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Directorate of Distance Education

BA [History]

V - Semester

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**HISTORY OF RUSSIA
(FROM 1800 TO 1970 A.D.)**

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INTRODUCTION

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In 1721, in contrast to his Western Europe-oriented reforms, Czar Peter the Great renamed his kingdom as the Russian Empire, aiming to align it with the historical and cultural accomplishments of ancient Russia. The state expanded from the eastern boundaries of the Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania to the Pacific Ocean. Since their triumph over Napoleon, Russia was a great force and dominated Europe. Peasant uprisings were widespread, and all were fiercely crushed. In 1861, Russian serfdom was abolished by Czar Alexander II, but the peasants suffered badly and revolutionary tensions intensified.

The Revolution in Russia in 1917 was caused by a combination of economic collapse, war-weariness, and frustration with the autocratic government structure. Soon, the monarchy was replaced with an alliance of liberals and moderates socialists, however, their unsuccessful policies led the Bolsheviks to seize control in 1917. In 1922, the Treaty on the Creation of the USSR was signed by Soviet Russia, Soviet Ukraine, Soviet Belarus, and the Transcaucasian SFSR, officially merging them to form the Soviet Union as a country. Between 1922 and 1991 the history of Russia became essentially the history of the Soviet Union, effectively an ideologically-based state.

This book, *History of Russia (From 1800 to 1970 A.D.)*, is divided into fourteen units that follow the self-instruction mode with each unit beginning with an Introduction to the unit, followed by an outline of the Objectives. The detailed content is then presented in a simple but structured manner interspersed with Check Your Progress Questions to test the student's understanding of the topic. A Summary along with a list of Key Words and a set of Self Assessment Questions and Exercises is also provided at the end of each unit for recapitulation.

BLOCK I
THE CONDITION OF RUSSIA IN THE 17TH
CENTURY AND EARLY ROMANOV

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UNIT 1 17TH CENTURY RUSSIA

Structure

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- 1.1 Objectives
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 - 1.2.1 Pre-Romanovs
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The seventeenth-century commenced with a period of political confusion. The ruling Muscovite dynasty came to an end in 1598. Before Michael Romanov was at last proclaimed Czar in 1613, Russia was shaking with struggles for power, peasant insurgences, and foreign incursions. The Romanov family was the last grand dynasty to rule Russia. It came to power in 1613, and over the next three centuries, eighteen Romanovs took the Russian throne, including Peter the Great, Catherine the Great, Alexander I and Nicholas II. In this unit, we will discuss the conditions in 17th century Russia.

1.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the conditions of Russia in the 17th century
- Examine the factors that led to the rise of power of the House of Romanov
- Analyze the role of Peter the Great

1.2 CONDITION OF RUSSIA IN THE 17TH CENTURY

NOTES

By the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Russia had gained a status for being a ‘backward’ country. It did not have much in common with the West. Russia was an agrarian state with insufficient scattered towns whose populace was measured by an upper class of land-holding aristocracy. Traders could not move easily without a licence from the government in Moscow. All this prohibited the development of an independent middle class. Thus, not only trade and industry, but education was also ill-developed. Until 1755, there were no universities in Russia. The Czars along with the Orthodox Church were against western influence. It wasn’t until the power came into the hands of Peter the Great that the course of westernization was set afoot in Russia.

The factors contributing to Russia’s ‘backward’ status and lack of contact/association with the West were:

- Serfdom sustained long after it was eliminated in Western Europe; it was not obliterated in Russia until the 1800s.
- Mongols chiefly isolated them from progress happening in the West, such as the Renaissance and Age of Exploration.
- Mongol rule was harsh—demanded substantial tribute, didn’t do much for the development of Russia culturally, economically and politically. In the judicial sphere, capital punishment, which during the times of Kievan Rus’ had only been applied to slaves, became prevalent, and the use of anguish and suffering became a regular part of criminal procedure. Explicit punishments were introduced in Moscow including beheading for suspected traitors and branding of thieves.
- Severe geography led to a degree of physical segregation from the rest of the continent
- It was culturally different from the West. It looked towards Constantinople for motivation, not Rome.

1.2.1 Pre-Romanovs

Some of the predecessors of the Romanov dynasty are discussed in this section.

Ivan III (Ivan the Great)

Ruled from 1462-1505

- Prince of Moscow
- Challenged Mongols; succeeded in breaking Russia free from Mongol rule (refused to continue paying tribute, then led the Russians against the Mongols; Mongols left after a bloodless standoff)

- Conquered much of the territory around Moscow. Ivan occupied or brought under his control the lands of north-eastern Rus', marking the commencement of Muscovite supremacy over Rus' territory. Ivan unquestionably became best known for his consolidation of Muscovite rule.
- Began centralizing and consolidating Russian government and territory. He began the consolidation of power in the northern principalities, often called the 'Gathering of the Russian Lands'.
- Took the title Czar, meaning 'Caesar' in Russian.

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Ivan IV (Ivan the Terrible): Ruled 1533-1584

Ivan IV Vasilyevich is commonly known as 'Ivan the Terrible' or 'Ivan the Fearsome'. He was the Grand Prince of Moscow from 1533 to 1547 and ruled as the 'Czar of all the Russia' from 1547 until he died in 1584. He also married Anastasia Romanova, which tied him to the influential Romanov family. Boyars struggled for power/influence and tried to control Ivan as he was very young. He expanded Russia's territory as he conquered the Khanates of Kazan, Khanate of Astrakhan and Siber, resulting in Russia becoming a multinational and multi-ethnic state. He announced local self-government to rural regions, mostly in north-eastern Russia, populated by the state peasantry. The 1560-1584 is considered as the 'Bad period' under his rule:

- His wife, Anastasia, died; he accused the Boyars of poisoning her
- Directed secret police to search and kill traitors (sometimes with little to no evidence)
- Demanded loyalty from new nobles that he himself promoted
- Introduced new law Oprichnina

Ivan is commonly alleged to have murdered his eldest son and heir, Ivan Ivanovich and his unborn son during his outbursts, which left the diplomatically incompetent Feodor Ivanovich to accede to the throne, whose rule unswervingly led to the end of the Rurikids dynasty and the commencement of the Time of Troubles.

In 1613, representatives from Russian cities met to choose the next Czar and finally selected Michael Romanov. This selection of the new Czar started the grand dynasty of leaders in Russia called the Romanovs.

Check Your Progress

1. Who were persecuted with capital punishment during the times of Kievan Rus'?
2. How long did Ivan III rule Russia?

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1.3 THE EARLY ROMANOVS

The House of Romanov was the second chief royal dynasty in Russia and ascended the throne after the Rurikids Dynasty. It was founded in 1613 with the coronation of Michael I and ended in 1917 with the relinquishment of Czar Nicholas II. However, the direct male blood line of the Romanov Dynasty finished when Elizabeth of Russia died in 1762, and Peter III, followed by Catherine the Great were positioned in power, both German-born royalty.

1.3.1 Origins of the Romanovs

The initial common forefather for the Romanov clan goes back to Andrei Kobyla. Sources say he was a boyar under the leadership of the Rurikids prince, Semyon I of Moscow in 1347. This figure remains somewhat enigmatic with some sources claiming he was the high-born son of a Rus' prince. Others point to the name Kobyla, which means horse, signifying he was descended from the Master of Horse in the regal household. Whatsoever the actual origins of this patriarch-like figure, his progenies split into about a dozen dissimilar branches over the subsequent couple of centuries. One such descendent, Roman Yurievich Zakharyin, gave the Romanov Dynasty its name. Grandchildren of this patriarch transformed their name to Romanov and it continued there until they rose to power.

1.3.2 Michael I

The Romanov Dynasty was properly founded after the 'Time of Troubles', an era between 1598 and 1613, which included a dynastic struggle, wars with Sweden and Poland, and severe famine. Czar Boris Godunov's rule, which lasted until 1605, saw the Romanov families exiled to the Urals and other distant areas. Michael I's father was obligated to take monastic vows and adopt the name Philaret. Two impostors attempting to gain the throne in Moscow endeavoured to leverage Romanov power after Godunov died in 1605. And by 1613, the Romanov family had again become a prevalent name in the running for power.

Michael I was only sixteen at his coronation, and both he and his mother were frightened about his future in such a problematic political position. Michael I reinstated order in Moscow during his first years in power and also developed two major government offices, the *Posolsky Prikaz* (Foreign Office) and the *Razryadny Prikaz* (Duma chancellor, or provincial administration office). These two offices remained essential to Russian order for many decades. Michael's reign saw the greatest territorial expansion in Russian history.

1.3.2 Alexis I

Michael I ruled until his death in 1645, following which his son, Alexei Mikhailovich, ascended the throne at the age of 16, just like his father. His rule would last over thirty years and was over with his death in 1676. His rule was marked by uprisings in cities such as Pskov and Novgorod, as well as sustained wars with Sweden and

Poland. However, Alexis I recognized a new legal code called *Sobornoye Ulozheniye*, which shaped a serf class, made hereditary class unalterable, and required official state documentation to travel between towns. These laws were in effect till the nineteenth centuries. Under Alexis I's rule, the Orthodox Church also convened the Great Moscow Synod, which formed novel customs and traditions. This historic moment formed a division between what is termed as Old Believers (i.e., who strongly believes in the hierarchy and traditions of the Church) and the new Church traditions. Alexis I's rule showed him as a peaceful and thoughtful ruler, with a tendency for liberal ideas. During this time, Alexis also began ameliorating the army. The chief direction of the reform was the mass creation of New Order Regiments: Reiters, Soldiers, Dragoons and Hussars.

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1.3.3 Dynastic Dispute and Peter the Great

At the death of Alexis I in 1676, a dynastic argument flared up between the children of his first wife, namely Fyodor III, Sofia Alexeyevna, Ivan V, and the son of his second wife, Peter Alexeyevich (later, Peter the Great). The crown was quickly passed down through the children of his first wife. Fyodor III died from illness after ruling for only six years. Between 1682 and 1689 power was contested between Sofia Alexeyevna, Ivan V, and Peter. Sofia served as regent from 1682 to 1689. She vigorously opposed Peter's claim to the throne in favour of her own brother, Ivan. However, Ivan V and Peter went on to share the throne until Ivan's death in 1696. Peter went on to rule over Russia, and even style himself as Emperor of all Russia in 1721 and ruled until his death in 1725. He erected a new capital in St. Petersburg, where he constructed a navy and endeavoured to gain control of the Baltic Sea. He is also reminisced for bringing western culture and Enlightenment ideas to Russia, as well as restricting the control of the Church.

Check Your Progress

3. When did the direct male blood line known of as the Romanov Dynasty finish?
4. What is the 'Time of Troubles'?
5. How long did Alexei Mikhailovich rule Russia?

1.4 PETER THE GREAT (1682 -1725)

Peter was born in 1672. He became Tsar at the age of seventeen. He is applauded as the creator of contemporary Russia because of the technological advancement that he brought to Russia during his forty-two year reign. He was the first Russian monarch to go on an educational trip to the West. In 1697, he travelled in disguise to Europe where he not only visited manufactures, garrisons and schools, but also closely observed scientists and technicians and even worked in a shipyard for 4 months. He was known for his physical strength, ferociousness, infinite energy,

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and the inquisitiveness that few men possessed. After his return in 1698, he was determined to revolutionize his country to make Russia a powerful nation. However, for the first six years of his rule, he spent most of his time with his friends in the foreign quarters of Moscow, eating, singing in the streets, and playing practical jokes. He also performed the roles of dentist, engraver, surgeon, shipwright and executioner. He didn't let morals, religious feeling or social customs get in his way. He secluded his sister, rejected his first wife, and tortured and executed his son.

In contrast to most of his countrymen, Peter enjoyed the sea and ships and was determined to strengthen Russia's naval power. His first belligerent exploit was when the Russian fleet seized the port of Azov at the mouth of the Don from the Turks. Peter understood that Russia, unaided by a western ally, could not achieve mastery of the Black Sea, thus, he turned his attention to the Baltic area in the West. In 1697, Peter went on a western tour, staying in England and many of the European capitals. He saw the advantages and facilities of western civilization and returned home resolute to 'westernize' Russia and raise the level of its competence as a State. In this, he succeeded by the sheer power of his will. Peter's first and foremost priority was his army and the Russian navy. He hired Europeans and Russians as officers in his army, and enlisted peasants to serve for twenty-five years. Thus, by the end of his reign, he had a standing army of about three lakh men. The Russian navy was founded in 1696, but not until after the Czar's trip to the West did the Russians own the essential knowledge to shape strong, seagoing ships.

He abolished the Council of Boyars. He made appointment to civil service by merit and not by birth and formed a centralized government with a civil service and a senate chosen by him. He criticized the ancient Russian traditions—the facial hair (beard) of the men, the isolation of women, the prosperity of the priests, etc. He changed the currency and the calendar, and removed eight letters from the alphabet. He gave the Russians their first hospital, newspaper, and museum. As a symbol of contact with the West, Peter built a new capital on the Baltic—St. Petersburg. It stood for the acceptance of Western culture, in contradiction to Moscow which was viewed as the heart of the oriental traditions of Russia. Peter's measures gave Russia some of the competence and substantial advantages of Western life. However, the Westernization did not cause any drop in poverty or give the Russians any social justice. In fact, it broadened the gap between the Westernized nobility and the peasants. To generate money for Peter's projects, the peasants were exploitatively taxed. Thousands were recruited to man the novel industries and to build St. Petersburg, where they worked until they died. Peter also added the post of 'Oberfiscal' who was appointed to check the trustworthiness and honesty of government officials.

The main hindrance in the plan of Peter for territorial growth to the Baltic was Sweden, which, after centuries of dormancy, had become the nation with significant military power in Europe in the seventeenth century. A series of voracious wars on her neighbours led to success in surrounding Sweden with a ring of enemies—Poland, Denmark, and Saxony. In 1700, a coalition was formed against

her, which Peter promptly joined. The coalition, however, failed to take into account the young Swedish King, Charles XII, who proved himself to be an unconquerable leader and a master of the art of war. Peter's first venture, then, was a failure. At Narva, near St. Petersburg, forty thousand Russians were routed by ten thousand Swedes. Charles XII spent the next 6 years fighting the Polish and the Saxons before turning once more on Russia, providing Peter ample time during which he reorganized his army and seized the Baltic provinces. In 1709, Charles marched into the heart of Russia to dethrone the Czar. As others were to discover after him, an army advancing into Russia has not only the Russian army to face, but the difficult adversaries in the form of vast roadless wastes and a pitiless winter. Finally, shrivelled to half their strength by deprivation and illness, the Swedes were overwhelmed by the Russians at Poltava, east of Kiev, even though Peter, during a dangerous period of the campaign, was drunk. The Battle of Poltava proved to be pivotal; the Swedish Empire south of the Baltic got fragmented, and Peter the Great further strengthened his position in the Baltic provinces.

After Peter's death in 1725, there were several short reigns until 1741, when Peter's youngest daughter Elizabeth became Empress. An intelligent politician, but depraved in character, Elizabeth continued her father's Westernization policy. She kept a vivid royal court, but under her the rights of the aristocracy increased and their service to the State diminished. It was also, however, a period of development in learning and science. Russia's first university was founded at Moscow in 1755.

- Peter the Great was regarded as an absolute ruler.
- He put the Russian Orthodox Church under his control, and eliminated the patriarchy. He contended that a council of several clergymen would be more suitable to govern the church than a single patriarch, so the Patriarchate was eliminated after the death of Patriarch Adrian in 1700 and the Holy Synod was created in 1721, consisting of clergymen and laymen.
- Condensed the power of wealthy landowners by recruiting men from lower classes and giving them land grants
- Introduced potatoes which became a main staple of the Russian diet
- Enhanced status of women; Under him, they could join social assemblies
- Nobles ordered to give up outdated clothes in favour of Western fashion
- Started (and edited) Russia's first newspaper, *Vedomosti*
- Fascinated by the tools and machines that foreigners (mainly Dutch and Germans) would bring to Moscow, he spent time touring Western European nations to learn their ways
- Advanced education—set up schools for navigation, arts, and science. He established the School of Engineering, School of Medicine, School of Navigation, and Mathematic and School of Social Science and

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Humanities. To safeguard the competence of these schools, Peter brought in numerous academic experts from Western Europe to clarify the subjects introduced in these schools. Apart from founding schools, introducing contemporary courses in Russia, Russian students were directed to the West to study Western education, know-how and way of life.

- Military was completely reformed—European officers taught Russians, European formations, tactics, and how to use European weapons
- Encouraged Russians to travel abroad
- The czar needed money for his army and navy which cost about 80 per cent of the money the state earned. Therefore, Peter adopted a mercantilist approach; he tried to increase exports and become less dependent on imports. At the same time, he wanted to exploit Russia's resources like the iron mines in the Urals. But his need for money was too great and he finally raised taxes, burdening the peasants even more. Peter's reforms turned Russia into a great military power and into an important member of the European state system, but his attempt to modernize Russia was not completely successful.

Check Your Progress

6. When was Peter the Great born and when did he become Czar?
7. Which of the Russian traditions were criticized by Peter the Great?

1.5 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. The slaves were the only one who were persecuted with capital punishment during the times of Kievan Rus'.
2. Ivan III ruled Russia from 1462 to 1505.
3. The direct male blood line of the Romanov Dynasty finished when Elizabeth of Russia died in 1762 and Peter III, followed by Catherine the Great, was positioned in power.
4. The 'Time of Troubles' was an era between 1598 and 1613 in Russia, which included a dynastic struggle, wars with Sweden and Poland, and severe famine.
5. Alexei Mikhailovich ruled Russia for over thirty years until his death in 1676.
6. Peter the Great born in 1672 and he became Czar at the age of seventeen.
7. Peter the Great criticized many ancient Russian traditions—the facial hair (beard) of the men, the isolation of women, the prosperity of the priests, etc.

1.6 SUMMARY

- By the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Russia had gained a status for being a ‘backward’ country. It did not have much in common with the West.
- Traders could not move easily without a licence from the government in Moscow. All this prohibited the development of an independent middle class. Thus, not only trade and industry, but education was also ill-developed.
- It wasn’t until the power came into the hands of Peter the Great that the course of westernization was set afoot in Russia.
- Ivan III (Ivan the Great) challenged Mongols; succeeded in breaking Russia free from Mongol rule.
- Ivan IV Vasilyevich is commonly known as ‘Ivan the Terrible’ or ‘Ivan the Fearsome’. He was the Grand Prince of Moscow from 1533 to 1547 and ruled as the ‘Tsar of all the Russia’ from 1547 until he died in 1584.
- In 1613, representatives from Russian cities met to choose the next czar and finally selected Michael Romanov. This selection of the new czar started the grand dynasty of leaders in Russia called the Romanovs.
- The House of Romanov was the second chief royal dynasty in Russia and ascended the throne after the Rurikids Dynasty. It was founded in 1613 with the coronation of Michael I and ended in 1917 with the relinquishment of Tsar Nicholas II.
- The initial common forefather for the Romanov clan goes back to Andrei Kobyla. Sources say he was a boyar under the leadership of the Rurikids prince, Semyon I of Moscow in 1347.
- Michael I reinstated order in Moscow during his first years in power and also developed two major government offices, the *Posolsky Prikaz* (Foreign Office) and the *Razryadny Prikaz* (Duma chancellor, or provincial administration office).
- Michael I ruled until his death in 1645, following which his son, Alexei Mikhailovich, ascended the throne at the age of 16, just like his father. His rule would last over thirty years and was over with his death in 1676.
- At the death of Alexis I in 1676, a dynastic argument flare up between the children of his first wife, namely Fyodor III, Sofia Alexeyevna, Ivan V, and the son of his second wife, Peter Alexeyevich (later, Peter the Great).
- Peter was born in 1672. He became Czar at the age of seventeen. He is applauded as the creator of contemporary Russia because of the technological advancement that he brought to Russia during his forty-two year reign.

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- In contrast to most of his countrymen, Peter enjoyed the sea and ships and was determined to strengthen Russia's naval power.
- The main hindrance in the plan of Peter for territorial growth to the Baltic was Sweden, which, after centuries of dormancy, had become the nation with significant military power in Europe in the seventeenth century.
- Peter's reforms turned Russia into a great military power and into an important member of the European state system, but his attempt to modernize Russia was not completely successful.

1.7 KEY WORDS

- **Serfdom:** It was the status of many peasants under feudalism, specifically relating to manorialism, and similar systems.
- **Age of Exploration:** The Age of Discovery, or the Age of Exploration, is an informal and loosely defined term for the early modern period approximately from the beginning of the 15th century until the middle of the 17th century in European history.
- **Kievan Rus:** It was a loose federation of East Slavic and Finno-Ugric peoples in Europe from the late 9th to the mid-13th century, under the reign of the Varangian Rurik dynasty. The modern nations of Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine all claim Kievan Rus' as their cultural ancestors, with Belarus and Russia deriving their names from it.
- **Boyars:** A boyar or bolyar was a member of the highest rank of the feudal Bulgarian, Russian, Wallachian, Moldavian, and later Romanian, Lithuanian and Baltic German nobility, second only to the ruling princes from the 10th century to the 17th century.
- **Oprichnina:** It was a state policy implemented by Tsar Ivan the Terrible in Russia between 1565 and 1572. The policy included mass repression of the boyars, including public executions and confiscation of their land and property.
- **Patriarchate:** It is an ecclesiological term in Christianity, designating the office and jurisdiction of an ecclesiastical patriarch.

1.8 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Why was Russia considered backward in the 17th century?
2. Why Ivan IV was regarded as the terrible Czar?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the Rurikids dynasty.
2. Describe the reforms that were introduced by Peter the Great.

17th Century Russia

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1.9 FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 2 REIGN OF CATHERINE II

NOTES

Structure

- 2.0 Introduction
- 2.1 Objectives
- 2.2 Catherine II (1762 - 95)
 - 2.2.1 Domestic Policy
 - 2.2.2 Foreign Policy
- 2.3 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 2.4 Summary
- 2.5 Key Words
- 2.6 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 2.7 Further Readings

2.0 INTRODUCTION

One of the renowned personalities of Russia was Catherine II, most commonly known as Catherine the Great, who ruled from 1762 to 1796—the country’s first long-lasting female ruler. She came to power following a coup that ousted her husband and second cousin, Peter III. During her reign, she abridged the powers of the clergy, sustained friendly relations with Prussia, France and Austria. In 1764, she defined Poland’s borders and appointed one of her old lovers as king of Poland. In this unit, we will discuss the domestic and foreign policies of Catherine II.

2.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the situation of Russia under Catherine II
- Discuss and analyze the domestic policies of Catherine II
- Describe the foreign policies of Catherine II

2.2 CATHERINE II (1762-95)

Catherine II’s original name was Sophia Augusta Frederica. She was born in the German city of Stettin, Prussia (now Poland), on April 21, 1729. She was the daughter of a German prince, Christian August, Prince of Anhalt-Zerbst, but was related to the Dukes of Holstein through her mother. At the age of fourteen she was in consideration to be the wife of Karl Ulrich, Duke of Holstein-Gottorp, grandson of Peter the Great and heir to the throne of Russia as the Grand Duke,

Peter. In 1744, Catherine arrived in Russia, assumed the title of Grand Duchess and married her young cousin the following year. The marriage was a complete failure; the following eighteen years were filled with dissatisfaction and humiliation for her.

2.2.1 Domestic Policy

During the reign of Catherine II, Russia grew tremendously, its values were invigorated, and it was recognized as one of the great powers worldwide. In her accession to power and her rule of the empire, Catherine frequently relied on her noble favourites, most particularly Grigory Potemkin and Grigory Orlov. She expanded the Russian Empire, improved administration, and energetically pursued the policy of Westernization. Under her rule, Russia grew robust and rivalled the great powers of Europe and Asia. The Catherine Era is considered as the Golden Age of Russia. Catherine's first Manifesto was issued on December 4th 1762. It was printed in Russian, German, French, English, Polish, Czech, and Arabic. This Manifesto was largely symbolic as the Russian government had not yet established an administrative structure to plan and manage such a large colonization program. She devotedly reinforced the ideals of the Enlightenment and thus, was frequently observed as an enlightened autocrat. As a patron of the arts, she headed over the age of the Russian Enlightenment, a period when the Smolny Institute got established, borrowing its name from the nearby Smolny Convent. This was the first state-financed higher education institute for women in Europe. A sharp-witted and refined young woman, she read extensively, mainly in French. She liked novels, plays, and verse but was particularly interested in the writings of the major figures of the French Enlightenment, such as Diderot (1713–1784), Voltaire (1694–1778), and Montesquieu (1689–1755). Catherine was devoted to the arts and reinforced many cultural projects. In St. Petersburg, she had a theatre built for opera and ballet performances and even wrote a few words herself. She also turns out to be an art collector, which were displayed in the Hermitage in a royal dwelling in St. Petersburg.

2.2.2 Foreign Policy

Catherine II's foreign policies usually have been considered the most outstanding and efficacious part of her reign. Polish Commonwealth and the Ottoman Empire were the epicentre of Catherine's foreign policies through the 34 years of her reign. The Ottoman Empire had been Russia's rival since at least the middle of the 17th century when the left-bank Ukraine assimilated into Muscovy. Poland became a problem somewhat unexpectedly, with the change of power in St. Petersburg in 1762.

More than a few decades before, in 1726, Andrei Ivanovich Ostermann, then vice-chancellor of the Russian Empire, penned down an extensive treatise on the problems and objectives of Russian foreign policy.

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The treatise comprised of numerous sections, each one dedicated to associations with one of the European powers. Poland was not amongst them. Ostermann was in fact, the architect of Russian foreign policy for the subsequent numerous decades. He was the main person in leading the treaty of alliance with the Habsburg Empire that was signed in the same year. Empress Elizabeth who ruled from 1741–61 banished him in January 1742, but her foreign policy continued consistent with Ostermann's until her death in December 1761. Catherine was quite determined in advancing her political goals. She considered that the chief aim of her reign was to restructure Russia, bestowing it with the principles of enlightenment. She thought that domestic reforms would make the Russian people flourish, and would transform the Russian Empire into a leading European power and an example for other nations. To safeguard these objectives, Catherine required not only to introduce new laws inside the country, but also to be a vigorous player at the intercontinental arena.

Catherine's greatest mistake in 1762 was the non-existence of political legitimacy, for her seizure of power was illegal. To keep the throne, she desired to increase authority among her subjects, beginning with those who had aided her in the coup d'état of June 1762 and who distrust her ruling abilities. One of the ways to do so, was to substantiate that she was astute and self-determining politician, who could work out and conduct policies of her own. The condition for this was most favourable. In 1768, Russia successfully forced the Polish to accept laws improving the state of non-Catholics. The answer of the Polish nobility to this Russian insolence was the rise of the Bar Confederation, which declared war on Russia and started mass homicides of Polish Orthodox. Orthodox population responded in turn with an uprising of peasants and Cossacks in Western Ukraine. The rebels were also involved in mass killings, this time of Catholics, Jews, and even of their Orthodox co-believers. The insurgents sought to convert subjects of the Russian empress, a step Catherine could not face at the time. Instead, she assisted the Polish king quash the rebels. A century later Ukrainian national philosophers blamed Catherine of treachery.

The 1768–1774 War with Turkey was in certain respects a victory for Russia, but it was expensive and its actual consequences were quite fruitless. The war disturbed the process of reform that Catherine desired inside the country. During this war the Empire was stunned by the large-scale political crisis instigating in the Pugachev's revolt. The Russia's advance into the Balkans was not possible without Austria's support, which was absent at the time. In fact, Austria did everything it could to stop Turkey from signing a peace treaty with Russia. A solution came from the government in Berlin, which recommended the partition of Poland into Prussia, Russia, and Austria. The 1774 peace treaty signed was, on

the one hand, very favourable. Russia obtained the right of free passage through the Straits for her ships, and the Ottoman Empire acknowledged the independence of the Crimea. Still, the lands with the Orthodox populations in Greece and Moldavia that had been engaged by Russian troops during the war were to be given to the Turks. Nor could these gains reimburse for the human and financial injuries. The 18th century British politician, Horace Walpole, described the Polish partition as ‘the most impudent association of robbers that ever existed’.

In July 1778, Prussia started a new war with Austria (the War of the Bavarian Succession), in which Russia acted as an arbitrator. In accord with the Treaty of Teschen signed in May 1779, Russia became the ally of peace in the Holy Roman Empire, which provided it the right to impede in German affairs. Subsequently, an effort by the Turks to conquer the Crimea through sea failed in August 1778, leading to a new agreement between Russia and the Ottoman Empire allowing the independence of the Crimea. For now, Britain was engrossed with the American War of Independence and with the war against France that was underway in June 1778. Russia rejected to aid Britain by directing troops to North America. Catherine now assumed that since the two powerful European nations were busy fighting with each other, she was free to act as she liked. In February 1780, Russia suggested the ‘Declaration of Armed Neutrality’, which aimed to guard maritime trade. The declaration was signed by Prussia, Denmark, Sweden, and Holland. Most historians acclaim it as Catherine’s success, but not everybody would agree because Russia had lost Great Britain as a friend, without gaining another ally.

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Check Your Progress

1. Who was the father of Catherine II?
2. When was Catherine’s first Manifesto issued?
3. What two kingdoms were at the epicentre of Catherine’s foreign policies?
4. What were the advantages of the 1774 peace treaty?
5. Which countries signed the ‘Declaration of Armed Neutrality’?

2.3 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Catherine II was the daughter of a German prince, Christian August, Prince of Anhalt-Zerbst.
2. Catherine’s first Manifesto was issued on December 4th 1762. It was printed in Russian, German, French, English, Polish, Czech, and Arabic languages.

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3. Polish Commonwealth and the Ottoman Empire were the epicentre of Catherine's foreign policies through the 34 years of her reign.
4. The advantages of the 1774 peace treaty include Russia obtained the right of free passage through the Straits for her ships, and the Ottoman Empire acknowledged the independence of the Crimea.
5. The 'Declaration of Armed Neutrality' was signed by Prussia, Denmark, Sweden, and Holland.

2.4 SUMMARY

- Catherine II's original name was Sophia Augusta Frederica. She was born in the German city of Stettin, Prussia (now Poland), on April 21, 1729.
- In 1744, Catherine arrived in Russia, assumed the title of Grand Duchess and married her young cousin the following year. The marriage was a complete failure; the following eighteen years were filled with dissatisfaction and humiliation for her.
- During the reign of Catherine II, Russia grew tremendously, its values were invigorated, and it was recognized as one of the great powers worldwide.
- Catherine was devoted to the arts and reinforced many cultural projects. In St. Petersburg, she had a theatre built for opera and ballet performances and even wrote a few words herself.
- Catherine II's foreign policies usually have been considered the most outstanding and efficacious part of her reign. Polish Commonwealth and the Ottoman Empire were the epicentre of Catherine's foreign policies through the 34 years of her reign.
- In 1726, Andrei Ivanovich Ostermann, then vice-chancellor of the Russian Empire, penned down an extensive treatise on the problems and objectives of Russian foreign policy.
- Catherine was quite determined in advancing her political goals. She considered that the chief aim of her reign was to restructure Russia, bestowing it with the principles of enlightenment.
- In 1768, Russia successfully forced the Polish to accept laws improving the state of non-Catholics.
- The 1768–1774 war with Turkey was in certain respects a victory for Russia, but it was expensive and its actual consequences were quite fruitless. The war disturbed the process of reform that Catherine desired inside the country.
- A solution came from the government in Berlin, which recommended the partition of Poland into Prussia, Russia, and Austria.

- For now, Britain was engrossed with the American War of Independence and with the war against France that was underway in June 1778. Russia rejected to aid Britain by directing troops to North America.
- Russia suggested a ‘Declaration of Armed Neutrality’, which aimed to guard maritime trade. The declaration was signed by Prussia, Denmark, Sweden, and Holland. Most historians acclaim it as Catherine’s success, but not everybody would agree.

