

Does Reform Prevent Rebellion? Evidence From Russia's Emancipation of the Serfs

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Abstract

Contemporary models of political economy suggest that reforms intended to reduce grievances should curtail unrest, a perspective at odds with many traditional accounts of reform and rebellion. We explore the impact of reform on rebellion with a new data set on peasant disturbances in 19th-century Russia. Using a difference-in-differences design that exploits the timing of various peasant reforms, we document a large increase in disturbances among former serfs following the Emancipation Reform of 1861, a development counter to reformers' intent. Our analysis suggests that this outcome was driven by peasants' disappointment with the reform's design and implementation—the consequence of elite capture in the context of a generally weak state—and heightened expectations of what could be achieved through coordinated action. Reform-related disturbances were most pronounced in provinces where commune organization facilitated collective action and where fertile soil provoked contestation over land.

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Many contemporary models of political economy suggest that policy and institutional change are driven by fear of social unrest (e.g., Acemoglu & Robinson, 2006; Ansell & Samuels, 2010; Boix, 2003; Dunning, 2008; Gandhi & Przeworski, 2006; Svoboda, 2012). Although details differ, such models are typically characterized by a bargaining environment in which an excluded group has the ability to impose a costly settlement—often through large-scale social unrest—if bargaining breaks down. Reform (policy or institutional change intended to improve the welfare of the excluded group) reduces the likelihood that this option is exercised—the only alternative to elites being repression, which is itself costly.¹ As summarized by Adam Przeworski, “extensions of rights are a response of the incumbent holders of rights to revolutionary threats by the excluded” (Przeworski, 2009, p. 292).

Although it is intuitive that reforms intended to reduce grievances should reduce unrest, earlier important work suggests a more ambiguous relationship between reform and rebellion, especially in traditional societies. Huntington (1968), for example, suggests that reform can be either a “catalyst” or “substitute” for political instability, as reform may raise expectations among excluded groups even as it addresses long-standing grievances. Skocpol (1979) shows how reform driven by international pressures but constrained by elite interests can paradoxically create the conditions for rebellion, especially in the context of preexisting capacity for collective action among the peasantry. Scott (1976), in turn, demonstrates that modernizing reforms can undermine norms that ensure subsistence lifestyles, thus fostering grievances that drive rebellion, even if such reforms increase expected income.²

What is the impact of reform on rebellion? We provide new evidence on this question with a novel data set of peasant disturbances in 19th-century Russia. Our data allow us to examine the impact of a particular reform designed to prevent social disorder: Tsar Alexander II’s emancipation of the serfs in 1861. Long-simmering unrest among peasants bound to the nobility, punctuated by occasional spasms of intense violence, had encouraged various acts of peasant reform throughout the Russian Empire but never emancipation of the serfs in Russia proper. In the wake of the Crimean War, which led to renewed peasant disturbances as well as a perception that Russia’s institutions were outdated, Alexander finally declared to the Moscow nobility in 1856 that it was better to end serfdom “from above” than to wait for it to

happen “from below.” This was more than public rhetoric: The tsar’s personal reaction to reports by members of his Secret Committee on the Peasant Question indicate a fear of spontaneous peasant revolution (Zaionchkovskii, 1968, Chapter 2).

Our focus on Russian Emancipation represents a “most-likely” research design (e.g., Eckstein, 1975; Gerring, 2007), in which the deck is intentionally stacked in favor of some theoretical prior—here, that reform reduces unrest. In addition to the reality that preventing unrest was a primary goal of the Emancipation Reform of 1861, there were various other factors that made such an outcome likely. Discontent among Russian serfs (as with peasants generally, suggests Huntington, 1968) was primarily distributive, not ideational, implying that the peasantry may have been comparatively easy to buy off.³ In addition, reform did not pose the sort of commitment problem that would make it difficult to avoid unrest (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2006). As we discuss below, property rights were for years after emancipation determined by land charters that were negotiated during the reform process. Indeed, it is precisely the commitment value of the charters that led to the contestation that we document. Finally, reform arguably led to no immediate change in the ease of rebellion.

The utility of the Russian case can be observed by comparing it with other instances of 19th-century reform: emancipation of the serfs in neighboring Austria–Hungary and Prussia. As oppressive as serfdom was in those regions, peasants were materially better off at the time of reform than they were in Russia, with greater right to land. Peasant revolt was not the ever-present danger that it was further east: Prussian peasants were by and large an “obedient lot” (Kieniewicz, 1969, p. 59), and “[t]he peasantry was no danger to the Austrian state” (Link, 1974, p. 174). Consequently, reform was driven in both Austria–Hungary and Prussia in substantial part by a desire to improve state finances, not to prevent unrest (Blum, 1948; Eddie, 2013). Moreover, and largely in contrast to the Russian case, reform proceeded gradually over decades of evolution of the state apparatus (Kosáry, 1941), complicating identification of any causal effect of reform on rebellion.

Thus, various factors skewed the distribution of likely outcomes in the direction of reducing unrest among the Russian peasantry. Yet, as we demonstrate with a difference-in-differences design that exploits the differential impact of reform on serfs and “state peasants” (i.e., peasants who lived on state lands), respectively, the immediate impact of reform was opposite to what was intended. Unrest among former serfs accelerated sharply after the publication of the Emancipation Manifesto in 1861, with disturbances sufficiently dangerous and widespread as to provoke a large military response—that is, repression. Even after the immediate crisis had passed, those rebellions

that did occur were larger and more likely to result in the deployment of troops than had been the case prior to emancipation, a pattern that persisted through the 1860s.

Why would a reform intended to prevent rebellion instead encourage it? To answer this question, we draw on the historical record and our data on the proximate cause of disturbances to demonstrate that unrest was driven by grievances with the reform process, the consequence of capture by a nobility operating in the context of a generally weak Russian state. The impact of these grievances appears to have been magnified by heightened expectations—also a consequence of reform—of what coordinated action could achieve. Although peasant unrest spiked nearly everywhere after reform, disturbances driven by liberation-related grievances were greatest in regions with relatively fertile soil, where the land was worth fighting for. Preexisting capacity for collective action also seems to have played a role, with unrest greater in provinces where the peasant commune historically played an important role in organizing work on the demesne.

Our micro-level findings thus reinforce the largely qualitative work cited above that suggests that reform can provoke rather than prevent rebellion. Beyond this contribution to political economy and the study of contentious politics, our article adds to the historiography of an important period in Russian history. Although the increase in social instability that we describe is mentioned in various important works on serfdom and the Emancipation Reform in both the primary (e.g., Blum, 1961; Moon, 2001a; Zaionchkovskii, 1968) and secondary (e.g., Skocpol, 1979) literature, scholarly understanding of this episode is largely informed by case studies of a few well-known but unrepresentative major uprisings (Field, 1976b) or analyses of disturbances in a single province or region (e.g., Degtiarev, Kashchenko, & Raskin, 1990; Kashchenko, 2009; Litvak, 1972), and there is some disagreement about the extent of the uprising and its relationship to the Emancipation Reform (e.g., Field, 1976a). Ours is the first econometric study of disturbances in all regions affected by the reform. In addition, this article is the first attempt to identify a causal effect of emancipation on social instability using modern methods of causal inference; we provide a range of estimates based on various assumptions about potential measurement error and biased selection into the data set. Our data on the proximate cause of disturbances supply further evidence while also generating insight into the mechanisms that drive variation in unrest across time, space, peasant class, and nature of disturbance.

Finally, our work has obvious connections to a large literature on peasant rebellion (e.g., Migdal, 1974; Popkin, 1979; Scott, 1976; Wolf, 1967), including recent work that empirically estimates the relationship between land reform and insurgency (Albertus & Kaplan, 2012; Alston, Libecap, &

Mueller, 2000).⁴ Our finding that rebellion increased in response to emancipation, a package of reforms that included land redistribution, is consistent with the estimates in each of the latter articles, suggesting generalizability of our results beyond the context of 19th-century Russia. Relative to these articles, a major contribution of our work is that our data allow us to identify the grievances that prompted particular disturbances, thus helping to establish the causal mechanism between reform and rebellion. In addition, we employ a different identification strategy, exploiting the fact that Russia's equally numerous state peasants had been given legal freedom decades before emancipation of the serfs in 1861. Finally, by demonstrating the relationship between unrest (on one hand) and soil fertility and commune organization (on the other hand), we give greater emphasis to heterogeneous effects across different agricultural economies.

Historical Background

Compared with the rest of Europe, serfdom developed relatively late in Russia. Two factors—the government's decision to create a large class of military and civil servitors, and the land/labor ratio—led to its introduction (Domar, 1970). As Moscow's rulers embarked on a process of rapid territorial expansion, the large number of servitors needed for these activities were compensated by land grants (e.g., Kimerling Wirtschafter, 2008). However, the peasants' freedom of movement and the availability of yet-unsettled land put substantial economic pressure on the landed nobility. Restrictions on peasant mobility, introduced and enforced by the state, increased the attractiveness of state service. This process of gradual encroachment on peasants' freedom culminated during the late 17th and 18th centuries in the formal introduction of serfdom.

