

<p>OCR – A2 GCE Historical Themes 1789–1997 F 966</p>	<p>Unit 4 Russia and its Rulers, 1855–1964</p>	<p>ESSAY</p>
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Examiner's Specific Advice

Historical Themes is the A2 synoptic paper. It draws together factual knowledge, understanding and links between different elements of a key theme – in this case Russia and its Rulers. Students need to understand continuity and change over the years between 1855 and 1964.

To begin with, make a plan that organises your thoughts on both sides of the divide – was there more continuity, or more change? You may want to consider the statement under a number of different headings, such as economics, law and order, the role of religion, agriculture, etc. – and whether the sense of continuity or change was the same for all social and economic groups. Finally, there may be distinct phases in the period in question, during which change may be more or less in evidence.

A question which asks 'How far' should compare and contrast the Tsarist and soviet methods of government to show similar and dissimilar features, and explain any changing and continuing developments. The principal elements should be synthesised across the whole period from 1855 to 1964 in a coherent and detailed analysis.

Exemplar Question

1. 'Continuity rather than change characterised the way Russia was governed between 1855 and 1964.' How far do you agree with this statement?

[60 marks]

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Chronology
Relating to this
Topic**

Examiner's Exemplar Plan and Essay 1

Plan

Introduction

Continuity

- God-like figure
- Autocracy
- Secret police, e.g. Okhrana, Cheka, OGPU, NKVD, KGB

Changes

- Elections: Alex II and Zemstva; Nich II and Duma; Lenin and Stalin; Khrushchev and Presidium
- Church
- Economy

Conclusion

Between 1855 and 1964 the Russian people saw a variety of leaders and, although the 1917 revolution marked the end of the Tsarist regime and the beginning of the Bolshevik (1), the Tsarist regime was very similar to that of Lenin, Stalin and Khrushchev.

The Tsars and the Bolsheviks had a certain style of ruling in common. The Tsars regarded themselves as the supreme rulers elected by God. Nicholas II in particular believed he was all-powerful, a God-like figure. During World War I pictures of the Tsar were sent down to the front line where soldiers would worship the photo. Stalin also saw himself as a God-like figure having total control over his people (2).

The two regimes were also very similar in their types of government. The Tsar's government was made up of family members, friends and nobles, people who would support his autocracy. However, this meant that his government was weak with really incapable ministers as the autocracy supported the upper classes and paid little attention to the peasantry. The Bolsheviks were very similar. Stalin for example, appointed ministers who supported him, and during his rise to power and in the purges he removed many members of the Politburo and replaced them with his friends (3).

Both regimes also had very good secret police. The Tsarists had the Okhrana who helped to remove any opposition. For example, Alexander III exiled all those who had attempted to assassinate his father and executed Lenin's brother. Lenin himself had to leave the country and was sent to Siberia on several occasions. Although the secret police was quite successful, the assassination of Alexander II in 1881 and the attempt on Alexander III in 1887 show that it was not able to stop all opposition to the government. Lenin's administration also had a secret police – the Cheka. Their job was also to stop opposition, which had mainly emerged as a result of the civil war in 1918-21. Their harsh

(1) This phrase is not very precise. The question is about the methods and nature of Russian governments, and not just the regimes.

(2) The idea of a 'cult hero' is an important point. What was Lenin's view? Give an example from Stalin's rule. What was Khrushchev's view of the 'cult hero'?

(3) This is a weak paragraph. Examples of the autocracy are needed to point up similarities and perhaps differences between the Tsarists and Bolsheviks. How far did Lenin seek to establish a dictatorship?

punishments included putting people in barrels studded with nails and rolling them down hills. Stalin also used the secret police – the OGPU, which later became the NKVD - to crush his opposition during the purges between 1934 and 1940. Ministers such as Kamenev, Zinoviev and Bukharin were arrested and executed on false charges in show trials. In much the same tradition, Khrushchev used the KGB as his state police and attempted to impose uniformity of belief throughout Russia. The fact that the secret police were present under the Tsarist and communist regimes in order to carry out repression suggests that there was more continuity than change between 1855 and 1956 (4).

