



# EmpireMUNC X

*General Crisis*

## Cabinet of Tsar Nicholas II

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**CHAIR**

Vania Cheung

**CRISIS DIRECTOR**

Katherine Pikulik

# The Cabinet of Tsar Nicholas II

## *Committee Background Guide*

General Crisis Committee  
Empire Model United Nations Conference X  
New York University - November 2023

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# Welcome Letter

*Meet Your Chair:*

Добро пожаловать!

My name is Vania Cheung, and I'm excited to welcome you as your Honorable Chair for the Cabinet of Tsar Nicholas II. Before this committee, I chaired a Joint Crisis Harry Potter committee and was Crisis Director for an Atlantis committee. I'm also an active member of the NYU Model UN Travel Team and was Training Coordinator during my sophomore year of college. I write this not as a way to pad my resume, but to let you know that I've had my fair share of conference experience and that I am always open if you have any questions regarding the conference or committee.

The historical period in which this committee takes place is rife with potential chaos and change. The Russian Empire is at a crossroads with multiple ways it can move forward, and the job of steering this continent-spanning nation has been given to you. I personally will be looking for creative ideas combined with interesting uses of real historical facts, and can't wait to see what you all have planned for your characters. While it may not look like it, this is the perfect time for anything to happen, be it by the hands of a noble or peasant, citizen or outsider. The only limits you have are your own ideas.

This committee is also going to be my last time with EmpireMUNC, and I couldn't have asked for a better team than Katherine, Masha, and the rest of our amazing staffers. We have worked long hours to make sure that this committee runs without a hitch, and have plenty of challenges to throw in your direction to keep things interesting. At a time of global shifts in power, culture, and influence, I encourage you all to think big, not just from the perspective of the greater Russian Empire, but perhaps even the world. This background guide should serve as a main resource for your planning, and please don't hesitate to reach out should you have questions or concerns. I look forward to meeting each and every one of you on day one of the conference.

Удачи,

***Vania Cheung | Chair***

nic2003@nyu.edu

*Meet Your Crisis Director:*

Привет!

My name is Katherine and I will be your Crisis Director for EmpireMUNC X. I'm a Senior at NYU Stern double majoring in Finance and Accounting and minoring in Psychology. I was a CA for EmpireMUNC IX and NYUMUNC XIV, and I also attended two conferences in high school. Outside of school, I like doing puzzles, spending time with my family, and *attempting* to bake. I'm so excited to meet you all, and am looking forward to running this committee alongside Vania and Masha!

С уважением,

***Katherine Pikulik | Crisis Director***

krp412@stern.nyu.edu

*Meet Your Assistant Crisis Director:*

Здравствуйте делегаты,

My name is Masha and I will be your Assistant Crisis Director for this conference. I'm a Junior at NYU Gallatin concentrating in Fashion Business and Journalism with a minor in Digital Design. I have been on NYU's Model UN Travel Team since the spring of 2022 and was a CA for NYMUNC XIII and a Chair for EmpireMUNC IX. When I'm not in school, I like to skateboard, make clothes, dance, and cook with my family. I am ecstatic to be staffing this committee and can't wait to meet you all!

До Скорого,

***Masha Malinina | Assistant Crisis Director***

mm11570@nyu.edu

# Statement of Diversity and Inclusion

Whilst EmpireMUNC is committed to maintaining as educational and historically accurate an experience as possible, we recognize that any debate around historical events will incorporate sensitive issues. Delegates are expected to discuss these issues maturely and appropriately. EmpireMUNC is committed to promoting a culture of diversity and inclusion in line with NYU's values; in the spirit of this commitment, EmpireMUNC will not tolerate any bigoted symbols, statements, or attitudes. Remember that by attending our conference you agree to our Terms and Conditions of Conference Attendance, which we suggest you read over. It is posted on our website and is in your Delegation Guide.

