

# HISTORY OF RUSSIA

From prehistory to Putin

## ABSTRACT

All empires rise, expand and collapse. But Russians have built no fewer than four empires, each one expanded in size and power. The first European-like medieval empire of Kiev Rus lasted over 300 years to be brutally destroyed in 1240 by the Mongol invasion. Burdened by the legacy of the 240 years of the brutal Mongol rule and by the hostile invasions from its enemies, each empire was sustained by the despotic power of its rules and by the strong patriotic feelings of the Russian people. The history is still in making on the current Russian state established in 1990 and currently ruled by Vladimir Putin.

*Eva and Vladimir Hnizdo*

History of Russia from St. Vladimir to Vladimir Putin

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# 1. GEOGRAPHY, CLIMATE, AND ETHNICITY

## 1.1 Geography



Ural Mountains

## 1.2 Russian climate

Russian climate is colder than Northern American and European, it is also unpredictable and has extreme temperatures with sudden unpredictable changes. The plant growing season is short, around five months. The harsh climate also affects the density of the population in the northern regions of Russia and in Siberia.



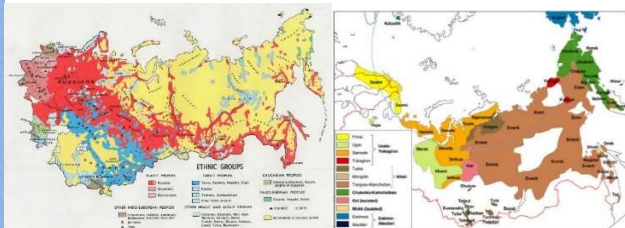
## 1.3 Ethnicity of Russian population

The population of Russia is about 149.6 million and is growing annually at only 0.2 percent. There are some 120 different ethnic groups, but most are small. Ethnic Russians form 82 percent of the entire population.

Of all the 15 former Soviet Union republics, Russia has the greatest ethnic diversity, with more than 70 distinct nationalities. Russians make up about four fifths of the total, and only two other groups—Tatars and Ukrainians—constitute more than 2 percent each. Other notable ethnic groups include Chuvash, Bashkir, Chechen, Morдовian, and Beloussian.

Russian 79.8%, Tatar 3.8%, Ukrainian 2%, Bashkir 1.2%, Chuvash 1.1%, other or unspecified 12.1% (2002)

**Population**



### Nomadic Tribes of Siberia:

*Chukotko-Kamchatkan people: Koryaks and Chukchi* live in the far east of Russia in the region of Kamchatka and in features and living habits are close to North American Indians. They are originally nomadic people living of reindeer in a cold sparsely forested areas.



The **Chukchi**, Eskimos of Western Chukotka, indigenous **people** inhabiting the Chukchi Peninsula and the shores of the Chukchi Sea and the Bering Sea region of the Arctic Ocean within the Russian Federation. They speak the Chukchi language. The Chukchi originated from the people living around the Okhotsk Sea.



**Evenks** - The Evenks (also spelled Ewenki or Evenki) are a Tungusic people of Northern Asia originally from Mongolia. In Russia, the **Evenks** are recognized as one of the Indigenous peoples of the Russian North. According to the 2010 census, there were 37,843 Evenks in Russia.



### **Saami people**

The Sami people (also Sámi or Saami, traditionally known as Lapps or Laplanders) are an indigenous Finno-Ugric people inhabiting the Arctic area of Sápmi, which today encompasses parts of far northern Norway, **Sweden**, **Finland**, and the Kola Peninsula of **Russia**. The Sami are the only indigenous people in Scandinavia that are recognized and protected under the international conventions of indigenous peoples,

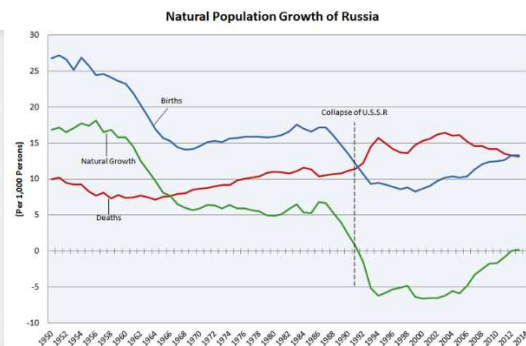
and are hence one of the northernmost indigenous people of Europe. Their traditional languages are the Sami languages and are classified as a branch of the Uralic language family.



Renee Zellweger

RUSSIAN POPULATION PROJECTIONS					
	1990	2000	2010	2020	2030
Total population in millions	148.0	147.1	142.5	137.0	127.9
Muslim population in millions	13.6	17.2	16.7	18.3	19.9
Muslims as percentage of population	9.2%	11.7%	11.7%	13.3%	15.6%
Annual number of immigrants	195,324	326,460	240,870*	211,300	204,200

Sources: Russian Federal State Statistics Service and the Pew Foundation  
\*Russian's Center of Studies estimated net legal and illegal immigration at more than 400,000 in 2019  
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## 2. EARLY HISTORY: PREHISTORY TO 8<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

### 2.1 Prehistory

The territory of European Russia had been populated before the Ice Age about 20,000 years ago based on archeological findings dated to be 20-26 thousands years old of bones of a teenage girl and boy whose leather garments and moccasin shoes were decorated in a similar manner to those worn by the Siberian populations of today. During the Ice Age human population moved south. Global warming and ice retreat started around 8,000 years ago. Findings of large settlements of farming people found in southern Ukraine date from around 5-6,000 years ago. Around 3,000 ago iron age starts and agricultural settlements (Swidden agriculture), Persian Empire people (Cumerians, Scythians), Greeks (Sarmatians) were found in the southern territory of European Russia.

### 2.2 The ethnic origin of the Slavic people

The predominant people in Russia are the ethnic Russians who are of Slavic ethnicity. The Slavic people originated in the northern forested region of Ukraine. The Slavic people are of Caucasian origin, the Slavic languages are of Indo-European origin, as for most Europeans. The ethnic origin of the Slavic people is still not well establish, but it is certain that its formation was

influenced by people of Baltic, Germanic, Finno-Ugrians and Iranian origins. Genetic analysis suggests that when Europe was struck by Ice Age around 24,000 yrs ago, its stone age inhabitants migrated south in several directions leading to differentiated genetic pools across Europe. The Slavic people may be descendants of the migrants going east to the present day Ukraine around the upper and middle reaches of the Dnieper and Vistula rivers. Archeological findings indicate dense settlements of Slavic people at about 3,000 years ago in that region. They mostly populated the northern forested regions, where they were protected against the warring nomadic tribes of the southern (grasslands) steppes (“prairies” in N. America). To the south they were in contact with nomadic people of the steppe of Iranian origin (Scythians and Sarmatians who flourished from about 5<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> BC; they migrated to Central Asia and Ural and eventually settled in southern region of Russia where they were destroyed by the Huns).

### 2.3 Expansion of Slavic people through Europe

At the beginning of the 2<sup>st</sup> century A.D. the Roman Empire reached its zenith in terms of its geographic expansion; this corresponded with building large fortifications on the rivers Rhine and Danube to protect itself from attacks from the Germanic tribes, but that did not stop the attacks nor the inner decline of the Empire. The chronology of the decline during the Empire’s last 200 years A.D. was as follows:

- 284-305 Emperor Diocletian divides the Roman Empire into western and eastern part
- 306-337 Under Constantine, Constantinople (Istanbul) is built where an old Greek city Byzantine was, and becomes the capital of the Empire; persecution of Christians ceases and Christianity becomes an official religion of the Empire.
- 330- Khazar Khanate is established (nomadic Turkic people of southern Russian steppes)
- 375-451 Wild hordes of Huns invade Europe and Europe’s population migrates west. Huns are eventually defeated in France as Attila, their leader, dies.
- 476 Western Roman Empire falls to German invaders and disintegrates (27BC: 500 yrs)
- 486 Middle Ages start in Europe with the formation of Frankish Empire (486-960: 474 yrs)
- 500 Slavic people start migrating west into de-populated regions of central Europe
- 800-962 Holy Roman Empire is created under Charlemagne/Otto I (800/962-1806 AD:844 yrs)
- 305-1453 Eastern Roman empire remains with capitol Constantinople, Eastern Orthodox Church and Patriarch heading the church, Latin liturgy slowly replaced by Greek language.
- 1453 Constantinople is conquered by Ottoman Empire (1,348 yrs) and renamed to Istanbul.



As the populations of central Europe migrated west in advance of the raids by the wild, barbaric Huns there remained unoccupied lands. The Huns pillaged and caused havoc in Europe over 80 years and were eventually stopped in 451 in France as their leader Attila died. During the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> century the deserted eastern territory was gradually populated by the Slavic tribes spreading

west and east from the forests of the northeastern Europe. During the 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> century the Slavs started to form large tribal units and tribal elites as recorded by Romans and Greeks.



Europe during the Bronze Age and migration of Slavs 5-6<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

## 2.4 Formation of the Russian tribes

During the 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> century Russia was “discovered” by travelers and involved in foreign trade as indicated by unearthed coins around the area of the city Kiev in Ukraine. In the 8-9<sup>th</sup> century the Vikings, who lived by trade and plunder also came into contact with the Russians from the north. The ruthless warrior-like Viking who live mostly by pillage and robbery aimed for the wealth of the Byzantine. To get through the impenetrable forests in northern European Russia, the Vikings learned from the Russians how to navigate the Russian rivers to reach Constantinople and the Orient. They also established trading settlements along the rivers and intermarried with Russian women. The Russian trade included sabre and black fox skins, swords, honey and other agricultural products, including slaves. In the northern regions, the Russians also came into contact with the Finno-Ugrian nomadic people. The first large settlements and towns such as Novgorod and Kiev were established along the river trading routes and led to a symbiosis between Russians, Vikings and Finno-Ugrian nomadic people in the north. The southern steppes were under the territory of the Khazar Khanate of the nomadic Turkic-speaking people who in 860 converted to Judaism. The Khazars and other nomadic tribes also conducted raids into Russian settlements and collected tributes from the southern Russian tribes.



## 3. KIEV RUS - FIRST RUSSIAN STATE (900-1263)

### 3.1 Formation of Kiev Rus

The formation of the Kiev Rus (Russia) is linked with the Viking of the name Riurik. Riurik was a Jutlander who made his reputation by raiding and plundering Western Europe, including the British Isles. By 856 he diverted his interest to Russia and established a trading post around the lake Lagoda, in northern Russia, with the view of navigating the Russian rivers to reach the wealth of the Byzantine and Arab states. Subsequently, the Vikings built a fort at Novgorod for better river access and another fort at Kiev. In 860 he organized a brutal and savage Rus-Viking raid on



Constantinople with 200 boats and about 8,000 men causing a widespread destruction and plunder. Being a strong leader, Riurik started to control the tribal leaders and became their first “ruler”. Riurik was able to centralize the power of the tribal chiefs and started a dynasty that eventually led to the creation of the state of Kiev Rus with its center in Kiev during the 10<sup>th</sup> century. The Kiev Rus had two important centers, Novgorod and Kiev.

Acceptance of Christianity from Constantinople played an important role in the formation and civilization of Kiev Rus. The son of Riurik, Oleg, and grandson Igor, continued to centralize their power and continued the warring and robbing expeditions south, including Constantinople. When the grandson Igor was killed on a tax collecting expedition in the year 945, his widow Olga ruled (945-961) on behalf of her young son Svjatoslav. She proved to be an energetic organizer who regularized the amount of tribute to be paid and journeyed extensively around the country using the river transport. She set up an administrative center in Novgorod and transitioned the state from a robber economy to state building.

Olga travelled to Constantinople in 955/957 where she initiated communication with the Patriarch of Constantinople and viewed the many wonders of the imperial city. The fortified walls that guarded the city; the great cistern that could supply the population with water in times of siege; the hippodrome used for imperial games, ceremonies, and racing; the city’s rich central market; the gilded head of the first Christian emperor Constantine I; fine marble buildings and statues; the imperial palace where Olga was entertained with grandeur and exotic meals by the emperor himself. Most impressive was the Church of the Holy Wisdom, or Santa Sofia, and the elaborate religious rituals. She learned that the Christian Church, administered by the Patriarch of Constantinople, worked in cooperation with the emperor and helped the secular authorities in many ways- moral authority, provider of social services, and mobilizer of Christian population. Olga was baptized in Constantinople, with the emperor himself serving as her godfather.

The contact with Constantinople increased flow of Byzantine artist and craftsmen into Russia. The spread of literacy using the old Slavonic alphabet created by Cyril and Methodius based on Greek alphabet (Cyrillic) is also dated to that time. Although, Olga was converted to Christianity, she realized that Christianization of Russia is going to be a slow process. The black-garbed chanting Byzantine priests with their single Christian god were no competition for the Russian shamans in their magic clothes and their pagan gods; Perun, god of thunder, bringer of rain and prosperity who had to be kept appeased even with human sacrifice.



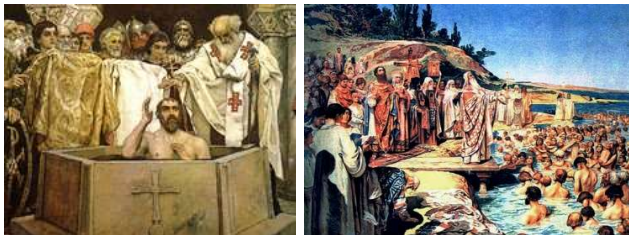
Olga’s visit to Constantinople, St Sophia Cathedral in Constantinople



10th–11th century canonical monument of Old Slavonic Church bible

### 3.2 Christianization of Kiev Rus

The slow process of Christianization was started by the Greek speaking priests who came to Russia. They used bible translated into old Slavonic language by Cyril and Methodius, to teach Russian preachers and spread the god's words. Conversion to Christianity was taken up by Olga's grandson Vladimir, 20 years after Olga's death. In the interim, Olga's ruthless son Sviatoslav (962-972) defeated the Khazars and drove them to southeast steppes. After his early death his three sons who acted as his viceroys in Kiev, Novgorod and Derevlania became candidates for the Kiev Rus ruler. The struggle for power among them ended with the only survivor Vladimir (r. 978-1015) becoming the ruler. The emperor of Byzantine who was under duress from Bulgars and other pagan tribes, offered Vladimir his daughter Anna if he installed Christianity in Russia. To fulfill the bargain, **Vladimir was baptized in about 988**. To Christianize his people, he had the statues of Perun the Thundered and the other pagan idols in Kiev to be pulled down, lynched and thrown into the river. Then the entire population of Kiev was driven into the river to be baptized *an masse*. Vladimir was later canonized as the first Russian Saint. The acceptance of Christianity on a state level resulted in more Greek churchmen coming to Russia and slowly developing influence in all spheres of life. As more Russians became literate and ordained as priests a Russian church hierarchy was being formed.



Many Christian churches started to be built. With its 13 golden domes, **St Sophia's Cathedral** is one of **Kiev's** most impressive landmarks of Christianity built by Vladimir's grandson Jaroslav the Wise (1019-1054). Construction began in 1037, although much of the Baroque exterior dates from the 18th century. Named after the Hagia **Sophia** (the Holy Wisdom) in Constantinople, the cathedral is famous for its ancient mosaics and frescoes.



**St. Sophia Cathedral** (Greek: Holy Wisdom) located in the Kremlin of the Russian city of **Novgorod** the Great (Russian: Великий Нѡвгород ) is the oldest Orthodox church building in Russia. The cathedral was constructed between 1045 and 1052 also by Jaroslav the Wise.

Building of the two beautiful churches symbolized Russia's coming of age as an independent state and its membership of what had been called "the Byzantine Commonwealth" of Christian Orthodoxy. The new cathedrals also symbolized Russia's membership of Christian civilization and reflected the state's considerable wealth. **Jaroslav the Wise** (1019-1054), grandson of St. Vladimir, can be regarded as a founding father of the first Russian state. He created the first code of law, a family cult, and issued his own coinage. Jaroslav married a daughter of the king of Sweden; his son married into the Byzantine imperial family; his daughters married the king of France, Hungary, and Norway. With the missionaries priests came Bibles, books, compilation of civil as well as canon law, and literacy.

The wealth, power and influence that Russia enjoyed in the time of Jaroslav the Wise held out every prospect of great future. Russia's territory was immense, its population had burgeoned, its commerce thrived, its ruler had a European stature, and its enemies were deterred by its military strength. And yet this first Russian Empire was to shrivel and collapse within 200 years, and Jaroslav the Wise bears some responsibility for it.

A fatal flaw was the '**apanage**' system, the practice by which an estate was divided among all the offspring, including lateral succession from brother to brother to entrust large properties to the most senior person – this applied to princes and peasants alike. This led to constant family disputes and feuding. At his death Jaroslav the Wise divided the country rule among his five sons. As generations succeeded generations the inheritance became more confusing and the princes had created dissension among themselves and there was no longer a strong central rule and military power to protect the country. By the onset of the 13<sup>th</sup> century the Kiev Rus essentially fell apart into individual principalities and ceased to function as a unified state. This development was paralleled in many European countries (War of Roses in England, states of Italy).

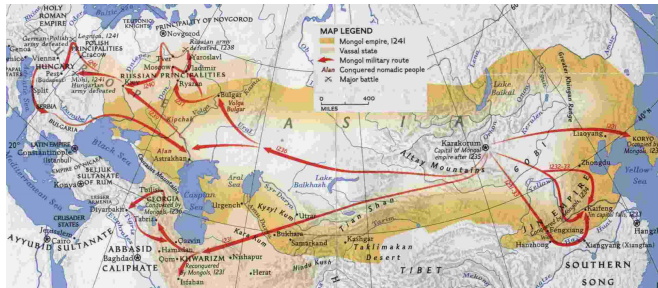
The wealth of the Russian state also attracted enemies. Many of the nomad steppe people conducted plundering and robbing attacks against the settled Russians. In 1240 Alexander Nevsky defeated the Swedish army at the river Neva and later in the year Teutonic Knights at a battle of Novgorod, but later he was badly defeated by the Mongols (Tartars) invading from the south. The defeat by the Tartars had disastrous consequences for Russia. But, in the long run it might have helped to unite Russia and built an empire.

History of the formation of the state of Kiev Rus is based mainly on records kept by the emperors of the Byzantium, Arab writers, and a **Kronicle by Nestor** written during 11-12<sup>th</sup> century. Nestor the Chronicler is considered the father of Russian history that he called the **Tale of Bygone Years**. Nestor was a monk who has also been canonized by the Russian Orthodox Church and whose remains rest in a Kiev monastery, Apparently Nestor was one of the most educated men in late 11<sup>th</sup>- and early 12<sup>th</sup>-century Kiev Russia, his knowledge extending to theology, history, literature, and Greek. He lived during the reign of Prince Sviatopolk II (1093-1113), who tried to steer Russia away from Greek influence towards Scandinavia.

### **3.2 Mongol invasion and submission of Kiev Russ**

During 1237 to 1240 the Mongols under the leadership of the Khan Batu, a grandson of Genghis Khan, conquered the whole Kiev Rus in the most brutal way and in 1240 Batu destroyed Kiev

itself. According to a chronicle: "The accursed Batu stormed the city with torches, battering rams and scaling ladders. In the cathedral of Assumption the Tartars seized Princes Agrippina and hacked her into pieces together with other princesses. The bishop and priests were burned alive and fire set to the churches, killing men, women, and children and drowning others in the river. The Tartars burned the Holy City with all its beauty and its wealth and spilled blood on the holy altars. By night the Mongols had set Kiev ablaze. Not one person remained alive, some 50,000 inhabitants perished. The civilization that was Kiev Rus, its culture and beauty, the embryonic democracy, the respect for legal and civic values- all had been destroyed forever." It was the brutal ruthlessness that enabled the Mongols to conquer vast areas of Asia and Europe, see below.