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2.5 KEY WORDS

- **Manifesto:** It is a written statement by a political party that explains what it hopes to do if it becomes the government in the future.
- **Bar Confederation:** The Bar Confederation was an association of Polish nobles formed at the fortress of Bar in Podolia (Ukraine) in 1768 to defend the internal and external independence of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth against Russian influence and against King Stanisław II Augustus with Polish reformers, who were attempting to limit the power of the Commonwealth’s wealthy magnates.
- **Pugachev’s Revolt:** Pugachev’s Rebellion, also called the Peasants’ War of 1773–75 was the principal revolt in a series of popular rebellions that took place in the Russian Empire after Catherine II seized power in 1762.

2.6 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on Catherine II’s personality.
2. Discuss the wars were fought during Catherine II’s reign.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the domestic policy of Catherine II.
2. Describe the highlights of Catherine II’s foreign policy.

2.7 FURTHER READINGS

- Kamenskii, A. and D. Griffiths. 2015. *The Russian Empire in the Eighteenth Century: Tradition and Modernization*. United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis.
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UNIT 3 REIGN OF ALEXANDER I

Structure

- 3.0 Introduction
- 3.1 Objectives
- 3.2 Alexander I (1801-25)
 - 3.2.1 Internal Reforms
 - 3.2.2 Foreign Policy
 - 3.2.3 Holy Alliance
- 3.3 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 3.4 Summary
- 3.5 Key Words
- 3.6 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 3.7 Further Readings

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3.0 INTRODUCTION

The Emperor of Russia (Czar) from 1801, the first King of the Polish Congress from 1815, and the Grand Duke of Finland from 1809 until his death, Alexander I or Aleksándr Pávlovich, was the eldest son of Emperor Paul I and Sophie Dorothea of Württemberg. Alexander, who was born in Saint Petersburg to Grand Duke Paul Petrovich (later Paul I) succeeded to the throne after the assassination of his father. During the turbulent time of the Napoleonic Wars, he governed Russia. Alexander, as prince and during the early years of his reign, frequently used liberal rhetoric, but in reality continued Russia's absolutist policies. In this unit, we will discuss the internal reforms and foreign policies during Alexander I's rule. We will also focus on the establishment of Holy Alliance.

3.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the reign of Alexander I
- Discuss the domestic and foreign policies of Alexander I
- Describe the functions and importance of the Holy Alliance

3.2 ALEXANDER I (1801-25)

Aleksandr Pavlovich was the grandchild of Empress Catherine II and was the first child of Grand Duke Pavel Petrovich (Paul I) and Grand Duchess Maria Feodorovna, a Princess of Württemberg-Montbéliard. Her grandmother took him

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from his parents and raised him herself to prepare him for the throne after her. She was determined to disown her own son, Pavel, who annoyed her by his insecurity. Catherine invited her acquaintance and an adherent philosopher of the French Enlightenment, Denis Diderot, who became Alexander's private tutor. When he refused to study from him, she chose Frédéric-César La Harpe, a Swiss citizen, a republican by belief, and an exceptional educator. He stimulated his pupil to become flexible and open minded.

As a juvenile, Alexander was permitted to visit his father at Gatchina, on the outskirts of St. Petersburg. There, his father had created an absurd kind of small kingdom where he dedicated himself to military trainings and parades. Alexander received his military training there under the guidance of a tough and stiff officer, Aleksey Arakcheyev, who was devotedly close to him and whom Alexander respected all through his life. Catherine the Great had already written the manifesto that dispossessed her son of his rights and nominated her grandson as the heir to the throne. When she died unexpectedly on November 17, 1796, Alexander, who knew of it, did not dare reveal the manifesto, and thus, Pavel became emperor. Paul I's reign was a gloomy period for Russia. The monarch's dictatorial and inexplicable behaviour led to a conspiracy against him by certain nobles and military men, and he was swiftly murdered during the night of March 23, 1801. Alexander became Czar the next day.

On October 9, 1793, Alexander married Louise of Baden, known as Elizabeth Alexeievna after her conversion to the Orthodox Church. The marriage was a political match which was devised by his grandmother, Catherine the Great. However, the marriage proved to be a curse for him and his spouse. Their two children died young, however, their mutual grief drew the spouses closer together.

Alexander desired his rule to be a cheerful one and visualized great and essential reforms. With four friends, who were of noble families, but driven by liberal ideas, he formed an unofficial committee consisting of Prince Adam Czartoryski, Count Pavel Stroganov, Prince Viktor Kochubei, and Nikolay Novosiltsev. Prince Adam Czartoryski (1770-1861) was a prominent Polish statesman, minister of foreign affairs and curator of Vilna. Count Pavel Stroganov (1744-1817) was the assistant minister of internal affairs and curator of the St. Petersburg Educational District. Prince Viktor Kochubei (1768-1834) was the minister of internal affairs, and lastly, Nikolai Novosil'tsev (1761-1832), served as a diplomat. Its affirmed purpose was to make 'good laws, which are the source of the well-being of the nation'.

3.2.1 Internal Reforms

Alexander and his close associates modified numerous laws decreasing the injustices of the previous reign and also, made countless administrative improvements. Their chief accomplishment was the commencement of a massive plan for public education, which involved the construction of various schools of diverse types, organizations for training teachers, and the establishment of three new universities

at Moscow, Vilna (Vilnius), and Dorpat (Tartu) and three others at St. Petersburg, Kharkov, and Kazan. Literary and technical bodies were recognized or reinvigorated, and his reign was noted for the assistance lent to the various streams by the Emperor and the affluent nobility. Alexander later expelled foreign intellectuals.

Despite the philanthropic ideas indoctrinated in him by Frédéric-César La Harpe and his own desire to make his populace happy, Alexander lacked the energy essential to perform the most crucial change, the eradication of serfdom. The organization of serfdom was, in the Czar's own words, 'a degradation' that kept Russia in a catastrophically regressive state. But to release the serfs, who composed three-quarters of the populace, would stimulate the aggression of their noble owners, who did not want to lose the slaves on whom their fortune and well-being depended. Serfdom was an on-going encumbrance on the Russians. It prohibited modernization of the country, which was at least an era behind the rest of Europe. Out of a genuine wish to revolutionize, Alexander deliberated a constitution and 'the limitation of the autocracy', but he backtracked before the hazard of angering nobility. He was an idealist than a realist person, who could not change his dreams into actuality due to his unsteady personality; he would become intoxicated by the idea of impressive projects, while hesitating at carrying them out.

A few years into his reign the liberal Mikhail Speransky became one of the emperor's closest advisors, and he drew up many plans for elaborate reforms. In the government reform of Alexander I the old collegia were eliminated and novel ministries were put in their place. A council of ministers under the chairmanship of the sovereign dealt with all interdepartmental matters. The state council was created to expand the enforcement of legislation. It was envisioned to become the second chamber of representative legislature. The Governing Senate was restructured as the Supreme Court of the Empire. The classification of the laws commenced in 1801, but was not carried out during his reign.

He extended the right to own land to the masses, mainly comprising of state-owned peasants in 1801 and shaped a novel social category of 'free agriculturalist', for peasants willingly liberated by their masters in 1803. The countless majorities of serfs remained unaffected. After 1815, the military settlements (farms worked by soldiers and their families under military control) were introduced, with the awareness of making the army, or part of it, self-sufficient economically and for providing it with workers.

3.2.2 Foreign Policy

At the end of the eighteenth century, Russia was entering a new stage of her history with respect to foreign affairs. Previously, Russia had restricted her efforts of territorial expansion in Eastern Europe and Asia, and had pursued foreign associations merely as provisional measures to simplify the accomplishment of that object. However, now the nation was starting to consider herself an influential

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member of the European countries, and as such desired to exercise a major impact on all European issues. This desire was not new even during the reign of Catherine, she formed the League of Neutrals as a support against the naval supremacy of England, and by Paul when he asserted that his peace negotiations with Bonaparte should be regarded as part of an overall European pacification, in which he must be assessed.

Alexander's focus was not on domestic policy but on foreign affairs, and primarily on Napoleon. Against the imperialistic tendencies of the Napoleon and the growth of French power, Alexander amalgamated Britain and Austria. Napoleon defeated the Russians and Austrians at Austerlitz in 1805 and overpowered the Russians at Friedland in 1807, resulting in the Treaty of Tilsit, signed in 1807, between Alexander I and Napoleon. The treaty ended the war between Russia and France and began an association between the two empires that made the rest of continental Europe almost powerless. Russia lost some of its territory under the treaty, but Alexander still managed to make use of his alliance with Napoleon for further growth. He gained the Grand Duchy of Finland from Sweden in 1809 and gained Bessarabia from Turkey in 1812.

Alexander played a very important role in the redrawing of the map of Europe at the Congress of Vienna in 1815. Alexander was regarded as the saviour of Europe after he and his allies defeated Napoleon. In the same year, Alexander initiated the creation of the Holy Alliance, a loose arrangement promising the rulers of the nations involved to act in accordance with the Christian principles. In 1814, the powers like Russia, Britain, Austria, and Prussia had formed the Quadruple Alliance. The allies formed an international system to preserve the territorial status quo and avoid the resurgence of an imperialist France. The Quadruple Alliance, strengthened by several international conferences, guaranteed Russia's influence in Europe.

At the same time, Russia continued its expansion. The Congress of Vienna formed the Kingdom of Poland (Russian Poland), to which Alexander granted a constitution. Thus, Alexander I became the constitutional monarch of Poland, while being the autocratic Czar of Russia. He was also the limited monarch of Finland, which had been annexed in 1809 and was bestowed autonomous status. In 1813, Russia expanded territory in the Baku area of the Caucasus at the expense of Persia. By the early nineteenth century, the empire was also resolutely established in Alaska.

3.2.3 Holy Alliance

The Holy Alliance was an alliance formed by the monarchist great powers of Russia, Austria, and Prussia, recognized after the ultimate defeat of Napoleon at the request of Czar Alexander I of Russia and signed in Paris in 1815. Apparently, the alliance was formed to infuse the divine right of kings and Christian values in European political life. About three months after the Final Act of the Vienna Congress, the sovereigns of Orthodox (Russia), Catholic (Austria), and Protestant (Prussia) faiths

promised to act based on ‘justice, love and peace’, both in internal and foreign affairs, for ‘consolidating human institutions and remedying their imperfections’. Despite this noble wording, the Alliance was rejected as unsuccessful by the United Kingdom, the Papal States, and the Islamic Ottoman Empire.

However, in practice, the Austrian state chancellor, Prince Klemens von Metternich, made the Alliance a symbol against revolution, democracy and secularism. The monarchs of the three countries used it to band together to avoid radical influence (particularly from the French Revolution) from entering these nations. Hence, a balance of power was upheld, known as the Concert of Europe, because European monarchs worked together to enforce and protect the agreements established in the Congress of Vienna. It was the first effort in Europe to form a society of governments amalgamated to keep peace and protect the balance of power.

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Check Your Progress

1. Who was the first tutor of Alexander I?
2. Who was Prince Adam Czartoryski?
3. When did Alexander I extend the right to own land to the masses?
4. When and where did Napoleon defeat the Russians and Austrians in the first war?
5. Which countries were part of the Holy Alliance?

3.3 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Catherine invited her acquaintance and an adherent philosopher of the French Enlightenment, Denis Diderot, to become Alexander I’s private tutor.
2. Prince Adam Czartoryski was one of the four friends of Alexander I, who was a prominent Polish statesman, minister of foreign affairs and curator of Vilna.
3. Alexander I extended the right to own land to the masses, mainly comprising of state-owned peasants in 1801.
4. Napoleon defeated the Russians and Austrians at Austerlitz in 1805 and overpowered the Russians at Friedland in 1807.
5. The Holy Alliance was an alliance formed by the monarchist great powers of Russia, Austria, and Prussia, recognized after the ultimate defeat of Napoleon at the request of Czar Alexander I of Russia and signed in Paris in 1815.

3.4 SUMMARY

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- Aleksandr Pavlovich was the grandchild of Empress Catherine II and was the first child of Grand Duke Pavel Petrovich (Paul I) and Grand Duchess Maria Feodorovna, a Princess of Württemberg-Montbéliard.
- As a juvenile, Alexander was permitted to visit his father at Gatchina, on the outskirts of St. Petersburg. There, his father had created an absurd kind of small kingdom where he dedicated himself to military trainings and parades.
- Paul I's reign was a gloomy period for Russia. The monarch's dictatorial and inexplicable behaviour led to a conspiracy against him by certain nobles and military men, and he was swiftly murdered during the night of March 23, 1801.
- On October 9, 1793, Alexander married Louise of Baden, known as Elizabeth Alexeievna after her conversion to the Orthodox Church.
- Alexander desired his rule to be a cheerful one and visualized great and essential reforms. With four friends, who were of noble families, but driven by liberal ideas, he formed an unofficial committee.
- Alexander and his close associates modified numerous laws decreasing the injustices of the previous reign and also, made countless administrative improvements.
- Despite the philanthropic ideas indoctrinated in him by Frédéric-César La Harpe and his own desire to make his populace happy, Alexander lacked the energy essential to perform the most crucial change, the eradication of serfdom.
- In the government reform of Alexander I the old collegia were eliminated and novel ministries were put in their place.
- At the end of the eighteenth century, Russia was entering a new stage of her history with respect to foreign affairs.
- Against the imperialistic tendencies of the Napoleon and the growth of French power, Alexander amalgamated Britain and Austria.
- Alexander played a very important role in the redrawing of the map of Europe at the Congress of Vienna in 1815. Alexander was regarded as the saviour of Europe after he and his allies defeated Napoleon.
- The Holy Alliance was an alliance formed by the monarchist great powers of Russia, Austria, and Prussia, recognized after the ultimate defeat of Napoleon at the request of Czar Alexander I of Russia and signed in Paris in 1815.

3.5 KEY WORDS

- **Concert of Europe:** It was also known as Vienna System. It was adopted by the major conservative powers of Europe to maintain their power, oppose radical movements, and to defend the balance of power.
- **Balance of Power:** The balance of power theory in international relations proposes that states may protect their survival by avoiding any one state from acquiring adequate military power to control all others.

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3.6 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on Alexander I.
2. Briefly explain the formation of the Holy Alliance.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the internal reforms under the reign of Alexander I.
2. Comment on the foreign policy of Alexander I.

3.7 FURTHER READINGS

- Kamenskii, A. and D. Griffiths. 2015. *The Russian Empire in the Eighteenth Century: Tradition and Modernization*. United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis.
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BLOCK II
REFORMS FROM NICHOLAS I-NICHOLAS II

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UNIT 4 REIGN OF NICHOLAS I

Structure

- 4.0 Introduction
- 4.1 Objectives
- 4.2 Nicholas I (1825-55)
 - 4.2.1 Domestic Policy
 - 4.2.2 Foreign Policy
 - 4.2.3 Crimean War
- 4.3 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 4.4 Summary
- 4.5 Key Words
- 4.6 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 4.7 Further Readings

4.0 INTRODUCTION

From 1825 until 1855, Nicholas I reigned as Emperor of Russia, King of Poland and Grand Duke of Finland. He was Paul I's third son and his predecessor, Alexander I's younger brother. In spite of the unsuccessful Decembrist coup against him, Nicholas inherited his brother's throne. In history, he is mostly remembered as a reactionary whose tumultuous reign was characterized, on the one hand, by territorial expansion, rapid development and significant industrialization, and, on the other hand, by the centralization of administrative policies and the suppression of opposition. In this unit, we will discuss the domestic and foreign policy under Nicholas I. We will also focus on the Crimean War.

4.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the personality of Nicholas I
- Discuss the domestic and foreign policy under Nicholas I
- Describe the significance of the Crimean War

4.2 NICHOLAS I (1825-55)

Nicholas I (1825-55) has the reputation of being the most intransigent Czar the Russian Empire ever had. The renowned historian, S. M. Solov'Ev, called him

the ‘the new Nebuchadnezzar’. Nicholas had a happy marriage that produced a large family; all their seven children survived childhood. The horrible features of a government which fraught the people and methodically repressed all enlightenment and liberal thought became predominantly obvious under the tyrannical ‘stick’ of this sovereign. Most of the Russian people were still tied to the land, either as State and Imperial Crown farmers, or as private serfs, especially, the latter, living under the most miserable economic conditions and destitute of personal liberty, were reduced almost to the level of chattels. Against such a background of autocracy and serfdom there could grow only a system of injustice in lieu of a horrific abuse of equity, and indeed, the courts and their members at the time of Nicholas were in complete harmony with the epoch. They vanished after the excessive reforms of Alexander II, who justly come in history under the name of ‘liberator’, for he not only broke the shackles which held the peasants in chains throughout many centuries, but also ripped the bonds which fettered the administration of justice in old Russia.

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4.2.1 Domestic Policy

The time from 1825 until 1855, Nicholas I ruled not only as Emperor of Russia but also as the King of Poland and Grand Duke of Finland. Nicholas totally lacked his brother’s mystical and academic extensiveness; he saw his role just as that of a patriarchal autocrat ruling his people by whatever means obligatory. Nicholas strove to assist his country’s best interests as he saw them, but his methods were tyrannical, authoritarian, and often insufficient. Throughout Nicholas’ rule, possibly two of Russia’s greatest poets, Aleksandr Pushkin and Mikhail Lermontov, tolerated severe control and harassment for their liberal ideas. The catastrophic deaths of both were seen by many, at least in part, because of the Czar’s maltreatment. While Nicholas reinvigorated the growth of technical education and engineering, he also stiffened his grip on universities and limited the number of students permissible to study there.

Nicholas I had made the usage of ad hoc committees which were outside the purview of the state jurisdiction. The committees were archetypally composed of a minority of the most reliable supporters of the emperor; since these were few, the same men in different amalgamations formed these committees throughout Nicholas’s reign. As a rule, the committees carried kept their work clandestine, adding further complication and misperception to the already unstable administration of the empire. The let-down of one committee to accomplish its task simply led to the creation of another. For example, about nine committees tried to deal with the issue of serfdom during Nicholas’s reign.

Czar Nicholas eradicated numerous areas of local autonomy. Bessarabia’s self-sufficiency was removed in 1828, Poland’s in 1830 and the Jewish Qahal (Community)’s in 1843. As an exception to this trend, Finland was able to keep

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its independence partly due to Finnish soldiers' faithful partaking in crushing the November Uprising in Poland. The first railway of Russia was open in 1837, a twenty-six km line between St. Petersburg and the suburban residence of Czarskoye Selo. The second was the Saint Petersburg–Moscow Railway, built in 1842–51. By 1855, there were about 920 km of Russian railways built. The emperor loved everything Russian and asserted on the use of Russian language and manners at court (until then, French and sometimes German, was spoken). The industrial revolution progressively spread to Russia. Freeways and electromagnetic telegraph lines were also constructed.

In 1833, the Ministry of National Education, Sergey Uvarov, devised a programme of 'Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationality' or 'Official Nationality' as the controlling principle of the regime. It was a medieval policy based on convention in religion, dictatorship in government, and the state-founding role of the Russian nationality and equal citizen rights for all people living in Russia, with exclusion of Jews. The people were to demonstrate loyalty to the authority of the Czar, to the traditions of the Russian Orthodox Church, and to the Russian language.

Nicholas disliked serfdom and toyed with the idea of abolishing it in Russia but failed to do so for reasons of state. He dreaded the aristocracy and alleged they might turn against him if he abolished serfdom. However, he did make some efforts to improve the lot of the Crown Serfs (serfs owned by the government) with the help of his minister Pavel Kiselyov. Throughout his reign, he tried to intensify his control over the landowners and other influential groups in Russia. Under Nicholas I, the Jewish agricultural establishment of Ukraine sustained with the transfer of Siberian Jews to Ukraine. In Ukraine, Jews were given land, but had to pay for it, leaving very little to sustain their families. On the other hand, these Jews were relieved from the forced military conscription. He suppressed all radical movements, for example, Decembrist movement, unified the bureaucracy, announced the third section that is, secret police and gendarmerie and imposed strict censorship throughout the Russian Empire.

Nationalism served a vital function during Nicholas I's reign. It was a means to legitimize his rule by linking him straight to the people. In so doing, he accentuated an organic tie between rulers and ruled while disintegrating some of the feudal and agrarian bonds of the old order. In this sense, Official Nationality also aided the cause of 'right-wing modernization'. Nicholas I's concept of nationality remained influential throughout the Czar period, with the Czar serving as the kindly but sporadically stern father (batyushka) to the Russian nation.

4.2.2 Foreign Policy

Nicholas I's belligerent foreign policy led to many exclusive wars, with a catastrophic effect on the empire's finances. His propositions to suppress

revolution on the European continent, recognized in some illustrations, earned him the label of ‘gendarme of Europe’. He was efficacious against Russia’s neighbouring southern opponents as he seized the last territories in the Caucasus held by Persia, which comprised the modern-day Armenia and Azerbaijan by effectively ending the Russo-Persian War (1826-28). Russia had got the territories of Azerbaijan, Dagestan, Georgia, and Armenia from Persia, and therefore, had the strong geopolitical and territorial upper hand in the Caucasus. He also finished the Russo-Turkish War (1828–29) magnificently. In 1830, after an uprising in France, the Poles in Russia revolted. Nicholas crushed the rebellion, repealed the Polish constitution, and reduced Russian Poland to the position of a province.

While Nicholas I was endeavouring to uphold the status quo in Europe, he implemented an aggressive policy toward the Ottoman Empire. Nicholas I was following the outdated Russian policy of resolving the ‘Eastern Question’ by partitioning the Ottoman Empire and creating a protectorate over the Orthodox populace of the Balkans. Russia fought an efficacious war with the Ottomans in 1828 and 1829. In 1833, Russia negotiated the Treaty of Unkiar-Skelessi with the Ottoman Empire. As a result, the major European powers interfered and by the London Straits Convention of 1841 declared Ottoman control over the straits and prohibited any power, including Russia, to send warships through the straits. Based on his role in suppressing the revolutions of 1848 and his wrong belief that he had British diplomatic support, Nicholas moved against the Ottomans, who declared war in 1853. Thus, the Crimean War began.

In 1848, when a series of revolutions shuddered Europe, Nicholas was at the forefront of reaction. In 1849, he interfered on behalf of the Habsburgs and aided in suppression of an uprising in Hungary. He also urged Prussia not to accept a liberal constitution. Having helped conservative forces repel the spectre of revolution, Nicholas I seemed to dominate Europe. However, Russian ascendancy proved deceptive in nature. Later, he led Russia into the Crimean War (1853–56) with calamitous results. Historians accentuate that his micromanagement of the armies delayed his generals, as did his misguided strategy. Fuller notes that historians have frequently concluded that ‘the reign of Nicholas I was a catastrophic failure in both domestic and foreign policy’.

The European powers feared Russia, and in 1854 Britain, France, and Sardinia joined the Ottoman Empire against Russia. Austria offered the Ottomans diplomatic support, while Prussia remained neutral. The European allies landed in Crimea and laid siege to a well-fortified base at Sevastopol. After a year’s siege the base fell, revealing Russia’s incapability to protect a major fortification on its own soil. Nicholas I died before the fall of Sevastopol, but even before then he had known the failure of his regime. The conquest of the Russian Empire in the

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Crimean War had exposed the moral, social and economic bankruptcy of Nicholas's rule.

Russia's Czar, Nicholas I, died in February 1855. He was buried in the Peter and Paul Cathedral in St. Petersburg. Though a complex personality, Nicholas has gone down in Russian history as an aggressive and intransigent. Aleksandr Pushkin described him as being 'very much a soldier and a little bit Peter the Great'. The Czar's liking for endless manoeuvres and flogging in the army earned him the nickname 'Nicholas Palkin' from the Russian *palka* or 'stick'. On the eve of his death, the Russian Empire stood stretched over twenty million square kilometres.

4.2.3 Crimean War

In July 1853, Russia occupied territories in the Crimea. These territories had formerly been under Ottoman control. Alarmed by the Russian expansion, Britain and France made efforts to achieve a negotiated withdrawal of Russian troops. They feared that the Russians were about to encroach upon the Balkan States as the Ottoman Empire was too weak to stop Russian advances. Britain and France also feared the possibility of Russia gaining access to the Mediterranean by occupying the port city of Istanbul. However, the attempts at a peaceful settlement failed as the Turkish Sultan was reluctant to grant concessions to the Czar. Turkey formally declared war on Russia on 23 October 1853. When the Russians annihilated the Turkish fleet at Sinope in the Black Sea in November 1853, Britain and France entered the war against Russia.



Fig 4.1 Russian annihilated the Turkish fleet at the Battle of Sinope

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Battle_of_Sinop.jpg

The major part of the Crimean War took place in the Crimean region. On 20th September 1854, the Allied army defeated the Russian Imperial Army at the Battle of the Alma; however, the Battle of Balaklava in October 1854 proved to be indecisive. Perhaps the most important battle of the war was the Siege of Sevastopol. Sevastopol was the home of the Czar's Black Sea fleet which threatened British and French interests in the Mediterranean. The siege of Sevastopol by allied troops lasted for over a year and resulted in the Russians

being defeated. However, the siege proved costly for both sides with over 250,000 soldiers killed during the siege. The costs of the siege forced both sides to start peace negotiations which culminated in the Treaty of Paris. As a result of Treaty of Paris, Russia had to give up some territories on the Danube River. Moreover, the treaty made the Black Sea neutral territory which was a huge setback for Russian influence in the region.

The Crimean War was one of the bloodiest wars fought in the 19th century. Many of the dead in the war were not because of battle wounds, but because of diseases that occurred in filthy field hospitals. The war also shattered the idea of great powers working in a united manner. The Treaty of Vienna which had governed the balance of power in the region was broken. The war also was one of the major reasons for the formation of centralized states in Italy and Germany.

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Check Your Progress

1. What did S. M. Solov'Ev call Nicholas I?
2. Why were Aleksandr Pushkin and Mikhail Lermontov harassed under Nicholas' rule?
3. What is 'Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationality' principle?
4. When did Nicholas I die and where was he buried?
5. What was the significance of the Siege of Sevastopol?

4.3 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Nicholas I (1825-55) got the repute of being the most intransigent Czar the Russian Empire ever had. The renowned historian, S. M. Solov'Ev, called him 'the new Nebuchadnezzar'.
2. Aleksandr Pushkin and Mikhail Lermontov, possibly two of Russia's greatest poets, tolerated severe control and harassment under Nicholas' rule for their liberal ideas.
3. 'Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationality' principle or 'Official Nationality' was a medieval policy based on convention in religion, dictatorship in government, and the state-founding role of the Russian nationality and equal citizen rights for all people living in Russia, with exclusion of Jews. The people were to demonstrate loyalty to the authority of the Czar, to the traditions of the Russian Orthodox Church, and to the Russian language.
4. Russia's Czar, Nicholas I, died in February 1855. He was buried in the Peter and Paul Cathedral in St. Petersburg.

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5. The siege of Sevastopol by allied troops lasted for over a year and resulted in the Russians being defeated. However, the siege proved costly for both sides. The costs of the siege forced both sides to start peace negotiations which culminated in the Treaty of Paris. As a result of Treaty of Paris, Russia had to give up some territories on the Danube River.

4.4 SUMMARY

- Nicholas I (1825-55) got the repute of being the most intransigent Czar the Russian Empire ever had. The renowned historian, S. M. Solov'Ev, called him the 'the new Nebuchadnezzar'.
- The horrible features of a government which fraught the people and methodically repressed all enlightenment and liberal thought became predominantly obvious under the tyrannical 'stick' of Nicholas I.
- The time from 1825 until 1855, Nicholas I ruled not only as Emperor of Russia but also as the King of Poland and Grand Duke of Finland.
- While Nicholas reinvigorated the growth of technical education and engineering, he also stiffened his grip on universities and limited the number of students permissible to study there.
- Nicholas I had made the usage of ad hoc committees which were outside the purview of the state jurisdiction. The committees were archetypally composed of a minority of the most reliable supporters of the emperor.
- Czar Nicholas eradicated numerous areas of local autonomy. Bessarabia's self-sufficiency was removed in 1828, Poland's in 1830 and the Jewish Qahal (Community)'s in 1843.
- Nicholas disliked serfdom and toyed with the idea of abolishing it in Russia but failed to do so for reasons of state. He dreaded the aristocracy and alleged they might turn against him if he abolished serfdom.
- Nationalism served a vital function during Nicholas I's reign. It was a means to legitimize his rule by linking him straight to the people.
- Nicholas I's belligerent foreign policy led to many exclusive wars, with a catastrophic effect on the empire's finances. His propositions to suppress revolution on the European continent, recognized in some illustrations, earned him the label of 'gendarme of Europe'.
- Nicholas I was efficacious against Russia's neighbouring southern opponents as he seized the last territories in the Caucasus held by Persia.
- In 1830, after an uprising in France, the Poles in Russia revolted. Nicholas crushed the rebellion, repealed the Polish constitution, and reduced Russian Poland to the position of a province.

- While Nicholas I was endeavouring to uphold the status quo in Europe, he implemented an aggressive policy toward the Ottoman Empire.
- In 1848, when a series of revolutions shuddered Europe, Nicholas was at the forefront of reaction. In 1849, he interfered on behalf of the Habsburgs and aided in suppression of an uprising in Hungary. He also urged Prussia not to accept a liberal constitution.
- Though a complex personality, Nicholas has gone down in Russian history as an aggressive and intransigent. Aleksandr Pushkin described him as being ‘very much a soldier and a little bit Peter the Great’.
- In July 1853, Russia occupied territories in the Crimea. These territories had formerly been under Ottoman control.
- Turkey formally declared war on Russia on 23 October 1853. When the Russians annihilated the Turkish fleet at Sinope in the Black Sea in November 1853, Britain and France entered the war against Russia.
- The most important battle of the war was the Siege of Sevastopol. Sevastopol was the home of the Czar’s Black Sea fleet which threatened British and French interests in the Mediterranean.

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4.5 KEY WORDS

- **Chattel:** It means an item of property other than freehold land, including tangible goods (chattels personal) and leasehold interests.
- **Eastern Question:** In diplomatic history, the Eastern Question was the issue of the political and economic instability in the Ottoman Empire from the late 18th to early 20th centuries and the subsequent strategic competition and political considerations of the European Great powers in light of this.
- **Siege:** It is a military operation in which an army tries to capture a town by surrounding it and stopping the supply of food, etc. to the people inside.

4.6 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on the life of Nicholas I.
2. Briefly explain the domestic policy of Nicholas I.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Describe the foreign policy of Nicholas I.
2. Discuss the Crimean War in detail. How did this war shape the history of the Ottoman Empire on one hand, and of the European powers on the other?

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4.7 FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 5 REIGN OF ALEXANDER II

Structure

- 5.0 Introduction
- 5.1 Objectives
- 5.2 Alexander II (1855-81)
 - 5.2.1 Internal Reforms
 - 5.2.2 Emancipation of Serfs
 - 5.2.3 Foreign Policy and the Congress of Berlin
- 5.3 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 5.4 Summary
- 5.5 Key Words
- 5.6 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 5.7 Further Readings

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5.0 INTRODUCTION

From 2 March 1855 until his murder, Alexander II was the Emperor of Russia, King of Poland and Grand Duke of Finland. The liberation of Russia's serfs in 1861 was Alexander's most important reform as emperor, for which he is known as Alexander the Liberator. He was responsible for other significant reforms as well. In this unit, we will discuss the internal reforms and foreign policy under the rule of Alexander II.

5.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the personality of Alexander II
- Describe the domestic and foreign policy under Alexander II
- Analyze the emancipation of serfs and Congress of Berlin under Alexander II

5.2 ALEXANDER II (1855-81)

Alexander Nikolaevich Romanov, also known as Alexander II, was the Czar and the Russian Emperor from 1855 to 1881. He is remembered for emancipating the serfs and being the only Czar who was assassinated. Born in Moscow, on 17th April, 1818, Alexander II was the eldest son of Nicholas I. Alexander II was brought up in a manner different from his father's upbringing. Nicholas I thought it was better to prepare young Alexander II, the future Czar, for the challenges ahead. Therefore, as soon as baby Alexander was a few days old, he was made

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the head of a hussar regiment. His early training mainly consisted of military matters and he kept receiving promotions as he grew. As Alexander II turned six, Nicholas I put him under the training of Captain K. K. Merder, head of the Moscow Military School. Captain Merder's qualities such as love for the military and his kindness towards other people greatly influenced the future Czar.