## **To the members of Tsar Nicholas II's Cabinet,**

The staff would like to highlight a few more topics that we think should be addressed when it comes to diversity and inclusion. As you are all aware, the Russian Federation has been attempting to annex Ukraine since 2022. We want to take a moment to affirm our opposition to the war. This does not mean, however, that we will condone any sort of stereotyping or bad-faith discussions regarding Russia as a nationality or heritage, and we believe our delegates are thoughtful and intelligent enough to understand the difference between the Russian government and the Russian people.

A few more topics that we want to address: statements that may be taken as disparaging towards certain ethnic groups within Russia will not be tolerated. So is the use of the Russian Orthodox Church as a scapegoat for violent rhetoric. Finally, we want to steer away from topics of antisemitism and Zionism.

If you have specific questions that you are not sure about in regard to appropriate topics, please don't hesitate to email or ask.

Best,

Vania Cheung, Katherine Pikulik, and Masha Malinina

# Committee Mechanics

Outlined below are some committee mechanics that will hopefully shed some light if you are confused. Just because something is listed here does not mean the committee is obligated to do it; we are simply providing guidelines in case you decide to take these actions. Don't hesitate to reach out if there are further questions, and we are happy to discuss these more in-depth either before or after committee sessions. We want this committee to be yours as much as ours, so if you have any ideas we are happy to consider them.

## Assassination

Many delegates are aware that assassinations can be an integral part of Model UN. A well-timed execution of this plot can be the difference between success and failure. Most of all, it's fun to make pretend plots about fake people losing their lives through careful machinations. However, there are a couple of factors in mind when it comes to engaging in this idea.

1. **Assassinations must be planned out.** This does not only mean a single note, by the way. Delegates should have solid resources and a clever, detailed plan if they hope to succeed.
2. **Don't be graphic.** We want the strategy behind the assassination, not gruesome details. Being overly inappropriate may lead to being removed from the committee.
3. **Assassinations can fail.** Even the best plan has weaknesses. Sometimes a witness sees you, sometimes a poison might not work, and sometimes you fall over and hurt yourself before you can stab a target. Mistakes occur, there is likely a reason why Backroom did not approve of the assassination.
4. **Assassination attempts against committee members will not be implemented until late day 3, or early day 4.** This is not a hard and fast rule, but we will not be looking for this type of note on days 1 and 2, and even early in day 3. Plan things carefully and ensure you have the resources and know-how before committing, otherwise, you may get a nasty surprise.

## Trials

Like any group of people, some politicians commit (or don't commit) crimes. And sometimes those politicians are accused of bad things. When this happens, a trial is usually standard to determine if the person is guilty. Trials will work as follows:

1. A delegate must propose a trial and have it seconded. The delegate must clearly define who is being accused of what crime. A delegate can stand trial for multiple allegations, but can only be tried one at a time. Furthermore, a delegate can be retried, but only for a different crime, and after the sentence has been served, should the accused be found guilty.
2. A simple majority is required to pass and this will be considered most disruptive in parliamentary procedure.

3. The delegate initiating the trial will have a speaking time, as will the accused defending themselves. If multiple trials occur, it will go from the order in which it was introduced unless otherwise stated. The number of speakers and speaking time are defined by the delegate introducing the trial.
4. A simple majority is required for an accused to be found guilty. The punishment can be voted on by delegates through secret ballot or vocal motions followed by a simple vote.

While trials are malleable in everything but basic formatting, it is up to the chair's discretion should further edits be proposed when motioning for a Trial.

### **Timed Crisis**

Sometimes a crisis update is not enough. A timed crisis has delegates work in real-time to solve an issue. The basic logistics are as follows:

1. The backroom enters and announces a timed crisis. The announcement will include the general situation, some details, and a small Q&A portion.
2. A time will be decided by staffers that is appropriate for the committee with delegate input.
3. Once the time starts, delegates must come up with a directive that solves the crisis before time runs out.
4. If a directive is submitted in time, the backroom will return with an update.
5. Should delegates be unable to finish passing a directive in time, a tragedy may strike the entire committee.

These rules can be amenable with delegate feedback at the Chair's discretion.

