

FAILED LIBERALISM AND THE SEEDS OF REVOLUTION:
Russian and Chinese Constitutional Reform at the Turn of the Twentieth Century

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(ABSTRACT)

At the turn of the twentieth century, the imperial regimes of Russia and China underwent periods of political and constitutional reform unprecedented in the long histories of both states. This paper explores the conceptualization of Weberian legitimacy as it applies to these turn-of-the-century trends of political reform in Russia and China. I argue that both external and internal challenges to the legitimacy of the traditional power structures in each state gave rise to and, in effect, necessitated these reforms. Moreover, I contend that the failure of these political reforms to establish meaningful norms of representative government in Russia and China further exacerbated the challenges to the legitimacy faced by each state and subsequently fomented the revolutions that ultimately brought these periods of constitutional reform to an end. In a brief epilogue, the paper examines the possible parallels between these periods at the turn of the twentieth century and contemporary power structures and challenges to legitimacy in these states.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In the aftermath of the tumultuous Cold War era, a wealth of scholarship has explored the multifaceted process of democratization. Numerous analysts have detailed the processes and institutions through which these transitions occur, as well as their potential outcomes and limitations.¹ A substantial amount of the recent body of literature regarding democratization has focused specifically on the two major communist powers of the Cold War: Russia and China.² Although post-Soviet Russia has established the constitutional framework for Western-style democratic governance over the past decade, the frequent reversion to neo-authoritarian tactics under presidents Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin has called the liberal character of the system into question.³ On the other hand, despite progressive attempts at decentralization and the separation of the Chinese Communist Party hierarchy from the government under Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin, events such as the Tiananmen massacre of 1989 serve as a solemn reminder that China remains an authoritarian regime.⁴

In speculating about the potential for further democratization and the nurturing of civil society in Russia and China, many analysts have put forth as a truism the assertion that both states lack any significant historical precedent for democratic governance—in

¹ Such analysts include: Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991); Robert D. Putnam with Robert Leonardi and Raffaella Y. Nanetti, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); James Frank Hollifield and Calvin Jillson, ed., *Pathways to Democracy: The Political Economy of Democratic Transitions* (New York: Routledge, 2000); Theda Skocpol, *Social Revolutions in the Modern World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Robert D. Kaplan, "Was Democracy Just a Moment?" in *The Atlantic Monthly Magazine*, Dec 1997 v280 n6, 55-72; and numerous others.

² Including: An Chen. *Restructuring Political Power in China: Alliances & Opposition, 1978-1998* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999); Edwin A. Winckler, ed., *Transition from Communism in China: Institutional and Comparative Analyses* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999); Marcia A. Weigle, *Russia's Liberal Project: State-Society Relations in the Transition from Communism* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000); Liliia Fedorovna Shevtsova, *Yeltsin's Russia: Myths and Reality* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999); Baogang He, *The Democratization of China* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Bruce J. Dickson, *Democratization in China and Taiwan: The Adaptability of Leninist Parties*; and numerous others.

³ Such analysts include Liliia Fedorovna Shevtsova, *Yeltsin's Russia: Myths and Reality* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999); Richard Sakwa, "The Regime System in Russia," *Contemporary Politics* 3, no. 1 (1997); Nicolai N. Petro, *The Rebirth of Russian Democracy: An Interpretation of Political Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995); and numerous others.

⁴ Throughout the course of this paper, I will attempt to utilize the Pinyin spelling to render Chinese names whenever possible. Notable exceptions will be in the cases of quotations not originally rendered in the Pinyin form in their source and bibliographical citations wherein the author or authors choose to render their names or the names of their work using the Wade-Giles system instead.

effect, a civic culture. In *Making Democracy Work*, analyst Robert D. Putnam evaluates at length the significance of civic traditions in the establishment of effective democratic governance. Specifically, Putnam stresses the importance of such factors as political equality, interpersonal and institutional trust, social tolerance, and civil associations in establishing these civic norms of democratic governance. Furthermore, he notes that history plays a vital role in shaping both the traditions and the institutions that give rise to and maintain such norms.⁵ Therefore, in response to the aforementioned charges that China and Russia have little historical precedent for the existence of a civic culture, it is important to consider the early years of the twentieth century during which both states underwent brief periods of constitutional reform: Russia from 1905 to 1917 and China from 1905 to approximately 1915.⁶

The present work will provide an analytical exploration of the history of the constitutional and self-governmental reforms that occurred in Russia and China at the turn of the twentieth century. These reforms, I argue, fundamentally arose from a combination of external and domestic challenges to the legitimacy of the traditional power structures in both states. Furthermore, I maintain that while the ongoing challenges to legitimacy faced by these regimes at this time led to constitutional reform, the failure of these reforms further deteriorated state legitimacy and, in turn, fomented the revolutions that ultimately brought an end to early twentieth-century experiments in constitutionalism for Russia and China. Therefore, at its most basic level, the present work explores the conceptualization of political legitimacy as it applies to these turn-of-the-century reforms in Russia and China. Although the details of constitutional reform in these states are somewhat specific to their respective historical circumstances, as well as cultural and political traditions, I argue that the concept of political legitimacy and the outcomes of challenges thereto have significant potential for generalization beyond this

⁵ Robert D. Putnam with Robert Leonardi and Raffaella Y. Nanetti, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 7-8, 86-91.

⁶ The year 1915 is perhaps debatable when used mark the end of constitutional reform in China. As will be discussed at greater length in Chapter Three, Yuan Shikai's autocratic behavior as President of China could arguable set the date back to 1912. He did not officially adopt the title of emperor, however, until 1915. The present analysis ends with Yuan's adoption of the imperial title as this effectively marked the end of the period constitutional reform that began in China in 1905. Such political reforms did not reappear until Chiang Kaishek's Nationalist Party rose to power in 1928 after a period of warlordism and civil war.

particular set of case studies. To this end, the present study draws various parallels between contemporary power structures and political reforms in Russia and China and those present almost a century prior in its epilogue. This project, however, stops short of advocating that the reforms of 1905 created a modern legacy of democratic civic culture in Russia and China. Instead, I attempt merely to recognize that many of the same challenges to legitimacy that exist in Russia and China today at the turn of the twenty-first century were also present at the turn of the twentieth century. Moreover, I would argue that in many cases the contemporary regimes have responded to these challenges in a fashion similar to their predecessors of a century earlier.

RUSSIAN AND CHINESE REFORM

In order to evaluate the ultimate outcomes of the periods of reform under consideration in the present work, one must first explore the actual historical framework surrounding from which they arose in both Russia and China. By way of introduction, I will present a brief overview of these periods of constitutional reform in each state. These topics, in turn, will receive far greater attention in Chapters Two (Russia) and Three (China). This overview will begin with early twentieth-century reform in czarist Russia.

After centuries of essentially static governance in imperial Russia, Czar Alexander II initiated sweeping political reforms in the face of mass discontent following the Crimean War that, in effect, formed a basis for limited popular participation for the first time in the state's modern history. In 1861, the "Czar-Liberator" emancipated the Russian serfs and followed this act in 1864 with the establishment of the quasi-democratic local governing apparatus, the *zemstvo*, to administer the state's new social order.⁷ More significantly, however, following Russia's striking loss in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, political reform in the state took another significant leap forward with the Revolution of 1905. This revolution ultimately resulted in the October Manifesto, a brief document that established a popularly elected national legislative

⁷ Douglas A. Borer, "War Loss and Political Reform: An Ongoing Pattern in Russian History," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 20, no. 4 (1997): 352; Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 5th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 368-377.

assembly (the Duma), guaranteed civil liberties, and reorganized the Russian government by creating a Council of Ministers headed by a president.⁸ Hence, the October Manifesto essentially transformed imperial Russia—at least in theory—into a constitutional monarchy overnight.

