

Tsar Wars: The
Duma Awakens,
1910

RUSSIA

MUNUC 38

Model United Nations of the University of Chicago

CHAIR LETTER

Dear Delegates,

Welcome one and all to the Russian Empire! The year is 1910, and the formation of our Third State Parliament (Duma) has just begun. As we refine our constitution, we will face many challenges as a rising great power in the world. Will you be able to weather the storm of these arduous challenges? Or will we collapse and fall into nothingness in the realms of history?

My name is Steven Sotomayor, and I'll be your chair through the West Indies Federation committee. This is my second time chairing, and I'm enthusiastic about our future endeavors to save our young nation. At the University of Chicago, I'm a third-year student majoring in Political Science and Global Studies. In MUNUC 36, I was an Assistant Chair for Los Cortes Constituyentes Spain 1977, and in MUNUC 37, I was the Chair for Water You Wading For?: The West Indies Federation (WINDIES!). Outside of MUNUC, I am also a part of CHOMUN, our college conference. These past few years, I have served as an Assistant Chair for the Unification of Italy at CHOMUN XXVII, the Chair for Yongle's Bongle at CHOMUN XXVIII, and am now a USG for CHOMUN XXIX. I've also developed an obsession with F1 as a fun hobby.

Moving on to important matters, my job is to ensure this committee goes swimmingly and encompasses a space where we can have fun with roleplay and problem solving, but also still be serious enough to work diligently on saving our nation. I aim to provide you all with a thrilling experience in the few short days I'll be your chair. Since we can expect intense discussion in the front room, I expect everyone to engage in constructive dialogue, alongside remaining mature throughout debates. Please treat other delegates in the manner you would like to be treated. Ivan, Diego, and I are excited to meet you all! I'm sure MUNUC 38 will be a

fantastic experience for you all. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to any of us.

Sincerely,

Steven Sotomayor

Chair, *Tsar Wars: The Duma Awakens, 1910*

sotomayorsteven@uchicago.edu

CRISIS DIRECTOR LETTERS

Dear Delegates,

I would like to welcome you all to MUNUC 38! My name is Ivan Cano, and I will be one of your Crisis Directors for *Tsar Wars: The Duma Awakens, 1910*. I'm originally from Oklahoma City and a third-year at the University of Chicago studying Biological and Environmental Sciences on the pre-med track. Outside of MUN, I help manage concerts with the UChicago Music Department and mentor first-generation students through the Maroon Mentors program. Since arriving at UChicago, I've served as an Assistant Chair for both MUNUC and ChoMUN, and I'm excited to bring that experience to this committee for an unforgettable weekend.

The year is 1910, and the Russian Empire is walking a tightrope between reform and repression. Just five years after the Tsar introduced the Duma, you must now decide whether this institution will remain a symbol or become a force that might challenge the very foundations of autocracy. Whether it is advocating for constitutional reform, defending the old order, or simply plotting, every decision you make in this committee will ripple into its consequences (and its crises). The politics of this era are complex, the stakes are high, and the future of the empire hangs in the balance of your decisions. As you navigate these themes, I ask that you approach the material with care and respect, as many of the issues we will explore reflect human struggles during the period. With that being said, I look forward to seeing how each of you brings your creativity, intensity, and leadership to *Tsar Wars: The Duma Awakens*.

Best,

Ivan Cano

Crisis Director, *Tsar Wars: The Duma Awakens, 1910*

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Dear Delegates,

My name is Diego Estrada and I will be your Crisis Director for these turbulent times. I am a current third-year majoring in Political Science and Economics. Although originally born in Arizona, my upbringing in the great state of Texas has firmly rooted me in the ways of the cowboy! The previous year I, along with Steven, were Co-Execs for West Indies Federation 1958 for MUNUC 37. Outside of MUN, I am an avid international relations consumer and often engage in conversation about foreign politics and events.

Throughout our committee, we hope to foster a positive and supportive environment that allows you to grow in your public speaking, directive writing, and collaboration skills. Our aim is to cultivate an inclusive space where every voice is heard and valued, enabling you to develop and hone your skills. Through that, we hope to see fun and creative crisis arcs that will lead Russia to a new, eventful future.

Having said that, we truly want everyone to be able to participate and share their creative ideas in our committee. Russia is truly at a crossroads in history, and different actions can cause widely different results. We hope to see some great collaboration between delegates and the emergence of innovative solutions for the crisis ahead. Our goal is to create an atmosphere where each delegate's unique ideas are not only welcomed but celebrated. If you have any questions regarding the flow of committee or delegate expectations, do not hesitate to contact us!

Sincerely,

Diego Estrada

Crisis Director, *Tsar Wars: The Duma Awakens, 1910*

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SENSITIVITY STATEMENT

Dear Delegates,

As mentioned in our Chair and Crisis Director Letters, one of our utmost priorities is to ensure that all delegates are welcomed and treated with respect. In order to create and ensure an inclusive environment, we want you to be aware of some expectations.

As you may know, the composition of the Russian Empire is deeply intertwined with the region's tumultuous history and series of independence movements. In addition, Russia is home to vast, diverse minority groups of various economic and political backgrounds. We will not allow the use of sexist, racist, homophobic, or other forms of discriminatory rhetoric. Language, policies, or violence designed to target a specific minority group will be prohibited. This includes, but is not limited to, the formation of terrorist organizations, scapegoating for political gains, and the use of targeted language to gain public support. Note that violence towards civilians in any form will also not be allowed, and the Geneva Convention applies to any or all instances of international conflict.

We will not tolerate any of the above behaviors, whether that be in your notes, directives, or discussions within the committee. There is plenty of room to explore ideological differences while respecting civilians' backgrounds. Even if your character is opposed to cooperation with a specific group, you should not use violent means against civilians to pursue any front-room or backroom goals.

We want to ensure that this conference is a safe and fun learning experience for every delegate. If you have any questions or concerns regarding any of these policies, please feel free to reach out to any of us.

Best,

Steven, Diego, Ivan

STRUCTURE AND MECHANICS

Tsar Wars: The Duma Awakens, 1910 is a continuous crisis committee. We are aware that you may not have experience with this format. This section aims to lay out the general structure and flow of the committee.

As previously mentioned, this committee is a continuous crisis. This means that we will be using the crisis format for all sessions. Crisis can widely be divided into two distinct sections: front room and back room. Generally, in the front room, crisis committees are characterized by mechanics such as directive writing and crisis breaks. Meanwhile, the backroom is defined by note writing.

Crisis can be simply explained by a cycle that will be repeated over the course of the conference. This cycle largely consists of a crisis break, followed by debate, directive writing, and directive voting. After these steps are completed, there will be a new crisis break prepared by the Crisis Directors and backroom staff, where you will repeat the aforementioned steps above cyclically, if you will.

In practice, this means that when we begin the first session, delegates will be introduced to a crisis break, which will introduce the initial problems of the committee. At first, these crises will involve issues we discuss in the rest of this background guide. In the later sessions, crisis breaks will be primarily driven through the actions of delegates in the backroom. Delegates conduct these actions by writing notes in the backroom.

Delegates will then work together to solve these crises through directives. You can think of directives as targeted solutions for different aspects of the crisis being presented. In order to pass directives, you will need to use many skills, which include but are not limited to giving

speeches, debating during moderated caucuses, and working together in blocs in unmoderated caucuses. Backroom staff will have access to all directives as they are being presented and will design crisis breaks that correspond with the directives that delegates pass.

Delegates should come prepared with an idea for their assigned character's goal for the committee. These goals should ideally be executable within five committee sessions and do not have to align with the overall committee's goals. You will then use notes to enact plans to bring this goal into motion. We highly encourage you to put these goals in your first crisis note. In general, notes should be written in character and directed to a family member, friend, or secretary, for example. They should contain instructions to carry out specific tasks that will be beneficial to your goal. The clearer the connection to a delegate's end goal, the easier it will be for Assistant Chairs, the people who will read and answer your notes, to help you.

In the beginning, you should aim to accumulate resources and lay the foundation for your assigned character's goals. A good rule of thumb is that you should have the finances, infrastructure, land, and manpower of your operation built up in your notes before you execute your actions. When asking for resources, you should consider the historical context of the committee as well as your character's background. For example, as the committee took place in 1910, we will not grant delegates a time machine, as that is not realistic for the time period. Your goal in regards to notes should be to trigger a crisis break in the front room as many times as possible. A good way to do this is to ensure that your actions in your backroom notes are sufficiently disruptive to the committee such that it triggers a crisis.