The papal envoy travelling through Kiev Rus in 1245 reported: "In the fields we could see countless heads and bones of people. Kiev is now reduced to barely 200 dwellings and those inhabitants are held in the cruelest slavery. The rest of the country is similarly hurt."

The Mongol yoke would last for 240 years, from 1240 to 1480. The Mongols let the Princes to administer the individual principalities and used them to maintain the internal power structure to collect tributes (taxes). The princes had to regularly visit the Mongol capital of the Golden Horde Empire, Sarai, on the river Volga to obtain confirmation of their appointments from the Khan for their obedience and good service. Any signs of disloyalty were met with harsh retribution, including death. In **1257 the Mongols conducted a census** of the population to ensure correct tribute payment.

The legacy of the Mongol period was a shift from a fragile, embryonic democracy during which the Kiev Rus started to fall apart to flourishing and durable autocracy of the Russian state and empire later on. During the Mongol years the Russians began to adopt features of the Mongolian system for themselves. Forced to kowtow to the Khan, the princes started to demand the same from their subjects. The practice of *Chelobitie* (forehead beating) was adopted as part of Russian court etiquette and would remain in use for centuries. Princes vied with each other to prove their commitment to Mongol cause, became zealous collaborators and willing collectors of tributes. Over time, the Russian ruling classes develop profound admiration for the Mongol model of an autocratic, militarized state and Asiatic despotism; this practice became part of the Russian psyche.

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=Andrei+Rublev+film+youtube&view=detail&mid=CAA73278C642E1D806F7CAA73278C642E1D806F7&FORM=VIRE>

According to Russian historians, the Mongol rule is the moment in history when Russia became separated from Western Europe, when the commercial and cultural links that flourished under Kiev Rus were broken. Russia stood still while Europe moved forward on to the path of renaissance,

reformation and enlightenment. The Mongol occupation was the genesis of Russian enduring failure to develop as a European state.

Although the Mongols were Buddhists and later on in 1300 converted to Islam, they did not suppress the **Russian Christian Church**. Over the years the role of the Church became much enhanced as a source of spiritual solace, welfare, literacy, and also of political wisdom and as an economic organizer. The Orthodox Church became also part of Russian identity. The Church played an important role by helping in the territorial expansion of Russians into the interior to escape the Mongol rule. A boom in monastic development helped in the colonization of northeast; monasteries were built in the wilderness enabling wider Russian population spread, and spreading Christianity and civilization among the nomadic people. There was also contact between Russian churchmen and western Slavic churches.

During these times the center of power moved from Kiev northward towards Moscow which had great network of rivers and sufficient agricultural land. Ironically, the same rapacious Tartars who plundered, disrupted, and lorded over Russia also contributed unwittingly to Russia's reincarnation as empire builders. They jolted the Russians out of their ways, by denying the Russians access to the steppe, the Russian expansion was thereafter in the north-eastward direction.

By the 14<sup>th</sup> century the Tartars had relaxed their grip and allowed the princes some independence. **Ivan I**, also called Moneybag or Kalita, a grandson of Alexander Nevsky, who ruled from 1325-1340 took advantage of the opportunities provided during those times. He is remembered as a historical figure who was able to make use of opportunities and established Moscow as a pre-eminent center of the Russians. He gained Khans confidence and was appointed as the Grand Prince who controlled tribute collection over all the vassal principalities of Russia. Unified Russia was also needed by the Khan to protect his vassal state from western invasions by Crusaders, Swedes and Lithuanians. This enabled the Russians over time to centralize and consolidate their military power. The great grandson of Ivan I, **Dimitri Donskoy** (1359-1389) at 27 years of age in 1378 led a Russian army to victory over the Tartars, and two years later, in 1380, he defeated them again in a battle at **Kulikovo Field** on the River Don. The battle claimed about 200,000 deaths and weaken the Tartars, but did not totally defeat them. Nevertheless, the Russians realized that the Tartars can be defeated and also that they are able to unite against a common enemy. Despite the constant strife among the princes, the Principality of Moscow took the lead under leadership of the Dimitri's descendants in building the Russian state.



Fourteen century icon of the Saints Boris and Gleb. Boris and Gleb received the crown of martyrdom in 1015. The brothers were killed by their own brother Svatopluk and became known as "Strastoterptsy" (Passion-Bearers), since they did not resist evil with violence. Boris and Gleb were glorified (canonized) by the Orthodox Church in Kiev Rus in 1071. Memorial column on the Red Hill, erected in their memory in 1848.

## 4. BUILDING OF THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE (1463-1613)

### 4.1 Prominence of the Muscovy principality

The prominence of the Muscovy principality started with the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks in 1453. The 1453 destruction of Christian Byzantium by Turks left Muscovy as the sole remaining bastion of Orthodox faith, directly exposed to the expanding empire of Islam. The emerging Russian nation embraced the sense of a God-given mission to defend the Christian world against the Muslims. Constantinople was named Istanbul and Islam became the official religion there. Many Greek Orthodox Christians and other refugees started to migrate into Russia, specifically Moscow which now became the center of the Russian Orthodox Church. The refugees included churchmen, noblemen, artists, and functionaries of all sorts who brought with them the diplomatic, administrative, and military expertise essential for building and administrating an empire. Moscow rulers encouraged by the new immigrants began to develop imperial ambitions over the Russian people who now spread over vast territory. The Muscovy princes, who still functioned as central tribute collectors for the Khans, enjoyed longer periods over which they ruled than the other Russian princes, which enabled them to develop a political and administrative system to control the other principalities, basing the administrative system on the Mongol principles of service-based society and total control by the Khan.

By 1462, **Ivan III** the Great (r. 1462-1505), the great-great grandson of Dimitri Donskoy (who first defeated the Golden Horde in 1380) became determined to be “Sovereign over all Russian land”. His aim was to become the Grand Prince and subordinate the princes and boyars of other principalities to his will and absorb their private armies into his own.

The departure of the Mongols left power vacuum. In the west, Lithuania had united with the Catholic Poland and their powerful empire was expanding into western Russian lands. In the north, Novgorod that has avoided direct Mongol occupation, was becoming a rich trading state while preserving many of the old quasi-democratic values of the Kiev Rus. On their own Novgorod had no chance to stand up to the large army of Ivan III and invited Poland and Lithuania to take over power of the Novgorod principality. When Ivan III heard of the invitation he marched his army onto Novgorod and installed his own Muscovite autocratic form of governance. He tore down the *veche* bell, the ancient symbol of participatory governance, civic society and legal rights.

In 1480 Ivan III defeated the Golden Horde and its grip on Russia finally ended. In 1487 Ivan defeated the Khanate of Kazan, one of the offshoots of the Golden Horde, and reduced it to the condition of a vassal-state of Russia. In 1493 he adopted the title “Sovereign of All Russia” and he also developed successful diplomatic ties with other European nations. One of the important roles of the diplomats was to gather and record any information about a country that may potentially be useful to the state. This was the beginning of the Russian intelligence services that over the years served them well in their empire building. To survive constant attacks on the northern borders by the crusaders of the Catholic Church and southern borders by the nomadic Turkic tribes, Ivan III had to maintain a large standing army.



Ivan III adopted the **imperial double –headed eagle** as his insignia, which is now again the emblem of Russia. The eagle carries a scepter, the sign of state power, and an orb, the sign of unity. You can see St George on the breast of the eagle; an oldest **Russian symbol** of love for Motherland. He also made the Russian throne hereditary to his descendants.

To maintain a large army and large number of servicemen to administer the conquered land, Ivan III instead of paying cash money, which he did not have much to spare, developed the system of land allotment for service called *pomestie* in Russian, as land was plentiful. Institutions and administrators were needed to build and run the expanding state. At that time there was a large culture gap between Europe and Russia, and the Greek immigrants from Constantinople, who were familiar with the European diplomatic etiquette, helped Ivan to overcome this gap. He also established access to the Baltic Sea, and created a town Ivangorod for that purpose. During his reign he built and modernized his military power and fought numerous wars against the catholic Knights of Sword and Poland-Lithuania crusaders for the Catholic Church, and against the Crimean Tartars. During his reign the Russian government retained services of independent and renegade Tartar groups to give early warning of raiding parties approach and to slow down their advance. This was the origin of the Cossack military formation, which were to play a significant role in Russia’s imperial advances later on.



Ivangorod was built by Ivan III after 1480 on the Narva River, to gain access to the Baltic Sea.

Ivan’s son **Vasilii III** (1505-1530) continued in his father’s policies of land expansion and expanding diplomatic contacts with Europe. Around 1523 the monk Philofei developed the idea of Moscow as the “third Rome” after Constantinople (“the second Rome”) takeover by Turks, and wrote a letter about it to Vasilii to promote Moscow as the chief center of the Orthodox world. This provided some impetus for uniting all Orthodox Christians in Russia, Ukraine, the Balkans, etc. Religious conservatism of the Russian Orthodox Church that dated back to the great schism in church liturgy between Roman Catholic Church and Eastern Orthodox Church of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, however, implied cultural isolation from Europe. Most Russians were strongly associated with the Russian Orthodox Christian church and liked the centralized state that Ivan III created.

That trapped Russia in the past and lead to the cultural isolationism at the time when Renaissance and Reformation were starting in Europe. When Vasilii III, in an effort to modernize himself, shaved of his beard the Russians were upset and critical.

During the 71 year long reign of Ivan III and Vasilii III (1462-1533) whenever possible objectives were achieved by negotiation rather than confrontation. Both Ivan and Vasilii took care to reward servitors and show their subjects pious and kindly face - yet they were ruthless in punishing those who fell out of line. Together they tripled Muscovy territorial extent, build a strong army and administration of the state.



Ivan III the Great, Vasilii III

#### 4.2 Ivan IV the Terrible – the first Russian emperor (tsar)

Ivan IV was born in 1530, and succeeded to the throne in 1533, after the death of his father Vasilii III. Council of regents ruled on his behalf until he came of age. Ivan's early years were marked by political instability and possibly personal insecurity. When his mother died in 1538, allegedly poisoned, his successive guardians were also ousted or executed by rival factions. Nevertheless, from his own writing and contemporary accounts, it can be inferred that he received an excellent education for his time and standing. He was highly literate and musical, interested in the outside world as befitted a monarch, and he was also dutiful in matters of religion. He received instructions from senior officials concerned with administration, military and foreign affairs, and the Church matters so that he was well informed about Russia and the world beyond to rule.

On January 1547, at a glittering ceremony in the Kremlin Cathedral of Assumption, the 16 year old Ivan was solemnly invested with a bejeweled cross, collar and a cup brought from Constantinople, and with a cloak of imperial purple. In this way Ivan IV became the first **Tsar** (emperor), and the **Autocrat of all Russia**. The imperial title was endorsed by the patriarch of Constantinople and the Ottoman Turks. The imperial status was proclaimed in the blessing: Grant Ivan long life...Seat him on the throne of righteousness... and bring all barbarian people under his power." The new imperial status justified violent efforts by Ivan through his reign to make government autocratic in practice and in theory by the emergence of a colonial administration system. Advantage was taken of any new technology including printing press, armaments, and central administration of the state as was done in other European countries. Ivan was a Renaissance prince and Orthodox Christian who lived in turbulent and violent times of Protestant Reformation and Catholic Counter-Reformation, and Russia was also drawn into these wars. His first concern was to extend and enforce the law so that he can run an effective administration and state, root out corruption, and enforce obedience.

Ivan's expansionist drive was first into the southern steppe, then the **Caucasus**, and eventually westward into Baltic. In 1551, at 21 years of age, he ordered an attack against the Khanate of Kazan. The attack was well planned with 150,000 troops, large cannons, and myriad of standards



bearing images of Christ, drums and trumpets to encourage the Russian troops and demoralize the Tartars. After 40 days of siege explosives breached the walls and the Russian troops stormed and conquered the city. As a result, Kazan became another Russian province administered by a Russian governor and serviced by the Russian Orthodox Church with its policies of expansion. For the Russians every war they fought became a crusade and every enemy be it Polish, Swedish, Livonian, or Tartars were heathen or heretics. In 1555 Caucasian Christians tribes submitted to Ivan without much effort, the relationship was of mutual benefit that lasted for centuries. Because of the difficult mountainous Caucasian region, Ivan used Cossacks (by now mostly Russians or other European rootles man), to shore up Russian position in the Caucasus. Depending on their origin there were Zaporozhian and Don Cossacks who were used against the Ottoman Turks in the south, and general Cossacks who were used to administer and expand the empire in other areas.

**Siberia** and the significance of its colonization was not well appreciated by the government and was mainly left to private individuals to exploit its resources. This was unusual as most land in European Russia was controlled and allocated by the state for services granted. Siberian population was mostly nomadic, sparse, and backward. In particular, the Stroganov family made their fortune by exploiting the wealth of Siberia and expanding the Russian influence to the Pacific.

As the extensive warfare became very costly, higher taxes needed to be collected to support the war efforts, and opposition to his policies raised among the nobles and the peasants. To get his ways, for a while Ivan even left Moscow and moved all his wealth to a small town close to Moscow. The purpose was to demonstrate his popularity with the people (who indeed followed him) and to show that he is essential for the running of the state. This worked and Ivan was given *carte blanche* to rule as he wanted to. His plan was to eliminate opposition to his exercise of autocracy, which he deemed essential if Russia was to fulfill its imperial potential.

To maintain his autocratic rule, in 1565, the 35 year old Ivan created an organization called ***Oprichnina***. Oprichnina was a state within a state, it owned large properties and was run by Ivan's trustees who wore black cowls (hoods) and carried brooms and dog's heads at their saddles. The Church also owned and controlled largest portion of the agricultural land, but Ivan's effort to restrict the Church's wealth was not very successful. By 1565 the murder of Ivan's political opponents in a most cruel way began; Ivan is known to himself participate in violence against his opponents. To ensure that Russia will be able to administer the empire, the law was changed so that the entire nobility class and the peasants became servants of the tsar. To get his way the ***Oprichnina*** became an instrument of maintaining permanent terror and fear in the population, the nobility and peasants.

The need for getting access to western goods strengthened Ivan's resolve to get access to the Baltic Sea. The intense and brutal west-wart push started with Livonia (currently the Baltic States) and soon the Russians took over the town of Narva, situated on the Narva River which leads to the Baltic Sea. However, as the war dragged on Livonia asked for help from other countries (Sweden, Poland, and Denmark) and the brutality of the Russian invasion in a Mongolian style in Livonia and Poland became widely known across Europe. Hate literature against Russia was widely distributed. The strain of maintaining wars in the south and north-west eventually precipitated a crisis for the Russian state.



**Swedish Empire in the Baltic.** The beginning of the Empire is usually taken as the reign of Gustavus Adolphus, who ascended the throne in 1611, and the end as the loss of territories in 1721 following the Great Northern War.

Despite the never ending wars against Catholic Lithuania and Poland in the west; Sweden in the north; and Muslim powers in the south, and large war expenses, Ivan had few results to show for it. In 1569, Lithuania merged with Poland and many Orthodox Christians converted to Catholicism. By 1577 Livonia was temporarily under Russian domination, but within 2 years the domination was lost and Ivan became a broken man. The strains and costs of Ivan's wars of imperial expansion and the internal upheaval he created in his attempt to pay for his campaigns contributed to an economic crisis which struck Russia in the latter part of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Many urban settlements were abandoned as the inhabitants fled to the countryside. The large amount of land was allocated to servitors for services, however, they needed peasants to work on the land. Peasants often ran away if they did not like the working conditions. To make the system of land allocation for services work, peasants needed to be tied to the land. The system of land allocation eventually led to serfdom, but also to systematic Russian expansion eastward.

In his later years Ivan has become a wild-eyed, slightly deranged figure. He swung between volcanic fits of drunkenness and depravity. By March 1584, at 50 years of age and 37 years long reign, Ivan was dead; an autopsy of Ivan's remains in the 1960's established that he had a painful condition *ankylosing spondylitis* (inflammation, even fusion of the spine) that caused his spine to be locked in a painful stooping position. Inhalation of mercury vapors, prescribed to ease the pain, resulted in neurological damage which caused insomnia and contributed to his frequent attacks of rage. In one of those attacks he accidentally killed his son Ivan who was groomed to become his successor. At the end of his life, in despair, Ivan himself conceded failure in the war with Livonia and admitted that he had brought ruin to his country, and to many of his people.

A British ambassador to Russia wrote about the astonishing unchecked power of the Russian tsar: "The form of the government is plain tyrannical! All are behooved to the prince after a most barbarous manner. In most matters of state all pertain wholly and absolutely to the emperor, as he may be both commander and executioner of all."

Ivan IV's reign left only the autocrat and his subservient people. Any formation of independent estates with their powers as existed as in the Western Europe was stopped. No independent structure of institutions mediated power between them existed. The Church saw its influence wane. No infrastructure of laws and rights and no civic society -no middle class- were allowed to form. This legacy of autocratic despotism as a model of society became a major obstacle to reform Russia in later years.

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=ivan+the+terrible+part+2+youtube&view=detail&mid=D6837244663E42F5C439D6837244663E42F5C439&FORM=VIRE>



*Oprichnina*

### 4.3 Times of Troubles (1598 - 1613)

The new tsar **Feodor** (r. 1582-1589), the elder of Ivan's two surviving sons, was rumored to be of limited mental ability, and the country was essentially run by regents. One of the regents was shrewd Boris Godunov who also served under Ivan IV in the Oprichnina. He was the main spirit behind the new plans after Ivan IV death. Cessation of the war with Livonia and of the terrorizing by Ivan's *oprichnina* led to recovery of the economy, of the diplomatic ties with Western Europe, and people settling back into abandoned cities and villages. In 1591 Moscow became an independent patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church, making the church a national church.



Ivan IV the Terrible, Feodor, Ivan's second son, and Boris Godunov

A new tax law abolished tax privileges of hereditary estate holders and exempted others from heavy taxation to promote commerce. The government also took radical measures to develop south and south-east by building new towns. The government also extended its administration to the Siberia's native population, the hunters and trappers, who had to pay taxes in kind. The administrative system expansion consisted of a strategic and systematic erection of log-forts manned by servitors; these also served as a defense system for the population.

In 1591 the younger brother of Feodor, Dimitrii, suddenly died in an accident; a misadventure while playing with a sharp knife. Without any evidence, Dimitrii's family and the church started to perpetuate a lie that Boris Godunov was connected with his murder. In 1598 Tsar Fedor died without leaving an heir and his death created crisis for the state as only vertical succession was allowed now and he was the last of the Rurikid dynasty.

**Boris Godunov** (r. 1598-1605), the regent under Feodor, had great support among the people and nobility as well, and in September 1598 he was enthroned as tsar. He was experienced, relatively young, and judicial in his decision-making; he also had a young intelligent son and Russia seemed predestined to prosper. Yet, a drastic change in weather patterns known as the **Little Ice Age** started the first year Boris became tsar. The persistent bad weather caused famine; the crops were destroyed by bitterly cold winters and heavy rain storms during the summer and autumn. People were starving and epidemics broke up leading to population migration, public discontent and political dissent. People were dropping dead in the streets, farmers and peasants abandoned the land and migrated to the cities, where they became displaced people. Rumors spread that this is God's punishment for the murder of Dimitrii and Feodor by Boris Godunov. A particularly bad weather lasted for about seven years.

