



## **RUSSIAN CIVIL WAR STUDY GUIDE**



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Overview
- Timeline
- Introduction to Crisis
- Background Information
- Factions
- Military Strength and Key Themes



## Overview

As the crisis team, we would love to welcome you to WARMUN. Crisis committees are entertaining but difficult committees to both participate in and manage. The topic of this year's crisis, the Russian Civil War, is one of history's most chaotic turning points. Thus, the crisis team has tried its best to simplify this year's topic and make this committee as entertaining as possible. The study guide you are currently reading will help you to understand the context of the Russian Civil War. Furthermore, the information provided in this guide can help you prioritise certain issues over others in this era full of seemingly unresolvable chaos. We would suggest you to also conduct your own research. Good luck, and welcome to the chaos!

## Timeline

### Pre-Revolution Russia

1904 - Russian defeat in the Russo-Japanese War and following protests

1905 - Bloody Sunday and the establishment of the Duma

1914 - WWI and Russian losses against Germany

March 1917 - February Revolution and the Provisional Republic

November 1917 - October Revolution and Bolshevik Domination

3 March 1918 - Treaty of Brest-Litovsk

11 November 1918 - Armistice of WWI and Independence Movements

## Introduction to Crisis

As delegates in a crisis committee, you have to make decisions on an ad-hoc basis. These decisions might be made in response to an update that the crisis team brings to you, or a follow-up on a directive/press release. As representatives of individuals and not countries, your main area of concern should be the interests of yourself and/or the people you represent. Thus, at times, these concerns might override the concerns of others in the same committee (for example, both Trotsky and Stalin are on the same side, but they would compete to be the successor of Lenin). Please have a look at this presentation explaining Crisis procedure.

[https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1b68hVAFcUimU\\_dgcSKbwY9roljc\\_-ajwu0KE90HnFms/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1b68hVAFcUimU_dgcSKbwY9roljc_-ajwu0KE90HnFms/edit?usp=sharing)

The crisis team will have a small debrief in the first session and introduce themselves. Our Crisis will be taking place through Master Of Disaster - a website designed for running Crisis.

## Background Information

Russia was an autocratic empire run by the **tsar** which had only abolished a feudal system in 1906, that meant peasant were slave-like serfs. The fundamental law of the empire, declared in 1832, defined the tsar's powers as God-given, autocratic, and unlimited. Even establishment liberals only went as far as to propose reform, striking a compromise between limiting the ruler's powers and holding back the 'dark masses' of the large, uneducated peasant class.

Following economic recession due to failed harvests, the government's move to increase taxation and political repression, and the national humiliation at their defeat in the **Russo-Japanese War**, a revolt broke out in 1905. The revolutionaries, lacking unity and direction, could not maintain revolution when the tsar, reluctantly, declared **The October Manifesto** and guaranteed freedom of speech, meeting, and freedom from wrongful imprisonment. When the peasants were pacified with reduced mortgage payments and the liberals with the establishment of the parliamentary **Duma**, revolutionary sentiment died down, allowing the tsar's administration to abolish the growing factory-based unions called soviets and retain control of industry and its workforce. In addition, the tsar maintained the right to dismiss the Duma, elect his own ministers and declare war. Meanwhile, increasingly large numbers of the lower classes were systematically excluded from voting in elections due to property requirements, political revolutionaries faced increased persecution. Government incompetence, however, remained a constant in an increasingly volatile political equation.

The advent of the **First World War** brought left-wing protests against the 'capitalist conflict,' as it did all over Europe, but did not threaten the tsar's position or power. In fact, the Duma voted for its own dissolution in support of the tsar's increased wartime authority. As Supreme Commander of the Russian Army stationed on the front lines, the tsar's level of responsibility and visibility allowed much of the population to rally around their ruler and increased his popularity.

That is, until the consequences of the government's poor leadership, both militarily and domestically, fell squarely on the tsar's shoulders. Empress

Alexandra, German by birth and enthralled by the heretic mystic Rasputin who treated her sick son, ruled with him in a deeply unpopular coalition which appointed their often politically inexperienced followers in short-lived posts. Between 1915 and 1916, there were four prime ministers, three ministers of defence and six interior ministers. Between 1914 and 1917, government spending rose over 850%, as the gold standard was abandoned, taxes and borrowing increased and more currency was printed to pay wages. Inflation ensued and, while average earnings doubled, food and fuel prices quadrupled and food hoarding in the countryside began.