We look forward to seeing how you navigate these mechanisms and use all the resources at your disposal. We encourage you to think creatively about how you approach the problems you will face during the committee. Prior to the conference, we encourage you to visit the

MUNUC website to familiarize yourself with typical terminology as well as best practices to help you succeed in sessions. If there are any points of confusion, do not hesitate to reach out.

HISTORY OF THE PROBLEM

The Golden Horde's Legacy in Muscovy

While Russia currently sprawls as the largest nation by land mass, it was once a fledgling nation barely maintaining its sovereignty. Kievan Rus' (882 CE - 1240 CE), the ancient state that encompassed much of modern-day Belarus, Ukraine, eastern Russia, and the Baltic States, had served as a beacon for a unified Slavic culture and hope for the prosperity to come. However, political conflicts slowly fragmented the Rus', leading to the formation of numerous smaller autonomous states within the federation.¹ With the incoming threat of the Mongols, the fragmentation only got worse, leading to the complete collapse of Kievan Rus'. The resulting states were luckily far enough away to be spared by the Tatar Yoke (Golden Horde) or fell victim to infighting amongst themselves for a successor state.²

The Grand Principality of Moscow (Muscovy)

After the fragmentation of Kievan Rus', the small principality of Muscovy worked on consolidating itself under the lead of Daniil Aleksandrovich (Daniil of Moscow). In 1325, Ivan I Danilovich Kalita was made the Grand Prince of the Russian tributary states by the Golden Horde, allowing Muscovy to amass massive wealth.³ Within this time, the Seat of the Orthodox Church in Vladimir relocated to Moscow, making Moscow, and ultimately Muscovy, the leading political, religious, and essentially the dominant force within the region.

¹ Riasanovsky, Nicholas V., and Mark D. Steinberg. *A history of Russia*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019.

² Halperin, Charles J. *Russia and the Golden Horde: The Mongol Impact on Medieval Russian History*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana Univ. Press, 2010.

³ Riasanovsky, Nicholas V., and Mark D. Steinberg. *A history of Russia*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019.

Muscovy's privileged relationship with the Horde accelerated its centralization. As the Grand Prince, Ivan used the tributaries' wealth and resources to amass armies and develop Muscovy economically. He also adapted the Mongol system of tax farming and regular censuses to extend Muscovy's administrative reach.⁴ Over time, these practices created a more efficient economic structure than those of their regional rivals, creating an unrivalled economic advantage. This fiscal superiority, alongside Muscovy's position over the rest of the tributary states, allowed the principality to sustain larger armies and more extensive diplomatic efforts.

By the mid-14th century, Muscovy leveraged its role as the Horde's political, cultural, and religious center into both material and symbolic power. Wealth, administrative capacity, and religious prestige became mutually reinforcing pillars of authority, enabling the principality to outpace competitors and lay the groundwork for its eventual dominance over the Russian heartland. As the century progressed, and Muscovy grew, so too did the dreams of a unified Russian state.

The Fall of Novgorod and the Shattering of Chains

While Muscovy prospered, the Golden Horde struggled with divisive political conflicts. In 1380, Vasily I of Muscovy seized this chance to win a major victory against a grand military general of the Golden Horde. While this didn't secure the independence of the tributary state, it provided immense prestige and legitimacy to the Muscovites' claims of being the leaders of a unified Russian state. Vasily I capitalized on his victory and greatly expanded Muscovy.⁵ As the years progressed, the Golden Horde regained its former glory, while the Muscovites became embroiled in civil turmoil. This led to the Orthodox Church declaring autocephaly, weakening

⁴ Halperin, Charles J. *Russia and the Golden Horde: The Mongol Impact on Medieval Russian History*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana Univ. Press, 2010.

⁵ Ibid.

Muscovy's status as a religious power. For the next few decades, Muscovy faced persistent stagnation.

However, luck would turn in their favor with the arrival of Ivan III Vasilyevich, otherwise known as Ivan the Great. Within four decades, Ivan would manage to conquer nearly all the Russian states, including the Great Republic of Novgorod to the north. After a humiliating defeat in the Muscovite civil war and a brief peace due to the Treaty of Yazhelbitsy of 1456, Ivan the Great focused on slowly stripping the Russian states of their territories. After hearing rumors that Novgorodians were conspiring with foreign powers, Ivan besieged the city into submission. In 1480, Ivan III had had enough of paying tribute to the Golden Horde, and both sides militarized on the Ugra River. After a short skirmish dubbed the Great Stand on the Ugra River, the Golden Horde backed down, and Muscovy's centuries of submission were no more.⁶ By the end of Ivan the Great's reign in 1505, he had established the administrative changes, economic reforms, and land mass needed to declare himself the leader of a new nation, and thus officially began the grand era of *Muscovite Russia*.

Russian Unification and Serfdom Galore

Ivan III had truly transformed Muscovy with his reforms and approaches. During his reign, Ivan III tripled Muscovy's size, expanded its military capabilities, and centralized a vast state from the ruins of the Tatar Yoke and other Russian substates. Despite these accomplishments, Ivan III's reforms placed the initial barrier between Russia and the West. Many argue his reign was "a period of cultural depression and spiritual barrenness. Freedom was stamped out within the Russian lands. By his bigoted anti-Catholicism, Ivan brought down the

⁶ Halperin, Charles J. *Russia and the Golden Horde: The Mongol Impact on Medieval Russian History*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana Univ. Press, 2010.

curtain between Russia and the West. For the sake of territorial aggrandizement, he deprived his country of the fruits of Western learning and civilization”.⁷ Indeed, Ivan III expanded the nation at the cost of its future. For generations, Muscovy would struggle to adapt to the changing world.

After Ivan III, his grandson Ivan IV (Ivan the Terrible) transformed Muscovy into a true autocracy. Ivan IV built upon the previous traditions inherited from the Golden Horde to transform his kingship into a dictatorship, crowning himself as Russia’s first “Tsar”. In 1549, he created the *Zemsky Sobor* (Assembly of Land) to serve as a consulting body, further solidifying his rule.⁸ After reforming the legal code and attempting to establish connections with Western nations, primarily England, he would go on to introduce autonomous governments within Russia, providing the foundations for more local self-government. He also established the *Streletsy* (Russia’s first standing army) and continued his conquests into Central Asia, taking out Kazan and Astrakhan, nations located on the Volga River.

Ivan IV’s title, Ivan the Terrible, is a bit of an archaic translation, with the “terrible” referring to the terror or fear resulting from the strict policing and reforms established during his reign. Despite some positive reforms in opening relations with other Western nations, his establishment of the *oprichniki* (a political police force) as well as his failed war in the Livonian from 1558-1578 exhausted Russia’s resources and killed the momentum from Ivan the Great’s reign.⁹

⁷ Fennell, J. (1963). *Ivan the great of Moscow*. Macmillan ; St. Martin’s Press.

⁸ Riasanovsky, Nicholas V., and Mark D. Steinberg. *A history of Russia*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019.

⁹ Ibid.

Time of Troubles and the Revival of the Romanovs

The death of Feodor I led to the Time of Troubles, a period of famine, succession crises, and foreign interventions in Russia. The collapse of the ruling dynasty within Russia led to pure chaos as factions emerged amongst the rubble and vied for the position of Tsar and its power. This internal feud led to massive instability, resulting in a weakened government. This left Russia unprepared when a famine struck between 1601-1603 and killed nearly a third of the total population. In addition, rebellions such as the Khlopko rebellion would cause further instability, making Russia's imminent collapse seem apparent.

In the midst of all this chaos, many individuals were still power hungry for the position of Tsar, and many False Dmitrys began to sprout across Eastern Europe. The first false Dmitry would emerge in 1603, hailing from the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth, claiming to be capable of ruling as the “rightful” heir. He rapidly rose to power through one of many civil wars, and just as quickly lost the trust of the people by converting to Catholicism despite many being Orthodox. He was later murdered during a riot sparked by his marriage to the Polish princess Marina Mniszech.¹⁰ This sequence of succession to immediate ousting or betrayal would continue for the second and third Dmitry.

