

Russian Empire

The **Russian Empire** (Russian: Российская Империя) or **Russia** was an empire that existed across Eurasia and North America from 1721, following the end of the Great Northern War, until the Republic was proclaimed by the Provisional Government that took power after the February Revolution of 1917.^[6]

The third largest empire in world history, stretching over three continents, the Russian Empire was surpassed in landmass only by the British and Mongol empires. The rise of the Russian Empire happened in association with the decline of neighboring rival powers: the Swedish Empire, the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, Persia and the Ottoman Empire. It played a major role in 1812–1814 in defeating Napoleon's ambitions to control Europe and expanded to the west and south.

The House of Romanov ruled the Russian Empire from 1721 until 1762, and its German-descended cadet branch, the House of Holstein-Gottorp-Romanov, ruled from 1762. At the beginning of the 19th century, the Russian Empire extended from the Arctic Ocean in the north to the Black Sea in the south, from the Baltic Sea on the west to the Pacific Ocean, and (until 1867) into Alaska in America on the east.^[7] With 125.6 million subjects registered by the 1897 census, it had the third-largest population in the world at the time, after Qing China and India. Like all empires, it included a large disparity in terms of economics, ethnicity, and religion. There were numerous dissident elements, who launched numerous rebellions and assassination attempts; they were closely watched by the secret police, with thousands exiled to Siberia.

Economically, the empire had a predominately agricultural base, with low productivity on large estates worked by serfs (until they were freed in 1861). The economy slowly industrialized with the help of foreign investments in railways and factories. The land was ruled by a nobility (the boyars) from the 10th through the 17th centuries, and subsequently by an emperor. Tsar Ivan III (1462–1505) laid the groundwork for the empire that later emerged. He tripled the territory of his state, ended the dominance of the Golden Horde, renovated the Moscow Kremlin, and laid the foundations of the Russian state. Tsar Peter the Great (1682–1725) fought numerous wars and expanded an already huge empire into a major European power. He moved the capital from Moscow to the new model city of St. Petersburg, and led a cultural revolution that replaced some of the traditionalist and medieval social and political mores with a modern, scientific, Europe-oriented, and rationalist system.

Catherine the Great (reigned 1762–1796) presided over a golden age; she expanded the state by conquest, colonization and diplomacy, continuing Peter the Great's policy of modernisation along West European lines. Tsar Alexander II (1855–1881) promoted numerous reforms, most

Russian Empire

Российская Империя (Russian)

1721–1917



Flag



Lesser coat of arms

Motto

S nami Bog!
Съ нами Богъ!
"God is with us!"

Anthem

Bozhe, Tsarya khrani!
Боже, Царя храни!
"God Save the Tsar!"





Russian Empire at its peak:

-  Russian Empire
-  Protectorates and sphere of influence



dramatically the emancipation of all 23 million serfs in 1861. His policy in Eastern Europe involved protecting the Orthodox Christians under the rule of the Ottoman Empire. That connection by 1914 led to Russia's entry into the First World War on the side of France, the United Kingdom, and Serbia, against the German, Austrian, and Ottoman empires.

The Russian Empire functioned as an absolute monarchy until the Revolution of 1905 and then became a *de jure* constitutional monarchy. The empire collapsed during the February Revolution of 1917, largely as a result of massive failures in its participation in the First World War.

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Capital	Saint Petersburg (1721–28; 1730–1917) Moscow (1728–30)
Languages	Official: Russian Regional: Armenian Azerbaijani Belarusian Chechen Estonian Finnish Georgian Iranian Kazakh Kyrgyz Latvian Lithuanian Mongolian Polish Romanian Tajik Turkish Turkmen Ukrainian Uzbek
Religion	Dominant: Orthodox Christianity Minor: Roman Catholicism Protestantism Lutheranism Judaism Islam Buddhism
Government	Absolute monarchy (1721–1906) Constitutional monarchy (1906–17; <i>de jure</i>) ^[1]
Emperor • 1721–1725 • 1894–1917 Prime Minister • 1905–1906 • 1917	Peter I (first) Nicholas II (last) Sergei Witte (first) Nikolai Golitsyn (last)
Legislature	Emperor along with

Foreign relations

Eighteenth century

Peter the Great (1672–1725)

Peter I the Great (1672–1725) played a major role in introducing Russia to the European state system. While the vast land had a population of 14 million, grain yields trailed behind those of agriculture in the West,^[10] compelling nearly the entire population to farm. Only a small percentage lived in towns. The class of kholops, close in status to slavery, remained a major institution in Russia until 1723, when Peter converted household kholops into house serfs, thus including them in poll taxation. Russian agricultural kholops were formally converted into serfs earlier in 1679.

Peter's first military efforts were directed against the Ottoman Turks. His attention then turned to the North. Peter still lacked a secure northern seaport, except at Archangel on the White Sea, where the harbor was frozen for nine months a year. Access to the Baltic was blocked by Sweden, whose territory enclosed it on three sides. Peter's ambitions for a "window to the sea" led him to make a secret alliance in 1699 with Saxony, the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth and Denmark against Sweden, resulting in the Great Northern War. The war ended in 1721 when an exhausted Sweden asked for peace with Russia. Peter acquired four provinces situated south and east of the Gulf of Finland. The coveted access to the sea was now secured. There he built Russia's new capital, Saint Petersburg, to replace Moscow, which had long been Russia's cultural center. In 1722, he turned his aspirations as first Russian monarch toward increasing Russian influence in the Caucasus and the Caspian Sea at the expense of the weakened Safavid Persians. He made Astrakhan the centre of military efforts against Persia, and waged the first full-scale war against them in 1722–23.^[11]

Peter reorganized his government based on the latest political models of the time, moulding Russia into an absolutist state. He replaced the old boyar Duma (council of nobles) with a nine-member Senate, in effect a supreme council of state. The countryside was divided into new provinces and districts. Peter told the Senate that its mission was to collect taxes, and tax revenues tripled over the course of his reign. As part of the government reform, the Orthodox Church was partially incorporated into the country's administrative structure, in effect making it a tool of the state. Peter abolished the patriarchate and replaced it with a collective body, the Holy Synod, led by a government official. Meanwhile, all vestiges of local self-government were removed. Peter continued and intensified his predecessors' requirement of state service for all nobles.^[12]

Peter died in 1725, leaving an unsettled succession. After a short reign of his widow Catherine I, the crown passed to empress Anna who slowed down the reforms and led a successful war against the Ottoman Empire, which brought a significant weakening of the Ottoman vassal Crimean Khanate, a long-term Russian adversary

The discontent over the dominant positions of Baltic Germans in Russian politics brought Peter I's daughter Elizabeth on the Russian throne. Elizabeth supported the arts, architecture and the sciences (for example with the foundation of the Moscow University). However, she did not carry out significant structural reforms. Her reign, which lasted nearly 20 years, is also known for her involvement in the Seven Years' War. It was successful for Russia militarily but fruitless politically.^[13]

	Turkey
	Turkmenistan
	Ukraine
	Uzbekistan
	United States ^[5]

- a. ^ After 1866, Alaska was sold to the United States, but Batum, Kars, Pamir and Transcaspia were acquired.
- b. ^ Renamed Petrograd in 1914.
- c. ^ Russia continued to use the Julian calendar until after the collapse of the empire (see Old Style and New Style dates).

Warning: Value specified for "continent" does not comply



Peter the Great officially renamed the Tsardom of Russia as the Russian Empire in 1721 and became its first emperor. He instituted sweeping reforms and oversaw the transformation of Russia into a major European power.