According to Russian legislation, serfs were bound to the land on which they lived though *de facto* restrictions on mobility appear to have varied by region and estate (e.g., Dennison, 2011). They were required to provide the aristocratic landowners certain obligations, the most important of which were *corvée* (unpaid labor on landowner's fields, known in Russian as *barshchina*) and *quitrent* (payment in money, or in kind, or *obrok*). Where the land was rich, such as in Ukraine's black-earth provinces, *barshchina* predominated; in the less fertile areas of northern Russia, where peasants tilled the land and were engaged in crafts and trade, *obrok* was prevalent. The combination of both was common. The landowner had policing and judicial powers over the serfs and was entitled to administer various punishments, such as flogging, imprisonment, and exile to Siberia. The serfs could also be sold, with or without land, at the landlord's whim (Zaionchkovskii, 1968).

Not all peasants in the Russian Empire were serfs, however. By 1861, slightly less than half of Russia's peasants belonged to the state and appanage peasantry, who lived on state lands and lands owned by the royal family, respectively. The state peasantry, by far the larger of the two groups, was established in the early 18th century through the reforms of Peter the Great. Although initially subject to many of the same conditions as serfs, the Kiselev Reforms of 1837 through 1841 put state peasants under the control of the Ministry of State Properties and improved their economic and social status. Overall, state peasants tended to have larger land allotments than did serfs. Most important, unlike serfs, state peasants enjoyed greater rights to own property, engage in other occupations, and move to other social estates. The appanage peasants, in turn, were required to pay *obrok* and, like state peasants, they had to pay taxes and fulfill several additional obligations though their land allotments were generally smaller (Zaionchkovskii, 1968).

The original justification for serfdom was that serfs provided working hands and income for the nobles, who in turn were legally obliged to serve the tsar and the state. However, when this obligation ended in 1762, much of the moral justification for serfdom was lost. Furthermore, the often brutal and abusive treatment of serfs by the landlords or estate stewards, combined with the exploitation of peasants' labor, led to numerous instances of violence that ranged from killing or flogging landlords to massive peasant uprisings that devastated entire regions and required substantial military effort to quell. (The most notable of these, the Pugachev Rebellion during the reign of Catherine II, formed the basis of Pushkin's depiction of the "Russian revolt, senseless and merciless.")

By the early 19th century, serfdom was not only morally problematic, but simply dangerous to maintain. At the same time, the government was afraid to institute any drastic reforms: In 1801, Tsar Paul I was murdered in a palace coup, in part due to the "nobility's indignation at Paul's decrees establishing a legal minimal allotment of land to the serfs by the landlords" (Zenkovsky, 1961, p. 282). Yet, some reforms did take place, mainly in the westernmost parts of the Empire. Between 1816 and 1819, the serfs of the Baltic *guberniyas* (contemporary Estonia and Latvia) were the first to be emancipated. However, while the peasants gained individual freedom, they received no land and therefore remained completely dependent on their former lords as hired laborers. In 1837, as discussed above, the government initiated a major reform substantially improving the status of state peasants. Finally, in the late 1840s, an "inventory reform," regulating peasants' land allotments and obligations, was introduced in the right-bank Ukraine, with a clear goal of limiting the powers of the largely Polish Catholic nobility. Abuses of this process by the gentry provoked widespread peasant disturbances that prefigure the events that we describe below (Moon, 2001b).

The main catalyst for reform was the Crimean War (1853-1856), which resulted in Russia's humiliating defeat and clearly demonstrated the country's backwardness.⁵ Furthermore, the war led to numerous instances of unrest because of increased conscription of peasants to the military and attempted migration (fueled by false rumors of freedom on joining the wartime militia) or settlement in Crimea in the aftermath of the fighting (Zaionchkovskii, 1968). Although serfdom was profitable for the landowners (Domar & Machina, 1984),⁶ the central government's increasing fear of peasant rebellion (Gerschenkron, 1965) made eventual emancipation unavoidable. On December 4, 1858, Alexander publicly announced that serfdom was soon to be abolished.

As the nobility internalized the general idea of emancipation, however reluctantly, a pitched battle was waged over the reform's content. Standard historical accounts present the reform drafting process as a bitter struggle between the *krepostniki* (serfdom supporters) and the liberals, with the two groups divided on whether emancipation should be accompanied by the distribution of land to former serfs. In fact, the divisions ran deeper, involving cleavages between Westernizers and Slavophiles, as well as between those who viewed the peasants through the prism of romanticism and those who adopted a more rationalist, individualist view of the peasant (Khristoforov, 2011).

Navigating between these camps, Alexander rejected the idea of landless emancipation, but at the same time he could not order the radical reform envisaged by the liberal bureaucracy. Therefore, the emancipation act of 1861, known as the February 19 Manifesto, was a complicated and convoluted compromise that fell short of each camp's desires. According to the manifesto, serfs gained immediate personal freedom. The peasants were granted the right to "redeem" (buy out) their houses and adjacent garden plots, but the fate of the much larger cultivated land plots depended on the landowners' will. The landowner and peasants had the option to agree on an immediate "grant allotment" of one quarter of the maximum allotment, for which the peasants would not be required to pay or provide obligations. Otherwise, the landowner could either sell the land to his or her former serfs with the state acting as financial intermediary (redemption payments were to be made to the state over 49 years), or he or she could keep it in her ownership, allowing the former serfs to use the land in exchange for payment or obligations. In the former case, transactions were not between the landlord and individual peasants, but between the landlord and the entire local peasant community, the *sel'skoe obshchestvo*, which was subsequently held collectively responsible for redemption payments of its members; former serfs could not leave the commune unless they paid off their full share of the

community obligation. Plans to subsidize redemption payments were shelved after the banking crisis in 1859, thus increasing the expected flow of payments by serfs who gained ownership of their land (Hoch, 1991).

This was obviously not the free transfer of land that many peasants anticipated. Peasants who nonetheless wished to retain the possibility of purchasing their full land allotment became “temporarily obligated.” During this transition period, *obrok* remained largely at the preemancipation level, whereas *barshchina* was substantially reduced. Regulatory charters (*ustavnye gramoty*) were to be compiled by the landlord, regulating land allotments, payments, and the general framework of relations between former serfs and the landowners. Although, in principle, the peasants were entitled to their existing land allotments, the legislation provided ample opportunities for gerrymandering—mainly in cases where the existing allotment was below the stipulated minimum, or as was often the case, exceeded the envisaged maximum. The verification of charters and resolution of conflicts between the landlords and the peasants was entrusted to the newly created institution of “peace arbitrators” (*mirovye posredniki*), discussed below. A landowner was given a year to draw up the charter, with or without consultation with the peasants. After that period, the arbitrator could draft the charter independently. Although initially both sides had to approve the charter terms, eventually a refusal to sign ceased to be an obstacle to implementation. Indeed, of the 73,195 charters in effect at the start of 1863, approximately half had not been signed by the peasants (Easley, 2002).

Possible Effects of Reform on Rebellion

What impact could the Emancipation Reform have had on unrest among Russia’s landowner peasants? In this section, we outline three potential channels through which reform might affect rebellion. In the online appendix, we present a simple formal model that provides a common microfoundation for these channels.

First, reform may have altered the *grievances* that drive rebellion. As discussed above, a major goal of the tsar and reformers in the government was to prevent unrest by improving peasant welfare through emancipation. To the extent that peasants were in fact made better off (and not simultaneously subjected to a loss of subsistence guarantees of the sort described by Scott, 1976), reform might have reduced the threat of rebellion. Conversely, if the reform process ultimately left some peasants materially worse off than before, then peasants might have been more likely to be rebel.

Second, the Emancipation Reform may have raised peasants’ *expectations* of the benefits of successful collective action. Russian historiography

emphasizes the “myth of the tsar” (Field, 1976b), in which peasants believed in the good intentions of the monarch even as they distrusted the nobility, the embodiment of monarchical power at the local level. Emancipation in the tsar’s name may have convinced serfs that various forms of contentious action would be rewarded.

Finally, reform may have affected the *ease of rebellion*, perhaps through changes in mobilizing structures, that is, “those collective vehicles, informal as well as formal, through which people mobilize and engage in collective action” (McAdam, 1999, p. ix). As we discuss below, emancipation was accompanied by various changes in local self-governance, which, in principle, might have altered the ability of peasants to overcome their collective-action problems.

Depending on the direction and relative weight of any of these effects, emancipation and related reforms could thus have produced either an increase or decrease in unrest among former serfs. In the following sections, we identify the effect of emancipation on rebellion and explore the underlying causes of any change through analysis of our data on peasant disturbances, which we now proceed to describe.