Between the transition of power, Russia faced increasing conflicts with its neighbor. During the rise of the second Dmitry in the early 1610s, Russia fought Sweden in the Ingrian War, and coincidentally, the Kremlin was occupied by the Poles due to the actions of the previous two Tsars.¹¹ As a result, a rivalry grew between the two nations, signaling their attitudes toward foreign non-Russian powers and their general consensus of Isolationism. Alongside the sack of Novgorod and suffering from Crimean raids, it's safe to say Russia simply couldn't catch

¹⁰ Stone, Daniel Z.. *The Polish-Lithuanian State, 1386–1795*. University of Washington Press, 2014. P. 140

¹¹ Riasanovsky, Nicholas V., and Mark D. Steinberg. *A history of Russia*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019.

a break. While the third Dmitry rose to power in 1612, the revolting/mutiny of the Polish army within Russia led to a siege of Polish troops within the Kremlin.

The Rise and Fall of the Serfs

As the Romanovs eventually rose to power from the Time of Trouble, they solidified their rule. The Romanovs leaned heavily on noble service and peasant labor to sustain their power, so they began codifying restrictions on peasant mobility. By the mid-17th century, these restrictions hardened into full-fledged serfdom, a system that tied the majority of the Russian population to the land and their landlords. This development reflected the darker inheritance of Mongol-style resource extraction, now directed inward by Russia's rulers.¹² Indeed, peasant and serf labor was the key to making many of Russia's ambitions possible.

During the reign of Peter I (Peter the Great) (1682–1725), he modernized the army, created a navy, restructured administration into a centralized bureaucracy, and moved the capital to St. Petersburg, his “window to the West” in an attempt to break Muscovy's isolation and force Russia into the ranks of European great powers. However, his modernization was also built on the backs of peasants and serfs, whose labor made Russia's military and industrial ambitions possible. Indeed, serfdom deepened even as Russia gained the façade of European modernity, creating a paradox of a “modern” empire still rooted in feudal exploitation and traditions.

Meanwhile, Catherine II (Catherine the Great) (1762–1796) expanded Russia's borders dramatically while embracing Enlightenment rhetoric. She corresponded with philosophers like Voltaire, but her reliance on noble support led to an even harsher codification of serfdom after Pugachev's Rebellion (1773–1775).¹³ The rebellion, fueled by peasant grievances, demonstrated

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Riasanovsky, Nicholas V., and Mark D. Steinberg. *A history of Russia*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019.

how tightly the Russian social order was bound by the chains of serfdom and how violently those chains could be defended by the state. Despite territorial conquests and cultural flourishing, the empire's foundation remained brittle, weighed down by peasant oppression.

The 19th Century and the Peasant Reform of 1861

By the 19th century, Russia's weaknesses became increasingly apparent. Defeat in the Crimean War (1853–1856) exposed the empire's lack of economic and military power compared to industrial Europe. Alexander II, recognizing serfdom as both an economic and social liability, enacted the Emancipation Edict of 1861.¹⁴ Serfs were legally freed and granted land, though, in practice, they faced “redemption payments” that left them tied to their communes and perpetually indebted. While emancipation was a watershed moment, ending centuries of feudal bondage, it also highlighted Russia's halting, uneven, and most definitely unsteady path to modernization.

The late 19th century saw Russia beginning to industrialize, spurred by railway construction (notably the Trans-Siberian Railroad), foreign investment, and urbanization. Cities like Moscow and St. Petersburg grew as industrial hubs, and a small working class began to emerge. However, the majority of the population remained rural peasants, struggling under communal obligations and poverty. The persistence of autocracy, combined with social inequality and economic modernization, created volatile conditions that would later erupt in revolution.

By 1900, Russia stood as a paradox: a vast empire with growing industry, a powerful military, and expanding influence, but also a state still shackled by the legacies of Mongol

¹⁴ Ibid.

tribute, Muscovite autocracy, and centuries of serfdom.¹⁵ The Golden Horde's influence of centralized authority, fiscal extraction, and reliance on coerced labor echoed across centuries, shaping Muscovy into Russia and Russia into a modern empire.¹⁶ Yet these very legacies also planted the seeds of unrest, as the peasants once bound by serfdom are now workers bound by factories, with both continuing to hope for a future beyond autocracy.

Meet the Tsars

The history of Russia became linked to its tsars once Muscovy emerged as the most powerful of the Russian states. Each ruler had his own personal legacy, whether it was through building the state, expanding its lands, or leaving behind periods of hardship.

Ivan III, The Gatherer of the Russian Lands

The first of the rulers was Ivan III, or Ivan the Great, who ruled from 1462 to 1505.¹⁷ One of his greatest achievements is the conquest of the Republic of Novgorod, whose independence long resisted Muscovy's dominance.¹⁸ By adding Novgorod to Muscovy control, Ivan added new territory and removed a serious rival. Another event which was just as significant was his refusal in 1480 to continue paying tribute to the Mongols, known as the Great Stand on the Ugra River.¹⁹ The Mongols withdrew without a fight, and their centuries-long control over Muscovy ended. Ivan also strengthened Muscovy's status by marrying Sophia (Zoë) Palaeologus, the niece of the

¹⁵ Riasanovsky, Nicholas V., and Mark D. Steinberg. *A history of Russia*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019.

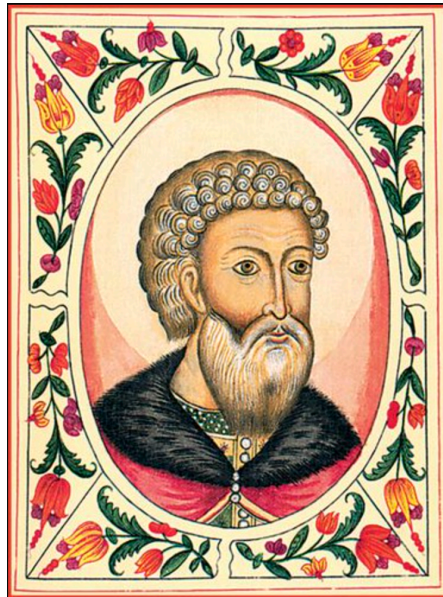
¹⁶ Halperin, Charles J. *Russia and the Golden Horde: The Mongol Impact on Medieval Russian History*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana Univ. Press, 2010.

¹⁷ "Ivan III." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc. Accessed August 18, 2025. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ivan-III>.

¹⁸ "Muscovite Conquest of Novgorod." *EBSCO Research Starters*. Accessed August 18, 2025. <https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/history/muscovite-conquest-novgorod>.

¹⁹ "Battle of the Ugra." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc. Accessed August 18, 2025. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Battle-of-the-Ugra>.

last Byzantine emperor.²⁰ This alliance gave Muscovy the sense of imperial heritage, and many began to view Moscow as the “Third Rome”, the new defender of Orthodoxy.²¹ When Ivan had passed away, and his heir Vasily III carried on his work, Muscovy had evolved from a tributary state to the center of a growing empire.



*A portrait of Ivan III.*²²

²⁰ “Sophia of Byzantium (1448–1503).” *Women in World History: A Biographical Encyclopedia*. *Encyclopedia.com*. Accessed August 18, 2025.

<https://www.encyclopedia.com/women/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/sophia-byzantium-1448-1503>

²¹ “Religious Origin and Political Extension of the Idea of ‘Moscow – Third Rome.’” *SAGE Research*. Accessed August 19, 2025.

<https://advance.sagepub.com/users/717941/articles/703249-religious-origin-and-political-extension-of-the-idea-of-moscow-third-rome>.

²² “Ivan III of Russia.” Flickr, uploaded by State Tretyakov Gallery, September 2017.

https://live.staticflickr.com/4407/37403929612_a794a22d01.jpg. Accessed August 18, 2025.

Ivan IV, The Gatherer of Autocracy and Terror

Ivan the Great's grandson, Ivan IV, remembered as Ivan the Terrible, took things even further. Crowned by his grandfather's successor, Vasily III, in 1547, Ivan began with a burst of energy and launched into reforming Russia in his image.²³ He founded the Streltsy, a permanent corporation of musketeers, and formed the first Zemsky Sobor, a national assembly which advised him on state matters.²⁴ During his reign, he pushed Russia's boundaries even further, capturing Kazan in 1552 and Astrakhan in 1556. This gave Muscovy control of the Volga River and opened the door to even further expansion into Siberia. However, after his wife Anastasia died, Ivan's reign changed completely. Overcome with grief and suspicion, he created the Oprichnina in 1565, dividing his empire into two parts and ruling over one as his personal domain.²⁵ His guards, the *oprichniki*, carried out mass killings, robbing innocents, destroyed towns, and left much of the country in ruins. So Ivan's rule left a mixed legacy behind as he had built Russia into a powerful state with expanding borders, but had left it scarred with fear, depopulation, and in economic decline.

