

## RUSSIA: AN INTRODUCTION

- Russia's vast expanse covered substantial parts of Europe and Asia, and its population surged from 40 million in 1815 to 165 million by 1914.
- The majority of the population resided in European Russia, the focal point of political and economic life, featuring prominent cities like Moscow and St. Petersburg.
- Russia, a multiethnic empire, encompassed over 22 national groups, with Russians, Ukrainians, Turks/Tatars, and Poles as the majority.
- An autocratic Tsar governed Russia with absolute control over land, people, and resources. The Tsarist system was characterized by the Tsar's unrestricted authority and limited power of advisory bodies like the Imperial Council, the Cabinet of Ministers, and the Senate.
- Liberal ideas and reformist movements existed but were outlawed by the state. The Tsarist secret service, okhrana, closely monitored and controlled political activities.
- The Orthodox Church played a significant role in supporting Tsarist authority but was seen as resistant to change and progress. The church emphasized obedience to authority.
- The social structure was dominated by peasants (82%), followed by workers, traders, industrialists, and the upper class. The ruling elite, about 0.5% of the population, held significant power and exhibited bias against the peasants.
- Russia's economy faced challenges due to a poor distribution of professional and working populations, concentrated industries, underdeveloped transport infrastructure, ineffective banking systems, and limited entrepreneurial opportunities.
- The agricultural sector, employing a substantial portion of the population, faced difficulties due to inhospitable climates, poor-quality soil, limited peasant land access, and heavy taxes.
- The ruling elite's attitude toward peasants, lack of education access, and efforts to keep them illiterate perpetuated social, political, and economic inertia.

Overall, Russia at the turn of the century was marked by a diverse population, autocratic governance, a sluggish economy, and a social order that reinforced traditional hierarchies and hindered progress.

- The Russian army served as a tool for controlling the population, with severe conscription and harsh military camps. It played a key role in stabilizing the empire but faced challenges due to a lack of strategic vision and the memory of the Crimean War's defeat.
- Russia's bureaucracy struggled with inefficiency, nepotism, incompetence, and corruption despite reform attempts.
- The court was divided between "Westerners" advocating Western systems and "Slavophiles" seeking to preserve Russian culture and the Tsardom's status, hindering reform consensus.
- Alexander II enacted limited reforms, including serf emancipation in 1861 and zemstvos (local councils), with some limitations such as excluding peasants from voting.
- Nicholas II pursued Russification and anti-Semitism, intensifying societal divisions and resistance.
- Sergei Witte played a key role in Russia's industrialization during the 1890s but faced challenges like foreign loan dependence and neglect of light engineering.
- The turn-of-the-century trade recession and the end of the "great spurt" had severe consequences, leading to urban worker issues like overcrowding, unemployment, and unrest.

Overall, these challenges and complexities within late Imperial Russia highlighted governance, reform, and industrialization difficulties, along with political and socio-economic tensions.

### The Russo-Japanese War

- Russia's motivations included eastward expansion, securing a free ice port, and diverting domestic unrest.
- Japan, under Emperor Meiji's modernization, proved a formidable opponent.
- Russia suffered defeats, including the fall of Port Arthur and the destruction of the Baltic Fleet at Tsushima, leading to unfavourable peace terms in the Treaty of Portsmouth.

The war revealed Russia's weaknesses, impacted its international reputation, and contributed to the Russian Revolution of 1917.

### Political Movements

- Revolutionaries, like Populists (Narodniks), Social Revolutionaries, and Social Democrats, advocated the violent overthrow of the Tsardom.
- Reformers, including the Union of Liberation, Octobrists, and Kadets, sought gradual change and a constitutional order.

These groups, along with wider societal factors, influenced the fate of the Tsardom and led to the Russian Revolution of 1917.

### 1905 Revolution

- Grievances included overflowing prisons, army repression, censorship, famine, taxation, leadership crisis, and class discontent.
- Opponents of the Tsardom were industrial workers, peasants, and reformist middle classes.
- Bloody Sunday triggered widespread unrest, leading to concessions and reformist movements.

The revolution revealed deep societal divides and set the stage for future events.

### The Moscow Uprising

- An alliance of Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, and Social Revolutionaries attempted a citywide uprising but faced Tsarist resistance.

- The 1905 events were a surge of uprisings rather than a full-fledged revolution.
- The concessions in the October Manifesto were insufficient to address underlying issues.

The 1905 Revolution highlighted class divisions and the need for united fronts and organization in revolutionary movements. It provided lessons for the larger events leading to the Russian Revolution in 1917.