Data

We assembled data on peasant disturbances from four volumes of *Krest'ianskoe Dvizhenie v Rossii* (*The Peasant Movement in Russia*), a chronicle of peasant actions between 1796 and 1917 (Ivanov, 1964; Okun', 1962; Okun' & Sivkov, 1963; Zaionchkovskii & Paina, 1968). The events in these volumes were gathered by a team of Soviet historians, working during the Khrushchev Thaw, based on two main sources of information. The first is the archival collections of the main Soviet archives—the Central State Historical Archive of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (TsGIA USSR), the Central State Archive of the October Revolution (TsGAOR), and the Central State Military-Historical Archive (TsGVIA)—and several smaller archives. These archives house, among other materials, the documents of the Imperial Court; the State Council; the political police (Third Section); the Ministries of Internal Affairs, Justice, and State Properties; the Senate; and the highest governing body of the Russian Orthodox Church. They also include reports to central authorities by provincial governors, state officials, and police officers; final reports of various inspections; archives of large landholding families; and similar documents. The second main source used to compile the chronicle is numerous secondary historical works on peasant unrests, emancipation, and rural life in various provinces.

16 октября. Пензенская губ. Наказание управляющего Унгерн-Штернберга крестьянами помещиц Леонтьевых с. Никольского (Буды) Наровчатского у. за жестокое обращение.
 ЦГИА, ф. 1286, оп. 21, 1860 г., д. 636, л. 106—111; ф. 1291, оп. 123, 1860 г., д. 1, л. 192, 197 об.—198 об., 211 об.—217; ЦГАОР, ф. 109-И, 4 эксп., 1860 г., д. 230, л. 10; «Документы и материалы по истории Мордовской АССР», стр. 345—359.

Figure 1. A typical chronicle entry from *Krest'ianskoe Dvizhenie v Rossii* (*The Peasant Movement in Russia*), indicating that, on October 16, 1860, punishment was inflicted on the management of an estate in Penza *guberniya* in response to brutal treatment. The indented text at the bottom gives the archival sources on which the entry is based.

We coded all entries from 1851 to 1871—that is, the decade before and after emancipation. Doing so resulted in a total of 3,775 events across 55 *guberniyas*, which currently constitute the Baltic States; Belarus; Moldova; most of Ukraine, Armenia, and Georgia; and almost all of European Russia. We code events in Ufa, which was carved out of Orenburg *guberniya* in 1865, as belonging to Orenburg. Missing population data (discussed below) for six *guberniyas* in the Baltics and the Caucasus further reduce our sample to 48 provinces. In addition, we drop Kutaisi, Tiflis, and Bessarabia, three outlying *guberniyas* where emancipation was implemented later, for a final sample of 45 provinces, in which we observe 3,615 events.

The information in the chronicles is quite rich, allowing us to code events using categories similar to other event data analyses (e.g., Robertson, 2011). Figure 1 depicts a typical entry. For each event, we are able to code one or more actions taken by peasants at a particular time and place. For 2,057 events, the chronicle also identifies the proximate cause of the action. Peasant type is given for all but 109 events. Many events also indicate some sort of response by local officials (typically the arrival of a military detachment). With the assistance of a native Russian research assistant, we developed a coding protocol based on analysis of a subsample of events from the pre- and postemancipation period. We then manually coded all events during the sample window. Ultimately, all events were read and coded twice: first by our research assistant, and then again by one of the authors, who is a native Russian speaker, with discrepancies resolved in favor of the latter's judgment in consultation with the other authors. We provide the complete codebook in an online appendix (available at <http://cps.sagepub.com/supplemental>).

We aggregate up from the event-level data to construct a panel data set with event counts at the province-year level. In doing so, we face some

choices about how to categorize peasant types, actions, and causes. With respect to the former, we provide separate counts for *current and former landowner peasants* and *state and appanage peasants*. The first category includes “landowner peasants” (i.e., serfs), “former landowner peasants,” and “temporarily obligated peasants” (i.e., those still required to provide obligations to their former owners—see the discussion above). Similarly, the second category includes peasants classified as “former state” and “former appanage” peasants. We include the small number of cases with participation by both peasant types in the count for each. Furthermore, we include the small number of events in which peasant type is unknown in the count for landowner peasants; the results reported below are very similar if we instead drop such cases from the analysis.

With respect to peasant actions, we derive the province–year count of events falling into each of four general categories: *Refusal*, *Theft and violence*, *Complaint*, and *Governance*. As with peasant type, we include events that fall into more than one category in the count for each. Refusals capture those instances in which peasants refuse to accept terms of liberation, pay for land, pay *obrok* or *barshchina*, and otherwise employ what Scott (1987) refers to as “weapons of the weak.” In contrast, the second category includes events in which peasants actively engage in some act of theft or violence: seizing the landlord’s land; committing violence—murder, at times—against the landlord or management; or destroying property, including burning down the landlord’s manor house or, in a number of cases, the local pub. We include in this category events in which the chronicle records unspecified unrest, typically rendered as *volnenie*. Although the context implies that such disturbances are likely to have been violent, we report below the robustness of our results to instead classifying such events as refusals.

The third category of events includes those instances in which peasants make a formal complaint to government officials, including the tsar, grand duke, minister of justice, minister of internal affairs, governor, and police. Governance, the fourth category, includes instances in which peasants attempt to change the estate or municipal administration, often motivated by the introduction of peasant self-administration at the village or *volost’* (an administrative unit comprising several villages) level after the publication of the Emancipation Manifesto. Figure 2 illustrates the geographic distribution of all classes of disturbances for the entire period that we examine.

The event description provides some indication of the proximate cause for approximately 57% of the cases in our sample, as in the entry in Figure 1, where action is taken “because of brutal treatment” (*za zhestokoe obrashchenie*).⁷ Based on our reading of the events, we divide causes into five categories and derive the province–year count of events falling into each. *Landlord/*

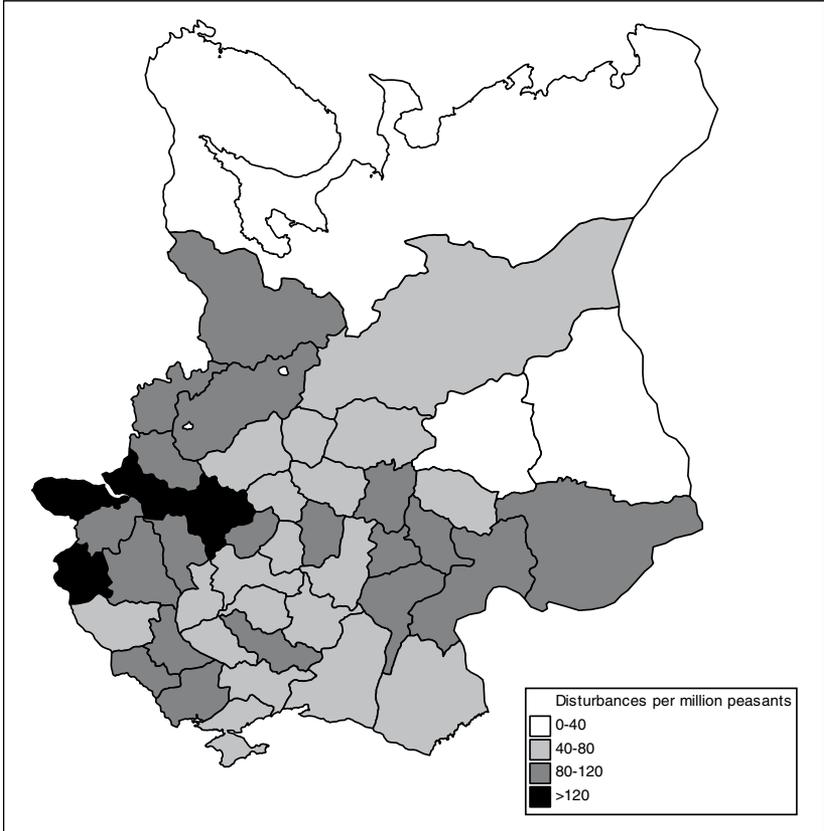


Figure 2. Peasant disturbances, 1851 to 1871.

peasant relations capture issues related to peasant obligations to the landlord, including *barshchina* and *obrok*, as well as landlord actions toward the peasants, including brutal treatment and the forced enlistment of serfs in the military. A second category relates to peasants' *Serf status*, including desire to be released from such status or transferred to the state peasantry. A third cause deals specifically with *Liberation*: rumors of liberation, anticipation of a "second liberation," dissatisfaction with the terms of emancipation, or distribution of printed materials calling for peasants to liberate themselves. *Estate* captures instances in which peasants express dissatisfaction with estate management or municipal government. The residual category, *Other*, incorporates a small number of causes that do not fit into the previous categories:

miscellaneous events related to the Crimean War, forest fire, and so forth. As we discuss below, the emphasis in this article is on events in the third category.

