

improving the nation's capacity to assimilate the newer Western technologies.

Limits on Japanese economic advance included vulnerability to economic conditions abroad. Because Japan exported relatively few items to the West but continued to require considerable imports of raw materials, including fuels and sophisticated equipment, a slump in demand for a product such as silk cloth could be disastrous. In this sense Japan bore some resemblance to dependant economies in the world, despite industrial progress. Population growth was another burden, or at least a mixed blessing. Japan's population soared from 30 million in 1868 to 45 million in 1900 and then to 73 million by 1940. This was a tribute to agricultural advance, as the size of the farm population remained constant, and it facilitated a low-wage industrial economy. It also restricted further improvements in the standard of living and created considerable social dislocation in the crowded, migrant-filled cities. Periodic protests through strikes, demonstrations, and some socialist agitation were met with vigorous police response.


Japan experienced ongoing difficulties in assimilating a generally accepted political structure—difficulties that had not been resolved during the first decades of the 20th century. Military leaders began to take a growing role in setting general diplomatic policy from the mid-1920s onward, at the expense of the civilian parties and politicians. Japan's oligarchic political structure, in which elite groups negotiated with one another for appropriate policy rather than fully yielding to any single agency such as parliament, permitted this kind of realignment. From the Meiji period onward, military leaders, though largely weaned from the samurai tradition, had remained separate from the civilian bureaucracy. They were trained in separate schools and regarded themselves as true guardians of the modern Japanese state as well as older traditions. They reported not to civilian authority but directly to the emperor. Like military leaders in the West during the 1920s but with greater vigor, they resented what they regarded as the selfishness and accommodation to special interests of the political parties, as the latter increasingly resorted to mass political campaigns and vote-getting strategies. Reduction of military budgets during the 1920s hit military leaders hard, and army prestige declined to the point that officers wore civilian clothing when off base. In essence Japan experimented during the

1920s with a liberal political pattern, which seemed to give primacy to party maneuverings and electoral appeals but which also antagonized the military (and other conservative elite groups) while failing to subject them to new controls. Voting rights were extended to all adult males, but this did not produce agreement on political forms.

A Balance Sheet

Changes in Europe, the “settler societies,” and Japan during the 1920s were complex. Democratic and parliamentary political forms took further root in Germany and in places like Canada. Significant industrial and social change combined with signs of creativity in culture, in both sciences and the arts. On the other hand, challenges to democracy arose in Italy and in much of east central Europe, while Japanese politics became less stable. The United States tried to isolate itself from world politics. Events would soon prove that the economic foundations of the major industrial powers were shaky as well. Even in the 1920s the economy of western Europe was newly challenged by the greater vigor of the United States and Japan.

Revolution: The First Waves

 An unprecedented surge of political and social revolution seized other key parts of the world. Launched in some cases before World War I, revolution posed a direct challenge to the more established industrial, democratic powers, particularly in the West. Revolutions also set a host of new forces in motion in the societies directly involved. Collectively, revolutions suggested alternatives to economic, political, and social forms emphasized in the West. Along with the surge of anticolonialism in the 1920s, they contributed a new level of complexity to world affairs and suggested the growing vulnerability of Western dominance.

Mexico's Upheaval

Several cataclysmic events launched Latin America into the 20th century and set in motion trends that would

determine much of the region's subsequent history. The first of these events was the 10-year civil war and political upheaval of the Mexican Revolution, caused primarily by internal forces. Eventually, the Mexican Revolution was also influenced by another major event: the outbreak of World War I. Although most Latin American nations avoided direct participation in the Great War, as World War I was called at the time, the disruption of traditional markets for Latin American exports and the elimination of European sources of goods caused a realignment of the economies of several nations in the region. They were forced to rely on themselves. A spurt of manufacturing continued the process begun after 1870, and some small steps were taken to overcome the traditional dependence on outside supply. Finally, at the end of World War I, the United States emerged as the dominant foreign power in the region, replacing Great Britain in both economic and political terms. That position created a reality that Latin Americans could not ignore and that greatly influenced the economic and political options in the region.

The regime of Porfirio Díaz had been in power since 1876 and seemed unshakable. During the Díaz dictatorship, tremendous economic changes had been made, and foreign concessions in mining, railroads, and other sectors of the economy had created a sense of prosperity among the Mexican elite. However, this progress had been bought at considerable expense. Foreigners controlled large sectors of the economy. The hacienda system of extensive landholdings by a small elite dominated certain regions of the country. The political system was corrupt, and any complaint was stifled. The government took repressive measures against workers, peasants, and American Indians who opposed the loss of their lands or the unbearable working conditions. Political opponents often were imprisoned or forced into exile. In short, Díaz ruled with an iron fist through an effective political machine.