However, it can also be argued that there was change as well as continuity both before and after 1917. Although the Tsars were predominantly autocratic, some attempts were made to hold elections and give people a say in running the country. Alexander II set up local Zemstva, in which local landowners and members of the gentry could sit and decide issues, such as setting up local hospitals and improving the local education system. Though this implies that Alexander II was not an autocrat, he acted like this because he needed to give the nobles a role in society after the Emancipation of 1861. Nicholas II also held elections to a Duma in 1906 implying that he was not an autocrat. However, he like Alexander was attempting to preserve his position as an autocrat following the 1905 Revolution when he had been forced to make concessions. Lenin held elections to the Constituent Assembly in 1918; however, when the Bolsheviks did not receive the majority of votes, he closed it down implying that he did not believe in democracy and was in fact more like an autocrat. Stalin on the other hand did not hold elections and Khrushchev began to decentralise central government after 1956 and gave regional councils more freedom. Politically there was continuity as well as change during this period (5).

The Orthodox Church played a significant part in the lives of the people during the Tsarist rule. Peasants in particular were very devout and regarded the Tsar as a God-like figure since God had chosen him to rule. However, during the revolution of 1917 many churches were desecrated and the state church was abolished (6). Economic policies were also different. All rulers wanted Russia to be a great power but the Tsars failed to make any lasting changes (7). Witte's policies made a start in the 1890s with the Trans-Siberian railway and Stolypin's land reforms helped the peasants but real changes occurred under Lenin and Stalin. Peasants were given their own land in 1918 and thousands moved to the towns to develop Russia's industry. Stalin's 5 year plans revolutionised Russia's industry and his policy of collectivisation forced the kulaks to give up their private farms in favour of state-run kolkhoz. Khrushchev, in contrast, reversed some of these policies, ended Cominform and reduced the number of collectives (8).

In conclusion I think that the regimes were very similar in

(4) A good paragraph. You demonstrate sound synoptic skills by examining the work of the secret police throughout the period.

(5) The idea that there was an underlying continuity behind these examples of apparent political reform is important. The examples cited here are very appropriate and the argument is sound.

(6) Changes in religion could be developed more effectively. How important was the Church to the way the Tsars and soviets governed Russia? Though the state church was abolished, people remained deeply religious.

(7) Surely the emancipation of the serfs was a major and lasting reform?

(8) This paragraph needs to be more closely linked to the question set. It illustrates some of the effects of government

many ways. The 1917 revolution was intended to destroy the old regime but in practice failed and the Communists were really just 'Red Tsars'. Although some features of government changed, overall there was a great deal of continuity.

Examiner's Assessment

Structure is sound, using mostly relevant and accurate evidence but not always extensively; communicates clearly. Level III mark of 13 (AO1a).

Attempts to synthesise some elements, understands change and continuity over most of the period. The argument is mostly analytical but there are some uneven paragraphs in which points are not clearly linked to the question or are lacking in illustration. Level III mark of 25 (AO1b).

Overall total mark of 38 is likely to get a Grade C.

Examiner's Exemplar Plan and Essay 2

Plan

Similarities:

- Systems of government – repression, e.g. 1863, 1921, 1934–40, 1956; the Soviets were better dictators
- Ideology – divine right c.f. cult of personality; Stalin and the Church; Khrushchev's denunciation of cult status

Differences:

- Lenin's NEP
- Stalin's collectivisation
- Opposition existed under the Tsars but not tolerated under the Soviets
- Khrushchev was not a dictator, presided over a more liberal era

Many historians would concur with the sentiment that throughout the period 1855–1964, Russia did indeed see more continuity than change (9).