Despite the establishment of a constitutional government with virtually universal male suffrage, however, Russia did not proceed along a particularly liberal path over the course of the next decade. As early as May 1906, the government issued the Fundamental Laws, which rescinded much of the liberal character of the October Manifesto and reestablished the ultimate authority of the Czar.⁹ Soon thereafter, Nicholas II acted in a decidedly illiberal fashion by dissolving the first two Dumas when they disagreed with the executive branch over various issues such as the redistribution of imperial and church lands. Although the October Manifesto created the political framework for democratic governance in Russia, the refusal of Czar Nicholas II to relinquish his traditional power prevented these reforms from having the effects desired by liberal elements of Russian society. Whereas democracy remained the goal of the reformers, Nicholas clearly had other ideas. These trends, coupled with Russia's major losses in World War I, culminated in the overthrow of the czarist government and the eventual rise of the Bolsheviks, effectively putting an end to Russian democratization and liberal reform for over seventy years.

Much like Russia, the people of China also experienced a brief flirtation with self-government at the turn of the twentieth century. Although one can trace these reforms back to the groundwork laid with the initiation of a *laissez-faire* county administration during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Chinese decentralization also began in earnest in the aftermath of the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars. Consequently, as Chinese reformers recognized the value of Japan's modernizing constitutional monarchy, a strong desire for constitutional governance—an outgrowth of both an aspiration for change and a fear of Japan's growing power—spread both among the

⁸ Jacob Walkin, *The Rise of Democracy in Pre-Revolutionary Russia: Political and Social Institutions Under the Last Three Czars* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962), 205; Borer, "War Loss and Political Reform," 354-355.

⁹ Borer, "War Loss and Political Reform," 354-355.

state's elites and masses. On 1 September 1906, the Empress Dowager Tongzhi¹⁰ issued an edict calling for the framing a constitution based fundamentally on the study of foreign models. While the Empress Dowager's edict called for the creations of a national congress (*guohui*), initial efforts by government officials in 1906 and 1907 focused on forming an advisory cabinet rather than a parliament. Furthermore, no national legislative or advisory body was convened that rivaled the power of the Qing Imperial Court. At the provincial level, however, these reforms generally devolved power from the military and placed it in the hands of civil governors.¹¹

Despite these reforms, the question of a parliament continued to dominate the Chinese political landscape. On 27 August 1908, the Imperial Court issued an "Outline of Constitution." This parliamentary law called for the convocation of a preparatory National Assembly in Beijing in 1910, to be replaced by a nationally-elected Parliament in 1917.¹² Much like the Fundamental Laws in Russia, the Qing "Outline" retracted much of the liberal character of the initial reforms and reaffirmed the emperor's vast power, including ultimate executive, legislative, and judicial authority.¹³ Subsequent limitations of the voting franchise and the actual governmental role of the parliament also hindered the democratic character of the new governmental framework. Faced with revolts throughout the countryside as a result of the lack of meaningful democratic reform, the Qing Emperor abdicated to reform-minded general Yuan Shikai in 1912, establishing the Republic of China.¹⁴ Initial democratic reforms reached a standstill, however, as Yuan resorted to autocratic rule, eventually culminating in the reinstatement of the monarchy in 1915. As author John H. Fincher contends, "The representative institutions which best symbolize the Chinese democracy were opened by one kind of autocrat in the wake of the Russo-Japanese War and closed by another kind of autocrat on the eve of the First World War."¹⁵ In the years between the reigns of these autocrats,

¹⁰ The Empress Dowager was the effective head of the Chinese government at the turn of the twentieth century, ruling as a regent for the young Chinese emperor.

¹¹ John H. Fincher, *Chinese Democracy: The Self-Government Movement in Local, Provincial, and National Politics, 1905-1914* (London: Crom Helm, 1981), 72-79.

¹² Fincher, *Chinese Democracy*, 79-81.

¹³ Immanuel C. Y. Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 5th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 168ff; Dreyer, *China's Political System*, 415-416.

¹⁴ Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 470.

¹⁵ Fincher, *Chinese Democracy*, 30.

however, China underwent a period of constitutional reform that was, while ultimately unsuccessful, unprecedented in scope throughout its long history.

LEGITIMACY, REFORM, AND REVOLUTION

What were the roots of constitutional reform in turn-of-the-century Russia and China? Why did self-government fail to take root? Why did the failure of these reforms ultimately give way to revolution? I argue that the answer to this question—or at least one very plausible answer amidst the myriad of historical, social, political, economic, and psychological explanations that scholars may offer—is encapsulated in the basic concept of political legitimacy.¹⁶ In fact, the application of political legitimacy to these periods of reform and revolution in Russia and China overarches, encompasses, and incorporates many of the aforementioned alternative hypotheses in its derivation. Prior to discussing the history of these states in terms of challenges to legitimacy in Chapters Two and Three, however, it is crucial that the present work first address the concept of legitimacy itself at greater length.

A significant degree of contemporary political and social thought regarding the concepts of legitimacy and authority are based on the abundant and insightful writings of sociologist Max Weber. In fact, legitimacy serves as at least an underlying theme in the vast majority of Weber's sociological writings. As Weber maintains, "Conduct, especially social conduct, and more particularly a social relationship, can be oriented on the part of the individuals to what constitutes their 'idea' of the existence of a *legitimate authority*."¹⁷ Furthermore, he contends that one may consider the structure of a given social relationship as legitimate when those actors involved in the relationship perceive it as having assumed some degree of validity. Hence, one may essentially equate legitimacy with the concept of perceived validity. This validity ideally emanates, Weber continues, from three basic sources: an emotional surrender to its authority, a rational belief in the social arrangement, and fundamental religious attitudes predisposed toward

¹⁶ I am greatly indebted, as is this project, to Professor Douglas A. Borer's assistance in both fully grasping and acquiring a more thorough appreciation of the role of legitimacy in history through his writings on the subject.

¹⁷ Max Weber, *Basic Concepts in Sociology*, translated by H. P. Secher (New York: The Citadel Press, 1969), 71. Emphasis in original.

the existing relationship.¹⁸ Any combination of these sources of validity and legitimacy may in fact be present in any given social relationship. If none of the three is present, however, there is no reason for the actors involved to perceive the relationship as a valid arrangement.

Weber goes on to argue that recognized legitimacy serves as a significant source of power and influence in social relationships. In this context, he defines power as “the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests.”¹⁹ As a result of the essential connection between Weber’s concepts of legitimacy and power as they pertain to social relationships in general, numerous scholars have examined Weber’s typology of legitimate social relationships as it pertains specifically to the political arrangements of the state. In these terms, Seymour M. Lipset defines political legitimacy simply as the accepted “title to rule,” whether vested in an individual, institutional, or systemic framework.²⁰ Analyst Douglas A. Borer goes on to provide a more detailed analysis of the concept, outlining political legitimacy as “the basis for social unity, cohesion, and stability within any given polity, with the polity comprising the ruling state apparatus and the citizenry of a given territory.”²¹ Based on the aforementioned sources of validity expressed by in Weber’s writings, one may enumerate three fundamental ideal types of legitimacy as observed in social relationships between governments and the governed: traditional, charismatic, and rational-legal authority. This Weberian typology of legitimacy, in turn, merits further exploration.

Traditional political legitimacy, which is perhaps the most rudimentary of Weber’s three-part typology, bases its validity on “that which as always been.”²² In a state based on traditional legitimacy, the regime is considered to possess authority over

¹⁸ Weber, *Basic Concepts in Sociology*, 81.

¹⁹ Max Weber, *On Charisma and Institution Building (Selected Papers)*, translated by edited by S. N. Eisenstadt (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), 15.

²⁰ Seymour Martin Lipset, *The First New Nation: The United States in Historical & Comparative Perspective* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1979), 17.

²¹ Douglas A. Borer, *Superpowers Defeated: Vietnam and Afghanistan Compared* (London: Frank Cass, 1999), xix.

²² Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, Vol. I, Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 36.

the governed as a result of the governed themselves perceiving this power structure as having existed, for all intents and purposes, in perpetuity. In turn, allegiance is fundamentally owed to the regime itself in such a traditional arrangement rather than, for instance, its leader as a specific individual or persona. Most monarchical regimes therefore fit this traditional model of political legitimacy as the ruled essentially give allegiance to the notion of “the crown” and the royal tradition, rather than the specific person of the present monarch. Charismatic authority, on the other hand, is far more personalized, drawing its legitimacy from “the specific and exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him.”²³ In this form of power structure, ultimate legitimacy and validity rests in the hands of the exceptional individual around whom charismatic authority is constructed. Finally, a state may construct political legitimacy on the grounds of rational-legal authority. Rational-legal authority, in turn, rests on the belief that the rule of a state is legitimate based on an acceptance by the governed of the appropriateness of the legal structures and “rules of the game” upon which the state’s power structure is based.²⁴ Hence, legitimacy is imbued by the governed within the legal framework of the system under which the regime and its leaders hold power—the political apparatus, in effect. Constitutional states, therefore, most frequently exemplify such rational-legal political legitimacy in the formulation of their power structure.

It is also possible—and, in most cases, likely—for a hybrid of Weber’s three-part typology to exist within any given political power structure. After all, Weber presents these models as ideal types rather than strictly delineated categories under which every social relationship must fall. Regarding the existence of combined or amalgamated forms of legitimacy, Borer states, “At the foundation of any state, legitimacy is best understood as a mixture of various ideal forms. For any given society, the number of possible historical mixes is infinite.”²⁵ Lipset specifically identifies political legitimacy in the early years of the United States as such a hybrid, wherein the state based its authority on a combination of the rational-legal principles embodied in the Constitution and the

²³ Weber, *On Charisma and Institution Building*, 46.

²⁴ Weber, *On Charisma and Institution Building*, 46; Lipset, *The First New Nation*, 17.

²⁵ Borer, *Superpowers Defeated*, 38.

charismatic leadership of President George Washington.²⁶ For instance, as discussed at greater length in Chapters Two and Three, the imperial regimes of Russia and China serve as prime examples of the merger of traditional and charismatic authority.

It is important to bear in mind that Weber's concept of legitimacy is fundamentally founded upon the *perceptions* of those under the authority of the person or persons in power. To reiterate, legitimacy remains a *concept* in social relationships; it exists in no tangible form. Moreover, legitimacy only exists when and where it is perceived to exist. As Weber contends, "[c]ompliance with authority imposed by one man or several, insofar as it does not depend on fear or is derived from motives of expediency, always presupposes *a belief* in the legitimate authority of the source imposing it."²⁷ In the case of political systems, ruling legitimacy is present only in cases in which the governed under a given polity believe that the authority of the ruling structure is valid. Furthermore, different segments of a given society may imbue their ruling power structure with distinct sources of legitimate authority based on their unique perceptions of it. Its lack of a tangible form, however, does not lessen the ultimate influence of legitimacy on social relationships and the degree to which it can shape decidedly tangible political outcomes.

Since the concepts of political legitimacy and authority are fundamentally based on the perceptions of the governed, they are also far from everlasting or immutable in their composition and validity. Should the perceptions of the governed regarding the legitimacy of the power structure of a state be reconstituted for whatever reason, it is entirely possible for the perceived basis of authority to shift, change, or dissipate altogether. In this sense, the constituting and maintenance of legitimate political authority is perhaps most appropriately conceptualized as an ongoing process. As such, it is appropriate to discuss the concept of challenges to the state's existing legitimacy—junctures at which the state's validity is called into question. Such challenges, in turn, may either be momentous in their scope or otherwise historically inconsequential, but the

²⁶ Lipset, *The First New Nation*, 18ff. One may also argue that the elements of British common law carried over in the American political system also represented at least an facet of traditional legitimacy, as well.

²⁷ Weber, *Basic Concepts in Sociology*, 83. Emphasis added.

outcomes in cases of challenged legitimacy are frequently noteworthy when they do not simply fade away on their own accord.

Challenges to a political regime's legitimate authority may take on any number of forms, both external and domestic. Borer, for instance, focuses extensively on war loss as an external challenge to state legitimacy as it pertains specifically to Russia.²⁸ These challenges may also arise from domestic issues ranging from fundamental social disparities to economic, political, and cultural disputes. Weber indirectly addresses such challenges into account in his typology of legitimacy. When the idealized conceptualization of legitimacy on the part of a state's subjects or citizens differs significantly from its reality as expressed and administered by the state, Weber argues that it will likely result in what he terms "disenchantment" on the part of the governed.²⁹ Moreover, should the state fail to address these challenges and the disenchantment of its subjects continues unchecked, these challenges could develop into a full-fledged crisis of legitimacy.³⁰

When faced with a crisis of legitimacy, I argue that a political regime essentially has a choice of three options in dealing with the situation. First and most simply, the regime may choose not to respond to its challenged authority. In this case, the challenge to the state's "right to rule" may in fact pass eventually, and the governed may subsequently reaffirm the legitimacy of the present power structure. On the other hand, the possibility remains that, if unchecked, the crisis of legitimacy could result in further disenchantment and, potentially, significant social upheaval. Second, the state may attempt to reassert its present form of legitimate political authority in some fashion. If the challenge to legitimacy is serious enough, however, this option may not be possible. The state may no longer have the capacity—from a material standpoint and/or in terms of its popular support—to engage in the reassertion of its authority. If the regime does possess the capacity, however, such a reassertion seems the most likely option given the

²⁸ Borer, "War Loss and Political Reform."

²⁹ Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, translated and edited by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 51.

³⁰ The concept of the legitimacy crisis is drawn from Borer, *Superpowers Defeated*.

basic tendencies of regimes and individuals in power to maintain their own power. Third and finally, the state may find itself in a position wherein it is necessary to reconstitute its legitimacy upon different grounds in order to maintain authority. The state may attempt supplant its present source or sources of legitimacy or augment its authority by “grafting on” another of Weber’s ideal types. Such revisions of legitimate authority can potentially occur through the mechanisms of political reform or the wholesale replacement of a ruler or ruling institution. Based on historical precedents of reform and revolution, however, such a reconstitution of legitimacy is seldom a facile or uneventful process.³¹

As noted above, Borer contends that challenges to state legitimacy in the form of war loss have historically played a vital role in spurring political reform in Russian society. As he argues, the inability of Russian regimes to effectively defend its territory, citizens, interests, or ideology essentially called into question its continued right to rule at several junctures throughout history.³² At a broader level, building upon the analysis of such scholars as Borer and Lipset,³³ I hypothesize that war loss, economic crisis, and other serious challenges to a state’s legitimacy—circumstances that, in effect, leave the regime with little or no choice but to reconstitute its foundations of legitimacy in order to maintain political authority—are in many cases fundamentally linked to trends of both reform and revolution. As previously argued, one of the options available to a regime facing a crisis of legitimacy is to reform or reconstitute the basis of its authority in some fashion. Ideally in this case, the state will sufficiently address to best of its ability the source of the initial challenge to its legitimacy. On the other hand, if reforms or attempts at reconstitution fail to address the problem to the satisfaction of the governed or, if the state instead chooses not to respond to its challenged legitimacy, the resulting damage to its legitimacy could give rise to revolution. In turn, should such a revolt occur, the subjects of the discredited regime are likely to attempt a reconstitution the state’s

³¹ Examples are numerous throughout history, but the French Revolution is frequently cited by scholars to be the archetypal modern revolution. In turn, its origins and course fit with the overall conceptual framework of the legitimacy crisis, as discontent arose amongst the French middle class as it reconstituted its view of state legitimacy in terms its lack of meaningful political influence and the continued rule of the aristocracy.

³² Borer discusses these themes at length in both “War Loss and Political Reform” and *Superpowers Defeated*.

³³ Lipset explores the role of legitimacy in state building and rebuilding (specifically in relation to the United States) in *The First New Nation*, 1979.

legitimacy on their own terms. Seymour Lipset elaborates on the results of a successful upheaval of this nature in the following passage:

The old order has been abolished and with it the set of beliefs that justified its system of authority. The imperialist ogre upon whom all ills were blamed has now disappeared.... The new system is in the process of being formed and so the questions arise: To whom is loyalty owed? And why?³⁴

In many ways, this quotation addresses the very heart of state legitimacy and authority. Furthermore, it is particularly pertinent in relation to the Russian and Chinese cases under consideration in the present study.

