

Internal and External Challenges to State Power

The English made them drunk and then cheated them in Bargains.

—John Easton, *A Narrative of the Causes Which Led to Philip's Indian War*, 1858

Essential Question: How did the development of state power result in external and internal challenges in the period between 1450 and 1750?

As empires developed and changed, many social, political, and economic groups resisted state expansion through a variety of challenges to state power. Some of these revolts occurred in the home of the empire. For example, the **Fronde** civil disturbances in France between 1648 and 1653 attempted to curb growing royal power.

Other disturbances took place within colonies. For instance, **Metacom's War** (1675–1678), also called King Philip's War, was in part a result of English colonists using underhanded tactics (such as that described in the quote above) in their continuing pressure to control Native American lands. Several powers sought to create empires in the 16th and 17th centuries. They fought with one another and with indigenous peoples.

Resistance to Portugal in Africa

By the 17th century, the Dutch and the English had pushed the Portuguese out of South Asia. (See Topic 1.3.) The Portuguese looked to Africa, where it had carried out slave raids since the 15th century, to build a colony. In 1624, **Ana Nzinga** became ruler of **Ndongo** in south-central Africa (present-day Angola). In addition to the slave raids by Portugal, other African peoples were attacking Ndongo. In exchange for protection from neighboring powers and an end to Portugal's raiding for slaves, Nzinga became an ally of Portugal. Nzinga was baptized as Christian, with the governor of the Portuguese colony as her godfather. However, the alliance broke down. Nzinga and her people fled west, taking over the state of **Matamba**. She then incited a rebellion in Ndongo, allied with the Dutch, and offered runaway slaves freedom in Matamba. Nzinga ruled for decades, building Matamba into an economically strong state.



Source: Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Photographs and Prints Division, The New York Public Library

Lithograph of Ana Nzinga, queen of Matamba, by François Villain (1800)

Local Resistance in Russia

In contrast to the Portuguese empire, pressures on state power came from within Russia, not outside of it. While conditions had improved for serfs (see Topic 1.6) in Western Europe by the 14th century, the same was not true for the serfs in Russia. Wars during the 14th and 15th centuries weakened the central government and increased the power of the nobility.

As demand for grain increased, nobles imposed harsh conditions on serfs. But Russian serfs had long been oppressed. First the Mongols and later the Russian princes collected heavy tribute and taxes (for services such as protection or to support the government's army) from the peasants. As a result, the peasants' debts increased, and over time more peasants lost their lands and were forced into serfdom.

Serfdom, Power, and Control The practice of serfdom benefitted the government because it kept the peasants under control, regulated by the nobility. Serfdom also benefitted the landowners because it provided free labor. Although townspeople were also controlled and not permitted to move their businesses freely to other cities, the serfs were practically slaves, their labor bought and sold along with the lands of their owners.

As Russian territory expanded west to the Baltic and east to Siberia, the institution of serfdom expanded with it. An agricultural state, Russia kept serfs tied to the land long after the practice had ended, practically if not legally, in

Western Europe. For example, Elizabeth I freed the last remaining serfs in England in 1574. In contrast, a law of 1649 chained Russian serfs to the lands where they were born and ensured their service to their landlords, who could buy and sell them and administer punishments. The village communes, called **mir**s, also controlled even the small landholders among the peasants.

Cossacks and Peasant Rebellions Southwest of Moscow, near the **Black Sea**, peasants who were skilled fighters lived on the grassy, treeless **steppes**. Many were runaway serfs who lived in small groups, influenced by the ways of the neighboring nomadic descendants of the Mongols. These fierce Cossack warriors were sometimes at odds with the central, autocratic government of the tsars. However, these fiercely independent warriors could also be hired as mercenaries to defend “Mother Russia” against Swedish, Tartar, and Ottoman forces. The Cossacks were thus important in Russia’s expansion to the Ural Mountains and farther east into Siberia.

A Cossack known as **Yemelyan Pugachev** began a peasant rebellion against Catherine the Great in 1774 for giving the nobility power over the serfs on their lands in exchange for political loyalty, leaving the peasants without ties or recourse to the state. Falsely claiming to be Catherine’s murdered husband, Peter III, Pugachev gathered a following of discontented peasants, people from different ethnic groups, and fellow Cossacks. At one point, these groups controlled the territory between the Volga River and the Urals. Within a year, though, the Russian army captured Pugachev and the Russian government executed him. The **Pugachev Rebellion** caused Catherine to increase her oppression of the peasants in return for the support of the nobles to help her avoid future revolts.