Having found in a study of the front lines that “peasants in uniform” were ill-equipped, underfed and “fought bare-footed,” while war hospitals “were short of bandages” and medicine, the Duma withdrew its show of support and recalled itself in 1915. Indeed, until 1916, most shortages were the result of the government’s poor organisation and not a lack of resources. Progressive blocs formed to “prevent revolution” by working with the tsar to improve his popular image, backed by calls to replace the appointed cabinet with “a ministry of national confidence” composed of Duma members. By rejecting them, the tsar lost support from almost all sections of society.

Rumours of further bread shortages and revolution had been circulating for months when the Duma president warned the tsar of imminent “very serious outbreaks of unrest” in February 1917. Within two weeks, a full-scale strike in Petrograd had escalated into demonstrations that paralysed the city. Entire regiments deserted as military forces in the city shrunk from 150,000 troops to 3,000. Ignoring the Duma’s calls for major concessions, the Tsar ordered its dissolution and travelled to Petrograd, thinking that his presence would create a sense of authority and restore order. Instead, his train was diverted to a depot by rebel troops, where he was forced to abdicate. The **Mensheviks**, a centre-left party from which the Bolsheviks had split in 1903, had defied the dissolution order and formed the Provisional Committee. Now, it worked with the existing soviet power structure to set up Dual Authority within a **Provisional Government** to rule until a Constituent Assembly could be elected.

This new government, aware of its temporary nature, did not introduce reforms, failing either to arouse enthusiasm nor control the precarious situation.

Moreover, it could not fight the war successfully, dependent on Allied war credits and supplies, but refused to support withdrawal. The Bolsheviks were not part of the **February Revolution** but, fearing right-wing reactionaries, the Provisional Government reversed an earlier decision to exile them in return for their militias maintaining order. Instead, in October after failure in a local election, the Bolsheviks orchestrated a top-down revolution in the people's name. Their support, however, did not extend past the industrial class and into the countryside. Indeed, revolutionary events had been limited beyond major cities. So, when a rural socialist party won a clear majority in the new Constituent Assembly in November, **Bolshevik forces dissolved the assembly** at gunpoint and established a single-party government.

This bid for absolute power made civil war increasingly likely and, therefore, war with Germany increasingly unjustifiable. Indeed, the situation was becoming untenable. Petrograd and Moscow were receiving only  $\frac{1}{3}$ rd of their food and fuel requirements as supply lines broke down. Delegates cried as they voted to accept the **Brest-Litovsk Treaty**, which agreed to pay Germany 3 million roubles in reparations and surrendered a  $\frac{1}{3}$ rd of Russia's European and grain-rich territory, along with the  $\frac{1}{3}$ rd of the

Russian population who lived there. Following this, several ex-Russian territories declared their independence. The German Army, however, moved into these regions. Germany's intention was to turn these territories into satellites, but this plan collapsed with Germany's own defeat within a year. After the German surrender, the Soviets made an attempt to **regain lost territories**. On 12 March 1918, fearing an invasion, Lenin moved the capital from Petrograd to **Moscow**. Meanwhile, opposition to the Bolsheviks just kept on growing. Both sides rushed to recruit officers and soldiers from the old Imperial Army. Allied interventionist forces landed in Vladivostok in Siberia and in Archangelsk. In November 1918, a coup occurred in Vladivostok, which ended in Admiral Kolchak being declared the 'Supreme Leader' of Russia.