### **“War Games”**

War games are a specific type of timed crisis revolving around strategy. In this case, delegates will be provided with a visual aide and some basic troop movements, and it is up to them to find a strategy that will solve the issue. Keep in mind that this does not necessarily require violence. A peace treaty can sometimes be more effective than a battalion of soldiers.



# Introduction

С НОВЫМ ГОДОМ (Happy New Year)! Thick snow and howling winds contrast the warm windowed palaces along the canals of St. Petersburg. Inside, grand trees covered in lights, candles, and candies are surrounded by seas of presents for the children of the nobility. Music, laughter, and merriment echo through the halls as luxuriously dressed men and women float around grand ballrooms. The air is abuzz with snippets of the latest gossip, young shrieks of excitement, and whispered debates about the current state of affairs. Within these castles, one can truly feel safe from not just the harsh elements outside, but from the long daggers of possible enemies from within.

This rose-colored sanctuary may be the home of a few select wealthy elites, but it is a far cry from what much of the real Russian Empire is. The harsh environment and the hungrier times that it brings may be scoffed at by the ruling class, but are a constant threat to the rest of the Russian populace. Whether in the city or country, many find themselves making meager to almost nonexistent salaries working back-breaking jobs as farmers or factory workers. The abolition of serfdom by Alexander II in 1861, while impactful, did little to help improve the real living conditions of many Russian citizens. Forced Russification of the Empire's minorities, coupled with a further push towards autocracy by the tsar and continued losses in a war meant to reinvigorate the country's patriotism, and the problems of Russia seemed to be reaching a boiling point, threatening to destroy what little stability left within the continent-spanning Empire.

As the 300-year-old, continent-spanning empire pushes into the 20th Century, it is up to a group of the tsar's closest advisers to solve the problems of a nation at the cusp of complete collapse, with the mission of finding solutions towards not just the poverty and war that has been inflicted onto its populace, but decide what must be done concerning the government itself. Will Russia continue to be an autocratic empire? Will it instead, like its European counterparts, move towards a Constitutional Monarchy or even a full Democracy? Or will something even more radical take hold?

# Historical Context

## *Origins of current Russia:*

A Prince named Rurik founded Novgorod in 862 CE, beginning the long history of the Kievan-Rus. Rurik's heir, Oleg, conquered Smolensk and Kyiv, cities in modern-day Ukraine that officially kickstarted the empire. Originally the people of the Kievan-Rus worshiped pagan deities, until the Emperor of Constantinople asked the Grand Prince of Kyiv, Vladimir, for support in 988. In return, Vladimir married the emperor's sister—but he needed to convert to Christianity in order to do so, establishing the Orthodox Church in Kievan-Rus. The Kievan-Russ kept expanding despite conflicts with nearby Poland and the Mongol Empire. In the 13th century, however, the Mongols invaded the empire but kept the Orthodox Church protected and exempt from taxes, giving them a slight economic leg-up compared to their Catholic neighbors.

In the 14th century, a small Russian principality called Muscovy started to gain power after the Head of the Orthodox Church moved there. Muscovy kept expanding through the 15th century. In 1547, Ivan the Terrible of the Rurik Dynasty became Tsar of all Russia and with his hunger for power, created internal instability. He killed his only heir capable of ruling, effectively dooming the Rurik dynasty in 1568, leaving Boris Godunov, his brother-in-law, to take power by putting Ivan's remaining son Fyodor I. Once Fyodor died, Boris Godunov became Tsar in 1598. His rule was greeted by a terrible famine, and in a failed attempt to combat it, the Tsar reinstated serfdom, leading to a violent revolt that began the Time of Troubles.

