

# Shifting Power

*I shall never, under any circumstances, agree to a representative form of government because I consider it harmful to the people whom God has entrusted to my care.*

—Russian Tsar Nicholas II (1905)

**Essential Question:** How did internal and external factors contribute to change in various states after 1900?

**A**n intense period of rebellion continued into the early 1900s. Nicholas II, the last Russian tsar, clearly did not understand the force of the political opposition to his rule that resulted in his assassination in 1918. In the 20th century's first two decades, rebellions erupted against long-standing authoritarian governments in Russia, China, and Mexico. Revolutionaries unseated ruling governments in each country, challenging the existing political and social order and instituting their own political philosophies and practices. Established land-based and maritime empires collapsed under pressure from internal and external forces. By the end of the century, a new global order had emerged.

## Revolution in Russia

By the early 20th century, Russia was falling behind most of Europe, the United States, and Japan in wealth in power.

Russia's most obvious challenges were internal. While governments in other industrializing states in the 19th century were actively promoting economic growth, Russia was not. It was slow to expand education for peasants, build roads and other parts of its transportation networks, and support entrepreneurs with loans and contracts. Further, the tsarist government resisted calls for political reform. It did was reluctant to recognize civil liberties and to allow more citizens to participate in government.

These internal problems led to external ones. Without a strong economic base to support a military, Russia then became weaker in international affairs:

- It lost the Crimean War (1853–1856) against the Ottoman Empire,, which was supported by Great Britain and France.
- It lost the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905) in a battle for power in East Asia.



In the fall of 1917, the **Bolsheviks**, an organization representing the revolutionary working class of Russia under the leadership of Vladimir Lenin, seized power and set up a communist government with Lenin at its head. The **communists** believed that workers eventually should own the means of production and that collective ownership would lead to collective prosperity and a just society. Toward that long-term goal, the Soviet government abolished private trade, distributed peasants' crops to feed urban workers, and took over ownership of the country's factories and heavy industries (see Topic 7.4)

Key Events Leading to Revolution in Russia	
<b>Internal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Bloody Sunday, January 22, 1905:</b> Thousands of workers marched peacefully to petition the tsar asking for better working conditions, higher wages, and universal suffrage. The tsar's troops and police began shooting. About 1,300 marchers were killed.</li> <li>• <b>The Revolution of 1905:</b> In strikes responding to Bloody Sunday, 400,000 workers refused to work. The tsar tried to appease the protesters. However, by the end, thousands of workers had been killed, injured, or exiled.</li> </ul>
<b>External</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905):</b> Russia and Japan both wanted to expand their influence in Korea and Manchuria. Japan won easily, the first time in modern history that an East Asian state had defeated a European power.</li> <li>• <b>World War I:</b> Germany declared war on Russia in 1914. Russians quickly realized how poorly trained and armed their troops were. Civilians suffered from extreme food shortages.</li> </ul>

The success of the Bolsheviks in taking power shook the world. They were the first example of communists running a large country. Throughout the capitalist world, from Europe to the United States to Japan, people worried that communists were a danger to their governments as well. The conflict between communism and capitalism would become an important issue shaping world affairs in the rest of the 20th century.

## Upheaval in China

China was another land-based empire that collapsed in this period from problems it faced at home and from other countries. The Qing Dynasty had come to power in China in 1644. Finally, a revolution overthrew it in 1911, creating a republic led first by Dr. **Sun Yat-sen**. However, his rule was short.

**Internal Challenges** China faced daunting domestic concerns in the 19th century, each of which weakened support for the government. One of these was ethnic tension. China consisted of dozens of ethnic groups. The largest group was the Han. The rulers of the Qing Dynasty were Manchus, from a region northeast of China. Many Chinese, particularly the Han, never fully accepted the Qing as legitimate rulers of China. By the late 19th century, the Qing had ruled China for over two centuries, but they had remained ethnically distinct.

A second problem was the constant danger of famine. China experienced rapid population growth between the mid-1700s and mid-1800s, but could not expand the amount of farmland or productivity rapidly enough to provide a stable food supply. Any natural disaster, such as a drought or a flood, could result in the early deaths of thousands of people.

Third, government revenues were very low. The imperial government had not updated the tax system to adjust to changes in the economy. As a result, compared to Europe or the United States, taxes in China were low. This meant that the government did not have the resources to maintain roads, bridges, and irrigation canals.

**External Challenges** China had been one of the wealthiest, most powerful, most innovative states in the world for much of its recorded history. However, starting in the late 18th century, it faced growing threats to its position by industrialization in Europe. In the late 18th century, Europeans interested in the Chinese market could trade only in the city of Canton (Guangzhou). Europeans commonly bought tea, rhubarb, porcelain, and silk. In Europe, Chinese fashions, table settings, and art objects were very popular. The Chinese received European silver in exchange for they sold. However, the Chinese did not desire the products Europeans produced, and they looked down on Europeans as violent and less civilized. In response to growing European influence in China, many Chinese did rally behind the empress in the 1890s.