There are natural questions about the potential for biased selection into this data set. With respect to our identification strategy, the most serious concern would be if events were recorded for some types of peasants while ignored for others. In fact, the key motivation of the Soviet historians who compiled the chronicles was to introduce “the archival materials on a prolonged and determined struggle (*dlitel'noi i upornoj bor'be*) of the peasant masses against feudal and capitalist exploitation” (Druzhinin, 1961, p. 5). Scholars set out to document the struggle of the peasants *as a class*, regardless of whether particular peasants were victims of feudal or capitalist oppression, and thus to highlight the historical origins of the peasant–proletariat alliance that led to the October 1917 Revolution (Druzhinin, 1961). The contextual material in the chronicles is replete with the language of peasant class unity and class consciousness familiar to Soviet historians, where “class” was defined as peasants as such. In short, the goal of data collection was to compile a comprehensive chronicle of unrest among *all* peasants.

Other obvious sources of bias are period- or province-specific, for which various elements of our empirical strategy control. In March 1858, for example, in anticipation of emancipation, the Ministry of Internal Affairs increased the frequency with which it provided reports to the tsar on peasant affairs (Okun' & Sivkov, 1963, p. 13). This continued until 1863, when weekly reports were abandoned in favor of monthly reports (Zaionchkovskii, 1958). Furthermore, Soviet historians, eager to present the severity of the “revolutionary situation,” may have paid more attention to the period preceding the reform. In addition, not all provinces are covered equally. Some provinces were subject to frequent inspections by high-ranking officials, whereas others received less attention. Finally, the combination of primary and secondary sources implies that data were gathered only from central state archives for some provinces but from both central and local archives for others (Zaionchkovskii, 1968).

In our analysis, we exploit demographic data reported by local authorities to the Statistical Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs just prior to emancipation, as recorded in Bushen (1863). At the guberniya level, we derive *Serf population* as the number of male and female field and household serfs, and *State and appanage population* as the number of male and female state and appanage peasants. The former variable is highly correlated with an analogous count from the 10th *reviziia*, or tax census, as reported by Troinitskii (1861). We also use province-level data on average peasant *Settlement size* and on *Barshchina share*. The former variable is calculated

using the population data described just above and the number of settlements circa 1893, as reported by the Central Statistical Committee, on the assumption that few settlements would have been founded or disbanded during the 30 years following emancipation, given the restrictions on peasant mobility during that time.⁸ The latter variable, constructed from data in Skrebnitskii (1865/1866), is the proportion of male serfs whose obligations are primarily labor on the demesne.

Finally, one of the primary issues surrounding the implementation of emancipation was the distribution of land. As such, we might expect soil quality to also influence the frequency of peasant disturbances. To account for soil type, we use geographic information system (GIS)-coded data on soil type from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO),⁹ which we overlay on a map of 19th-century Russian administrative boundaries. The resulting data set provides the proportion of land in each *guberniya* belonging to one of 22 soil types or to other categories such as water. Based on a classification by Brady and Weil (2002), we define *Fertile soil* as any of the following soil types observed in our data: Chernozem, Greyzem, Histosol, Kastanozem, Phaeozem, or Vertisol. (Although the FAO data are from 1990, soil type—as opposed to soil quality, which can be affected by land use—evolves over the course of millennia, and we assume that soil types for our sample of Russian provinces did not fundamentally change over the succeeding 120-140 years.) Figure 3 shows the distribution of fertile soil across our sample of 46 provinces, with a belt of fertile agricultural land across Russia's southern territory, a geographic feature that figures prominently in Russian history.

Empirical Strategy

We employ a difference-in-differences research design that takes advantage of the fact that the Emancipation Reform of 1861 had a direct effect only on landowner peasants (i.e., serfs), not on state or appanage peasants. Our data allow us to separately estimate the rate of disturbances for these two classes of peasants at different points in time, from which we compare the change over time in the rate for each class. This empirical strategy holds constant any measurement error or economic shocks that affect each class of peasants equally.

In particular, our baseline empirical model assumes that peasant disturbances for both landowner and nonlandowner peasants are generated by a Poisson process with observation-specific mean (i.e., a negative binomial model).¹⁰ For each group of peasants, we assume that the expected rate of disturbances μ_{jt} in province j and year t is given by



Figure 3. Distribution of soil highly suitable for agriculture across provinces in sample. (Figure is available in color in the online version at cps.sagepub.com)

$$E(\mu_{jt}) = \exp(\alpha + \mathbf{w}_t\beta + \ln(z_j)), \quad (1)$$

where \mathbf{w}_t is a vector of time variables; z_j is an exposure variable given by the population of landowner or nonlandowner peasants in province j , as described above; and α and β are (vectors of) parameters to be estimated. We assume $\mathbf{w}_t = (x_t, y_t)$, where x_t is a dummy variable equal to one if $t = 1861$ or $t = 1862$, and zero otherwise, and y_t is a dummy variable equal to one if $t > 1862$, and zero otherwise. Thus, we estimate the change in the rate of peasant disturbances for the 2-year transition period and the postemancipation period, relative to the preemancipation baseline. Our difference-in-differences estimates come from comparing the estimates of β for landowner and nonlandowner peasants, respectively.

One potential problem with the specification in Equation 1 is that the rate of peasant disturbances could be driven by time-invariant provincial characteristics other than the size of the peasant population. There is, however, no

way to condition out fixed effects in a negative binomial model, and including dummy variables for the fixed effects introduces a potential incidental-parameters bias. We therefore employ two alternative models to control for time-invariant provincial characteristics. First, we estimate a linear fixed-effects model. Second, we estimate a negative binomial model in which the dispersion parameter is fixed for each province.

Finally, as discussed in the following section, we check the robustness of our results to alternative ways of aggregating events to the province–year level. In addition, we leverage the historical record to identify particular provinces or years that might violate the difference-in-differences assumption of common trends in the absence of treatment.

Estimation

Before presenting our estimation results, we illustrate the evolution of peasant disturbances graphically. Figure 4 depicts the average annual count of disturbances for each of the four categories described above for landowner and nonlandowner peasants, respectively. For both classes of peasants, there are relatively few reported disturbances during the 1850s and mid- to late 1860s. (We address potential concerns with the data-generating process further below.) The uptick in the late 1850s seems to reflect an increase in disturbances in the wake of the Crimean War, which as discussed above was part of the context in which plans for emancipation were made. During the early 1860s, however, there is a marked increase among landowner peasants in incidence of the two most frequent disturbances: refusals and theft/violence. Notably, there is no analogous increase among state and appanage peasants.

The following events, drawn from the chronicle used to assemble our data set, illustrate the extent of the uprising among former serfs following publication of the Emancipation Manifesto in 1861. In spring 1861, approximately 9,000 peasants in Saratov *guberniya* refused to cultivate their landlords' fields and began preparations for an armed uprising. Military units were called in to put down the unrest. In Hrodno (in contemporary Belarus), about 1,000 peasants on more than 20 estates, doubting the authenticity of the tsar's manifesto, refused to provide obligations to their landlords. Again, troops were called in. In Penza, peasants demanding immediate liberation and transfer of all land to their ownership mounted armed resistance against government troops. In Voronezh, 10,000 peasants called for immediate emancipation; in Ryazan they demanded to see the estate's accounting ledgers. In Chernigov, more than 26,000 peasants protested against their landlords, and troops sent to put down the unrest were attacked by armed villagers. In Yekaterinoslav, 2,500 peasants simply refused to obey the orders of local authorities. More

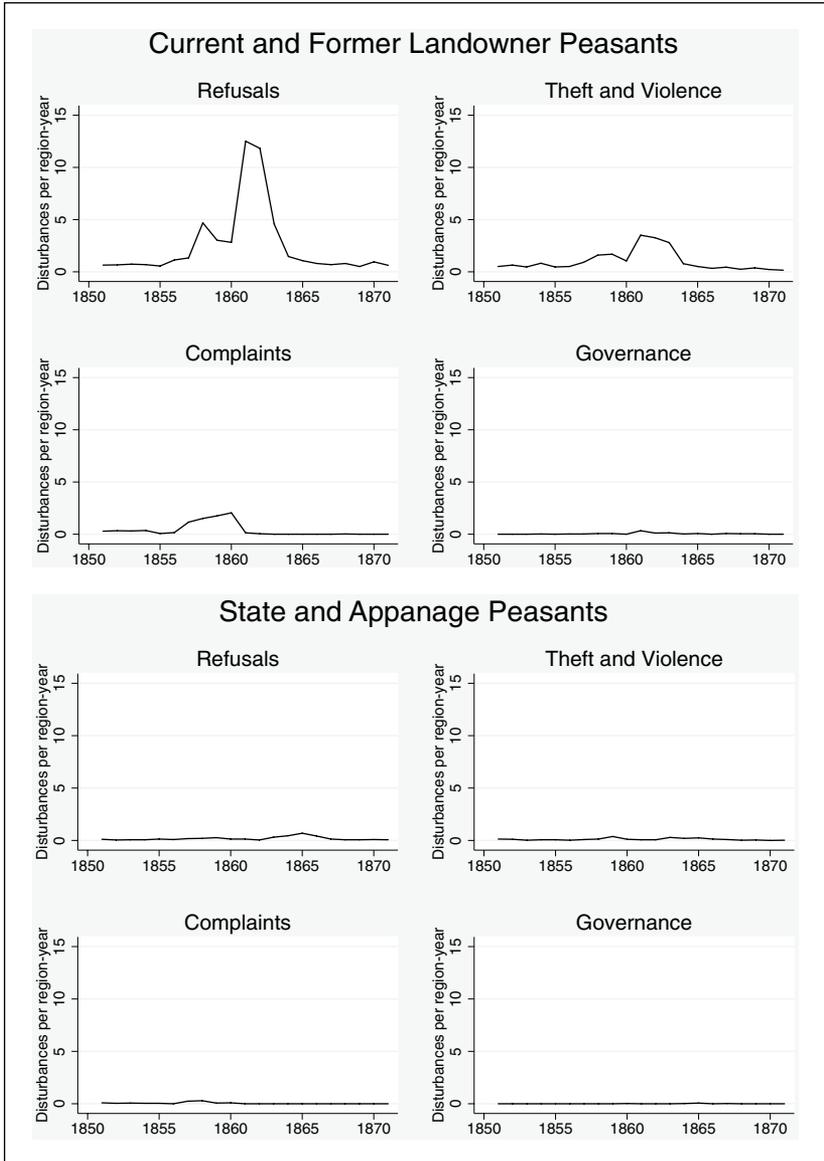


Figure 4. Dynamics of reported disturbances, landowner versus nonlandowner peasants.