Boris Godunov, The Elected Tsar

When Ivan the Terrible died in 1584, succession temporarily passed to his son Feodor, who died without an heir in 1598.²⁶ Feodor's death marked the end of the Rurikid dynasty and paved the way for Boris Godunov, one of his boyar attendants who had served as a trusted adviser for many years, to take the throne. He was chosen by the Zemsky Sobor, and as such is

²³ "Ivan the Terrible." *EBSCO Research Starters*. By Surendra K. Gupta. Published 2022. Accessed August 19, 2025. <https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/history/ivan-terrible>.

²⁴ "Zemsky Sobor." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc. Accessed August 19, 2025. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/zemsky-sobor>.

²⁵ "Ivan IV's Oprichnina." Text by Robert Wilde, originally from *History Net*, hosted by UNC Greensboro. Accessed August 19, 2025. <https://home.uncg.edu/~jwjones/russia/377readings/Oprichnina.html>.

²⁶ "Boris Godunov." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc. Accessed August 19, 2025. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Boris-Godunov-tsar-of-Russia>.

one of the few tsars not born into the role. Boris at first seemed to be a capable ruler. He strengthened borders, upgraded the past administration, and opened Russia tentatively to the influences of the West, but his reign was marred by tragedy.²⁷ Starting in 1601, a series of poor harvests caused a famine that killed hundreds of thousands. In addition to this crisis came the challenge of the False Dmitris, men claiming to be the surviving son of Ivan IV, who had Polish support and unhappy nobles. Godunov's sudden death in 1605 left the country divided and weakened.

The Duma

Godunov's death was preceded by one of the darkest moments in Russian history, known as the Time of Troubles, which took place from 1598 to 1613, because Russia did not have a clear ruler at that time.²⁸ The throne kept constantly getting claimed by foreign-backed imposters, opposition boyar factions, ambitious warlords, and even Polish forces took control of Moscow for a short while when peasants and Cossacks rebelled across the country. Famine, war, and invasion combined to push Muscovy to the brink of ruin. Even amidst the chaos, however, a resistance movement formed within the country. Local militias, often organized through the Orthodox Church, united to drive out the foreign troops and restore order to the throne. In 1613, the Zemsky Sobor elected Michael Romanov as Russia's next tsar and founded a dynasty that would rule Russia for the next three centuries. His rise to power brought much-needed stability across the realm and established the same patterns that had defined Muscovy's past: a strong central government, close ties between the state and church, and the belief that Russia could not survive without an omnipotent tsar.

²⁷ "Boris Godunov." *EBSCO Research Starters*. By Eric L. Wake. Published 2022. Accessed August 19, 2025. <https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/biography/boris-godunov>.

²⁸ "Tsars, Pseudo-Tsars and the Era of Russia's Upheavals." Daniel H. Shubin. Lulu Press, Inc., 2015.

The Boyar Duma

As Muscovy expanded in size and power, it became ever harder for the tsar to accomplish everything alone. So to help with these important decisions, the Boyar Duma developed into a council made up of the highest-ranking nobles and church leaders.²⁹ It was not similar to a Western European parliament since it did not have the authority to overrule the tsar, but served as an advisory body to him. The boyars who sat in the Duma possessed the majority of the land and led armies, and their counsel and wisdom were worth something when issues of war, diplomacy, taxation, or even legal reform were being debated.³⁰

During the early part of his reign, Ivan IV relied on the Duma and even created a smaller inner circle of his most trusted advisers, commonly known as the Chosen Council, to help him with reforms in government and in military reforms.³¹ As Ivan became more suspicious of the nobility, he started to limit the role of the Duma. So when he later established the Oprichnina, the Duma's influence decreased drastically. Despite this, the fact that it existed meant that the tsar's power was not completely separate from the nobility; he still needed their support and counsel in order to rule Russia.

The Zemsky Sobor

As previously mentioned, in addition to the Duma, Ivan IV created an assembly known as the Zemsky Sobor in 1549.³² This gathering was unusual because it brought together not only nobles and clergy but also representatives from towns and the service gentry, who formed the

²⁹ "Boyar Duma." *Encyclopedia.com*. Accessed August 20, 2025.

<https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/boyar-duma>.

³⁰ "Boyar." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc. Accessed August 20, 2025.
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/boyar>.

³¹ Feldbrugge, Ferdinand J. M. "The Chosen Council". *A History of Russian Law: From Ancient Times to the Council Code (Ulozhenie) of Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich of 1649*. Brill, 2 October 2017. pp. 790–791.

³² *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Ivan the Terrible," last updated August 20, 2025.

backbone of the army. The Sobor did not have independent authority, and only met when the tsar so decided to, but it gave the ruler a way of consulting more widely with different groups across Russia.

The Sobor was especially important during times when the state needed extra support, for instance, new taxes for war or approval for extensive campaigns. In appealing to the gentry and burghers, Ivan was able to consolidate support among them further and be able to implement his policies as serving not just Moscow, but all of Russia. This helped establish the connection between service, loyalty, and land, notions which later became tied up with the institution of serfdom.

Whereas the Sobor never met regularly and Ivan eventually abandoned it in the worst years of his reign, its institution was significant in that it gave Muscovy its first experience of a wider political forum, even though all the power lay in the hands of the throne. Later rulers would call the Sober again in moments of crisis, most famously Michael Romanov during the Time of Troubles.³³ This showed how Ivan's vision of wider consultation, though limited, could still play an important role in shaping the future of the Russian state.

³³ "Michael." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc. Last updated July 19, 2025. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Michael-tsar-of-Russia>.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Economic Situation

While Russia was a major European power, the country's economy was poor compared to other European states. Russia, despite the rise of industrialization in Europe, has yet to industrialize. In 1913, agriculture accounted for 45% of the national income, with over $\frac{2}{3}$ of the population participating in the sector.³⁴ In fact, agriculture as a sector, in proportion to the total GDP, was growing roughly 2% year by year.³⁵ Russian agriculture mainly focused on rye due to its survivability, which allows it to grow in poor, cold soils. This remained the primary agricultural produce until the mid-1900s. Wheat was another major crop that was grown in Southern Russia in regions such as Ukraine and the Volga steppes. Other crops include oats, buckwheat and millet, and corn.³⁶

Russian dependence on agriculture, while growing its GDP and providing food, caused massive structural weakness. Since a majority of the population was employed in these fields, low yields, such as during a poor harvest or a drought, significantly impacted economic growth. Even without these shocks, Russian agriculture was very inefficient and yielded poor output. Most farmers used outdated methods, such as using wooden plows and communal land systems. This massively limited potential innovation and invention.³⁷ Moreover, in addition to the poor

³⁴ Crisp, Olga. *Studies in the Russian Economy Before 1914*. London and Basingstoke; New York: The Macmillan Press Ltd./Barnes & Noble Books, 1976.

³⁵ Goldsmith, Raymond W. "The Economic Growth of Tsarist Russia, 1860–1913." *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 9, no. 3 (April 1961): 441–75. <https://doi.org/10.1086/449917>

³⁶ Crisp, Olga. *Studies in the Russian Economy Before 1914*. London and Basingstoke; New York: The Macmillan Press Ltd./Barnes & Noble Books, 1976.