Clearly, the progression of a legitimacy crisis as described above is dealing extensively in ideal types, and therefore one must not assume that all historical situations will conform precisely to this potential pattern of challenged authority, reform, and revolution. In the case of Russia and China at the turn of the twentieth century, however, I argue that it is an apt description of the historical events of this turbulent era in both states—events that are explored in detail in Chapters Two and Three. Following war loss abroad and social unrest at home, both regimes instituted political reform as a means to reconstitute their legitimacy, grafting on elements of rational-legal authority to their foundations of traditional and charismatic legitimacy. These attempts, however, failed to address many of the fundamental problems that initially gave rise to the crisis of legitimacy. In turn, revolution eventually took place in both states and ultimately resulted in a sweeping overhaul of their norms of legitimacy and authority. This cycle of challenged legitimacy, reform, failed reform, and revolution as it applies to Russia and China at the turn of the twentieth century is summarized below in Table 1.

³⁴ Lipset, *The First New Nation*, 16.

Table 1

Progression of Challenged Legitimacy, Political Reform, and Revolution In Early-Twentieth Century Russia and China
<p><u>STAGE 1</u></p> <p>War Loss (external) → Social Unrest (internal) → Loss of Traditional/Charismatic Legitimacy → Political Reform and Reconstitution of Legitimacy</p>
<p><u>STAGE 2</u></p> <p>Failure and/or Retraction of Political Reform (internal) → Loss of Rational-Legal and remaining Traditional/Charismatic Legitimacy + War Loss (external) and/or Social Unrest (internal) → Revolution</p>

I will examine the above progression of challenged legitimacy at greater length through a historical overview of Russian and Chinese constitutional reform and revolution in Chapters Two and Three, and in a more comparative framework in Chapter Four.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

I have divided the present study into five chapters (including the current introduction). This chapter has briefly introduced the project's primary research questions: What challenges to legitimacy led the imperial regimes of Russia and China to initiate constitutional reforms at the turn of the twentieth century, and why did they fail and give way to revolution? As noted above, I contend that a historical analysis will support my hypothesis that it was challenges to political legitimacy and authority—in the form of both long-term societal factors and immediate challenges such as war loss—that served as the driving forces behind constitutional reform. Moreover, when constitutional reforms failed to remedy such challenges to the satisfaction of the discontent elements of both the Russian and Chinese populaces, the authority of the respective imperial regimes was further called into question, ultimately resulting in revolution in both cases.

The second and third chapters of the present work will examine the historical literature on constitutional reform in Russia and China, respectively, at the turn of the twentieth century. This analysis begins with an exploration of the preexisting social and

political arrangements in each state, as well as an analysis of the sources of legitimate authority drawn upon by each imperial regime. An examination of historical precedents for liberal reform and self-government in China and Russia follows, as well as a study of the challenges to legitimacy that served as the immediate impetuses for political reform in both states. Finally, the historical narrative will move through these constitutional reforms, assessing their successes and failures in terms of both the expectations of both the reformers and the reforming regimes of both states.

The fourth chapter will specifically explore *why* democratic reform failed in both China and Russia and the reasons why this failure led to eventual revolution in both cases. Once again, this analysis will focus on the overarching theme of Weber's formulation of legitimacy as it relates to failed reform and reconstitution, as well as incorporating the research of analysts Theda Skocpol, William Sewell, Barrington Moore, Jr., and other scholars on the fundamental sources of revolution. Finally, a brief epilogue examines the possible parallels present in contemporary power structures in Russia and China and challenges to legitimacy that each state faces at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

The ultimate goal of the project is to illustrate the manner in which crises of legitimacy during the early twentieth century gave rise to constitutional movements in both China and Russia and, in turn, how continued challenges to legitimacy ultimately resulted in revolution. I argue that such reforms made a significant political, social, and cultural impact in each of these countries. The legacy they created, however, was not a legacy of liberalism or democracy. Instead, the attempts of each imperial regime to maintain its own absolute authority within the trappings of political liberalization resulted instead in failed reform. Subsequently, these aborted constitutional reforms in China and Russia—and the crises of legitimacy that resulted from their failure—fomented revolution in these states and eventually led to the establishment of Communist governments not dissimilar to the imperial regimes that these reformers and revolutionaries, respectively, initially intended to restructure and topple.

CHAPTER TWO: REFORM AND REVOLUTION IN RUSSIA

An analysis of reform and revolution in Russia and China at the turn of the twentieth century must begin with an exploration of the specific circumstances of this tumultuous era in the histories of both states. The following two chapters briefly examine the political and sociological backdrops of each state to establish a context for further analysis before shifting its focus to each state's political reforms beginning in 1905 and the immediate challenges to state legitimacy that necessitated such a fundamental reconstitution of authority. Moreover, these chapters will investigate the revolutions that followed failed democratic reform in Russia and China, as well as their outcomes. The chapters will serve to demonstrate both the similarities and differences in the experiences of Russia and China in the early years of the twentieth century. This analysis, in turn, will illustrate that the parallelism between early-twentieth-century reform in Russia and China transcends beyond mere temporal novelty and, in fact, goes further to incorporate both strikingly similar framing circumstances and outcomes.

Analyst Ellen Comisso offers a basic typology of democratic governance that is beneficial for analyzing these periods of constitutional reform in both Russia and China. Comisso fundamentally stresses that democracy is more than “an organized process for delegating decisions to representatives; democracy should also be a means of insuring those decisions represent popular interests.”¹ Moreover, she divides democracy (specifically as it pertains to liberal reform) into two basic categories: procedural democracy and substantive democracy. Comisso delineates the precepts of procedural democracy as a government based on the consent of the governed, formalized in a constitution, and featuring competitive elections, universal suffrage, the protection of basic human rights, and a process in which officials may be held accountable to the general public.² Hence, procedural democracy is concerned fundamentally with the establishment of the basic democratic institutions and the “rules of the game” necessary

¹ Ellen Comisso, “Is the Glass Half Full or Half Empty? Reflections on Five Years of Competitive Politics in Eastern Europe,” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 30, no. 1 (March 1997): 1.

² Comisso, “Is the Glass Half Full or Half Empty?” 3.

for effective governance. Substantive democracy, on the other hand, is focused less on the “requirements” of democracy and instead emphasizes the political, social, and economic *outcomes* of democratic government.³ Through this conceptualization, Comisso stresses the practical disparity between the letter of the law (procedural democracy) and its spirit (substantive democracy) in terms of democratic reform. Analyst Fareed Zakaria makes a similar distinction between the establishment of free elections and representative institutions and what he terms “constitutional liberalism”—the guarantee of the rule of law, a separation of powers, and basic civil liberties.⁴ This distinction between procedural and substantive elements of democracy plays itself out during these periods of constitutional reform in China and Russia and will be discussed further in Chapter Four.

CZARIST RUSSIA PRIOR TO 1905

The power held by the Russian Czar by the time of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries outwardly resembled the authority held by various absolute monarchs in continental Europe a century earlier. As was the case in the absolutist European states of that previous era, such as France and Prussia, the Czars ruled Russia with virtually no legal restraints on their exercise of power. A closer examination, however, reveals that the Czar’s authority exceeded that of even his historical European counterparts. Whereas the power of the Western European rulers was at least somewhat checked by and, to a degree, contingent upon the influence of such institutions as the estates, the guilds, the churches, and the universities, such corporate groups played a markedly lesser role in Russia’s history.⁵ Furthermore, in the European states, these institutions were instrumental in establishing a society separate from the absolutist state and providing citizens with various public services—including the eventual advent of at least limited self-government. Although various units of local self-government existed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in Russia, their influence was extremely weak. In turn, the absence of strong social institutions other than the czarist state meant that, by and large,

³ Comisso, “Is the Glass Half Full or Half Empty?” 3-4.

⁴ Fareed Zakaria, “The Rise of Illiberal Democracy,” in *The New Shape of World Politics*, revised ed., (New York: Foreign Affairs, 1999) 242.