In 1603, monk Gregory Atorpiyev traveled to Kyiv and claimed to be Dmitriy Ivanovich (Ivan the Terrible's dead son), becoming "False Dima." The Polish-Lithuanian king believed him when False Dima asked him to help take back the Russian throne in exchange for converting the Russian people to Catholicism. In 1605, Boris Godunov died and False Dima became the new Tsar. However, he was assassinated in 1606 due to accusations of being too admiring of the West, leaving Russia yet again without a ruler. Poland saw Russia's instability and invaded, ending with the Battle of Klushino where the Polish Prince became the new tsar of Russia in 1610. The following year, while the country was revolting against its new leader, former ally Sweden turned against Russia, and Moscow was burned to the ground. This revolt, however, still managed to drive out the Poles from Russia. To end the Times of Trouble, a Grand Council elected 15-year-old Mikhail Romanov to be the new Tsar, beginning the reign of House Romanov.

## *The Romanov Family:*

The history and development of the Russian Empire is inextricably linked to the House of Romanov. The family gained prominence in 1547, when Anastasia Romanova married the first Tsar of Russia, Ivan the Terrible. The true beginnings of the dynasty, however, started when 15-year-old Mikhail Romanov was elected as Tsar of Russia. Ever since his coronation, the Romanov family has held the throne.

The dynasty's first great monarch was Peter the Great, who culturally revolutionized Russia and drastically modernized it during his reign (1682 - 1725). He replaced many traditionalist, medieval systems with ones that emphasized science and rationalism, inspired by his Western European counterparts. Under his reign, the government took a central role in establishing factories and encouraging private development. This led to increased trade as well as cultural exchanges, as Russians were sent abroad while foreigners were invited into Russia. Despite a high tariff on imports, Russia grew close trading relationships with several countries, including the Netherlands and England to the west and Persia and China to the east. Peter also instituted a standing army and introduced a poll tax that eventually turned the government's deficit into a surplus. Another area of drastic reform was the Russian Orthodox Church – Peter brought it under government control and essentially turned it into another branch of the state. Navigation schools, a medical school, a naval academy, an engineering school, and a secular school were also all established during this time.

Peter the Great's grandson, Peter II, was wildly unpopular. His wife Catherine overthrew him in 1762 and would become known as Catherine the Great, Russia's second great monarch. She sought to build on the reforms enacted by Peter the Great and wanted to become the ideal, enlightened monarch. Catherine corresponded with philosophers and other royals of her time, attempting to reform the code of law by defining restrictions on the power of the gentry (rural nobility) over the serfs. However, the gentry fought those restrictions, and instead of engaging in a power struggle with them, Catherine instead increased the nobility's influence over the serfs. Further expansion also came with the creation of local administrative offices for new and old provinces, as well as a court system for all of Russia. After the French Revolution, however, Catherine abandoned these liberal ideologies out of fear, persecuting opposition until her death in 1796.

After Catherine's son was assassinated in 1801, her grandson Alexander I took the throne. Like his grandmother, he began pursuing liberal reforms. Although his circle of advisers convinced him it would be too risky to abolish serfdom, Alexander passed reforms allowing nobles to free their serfs and grant them land. He also developed an alliance with Napoleon as Russia attempted to institute a constitutional government within its borders. This angered the conservatives, and the increased nationalism grew into what would become the War of 1812. Napoleon's France, now an enemy, launched a massive invasion that penetrated the country into the Russian capital Moscow, but a crippling winter and reinvigorated Russian army managed to

push them back. Alexander ended up victoriously entering Paris at the end of the war, and having gained a newfound religious devotion, proposed the creation of a “Holy Alliance” between the European nations. Some of the younger officers, however, were appalled at the conservative Russia after seeing first-hand the liberal sentiments in the West. Groups hoping to enact liberal reforms in Russia were swiftly broken up by the Tsar, who wanted to spread his religious zeal to the rest of Russia. The universities that had only existed for a few decades were shut down in favor of education based solely on Scripture. Those in favor of a constitutional government were losing power, and increasingly radical ideas were beginning to spread. With the sudden passing of Alexander I in 1825, a group of liberal revolutionaries known as the Decembrists took the opportunity to try and place Alexander’s younger brother Constantine into power rather than the heir apparent, his older brother Nicholas. However, this attempt was brutally suppressed, with hundreds being executed or sent to Siberia.