Rebellion in South Asia

In the 16th and 17th centuries, the Mughal empire controlled much of what is now India and Pakistan. (See Topic 3.1.) The Mughals centralized government and spread Persian art and culture as well as Islam. However, much of the population remained Hindu. The Maratha—a Hindu warrior group—fought the Mughals in a series of battles from 1680–1707. They created the Hindu **Maratha Empire**. It lasted until 1818, effectively ending the Mughal rule of India.

Revolts in the Spanish Empire

Spain also experienced rebellions within its territories. The **Pueblo Revolt** took place in 1680 against the Spanish in what is now New Mexico. The Pueblo and Apache, two indigenous groups, fought colonizers who were trying to force religious conversions. The indigenous people killed about 400 Spaniards, drove the rest out of the area, and destroyed churches. The Spanish reconquered the area in 1692.

Struggles for Power in England and Its Colonies

Although Spain colonized much of the Caribbean, England's power there grew stronger. England defeated Spanish colonists and took control of much of Jamaica in 1655. Slaves in the Caribbean and former Spanish territories in the Americas fought to gain freedom in what were known as **Maroon wars** (1728–1740 and 1795–1796).

Maroons were descendants of runaway African slaves in Jamaica. They escaped their owners and formed independent settlements. **Queen Nanny**, herself an escaped slave, united all the maroons of the island. Jamaicans later recognized her as a national hero.

Slave revolts were common in the Americas, especially in those locations where enslaved Africans outnumbered free Europeans. The first recorded slave revolt in what is now the United States was the **Gloucester County Rebellion** in Virginia in 1663. In this rebellion, enslaved Africans and white indentured servants conspired together to demand their freedom from the governor. Authorities found out about their plot, ambushed them, and arrested them.

Metacom's War, discussed earlier in this topic, was the final major effort of the indigenous people to drive the British from New England. The war spread throughout New England and resulted in the destruction of 12 towns. Some Native American groups, including the **Mohegan** and **Pequot**, sided with the English. Although Native American peoples continued to live in the region, the war ended with the subjugation of the **Wampanoag** people to the English colonists.

Struggles for power took place within England as well. In 1685, **James II** became king. James was Catholic, and his anti-Protestant measures enraged many English people. A group of nobles invited **William of Orange**, who was James's nephew and son-in-law, to invade England with an army and become the new king. He agreed, landing in England in 1688. James fled to France. In 1689, William and his wife **Mary II** (James's daughter) began their joint rule of England. Both William and Mary were Protestant, and the English throne remained in Protestant hands after that.

English people called this revolt the **Glorious Revolution** or the Bloodless Revolution. It strengthened the power of Parliament, which passed a law forbidding Catholics to rule England. That revolution took place without much violence, but religious tensions continued in England and throughout much of the world. (Connect: Create a graphic organizer of the rebellions that were beginning to challenge growing European empires.)



Internal and External Challenges to State Powers	
State	Internal/External Challenge
Portugal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dutch and English pushed Portugal out of South Asia (external) • Rebellion in Ndongo allied with Dutch (external)
France	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fronde civil disturbances against royal power (internal)
Russia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cossack rebellion (internal) • Pugachev rebellion (internal)
South Asia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hindu Marathas ended Mughal rule (internal)
Spanish Empire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pueblo and Apache groups rebelled in present-day New Mexico (internal to the colonies)
British Empire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maroon wars (internal to the colonies) • Gloucester County Rebellion (internal to the colonies) • Metacom's War (internal to the colonies) • Glorious Revolution (internal)

KEY TERMS BY THEME		
<p>ENVIRONMENT: Locations</p> <p>Ndongo Matamba Black Sea steppe Maratha Empire</p> <p>CULTURE: Social Organizations mirs</p>	<p>GOVERNMENT: Leaders and Rebels</p> <p>Ana Nzinga Yemelyan Pugachev Queen Nanny James II William of Orange Mary II</p> <p>SOCIETY: Native American Peoples</p> <p>Mohegan Pequot Wampanoag</p>	<p>SOCIETY: Revolts</p> <p>Fronde Metacom's War Pugachev Rebellion Pueblo Revolt Maroon wars Gloucester County Rebellion Glorious Revolution</p>