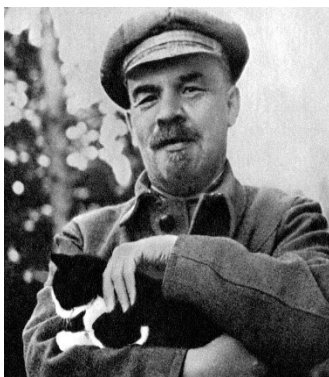


# Factions

## *BOLSHEVIKS:*

The Bolsheviks are the dominant Marxist faction within Russia at this time, taking power during the October Revolution in 1917. However, the Mensheviks and the Socialist Revolutionary Party still hold political influence in Russia, albeit much smaller than that of the Bolsheviks, especially after the Mensheviks were explicitly expelled from the RSDLP due to their opposition to numerous radical, violent, and undemocratic methods and ideals the Bolsheviks now held. In this moment of 1919, the Bolsheviks had to face the direct military threat from the White Russians, but also the internal political threat of leftist infighting between Marxists within and outside the Bolshevik party; however, many of the ideological differences could be compromised upon given smart diplomacy and deal-braking. Unfortunately, Marxists are not known for compromising. A key issue the Reds will face is constructing a new economic and political system while also fighting a civil war. The Bolsheviks are internationally isolated, they are alone diplomatically outside of Russia, which does not make them entirely alone. Separatist factions and other leftist factions that have broken free during the collapse of the old Russian order could be worked with, or quickly overthrown. The Greens however will be harder to work with and more than just words or guns will be needed to at least quell their uprisings throughout rural Russia. Furthermore, the Reds control regions of Russia with lots of urban cities and railway networks, making logistics and troop movements much easier than that of the Whites, as long as they can keep control of them.

## **Vladimir Lenin:**



Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the Soviet Union, Lenin is the de facto leader of the Bolsheviks. Lenin was able to dominate politically and take power, with his Bolsheviks pushing aside other leftist movements through their more radical and violent methods to attain power. Lenin made peace with the Central Powers, ceding large portions of Russia's western border to Germany. Lenin believed that the newly emerged governments would eventually collapse and fall to communist revolutions as Russia's had,

whether this comes to pass and how much of a hand the Bolsheviks have in this is yet to be formalised between the many butting heads of the Red faction. But as of right now, Lenin is on top and any man aiming to achieve rank and power in this new order must be on his good side, lest they be sidelined or kicked from the party.

### **Leon Trotsky:**



A Marxist leader who befriended Lenin while both resided in London. Trotsky later helped with the failed 1905 revolution with Lenin and other notable Marxists. Trotsky at first sided with the Mensheviks against Lenin but later joined the Bolsheviks, becoming Commissar of Foreign Affairs. Lenin seems at least to now trust the man he used to call "Little Judas". Trotsky now acts as the head of the Red Army and must do what he can to bolster and train his forces before the whites attempt to march on Moscow, mostly likely by Denikin's forces. Trotsky himself wished to

heal many of the divisions and factionalism within the Russian and global Marxist groups.

### **Joseph Stalin:**



Born in Georgia, Stalin was initially raised with the intention of joining the Clergy, but he instead ended up joining the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, becoming the editor of their newspaper, and later committing acts of armed robbery; kidnapping; and racketeering; in order to fund Lenin's Bolsheviks. He eventually rose up the ranks and became a member of an informal triumvirate with Lenin and Trotsky (Yakov Sverdlov was also minimally part of this

group). Stalin is a cunning brute and many of his colleagues know and fear this fact, he understands minimally the actual tenants and ideals of Marxism which makes others look down on and underestimate him, but as of right now Lenin still likes and sees Stalin as necessary to his purposes, to the chagrin of Trotsky and many others.

## *WHITES:*

Contrary to the Red's more politically narrow faction, the White Russians are a coalition of disparate groups and ideologies with a common anti-communist agenda. From liberals to Tsarists, to Nationalists, to men who think they are the reincarnation of Genghis Khan. While the Whites may be able to utilise their united hatred of communism to work together, the diversity of ideologies and men of great ego could make collaboration quickly fall apart as each faction attempts to enact their "true" agenda and come out on top. At the end of the day, they cannot exist in cooperation when/if the communists are defeated, the question is not if but when they turn on each other. This also means that the Whites do not have a clear leader, although Kolchak is proclaimed the Supreme Leader of Russia. These men are used to brutally oppressing opponents to the Tsar and may need to be kept in check lest they commit atrocities that scare the Russian people into the hands of the Reds. An advantage the Whites have is international support from the likes of the Allies of the First World War. However, except for Japan, these are democratic countries with minimal ambitions in Russia except stopping the communists. If the Whites cannot prove themselves capable of winning the war, or news breaks of atrocities committed by their soldiers, these countries may quickly lose interest. Another issue the Whites must deal with is logistics. Their armies and territories are spread thin, and some are disconnected from one another, making logistics and coordination a challenge.