**Chinese Republic** However the desire to support the empress against foreign pressure was not enough to save the Qing Dynasty. In 1911, the last Chinese dynasty was overthrown by a revolutionary movement led by Sun Yat-sen. Though a Christian, Sun believed that China should continued to follow such Confucian principles as loyalty, respect for ancestors, and efforts to promote social harmony. He combined these traditions with ideas he later elaborated upon in his book *The Three People's Principles*:

- **Democracy:** Sun believed in sovereignty, not for all the people but for those Chinese who were “able.” In Confucian terms, this meant a country governed by active and pragmatic experts in the name of the people. He felt that expelling foreign capitalists from China would enable China to redistribute revenues from land taxes more fairly, since the revenues would not have to be used to pay debts to foreigners.
- **Nationalism:** Sun advocated patriotism and loyalty, primarily to central authority.
- **Livelihood:** Sun wanted to end the extreme unequal distribution of wealth in China and the harsh economic exploitation.

**Sun Yat-sen's Legacy** Sun never had enough military strength to rule all of China. Various warlords controlled the majority of the country. Sun recognized the weakness of his position. After two months in office, he gave up his position to a military leader.

The party Sun led, the Chinese Nationalist Party, or Kuomintang, would later regain power. It would rule China for two decades before losing a civil war with Chinese Communists (see Topic 7.5). While both the Kuomintang and the Communists would honor Sun as the founder of the Chinese republic, neither would fully implement his principles.

## Self-Determination in the Ottoman Collapse

By the beginning of the 20th century, the once-mighty Ottoman Empire—now “the sick man of Europe”—had relatively few exports and a waning agricultural economy. The empire relied mostly upon its position as a trade center. Egypt, by contrast, continued to make profits from cotton.

**The Young Turks** As Ottoman prosperity declined, a group of reformers known as the **Young Turks** emerged. They advocated for a constitution like those of the European states. They also advocated **Turkification**, an effort to make all citizens of the multiethnic empire identify with Turkish culture, which was heavily Islamic. For the millions of Armenians in the empire, who were mostly Christians, this was difficult. In response, some Young Turks scapegoated, or unfairly blamed, Armenians for the empire’s economic problems. (Connect: Compare the cultural assimilation forced on Armenians to that forced on American Indians. See Topic 6.3.)

**Fight Against Foreign Influence** Turks resented many Europeans, particularly the British and the French, for their economic policies. Foreign investments had given Europeans undue power in the empire. Further, Europeans had imposed trade privileges that were unprofitable for the Ottomans. Because of these resentments, the Ottoman Empire secretly allied with Germany in World War I. (See Topic 7.2.) After Germany’s defeat in World War I, the Ottoman Empire was dismantled by the victorious powers. It was replaced by a smaller nation-state, the Republic of Turkey, and several independent countries.

Victorious Allied forces immediately sent troops to occupy Anatolia. Although the sultan of the Ottoman Empire remained on his throne, he had little power. He served as a mere puppet for British forces that hoped to control the lands of the former empire.

**The Rise of Atatürk** During the war, a group called the Turkish National Movement organized an army to fight for self-determination. Led by **Mustafa Kemal**, the Turkish Nationalists defeated British and other forces in 1921. The Republic of Turkey was established in 1923, with Kemal as the first president. The new national assembly awarded him the surname **Atatürk** (“father of the Turks”) in recognition of his role in establishing the new republic.

Atatürk’s policies focused on reforming Turkey to make it more like the Western democracies. He was determined to create a secular nation, not one with strong Islamic influences. He implemented several reforms: establishing public education for boys and girls, abolishing polygyny, and expanding



suffrage to include women. As a symbolic gesture, he wore mainly Western suits and hats and encouraged others to do the same. Despite his reforms, he ruled as a dictator for 15 years. He did not give up power before his death in 1938.

## Power Shifts in Mexico

Mexico entered the 20th century as an independent nation firmly under the control of a dictator, **Porfirio Díaz**. He oversaw a period of stability and some economic progress. However, he had allowed foreign investors, particularly those from the United States, control over many of the country’s resources. Additionally, the wealthiest 1 percent of the population controlled 97 percent of the land. Typical Mexican peasants were landless.

**Revolution** In 1910, Díaz jailed **Francisco Madero**, the opposition candidate for president. This act, combined with the growing opposition to Díaz’s strong-armed policies, accommodation to foreign powers, and opposition to land reform, ignited the **Mexican Revolution**. Madero escaped and set up revolutionary offices in El Paso, Texas. Then, in 1911, Madero’s troops, under the command of **Francisco “Pancho” Villa**, defeated Mexican troops, sending Díaz into exile. One revolutionary leader, **Emiliano Zapata**, began the actual process of redistributing land to impoverished peasants.

Until 1920, Mexico suffered from political instability and devastating violence. Between 1910 and 1920, conflict resulted in around 2 million deaths, out of a population of around 15 million people. Political violence continued for another decade. However, two results came out of conflicts between 1910 and 1930 that provided Mexico with stability for the rest of the century:

- Mexico adopted a new constitution in 1917. It included the goals of land redistribution, universal suffrage, and public education. These principles continued to guide Mexico’s government.
- The **Institutional Revolutionary Party**, or **PRI**, was formed in 1929. Though widely criticized as corrupt, the PRI dominated Mexican politics. Until 2000, all presidents were PRI members.

KEY TERMS BY THEME		
<p><b>CULTURE:</b> Ethnic Conflict Turkification</p> <p><b>GOVERNMENT:</b> Politics Bolshevik communists</p>	<p>Young Turks Mexican Revolution Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI)</p>	<p><b>GOVERNMENT:</b> Leaders Sun Yat-sen Kemal Atatürk Porfirio Díaz Francisco Madero Francisco “Pancho” Villa Emiliano Zapata</p>