

CHAPTER 31-SOCIETIES AT CROSSROADS

Beginning in the early 1800s four major empires—Ottoman, Russian, Chinese, and Japanese—found themselves confronted with the same problems. Military weakness made them all vulnerable to outside forces. They also suffered internal weakness, including economic and financial problems as well as government corruption. They all attempted the same kinds of solutions, changes in politics, education, and industry based on western models. Japan was the only one to achieve real success.

The Ottoman Empire had been in decline since the late 1600s. Its military technology was outdated, the Janissaries corrupt, and the provincial governors were gaining power. The empire had lost territory to surrounding empires. The shift to Atlantic trade had weakened the economy, and it began to rely on foreign loans that resulted in a European takeover of the economy. Attempts at reform began in the early 1800s as seen in military reforms and new schools and roads. The Tanzimat (reorganization) era, during the mid-1800s, brought legal and educational reform but was opposed by a number of different groups. One of these groups, the government bureaucrats, staged a coup in 1876 and demanded a constitutional government. The new sultan eventually suspended the constitution and dissolved parliament. In 1889, the second group, later known as the Young Turks, began to oppose the sultan. They called for women's rights, universal suffrage, and a secular government and eventually dethroned the sultan.

Russia's defeat in the Crimean War (1853–1856) brought radical reforms to the country. In 1861, the serfs were freed, but they had no political rights. Other reforms were attempted but nobles and the tsar still held most of the power. Between 1860 and 1914 industrialization in Russia was more successful than land reform, but the workers were exploited and became increasingly radical. Anti-government protests increased in the 1870s, as did government repression. Violence emerged with the assassination of Alexander II in 1881, which resulted in further repression. In 1905, Russia lost another war, this time to the Japanese. This defeat triggered the Revolution of 1905. The tsar made concessions, but Russia did not solve the deeper problems that would eventually lead to revolutions.

The problems for the Chinese revolved around opium. China had little demand for European goods but was populated by a large number of consumers. The British began to exchange opium for Chinese goods in the early 1800 and the Chinese soon attempted to stop the trade. The resulting Opium War (1839–1842) was a disaster for the Chinese and, in the treaties that followed, they were forced to accept the opium trade along with other concessions. By 1900, other nations obtained similar concessions and China lost control of her economy. Adding to China's problems were four major rebellions in the 1850s and 1860s, the largest being the Taiping Rebellion. This radical group called for social and political change and seized large parts of China, but was defeated in 1864 after the rebellion cost 20–30 million lives. There were other attempts at reform in China, including the Self-Strengthening Movement of the late 1800s and the Hundred-days Reforms of 1898, but these met with little success because of opposition from either the Europeans or China's own government. The Boxer Rebellion (1899–1900), a last attempt by the

Qing dynasty to free China from foreign control, was crushed by European and Japanese troops and brought the fall of the Qing in 1912.

Japan in the 1800s was torn by many of the same forces as China. Crop failures, high taxes, and the rising price of the staple crop, rice, led to protests and rebellions. In the mid-1800s, foreign nations forced Japan, militarily weak by European standards, to accept unequal trade treaties. The protests over this led to a civil war and the fall of the Tokugawa shogunate. The Meiji Restoration in 1868 returned the emperor to political power and ended 700 years of military rule. The Meiji emperor welcomed western expertise in both politics and education. He abolished the feudal system, created a new tax structure, and created a constitutional government that, though very restricted in terms of voting rights, was a start toward democracy. The Meiji brought new technology and educational reform and began the process of industrialization in Japan. As a result, Japan would be an industrial power in less than a generation. This progress had a cost however. The taxes on the peasants were fifty percent of their crops. This led to rebellions that were put down by the government. Labor unions also attempted to rebel and were treated the same way as the peasants, as unions and strikes were viewed as crimes against the state.

Key Concept 5.1. Industrialization and Global Capitalism

- I. Industrialization fundamentally changed how goods were produced.
- II. New patterns of global trade and production developed that further integrated the global economy as industrialists sought raw materials and new markets for the increasing amount of goods produced in their factories.
- IV. There were major developments in transportation and communication, including railroads, steamships, telegraphs and canals.
- V. The development and spread of global capitalism led to a variety of responses.

Key Concept 5.2. Imperialism and Nation-State Formation

- I. Industrializing powers established transoceanic empires.