### **Alexander Kolchak:**



While serving in the British navy after the Russian Revolution, Kolchak was shipped by the British up to Manchuria to lead the Russian troops guarding the Russian-owned railways in Manchuria to set up a base from which to overthrow the Bolsheviks. He became a minister of the Siberian Regional Government. It is clear that despite his grit and attitude; he has no skill in making allies or friends, being described as a childish neurotic idealist with mood swings and a want yet inability to please others. He despises the unruliness of the current White Russian coalition and may seek to correct this.

Kolchak is not comfortable with the idea of collaborating with separatist forces.

He saw himself as a military man with no knowledge of politics (he never served in the army and only had naval experience). His great sense of honour however has earned him respect both in Russia and abroad, especially with the British. Thus, when the British overthrew the regional government in 1918, the remaining cabinet members granted Kolchak emergency powers and gave him the title of Supreme Ruler. Kolchak in general distrusts many of the strange allies that the White faction has impromptu made such as the Czechoslovak Legion, who were displeased with Kolchak's rise to power and overthrow of the initial Regional Government.

### Anton Denikin



After the death of Kornilov in 1918, Denikin became head of the anti-Bolshevik army in the Don-Kuban region of Southern Russia after the highly successful Second Kuban Campaign. His army now plans to push forward to Moscow and end the civil war and will inevitably come into quick conflict with Trotsky's Red Army. Denikin was a notorious antisemite, and his behaviours and actions made against Russian and Ukrainian Jews already in the conflict have alienated him from Western support despite his current military successes. Many of his beliefs have trickled down

into his troops as well, making him diplomatically isolated and loathed even by other White Russians. Despite the very different characters of Denikin and Kolchak, Denikin is likely "next in line" to the title of Supreme Ruler if the worst was to happen to Kolchak.

### *THE GREENS:*

The Greens were small peasant militia groups that emerged throughout Russia. Primarily formed in order to protect their local communities from the civil war. These groups were technically neutral, but some had connections and sympathies to the Socialist Revolutionary Party within the Reds, however many of these militia groups formed due to the Soviets' inability to extend their power and influence outside of urban areas and many of these groups opposed the Bolsheviks specifically as the Greens ideologically aligned closer to anarchism,

not Communism. However, the Whites will struggle even more to gain any Green support due to their direct connection to the old Tsarist regime these peasant groups initially rebelled against. Some may find bullets and fear more convenient than dealing with the Greens.

## *INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENTS:*

### **Baltic States and Poland**

The Baltic states as we know them today were not a notion in the early 20th century. Instead, the region was composed of various cultural groups with their own languages, whose populations spread across modern north-east Germany, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. Urbanisation was propelled by the region's port cities - namely Riga, Libau and Talin - but did not extend into landlocked areas. Modern Lithuania, for example, remained rural. In general, however, the Baltic region represented an important trade link between the Russian Empire and the wider world. This, combined with a large, landless peasant class, led to regional tensions over Russian rule and its redistribution of the region's revenue. And, during the course and aftermath of World War 1, the Baltic states were confronted with an unprecedented opportunity for independence.



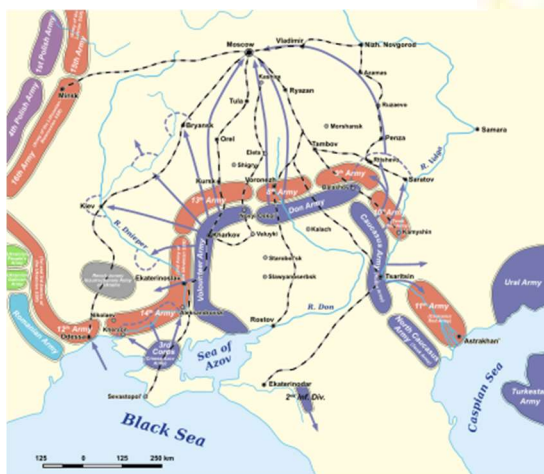
As Russian forces retreated from the invading German army, scorched-earth tactics were employed across the area. Germans occupied all of Lithuania and parts of Latvia in 1915, and all of Estonia in 1917. Initially, politically left-leaning groups continued to side with the Tsarist government, fearing the minority-hostile policies of the German Empire and its tendency towards annexation. The German elite, on the other hand, welcomed the army after decades of social unrest and political violence. Only the nationalists put cautious hope in Germany to help undo the region's political ties with Russia. Conscription for



soldiers and forced labourers, in addition to planned and unplanned evacuations, tore communities apart.