Nicholas, now a Tsar, believed that ascending the throne meant divine enlightenment, which led to him developing an inflated ego and sense of invincibility. Nicholas wished to stifle free or independent thought because it would disturb the “natural order” that God had put into his care, and used fear tactics to achieve this, most notably by establishing a secret police force. He severely punished the Decembrists, but still enacted their ideas in the hopes of counteracting a possible uprising. One of Nicholas’s main focuses was education; he had it confined to strictly the upper classes and removed any concepts he found to be politically dangerous. After 1848, he began persecuting intellectuals, who had grown up during Alexander I’s reign and benefitted from liberal education policies. He also focused on Russia’s expansion, launching a religiously motivated war against Turkey in 1828 in order to free the Christians in Greece. His efforts were largely successful, but the war also created an illusion of Russia being “Europe’s policeman”, culminating in what would be called the Crimean War. Here, Russia faced off against a British and French-backed Ottoman Empire, which ultimately resulted in Russia’s defeat as Nicholas’s autocratic and bureaucratic regime could not mount a sufficient defense.

Nicholas’s son, Alexander II, was not consistent in his political views. Russia’s defeat in the Crimean War illustrated that his father’s system was not sustainable, so Alexander II followed the current of public opinion and enacted numerous reforms that would seemingly right the wrongs of Nicholas’s reign. However, Alexander II always stopped short of truly liberal policies; he ended the reforms as soon as they revived political thought or movements for autonomy. As a result, the public was left wanting more, and revolutionary fervor began to grow. Alexander’s greatest achievement was the emancipation of the serfs in 1861. As a result, former serfs began organizing into villages that held a lot of power over their members, eventually evolving into established county councils, although the gentry and government officials were given the majority of seats. These councils, called *zemstvos*, covered infrastructure, medicine, and general public welfare, greatly improving the quality of life in their jurisdictions. Another area of reform was the court system, with an independent court system being established and

trials being held in public using oral arguments and trained attorneys. The third main area of reform was the military, with the duration of active service being reduced from 25 years to 6, and military service becoming mandatory for all classes, not just the peasantry. Industrialization also thrived during this time; the railroad increased from 646 miles to 11,070 miles by 1876, and the number of factory workers and the amount of grain exported increased dramatically. The press was not reformed, but it also thrived under Alexander II's rule – the number of newspapers and monthlies grew exponentially. While moderate at first, the tone of the press grew more radical as time progressed. Censorship became prevalent, which resulted in revolutionary movements gaining further traction. A student attempted to assassinate Alexander II in 1866, which resulted in his liberal ministers being replaced with conservatives. The educated portion of the public disliked this, and support grew for a new doctrine called populism, which claimed that spreading liberal ideas to the masses would cause them to influence the government to become more liberal. The peasants were receptive, and Russian youth who studied abroad listened to discussions about populism and embraced the idea of causing disorder by inciting the common people. However, when these students returned to Russia, the common people did not accept them and they were quickly arrested by the police. They soon resorted to terrorism; the group *Narodnaya Volya* (translated to the People's Will) was formed and began assassination attempts on the tsar. After an explosion at the Winter Palace, Count Mikhail Loris-Melikov designed a plan that would initiate reforms and appeared to be the foundation for a constitution. On March 13, 1881, however, the day that Alexander II signed Loris-Melikov's plan, the Tsar was suddenly assassinated by *Narodnaya Volya*.

Alexander III, the son of the late Alexander II, was expected to continue the reforms started by his father. However, his childhood tutor, Konstantin Petrovich Pobedonostsev, opposed the Loris-Melikov plan. He wrote a manifesto declaring that Alexander III was chosen to defend autocracy, but at the same time promised to continue with Alexander II's reforms. Loris-Melikov resigned and was replaced by Count Nikolay Ignatyev, who promised to allow the *zemstvos* to keep their power and ease the burden on peasants. He created a committee that eliminated the poll tax, lowered redemption prices for former serfs purchasing land, and regulated internal colonization and land rents. A peasants' bank was also opened during Alexander III's reign, as well as laws regulating factory conditions and reform of peasant self-government. At Alexander III's coronation in 1882, Pobedonostsev and the conservatives won out. Count Ignatyev resigned, and Count Dmitry Tolstoy replaced him. Tolstoy became the mouthpiece of the declining gentry, managing to rework the *zemstvo* system so that nobles would once again have power over the rest of the citizens. The government also continued expanding the railroad and protected Russian industries with a prohibitive tariff. Further economic reforms, although successful, meant more suffering for the Russian public through low pay. Despite efforts to remedy the situation, the taxation rate was increasing more than the population, which meant that a crisis was forming. Meanwhile, Alexander III made a point of persecuting everything that did not align with the accepted "national type." Religions other than Russian Orthodox Christianity were