Catherine the Great (1762–1796)

Catherine the Great was a German princess who married Peter III, the German heir to the Russian crown. After the death of Empress Elizabeth, she came to power when her coup d'état against her unpopular husband succeeded. She contributed to the resurgence of the Russian nobility that began after the death of Peter the Great. State service was abolished, and Catherine delighted the nobles further by turning over most state functions in the provinces to them.^[14]

Catherine the Great extended Russian political control over the lands of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. Her actions included the support of the Targowica Confederation, although the cost of her campaigns, on top of the oppressive social system that required serfs to spend almost all of their time laboring on their owners' land, provoked a major peasant uprising in 1773, after Catherine legalised the selling of serfs separate from land. Inspired by a Cossack named Pugachev, with the emphatic cry of "Hang all the landlords!", the rebels threatened to take Moscow before they were ruthlessly suppressed. Instead of the traditional punishment of being drawn and quartered, Catherine issued secret instructions that the executioner should carry the sentence out quickly and with a minimum of suffering, as part of her effort to introduce compassion into the law.^[15] She also ordered the public trial of Darya Nikolayevna Saltykova, a member of the highest nobility, on charges of torture and murder. These gestures of compassion garnered Catherine much positive attention from Europe experiencing the Enlightenment age, but the specter of revolution and disorder continued to haunt her and her successors.



Empress Catherine the Great, who reigned from 1762 to 1796, continued the empire's expansion and modernization. Considering herself an enlightened absolutist, she played a key role in the Russian Enlightenment.

In order to ensure continued support from the nobility, which was essential to the survival of her government, Catherine was obliged to strengthen their authority and power at the expense of the serfs and other lower classes. Nevertheless, Catherine realized that serfdom must be ended, going so far in her "Instruction" to say that serfs were "just as good as we are" – a comment the nobility received with disgust. Catherine successfully waged war against the Ottoman Empire and advanced Russia's southern boundary to the Black Sea. Then, by plotting with the rulers of Austria and Prussia, she incorporated territories of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth during the Partitions of Poland, pushing the Russian frontier westward into Central Europe. In accordance with the treaty Russia had signed with the Georgians to protect them against any new invasion of their Persian suzerains and further political aspirations, Catherine waged a new war against Persia in 1796 after they had again invaded Georgia and established rule over it about a year prior and expelled the newly established Russian garrisons in the Caucasus. By the time of her death in 1796, Catherine's expansionist policy had turned Russia into a major European power.^[16] This continued with Alexander I's wresting of Finland from the weakened kingdom of Sweden in 1809 and of Bessarabia from the Principality of Moldavia ceded by the Ottomans in 1812.

State budget

Russia was in a continuous state of financial crisis. While revenue rose from 9 million rubles in 1724 to 40 million in 1794, expenses grew more rapidly, reaching 49 million in 1794. The budget allocated 46 percent to the military, 20 percent to government economic activities, 12 percent to administration, and nine percent for the Imperial Court in St. Petersburg. The deficit required borrowing, primarily from Amsterdam; five percent of the budget was allocated to debt payments. Paper money was issued to pay for expensive wars, thus causing inflation. For its spending, Russia obtained a large and well-equipped army, a very large and complex bureaucracy, and a court that rivaled Paris and London. However the government was living far beyond its means, and 18th century Russia remained "a poor, backward, overwhelmingly agricultural, and illiterate country."^[18]

First half of the nineteenth century

Napoleon, following a dispute with Tsar Alexander I, launched an invasion of Russia in 1812. The campaign was a catastrophe. Although Napoleon's Grande Armée made its way to Moscow, the Russians' scorched earth strategy prevented the invaders from living off the country. In the bitter Russian Winter, thousands of French troops were ambushed and killed by peasant guerrilla fighters.^[19] As Napoleon's forces retreated, the Russian troops pursued them into Central and Western Europe and to the gates of Paris. After Russia and its allies defeated Napoleon, Alexander became known as the 'saviour of Europe', and he presided over the redrawing of the map of Europe at the Congress of Vienna (1815), that ultimately made Alexander the monarch of Congress Poland^[20]



Catherine II Sestroretsk Rouble (1771) is made of solid copper measuring 77 millimetres ($3\frac{3}{100}$ in) (diameter), 26 millimetres ($1\frac{1}{50}$ in) (thickness), and weighs 1.022 kg (2.25 lb). It is the largest copper coin ever issued.^[17]



Battle of Borodino

Although the Russian Empire would play a leading political role in the next century, thanks to its defeat of Napoleonic France, its retention of serfdom precluded economic progress of any significant degree. As Western European economic growth accelerated during the Industrial Revolution, Russia began to lag ever farther behind, creating new weaknesses for the Empire seeking to play a role as a great power. This status concealed the inefficiency of its government, the isolation of its people, and its economic backwardness. Following the defeat of Napoleon, Alexander I had been ready to discuss constitutional reforms, but though a few were introduced, no major changes were attempted.^[21]

The liberal tsar was replaced by his younger brother, Nicholas I (1825–1855), who at the beginning of his reign was confronted with an uprising. The background of this revolt lay in the Napoleonic Wars, when a number of well-educated Russian officers travelled in Europe in the course of military campaigns, where their exposure to the liberalism of Western Europe encouraged them to seek change on their return to autocratic Russia. The result was the Decembrist revolt (December 1825), the work of a small circle of liberal nobles and army officers who wanted to install Nicholas' brother as a constitutional monarch. But the revolt was easily crushed, leading Nicholas to turn away from the modernization program begun by Peter the Great and champion the doctrine of Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality.^[22]



Fort Ross, an early-19th-century outpost of the Russian-American Company in Sonoma County, California

The retaliation for the revolt made "December Fourteenth" a day long remembered by later revolutionary movements. In order to repress further revolts, censorship was intensified, including the constant surveillance of schools and universities. Textbooks were strictly regulated by the government. Police spies were planted everywhere. Would-be revolutionaries were sent off to Siberia – under Nicholas I hundreds of thousands were sent to katorga there.^[23]

After the Russian armies liberated allied (since the 1783 Treaty of Georgievsk) Georgia from the Qajar dynasty's occupation in 1802, in the Russo-Persian War (1804–13) they clashed with Persia over control and consolidation over Georgia, and also got involved in the Caucasian War against the Caucasian Imamate. The conclusion of the 1804-1813 war with Persia made it irrevocably cede what is now Dagestan, Georgia, and most of Azerbaijan to Russia following the Treaty of Gulistan.^[24] To the south west, Russia attempted to expand at the expense of the Ottoman Empire, using recently acquired Georgia at its base for the Caucasus and Anatolian front. The late 1820s were successful military years. Despite losing almost all recently consolidated territories in the first year of the Russo-Persian War of 1826–28, Russia managed to bring an end to the war with highly favourable terms with the Treaty of Turkmenchay, including the official gains of what is now Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Iğdır Province.^[25] In the 1828-29 Russo-Turkish War, Russia

invaded northeastern Anatolia and occupied the strategic Ottoman towns of Erzurum and Gümüşhane and, posing as protector and saviour of the Greek Orthodox population, received extensive support from the region's Pontic Greeks. Following a brief occupation, the Russian imperial army withdrew back into Georgia.^[26]

The question of Russia's direction had been gaining attention ever since Peter the Great's program of modernization. Some favored imitating Western Europe while others were against this and called for a return to the traditions of the past. The latter path was advocated by Slavophiles, who held the "decadent" West in contempt. The Slavophiles were opponents of bureaucracy who preferred the collectivism of the medieval Russian obshchina or *mir* over the individualism of the West.^[27] More extreme social doctrines were elaborated by such Russian radicals on the left as Alexander Herzen, Mikhail Bakunin, and Peter Kropotkin.