It was in this climate, as revolution spread through the region, that the population was presented with a new opportunity to pursue political autonomy. The radical land reform promised by the Bolsheviks attracted the large peasant class, which were rewarded for combat with large pieces of land. Despite this, many chose to fight for independence, and chaos ensued until about 1920. Volunteer armies under German command struggled to hold back a Bolshevik invasion, fighting both with and against regional nationalist armies. There were numerous armies and smaller battalions for and against independence in every nation, formed by the Germans, Russians, and everyone in between. Those that were successful locally often ventured to 'liberate' neighbouring areas. Britain sent ships to Baltic ports to deter Russian ships. From 1918 - 1920, the Polish Army fought both the White and Red Guards in an attempt to define a new Poland's eastern border. Administrative structures for new, independent regions formed and fell apart within months, as coordination was poor. In all, "the war bore characteristics of a coalition war, secessionist war, civil war, ethnic conflict and warlordism."

### Ukraine:



Ukraine, summer of 1919 (useful to understand the location of the Black Army)

Ukraine, along with the north-western parts of modern-day Russia and most of Belarus, is the birthplace of Russian and Slavic culture. Ukraine has always been integral to Russia, both as an extension of Russia itself and as an independent country. Ukraine was largely divided between Monarchists and Bolsheviks, with divisions inside each of these factions as well. While various Ukrainian revolutionaries supported the White Army in the hopes of an independent Ukraine, others supported the white army

because of their belief in the monarchy. On the other hand, a majority of the Revolutionary Insurgent Army of Ukraine supported the Bolshevik Army, they

were also interested in sovereignty. The Insurgent Army was divided between Communists and Insurrectionists.

### Factions

- Ukrainian People's Republic - Symon Petliura
- Makhnovshchina (Black Army) - Nestor Makhno
- Ukrainian State - Pavlo Skoropadskyi
- South Russia - Anton Denikin

### Key Figures

#### **Symon Petliura**

- Supreme Commander of the Ukrainian Army and the President of the Ukrainian People's Republic
- Leading Ukrainian Independence activist
- His forces were responsible for a large part of antisemitic violence, however, this was not ordered by him

#### **Nestor Makhno**

- The namesake for the Insurgent Army (Makhnovtsi) and movement (Makhnovshchina), leader of the Revolutionary Insurgent Army of Ukraine
- Allied with the red army, but was an Anarcho-communist, so he believed in de-centralised governance
- After the defeat of the White Army, his faction was in direct conflict with the Red Army

#### **Pavlo Skoropadskyi**

- Russian and later Ukrainian military commander from a distinguished family of military leaders and statesmen
- Monarchist - committed to federation under Russian Empire
- Hetman of Ukraine under German occupation (German Puppet)

## **Caucasus States:**

During World War I and the Russian Revolution, the Caucasus region saw the independence of Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan (first as one state - the Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic). The Southern Russian parts of the Caucasus fell under White Russian rule until the Bolsheviks defeated them. Various smaller groups declared short lived independence and sovereignty over lands.

### Factions

- Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic
- Democratic Republic of Georgia
- Azerbaijan Democratic Republic
- The First Republic of Armenia - Noe Zhordania

## **Cossacks:**

Following the outbreak of the Russian Civil War, the Don and Kuban Cossacks were the first to declare war against the Bolsheviks. They were integrated and formed the core of the White Forces. Cossacks originated from Ukrainian, Russian, and Transcaucasian lands and were almost entirely anti-Bolshevik.

## **Separatists in Central Asia**

The Russian Revolution saw independent states and autonomous regions pop up in almost every non-Russian region. The Muslim population of Central Asia had already dissented from conscription and involvement. When the First World War started, the Russian Revolution was a mere boost to their ambitions for self-determination. The various ethnic groups of the region each broke away and formed their own polities, which were ultimately integrated into the Soviet Union.