In 1604, **False-Dimitrii**, a pretender who claimed to be the dead Dimitrii, suddenly appeared on the scene. Supported by Poland and Ukraine, and some Russian rebels, he gained sufficient military power to cause havoc. On April 1605 Boris died, probably of heart disease. While Boris's son Fodor was only 16 and frightened of the situation, False-Dimitrii was a star and slowly people were coming his way. In May 1605 a large crowd seized the Godunov family and the Patriarch and eventually Fedor and his mother were strangulated. On June 1605 False-Dimitrii was crowned the tsar. Soon, however, rumors spread that he was a defrocked monk; that he was a puppet of the Jesuits; that he was executing orthodox monks; that he had promised to cede Russian territory the king of Poland; and that he was going to convert Russians to the Catholic Church. On top of it, that he was a sex maniac. At his wedding ceremony a scuffle broke out at which he met his death.

A new tsar **Vasilii Shuiskii** was crowned; he was however without any support and power, and the country was bankrupt. Other new pretenders kept appearing, and rebellions connected with the bad economic situation in the country were tearing the country apart. Moreover, Russian neighbors Poland, Sweden, and the Tartars, were beginning to move in like jackals on a dying beast to dismember the empire. In 1610 Vasilii Shuiskii was dethroned and a new Polish prince was elected as the tsar, and Polish troops moved to Moscow. The Swedes troops took Novgorod. In January 1613 the Russian people formed a militia that forced Polish troops out of Moscow and a call came out all around the Russia for delegates to come to Moscow to choose a new tsar.

On February 21, 1613, the sixteen years old **Michael Romanov** was chosen by the delegates as the new tsar. Romanovs were a rich Russian family, related to the Rurik princes, but during the time of troubles they suffered and lost their wealth and prestige. When elected, Michael and his mother were hiding in a monastery and the father Filaret Romanov was kept a prisoner by the Poles. Michael was not well educated and was of a weak physical constitution. When delegates from Moscow found him, he and his mother both refused to accept the nomination. Nevertheless, persistent begging and eventually crying by the delegates made him accept. Michael was crowned on July 1613. He inherited a broken-down country and a ransacked Kremlin and Moscow.



A crowd at the Ipatiev Monastery imploring Mikhail Romanov's mother to let him go to Moscow and become their tsar (Illumination from a book dated 1673)

The tale of Ivan Susanin, who sacrificed himself when the Poles plotted to kill the tsar Michael and let the Poles into the deep forest where they all froze to death, was later on (19<sup>th</sup> century) written into an opera by Mikhail Glinka, **Life for the Tsar**, and has the famous tune “Slavnya Ty, Rus Moya”. The Communists used the tune, but changed the story; the song was also sung at Putin’s “coronation”. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5114Jr606VM>

The Times of Troubles left a damaged economy and damaged institutions. But there was a legacy of the bad times for the Russian people: an oppressive autocratic government was preferable to the mayhem of anarchy. However, the fact that they were finally able to organize themselves and rise an army to overthrow a foreign oppressor gave rise to a strong sense of patriotism that was shared across the whole Empire among diverse ethnic and religious groups.

## 5. THE ROMANOV DYNASTY (1613 – 1917)

### 5.1 Recovery of military and economic strength

**Michael Romanov** (r. 1613-1645) was by his nature a pious man who was always depicted in formal, almost symbolic style as a passive, callow youth with a crown and scepter – a sufferer for Christ’s sake. This perception was needed as his government was very much focused on peaceful recovery of a bankrupt country; the image seemed to work as he enjoyed support.

In 1613 the Romanovs sent out wise men across the European courts bearing gifts of sable skins, live falcons and other valuables. The purpose was to announce that Tsar Michael Romanov together with his father Patriarch Filaret now guide Russia and that the Times of Trouble are over. But their brave show masked the sad condition of the bankrupt country. The population was devastated and reduced, and Russia was still defending itself from Poland, Sweden and Tartars in the South. The tsar had to send emissaries to negotiate peace even at a cost of losing territory. Yet, by 1630 normal economic activities were recovered, and by 1670 the pitiable Russia of 1613 was



transformed into a new Goliath with bulging muscles. How was this achieved?

Since all the virgin land was regarded as crown property, the state was anxious to make all cultivable land in Siberia productive. The state encouraged peasants to settle the land by providing to them good support of seeds, food, and infrastructure. In 1648 Cossacks migrating eastwards reached the straits separating Asia from America, eighty years before Vitus Bering. The conquest of Siberia turned out to be a critical factor to the development of the new Empire. The skins of ermines and sables decorated the robes of European nobles, and bearskins were worn by European soldiers. Other assets were rare falcons, oil and grease from the seals, and narwhal and walrus tusks. Siberia turned out to be also rich in minerals, including gold. Expansion into Siberia also provided access to Chinese and Pacific markets, including North America. It was only in 1667, however, that a map of Siberia and its new settlements was drawn and the empire builders were able to appreciate fully the size of its possession. Nevertheless, maintaining the Siberian settlements was difficult given the harsh conditions and no infrastructure for travel. Also, by the 1680’s Russians became engaged in border wars with China in the Far East.

Generally, the native populations of Siberia fared better than other native populations in the world. This is attributed to the fact that the population was very sparse and the Siberian conditions were inhospitable. It is estimated that the whole native population of Siberia was only about 250 thousands. The sparseness limited the spread of epidemics and the inhospitable conditions protected them against the violence of the invaders. Although some of the Russian adventurers or exiles were desperate and violent men, their survival was dependent on cooperation with the natives. The state policy of demanding tribute from the native people often provoked resistance, but the state encouraged non-violence. For example, in 1634 Buriat tribesmen burned down Fort Bratsk, and 10 years later 2,000 armed Buriat tribesmen massacred the Russian settlers in a town. In response, the Tsar Michael has issued an order that “servicemen bring men of newly-discovered lands who do not yet pay tribute under the exalted arm of the Sovereign Tsar, but in a kind, not a violent manner.” Conversion to Christianity was encouraged, but only if the native people wished it of their free will. However, once baptized, a native was regarded as acceptable to enter the tsar’s service. Generally, the Russians were free of anti-native prejudice.

Expansion to the West and South was less successful. In the 1630’s Michael’s father, Patriarch Filaret wanted a revenge against Poland. Russia made two attempts to regain the land it lost during the Times of Troubles. This proved to be premature; two-year war with Poland ended in a humiliating defeat, and later on the Russians had to let go of the Turkish citadel of Azov, which was earlier conquered by the Don Cossacks, for lack of military power.

To improve the fighting capacity of the Russian army, the state started employing foreign military advisers and professional soldiers to fight the ongoing war with Poland and against southern intruders. Also, the Russian arms production was increased and modernized along the western fashion, and western specialists were hired. This stimulated mineral-prospecting and development of the metallurgic and armament industry. In 1639 two of Michael’s sons died, their death took toll on the pious tsar. In 1645 Michael fell ill with scurvy, dropsy and depression. Dropsy is an old term for swelling in the feet and legs which may be due congestive heart failure. In July 1645 Michael Romanov died and his son Alexis became the next tsar.

**Alexis Romanov** (r. 1645-1676) was crowned the tsar under difficult situation. The three plagues of Russia – typhus, Tartars, and Poles— still persisted and in addition in August his mother Eudoxia also died. The teenage tsar swiftly imposed himself on his court in a way his father had never managed. Alexis was one of the best-prepared heirs. He looked the part and lived it too: six feet tall, burly, energetic and healthy, with lustrous red beard. He was an intelligent, restless and sharp-tongued reformer who did not suffer fools gladly. He wrote poems, made sketches and constantly wrote down ideas on every possible subject; he sought foreign technology to improve his army and palaces. Under him the printing press was expanded, many books, especially religious books and bible were printed. Alexis was also deeply religious and played the pious tsar as assiduously as Michael had done; he was called “young Monk” as he spent many hours praying in a chapel.

To conquer Russian drinking habits, Alexis enforced a ban on smoking, drinking, swearing and sexual immorality. In mid-1648 there was a mob uprising in Moscow directed against the corrupted

and oppressive ministers, and high taxes. During this period of instability Alexis needed the support of the nobles. To gain the support Alexis issued a new law that helped the young tsar to consolidate his legitimacy by negotiating an alliance with the nobles. The law would be the foundation of Romanov rule until 1861. It confirmed to the nobles grants of land which were gradually being transformed into **permanent holdings**. Justice would be dispensed by the landowner to their peasants, who were now **serfs under a total control by their masters and prohibited from leaving the estates**. Serfdom has been tightening its grip on Russia's people since Ivan the Terrible and Alexis' new law completed the process. The Russian serfs worked on the landowner's land, owned small plots of land, paid taxes and had to serve in the army. The new law also granted the nobles rights of severe punishment, including brutal beatings and torture of their serfs, and selling serfs. The system was amounted essentially to slavery. In return for Romanov autocracy, Alexis granted the nobles tyranny over the peasantry - 90% of the population.

During Alexis reign Russia began to taste success again after a long interval, and as confidence returned, the regime became more outward looking, and more open to the outside world. The development of the army and the armament industry was further stimulated by the **Thirteen Years War** against Poland in which Russia at last gained the upper hand. The war was precipitated by the developments in Ukraine, where the Orthodox population resented a Catholic Church recruitment campaign. The Cossacks became restive when the Polish landlords were trying to establish great estates and introduce serfdom. This threatened the free farmers-warriors of the frontier zone with loss of the Cossacks' liberties, and led to rebellions against Poles and Jews in 1648 and in 1657 known as the Cossack-Polish War. This led to the creation of Cossack Hetmanate in Ukraine, where Zaporozhian Cossacks allied with Crimean Tartars and local peasantry against the forces of Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Mass atrocities were committed against the Roman Catholic clergy and the Jews. The uprising ended Polish Catholic nobles' domination over the Orthodox Christian population and led to eventual incorporation of eastern Ukraine into Russia. The wars waged by Poland with Russia and Sweden (Russo-Polish War (1654–67)) and Second Northern War (1655–1660), ended the Polish Golden Age and caused a decline of Polish power.

In 1654 Ukrainian Cossacks submitted to the tsar Alexis Romanov. The number of Cossacks funded by the Russian government increased from 40,000 to 60,000. In 1655 Alexis' interest had been raised by a new project, proposed by a Frenchman, to build ships for the international market. To gain access to the sea, in 1656 the Russian army marched on a famous port of Riga situated on the river Western Dvina and its estuary into the open sea. This was an opportune time as Riga was in Swedish possession and Sweden was in financial straits. Nevertheless, the military campaign did not succeed. But in **1667 Russia gained Kiev, Smolensk and eastern Ukraine** (Treaty of Andrusovo). However, securing Ukraine for Russia proved to be a costly business over time, because of constant rebellions of the Cossacks and wars against Crimea Tartars and the Ottoman Turks.



Michael Romanov (r.1613-1645) and Alexis (r. 1645-1676)

During their reign Ivan III and Alexis developed extensive diplomacy and a well-ordered department of external affairs. The department employed professional officers and translators whose task was to collect intelligence from around the world to be available to the tsar when needed. The diplomats and the officers reported and recorded all the information that could potentially be useful to the tsar, and maintained their records for future reference. The systematic, painstaking recording of information was the basis for the Russia's superior system of intelligence in comparison to other countries. Summaries of reports from merchants, monks, diplomats and emigres kept the tsar and his top officials up to date on foreign military and political news. It was their accurate intelligence about international politics that allowed the tsars to play an increasingly more important role in the European politics.

During Alexis's time the Patriarch Nikon of Moscow (1652-1666) who was a member of the Zealot religious sect encouraged the austerity of Alexis'. Nikon was obsessed with Moscow's role as the New Jerusalem. He believed that the corruption of the realm was made only by the deviations of the Church. He turned on foreigners and confined them to so called Foreign (German) Quarters "where they could pray in their infidel Protestant churches, smoke their tobacco and party with whores". As for the church, he ordered that innovations of church rituals sanctioned under Ivan the Terrible must be purged and the pure Byzantine services be restored. Henceforth the sign of the cross must be made only with three fingers instead of two. This, however, met with a strong resistance by the so-called **Old Believers**. The Old Believers were prepared to die unspeakable deaths rather than make a cross with three fingers. The **Old Believers**, or **Old Ritualists** are Russian Orthodox Christians who maintain the liturgical and ritual practices of the Russian Orthodox Church as they existed prior to the reforms of Patriarch Nikon of Moscow.

On March 1669, the forty-three-year old Tsarina Maria (nee Miloslavsky), after twenty one years of marriage, gave birth to her thirteenth child, but the child and the mother died. On January 1670, tsarevich Alexis, an heir to the throne, died leaving only a frail son Fyodor and a sickly toddler Ivan. Alexis felt the urge to produce another heir and on January 1671 married an eighteen-year old Natalya Naryshkina, a black-eyed beauty who was blooming with health. A year later, on May 1672 Natalya gave birth to a sturdy son Peter. Alexis dressed in European fashion, built and enjoyed with his family a theater, and renovated his palaces according to the latest European fashion. On January 1676, while enjoying a comedy theater, he fell ill, his body swelling up alarmingly. No medicine could save the forty-seven year old tsar from dying from renal and cardiac failure. On his deathbed he told crying Natalya "I would have never married you if I had known our time was to be so short", for he could no longer protect her. By the end of Alexis reign in 1676,



Russia made its mark as a European military and diplomatic power to be counted with, rising from ashes after the Years of Troubles. Alexis produced six sons, of whom three survived (Fyodor, Ivan, and Peter) and eight daughters, of whom seven survived (the oldest Sophia).



Old Believers:

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=siberian+old+believers+youtube&view=detail&mid=B00EBB6751485503DC63B00EBB6751485503DC63&FORM=VIRE>

**Fyodor III** (r. 1676-1682), Alexis' eldest son became a tsar at fourteen and Natalya, Alexis young wife, became a regent. The new tsar was breathless, wheezing, and beardless, thin as a reed, cadaverously pale and chronically ill with scurvy. Yet he was intelligent and well educated, determined and enlightened when his health allowed. Because of his ill health he was taken advantage by his mother family, the Miloslavskys, who exiled the Naryshkins and sent Natalya and Peter to the estate Preobrazhenskoe (see below), a hunting lodge outside Moscow.



In 1682 Fyodor unexpectedly died. The second son Ivan was mentally handicapped and the third son Peter (b. 1672), by Alexis's second wife Natalya, was at ten years of age too young to rule. The church and the family of Naryshkins supported Peter's ascension to the throne, however, the Miloslavskys and Ivan's oldest sister Sophia, opposed the move. Sophia and the Miloslavskys spread rumors around Moscow that Feodor III had been poisoned and Ivan strangled by boyars so that the 10-year-old Peter could become Tsar. These rumors in addition to the grievances of the *streltsy* (Musketeers) that their wages were stolen by corrupt colonels led to a three-day uprising of the *streltsy* and the Old Believers. The *streltsy* were hereditary corps of about 25,000 infantry founded by Ivan the Terrible to guard the tsar and Kremlin. They were a fearsome sight with their

muskets, scarlet wardrobe and fur-rimmed hats. The disturbances subsided after both Ivan and Peter appeared in person to prove that Ivan was alive. The streltsy and Sophia demanded that Ivan be named tsar. A compromise was found by declaring Ivan and Peter to be co-rulers, with a regency government by Sophia until the boys came of age. Sofia (r. 1682-1689), was intelligent and determined and had been influential at court during Feodor III's reign. The leading Musketeers were executed and the Older Believers who participated in the rebellion were burned at stake. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LVBHi70OluE>

## **5.2 Reign of Peter the Great of Russia (r. 1682-1725)**

**Ivan V and Peter II became tsars and Sophia a regent (1682-1689).** The first priority of the new government was to establish a permanent peace with Poland. On July 1683, the Ottoman Turks launched a bid to conquer the West; they besieged Vienna and only the intervention by the brave Polish king Jan Sobieski prevented Vienna's capitulation by defeating the Ottoman army. As the Turks retreated, Sophia agreed with Poland to join Christendom's Holy League and attack the Sultans' ally, the Khan of Crimean Tartars in return for a perpetual ownership of Kiev and much of Ukraine. In 1686 Poles ceded Kiev and other territory to Russia in return for a payment of 150,000 Rubles. Sophia and her Chief of the Foreign Office, bojar Vasily Golitsin, who was also her lover, organized two unsuccessful attacks on Crimea Tartars in 1687 and 1689.

In the meantime Peter spent all the time in the estate Preobrazhenskoe where he trained his own army under the advice of a Scottish military expert Gordon and learned how to construct a ship. Peter also spent time at the Foreign Quarters learning about new things as well as partying, drinking and womanizing. In 1689, at 17 years of age, after a traditional bride show, Peter was married to a Russian girl Eudoxia. To everybody's amazement the same year tsar Ivan, who was physically and mentally challenged, produced a daughter with his wife Praskovia who was known to find Ivan repulsive. Eventually Ivan's marriage produced three daughters and the middle one, Anna, would become Empress of Russia. It was suspected that the children were by the lover of Praskovia.

After the last disastrous attack on Tartars led by Sophia's lover Golitsin, Peter showed his disrespect for Sophia, who pretended that Golitsin won against the Tartars. Sophia wanted to get rid of Peter and organized an attack on Peter at Preobrazhenskoe; this was the last straw for Peter, he got some of the streltsy on his side and marched with his army on Kremlin and eventually confined Sophia to a monastery.

**Peter I the Great** (r. 1689-1725) was raised amid the most savage political strife in the Russian court. By talent and temperament he saw himself as a warlord. One result of Sophia's overt exclusion of Peter from the government was that he did not receive the usual education of a Russian tsar; he grew up in a free atmosphere instead of being confined within the narrow bounds of a palace. His first alcoholic tutor, the church clerk Nikita Zotov, could give little to satisfy Peter's curiosity, and the boy enjoyed noisy outdoor games and took especial interest in military matters. He occupied himself with carpentry, joinery, blacksmith's work, and printing. Even after Sophia lost her power, he spent lots of time at Preobrazhenskoe where he drilled his army while his handicapped brother Ivan participated in the unproductive rituals of the Muscovite court. But everybody knew where the power was. Peter ruled through a small circle of his relatives from his grandfather, father and brother. Peter had an iron metabolism for alcohol, and to rise at Peter's

court, a steely capacity for alcohol consumption was essential. Peter organized large drinking parties, where freak shows of dwarfs, giants, jesters, extreme obesity, etc. entertained the participants. Peter seemed like a circus master, making no division between business and bacchanalia right up to his death. His company of drinking cronies, the All-Drunken Synod, overlapped with top generals, secretaries, admirals and fools. Despite his seemingly godless behavior, Peter was a strong believer in God and his own holy monarchy. He was a born autocrat, as a visionary he was meticulous and industrious, compulsively regulating every detail of every enterprise, scrawling orders on numbered lists. His vision was to modernize Russia, to build up its armed forces, to compel its elites to serve his vision, to find gifted people to direct his monumental projects.