Russian tsars crushed two uprisings in their newly acquired Polish territories: the November Uprising in 1830 and the January Uprising in 1863. The Russian autocracy gave the Polish artisans and gentry reason to rebel in 1863 by assailing national core values of language, religion, culture.^[28] The result was the January Uprising, a massive Polish revolt, which was crushed by massive force. France, Britain and Austria tried to intervene in the crisis but were unable to do so. The Russian patriotic press used the Polish uprising to unify the Russian nation, claiming it was Russia's God-given mission to save Poland and the world.^[29] Poland was punished by losing its distinctive political and judicial rights, with Russianization imposed on its schools and courts.^[30]

Second half of the nineteenth century



A panoramic view of Moscow in 1867.

In 1854–55 Russia lost to Britain, France and Turkey in the Crimean War, which was fought primarily in the Crimean peninsula and to a lesser extent in the Baltic. Since playing a major role in the defeat of Napoleon, Russia had been regarded as militarily invincible but against a coalition of the great powers of Europe, the reverses it suffered on land and sea exposed the decay and weakness of Tsar Nicholas' regime.

When Tsar Alexander II ascended the throne in 1855, desire for reform was widespread. A growing humanitarian movement attacked serfdom as inefficient. In 1859, there were more than 23 million serfs in usually poor living conditions. Alexander II decided to abolish serfdom from above, with ample provision for the landowners, rather than wait for it to be abolished from below in a revolutionary way that would hurt the landowners.^[35]

The emancipation reform of 1861 that freed the serfs was the single most important event in 19th-century Russian history, and the beginning of the end for the landed aristocracy's monopoly of power. Further reforms of 1860s included socio-economic reforms to clarify the position of the Russian government in the field of property rights and their protection.^[36] Emancipation brought a supply of free labour to the cities, stimulating industry, and the middle class grew in number and influence. However, instead of receiving their lands as a gift, the freed peasants had to pay a special tax for what amounted to their lifetime to the government, which in turn paid the landlords a generous price for the land that they had lost. In numerous cases the peasants ended up with the smallest amount of land. All the property turned over to the peasants was owned collectively by the *mir*, the village community, which divided the land among the peasants and supervised the various holdings. Although serfdom was abolished, since its abolition was achieved on terms unfavourable to the peasants, revolutionary tensions were not abated, despite Alexander II's intentions. Revolutionaries believed that the newly freed serfs were merely being sold into wage slavery in the onset of the industrial revolution, and that the bourgeoisie had effectively replaced landowners.^[37]

Alexander II obtained Outer Manchuria from the Qing China between 1858–1860 and sold the last territories of Russian America, Alaska, to the USA in 1867.

In the late 1870s Russia and the Ottoman Empire again clashed in the Balkans. From 1875 to 1877, the Balkan crisis intensified with rebellions against Ottoman rule by various Slavic nationalities, which the Ottoman Turks dominated since the 16th century. This was seen as a political risk in Russia, which similarly suppressed its Muslims in Central Asia and Caucasus. Russian nationalist opinion became a major domestic factor in its support for liberating Balkan Christians from Ottoman rule and making Bulgaria and Serbia independent. In early 1877, Russia intervened on behalf of Serbian and Russian volunteer forces in the Russo-Turkish War (1877–78). Within one year, Russian troops were nearing Istanbul and the Ottomans surrendered. Russia's nationalist diplomats and generals persuaded Alexander II to force the Ottomans to sign the Treaty of San Stefano in March 1878, creating an enlarged, independent Bulgaria that stretched into the southwestern Balkans. When Britain threatened to declare war over the terms of the Treaty of San Stefano, an exhausted Russia backed down. At the Congress of Berlin in July 1878, Russia agreed to the creation of a smaller Bulgaria, as an autonomous principality inside the Ottoman Empire. As a result, Pan-Slavists were left with a legacy of bitterness against Austria-Hungary and Germany for failing to back Russia. Disappointment at the results of the war stimulated revolutionary tensions, and helped Serbia, Romania and Montenegro to gain independence from and strengthen themselves against the Ottomans.^[38]

Another significant result of the 1877–78 Russo-Turkish War in Russia's favour was the acquisition from the Ottomans of the provinces of Batum, Ardahan and Kars in Transcaucasia, which were transformed into the militarily administered regions of Batum Oblast and Kars Oblast. To replace Muslim refugees who had fled across the new frontier into Ottoman territory the Russian authorities settled large numbers of Christians from an ethnically diverse range of communities in Kars Oblast, particularly the Georgians, Caucasus Greeks and Armenians, each of whom hoped to achieve protection and advance their own regional ambitions on the back of the Russian Empire.

Alexander III

In 1881 Alexander II was assassinated by the Narodnaya Volya, a Nihilist terrorist organization. The throne passed to Alexander III (1881–1894), a reactionary who revived the maxim of "Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality" of Nicholas I. A committed Slavophile, Alexander III believed that Russia could be saved from turmoil only by shutting itself off from the subversive influences of Western Europe. During his reign Russia declared the Franco-Russian Alliance to contain the growing power of Germany, completed the conquest of Central Asia and demanded important territorial and commercial concessions from the Qing. The tsar's most influential adviser was Konstantin Pobedonostsev, tutor to Alexander III and his son Nicholas, and procurator of the Holy Synod from 1880 to 1895. He taught his royal pupils to fear freedom of speech and press, as well as disliking democracy, constitutions, and the parliamentary system. Under Pobedonostsev, revolutionaries were persecuted and a policy of Russification was carried out throughout the Empire.^{[39][40]}

The movement south toward Afghanistan and India alarmed the British, who ignored Russia's quest for a warm-water port and worked to block its advance in what observers called The Great Game. Both nations avoided escalating the tensions into a war, and they became allies in 1907.^{[41][42]}



Flag of the Russian Empire for "Celebrations" from 1858 to 1883.^{[31][32][33][34]} It was not as popular as Peter the Great's tricolour the white-blue-red flag, which was adopted as the official flag in 1883, officialised by the Tsar in 1896; however, it had been used as *ade facto* flag to represent Russia since the end of the 17th century



The Imperial Standard of the Tsar, used from 1858 to 1917. Previous versions of the black eagle on gold background were used as far back as Peter the Great's time.



The eleven-month siege of a Russian naval base at Sevastopol during the Crimean War

Early twentieth century

In 1894, Alexander III was succeeded by his son Nicholas II, who was committed to retaining the autocracy that his father had left him. Nicholas II proved ineffective as a ruler and in the end his dynasty was overthrown by revolution.^[45] The Industrial Revolution began to show significant influence in Russia, but the country remained rural and poor. The liberal elements among industrial capitalists and nobility believed in peaceful social reform and a constitutional monarchy, forming the Constitutional Democratic Party or *Kadets*.^[46]

On the left the Socialist Revolutionary Party (SRs) incorporated the Narodnik tradition and advocated the distribution of land among those who actually worked it — the peasants. Another radical group was the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, exponents of Marxism in Russia. The Social Democrats differed from the SRs in that they believed a revolution must rely on urban workers, not the peasantry.^[47]

In 1903, at the 2nd Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party in London, the party split into two wings: the gradualist Mensheviks and the more radical Bolsheviks. The Mensheviks believed that the Russian working class was insufficiently developed and that socialism could be achieved only after a period of bourgeois democratic rule. They thus tended to ally themselves with the forces of bourgeois liberalism. The Bolsheviks, under Vladimir Lenin, supported the idea of forming a small elite of professional revolutionists, subject to strong party discipline, to act as the vanguard of the proletariat in order to seize power by force.^[48]