There are many similarities between the two theoretically different systems of government. While the Communist Party Manifesto that was translated into Russian in 1863 may have called for the 'dictatorship of the proletariat', it would be fair to suggest that soviet rule provided simply another version of autocratic dictatorship. Stalin in particular can be seen to be very much a continuation of Tsarist methods of repression. He is often described as continuing Nicholas I's ('Nicholas the stick') tactics. Alexander II's crushing of the Polish rebellion in 1863 was of course a continuation of Tsarist repression in Poland but far more surprisingly Lenin's brutal use of Trotsky's 'Red Army' to quell the 1921 Kronstadt uprising and Stalin's purges during the Great Terror of 1934–40, can also be seen to be continuing this trend. Indeed even Khrushchev's crushing of the Hungarian uprising in 1956 can be seen as a

policies rather than changes in the way that Russia was governed.

(9) A focused if brief opening paragraph

(10) Good cross-references illustrate this point. You might also refer to Stalin's occupation of Poland in the 1940s.

direct continuation of Tsarist repression (10).

Possibly one of the main differences between Tsarist and Soviet rule was simply that the Soviets were far better at governing through dictatorship than the Tsars. Both systems relied heavily on secret police activity to maintain law and order, with first Alexander II's 'third section', and also the Tsarist 'Okhrana' merely being succeeded by the soviet 'Cheka' under Lenin during the civil war and later by the notorious KGB and NKVD (11).

Obviously there are many differences between the ideologies of the two systems. For example, the Tsars believed right up to Nicholas II that they governed through 'divine right', that they were God's representatives on earth. Marxist theory would state that Lenin, and later Stalin, were ruling for the people, yet it must not be forgotten that there is a huge ideological gulf between Leninism (and Stalinism) and Marxism. The 'cult of personality' surrounding both men was far more Tsarist than Marxist. Indeed during the Great Patriotic War, Stalin put himself across as being a paternalistic leader, deliberately evoking images of Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great. This flew in the face of Marxist theory. In contrast, Khrushchev in 1956 denounced Stalin's cult of personality in favour of a more collective government. Nevertheless, in spite of giving more power to the regions, Khrushchev remained effectively in control of the government (12).

Under the Tsars the state was heavily underpinned by the Russian Orthodox Church and the people were very much kept in check by this (13). Whilst Marxist theory may have derided the church as being merely 'the opium of the people', it must be noted that under the Soviets the people's allegiance to the party took on a very religious nature and religious zeal was in many places merely replaced with political zealousness. Even more significantly under Stalin there was a revival in religious activity as the church was tolerated and even encouraged during the Great Patriotic War. This was in violation of strongly atheist Marxist theory, and was again merely a continuation of Tsarist rule. Such developments continued under Khrushchev.

There were, however, some clear differences in policy between the two regimes. Despite the temporary retreat on the road to socialism that Lenin adopted with his New Economic Policy of 1921, Lenin did nationalise the land, which was a strongly Marxist move. Likewise, Stalin's introduction of a collectivisation in 1928 was possibly the only genuine Marxist move of Stalin's entire regime. Yet even Stalin's collectivisation has Tsarist leanings. Historians like Dukes have criticised it for being Marxism via Tsarist methods (14). Indeed the brutal repression with which Stalin forced the peasants to accept collectivisation could be seen as a continuation of Tsarist reactionism, like

(11) Discuss the ways in which the secret police kept order, e.g. the enforcement of censorship.

(12) This is a very good paragraph. You have explained a complex and important point concisely and clearly.

(13) You could usefully elaborate on this to explain how the Church assisted the Tsars to govern Russia.

(14) What did Dukes mean by this phrase?

