such an act on behalf of Russia represents a profound statement to the rest of the world that a new alliance of significant weight was born despite original historical reservations of the Russian people towards the Chinese. Overall, Russian used Siberia throughout history as a buffer zone between its mainland and its Asian neighbors, as an industrial region, as a region of exile, and as a status land that confirmed its imperial might. These days it seems that the current Russian government has finally realized all of the importance of Siberia for its foreign policy, which is being redirected towards China and the other countries in Asia as opposed to the previous course towards Europe. (6)

Russia’s ambition: The annexation of Crimea – The dream of Eurasian Union and Putin’s new leadership style

32. The Russian ambition started an implementation phase when the Russian army invaded Ukraine in March 2014 and annexed the region of Crimea. The annexation took place following Russian invasion and intervention in the autonomous republic of Crimea and city of Sevastopol, administrative division of Ukraine, and after unrecognized local authorities declared their independence from Ukraine and held a referendum, organized under Russian military occupation. (7)

33. The Russian president sees his "Eurasian Union", in which Ukraine would play a central role, as a future rival to China, the United States and the European Union. Some say he sees it as the president's personal political legacy - a strong force emerging from the ashes of the old Soviet Union. “The Eurasian Union is a very important project for Putin. Without Ukraine, he will lose all enthusiasm for it,” said Gleb Pavlovsky, a former Kremlin spin-doctor who has also worked in Ukraine. "Without Ukraine, Putin's project is impossible."

(5) http://valdaiclub.com/economy/53980.html
(6) http://www.cnbc.com/id/100823089# - Siberia could be Russia’s secret economic weapon

34. Putin also hopes to persuade several other former Soviet republics that were being courted by EU leaders at a summit in Lithuania. But none is more important to Putin than Ukraine, a huge market and the cradle of Russian civilization.
35. The opposition-minded Russian newspaper Novaya Gazeta described the situation as a love triangle in which Ukraine was a cheating husband, the EU an attractive mistress and Russia an angry wife. Who would win out in the end was unclear.

36. For Putin it may be a question of exercising the kind of 'soft power' that comes to a nation as vast as Russia. Putin is widely thought to have offered Ukraine lower prices for gas supplies and threatened crippling trade sanctions if it signed the planned trade pact with the EU in Lithuania, although he denies this.

37. President Viktor Yanukovich may also have been 'shopping around' for the best finance deal to rescue his country. Russia has clearly offered him better terms than the 600 million euros the EU has put on the table.

38. The Eurasian Union is intended to recoup potential lost when the Soviet empire collapsed 22 years ago and to group like-minded states against any meddling by the West or China. Putin showed his intent by adopting a decree on the first day of his new presidency last year making it a priority to develop ties with the former Soviet republics in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) - the very loose association of states created after the Soviet collapse. (8)

39. It is wrong to think that Crimea is Moscow’s only strategic objective. As Putin’s stock at home soars, he is likely to methodically challenge the European Union and, especially, NATO. Russia’s willingness to use overwhelming force and the West's inability to effectively respond give him two key advantages. As the real possibility of force hangs over Russia’s neighbours, Putin will focus resources on the launch of the Eurasian Union next year. This new alliance is not a Soviet reunion tour — it is far more geographically ambitious. Russian exports of military equipment and oil will help the Eurasian Union assemble geopolitical capital far beyond Europe’s borders.

40. Very few nations can produce the arms and energy they need. This is where Russia comes in. India and China, for example, have large militaries that depend on Russian technology. Gazprom is finalizing a massive gas supply deal with China that builds on an earlier oil agreement, and Rosneft is seeking a long-term oil deal with India. Neither nation has a history of disagreeing with Russia on the international stage; both were among the 69 nations that did not vote to condemn the Crimean “referendum” at the U.N.

41. Another Russian export — ideology — aims to erode the European Union. The Russo-Orthodox morality that shrouds Putin’s union also has been deployed tactically to build political relationships in Europe, particularly with far-right parties. (9)

(8) http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/11/29/us-ukraine-eu-putin-idUSBRE9AS0F3201311129
(9) http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/putin-has-ambitions-far-beyond-the-former-soviet-union/2014/03/31/89dd1574-b8da-11e3-9a05-c739f29ccb08_story.html

42. Some reports indicated to the fact that Vladimir Putin’s Objective is to achieve a New Russian Empire And Crushing NATO as well! In Putin’s view of history, Russia was unfairly robbed of extensive territory in Ukraine; include Crimea, by the leaders of the USSR. Addressing the Russian Duma on the 18th of March 2014, Putin
said “On the contrary, they have lied to us many times, made decisions behind our backs, placed us before an accomplished fact. This happened with NATO’s expansion to the East, as well as the deployment of military infrastructure at our borders. They kept telling us the same thing: “Well, this does not concern you.” That’s easy to say. “It happened with the deployment of a missile defence system. In spite of all our apprehensions, the project is working and moving forward. It happened with the endless foot-dragging in the talks on visa issues, promises of fair competition and free access to global markets.”