5.2.1 Internal Reforms

Alexander II received literary training from the famous poet, Vasily Zhukovsky, who helped in enlightening his mind. The young Czar travelled through Russia and Europe. In 1837, he became the first Russian emperor to travel to Siberia. It was in Siberia that Alexander II called for a meeting with Decembrists and then asked his father to help them by improving their conditions.

Alexander II was included in each and every aspect of governing by his father. Since, Nicholas I himself had been so unprepared for his role, he deemed it fit to prepare his son for every challenge as a Czar. Alexander II wholeheartedly participated in every aspect of his training. Alexander was made a member of the imperial council and also became the supervisor of the military schools. Further, when his father could not supervise the State Council meetings, he presided over them. In 1846, Alexander was made the chairman of the Secret Committee on Peasant Affairs, by his father Nicholas I. Alexander II stressed on the existing socio-political order. Since a young age he was trained to support the system where an autocratic leader was supposed to rule over the commoners, he, as yet, found no problem in this system. Nobody, however, would have thought that this young Czar would make significant changes in the existing system.

In 1855, Nicholas I passed away leaving Russia helpless in the middle of the ongoing Crimean War. Hence, Alexander II ascended to the throne as the new emperor. The defeat and his father's loss, compelled Alexander II to accept changes in the existing ideology. This led to fundamental changes in the entire Russian Political System. Alexander II took over as the emperor on 19th February, 1855. However, his official coronation was on the 26th of August in 1856. During this time, the young Czar struggled with the Crimean War, which worsened with time. On 9th September, 1855, the Crimean city Sevastopol, surrendered. Alexander began the negotiations for peace and signed the Treaty of Paris on 30th March 1856. A large number of Russian soldiers were lost and the country also had to give-up its naval rights in the Black Sea. These events compelled Alexander to reform the existing system.

As soon as the war was over, in 1856, the Moscow nobles enquired the Czar about liberating the serfs, to which he answered: 'I cannot tell you that I totally oppose this; we live in an era in which this must eventually happen. I believe that you are of the same opinion as I; therefore, it will be much better if this takes place from above than from below.' This quote by Alexander II became quite popular. This shows that the Czar knew the importance of this reform. However, Alexander thought it was reasonable to transform the autocracy from within. Thus,

his decision to reform along with his pledge to autocracy became an important agenda.

Although, Alexander was firm on his decision to finish serfdom in Russia, yet he did not stop taking advice from his council of ministers. The liberation of serfs was a difficult process. Alexander II began the process of liberating the serfs in 1856. He formed a secret committee where he asked for suggestions regarding the emancipation. The emancipation degree was rolled out on 19th February. The emancipation of the serfs was not easy task for the Czar. He was opposed by many for taking such a drastic step. The emancipation order freed twenty million serfs and nearly thirty million state peasants, which is about 8 percent of the Russian population. Since Alexander II worked for the liberation of the serfs, he was labelled the Czar-Liberator.

Alexander II went on to support other changes after the process of emancipation had been completed. Historians, most often, refer to these changes as the 'Great Reforms'. Alexander did not take part in these changes himself, which took place after 1861, he merely selected those who were given the authority to draft the reforms. However, he was the one who approved these changes. Alexander, between 1864 and 1874, announced several reforms, such as the creation of zemstvo, which was a new local government reform. He also brought out reforms in the censorship law, military law, education, and judiciary. In the process of reforming the system, Alexander trusted those bureaucrats, who were a part of the system since his father's time. Therefore, these reforms were linked with names such as Petr Valuev, Nicholas Milyutin and Dmitry Milyutin. However, these new reforms came with a new set of challenges for the autocrat.

During the reform process, he had to deal with many revolutionaries and rebels. All these responses were the result of the liberal reforms initiated by the Czar, some of which he had not anticipated. For example, in Poland, an uprising was brimming due to the reform initiatives undertaken by Alexander. Poland was a part of the Russian empire at that time. In 1863, the nationalists in Poland managed a Warsaw revolution, which asked for more liberation. Alexander became defensive as a result of this rebellion and tried to suppress the revolution, but he did not tighten his hold over the empire as his father would have. He permitted the Finnish Parliament to come together in 1863, because of their loyalty. In Russia, the reforms empowered the masses who wished to see more changes. In the 1850s and 1860s, those who were educated, discussed the pros and cons of the 'Great Reforms' openly and most of them suggested several changes. A large number of people were agitated and this resulted in a politically radical movement that wanted to finish off the autocracy.

5.2.2 Emancipation of Serfs

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Czarist Russia was primarily an agrarian and economically backward country. About 19% of the land suitable for cultivation

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was owned by the Czar and about one lakh noble families. Cultivation on these large estates was carried on with the help of serfs, who were tied to the land and who were not free to leave the estates. The poverty and misery of the Serfs because of unlimited exploitation by the landlords was intolerable. Agrarian unrests and revolts, both sporadic and organized or ill-organized, were quite common. The Russian aristocracy showed no concern for the lot of the millions of backward population of Russia and this added to the gravity of the situation. For maintaining their hold over the serfs and for perpetuating their limitless exploitation, the aristocracy resorted to brutal repression of the serfs.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the belief that serfdom was incompatible with modern economic growth was spreading in Russian society. However, it was Russia's defeat in the Crimean War on the one hand, and growing peasant uprisings on the other, that forced Czar Alexander II to abolish serfdom. The manifesto of February 19, 1861, and the 'Act on Peasants Emerging from Serf Dependence' granted personal freedom to the peasants in the sense that the landowners could no longer buy or sell them. The serfs were granted equal status with the members of other social estates, including the freedom to marry, conclude legal contracts, and to independently establish and run industrial and commercial enterprises. The land they tilled was to become their own, but they were required to pay for it; and the commune was made jointly responsible for these payments. These were known as redemption dues. Finally, the gentry were given some of the peasant land to compensate them for the loss of their serfs. Many historians have contended that it is misleading to speak of the emancipation of the serfs in 1861, because the newly emancipated serfs were burdened by long-term debt, and granted inadequate and unbalanced allotments of land. Further, because the commune was now jointly responsible for the payment of dues, it restricted peasants moving out until they had paid off their dues. Thus, the problem of peasant mobility remained acute. Thus, in spite of the apparent emancipation of the serfs, they continued to be ruthlessly exploited by the land owners.



Fig. 5.1 Alexander II personally announcing Emancipation of Serfs

Source: <http://www.executedtoday.com/2012/05/01/1861-anton-petrov-of-bezdna/>

5.2.3 Foreign Policy and the Congress of Berlin

In the last quarter of the 19th century, there was increasing restlessness among the subject states of the Ottoman Empire due to growing nationalist aspirations and race consciousness among the people of the Balkans. The sight of the Serbs, the Greeks and the Rumanians winning their partial or complete freedom inevitably aroused the other non-Turkish inhabitants of the Balkans to attempt a similar movement for their freedom. This feeling was especially strong among the different Slav peoples of the Balkans, who now began to be conscious of their racial kinship with the Slavs of Russia, Poland and the Austria-Hungary Empire. The emergence of Bulgarian nationalism was also closely related to the re-establishment of the independent Bulgarian Orthodox Church in 1870. The pan Slavic feeling was also encouraged by Czarist Russia whose agents carried on an unceasing propaganda among the Balkan Slavs of the South to stir up racial consciousness and national hostility towards the Turks. Nationalism was thus becoming tinged with racialism. The leadership of the South Slav agitation was assumed by Serbia who began to dream of uniting under her rule all the Serbs and their close relations, the Croats, into her kingdom.

Besides Pan-Slavism and the growth of nationalist feeling, there was another factor in the Balkans which precipitated the Ottoman crisis. This factor was the extinguished hopes of Turkish revival and reform. The Ottoman Sultan had not carried out the promised reforms for his Christian subjects. Rather, his incompetence and extravagance had imposed upon them a burden which was almost past endurance. The peasants of Bosnia and Herzegovina rose in revolt in 1875 to protest against the rapacity and grinding extortion of the Ottoman tax collectors. Fellow Serbs of Montenegro and Serbia sympathized with them and helped them. The Bulgarian revolt threatened to become widespread, and thus, the European powers attempted to localize the conflict lest the revolt jeopardize their interests in the Balkans. Austria, Berlin and St. Petersburg reached a joint understanding, and their views were embodied in what is known as the Andrassy Note. The Andrassy Note was named after the Austrian Foreign Minister Count Andrassy who sent it to Count Beust, the Austrian ambassador to the Court of St James. In the note the Count noted that despite the efforts of Vienna, Berlin and St Petersburg to localize the revolt, there was a serious danger of the revolt becoming widespread, and thus, the Count asserted that there was a need for concerted action on the part of the three powers for the purpose of pressing the Sublime Porte, i.e., the central government of the Ottoman Empire, to fulfil its promises. The Sultan promised reforms but the rebels demanded more substantial guarantees. Thus, the three European powers jointly issued the Berlin Memorandum, which called upon the Sublime Porte to make concessions and threatened armed intervention in case the demands were not met. But since Britain refused to be a party to any measure of coercion against the Ottoman Empire, the Sultan was encouraged to ignore the protests of the three European powers.

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As the Bulgarian rebellion had started threatening Turkish rule near Constantinople, the Ottoman's reacted by violently suppressing the revolt. The world was shocked by these atrocities and the conscience of the Christian world was shaken to the core. In Britain, the British liberal politician William Gladstone denounced the unspeakable Turkish atrocities and urged that the Turks be expelled 'bag and baggage out of the provinces they had desolated and profaned'. He was joined in his outrage by other leading figures of the Western world. In spite of the strong protests by members of the public and leading intellectuals of the time, Benjamin Disraeli, who was then the Prime Minister, refused to intervene and called the whole affair a 'coffee-house bubble'. Disraeli showed more concern about what the Russians would do in the Balkans rather than the condition of the oppressed Christians of Bulgaria.

The Russian Czar saw the perfect opportunity for securing Russian interests in the Balkans after the revolt was suppressed. He wrote to the British Ambassador that, 'the affairs in Turkey were intolerable and unless Europe was prepared to act with firmness and energy, he should be obliged to act alone.' As the situation in Serbia and Montenegro was also worsening, Russia decided to declare war upon Turkey in April 1877. The Russo-Turkish War continued up until January 1878. The Russian forces crossed the Danube and besieged Plevna (Pleven) in July 1877. In spite of the strong resistance by the Turks under the leadership of Osman Pasha at Plevna, 43,000 Turkish soldiers eventually surrendered after being besieged for six months and thus, 'the backbone of Turkish resistance was broken'. The Turkish defeat was complete when Constantinople itself was threatened and the Ottoman Empire lay at the mercy of the Russian Czar. The Sultan sought peace and thus the Treaty of San Stefano was signed between Russia and Turkey in 1878.



Fig. 5.2 Russian forces crossing the Danube in 1870

Source: Wikipedia

Treaty of San Stefano March, 1878

After capitulating against the Russians, the Turks were forced to sign the Treaty of San Stefano. The treaty shook the very foundations of the Turkish Empire in Europe. According to the treaty, the Sultan recognized the independence of Serbia and Montenegro. Serbia received vast territories to the South and Montenegro was 'trebled in size and doubled in population'. Bosnia and Herzegovina, though still under Turkish protection, were to be given a better government. Rumania was recognized as the independent state. In addition, Russia obtained Batum and Kars. She also constituted a 'Greater Bulgaria' as a vassal state extending from the Danube to the Aegean and from the Black Sea to Albania and comprising eastern Roumelia as well as considerable part of Macedonia.

As a result of the treaty, Russia wiped out her humiliation at the Congress of Paris and gained what she had lost there. Her influence in the Balkans was now at its zenith. As was expected, a treaty so helpful to Russia could not be tolerated by Britain and Austria. Britain feared that with the increase of Russian influence in the Balkans and the Mediterranean, the sea routes to India would not be secure. Strong resentment prevailed even in the other European states against the favourable terms to Russia. Thus, the British PM Disraeli sought for the revision of the treaty by a Congress of European powers. The situation became tense and, facing immense pressure from the other European powers, Russia agreed to a revision of the treaty at the Congress of Berlin.

Congress of Berlin

A Congress of European powers met at Berlin in 1878 under Bismarck's presidency. It drew up the Treaty of Berlin by which the following arrangements were made:

- Montenegro, Serbia and Rumania were declared independent of Turkey.
- The 'Greater Bulgaria' envisioned by the Treaty of San Stefano was divided into two parts: one part was made a self-governing principality, subject to the payment of an annual tribute to the Sultan, while the other part (southern) was constituted as the province of eastern Roumelia with an independent administration under a Christian governor but under Turkish suzerainty. A considerable portion of the Macedonian territories, which was formerly included in the "Greater Bulgaria", was again restored to Turkey.
- Austria was allowed to occupy and administer Bosnia and Herzegovina, which nominally remained dependent on Turkey.
- Russia received Bessarabia and a number of territories in Asia Minor.
- Britain, by a separate treaty with Turkey, secured the control of Cyprus.

The Treaty of Berlin unfortunately provided no long lasting solution to the complex problems of the Balkan Peninsula. Some of the terms of the treaty blatantly violated all forms of justice and equity. Moreover, most of the decisions in the Congress were made in private meetings and hence never fully discussed in their details and

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depth. Most of the signatories of this treaty left Berlin ‘smarting under the sense of disappointment and humiliation which definitely boded ill for the tranquillity of Europe. The British historian Professor A.J.P Taylor called the treaty ‘a watershed in the history of Europe’, however, such a flattering appreciation of the treaty seems to be rather overdrawn. While it is true that in the next thirty six years or so Europe never witnessed war, but, it cannot be denied that some of the unpopular settlements of the treaty hampered understanding between numerous Balkan States. Rumania had a justifiable grievance when it was deprived of Besserabia. Bulgaria found her dream of ‘Greater Bulgaria’ ending in smoke. Serbia’s lament that her southern Slav population in Bosnia and Herzegovina was transferred from ‘the nerveless grasp of Constantinople to the tighter grip of the Hapsburgs’ was substantially correct. Montenegro and Greece regarded that their rewards were inadequate. According to G.P Gooch, Russia also felt justifiably aggrieved that she was deprived of ‘her precious gains of her struggles and sacrifices’ by the wily manipulations of Disraeli with the assent, if not indeed the encouragement of Bismarck because Austria pocketed Bosnia and Herzegovina as a reward of her ‘inglorious neutrality’. It was the newly acquired position of Austria in the Balkans which gave a new edge to her long-nourished ambition to aggrandize in that area. It was this position of hers which was bound to clash with the equally expanding interests of the Russians, stimulated and strengthened by the predominance of their Slav kinsmen in the Balkan Peninsula. Both Austria and Russia set their longing eyes on the Balkans. Hence peace in that area hanged on a precarious threat which could be ended at any time on the slightest of pretexts.

According to Stanley Lane Poole, the British orientalist and archaeologist, ‘rightly or wrongly, in supporting the Christian provinces against their sovereign, the powers at Berlin sounded the knell of Turkish domination in Europe.’ Another expert on the matter, Allen, is highly critical of the Treaty of Berlin. He says, ‘It was concluded in a spirit of shameless bargain with a sublime disregard of elementary ethics, and in open contempt of the rights of civilized people to determine their own future. It was essentially a temporary arrangement concluded between rival Imperialist States. And it sowed the seed of the crop of “nationalist” wars and risings in which the Balkan people were to be embroiled for the next half century.’ Thus, it can be stated that the Treaty of Berlin led to the partial dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire with the consent of European Powers. It also proved to be a temporary settlement because disorder grew at a very rapid speed in the Ottoman Empire and created an atmosphere of general unrest, which ultimately culminated in the disastrous events of 1912–18.



Fig. 5.3 Painting depicting the Congress of Berlin by the German painter Anton von Werner

Source: Wikipedia

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Check Your Progress

1. Why was Alexander II of Russia called Czar-Liberator?
2. Which act granted freedom to the serfs in 1861?
3. What was the Andrassy Note?
4. What was the Treaty of San Stefano?

5.3 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Since Alexander II worked for the liberation of the serfs, he was labelled the Czar-Liberator. The emancipation order freed twenty million serfs and nearly thirty million state peasants, which is about 8 per cent of the Russian population.
2. The manifesto of February 19, 1861, and the 'Act on Peasants Emerging from Serf Dependence' granted personal freedom to the peasants in the sense that the landowners could no longer buy or sell them.
3. Austria, Berlin and St. Petersburg reached a joint understanding about the Bulgarian revolt, and their views were embodied in what is known as the Andrassy Note.
4. After capitulating against the Russians in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877, the Turks were forced to sign the Treaty of San Stefano. According to the treaty, the Sultan recognized the independence of Serbia and Montenegro.

Serbia received vast territories to the South. Bosnia and Herzegovina, though still under Turkish protection, were to be given a better government. Rumania was recognized as the independent state.

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5.4 SUMMARY

- Alexander Nikolaevich Romanov, also known as Alexander II, was the Czar and the Russian Emperor from 1855 to 1881. He is remembered for emancipating the serfs and being the only Czar who was assassinated.
- Born in Moscow, on 17th April, 1818, Alexander II was the eldest son of Nicholas I.
- In 1855, Nicholas I passed away leaving Russia helpless in the middle of the ongoing Crimean War. Hence, Alexander II ascended to the throne as the new emperor.
- Alexander II began the process of liberating the serfs in 1856. He formed a secret committee where he asked for suggestions regarding the emancipation. The emancipation decree was rolled out on 19th February.
- Alexander II, between 1864 and 1874, announced several reforms, such as the creation of zemstvo, which was a new local government reform. He also brought out reforms in the censorship law, military law, education, and judiciary.
- New reforms came with new set of challenges for Alexander II. During the reform process, he had to deal with many revolutionaries and rebels.
- At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Czarist Russia was primarily an agrarian and economically backward country. About 19% of the land suitable for cultivation was owned by the Czar and about one lakh noble families.
- The manifesto of February 19, 1861, and the ‘Act on Peasants Emerging from Serf Dependence’ granted personal freedom to the peasants in the sense that the landowners could no longer buy or sell them.
- Many historians have contended that it is misleading to speak of the emancipation of the serfs in 1861, because the newly emancipated serfs were burdened by long-term debt, and granted inadequate and unbalanced allotments of land.
- In the last quarter of the 19th century, there was increasing restlessness among the subject states of the Ottoman Empire due to growing nationalist aspirations and race consciousness among the people of the Balkans.
- Besides Pan-Slavism and the growth of nationalist feeling, there was another factor in the Balkans which precipitated the Ottoman crisis. This factor was the extinguished hopes of Turkish revival and reform.

- As the Bulgarian rebellion had started threatening Turkish rule near Constantinople, the Ottoman's reacted by violently suppressing the revolt. The world was shocked by these atrocities and the conscience of the Christian world was shaken to the core.
- The Russian Czar saw the perfect opportunity for securing Russian interests in the Balkans after the revolt was suppressed.
- After capitulating against the Russians, the Turks were forced to sign the Treaty of San Stefano. The treaty shook the very foundations of the Turkish Empire in Europe. According to the treaty, the Sultan recognized the independence of Serbia and Montenegro.
- A Congress of European powers met at Berlin in 1878 under Bismarck's presidency. It drew up the Treaty of Berlin.

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5.5 KEY WORDS

- **Serfdom:** It was a condition in medieval Europe in which a tenant farmer was bound to a hereditary plot of land and to the will of his landlord.
- **Czar:** It refers to an emperor of Russia before 1917.
- **Zemstvo:** It was an institution of local government set up during the great emancipation reform of 1861 carried out in Imperial Russia by Emperor Alexander II of Russia.

5.6 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on emancipation of serfs in Russia.
2. What were the terms of the Treaty of Berlin?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the role of Alexander II in modernising Russia. What were the different reforms that brought about changes in the existing system?
2. Comment on the foreign policy of Alexander II.

5.7 FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 6 CZAR ALEXANDER III

Structure

- 6.0 Introduction
- 6.1 Objectives
- 6.2 Alexander III (1881-94)
 - 6.2.1 Domestic Policy
 - 6.2.2 Foreign Policy
- 6.3 Nicholas II (1894-1917)
 - 6.3.1 Domestic Policy
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- 6.4 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
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- 6.8 Further Readings

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6.0 INTRODUCTION

The rule of Alexander III will constantly be equated either with that of his ‘liberating’ father, Alexander II, or his unfortunate son, Nicholas II. Though it is easy to see Alexander III as the oppressive contrast of his father, or the sturdy tyrant his son desired he could be, it is significant to judge Alexander III’s worth in his own right. Unlike his father and grandfather, Nicholas II did not have the personal abilities obligatory to be an efficacious ruler. Hostility to his rule multiplied and became more organised in the form of the radicals and the liberals like Kadets and Octobrists. The Bolsheviks, a division of the Social Democrats, went on to grab power from the Provisional Government and to murder Nicholas and his family. To sidetrack the attention of the people from growing economic problems, Nicholas engaged in a calamitous war with Japan (1904–5). The consequences of this fuelled the so-called revolution of 1905. Nicholas also forced Russia to fight in the First World War, although first this was greeted by the bulk of the population. However, he never got to grips with the massive challenges this posed. With retrospection, his choice to take personal control of the armed forces, thus leaving his wife (and Rasputin) in charge of domestic affairs, was an enormous blunder. In 1917, he was forced to abdicate, and his regime was substituted by the Provisional Government. In this unit, we will study about the domestic and foreign policies of Alexander III and Nicholas II.

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6.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through the unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the situation of Russia under Alexander III and Nicholas II
- Analyse and interpret the domestic policies and foreign policies of Alexander III
- Explicate the domestic policies and foreign policies of Nicholas II

6.2 ALEXANDER III (1881-94)

Alexander III was born on February 26, 1845. Awkward and bad-tempered as a child, he bred up to be a man of excessive physical strength. Everything about him recommended imperial power. He was six feet four inches tall, wide and very robust. Stories about his caliber and strength disseminated that he re-straightening iron fire pokers, crushing silver rubles in his fingers, and ripping packs of cards in half for the entertainment of his children, and about the occasion when, after the imperial train was derailed by terrorists at Borki (in the former Kharkov Governorate of the Russian Empire (present-day Ukraine), in October 29, 1888 he held up the wrecked carriage's roof on his shoulders while his family escaped. He was the first Czar to wear a full beard since the time of Peter the Great, whose Europeanising reforms altered fashions to such a degree that untrimmed facial hair had become a symbol of absence of western sophistication. He had jeopardized Russian stereotype. He could be insolent and blunt in discussion and was petrifying when angry. He used obscene language when unsatisfied and senior officials were frightened by him, though they felt protected when working for him, partially because they were assured of his personal support and partially because Alexander's physical and personal strength heightened the sense of tyrannical might surrounding him. He was the second son of Czar Alexander II, and as such was not provided with the education compulsory for an emperor. His tutor, Konstantin Pobedonostsev then a professor of civil law at Moscow State University, abandoned Alexander in his initial years because he considered him foolish. However, when Alexander II became the Czar, Pobedonostsev inculcated into the young man's mind the trust that zeal for Russian Orthodox thought was an indispensable factor of Russian allegiance to be cultivated by every right-minded emperor. Alexander's policies were appropriately robust. He responded furiously to the murder of his father on March 1, 1881 by 'The People's Will', a terrorist group demoralized at slow ameliorating progress during Alexander II's reign (1855-1881). His father's assassination only strengthened the son's traditional instincts. He was also surprised at this most melodramatic display of disloyalty from the Czar's

subjects. Alexander III therefore blamed his father's own reasonable aims, and quickly halted all of the future reforms. Though this made him tremendously hated by Russia's westernized educated population, it did permit a period of firmness during which government control could be reinforced and Russian confidence and respect reinstated.

6.2.1 Domestic Policy

Alexander's new heads Ivan Vyshnegradsky the Finance Minister and Dmitry Tolstoy the Interior Ministries motioned the commencement of a more oppressive phase, and it is these policies for which Alexander III's reign is most usually reminisced. The new Minister of Finance was Ivan Vyshnegradsky, a physics professor and corporate executive. He followed policies alike to his predecessor but overlooked the community features of Bunge's reforms. Instead his rudimentary emphasis was on attaining a balanced budget by increasing taxes and tariffs and also by creating an optimistic trade balance in order to fascinate vital foreign investment. A natural conservative, Alexander had a robust sense of morality and duty.

The Czar, in 1882, appointed Dmitry Tolstoy the Minister of the Interior. Tolstoy and Pobedonostsev were the poignant spirits of the intentionally die-hard policies that followed. Education was further constrained, the work of the zemstvos was hindered, and the village communes were brought under stricter control in 1889 by the institution of the "land commandant" (*zemsky nachalnik*)—an official appointed by the Ministry of the Interior, usually a former officer or a local landowner, who interfered in all parts of peasant affairs. The government was empowered to adopt emergency powers when public order was said to be in danger. The office of elected justice of the peace was eradicated. By this time Russian public officials were well paid and educated, and not as much of habituated to rudimentary corruption, than they had been in the reign of Nicholas I, but they reserved their egotistical contempt for the public and particularly for the inferior classes. The bigoted laws against Jews and members of rebellious Christian sects persisted as a source of extensive injustice, adversity, and bitterness. The zemstvos were in mounting struggle with the central authorities. Even their exertions at social improvement of a rather non-political type met with hindrance. The Ministry of the Interior became a stranglehold of confrontation.

He also prohibited morganatic marriages, as well as those external of the Orthodoxy. Alexander III's most of the internal reforms meant to reverse the liberalization that had happened in his father's reign. The new Emperor thought that enduring to Russian Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality (the ideology announced by his grandfather, Emperor Nicholas I) would save Russia from revolutionary tension. By the 1881 statute of State security, amplified government powers by setting up government-controlled courts and liberal officials, judges and magistrates were removed. For example government controlled courts bestowed administrative justice outside the normal scope of the legal system. The

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powers of Okhrana (secret police) were considerably extended. Protectionism, the growth of railways network and substantial foreign investment caused a histrionic growth of industrialization during Alexander’s reign.

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The Russian famine of 1891–92, which triggered 375,000 to 500,000 deaths, and the subsequent cholera epidemic allowed some liberal activity, as the Russian government could not cope with the catastrophe and had to allow zemstvos to help with relief. Alexander’s political model was a nation composed of a sole nationality, language, and religion, all under one roof of administration. He had introduced the teaching of the Russian language in Russian schools in Finland, Germany and Poland the annihilation of the fragments of Swedish, German and Polish and institutions in the respective provinces, and the patronization of Eastern Orthodoxy, he endeavoured to comprehend this ideal. He was antagonistic to Jews; His reign saw a strident worsening in the Jews’ political, economic and social condition. His policy was keenly executed by Czarist officials in the “May Laws” of 1882. These laws invigorated open anti-Jewish sentiment and tons of persecutions across the western part of the empire. As a result, numerous Jews migrated to Western Europe and the United States. They excluded Jews from residing in rural areas and constrained the occupations in which they could involve themselves. By the time Alexander III, aged 49, died of a nephritis (Kidney disease) on November 1, 1894, the appeasing effect of his policies appeared to be wearisome. Alexander was a prudent man who loathed dishonesty and depravity. His one indulgence was vodka, which he declined to give up, even when ordered to do so by his wife after his kidney illness deteriorated. He carried out his duties meticulously, but hated large congregations.

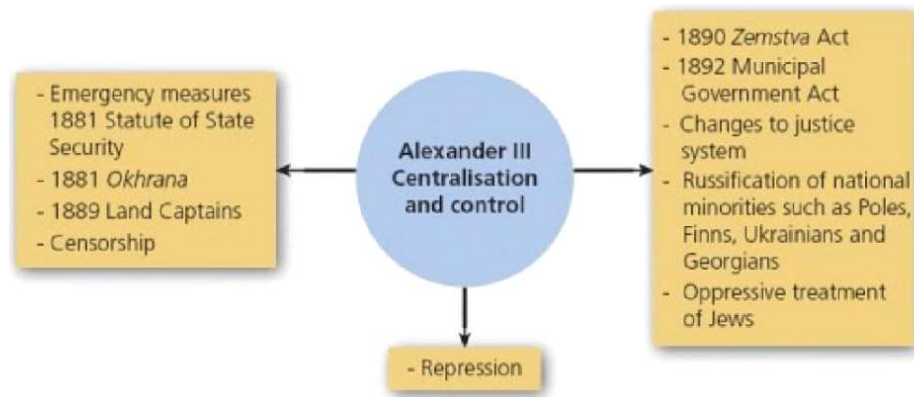


Fig. 6.1 Centralisation and control of Alexander

6.2.2 Foreign Policy

Alexander condemned Russia’s foreign policy of his father and wanted a more vigorous policy in the Balkans. He criticized Dmitry Alekseyevich Milyutin army reforms as a destruction of Russian traditions, and even assisted in the Rushchuk Detachment (a large Russian military unit) during the 1877-78 Russo-Turkish War.

Contrasting to his father, Alexander III was very anti-German, particularly after his marriage to Queen Dagmar. When his brother Nikolai died in 1865, Alexander inherited both his brother's position as heir and his betrothed.

As regards foreign affairs Alexander III was regarded as a peaceful man, but not at any price, and held that the best means of avoiding war is to be well-prepared for it. Diplomat Nikolay Girs, belonging to a rich and influential family, served as his Foreign Minister from 1882 to 1895 and established the diplomatic policies for which Alexander has been given credit. Girs was a draftsman of the Franco-Russian Alliance of 1891, which was further extended into the Triple Entente with the addition of Great Britain. That alliance brought France out of diplomatic remoteness and moved Russia from the German orbit to an alliance with France, one that was powerfully supported by French financial assistance to Russia's economic modernization. Girs was in charge of a diplomacy that included many negotiated settlements, treaties and pacts. These contracts defined Russian boundaries and reinstated equilibrium to perilously wobbly situations. The greatest histrionic achievement came in 1885, settling long-standing tensions with Great Britain, which was fearful that Russian development to the South would be a threat to India.

Girs was regularly successful in preventing the antagonistic inclinations of Czar Alexander convincing him that the very existence of the Czarist system be contingent on evading major wars. With a profound vision into the Czar's moods and views, Girs was typically able to form the ultimate decisions by outwitting antagonistic journalists, ministers, and even the Czarina, as well as his own diplomats. Notwithstanding frigid relations with Berlin, the Czar nonetheless restricted himself to keeping numerous troops near the German frontier. With respect to Bulgaria he exercised alike self-control.

In Central Asian affairs he followed the traditional policy of gradually encompassing Russian domination without aggravating conflict with the United Kingdom for example Panjdeh Incident, and he never allowed the bellicose partisans of a forward policy to get out of hand. His reign cannot be regarded as an eventful period of Russian history; but under his hard rule the country made considerable progress.

Check Your Progress

1. Who was a land commandant?
2. What caused a histrionic growth of industrialization during Alexander's reign?

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6.3 NICHOLAS II (1894-1917)

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Nicholas' reign was a turbulent one. From 1894-1917, Russia advanced rapidly. Economically, the country experienced a program of strong industrialization headed by Sergei Witte, Minister of Finance from 1892-1904. Socially, this program suggested massive changes in both the urban and rural areas of Russia. Nicholas II reign witnessed events such as the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, the Russian Revolution of 1905, the subsequent October Manifesto of 1905, the Fundamental Laws of 1906, the progressive interim years 1907-1914, and finally the outbreak of World War I in 1914.