systematically persecuted, especially Judaism. Revolutionary organizations and the press were both stifled, and a new revolutionary group based on the ideology of Karl Marx, began to call for an overthrow of the government by the working class.

The death of Alexander III in 1894 brought the coronation of the current Tsar, Nicholas II. Rumors say the Tsar has a weak personality, mainly agreeing with whoever had just spoken and being highly susceptible to his wife, Tsarina Alexandra. During his reign, Nicholas vowed to uphold the autocratic principles of his late father; this conviction was only strengthened by the birth of his son and heir, Tsarevich Alexei. Nicholas II's foreign policy attempted to reflect this, as he attempted to assert full dominance of East Asia, seeking to take Manchuria and Korea for himself. This pushed Russia into war with Japan in 1904, which continued to rage at the start of 1905. Domestically, Nicholas's reign saw continued industrialization. with the ruble's gold standard drawing increased amounts of foreign capital into Russia. However, agricultural hardship and a disorganized government have continued to plague Russia. In 1896, several workers' strikes were organized as the economy experienced a depression, causing a rise in unemployment. The Russification policy of Alexander III has continued, discriminating against non-Russian people, particularly Jewish people. Violent student demonstrations took place in 1899-1900, and two government ministers were assassinated in less than a year. As the Tsar's government continues to stumble forward, one can only wonder what could happen next.

### ***Culture and Sociological Analysis:***

The beginning of the 20th century was a turning point for Russia: a blossom in literature known as the "Silver Age" (Серебряный век), the explosion of culture in metropolitan cities, and political turmoil characterized the turn of the century.

The Russian Silver Age was the second wave of modernism in Russia, following the Golden Age a century prior, when Catherine the Great introduced Western philosophy into Russian education. However, unlike the last epoch, the Silver Age was not birthed by great rulership, but the opposite. Mysticism and symbolism were making their way through the Russian minds, resulting in the rise of great Russian poets such as Anna Akhmatova, Valeriy Brusev, and Konstantine Balmonte whose poems were all characterized by a melancholic, pensive mood, reflecting the state of the Russian empire. This poetry has become an insight into the internal ideas that the Russian common people had about their Romanov leaders.

The majority of the Russian population lived in its two metropolitan cities, Saint Petersburg and Moscow. While Saint Petersburg was crowded with aristocrats interested in developing art, culture, and literature, Moscow was the capital of business and politics, attracting a focus on material wealth. Although Moscow had been the traditional capital of Russia, St.

Petersburg had been built as the capital of the new Russia by Peter the Great and has remained the seat of the Romanovs for the last 200 years.

Russians as a culture are very family-oriented and devout Christians. Many take pride in their institutions despite their autocratic nature, with many Russians seeing the royal family as a symbol of Russia as a whole. However, the day-to-day life of many Russians has been difficult, with many either farmers or laborers with little excess funds. This is one of the reasons why much of Russian literature focuses on the melancholy of life, and why conversely much of Russian art has religious symbolism. As the turn of the century approaches, there has been increased turmoil amongst the Russian public, with conflict over whether to continue to embrace traditional values or move towards new solutions. With little change over long periods, this desire for new ideas has moved further and further towards radicalism, leaving little in the way of compromise between an ever-stratifying population.