Defeat in the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905) was a major blow to the Tsarist regime and further increased the potential for unrest. In January 1905, an incident known as "Bloody Sunday" occurred when Father Georgy Gapon led an enormous crowd to the Winter Palace in Saint Petersburg to present a petition to the Tsar. When the procession reached the palace, soldiers opened fire on the crowd, killing hundreds. The Russian masses were so furious over the massacre that a general strike was declared demanding a democratic republic. This marked the beginning of the Revolution of 1905. Soviets (councils of workers) appeared in most cities to direct revolutionary activity. Russia was paralyzed, and the government was desperate.^[49]

In October 1905, Nicholas reluctantly issued the famous October Manifesto, which conceded the creation of a national Duma (legislature) to be called without delay. The right to vote was extended and no law was to become final without confirmation by the Duma. The moderate groups were satisfied. But the socialists rejected the concessions as insufficient and tried to organise new strikes. By the end of 1905, there was disunity among the reformers, and the tsar's position was strengthened for the time being.

War, revolution, collapse

Tsar Nicholas II and his subjects entered World War I with enthusiasm and patriotism, with the defense of Russia's fellow Orthodox Slavs, the Serbs, as the main battle cry. In August 1914, the Russian army invaded Germany's province of East Prussia and occupied a significant portion of Austrian-controlled Galicia in support of the Serbs and their allies – the French and British. In September 1914, in order to relieve pressure on France, the Russians were forced to halt a successful offensive against Austro-Hungary in Galicia in order to attack German-held Silesia.^[50] Military reversals and shortages among the civilian population soon soured much



Russian troops taking Samarkand (8 June 1868)



Capturing of the Turkish redoubt during the Siege of Plevna (1877)



A scene from the First Russian Revolution, by Ilya Repin.^{[43][44]}



Play media
View of Moscow River from Kremlin, 1908

of the population. German control of the Baltic Sea and German-Ottoman control of the Black Sea severed Russia from most of its foreign supplies and potential markets.

By the middle of 1915, the impact of the war was demoralizing. Food and fuel were in short supply, casualties were increasing, and inflation was mounting. Strikes rose among low-paid factory workers, and there were reports that peasants, who wanted reforms of land ownership, were restless. The tsar eventually decided to take personal command of the army and moved to the front, leaving his wife, the Empress Alexandra in charge in the capital. The illness of her son Alexei led her to trust the semi-literate Siberian peasant Grigori Rasputin (1869 – 1916), who convinced the royal family that he possessed healing powers that would cure Alexei. He had gained enormous influence but did not shift any major decisions. His assassination in late 1916 by a clique of nobles restored their honor but could not restore the Tsar's lost prestige.^[51]



Patriarch Tikhon of Moscow in 1917

The Bolsheviks said “no annexations, no indemnities” and called on workers to accept the policies of the Soviet Union and demand the end of the war. On 3 March 1917, a strike was organized on a factory in the capital, Saint Petersburg; within a week nearly all the workers in the city were idle, and street fighting broke out.

The Tsarist system was overthrown by a liberal February Revolution in 1917. Rabinowitch argues, "The February 1917 revolution...grew out of prewar political and economic instability, technological backwardness, and fundamental social divisions, coupled with gross mismanagement of the war effort, continuing military defeats, domestic economic dislocation, and outrageous scandals surrounding the monarchy"^[52]

Swain says, "The first government to be formed after the October Revolution of 1917 had, with one exception, been composed of liberals."^[53] With his authority destroyed, Nicholas abdicated on 2 March 1917.^[54] The execution of the Romanov family at the hands of Bolsheviks followed in 1918.

Territory

Boundaries

The administrative boundaries of European Russia, apart from Finland and its portion of Poland, coincided approximately with the natural limits of the East-European plains. In the North it met the Arctic Ocean. Novaya Zemlya and the Kolguev and Vaygach Islands also belonged to it, but the Kara Sea was referred to Siberia. To the East it had the Asiatic territories of the Empire, Siberia and the Kyrgyz steppes, from both of which it was separated by the Ural Mountains, the Ural River and the Caspian Sea — the administrative boundary, however, partly extending into Asia on the Siberian slope of the Urals. To the South it had the Black Sea and Caucasus, being separated from the latter by the Manych River depression, which in Post-Pliocene times connected the Sea of Azov with the Caspian. The western boundary was purely conventional: it crossed the Kola Peninsula from the Varangerfjord to the Gulf of Bothnia. Thence it ran to the Curonian Lagoon in the southern Baltic Sea, and thence to the mouth of the Danube, taking a great circular sweep to the west to embrace Poland, and separating Russia from Prussia, Austrian Galicia and Romania.



The Russian Empire in 1912.

It is a special feature of Russia that it has few free outlets to the open sea other than on the ice-bound shores of the Arctic Ocean. The deep indentations of the Gulfs of Bothnia and Finland were surrounded by what is ethnically Finnish territory, and it is only at the very head of the latter gulf that the Russians had taken firm foothold by erecting their capital at the mouth of the Neva River. The Gulf of Riga and the Baltic belong also to territory which was not inhabited by Slavs, but by Baltic and Finnic peoples and by

Germans. The East coast of the Black Sea belonged to Transcaucasia, a great chain of mountains separating it from Russia. But even this sheet of water is an inland sea, the only outlet of which, the Bosphorus, was in foreign hands, while the Caspian, an immense shallow lake, mostly bordered by deserts, possessed more importance as a link between Russia and its Asiatic settlements than as a channel for intercourse with other countries.

Geography

By the end of the 19th century the size of the empire was about 22,400,000 square kilometers (8,600,000 sq mi) or almost 1/6 of the Earth's landmass; its only rival in size at the time was the British Empire. However, at this time, the majority of the population lived in European Russia. More than 100 different ethnic groups lived in the Russian Empire, with ethnic Russians composing about 45% of the population.^[55]

Territorial development

In addition to almost the entire territory of modern Russia,^[n 1] prior to 1917 the Russian Empire included most of Dnieper Ukraine, Belarus, Bessarabia, the Grand Duchy of Finland, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Central Asian states of Russian Turkestan, most of the Baltic governorates, as well as a significant portion of the Kingdom of Poland and Ardahan, Artvin, Iğdır, Kars and northeastern part of Erzurum Provinces from the Ottoman Empire.

Between 1742 and 1867, the Russian-American Company administered Alaska as a colony. The Company also established settlements in Hawaii, including Fort Elizabeth (1817), and as far south in North America as Fort Ross Colony (established in 1812) in Sonoma County, California just north of San Francisco. Both Fort Ross and the Russian River in California got their names from Russian settlers, who had staked claims in a region claimed until 1821 by the Spanish as part of New Spain.

Following the Swedish defeat in the Finnish War of 1808–1809 and the signing of the Treaty of Fredrikshamn on 17 September 1809, the eastern half of Sweden, the area that then became Finland was incorporated into the Russian Empire as an autonomous grand duchy. The tsar eventually ended up ruling Finland as a semi-constitutional monarch through the Governor-General of Finland and a native-populated Senate appointed by him. The Emperor never explicitly recognized Finland as a constitutional state in its own right, however, although his Finnish subjects came to consider the Grand Duchy as one.