than 80,000 peasants were involved in various disturbances in Podolia, which ultimately were put down by the military.¹¹

Further evidence of the uprising's magnitude can be inferred from the scale of the military response. The Russian army, not fully recovered from its humiliating defeat in the Crimean War, and fighting a major uprising in the Caucasus, had few extra troops at its disposal. Yet in addition to numerous police and internal security forces, more than 80 infantry and cavalry regiments—a formidable force, especially by the standards of a military not yet based on universal conscription—were involved in quelling peasant disturbances in various parts of the Russian Empire (Zaionchkovskii, 1968).

We now more systematically analyze the data. In doing so, we restrict attention to the two most common disturbances: refusals and theft/violence. The almost complete nonincidence of reported complaints postemancipation implies that any difference-in-differences design would be driven mostly by differences in frequency preemancipation, and there are only a handful of governance-related actions in the data.

Table 1 presents results for various specifications and samples for peasant disturbances involving refusals. Column 1 is our baseline specification. We run separate negative binomial models for landowner and nonlandowner peasants, estimating in each case the rate of disturbances during the preemancipation, transition, and postemancipation periods. The parameter estimates indicate an enormous 720% increase in refusals among landowner peasants during the transition period, $\exp(2.104) - 1 \approx 7.20$, versus a much smaller, statistically insignificant decrease among nonlandowner peasants. In contrast, there is a small, 21% decrease in refusals among landowner peasants during the postemancipation period, relative to the preemancipation period, versus a sizable 81% increase among nonlandowner peasants. The estimated dispersion parameters are quite large and significantly different from zero, supporting the negative binomial over Poisson model.

The bottom panel of Table 1 provides the change in the expected number of refusals for the transition and postemancipation periods, relative to the preemancipation period, holding the exposure variable at its mean value. We generate confidence intervals for these first differences through parameter simulation via the Clarify package for Stata (King, Tomz, & Wittenberg, 2000). Our interest is in the difference in first differences—that is, the relative change in disturbances among landowner peasants during each of the two periods—which holds constant any measurement error or economic shocks that affect landowner and nonlandowner peasants equally.

As Table 1 shows, the transition period is marked by a very large relative increase in refusals among landowner peasants: more than eight events per province-year. In contrast, there is a very small decrease in disturbances

Table 1. Disturbances Among Landowner and Nonlandowner Peasants: Refusals.

	1858-1860 versus 1861-1862					
	Baseline (1)	TsGAOR only (2)	(3)	Linear fixed effects (4)	Large events (5)	Drop western regions (6)
Parameter estimates						
Landowner peasants						
Transition period	2.104 (0.140)	2.588 (0.156)	1.299 (0.123)	10.558 (0.411)	2.605 (0.170)	2.006 (0.156)
Postemancipation period	-0.230 (0.099)	0.140 (0.131)		-0.355 (0.244)	0.290 (0.142)	-0.364 (0.111)
Constant	-12.557 (0.066)	-14.021 (0.092)	-11.786 (0.084)		-14.261 (0.102)	-12.444 (0.073)
Dispersion parameter	1.144 (0.096)	1.060 (0.152)	0.562 (0.077)		1.216 (0.193)	1.097 (0.105)
Nonlandowner peasants						
Transition period	-0.492 (0.446)	-1.085 (1.100)	-0.827 (0.414)	-0.040 (0.079)	-1.774 (1.079)	-0.433 (0.451)
Postemancipation period	0.594 (0.213)	1.142 (0.376)		0.125 (0.047)	0.601 (0.319)	0.509 (0.222)
Constant	-15.055 (0.162)	-16.487 (0.307)	-14.688 (0.202)		-15.833 (0.245)	-14.997 (0.167)
Dispersion parameter	2.933 (0.650)	7.103 (2.594)	0.300 (0.673)		6.281 (2.054)	2.600 (0.612)
Change in expected disturbances						
Transition period						
Landowner peasants	8.35 [6.20, 10.84]	3.31 [2.53, 4.23]	6.72 [5.07, 8.50]	10.56 [9.75, 11.36]	2.66 [1.94, 3.54]	7.30 [5.31, 9.96]
Nonlandowner peasants	-0.04 [-0.10, 0.05]	-0.01 [-0.04, 0.04]	-0.09 [-0.18, 0.00]	-0.04 [-0.20, 0.12]	-0.04 [-0.07, 0.01]	-0.05 [-0.13, 0.07]
Postemancipation period						
Landowner peasants	-0.24 [-0.43, -0.04]	0.04 [-0.03, 0.11]		-0.35 [-0.83, 0.13]	0.07 [0.00, 0.14]	-0.33 [-0.55, -0.12]
Nonlandowner peasants	0.09 [0.02, 0.15]	0.06 [0.02, 0.10]		0.13 [0.03, 0.22]	0.04 [0.00, 0.09]	0.10 [0.02, 0.19]

All models are negative binomial models but for Model 4, which is a linear fixed-effects model. Model 2 restricts the analysis to events drawn from the archive TsGAOR, whereas Model 3 restricts the sample to the years from 1858 to 1862. Model 5 considers only disturbances involving more than one village or *uyezd*. Model 6 drops nine provinces affected by the Polish Rebellion. Sample is annual data from 1851 to 1871 (but for Model 3) for 45 regions (but for Model 6). In parentheses, standard errors for parameter estimates; in brackets, 95% confidence intervals for first differences. Changes in expected disturbances for both transition and postemancipation periods are relative to preemancipation period. TsGAOR = Central State Archive of the October Revolution.

among landowner peasants during the postemancipation period (0.33 events per province–year), relative to the preemancipation period. Comparison of the confidence intervals for first differences indicates that both difference-in-differences estimates are statistically significant at conventional levels.

One potential concern with these results is that the process by which disturbances entered the chronicles might have differed for landowner and non-landowner peasants, given that across all years we observe approximately 11 times as many of the former as the latter. In general, there is little reason to suspect disproportionately high reporting of disturbances involving landowner peasants. Disturbances among state peasants would likely have entered the archives more easily, given reporting requirements for stewards on state lands, and as discussed above, the chroniclers themselves emphasized that they were focused on emerging class consciousness among the peasantry as a whole. To the extent that disturbances are less frequent among state peasants—though they are also infrequent among landowner peasants at the beginning and end of our sample window—this may reflect the generally larger land allotments and lower dues for peasants on state lands (e.g., Hoch, 2004). That said, it is possible that events involving former serfs would have been better documented during the transition period due to the presence of the peace arbitrators described above and below. To check for this possibility, we restrict attention to events drawn from the archive TsGAOR, which are primarily disturbances recorded by the tsarist political police, which was active throughout the period we examine.¹² Column 2 shows that our qualitative results are very similar, with the smaller difference-in-differences estimate reflecting the smaller number of events meeting this criterion.

A related concern, as discussed above, is the increased frequency from 1858 through 1862 with which the Ministry of Internal Affairs provided reports on peasant affairs to the tsar. Documents of the Ministry of Internal Affairs were primarily culled from the archive TsGIA, so the restriction to events in TsGAOR already controls for the possibility that events entered the data set more readily during this period. As an additional check, we restrict the sample to the years 1858 through 1862 and estimate the change in number of refusals during the transition period, relative to the previous 3 years. Column 3 shows that the difference-in-differences estimate is about 20% smaller than in column 1—that is, still very large.

In the following columns, we further check the robustness of these results to changes in specification and sample. In column 4, we model the count of disturbances as a continuous variable and estimate a linear model with province fixed effects. The difference-in-differences estimates are somewhat larger than those produced by the negative binomial model, though the same qualitative pattern emerges. We also obtain qualitatively similar results from

a “fixed effects” negative binomial model (not reported), where the dispersion parameter is fixed for each province.

