

# A comparison of old (tolstoy's) and modern russia

[History](#)



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A COMPARISON OF OLD (TOLSTOY'S) AND MODERN RUSSIA Today's Russia appears remarkably different from the Russia in which Leo Tolstoy lived in terms of political, social and economic development. Tolstoy was born in 1828, three years after military reformists had staged a revolt to try to stop the accession of Nicholas I to power. The military reformists were there after the introduction of a constitutional monarchy. However, the revolt had failed, leading to an era of a very reactionary leader in which Tolstoy lived. The era of the expansionist Alexander II (1855-1881) brought no difference in Russia as the status quo was maintained. Nicholas II (1894-1917) was forced into granting Russia a representative national body by revolutionary strikes; however, little was to change in terms of governance. 1 This historical review indicates that the old Russia was governed by aristocratic monarchs with an iron fist. These are the situations in which Tolstoy wrote his work and, as a result, constructed his view of Russia at the time. Tolstoy belonged to a cadre of writers viewed as being realist writers, who considered the novel as a framework through which they could discuss the socio-political influences in their lives. As a result, Tolstoy's work can help define what Russia was in the 19th Century. One of the main themes of his work centers around aristocracy in Russia, which effectively captures the political situation, described earlier. Hence, the old Russia can be defined as an aristocratic nation- and, consequently, a nation characterized by great inequality and intolerance between the aristocrats and the masses of peasants. For instance, Tolstoy's *The Cossacks* exposes the experiences of the Cossack peasants through telling the story of an aristocrat who is in love with a Cossack girl. 2 *War and Peace* also gives the audience a view of Russian aristocratic families during the French invasion of Russia. Hence, there is a sufficient argument that <https://assignbuster.com/a-comparison-of-old-tolstoys-and-modern-russia/>

Russia was defined as an aristocracy and unequal society in the 19th Century. Contemporary Russia bears influences from the nation's rich history and global turns of events. Influences of aspects such as the Revolution are discernible as well as Western-influenced privatization of the largely nationalized economy inherited from the Soviet system. After the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia experienced economic woes and political near-anarchy as the nation sought to adopt multi-party politics. The political challenges were the result of structural problems, which pitted the president and parliament against each other in a race for supremacy, a situation worsened by a disorderly party system. Currently, Russia politically is a guided by a constitution that provides for a president as head of state, a prime minister (appointed by the president with approval from the parliament) as head of government, and a parliament, the Federal Assembly, which has legislative powers. Russia faces challenges in charting a future political direction as strains occur along several perspectives. For instance, strains are evident between the seemingly pro-reform executive and the legislature where nationalist and communist elements are still present. Another aspect of political challenges are seen in the way the powers of the central government in Moscow wane as the regional entities gain significant levels of economic and political autonomy. Power hungry governors and aristocratic presidents of republics lead the way in denouncing Moscow border demarcations and agreements on foreign relations. <sup>3</sup> However, modern Russia has experienced economic growth especially in the 21st Century, alongside a strong history of education and scientific exploit. Thus, Russia's current definition would entail the society being a stable and progressive one. When the two definitions of Russia, old and current, are compared, a <https://assignbuster.com/a-comparison-of-old-tolstoys-and-modern-russia/>

number of similarities emerge. First, the lack of political stability that impacted the socio-economic being of old Russia is replicated in the current Russia. Although old Russia was heavily aristocratic and led by monarchs while the current Russia pursues constitutional multi-party governance, both forms showcase instability due to differences in views of political direction. During the 19th Century, revolts and resistance were aimed against the ruling monarchs; currently, disagreements are due to conflicts of opinion in terms of whether Russia should pursue communism or capitalism and federal or national governance. Another aspect of comparison is aristocratic rule which appears in both ages of Russia which again results in failure to address inequality. The current society is clearly divisible into a wealthy and luxurious minority on one side and millions of individuals in social decline on the other. 4 Russia has also been cited as one of the most unequal societies in the world. 5 This is very comparable with the definition of old Russia in Tolstoy's time where the society was also divided in terms of wealthy aristocrats and masses of peasants. The unrest caused by the societal inequality in both old and new Russia is also a shared aspect. Hence, Tolstoy's definition of Russia would still be relevant for the current Russia.

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