In the aftermath of the Russo-Turkish War, 1806–12, and the ensuing Treaty of Bucharest (1812), the eastern parts of the Principality of Moldavia, an Ottoman vassal state, along with some areas formerly under direct Ottoman rule, came under the rule of the Empire. This area (Bessarabia) was among the Russian Empire's last territorial increments in Europe. At the Congress of Vienna (1815), Russia gained sovereignty over Congress Poland, which on paper was an autonomous Kingdom in personal union with Russia. However, this autonomy was eroded after an uprising in 1831, and was finally abolished in 1867.

Saint Petersburg gradually extended and consolidated its control over the Caucasus in the course of the 19th century at the expense of Persia through the Russo-Persian Wars of 1804–13 and 1826–28 and the respectively ensuing treaties of Gulistan and Turkmenchay,^[56] as well as through the Caucasian War (1817–1864).

The Russian Empire expanded its influence and possessions in Central Asia, especially in the later 19th century conquering much of Russian Turkestan in 1865 and continuing to add territory as late as 1885.



Ethnic map of European Russia before the First World War



Map of governorates of the western Russian Empire in 1910

Newly discovered Arctic islands became part of the Russian Empire as Russian explorers found them: the New Siberian Islands from the early 18th century; Severnaya Zemlya ("Emperor Nicholas II Land") first mapped and claimed as late as 1913.

During World War I, Russia briefly occupied a small part of East Prussia, then part of Germany; a significant portion of Austrian Galicia; and significant portions of Ottoman Armenia. While the modern Russian Federation currently controls the Kaliningrad Oblast, which comprised the northern part of East Prussia, this differs from the area captured by the Empire in 1914, though there was some overlap: Gusev (*Gumbinnen* in German) was the site of the initial Russian victory.

Imperial territories

According to the 1st article of the Organic law, the Russian Empire was one indivisible state. In addition, the 26th article stated that "With the Imperial Russian throne are indivisible the Kingdom of Poland and Grand Principality of Finland". Relations with the Grand Principality of Finland were also regulated by the 2nd article, "The Grand Principality of Finland, constituted an indivisible part of the Russian state, in its internal affairs governed by special regulations at the base of special laws" and the law of 10 June 1910.

Between 1744 and 1867, the empire also controlled Russian America. With the exception of this territory – modern-day Alaska – the Russian Empire was a contiguous mass of land spanning Europe and Asia. In this it differed from contemporary colonial-style empires. The result of this was that while the British and French colonial empires declined in the 20th century, the Russian Empire kept a large portion of its territory, first as the Soviet Union, and latter as part of present-day Russia as well as the Commonwealth of Independent States



The Russian settlement of St. Paul's Harbor (present-day Kodiak town), Kodiak Island

Furthermore, the empire at times controlled concession territories, notably the Kwantung Leased Territory and the Chinese Eastern Railway, both conceded by Qing China, as well as a concession in Tianjin. See for these periods of extraterritorial control the empire of Japan–Russian Empire relations

In 1815, Dr. Schäffer, a Russian entrepreneur, went to Kauai and negotiated a treaty of protection with the island's governor Kaumualii, vassal of King Kamehameha I of Hawaii, but the Russian Tsar refused to ratify the treaty. See also Orthodox Church in Hawaii and Russian Fort Elizabeth

In 1889, a Russian adventurer, Nikolay Ivanovitch Achinov, tried to establish a Russian colony in Africa, Sagallo, situated on the Gulf of Tadjoura in present-day Djibouti. However this attempt angered the French, who dispatched two gunboats against the colony. After a brief resistance, the colony surrendered and the Russian settlers were deported to Odesa.

Government and administration

From its initial creation until the 1905 Revolution, the Russian Empire was controlled by its tsar/emperor as an absolute monarch, under the system of tsarist autocracy. After the Revolution of 1905, Russia developed a new type of government which became difficult to categorize. In the Almanach de Gotha for 1910, Russia was described as "a constitutional monarchy under an autocratic tsar." This contradiction in terms demonstrated the difficulty of precisely defining the system, essentially transitional and meanwhile *sui generis*, established in the Russian Empire after October 1905. Before this date, the fundamental laws of Russia described the power of the Emperor as "autocratic and unlimited." After October 1905, while the imperial style was still "Emperor and Autocrat of All the Russias", the fundamental laws were remodeled by removing the word *unlimited*. While the emperor retained many of his old prerogatives, including an absolute veto over all legislation, he equally agreed to the establishment of an elected parliament, without whose consent no laws were to be enacted in Russia. Not that the regime in Russia had become in any true sense constitutional, far less parliamentary. But the "unlimited autocracy" had given place to a "self-limited autocracy." Whether this autocracy was to be

permanently limited by the new changes, or only at the continuing discretion of the autocrat, became a subject of heated controversy between conflicting parties in the state. Provisionally, then, the Russian governmental system may perhaps be best defined as "a limited monarchy under an autocratic emperor"

Emperor

Peter the Great changed his title from Tsar in 1721, when he was declared *Emperor of all Russia*. While later rulers kept this title, the ruler of Russia was commonly known as *Tsar* or *Tsaritsa* until the fall of the Empire during the February Revolution of 1917. Prior to the issuance of the October Manifesto, the Emperor ruled as an absolute monarch, subject to only two limitations on his authority (both of which were intended to protect the existing system): the Emperor and his consort must both belong to the Russian Orthodox Church, and he must obey the laws of succession (Pauline Laws) established by Paul I. Beyond this, the power of the Russian Autocrat was virtually limitless.

On 17 October 1905, the situation changed: the Emperor voluntarily limited his legislative power by decreeing that no measure was to become law without the consent of the Imperial Duma, a freely elected national assembly established by the Organic Law issued on 28 April 1906. However, the Emperor retained the right to disband the newly established Duma, and he exercised this right more than once. He also retained an absolute veto over all legislation, and only he could initiate any changes to the Organic Law itself. His ministers were responsible solely to him, and not to the Duma or any other authority, which could question but not remove them. Thus, while the Emperor's power was limited in scope after 28 April 1906, it still remained formidable.

Imperial Council

Under Russia's revised Fundamental Law of 20 February 1906, the Council of the Empire was associated with the Duma as a legislative Upper House; from this time the legislative power was exercised normally by the Emperor only in concert with the two chambers.^[57] The Council of the Empire, or Imperial Council, as reconstituted for this purpose, consisted of 196 members, of whom 98 were nominated by the Emperor, while 98 were elective. The ministers, also nominated, were ex officio members. Of the elected members, 3 were returned by the "black" clergy (the monks), 3 by the "white" clergy (seculars), 18 by the corporations of nobles, 6 by the academy of sciences and the universities, 6 by the chambers of commerce, 6 by the industrial councils, 34 by the governments having zemstvos, 16 by those having no zemstvos, and 6 by Poland. As a legislative body the powers of the Council were coordinate with those of the Duma; in practice, however, it has seldom if ever initiated legislation.

State Duma and the electoral system

The Duma of the Empire or Imperial Duma (Gosudarstvennaya Duma), which formed the Lower House of the Russian parliament, consisted (since the ukaz of 2 June 1907) of 442 members, elected by an exceedingly complicated process. The membership was manipulated as to secure an overwhelming majority of the wealthy (especially the landed classes) and also for the representatives of the Russian peoples at the expense of the subject nations. Each province of the Empire, except Central Asia, returned a certain number of members; added to these were those returned by several large cities. The members of the Duma were chosen by electoral colleges and these, in their turn, were elected in assemblies of the three classes: landed proprietors, citizens and peasants. In these assemblies the wealthiest proprietors sat in person while the lesser proprietors were represented by delegates. The urban population



The building on Palace Square opposite the Winter Palace was the headquarters of the Army General Staff. Today, it houses the headquarters of the Western Military District/Joint Strategic Command West.