6.3.1 Domestic Policy

In 1905 Nicholas II made various 'liberal' concessions. He had also introduced another set of Fundamental Laws (1906) which reiterated the need for the preservation of autocracy. The 1906 legislation stated that: "The All-Russian Emperor possesses the supreme autocratic power. Not only fear and conscience, but God himself, commands obedience to his authority." The Russian Empire is ruled by decisively established laws that have been properly enacted. Thus, all the Czars constantly encouraged and vindicated autocracy. Even when reforms were endorsed, it was clear that significant power and control, as endorsed by God, rested in the hands of the Czar. Nicholas II continued to rule in the same manner as his father.

Economic Aspect: Nicholas invigorated Witte to endure with his plan in order to modernize the Russian economy, with a specific emphasis on the development of heavy industries and the railways. The metallurgical industry of Ukraine made rapid progress. He was able to introduce the gold standard in 1897, and this demonstrated an enticement for a considerable influx of foreign capital into Russian industry. The industrial working class grew rapidly. There were several large strikes in St. Petersburg in 1896 and 1897, and in the latter year Witte introduced a law imposing a maximum of eleven and a half hours' work for all day workers and ten hours for all engaged in night work. From 1899 to 1903 Russian industry agonized a despair, and unemployment bred. In these conditions the workers were unable to attain further economic concessions from employers, but there were several brief political strikes and street demonstrations, in some cases convoked by violence. The 1905 Revolution began with what has become known as Bloody Sunday.

On January 22, Father Georgi Gapon, an Orthodox priest, endeavoured to lead a nonviolent march of workers and their families to the Winter Palace in St Petersburg. The marchers' purpose was to present a devoted petition to the Czar, pleading him to use his royal authority to release their despairing conditions. However, the march brought panic in the police forces in the capital. The protesters were fired on and charged by cavalry. There are no exact casualty figures, but

estimates suggest that up to two hundred protesters may have been killed, with 100 more being injured. The deaths were represented by opponents of the Czarist regime as a deliberate annihilation of defenceless petitioners. Although Nicholas II was in fact absent from St Petersburg when these events took place, they austerey injured the traditional image of the Czar as the 'Little Father'. During the death and confusion, Gapon had repeatedly cried out: 'There is no God any longer. There is no Czar.'

Political Aspect: As a result of the solemn widespread unrest of 1905, Nicholas ordered the setting up of a representative political chamber called the Duma. Though this appeared to be a step on the road to a constitutional monarchy, Nicholas came to doubt the Duma to the extent that he strictly inhibited its conformation and powers. Nicholas II held anti-Semitic views and favoured the constant discernment, in economic and cultural life, against the Jews. Russification of the German schools in the Baltic provinces continued, and the old university of Tartu (now in Estonia), which had been closed in 1893, was reopened as the Russian University of Yuryev. In the central provinces of European Russia, Orthodox missionaries continued their efforts to compete with Muslim Tatar missionaries for the conversion of the trivial, still partly shamanistic, Finno-Ugric population of this area. He permitted discrimination against the Jews in Russia. The treatment of other minorities deteriorated, as well. During his reign, the czar and his government continued to lose the sustenance of the people. Ill-fated peasants worked for the rich nobility. Non-Russians were ruled and controlled by the Russian army. Liberals, those who needed reform, were put in jail. And the intelligentsia those who understood the country's problems were unnoticed, confined, or assassinated.

Social Aspect: In the field of social reform, there was some degeneration to the ideas espoused by Alexander II. There was a growth in education field and there was a reduction in censorship. Yet, Nicholas showed little intention of distracting from autocracy and his over-all attitude towards the Russian people did not gel well with their wants and needs. Frightened by the people's demonstrations, Czar Nicholas II agreed to a constitution in October of 1905. The Czar issued the October Manifesto, which gave civil rights to citizens. A parliament, or elected national legislature known as the Duma, was set up. Numerous people alleged that Russia had become a constitutional monarchy, a government that restricted the power of the monarch. The czar, however, never followed the Duma's suggestions. He sustained to keep his powers. He finally ordered that the Duma be disbanded. Persecutions against Jews and seizures of peasant and labour leaders continued. The 1905 revolution failed to make any changes in the conditions of the Russian people. However, the revolutionaries learnt an important lesson. They learned that to make an effective revolution in Russia, they required the sustenance of both the workers and peasants. They also learnt that the government was surviving on a feeble groundwork, since the people did not support the czar and his government.

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Czar Nicholas II made a grave mistake in judgment. In 1915 he shifted his headquarters to the Russian Front so he could stimulate his troops to victory. The working of the administration was left in the hands of his wife the Czarina Alexandra's. She overlooked the czar's chief advisers. Instead she was powerfully prejudiced by a mystic therapist named Gregory Rasputin. Rasputin, designated by some as a holy man, claimed to have magical healing powers. The only son of Nicholas II, Alexis, suffered from haemophilia, a genetic disease. This serious disease avoids the usual clotting of blood. Alexandra trusted on the mystic healer's powers to cure her son. Rasputin appeared to be able to comfort her son's symptoms. Rasputin ultimately increased great stimulus in the Russian government. He got influential positions for dozens of his friends, many of whom were unqualified for their jobs. He advised the Czarina Alexandra to disregard the people's demands for reform. His impact spread dishonesty throughout Russian government. Most Russian nobles begrudged the impact that Rasputin had over the royal family. They also dreaded his growing role in the government. Rasputin's guidance was leading czarist Russia down the road to ruin. In December of 1916, three nobles killed Rasputin.

By the winter of 1916-1917, conditions in Russia were frantic. Crowds were uncontrollable. Riots over food and fuel deficiencies spread. When police were powerless to control the mobs, the army was brought in. Rather than fighting the mobs, many soldiers joined them. There was a complete breakdown of Russian administration. Huge groups shouted, "*Down with Autocracy!*" "*Down with the War!*" The leaders of the Duma pleaded Nicholas to make reforms to gratify the Russian people. When Nicholas rejected, the people wanted his abdication or giving up his throne. When Nicholas learned that even the soldiers supported the revolutionaries, he had no choice but to give up his throne. Czar Nicholas' son was too sick and too young to become czar. Although Nicholas II endeavoured political reforms to appease opposition, his maladministration of Russia's participation in the First World War led to his downfall and the end of the Romanov dynasty. Nicholas seemed to lack the political knowledge, understanding and skill of his father. If he had worked more supportively with the opposition groups in the Duma he may have lived. However, his persistent insolence resulted in strict loyalty to autocracy which demonstrated intolerable to other protruding members of Russian government.

After the abdication of the Czar a new government called the provisional government was set up. The first act of the new government was to announce Russia a democratic republic. Its goal was to write a new constitution for Russia. The provisional government made a fateful mistake, however. They chose to continue the war against Germany. Many leaders in the provisional government felt honour-bound by treaties Russia had made with the Allies. The Russian army, however, was no more enthusiastic to fight and die for the provisional government than it had been eager to die for the czar. Disappearances in the Russian army continued. While the Russian army was falling apart, the Germans secretly smuggled

the radical Russian revolutionary Vladimir Ulyanov, who used the alias, or false name of Lenin, into Russia. Lenin and his Bolshevik followers were able to tumble the provisional government in November 1917. When the provisional government fell, the Bolsheviks grabbed power and established a government led by Lenin and Leon Trotsky the Red army leader. We will discuss these events in greater detail in the unit on the Russian Revolution.

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6.3.2 Foreign Policy

Nicholas sought to “preserve the autocracy and to protect the self-esteem, integrity, and worth of Russia” He implemented a belligerent foreign policy chiefly as means of exhibiting the power of his nation. In 1889, it was at his ingenuity that the International Peace Conference met at The Hague in Holland, having for its aim the elevation of universal peace.

In the 1890s Russian foreign policy was concerned above all with the Far East. The incapability of Nicholas II to decide between inconsistent policies urged by different advisers was a chief factor in the drift toward war with Japan. Russia repudiated to make a bargain with Japan, leaving it Korea in return for Russian supremacy in northern Manchuria, or even in all Manchuria. By contending on having all Manchuria and all Korea, it forced Japan first to ally itself with Britain and then to go to war with Russia. The war brought a series of defeats to Russia, terminating the protection of the Baltic Fleet in the Strait of Tsushima in May 1905. It was privileged for Russia that Japan too was tired by its efforts, as peace could be attained on fairly favourable terms.

U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt brokered the Treaty of Portsmouth, by which Russia unrestrained all claims to Korea and yielded Port Arthur and the South Manchurian Railway. However, it was able to recall its position in northern Manchuria and its control of the Chinese Eastern Railway, so vital for communication between Siberia and Vladivostok. Russia also kept the northern half of Sakhalin and did not have to pay an indemnity. Despite some reforms in the preceding decade, the Russian army in 1914 was ill-equipped to fight a foremost war, and neither the political nor the military leadership was up to the standard required. Nevertheless, the army fought bravely, and both soldiers and junior officers showed noteworthy qualities. The campaigns of 1915 and 1916 brought dreadful fatalities to the Russian forces, which at times did not even have adequate rifles.

Check Your Progress

3. Name the events witnessed by Nicholas II reign.
4. What did the 1906 legislation introduced by Nicholas II state?
5. What demonstrated an enticement for a considerable influx of foreign capital into Russian industry?

6.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

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1. A land commandant was an official appointed by the Ministry of the Interior, usually a former officer or a local landowner, who interfered in all parts of peasant affairs.
2. Protectionism, the growth of railway network and substantial foreign investment caused a historic growth of industrialization during Alexander's reign.
3. Nicholas II reign witnessed events such as the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, the Russian Revolution of 1905, the subsequent October Manifesto of 1905, the Fundamental Laws of 1906, the progressive interim years 1907-1914, and finally the outbreak of World War I in 1914.
4. The 1906 legislation stated that: "The All-Russian Emperor possesses the supreme autocratic power. Not only fear and conscience, but God himself, commands obedience to his authority."
5. Nicholas II was able to introduce the gold standard in 1897, and this demonstrated an enticement for a considerable influx of foreign capital into Russian industry.

6.5 SUMMARY

- Alexander's new heads Ivan Vyshnegradsky the Finance Minister and Dmitry Tolstoy the Interior Minister motioned the commencement of a more oppressive phase, and it is these policies for which Alexander III's reign is most usually reminisced.
- The Czar, in 1882, appointed Dmitry Tolstoy the Minister of the Interior. Tolstoy and Pobedonostsev were the poignant spirits of the intentionally die-hard policies that followed. Education was further constrained, the work of the zemstvos was hindered, and the village communes were brought under stricter control in 1889 by the institution of the "land commandant" (*zemsky nachalnik*).
- The government was empowered to adopt emergency powers when public order was said to be in danger. The office of elected justice of the peace was eradicated. By this time Russian public officials were well paid and educated, and not as much of habituated to rudimentary corruption, than they had been in the reign of Nicholas I, but they reserved their egotistical contempt for the public and particularly for the inferior classes.
- Alexander III's most of the internal reforms meant to reverse the liberalization that had happened in his father's reign. The new Emperor thought that enduring to Russian Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality (the ideology

announced by his grandfather, Emperor Nicholas I) would save Russia from revolutionary tension.

- Protectionism, the growth of railways network and substantial foreign investment caused a histrionic growth of industrialization during Alexander's reign.
- Alexander's political model was a nation composed of a sole nationality, language, and religion, all under one roof of administration. He had introduced the teaching of the Russian language in Russian schools in Finland, Germany and Poland the annihilation of the fragments of Swedish, German and Polish and institutions in the respective provinces, and the patronization of Eastern Orthodoxy, he endeavoured to comprehend this ideal.
- He was antagonistic to Jews; His reign saw a strident worsening in the Jews' political, economic and social condition. His policy was keenly executed by Czarist officials in the "May Laws" of 1882.
- Alexander condemned Russia's foreign policy of his father and wanted a more vigorous policy in the Balkans. He criticized Dmitry Alekseyevich Milyutin army reforms as a destruction of Russian traditions, and even assisted in the Rushchuk Detachment (a large Russian military unit) during the 1877-78 Russo-Turkish War.
- As regards foreign affairs Alexander III was regarded as a peaceful man, but not at any price, and held that the best means of avoiding war is to be well-prepared for it.
- Girs was a draftsman of the Franco-Russian Alliance of 1891, which was further extended into the Triple Entente with the addition of Great Britain. That alliance brought France out of diplomatic remoteness and moved Russia from the German orbit to an alliance with France, one that was powerfully supported by French financial assistance to Russia's economic modernization.
- Girs was regularly successful in preventing the antagonistic inclinations of Czar Alexander convincing him that the very existence of the Czarist system be contingent on evading major wars. With a profound vision into the Czar's moods and views, Girs was typically able to form the ultimate decisions by outwitting antagonistic journalists, ministers, and even the Czarina, as well as his own diplomats.
- In 1905 Nicholas II made various 'liberal' concessions. He had also introduced another set of Fundamental Laws (1906) which reiterated the need for the preservation of autocracy. The 1906 legislation stated that: "The All-Russian Emperor possesses the supreme autocratic power. Not only fear and conscience, but God himself, commands obedience to his authority."

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- Nicholas invigorated Witte to endure with his plan in order to modernize the Russian economy, with a specific emphasis on the development of heavy industries and the railways. The metallurgical industry of Ukraine made rapid progress. He was able to introduce the gold standard in 1897, and this demonstrated an enticement for a considerable influx of foreign capital into Russian industry.
- As a result of the solemn widespread unrest of 1905, Nicholas ordered the setting up of a representative political chamber called the Duma. Though this appeared to be a step on the road to a constitutional monarchy, Nicholas came to doubt the Duma to the extent that he strictly inhibited its conformation and powers. Nicholas II held anti-Semitic views and favoured the constant discernment, in economic and cultural life, against the Jews.
- Nicholas II's maladministration of Russia's participation in the First World War led to his downfall and the end of the Romanov dynasty. Nicholas seemed to lack the political knowledge, understanding and skill of his father. If he had worked more supportively with the opposition groups in the Duma he may have lived.
- After the abdication of the Czar a new government called the provisional government was set up. The first act of the new government was to announce Russia a democratic republic. Its goal was to write a new constitution for Russia.
- While the Russian army was falling apart, the Germans secretly smuggled the radical Russian revolutionary Vladimir Ulyanov, who used the alias, or false name of Lenin, into Russia. Lenin and his Bolshevik followers were able to tumble the provisional government in November 1917. When the provisional government fell, the Bolsheviks grabbed power and established a government led by Lenin and Leon Trotsky the Red army leader.
- In the 1890s Russian foreign policy was concerned above all with the Far East. The incapability of Nicholas II to decide between inconsistent policies urged by different advisers was a chief factor in the drift toward war with Japan.
- Despite some reforms in the preceding decade, the Russian army in 1914 was ill-equipped to fight a foremost war, and neither the political nor the military leadership was up to the standard required. Nevertheless, the army fought bravely, and both soldiers and junior officers showed noteworthy qualities.

6.6 KEY WORDS

- **Zemstvo:** It is an organ of rural self-government in the Russian Empire and Ukraine. It was established in 1864 to deliver social and economic services. In sixteen century the term *zemstvo* was also denoted as institution for tax collection.
- **Morganatic marriage:** This type of marriage sometimes called a left-handed marriage. It is a marriage between a man of high birth and a woman of lesser status. Generally, neither the bride nor any children of the marriage have a prerogative on the bridegroom's succession rights, titles, precedence.
- **Protectionism:** It is the theory or practice of shielding a country's domestic industries from foreign competition by taxing imports.
- **Panjdeh Incident:** It was an armed engagement between Afghanistan and the Russian Empire in 1885 that led to a political crisis between the British Empire and the Russian Empire caused by the Russian expansion south-eastwards towards the Afghanistan and the British Raj.
- **Triple Entente:** It describes the informal understanding between the Russian Empire, the French Third Republic and Great Britain.
- **Autocracy:** It is a system of government by one person with absolute power.

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6.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Question

1. What were May Laws of 1882?
2. What was the role of Girs in the foreign affairs of Alexander III?
3. What was Bloody Sunday?
4. State the economic aspect of Nicholas II's domestic policy.

Long-Answer Question

1. How did the Ministry of the Interior become a stranglehold of confrontation?
2. 'Alexander III's reign cannot be regarded as an eventful period of Russian history; but under his hard rule the country made considerable progress.' Explain.
3. Describe the impact of Rasputin's influence on the Czarina Alexandra's in Nicholas II's administration.
4. Discuss Nicholas II's foreign policy.

6.8 FURTHER READINGS

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BLOCK III
THE REVOLUTIONS OF 1905 & 1917

UNIT 7 CZAR NICHOLAS II

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Structure

- 7.0 Introduction
- 7.1 Objectives
- 7.2 Domestic and Foreign Policy of Nicholas II
- 7.3 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 7.4 Summary
- 7.5 Key Words
- 7.6 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 7.7 Further Readings

7.0 INTRODUCTION

Nicholas II (1868-1918) was the last Russian emperor. Characterized by some as shy, weak, vacillating, and indecisive, he was nevertheless a stubborn supporter of the right of the sovereign under growing pressure for reform. Discontent at home, plus losses of territory and massive casualties in two wars, precipitated the February Revolution on March 12, 1917. Nicholas II abdicated on March 15, 1917. In April 1918, the Bolshevik government moved him and the Imperial family to Vekaterinburg in the Urals, where they were executed on July 17, 1918, as anti-Bolshevik forces approached the city. In this unit, we will study about the domestic and foreign policies of Nicholas II along with the Russian-Japanese War and the revolution of 1905.

7.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe domestic and foreign policy of Nicholas II
- Discuss the impact of Russian-Japanese war
- Explain the causes of Revolution of 1905

7.2 DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICY OF NICHOLAS II

We have already studied about the domestic and foreign policy of Nicholas II in the previous unit. Let us briefly discuss them once again here. The root causes of

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the Russian Revolution lay in the socio-economic and political realities of Russian society. Russia in the 19th century seemed to be totally untouched by the ideas of the enlightenment that had swept Western Europe during that time. In the early 19th century, Russia continued to be governed like it had been for the previous three centuries – under the autocratic rule of the Romanov dynasty. The Romanovs ruled alone and did not permit any opposition to them. There were no real representative bodies for the people, freedom of expression was limited, the press was not free, books were censored frequently, opposition leaders were either executed or exiled to Siberia, etc. Even the Russian Parliament, called the Duma, was ignored by the Czar whenever he wanted to. All of these factors led to the people of Russia being totally frustrated by the Romanov dynasty. This frustration manifested itself in many demonstrations and strikes against the Czarist regime, many of which were brutally suppressed by the Czar. A notable example being the events of ‘Bloody Sunday’ where unarmed peaceful demonstrators were brutally massacred by the Imperial guard in St. Petersburg when they were marching to present a petition to Czar Nicholas II. Somewhere from 1,000 to 4,000 people were killed by the guards during the shooting. According to many historians, ‘Bloody Sunday’ was one of the major reasons why the Czarist regime, and in particular Czar Nicholas II, in the beginning of the twentieth century had become totally discredited in the eyes of the Russian people.



Fig. 7.1 Czar Nicholas II

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Tsar_Nicholas_II_-1898.jpg

Social and Economic Backwardness

Russia at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century was an unjust and unequal society. The industrial revolution that had swept Europe in the second half of the 19th century resulted in a huge increase in the urban industrial working class population in Russia. However, the growth of industrialization did not improve the lives of the people in Russia. The industrial working classes lived in cramped urban dwellings, were paid low wages, were denied any sort of rights

in the workplace, etc. By the end of the 19th century, due to a variety of reasons, this industrial urban working class became extremely conscious of their rights. They undertook many strikes and agitations against what they saw as unjust policies of the regime and demanded economic and social improvement in their lives. It could be said that the political awareness among the industrial workers was one of the factors that led to the revolution.

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The condition of the Russian peasantry was no less satisfactory. By the turn of the century, about 70 per cent of the population in Russia was made up of peasants. Although serfs had been emancipated in 1861, their conditions had not improved significantly. In return for their freedom, serfs had to pay to the state a sum of money, which caused many serf families to go into debt. Moreover, many serfs were given less land than they needed to survive, while others were not given any land at all. The condition of agriculture in Russia was also extremely poor with the Czarist regime not making any attempts to improve it. Primitive techniques were used for farming, which led to poor yields. A majority of the peasants were also illiterate and thus were not in any position to find alternative sources of work. Czarist policies had also resulted in extremely unequal distribution of land in Russia. In the early twentieth century, about 1.5% of the Russian population owned 25% of the land. This segment of big landholders became the capitalist farmers who exploited landless farm labourers mercilessly. All of these factors resulted in a tremendous increase in peasant uprisings throughout the latter half of the 19th century. Since the Russian peasantry constituted the vast majority of the Russian population, their dissatisfaction became one of the major causes of the revolution.

Another important social factor that bred discontent among the people was the policy of ‘Russification’. The Russian Empire was one of the biggest in the world and encompassed several countries. The policy of Russification, i.e., the suppression of the languages, literature, and culture of the non-Russian nationalities was introduced by the Romanovs in an effort to create some sort of uniformity in society and thus making their task of administration easier. There was always tension between the European and the Asian residents of the Russian empire, with frequent clashes erupting. The policy of Russification made things worse. Moreover, the relationship between the minorities and the majority ‘white’ Russians was almost colonial in nature. The regions of Caucasia, Kazakhstan, Russian Poland and others were exploited for their raw material, but equal attention was not paid to the development of these regions. This made the people of these regions extremely resentful and angry with the Romanovs. This resentment and anger of the minorities played an important role in the revolution that was to occur in 1917. A number of prominent revolutionaries emerged from the various minorities in Russia, for example Leo Trotsky.

The Growth of Revolutionary Ideas

The extreme inequality and oppression in Russia in the 19th century proved to be a fertile ground for revolutionary ideas. In the 19th century, although Russia continued to have a backward political system that was resistant to change, there

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also emerged an educated politically conscious class of people –writers, philosophers, activists- whose radical ideas germinated throughout the Russian empire. The class of writers that emerged in Russia in the 19th century—writers like Pushkin, Gogol, Tolstoy, Turgenev, Dostoevsky and Chekov—are still considered by many to be the greatest generation of writers the world has ever seen. Their books were widely read and deeply influenced the Russian people.

Moreover, the despotic czarist regime also gave rise to several revolutionary movements in Russia. These movements, like Nihilism, Anarchism and Populism, started in the 1860s and played a huge role in radicalizing the population of Russia. Many radicals from these movements also took part in many acts of violence against the state, including the assassination of Czar Alexander II in 1881. There was also an increase in the popularity of the philosophy of Karl Marx among the students and the young population of the country. Finally, there was also an emergence of two political parties which were to play an extremely critical role during the revolution. These two parties were:

- **The Social Democratic Party (S.D):** It was a party formed in 1898 to unite various revolutionary movements under one banner
- **The Socialist Revolutionaries (S.R):** It was a party whose ideology was largely derived from the populist movements of the 1860s

In 1903, the Socialist Democratic Party split into two factions, i.e., the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks. Despite their ideological differences, both the Social Democrats and the Social Revolutionaries were united by their hatred of the czarist regime. Although revolutionary movements like nihilism and populism played an important role in developing the consciousness of the masses towards the revolution that was to come, it was the Social Democratic Party and the Socialist Revolutionaries who were to lead the Russian people towards the revolution.

Russian-Japanese War

A major event that occurred and proved to be a turning point for the Czarist regime was the Russian-Japanese War in 1904-1905. The war was extremely unpopular among Russians and highlighted the inefficiency and incompetence of the Russian government headed by Czar Nicholas II. The military disaster and humiliation faced by Russia at the hands of a small Asian country Japan once again proved to the Russian people the rottenness of the Russian regime. The ensuing anger and resentment led to the assassination of the Minister of the Interior Vyacheslav Konstantinovich von Plehve. After the defeat against Japan, the government, fearing that uprisings and civil unrest could go out of hand, asked various revolutionary groups to submit a list of demands. An eleven point charter was submitted to Nicholas II which included basic rights of citizens. Through these eleven points, a dent was made to the 200 year old absolutist rule by the Romanovs.

Revolution of 1905

The eleven point charter that was submitted to Nicholas II was backed by several demonstrations. There were a series of strikes and demonstrations all over Russia. These strikes involved people from all walks of life including lawyers, railway workers, factory workers, magistrates, doctors, etc. The magnitude of the protests and its attendance by people from all walks of life forced the Russian government to start initiating reforms. The Czar and his ministers also opened negotiations with various revolutionary groups. Under the pressure of mass demonstrations, Czar Nicholas II issued his famous 'October Manifesto' of 1905.

The 'October Manifesto' promised sweeping reforms that included the right to freedom of speech, association, assembly and press. A legislature known as the *Duma* endowed with legislative functions and the control over the law of the land was also promised. Nicholas also promised the right to vote for workers. Nicholas II's promise to set up the *Duma* amounted to the surrender of autocratic and despotic power by the Czar and his ministers. Although Nicholas II diluted many of the concessions he had made in the October Manifesto, the revolution of 1905 revealed to the people what united public action was capable of. Lenin was later to term the revolution of 1905 as a dress rehearsal for another revolution that was to come.

After the Czar diluted many of the promises that he made in his October Manifesto, the experiment of limited constitutional monarchy in Russia was doomed to fail. In later years, Czar Nicholas II routinely ignored the *Duma* and did what he liked. The failure of the *Duma* experiment of limited constitutional monarchy eventually led to a more radical revolution which put an end to the despotic and reactionary regime of Czar Nicholas II.



Fig. 7.2 Demonstrators in Jakobstad 1905

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Demonstration_Pietarsaari_1905.jpg

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Check Your Progress

1. What was the Policy of Russification?
2. Name the revolutionary movements in Russia due to the despotic czarist regime.
3. What was the October Manifesto?

7.3 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. The policy of Russification, i.e., the suppression of the languages, literature, and culture of the non-Russian nationalities was introduced by the Romanovs in an effort to create some sort of uniformity in society and thus making their task of administration easier.
2. The despotic czarist regime gave rise to several revolutionary movements in Russia such as Nihilism, Anarchism and Populism.
3. The ‘October Manifesto’ promised sweeping reforms that included the right to freedom of speech, association, assembly and press.

7.4 SUMMARY

- In the early 19th century, Russia continued to be governed like it had been for the previous three centuries – under the autocratic rule of the Romanov dynasty. The Romanov’s ruled alone and did not permit any opposition to them. There were no real representative bodies for the people, freedom of expression was limited, the press was not free, books were censored frequently, opposition leaders were either executed or exiled to Siberia, etc.
- A notable example being the events of ‘Bloody Sunday’ where unarmed peaceful demonstrators were brutally massacred by the Imperial guard in St. Petersburg when they were marching to present a petition to Czar Nicholas II.
- According to many historians, ‘Bloody Sunday’ was one of the major reasons why the Czarist regime, and in particular Czar Nicholas II, in the beginning of the twentieth century had become totally discredited in the eyes of the Russian people.
- The industrial revolution that had swept Europe in the second half of the 19th century resulted in a huge increase in the urban industrial working class population in Russia. However, the growth of industrialization did not improve the lives of the people in Russia. The industrial working classes lived in cramped urban dwellings, were paid low wages, were denied any sort of rights in the workplace, etc.

- The condition of the Russian peasantry was no less satisfactory. By the turn of the century, about 70 per cent of the population in Russia was made up of peasants.
- In return for their freedom, serfs had to pay to the state a sum of money, which caused many serf families to go into debt. Moreover, many serfs were given less land than they needed to survive, while others were not given any land at all.
- Another important social factor that bred discontent among the people was the policy of ‘Russification’. The policy of Russification, i.e., the suppression of the languages, literature, and culture of the non-Russian nationalities was introduced by the Romanovs in an effort to create some sort of uniformity in society and thus making their task of administration easier.
- The class of writers that emerged in Russia in the 19th century—writers like Pushkin, Gogol, Tolstoy, Turgenev, Dostoevsky and Chekov—are still considered by many to be the greatest generation of writers the world has ever seen. Their books were widely read and deeply influenced the Russian people.
- In 1903, the Socialist Democratic Party split into two factions, i.e., the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks. Despite their ideological differences, both the Social Democrats and the Social Revolutionaries were united by their hatred of the czarist regime.
- The military disaster and humiliation faced by Russia at the hands of a small Asian country Japan once again proved to the Russian people the rottenness of the Russian regime. The ensuing anger and resentment led to the assassination of the Minister of the Interior Vyacheslav Konstantinovich von Plehve.
- Under the pressure of mass demonstrations, Czar Nicholas II issued his famous ‘October Manifesto’ of 1905. The ‘October Manifesto’ promised sweeping reforms that included the right to freedom of speech, association, assembly and press.
- After the Czar diluted many of the promises that he made in his October Manifesto, the experiment of limited constitutional monarchy in Russia was doomed to fail. In later years, Czar Nicholas II routinely ignored the Duma and did what he liked. The failure of the *Duma* experiment of limited constitutional monarchy eventually led to a more radical revolution which put an end to the despotic and reactionary regime of Czar Nicholas II.

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7.5 KEY WORDS

- **Duma:** It is a *duma* is a Russian assembly with advisory or legislative functions.

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- **Russification:** It is a form of cultural assimilation process during which non-Russian communities (whether involuntarily or voluntarily) give up their culture and language in favor of Russian culture.
- **October Manifesto:** It is a document that served as a precursor to the Russian Empire's first Russian Constitution of 1906, which was adopted the following year.

7.6 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Which factors led to the people of Russia being totally frustrated by the Romanov dynasty?
2. How was the condition of the Russian peasantry?
3. Which two political parties played an extremely critical role during the revolution?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Describe the social and economic backwardness in Russia during Nicholas II reign.
2. Explain the reasons that led to the revolution of 1905.

7.7 FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 8 THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION OF 1917

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Structure

- 8.0 Introduction
- 8.1 Objectives
- 8.2 The Russian Revolution: Causes, Course and Results
 - 8.2.1 February/March Revolution of 1917
 - 8.2.2 The October/Bolshevik Revolution
 - 8.2.3 Lenin and the Bolshevik Revolution
 - 8.2.4 Significance of the Russian Revolution
- 8.3 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 8.4 Summary
- 8.5 Key Words
- 8.6 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 8.7 Further Readings

8.0 INTRODUCTION

The Russian Revolution, starting with the overthrow of the monarchy in 1917 and ending in 1923 with the Bolshevik establishment of the Soviet Union at the end of the Civil War, was a time of political and social revolution throughout the territories of the Russian Empire. It began with the February Revolution during the First World War, which was centred in Saint Petersburg. In the background of Russia's massive military defeats during the war, the uprising escalated, resulting in most of the Russian Army willing to mutiny. In the uproar, the representatives of the Duma, Russia's parliament, seized control of the country and established the Provisional Government of Russia. In this unit, we will discuss the causes, course and results of the Russian Revolution of 1917.

8.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the causes of the Russian Revolution of 1917
- Describe the course of the Russian Revolution of 1917
- Analyze the results of the Russian Revolution of 1917

8.2 THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION: CAUSES, COURSE AND RESULTS

The immediate cause of the Russian Revolution was the hardships the common people and the soldiers suffered after the outbreak of the First World War. The

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First World War was essentially a European war fought to divide the colonies of various empires. For the vast majority of the people whether the Russian Empire gained more colonies was a matter of great indifference. Czar Nicholas II, on the other hand, looked at the war as a matter of prestige. This complete alienation of the monarch from the wishes of the people was the final nail in the coffin for the Czarist regime.

During the war, soldiers of Czar Nicholas II's army suffered heavily due to inefficient leadership. On the front lines, the major brunt of the war against the Germans was fought by the ill-fed, ill-equipped and ill-clothed Russian soldier, many of whom were poor peasant conscripts. Lacking adequate provisions and ammunitions, the Russian soldier became cannon fodder for the German guns. In 1916 alone, over a million Russian soldiers were killed. As a result, the soldiers of the Russian Army became increasingly disillusioned by the Czarist regime. The First World War also had an impact on people in towns and cities as well. During the war, inflation skyrocketed and thus, the prices of various daily needed goods increased by leaps and bounds. By the end of 1916, there was acute shortage of food in Russia and all around there was a cry for bread. The increasing gap between the wage level and the cost of living of the workers created unhealthy living conditions for workers. Moreover, issues like war repression, poor working conditions especially in militarised factories and industries rendered life miserable for the working classes. An attempt to improve the situation was made by a committee of experts who appealed to the Czar to look into the affairs of the government and mend things. However, the Czar turned a deaf ear to the appeals and his officers became more corrupt. Thus, people increasingly started to believe that there was no way other than a revolution to get rid of Czarist apathy.