³⁷ Britannica. "Mir." *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Accessed October 21, 2025. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/mir-Russian-community>.

methods, only certain regions in Russia had fertile soil, with the vast majority having soil of low quality.³⁸

As previously mentioned, Russia was behind in industrialization as compared to other European states, though it did have some small-scale industrialization in certain regions. Cities such as St. Petersburg and Moscow saw rapid industrialization in the 1890s with railways, coal, and steel production. However, this came at a cost. Russia's industrialization was financed primarily by foreign capitalists from countries such as France and Belgium, making them vulnerable to potential international policy risks. In addition, even though Russia was industrializing, the required domestic demand for manufactured goods did not exist domestically due to peasant poverty.³⁹ Low yields barely allowed peasants to make money on top of their expenses for food and necessities. In addition, while serfdom was abolished, peasants were still required to pay annual sums to compensate landlords for land received after their emancipation. All these factors contributed to the widespread poverty of the peasant class in Russia, leading to low industrialization rates and growth.⁴⁰

Culture and Religion

In 1987, Russia was roughly 8.8 square miles (22.8 square kilometers), accounting for around 1/6 of the entire world. The state had around 120 million people spread around the empire with over 100 ethnic groups and a multitude of religions.⁴¹ While the country had a diverse

³⁸ Merl, Stephan. "Agricultural Reforms in Russia from 1856 to the Present: Successes and Failures in the International Comparative Perspective." *Russian Peasant Studies* 5, no. 2 (2020): 56–87. <https://doi.org/10.22394/2500-1809-2020-5-2-56-87>

³⁹ Crisp, Olga. *Studies in the Russian Economy Before 1914*. London and Basingstoke; New York: The Macmillan Press Ltd./Barnes & Noble Books, 1976.

⁴⁰ Gatrell, Peter. *The Tsarist Economy, 1850–1917*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986.

⁴¹ "The First General Census of the Russian Empire of 1897. Breakdown of Population by Mother Tongue and Districts in 50 Governorates of the European Russia." *Demoscope Weekly*. https://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/rus_lan_97.php

population with many different ethnicities, they were primarily housed in Western Russia, with around 90% of the overall population living in the region.⁴² Thus, the culture of Russia was heavily influenced by Western religions such as Orthodoxy.

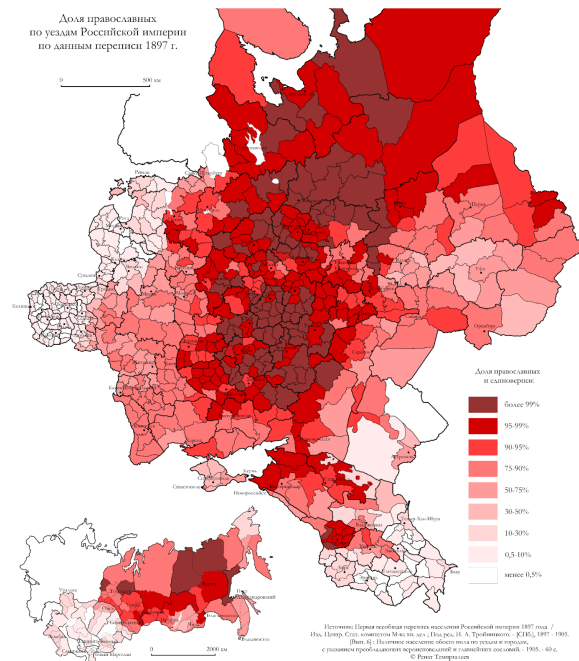
The Orthodox church and religion were heavily intertwined with Russian identity. The Tsar, similar to other European monarchs, claimed to derive his power from God. The Orthodox church had ceremonies to further emphasize this connection. Nicholas I even promoted Orthodoxy as the Empire's official doctrine, alongside Autocracy and Nationalism.⁴³ Peasant daily life also interacted heavily with religion outside political forces. Many homes had an icon corner, and families participated in feast days and other religious ceremonies. Furthermore, the local parish churches were often hubs for events and public intermingling. Moreover, pilgrimages to holy sites and saint relics drew thousands of people across Russia, creating an identity of a “Holy Russia”.⁴⁴ While the peasants and rural folks widely believed and participated in orthodoxy, the upper elite and nobility distanced themselves from it, instead preferring Western philosophies and literature. This created a disconnect between official ideology and actual belief on the elite level. Furthermore, since the Orthodox were so interconnected with the government itself, any movement against the state/ status quo was also often against the church itself, creating resentment.⁴⁵

⁴² “The First General Census of the Russian Empire of 1897. Breakdown of Population by Mother Tongue and Districts in 50 Governorates of the European Russia.” Demoscope Weekly. https://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/rus_lan_97.php

⁴³ Britannica. “Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality.” Encyclopaedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Orthodoxy-Autocracy-and-Nationality>

⁴⁴ Cherniavsky, Michael. “‘Holy Russia’: A Study in the History of an Idea.” *The American Historical Review* 63, no. 3 (1958): 617–37. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1848883>.

⁴⁵ Chulos, Chris. “Russian Piety and Culture from Peter the Great to 1917.” Chapter. In *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, edited by Michael Angold, 348–70. Cambridge History of Christianity. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.



Map of orthodoxy.⁴⁶

Outside Orthodoxy, Russian culture was seemingly at a crossroads of where to continue. The peasantry carried many oral traditions, songs, dances, and crafts that were spread across the country, creating a wider Russian culture.⁴⁷ Russian literature became an important part of the culture. Writers such as Dostoevsky and Tolstoy showed Russian views of morality and politics, with other writers like Chekhov showing a glimpse into daily life. This era would come to be known as the Silver Age, named after the many influential and creative works made during the period. This period would also see many debates between Slavophiles vs Westernizers, who debated over whether Russia should continue to Westernize and become similar to the Western European powers or continue embracing and deepening their own Orthodox and cultural roots.

⁴⁶ Orthodox Christians in the Russian Empire 1897. n.d. Wikimedia Commons. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Orthodox_Christians_in_the_Russian_Empire_1897.png.

⁴⁷ Ivanits, Linda. "Folklore in the Debates of the Westernizers and Slavophiles." *Folklorica* 16 (2011): 87–103. <https://doi.org/10.17161/folklorica.v16i1.4210>

The struggle over Russian identity gave rise to the idea of the “Russian Soul”, a term used by Russians to describe how unique Russian identity is.⁴⁸

While Russian Orthodoxy was prevalent in the empire, many other religious and ethnic groups also practiced their own religions and practices. Beyond Orthodoxy, Islam was the second most widely practiced religion in the Russian Empire. It was especially prevalent in the Volga region, Crimea, and Central Asia, where mosques and Islamic schools were a common feature of daily life. In the western territories of Poland and Lithuania, Catholicism was the dominant faith, while in the Baltic regions, Protestantism prevailed. Judaism was also prevalent in the Pale of Settlement, a region in modern-day Lithuania, Poland, Belarus, and Ukraine where Jews were confined to.⁴⁹ While these other religions were practiced in these regions, the state was not always lax towards them, with frequent attempts to repress the religions and promote Orthodoxy. Though many cultures and customs in these regions were also adapted in the wider Russian culture.

⁴⁸ Hamburg, G. M., and Randall A. Poole, eds. *A History of Russian Philosophy 1830–1930: Faith, Reason, and the Defense of Human Dignity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

⁴⁹ “The First General Census of the Russian Empire of 1897. Breakdown of Population by Mother Tongue and Districts in 50 Governorates of the European Russia.” Demoscope Weekly. https://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/rus_lan_97.php

The Tsar



*Nicholas II and Family.*⁵⁰

In 1910, Russia was under a monarchy. The monarch, or the Tsar as he was known in Russia, was Nicholas II. The Tsar derived his power from the Orthodox church through an idea called divine right. Divine right was the idea that the monarch rules by God's will and thus is an extension of him. Following God, then, would mean following the monarch.⁵¹ While Nicholas II had divine right and ruled on it, his own power in public perception by both the nobility and peasantry waned heavily before 1910. Nicholas II had a noble upbringing and was properly educated on Russian affairs. Yet, Nicholas II was often uncomfortably shy when engaging in official matters. He would often leave meetings and return to his room. He preferred to maintain privacy with his family rather than interact and engage with nobility. This social isolation led to many nobles losing faith in the Tsar as their opinions and counsel were ignored.⁵²

⁵⁰ Nicholas II and Family. n.d. <https://www.romanovempire.org/media/nicholas-ii-with-his-family-0d568c>.

⁵¹ Britannica. "Divine Right of Kings." Encyclopaedia Britannica. Accessed August 26, 2025. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/divine-right-of-kings>

⁵² Britannica. "Nicholas II | Biography, Wife, Abdication, Death, & Facts." Encyclopaedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Nicholas-II-tsar-of-Russia>

The peasant class was equally disappointed and frustrated at the Tsar. The peasant ideation of the Tsar was the “Little Father,” a figure that was meant to be warm and approachable, who listened and cared for their subjects. Nicholas II did not fit this image, leading people to see him as cold and detached. His isolation reinforced the image of the Tsar as a leader who did not understand the grievances and problems of the common people.