The Catherine Palace, located at Tsarskoye Selo, was the summer residence of the imperial family. It is named after Empress Catherine I, who reigned from 1725 to 1727.

was divided into two categories according to taxable wealth, and elected delegates directly to the college of the Governorates. The peasants were represented by delegates selected by the regional subdivisions called volosts. Workmen were treated in special manner with every industrial concern employing fifty hands or over electing one or more delegates to the electoral college.

In the college itself, the voting for the Duma was by secret ballot and a simple majority carried the day. Since the majority consisted of conservative elements (the landowners and urban delegates), the progressives had little chance of representation at all save for the curious provision that one member at least in each government was to be chosen from each of the five classes represented in the college. That the Duma had any radical elements was mainly due to the peculiar franchise enjoyed by the seven largest towns — Saint Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev, Odessa, Riga and the Polish cities of Warsaw and Łódź. These elected their delegates to the Duma directly, and though their votes were divided (on the basis of taxable property) in such a way as to give the advantage to wealth, each returned the same number of delegates.



Nicholas II was the last Emperor of Russia, reigning from 1894 to 1917.

Council of Ministers

By the law of 18 October 1905, to assist the Emperor in the supreme administration a Council of Ministers (Sovyet Ministrov) was created, under a *minister president*, the first appearance of a prime minister in Russia. This council consists of all the ministers and of the heads of the principal administrations. The ministries were as follows:

- Ministry of the Imperial Court
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
- Ministry of War;
- Ministry of Navy
- Ministry of Finance;
- Ministry of Commerce and Industry (created in 1905);
- Ministry of Internal affairs (including police, health, censorship and press, posts and telegraphs, foreign religions, statistics);
- Ministry of Agriculture and State Assets
- Ministry of ways of Communications;
- Ministry of Justice;
- Ministry of National Enlightenment

Most Holy Synod

The Most Holy Synod (established in 1721) was the supreme organ of government of the Orthodox Church in Russia. It was presided over by a lay procurator, representing the Emperor, and consisted of the three metropolitans of Moscow, Saint Petersburg and Kiev, the archbishop of Georgia, and a number of bishops sitting in rotation.

Senate

The Senate (Pravitelstvuyushchi Senat, i.e. directing or governing senate), originally established during the government reform of Peter I, consisted of members nominated by the Emperor. Its wide variety of functions were carried out by the different departments into which it was divided. It was the supreme court of cassation; an audit office, a high court of justice for all political offences; one of its departments fulfilled the functions of a heralds' college. It also had supreme jurisdiction in all disputes arising out of the administration of the Empire, notably differences between representatives of the central power and the elected organs of local self-government. Lastly, it promulgated new laws, a function which theoretically gave it a power akin to that of the Supreme Court of the United States, of rejecting measures not in accordance with fundamental laws.

Administrative divisions

For administration, Russia was divided (as of 1914) into 81 governorates (*guberniyas*), 20 oblasts, and 1 okrug. Vassals and protectorates of the Russian Empire included the Emirate of Bukhara, the Khanate of Khiva and, after 1914, Tuva (Uriankhai). Of these 11 Governorates, 17 oblasts and 1 okrug (Sakhalin) belonged to Asian Russia. Of the rest 8 Governorates were in Finland, 10 in Poland. European Russia thus embraced 59 governorates and 1 oblast (that of the Don). The Don Oblast was under the direct jurisdiction of the ministry of war; the rest had each a governor and deputy-governor, the latter presiding over the administrative council. In addition there were governors-general, generally placed over several governorates and armed with more extensive powers usually including the command of the troops within the limits of their jurisdiction. In 1906, there were governors-general in Finland, Warsaw, Vilna, Kiev, Moscow, and Riga. The larger cities (Saint Petersburg, Moscow, Odessa, Sevastopol, Kerch, Nikolayev, Rostov) had an administrative system of their own, independent of the governorates; in these the chief of police acted as governor

Judicial system

The judicial system of the Russian Empire, existed from the mid-19th century, was established by the "tsar emancipator" Alexander II, by the statute of 20 November 1864 (*Sudebny Ustav*). This system — based partly on English, partly on French models — was built up on certain broad principles: the separation of the judicial and administrative functions, the independence of the judges and courts, the publicity of trials and oral procedure, the equality of all classes before the law. Moreover, a democratic element was introduced by the adoption of the jury system and—so far as one order of tribunal was concerned—the election of judges. The establishment of a judicial system on these principles constituted a major change in the conception of the Russian state, which, by placing the administration of justice outside the sphere of the executive power, ceased to be a despotism. This fact made the system especially obnoxious to the bureaucracy, and during the latter years of Alexander II and the reign of Alexander III there was a piecemeal taking back of what had been given. It was reserved for the third Duma, after the 1905 Revolution, to begin the reversal of this process.^[n 2]

The system established by the law of 1864 was significant in that it set up two wholly separate orders of tribunals, each having their own courts of appeal and coming in contact only in the Senate, as the supreme court of cassation. The first of these, based on the English model, are the courts of the elected justices of the peace, with jurisdiction over petty causes, whether civil or criminal; the second, based on the French model, are the ordinary tribunals of nominated judges, sitting with or without a jury to hear important cases.

Local administration

Alongside the local organs of the central government in Russia there are three classes of local elected bodies charged with administrative functions:

- the peasant assemblies in the mir and the volost;
- the zemstvos in the 34 Governorates of Russia;
- the municipal dumas



The Senate and Synod headquarters – today the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation on Senate Square in Saint Petersburg.



Subdivisions of the Russian Empire in 1914



Residence of the Governor of Moscow (1778–82)

Municipal dumas

Since 1870 the municipalities in European Russia have had institutions like those of the zemstvos. All owners of houses, and tax-paying merchants, artisans and workmen are enrolled on lists in a descending order according to their assessed wealth. The total valuation is then divided into three equal parts, representing three groups of electors very unequal in number, each of which elects an equal number of delegates to the municipal дума. The executive is in the hands of an elective mayor and an *uprava*, which consists of several members elected by the дума. Under Alexander III, however, by laws promulgated in 1892 and 1894, the municipal dumas were subordinated to the governors in the same way as the zemstvos. In 1894 municipal institutions, with still more restricted powers, were granted to several towns in Siberia, and in 1895 to some in Caucasia.



The Moscow City Duma

Baltic provinces

The formerly Swedish-controlled Baltic provinces (Courland, Livonia and Estonia) were incorporated into the Russian Empire after the defeat of Sweden in the Great Northern War. Under the Treaty of Nystad of 1721, the Baltic German nobility retained considerable powers of self-government and numerous privileges in matters affecting education, police and the administration of local justice. After 167 years of German language administration and education, laws were declared in 1888 and 1889 where the rights of the police and manorial justice were transferred from Baltic German control to officials of the central government. Since about the same time a process of Russification was being carried out in the same provinces, in all departments of administration, in the higher schools and in the Imperial University of Dorpat the name of which was altered to Yuriev. In 1893 district committees for the management of the peasants' affairs, similar to those in the purely Russian governments, were introduced into this part of the empire.

Economy

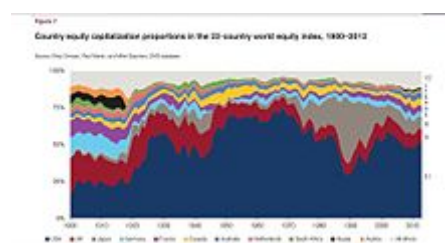
Mining and Heavy Industry

Output of mining industry and heavy industry of Russian Empire by region in 1912 (in percent of the national output).