⁵ Jacob Walkin, *The Rise of Democracy in Pre-Revolutionary Russia: Political and Social Institutions Under the Last Three Czars* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962), 4-6.

the imperial regime was placed in the position of being the primary provider of nearly all public goods and services.⁶ As a result of these unique aspects of Russian society, a society characterized by top-down networks of public interaction emerged, formed largely on a basis of local customs. As Jacob Walkin argues, what emerged by the seventeenth century in Russia—and what persisted at the time of the 1905 Revolution—was essentially a “state without a society.”⁷

From what sources did the Russian czars derive their absolute legal authority? Analyst Douglas A. Borer argues that “[t]radition, Orthodox mysticism, and the divine right of aristocratic rule lay at the foundation of the czarist order.”⁸ In Weber’s typology of legitimacy, the Czar’s “title to rule” flowed forth from a combination of traditional and charismatic authority. As noted in the previous chapter, traditional legitimacy results from the populace’s perspective that the present power structure has “always” possessed the valid right to rule and, therefore, it continues to do so.⁹ By the turn of the twentieth century, the czars had ruled Russia for several hundred years, dating as far back to Ivan III’s assumption of the title in 1462.¹⁰ Furthermore, elements of charismatic legitimacy—authority based on a leader believed to be endowed with great personal worth—were also at the heart of the czarist state. As Article I of the Fundamental Laws of the Russian Empire issued in 1892 stated, “The All-Russian Emperor is an autocratic and unlimited monarch—God Himself commands that his supreme power be obeyed, out of conscience as well as fear.”¹¹ Furthermore, the Czar’s authority was frequently reaffirmed and maintained by the use of state-sponsored violence against threats to the state—both external and domestic. To return to the concept of legitimacy as expressed by Weber, however, these charismatic elements should not be taken entirely at face value, as they generally existed more accurately in theory than in practice. Although specific

⁶ Walkin, *The Rise of Democracy in Pre-Revolutionary Russia*, 5-6.

⁷ Walkin, *The Rise of Democracy in Pre-Revolutionary Russia*, 16.

⁸ Douglas A. Borer, “War Loss and Political Reform: An Ongoing Pattern in Russian History,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 20, no. 4 (1997): 365.

⁹ Seymour Martin Lipset, *The First New Nation: The United States in Historical and Comparative Perspective* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1979), 16-17.

¹⁰ Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 5th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 66. Basil III (1505) and Ivan IV, the Terrible, (1533) also have legitimate claims to being the first “true” Russian czar. Ivan III, however, was the first Russian ruler known to have bestowed the title upon himself.

¹¹ The Fundamental Laws of the Russian Empire (1862), as quoted in Walkin, *The Rise of Democracy in Pre-Revolutionary Russia*, 27.

czars throughout Russian history may have drawn support from the populace based on their exceptional personal characters, these elements were generally more of a matter of traditional respect, and allegiance was instead owed to the institution of the czarist state. Hence, in practice, Russian charismatic authority essentially coalesced with its traditional sources of legitimate rule.

Despite the monopoly on power held by the czarist state, however, the Czar himself generally enjoyed significant public support from his subjects in times of peace and relative prosperity and was in fact viewed by many somewhat ironically as a guarantor of democracy in Russian society.¹² On the other hand, when things were not going well for Russia, the assumption among the masses was often that the czar's corrupt or uncaring ministers—not the Czar himself—were the source of such problems.¹³ In turn, this potent mixture of traditional and the held-over aspects of charismatic political legitimacy served as the primary source of the Russian state's authority throughout the czarist era.

As noted above, institutions such as the guilds, churches, and universities—which played a vital role in the emergence of civic culture in the West—failed to serve as an effective check on the Czar's political power in Russia. Moreover, the Russian landed nobility also failed to play a modernizing role as they were essentially “co-opted” by the imperial state into its bureaucratic structure. As analyst Theda Skocpol notes, the czars went to great lengths through the centuries to ensure that no groupings of independent landed aristocrats could arise in Russia.¹⁴ Peter the Great, for instance, went so far as to require lifelong military or civil service careers for all adult male nobles. In turn, as Skocpol argues, the landed nobility became completely dependent upon the czarist state for their noble status. By the middle of the eighteenth century, the state lifted this

¹² Walkin notes that this perception of the Czar as a guarantor of democracy was founded “not, of course, in the sense of restraints on power or of the guarantee of civil liberties, but in the sense of equality, justice, and the representativeness of government to the people” (27). The final count of representativeness arises from the legal right of the Russian populace to petition the Czar in regards to political matters (no matter ineffective such petitions may have been in terms of affecting policy). In effect, Walkin argues that the Czar was considered the guardian of the people's interests and the guarantor of the rule of law and stability.

¹³ Walkin, *The Rise of Democracy in Pre-Revolutionary Russia*, 27, 33.

¹⁴ Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, & China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 86.

requirement for mandatory civil or military service. The landed nobility, however, largely remained dependent on the imperial state for employment in the Russian bureaucracy. On the other hand, the imperial state had direct little dependence upon the nobility, as literate commoners possessed upward mobility into noble status based on service in the state bureaucracy by the time of Peter the Great's reign. Furthermore, by the mid-nineteenth century, many nobles found themselves deeply indebted to the state, with 66 percent of all serfs having been "mortgaged" by their noble owners to state credit institutions by 1860.¹⁵ Walter M. Pinter further contends that:

[B]y the end of the eighteenth century the civil bureaucracy in the central agencies, and by the 1850s in the provinces also, was an essentially self-perpetuating group. Recruits came from a nobility that was in large measure divorced from the land, and from among the sons of nonnoble government workers.¹⁶

Therefore, analysts have argued that the Russian imperial state essentially co-opted the nobility into the state bureaucracy. As a result, while the nobility was part of the state administrative process, it possessed precious little political influence as a class.

As a result of the czarist state's far-reaching authority, civil liberties in Russia were quite limited. For instance, by 1865, while new regulations made the state's control and censorship of the press much weaker than it had been during the Crimean War, the government retained the right to suspend the publication of newspapers, periodicals, or books—temporarily or permanently. The regulations, in turn, remained in effect until 1905.¹⁷ As noted above, with the exceptions of the peasant commune and the Orthodox Church, voluntary associations separate from the state were far less prevalent in Russia prior to 1905 than in many of the Western states during their respective absolutist eras. Additionally, the rigid, legally mandated class division of the Russian state that Catherine II brought into effect with the Charter of the Nobility in 1785 further reinforced the state's overall top-down social structure.¹⁸ While it waxed and waned with the character

¹⁵ Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*, 86.

¹⁶ Walter M. Pinter, "The Social Characteristics of the Early Nineteenth-Century Russian Bureaucracy," *Slavic Review* 29:3 (September 1970), 442 as quoted in Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*, 87.

¹⁷ Walkin, *The Rise of Democracy in Pre-Revolutionary Russia*, 111.

¹⁸ Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 262ff.

of each czar, the Russian aristocracy held very limited social, economic, and political powers prior to 1905—particularly in comparison Western European states such as France under the Bourbon monarchs. As Theda Skocpol notes, “the Russian landed nobility was economically weak and political dependent vis-à-vis Imperial authorities.”¹⁹ Whereas the rise of an independent aristocracy certainly played a vital role in liberal political reform in many Western European states, a similar transition did not occur amongst the Russian nobility, which was largely unwilling to cooperate with one another and become a true political force. In turn, although the emancipation of the serfs and the formation of a limited local governing apparatus under Alexander II were major leaps forward (as discussed in greater depth below), the czarist state allowed the peasantry precious little meaningful input into Russia’s political landscape at the national level.

Despite the virtually unchecked magnitude of the state’s power in czarist Russia and the lack of strong social institutions outside of the state, however, limited forms of representative government were not without precedent within its authoritarian framework. For instance, a significant degree of groundwork for political reform and representative government in czarist Russia was laid following the end the Crimean War in 1856. Russia’s humiliating defeat in this conflict made evident the fact that the imperial state had significant cracks and that its ability to maintain status as a great power in the increasingly modernized world was deteriorating rapidly. As Nicholas V. Riasanovsky contends, “The catastrophe of the Crimean War underlined the pressing need for fundamental reforms in Russia as well as the fact that the hour was late.”²⁰ Clearly, as the outcome of the Crimean War indicated, Britain and France had simply outpaced Russia’s economic system and technological base. Therefore, after centuries of essentially static governance in Russia, Czar Alexander II initiated sweeping political changes—the Great Reforms—that essentially formed a limited basis for both modernization and popular participation in the state.