The First World War had a huge impact on the Russian countryside as well. Many millions of peasant conscripts were killed in the war. Moreover, since many peasants had joined the army, thousands of agricultural household were devoid of workers. This loss of manpower led to a decline in farm productivity and helped undermine the agriculture sector. There was an acute shortage of food grains in the open market as all food grain supplies was transported to soldiers on the front line. As there was a breakdown of transport facilities, it became difficult to transport food grains to the towns and cities too. All these factors bred discontent among the docile peasantry and enabled revolutionary parties to use their discontent against the Czarist regime. During the revolution, socialist revolutionaries organised the peasants into an anti-czarism revolutionary force.

The war also revealed the moral bankruptcy of Czarist Russia. During the war it became apparent to the people that Czar Nicholas II was willing to sacrifice millions of his countrymen in a war no one wanted to fight just so the 'prestige' of the Russian Empire could be maintained. Moreover, during the war, administrative affairs began to be mismanaged. Rumours began to be spread that the King and Queen were under the influence of the monk Rasputin, who was considered an

extremely controversial figure. These rumours resulted in people beginning to mistrust a regime that was already on its last legs. The suffering caused by the virtual blockade of Russian trade by the Germans, together with the above mentioned factors combined to destroy the last foundations of Czarist Russia. Even the assassination of Rasputin by those who considered him a threat to the Russian Empire could not save the Romanovs. By the end of 1916, the Russian people had had enough of the Romanovs.

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8.2.1 February/March Revolution of 1917

By the middle of 1916, the Russian people were physically, mentally, and psychologically exhausted by the First World War. The Russian Empire had lost millions of people and was economically shattered. The people had also become disgusted by the whims of the czar and the czarina and grew tired of the stifling oppression in Czarist Russia. But even amidst this chaos, the Czar and his courtiers seem totally ignorant of the seriousness of the suffering of the people. By the end of 1916, it was only a matter of time before the revolution would erupt. Let us now look at the sequence of events that led to the February/March Revolution erupting:

- **February 1917:** Series of strikes break out in cities and peasants start riots in rural areas. By the end of February, the number of strikers in Petrograd alone numbers over 200,000.
- **March 8th:** The International Day of Women is observed. Housewives demonstrate at Petrograd, the capital of the Russian Empire.
- These demonstrators are joined by the striking workers.
- **March 10th:** All factories and industrial establishments in the capital are closed.
- The next day troops are called out to maintain law and order. They open fire on the striking workers killing sixty of them.
- The Czar orders the Duma to be prorogued because a socialist leader, Alexander Kerensky, demands removal of the Czar, by force if necessary, to save Russia.
- The Duma defies the Czar and sets up a provisional committee to restore order and take necessary measures to carry on the affairs of the country.
- The next day, the Czar orders his troops to shoot at the rioters and put down the disturbances. The soldiers at the garrison of Petrograd refuse and revolt.
- The soldiers arrest their own officers and openly support the revolutionary cause.
- **March 12th:** The representatives of the factory committee meet different representatives of the SDS and the SRS and organise a Soviet (council) of Workers Deputies.

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- The next day, the Soviet of Workers Deputies is recognised by the mutinous soldiers.
- The Soviet immediately takes control of all crucial public services in Petrograd.
- **March 14th:** The leaders of the Duma eager to bring the situation under control formed the provisional government and sent a notice to Czar Nicholas II to abdicate the throne since he had proved himself unfit to restore law and order. Finding himself abandoned by the Duma and the armed forces, the Czar abdicates his throne on March 15th, 1917.



Fig 8.1 Demonstrators in Petrograd in February 1917

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Feb_1917.jpg

8.2.2 The October/Bolshevik Revolution

The revolution that ended the dynastic rule of the Romanov dynasty was a spontaneous outburst of people's dissatisfaction against the corrupt and autocratic rule of Czar Nicholas II. After the overthrow of Czar Nicholas II, the authority of the state was now in dual hands; the Duma and the Provisional government on one side and the Petrograd Soviet of Worker Deputies on the other. The leaders of the Petrograd Soviet believed that they represented only a particular class of the population in Russia and not the whole nation. They also believed that Russia was not ready for socialism. Thus, they wanted to limit their role to only act as a pressure group to force a hesitant provincial government to introduce extensive democratic reforms in Russia. These reforms included guaranteed civil rights, abolishing the monarchy and introducing a republic, free democratic elections, etc. The Soviet also made it clear to the provincial government that Russia would have to withdraw from the First World War. Initially, the Soviet (which had now expanded into a national organisation with national leadership) refused to join the government, considering it a bourgeois government that was pro capitalist and therefore anti people. However, a member of the Revolutionary Socialist Party

called Alexander Kerensky agreed to join the government and later became its leader.

In the coming months, it was made clear that the provincial government would not be withdrawing from the First World War. In fact, on June 18, the provincial government launched an attack on the Germans which proved to be disastrous. Later, they reengaged on a promise and ordered soldiers to the frontline. The war weary soldiers and the turbulent working classes started becoming increasingly critical of the provincial government. By July, demonstrations were taking place on the streets. On 1 July, about 500,000 workers and soldiers in Petrograd demonstrated chanting, 'down with the war', and 'down with the ten capitalist ministers'. On July 17, under the leadership of the Bolsheviks, over 500,000 people participated in a peaceful demonstration. The provisional government in response ordered an armed attack against the demonstrators. The attack left 56 people dead. The events that took place in July, termed the 'July Days' turned the workers and soldiers in Russia against the provincial government. Throughout its brief existence, the provincial government was unable to weld soldiers, peasantry, workers and the bourgeois together and this paved the way for the Bolshevik revolution in October.

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Fig 8.2 Demonstration against the Provincial Government in July 1917

Source: Wikipedia

8.2.3 Lenin and the Bolshevik Revolution

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin was the acknowledged leader of the Bolshevik party. When the February/March revolution broke out, he was in exile in Switzerland. Soon after the revolution, he came back to Petrograd and began the task of organising the Bolshevik Party. During the train back to Russia, Lenin composed his famous 'April Thesis'. In the thesis, Lenin demanded, among other things, the immediate transfer of power to the Soviet and an immediate end to the First World War, and

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the merger of all banks into one national bank controlled by the Soviets. After returning to Russia, Lenin organised an intensive and sustained propaganda campaign against the provisional government. Lenin held public meetings and denounced the provisional government and called for 'all power to the Soviets'. Infused with the leadership of Lenin, the popularity of the Bolshevik increased dramatically. In August, an attempt was made at a conservative coup by General Lavr Kornilov, the recently appointed Supreme Commander of Russian military forces. The provincial government had to call on the Bolsheviks to help 'defend the revolution'. This event, known as the 'Kornilov Affair', not only exposed the provincial government as being extremely weak and fragmented, but at the same time it strengthened the Bolshevik Party. The provincial government seemed to be moving from crisis to crisis and it was only a matter of time that it was overthrown.



Fig. 8.3 Lenin and Trotsky addressing Demonstrators in 1917

Source: Wikipedia

In October, under Lenin's leadership, the Bolsheviks launched their own revolution to take the city of Petrograd. In Petrograd, the provincial government had almost no support with almost the entire population of the city supporting the Bolsheviks. The Bolsheviks were totally in command of the Petrograd Soviet and used it to organise their military units. Under the command of the Military Revolutionary Committee (MRS) the Bolshevik Red Guards began the takeover of government buildings on 24 October 1917. The following day, the seat of power of the provincial government—the Winter Palace—was captured. The storming of the Winter Palace signalled the beginning of Bolshevik rule in Russia. Let us now look at the sequence of events that led to the Bolshevik revolution in October:

- In July, an armed demonstration was held by soldiers, sailors and workers against the provincial government, although government managed to suppress it.

- In August, the army under General Kornilov sought to capture power by overthrowing the provincial government. However, this coup also collapsed and the Kerensky government was saved once again.
- From the first week of September, Russia started witnessing an unexpected whirlwind of revolts and demonstrations as far as Siberia and Turkestan.
- Lenin started to mobilise the Bolsheviks in an effort to capture power. Leon Trotsky was elected the chairman of the Petrograd Soviet and organised the Military Revolutionary Committee with an aim to overthrow the provisional government.
- On October 6th, a rumour concerning a counter revolution to shift the government out of Petrograd and abandon the citadel of revolution to the advancing German army alarmed the Soviet and the Bolsheviks. Trotsky immediately took steps to act on the rumour.
- The politburo of the Bolsheviks decided that the proposed coup would take place on October 25th to coincide with the meeting of All Russian Congress of Soviets
- The strategy and actions of the Petrograd Soviet and the MRC had already reduced Kerensky's government to a mere shadow with the provisional government practically having lost power.
- On October 24th, Kerensky declared that Petrograd was in a state of insurrection and ordered the arrest of all those Bolsheviks who had participated in the July armed demonstrations.
- The Bolsheviks, the Petrograd Soviet and the MRC decided that the time had come to act. During the night, Trotsky's troops occupied the central telephone exchange, the railway station, the central post office and other key installations without violence.
- The city's electric power plant was also occupied and the power supply to government buildings was cut off. The pro Bolshevik crew of the naval ship 'Aurora' defied the orders of their superiors put their ship out to sea and dropped anchor in the Neva river near the Winter Palace.
- During this time, Kerensky's cabinet was in an emergency meeting. The *Aurora* threatened the Winter Palace and the Peter and Paul Fortress by firing salvos on them. The Red Guards, the Bolshevik soldiers and the Baltic naval fleet soldiers issued an ultimatum to the provincial government demanding its resignation. This ultimatum was rejected.
- By the morning of October 25th, almost the entire city of Petrograd had been captured by the Bolsheviks. At 10:00 am, the MRC broadcasted an address of Lenin declaring that the provisional government had been overthrown. Lenin declared that now the power had passed into the hands of the MRC which was heading the Petrograd Proletariat and soldiers. He

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proclaimed, “the cause for which people have fought namely the immediate offer of a democratic peace, the abolition of landed proprietorship, workers’ control over production and the establishment of Soviet power—that cause has been secured. Long Live the Revolution of Workers, Soldiers and Peasants!”

- While the Red Guards were busy capturing power, the All Russian Congress of Soviets met on the 25th. In the Congress, the Bolsheviks had 350 members out of 650 members in total.
- The congress issued three decrees:
 - A decree of peace announcing the unilateral termination of Russia’s participation in the First World War by the new Soviet government
 - The second decree was related to the abolition of private ownership of estates and their confiscation without compensation
 - The third decree ordered the election of an All-Russian Central Executive Committee comprising of 101 members
- The All Russian Congress of Soviets also elected a cabinet with Lenin as the Prime Minister, Trotsky as the Minister of War and Foreign Affairs and Joseph Stalin as Minister for Nationalities. The cabinet was known as the Soviet of Peoples Commissars.
- The new government began functioning and worked for the establishment of a socialist government by eliminating feudalism and capitalism with earnest.



Fig. 8.4 Petrograd Soviet Assembly 1917

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:1917petrogradsoviet_assembly.jpg

8.2.4 Significance of the Russian Revolution

Lenin’s Russia was a one party ruled state which was infused with revolutionary ideas. The new Soviet republic immediately began working to transform the lives

of the working class and the peasants in Russia. The legacy and the significance of the Russian Revolution were:

- The revolution put an end to the autocratic and despotic rule of the Czar and paved the way for the Bolshevik rule.
- The Bolshevik Revolution in October was the first great experiment in the implementation of the ideas of Marxism- Leninism to actually govern a country.
- Soviet Russia challenged the existing State and social structure and thus offered an alternative to capitalism.
- The Bolshevik Revolution put Russia on the road to modernity and progress by bringing her out of the slumber of backwardness.
- The economic planning of Soviet Russia, particularly the Five Year plans not only provided a model of development for underdeveloped countries like India, but also for advanced nations.
- The Bolshevik Revolution took Russia into the realms of technological advancement and progress in the fields of sports, science, industry, etc.
- The success of the economic development under Soviet rule transformed the nation from being a European backwater into one of the two sole superpowers.
- The revolution also encouraged class antagonism and class conflict.
- The traditional power of clergy, nobles and the bourgeoisie were liquidated and state power was monopolised by the Communist and its leadership in the name of ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’.
- The economically worn out and distressed masses of Russia were inspired with new hope by the Bolshevik party that took over after the October Revolution in 1917. The USSR was to become, at least for a few years, a beacon of hope for the working classes all over the world and provided inspiration for people in colonised nations to overthrow their imperialist government.

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Check Your Progress

1. What was the immediate cause of the Russian Revolution?
2. When did the leaders of the Duma sent a notice to Czar Nicholas II to abdicate the throne?
3. What do you mean by ‘July Days’?
4. What were the consequences of the Bolshevik Revolution?

8.3 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

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1. The immediate cause of the Russian Revolution was the hardships the common people and the soldiers suffered after the outbreak of the First World War.
2. On March 14th, 1917, the leaders of the Duma sent a notice to Czar Nicholas II to abdicate the throne since he had proved himself unfit to restore law and order.
3. On July 17, under the leadership of the Bolsheviks, over 500,000 people participated in a peaceful demonstration. The provisional government in response ordered an armed attack against the demonstrators. The attack left 56 people dead. These events are termed as the 'July Days'
4. After the Bolshevik Revolution, the traditional power of clergy, nobles and the bourgeoisie was liquidated and state power was monopolised by the Communist and its leadership in the name of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

8.4 SUMMARY

- The immediate cause of the Russian Revolution was the hardships the common people and the soldiers suffered after the outbreak of the First World War.
- During the war, soldiers of Czar Nicholas II's army suffered heavily due to inefficient leadership. In the front lines, the major brunt of the war against the Germans was fought by the ill-fed, ill-equipped and ill-clothed Russian soldier, many of whom were poor peasant conscripts.
- The war also revealed the moral bankruptcy of Czarist Russia. During the war it became apparent to the people that Czar Nicholas II was willing to sacrifice millions of his countrymen in a war no one wanted to fight just so the 'prestige' of the Russian Empire could be maintained.
- In February 1917, a series of strikes broke out in cities and peasants started riots in rural areas. By the end of February, the number of strikers in Petrograd alone numbered over 200,000.
- In March, the leaders of the Duma form the provisional government and send a notice to Czar Nicholas II to abdicate the throne since he had proved himself unfit to restore law and order in Russia.

- The revolution that ended the dynastic rule of the Romanov dynasty was a spontaneous outburst of people's dissatisfaction against the corrupt and autocratic rule of Czar Nicholas II.
- After the overthrow of Czar Nicholas II, the authority of the state was now in dual hands; the Duma and the Provisional government on one side and the Petrograd Soviet of Worker Deputies on the other.
- In the coming months, it was made clear that the provincial government would not be withdrawing from the First World War.
- The war weary soldiers and the turbulent working classes started becoming increasingly critical of the provincial government. By July, demonstrations were taking place on the streets.
- Throughout its brief existence, the provincial government was unable to weld soldiers, peasantry, workers and the bourgeois together and this paved the way for the Bolshevik revolution in October.
- Vladimir Ilyich Lenin was the acknowledged leader of the Bolshevik party. When the February/March revolution broke out, he was in exile in Switzerland. Soon after the revolution, he came back to Petrograd and began the task of organising the Bolshevik Party.
- After returning to Russia, Lenin organised an intensive and sustained propaganda campaign against the provisional government.
- In October, under Lenin's leadership, the Bolsheviks launched their own revolution to take the city of Petrograd.
- Under the command of the Military Revolutionary Committee (MRS) the Bolshevik Red Guards began the takeover of government buildings on 24 October 1917.
- Soviet Russia challenged the existing State and social structure and thus offered an alternative to capitalism.

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8.5 KEY WORDS

- **Proletariat:** It refers to workers or the working class.
- **Mensheviks:** The Mensheviks, also known as the Minority were one of the three dominant factions in the Russian socialist movement, the others being the Bolsheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries.
- **Romanov Dynasty:** The House of Romanov was the second and last imperial dynasty to rule over Russia, reigning from 1613 until the February Revolution abolished the crown in 1917.

8.6 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on the events that led to the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917.
2. What was the significance of the Russian Revolution?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the impact that the First World War had on Russia which resulted in the February revolution of 1917.
2. After the overthrow of Czar Nicholas II, the authority of the state was now in dual hands. Discuss.

8.7 FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 9 RUSSIA UNDER LENIN

Structure

- 9.0 Introduction
- 9.1 Objectives
- 9.2 Civil War and War Communism
 - 9.2.1 New Economic Policy
- 9.3 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 9.4 Summary
- 9.5 Key Words
- 9.6 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 9.7 Further Readings

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9.0 INTRODUCTION

During the tenure of Vladimir Lenin, a Russian communist revolutionary, the Bolshevik Party seized power in the Russian Republic through a coup known as the October Revolution. After overthrowing the pre-existing Provisional Government, the Bolsheviks established a new administration, the first Council of People's Commissars with Lenin as its governing chairman. Lenin introduced numerous reforms such as confiscating land for redistribution among the permitting non-Russian nations to declare themselves independent, improving labour rights, and increasing access to education. In this unit, we will discuss the Civil War, War Communism, and the New Economic Policy under Lenin.

9.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the Civil War under Lenin
- Describe the concept of war communism under Lenin
- Analyze the New Economic Policy under Lenin

9.2 CIVIL WAR AND WAR COMMUNISM

After seizing power, the first task which Lenin and Trotsky took into their hands was to enter into talks with the Germans to end the participation of Russia in the First World War and to declare the war as imperialistic. On March 3, 1918, the Bolshevik government signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Germany and agreed to cede vast territories of the Russian Empire including Poland, Lithuania, Livonia and Estonia. No war indemnities were claimed by Germany. Lenin and Trotsky cared more for the social and economic revolution in Russia than any other

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unforeseen gains after the war. For them, Germany and her enemies were equally hostile capitalist powers. The main aims of the Soviets were to make peace with Germany, to strengthen the position of their party in Russia, to make radical changes in the social and economic structure of the country, and to drive foreign influences out of Russia.

The signing of the peace treaty resulted in a Civil War in Russia from 1918 to 1920. The anti-Communist forces were known as the 'Whites' and received help from foreign imperialist powers, including Britain, France, USA and Japan, who were concerned about what a working class revolution would mean for the relationship between the working class and the ruling elites in their respective countries. The Whites could not agree among themselves about what form of government Russia should have after they had won the Civil War. Some favoured a liberal republic or a military dictatorship, others argued for the restoration of the monarchy. They were unable to coordinate their offensive precisely and often quarrelled among themselves. The Communists managed to organize their war efforts much better. Trotsky formed the Red Army and instilled discipline into them. The war was fought with great ferocity on both the sides.

The need to win the Civil War determined the way in which the Communist Government of Russia developed. A secret police, Cheka, was established to hunt the down the Whites. The Civil War ended in a complete Communist victory. Soviet Russia could withstand the challenge of the imperialist intervention and the Civil War, thanks to the policy known as War Communism. The Bolsheviks fully understood that vested capitalist and imperialist interests could not accept the Marxian principles of abolition of private property and the establishment of a working class state. For bringing a complete social, political and economic revolution, the Bolsheviks took many measures like acquiring full control over foreign trade, heavy industries, banking corporations, railways, forests and rivers, confiscation of the property of landlords and nobles, prohibition of religious propaganda and the establishment of a powerful dictatorship of the Communist Party leadership. In the beginning, they exhorted the peasants and workers of the other countries to throw down the yoke of capitalists and imperialist governments. In spite of the fact that after 1918, the capitalist countries like Britain and France tried their best to crush this new menace to their own position, the Bolsheviks were able to surmount all difficulties. The counter revolutionaries helped by the foreigners had no moral basis and the Russian masses took them as puppets in the hands of the imperialists.

After boldly facing these initial difficulties Lenin took the reconstruction of the country on the basis of Marxian principles. The basic unit of the government was called the Soviet and the indirectly elected 'All Russian Congress of Soviets' was the highest organ. In 1922, the federal system was established and the country was renamed the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. In the beginning some of the reforms quite upset the economic structure. The peasants could not adjust

easily to the new circumstances. The abolition of private property created many complications. The profit-motive could not be easily foregone. The factory workers also could not reconcile to the new order. A severe famine in 1921 further deteriorated the situation.

Thus, the immediate impact of the strategy of War Communism proved disastrous to the Russian economy. Lenin himself correctly assessed that this was due to the fact that the state took from the peasants all their surpluses to maintain the workers, and sometimes even what was not surplus but was necessary to feed their families. Thus, Lenin dictated partly by his own sense of realism and partly by the pressure of the peasants had to scrap War Communism in 1921. On the need of War Communism Lenin wrote:

It was the war and the ruin that forced us into War Communism: It was not, and could not be a policy that correspond to the economic tasks of the proletariat. It was a makeshift. Though this policy involved a retreat to capitalism but it was necessary as the Soviet Government wanted to grasp the forces and then resume the offensive.

9.2.1 New Economic Policy

Lenin had already realized that a change of policy was needed if the Bolsheviks were to remain in control. In March 1921, at the Tenth Congress of the Communist Party, Lenin introduced his New Economic Policy (N.E.P). The N.E.P meant that the government stopped acquiring food from the peasants and permitted them to sell their produce to private traders who became known as ‘Nepmen’. This meant that the ‘Black Market’, which during the Civil War had handled more than 60 % of the food that reached Russia’s towns and cities, was legalized. N.E.P also meant a return to money. The old currency was replaced by a new ruble. Lenin permitted private businessmen to own and run medium-sized and small factories and to make a profit. Only large enterprises, ‘the commanding heights of the economy’, as Lenin called them remained in government ownership. Private owners had to obey government rules about wages and working conditions and, like state-owned factories, had to produce whatever the government directed at as prices fixed by the government.

The N.E.P shocked many Communists because it seemed like a step backwards towards capitalism. But this retreat was planned, orderly and short-lived. Lenin reminded them that Russia badly needed breathing space in which to recover from the effects of the Civil War and that the Communists did not have enough officials and troops to run the whole economy themselves. N.E.P would leave them free to concentrate on important projects such as electrification. He also insisted that Russia must restore trading links with the capitalist countries so that she could import the machinery and raw materials needed to rebuild her economy. Enforcing the N.E.P, the Soviet Government kept a vigilant watch over the correlation between the Socialist and Capitalistic elements, ensuring the growth of the former and restricting and ultimately liquidating the latter.

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The State General Planning Commission (GOSPLAN) was set up in February 1921. Planning, control and management were in its hands. It was established for the purpose of working out a single and unified economic plan on the basis of a plan for the electrification of the country adopted at the Eighth Congress of the Soviets. Lenin attached great importance to electrification. Once, when asked to define Communism, he instantly called it ‘Soviet power plus electrification’.

The N.E.P made possible a slow recovery from the catastrophic situation of 1920-21. By 1928, the Russian industry was producing roughly the same amount as in 1914. The successful restoration of industry was accompanied by the numerical growth of the working class and a considerable rise of labour productivity. Wages also rose. The recovery in food production was more rapid and this brought new problems. Food prices remained fairly low while the price of scarce manufactured goods rose. The ‘scissors’ crisis meant that the peasants could not afford the tools, pots and pans that they needed. The government passed decrees that slowed down the increase in industrial prices and helped the ‘scissors’ to close. By 1922, the Western imperialist nations reconciled to the new situation in Russia and recognized the Bolshevik Government as a ‘necessary evil’. Britain signed a trade pact with it in 1921 and Germany entered into the Treaty of Rapallo in 1922. When Lenin died in January 1924, the Russian Soviet government had surmounted all internal and external dangers and had been established on a firm footing. Markedly, Lenin was the maker of new Russia and can truly be called as the Father of the Bolshevik Revolution.

Check Your Progress

1. What was the basic unit of the government under Lenin?
2. What was the purpose of Cheka?
3. What was GOSPLAN?

9.3 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. The basic unit of the government under Lenin was called the Soviet and the indirectly elected ‘All Russian Congress of Soviets’ was the highest organ.
2. A secret police, Cheka, was established to hunt the down the Whites.
3. The State General Planning Commission (GOSPLAN) was set up in February 1921. Planning, control and management were in its hands. It was established for the purpose of working out a single and unified economic plan on the basis of a plan for the electrification of the country adopted at the Eighth Congress of the Soviets.

9.4 SUMMARY

- After seizing power, the first task which Lenin and Trotsky took into their hands was to enter into talks with the Germans to end the participation of Russia in the First World War and to declare the war as imperialistic.
- The main aims of the Soviets were to make peace with Germany, to strengthen the position of their party in Russia, to make radical changes in the social and economic structure of the country, and to drive foreign influences out of Russia.
- The Whites could not agree among themselves about what form of government Russia should have after they had won the Civil War. Some favoured a liberal republic or a military dictatorship, others argued for the restoration of the monarchy.
- The need to win the Civil War determined the way in which the Communist Government of Russia developed. A secret police, Cheka, was established to hunt the down the Whites.
- The Bolsheviks fully understood that vested capitalist and imperialist interests could not accept the Marxian principles of abolition of private property and the establishment of a working class state.
- In spite of the fact that after 1918, the capitalist countries like Britain and France tried their best to crush this new menace to their own position, the Bolsheviks were able to surmount all difficulties.
- After boldly facing these initial difficulties Lenin took the reconstruction of the country on the basis of Marxian principles.
- In March 1921, at the Tenth Congress of the Communist Party, Lenin introduced his New Economic Policy (N.E.P).
- The N.E.P shocked many Communists because it seemed like a step backwards towards capitalism. But this retreat was planned, orderly and short-lived.
- The State General Planning Commission (GOSPLAN) was set up in February 1921. Planning, control and management were in its hands.

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9.5 KEY WORDS

- **Cheka:** The Cheka (sometimes called VeCheka) was the much-feared Bolshevik security agency, formed to identify and eradicate counter-revolutionary activity. The Cheka is sometimes referred to as the Bolshevik 'secret police', though most Russians were well aware of its existence and activities.

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- **Treaty of Rapallo:** The Treaty of Rapallo was an agreement signed on 16 April 1922 between the German Republic and Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic under which each renounced all territorial and financial claims against the other following the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and World War I.

9.6 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What do you understand by the term War Communism?
2. What were the changes made during Lenin's rule?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the New Economic Policy (N.E.P) of Lenin.
2. Describe the purpose and causes of Civil War during Lenin's times.

9.7 FURTHER READINGS

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Stalin

BLOCK - IV
FIVE YEAR PLANS AND USSR

UNIT 10 STALIN

NOTES

Structure

- 10.0 Introduction
- 10.1 Objectives
- 10.2 Russia under Stalin
 - 10.2.1 Five Year Plans
 - 10.2.2 The Constitution of 1936
- 10.3 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 10.4 Summary
- 10.5 Key Words
- 10.6 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 10.7 Further Readings

10.0 INTRODUCTION

During the second half of the 1920s, Joseph Stalin set the stage for gaining absolute power by employing police repression against opposition elements within the Communist Party. The machinery of coercion had previously been used only against opponents of Bolshevism, not against party members themselves. The first victims were Politburo members Leon Trotskii, Grigorii Zinov'ev, and Lev Kamenev, who were defeated and expelled from the party in late 1927. Stalin then turned against Nikolai Bukharin, who was denounced as a "right opposition," for opposing his policy of forced collectivization and rapid industrialization at the expense of the peasantry. Stalin had eliminated all likely potential opposition to his leadership by late 1934 and was the unchallenged leader of both party and state. Nevertheless, he proceeded to purge the party rank and file and to terrorize the entire country with widespread arrests and executions. During the ensuing Great Terror, which included the notorious show trials of Stalin's former Bolshevik opponents in 1936-1938 and reached its peak in 1937 and 1938, millions of innocent Soviet citizens were sent off to labour camps or killed in prison. By the time the terror subsided in 1939, Stalin had managed to bring both the party and the public to a state of complete submission to his rule. Soviet society was so atomized and the people so fearful of reprisals that mass arrests were no longer necessary. Stalin ruled as absolute dictator of the Soviet Union throughout World War II and until his death in March 1953. In this unit, we will study about the targets and the achievements of Stalin's Five Year Plans and 1936 Constitution.

10.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

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- List the achievements made in agricultural and industrial sectors during the period of Stalin
 - Discuss the targets set in first and second Five Year Plans of Stalin
 - Describe the important points drafted in the 1936 Constitution
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10.2 RUSSIA UNDER STALIN

After the death of Lenin, there was a bitter struggle for power among his followers. Stalin and Trotsky tried to capture power, but in the end, Stalin succeeded. Stalin became the Soviet Union's leader for many years, right up till his death in February 1953. Trotsky advocated world revolution, but Stalin stood for 'Socialism in one country'. In Stalin's view, concentration on national revival through industrialization and education was a better method for propagating Communism in the world.



Fig. 10.1 Joseph Stalin

Source: <http://plazampwiki.wikispaces.com/Joseph+Stalin>

Under Stalin, the Soviet Union made momentous progress in every field of her social and economic life. By that time, the conditions for large scale collective farming had become ripe. A collective farm (*kolkhoz*) was one in which the peasants pooled their land to form a large unit which they farmed cooperatively. They sold a fixed amount of the produce to the government at a low price and kept the surplus for themselves. Stalin also envisaged State Farms in which the land would belong to the government and the peasants could work it in return for a cash wage, these farms were known as *Sovkhoz*. Some peasants had achieved a modest degree of efficiency and prosperity under the N.E.P, and the Communists

referred to these as ‘kulaks’ and encouraged the majority of farmers to regard them with envy and hatred.

Though Stalin intended to collectivize all land, he began by attacking the kulaks. This served two purposes. Firstly, it was a warning to the rest of the peasants about what would happen to them if they did not cooperate with collectivization. Secondly, it enabled Stalin to claim that collectivization was an act of social justice. The liquidation of the kulaks began in 1929 which meant forcible deportations of many well-off peasants to Siberia and Central Asia where they were given the chance to start new farms in these infertile regions. Some peasants opposed the measure, but they were suppressed harshly, and by 1937, virtually all the farmland in the USSR had been collectivized. The purpose of collectivization was to improve the efficiency of Russian agriculture and thus, of the Russian industry.

When Stalin decided to speed up the growth of industry, he and his advisers drew up a Five Year Plan for growth. The Plan, which was supposed to run from 1928-33, set production targets for Russian industry. It called for a doubling of coal production and of iron and steel output, and a more than threefold increase in the amount of electricity generated. Many of the targets were unrealistically high. The expansion of industry was to be achieved by state ownership. In 1930, private trade and the employment of labour for private profit were declared illegal.

In 1929, Stalin decreed that the targets of the Plan must be met in four years and the shape of the Plan was changed. Originally, it had called for growth in all types of industry, but now it concentrated on basic industries such as coal, iron and steel and engineering. Remarkable things were achieved under the first Five Year Plan. But targets were achieved in only a few areas of production. Employment in industry doubled during the period of the Plan. In 1932, targets were set for a second Five Year Plan, which was to be completed by 1937. The targets had to be lowered because of the famine and the chaos caused by collectivization. Some parts of the Plan succeeded. In steel, machine-tools and leather footwear the targets were beaten, though in many other areas of production, the results were less than Stalin had hoped for. The Plan was disrupted by the Purges, in the course of which many managers and engineers were killed or deported. During 1937, a third Five Year Plan was prepared which was badly disrupted by the need to arm Russia for war with Germany. The Plan was interrupted by the German invasion of the USSR in June 1941.

Though the targets were rarely met, the overall achievement of the Plans was considerable. In less than a decade Russia had industrialized to a point where she had a chance of surviving a war with Germany, though she was still far behind Western countries in terms of technological skills and production of consumer

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goods. The human cost of this catching-up process was terrible. Russia in the 1930s was far from being the Communist paradise that Marx and Engels had predicted.