Russian food was at an interesting crossroads at the turn of the century, as it combined elements from century-old traditions and new Western influences. Homemade rye breads made in Russian ovens, stuffed hand pies (*piroshki*), and pickled mushrooms were being eaten alongside expensive French food prepared by foreign chefs, leading to interesting fusions that are a staple of Russian tables everywhere, such as *Olivié* Salad. This foreign fusion, however, was only enjoyed by the upper class at the time; the lower and working classes stuck to their century-old traditions of cheap grain such as barley and hardy potatoes.

### ***The Russian Orthodox Church:***

The Russian Orthodox Church is a sect of Christianity, with its origins dating back as far as the 9th century CE when Prince Vladimir of Kyiv embraced Christianity and was baptized. In 1054, the Great Schism split Christianity into two main denominations: Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox. The Russian Orthodox Church became a subset of Eastern Orthodoxy (as well as other national churches, such as the Greek Orthodox Church). The head of the Eastern Orthodox Church was the ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople (now Istanbul), but each national church was governed autonomously by its own group of patriarchs. The patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church lived in Moscow, and certain western territories eventually began their own sects with their own patriarchs.

This continued until 1721 when Peter the Great abolished the patriarch's seat in Moscow and forced the church under the control of the government through the institution of the Holy Governing Synod, which was essentially a ministry for religious affairs. All income from church-owned land now had to be passed on to the state, and it became the church's responsibility to maintain the ecclesiastical schools already in existence as well as build new

ones in each diocese. This has been the status quo for almost two hundred years – the church is now an essential tool for the state to achieve its goals.



# Current Issues

## *European Geopolitics at the Beginning of the 20th Century:*

Europe at the start of the 20th Century was a far cry from what it was less than 50 years ago. Following the end of the Napoleonic Wars, the major powers of the continent formed a delicate peace, as they focused their efforts on colonizing the global south. The rapid modernization brought great wealth to these powers, with the Belle Epoque of France and Victorian Era England showcasing just how far the nations had come scientifically and culturally. This rapid modernization also gave a false sense of complacency among these states, as save for the Crimean War, no conflict existed where both sides were on equal technological footing, resulting in one-sided conquests that artificially inflated the perception of the conquering parties. Each country felt invincible, and it was only a matter of time before this perception would be tested.

The Napoleonic Wars, as well as a rise in industrialization and nationalism, caused an increased number of nations to proclaim self-governance. Combined with the continued presence of colonialism, nations saw themselves fighting a soft power war on two fronts, as the old guard attempted to continue its dominance both abroad and back home. As more nation-states came into existence, more alliances were forged as each country struggled to find its place within an increasingly changing world. Old feuds, taboos, and stereotypes became more blatant within foreign policy, and radical decision-making began to rule the actions of leaders.

Many of the new nation-states also began to forge alliances, hoping that protection from a stranger neighbor would keep them from falling under the boot of their previous oppressors once again. This rush to create pacts with each other was soon influencing larger players and would culminate in the Central Powers (Germany, the Ottoman Empire, Austria-Hungary, and Bulgaria) and the Entente/Allied Powers (The United Kingdom, France, and the Russian Empire). These super alliances fractured Europe, becoming a cracked tableleg that somehow still kept much of Europe under a veil of peace. Yet this delicate balance of influence grows thinner by day, and one can already see that it would take only a simple spark for the continent to break out into open war once again.

## *Russo-Japanese War:*

Desiring to keep up with the expansion of its neighbors, Russia hoped to establish a warm-water port in the Pacific to facilitate both trade and expand its influence. This came into direct conflict with the emerging Japanese Empire, which had rapidly modernized thanks to the Meiji Restoration. Hoping to become the preeminent power in Asia and the Pacific, Japan saw

Russia's expansion as a potential problem. Japan was seeking to establish a sphere of influence in Korea and Manchuria, which came into direct conflict when both empires set their sights on the territories of Korea and Manchuria. Japan offered a compromise: Russia could control Manchuria, while Japan would keep its influence over Korea. Russia refused this deal, believing Japan to be an inferior power, and insisted upon a buffer zone between the two countries in Korea, somewhere north of the 39th parallel. Japan, in turn, viewed this as a threat to its plan for expansion into mainland Asia and chose to go to war. The Japanese navy launched a surprise attack on the Russian fleet in February of 1904, with the war having gone almost exclusively in Japan's favor since. Nicholas II, however, believes that Russia can still win, although he has yet to back up his claims in the actual field.