### Factions

- Basmachi - Uzbeks (Russian Turkestan)
- Alash Autonomy - Kazakhs (Most of Kazakhstan)
- The Confederated Republic of Altai - Altai people (Gorno-Altai)





as early as 1905

- Green Ukraine - sought to be a part of Ukraine and then an independent Ukrainian state in the Pacific
- Chukotka
- Kamchatka
- Tungus Republic - an unrecognised secessionist state, saw fighting against the Red Army into the mid-1920s

### Foreign Interventions:

The Russian Revolution saw unprecedented foreign involvement due to the importance of the Russian state and its involvement in the First World War. The stakeholders included but were not limited to the UK, Japan, France, the US, Germany, and Poland among others. According to Western sources, the goal of the allied forces in Russia was to stop Germany from exploiting Russia's resources (and prolonging the war) and to support and extract allied forces trapped in Russia following the revolution. However, it is safe to assume vested interests. Most foreign forces, including Germany and Poland, supported the White movement directly or indirectly. The Czechoslovak legion which sought independence from Austria and Hungary was a major player throughout the revolution and also controlled the Trans-Siberian railway for a large part of the war. Japan was one of the only foreign forces that did not side with the White Movement or the Bolsheviks as they pursued their own interests in outer Manchuria, Sakhalin and other islands in the Russian Far-east and Japanese North.

Map showing Allied positions in Arkhangelsk, Murmansk, Crimea, and the Caucasus



# Military Strength and Areas of Concern

## *Comparison of Forces:*

Overall, the Bolshevik forces were greater in number, while the White Armies were adequately supplied, thanks to the Allies. However, desertion was common on both sides. Furthermore, many Allied weapons would end up in the hands of the Reds, due to the black market. Thus, conditions are very fragile on the front line.

Both sides heavily rely on officers from the old Imperial Army. The Bolsheviks occasionally enforced the loyalty of such recruits by holding their families as hostages. Neither army has reached its peak and there still are troops arriving from the fronts of WWI. Furthermore, agreements with separatist movements can help you find valuable allies and recruit specialised troops (such as the Cossack cavalry). Infantry divisions, supplemented by some cavalry divisions, dominate both armies. There are also some artillery divisions. You may try to purchase (officially, or through the black market) more equipment. Your exact army composition and military strength will be given to you in the first session of the conference.

## *Supply:*



Supply is key in any war. Supply is even more important in a civil war. Supply is **the most important area of concern** in a civil war in Russia. The Whites have access to a number of important ports and can receive support from the Allies. On the other hand, the Bolsheviks control the industrial and agricultural heartland of Russia. Thus, supplies arrive from these two sources. Your armies are heavily reliant on railroads and especially the Trans-Siberian Railway. At the starting date of the crisis, this railway is controlled by the Czechoslovak Legion. Damaging railways is not always a smart decision as it may slow down the supplies reaching you, as well as the supplies reaching

your enemy. Armoured trains are heavily used to counter raids, especially by the Bolsheviks.

### *Morale:*

Maintaining high public and military morale is key to winning this war. Large numbers of soldiers are deserting their positions and joining the enemy in this war. To prevent this, you need to make sure your army is confident in your side. Make use of your charismatic members of cabinets and make sure your soldiers are receiving their supplies.

As conscription is the main way both sides recruited soldiers, the morale of the public is also important. If the general public is unhappy with you, potential recruits might flee. If the peasants are unhappy with your administration, green armies will rise up.

### *Who is the Leviathan?*

Both cabinets are ruling over heavily decentralised entities. There are many local warlords and several separatist movements. You need to make sure you know who to ally with and who to crush. Think about the implications of the decisions you make. Do the material gains when allying with a separatist leader justify the loss of prestige?

One cabinet is the first proper trial of an ambitious ideology, while the other cabinet is full of big egos and a very loose cooperation of left-wing, right-wing, far right, and non-Russian politicians and soldiers. Remember that you are ruling over a population that, for decades, has been perished under war, poverty, and famine. You need to prove to the public that you deserve to be the Leviathan. Not only are you military generals, but you are also administrators in this war.