¹⁹ Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*, 85.

²⁰ Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 340.

The Great Reforms initiated by Alexander II are discussed in greater detail below. It is important to note, however, the international context within which these events took place. On the one hand, defeat in the Crimean War made clear the fact that Russia was increasingly incapable of competing with the modernized states of Western Europe. Fundamental Western concepts of liberalism such as personal autonomy, the protection of privacy, and the rule of law, however, were also making inroads into Russian society by this point in time. The nineteenth century was a crucial period in the evolution of liberal thought throughout the nations of Europe. As historian Gordon A. Craig remarks regarding many Western European countries during this period, “[w]ith varying degrees of intensity, the middle classes desired either to acquire civil and political rights denied them or to extend rights already acquired.”²¹ These trends perhaps reached their apex with the virtually simultaneous 1848 revolutions by the middle classes in France, the Austrian Empire, and Prussia. Historian David Kaiser contends that as constitutional rule spread across Europe at the end of the nineteenth century, “European rulers and politicians could no longer claim to rule according to their own interests, or even, as in the late eighteenth century, in the interests of the state itself.”²² As these events transpired throughout Europe, Russia avoided having revolution spread across its own borders—most likely due to the country’s lack of a politically active middle class. However, these events, coupled with the growing international influence of the Western press, helped spread the liberal ideology (as well as such emerging trends as socialism and anarchism) to the intellectual elite of Russia. In terms of liberal thought, historian Laura Engelstein notes that by the time of the mid-1800s, “Russian secular elites drew their cultural vocabulary from the Western repertoire and tested their values against a Western standard.”²³

The countervailing cultural assumptions of such Russian traditions as the model of custodial statehood, however, created something of a disjuncture with many of these

²¹ Gordon A. Craig, *Europe, 1815-1914*, 3d ed (Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1989), 123.

²² David Kaiser, *Politics & War: European Conflict from Philip II to Hitler* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 272-273.

²³ Laura Engelstein, *The Keys to Happiness: Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-de-Siècle Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 1-2.

imported concepts.²⁴ Yet, despite this general skepticism among Russian elites about certain aspects of the West, it is difficult to deny the overall impact of Western liberal ideals in prompting Russian political and social reforms. As Skocpol contends: “Before meeting its demise, the Russian Imperial state weathered intensified competition from more-developed nations in the European state system and, indeed instituted a series of far-reaching modernizing reforms.”²⁵ I concur with these scholars that, despite the lack of middle-class political consciousness in Russia, the tumultuous events of eighteenth-century Europe, as well as the political ideologies that were their source, had at least an indirect impact on the political and social landscape of the czarist state.

In 1861, Alexander II (the "Czar-Liberator") emancipated the Russian serfs, and then followed this act in 1864 with the establishment of the quasi-democratic local and provincial governing apparatus, the *zemstvo*, to administer the nation's new social order. In reference to the emancipation of the serfs, Alexander II is quoted as having stated that it was better “to abolish bondage from above than to wait for the time when it will begin to abolish itself from below.”²⁶ A variety of local and provincial concerns fell under the jurisdiction of the popularly elected *zemstvo* assemblies, including education, medicine, roads, and the stockpiling of food for potential emergencies.²⁷ These reforms marked a significant modification in the traditional role of the czarist state as the provider of practically all public goods and services to its populace. While much of the historical debate has centered on its merits and overall impact, the concept of *zemstvo* as a whole was a radical departure from traditional Russian politics, and it created meaningful inroads for self-government in the late-czarist period. *Zemstvo* representatives were elected for three-year terms from three distinct social groups: local landowners, the urban population, and the peasantry. Moreover, none of these groups was allowed to attain an absolute majority in the assemblies.²⁸

²⁴ Engelstein, *The Keys to Happiness*, 7-8.

²⁵ Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*, 81.

²⁶ Quoted in Craig, *Europe, 1815-1914*, 232.

²⁷ Borer, "War Loss and Political Reform," 352; Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 368-377.

²⁸ Nicolai N. Petro, *The Rebirth of Russian Democracy: An Interpretation of Political Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 42; Borer, "War Loss and Political Reform," 352.

As Nicolai N. Petro notes, “Once granted the authority to administer funds and raise taxes, the gentry took a keen interest in local politics. The *zemstvos* soon attracted the best and brightest among Russia’s newly forming middle class.”²⁹ Although the *zemstvos* varied from region to region in terms of their liberal character, they quickly became a significant force in politics—at least at the local and provincial level—and, in turn, were perceived by some as a threat to czarist authority. By the 1890s, many *zemstvo* assemblies were petitioning the czar to convene a national assembly, leading Alexander III’s minister of the interior, Count D. A. Tolstoy, to contend that the *zemstvos* had essentially taken on a stance of “systematic opposition to the government.”³⁰ Such a statement makes clear the impact that, within a few decades after their establishment, these local and provincial assemblies were beginning to have on both Russian politics and society at large.³¹

In addition to the formation of the *zemstvos*, the Great Reforms of Alexander II also included such meaningful gestures as judicial rationalization, the establishment of the equality of all persons before the law regardless of social class, the separation of administrative and judicial powers, and the institution of jury trials. As Douglas A. Borer argues, these reforms were “crucial in the evolution toward a less ascriptive civic culture” and formed a political framework “within which mass participation, opposition, and revolution could incubate.”³² Despite these significant reforms, however, the czarist state remained an absolutist regime. Moreover, as Russia’s general lack of political, social, economic, and military modernization became increasingly pronounced in the decades that followed the Great Reforms, the state’s bases of traditional and charismatic legitimacy slowly eroded. In turn, the disastrous outcome of the Russo-Japanese War and the Revolution of 1905 that followed proved to be the impetus necessary for the czarist regime to truly begin reconsidering and reconstituting its foundations of authority for the first time in centuries.

²⁹ Petro, *The Rebirth of Russian Democracy*, 43.

³⁰ Petro, *The Rebirth of Russian Democracy*, 43-44.

³¹ An extensive and insightful examination of the impact of the *zemstvo* assemblies is presented in Mary Schaeffer Conroy’s edited volume, *Emerging Democracy in Late Imperial Russia: Case Studies on Local Self-Government (The Zemstvos), State Duma Elections, the Tsarist Government, and the State Council Before and During World War I* (Niwot, CO: The University Press of Colorado, 1998).

³² Borer, “War Loss and Political Reform,” 353.

THE RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR

Historian Nicholas V. Riasanovsky argues that policies of “aggressiveness and adventurous involvement” characterized Russia’s behavior in the Far East at the turn of the twentieth century.³³ In turn, this aggressive behavior culminated in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, fought primarily over these states’ competing interests in Korea and Manchuria. Although Russian Interior Minister V. K. Plehve predicted that the clash would serve the state as “a little victorious war to stop the revolutionary tide,” the grim realities of the Russo-Japanese War for imperial Russia had quite the opposite effect.³⁴ On 8 February 1904, the Japanese navy attacked the unsuspecting Russian fleet in the Far East harbor of Port Arthur, which set off a series of humiliating defeats that culminated in the virtual obliteration of Russia’s naval capacity. Furthermore, Russian ground forces were also met with strong resistance from the Japanese army, with their suffering a major loss at the Battle of Mudken in 1905. The utter annihilation by the Japanese of Admiral Zinovii Rozhdestvensky’s antique Baltic fleet in the Battle of Tsushima Strait during May 1905 served perhaps as the greatest indicator of Russia’s depleted capacity to contend in conflict with a more modernized nation.³⁵ Soon after this disastrous loss for Russia, both sides agreed to an armistice. While it should be noted that the Japanese also suffered heavy material and economic losses throughout the course of the war, those of the Russian “colossus” were far more pronounced. In turn, at the secret request of the Japanese government, American President Theodore Roosevelt arranged a peace conference in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, in August 1905. Although Russia’s skillful Minister of Finance Serge Witte negotiated favorable terms of peace for his state, Russia was already in the throes of war-invoked revolution and political upheaval at home by this point in time.³⁶

³³ Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 401.