In 1695, at twenty-three years of age, Peter marched his army south to attack the Ottoman fortress Azov at the river Don's mouth into the Sea of Azov. He soon realized that he needed artillery and called the siege off to devote himself to building a first Russian fleet at the town of Voronezh. While at Azov his brother Ivan died and with him the traditional Muscovy court. In the spring of 1696 Peter finally conquered Azov with an army of 46,000 and built a new port of Taganrog, the first challenge to the Ottoman mastery of the Black Sea.



Peter was determined to learn the new western technologies and the trade of ship building. In the spring of 1697, at 25 years of age, he left behind his court, a risky business in Russia, and with an entourage of 250 Russian officials, cooks, soldiers, etc., he traveled incognito as Peter Mikhailov around Europe. While he traveled through the Holy Roman Empire, admiring western technologies, the west was startled by the unruly behavior of the Russians. In August 1697 he enrolled as a shipyard apprentice in Holland to learn naval architecture [the monument The Tsar Carpenter in St. Petersburg; the opera Zar und Zimmermann (Tsar and Carpenter) by Albert Lortzing;]. Later on he dispatched 50 Russian nobles to Holland to learn about ship building. In Holland he observed medical procedures, bought a set of surgical instruments, and if any of his company needed a surgical operation or a tooth pulled out, he insisted on doing it himself. In January 1698 he arrived in London where he met King William III, watched parliament in session, and picked up an English actress as a companion from whom he caught venereal disease. The beautiful house that his entourage was provided with was devastated during their stay and they developed a reputation of being “wild animals”. On the way back he stopped in Vienna to meet the Holy Roman Emperor, 60 years old Leopold I, King of Bohemia, Hungary, Austria, and Germany (1656-1705), who ruled from his 17 to 65 years of age, one of the longest rulers, to discuss attack on the Ottoman Turks; however the Austrian signed in the meantime peace treaty with Turkey. In Poland he met the newly elected king Augustus the Strong known to be very promiscuous. After his unsuccessful visit to Vienna, he diverted his interest to the Baltics and changed the purpose of his visit. His purpose became the demolition of the Swedish empire to gain access to the Baltic Sea. On his trip he received a note that musketeers of the Azov fortress rebelled

against their confinement in the Azov fortress and marched on Moscow; they were taken prisoners and about 2,000 of them awaited Peter's return.

On September 1689 Peter returned from his trip with many new ideas. At a welcoming reception, clean shaven Peter dressed in western clothes, ordered the boyars' beards to be shaved off and their Russian long dresses shortened and westernized. He kidnapped his own son Alexis from his wife, and sent his wife to a monastery. He then attended to tortures of 2,000 musketeers kept as prisoners.

On August 1700, Peter backed by allies Poland and Denmark attacked Sweden. The so-called Second Northern War, also called **Great Northern War**, lasted for 21 years till 1721. In this military conflict Russia, Denmark-Norway, and Saxony-Poland challenged the supremacy of Sweden in the Baltic area. But the brave eighteen year old Swedish warrior king Charles XII, known as "the last of the Vikings", took himself the command of his army. Charles and Peter were of the same frame of mind and their duel to death would last for 20 years. Charles's well-equipped and disciplined army defeated the Russians backed by Poles and Denmark, in 1700 at Narva. Peter intensified the militarization and modernization of his army with modern artillery and training, and mobilized the nobility for twenty years of warfare and sacrifice. In January 1708, Charles, deploying 44,000 of the finest troops, invaded Russia. Charles advanced into Russia, but the Russians, who were no match to his large army, were only shadowing, harassing and drawing the Swedes deeper into Russia. Low on supplies Charles waited for a reinforcement, but the Russians interceded the reinforcement, and Charles became stranded with a withering army of 24,000 at Poltava, where in June 1709 he was defeated by the Russian army at the Battle of Poltava. The war resulted in the decline of Swedish influence and the emergence of Russia as a major power in that region. In 1710 the Russians took over the Baltic ports of Riga, Reval, and Vyborg, a strong defence cushion for St. Petersburg, and Peter focused on building his dream capital city of St. Petersburg, named after St. Peter.

**Battle of Poltava 1709**

The decisive victory of Peter I of Russia over Charles XII of Sweden in one of the battles of the Great Northern War. It is widely believed to have been the beginning of Sweden's decline as a Great Power; the Russians took their place as the leading nation of northern Europe. This also meant the rise of Imperial Russia and a temporary end to the independence ambitions of Ukraine. (Wikipedia)

Day in History  
27 June 1709

Peter the Great

27 June 1709 - Battle of the Poltava - Great Northern War

The Battle of Poltava on 27 June 1709 was the decisive victory of Peter I of Russia over the Swedish forces under King Charles XII during the Great Northern War. It is widely believed to have been the beginning of Sweden's decline as a Great Power, as the Russian Empire took their place as the leading nation of northern Europe. Source: British Library (Source: Wikipedia)

In 1703 Peter met a nineteen year old black-eyed, voluptuous Martha Scavronskaya, a servant girl who was a daughter of a peasant. She was orphaned in childhood and adopted by a Lutheran pastor, who married her to a Swedish soldier. On her husband's death, she was captured and marched into a Russian camp, after several short affairs she was finally presented as a laundress to Peter. Peter

became fond of Maria, converted her to orthodoxy, renamed her to Catherine and secretly married her in 1708, and married her formally in 1712. During the Swedish wars Catherine followed Peter with the army and became his great emotional support. Catherine would spend most of her 20 years of their married life pregnant, with 12 children born, but only two girls survived to adulthood (Anna and Elizabeth).

The building of St. Petersburg started after the battle of Poltava. Grandees were ordered to build stone palaces in the European style in the inhospitable, cold, windswept marshes of the Neva River. The cost in human lives of convicts and serfs was enormous as the marshes had to be filled with stones on which the buildings were erected. Peter ordered Italian and German architects to begin building a great European metropolis. He also started moving government departments to St. Petersburg. In 1711 Peter found a new institution, the Senate, a nine-member cabinet, mostly his trusted relatives who were to run the country in his absence. However, he undermined his rational ideas with a tyrannical, idiosyncratic style. He dictated everything, while complaining that the senators were incapable of decision-making, a typical complaint of all Russian autocrats from Ivan the Terrible, Stalin and Putin. In July 1711, the Ottomans marched on Russia, and Peter with an army of only 38,000 was overmatched by Ottomans' 150,000, but the Russian artillery, helped to prevent a total disaster and capture of Peter by the Ottoman Turks. Eventually a settlement was reached under which Russia lost the Azov Fort. Peter methodically continued his attack on Sweden, taking over the Baltic States, conquering Norway, invading Sweden, and finally in 1714 he defeated the Swedish navy. But he was still worried about Charles XII.

Poltava changed Russian status in Europe, Russia became a great power and the Romanovs were no longer the barbarians from the eastern back-water of Europe. The unfulfilled aspirations of Michael and Alexis to marry their children into European royalty was now fulfilled under Peter the Great. He married Anna, daughter of his half-brother Ivan V, to a duke of Courland in 1711. The duke died, however, shortly after the wedding and Anna became stranded and poor in Courland. The same year Peter married his son Alexis, his son from his first wife Eudoxia, to Charlotte of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel. After Alexis was removed from Eudoxia, Peter placed Alexis under the governorship of the harsh Alexis Menshikov (Peter's best companion), who bullied the boy and taught him to drink heavily. Now at twenty-two Alexis was scared of Peter and disliked all his pursuits of western cultures, expertise, technology, and the brutal wars Peter initiated.

Also, Alexi did not like the idea of him marrying a foreign girl, in addition Charlotte was scared of Peter and of living in Russia. Eventually she bore two children to Alexis; the son Peter who become the Russian Tsar Peter II. But, Peter the Great suspected that Alexis was against everything that he has been building up in Russia. In 1716, Alexis, afraid that Peter wants to have him eliminated, and on advice of others, ran away to Europe where he ended up at the Viennese court. The Austrian emperor secretly moved him to a castle in Tyrol. Peter, however, learned about it and sent an ambassador to Vienna to persuade the Emperor to give up Alexis. At the same time he asked Alexis to sign a document giving up his succession to the throne. Then Peter declared his baby son from Catherine, Petrushka, as his heir.

Peter then watched as all the Alexis associates, mostly important men who resented Peter's despotism and wanted to help the young tsarevich to escape Peter's destruction, were tortured to

death or beheaded. Peter promised Alexis that he will be safe in Russia: “I assure you and promise to god that I won’t punish you”. Nevertheless, on Alexis return to Moscow in January 1718, Peter made Alexis to denounce his associates, and Alexis was tortured to death under Peter’s supervision to provide names of his collaborators. It is suspected that Peter killed Alexis himself as he did not want him to become a tsar.

The forty-six year old Peter remained focused on his driving ambition to build Petersburg and to change Russia. Even while he supervised torturing Alexis, Peter was directing a multinational team of architects on a variety of projects. Although his social life revolved around frequent drinking parties of the Drunken Synod, Peter wanted to foster civilization he has admired in the West. He issued various orders and regulations on how a polite society of Russia should dress and behave – his guide to civilized behavior.

Peter’s creativity came at a terrible price. Building of St. Petersburg came with a horrendous human cost. The city was built by slaves and convicts sentenced to forced hard labor. Nameless legions of men perished while building the city on the marches of the Narva River, fulfilling Peter’s dream. Peter also establish another Russian town, Yekaterinburg (named after his second wife Catherine I), in the Ural region which was rich in iron and other minerals. The city become a third largest city and a prominent industrial center in modern Russia.

On 1719 Charles XII of Sweden, the warrior king, was shot dead. On September 1721 Peter launched an assault on the coast of Sweden, raiding Stockholm itself, until the new king sued for peace, thus ending the 20 year war with Russia. Having completed the European wars, Peter was ready to fight Muslims in the east. He also reformed the legislation, he believed that universal state service should be the only condition for eminence in society. Military service became superior to civil service and he created a Table of Ranks, to encourage competition among the nobles. Even sons of peasants could achieve nobility. Nobility became a reward for service.

Peter became ill with sever bladder infection caused by the sexually transmitted disease he caught on his visit to London and on January 1725 he could not pass urine and died of the infection. Because his only son by Catherine, Peter, died at three years of age, on his death bed Peter could not decide on his succession to the throne. Finally, Peter aged fifty-two, in the forty-third year of reign, died without naming a successor.

### **5.3 The reign of Empresses**

Catherine I (r. 1725-1727) Peter’s the Great second wife became the first female ruler of Russia. She was popular among the military and many nobles. Being already crowned, Alexis Menshikov, Peter’s best lieutenant, proposed that Catherine be proclaimed an autocrat. He knew that Catherine had no ambitions to rule or change Russia and that he can take advantage of it. She embraced Petrine debauchery even before the end of official mourning. Those amusements became almost daily drinking bouts which would last the entire night and into the next day. Catherine also enjoyed young men, many of whom became her lovers. During her short reign, the corrupt former lieutenant of Peter, Alexei Menshikov, became the richest and most influential man in Russia. Within two years of Peter’s death, in 1727, Catherine died, likely of heavy drinking and disorderly lifestyle.

**Peter II** (r. 1727-1730), the grandson of Peter the Great, and son of Alexis (d. 1718) and Charlotte of Brunswick-Wolfenbützel. He was an orphan after his father's death and was rather neglected by Peter the Great. At 11 years of age he was declared emperor of all Russia. Peter's the Great daughters, Anna and Elizaveta, were meant to act as joint regents, but the despotic Alexei Menshikov immediately took control. However, the young tsar Peter II soon rejected Menshikov's scheming and sent already sick Menshikov and his family to an exile in Siberia where they all perished. Peter II moved the court from St. Petersburg to Moscow and mostly rejected the work of his grandfather Peter the Great; presumably because of the way Peter the Great dealt with his father Alexei, who was accused of treason and torched to death. He pardoned all the conspirators exiled in the Alexei's case, and declared that he was not going to support his grandfather's navy nor continue with the ongoing military pursuits. He became very popular among the Russian people because of his Russian ways and his inactivity after his grandfather's hyperactive tyranny. He was quick-witted, but did not show interest in governing and lived a reckless lifestyle, spending much time feasting, playing cards and enjoying the company of women while the country was sliding into chaos. On the 3rd year the popular tsar died of smallpox. With Peter's death, the direct male line of Romanov Dynasty ended. He was succeeded by **Anna Ivanovna** daughter of Peter the Great's half-brother Ivan V.



**Anna** (r. 1730-1740), daughter of Ivan V (d. 1696) and Praskovia. Ivan V was mentally deficient to such an extent that he would remain in a nearly vegetative state for hours on end. He could walk only with the support of courtiers and was capable only of performing ceremonial functions as czar, while Peter the Great, Anna's uncle and co-czar, performed most of the real court. Her mother wasn't a happy woman and sternly believed in maintaining the Old Russian ways of little education for girls; Anna was barely literate, and she wasn't pretty. Peter II married Anna to the duke of Courland. Two days after the couple's marriage, Peter staged a wedding of two dwarfs as a companion celebration to Anna's. It was an incredibly elaborate affair and was meant as a parody of Anna's wedding and a mockery of the Russian court manners. This hurt deeply Anna's feelings. In addition Peter made Anna's new husband drink heavily and on the way to Courland he died. Anna became duchess of Courland which she ruled for 20 years. She remained stranded as a poor widow in Courland without much financial support for twenty years (1711-1730). There she lived an unhappy life of an unmarried woman with a married, uneducated, and coarse lover Biron, her former groom for comfort. For strategic reasons Peter the Great did not allow Anna to remarry or return to Russia.

This all changed after Peter's II death, when it was decided by the Russian court council that she would be a suitable candidate to continue the Romanovs dynasty as a figurehead. After twenty years of humiliation, she signed a document that she will not interfere in the ruling of Russia; she was ready to sign anything to leave Courland. In Moscow, she cleverly rejected the agreement and became an Autocrat of All Russia.

Anna moved the court back to St. Petersburg and supported Peter's navy and westernization programs. During Anna's reign the Academy of Science established by Peter I continued and began to include the Arts into their program as Anna was a firm supporter of arts. Theater, architecture, engraving, and journalism were added to the curriculum. The foundations of the world-famous Russian Ballet was laid down as well.

During her reign Anna led a costly four year **war (1735-1739) against the Ottoman Empire** which ended by the defeat of the Ottomans and Russia winning back Azov and part of Caucasus. The cost of the war was huge a hundred thousand men and millions of rubles and great stress on the people of Russia.

Nevertheless, the campaign dissipated the illusion of Ottoman invincibility, the Tatar hordes of the Crimea had been destroyed, and Russia's unexpected successes greatly increased its prestige within Europe.

As an autocrat she led a pleasure-seeking lifestyle, spent vast sums on clothes, carriages, palaces, Italian theater, but she lacked in sophistication and culture. She was also a malicious bully, who enjoyed humiliating the established nobility in cruel games, where she reduced them to a statues of court jesters. She build an ice palace in St. Petersburg where she organized a wedding part for the aristocrat Michael Golitsin, who recently lost his wife, to a middle aged Kalmyk servant and she made them to spend a night there; they survived and the maid later delivered two sons. While Anna enjoyed her ostentatious lifestyle she promoted her favorites to power. Her foreign affairs was run by a German man Osterman who did so under Catherine I, and the internal affairs was run by her lover Biron who now became a powerful man in Russia. The Secret Office of Investigation was resurrected during Anna's reign to punish severely mostly for political crimes. The punishments were often very painful and disgusting. For example, some people that had supposedly been plotting against the government had their noses slit or were knouted. Russian authorities listed around 20,000 Russians—including some of the highest Russian nobility—who fell victim to Biron's police.



Anna, map of Corland, and her ice palace where she organized a wedding for the aristocrat Michale Golitsin.

In choosing an heir, Anna disliked the beautiful Elizaveta, the younger daughter of Peter the Great, who was next in line for the throne. To prevent Elizaveta from becoming the empress, Anna married her 13 year old niece, Anna Leopoldovna, to Anton Ulrich of Brunswick hoping that she will produce a male soon. Indeed Anna Leopoldovna produced a son Ivan. During the summer 1740 Anna became ill and died at the age of forty-six. The two month old baby became the Tsar **Ivan VI** (r. 1740-1741) and his frivolous mother Anna Leopoldovna an regent. The rule of Anna Leopoldovna and the Tsar Ivan VI was very unpopular among the Russians and on November 1741, in a palace coup led by Elizaveta, Anna's family was arrested and incarcerated for the rest of their lives at a Baltic fortress. Ivan was kept a prisoner in isolation from others until 24 years of age when he was killed by guards under Catherine II.



Anna Leopoldovna her son Ivan VI and Elizabeth Petrovna

**Elizabeth Petrovna** (r. 1741-1762), (Elizaveta) a beautiful Russian Venus, was a daughter of Peter the Great and his second wife Catherine I. She gained power in a palace coup in November 1741. Of the twelve children born to Peter and Catherine, only two daughters, Anna (b. 1708) and Elizabeth (b. 1709,) survived to adulthood. Elizabeth, a favorite of her father, resembled him both physically and temperamentally. She was a bright if not brilliant girl, but received only a limited formal education. Like her father, Elizabeth was physically active and loved riding, hunting, sledging, and skating. She delighted everyone with her extraordinary beauty and vivacity, and was regarded as the leading beauty of the Empire.



Peter the Great desired to see his children married into the royal houses of Europe. With Peter's only son and heir, Alexis, born to a nobleman's daughter, no problem was encountered in securing a bride from the ancient house of Brunswick-Luneburg. However, it was more difficult to arrange similar marriages for the daughters born to Catherine I, his second wife, who had formerly been a laundry woman. In 1724, Peter betrothed his daughters to two young princes, first cousins to each other, from the tiny north German principality of Holstein-Gottorp. Anna Petrovna (aged 16) married Charles Frederick, Duke of Holstein-Gottorp, who was then living in exile in Russia as Peter's guest as Holstein-Gottorp was under Danish occupation. Elizabeth was betrothed to Charles Frederick's first cousin. Anna's wedding was held in 1725 as planned, even though Peter I died few weeks before the nuptials. Elizabeth's fiancé died, however, before her wedding and unfortunately, Catherine I also died just two weeks before Elizabeth's fiancé.

Thus, Elizabeth (aged 17) had lost her fiancé and both of her parents; and furthermore, her half-nephew Peter II (son of Peter the Great son Alexis) was on the throne. Her marriage prospects immediately dried up. They did not improve under Empress Anna (r. 1730-40), a daughter of Peter the Great's elder brother Ivan V. There was little love lost between the cousins and no prospect of either any Russian nobleman or any foreign prince seeking Elizabeth's hand in marriage. Elizabeth's response to the lack of marriage prospects was to take lovers. Elizabeth eventually found her long-term companion in Alexi Razumovsky, a handsome Ukrainian peasant serf with a good bass voice. Elizabeth purchased the talented serf from a nobleman for her own choir. Elizabeth was devoted to Razumovsky.



Under Anna's rule, Russia had been under the domination of German advisers, and Elizabeth exiled most unpopular of them. Fortunately for Russia, Elizabeth, with all her shortcomings had inherited some of her father's genius for government. The substantial changes made by Elizabeth's father, Peter the Great, had no real formative influence on the intellectual attitudes of the ruling classes. Elizabeth made considerable impact and laid the groundwork for her successor, Catherine II. Elizabeth reconstituted the senate as it had been under Peter the Great with the chiefs of the departments of state being all Russians.

