

Regents Prep: Global History: Change & Turning Points:

Political Revolutions

Background

Political **revolutions** occur throughout history. They are usually the result of poor or oppressive government, and many times end in a worse situation than before. However, some political revolutions can be seen in a positive way, with the government becoming more responsive to their people's needs. Whatever the case, political revolutions are major turning points in a country's history.

American Revolution

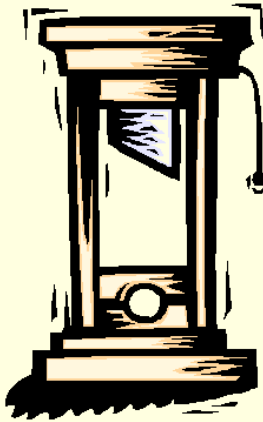
Causes: The 13 British colonies in North America were upset over a lack of **representation** in **Parliament**, and perceived over taxing. This resulted in a short period of protests and demonstrations, until July 4, 1776, when the American Colonists declared **independence**. War followed with the Americans emerging victorious.



Effects: The American Republic, based upon **Enlightenment** ideas, became a symbol of freedom in Europe and Latin America. The **United States Constitution** became a model for liberal government. The American Revolution's success inspired others to revolt against their governments.

French Revolution

Causes: The French Revolution has **political, social, and economic** causes. Politically, France suffered under an **Absolute Monarchy**, and most people were denied basic rights, or a say in their government. Socially, France was divided among **3 Estates**, or classes. The 3rd Estate, which constituted 98% of the population, had the fewest rights, the least amount of land, and the heaviest tax burden. Economically, France faced a severe financial crisis due to overspending. Also, bad harvests resulted in food shortages. The Third Estate faced the greatest burden because of these problems.



In **1789**, **King Louis XVI** called the **Estates General**, France's weak legislative body to deal with the crisis. The meeting begins the French Revolution as the Third Estate attempts to better their situation by taking control of government.

Stages of the French Revolution

1st Stage: National Assembly	Third Estate declares itself the National Assembly, vows to write new Constitution . (1789)
2nd Stage: Limited Monarchy	New Constitution of 1791 limits the monarchy, sets up a representative assembly.

- Home
- Geography
- Neolithic Rev.
- Commercial Rev.
- Reformation
- Exploration
- Scientific Rev.
- Political Rev.
- Nationalism
- Industrial Rev.
- World War II
- Cold War
- Post Cold War
- Practice

3rd Stage: Radicals	1792, Radicals take over. Maximillien Robespierre is leader. Reign of Terror, many die as result.
4th Stage: Directory	Moderates return to government. In 1795, 5 man Directory runs country. Government very weak.
5th Stage: Napoleon	1799 Coup d'etat ... takes control from Directory. 1802 - names himself Emperor of the French. Absolute government again.

Effects: The French Revolution provides an **example** to other nations, especially Latin America. The democratic ideas of "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity" were spread across Europe. Also, nationalist ideas were spread, which would in turn lead to the **unification of Italy and Germany**. The growing **Middle Class** asserted their power, and would come to dominate politics throughout Europe as limitations were placed on existing monarchs, or they were ousted in favor of other forms of government.

Latin America

Revolutions: The main causes of Latin American revolutions are **Enlightenment** ideas, the examples of the **American and French Revolutions**, and the basic inequalities present in their societies. By the beginning of the 19th century, many wealthy landowners in Latin America were tired of European control. These landowners enlisted the support of the lower classes in an attempt to gain their independence. The Latin American revolutions are initially successful, gaining independence from Europe, but they fail to address any of the social class problems that exist. This leads to more almost **200 years** of continued problems, with revolutions, military coups, and foreign control dominating Latin American politics.

Russian Revolution

Causes: Throughout the **19th century**, Russian **Czars** attempted to westernize and industrialize, without also importing French Revolution liberal ideas. They were mostly unsuccessful, and many Russian liberals called for reform. In response, the Czars became harsh and oppressive. A **rigid social class system** added to this problem by denying the majority peasant class most basic rights. The peasant class, composed of both farmers and urban workers, were mostly poor, overworked, and hungry, which would lead them to support liberal ideas that promised better living conditions.



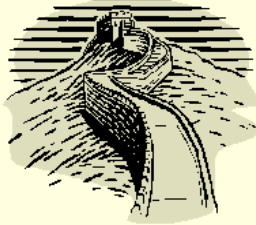
A small revolution in **1905** forced **Czar Nicholas II** to enact some minor reforms, however, these did not last. Finally, as Russia suffered through many defeats during **World War I**, and the country faced **shortages** in **food, fuel** and **housing**, the people began to revolt. The czar was forced from power in **March of 1917**, and a **provisional government** was setup. In **November**, after this government had been slow in reacting to the country's problems, a group known as the **Bolsheviks**, took control of the country. This is known as the Bolshevik or **Communist Revolution**, as the Bolsheviks, led by **Vladimir Lenin**, later renamed themselves Communists.

Effects: Russia became the first country to base its government on the writings of **Karl**

Marx. By **1922**, Lenin and the Communists had retaken most of the old Russian Empire and renamed it the **Soviet Union**. Initially, the Communists fulfilled their revolutionary promises by improving basic living conditions, and ending Russia's involvement in World War I, but ultimately failed to provide a government of equal rights and participation.

Chinese Communist Revolution

Causes: After China freed itself from foreign control, the **Kuomintang**, or **Nationalist Party** led by **Jiang Jieshi**, began a war against the **Communist Party** led by **Mao Zedong**. Jiang Jieshi believed that Mao Zedong was a threat to his power. China under the Nationalists did



little to improve the lives of the people, as had been promised. Mao, along with 100,000 supporters, were forced to retreat from the Kuomintang in **1934** in what became known as the **Long March**. Despite losing **80%** of his forces, Mao continued to fight against the government, and eventually overthrew it in **1949**. Mao then setup a government based upon Communist principles.

Effects: Under Mao and the Communists, China was transformed from an agricultural society, into an **industrial society**. Mao eliminated the old landlord and business classes, and provided **free health care** for peasants. Mao also instituted reform that made **women legally equal to men**, although in practice this was never achieved. China was transformed into a **One-Party Dictatorship** with Mao in total control. Similar to the Soviet Union, China never completely fulfilled the promises of equality and brotherhood that were originally promised when the revolution began.

Iranian Revolution

Causes: In **1953**, **Great Britain and the United States** helped **Muhammad Reza Pahlavi** take control of the Iranian government. Pahlavi proclaimed himself **Shah**, and ruled as a dictator. He instituted a policy of **westernization** and **modernization** that caused problems among **Islamic fundamentalists**. During the **1970s**, the **Ayatollah Khomeini**, an Islamic religious leader, led the opposition movement against Pahlavi. In **1979**, the Shah was forced into exile, and Khomeini took control of the government.



Effects: Iran was transformed into a **Islamic Republic**, which meant a rejection of western ideas and culture, and a return to traditional Islamic beliefs. Iran became extremely hostile to the West, often supporting terrorist activities directed against the United States. After the death of Khomeini in **1989**, more moderate leaders took control. Iran remains an Islamic Republic, but has worked to normalize relations with the West.

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