<p>Alexander III's 'Reaction' following the assassination of Alexander II in 1881, and the brutal restrictions he enforced, for example the Statute '<u>Concerning Measures for the Security of the State and the Social Order</u>' (15), which was also introduced in 1881. Interestingly, economic policies became less centralised under Khrushchev even though he imposed five and seven year plans. For instance, factory farmers were given more freedom in managing collectives.</p> <p>Political opposition is another area where the Tsarist and Soviet regimes can be easily compared. Nicholas II's infamous '<u>senseless dreams</u>' (16) comment does perhaps define his attitude towards opposition, and is perhaps a comment representative of the attitude towards opposition throughout the Tsarist regime. Opposition groups did exist under the Tsars, which perhaps is where the distinction lies. The Land and Freedom Party of 1876, the People's Will Party and Black Partition both founded in 1879, and the Social Democratic Labour Party founded in 1898, which later split into Mensheviks and Bolsheviks at the London Conference of 1903. Under the Soviets, however, no opposition was tolerated at all, and perhaps this is where a key difference lies. Even Khrushchev, who relaxed censorship, employed the KGB to great effect in attempting to enforce uniformity (17).</p> <p>Examiner's Assessment</p> <p>Argument is very well structured, relevant and clearly written, and uses a wide range of accurate evidence. Level IA mark of 18 (AO1a).</p> <p>The essay demonstrates a very good level of understanding of key concepts, focused on question set and provides an analysis and synthesis of the whole period. However, some judgements could be more substantiated; for instance, the examples cited in the section on collectivisation. Level IB mark of 34 (AO1b).</p> <p>Overall the essay merits a mark of 52 (Grade A).</p>	<p>(15) Explain the purpose of this statute. How valid is a comparison of Alexander's political repression with Stalin's agrarian policy?</p> <p>(16) Make this reference to the introduction of the Duma in 1906 more explicit.</p> <p>(17) This is a strong point to finish on but your main argument is that continuity rather than change marked this period, so it would be wiser to end on that note instead.</p>
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[Click here for a Mark Scheme that accompanies the exemplar answers provided above](#)

[Click here for further sample Questions to test your skills](#)

Mark Scheme

Examiners use Mark Schemes to determine how best to categorise a candidate's essay and to ensure that the performances of thousands of candidates are marked to a high degree of accuracy and consistency. Few essays fall neatly into the mark levels indicated below: some answers only cover part of the period; others give a good overview but provide few supporting details. As a result, examiners seek to find the 'best fit' when applying the scheme. Each essay has a final mark based on two Assessment Objectives (AO1a and AO1b) worth 20 + 40

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= 60 marks. As the standard of the two essays lies between Level 1 and Level IV, only the descriptors and marks for these levels are tabulated below.

	A01a Mark Scheme for Levels I, II, III and IV
Assessment Objectives	Recall, select and use historical knowledge appropriately, and communicate knowledge and understanding clearly and effectively
Level IA 18–20 marks	Uses a wide range of accurate, detailed and relevant evidence. Accurate and confident use of appropriate historical terminology. Answer is clearly structured and coherent; communicates accurately and legibly.
Level IB 16–17 marks	Uses accurate, detailed and relevant evidence. Accurate use of a range of appropriate historical terminology. Answer is clearly structured and mostly coherent; writes accurately and legibly.
Level II 14–15 marks	Uses mostly accurate, detailed and relevant evidence, which demonstrates a competent command of the topic. Generally accurate use of historical terminology. Answer is structured and mostly coherent; writing is legible and communication is generally clear.
Level III 12–13 marks	Uses accurate and relevant evidence, which demonstrates some command of the topic but there may be some inaccuracy. Answer includes relevant historical terminology but this may not be extensive or always accurately used. Most of the answer is organised and structured; the answer is mostly legible and clearly communicated.
Level IV 10–11 marks	There is deployment of relevant knowledge but level/accuracy of detail will vary; there may be some evidence that is tangential or irrelevant. Some unclear and/or under-developed and/or disorganised sections; mostly satisfactory level of communication.