43. Putin objects to NATO expansion and the expansion of Ballistic Missile Defense for exactly one reason. They serve as a brake on Russian ambitions. Smaller nations, if members of NATO and covered by a shield against ballistic missiles, cannot be browbeaten into joining a customs union or a Greater Russia. The history of NATO suggests that NATO is exactly what it claims to be, a defensive alliance. The current military status of NATO indicates it is more of a drinking and dinner club than a defensive alliance. Putin knows this but as long as it is in place it raises unacceptable risks for his expansionism. (10)

Putin’s leadership

44. Indeed, strongman Putin helped Russia regain power of discourse on global stage. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The national image of Russia has long been shaped by others amid the Western world's strong media communication capability. However, in recent years, Moscow's actions in dealing with the Syrian crisis, Ukraine's turmoil and Crimea's upheaval have made the world realize that it must learn to listen to the "Russian voice," represented by Russian President Vladimir Putin. With Putin's toughness, from his speech calling for an end to break the fantasy of "the unipolar model" at the 2007 Munich Security Conference, to his article entitled "A Plea for Caution From Russia" published in the New York Times in 2013, to his address on the Ukraine crisis and Crimea's integration into Russia this month, Russia has retaken the stance of a political power. Putin has safeguarded national strategic interest with a resolute attitude and a tough stance. His superb diplomatic stunt has greatly promoted Moscow's influence on the international community, dealing a heavy blow to the West and improving Russia's prestige in the non-Western world. Putin's confident governing style and strongman image have attracted attention worldwide. Putin ranks top on the list of the "World's Most Powerful People" according to the Forbes magazine and even climbed one spot ahead of US President Barack Obama in 2013. Forbes said that Putin, in protracted possession of power, surpassed other state heads in terms of how many people he has power over, how he wields his influence and how actively he uses his power to change the world. (11)

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(10)http://www.redstate.com/2014/03/20/vladimir-putins-objectives-new-russian-empire-crushing-nato/
(11)http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/851677.shtml

We should learn from the history - The re-emergence of the cold war!

45. Some experts see an inherent acceptance of Russia as a reborn superpower emanating from the old cold war. The comments made by Obama and other leaders, in
the aftermath of the invasion of Ukraine by Russia its astonishing action of annexation of the Crimea region, refers to the containment policy that was used by the west to contain the USSR. This is a good proof that Russia is recognized as the giant that woke up again. (12)

**Demonstrating the Veto muscles in the Security Council is not only American**

46. In the history of the Security Council, almost half the vetoes were cast by the Soviet Union, with the vast majority of those being before 1960s. Since 1966, out of the total 155 vetoes cast, 133 were issued by one of the council's three NATO members: the US, the UK and France. From 1946 to 2008, vetoes were issued on 261 occasions. For that period, usage breaks down as follows: The United States has used the veto on 82 occasions between 1946 and 2007; and since 1972, it has used its veto power more than any other permanent member. Russia or the Soviet Union have used the veto on 124 occasions, more than any two others of the five permanent members of the Security Council combined. (13)

47. Not only on Georgia or Syria, in addition to that, Russia deployed its veto at the U.N. Security Council Saturday, blocking a resolution condemning the referendum slated for Sunday in the Ukrainian region of Crimea. If passed, it would see the Black Sea peninsula secede from the country and join Russia. The move came as Ukraine's ambassador to the United Nations warned that Russian paratroopers have crossed the Crimean border into the Ukrainian mainland. At the U.N, the United States put forward the resolution in a strategic effort to demonstrate the extent of Russia's political isolation, and attempted to reaffirm Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence while calling on states not to recognize the results of the referendum. Between 4 October 2011 and 22 May 2014, Russia used the veto five times to kill 5 Security Council resolutions on the Syrian Crisis. (14)

**Conclusion**

48. Having considered the facts and analysis above, it seems that the historical indicators of the creation of Russia and its expansion, are rising again and Russia is becoming an Empire as effective superpower that will bring balance to the state of one polar power which was led by the west, in particular the USA, after the collapse of the USSR.

49. Russia has the economic, social and other potentials and means to provide her self-reliance and even ability to influence the International Political Arena, which gives Russia great chance to make changes not less than other superpowers.

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(12)www.theguardian.com

50. Russia is also forming a new bulk in the East that will counter the western bulk, not only the European Union but also the NATO. With its population, scientific advancement, resources, nuclear and military power, it can engage and consolidate
other big countries in the region such as the central Asian states besides China and India into one strong block that is military and economically strong and independent.

51. Under the leadership of President Vladimir Putin, Russia looks set to continue its bid to regain superpower status and strong Empire.

52. Western provocative policy and expansion of western power, in particular by the USA provoked the Russian giant and caused his awakening again.

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