	Ural Region	Southern Region	Caucasus	Siberia	Kingdom of Poland
Gold	21%	—	—	88.2%	-
Platinum	100%	—	—	—	—
Silver	36%	—	24.3%	29.3%	—
Lead	5.8%	—	92%	—	0.9%
Zinc	—	—	25.2%	—	74.8%
Copper	54.9%	—	30.2%	14.9%	—
Pig Iron	19.4%	67.7%	—	—	9.3%
Iron and Steel	17.3%	36.2%	—	—	10.8%
Manganese	0.3%	29.2%	70.3%	—	—
Coal	3.4%	67.3%	—	5.8%	22.3%
Petroleum	—	—	97%	—	—



100 roubles (1910)



Country equity capitalization 1900-2012

Infrastructure

Railways

The planning and building of the railway network after 1860 had far-reaching effects on the economy, culture, and ordinary life of Russia. The central authorities and the imperial elite made most of the key decisions, but local elites set up a demand for rail linkages. Local nobles, merchants, and entrepreneurs imagined the future from "locality" '(mestnost')' to "empire" to promote their regional interests. Often they had to compete with other cities. By envisioning their own role in a rail network they came to understand how important they were to the empire's economy.^[58] The Russian army built two major railway lines in Central Asia during the 1880s. The Trans-Caucasian Railway connected the city of Batum on the Black Sea and the oil center of Baku on the Caspian Sea. The Trans-Caspian Railway began at Krasnovodsk on the Caspian Sea and reached Bukhara, Samarkand and Tashkent. Both lines served the commercial and strategic needs of the Empire, and facilitated migration.^[59]



Russian and US equities, 1865 to 1917



Tzarskoselskaya Railway 1830



Map of Russian railroads in 1916

Year	1840	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	1911
Kilometers	26	601	1,590	11,243	23,982	32,390	56,976	78,468

Seaports

Biggest seaports of Russian Empire by tonnage of visiting ships in 1912 (the figures for tonnage are in thousands of tonns)

Port	Tonnage	Position
<u>Riga</u>	1528	Baltic Sea
<u>Kerch</u>	33	Black Sea
<u>Arkhangelsk</u>	549	White Sea
<u>Feodosia</u>	175	Black Sea
<u>Onega</u>	98	White Sea
<u>Mariupol</u>	266	Black Sea
<u>Evpatoria</u>	66	Black Sea
<u>Sukhum</u>	45	Black Sea
<u>Izmail</u>	47	Black Sea
<u>Astara</u>	64	Caspian Sea
<u>Vladivostok</u>	891	Pacific Ocean
<u>Nikolayevsk-on-Amur</u>	57	Pacific Ocean
<u>Astrakhan</u>	34	Caspian Sea
<u>Baku</u>	286	Caspian Sea
<u>Reni</u>	173	Black Sea
<u>Krasnovodsk</u>	21	Caspian Sea
<u>Batum</u>	898	Black Sea
<u>Poti</u>	348	Black Sea
<u>Berdyansk</u>	80	Black Sea
<u>Novorossiysk</u>	646	Black Sea
<u>Nikolayev</u>	721	Black Sea
<u>Libava</u>	796	Baltic Sea
<u>Odessa</u>	1243	Black Sea
<u>Narva</u>	95	Baltic Sea
<u>Kherson</u>	252	Black Sea
<u>Revel</u>	65	Baltic Sea
<u>Sevastopol</u>	44	Black Sea
<u>Saint Petersburg</u>	2024	Baltic Sea
<u>Genichensk</u>	67	Black Sea
<u>Pernov</u>	23	Baltic Sea
<u>Taganrog</u>	657	Black Sea
<u>Vindava</u>	604	Baltic Sea

Religion

The Russian Empire's state religion was Orthodox Christianity.^[60] The Emperor was not allowed to "profess any faith other than the Orthodox" (Article 62 of the 1906 Fundamental Laws) and was deemed "the Supreme Defender and Guardian of the dogmas of the predominant Faith and is the Keeper of the purity of the Faith and all good order within the Holy Church" (Article 64 *ex supra*).

Although he made and annulled all senior ecclesiastical appointments, he did not determine the questions of dogma or church teaching. The principal ecclesiastical authority of the Russian Church that extended its jurisdiction over the entire territory of the Empire, including the ex-Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti, was the Most Holy Synod, the civilian Over Procurator of the Holy Synod being one of the council of ministers with wide *de facto* powers in ecclesiastical matters. All religions were freely professed, except that certain restrictions were laid upon the Jews and some marginal sects. According to returns published in 1905, based on the Russian Imperial Census of 1897, adherents of the different religious communities in the whole of the Russian empire numbered approximately as follows.

Religion	Count of believers ^[61]	%
<u>Russian Orthodox</u>	87,123,604	69.3%
<u>Muslims</u>	13,906,972	11.1%
<u>Latin Catholics</u>	11,467,994	9.1%
<u>Jews</u>	5,215,805	4.2%
<u>Lutherans</u> ^[n 3]	3,572,653	2.8%
<u>Old Believers</u>	2,204,596	1.8%
<u>Armenian Apostolics</u>	1,179,241	0.9%
<u>Buddhists and Lamaists</u>	433,863	0.4%
<u>Other non-Christian religions</u>	285,321	0.2%
<u>Reformed</u>	85,400	0.1%
<u>Mennonites</u>	66,564	0.1%
<u>Armenian Catholics</u>	38,840	0.0%
<u>Baptists</u>	38,139	0.0%
<u>Karaite Jews</u>	12,894	0.0%
<u>Anglicans</u>	4,183	0.0%
<u>Other Christian religions</u>	3,952	0.0%

The ecclesiastical heads of the national Russian Orthodox Church consisted of three metropolitans (Saint Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev), fourteen archbishops and fifty bishops, all drawn from the ranks of the monastic (celibate) clergy. The parochial clergy had to be married when appointed, but if left widowers were not allowed to marry again; this rule continues to apply today

Military

The Russian Empire's military consisted of the Imperial Russian Army and the Imperial Russian Navy. The poor performance during the Crimean War, 1853–56, caused great soul-searching and proposals for reform. However the Russian forces fell further and further behind the technology training and organization of the German, French and particularly the British military^[62]

Society

The Russian Empire was, predominantly, a rural society spread over vast spaces. In 1913, 80% of the people were peasants. Soviet historiography proclaimed that the Russian Empire of the 19th century was characterized by systemic crisis, which impoverished the workers and peasants and culminated in the revolutions of the early 20th century. Recent research by Russian scholars disputes this interpretation. Mironov assesses the effects of the reforms of latter 19th-century especially in terms of the 1861 emancipation of the serfs, agricultural output trends, various standard of living indicators, and taxation of peasants. He argues that they brought about



The Kazan Cathedral in Saint Petersburg was constructed between 1801 and 1811, and prior to the construction of Saint Isaac's Cathedral was the main Orthodox Church in Imperial Russia.



Subdivisions of the Russian Empire by largest ethnolinguistic group (1897)

measurable improvements in social welfare. More generally, he finds that the well-being of the Russian people declined during most of the 18th century, but increased slowly from the end of the 18th century to 1914.^{[63][64]}

Estates

Subjects of the Russian Empire were segregated into *sosloviyes*, or social estates (classes) such as nobility (*dvoryanstvo*), clergy, merchants, cossacks and peasants. Native people of the Caucasus, non-ethnic Russian areas such as Tartarstan, Bashkirstan, Siberia and Central Asia were officially registered as a category called *inorodtsy* (non-Slavic, literally: "people of another origin").