Her first task after this was to address the war with Sweden. Elizabeth had wisely placed Aleksey Bestuzhev-Ryumin at the head of foreign affairs immediately after her accession. On August 1743, Sweden ceded to Russia all of southern Finland east of the Kymmene River. This triumphant result can be credited to the diplomatic ability of the new vice chancellor, Aleksey Bestuzhev-Ryumin. His main objective was to bring about an Anglo-Austro-Russian alliance. His faultless diplomacy, and an auxiliary Russian corps of 30,000 men sent to the Rhine, greatly accelerated the peace negotiations in **War of the Austrian Succession (1740-48)**. Europe's war over the eligibility of Maria Theresa's succession to rule the Habsburg Monarchy after Charles VI death. By sheer tenacity of purpose, Bestuzhev had extricated his country from the Swedish predicament; reconciled his imperial mistress with the courts of Vienna and London; and isolated the King of Prussia by forcing him into hostile alliances. Elizabeth trusted Bestuzhev, however, in 1758 he was removed from office.

The great event of Elizabeth's later years was the **Seven Years' War**. A large-scale conflict that drew in most of the European powers was centered on Austria's desire to recover the industrial and rich Silesia that Frederick the Great invaded and annexed to Prussia when Maria Teresa became Empress of the Holy Roman Empire in 1740. Seeing the opportunity to curtail Britain's and Prussia's ever-growing might, France and Austria formed a grand coalition of their own, bringing most of the other European powers to

their side. Elizabeth sided against Prussia over a personal dislike of Frederick the Great. She wanted him reduced within proper limits so that he might no longer be a danger to the Russian empire. Elizabeth entered into an alliance with France and Austria against Prussia. In May 1757 the Russian army, 85,000 strong, delivered a crushing defeat to the Prussian army, best equipped army in the world, in Königsberg. Königsberg was an Old Prussian city, it later belonged to the monastic state of the Teutonic Knights, the Duchy of Prussia, the Kingdom of Prussia, the Russian Empire and Germany until 1946. After being largely destroyed in World War II by Allied bombing and Soviet forces and annexed by the Soviet Union thereafter, the city was renamed Kaliningrad.



The decisive **Battle of Kunersdorf** occurred in 1759 near Frankfurt an der Oder, 50 miles from Berlin. Part of the Third Silesian War and the wider Seven Years' War, the battle involved over 100,000 men. This represented the penultimate success of the Russian Empire under Elizabeth of Russia and was arguably Frederick's worst defeat that brought Frederick to the ruin. Elizabeth's greatness as a stateswoman consists in her steady appreciation of Russian interests, and her determination to promote them at all costs. She insisted that the King of Prussia must be rendered harmless to his neighbors and that the only way to do so was to reduce him to the rank of a Prince-Elector (i.e., he will have the privilege to vote the king of the Holy Roman Empire). In 1760 Frederick wrote "I'm at the end of my resources, the continuation of this war means for me utter ruin." On May 1760, a convention was signed between Russia and Austria, a secret clause of which guaranteed East Prussia to Russia as an indemnity for war expenses. Elizabeth continued her military campaign totally defeating the Prussian army. In 1762 Frederick was at the last gasp. The Miracle of the House of Brandenburg that snatched him from total destruction was the death of the Russian empress Elizabeth on January 1762 due to heart attack at 53 years of age.

Under the reign of Elizabeth, the Russian court was one of the most splendid in all Europe. Foreigners were amazed at the sheer luxury of the sumptuous balls and masquerades. The Russian court had steadily increased in importance throughout the 18th century and came to hold more cultural significance than many of its Western counterparts due its inclusive nature; all "well to do inhabitants" were welcome at Court. The Court, like most Imperial Courts, was considered a reflection of the ruler at its center and Elizabeth was said to be "the laziest, most extravagant and most amorous of sovereigns." Elizabeth was intelligent but lacked the discipline and early education necessary to flourish as an intellectual; she found the reading of secular literature to be "injurious to health."

Yet, of all her various characteristics manifested in the structure of Court life, the most evident were her extravagance, her vanity, and her gaiety and playful nature. Her court was "arrayed in cloth of gold, her nobles satisfied with only the most luxurious garments, the most expensive foods, the rarest drinks, that largest number of servants and they applied this standard of lavishness to their dress as well." Elizabeth is reported to have owned 15,000 dresses, thousands pairs of shoes. Needing goods shipped from all over the world, postal system and roads were modernized in order to fulfill the Empress's many desires.

Elizabeth's was known for her commitment to the arts, particularly music, theater, and architecture. It is reported that Elizabeth threw two balls a week. The Empress had a longstanding love of theatre and had a stage erected in the palace to enjoy the countless performances she sanctioned. Elizabeth transformed "her court into the country's leading musical center." As to the Empress's love of architecture, she financed many construction projects during her reign. Her most famous creations were the **Winter Palace**, which she commissioned and oversaw the construction of but died before its completion, and the **Smolny Convent**.



Winter Palace, Elizabeth commissioned her court architect Rastrelli to build the Smolny Convent on the bank of the Neva River

As an unmarried and childless empress, it was imperative for Elizabeth to find a legitimate heir to secure the Romanov dynasty. Elizabeth was only too aware that the deposed Ivan VI, whom she had imprisoned in the Schlüsselburg Fortress and placed in solitary confinement, was a threat to her throne. Elizabeth feared a coup in his favor and set about destroying all papers, coins or anything else depicting or mentioning Ivan. Elizabeth had issued an order that if any attempt were made for him to escape, he was to be eliminated. Later on Catherine II upheld the order and when an attempt was made, he was killed and secretly buried within the fortress.

To secure the Romanovs dynasty, Elizabeth invited her young fourteen year old nephew Peter of Holstein-Gottorp (Karl Peter Ulrich) to Saint Petersburg. Peter had lost his mother, Elizabeth's sister Anna, at three months of age and his father at the age of eleven. Peter grew up in Holstein-Gottorp and spoke only German. He had a German guardian and a tutor who was cruel to him and applied severe physical punishments, including withdrawal of food. Apparently, because of this strict upbringing Peter grew up undernourished, undereducated, withdrawn, and with some peculiar personal habits. In Russia he was received into the Orthodox Church and proclaimed an heir to the Russian throne in 1742. Elizabeth gave him at once Russian tutors.



Holstein-Gottorp and Peter of Holstein-Gottorp

Keen to see the dynasty secured Elizabeth settled on **Princess Sophie of Anhalt-Zerbst** (a province of Saxony) as a bride for her nephew Peter. Sophie's mother, Joanna Elizabeth of Holstein-Gottorp, was a sister of Elizabeth's own fiancé who had died of smallpox before the wedding. Historical accounts portray Johanna as a cold, abusive woman who loved gossip and court intrigues. Her hunger for fame centered on her daughter's prospects of becoming empress of Russia, but she infuriated Empress Elizabeth, who eventually banned her from the country for spying for King Frederick of Prussia. On her conversion to the Russian Orthodox Church Sophie was given the name Catherine in memory of Elizabeth's mother Catherine II. The marriage to Peter took place in 1745. Nine years later, a son, the future Paul I, was finally born. There is considerable speculation, supported by Catherine, as to the actual paternity of Paul I. It is suggested that he was not Peter's son at all but that his mother had engaged in an affair, to which Elizabeth had consented, with a young officer, Sergei Saltykov who would have been Paul's real father. Peter never gave any indication that he believed Paul to have been fathered by anyone but himself, but he also did not take any interest in the parenthood. On the other hand Elizabeth took an active interest. She removed the baby Paul from Catherine at birth and acted as if she were his mother instead of Catherine. Catherine was not to see her child for another month. The child had in effect become a ward of the state to

be brought up by Elizabeth as she believed he should be: as a true heir and great-grandson of her father, Peter the Great.



Elizabeth preferred to sojourn in the wooden Summer Palace

**Significance of Elizabeth reign.** Elizabeth altered the Russian system of punishment, even outlawing capital punishment. She led the country during the two major European conflicts of her time: **the War of Austrian Succession (1740–48) and the Seven Years' War (1756–63)** and gained more land for Russia. On the eve of her death Russia spanned almost 16.2 million square kilometers (6.2 million sq. mi). (US Land Area is 9.2 million sq. km and Canada is 10.0 million sq. km = 19.2 sq. km together). Her domestic policies allowed the nobles to gain dominance in local government while shortening their terms of service to the state. She encouraged Mikhail Lomonosov's establishment of the University of Moscow and Ivan Shuvalov's foundation of the Imperial Academy of Arts in Saint Petersburg. She also spent exorbitant sums of money on the grandiose baroque projects of her favorite architect, Bartolomeo Rastrelli, particularly in Peterhof and Tsarskoye Selo. The Winter Palace and the Smolny Cathedral in Saint Petersburg are among the chief monuments of her reign. She remains one of the most popular Russian monarchs due to her strong opposition to Prussian policies and her decision not to execute a single person during her reign.



Peterhof



Tsarskoye Selo



**Peter III** (r. 1761-1762) grandson of two emperors Peter the Great and Charles XII and heir to the throne of Russia and Sweden. Peter had immaculate pedigree, son of Peter's daughter Anna and Charles XII son the duke of Holstein-Gottorp. An heir to the Swedish and Russian throne. Peter allegiance was towards Prussia, he dislike being in Russia, the Orthodox Church, and did not care about the Russian people. Peter succeeded to the throne after Elizabeth died on December 1761.

Once on the throne, Peter III reversed his aunt's foreign policy, withdrew Russia from the Seven Years War and struck an alliance with Prussia, Russia's enemy. He set out to wage war against Denmark and gain back his native land of Holstein. The move was seen as a betrayal of Russian war sacrifices and alienated him

politically among the military and powerful court cliques. During his short reign, Peter III also instituted many domestic reforms that today seem democratic. Most important was reform about partial freedom of nobility from state service, secularization of the properties of the Church, introduction of Prussian uniforms and Prussian military leadership. Others, including proclaiming religious freedom, abolishing the secret police and outlawing the killing of serfs by their landowners were also progressive. He established the first state bank in Russia and encouraged mercantilism by increasing grain exports and placing embargos on materials that could be found in Russia.

There is wide speculation as to Peter III's demise. Traditionally, it has been believed that he had alienated the Orthodox Church and much of the nobility with his reforms, and that because his personality and policies were seen as so bizarre and unpredictable, these factions went to Catherine for help and plotted against him. But recent scholarship points to Catherine as the mastermind of a conspiracy with her lover, Grigory Orlov who was a prominent member of the palace guards, to rid herself of her husband because she thought he was going to divorce her. On June 28, 1762, Peter III was arrested and forced to abdicate. He was taken to Ropsha, outside St. Petersburg, where he was supposedly assassinated on July 17, though this has never been confirmed, and some evidence shows he might have committed suicide.



Peter III and the Grand Duchess Catherine II around the time of their wedding in 1745, and their wedding picture.

**Catherine II** (r. 1762 –1796), (Екатерина Алексеевна) also known as **Catherine the Great**, born **Princess Sophie of Anhalt-Zerbst**, Empress of Russia from 1762 until 1796, the country's longest female leader. She came to power following a *coup d'état* when her husband, Peter III, was assassinated.

**Childhood.** Sophie arrived to Russia in winter 1744 on invitation from the empress Elizabeth. Her mother, Joanna of Holstein-Gottorp, was a sister of Elizabeth's fiancé who had died of smallpox before the wedding. Although Johanna came from impoverished gentry, she was brought up by relatives in a rather luxurious lifestyle which she expected to continue after her marriage. At 15 years of age she married an older retired military man whose simple lifestyle and lack of luxuries made Johanna restless for something more. When Sophie was born she was rather disappointed as she wished for a male heir who may help her to escape her unexciting life. Sophie grew up as a rather lonely, unloved child who spent many hours by herself entertaining herself by reading books. When her younger brother was born she resented her mother's adulation of the boy who was rather sickly and died at a younger age. When Elizabeth's invitation to Russia came, Johanna's hunger for fame centered now on her daughter's prospects of becoming empress of Russia. She bought herself an expensive wardrobe, while Sophie had only three gloomy dresses. Before going to Russia she was invited by Frederick II who asked her to spy for him on Aleksey Bestuzhev-Ryumin. In Russia, Elizabeth very quickly found out about Johanna's spying activities from her letters and banned her from the court and eventually from the country. Sophie worked very hard to endear herself to Elizabeth and the Russian people, she converted to Russian Orthodox Church, which gave her a new name, Catherine, and learned to speak Russian.

**Marriage and ascension to the throne.** The long-planned dynastic marriage to Peter von Holstein-Gottorp, Duke of Holstein-Gottorp, an heir to the Russian throne, occurred on August 1745, when she turned 16. The marriage between Catherine and Peter may not have been initially consummated for several years, but later Peter took a mistress and Catherine likewise took lovers during their marriage.

On indirect approval of Elizabeth, Catherine carried on a liaison with Sergei Saltykov who, according to Catherine, was a father of her first child Paul born 1754; however, her son Paul behaved and looked very much like his father Peter. At some point Peter developed smallpox and survived mainly due to Empress Elizabeth's diligent care, but his face remained covered with poxes and his confidence and behavior was affected. According to Catherine's diaries, Peter spent lots of time in childish pursuits one of them was to dress up his servants in military uniforms and make them perform military drills while ignoring Catherine. In 1755 Catherine fell in love with a handsome twenty-two-year old **Stanislaw Poniatowski**, a romantic and cultured product of enlightenment. In 1757 she had a baby daughter, which may have been a child of Poniatowski, but the child died within 2 years.

In 1759 Catherine met the 25 year old **Grigory Orlov**, who had a distinguished military service. Gigantic in stature, angelic in face, blessed with countenance and manner, but a simple and straightforward man without pretensions. Orlov was heroic in battlefield and legendarily good in the bedroom. By late 1760 Catherine was pregnant again by Orlov. In July 1761 while Russian forces reached Berlin Elizabeth, now 50, collapsed and remained unwell with swollen legs. Elizabeth and others at the court were not very happy with Peter's behavior and his sympathy with Prussia, and tried to organize for Catherine's seven year old son Paul to be named heir and Catherine a regent, to bypass Peter. However, nothing was changed and on Christmas Day 1761, when Elizabeth died, Paul ascended to the throne as Paul III.

After ascension to the throne, Peter III's behavior became quite unbearable, according to information provided in Catherine's diaries (which were rewritten several times). He would announce trying drills in the morning to male servants, who later joined Catherine in her room to sing and dance until late hours. She spent much of this time in her own private boudoir to hide away from Peter's abrasive personality, suspecting that Peter wants a divorce. Peter's strong pro-Prussian sentiments raised opposition against him among the guards and others in the court. Catherine used her lover Grigory Orlov to organize an opposition group against Peter III, and to conduct a palace coup. On July 1762 after a palace coup, Catherine succeeded her husband as Empress Regnant, following the precedent established when Catherine I succeeded her husband Peter the Great in 1725. Catherine was crowned at the Assumption Cathedral in Moscow on September 1762. Peter III was first imprisoned and soon after killed, the Orlov brothers were under suspicion.



The Assumption Cathedral in Moscow Consecrated 1479 in Moscow Kremlin and the Imperial Crown of Russia since 1762.

**Imperial Crown of Russia.** Catherine coronation marks the creation of one of the main treasures of the Romanov Dynasty, the Imperial Crown of Russia. Inspired by the Byzantine Empire design of two gold and silver half-spheres, representing the eastern and western Roman Empires. The crown contains 75 pearls and 4,936 Indian diamonds forming laurel and oak leaves, the symbols of power and strength, and a 398.62-carat ruby spinel necklace owned by Elizabeth, and a diamond cross. The crown, produced in a record two months, weighed 2.3 kg. The Great Imperial Crown became the coronation crown of all Romanov emperors and it is now on display in the Moscow Kremlin Armory Museum.

**Governance under Catherine.** Natural born politician, Catherine was a tireless hard worker, in opposite to Peter III, and she was trying hard not to offend people in the court and to appear a picture of intelligence and imperturbable confidence. She realized that her position was rather weak and she worked hard to get any opposition on her side. Throughout the early years she was a supporter of the Enlightenment, thus

earning the status of an enlightened monarch. She enlisted Voltaire to her cause, and corresponded with him for 15 years, from her accession to his death in 1778. He lauded her accomplishments, calling her "the Star of the North". Though she never met him face to face, she mourned him bitterly when he died and acquired his collection of books from his heirs, and placed them in the National Library of Russia.

Within a few months of her accession in 1762, having heard the French government threatened to stop the publication of the famous French *Encyclopédie* on account of its irreligious spirit, Catherine proposed to Diderot that he should complete his work in Russia under her protection. Four years later, in 1766, she endeavored to embody in legislation the principles of Enlightenment she learned from studying the French philosophers. She called together in Moscow a **Grand Commission**—a consultative council—composed of 652 members of all classes (officials, nobles, burghers, and peasants) and of various nationalities. The Commission was to consider the needs of the Russian Empire and the means of satisfying them. As many of the democratic principles frightened her more moderate and experienced advisors, she refrained from immediately putting them into practice. After holding more than 200 sittings, the Commission dissolved without getting beyond the realm of theory.

In spite of this, Catherine began issuing codes to address some of the modernization trends suggested in her Instructions on Governance (Nakaz). Catherine expanded the number of gubernias established by Peter the Great and reformed the administration of Russian Provinces (guberniyas). An admirer of Peter the Great, Catherine continued to modernize Russia along Western European lines and continued with the reforms introduced by Peter III. In 1775, the Empress decreed a Statute for the Administration of the Provinces of the Russian Empire. The statute sought to efficiently govern Russia by increasing population and **dividing the country into administrative provinces and districts**. By the end of her reign, 50 provinces and nearly 500 districts were created, the government officials were more than doubled, who were spending six times as much as previously on local government.

The period of Catherine the Great's rule, the **Catherine Era**, is often considered the Golden Age of the Russian Empire and the Russian **nobility**. The *Manifesto on Freedom of the Nobility*, issued during the short reign of Peter III and confirmed by Catherine, freed Russian nobles from compulsory military or state service. Construction of many mansions of the nobility, in the classical style endorsed by the Empress, changed the face of the country. The nobility started to travel to Western Europe, learned European languages, especially French, and copied the western fashion in dressing, architecture, and culture.

Although Catherine II was appalled by the slavery in which a large percentage of the Russian peasants were kept, she never improved their condition. Military conscription and the economy continued to depend on the **serfdom**, and the increasing economic demands of the state and private landowners led to increased reliance on serfs. This led to many rebellions, including the large-scale Pugachev's Rebellion of Cossacks and peasants in 1774. Pugachev declared himself to be the tsar Peter III and granted the Russian peasants basic human freedom over a large area. After Pugachev's defeat, Catherine became convinced that it is important to keep the Russian serfs under strict control to prevent further rebellions.

To strengthen her position, in 1785, Catherine conferred on the nobility the Charter to the Nobility, increasing further the power of the landed oligarchs. Nobles in each district elected a Marshal of the Nobility, who spoke on their behalf to the monarch on issues of concern to them, mainly economic ones. However, in the same year, Catherine issued the Charter of the Towns, which distributed all people into six groups as a way to limit the power of nobles and create a middle estate.

The percentage of state money spent on the Russian court increased from 10.4% in 1767 to 11.4% in 1781 to 13.5% in 1795.