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The new industrial workers were illiterate, unskilled and undisciplined. Russia needed a skilled, stable workforce and Stalin achieved this by a policy of the carrot and stick. The carrot consisted of social security benefits, which were not available to collective farm workers, higher wages for skilled workers and medals and honours for those who worked exceptionally hard. The stick was an iron discipline reminiscent of the policy of War Communism. Workers could only change their jobs with the government's permission. Absence from work was a crime punishable by imprisonment. Skilled workers were moved to the remote areas of USSR. Trade unions were controlled by the Communist Party and were used as a means of disciplining the workforce.

In 1931, Stalin decreed that skilled workers would earn three times as much as the unskilled workers. Though cash wages doubled between 1933 and 1937, their value was undermined by inflation and the workers were no better off. Schools, housing, sanitation and health-care in Russian towns and cities were not adequate to cope with the arrival of millions of workers from the countryside. The 1930s was a period of squalor and misery for Russian workers.

The Five Year Plans are an example of a 'Command Economy'. Stalin and his colleagues decided on production targets and ordered the factories to meet them. Managers who failed to achieve their targets were deported to labour camps, and the fear of this fate encouraged others to drive their workers even harder or to 'cook the books' and fool the officials of GOSPLAN, the State Planning Agency, into thinking that they had beaten their targets. Anyone who questioned the wisdom of the Plan or asked for a target to be lowered risked being tried as a 'defeatist' or 'saboteur'. Sometimes the Plan itself was irrational. One department of GOSPLAN might call for massive increases in the output of tractor wheels, while another department would insist on a much smaller increase in the production of the caterpillar tracks to go with them.

Workers who produced more than the daily norm that was required of them were rewarded with medals and privileges. The most famous example of this was a coal miner named Alexei Stakhanov. By hard work and well planned use of unskilled labour he managed to produce 102 tons of coal in a single shift in 1935. This was fourteen times more than the norm, and Stakhanov became a national hero. A 'Stakhanovite Movement' was set up to encourage other workers to follow his example, and Stakhanov toured the country lecturing on his ideals and methods. Stakhanovism led to a general increase of work norms, and this made the Stakhanovites very unpopular among the workers.

10.2.1 Five Year Plans

Stalin intended to turn the USSR into a contemporary, manufacturing country, with an up-to-date agricultural system. He commenced a policy of rapid industrialization to get the country ready for war and because he saw it as a way of moving towards full communism. Stalin hurled what would later be called a 'revolution from above' to recover the Soviet Union's domestic policy.

To mechanize the USSR as rapidly as possible, Gosplan, the state planning agency, created three Five Year Plans, setting out striving economic targets for the economy. In the First Five-year Plan heavy industry was the chief priority. Remarkable gains were made in coal, oil, iron, steel and electricity production. For ordinary labours, life was very hard-hitting under the Five-Year Plans. The small-scale industries which manufacture the things for ordinary people received petite investment. Most of the consumer industries who were into manufacturing of shoes and clothing for the ordinary people were ignored.

One of the shrewdest but most contentious propaganda campaigns focused on the exertions of a miner called Alexei Stakhanov. In August 1935, Stakhanov mined one hundred two tonnes of coal in just six hours. This was fourteen times the output of a usual miner. He was rewarded with one month's wages, a new apartment and a holiday. He also became the centre of attraction in publicity campaign endorsing 'the Stakhanovite Movement'.

- Publicity posters and news reports held him up as a model Soviet worker.
- Sculptures were built in his honour.
- Stakhanov toured the country, cheering other workers to follow his example.
- Workers were assured rewards such as a new flat, higher wages or bigger rations if they accomplished to surpass their targets like Stakhanov.

Within a year, almost one-quarter of industrial workers were categorized as Stakhanovites.

To boost up the process of industrialization, from 1928 Stalin ordered all farms to be collectivized. Stalin had numerous reasons for collectivizing agriculture.

- Economically, he wanted to revolutionize an old-fashioned farming system. He also wanted a definite supply of grain to feed the workers and to sell it abroad to pay for industrialization.
- Ideologically, Stalin, like many Communists, alleged that peasants were not really followers of communism. So, he required to alter the way farming was organized to ensure they followed true communist methods.
- Politically, Stalin required to encompass Communist control over the countryside. He also saw this policy as a way of wearying his opponent, in the struggle for power.

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Collectivization was an intensely ostracized policy, and many peasants resisted by killing their livestock and burning their farms. Collectivization came at an enormous cost. Millions were extradited or died in the Great Famine. Farm production fell. Stalin saw collectivization as successful, mainly because the state gained a guaranteed supply of grain. Stalin's topmost aim was to enlarge industrial production. This period saw a significant innovation in the planning methods with the introduction of a system of 'material balances' which contained the balance for the use of many industrial supplies, usually in small amount, in individual sectors. For this, he developed three Five-year Plans between 1928 and 1938. Gosplan, the state planning agency, drew up goals for production for each factory. The first two plans concentrated on improving heavy industry – coal, oil, steel and electricity. But the improvements in production between 1928 and 1937 were phenomenal.

- **Coal** - from thirty-six million tons to one hundred thirty million tons
- **Iron** - from three million tons to fifteen million tons
- **Oil** - from two million tons to twenty-nine million tons
- **Electricity** - from five thousand million to thirty-six thousand million kilowatts

Some keen young Communists, called Pioneers, went into infertile areas and set up new towns and industries from nothing. There were champion workers called Stakhanovites, named after a coal miner who broke the record for coal dug up in a single shift as stated earlier. Education schemes were announced to train skilled, well-educated workers.

The women were also given greater opportunities – crèches were set up so they could also work. Women became doctors and scientists, as well as canal diggers and steel workers. At the same time, numerous workers were slaves and kulaks (rich peasants) from the gulag (main camp administration). The Gulag was the Soviet system of prison labour camps. During the First Five-Year Plan, the Gulag was authoritatively recognized and grew knowingly. Many farmers who struggled the collectivization of agriculture were directed to the Gulag, and others were merely executed. Protestors were shot, and wreckers (slow workers) could be executed or imprisoned. Thousands died from accidents, malnourishment or cold. For example, the Belomor Canal, which connects the White Sea with the Baltic, was completely constructed by hand, using two lakh fifty thousand prisoners. Prisoners also worked in mines or cut timber. Housing and wages were terrible, and no consumer goods were produced for people. To accomplish the goals of the first five-year plan the Soviet Union began using the labour of its increasing prisoner populace. The people of the Soviet Union began being punished to forced labour, even when they committed trivial offenses, or execute no crime at all. This was an effort by the Soviet Union to get free labour

for the rapid industrialization; however, it led to the confinement of many guiltless persons in the Soviet Union. The Third Five Year Plan 1938- 1941 focused on consumer goods for the people of the Soviet Union such as bicycles, household goods and radios. However, the third five-year plan was changed when the Soviet Union was attacked by Nazi Germany in 1941. Armaments were manufactured to fight the war.

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Table 10.1 First and Second Five Year Plans

| First Five-Year Plan (October 1928 To December 1932) | Second Five Year Plan (January 1933 to December 1937) |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enlarge heavy industries. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enlarge heavy industries. • Evolve new chemical industries. • Expand railway and road transport links. As well as develop canals. • Make some durable goods. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The economy grew by a huge fourteen per cent every year. • Coal and iron output increased tremendously. • Steel production increased by one third. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More accurate goals were set. • Hefty investments continued to be made in heavy industry. • Gains were made in chemical industries such as fertilizer production. • Innovative transport schemes such as the Moscow Metro and Moscow canal were finished |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many targets were incomplete. • Targets were set at impractical levels. • Limited resources for various factories who were not able to obtain the necessary resources. • There was a deficiency of skilled workers. • Living and working standards deteriorated histrionically. • Many products were of enormously poor quality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regardless of promises to increase living standards, consumer industries were acknowledged with little investment. |

10.2.2 The Constitution of 1936

In 1935, in response to varying socio-economic conditions in the USSR, the Party and state elite moulded a Constitutional Drafting Commission to review and then later redraft the Constitution of the USSR. The committee worked on the new Constitution through June 12, 1936, when a complete draft was acquiesced to the public for discussion. The discussion of the draft Constitution took place over a period of 6 months, from June to December 1936. More than four crore people partook in meetings and discussions across the whole USSR, during which Soviet citizens made over forty-three thousand recommended changes to the draft Constitution.

On December 5, 1936, the Supreme Soviet of USSR acknowledged and passed unanimously the first constitution of Soviet Union. This document decreed the ‘official birth’ of the Soviet regime by formally legalizing the communist rule

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and establishing an inclusive system of bureaucratic administration. This document is commonly granted the name ‘Stalin Constitution’ since Stalin’s individual influence, as well as the contemporary political structure shaped by him, overpoweringly influenced the draft, passage and publicizing of this document. The 1936 Constitution was the second constitution of the Soviet Union and replaced the 1924 Constitution. December 5, being celebrated annually as Soviet Constitution Day from its adoption by the Congress of Soviets. The 1936 Constitution reshaped the government of the Soviet Union, ostensibly granted all manner of rights and freedoms, and read out numerous democratic procedures.

The 1936 Constitution revoked limitations on voting, eliminating the *lishentsy* (deprived of rights) category of people, and added universal direct suffrage and the right to work to rights guaranteed by the constitution. Moreover, the 1936 Constitution is known for collective social and economic rights including the rest and leisure, care in old age and sickness, housing, health protection, rights to work, education and cultural benefits. The 1936 Constitution also provided for the direct election of all government bodies and their reorganization into a single, uniform system. It was written by a special commission of thirty-one members which General Secretary Joseph Stalin chaired. Those who partook included (among others) Nikolai Bukharin, Maxim Litvinov, Andrey Vyshinsky Kliment Voroshilov, Andrei Zhdanov, Vyacheslav Molotov, Lazar Radanovich and Karl Radek. The Constitution included thirteen chapters with one hundred forty-six articles. The chief body of state authority in the USSR was now the Supreme Soviet of the USSR elected for four years; between its sessions the country was led by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. The supreme Executive body was the Soviet of People’s Commissars of the USSR, subject to the Supreme Soviet and its Presidium. This constitution worked up till October 7, 1977.

The transformations in the federal structure of the Soviet Union brought about by the Stalin Constitution were more substantive. The 1936 constitution specifically mentioned the role of the ruling All-Union Communist Party for the first time. Article 126 stated that the Party was the “vanguard of the working people in their struggle to strengthen and develop the socialist system and representing the leading core of all organizations of the working people, both public and state”. This provision was used to justify banning all other parties from functioning in the Soviet Union and legalizing the one-party state.

Some of its important articles are as follows:

ARTICLE 1: The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is a socialist state of workers and peasants.

ARTICLE 2: The Soviets of Working People’s Deputies, which grew and attained strength because of the overthrow of the landlords and capitalists and the achievement of the dictatorship of the proletariat, constitute the political foundation

of the U.S.S.R.

Stalin

ARTICLE 13: The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is a federal state, formed based on the voluntary association of Soviet Socialist Republics having equal rights, namely:

- The Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic
- The Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic
- The Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic
- The Azerbaidjan Soviet Socialist Republic
- The Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic
- The Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic
- The Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic
- The Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic
- The Tadjik Soviet Socialist Republic
- The Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic
- The Kirghiz Soviet Socialist Republic
- The Karelo-Finnish Soviet Socialist Republic
- The Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic
- The Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic
- The Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic
- The Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic.

Under the Stalin Constitution of 1936, however, an entire chapter, comprised of sixteen articles, was devoted to setting down the “Fundamental Rights and Duties of Citizens.” By 1936, Stalin could prerogative that the “exploiter class had been eliminated” and these rights and duties securely could be made similarly pertinent to all citizens. Chapter IX guaranteed certain procedural rights to criminal defendants, such as the right to a public trial and the “right to defense.” Chapter XI guaranteed “universal suffrage by secret ballot irrespective of race or nationality, sex, religion, educational or residential qualifications, social origin, property status or past activity.”

- This constitution had changed the nomenclature of the Central Executive Committee to the Supreme Soviet.
- The Supreme Soviet was authorized to set up Commissions, which managed most of the government.
- The leader of the Presidium was declared to be the Head of State.
- This Constitution had focused power in Stalin’s hands.

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- It also gave everyone some respectable things such as rights to vote (but only for the Communist Party), to work, to rest and leisure, to health protection, to care in old age and sickness, to housing and education.

Check Your Progress

1. What was a better method for propagating Communism in the world according to Stalin?
2. What do you mean by a collective farm?
3. Which targets were set up in the first Five Year Plan of Stalin?
4. Why were the targets of the second Five year Plan lowered?
5. What was Gosplan?
6. Why was the 1936 Constitution granted the name 'Stalin Constitution'?

10.3 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. In Stalin's view, concentration on national revival through industrialization and education was a better method for propagating Communism in the world.
2. A collective farm (*kolkhoz*) was one in which the peasants pooled their land to form a large unit which they farmed cooperatively.
3. The first Five Year Plan of Stalin called for a doubling of coal production and of iron and steel output, and a more than threefold increase in the amount of electricity generated.
4. The targets had to be lowered because of the famine and the chaos caused by collectivization.
5. Gosplan was the state planning agency which drew up goals for production for each factory.
6. The 1936 Constitution was granted the name 'Stalin Constitution' because Stalin's individual influence, as well as the contemporary political structure shaped by him, overpoweringly influenced the draft, passage and publicizing of this document.

10.4 SUMMARY

- After the death of Lenin, there was a bitter struggle for power Stalin and Trotsky. But in the end, Stalin succeeded. Stalin became the Soviet Union's leader for many years, right up till his death in February 1953.

Trotsky advocated world revolution, but Stalin stood for ‘Socialism in one country’.

- The liquidation of the kulaks began in 1929 which meant forcible deportations of many well-off peasants to Siberia and Central Asia where they were given the chance to start new farms in these infertile regions.
- By 1937, virtually all the farmland in the USSR had been collectivized. The purpose of collectivization was to improve the efficiency of Russian agriculture and thus, of the Russian industry.
- When Stalin decided to speed up the growth of industry, he and his advisers drew up a Five Year Plan for growth.
- Remarkable things were achieved under the first Five Year Plan. But targets were achieved in only a few areas of production. Employment in industry doubled during the period of the Plan.
- In 1932, targets were set for a second Five Year Plan, which was to be completed by 1937. The Plan was disrupted by the Purges, in the course of which many managers and engineers were killed or deported.
- During 1937, a third Five Year Plan was prepared which was badly disrupted by the need to arm Russia for war with Germany. The Plan was interrupted by the German invasion of the USSR in June 1941.
- In less than a decade Russia had industrialized to a point where she had a chance of surviving a war with Germany, though she was still far behind Western countries in terms of technological skills and production of consumer goods.
- Russia needed a skilled, stable workforce and Stalin achieved this by a policy of the carrot and stick. The carrot consisted of social security benefits, which were not available to collective farm workers, higher wages for skilled workers and medals and honours for those who worked exceptionally hard. The stick was an iron discipline reminiscent of the policy of War Communism.
- Trade unions were controlled by the Communist Party and were used as a means of disciplining the workforce.
- Managers who failed to achieve their targets were deported to labour camps, and the fear of this fate encouraged others to drive their workers even harder or to ‘cook the books’ and fool the officials of GOSPLAN, the State Planning Agency, into thinking that they had beaten their targets.
- Workers who produced more than the daily norm that was required of them were rewarded with medals and privileges.
- Stalin’s topmost aim was to enlarge industrial production. This period saw a significant innovation in the planning methods with the introduction of a system of ‘material balances’ which contained the balance for the use of many industrial supplies, usually in small amount, in individual sectors.

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- The women were also given greater opportunities - crèches were set up so they could also work. Women became doctors and scientists, as well as canal diggers and steel workers.
- The Gulag was the Soviet system of prison labour camps. During the First Five-Year Plan, the Gulag was authoritatively recognized and grew knowingly. Many farmers who struggled the collectivization of agriculture were directed to the Gulag, and others were merely executed.
- To accomplish the goals of the first five-year plan the Soviet Union began using the labour of its increasing prisoner populace. The people of the Soviet Union began being punished to forced labour, even when they committed trivial offenses, or execute no crime at all. This was an effort by the Soviet Union to get free labour for the rapid industrialization.
- In 1935, in response to varying socio-economic conditions in the USSR, the Party and state elite moulded a Constitutional Drafting Commission to review and then later redraft the Constitution of the USSR.
- The 1936 Constitution revoked limitations on voting, eliminating the *lishensty* (deprived of rights) category of people, and added universal direct suffrage and the right to work to rights guaranteed by the constitution.
- The chief body of state authority in the USSR was now the Supreme Soviet of the USSR elected for four years; between its sessions the country was led by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. The supreme Executive body was the Soviet of People's Commissars of the USSR, subject to the Supreme Soviet and its Presidium. This constitution worked up till October 7, 1977.
- The transformations in the federal structure of the Soviet Union brought about by the Stalin Constitution were more substantive. The 1936 constitution specifically mentioned the role of the ruling All-Union Communist Party for the first time.

10.5 KEY WORDS

- **Collectivization:** It was the policy adopted by the Soviet government, pursued most intensively between 1929 and 1933, to transform traditional agriculture in the Soviet Union and to reduce the economic power of the kulaks (prosperous peasants).
- **Stakhanovite Movement:** It refers to workers who modelled themselves after Alexey Stakhanov. These workers took pride in their ability to produce more than was required, by working harder and more efficiently, thus strengthening the Communist state.
- **Kulaks:** It refers to a wealthy or prosperous peasant, generally characterized as one who owned a relatively large farm and several head of cattle and

horses and who was financially capable of employing hired labour and leasing land.

Stalin

- **Gulag:** It was a system of forced labour camps established during Joseph Stalin's long reign as dictator of the Soviet Union.

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10.6 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What progress did the agriculture sector see after Stalin leadership?
2. List the achievements of the first Five Year Plan of Stalin.
3. What was Stalin's carrot and stick policy?
4. Who was Alexei Stakhanov? What was the Stakhanovite Movement?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Analyze the efficacy of the Five Year Plans of Stalin.
2. 'The Five Year Plans are an example of a 'Command Economy'.' Explain.
3. Discuss the reasons of Stalin for collectivizing agriculture.
4. Describe the Soviet system of prison labour camps.

10.7 FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 11 USSR AND THE SECOND WORLD WAR

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Structure

- 11.0 Introduction
- 11.1 Objectives
- 11.2 USSR during the Second World War
- 11.3 USSR Foreign Policy Between 1945 and 1953
- 11.4 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 11.5 Summary
- 11.6 Key Words
- 11.7 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 11.8 Further Readings

11.0 INTRODUCTION

The Second World War was the goriest fight in human history. Historian John Keegan writes, ‘The Second World War was the continuation of the First’, and indeed Second World War is incomprehensible except in terms of the uncertainties left by the previous war. The Soviet Union agonized far more human losses than any other country, losing more than thirty million soldiers and civilians throughout the course of the war. The massive price of triumph over Nazi Germany made Second World War an important moment in history for the Soviet Union and the sovereign states that arose from it, especially Russia. Known to Russians as the Great Patriotic War, it remains a source of enormous pride and is a significant element of national identity in the region. The Soviet Union gave Germany entree to the Far East. From 1939- 1940 it also fought the “Winter War” with Finland and, in 1940, occupied Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania. However, the Soviet Union anticipated more scientific aid from Germany than it was prepared to give. Hitler resolved to annex the country, in part, to grab its natural resources. The second war did not comprise the Soviet Union and was about control of the Mediterranean. After the defeat of Germany, the Soviet Union entered the Pacific War, which had commenced with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. On August 9, 1945 the Soviet Union attacked the Japanese Army in Manchuria, which surrendered eight days later. The Soviet effort, and chiefly the dramatic reversal of fortunes that occurred in 1942 and 1943, turned a “pariah state” investigating with a new economic and political system into the successful proponent of the same, and into a space-bound superpower with the revived trappings of its imperial past. The Soviet nuclear program, for example, began in 1942. The pivotal contribution of its armed forces to the overall Allied victory was underestimated in the West during the Cold War. However, the process of resolution that began in the 1980s and the breakup of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991 changed that.

In this unit, we will study about the role of USSR in the Second World War and its foreign policy between 1945 and 1953.

*USSR and the Second
World War*

11.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the situation of USSR during the Second World War
- Discuss the foreign policy of USSR between 1945 and 1953

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11.2 USSR DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The 1930s was an era of powerful change in the Soviet Union as Joseph Stalin carried out a ruthless campaign of purges against political enemies — both actual and illusory. His brutal policies of forced collectivization and industrialization led to millions of deaths across the country. Though, the USSR speedily modernized, and its industrial size grew at an astounding rate. On the other hand, Adolf Hitler was consolidating his grip over Germany and prepare for a campaign to produce a land empire in Europe. He and Stalin both saw prospects in the states bordering their countries. Stalin desired to spread communism westward and evoke territories lost during the Russian Civil War two decades earlier. Whereas, Hitler wanted to use Eastern Europe as a place to force “inferior” races to extract resources and to produce food to feed ethnic Germans, a policy known as “lebensraum” or “living space.” In 1938 Germany annexed Austria and part of Czechoslovakia, commencing its eastward growth. The Soviet Union looked on anxiously as the German border moved closer at a faster pace while enduring sceptical of an alliance with the capitalist nations. USSR and Nazi Germany signed a non-aggression agreement, on August 23, 1939, known as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, named after the two countries’ foreign ministers. Throughout secret talks over the pact, Eastern Europe was separated into spheres of influence, and the leaders decided to split control over the countries among themselves. On September 1 Germany invaded Poland from the west. Sixteen days later the Soviet Union invaded Poland from the east. The two countries set to work carrying out their respective ideological policies toward the local populations. The next summer the Soviet Union invaded the Baltic states and the eastern portion of Romania, escalating the Soviet project further into Europe. Germany and the USSR, ideological enemies, approved to progress trade relations.

The Soviet leaders were aware of the fact that Nazi Germany could invade, but they thought they would have sufficient time to formulate their military strategies. In addition to reinstating much of the Russian Empire’s mislaid territory to the Soviet Union, Stalin and the Soviet leadership believed the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact would postpone war with Hitler. On June 22, 1941, Germany hurled an enormous invasion of the Soviet Union, surprising Stalin, who had

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overlooked warnings from Western leaders that an attack was impending. The invasion, known as Operation Barbarossa, drove deep into Soviet territory. German troops rapidly overwhelmed the Red Army, which had been left muddled and ill-equipped for battle since Stalin's purges of the 1930s had annihilated the military's leadership. Germany had the taste of quick victories, apprehending the rest of Poland and going deep into Ukraine, Belarus, and western Russia. Nazi security forces quickly began exterminating the local Jewish populations. More than one and half million Soviet Jews were shot or disappeared during the war. Hitler thought the invasion would lead to the rapid failure of the Soviet Union, but entire victory proved more problematic than expected. German and Soviet troops fought viciously, and Nazi forces reached the outskirts of Moscow and Leningrad but failed to seize the cities. Leningrad grieved a devastating, eight hundred seventy-two-day siege during which more than a million citizens died from ferocity and famishment. When the winter of 1941-1942 set in, German troops proved powerless to push into Moscow. They also lacked adequate supplies to fight effectively in the flash floods of the autumn, which soon gave way to the cold Russian winter. The Red Army by this time was reorganizing and preparing to push westward. On December 7, 1941, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, bringing the United States into the war. The US entry meant more German possessions were needed to fight rising allied pressure on the Western Front. Conditions for prisoners of war captured on the Eastern Front were awful on both the Soviet side and the German side. The cruel treatment of Soviet and German POWs meant that for many soldiers it was better to fight to the death rather than be arrested, which could mean agony, forced labour, or malnourishment. An order issued by Stalin also meant that officers who allowed their soldiers to depart could be arrested. Stalin overturned some of his international communist pomposity in an attempt to stir up Russian nationalism, claiming the Red Army was fighting a "Great Patriotic War," a name that invoked the Russian Empire's defeat of Napoleon in 1812.

Though they were incapable to capture Moscow as Hitler had predicted, German soldiers continued advancing east into Russia. By February 1943, German forces were enclosed, badly low on supplies, and starting to famish and freeze to death. The remaining soldiers capitulated, marking a chief turning point in the war. The Red Army began retrieving territory, forcing German troops to retreat from Russia and recapturing Ukraine east of the Dnipro River by autumn 1943. Now it was crystal clear that the Soviet Union would not collapse, and that Germany would finally be defeated. Stalin met with British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and the US President Franklin D. Roosevelt in Tehran, where the leaders discussed their roles in the conflict and started making plans for the post-war order. A second conference was held in Yalta in Crimea in February 1945. In 1944 Soviet forces were advancing into Poland. By October they had reached Warsaw. In January 1945 Red Army troops entered Germany and by May had encircled Berlin. On May 8 Germany surrendered. However, because the articles of surrender were

signed after midnight Moscow time, the date is remembered as May 9 in much of the former Soviet Union.

The price of Soviet victory in Second World War was enormous. More than thirteen percent of the population had been slain and twenty-five million were displaced by the end of the war. The post-war years saw a noteworthy gender inequality, since many of the country's men were murdered as soldiers in battle. The USSR lost roughly seven times as many soldiers as all of the other allies combined in the European theatre. In 1946 and 1947, a famine swept through the Soviet Union due to famine and destruction from the war. Despite the huge loss of life and hardship, the Soviet Union arose from the war as an international power. With British influence reduced due to hefty fatalities during the war and the effects of decolonization, the United States and the Soviet Union were left as the world's two unparalleled superpowers, a state that would soon lead to eras of conflict. Upon defeat Germany was required to give up the territories it had seized before it conquered the Soviet Union, including Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and the western part of Poland. The Soviet Union, however, kept the eastern piece of Poland it had taken in accordance with the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, integrating it into the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, which is now part of modern-day Ukraine. The three Baltic states i.e. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania also remained part of the Soviet Union. Those countries gained independence in 1991 with the collapse of the USSR. Russia rejoices Victory Day each year on May 9. The event includes huge parades and is often an opportunity to introduce new military equipment. Soviet victory over Nazi Germany remains a major cause of national pride.

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Check Your Progress

1. What is Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact?
2. During the German invasion of Russia, why was it better to fight to the death for many soldiers rather than be arrested?
3. Why did Japan attack Pearl Harbour?

11.3 USSR FOREIGN POLICY BETWEEN 1945 AND 1953

The USSR was resolute to upsurge its power relation to its rivals and expected an unavoidable conflict with them, but it was also determined on evading a conflict for some time to come and on evading infuriating strong reactions from its enemies. Ruthless goals - vigorous by both ideology and realpolitik - guided Soviet foreign policy. While world authority may have been an eventual Soviet objective but should be regarded as an isolated and chiefly theoretical aim. Russia has always been one of the most noteworthy geo-strategic players in world affairs. In a foreign

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policy realm, Stalin was an accurate leader based on a cold calculation, not philosophical leader based on radical ideology. Stalin's speech and words were mainly ideological radical terms. However, his actions, foreign policy, always were based on realism. Many scholars described the Cold War as a battle between two diverse ideological parties and particularly construed the Soviet Union's leaders as ideological revolutionaries. Stalin wanted to make Russia as a great power with diplomatic, economic and military resources.

Soviet foreign policy in the late 1940s, then, was categorized by a steady bellicosity, and the application of persistent pressure on politically delicate areas. Eastern Europe quickly belonged to Stalin, as did East Germany, and in February 1948 Stalinist forces held power in Czechoslovakia. In the 1948, Stalin ordered a blockade of West Berlin, which was controlled by the Allies, only succeeded to recall their hold there via a patchwork airlift from West Germany. By the late 1940s, the Cold War was at its peak. Indeed, Stalin met opposition even in Eastern Europe: Marshal Tito, the Communist leader of Yugoslavia, argued sharply with Stalin in 1948, and broke from the Soviet bloc.

Given below is a timeline of the events between 1945 and 1953:

1945 – Soviet Union and the Allies reached an understanding on post-war spheres of influence in Europe during the Yalta and Potsdam summit conferences. Each power was allotted its own zone, including a section of Berlin, which was placed under Four-Power Control. The decision was also taken to lay the foundation of the United Nations.

In August 1945 Soviet Union declared war on Japan, eventually annexing the southern half of Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands.

1948-49 – Berlin blockade: The USSR, which had been occupied twice by Germany, was concerned at the idea of a robust Germany. Stalin was concerned that the Western powers would force the making of a sole capitalist Germany, by uniting their zones together and overwhelming the East. The allies wanted a sturdy, democratic Germany acting as a buffer against the communist states of Eastern Europe. It was when western countries delivered much needed food and supplies to the city of Berlin through the air because all other routes were blocked by the Soviet Union. In contrast, Stalin sought to deteriorate Germany as a reprimand for the war. He tried to rebuild the USSR by robbing German industrial technology and make communism look good to the Germans. Soviet Union failed to prevent supplies from reaching the sectors of Berlin occupied by Western forces.

1949 – In 1949, the Soviet Union tested its first atomic bomb; and recognized the Communist government in China.

1950 – During Mao's visit to the Soviet Union in the winter of 1949, Chairman Mao Zedong suggested to Stalin that a new treaty be signed by the two countries to substitute the outdated Sino-Soviet Treaty. Subsequently, Premier Zhou Enlai

led a Chinese Government Delegation to the Soviet Union for the negotiations. On 14 February 1950, the two sides signed the ‘Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and mutual Assistance’ and other agreements. On February 14, 1950, the Soviet Union and China signed the ‘Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and mutual Assistance’ and other agreements. It remained in force for a term of thirty years.

1950-53 – Eruption of Korean War saw relations between the Soviet Union and the West deteriorate noticeably.

1953 (March) – Stalin died and was succeeded by Georgi Malenkov as prime minister and by Nikita Khrushchev as first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party.

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Check Your Progress

4. How did many scholars describe the Cold War?
5. When did the Soviet Union test its first atomic bomb?
6. Who succeeded Stalin after his death?

11.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was a non-aggression pact between Nazi Germany and the USSR that permitted two powers to divide Poland between them. This pact was signed in Moscow on August 23, 1939 by German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop and Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov and was formally known as the Treaty of Non-Aggression between Germany and the USSR.
2. The cruel treatment of Soviet and German POWs meant that for many soldiers it was better to fight to the death rather than be arrested, which could mean agony, forced labour, or malnourishment.
3. When in 1937 Japan decided to declare war on China, America was contrary to this belligerence and replied with trade embargoes and economic sanctions. Without oil Japan’s military could not function and all war efforts would come to an end. Deliberations and discussions had been going on for months between Washington and Tokyo, without any solution, so Japan decided to attack first.
4. Many scholars described the Cold War as a battle between two diverse ideological parties and particularly construed the Soviet Union’s leaders as ideological revolutionaries.
5. In 1949, the Soviet Union tested its first atomic bomb.

6. Stalin died and was succeeded by Georgi Malenkov as prime minister and by Nikita Khrushchev as first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party.