³⁴ Borer, “War Loss and Political Reform,” 354.

³⁵ Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 401-403. Rozhdestvensky’s fleet was sent to the Far East all the way from the Baltic Sea. Along the way, it nearly caused a serious international incident by inadvertently firing on English fishing vessels on the Dogger Band.

³⁶ Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 401-403.

As Walkin notes, varying degrees of mass discontent had been simmering in Russia for decades prior to its series of humbling defeats in the Far East. The sources of this widespread discontent included dissatisfaction among the emerging middle and professional classes with their lack of political influence, the severe famine of 1891-1892 that seriously impacted the peasantry, student and trade union strikes, and wide variety of other social, economic, and political factors that challenged the czarist state apparatus.³⁷ It was the news of these military losses, however, that brought popular dissent to the forefront of Russian society, contributed significantly to the growth of political consciousness among the masses, and “dealt the autocracy the last fatal blows.”³⁸ As Borer argues, such a pattern of war loss and subsequent political reform was a common thread throughout the tapestry of Russian history, as was the case with Alexander II’s Great Reforms following the state’s defeat in the Crimean War.³⁹ Such military losses served to highlight the overall deficiencies of the czarist government to deal with the challenges of modern statehood and, in turn, called into question the basis of its legitimacy. Furthermore, the outcome of these events on the international scene only served to exacerbate preexisting social, economic, and political problems at the national and local levels. Walkin puts forth a similar line of analysis, stating:

For society at large, the [Russo-Japanese] war was final proof of the bankruptcy of police-bureaucratic rule. By undermining the faith in the omniscience of the Czar, the reactionary groups around him, and the bureaucracy in general, it was to result in the isolation of the Czar and a readiness on his part to yield to popular clamor.⁴⁰

With the legitimacy of the Czar’s traditional/charismatic authority coming under severe criticism from various segments of the Russia populace, Nicholas II was placed in the difficult position in which it became essential for him to reconstitute his right to rule on a firmer foundation if he wished to maintain power. While it is somewhat unclear from a historical standpoint whether or not the czarist government would have eventually

³⁷ Petro, *The Rebirth of Russian Democracy*, 44-45; Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 405.

³⁸ Walkin, *The Rise of Democracy in Pre-Revolutionary Russia*, 198-199.

³⁹ Borer, “War Loss and Political Reform,” 353ff. Other examples of this trend of war loss and political reform provided by Borer include the reforms that took place after the Livonian Wars of the sixteenth century, Peter’s Revolution after a series of defeats by the Swedish in the eighteenth century, and later the dismantling of the Soviet Union following war loss in Afghanistan in the 1980s.

⁴⁰ Walkin, *The Rise of Democracy in Pre-Revolutionary Russia*, 198.

initiated political and social reform on its own, the tumultuous events of 1905 made such measures a virtual necessity.

REFORM AND REVOLUTION IN RUSSIA

After Russia's striking loss in the Russo-Japanese War, political reform in the nation took another significant leap forward with the onset of the Revolution of 1905. The trends that eventually culminated in revolution, however, began a year earlier. For instance, dissatisfied with the limitation of the *zemstvo* system to local and provincial affairs and, indirectly, with Russia's performance in the ongoing Russo-Japanese War, the first congress of *zemstvos* met in November 1904 in St. Petersburg and produced the list of reform measures known as the "eleven theses." This document called for the establishment of a national legislative assembly, equality of rights for all Russian citizens, the guarantee of basic civil rights, and the expansion and improvement of the *zemstvo* system.⁴¹ While such a congress would have been illegal under the repressive policies of former Interior Minister Plehve, he had been assassinated a few months prior and replaced by the somewhat more liberal-minded Prince P. D. Sviatopolk-Mirsky.⁴² Subsequently, various civil associations throughout Russia—particularly, emerging professional organizations and unions—began making similar demands of the czarist state. Many of these reform-minded groups were in turn associated with the emerging Constitutional Democratic Party, or “Cadet” Party, under the leadership of historian Paul Miliukov, as part of the broader Russian Liberation Movement dedicated to reform the czarist government.⁴³

In response to these fundamental challenges to his legitimacy, Nicholas II issued an imperial decree in December, promising to restore the spirit of the Great Reforms but totally neglecting the crucial issue of national representation. This largely conciliatory move failed to placate the Russian masses and resulted in widespread student and worker

⁴¹ Walkin, *The Rise of Democracy in Pre-Revolutionary Russia*, 199-201.

⁴² Borer, “War Loss and Political Reform,” 354; Walkin, *The Rise of Democracy in Pre-Revolutionary Russia*, 199-200.

⁴³ Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 405.

strikes throughout the nation. Historian Jacob Walkin argues the following regarding the mass reaction to the czar's *ukaz* (decree):

Had the reforms proposed in the *ukaz* of December 12 been announced in 1902, they would have been enthusiastically received and would have temporarily checked the growth of the Liberation Movement. Had they been consistently carried out, both the Liberation Movement and the revolutionary movement would have been rendered impotent.⁴⁴

Neither was the case, however, and Nicholas' concessions failed to stem the revolutionary tide.

As historians Kyril Fitzlyon and Tatiana Browning argue, “[o]ften what started as a strike in pursuit of economic aims ended as a call for political action.”⁴⁵ The strikes that resulted from Nicholas' refusal to initiate meaningful reform culminated on 22 January 1905 in the event that came to be known as “Bloody Sunday.” Growing out of a strike that had its origins in the Putilov metallurgical and arms factory in St. Petersburg, a group of 200,000 citizens known as the Assembly of Russian Factory and Mill Workers under the leadership of a politically-minded priest named George Gapon marched on the Winter Palace in Moscow to present the czar with a petition. Although this petition originally called for shorter hours and higher pay, by the time that the protesters reached the palace, it had evolved into demands for an end to the war with Japan and the establishment of a constitution.⁴⁶ Several hundred marchers were either killed or wounded in the ensuing massacre, which gained the moniker “Bloody Sunday.”⁴⁷ This event, generally recognized by historians as the opening date of the Revolution of 1905, led to crippling railroad strikes and peasant riots throughout Russia. In fact, by the end of 1905, more strikes took place in Russia than in any other country in one year up to the point in history.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Walkin, *The Rise of Democracy in Pre-Revolutionary Russia*, 199-202; Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 406-407.

⁴⁵ Kyril Fitzlyon and Tatiana Browning, *Before the Revolution: A View of Russia Under the Last Tsar* (London: Penguin Book, Ltd., 1977), 33.

⁴⁶ Fitzlyon and Browning, *Before the Revolution*, 33.

⁴⁷ Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 407-408. Ironically enough, the czar was not actually present at the Winter Palace during these demonstrations, but was instead living in Tsarskoye Selo at the time.

⁴⁸ Walkin, *The Rise of Democracy in Pre-Revolutionary Russia*, 205.

Facing the very real possibility of nationwide revolt as his legitimacy crumbled, Nicholas II capitulated in the form of the October Manifesto on 30 October 1905. The manifesto opened with a frank admission that the “welfare of the Russian Sovereign is indissolubly bound to the welfare of the people” and went on to call for an end to the various “disturbances perilous to the state.”⁴⁹ In turn, the brief document established—at least in theory—a popularly elected national legislative assembly (the Duma) with the power to approve or veto any laws put into effect by the czar, established civil liberties, and reorganized the Russian government by creating a Council of Ministers headed by a president. Hence, the October Manifesto essentially transformed imperial Russia into an emerging constitutional monarchy.⁵⁰

Minister Witte clearly understood the grave repercussions of the events of 1905 and the necessity of political reform in terms of the czar’s legitimate authority to rule over Russia. In a letter written to Nicholas in October 1905, Witte stated the following regarding the upheaval transpiring in Russia:

The roots of unrest are deeper [than the product of the activities of extremist parties]: they are to be found in the disparity between the high-minded aspirations of Russian intellectual society and the framework within which it exists. Russia has outgrown her political framework and is striving for a legal order based on civil liberty.⁵¹

In this letter, Witte goes on to contend that the “framework of Russian political life must be changed to make it conform to the ideas that animate the moderate majority of society” and that Russia must establish “those institutions and legislative principles that are in accord with the political ideals of the majority of Russian society.”⁵² In summary, these statements clearly indicate that Witte recognized the fundamental fact that Nicholas must go about “buoying” his traditional/charismatic authority through rational-legal

⁴⁹ *The October Manifesto*, 30 October 1905 in *The Fall of the Russian Empire*, ed. Edward Chmielewski (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1973), 33.