**Personal life.** Catherine, throughout her long reign, took **many lovers**, often elevating them to high positions for as long as they held her interest, and then pensioning them off with gifts of serfs and large

estates. Many of her lovers helped her to get and to maintain her power. Her lovers took priority over her own children who never knew family life.

**Stanislaw Poniatowski – to gain control of Poland.** In 1755, 26 years old Catherine, already married to the Grand Duke Peter for some 10 years, met the 22-year-old handsome Poniatowski who became her lover. In 1763, when King Augustus III of Poland died, Catherine supported Poniatowski as a candidate to the Polish throne and sent the Russian army into Poland. Poniatowski accepted the throne, and thereby Catherine gained control of Poland. In 1768, she formally became protector of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, which provoked an anti-Russian uprising in Poland (1768–72). Afterwards she established a system of government fully controlled by the Russian Empire through a Permanent Council. Poniatowski became the last king of Poland. In the 1770s, Prussia, Russia, and Austria (under Maria Theresa) initiated the partitions of Poland. The partition happened in three steps in 1772, 1793 and 1795, by which time Poland ceased to exist as an independent nation till 1918. However, Polish revolts would engage Russia’s army and make it impossible for Catherine II to keep control of Poland.

After the French Revolution of 1789, Catherine rejected many principles of the Enlightenment she once viewed favorably. Afraid of the growing anti-monarchic and democratic movements inside the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, Catherine gave support to a Polish antireform groups and led the Polish–Russian War of 1792-94 to suppress the Polish pro-democratic movement. In 1795 she initiated the complete partitioning of Poland, among Russia, Prussia, and Austria.



Stanislaw Poniatowski, the last King of Poland and a map of partition of Poland by three stages

**Grigory Orlov – to ascend the throne.** He was a distinguished military man who represented a faction in an opposition to Peter III’s pro-Prussian sentiments. By 1759, Catherine and Orlov become lovers. Catherine saw Orlov as very useful as he was popular among the guards and among the opposition to Peter’s reign. He became instrumental in the June 1762 *coup d’état* against her husband Peter III. In April 1762 Catherine bore a son by Count Orlov, Aleksey Bobrinsky, born three months before the deposition and assassination by the Orlov brothers of her husband Peter III. Catherine did not marry Grigory, who proved inept at politics and useless when asked for a political advice. She preferred to remain the Dowager Empress of Russia, rather than marrying anyone. Nevertheless, the relationship lasted for 10 years and ended in 1772 when she learned that Orlov was adulterous. Grigory Orlov and his other three brothers found themselves rewarded with titles, money, swords, and other gifts, and Grigory received a palace in Saint Petersburg when Catherine became Empress.



Catherine II and Count Grigory Orlov, by Fyodor Rokotov



**Grigory Potemkin** (b. 1739 – d. 1791) the greatest favorite of Catherine the Great and her most influential lover. He reached the status of a Russian military leader, statesman, and nobleman. Potemkin was born into a family of middle-income noble landowners. When his father died, his mother moved the family to Moscow so that Potemkin can attend a prestigious gymnasium attached to the University of Moscow. There the young Potemkin excelled at languages and became interested in the Russian Orthodox Church. In 1750, at age eleven, he enlisted in the army, in accordance with the custom of noble children. After graduation from the gymnasium Potemkin became one of the first students to enroll at the University of Moscow. Talented in both Greek and theology, he won the University's Gold Medal in 1757 and became part of a twelve-student delegation sent to Saint Petersburg later that year. He remained in St Petersburg, where he joined the Guards. In 1762 Potemkin participated in the palace coup that ousted the tsar Peter III and soon after was formally presented to the Empress as a talented mimic; his imitation of her was well received and she encouraged his flirtatious behavior which may have got him into trouble with the Orlov brothers who dominated court and cost him his eye. Potemkin lost his left eye, withdrew from the court, and participated in many military battles where he distinguished himself as a military commander in the Russo-Turkish War (1768–1774). In 1772, Catherine wrote to Potemkin that she needed Potemkin's advice on a military strategy. Potemkin quickly gained positions at the court and awards. He later became the de facto absolute ruler of New Russia, governing its colonization. He became Catherine's lover, favorite and possibly her consort sometime after 1774 when Catherine was under duress and in need of an intelligent consort. The frequent letters the pair sent to each other survived, revealing their affair to be one of "laughter, sex, mutually admired intelligence, and power". Many of their trysts happened around the *banya* (sauna) in the basement of the Winter Palace.

In 1774 Pugachev had arisen as a pretender to the throne, and commanded a rebel army thirty thousand strong. In addition, Catherine's son Paul turned eighteen and began to gain his own support. During these difficult times Potemkin rose in political stature, particularly on the strength of his military advice and was quickly promoted, eventually as General-in-Chief, as Vice-President of the College of War, and as Commander-in-Chief of the Cossacks. These posts made him rich, and he lived lavishly. After their passion cooled, he remained her lifelong friend and favored statesman. Catherine obtained for him the title of Prince of the Holy Roman Empire. Potemkin's defining achievements include the peaceful annexation of the Crimea (1783) and the successful second Russo-Turkish War (1787–1792). Potemkin also founded many towns in the south (Odesa, Sevastopol, etc.) and it is alleged that his enemies called it Potemkin villages.



That Catherine and Potemkin married is "almost certain", the two at least acted as husband and wife. By late 1775, however, their relationship was changing, when Catherine took her secretary, Zavadovsky, as a lover. Though the love affair appeared to end, Catherine and Potemkin maintained a particularly close friendship, which continued to dominate their lives. Potemkin checked candidates for their suitability; it also appears that he tended to the relationships and "filled in" between favorites.

Potemkin fell very ill in August 1783. Catherine worried he would not finish his work developing the south as he had planned. Potemkin died at the age of 52 in 1791.



Catherine II and Grigory Potemkin

Some of her lovers loved her in return, and she always showed generosity towards them, even after the affair ended. One of her lovers received 50,000 rubles, a pension of 5,000 rubles, and 4,000 peasants in Ukraine after she dismissed him in 1777. The last of her lovers, Prince Zubov, was 40 years her junior.

**Expansion of the Russian Empire by conquest and diplomacy.** Under Catherine's reign, Russia grew larger and stronger, and was recognized as one of the great powers of Europe. Catherine led protracted wars against the Ottoman Empire, Sweden, and Persia, and extended the Russian territory to the west by partition of Poland mostly through diplomacy. Catherine often relied on her noble favorites and her lovers, most notably Grigory Orlov, Grigory Potemkin and Stanislaw Poniatowski to enhance her sphere of influence. Her army was led by highly successful generals such as Alexander Suvorov and Pyotr Rumyantsev, and admirals such as Fyodor Ushakov.

**Russo-Turkish Wars of 1768-74 and 1787-92.** Peter the Great had succeeded in gaining a foothold in the South, on the edge of the Black Sea, in the Azov campaigns. Catherine completed the conquest of the South, making Russia the dominant power in South-Eastern Europe after the **Russo-Turkish War of 1768-74**. Russia inflicted some of the heaviest defeats ever suffered by the Ottoman Empire. The Russian victories procured access to the Black Sea and incorporated the present-day southern Ukraine, where the Russians founded the new cities of Odessa, Nikolayev, Yekaterinoslav (the future Dnepropetrovsk). Russia also gained territories around the coast of Black Sea and Azov Sea, and was granted the position of protector of Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Empire, and made the Crimea a protectorate of Russia. In 1787, Catherine conducted a triumphal grand procession in the Crimea, which provoked the next **Russo-Turkish War of 1787-92**. This war became another catastrophe for the Ottomans and legitimized the Russian claim to the Crimea and gave additional Ottoman lands to Russia.



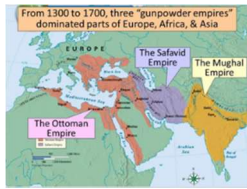
Ottomans Empire; loss of Crimea and land around the Black Sea during Catherine II reign.

**Swedish wars.** From 1788 to 1790, Russia fought a war against Sweden, a conflict instigated by Catherine's cousin, King Gustav III of Sweden, who expected to simply overtake the Russian armies still engaged in war against the Ottoman Turks, and hoped to strike Saint Petersburg directly. But Russia's Baltic Fleet checked the Royal Swedish navy in 1788 and the Swedish army failed to advance. After the decisive defeat of the Russian fleet in 1790, the parties signed a treaty returning all conquered territories to their respective owners. Peace ensued for 20 years, aided by the assassination of Gustav III in 1792.



Russian empress travelling, by Burney

**Russia-Persian War.** Over the centuries Russia fought many wars against Persia (the Safavid Empire) to gain influence in the Caucasus region and to maintain a trade route to India (1651-53, 1722-23, 1796, 1804-1813, 1826-28). During the 19<sup>th</sup> century wars Persia ceded all of what is now Georgia, Dagestan, Armenia, Nakhchivan, Azerbaijan, and İğdir to the Russian sphere of influence.



Under the reign of Catherine, in 1783, Russia had signed treaty with the Georgians to protect them against invasion by Persians. In 1796 Persia invaded Georgia and established rule over Georgia and expelled the newly established Russian garrisons in the Caucasus. This started a war against Persia, the ultimate goal for the Russian government however was to topple the anti-Russian Persian Shah (king), and to replace him with a half-brother who was pro-Russian. In May 1796, the 13,000-strong Russian corps led by Count Zubov, a brother of Catherine's lover Zubov, stormed the key Georgian fortress of Derbent. By June, Zubov's troops overran without any resistance most of the territory of modern-day Azerbaijan, including three principal cities — Baku, Shemakha, and Ganja. By November, they were stationed at the confluence of the Aras and Kura Rivers, poised to attack the mainland Iran.

Ultimately the 1796 Russian military effort led to nothing. In that month, Empress Catherine II of Russia died, and her successor Paul I, who detested the Zubovs brothers and had other plans for the army, ordered the troops to retreat to Russia. This reversal aroused the frustration and enmity of the powerful Zubovs and other officers who took part in the campaign: many of them would be among the conspirators who arranged Paul's I murder five years later.



**Caucasus** a mountain system in West Asia between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. The **Caucasus** region contain Europe's highest mountain, Mount Elbrus, at 5,642 meters (18,510 ft). River **Aras** flows through Caucasian Mountains and states of Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Iran, into Kura River that leads to the Caspian sea.



Expansion under Catherine II and Portrait of Catherine II in her 50s, by Johann Baptist von Lampi

**Economics and finance.** Under Catherine the Great Russian economic development was well below the standards in Western Europe. Historian Francois Cruzet writes that Russia under Catherine: “had neither a free peasantry, nor a significant middle class, nor legal norms hospitable to private enterprise. Still, there

was a start of industry, mainly textiles around Moscow and ironworks in the Ural Mountains, with a labor force mainly of serfs, bound to the works.”

In 1768, the Assignation Bank was given the task of issuing the first government paper money. It opened in St. Petersburg and Moscow in 1769. Several bank branches were afterwards established in other towns, called government towns. The emergence of these Assignation Rubles was necessary due to large government spending on military needs, which led to a shortage of silver in the treasury (transactions, especially in foreign trade, had been conducted almost exclusively in silver and gold coins).

**Arts and culture.** Catherine had a reputation as a patron of arts, literature, and education. The Hermitage Museum, which now occupies the whole Winter Palace, began as Catherine's personal collection.



*The Inauguration of the Academy of Arts*, a painting by Valery Jacobi

During Catherine's reign, Russians imported and studied the classical and European influences that inspired the Russian Enlightenment. Catherine became a great patron of Russian opera. However, when Alexander Radishchev published his *Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow* in 1790 (one year after the start of the French Revolution) and warned of uprisings because of the deplorable social conditions of the peasants held as serfs, Catherine exiled him to Siberia.

**Education.** Catherine held western European philosophies and culture close to her heart, and she wanted to surround herself with like-minded people within Russia. She believed a 'new kind of person' could be created by inculcating Russian children with European education. She established a commission on education to collect information from Russia and other countries about educational institutions. The commission submitted recommendations for the establishment of a general system of education for all Russian orthodox subjects from the age of 5 to 18, excluding serfs. However, no action was taken on any recommendations put forth by the commission.

Instead, Catherine had commissioned a General Program for the Education of Young People of Both Sexes. This work emphasized the fostering of the creation of a 'new kind of people' raised in isolation from the damaging influence of a backward Russian environment. The Establishment of the **Moscow Foundling Home** (Moscow Orphanage) was the first attempt at achieving that goal. It was charged with admitting destitute and extramarital children to educate them in any way the state deemed fit. Since the Moscow Foundling Home was not established as a state-funded institution, it represented an opportunity to experiment with new educational theories. However, the Moscow Foundling Home was unsuccessful, mainly due to an extremely high mortality rate, which prevented many of the children from living long enough to develop into the enlightened subjects the state desired.



The Moscow Orphanage and the Smolny Institute, the first Russian Institute for Noble Maidens and the first European state higher education institution for women.

Not long after the Moscow Foundling Home, Catherine established the **Smolny Institute for Noble Girls** to educate females. At first, the Institute only admitted young girls of the noble elite, but eventually it began to admit girls of the bourgeoisie, as well. The girls who attended the Smolny Institute, were accused of being ignorant of the world outside the walls of the Smolny buildings. They were taught impeccable French, musicianship, dancing, and complete awe of the Monarch. At the Institute, enforcement of strict discipline was central to its philosophy. Running and games were forbidden, and the building was kept particularly cold because too much warmth was believed to be harmful to the developing body, as was excess play.

Catherine continued to investigate educational theory and practice of other countries, but no national school system was established. By 1782 another advisory commission was to study educational systems of different countries. The Austrian three-tier model of trivial, real, and normal schools at village, town, and provincial levels seemed most suitable. In 1786 a two-tier network of high schools and primary schools in *guberniya* capitals that were free of charge, open to all of free classes (not serfs), and co-educational was initiated. The system did not do well as Catherine failed to supply enough money to support her educational program. An estimated 62,000 pupils were being educated in some 549 state institutions near the end of Catherine's reign. This was only a minuscule number of people compared to the size of the Russian population (out of  $\approx 37$  million in the year 1800,  $\approx 0.002\%$  of the population).

**Religious affairs.** Catherine nationalized all church lands to help pay for her wars, largely emptied the monasteries, and forced most of the remaining clergymen to survive as farmers or from fees for baptisms and other services. Very few members of the nobility entered the Church services, which became even less important than before. However, Catherine promoted Christianity in her anti-Ottoman policy, promoting the protection and fostering of Christians under Turkish rule. She placed strictures on Roman Catholics, mainly Polish, and attempted state control over Polish catholic churches in the wake of the partitions of Poland. Muslims were actively prohibited from owning any Orthodox serfs. They were also pressured into Orthodoxy through monetary incentives. But after the "Toleration of All Faiths" Edict of 1773, Muslims were permitted to build mosques and practice all of their traditions.

In 1785, Catherine attempted to ground many of the nomadic people who wandered through southern Russia by building new settlements with mosques placed in them. In 1786, she assimilated the Islamic schools into the Russian public school system, to be regulated by the government. This allowed the Russian government to control more people under the jurisdiction of Russian Law.

Russia treated **Judaism** differently. Judaism was a small, if not nonexistent, religion in Russia until 1772. When Catherine agreed to the First Partition of Poland, the large new Jewish element was treated as a separate people, defined by their religion. In keeping with their treatment in Poland, Catherine allowed the Jews to separate themselves from Orthodox society, with certain restrictions. Catherine tried to keep the Jews away from certain economic spheres, even under the guise of equality; in 1790, she banned Jewish citizens from Moscow's middle class. In 1785, Catherine declared Jews to be foreigners, with foreigners' rights. Catherine's decree denied Jews the rights of citizens of Russia. Taxes doubled again for those of Jewish descent in 1794, and Catherine officially declared that Jews bore no relation to Russians.

The **Orthodox Church** fared no better than its foreign counterparts during the reign of Catherine. She completed what Peter III had started: the church's lands were expropriated, and the budget of both monasteries and bishoprics were provided mostly by the state. The endowments were often much less than the original intended amount. She closed more than half of the 954 monasteries.

In 1762, while claiming religious tolerance, she intended to recall the Old Believers into the official Orthodox Church. Many refused to comply, and in 1764, she deported over 20,000 Old Believers to Siberia. In later years, she promised religious freedom to those who wished to re-settle in Russia.

By 1786, **Catherine excluded all religion and clerical studies programs from lay education.** By separating the public interests from those of the church, Catherine began a secularization of the day-to-

day workings of Russia. She transformed the clergy from a group that wielded great power over the Russian government and people, to a segregated community forced to depend on the state for funding.

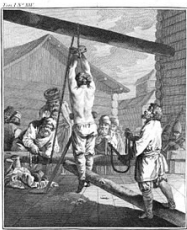
**Rights and conditions.** According to a census taken from 1754 to 1762, Catherine owned 500,000 serfs. A further 2.8 million belonged to the Russian State. Catherine also had many serfs and gave away 66,000 serfs from 1762–72, 202,000 from 1773–93, and 100,000 in one day in August 1795.



Russians, by Burney

At the time of Catherine's reign, the landowning noble class owned serfs who were bound to the land they tilled. Children of serfs were born into serfdom and worked the same land their parents had. The serfs had very limited rights, but they were not exactly slaves. While the state did not technically allow them to own possessions, some serfs were able to accumulate enough wealth to pay for their freedom. The understanding of law in imperial Russia by all sections of society was often weak, confused, or nonexistent, particularly in the provinces where most serfs lived. This is why some serfs were able to do things such as accumulate wealth. The serfs gave up their freedoms to a landowner in exchange for their protection and support in times of hardship. In addition, they would receive land to till, but would be taxed a certain percentage of their crops to give to their landowners. These were the privileges a serf was entitled to and that nobles were bound to carry out. All of this was true before Catherine's reign, and this is the system she inherited.

Catherine did initiate some changes to serfdom, though. If a noble did not live up to his side of the deal, then the serfs could file complaints against him by following the proper channels of law. Catherine gave them this new right, but in exchange they could no longer appeal directly to her. She did this because she did not want to be bothered by the peasantry, but did not want to give them reason to revolt, either. In this act, though, she unintentionally gave the serfs a legitimate bureaucratic status they had lacked before. Some serfs were able to use their new status to their advantage. For example, serfs could apply to be freed if they were under illegal ownership, and non-nobles were not allowed to own serfs. Some serfs did apply for freedom and were, surprisingly, successful. In addition, some governors listened to the complaints of serfs and punished nobles, but this was by no means all-inclusive.



Punishment with a knout.

Knouts were used in Russia for flogging as formal corporal punishment of criminals and political offenders. A sentence of 100 or 120 lashes was equivalent to a death sentence. Even twenty lashes could maim or kill by breaking the spine. Peter the Great is traditionally accused of knouting his son Alexis to death to extract confessions of his betrayal of the state. Emperor Nicholas I abolished the punishment by knout in 1845.

Other than these, the rights of a serf were very limited. A landowner could punish his serfs at his discretion, and under Catherine the Great gained the ability to sentence his serfs to hard labor in Siberia, a punishment normally reserved for convicted criminals. The only thing a noble could not do to his serfs

was to kill them as the life of a serf belonged to the state. Historically, when the serfs faced abusive masters, they often appealed to the autocrat, and continued doing so during Catherine's reign, though she signed legislation prohibiting it. She did create some measures to improve their conditions as a class and reduce the size of the institution of serfdom. However, she also restricted the freedoms of many peasants. During her reign, Catherine gave away many state-owned peasants to become private serfs (owned by a landowner), and while their ownership changed hands, a serf's location never did. However, peasants owned by the state generally had more freedoms than those owned by a noble.