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11.5 SUMMARY

- The 1930s was an era of powerful change in the Soviet Union as Joseph Stalin carried out a ruthless campaign of purges against political enemies — both actual and illusory.
- Hitler wanted to use Eastern Europe as a place to force “inferior” races to extract resources and to produce food to feed ethnic Germans, a policy known as “lebensraum” or “living space.”
- USSR and Nazi Germany signed a non-aggression agreement, on August 23, 1939, known as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, named after the two countries’ foreign ministers. Throughout secret talks over the pact, Eastern Europe was separated into spheres of influence, and the leaders decided to split control over the countries among themselves.
- The Soviet leaders were aware of the fact that Nazi Germany could invade, but they thought they would have sufficient time to formulate their military strategies. On June 22, 1941, Germany hurled an enormous invasion of the Soviet Union, surprising Stalin, who had overlooked warnings from Western leaders that an attack was impending. The invasion, known as Operation Barbarossa, drove deep into Soviet territory.
- Leningrad grieved a devastating, eight hundred seventy-two-day siege during which more than a million citizens died from ferocity and famishment.
- On December 7, 1941, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, bringing the United States into the war. The US entry meant more German possessions were needed to fight rising allied pressure on the Western Front.
- Stalin overturned some of his international communist pomposity in an attempt to stir up Russian nationalism, claiming the Red Army was fighting a “Great Patriotic War,” a name that invoked the Russian Empire’s defeat of Napoleon in 1812.
- In 1944 Soviet forces were advancing into Poland. By October they had reached Warsaw. In January 1945 Red Army troops entered Germany and by May had encircled Berlin. On May 8 Germany surrendered.
- The price of Soviet victory in Second World War was enormous. More than thirteen percent of the population had been slain and twenty-five million were displaced by the end of the war.
- Upon defeat Germany was required to give up the territories it had seized before it conquered the Soviet Union, including Czechoslovakia, Hungary,

and the western part of Poland. The Soviet Union, however, kept the eastern piece of Poland it had taken in accordance with the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, integrating it into the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.

- Russia rejoices Victory Day each year on May 9.
- In a foreign policy realm, Stalin was an accurate leader based on a cold calculation, not philosophical leader based on radical ideology. Stalin's speech and words were mainly ideological radical terms. However, his actions, foreign policy, always were based on realism.
- On February 14, 1950, the Soviet Union and China signed the 'Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and mutual Assistance' and other agreements. It remained in force for a term of thirty years.

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11.6 KEY WORDS

- **Lebensraum:** It refers to the territory which a group, state, or nation believes is needed for its natural development.
- **Operation Barbarossa:** It was the code name for the Axis powers incursion of the Soviet Union, which started on Sunday, 22 June 1941, during Second World War. The operation put into action Nazi Germany's ideological goal of conquering the western Soviet Union to proliferate it with Germans.
- **Red Army:** The Workers' and Peasants' Red Army, frequently shortened to Red Army was the army and the air force of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic and, after 1922, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The army was established immediately after the 1917 October Revolution.
- **Sphere of Influence:** In the field of international relations, a sphere of influence is an area or concept division over which a state or organization has a level of political, social, cultural, economic, or military exclusiveness.
- **Berlin Blockade:** It was an attempt in 1948 by the USSR to limit the capability of the United States, Great Britain and France to travel to their zones of Berlin, which lay within Russian-occupied East Germany.

11.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What did Hitler hope to attain by conquering the Soviet Union? Why did the invasion ultimately fail?
2. What was the Berlin Blockade?

Long-Answer Questions

1. 'The price of Soviet victory in Second World War was enormous.' Explain.
2. Discuss how the war affected the course of Soviet and post-Soviet history. How did it transform the Soviet Union?
3. Why have some former Soviet republics chosen to substitute Victory Day with other commemoratives? What is the legacy of Second World War in other earlier communist nations?

11.8 FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 12 RUSSIAN POLICY FROM 1953-1991

*Russian Policy from
1953-1991*

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Structure

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12.0 INTRODUCTION

While foreign policy is generally articulated to guard and encourage the national interest, in the case of Soviet Union a lot of stress was placed on ideological factors as well. The factors that influenced the Soviet domestic and foreign policy comprised of historical and traditional policies, geographical contemplations, internal political problems and the overall situation of the country under the diplomatic leaders. With the introduction of the five-year plan U.S.S.R. transformed from an agrarian and feeble country reliant on the whims of the capitalist countries, into an industrial and influential country, fully independent and self-regulating of the caprices of world capitalism. In this unit, we will study the domestic and foreign policies adopted from 1953 -1991 in Russia. We will also focus on the policy of Malenkov.

12.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the domestic and foreign policies adopted from 1953 -1991 in Russia

- Analyze the domestic and foreign policies adopted from 1953 -1991 in Russia
- Describe the policy of Malenkov

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12.2 MEANING OF DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICY

Domestic policy includes administrative decisions that are related to all issues and activity within a nation's borders. The term 'domestic policy' denotes plans and actions taken by a government to deal with questions and needs present within the country itself. A nation's form of government largely regulates how its domestic policy is formed and implemented. Under authoritarian governments, ruling group may pursue its domestic policy goals without the input or consent of the people being governed. But in democratic societies, the will of the people has a much larger impact.

In a democracy, the official design of domestic policy is primarily the concern of elected leaders, lawmaking bodies, and dedicated government agencies. But several other factors also play a role in the process. Electorates, for instance, regulate which individuals and political parties have the power to govern policy. The mass media allocate, opine, give information about domestic issues, and influence the beliefs and thoughts of the people. Lobbyists, activist groups, and other organizations also work to influence policy through a variety of methods.

The efficiency of domestic policy depends on the government bureaucracy (system of agencies) that puts laws and programs into action. In some cases, bureaucracies act slowly or incompetently, or fail to apply policies as they were initially intended. Domestic policy may also face challenges in the courts. In many countries, courts have the authority of judicial review, which allows them to strike down any legislative or executive action that they find in violation of the nation's constitution.

Foreign policy includes wide-ranging objectives that guide the activities and relationships of one country in its relations with other countries. The design of foreign policy is determined by domestic considerations, the policies or behaviour of other countries, or plans to develop accurate geopolitical designs. Foreign policies are drafted by governments to deal with international affairs efficiently. These policies have diverse goals intent on the country's interests. The purpose of it is to control the way the country intermingles with the rest of the world, to guarantee that domestic affairs are suitably protected from interlopers and foreign goals are achieved. Depending on a country's foremost agenda, which could be apolitical, economic or social, the foreign policy is moulded to promote that agenda, to gain supporters and to increase international consciousness and engagement. It also demarcates boundaries to keep allies near and enemies secluded by increasing or reducing relationships with each. The foreign policy had a vast range of topics

under its ambit such as military conflicts, international trade, war and international organizations, immigration policies, and international law to name a few.

There is no one precise definition with respect to foreign policy. Different scholars had given different definitions; however, they all are convinced that it is concerned with the behaviour of a state towards other states. Some of the important definitions are as follows:

- Hermann, for instance, defined foreign policy as ‘the discrete purposeful action that results from the political level decision of an individual or group of individuals. It is the observable artefact of a political level decision. It is not the decision, but a product of the decision’.
- George Modelski defines it as ‘the system of activities evolved by communities for changing the behaviour of other states and for adjusting their own activities to the international environment. Foreign policy must throw light on the ways states attempt to change and succeed in changing the behaviour of other states’.
- Keith R. Legg and James Morrison define ‘foreign policy as a set of explicit objectives with regards to the world beyond the borders of a given social unit, and a set of strategies and tactics designed to achieve these objectives’.

Check Your Progress

1. On what does the efficiency of domestic policy depend?
2. Name some of the topics that come under the purview of foreign policy.

12.3 DOMESTIC POLICY OF RUSSIA FROM 1953 -1991

In this section, we will discuss the domestic policy of Russia adopted by different leaders from 1953-1991.

12.3.1 Nikita Khrushchev (8 February 1955-14 October 1964)

Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev’s initial period of leadership has been extensively called the ‘Khrushchev Thaw’ for the way in which it broke away with the tyrannical reign of Joseph Stalin and executed new restructurings throughout the Soviet Union. Upon securing the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1958, Khrushchev immediately began to announce reforms and new tactics in both the domestic sphere and foreign policy. One of the areas targeted by Khrushchev domestically was Soviet industry, which had been brutally affected by the unbalanced structure of the Soviet economy and political interference. Though the reforms in civic education were fruitful in broadening entry into schooling and growing the number of graduates with higher levels of education, it also suffered several failures

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from 1958. The domestic economy was plagued by high levels of ‘drop-outs’, a deteriorating standard of education based on a fraught system and augmented teaching qualifications and the clumsiness of burdening industry and agriculture with large numbers of young people. Khrushchev endorsed reform of the Soviet system and commenced to place an importance on the production of consumer goods rather than on heavy industry.

Although the ‘Khrushchev Thaw’ epitomized a new potential for the Soviet Union and its place in the world, it was frequently plagued by unproductive reforms to essential problems and the inconsistencies that gradually emerged between Khrushchev’s stated purposes and his responses. In the case of industry and agriculture, Khrushchev’s reforms could not overcome the vital problems of inbuilt inadequacies and recognized approaches. In public education, reforms provided wider education and greater access to higher education, but it was hindered by the stride, scale and determination of the changes that Khrushchev implemented.

12.3.2 Leonid Brezhnev (14 October 1964 -10 November 1982)

While Brezhnev’s rule was categorized by partisan stability and notable foreign policy successes, it was also marked by exploitation, disorganization, financial stagnation, and speedily growing scientific gaps with the West. Brezhnev’s stabilization policy comprised of ending the liberalizing reforms of Khrushchev and suppressing cultural freedom. During the Khrushchev years, Brezhnev had supported the leader’s accusations of Stalin’s illogical rule, the restoration of many of the victims of Stalin’s purges, and the vigilant liberalization of Soviet intellectual and cultural policy, but as soon as he became leader, Brezhnev began to reverse this process, and developed a progressively authoritarian and regressive attitude. Around ten thousand radical and religious prisoners across the Soviet Union lived in critical conditions and suffered from malnutrition during mid-1970s. Most of the prisoners were considered by the Soviet state to be emotionally unfit and were hospitalized in mental asylums across the Soviet Union.

Brezhnev’s agricultural policy strengthened the traditional methods for shaping the collective farms. Khrushchev’s policy of integrating farms was continued by Brezhnev, because he shared Khrushchev’s belief that bigger kolkhozes would intensify productivity. While some areas improved during the Brezhnev era, most of the civilian services worsened and living conditions for Soviet citizens fell swiftly. Ailments were on the rise because of the crumbling healthcare system. Thousands of Moscow residents became destitute, most of them living in shacks, doorways and parked trams. Nutrition ceased to improve in the late 1970s, while regulation of staple food products returned to Sverdlovsk for instance.

12.3.3 Yuri Andropov (12 November 1982- 9 February 1984)

Yuri Andropov’s wide-ranging knowledge in both foreign and domestic affairs gave him a comprehensive base of backing within the upper echelons of the party. Andropov endeavoured to improve the nation’s economy by growing its

workforce's skill. He cracked down on Soviet labourers' lack of discipline by decreeing the arrest of absentee employees and penalties for tardiness. His intent was to counter negligence, intoxication, and bribery that he believed have a negative impact on the Soviet society. He was quick to discharge the most unsuccessful ministers and party officials. He also scrutinized the opportunity of minor economic restructuring to recover the management and inclusive competence of the Soviet economy.

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12.3.4 Mikhail Gorbachev (9 February 1984 -15 March 1990)

The two concepts which had majorly changed the Soviet society were Perestroika and Glasnost. Gorbachev's policy of Perestroika was applied to the economy, but was meant to denote the society in general. Perestroika was an idea of the economy meant to be decided by all-knowing authorities of the country for greater local sovereignty and driven by the market forces. Gorbachev stressed more upon domestic problems (economic condition) rather than the competition with the Western powers, and for the same purpose defence expenditure was diminished. Philosophies of researchers, officials, authors, and writers were increasingly applied, which were denounced during Stalin era, and a link was also established with the global culture, thoughts and science. He in his speeches had clearly and openly recognized the fact that the present system of the USSR is deteriorating: 'The economy is in a mess; we're behind in every area...The closer you look, the worse it is.' He also stated: 'Society is ripe for a change. If we back off now, society will not agree to a return. We have to make this process irreversible. If we do not do it, who will? If not now, when?'

The main objectives of Perestroika were reconstruction and to upgrade the use of modern know-how as well as robotics. Self-sufficiency of enterprises was increased, and worker's incomes got related to their performance. Soviet amalgamation into the global market and difficulties related to everyday items like grain, meat, and housing were meant to be resolute through application of Perestroika. Perestroika was introduced to eradicate the canons of the past and conventional ideological thinking of the leadership to generate a new view of the world. It was certified that the means should also be democratic to bring out the autonomous change in the society by Perestroika. It was problematic to change the conventional bureaucratic system while being a part of the system, even for Gorbachev. All aspects of human life were super centralized and controlled by the leadership above while subordinate follow the orders. Gorbachev tried to govern the 'black market but in reverse, it actually developed the people's distrust in the government's policy. The Soviet economy was deteriorating, and Gorbachev move toward the West for financial aid, which can be manifested as the failure of the Soviet government.

Glasnost was founded on the idea that truth can be initiated through deliberations and discussions among people, where everyone is underwriting a piece of reality. Gorbachev and his advisor, Alexander Yakovlev, presented Glasnost, to unveil the corruption and incompetence of Brezhnev's policies. The

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Russian public was always aware of this fact but the Kremlin failed to recognize and acknowledge the same. The foundations of the totalitarian system were pulled to pieces and democratic changes started to take place. Various principles were included in Glasnost like the free general election, allowing real choice, freedom of the press and multiparty system. The separation of power, representative bodies of government was also established along with human rights and freedom of conscience. Glasnost introduced the reforms for liberalization of mass media, reconstruction of apparatus, and superior flexibility in the organizations and mechanisms, most appreciated in the Western and Eastern Europe. 'Moscow Times' was the forerunner of Glasnost that time. Non-official advice was also entertained in the development of foreign policy of Soviet Union, just because of glasnost. Glasnost was the psychological alteration of Soviet society towards democratization and introduction of humanist values of civilization. It was meant for openness, liberty of information and expression of their party, religious opinions, including the freedom of censure. Glasnost was the backbone of Perestroika, for without the emancipation of society the economic change was not possible. However, Glasnost further undermined Soviet federalism and contributed to the breakup of the Soviet Union.

Check Your Progress

3. Why was Nikita Khrushchev's initial period extensively called the 'Khrushchev Thaw'?
4. What was the agricultural policy of Brezhnev?
5. What were the two concepts which majorly changed Soviet society in the 1980s?
6. Who was the advisor of Gorbachev?

12.4 FOREIGN POLICY OF RUSSIA FROM 1953 -1991

In this section, we will discuss the foreign policy of Russia adopted by different leaders from 1953-1991.

12.4.1 Khrushchev

The reconciliation with Tito and Khrushchev's new approach to the Soviet bloc had widespread effects throughout Europe. The approach to foreign policy that Khrushchev advocated was based on the understanding that the 'peaceful coexistence' of the Soviet Union and the US was possible. Closer relations was proposed as an imperative, with Khrushchev arguing that the 'very survival of the Soviet Union and ... socialism did not depend on petty satraps in Eastern Europe or even on Mao Zedong, but on the USA'. Hopes for co-existence and limited

conflicts between the two superpowers suffered a blow when the administration of John Fitzgerald Kennedy took office in 1961. From the beginning of his term, Kennedy regarded the capacities of the Soviet Union by the frequent bluffs of Khrushchev and immediately responded with the implementation of a massive 'crash missile-building program and [the introduction of] a strategic doctrine (flexible response) that improved the US capacity to fight limited foreign wars'. Realizing that his bluffs had been called, Khrushchev immediately searched for the means to counter the growing missile superiority of the US. The solution would form the basis of the Cuban Missile Crisis, as Khrushchev established a base for nuclear weapons in Cuba to counterbalance the growing superiority of American Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles. In the negotiations that followed, Khrushchev attempted to intimidate Kennedy until they finally reached a compromise, with Khrushchev withdrawing the missiles from Cuba in return for Kennedy removing those in Italy and Turkey. It had enormous effects within the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, damaging Khrushchev's advocacy of 'peaceful coexistence' but also forcing him 'to repeal his massive troop cut and [increase] defence spending in order to counter the Kennedy defence build-up'.

In relations to the Soviet bloc, Khrushchev was forced to move against his previous statements concerning a more welcoming response to differences when discontent in Poland and Hungary represented a challenge to unity in the Soviet Union. The failings of the doctrine of 'peaceful coexistence' with the United States, which first faltered with Eisenhower before being dismantled by Kennedy, meant that Khrushchev needed to accept the cost of military build-up to balance the competition. It cannot be forgotten however that Khrushchev had inherited an empire that was close to dysfunctional and required an immediate response to demands for reforms after Stalin. The direction that Khrushchev wanted to move the Soviet Union represented the possibility for a new era, but imperatives such as unity in the Soviet Bloc, the need to effectively challenge the United States and the structure of production could not be overcome.

12.4.2 Leonid Brezhnev

During his eighteen years as Leader of the USSR, Brezhnev's signature foreign policy revolution was the elevation of détente. While sharing some similarities with approaches pursued during the Khrushchev Thaw, Brezhnev's policy knowingly varied from Khrushchev's in two ways. The first was that it was more inclusive and extensive in its aims, and comprised signing agreements on crisis prevention, East-West trade, arms control, European security and human rights. The second part of the policy was based on the reputation of levelling the military strength of the United States and the Soviet Union. At the 1972 Moscow Summit, Brezhnev and U.S. President Richard Nixon signed the SALT I Treaty which gesticulated the beginning of 'détente', a proclaimed 'new era of peaceful coexistence'. Brezhnev Doctrine which cautioned that the Soviet Union would act to uphold its hegemony in Eastern Europe. Soviet suppression of the reform movement

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condensed obvious signs of disobedience on the part of Romania and aided as a threatening example to the Polish Solidarity trade union movement in 1980. But it also assisted disenchant communist parties in Western Europe to the degree that by 1977 most of the leading parties comprised Eurocommunism, a realistic approach to ideology that freed them to follow political programs autonomous of Soviet dictates.

The Soviet Union engaged ties with Syria and maintained Palestinians' claims to an independent state. But Soviet status among moderate Muslim states suffered in the 1980s as a result of Soviet military activities in Afghanistan. Trying to shore up a communist government in that country, Brezhnev sent in Soviet armed forces in December 1979, but a big part of the Afghan people resisted both the occupiers and the Marxist Afghan regime. The resulting war in Afghanistan continued to be a vague problem for the Soviet Union at the time of Brezhnev's death in 1982. But even during the period of détente, the Soviet Union augmented weapons deployments, with the result that by the end of the 1970s it attained nuclear parity with—or even dominance to—the United States. The Soviet Union also strengthened its disapproval of the NATO alliance in an attempt to wane Western unity. Although a second SALT agreement was signed by Brezhnev and President Jimmy Carter in Vienna in 1979, after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan the Carter administration withdrew the agreement from consideration by the United States Senate, and détente effectively came to an end. Also, in reaction to the Soviet involvement in Afghanistan, the United States imposed a grain restraint on the Soviet Union and boycotted the Moscow Summer Olympics in 1980. Strains between the United States and the Soviet Union continued up to Brezhnev's death.

12.4.3 Yuri Andropov

Yuri Andropov faced a series of foreign policy crises: the desperate situation of the Soviet army in Afghanistan, dangerous revolt in Poland, mounting hostility with China, the polarization menace of war in the Middle East, and the civil strife in Ethiopia and South Africa. Above all, the gravest threat was the 'Second Cold War' hurled by American President Ronald Reagan. In foreign policy, the struggle in Afghanistan continued even though Andropov, who now felt the attack was a mistake, unenthusiastically explored options for a negotiated withdrawal. Andropov's rule was also marked by deteriorating relations with the United States.

12.4.4 Mikhail Gorbachev

Gorbachev new outlook had definitely helped the USSR to influence the decades-long hostility between the East and the West. He had made possible for Soviet Union to collaborate with other nations for greater welfare of all humanity. Mutual respect for rights and interests of one another and acceptable solution of a problem through discussions was also introduced through new thinking. Even when Gorbachev called for the nuclear-free world, it was well-thought-out as a propaganda in the West and even in the Soviet Union to some degree. Under Gorbachev's diplomacy

the Soviet-US relation also began to progress. The enhancement of the US-Soviet relation was mainly depended on regional conflicts, arms control, and taking care of human rights. Relation with the West or Europe improved during the Gorbachev period mainly because of INF treaty and collapse of communism in Eastern Europe during 1989-90. The relations were further strengthened when George H. W. Bush and Mikhail Gorbachev met in Moscow to sign The Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START-I) with the objective of eradicating the numbers of the intercontinental ballistic missile. Under Gorbachev's foreign policy, the USSR did not leave its allies in the Third World (South Yemen, Vietnam, and Cuba) for their strategic importance and political prestige (Ethiopia, Angola). The USSR's effort to progress relationships with some of the major Third World countries i.e. Brazil, India, Argentina, Nigeria, and Mexico was progressive through bilateral relations and trade, rather than cultivating revolutionary forces in those countries to gain influence. The USSR would also assist to resolve the regional conflicts in the Third World, for example, the Cambodian and Angolan crisis, to join hands with other superpowers to find a suitable explanation of the same.

After the August 1991 coup attempt, Mikhail Gorbachev returned to his office which was extensively cherished by the western powers as a re-establishment of the legal authority. Only after a short period of time, the altering political context in the Soviet Union made Gorbachev toothless and feeble. No Western powers questioned the legitimacy of Minsk Declaration, which was signed by Republican leaders, and in which Gorbachev and his representatives were not allowed to participate. On December 1, 1991, the Ukrainian election took place that marked a critical event in the breakdown of the Soviet Union. Soon after the coup took place under Yeltsin's leadership, a chain of reaction of the declaration of independence also began in the Soviet Union by the non-Russian republics. It was in December when the USSR ceased to exist, and on 25 December Gorbachev resigned as the State president and handed over the power to Yeltsin.

12.5 POLICY UNDER MALENKOV

Malenkov was one of the few old-time Bolsheviks who had survived Stalin's bloody purges of the 1930s. He was a quiet figure, who preferred working in the background, Malenkov was not taken seriously by many of his peers in the Soviet government, but under Stalin's watchful eye he proceeded to go up the Communist Party hierarchy throughout the 1930s and 1940s. By the late-1940s it was widely assumed that he would succeed Stalin. When Stalin died in March 1953, Malenkov took the position of premier and first secretary of the Communist Party. It appeared that he might have a reformist streak, as he called for cuts in military spending and eased up on political repression in the Soviet Union and the eastern bloc nations. These actions might have proved his undoing. In just two weeks, his main political opponent in the Communist Party, Nikita Khrushchev, had organized a coalition of political and military leaders against Malenkov and took over as first secretary.

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Malenkov began with a historical review of Soviet industrial development in which he pointed with pride to the rapid growth of heavy industry. He considered the latter as a cornerstone of industrialization and, therefore, of primary importance and declared:

We will also continue in the future to develop heavy industry in every possible way ... and to develop and perfect our transportation system. We must always remember that the heavy industry is the very basis of our socialist economy, because without its development it is impossible to secure the further growth of light industry, the growth of productive forces in agriculture, and to strengthen the defence of our country.

Check Your Progress

7. In which ways Brezhnev's policy knowingly varied from Khrushchev's?
8. What were the foreign policy crises faced by Yuri Andropov?

12.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. The efficiency of domestic policy depends on the government bureaucracy (system of agencies) that puts laws and programs into action.
2. The foreign policy has a vast range of topics under its ambit such as military conflicts, international trade, war and international organizations, immigration policies, and international law to name a few.
3. Nikita Khrushchev's initial period of leadership has been extensively called the 'Khrushchev Thaw' for the way in which it broke away with the tyrannical reign of Joseph Stalin and executed new restructurings throughout the Soviet Union.
4. Brezhnev's agricultural policy strengthened the traditional methods for shaping the collective farms. Khrushchev's policy of integrating farms was continued by Brezhnev, because he shared Khrushchev's belief that bigger kolkhozes would intensify productivity.
5. The two concepts which majorly changed Soviet society in the 1980s were Perestroika and Glasnost.
6. The advisor of Gorbachev was Alexander Yakovlev.
7. While sharing some similarities with approaches pursued during the Khrushchev Thaw, Brezhnev's policy knowingly varied from Khrushchev's in two ways. The first was that it was more inclusive and extensive in its aims, and comprised signing agreements on crisis prevention, East-West trade, arms control, European security and human rights. The second part of the policy was based on the reputation of levelling the military strength of the United States and the Soviet Union.

8. Yuri Andropov faced a series of foreign policy crises: the desperate situation of the Soviet army in Afghanistan, dangerous revolt in Poland, mounting hostility with China, the polarization menace of war in the Middle East, and the civil strife in Ethiopia and South Africa.

*Russian Policy from
1953-1991*

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12.7 SUMMARY

- Domestic policy includes administrative decisions that are related to all issues and activity within a nation's borders. The term 'domestic policy' denotes plans and actions taken by a government to deal with questions and needs present within the country itself.
- The efficiency of domestic policy depends on the government bureaucracy (system of agencies) that puts laws and programs into action. In some cases, bureaucracies act slowly or incompetently, or fail to apply policies as they were initially intended.
- Foreign policy includes wide-ranging objectives that guide the activities and relationships of one country in its relations with other countries.
- Depending on a country's foremost agenda, which could be apolitical, economic or social, the foreign policy is moulded to promote that agenda, to gain supporters and to increase international consciousness and engagement.
- There is no one precise definition with respect to foreign policy. Different scholars had given different definitions; however, they all are convinced that it is concerned with the behaviour of a state towards other states.
- Nikita Khrushchev's initial period of leadership has been extensively called the 'Khrushchev Thaw' for the way in which it broke away with the tyrannical reign of Joseph Stalin and executed new restructurings throughout the Soviet Union.
- One of the areas targeted by Khrushchev domestically was Soviet industry, which had been brutally affected by the unbalanced structure of the Soviet economy and political interference.
- Though the reforms in civic education were fruitful in broadening entry into schooling and growing the number of graduates with higher levels of education, it also suffered several failures from 1958.
- While Brezhnev's rule was categorized by partisan stability and notable foreign policy successes, it was also marked by exploitation, disorganization, financial stagnation, and speedily growing scientific gaps with the West.
- Yuri Andropov's wide-ranging knowledge in both foreign and domestic affairs gave him a comprehensive base of backing within the upper echelons

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of the party. He endeavoured to improve the nation's economy by growing its workforce's skill.

- Gorbachev's policy of Perestroika was applied to the economy, but was meant to denote the society in general. Perestroika was an idea of the economy meant to be decided by all-knowing authorities of the country for greater local sovereignty and driven by the market forces.
- Glasnost was founded on the idea that truth can be initiated through deliberations and discussions among people, where everyone is underwriting a piece of reality.
- The approach to foreign policy that Khrushchev advocated was based on the understanding that the 'peaceful coexistence' of the Soviet Union and the US was possible.
- During his eighteen years as Leader of the USSR, Brezhnev's signature foreign policy revolution was the elevation of détente.
- Yuri Andropov faced a series of foreign policy crises: the desperate situation of the Soviet army in Afghanistan, dangerous revolt in Poland, mounting hostility with China, the polarization menace of war in the Middle East, and the civil strife in Ethiopia and South Africa.
- Gorbachev new outlook had definitely helped the USSR to influence the decades-long hostility between the East and the West. He had made possible for Soviet Union to collaborate with other nations for greater welfare of all humanity.
- After the August 1991 coup attempt, Mikhail Gorbachev returned to his office which was extensively cherished by the western powers as a re-establishment of the legal authority. Only after a short period of time, the altering political context in the Soviet Union made Gorbachev toothless and feeble.
- Malenkov was one of the few old-time Bolsheviks who had survived Stalin's bloody purges of the 1930s. He was a quiet figure, who preferred working in the background.

12.8 KEY WORDS

- **Electorates:** It refers to the people who are eligible to vote in an election, especially their number e.g. the term size of (the) electorate.
- **Kolkhozes:** It refers to collective farms in the former Soviet Union.
- **Socialist Economy:** It is an economy in which all the factors of production are state-owned. Machines, factories, manufacturing plants, capital, etc. are owned by a community in control of the State.

12.9 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What are the different definitions of foreign policy?
2. Write a short note on the domestic policy of Khrushchev and Brezhnev.
3. Briefly explain the policies of Malenkov.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Explain the difference and the relationship between domestic and foreign policy.
2. Describe the two concepts of Perestroika and Glasnost adopted by Gorbachev.
3. Explicate Mikhail Gorbachev's foreign policy in detail.

12.10 FURTHER READINGS

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BLOCK - V
KHRUSHCHEV AND COLD WAR

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**UNIT 13 KHRUSHCHEV, BULGANIN,
BREZHNEV, AND
GORBACHEV**

Structure

- 13.0 Introduction
- 13.1 Objectives
- 13.2 Nikita Khrushchev
- 13.3 Nikolai Bulganin
- 13.4 Policy under Brezhnev and Gorbachev
 - 13.4.1 Policy under Brezhnev
 - 13.4.2 Gorbachev Era and the End of Communist Rule
- 13.5 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 13.6 Summary
- 13.7 Key Words
- 13.8 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 13.9 Further Readings

13.0 INTRODUCTION

The Soviet Union traditionally had a de facto leader during its sixty-nine-year existence who would not actually be head of state but would rule when holding a position such as Premier or General Secretary. Under the 1977 Constitution, the head of government was the chairman of the Council of Ministers, or Premier, and the head of state was the chairman of the Supreme Soviet Presidium. The office of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers was equivalent to that of the First World Prime Minister, while the office of the President of the Presidium was comparable to that of the President. The post of General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party became synonymous with the head of the Soviet Union after the consolidation of power by Joseph Stalin in the 1920s, as this post governed both the Communist Party and the Soviet government indirectly by party membership and by the practise of a single person occupying two top positions in the party and in the Soviet government. Under Stalin, the post of General Secretary was repealed in 1952 and Nikita Khrushchev later re-established it under the name of First Secretary. Leonid Brezhnev changed back the designation of the office to its original name in 1966. In this unit, we will discuss some of these leaders namely, Khrushchev, Bulganin, Brezhnev and Gorbachev.

13.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the Soviet leaders Khrushchev and Bulganin
- Describe the policy of Brezhnev
- Analyze the policy of Gorbachev

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13.2 NIKITA KHRUSHCHEV

Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev was born in Kalinovka, a small Russian village near the Ukrainian border on April 15, 1894. From 1953 to 1964 he served as the First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and Premier of the Soviet Union from 1958 to 1964. He became a close associate of Stalin, the assertive leader of the Soviet Union since 1924. In March 1953, soon after the death of Stalin, there was a power struggle among diverse factions within the party. In 1955, he planned the removal of Premier Georgi Malenkov and substituted him with an ally, Nikolai Bulganin. Khrushchev thwarted a Malenkov-led coup effort in June 1957 and took over the premiership, the subsequent March. Khrushchev's leadership was marked by a vital change for the Soviet Union. He followed a course of reform and stunned delegates of the Twenty Party Congress on February 23, 1956 by making his eminent Secret Speech disparaging the 'cult of personality' that surrounded Stalin and condemning Stalin of the crimes committed during the Great Purges. This effectually alienated Khrushchev from the more conventional elements of the Party, but he managed to overthrow what he termed the Anti-Party Group after they were unsuccessful in a bid to overthrow him from the party leadership in 1957. Khrushchev endorsed reform of the Soviet system and commenced to place an importance on the production of consumer goods rather than on heavy industry.

In 1959, during Richard Nixon's expedition to the Soviet Union, he took part in what was later known as the Kitchen Debate. Khrushchev's new-fangled defiance towards the West as an enemy instead of as an evil entity alienated Mao Zedong's China. The Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, too, would later be involved in a similar "cold war" generated by the Sino-Soviet Split in 1960. Khrushchev was regarded by his political enemies in the Soviet Union as a rude, distant peasant, with a reputation for disturbing speakers to abuse them. In his Secret Speech, he denounced Stalin for his personality cult and his regime for 'violation of Leninist norms of legality', marking the onset of the 'Khrushchev Thaw'. His era saw the various twist and turns in the political arena. Some of them are:

- Thawed the Cominform organization and reconciled with Josip Broz Tito, which had finished the Informbiro period in the antiquity of Yugoslavia.