AO1b Mark Scheme for Levels I, II, III and IV	
Assessment Objectives	Demonstrate an understanding of the past through explanation and analysis, arriving at substantiated judgements of key concepts and of the relationships between key features of the period studied
Level IA 36–40 marks	Excellent understanding of key concepts relevant to the question set. Excellent synthesis and synoptic assessment of the whole period. Answer is consistently analytical with developed and substantiated explanations, some of which may be unexpected.
Level IB 32–35 marks	Clear and accurate understanding of most key concepts relevant to analysis and to the question set. Answer is mostly consistently and relevantly analytical with mostly developed and substantiated explanations. Clear understanding of the significance of issues and synthesis of the whole period
Level II 28–31 marks	Mostly clear and accurate understanding of many key concepts relevant to analysis and to the topic. Clear understanding of the significance of most relevant issues in their historical context. Much of the answer is relevantly analytical and substantiated with detailed evidence but there may be some uneven judgements.
Level III 24–27 marks	Sound understanding of key concepts relevant to analysis and mostly focused on the question set. Answers may be a mixture of analysis and explanation but also simple description of relevant material and narrative of relevant events OR answers may provide more consistent analysis but the quality will be uneven and its support often general or thin. There may only be a limited synthesis of the whole period.
Level IV 20–23 marks	Understanding of key concepts relevant to analysis and the topic is variable but in general is satisfactory. Answers may be largely descriptive/narratives of events and links between this and analytical comments will typically be weak or unexplained OR answers will mix passages of descriptive material with occasional explained analysis. Limited synoptic judgements of part of the period.

Further sample questions

- (1) How far did the working class of Russia suffer more from Bolshevik rule than Tsarist rule during the years from 1855 to 1964?
- (2) How effective was opposition to governments in Russia throughout the period from 1855 to 1964?
- (3) 'Military needs were always the main reason for Russia's economic development.' To what extent do you agree with this judgment?
- (4) Was Stalin the most successful ruler of Russia in the period 1855 to 1964? Explain with reference to the rulers of this period.
- (5) How far did the living and working conditions of the Russian peasants remain uniformly poor throughout the period 1855 to 1964?
- (6) 'Faced with a vast and backward Empire, Russia's rulers in the period 1855 to 1964 consistently viewed repression as their most effective tool of government.' To what extent do you agree with this judgement?

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- (7) 'The Communist rulers were effective autocrats: the Tsars were not.' How far do you agree with this view of Russian government in the period from 1855 to 1964?

Chronology: Key Events under *the Russian Rulers, 1855–1964*

- 1855 Accession of Alexander II – the ‘Tsar Liberator’.
- 1861 Emancipation of the serfs.
- 1864 Zemstvo Law (1) and legal reforms.
- 1866 First assassination attempt against Alexander II.
- 1874–81 Growth of opposition groups: Land and Freedom, Peoples’ Will.
- 1881 Assassination of Alexander II. The ‘Reaction’ (2).
- 1887 Execution of Alexander Ulyanov (Lenin’s elder brother).
- 1892–1903 Witte’s ‘Great Spurt’ (3).
- 1894 Accession of Nicholas II.
- 1898 Formation of Social Democrats (SDs).
- 1901 Formation of Social Revolutionaries (SRs).
- 1903 SDs split into Bolsheviks and Mensheviks.
- 1905 Revolution. October Manifesto (4).
- 1906–11 Stolypin’s reforms (5).
- 1906–14 Four Dumas meet (6).
- 1914–18 First World War.
- 1917 The February Revolution. The October Revolution.
- 1918 The Constituent Assembly.
- 1918–21 The Civil War.
- 1921 The Kronstadt Rising (7).
- 1921–27 New Economic Policy.
- 1924 Lenin’s death.
- 1928–53 Stalin in power.
- 1928–29 Introduction of the first Five Year Plan and of Collectivisation.
- 1934–40 The Great Terror – the ‘purges’ (8).
- 1941–45 The Great Patriotic War.
- 1954–56 Khrushchev’s rise to power.
- 1954–62 Virgin Lands Scheme (9).
- 1956 Hungarian uprising crushed. Five Year Plan ends Cominform.
Decentralisation begins. Regional councils given more economic freedom.
- 1958 Seven Year Plan starts.
- 1964 Khrushchev’s fall from power.