A majority of the people, 81.6%, belonged to the peasant order, the others were: nobility, 0.6%; clergy, 0.1%; the burghers and merchants, 9.3%; and military, 6.1%. More than 88 million of the Russians were peasants. A part of them were formerly serfs (10,447,149 males in 1858) – the remainder being "state peasants" (9,194,891 males in 1858, exclusive of the Archangel Governorate) and "domain peasants" (842,740 males the same year).

Serfdom

The serfdom that had developed in Russia in the 16th century, and had become enshrined by law in 1649, was abolished in 1861.^{[65][66]}

The household servants or dependents attached to the personal service were merely set free, while the landed peasants received their houses and orchards, and allotments of arable land. These allotments were given over to the rural commune, the *mir*, which was made responsible for the payment of taxes for the allotments. For these allotments the peasants had to pay a fixed rent, which could be fulfilled by personal labour. The allotments could be redeemed by peasants with the help of the Crown, and then they were freed from all obligations to the landlord. The Crown paid the landlord and the peasants had to repay the Crown, for forty-nine years at 6% interest. The financial redemption to the landlord was not calculated on the value of the allotments, but was considered as a compensation for the loss of the compulsory labour of the serfs. Many proprietors contrived to curtail the allotments which the peasants had occupied under serfdom, and frequently deprived them of precisely the parts of which they were most in need: pasture lands around their houses. The result was to compel the peasants to rent land from their former masters.^{[67][68]}

Peasants

The former serfs became peasants, joining the millions of farmers who were already in the peasant status.^{[68][69]} After the Emancipation reform, one quarter of peasants received allotments of only 2.9 acres (12,000 m²) per male, and one-half less than 8.5 to 11.4 acres; the normal size of the allotment necessary for the subsistence of a family under the three-fields system is estimated at 28 to 42 acres (170,000 m²). Land must thus of necessity be rented from the landlords. The aggregate value of the redemption and land taxes often reached 185 to 275% of the normal rental value of the allotments, not to speak of taxes for recruiting purposes, the church, roads, local administration and so on, chiefly levied from the peasants. The areas increased every



Tsarist troops prepare for invading Persian forces during the Russo-Persian War (1804–13), which occurred contemporaneously with the French invasion of Russia



An Imperial Russian Navy Brig "Mercury" Attacked by Two Turkish Ships in a scene from the Russo-Turkish War (1828–29), by Ivan Aivazovsky



Announcing the Coronation of Alexander II



Maslenitsa by Boris Kustodiev, showing a Russian city in winter

year; one-fifth of the inhabitants left their houses; cattle disappeared. Every year more than half the adult males (in some districts three-quarters of the men and one-third of the women) quit their homes and wandered throughout Russia in search of labor. In the governments of the Black Earth Area the state of matters was hardly better. Many peasants took "gratuitous allotments," whose amount was about one-eighth of the normal allotments.^{[70][71]}

The average allotment in Kherson was only 0.90-acre (3,600 m²), and for allotments from 2.9 to 5.8 acres (23,000 m²) the peasants pay 5 to 10 rubles of redemption tax. The state peasants were better off, but still they were emigrating in masses. It was only in the steppe governments that the situation was more hopeful. In Ukraine, where the allotments were personal (the mir existing only among state peasants), the state of affairs does not differ for the better, on account of the high redemption taxes. In the western provinces, where the land was valued cheaper and the allotments somewhat increased after the Polish insurrection, the general situation was better. Finally, in the Baltic provinces nearly all the land belonged to the German landlords who either farmed the land themselves, with hired laborers, or let it in small farms. Only one quarter of the peasants were farmers; the remainder were mere laborers.^[72]

Landowners

The situation of the former serf-proprietors was also unsatisfactory. Accustomed to the use of compulsory labor, they failed to adapt to the new conditions. The millions of rubles of redemption money received from the crown was spent without any real or lasting agricultural improvements having been effected. The forests were sold, and the only prosperous landlords were those who exacted rack-rents for the land without which the peasants could not live upon their allotments. During the years 1861 to 1892 the land owned by the nobles decreased 30%, or from 210,000,000 to 150,000,000 acres (610,000 km²); during the following four years an additional 2,119,500 acres (8,577 km²) were sold; and since then the sales went on at an accelerated rate, until in 1903 alone close to 2,000,000 acres (8,000 km²) passed out of their hands. On the other hand, since 1861, and more especially since 1882, when the Peasant Land Bank was founded for making advances to peasants who were desirous of purchasing land, the former serfs, or rather their descendants, had between 1883 and 1904 bought about 19,500,000 acres (78,900 km²) from their former masters. There was an increase of wealth among the few, but along with this a general impoverishment of the mass of the people, and the peculiar institution of the mir—framed on the principle of community of ownership and occupation of the land—, the effect was not conducive to the growth of individual effort. In November 1906, however, the emperor Nicholas II promulgated a provisional order permitting the peasants to become freeholders of allotments made at the time of emancipation, all redemption dues being remitted. This measure, which was endorsed by the third Duma in an act passed on 21 December 1908, is calculated to have far-reaching and profound effects on the rural economy of Russia. Thirteen years previously the government had endeavored to secure greater fixity and permanence of tenure by providing that at least twelve years must elapse between every two redistributions of the land belonging to a mir amongst those entitled to share in it. The order of November 1906 had provided that the various strips of land held by each peasant should be merged into a single holding; the Duma, however, on the advice of the government, left this to the future, as an ideal that could only gradually be realized.^[72]

Media

Censorship was heavy-handed until the reign of Alexander II, but it never went away.^[73] Newspapers were strictly limited in what they could publish, as intellectuals favored literary magazines for their publishing outlets. Fyodor Dostoyevsky, for example, ridiculed the St. Petersburg newspapers, such as *Golos* and *Peterburgskii Listok*, which he accused of publishing trifles and



Young Russian peasant women in front of traditional wooden house (ca. 1909 to 1915) taken by Prokudin-Gorskii.



Peasants in Russia. (Photograph taken by Sergey Prokudin-Gorsky in 1909.)

distracting readers from the pressing social concerns of contemporary Russia through their obsession with spectacle and European popular culture.^[74]

See also

- Alt Danzig
- Expansion of Russia 1500–1800
- Foreign policy of the Russian Empire
- List of Emperors of Russia
- List of largest empires
- Military history of Russia
- Russian conquest of Siberia
- Russian conquest of the Caucasus
- Russification

Notes

1. From 1860 to 1905, the Russian Empire occupied all territories of the present-day Russian Federation, with the exception of the present-day Kaliningrad Oblast, Kuril Islands, and Tuva. In 1905 Russia lost Southern Sakhalin to Japan, but in 1914 the Empire established a protectorate over Tuva.
2. An ukaz of 1879 gave the governors the right to report secretly on the qualifications of candidates for the trial of justice of the peace. In 1889 Alexander III abolished the election of justices of the peace, except in certain large towns and some outlying parts of the Empire, and greatly restricted the right of trial by jury. The confusion of the judicial and administrative functions was introduced again by the appointment of officials as judges. In 1909 the third Duma restored the election of justices of the peace.
3. The Lutheran Church was the dominant faith of the Baltic Provinces of Ingria, and of the Grand Duchy of Finland.

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External links

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 - [The Empire that was Russia color photographs from Library of Congress](#)
 - [General armorial of noble families in the Russian Empire \(Gerbovník\)](#)
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