While the majority of serfs were farmers bound to the land, a noble could also have his serfs sent away to learn a trade or be educated at a school, in addition to employing them at businesses that paid wages. This happened more often during Catherine's reign because of the new schools she established. Only in this way could a serf leave the farm for which he was responsible.

**Attitudes towards Catherine.** Generally, the attitude of the serfs towards their Autocrat had historically been a positive one. However, if the tsar's policies were too extreme or too disliked, he was not considered the true tsar. In these cases, it was necessary to replace this "fake" tsar with the "true" tsar, whoever he may be. Because the serfs had no political power, they rioted to get their message across. But usually, if the serfs did not like the policies of the tsar, they saw the nobles as corrupt and evil, preventing the people of Russia from communicating with the well-intentioned tsar and misinterpreting his decrees. However, they were already suspicious of Catherine upon her accession, because she had annulled the act by Peter III that had essentially freed the serfs belonging to the Orthodox Church. Naturally, the serfs did not like it when Catherine tried to take away their right to petition her because they felt as though she had severed their connection to the Autocrat, and their power to appeal to her. Far away from the capital, they were also confused as to the circumstances of her accession to the throne.

The peasants were discontented because of many other factors, as well, including crop failure, and epidemics, especially a major epidemic in 1771. The nobles were also imposing a stricter rule than ever, reducing the land of each serf and restricting their freedoms further beginning around 1767. Their discontent led to widespread outbreaks of violence and rioting during Pugachev's Rebellion of 1774. The serfs probably followed someone who was pretending to be the true tsar because of their feelings of disconnection to Catherine and her policies empowering the nobles, but this was not the first time they followed a pretender under Catherine's reign. Pugachev had made stories about himself acting as a real tsar should, helping the common people, listening to their problems, praying for them, and generally acting saintly, and this helped rally the peasants and serfs, with their very conservative values, to his cause. With all this discontent in mind, Catherine did rule for 10 years before the anger of the serfs boiled over into a rebellion as extensive as Pugachev's. Under Catherine's rule, though, despite her enlightened ideals, the serfs were generally unhappy and discontented.

**Death and succession.** Catherine died in 1796 of a stroke and was buried at the Peter and Paul Cathedral.



Catherine II in the Russian national costume. 1794 portrait of Catherine, age approximately 65, with the Chesme Column in the background

**Paul I** (r. 1796 –1801), (Пáвел I Петро́вич) ascended to the throne at 42 years of age as Emperor of Russia. He was the son of Peter III, whom he resembled physically and by character, and of Catherine the Great, though Catherine hinted that he was fathered by her lover Sergei Saltykov. Paul remained overshadowed by his mother for much of his life. His reign lasted five years, ending with his

assassination by conspirators who disagreed with his policies designed to reverse many of the progressive laws introduced by his mother Catherine II.

Paul did not have an easy childhood. At birth Paul was taken from Catherine II by the Empress Elizabeth, who proved an obsessive but incapable caregiver, as she had raised no children of her own. Paul was supervised by a variety of caregivers who often neglected the infant; reportedly: "On one occasion he fell out of his crib and slept the night away unnoticed on the floor." As a boy, he was reported to be intelligent and good-looking. Paul was put in the charge of a trustworthy governor Panin and of competent tutors.

At Elizabeth's death in 1762, Paul at 8 years of age became crown prince with the accession of his father Peter III to the throne. However, within 6 months his mother Catherine engineered a coup, had her husband Peter III deposed and likely killed by her supporters, and placed herself on the throne in a surpassingly grand and ostentatious coronation ceremony, for which event the Russian Imperial Crown was crafted by court jewelers. The 8-year-old Paul retained his position as crown prince although he was next in line to the throne. This fact may have further contributed for the restrained mother-son relationship, making Catherine insecure that he may be used by her opposition to depose her.

Paul was competing with Catherine's lovers for her attention and was often jealous of the favors she installed upon her lovers. In one instance she gave to one of her court favorites fifty thousand rubles on his birthday, while Paul received a cheap watch. She never considered inviting Paul to share her power. When Paul's son Alexander was born, it appeared that she had found a more suitable heir.

Under Paul I Russia participated in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Napoleonic War of 1799-1801 over Italy. Russian general Suvorov defeated Napoleon, but disagreed with Austria, returned to Russia, and Austria under the leadership of Holy Roman Emperor Francis II lost the war.



Paul I and his wife Maria Feodorovna (Sophia Dorothea of Württemberg) who had 13 children, three boys Alexander, Constantin, and Nicolas.

## 5.4 The 18<sup>th</sup> century post-French revolutionary times

**Alexander I** (r. 1801-1825) son of Paul I and Maria Feodorovna, grandson of Catherine the Great, ascended to the Russian throne after the assassination of his father. Alexander was raised by his grandmother, Catherine II, and was close to her in his formative years when she was still enamored with the ideas of the French Enlightenment philosophers. But the violent death of his father in 1801, in which he had tacit involvement, left a psychological impact on him. The inner conflict between Catherine's liberal ideas instilled in him and his father's reactionary conservatism played itself out in Alexander's psyche. The young Alexander initially resumed the quest Catherine has embarked on. The gap between Russia's ruler and the Russian people had grown dangerously wide and he feared revolution, if the gap was not addressed.

He set up a committee to address political reforms and enlisted a foremost Russian liberal thinker Mikhail Speransky to spearhead the committee into action. Speransky wrote a report for Alexander, where he stated "the autocracy in Russia has survived any attempt to reform it. The



Asiatic model of iron rule learned under Mongols had become so ingrained in the Russian mind that the absence of justice, law and protection from capricious authority of the autocrat had stifled progress and left Russia in primitive backwardness. Under Catherine, the government wished to enjoy the glory of philosophical ideals but still maintain all the advantages of despotism. Our laws may sound as if they were written in England, but our system of governance is that of Turkey”. On the other side of the liberal voice of Speransky there were hardline conservatives left behind from his father reign championing the cause of military dictatorship. Alexander vacillated between the two set of advices and at the end made no changes to the system.

His attitude towards the new French republic established by Napoleon were mixture of admiration and denunciation. In 1805 Alexander sent troops to fight Napoleon in the 3rd Napoleonic war of 1805-6. In the **Battle of Austerlitz**, or “the battle of three emperors”, near the village of Slavkov in Southern Moravia; Austrian & Russian coalition was defeated and Napoleon occupied Vienna. After the Battle of Austerlitz the whole Europe was subjugated except Britain. Napoleon annexed Belgium, Holland, large chunks of the present-day Italy, and set up dependencies in Switzerland, Poland, Austria and various German states. Germany became Confederation of the Rhine and Prussia and Austria were also subjugated by Napoleon. Only Great Britain remained completely outside of his grasp. In 1806 Napoleon decided to punish Britain with an embargo that became known as the **Continental System**. Despite warning Alexander agreed to meet Napoleon in 1807 in Tilsit (Lithuania) and Erfurt in 1808. Judging Napoleon to be a charming man Alexander announced that he was ready for a coalition with France. Alexander’s alliance with Napoleon secretly divided Europe into two spheres of influence, French and Russian. In 1807 Napoleon formed the Duchy of Warsaw from a part of Prussia. Alexander worried about Polish nationalism.



A French medallion dating from the post-Tilsit period.

It shows the French and Russian emperors embracing each other. Meeting of the two emperors in a pavilion set up on a raft in the middle of the Neman River (present Lithuania).

By the end of 1810, Alexander I had stopped complying with the British embargo due to its deleterious effect on Russian trade and the value of the ruble. Alexander also imposed a heavy tax on French luxury products like lace and rebuffed Napoleon’s attempt to marry one of his sisters.



To punish Russia, in June 1812 Napoleon crossed the river Niemen with an army of over half a million man, with a goal to win a quick victory to force Alexander to the negotiating table. Russia

was totally unprepared for the war. The paranoid Paul I, father of Alexander I, purged many top marshals and 333 generals as he doubted their loyalty. The Russian army pulled back, however, and let the French army capture the city of Vilna on June 27 with barely a fight. Nevertheless, due to freezing rain many Napoleon's soldiers became sick and died, and many started to desert - an ominous sign of the things to come. Nonetheless, Napoleon remained confident. "I have come once and for all to finish off these barbarians of the North," he purportedly declared to his top military advisors. "The sword is now drawn. They must be pushed back into their ice, so that for the next 25 years they no longer be able to busy themselves with the affairs of civilized Europe." The Russians similarly abandoned other towns, setting fire to towns, villages, bridges, and any potential supplies for the French army. Many peasants burned their crops to prevent them from falling into French hands. The summer heat become oppressive, and French soldiers were coming down with insect-borne diseases such as typhus and water-related diseases like dysentery. Thousands died while fighting at Smolensk and elsewhere. But the Russians did not truly make a stand until the Battle of Borodino on September 7. Alexander appointed a new commander, Mikhail Kutuzov, who was able to uplift the morale, confidence and patriotic feelings of the troops. Borodino was just 75 miles from Moscow. The losses on both sides were enormous, with total casualties of  $\approx 70,000$ . Rather than continue with a second day of fighting, the Russians withdrew.

On September 14, the French entered the ancient capital of Moscow, only to see it to become engulfed in flames. Napoleon waited for Alexander to come and negotiate, but that did not happen. Instead of finding signs of submission, Napoleon felt conquered and surpassed in the determination of will by what he called "Asiatic Scythian ruthlessness and determination that surfaced in the Russian character at times of threat and crisis". On October 19, with snow flurries having already fallen, Napoleon led his army out of Moscow. He realized that they could not survive the winter there. By this time, Napoleon was down to some 100,000 troops. Originally he planned a southerly retreat, but his troops were forced back to the road they plundered on the way in. Horses were dying in droves, and the army faced constant attrition from attacks. To top it off, an unusually early winter set in, complete with high winds, sub-zero temperatures and lots of snow. On particularly bad nights, thousands of men and horses succumbed to exposure. Stories abound of soldiers splitting open dead animals and crawling inside for warmth, or stacking dead bodies in windows for insulation. On December 5, Napoleon left the army and sped toward Paris amid rumors of a coup attempt. Nine days later, what little remained of the Grande Armée's rear guard stumbled back across the Niemen River.

Emboldened by the defeat, Austria, Prussia and Sweden re-joined Russia and Great Britain in the fight against Napoleon. Although the French emperor was able to raise another massive army, this time it was short on both cavalry and experience. Napoleon suffered a crushing defeat in October 1813 at the Battle of Leipzig. The supreme commander of the Coalition forces in the theatre and the paramount monarch among the three main Coalition monarchs, the Russian Tsar Alexander I, then ordered all Coalition forces in Germany to cross the Rhine and invade France. By the following March, Paris had been captured and Napoleon was forced into exile on the island of Elba. In the spring of 1815 Napoleon made one more attempt to take power, put together an army, but was overcome at the Battle of Waterloo by the British and Prussian armies.

The Russian army marched across Europe and fought decisive battles against Napoleon in Leipzig in 1813 and led the allied victory parade down the Champs Elysees. Russia became the most

influential and most feared power in Europe. However, the brief triumphant occupation of France was an eye-opener for the Russian soldiers. The Russian soldiers realized how backward Russia was. They saw the liberty and prosperity of Europe, and this led to discontent among returning soldiers. After the Napoleonic wars, there were expectations of reward for the peasants who bore the largest burden of the war. The people expected the Tsar to use his power to bring justice and liberty. But, Alexander was convinced that he must build a **Holy Alliance of European** states to maintain the established order and stop the spread of revolution.

**Congress of Vienna 1815.** The Congress of Vienna (a summit in the rhythm of waltz) was a conference of ambassadors of European states, including Alexander, chaired by the Austrian chancellor Clemens Metternich, and held from November 1814 to June 1815. The objective of the Congress was to provide a long-term peace plan for Europe by settling critical issues arising from the French Revolutionary Wars and the Napoleonic Wars. The goal was not simply to restore old boundaries but to resize the main powers so they could balance each other off and remain at peace. The leaders were conservative monarchs with little use for republicanism or reform. Throughout the conference the participants spent time attending large balls, elaborate entertainment parties and fireworks; not much was achieved throughout their deliberations. Eventually, after Napoleon's return to power in France in the spring of 1815 and his defeat at Waterloo, the participants came to their decision. France lost all its recent conquests, while Prussia, Austria and Russia made major territorial gains. Prussia added smaller German states in the west and 40% of the Kingdom of Saxony; Austria gained Venice and much of northern Italy, and Galicia, a large territory of southern Poland. ***Russia gained a large part of Poland and the Russian Emperor became also the King of Poland.*** Poland as a country disappeared from the map of Europe.

At home two attempts by opposition to assassinate or kidnap Alexander made him even more determined to maintain existing conservative autocratic rule and he set to further strengthen the police state based on spies and denunciations. But suddenly Alexander died in 1825 of typhus. Although Alexander I was able to defeat Napoleon, the Russia that he left behind was a police state with undermined and weak economic development and popular dissatisfaction that will grow throughout the century.

**Nicholas I** (r. 1825-1855) was Emperor of Russia, King of Poland and Grand Duke of Finland. He was a son of Paul I and Maria Fedorovna, and a younger brother of Alexander I. A political conservative whose reign was marked by geographical expansion, repression of dissent, economic stagnation, poor administrative policies, a corrupt bureaucracy, and frequent wars that culminated in Russia's defeat in the Crimean War of 1853–56. Nicholas responded to the social unrest in the mid-nineteenth century both at home and across Europe (1848 revolutionary uprisings) by becoming the most reactionary ruler in modern Russian history and among the most reactionary in modern European history.

A handsome man, he was highly nervous and aggressive. Trained as an engineer, he was a stickler for minute detail. Nicholas I came to represent autocracy personified: infinitely majestic, determined and powerful, hard as a stone, and relentless in his determination. His reign had an ideology based on a reactionary policy of orthodoxy in religion, autocracy in government, and Russian nationalism. Married to Alexandra Fedorovna with whom he had 12 children.



**Decembrists' uprising.** During the morning of a cold December 1825, 3,000 disaffected troops gathered in Senate Square in St Petersburg to make their demands public. Veterans of French campaign who built secret networks within the army aimed their demands at the **introduction of a constitutional monarchy and the abolition of serfdom**. Many wanted the end of autocratic rule and creation of republic. The men remain in the battle formation for the whole day. Nicholas's messenger was shot dead and finally he ordered an artillery to smash the rebels. Many Decembrists ended up in Siberia and five were sentenced to death. The Decembrists uprising became a watershed and an inspiration to future revolutionaries of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**Domestic policies.** Nicholas I responded to the Decembrists revolt by retreating into most repressive traditional ways of the Russian autocracy. He strengthened the secret police and introduced draconian measures to suppress political opposition. Nicholas's official state doctrine would become: Pravoslavie, Samoderrzhavie, Narodnost (**Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationhood**). A deliberate rebuff to the revolutionary triad: Liberte, Egalite, Fraternite. According to populist writer Gleb Uspensky the picture of the terror that pervaded the lives of Russia's citizens was: "Never to stir ... never to show that one had any thoughts ... always to show that one is afraid, terrified – such were the habits bred by those years. To be afraid was the basic rule of life and it throttled people's ability to think." Writers and journalists were heavily censored and many were exiled to Siberia or under house arrest (including the writer and poet Pushkin, exiled to his estate).

Nicholas I fostered anti-western sentiments and forced Russification and stimulated the birth of the Slavophile movement. According to the Slavophile ideas it was the Russian destiny to teach all humanity how to live. The Slavophile versus Westerner debate stemmed from a dichotomy that had haunted Russians from the earliest times: the value of eastern despotism, the legacy of the Mongol yoke, versus the western model of participatory government and social guarantees by law.

The oppression gave rise to **political thinkers and theorists of 1840** who advocated changes, but without resorting to violence. A prominent of those liberal westerners was **Alexander Herzen**, "the father of Russian socialism". He predicted that Russia provides most fertile ground for socialist revolution. He argued that Russians lived for generations in village communes and understand the communal sharing of land. He was exiled and ended up living in London writing into émigré journals arguing for peaceful introduction of socialism in Russia.

Ever since Kievan Rus and the Mongol invasion, the self-image of Russians as a nation in danger had permeated the Russian psyche, a nation in a quasi-continuous state of battle or preparedness for battle. The Mongol occupation had instilled the model of a militarized state that devotes national resources, material and human, predominantly to the waging of war. The strain of unremitted military readiness would deform Russia's economy and state structures and stand in the way of social reforms. The perceived need for a ready supply of military recruits would fatally delay efforts of reformist tsars in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and lend impetus to the forces of revolution.

Throughout the nineteenth century Russia was also involved in constant warfare in the Caucasus region, suppressing the rebellious Chechen people. Legendary Russian general Yermolov found the base Grozny, from where he conducted scorching expeditions against the villages of the Chechens. Many Russian writer wrote about the oppression of the Caucasus people (Michael Lermontov, 1839 – Hero of Our Time; Pushkin, a poem “A captive of the Caucasus”, Lev Tolstoy, Hadji Murat- moral revulsion against the Russian deeds in the region. One of the reason why Russia was defending the Caucasus region was to protect itself from Persians, Turks, and the British who were all jostling for territory there.

**In foreign policy**, Nicholas I acted as the protector of autocratic monarchs and guardian against revolution; the gendarme of Europe. In 1825 Nicholas I was crowned Polish king and began to limit the liberties of constitutional monarchy in Poland. In return, after the November Uprising in 1831, the Polish parliament deposed Nicholas as king of Poland. The Tsar reacted by sending Russian troops, crushing the rebellion, abrogating the Polish constitution, and reducing Poland to the status of a Russian province. He then embarked on a policy of repression towards Catholics. In 1848, when a series of revolutions convulsed Europe, Nicholas was in the forefront of reaction. In 1849 he intervened on behalf of the Habsburgs and helped suppress an uprising in Hungary, and he also urged Prussia not to accept a liberal constitution. Having helped conservative forces repel the specter of revolution, Nicholas I seemed to dominate Europe.

Russian dominance proved illusory, however. While Nicholas was attempting to maintain the status quo in Europe, he adopted an aggressive policy toward the Ottoman Empire. Nicholas I was following the traditional Russian policy of resolving the so-called Eastern Question by seeking to partition the Ottoman Empire and to establish a protectorate over the Orthodox population of the Balkans, still largely under Ottoman control in the 1820s. Russia fought a successful war with the Ottomans in 1828 and 1829, and in 1833 negotiated peace treaty with the Ottoman Empire.

The major European parties mistakenly believed that the treaty contained a secret clause granting Russia the right to send warships through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits. By the London Straits Convention of 1841, they affirmed Ottoman control over the straits and forbade any power, including Russia, to send warships through the Straits. Based on his role in suppressing the revolutions of 1848 and his mistaken belief that he had British diplomatic support, Nicholas moved against the Ottomans, who declared war on Russia in 1853. Fearing the results of an Ottoman defeat by Russia, in 1854 Britain and France joined what became known as the **Crimean War** on the Ottoman side. Austria offered the Ottomans diplomatic support, and Prussia remained neutral, leaving Russia without allies on the continent. The European allies landed in Crimea and laid siege to the well-fortified Russian naval base at Sevastopol. After a year's siege the base fell, exposing Russia's inability to defend a major fortification on its own soil. Nicholas I died before the fall of Sevastopol, but he already had recognized the failure of his regime. Russia now faced the choice of initiating major reforms or losing its status as a major European power.