In the preceding analysis, the province–year count of disturbances is based on discrete entries in the chronicles on which our data are based, regardless of the events’ magnitude. In practice (as shown, for example, by Viola, 1996), peasant disturbances vary greatly in scale. Unfortunately, we have a precise count of the number of peasants involved only for a small fraction of events in our sample, so we employ two alternative strategies to check that our results are not driven by events involving only a few peasants. First, we restrict attention to disturbances affecting more than one village or *uyezd* (an administrative unit similar to county); approximately one quarter of refusals meet this definition. As shown in column 5, the qualitative results for the transition period are again similar to those in the baseline model.¹³ Second, we restrict attention to events in which there was some sort of military response, on the assumption that such events were typically more serious. Again, there is a marked increase in disturbances among landowner peasants, but not state or appanage peasants, during the 2-year transition period.

Finally, there was a further reform of the state peasantry in 1866. For most *guberniyas*, the legal impact of this reform was relatively small, but mandatory redemption (i.e., purchase of land allotments) was established for state peasants in the nine western provinces affected by the Polish Rebellion that began in 1863. The same nine provinces saw substantial improvements in land allotments and redemption terms for former serfs; three of the nine provinces had also been affected by the “inventory reform” of the 1840s. To verify that these events are not driving our qualitative results, we drop all observations in the provinces affected by the Polish Rebellion in column 6. This results in a somewhat smaller difference-in-differences estimate for the transition period, but the qualitative change is similar to that with the full sample.

Table 2 presents analogous results for disturbances involving theft and violence. Although such events are less frequent than refusals, the qualitative patterns are similar to those in Table 1. The sharpest swing is in the transition period, where our baseline estimate shows a relative increase of 1.98 events among landowner peasants.¹⁴ As with refusals, this result is robust to changes in specification and sample.

The pattern that emerges is thus the following: The 1861 reform led to a sharp increase in peasant disturbances among former serfs during the transition period, when the terms of emancipation were being worked out on individual estates, followed by a decline to levels similar to those before the 1861 reform. In the following section, we analyze the historical record and our data on grievances to explore the underlying causes for this pattern.

Table 2. Disturbances Among Landowner and Nonlandowner Peasants: Theft and Violence.

	Baseline	TsGAOR only	1858-1860 versus 1861-1862	Linear fixed effects	Large events	Drop western regions
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Parameter estimates						
Landowner peasants						
Transition period	1.422 (0.159)	1.598 (0.232)	0.857 (0.157)	2.533 (0.193)	2.259 (0.258)	1.270 (0.160)
Postemancipation period	-0.322 (0.116)	-0.120 (0.185)		-0.215 (0.114)	0.568 (0.209)	-0.836 (0.131)
Constant	-13.198 (0.077)	-14.527 (0.125)	-12.666 (0.109)		-15.243 (0.159)	-13.062 (0.077)
Dispersion parameter	1.214 (0.136)	2.202 (0.414)	0.719 (0.132)		2.274 (0.484)	0.870 (0.132)
Nonlandowner peasants						
Transition period	-0.587 (0.499)	-1.023 (1.138)	-1.155 (0.524)	-0.047 (0.046)	-1.102 (1.142)	-0.434 (0.503)
Postemancipation period	0.017 (0.250)	0.593 (0.438)		0.003 (0.027)	0.088 (0.467)	-0.063 (0.265)
Constant	-15.206 (0.173)	-16.501 (0.325)	-14.638 (0.252)		-16.418 (0.322)	-15.245 (0.181)
Dispersion parameter	3.316 (1.047)	11.929 (5.331)	2.821 (1.471)		12.752 (6.597)	2.875 (1.006)
Change in expected disturbances						
Transition period						
Landowner peasants	1.94	0.65	1.39	2.53	0.69	1.55
	[1.29, 2.73]	[0.38, 1.03]	[0.84, 2.01]	[2.16, 2.91]	[0.43, 1.04]	[1.02, 2.17]
Nonlandowner peasants	-0.04	-0.01	-0.12	-0.05	-0.01	-0.03
	[-0.09, 0.03]	[-0.04, 0.05]	[-0.24, -0.02]	[-0.14, 0.04]	[-0.04, 0.05]	[-0.10, 0.06]
Postemancipation period						
Landowner peasants	-0.17	-0.02		-0.21	0.06	-0.34
	[-0.29, -0.05]	[-0.08, 0.04]		[-0.44, 0.01]	[0.01, 0.11]	[-0.45, -0.24]
Nonlandowner peasants	0.00	0.02		0.00	0.00	-0.01
	[-0.05, 0.05]	[-0.01, 0.06]		[-0.05, 0.06]	[-0.03, 0.04]	[-0.07, 0.05]

See Table 1.

Interpretation

Why would a reform developed to promote social stability lead instead to a large wave of unrest? To answer these questions, we return to our discussion above of the possible effects of reform on rebellion.

Least likely to have played a major role is any change in the *ease of rebellion*. Although peasants were granted legal freedom after 1861, the tsar and his bureaucrats were careful not to provide greater opportunity for social unrest. Restrictions on peasant mobility were retained after emancipation, out of fear that a more mobile population would be more volatile (Moon, 2001a). In an attempt to further cement local authority, elected councils—*zemstvo* assemblies—were set up after 1864, with electoral systems that privileged the gentry over the peasants (Nafziger, 2011). Unlike some other cases of land reform, the landowning elite in Russia thus retained substantial *de jure* political power following reform. Moreover, even if the *zemstvo* did not function as intended, the fact remains that the institution was not present during the period of greatest upheaval. Beyond the *zemstvo*, peasant self-administration was established at the village or *volost'* level following emancipation, and the traditional village commune was formalized as the *sel'skoe obshchestvo*. Although there is little evidence of a spike in “disturbances” through formal acts of governance, as illustrated in Figure 4, it is possible that these institutions helped to coordinate other forms of collective action. Perhaps most important, however, there was no sharp discontinuity in the state’s capacity for repression. Indeed, it was military action that helped to bring the disturbances to an end.

Even if there was no major change in the ease of rebellion, preexisting capacity for collective action may have played a role if there was a general change in *grievances* or *expectations*. In principle, reform may have increased grievances while holding expectations constant, which, as shown formally in the online appendix, would increase the risk of unrest. Alternatively, and in line with relative deprivation theory (Gurr, 1970), as well as with the more instrumental expectations that we stress in our model and in the discussion above, reform may have increased expectations while holding grievances constant. Various intermediate scenarios are also possible.

To explore these ideas, we exploit the detailed event descriptions in *Krest'ianskoe Dvizhenie v Rossii*, through which we are able to identify the proximate cause of approximately 57% of the disturbances in our data set. Figure 5 summarizes the incidence of disturbances among landowner peasants across the six categories discussed above for the preemancipation, transition, and postemancipation periods. The largest increase during the transition period is in events concerning liberation. Of these, the overwhelming majority (350 out of 387 events) are driven by dissatisfaction with the

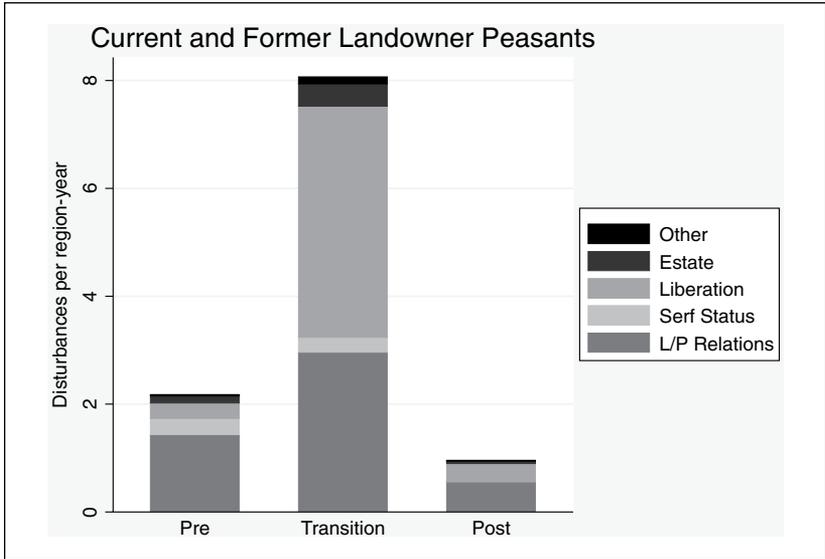


Figure 5. Proximate cause of reported disturbances, landowner peasants. L/P = landlord/peasant.

terms of liberation. As with our event data in general, such disturbances are most likely to take the form of refusals (89% of all disturbances), although acts of theft and violence are also common (18%, allowing for double counting).