The Bloody Sunday Massacre in 1905 is often cited as an example of how the Tsar’s silence led to peasant disconnect. In 1905, a group of peasants dissatisfied with the government marched towards the Winter Palace. This unarmed group wished to present a petition of their grievances to the Tsar. As the crowd approached, the soldiers stationed nearby opened fire on them, killing many. The Tsar, despite not being at the palace nor giving the orders, was blamed for causing this tragedy due to his utter silence. The peasants believed his silence to be a betrayal of their belief, breaking their trust in him. The Massacre marked a shift in peasant attitude towards the Tsar. Instead of seeing him as *Little Father*, the peasants began to call him *Nicholas the Bloody*.⁵³

The unpopularity of the monarchy also extended to the Tsar’s close family, with many disliking the Queen and the children of Nicholas II. The Tsar had five children, four daughters, and one son. As members of the imperial family, the children learned many languages other than Russian, such as English, German, and French. This led to the children never truly speaking any language very well. It was noted that they spoke Russian with an English accent, reinforcing the idea that they were out of touch with the Russian people.⁵⁴ The Russian monarch was deeply patriarchal, so only men could rule the state. Initially, Nicholas II only had daughters, leading to worries over succession.

⁵³ “Bloody Sunday (Massacre in Russia).” History.

<https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/january-22/bloody-sunday-massacre-in-russia>

⁵⁴ Eagar, Margaret. *Six Years at the Russian Court*. Alexander Palace Diaries.

It was not until his 5th child where he got Tsarevich Alexei, that the worries were alleviated.⁵⁵ However, even his birth did not totally quell worries of succession, as the child had hemophilia, a genetic disorder that prevents proper blood clotting. This led to Alexei appearing physically weak, causing the masseurs to worry about the imperial family and nobility. Imperial doctors could not provide relief to Alexei, and Alexandra, the empress, became desperate to find a cure. Her faith in Grigori Rasputin solidified after one particularly severe bleeding episode. When Alexei suffered an attack that the imperial doctors could not stop, Rasputin was summoned. He prayed at the boy's bedside, and by morning the bleeding had mysteriously subsided, convincing her of his mystic power. She would put all her faith into the man, believing him to be the only thing that could keep Alexei alive.⁵⁶ This gave Rasputin heavy influence over Alexandra, who herself had influence over Nicholas II. The political elite saw Rasputin as a corrupting force that was subtly influencing the state's politics. Rasputin in the later years would become a symbol of what was wrong with the monarchy, a representation of the corruption and weakness of the imperial court.

International Relations

In 1910, Russia was still feeling the impact of the humiliation suffered by its defeat in the Russo-Japanese War in 1904-1905. This war was fought over who would influence the Manchurian and Korean region in East Asia. Russia, before the war, had invested heavily in a Trans-Siberian railway and wanted to secure influence over the region. Japan, on the other hand, was worried about Russian expansion through Port Arthur, a Siberian warm-water port. Japan, to

⁵⁵ "Hemophilia in the Romanov Family." National Bleeding Disorders Foundation. March 29, 2022. <https://www.bleeding.org/news/hemophilia-in-the-romanov-family>

⁵⁶ Massie, Robert K. *Nicholas and Alexandra*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1967.

ensure its influence over Korea, attempted to make a deal with Russia, where they would mutually recognize each other's influence: Japan in Korea and Russia in Manchuria. However, Russia refused the deal, seeing Japan as merely a lesser Asian power. In response to the breakdown of communication, Japan launched a surprise attack on the Russian Pacific Fleet at Port Arthur. Due to Russian incompetence and underestimation, Japan eventually won the war, and Russia ceded influence over Korea and some Russian assets in Manchuria.⁵⁷ The defeat was massive in Russian domestic politics, as it was a war where a European power had lost to an Asian power, one that they saw as lesser and weaker. The elites, peasants, and others were in upheaval over the defeat. This would eventually fuel the revolution that would cause Bloody Sunday, and the need to pass political concessions such as the Duma.⁵⁸

While Russia was humiliated in the Russo-Japanese War, affairs in Europe were still largely untouched. In 1910, the European states believed in an idea called the balance of power, which was an idea where they would ensure that no one nation could dominate the rest. This meant that as nations grew and took territories, the other European states would change alliances or work against each other in order to limit expansion. In 1910, this largely culminated in two major alliance systems taking hold. One was the Triple Alliance, consisting of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy. To counteract growing German influence, the Triple Entente was made, consisting of Russia, France, and Britain. The formation of these alliances led to an arms race in which each power was massively increasing its own military spending and recruitment, trying to keep parity. This arms race also applied in the naval theatre, with Germany massively building up their navy to combat British dominance. The system was used as a way to ensure that

⁵⁷ Britannica. "Russo-Japanese War." Encyclopaedia Britannica.

<https://www.britannica.com/event/Russo-Japanese-War>

⁵⁸ "Bloody Sunday (Massacre in Russia)." History.

<https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/january-22/bloody-sunday-massacre-in-russia>

no major war would occur between the major powers, and it had largely worked with the century before it being named the century of peace. While the system was made to combat war, the situation became increasingly unstable.⁵⁹

An example of this instability is the Balkan crisis, which only occurred 2 years prior. The crisis started when Austria-Hungary formally annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina. Being of similar Slavic descent, Russia was outraged, but due to the recent defeat in Japan, it backed down on any military action. Germany had also backed Austria-Hungary, willing to defend them.⁶⁰ While no war was actually started, this crisis could have started something more, and, following this conflict, Russia became even closer to Britain and France. It would seem as if the alliances are becoming stronger and tensions are rising. Only one small spark could potentially start something greater.



Map of Military Alliances of Europe in 1914.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Berghahn, Volker R. *Europe before World War I: 1895–1914*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013.

⁶⁰ Britannica. “Bosnian Crisis of 1908.” Encyclopaedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Bosnian-crisis-of-1908>

⁶¹ Map Europe alliances 1914-en. n.d. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_Europe_alliances_1914-en.svg.

DELEGATE POSITIONS

Nikolay Alekseevich Khomyakov - Politician

Nikolay Alekseevich Khomyakov is a politician from Moscow. He is the son of Aleksey Stepanovich Khomyakov, who is a renowned theologian and philosopher and founder of the Slavophile movement. His upbringing instilled his father's values in his work. He graduated from Moscow University and served in the Ministry of Agriculture before his participation in the Duma. He was elected to lead the 3rd Duma, mainly aligning his interests with the landowners and loyalist deputies, though he seems to foster some progressive ideals regarding liberal reforms. His own hesitation towards his beliefs largely reflects the larger Russian debate over traditionalism vs modernization. In his free time, he likes to read literature and host gatherings to talk about it.

Sergei Ilyich Shemetov - Aspiring Entrepreneur

Sergei Ilyich Shemetov was born in the Orenburg Governorate. Before entering the Duma, Sergei had previously worked as a scribe, teacher, and village head. During this time, he gained a lot of skills in how to write and lead children and adults alike. He was very well-liked and was even a local celebrity in his town. While Sergei is in the Duma, he still has entrepreneurial ambitions. Specifically, he has an idea to build hotels that contain a spa element. He believes this idea to be revolutionary and plans to work on it when he has more free time. In the Duma, Sergei is a moderate, believing in some reforms, but not an extreme revolutionary. In his free time, he enjoys sitting in the town center and watching what people are doing to get an image of what the public is doing for future business ventures.

Konstantin Ivanovich Molodtsov - Regional Leader

Konstantin Ivanovich Molodtsov was born in the Tobolsk Governorate. He came from a peasant background where he served professionally as a volost scribe. This experience would eventually allow him to enter the Duma. Given his background, he advocated heavily for rural constituents. He was seen as a voice for the peasants and settlers, putting their opinions in the limelight. Specifically, he tried to bridge the gap between Siberian regional concerns and state concerns. He believed that the rural communities were just as important as the West, and fought to ensure that not one region was left behind. His area of expertise focused on resettlement and budget policy. When he's not working, you can almost certainly find him camping out in the Urals.