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- Established the Warsaw Pact.
- Hungarian Revolution was crushed in 1956
- Relinquished Crimea from RSFSR to Ukrainian SSR, 1955.
- Reinforced Egypt during the 1956 Suez Crisis.
- Upheld the doctrine of 'Peaceful co-existence' in the foreign policy, together with the slogan 'To catch up and overtake the West' in internal policy and economics.
- Sino-Soviet divide activated by Khrushchev's talks with the USA and rejection to support Chinese nuclear program.
- Introduced the Soviet space program that launched Sputnik I and Yuri Gagarin, getting a head start in the space race. Partaken in discussions with US President John F. Kennedy for a joint moon program, discussions that ended with Kennedy's assassination in 1963.
- Annulled a summit meeting over the Gary Powers U-2 incident.
- Introduced the placement of nuclear missiles in Cuba, which led to the Cuban missile crisis.
- Reinforced the Iron Curtain by approving the closure of the border around West Berlin, which led to East Germany's construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961.

13.3 NIKOLAI BULGANIN

Nikolai Bulganin was a prominent Soviet politician, who served as the Minister of Defence (1953-55) and Prime Minister (1955-58). In the year 1917, he joined the Bolshevik Party and in 1918, he was employed into the Cheka, which is the Bolshevik regime's political police and served until 1922. After the Russian Civil War, he served as an industrial manager, employed in the electricity administration until 1927, and as director of the Moscow electricity supply in 1927-31. He had also served as a chairman of the executive committee of the Moscow City Soviet from 1931 to 1937.

During the Second World War, Bulganin played a chief role in the government and Red Army, although he was not once a front-line commander. He was a member of the State Committee of Defence and was given the rank of Colonel-General. In 1944, he was appointed as the Deputy Commissar for Defence, under Stalin, and aided as Stalin's principal agent in the High Command of the Red Army. Later on, in 1946, he became Minister for the Armed Forces and was promoted to the rank of Marshal of the Soviet Union. He also became a candidate member of the Politburo of the Communist Party. From 1947-1950, he was again Deputy Prime Minister of the Soviet Union, under Stalin. He became a full member of the Politburo in 1948.

After Stalin's death in March 1953, Bulganin moved into the first rank of the Soviet leadership, being chosen for the key post of Defence Minister. He was a supporter of Nikita Khrushchev during his power scuffle with Georgy Malenkov, and in February 1955 he succeeded Malenkov as Prime Minister of the Soviet Union. He was usually seen as an ally of Khrushchev's programme of reform and destalinization. He and Khrushchev together toured Britain, India, and Yugoslavia, where they were known in the press as 'the B and K show'.

By 1957, however, Bulganin had come to share the doubts held about Khrushchev's liberal policies by the conservative group (the so-called 'Anti-Party Group') led by Vyacheslav Molotov. In June, when the conservatives tried to remove Khrushchev from power at a meeting of the Politburo, Bulganin hesitated between the two camps. When the conservatives were overpowered and removed from power, Bulganin endured for a while. But in March 1958, at a session of the Supreme Soviet, Khrushchev forced his resignation. In September, Bulganin was removed from the Central Committee and deprived of the title of Marshal. He was shipped to Stavropol as chairman of Regional Economic Council, a nominal position, and in February 1960, he was retired on a pension.

Check Your Progress

1. When and where was Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev born?
2. Who was Nikolai Bulganin?

13.4 POLICY UNDER BREZHNEV AND GORBACHEV

In this section, we will learn the policy of Brezhnev and Gorbachev.

13.4.1 Policy under Brezhnev

After Khrushchev's departure, three men—Alexei Kosygin, Leonid Brezhnev, and Nikolai Podgorny—shared power in the USSR. Kosygin was a leading figure and the chief spokesperson on foreign affairs, while Brezhnev and Podgorny looked after home affairs. In the early 1970s, Kosygin was eclipsed by Brezhnev after a disagreement over economic policies. By 1977, Brezhnev had established his firm control over USSR and he remained leader until his death in November 1982. His policies were more or less similar to those of Khrushchev. Brezhnev's economic policies maintained wage differentials and profit incentives and ensured economic growth, although the rate of growth was slow. The system remained strongly centralized with Brezhnev reluctant to take any major initiatives. By 1982, much of the industry in the Soviet Union was outdated and needed new technology for an increase in production. There was growing concern about the failure of the coal and oil industries to increase output. Low agriculture yield was still a major problem.

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In 1981, the harvest was disastrous which pushed the USSR into a humiliating position of depending upon the import of American wheat. It has been estimated that in the 1980s while a farmer in the USA produced enough to feed seventy-five people, his Russian counterpart managed to grow only enough to feed ten people as the productivity levels were appallingly low.

Brezhnev's record on human rights was not impressive either. Though he claimed to be in favour of the Helsinki Agreement and made important concessions on human rights in the USSR, very little progress was made in this regard. Groups were set up to check whether the terms of the agreement were being followed, but the authorities put them under intense pressure. Their members were arrested, imprisoned, exiled or deported and finally the groups were dissolved altogether in 1982. As far as the foreign policy was concerned, the Brezhnev administration worked towards détente (relaxation of tension), but after 1979, relations with the West deteriorated sharply as a result of the invasion of Afghanistan. Brezhnev continued to advocate disarmament but presided over a rapid increase in Soviet armed forces particularly the navy and the new SS-20 missiles. That further worsened the relation of USSR with the NATO countries. After Brezhnev's death in 1982, the Soviet Union was ruled for a short period by two elderly and ailing politicians until 1985.

13.4.2 Gorbachev Era and the End of Communist Rule

Mikhail Gorbachev, at the age of fifty-four, became the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in March 1985. He was a dynamic leader and was determined to transform and revitalize Russia after the depressing years following Khrushchev's fall. In order to revive the sluggish Soviet economy, Mikhail Gorbachev initiated a process of liberalization in the 1980s in the erstwhile totalitarian, communist one-party state. He intended to achieve this by modernizing and streamlining the Communist Party with new policies of *Glasnost* (openness) and *Perestroika* (restructuring through economic and social reforms). *Perestroika* literally means 'restructuring'. Scholars argue that this policy was one of the reasons behind the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. This policy rendered more powers and independence to the various ministries. It also led to social unrest and anarchy in the Soviet Union. Gorbachev lifted ban on many literary texts, and offered a new kind of freedom to the citizens of the USSR. Gorbachev sought to bring an element of democratization in the Soviet political system. The new thinking soon made an impact on foreign affairs, with initiatives on détente, relations with China, withdrawal from Afghanistan, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and ultimately the ending of the Cold War in early 1990s.

Gorbachev did not want to end communism, he wanted to replace the existing system which was basically Stalinist with a social system that was humane and democratic. However, this liberalization led to the emergence of long-repressed nationalist movements and ethnic disputes within the diverse republics of the Soviet Union. As a result, Gorbachev did not achieve the same amount success at home

as he did abroad. His policies failed to provide quick results. The revolutions of 1989 led to the fall of the Socialist states allied to the Soviet Union and pressure mounted on Gorbachev to introduce greater democracy and autonomy for the Soviet Union's constituent republics. Under Gorbachev's leadership, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union subsequently introduced direct elections, formed a new central legislature and ended its ban on political parties. Although a March 1991 referendum showed a large majority of Soviet citizens voting to retain the Union, but its legitimacy was marred by a boycott from the Baltic republics. The legislatures of the Soviet republics began passing laws undermining the control of the central government and endorsing independence. These developments led to the collapse of Communism, the breakup of the USSR and the end of Gorbachev's own political career.

Some of the new policies of Gorbachev include:

- **Policy of Glasnost (openness):** Mikhail Gorbachev implemented the policy of Glasnost in the initial years of his rule and the impact was immediately observed in areas such as human rights and cultural affairs. Several well-known dissidents were released including Andrei Sakharov and his wife, who were allowed to return to the capital, Moscow, from internal exile in Gorky in December 1986. Leaders like Nikolai Bukharin who had been disgraced and executed during Stalin's purges of the 1930s were declared innocent of all crimes. Pravda was allowed to print articles criticizing Brezhnev for overreacting against dissidents and in January 1988, a new law was introduced to prevent dissidents from being sent to mental institutions. Important political events like the Nineteenth Party Conference in 1988 and the first session of the new Congress of People's Deputies were televised in May 1989. In matters of culture and media there were some startling developments. In May 1986, both the Union of Soviet Film-Makers and the Union of Writers were allowed to remove their reactionary heads and elect more independent minded leaders. Long banned anti-Stalin films and novels were shown and published, and preparations were made to publish works by the great poet, Osip Mandelstam, who died in a labour camp in 1938. There was a new freedom in news reporting. In April 1986, for example, the Chernobyl nuclear disaster which killed many people and released a nuclear cloud that drifted across Western Europe was discussed with unprecedented frankness. The aim of this new approach were to use the media to publicize the inefficiency and corruption which the government was so anxious to stamp out, mould public opinion and mobilize support for the new policies, etc.
- **Policy of economic affairs:** Under Gorbachev, important changes were made in the economic affairs of the USSR. In November 1986, Gorbachev announced that: '1987 will be the year for broad applications of the new methods of economic management.' Gorbachev introduced Perestroika,

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meaning restructuring, in an effort to introduce some market reforms in the Soviet economy. It is important to note that Gorbachev did not want to end the command economy, but rather wanted to make Socialism as it was practiced in the USSR more efficient. Small-scale private enterprises such as family restaurants, family businesses, making cloths or handicrafts or providing services such as car or TV repairs, painting and decorating, private tuition, workers co-operatives up to a maximum of fifty workers were to be allowed. The important motive behind this reform was to provide competition for the slow and inefficient services provided by the state, in the hope of stimulating rapid economic growth. The second motive was the need to provide alternative employment as patterns of employment changed over the decades with increased automation and introduction of computers in factories and offices leading to a decline in demand for manual and clerical works. Another important change was that responsibility for quality control throughout the industry as a whole was taken over by independent state bodies rather than factory management. The most important part of the reform was the June 1987 law on state enterprises. This law removed the central planners' total control over raw materials, production quotas and trade, thus decontrolled factories and made them more efficient. According to some scholars, the introduction of Perestroika exacerbated the economic, social and political tensions inside the Soviet Union and thus was the chief reason for the revolutions of Eastern Europe and the eventual disintegration of the Soviet Union.

- **Policy on political changes:** Gorbachev unveiled the future policy on political reforms in the country and announced the move towards internal democracy in the party in January 1987. As per the policy, local Soviet members were to be elected by the people instead of being appointed by the members of the local Soviets. The plan also emphasised on secret elections for the top party posts and elections in factories to choose managers. A year later, dramatic changes were announced in the central government. Earlier, the Supreme Soviet of about 1450 deputies only met for two weeks each year. Its function was to elect two smaller bodies such as the Presidium of 33 members and the Council of Ministers consisting of 71 members. These two smaller bodies took all the important decisions and implemented all the policies. As per the new plan, the Supreme Soviet was to be replaced by a Congress of People's Deputies of 2250 members whose main function was to elect a new and smaller Supreme Soviet of 450 representatives, which would ensure a proper working Parliament, sitting for about eight months a year. The Chairman of the Supreme Soviet was to be the head of the state. As per Gorbachev's new plan, elections took place and in May 1989, the first Congress of People's Deputies met. In December 1989, during the second session, it was decided that reserved seats for the Communist Party should be abolished. In March 1990, Mikhail

Gorbachev was elected as the President of Soviet Union with two councils to advise and help him. One council comprised of his own personal advisers and the second one contained representatives from the 15 republics. These two new bodies completely replaced the old system with the Communist Party on the verge of losing its privileged position.

- **Changes in foreign policy:** Under Gorbachev, the Soviet Union's foreign policy underwent significant changes. He avoided confrontations with the USA and tried to promote co-operation in the economic sphere. In the 1980s, the United States, under the Reagan Doctrine initiated by President Ronald Reagan, had embarked on a plan of massive military expansion, including the testing of new weapon systems like Strategic Defense Initiative, also known as the 'Star Wars' project. In view of the growing tension in the USSR and fast deteriorating economic situation and knowing that the Soviet Union could not compete with the NATO nations in an arms race, Gorbachev tried to reach an understanding on disarmament. Some of the important steps adopted by him in this regard included the agreement on INF and Reduction on Strategic Offensive Weapons that concluded in 1986-87 and the agreement concerning elimination of chemical weapons from earth's surface within 10 years. The Soviet Union also staged a withdrawal from Afghanistan and avoided unnecessary involvement in the Middle East. In fact by 1990-91, the Soviet Union started playing a secondary role to United States, as was evident during the Iraq war, following occupation of Kuwait. With regard to the countries of Eastern Europe, the position of the Soviet Union considerably changed due to the emergence of liberal governments in these countries and the consequent subsiding of ideological conflict.

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Check Your Progress

3. Till what year did Brezhnev remain a leader of USSR?
4. Why was Russia dependent on the import of American wheat in 1981?
5. What was the effect of Glasnost on Nikolai Bukharin?

13.5 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev was born in Kalinovka, a small Russian village near the Ukrainian border on April 15, 1894.
2. Nikolai Bulganin was a prominent Soviet politician, who served as the Minister of Defence (1953-55) and Prime Minister (1955-58).
3. By 1977, Leonid Brezhnev had established his firm control over USSR and he remained leader until his death in November 1982.

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4. In 1981, the harvest was disastrous which pushed the USSR into a humiliating position of depending upon the import of American wheat.
5. Under the policy of Glasnost, leaders like Nikolai Bukharin who had been disgraced and executed during Stalin's purges of the 1930s were declared innocent of all crimes.

13.6 SUMMARY

- Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev was born in Kalinovka, a small Russian village near the Ukrainian border on April 15, 1894.
- In March 1953, soon after the death of Stalin, there was a power struggle among diverse factions within the party. In 1955, Khrushchev planned the removal of Premier Georgi Malenkov and substituted him with an ally, Nikolai Bulganin.
- Khrushchev endorsed reform of the Soviet system and commenced to place an importance on the production of consumer goods rather than on heavy industry.
- Nikolai Bulganin was a protuberant Soviet politician, served as Minister of Defence (1953-55) and Prime Minister (1955-58).
- After the Russian Civil War, Bulganin served as an industrial manager, employed in the electricity administration until 1927, and as director of the Moscow electricity supply in 1927-31. He had also served as a chairman of the executive committee of the Moscow City Soviet from 1931 to 1937.
- After Khrushchev's departure, three men – Alexei Kosygin, Leonid Brezhnev and Nikolai Podgorny – shared power in the USSR.
- By 1977, Brezhnev had established his firm control over USSR and he remained leader until his death in November 1982.
- Brezhnev's policies were more or less similar to those of Khrushchev. His economic policies maintained wage differentials and profit incentives and ensured economic growth, although the rate of growth was slow.
- After Brezhnev's death in 1982, the Soviet Union was ruled for a short period by two elderly and ailing politicians until 1985.
- Mikhail Gorbachev, at the age of fifty-four, became the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in March 1985.
- Gorbachev initiated a process of liberalisation in the 1980s in the erstwhile totalitarian, communist one-party state. He intended to achieve this by modernizing and streamlining the Communist Party with new policies of Glasnost (openness) and Perestroika (restructuring through economic and social reforms).

- Gorbachev did not want to end communism, he wanted to replace the existing system which was basically Stalinist with a social system that was humane and democratic.

Khrushchev, Bulganin, Brezhnev, and Gorbachev

13.7 KEY WORDS

- **Cominform Organization:** Cominform was a supranational alliance of Marxist-Leninist communist parties in Europe to coordinate their activity under the direction of the Soviet Union during the early Cold War.
- **Informbiro Period:** It was an era of Yugoslavia's history following the Tito–Stalin split in mid-1948 that lasted until the country's rapprochement with the Soviet Union in 1955.

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13.8 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What were the various twist and turns in the political life of Khrushchev?
2. Write a short note on the policies under Brezhnev.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Describe the role of Nikolai Bulganin as a Soviet politician.
2. Discuss the new policies that were introduced by Mikhail Gorbachev after coming to power in the Soviet Union.

13.9 FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 14 USSR DISINTEGRATION

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Structure

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- 14.1 Objectives
- 14.2 Disintegration of the USSR and the End of the Cold War
 - 14.2.1 The 1991 Coup
 - 14.2.2 Disintegration of USSR
 - 14.2.3 Impact of the Collapse of the Soviet Union
 - 14.2.4 Emergence of a Unipolar World System
- 14.3 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
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- 14.5 Key Words
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- 14.7 Further Readings

14.0 INTRODUCTION

The breakup of the Soviet Union was the internal disintegration procedure within the USSR, which started with increasing turmoil in its various constituent republics evolving into incessant political and legislative dispute between the republics and the central government. It ended when the leaders of three principal republics (the Russian SFSR, the Ukrainian SSR, and the Byelorussian SSR) announced that it no longer existed, later followed by 11 more republics, leading to the resignation of President Mikhail Gorbachev and the official acceptance of what had already taken place by what was left of the Soviet Parliament. In this unit, we will discuss the disintegration of the USSR in detail. We will also focus on the end of the Cold War.

14.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the disintegration of the USSR in detail
- Describe the impact of disintegration of the USSR
- Analyze the end of the Cold War

14.2 DISINTEGRATION OF THE USSR AND THE END OF THE COLD WAR

After the implementation of the radical reforms, Gorbachev faced many challenges. On the one hand, some party members such as Boris Yeltsin, the Moscow Party, etc. were more radical and felt that the reforms were not drastic according to the

need of the hour. They wanted a complete change to a western-style market economy as quickly as possible, while knowing fully well that this would cause severe hardships for the people. On the other hand, conservative communists like Yegor Ligachev felt that the changes were too drastic and that the Communist Party was on the verge of losing control. This difference of opinion between the two fractions of the Communist Party caused a dangerous split and made it difficult for Gorbachev to satisfy either group. The conservatives were in a large majority and in May 1989, when the Congress of People's Deputies elected the new Supreme Soviet, the house was packed with conservatives; whereas leaders like Yeltsin and many other radicals were not elected. This led to a massive protest demonstration in Moscow, where Yeltsin was a popular figure since he had cleaned up the corrupt Moscow Communist Party organization. Demonstrations would not have been allowed before Gorbachev's time, but the policies of Gorbachev encouraged people to voice their criticism and this began to turn against the Communist Party.

Economic crisis

Despite the implementation of liberal economic policies, there was no significant improvement in economic growth which stayed the same in the year 1988-89. In 1990, the national income started falling sharply and in 1991, the national income fell by a staggering 15 percent. Some economists cautioned that the USSR was going through an economic crisis as serious as the Great Depression in the USA in the 1930s. A major cause of the crisis was the disastrous result of the Law on State Enterprises. Due to the slowdown in production and the emphasis on more expensive goods, the wages of labourers went up. The higher wages forced the government to print more money to pay the workers. As a result of this, inflation went up sharply as basic goods were in short supply. This led to a widening of the government's budget deficit. Therefore, people were disillusioned with Gorbachev's reforms and this led to agitation and people becoming outraged by the shortages.

In July 1989, some coal miners in Serbia found no soap to wash themselves after the end of their shift. They staged a sit in against this short supply and decided to go on strike. Their counterparts and fellow miners in Serbia, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine joined the miners. Around half a million miners joined the strike and it was the first major agitation since 1917. The agitating miners put forward forty-two demands before the government which included better living and working conditions, better supplies of food, a share in the profits and more local control over the mines. The Soviet Government soon conceded most of the demands and promised a complete reorganization of the industry and full local control. By the end of July, the strike was over but the general economic condition did not improve. In 1990, it was calculated that about a quarter of the population was living below the poverty line with those having large families, pensioners and unemployed being the worst affected. Gorbachev was fast losing support for his economic reforms

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which he had initiated and the success of the striking miners further encouraged radicals to press for even more far reaching changes in the USSR.

Reactions from republics

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The reactions from the Republics also contributed towards Gorbachev's failure and led to the breakup of the USSR. The Soviet Union was a federal State consisting of fifteen separate Republics, each with its own Parliament. The Russian Republic was just one of the fifteen republics under the Soviet Union with its parliament in Moscow. These republics had been kept under tight vigil since the time of Stalin. However, the liberal policies of Gorbachev encouraged these republics to demand more powers for their parliaments and more autonomy from Moscow. Gorbachev seemed sympathetic towards these demands and the rising wave of protests soon went out of his control. During this period of uncertainty, independence movements started in Baltic Soviet Republics of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. Gorbachev declared these movements as 'National Excesses' but these movements only grew in strength. In March 1990, encouraged by what had happened in the satellite states of Eastern Europe, Lithuania took the lead by declaring itself independent. Latvia and Estonia soon followed, though Moscow refused to recognize their independence.

In the meantime, Boris Yeltsin who had been excluded from the new Supreme Soviet by the conservatives made a dramatic comeback in May 1990, when he was elected President of the parliament of the Russian Republic. Serious differences emerged between Gorbachev and Yeltsin. On the one hand, Boris Yeltsin believed that the entry into the Soviet Union should be voluntary and if any Republic wanted to opt out then it should be allowed to do so. However, Gorbachev thought that a purely voluntary union would lead to the disintegration of the USSR. Secondly, Boris Yeltsin was disillusioned with the Communist Party and the way the traditionalists had treated him. He thought the party no longer deserved its privileged position in the state, whereas Gorbachev was a convinced communist and thought the only way forward was through a humane and democratic Communist Party. Thirdly, Yeltsin thought that the economy of the country required a rapid changeover with the transition to a market economy being the only solution, whereas Gorbachev was much more cautious, realising that the plans of Boris Yeltsin would cause massive unemployment and even higher prices.

14.2.1 The 1991 Coup

When the political unrest deepened, Gorbachev and Yeltsin tried to work together and Gorbachev found the tide in favour of free multi-party elections. This invited severe attacks from the conservatives and in June 1990, Yeltsin resigned from the Communist Party. Gorbachev was now losing his control and many of the republics used this opportunity to demand independence. To contain the unrest, Soviet troops were used against the nationalists and the people organised mass movements against the use of force. In April 1991, the republic of Georgia declared independence

and in May 1991, Gorbachev held a conference with the leaders of the fifteen Republics and persuaded them to form a new voluntary union in which they would be largely independent of Moscow. The agreement was to be formally signed on 20 August 1991. At this point, a group of hard-line Communists including Gorbachev's vice-president Gennady Yanayev orchestrated a coup to remove Gorbachev and to reverse his reforms. They wanted to establish an authoritarian and strong central regime.

In August 1991, Gorbachev was arrested when he was on holiday in the Crimea and was asked to hand over power to Yanayev. When Gorbachev refused, he was put under house arrest while the coup went ahead in Moscow. The public was told that Gorbachev was ill and that an eight member committee was now in charge. They declared a state of emergency, banned demonstrations and brought in tanks and troops to surround public buildings in Moscow, including the Parliament of the Russian Federation called the 'White House' which they intended to seize. The new Union Treaty of Gorbachev, which was due to be signed the following day, was cancelled. However, the coup was poorly organized and the leaders of the coup made the catastrophic mistake of failing to arrest Yeltsin. Yeltsin rushed to the White House and standing on top of a tank outside condemned the coup calling it unconstitutional and called on the people of Moscow to come out of their houses and demonstrate against the coup. Yeltsin also urged the military to not take part in the coup. The army was in a state of confusion, not knowing which side to support, they failed to take any action against the popular Yeltsin. Responding to the call of Yeltsin, thousands of people thronged the streets of Moscow. Moreover, barricades were built around the White House which the coup supporters in the army hesitated to attack anticipating heavy casualties. By the next day, the coup leaders admitted defeat and were arrested. Yeltsin had triumphed and Gorbachev was able to return to Moscow. Although the coup was foiled by the mass support for Yeltsin, but the coup attempt led to heightened fears that the reforms introduced by Gorbachev would be reversed and this led most of the Republics to declare their independence.

14.2.2 Disintegration of USSR

The presidents of the Soviet Republics of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus attended a secret meeting on 8 December 1991 and agreed to dissolve the Soviet Union, replacing it with a loose and voluntary form of Union known as the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Later, eleven of the remaining twelve republics of USSR signed a protocol formally establishing the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and declared that the Soviet Union had ceased to exist. President Gorbachev became gradually more powerless in the face of these developments and the dissolution of the USSR meant that his role as President had ceased to exist, forcing him to resign from his office on 25 December 1991. The Soviet Union formally ended its existence the next day and got divided into fifteen independent states comprising of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia,

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Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. However, as per international law, the biggest amongst the fifteen states, Russia, was recognized as the successor of the Soviet Union which took total possession of its arsenal of nuclear weapons. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the decades-long hostility with the West associated with the Cold War came to an end and a new era of a unipolar world began.

14.2.3 Impact of the Collapse of the Soviet Union

The disintegration of the Soviet Union was one of the major events that changed the course of the twentieth century and thus, socio-political change from it was inevitable. The impact of the collapse of the Soviet Union was felt across the world, mainly in the socio-political sphere, hugely impacting the foreign policies of most countries. Firstly, after the collapse, the defence budgets of many countries were slashed around the world as many governments sought to reduce world tension. The defence spending of USA drastically came down as tensions associated with Cold War subsided and past blunders such as the Star Wars project came in for close scrutiny. However, the slash in the defence budget of the United States was short-lived. By the mid-1990s, the United States defence budget gradually started increasing once again. Secondly, the power vacuum in the new unipolar world resulted in the United States becoming the sole superpower. As a result, many countries which were hostile to the United States earlier came forward to establish good relations with them.

Moreover, in West Asia, during the Cold War period, the Soviet Union had backed Arab nations and supplied them arms and ammunitions to fight the Israeli occupation of Palestine, while the United States considered Israel its key ally in the Middle East. Although Israel had signed a peace treaty with Egypt in the 1970s, Israel's subsequent war in Lebanon had resulted in an increase in hostility against the Jewish nation in the Arab world. When the Soviet Union collapsed, the Arab nations became much less aggressive in their stance against Israel as they realized that America would never allow them to defeat Israel militarily and create a separate homeland for the Palestinians. This loss in confidence amongst the Arab nations can be seen through the peace treaties that Israel signed with Jordan and the fact that no Arab nation has dared attacked Israel since the 1973 Yom Kippur War.

Another huge impact of the disintegration of the Soviet Union was the decline of Socialism and the rise of Capitalism as the dominant economic force in world affairs. This dominance of capitalism can be seen in the emergence of globalization, which you will study about later in the unit. Let us now look at in detail the most significant impact of the collapse – the emergence of a Unipolar World System.

14.2.4 Emergence of a Unipolar World System

With the disintegration of USSR in 1991, the Cold War came to an end resulting in the creation of a unipolar world which replaced the bipolar world dominated by

America and the Soviet Union. The end of the Cold War brought a new world order where the USA emerged as the sole superpower. The replacement of the bipolar world by Unipolarism has allowed the United States to dominate the world, as it was the only super power left on the scene after the end of the Cold War. In this unipolar world, America not only dominates the polity of the world, but it also exerts its dominance in almost all spheres whether it be economic, military, diplomatic, ideological, technological, and cultural. Scholars like SP Huntington have observed: 'The United States, of course, is the sole state with pre-eminence in every domain of power—economic, military, diplomatic, ideological, technological, and cultural—with the reach and capabilities to promote its interests in virtually every part of the world.'

This dominance by the United States today has resulted in some scholars calling the United States a 'hyper-power' which has little regard for International Law. They argue that the United States attitude towards the world can be shown by the remarks of the former Secretary of State Madeline Albright, who stated that the United States will act 'multilaterally when we can and unilaterally as we must'. The recent wars in Iraq and Libya, the refusal of the United States to sign onto treaties relating to the environment despite being the world's biggest polluter, the pressure it puts on nations that refuse to be in line, especially on economic affairs, the use of its military to intimidate other nations, etc. seem to confirm the hypothesis of the United States being a 'hyper-power'. Another interesting fact relating to the United States' dominance of the world is that the United States defence budget is almost equal to the defence budget of the rest of the world combined. However, other scholars have argued that the notion of a unipolar world and the concept of a superpower are outdated considering complex global economic interdependencies. They propose that the world is now multipolar. For them, the onset of the process of globalization and resulted in new centres of political and economic power being created. For them, the rise of China and India, the creation of the European Union, the resurgence of Latin America and the emergence East Asia as one of the main centres of economic activity have made the world multi-polar where no one nation can dominate the other.

In recent times, the United States has not only been stagnating economically but it is also fast conceding its edge in technology to other emerging markets of the world. The disastrous wars that the United States has fought in the 21st Century are beginning to take its toll on the U.S. economy. The total combined public debt of the United States as of September 2012 was \$16.02 trillion dollars, which is more than the United States' GDP of \$15.02 trillion. Moreover, the Global Financial crisis of 2008 made worse the already floundering economy of the United States. It is yet to fully recover from the crisis. All these events seem to confirm the thesis that the world is increasingly becoming multi-polar; however, that is not to say that the world has already become multipolar.

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Check Your Progress

1. How many republics were there in the Soviet Union?
2. How did the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) form?
3. Why is the United States of America called a ‘hyper-power’?
4. What is the shocking aspect of the United States defence budget?

14.3 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. The Soviet Union was a federal State consisting of 15 separate Republics, each with its own Parliament.
2. The presidents of the Soviet Republics of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus attended a secret meeting on 8 December 1991 and agreed to dissolve the Soviet Union, replacing it with a loose and voluntary form of Union known as the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).
3. The dominance by the United States today has resulted in some scholars calling the United States a ‘hyper-power’ which has little regard for International Law.
4. The shocking aspect of the United States defence budget is that it is almost equal to the defence budget of the rest of the world combined.

14.4 SUMMARY

- After the implementation of the radical reforms, Gorbachev faced many challenges. Some party members such as Boris Yeltsin, the Moscow Party, etc. were more radical and felt that the reforms were not drastic according to the need of the hour.
- Despite the implementation of liberal economic policies, there was no significant improvement in economic growth which stayed the same in the year 1988-89. In 1990, the national income started falling sharply and in 1991, the national income fell by a staggering 15 percent.
- The reactions from the Republics also contributed towards Gorbachev’s failure and led to the breakup of the USSR.
- When the political unrest deepened, Gorbachev and Yeltsin tried to work together and Gorbachev found the tide in favour of free multi-party elections. This invited severe attacks from the conservatives and in June 1990, Yeltsin resigned from the Communist Party.

- In August 1991, Gorbachev was arrested when he was on holiday in the Crimea and was asked to hand over power to Yanayev. When Gorbachev refused, he was put under house arrest while the coup went ahead in Moscow.
- Although the coup was foiled by the mass support for Yeltsin, but the coup attempt led to heightened fears that the reforms introduced by Gorbachev would be reversed and this led most of the Republics to declare their independence.
- The presidents of the Soviet Republics of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus attended a secret meeting on 8 December 1991 and agreed to dissolve the Soviet Union, replacing it with a loose and voluntary form of Union known as the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).
- The impact of the collapse of the Soviet Union was felt across the world, mainly in the socio-political sphere, hugely impacting the foreign policies of most countries.
- The end of the Cold War brought a new world order where the USA emerged as the sole superpower.
- The replacement of the bipolar world by Unipolarism has allowed the United States to dominate the world, as it was the only super power left on the scene after the end of the Cold War.
- In recent times, the United States has not only been stagnating economically but it is also fast conceding its edge in technology to other emerging markets of the world.

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14.5 KEY WORDS

- **Star Wars project:** Officially called the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI) that was initiated by U.S. President Ronald Reagan as part of the Reagan Doctrine, it envisioned the use of space based systems to protect the United States from attack by Nuclear Ballistic Missiles.
- **Yom Kippur War:** Also known as the Arab-Israeli war of 1973, it was fought between Israel and a coalition of Arab nations led by Egypt and Syria.

14.6 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Was the collapse of the Soviet Union inevitable? Give reasons to support your answer.

2. Are we living in a unipolar world or a multi-polar world? Give reasons to support your answer.

Long-Answer Questions

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1. Discuss the impact of the collapse of the Soviet Union on the foreign policies of other nations.
2. The United States has not only been stagnating economically but it is also fast conceding its edge in technology to other emerging markets of the world. Elaborate.

14.7 FURTHER READINGS

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