In the terminology of Zald (1991), liberation was a “hard grievance,” that is, a sudden change in circumstances that affected a large proportion of the population, thus prompting contentious action. The nature and direction of this change were precisely counter to the intent of reform. What happened? The sources of peasants’ dissatisfaction were twofold. First, the reform design itself was not especially favorable to the serfs. As already mentioned, the *krepostniki* had succeeded in watering down the ambitious plans of liberals in the Russian bureaucracy, such that peasants were required to purchase land they considered to be theirs, and then only if the landlord initiated the process. In poor-soil regions, landlords were often happy to initiate this process as it relieved them of responsibility for various tax obligations to the state, even as the peasantry faced high redemption payments for land of little value. For most regions with relatively fertile soil, in turn, the minimum and maximum land allotments were reduced at the drafting stage due to the nobility’s opposition (Field, 1976a; Zaionchkovskii, 1968). No less important,

reformers who viewed the peasants through the prism of romanticist ideas succeeded in designing the emancipation process so that it was extremely difficult for individual peasants to leave the commune, which they perceived as the embodiment of the nation's spirit and tradition (Khristoforov, 2011). This policy effectively eliminated the exit option for those former serfs who were dissatisfied with the reform outcome. Disappointed with the terms of emancipation, many peasants simply refused to believe in the Manifesto's authenticity and to abide by its provisions. (In our data, we see 30 disturbances in 1861 and 1862 tied to anticipation of a "second liberation," with an additional 33 such events in 1863.)

Second, the implementation of the reform was captured by the nobility. Although the broad outlines of emancipation were set in St. Petersburg, preparation of the regulatory charters that specified land allotments and obligations was entrusted to the landowners themselves. Implementation by state authorities would have required a large and efficient bureaucracy that did not exist in the mid-19th century, when (as later) "arbitrary authority compromised central control by rendering the bureaucracy a structure composed of insecure officials at war with one another and with the center" (Bunce, 1993, p. 134). In addition, although a series of cadastral surveys had been undertaken in the 1840s and 1850s (Evtuhov, 2011), there was no true national land cadastre (the number of land surveyors was miniscule and of questionable professionalism; see, for example, Khristoforov, 2011), and central authorities would have been at a considerable disadvantage in knowing the quality and quantity of land owned by individual members of the gentry at the time of emancipation, much less its division between demesne and peasant allotments. More generally, "[i]mperial jurisdiction stopped just outside the doors of the noble-owned serf estates" (Skocpol, 1979, p. 89), such that state officials knew little about what was happening on particular estates.

In an environment where an agent possesses expertise that the principal does not, theory suggests that the principal should be more likely to delegate policy authority, notwithstanding any divergence in interests between the principal and agent (Epstein & O'Halloran, 1999; Huber & Shipan, 2002). This is precisely what happened in the Russian case. Entrusted with authority to draft the regulatory charters, the landowners abused their control rights to "cut off" peasants' existing land allotments, provide them with different allotments, resettle peasants to different land entirely, and more generally ensure that the estate's most fertile lands would remain in the landlord's hands.

In an attempt to limit such manipulation, the government had introduced "peace arbitrators" (*mirovye posredniki*), members of the nobility who were to verify the charters' legality and resolve conflicts between former serfs and landowners. Despite government effort, however, the rank of arbitrators

included people of “every political stripe, with varying degrees of vulnerability to local pressures” (Easley, 2002, p. 711). Even when the arbitrators were sympathetic to the cause of emancipation, the landlords were often able to neutralize their influence with a plethora of methods that included social ostracism, complaints to the capital, demands for dismissal, or even physical assault. “They want to thrash me and bring me to court,” wrote Leo Tolstoy, who served as a peace arbitrator in Tula province (Easley, 2009, p. 2).

Assisting this development “from below” were also actions of reform enemies “from above.” As early as 1861, the newly appointed minister of internal affairs and the minister of state properties, both vocal opponents of the reform, issued guidelines that eased the verification of charters by peace arbitrators and eventually culminated in a decision that charters could come into force regardless of whether peasants consented (Khristoforov, 2011). The only thing the peasants could do in this situation was protest and riot.

Opposition from the nobility thus contributed to a reform design that fell short of the tsar’s original intent and a reform implementation that drained utility from the already small bucket being offered to emancipated serfs. At the same time, reform may have raised peasants’ expectations of what they could achieve through coordinated action. As discussed above, many peasants found it difficult to believe that reduced land allotments and continued obligations to estate owners could be the intent of the tsar, whom they traditionally saw (and were understood to see) as their protector against the nobility. Indeed, rumors that after the 2-year transition period a new, “real” Manifesto would be issued were so widespread that Alexander himself undertook to convince the peasants that no additional reform would be forthcoming (Zaionchkovskii, 1968). In this context, it was perhaps reasonable for former serfs to expect that they would have the support of the monarch if they took action against the landowners they blamed for the reform outcome. Although our data do not allow us to observe such expectations directly, the historiography of particular disturbances suggests that peasants were ready to invoke the name of the tsar when taking up arms or refusing to provide obligations to the landowner (e.g., Field, 1976b).

In this context of generalized grievances and heightened expectations, it is reasonable to expect that preexisting capacity for collective action may have played an important role in channeling peasant discontent. To check this possibility, we exploit two features of peasant organization that vary across provinces. First, we might expect capacity for collective action to be greater in regions where *barshchina* obligations were predominant as in such regions the peasant commune may have played an important role in organizing work on the demesne (Hoch, 1989). Second, by the logic of collective action, unrest may have been greater where peasants lived in comparatively small

Table 3. Peasant Organization and Soil Type.

	1	2
Barshchina share	1.520 (1.139)	1.234 (0.503)
Settlement size	-2.565 (1.594)	-1.160 (0.837)
Fertile soil	2.179 (1.100)	0.973 (0.499)
Constant	0.906 (0.786)	-0.351 (0.378)
Dispersion parameter		0.329 (0.096)
Observations	42	42

Model 1 is an ordinary least squares regression. Model 2 is a negative binomial regression, with exposure assumed equal to serf population. The dependent variable in Model 1 is number of disturbances over the transition period (1861-1862) involving liberation grievances per 100,000 landowner peasants. The dependent variable for Model 2 is defined analogously, but with total number of disturbances rather than per capita. Standard errors in parentheses.

settlements: The benefits of collective action would have been concentrated among a relatively small group, and it would have been comparatively easy to monitor participation.¹⁵

At the same time, as we demonstrate formally in the online appendix, the wedge between what peasants had and what they felt they could get may have been largest in parts of the empire with relatively fertile soil—the *chernozem*, or “black earth” provinces. In such regions, the land was worth fighting for, so that expectations of gain from collective action would be greater. Although, in principle, landowners in provinces with relatively fertile soil may have had greater incentive to provide concessions to prevent social unrest,¹⁶ in practice they did not fully internalize the impact of unrest on each other or on the monarchy. The cost of calling out military detachments, for example, was not borne exclusively by the affected landowner.¹⁷

Table 3 presents results from ordinary least squares and negative binomial regressions of liberation-related disturbances involving landowner peasants on these three variables. As expected, peasant unrest is greater in regions where barshchina is predominant, though the estimated effect is significantly different from zero only in the negative binomial regression. Settlement size, in turn, is negatively related to peasant disturbances, though the effect is imprecisely estimated in both regressions.¹⁸ Finally, the number of disturbances driven by liberation-related grievances is significantly greater in regions with fertile soil.¹⁹

A final puzzle is why the disturbances dropped off so sharply beginning in 1863: after all, the redemption process stretched for years after publication of the Emancipation Manifesto. Easley (2002) suggests that, for all the problems, the introduction of peace arbitrators in the second half of 1861 may

have helped to calm passions. Although we cannot test this proposition directly, we do see a slight drop in disturbances from 1861 to 1862, though as shown below, the proportion of events with some sort of military response is actually greater in 1862 than 1861. A related possibility is that there was less to contest once the regulatory charters were drafted and approved (Chernukha, 1972). With negotiations complete, the wedge between what peasants had and what they expected may have started to shrink, so that there was less “negotiating by fighting.” In principle, it is also possible that an improvement in agronomic conditions may have contributed to a lessening of peasant unrest. Counter to this hypothesis, however, our point estimates are nearly identical if we include data on provincial rye prices as a control variable in the linear fixed-effects models in column 4 of Tables 1 and 2.²⁰

The most important factor, however, as with earlier rebellions, may have been the military response described above.²¹ As shown in the top panel of Figure 6, the proportion of events involving some sort of military response remained high at least throughout the mid-1860s. Also informative is the proportion of disturbances affecting more than one village or *uyezd*, as depicted in the bottom panel. There were fewer serf uprisings after 1862, but those that did occur were typically more serious than during the 1850s.

These patterns suggest that peasant discontent posed a threat to the state well beyond the explosion of disturbances in 1861 and 1862. Indeed, some have argued that the failure of the Emancipation Reform of 1861 to definitively resolve Russia’s peasant question ultimately set the stage for the Revolutions of 1905 and 1917 (e.g., Skocpol, 1979). Although we cannot test this proposition directly with the data and research design in this article, our results help to place subsequent events in context. The emancipation of the serfs was a catalyst for rebellion, not a substitute for political instability.