By 1910, however, Díaz was 80 years old and seemed willing to allow some political opposition. Francisco Madero, a wealthy son of an elite family, proposed to run against Díaz. Madero believed that some moderate democratic political reforms would relieve social tensions and allow the government to continue its economic development with a minimum of popular unrest. This was more than Díaz could stand. Madero was arrested, a rigged election put Díaz back in power, and things returned to normal.

When Madero was released from prison, he called for a revolt.

A general rebellion developed. In the north, small farmers, railroaders, and cowboys coalesced under the colorful former bandit and able commander Pancho Villa. In the southern province of Morelos, an area of old conflicts between American Indian communities and large sugar estates, a peasant-based guerrilla movement began under Emiliano Zapata, whose goal of land reform was expressed in his motto "Tierra y Libertad" (Land and Liberty). Díaz was driven from power by this coalition of forces, but it soon became apparent that Madero's moderate programs would not resolve Mexico's continuing social problems. Zapata rose in revolt, demanding a sweeping land reform, and Madero steadily lost control of his subordinates. In 1913, with at least the tacit agreement of the U.S. ambassador in Mexico, who wanted to forestall revolutionary changes, a military coup removed Madero from government and he was then assassinated.

General Victoriano Huerta sought to impose a Díaz-type dictatorship supported by the large landowners, the army, and the foreign companies, but the tide of revolution could not be stopped so easily. Villa and Zapata rose again against the government and were joined by other middle-class political opponents of Huerta's illegal rule. By 1914 Huerta was forced from power, but the victorious leaders now began to fight over the nature of the new regime and the mantle of leadership. An extended period of warfare followed, and the tides of battle shifted constantly. The railroad lines built under Díaz now moved large numbers of troops, including *voluntarios*, women who sometimes shouldered arms. Matters were also complicated by U.S. intervention, aimed at bringing order to the border regions, and by diplomatic maneuverings after the outbreak of World War I in Europe. Villa and Zapata remained in control in their home territories, but they could not wrest the government from the control of the more moderate political leaders in Mexico City. Alvaro Obregón, an able general who had learned the new tactics of machine guns and trenches from the war raging in Europe and had beaten Villa's cavalry in a series of bloody battles in 1915, emerged as leader of the government.

As much as the Mexican Revolution had its own internal dynamic, it is interesting to note that it was roughly contemporaneous with revolutions in other agrarian societies that had also just undergone a

period of rapid and disruptive modernization. The Boxer Rebellion in China (1899–1901) and the toppling of the emperor in 1911, the 1905 revolution in Russia, and a revolution in Iran in the same year underlined the rapid changes in these societies, all of which had received large foreign investments from either the United States or western Europe. In each of these countries, governments had tried to establish strong centralized control and had sought rapid modernization, but in doing so they had made their nations increasingly dependant on foreign investments and consequently on world financial markets. Thus, the world banking crisis of 1907 and 1908 cut Mexico and these other countries off from their needed sources of capital and created severe strains on their governments. This kind of dependency, and the fact that in Mexico more than 20 percent of the nation's territory was owned directly by citizens or companies from the United States, fed a growing nationalism that spread through many sectors of society. That nationalist sentiment played a role in each of these revolutions.

By 1920 the civil war had ended and Mexico began to consolidate the changes that had taken place in the previous confused and bloody decade. Obregón was elected president in that year. He was followed by a series of presidents from the new “revolutionary clique” who tried to consolidate the new regime. There was much to be done. The revolution had devastated the country; 1.5 million people had died, major industries were destroyed, and ranching and farming were disrupted. But there was great hope because the revolution also promised (although it did not always deliver) real changes.

What were some of these changes? The new Mexican Constitution of 1917 promised land reform, limited the foreign ownership of key resources, and guaranteed the rights of workers. It also placed restrictions on clerical education and church ownership of property, and promised educational reforms. The workers who had been mobilized were organized in a national confederation and were given representation in the government. The promised land reforms were slow in coming, though later, under President Lázaro Cárdenas (1934–1940), more than 40 million acres were distributed, most of it in the form of *ejidos*, or communal holdings. The government launched an extensive program of primary and especially rural education.

