



Putin and the Czar: Autocracy and Dissent



Loren Sohler, Quinn Radeke, and Tim Lux

Methodology and Purpose

- War in Ukraine demonstrates the need for the world to understand and create framework to handle Putin.
- Czar Nicholas II as a comparative: similar leadership styles, responses to defiance.
- Goals: Understand dynamics of foreign policy on dissent in Russia, (broad) idea of trajectory of Putin's regime.
- Methodology: Applied history
- Types of sources: Historical and political science journal articles, and news reports for Putin.

Early popular support

- Nicholas takes throne in 1894 with high hopes from public.
- Advocates divine right, status quo
- Putin also popular early on
- More or less “fair” elections
- Legal/Personal foundation for centralized power



- Differences: origins, earned popularity vs. incidental, preexisting dissent.



Opposition and Repression

- **Putin like Czar Nicholas isn't afraid to repress his opponents.**
- **Russian forces in Kherson opened fire on peaceful protesters.**
- **Czar Nicholas did this same type of oppression as well like during the 1905 Bloody Sunday protests.**
- **The Czar cracked down on these protests by jailing and even shooting protesters.**



Effects of War on Autocrats

- Allows leaders to enact policies that could not normally be enacted in times of peace
- Image of the leader
- Sphere of influence
- Economic and territorial gains

	Czar Nicholas II	Vladimir Putin
Good Wars	Boxer Rebellion <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Strengthened position with China and European powers.● Strengthened sphere of influence in Manchuria.	2014 Annexation of Crimea <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Increased Putin's popularity.● Gained territory.● Created a sphere of influence over the region.
Bad Wars	Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Bankrupted the Russian economy.● Tsar's inept leadership.● Creation of the Duma.	Russo-Ukrainian War (2022) <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Devastating economic sanctions.● Rise of protest at home and abroad.● Lose of influence in the region.

Stalemate for Putin

- The war in Ukraine has **not been going over well for Putin.**
- The Ukrainians have cutoff **Russian logistics and sustainment capabilities**
- Russian troops have retreated from around Kyiv.
- Russia is in **short supply of weapons** for the war.
- Putin will most likely **increase the attacks in Ukraine.**



Czar Nicholas Stalemate

- During World War 1 Czar Nicholas had the same kinds of problems Putin is encountering. For instance Czar Nicholas overestimated his military capacity.



Expansion of the Police State

- *Okhrana* since 1860's
- Growth after 1905
- Growth of forced labor and forced relocation.
- Anti-Semitism and suppression of regional separatism
- Membership/management of KGB/FSB
- New laws/crackdown post 2014
- Anti-LGBTQ, Anti-Western, Nationalist Rhetoric



Differences: Internet/information warfare, Okhrana focus on infiltration and redirection.



Conclusion

- Our assessment is that due to temperament and worldview, Putin will not willingly step down or institute meaningful reforms. (All or nothing)
- Vicious cycle of escalating public unrest being met with increasingly brutal repressive tactics
- Short term: Putin will tighten hold on power and “barricade”
- Long term: Regime change due to popular demands
- Peaceful or violent transition? Years away? Decades?



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Timothy Lux, Loren Sohler, Quinn Radeke
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This presentation will be the culmination of an applied history project that seeks to draw parallels between current events and analogous historical events. As part of our interest in the current conflict in Ukraine, we sought out a period of history that could provide insight into the political and social dynamics of Putin's Russia. We eventually chose to focus on the foreign and domestic policy of Czar Nicholas II due to similarities between these leader's commitment to autocratic rule that becomes increasingly centralized as their time in power progresses, as well as the link between foreign policy in Russia and the growth of repression at home. The prime dimension of the Husky Compact that we have selected, "seek and apply knowledge," guides our approach to first researching primary and secondary sources on a variety of Czarist Russian topics, then seeing how these conclusions and facts compare with the contemporary dilemma in Russia. For example, much scholarship has focused on the evolution of the "Okhrana" secret police under Czar Nicholas II and their suppression of increasingly numerous and aggressive revolutionary movements. We have sought to compare this to the steady increase in scope and use of state security forces and the growing repression in Russia under Putin, this time in the face of anti-corruption and pro-democracy reformers. Another relevant dimension to the Husky Compact is to "think creatively and critically." Researching history is relatively straightforward, but finding links to the past that have a reasonable chance of being relevant to current issues requires nuance and evaluation. A key way we have utilized critical and creative thinking has been not only in seeing how Putin and Czar Nicholas II are similar, but how they and their worlds are different, and how this may challenge our premise. For example, Russia today is in a radically different geopolitical position than the Russian Empire at the turn of the 20th century. Whereas Nicholas II was working to hold together a sprawling dominion and maintain Russia's prestige, Putin leads a more isolated, vulnerable nation seeking to reclaim lost glory. The two leaders are also different in background and personality. Despite similarities in their autocratic leadership and belief in Russian nationalism, Putin is generally evaluated as being more politically astute and machiavellian (although the war in Ukraine may undermine this reputation). Our experiences during the course of our education at SCSU has influenced this project as well, both in terms of exposure to content and interaction with individual sources of knowledge and perspective. We had all taken a geography course with Dr. Mikhail Blinnikov, who is a native of Russia and who provided a unique insight into social and cultural idiosyncrasies of Russian society and history. We also hope to continue to consult with Dr. Blinnikov as this project nears completion. Overall this project has morphed into a wider goal of increasing education and awareness of current events in Eastern Europe. As of writing this we are in the 5th day of the conflict in Ukraine, and the world's attention is spotlighted on this topic. As social studies education majors, we always believe in the importance of expanding the public's knowledge of history to better help people contextualize and comprehend their world. We hope that this presentation serves to advance this goal.