Conclusion

The Emancipation Reform of 1861 was an attempt at reform from above to avoid revolution from below. The actual large-scale revolution did not come for another half-century, but from a theoretical perspective what is important is not that the tsarist regime managed to survive the unrest (never a sure thing in weak states), but that the immediate impact of emancipation was precisely opposite to its intent. Peasant disturbances broke out across the Russian Empire as former serfs reacted to a reform that favored the gentry in its design and was captured by the nobility in its implementation. Ultimately, the rebellion subsided with assistance from a largely intact and still-loyal Russian military (a condition that would be missing in 1917), but the point of reform was precisely to avoid the need for repression. As Field (1976a) notes, the

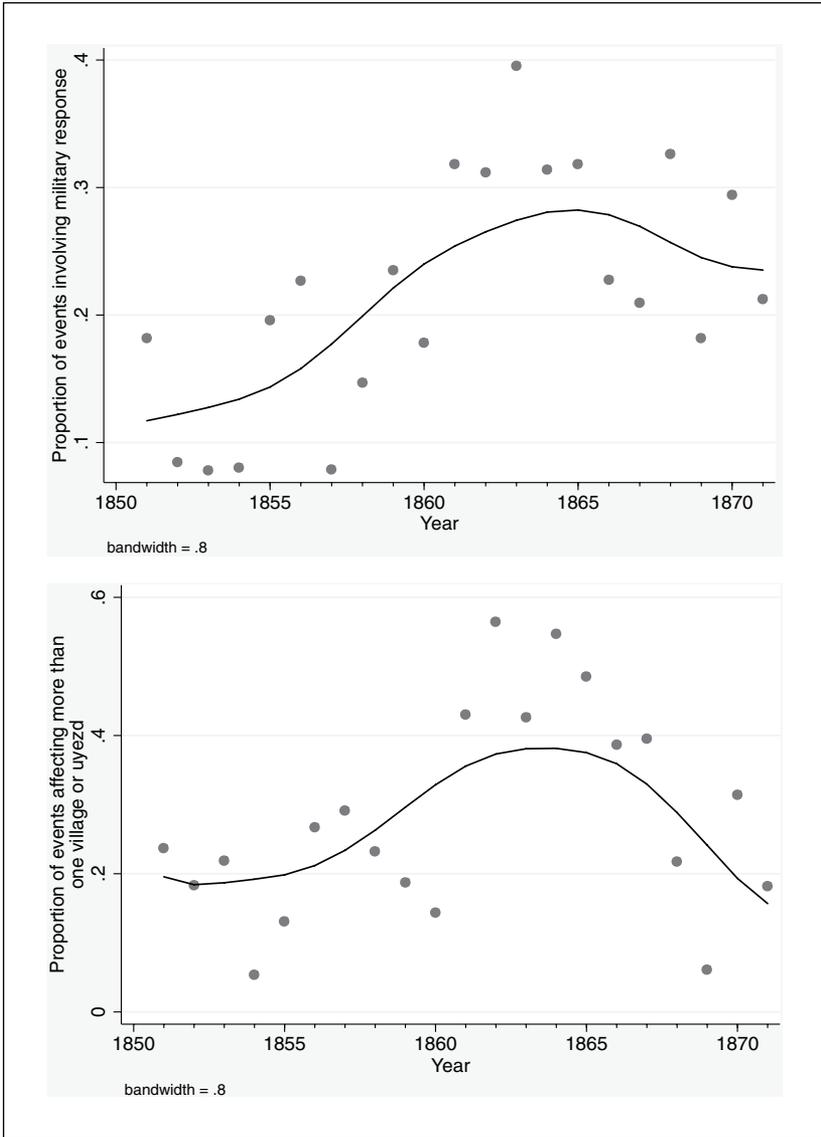


Figure 6. Dynamics of disturbances among current and former landowner peasants involving a military response (top panel) and affecting more than one village or *uyezd* (bottom panel). The nonparametric fits are derived from locally weighted regressions (LOWESS smoothers).

“army was the apple of the tsar’s eye”; peasant disturbances were a major distraction from regular military activity (p. 52).

Our conclusion that emancipation of the serfs in Russia acted as a catalyst for rebellion should cast doubt on the common assumption that reform and rebellion instead act as substitutes. As discussed in the introduction, numerous factors predisposed Russian reform for success. Yet the unavoidable “cooptation” of existing stakeholders (Shleifer & Treisman, 2000)—here, the landed gentry—left reformers with fewer resources to pacify the peasantry, while the weakness of the tsarist state led to capture of the implementation process once reform moved to the provinces. That the serfs expected “true” emancipation from the tsar only added fuel to the fire.

From the perspective of reformers who hoped for a very different outcome, the key difficulties were divisions among the elite (including, but not only, between liberals and supporters of serfdom) and the lack of “financial and cultural resources” necessary to carry out critical tasks demanded by society (Goldstone, 2001, p. 147). These constraints, central to earlier macro-historical accounts of reform and rebellion, have received comparatively little emphasis in more recent theoretical contributions. Future work can and should address the political constraints that structure reform, as well as the various ways in which the intended beneficiaries of reform can respond.

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Notes

1. We define “reform” in terms of intent rather than realized outcome. For the role of individual and aggregate uncertainty about realized outcomes in the political economy of reform, see Fernandez and Rodrik (1991) and Dewatripont and Roland (1992).
2. For a thorough review of this and much related work, see Goldstone (1980).
3. See Haggard and Kaufman (2012) on the empirical reach of theoretical models of distributive conflict.
4. In related work, McClintock (1984) demonstrates that the rise in Peru of the Shining Path occurred after, not before, agrarian reform (see also Mason, 1998), the consequence in part of “ideological divisions among top officers” in the military government (p. 79).
5. Dennison (2011) demonstrates that Russian serfdom was far more variegated than conventionally assumed, with some estates providing a legal and administrative framework that fostered rural economic development. Nonetheless, various constraints prevented such institutions from being universally adopted.
6. Although perhaps inefficient; see Markevich and Zhuravskaya (2013).
7. We find few substantial differences between events with and without proximate cause identified. Proximate cause is a bit more likely to be recorded for small than large events (59% vs. 52%), nearly equally likely for landowner and other peasants (57% each), somewhat more likely in the preemancipation than postemancipation period (67% vs. 51%), and a bit more likely for refusals than for acts of theft and violence (54% vs. 48%).
8. Lindert and Nafziger (2014, Table 1) report little movement from the countryside to the city in the decades following emancipation.
9. Data available at <http://www.fao.org/soils-portal/soil-survey/soil-maps-and-databases/harmonized-world-soil-database-v12/en/>
10. The estimated dispersion parameters that we report below support a negative binomial over Poisson regression model.
11. The events in this paragraph are drawn from Okun’ and Sivkov (1963), p. 686 (Saratov, Hrodno), p. 687 (Penza), p. 688 (Ryazan), p. 689 (Voronezh), p. 695 (Chernigov), p. 703 (Yekaterinoslav), and p. 714 (Podolia).
12. Although the political police would have been more numerous in regions where serfdom was prevalent, our choice of exposure variables essentially controls for the prevalence of serfdom.
13. As they are if we use only the village or *uyezd* restriction.
14. Not surprisingly, given the similar patterns across the two most frequent event categories, we obtain similar qualitative results if we aggregate across all disturbances, with a relative increase of 9.37 events among landowner peasants during the transition period.
15. Marcum and Skarbek (2014) present evidence that slave revolts were more likely on small than on large ships traveling the Middle Passage.
16. See Grossman (1994) for a model in which landlords redistribute land to peasants to prevent output-reducing unrest.

17. Exploiting data on one black-earth and three non-black-earth provinces, Hoch (2004) suggests that there were fewer large land allotments prior to emancipation in regions with good soil. Extrapolating from this result, we might speculate that it was easier for peasants to overcome coordination problems where preexisting land distributions were more equal, which if true would imply a negative relationship between inequality and unrest—counter to many arguments about contention and regime change. Extending Hoch's findings to a larger number of provinces so that these hypotheses can be explored is an important goal of future research.
18. Settlement size and fertile soil are especially highly correlated, with a pairwise correlation coefficient of .59, such that it may be difficult to identify an independent effect of each variable.
19. Notwithstanding this relative difference, there is still a substantial spike in disturbances in 1861-1862 in regions with comparatively poor soil. Restricting the sample to the 25 regions in which less than half the soil is fertile, as defined above, the difference-in-differences estimates analogous to those in column 1 of Tables 1 and 2 are 6.05 and 1.18 events, respectively.
20. The data sources are Tables 10 and 11 of Mironov and Man'kov (1985). Collection of provincial weather data began in earnest roughly two decades after emancipation.
21. Ideally, we would exploit variation in the disposition of military units at the time of emancipation. Unfortunately, such data appear not to be available.

Supplemental Material

The online appendix is available at <http://cps.sagepub.com/supplemental> and the replication data is available at <http://thedata.harvard.edu/dvn/faces/study/StudyPage.xhtml?vdcId=3049&studyId=118315>

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