Culture and Politics in Postrevolutionary Mexico

Nationalism and *indigenismo*, or the concern for the indigenous peoples and their contribution to Mexican culture, lay beneath many reforms. Having failed to integrate the American Indians into national life for a century, Mexico now attempted to “Indianize” the nation through secular schools that emphasized nationalism and a vision of the Mexican past that glorified its American Indian heritage and denounced Western capitalism. Artists such as Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco recaptured that past and outlined a social program for the future in stunning murals on public buildings designed to inform, convince, and entertain at the same time. The Mexican muralist movement had a wide impact on artists throughout Latin America even though, as Orozco himself stated, it sometimes created simple solutions and strange utopias by mixing a romantic image of the American Indian past with Christian symbols and communist ideology. Novelists, such as Mariano Azuela, found in the revolution a focus for the examination of Mexican reality. Popular culture celebrated the heroes and events of the revolution in scores of ballads (*corridos*) that were sung to celebrate and inform. In literature, music, and the arts, the revolution and its themes provided a stimulus to a tremendous burst of creativity, as in the following lines of poetry:

Gabino Barrera rose in the mountains
his cause was noble,
protect the poor and give them the land.
Remember the night he was murdered
three leagues from Tlapachuala;
22 shots rang out
leaving him time for nothing.
Gabino Barrera and his loyal seed
fell in the hail of rounds,
the face of this man of the Revolution
finally rested, his lips pressed to the ground.

The gains of the revolution were not made without opposition. Although the revolution preceded the Russian Revolution of 1917 and had no single ideological model, many of the ideas of Marxist socialism were held by leading Mexican intellectuals

and a few politicians. The secularization of society and especially education met strong opposition from the Catholic church and the clergy, especially in states where socialist rhetoric and anticlericalism were extreme. In the 1920s, a conservative peasant movement backed by the church erupted in central Mexico. These Cristeros, backed by conservative politicians, fought to stop the slide toward secularization. The fighting lasted for years until a compromise was reached.

The United States intervened diplomatically and militarily during the revolution, motivated by a desire for order, fear of German influence on the new government, and economic interests. An incident provoked a short-lived U.S. seizure of Veracruz in 1914, and when Pancho Villa's forces had raided across the border, the United States sent an expeditionary force into Mexico to catch him. The mission failed. For the most part, however, the war in Europe dominated U.S. foreign policy efforts until 1918. The United States was suspicious of the new government, and a serious conflict arose when U.S.-owned oil companies ran into problems with workers.

As in any revolution, the question of continuity arose when the fighting ended. The revolutionary leadership hoped to institutionalize the new regime by creating a one-party system. This organization, called the Party of the Institutionalized Revolution (PRI), developed slowly during the 1920s and 1930s into a dominant force in Mexican politics. It incorporated labor, peasant, military, and middle-class sectors and proved flexible enough to incorporate new interest groups as they developed. Although Mexico became a multiparty democracy in theory, in reality the PRI controlled politics and, by accommodation and sometimes repression, maintained its hold on national political life. Some presidents governed much like the strongmen in the 19th century had done, but the party structure and the need to incorporate various interests within the government coalition limited the worst aspects of caudillo, or personalist, rule. The presidents were strong, but the policy of limiting the presidency to one six-year term ensured some change in leadership. The question of whether a revolution could be institutionalized remained in debate. By the end of the 20th century, many Mexicans believed that little remained of the principles and programs of the revolutionaries of 1910.

Revolution in Russia: Liberalism to Communism

In March 1917 strikes and food riots broke out in Russia's capital, St. Petersburg (subsequently renamed Leningrad until 1991, when it was renamed St. Petersburg as a gesture of defiance against the revolutionary legacy). The outbursts were spurred by wartime misery, including painful food shortages. They also and more basically protested the conditions of early industrialization set against incomplete rural reform and an unresponsive political system. And they quickly assumed revolutionary proportions. The rioters called not just for more food and work but for a new political regime as well. A council of workers, called a soviet, took over the city government and arrested the tsar's ministers, after some brutal attempts at military repression. Unable to rely on his own soldiers, the tsar abdicated, thus ending the long period of imperial rule.

For eight months a liberal provisional government struggled to rule the country. Russia seemed thus to launch its revolution on a basis similar to France in 1789, where a liberal period set change in motion. Like Western liberals, Russian revolutionary leaders, such as Alexander Kerensky, were eager to see genuine parliamentary rule, religious and other freedoms, and a host of political and legal changes. But liberalism was not deeply rooted in Russia, if only because of the small middle class, so the analogies with the first phase of the French revolution cannot be pressed too far. Furthermore, Russia's revolution took place in much more adverse circumstances, given the pressures of participation in the First World War. The initial liberal leaders were eager to maintain their war effort, which associated their link with democratic France and Britain. Yet the nation was desperately war weary, and prolongation drastically worsened economic conditions while public morale plummeted. Liberal leaders also held back from the massive land reforms expected by the peasantry, for in good middle-class fashion they respected existing property arrangements and did not wish to rush into social change before a legitimate new political structure could be established. Hence serious popular unrest continued, and in November (October, by the Russian calendar) a second revolution took place, which expelled liberal leadership and soon brought to power the radical, Bolshevik wing of the Social Democratic