- (1) The *Zemstva* were district and provincial assemblies elected by local people. They were the first form of democratic government in Russia.
- (2) The ‘Reaction’ was Alexander III’s response to his father’s assassination. He executed five of the assassins and then passed the Statute of State Security. It set up tribunals that operated independently of the law courts, removed liberal-minded judges and extended the powers of the Okhrana.
- (3) To modernise Russia’s economy, Sergei Witte, the finance minister, invested capital raised from private and foreign investors and state taxation in heavy industry and transport. By 1903 there had been a massive increase in coal, iron and oil output, and the Trans-Siberian railway had been completed.
- (4) In the wake of rising opposition to his government, Nicholas II issued the October Manifesto, which promised political and economic concessions if the disturbances ended.
- (5) Peter Stolypin was president of the Council of Ministers who believed the best way to prevent further opposition to the Tsar was to implement social

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reforms. He focused on agriculture and set up a Land Bank to help peasants buy land; he encouraged them to acquire larger properties instead of their customary strips of land; and he hoped many would repopulate the more deserted areas of Russia.

- (6) The Dumas were parliaments resulting from the 1905 revolution. They met in 1906, 1907, 1907–12 and 1912–17.
- (7) Kronstadt was Russia's leading naval base situated close to Petrograd. When striking industrial workers joined disgruntled dockyard workers and mutinying sailors, Trotsky used the Red Army to brutally suppress the demonstration. Lenin, however, knew that most of these demonstrators had supported Bolshevism in the past and their complaints against War Communism were probably justified. The uprising was 'the spark which lit up reality'.
- (8) In a series of show trials between 1935 and 1940 Stalin purged the Communist Party of alleged enemies of the state – old Bolsheviks, like Zinoviev, Kamenev and Bukharin, were arrested and sentenced to death; half the officer corps and hundreds of thousands of party officials and administrative officers were sacked, deported or shot.
- (9) Between 1954 and 1962, 145 million acres of land in Siberia and Kazakhstan were reclaimed, resulting in an increase in crop production but overproduction soon led to erosion and falling yields, and bread rationing and imports from Canada were features of the early 1960s.

Teaching Activities

Continuity and change between 1855 and 1964:

Divide the class into four groups. Each group focuses on one key theme: politics, the economy, society, war, and answers the questions below for the periods 1855–1917 and 1918–64. Possible areas of research appear in the left-hand column.

- What were the most important developments under the Tsarists and Communists?
- Why were some periods marked more by continuity than by change?
- How far was 1917 the main turning point in Russia's development between 1855 and 1964? Explain your reasons.

KEY THEME	1855–1917: Tsarism	1918–1964: Communism
Politics: rulers, cult of the individual, form of government, opposition groups, reaction v. reform, repression v. liberty		
Economy: feudalism, state control, agriculture, trade, industry, transport, population, military needs		
Society: peasantry, proletariat, landowners, nobles, clergy, women, non-Russian subjects, education, religion		
War: effects of the Crimean War, the Russo-Japanese War, the First World War, the Civil War, the Great Patriotic War, the Cold War		

Resources

- P. Dukes, *The Trotsky Reappraisal* (Edinburgh University Press, 1992)
O. Figes, *A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution 1891–1924* (Cape, 1996)
S. Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution, 1917–32* (OUP, 1982)
J. Laver, *Lenin* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1993)
D. Lieven, *Nicholas II: Emperor of All the Russias* (London, 1993)
M. Lynch, *Reaction and Revolutions: Russia 1881–1924* 2nd edition (Hodder and Stoughton, 2000)
M. Lynch, *Trotsky the Permanent Revolutionary* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1995)
M. McCauley, *The Soviet Union 1917–1991* (Longman, 1993)
M. McCauley, *Stalin and Stalinism* (Longman, 1995)
D. Offord, *Nineteenth Century Russia: Opposition to Autocracy* (Longman, 1999)
R. Service, *Lenin: A Biography* (Macmillan, 2000)
R. Sherman, *Russia 1815–91* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1991)
W. Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era* (Norton and Co, 2004)
I. Thatcher (ed.), *Regime and Society in Twentieth-Century Russia* (Macmillan, 1999)
P. Waldron, *The End of Imperial Russia 1855–1917* (Macmillan, 1997)

Weblinks

- www.historyguide.org/
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