**Revolutionary movements during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.** During the eighteenth and nineteenth century slavery became an important pillar of the Russian economy providing the supply of the bonded labor and recruits for the army. The large and small landowners depended on the serf labor and were against any reforms. During the thirteen and fifteenth century the peasants' families ran their own communities and earned extra money by working for the landed gentry that was granted

land for services to the state. Under Godunov the law was changed so that the peasants became tied to the land of the landowners and could not leave. The number of peasants tied to the landowner land slowly increased reaching a peak under Peter the Great and Catherine the Great, when the wealth was expressed by the number of serfs, and the serfs now became legally the property of the owners. Both Peter the Great and Catherine the Great adopted the practice of rewarding the state services, and in Catherine's case also service of her lovers, by the gift of human beings, thousands of serfs here and there, who were property of the owner. By the end of Catherine the Great reign in 1796, 17 million of people out of 36 million were serfs, who were owned by landowners and who had no legal rights at all. The more the peasants were regarded as the property of the owners more they suffered, reaching a critical situation during the nineteenth century.

Conscience of the Russian nation resided with the writers and artists of the nineteenth century. In 1852 Nicholai Gogol published a book called "Dead Souls" where the central character Chichikov, a conman, buys up dead serfs whose names still appear on the census and then makes a fortune by mortgaging them with the state bank. An absurd humor and social critique to wake up the Russian nation to the social situation of the serfs. Painter Ilya Repin focused on peasant scenes, e.g. Barge Haulers in the Volga (1870), Religious Procession in Kursk (1880).



Despite the repressions of this period, Russia experienced the flourishing literature and arts. Alexander Pushkin (1799-1837), a Russian poet, playwright, and novelist of the Romantic era is considered by many to be the greatest Russian poet and the founder of modern Russian literature. Much of the Russian literature of the nineteenth century is a despairing attempt by the intelligentsia, guilty over the horrors of serfdom, to show the need of reforms. Nikolai Nekrasov, Ivan Goncharov, Mikhail Saltykov, Turgenev, Tolstoy all pay tribute to the inherent nobility of the serfs. Classical music became firmly established with the compositions of Mikhail Glinka (1804-1857). Most of the Russian intelligentsia of the nineteenth century came from landed gentry who was able to get education under the unfair laws of the land where serfs had no access to education. They tended to idolize the serfs as noble people, but very few had firsthand experience of the peasant life. The Europeanized upper classes and intelligentsia and the peasants lived as two different nations in one country. The colossal differences came to play a major role during the second half of the nineteenth century.

**Alexander II** (r. 1856- 1881) Emperor and Autocrat of All the Russia, King of Poland and the Grand Duke of Finland. He reigned from age 37; died age 62. He was the eldest son of Nicholas I of Russia and of Charlotte of Prussia. His early life gave little indication of his ultimate potential; until the time of his accession to the throne few imagined that posterity would know him for implementing the most challenging reforms undertaken in Russia since the reign of Peter the Great.

In the period of his life as heir apparent, the intellectual atmosphere of Saint Petersburg did not favor any kind of change: freedom of thought and all forms of private initiative were suppressed

vigorously by the order of his father Nicholas I. Personal and official censorship was rife; criticism of the authorities was regarded as a serious offence. To compensate for the lack of intellectual freedom, the education of the Tsarevich as a future emperor took place under the supervision of the liberal romantic poet and translator Vasily Zhukovsky, and included a smattering of a great many subjects and the chief modern European languages. Alexander showed little interest in military affairs. The young Alexander was taken on a six-month tour of Russia (1837) and he also visited many prominent Western European countries in 1838 and 1839. Alexander became the first Romanov heir to visit Siberia (1837). While touring Russia, he befriended the exiled poet Alexander Herzen & pardoned him. It was through Herzen's influence that he abolished serfdom.

Alexander II succeeded to the throne in 1855 when the country had been exhausted and humiliated by the Crimean War. The defeat in the Crimean War convinced the tsar that reform was necessary and encouraged by public opinion, he began a period of radical reforms.

**Alexander's most significant reforms** included emancipation of Russia's serfs in 1861, for which he is known as Alexander the Liberator (Алекса́ндр Освободи́тель). Unfortunately under this reform, he offered many concessions to landlords so that many peasants found themselves in worse economic circumstances than before. Often the plots of land the peasants received were smaller than those they had farmed as serfs and did not provide for self-sufficiency, payment of taxes, and the obligatory repayments over 49 years. This led to dissatisfaction and many peasant rebellions in the 1880's.

Political and legal reforms included establishment of local councils (Zemstvo) for rural districts and large towns, with powers to provide roads, schools and medical services. The judiciary became an independent branch of government and favor under the law for the wealthy was replaced by what was supposed to be equality before the law. Trial by jury was introduced for serious criminal offenses. Military service was reduced from twenty-five years to six and people from all classes were obliged to serve. Corporal punishment was abolished for soldiers. New legislation concerning industry and commerce produced a large number of limited liability companies. Plans were formed for building a great network of railways, for the purpose of developing the natural resources of the country, and for increased military defense and attack. The major weakness of his policy was the absence of a genuinely representative parliament. Reformers in Russia wanted the same democratic rights as those enjoyed in other European countries.

**His greatest domestic challenge** was an uprising in Poland in 1863, to which he responded by stripping that land of its separate constitution and incorporating it directly into Russia. All territories of the former Poland-Lithuania were excluded from liberal policies introduced by Alexander. The martial law in Lithuania, introduced in 1863, lasted for the next 40 years. Native languages, Lithuanian, Ukrainian and Belarusian were completely banned from printed texts. The Polish language was banned in both oral and written form from all provinces except Congress Poland, where it was allowed in private conversations only.

**Student radicalism of 1860.** Student radicalism began around the time Alexander's II reforms lifted many restrictions on universities, including a new freedom in the content and reading lists of academic courses. As universities and their curriculum expanded, there was a rapid growth of newspapers, journals, public lectures, professional societies and intellectual social life started to flourish. The atmosphere of the 1860s gave rise to political engagement by students outside universities and student radicalism by the 1870s. Students were called upon to repay the privilege

of learning by serving the people. The tactics of the left-wing students proved to be remarkably effective in turning the schools into centers of political activity.



A nihilist student in 19th century, by Russian painter Ilya Repin.

**In foreign policy**, Alexander sold Alaska to the United States for \$7.2 million (equivalent to ≈\$200 million in current dollars) in 1867, fearing the remote colony would fall into British hands if there was another war. He sought peace, moved away from France when Napoleon III fell in 1871, and in 1872 joined the League of the Three Emperors with Germany and Austria to stabilize the European situation. Despite his pacifist foreign policy, he fought a brief war with the Ottoman Empire in 1877–78, pursued expansion into Siberia and the Caucasus, and conquered Turkestan.

**Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78** was a conflict between the Ottoman Empire and the Eastern Orthodox coalition led by the Russian Empire and composed of Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, and Montenegro. It originated in supporting the political movement attempting to free Balkan nations from the Ottoman Empire and Russian hopes of recovering territorial losses suffered during the Crimean War, re-establishing itself in the Black Sea. The Russian-led coalition won the war. After almost five centuries of Ottoman domination (1396–1878), the Ottoman retreat from Balkans started. The treaty and the subsequent Congress of Berlin secured the emergence of an independent Bulgarian state for the first time since 1396, and the tsar's nephew, Prince Alexander of Battenberg, was elected as the Bulgarians' first ruler.

The Congress of Berlin (summer 1878) was a meeting of the representatives of six Great powers of the time (Russia, Great Britain, France, Austria-Hungary, Italy and Germany), the Ottoman Empire and four Balkan states (Greece, Serbia, Romania and Montenegro), aiming at determining the territories of the states in the Balkan peninsula following the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78 which Russia won. **The German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck**, who led the Congress, undertook to stabilize the Balkans, recognize the reduced power of the Ottoman Empire, and balance the distinct interests of Britain, Russia and Austria-Hungary; at the same time he tried to diminish Russian gains in the region. Although Russia had been victorious in the war that occasioned the conference, it was humiliated at Berlin by Bismarck, and resented its treatment.

Austria gained a great deal of territory, which angered the South Slavs, and led to decades of tensions in **Bosnia and Herzegovina**. The tensions between Russia and Austria-Hungary intensified, as did the nationality question in the Balkans. The congress agreed to keep Constantinople in Ottoman hands and it effectively disavowed Russia's victory over the decaying Ottoman Empire in the Russo-Turkish War. The dissatisfaction regarding the results festered until they exploded in the First and the Second Balkan wars of 1912–1913, and in the war in 1914.

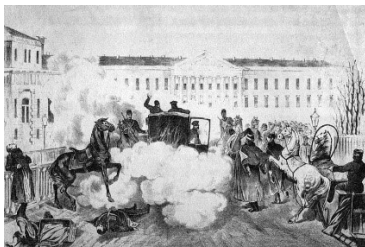




Alexander II had eight children by Tsarina Maria Alexandrovna, seven of whom survived into adulthood. He particularly placed hope in his eldest son, Tsarevich Nicholas. In 1864, Alexander II found Nicholas a bride, Princess Dagmar of Denmark, second daughter of King Christian IX of Denmark and younger sister to Alexandra, Princess of Wales and King George I of Greece. However, in 1865, during the engagement, Nicholas died and the tsar's second son, Grand Duke Alexander, inherited his brother's position of tsarevich, and also his fiancée. The couple married in November 1866, with Dagmar converting to Orthodoxy and taking the name Maria Feodorovna.

Tsarina Marie Alexandrovna was suffering from tuberculosis and was spending time abroad. In 1866, Alexander II took a mistress, Princess Catherine Dolgorukya, with whom he fathered three children. The affair alienated his adult children. The Tsarina died in May 1880 and Alexander II married his mistress Catherine in June in a secret ceremony and legitimized their three children.

Despite his liberal course, he was a target for numerous assassination attempts (1866, 1879, 1880). On 13 March 1881, members of the Narodnaya Volya (People's Will) party killed him with a bomb. The Emperor had earlier in the day signed the Loris-Melikov constitution which would have created two legislative commissions made up of indirectly elected representatives, had it not been repealed by his reactionary successor Alexander III before it was published.



The assassination of Alexander II. The first explosion killed one of the Cossacks and wounded the driver, the second bomb deadly wounded Alexander II who walked out of the coach to help the injured.

**Alexander III** (r. 1881-1894) (Алекса́ндр III Алекса́ндрович) was the Emperor of Russia, King of Poland, and Grand Duke of Finland. He was a highly conservative ruler and reversed many of the liberal reforms of his father Alexander II. During Alexander's reign Russia fought no major wars and he was thus called "The Peacemaker" (Миротво́рец).

In disposition Alexander bore little resemblance to his soft-hearted, liberal father. Although an enthusiastic amateur musician and patron of the ballet, Alexander was seen as lacking refinement and elegance. His education was not such as to soften these peculiarities. More than six feet tall (about 1.9 m), he was also noted for his immense physical strength.

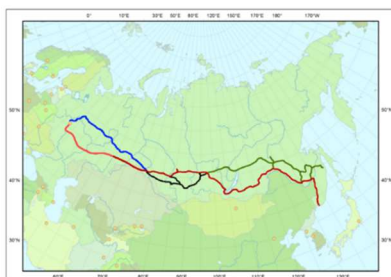
Alexander had little prospect of succeeding to the throne as his elder brother Nicholas was the chosen heir. Thus Alexander received only training of an ordinary Grand Duke of that period; acquaintance with French, English and German, and military drill. Unexpectedly Nicholas died in 1865. It was then that he began to study the principles of law and administration under Konstantin Pobedonostsev, a Moscow prosecutor. Pobedonostsev instilled into the young man the belief that zeal for Russian Orthodox thought was an essential factor of Russian patriotism. To fulfill the death wish of his brother Nicholas, Alexander married Nicholas fiancée, Princess Dagmar of Denmark in 1866 and the union proved a happy one.

The Tsarevich became estranged from his father Alexander II due to their vastly differing political views, and resentment towards Alexander II's long-standing relationship with Catherine Dolgorukov while his mother was suffering from tuberculosis.

**Domestic policies.** All of Alexander III's internal reforms aimed to reverse the liberalization that had occurred in his father's reign. The new Emperor believed that remaining true to Russian Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality (the ideology introduced by his grandfather, Nicholas I) would save Russia from revolutionary agitation. Alexander's political ideal was a nation composed of a single nationality, language, and religion, as well as one form of administration. He attempted to realize this by the institution of mandatory teaching of the Russian language throughout the empire, by the patronization of Eastern Orthodoxy, by the destruction of the remnants of German, Polish, and Swedish institutions in the respective provinces, and by the weakening of Judaism through persecution of the Jews. The latter policy was implemented in the "May Laws" of 1882, which banned Jews from inhabiting rural areas and shtetls (even within the Pale of Settlement) and restricted the occupations in which they could engage.

Alexander weakened the power of the zemstvo and placed the administration of peasant communes under the supervision of land-owning proprietors appointed by his government. These "land captains" were feared and resented. The act weakened the nobility and peasantry and brought Imperial administration under the Emperor's personal control.

**The Trans-Siberian Railway** (Транссибирская магистраль) was built between 1891 and 1916 under Tsar Alexander III and later Tsar Nicholas II. A network of railways connecting Moscow with the Russian Far East. With a length of 9,289 km (5,772 miles), it is the longest railway line in the world. There are connecting branch lines into Mongolia, China and North Korea.





Alexander and his wife Empress Maria Feodorovna on holiday in Copenhagen in 1893, Alexander III with his wife and their children. Grand painting by the artist Georges Becker of the coronation of Tsar Alexander III and Empress Maria Feodorovna, May 1883.

Encouraged by successful assassination of Alexander II, Narodnaya Volya began planning the murder of Alexander III. The Okhrana uncovered the plot and five of the conspirators, including Alexander Ulyanov, the older brother of Vladimir Lenin, were captured and hanged in 1887.

**Foreign policy.** In foreign affairs Alexander III was a man of peace, but not at any price, and held that the best means of averting war is to be well-prepared for it. Though he was indignant at the conduct of German chancellor Otto von Bismarck towards Russia after the Balkan wars (Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78), he avoided an open rupture with Germany. However, Alexander III began cordial relations with France. His reign cannot be regarded as an eventful period of Russian history; but under his hard rule the country made considerable economic progress.

**Death.** Alexander and his wife regularly spent their summers on the Finnish coast, where their children were immersed in a Scandinavian lifestyle of relative modesty. In 1888 the Imperial train derailed in an accident. At the moment of the crash, the imperial family was in the dining car. Its roof collapsed, and Alexander supposedly held its remains on his shoulders as the children fled outdoors. The onset of Alexander's kidney failure was later attributed to the blunt trauma suffered in this incident. In 1894, Alexander III died of terminal kidney disease (nephritis) at the age of forty-nine, and was succeeded by his eldest son Nicholas II.

**Nicholas II** (r. 1894 – 1917) (Russian: Николай II Александрович), was the last Emperor of Russia. His reign saw the fall of the Russian Empire from one of the foremost great powers of the world to economic and military collapse. He was given the nickname Nicholas the Bloody by his adversaries due to the Khodynka Tragedy, anti-Semitic pogroms, Bloody Sunday, the violent suppression of the 1905 Russian Revolution, the executions of political opponents, and his perceived responsibility for the Russo-Japanese War.

At the turn of the century, discontent with the Tsar's dictatorship was manifested not only through the growth of political parties dedicated to the overthrow of the monarchy but also through industrial strikes for better wages and working conditions, protests and riots among peasants, university demonstrations, and the assassination of government officials, often done by Socialist Revolutionaries.

Russia was defeated in the 1904–05 Russo-Japanese War which saw the annihilation of the Russian Baltic Fleet at the Battle of Tsushima, the loss of Russian influence over Manchuria and Korea, and the Japanese annexation of South Sakhalin further added to the discontent.

Russian entry into the First World War was the final straw leading to the Russian Revolution of 1917. Nicholas approved the Russian mobilization on 30 July 1914 which led to Germany declaring war on Russia on 1 August 1914. It is estimated that around 3.3 million Russians were killed in the First World War. The Imperial Russian Army's severe losses, the High Command's incompetent management of the war efforts, and the lack of food and supplies on the Home Front were the leading causes of the fall of the House of Romanov.

Following the February Revolution of 1917, Nicholas abdicated on behalf of himself and his son. He and his family were imprisoned and transferred to Tobolsk in late summer 1917. On April 1918, the whole royal family were handed over to the local Ural Soviet in Ekaterinburg and eventually murdered by their Bolshevik guards on the night of 16/17 July 1918. The remains of the imperial family were re-interred in St. Petersburg 80 years later on 17 July 1998.

On 15 August 2000, Nicholas and his family were canonized by the Russian Orthodox Church.

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## Important Rulers of the Rurikid Russian Dynasty 988 - 1589

Important rulers of the Rurikid Dynasty	Period	Achievements
St. Vladimir	988	Christianization of Kiev Rus
Jaroslav the Wise	1019 - 1054	Established Kiev Rus state with state and family laws, built many churches, established appanage system that over time led to breakdown of central state power and left Russia defenseless against the Mongol invasion in 1240
Alexander Nevsky	1230 - 1263	Duke of Novgorod who defeated Swedes and Teutonic Knights in 1237, but was defeated by Mongols in 1240 when a large part of Russia became a vassal state of the Mongol Empire; in particular the Golden Horde Empire with its capital of Sarai.
Ivan I (Moneybag, Kalita)	1325 - 1340	Duke of Principality of Muscovy who on behalf of the Mongol Khans centralized the tribute collection across all Russian principalities and created a central army needed to defend the vassal state of Russia against enemies from the north (Swedes and Poles).
Dimitrii Donsky	1355 - 1389	Defeated Mongols (Tartars) at Kulikovo Field 1380. This weakened the Mongols, but did not defeat them.
Ivan III	1462 - 1505	Duke of Muscovy who defeated Mongols in 1480 and declared Russia to be independent of the Golden Horde. He established the cornerstones of the service-bound society based on the Mongol system where the Khan owned all the land and his subjects. Land was used as payment for services to servitors. The land payed was called pomestie and the landholders were called pomeshchiks. He established also the basis of serfdom for peasants who worked on the land. He became the Sovereign of All Russia.
Vasilii III	1505 - 1533	Continued in his father's policies of expansion
Ivan IV Ivan the Terrible	1547 - 1584	The first Russian Tsar and Autocrat of All Russia. Defeated the Khanate of Kazan and Astrakhan and introduced Russian administration there. Led long protracted wars against Baltic state of Livonia, which led to opposition among nobles and peasants. To suppress opposition, Ivan IV created Oprichnina, an instrument of oppression used to liquidate, terrorize, and suppress any opposition among bojars and nobles. His reign destroyed any independent estates or social structures and led to strong autocracy of Ivan IV and also of future Russian tsars.
Feodor	1584 - 1589	Economic recovery under the rule of Boris Godunov as a regent. Oprichnina was discontinued.
Boris Godunov	1589 - 1605	A controversial tsar, who was member of Oprichnina under Ivan IV. He introduced many positive changes that led to recovery and development of new towns. However, bad weather during the Little Ice Age caused bad harvest, famines, epidemics and people abandoning villages and moving to towns.