Ivan Nikolaevich Popov - Farmer

Ivan Nikolaevich Popov was born in the Vologda Governorate. He came from a small peasant family growing up in agriculture. As he aged, he found himself working under a local merchant, where he mainly traded furs. His experience eventually led him to pursue his own mercantile ambitions with his eventual goal of enriching his local community. While his business succeeded, Ivan felt as if he could change more if he entered government. This led him to eventually join the Duma, where he would use his experiences as both a merchant and a peasant to make change. Specifically, Ivan dealt with trade and enterprise issues and resettlement policy. While Ivan wanted some change in the government, he was seen as a moderate, preferring stable reform rather than a giant upheaval. In his free time, he enjoys looking at the stock market and making simulated investments to see how much he could theoretically gain.

Nikolai Vladimirovich Mefodiev - Doctor

Nikolai Vladimirovich Mefodiev was born in the Arkhangelsk Governorate. As a child, he felt very empathetic towards the local wildlife. Whenever he saw any injured animals, he always rushed to help. His actions eventually led him to become a protégé of a local doctor. Under the doctor's tutelage, he learned many techniques and would often help the local people with diseases or wounds. To further help his local community, he became a teacher, giving the children a basic education. After teaching in his local community, he would join the Duma, advocating for health reforms and education. In his free time, Nikolai enjoys writing on topics ranging from new medical discoveries to local wildlife. His writings were even published in his own newspaper called The Moscow Times.

Ivan Kornil'yvich Pokrovsky - Business Owner

Ivan Kornil'yvich Pokrovsky was born in Chelyabinsk to an influential family that had many politicians and businessmen. Following in his family's footsteps, he opened up many businesses across Russia. These businesses included a gold mine he owned in the Urals and a sugar factory he had in his local town. Ivan even pursued international business as he worked and lived in Belgium for a brief period. Inspired by his own brother becoming a mayor in Chelyabinsk, Ivan turned his sights to politics. Having gained experience in many businesses, he joined the Duma, trying to find ways to enrich himself and his communities. In his free time, he enjoys playing chess, believing the game to be important to keep his mental abilities stable.

Ivan Vasilievich Titov - Priest

Ivan Vasilievich Titov was born in the Perm Governorate. As the son of a clergyman, Ivan became heavily involved in the Orthodox church. Following in his father's footsteps, he would graduate from the Perm Theological Seminary. After his graduation, he became a priest serving in Kugnur. Alongside his clerical duties, he led a school, where he taught law in primary schools. He would also use his wealth to build a two-story stone schoolhouse for the community. He eventually joined the Duma, where he advocated immensely for the expansion of education and served on many committees revolving around Orthodoxy. While he was a priest, he still would fight against the church's wishes and was even temporarily stripped of his priesthood after he petitioned the Tsar to spare technicians who were sentenced to death. In his free time, he enjoys teaching children law and religion, believing it to be a needed service for the youth.

Vladimir Volkonsky - Wealthy Scion

Vladimir Volkonsky was born in St. Petersburg to a prestigious Volkonsky family. The Volkonsky family has been a Russian noble family since ancient times. Coming from this historical lineage, Vladimir Volkonsky was very well educated in all manners of nobility. Many considered him to be a true image of what a noble man should be, always carrying himself with the utmost perfection. He graduated from the Tver Cavalry School and achieved the rank of Active State Councillor. Thanks to his upbringing and warm personality, he was well-liked by the Duma's conservative faction. He advocated immensely for the Monarch and the nobility beneath it due to his strong belief in the imperial family. He has become increasingly annoyed by the rebellions and conflict surrounding the imperial family and believes it to be utterly foolish to

entertain ideas of other governments. In his free time, Vladimir enjoys going into the forests and hunting for days on end, especially after contentious debates.

Ivan Petrovich - Farmer

Ivan Petrovich was born in a rural village in the Ryazan Province. Coming from a long line of farmers, he has tilled the land since his childhood, planting rye, oats, and barley with his family. Ivan, not being highly educated, became well respected within his village for his steady leadership and membership in the local Zemstvo assembly. This role provided him with the opportunity to represent peasants' issues at the national level, where he speaks for millions of Russian villagers. In the Duma, Ivan focuses on land reform and fairer taxes, arguing that the Empire has to address the struggles of common peasants. Despite a lack of wealth like nobles or the power of generals, his strength comes from his strong bond to the countryside and the loyalty of those who consider him their voice. In his free time, he enjoys playing cards with the neighbors at the village tavern and listening to church choirs following church on Sundays.

Nikolai Ottovich von Essen - Naval Admiral

Nikolai Ottovich von Essen was born in 1860 in St. Petersburg to a Baltic German noble family and, from an early age, chose the life of a naval career. He graduated from the Naval Cadet Corps and served with honor during the Russo-Japanese War. Following Russia's defeat in the naval war, von Essen emerged as one of the most vocal advocates for reform and modernization. In 1910, he was a Baltic Fleet commander who improved training, discipline, and morale among sailors. Although not a politician by nature, he cooperated with the Duma to obtain funds for new warships and allied himself with deputies who were in favor of making

Russia's forces stronger. His moderate views sometimes brought him into conflict with militant monarchists, but he remained loyal to the Tsar. In his personal life, he enjoys listening to music and reading naval history, while also encouraging young officers to think of themselves as guardians of Russia's honor at sea.

Pavel Pavlovich Ryabushinsky - Industrialist

Pavel Pavlovich Ryabushinsky was born in Moscow in 1871 to a rich Old Believer merchant family. He inherited his family's textile and banking firms and quickly became one of the most notable industrialists in Russia. By 1910, he was involved in politics, utilizing his wealth and influence to aid the Progressive Party and deputies who advocated for modest constitutional reform. Ryabushinsky believed that Russia's future lay in modern industry and finance, not in preserving the old nobility's structures. He often found himself in opposition to monarchist deputies, promoting freer trade, new banking laws, and better worker conditions to prevent unrest. While loyal to the Empire, but distrusting the Tsar's ministers, he wanted a government more responsible to society and business. In his private life, he was a collector of art and held salons.

Alexander Fyodorovich Kerensky - Community Organizer

Alexander Fyodorovich Kerensky was born in Simbirsk in 1881, the son of a school inspector. After studying law at St. Petersburg University, he gained a reputation as a skilled lawyer who often defended political dissidents and workers in court. His courtroom speeches made him popular among radicals and liberals alike. By 1910, he was active in the Socialist Revolutionary Party, balancing revolutionary ideas with a belief in parliamentary reform.

Kerensky would later win an election to the Duma, but even before that, he influenced a rising political figure who appealed to both intellectuals and workers. In debates, he positioned himself as a mediator between revolutionaries and moderates, warning that ignoring social grievances could lead to upheaval. Outside politics, Kerensky enjoyed literature and theater, often drawing on his love of drama to sharpen his speeches.

Yevno Fishelevich Azef - Informant

Yevno Azef was born in 1869 in Lyskovo to a Jewish tailor's family. As a young man, he joined the Socialist Revolutionary Party, quickly rising to lead its Combat Organization, which carried out political assassinations. At the same time, however, he secretly became an informant for the Okhrana, feeding the Tsarist police information about revolutionary activities while continuing to plan attacks. By 1910, he was one of the most notorious but mysterious figures in Russian politics, known to some as a committed revolutionary and to others as a loyal servant of the state. His reputation for gathering information and manipulating both sides gave him a unique power that few dared to challenge. In private, Azef kept a quiet life, preferring to avoid public attention, though whispers about his true loyalties followed him everywhere.

Mikhail Dmitrievich Sibiriyakov - Businessman

Mikhail Dmitrievich Sibiriyakov was born in Irkutsk in 1849 into a wealthy merchant family and became one of the most influential businessmen in Siberia. He invested heavily in mining, timber, and transport, and supported the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway, which opened Siberia to settlers and trade. Sibiriyakov saw Siberia not as a remote exile land but as the Empire's future, rich with untapped resources. By 1910, he was active in political and

philanthropic circles, promoting projects to expand education and industry in the region. In the Duma, he pushed for policies that would encourage migration to Siberia and give Moscow greater access to its wealth. Though not a revolutionary, he was wary of the central government's neglect of the region, and he wanted Siberia to play a larger role in shaping Russia's destiny. In his personal life, he sponsored explorers and enjoyed speaking about Siberia's vast landscapes, often referring to himself proudly as "a true Siberian."