Russia spanned Europe and Asia, with its population growing from 40 million in 1815 to 165 million by 1914, mostly concentrated in European Russia, featuring cities like Moscow and St. Petersburg. The multiethnic empire included 22 national groups, with an autocratic Tsar wielding absolute power. The Tsarist system limited advisory bodies' authority, such as the Imperial Council, the Cabinet of Ministers, and the Senate, while suppressing liberal ideas and reformist movements, closely monitored by the secret service, Okhrana. The Orthodox Church supported Tsarist authority, emphasizing obedience.

Peasants dominated the social structure, comprising 82% of the population, with workers, traders, industrialists, and the upper class following. The ruling elite, constituting 0.5% of the population, exhibited bias against peasants. Russia's economy faced challenges due to a poorly distributed workforce, concentrated industries, underdeveloped transport infrastructure, ineffective banking systems, and limited entrepreneurial opportunities. The agricultural sector struggled due to harsh climates, poor soil, limited land access, and heavy taxes, further perpetuating social, political, and economic inertia.

Russia at the turn of the century featured a diverse population, autocratic governance, a sluggish economy, and a social order reinforcing traditional hierarchies, hindering progress.

The Russian army served as a tool for controlling the population, with severe conscription and harsh military camps, playing a key role in stabilizing the empire. However, it faced challenges due to a lack of strategic vision and the memory of the Crimean War's defeat. Russia's bureaucracy grappled with inefficiency, nepotism, incompetence, and corruption, despite reform attempts. The court was divided between "Westerners" advocating Western systems and "Slavophiles" seeking to preserve Russian culture and the Tsardom's status, hindering reform consensus.

Alexander II enacted limited reforms, including serf emancipation in 1861 and zemstvos (local councils), with some limitations. Nicholas II pursued Russification and anti-Semitism, intensifying societal divisions and resistance. Sergei Witte played a key role in Russia's industrialization during the 1890s but faced challenges like foreign loan dependence and neglect of light engineering. The turn-of-the-century trade recession and the end of the "great spurt" led to urban worker issues like overcrowding, unemployment, and unrest.

Overall, these challenges and complexities within late Imperial Russia highlighted governance, reform, and industrialization difficulties, along with political and socio-economic tensions.

The Russo-Japanese War was driven by Russia's motivations for eastward expansion, securing a free ice port, and diverting domestic unrest. Japan, under Emperor Meiji's modernization, proved a formidable opponent. Russia suffered defeats, including the fall of Port Arthur and the destruction of the Baltic Fleet at Tsushima, leading to unfavourable peace terms in the Treaty of Portsmouth. The war exposed Russia's weaknesses, impacted its international reputation, and contributed to the Russian Revolution of 1917.

Political Movements saw revolutionaries, like Populists (Narodniks), Social Revolutionaries, and Social Democrats, advocating violent overthrow of the Tsardom, while reformers, including the Union of Liberation, Octobrists, and Kadets, sought gradual change and a constitutional order. These groups, along with wider societal factors, influenced the fate of the Tsardom and led to the Russian Revolution of 1917.

The 1905 Revolution stemmed from grievances like overflowing prisons, army repression, censorship, famine, taxation, leadership crisis, and class discontent. Opponents of the Tsardom included industrial workers, peasants, and reformist middle classes. Bloody Sunday triggered widespread unrest, leading to concessions and reformist movements, revealing deep societal divides and setting the stage for future events.

The Moscow Uprising involved an alliance of Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, and Social Revolutionaries attempting a citywide uprising but facing Tsarist resistance. The 1905 events were a surge of uprisings rather than a full-fledged revolution, with the concessions in the October Manifesto, deemed insufficient.

The 1905 Revolution highlighted class divisions and the need for united fronts and organization in revolutionary movements, providing lessons for the larger events leading to the Russian Revolution in 1917.

Between 1906 and 1914, Peter Stolypin, as the Prime Minister of Russia, implemented significant agricultural reforms, aiming for modernization and a strong, prosperous peasantry. However, his efforts were hindered by resistance and distrust within the court.

The question of whether Tsardom was doomed to collapse by 1914 is complex, as it was a culmination of various factors, including socio-economic disparities, political repression, resistance to change, and the impact of external events. The Great War exacerbated existing tensions and weaknesses within the system, ultimately leading to the collapse of Tsardom and the Russian Revolution in 1917.

The four empires destroyed after World War I were the Russian Empire, the German Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the Ottoman Empire, as a result of military defeats, economic strains, social unrest, and nationalist movements. In the case of the Russian Empire, the war exposed underlying problems and contributed to the erosion of Tsar Nicholas II's control, eventually leading to the Russian Revolution in 1917.