### ***Rise of Radicalism:***

The rapid industrialization of Europe also brought about new internal social change, in particular the rise of nationalism. Former regions made from a patchwork of duchies and kingdoms banded together to become full nation-states, the most important of these being Germany. This new development angered the old world order, who saw this new nation as a possible symbol for minorities in their own countries to rise. Indeed, many minority groups within large nations had begun to call for their own independence and self-governance, such as Serbia and the tribes of the Arabian Peninsula. This caused nations like the Ottoman Empire and Austria-Hungary, who increasingly saw this unrest within their populace, to forcefully stamp any attempts at disunity, provoking further strain within their subjects. Alongside this idea of national unity came class unity, as industrialization brought increased feelings of unity amongst the newly urban working class. Forced to engage in backbreaking labor within terrible factory conditions for days on end, workers began to voice their dissent.

Since Peter the Great's initial Westernization of Russia, a growing number of Russians have seen the rights and freedoms enjoyed by inhabitants of other nations. Time and time again, they have felt let down by a government that promises to make their lives better and then seemingly takes them in the opposite direction. After being stifled for so long under Alexander III and then left disappointed by Nicholas II, many can no longer be satisfied with the constitutional reforms that were considered liberal in the early 1800s. The increase in violence and assassination attempts shows that at least a segment of the population is angry and desperate for a drastic change in government. They are out for blood, and will not stop until they get what they want.

## Questions to Consider

1. What cultural and political tensions led up to the First Russian Revolution?
2. Where does Russia fit within the European continent in comparison to the rest of the major Western powers?
3. How has the monarchy's role in Russia differed from that of other nations, historically and politically?
4. Can there be a compromise between rapid change/progress and a stable transition of power? Why?

# Character List

1. **Sergei Yulevich Witte**: Chairman of the Council of Ministers
2. **Alexander Bulgyin**: Minister of the Interior
3. **Count Vladimir Nikolayevich Kokovstov**: Minister of Finance
4. **Prince Mikhail Ivanovich Khilkov**: Minister of Transport and Communications
5. **Count Vladimir Nikolayevich Lambsdorff**: Minister of Foreign Affairs
6. **Viktor Viktorovich Sakharov**: Minister of War
7. **Sergey Sergeevich Manukhin**: Minister of Justice
8. **Alexey Sergeevich Yermolov**: Minister of Agriculture and State Property
9. **Kazimir Petrovich Polivanov**: Chief Procurator of the Most Holy Synod
10. **Pyotr Frolov**: Chief of the Main Staff of the Imperial Russian Army
11. **Pyotr Arkadyevich Stolypin**: Governor of Saratov Province
12. **Baron Roman Romanovich Rosen**: Minister in Tokyo
13. **Mark Aleksandrovich Pirozhkov**: Chief Minister of Engineering
14. **Stepan Andreievich Morozov**: Minister of Science
15. **Grigory Aleksandrovich Mironchik**: General in the Imperial Russian Army
16. **Aleksandr Ivanovich Abramchik**: Chief of Construction on the Trans-Siberian Railroad
17. **Oleg Arkadyevich Leshchenko**: Minister of Urban Planning
18. **Prince Gavriil Nikolaevichi Lensky**: Leader of the nobility
19. **Tsezar Filipovich Milanov**: Royal Stablemaster
20. **Konstantin Balmont**: Great Russian Poet of the Silver Age
21. **Robert McCormick**: Ambassador from America
22. **Maurice Bompard**: Ambassador from France
23. **Sir Charles Hardinge**: Ambassador from the British Empire
24. **István Huszárík**: Ambassador from the Austro-Hungarian Empire
25. **Wilhelm von Schoen**: Ambassador from the German Empire