Vladimir Mitrofanovich Purishkevich - Community Organizer

Vladimir Mitrofanovich Purishkevich was born in 1870 in Kishinev and studied history at Odessa University before turning to politics. In 1910, he was among the most vocal monarchists in the Duma, and he led the far-right Union of the Russian People. He believed that the authority of the Tsar was sacred and that the Duma should serve only to protect autocracy, not to destroy it. Purishkevich gained attention for his fiery speeches, often clashing with liberals and socialists whom he accuses of betraying Russia. His close ties to the Black Hundreds resulted in him becoming a conservative favorite but being targeted by feared reformists. Purishkevich demanded harsh censorship, loyalty to the Orthodox Church, and brutal treatment of revolutionaries. Outside of politics, he was well known for his eccentricity and love of dramatic gestures, earning him equal amounts of ridicule and admiration.

Aleksandr Fedorovich Aladin - Merchant

Aleksandr Fedorovich Aladin was born into a merchant family in Novikovka, where he grew up learning the ways of trade and commerce. From an early age, he helped his family operate warehouses and oversee the transshipment of goods along the Volga and gained both a business sense and understanding of Russia's expanding markets. Although he is not of noble birth, his education and ambition allowed him to enter the field of politics, eventually securing him a seat in the Duma. There, he has dedicated himself to representing the commercial and industrial classes, pushing for fairer taxation, improved transport facilities and networks, and policies that would encourage commerce across the Empire. Aladin is highly respected among his peers for his pragmatic style, often finding himself acting as a peacemaker between liberal reformers and business conservatives. During his spare time, he spends his evenings in Moscow cafés, reading European newspapers, and engaging in heated discussions about Russia's future over a cup of tea.

Grigori Rzhevsky - Spiritualist

A Ural peasant-turned-mystic and faith healer, Rzhevsky was born in Yekaterinburg, Russia's 4th largest city, and located in the Sverdlovsk Oblast region, where he grew up in a humble farming family. He became famous for his mystic acts and healing acts within the region. In one feat, he was allegedly able to cure the mayor's son from Lupus. He was a divisive figure, seen variously as a prophet or a corrupt charlatan, and his notoriety contributed to discrediting the mayor's legitimacy. Despite his illusive nature and the strange occurrences leading up to his rise in fame, he secured a seat within the Duma as the man from Yekaterinburg. Rzhevsky loved

singing folk songs at town gatherings and was known for dancing energetically at parties, even in his later years.

Sergey Sazonov - Diplomat

Born in Ryazan Province, Sazonov grew up in a noble family tracing back to the 17th century. Most of his early life remains unknown apart from his education, but he did end up marrying Anna Borisovna von Neidhardt (1868–1939). As a result, he became brother-in-law of Prime Minister Pyotr Stolypin, who did his best to further Sazonov's ambitions before beginning his career in foreign service. Sazonov graduated from the Imperial Lyceum near Saint Petersburg, serving in the London embassy and taking a diplomatic mission to the Vatican, becoming the chief in March of 1906. He served as Russia's Foreign Minister from 1910 to 1916 and was key in negotiating alliances and treaties with both the Germans and Japanese in the years leading to World War I. Sazonov was a lover of gardening and often tended to his flowers as a way to relax from diplomatic pressures.

Stepanovich Petrov - Inventor

A pioneering physicist, Popov was born in the town of Krasnoturinsk, Sverdlovsk Oblast, in the Urals. As the son of a priest, his father held high expectations for him to attend theology school, but instead, he went to Saint Petersburg University, where he studied physics. After graduating, while initially being a laboratory assistant at the University, the low pay led him to become a teacher and head of laboratory at the Russian Navy's Torpedo school. He is sometimes credited as one of the inventors of radio, demonstrating the transmission of radio signals in St. Petersburg in the mid-1890s. His work reflected the technological optimism of progressive Duma members, and while he wasn't as politically advocate as others, his inventions and

progression of radio would shape the world. Popov enjoyed building mechanical toys for his children and delighted in showing them little electrical “tricks” at home.

Maxim Gorky - Writer

Born in Nizhny Novgorod, Gorky grew up in poverty and eventually became an orphan when he was eleven. Throughout his youth, Gorky worked hard as a baker, painter, and ship’s cook before becoming a writer. Beginning to become a socially conscious writer and political activist in 1899, he chronicled the hardships of the lower classes and was involved in the 1905 Revolution and the subsequent reformist movements. Due to his involvement in the revolution, he befriended many leading revolutionaries at the time as well. At the heart of all, his work was a belief in the inherent worth and potential of the human person. He was a critic of the Tsarist regime and participated in Duma-era progressive politics. Despite his grim stories, Gorky loved to cook hearty stews for his friends and hosted lively dinners with writers and activists.

Roman Malinovsky - Secret Agent

Born in Plotsk, Poland, Malinovsky grew up in a poor working-class family before moving to Moscow. In 1902, he enlisted in the prestigious Izmaylovsky Regiment by impersonating a cousin with the same name. It was here that he was also picked up as an Okhrana agent, reporting on fellow soldiers and officers. A “commie on the down low,” he was an undercover Bolshevik who simultaneously served as a deputy in the Duma and as an agent for the Okhrana (the Tsarist secret police). Despite his act as a double agent, he was considered a top-notch agent of the Okhrana, managing to lead to the arrest of both Stalin and Sverdlov under the codename “Portnoi” (the tailor). Malinovsky loved chess and frequently played matches in Moscow cafés, sometimes with the very men he was spying on.

Pavel Milyukov - Wealthy Scion

Milyukov was born in Moscow and grew up in an intellectual, upper-class family, eventually becoming a historian and professor before entering politics. When he eventually grew up from his childhood, Milyukov studied history and philology at Moscow University, where he was influenced by Herbert Spencer, Auguste Comte, and Karl Marx. A leading Kadet and member of the First and Second Dumas, he was a strong advocate for transforming Russia into a constitutional parliamentary system, frequently clashing with monarchists over political rights and civil liberties. While he initially wanted a full-fledged republic, he realized such a drastic change from the Tsar might've been too much for the Kadets - the Constitutional Democratic Party - and as such they shifted to a more gradual change. He enjoyed long walks in the countryside and was fond of birdwatching, often saying it helped him “clear his mind” before debates.

Savva Smirnov - Entrepreneur

Born in the village of Zuevo into a wealthy industrialist family, Morozov grew up immersed in the textile trade before becoming a magnate himself. In 1885–1887, he studied chemistry at the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom. While in England, he studied the structure of the textile industry in Great Britain, especially in Manchester. It was through this upbringing that his love for textiles had grown. A philanthropist, he bankrolled cultural and political movements, including the Moscow Art Theatre and aspects of the Social Democratic movement. Although he died just before the Duma era, industrialists like him symbolized the uneasy alliance between Russia's emerging capitalist class and revolutionary politics. Morozov

loved theater so much that he not only financed productions but occasionally joined rehearsals to read lines with actors.

Alexei Brusilov - General

Born in Tiflis (modern-day Tbilisi, Georgia), Brusilov grew up in an aristocratic military family and attended the Imperial Corps of Pages in St. Petersburg. As a career general who later led the famous 1916 Brusilov Offensive, Brusilov embodied the professional officer corps torn between loyalty to the Tsar and frustration with imperial inefficiency. While he was not considered to be the most brilliant general, he was known for always being open to others' ideas and was especially pragmatic. As such, although he was never officially a Duma deputy, he influenced debates on military budgets and reforms. Brusilov was an avid horseman and took great pride in training cavalry, often giving informal riding lessons to young officers. He was quite sociable with other riders and frequently met with others to discuss riding techniques.

Noe Zhordania - Author

Born in Lanchkhuti (in western Georgia, then part of the Russian Empire), Noe Zhordania came from a modest family and was educated in Tiflis before becoming one of the leading Georgian Mensheviks. A skilled journalist and orator, he became the editor of *Social-Democrat*, a Georgian-language paper that spread socialist ideas in the Caucasus. As one of the principal voices of the Mensheviks, Zhordania frequently clashed with Bolshevik deputies, advocating instead for gradual reform, parliamentary participation, and cultural autonomy within a federal Russia. Though not formally a long-term Duma deputy, he was deeply involved in organizing the Menshevik faction and helped shape opposition strategy in the Duma's sessions. Zhordania enjoyed spending time in cafés debating philosophy and politics with fellow

intellectuals, and he was fond of long countryside walks in his native Georgia, where he was known to carry volumes of poetry to read aloud to companions.

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