⁵⁰ *The October Manifesto*, in *The Fall of the Russian Empire*, ed. Chmielewski, 34; Borer, “War Loss and Political Reform,” 354-355; Walkin, *The Rise of Democracy in Pre-Revolutionary Russia*, 205.

⁵¹ “Most Humble Report of State Secretary Count Witte, October 1905,” in *The Fall of the Russian Empire*, ed. Edward Chmielewski (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1973), 35.

⁵² “Report of State Secretary Witte,” in *The Fall of the Russian Empire*, ed. Chmielewski, 35.

reform. As Count Witte noted in his letter to Nicholas, the events of the Revolution of 1905 essentially necessitated a radical reconstitution and reconceptualization of the basis of the Czar's right to rule over Russia. These factors will be discussed at greater length and further analyzed in Chapter Four of the present study.

The establishment of the October Manifesto fulfilled in the minds of many reformers the traditional Russian concept of *sobornost'*. The word *sobornost'* is derived from the word *Sobor*, a representative institution of sixteenth and seventeenth-century Russia.⁵³ In turn, according to analysts Victor Sergeev and Nikolai Biryukov, *sobornost'* came to represent in Russian political culture (among both philosophers and the masses) an idealized representative institution. Russians envisioned the idealized *sobornost'* as a genuinely democratic assembly that would embody the "egalitarian standards of modern democracy" and serve as the "symbolic deputy of the People in its intercourse with the government."⁵⁴ Clearly, the traditional Russian concept of *sobornost'* biased the perceptions of many observers of the Revolution of 1905 and the issuance of the October Manifesto. Russian liberal leader Ivan Petrunkevich, for instance, stated the following regarding the unprecedented events of 1905:

The manifesto of October 17th meant the capitulation of Tsarist autocracy, victory over servitude, victory of law over arbitrary rule—that is, all the five generations of sensitive Russians both dreamt of and sacrificed for...and by their sacrifices they are transmitting as their legacy to future generations the obligation to transform Russia into a country of liberty, law, and European culture.⁵⁵

Petrunkevich's sanguine comments embody the widespread hope for meaningful change⁵⁶ that existed among many in the liberal component of the Russian populace. The events of the next several months, however, led these reform-minded elements to quickly

⁵³ Victor Sergeev and Nikolai Biryukov, *Russia's Road to Democracy: Parliament, Communism, and Traditional Culture* (Hants, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 1993), 32ff.

⁵⁴ Sergeev and Biryukov, *Russia's Road to Democracy*, 33-34.

⁵⁵ Ivan Petrunkevich, *Iz Zapisok Obschestvennogo Deyatelya*, 1934, as quoted in Sidney Harcave, "The Russian Revolution of 1905," in Edward Chmielewski, ed., *The Fall of the Russian Empire*, 23.

⁵⁶ The dissatisfaction with the czarist state cut across the various strata of Russian society. As noted above, protests by workers were accompanied by student strikes, peasant revolts, and political movements led by members of the emerging professional class.

realize that they would not have the opportunity to pass on Petrunkevich's legacy of liberalism to future generations. Moreover, it became increasingly evident that the level of political representation that Nicholas II had established through the October Manifesto fell far short of the *sobornost'* ideal. As a result of this ideological retraction on the part of the Czar, many observers have instead employed the term *Scheinkonstitutionalismus*—sham constitutionalism—to characterize Nicholas II's reforms.⁵⁷

Initially, however, while pockets of political dissent persisted after the announcement of the October Manifesto, in the short-term, Nicholas II successfully quelled the growing dissatisfaction of the Russian masses. Whereas Nicholas' response by imperial decree to the “eleven theses” of the prior year had failed to put an end to strikes and protests, both reformers and the Russian populace were generally satisfied by the promise of significant guarantees of representative government outlined in the October Manifesto. The reforms proved elusive, however, when the government issued the Fundamental Laws on 6 May 1906—virtually on the eve of the meeting of the First Duma. These laws rescinded much of the liberal character of the October Manifesto. In fact, after dispensing with the brief formalities of an imperial decree, the Fundamental Laws clearly stated (in a section of the document titled the Essence of the Supreme Autocratic Power), “The All-Russian Emperor possesses the supreme autocratic power. Not only fear and conscience, but God himself, commands obedience to his authority.”⁵⁸ This statement, it should be noted, is almost identical to the opening passages of the Fundamental Laws of 1862. While such a passage is perhaps little more than a show of the traditional deference to the Czar, its inclusion certainly tempers the overall tone of the ostensibly constitutional gestures set forth in the Fundamental Laws. Clearly, the upheaval of the Revolution of 1905 had not wrought the degree of transformation that many had initially assumed. The idealized representation embodied in the *sobornost'* was slowly proving once again—as it had on numerous occasions through the centuries—to be a little more than a chimera amidst the realities of Russian political culture.

⁵⁷ Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 454.

⁵⁸ “The Fundamental Laws, 1906,” in *The Fall of the Russian Empire*, ed. Edward Chmielewski (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1973), 38.

Under the terms of the Fundamental Laws of 1906, the Czar would continue to exert complete control over the executive branch, foreign policy, succession to the throne, and also retained his imperial title. Although the Duma maintained various legislative and budgetary functions, the Czar was given the power to call its annual meetings, determine the length of these meetings, disband the assembly at will and call for new elections, veto legislation, and rule by decree when the assembly was not in session. In fact, the Fundamental Laws specified that the Czar exercised “legislative authority jointly with the State Council and the State Duma” and that these bodies could “examine the Fundamental State Laws only on [the czar’s] initiative.”⁵⁹ In addition, these laws transformed the State Council (also known as the Council of the Empire) from an advisory body to the Czar-appointed upper legislative chamber of the Duma. Despite these significant limitations on the national legislature, the democratic electoral law still emphasized the assembly's representative character, allowing virtually all Russian men to participate in the elections to the Duma.⁶⁰

When the First Duma convened on 10 May 1906 after its free election,⁶¹ it was almost immediately apparent that the liberal-led representative assembly would not function constructively or smoothly vis-à-vis the conservative czarist government. The liberal forces by this point were essentially divided between the Cadets, who called for greater parliamentary power, and the Octobrists, who were essentially content with the present political arrangement.⁶² Much to the dismay of the Czar and his ministers, and despite their efforts to the contrary, the moderate Cadets held the most power with 38 percent of the seats in the First Duma, while other liberal and Leftist parties held the next largest share.⁶³ It should also be noted that the Cadets and all political parties to their

⁵⁹ “The Fundamental Laws, 1906” in *The Fall of the Russian Empire*, ed. Chmielewski, 38.

⁶⁰ Borer, “War Loss and Political Reform,” 354-355; Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 408-409. Riasanovsky notes that a primary motivation for the instatement of universal manhood suffrage was the fact that the Czar and his ministers assumed that the peasantry would continue to support the czar and, in turn, the Right in these elections as they had traditionally.

⁶¹ The electorate that voted in the elections for the First and Second Dumas was based on the system that had previously governed the *zemstvo* elections. Voters elected representatives from three social groups: local landowners, the urban population, and the peasantry. Each group elected representatives from its own group. Furthermore, no one group was allowed to achieve an absolute majority. From Max Weber, *The Russian Revolutions*, translated by Gordon C. Wells and Peter Baehr (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), 184-186.

⁶² Craig, *Europe, 1815-1914*, 395.

⁶³ Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 410.

ideological left were technically illegal under the nebulous electoral law that governed the Duma election. Their status as “illegal” indicated that these parties were legally barred from organizing, holding party congresses, or publishing official lists of candidates. In practice, the moderate and leftist simply ignored many of these regulations, publishing unofficially and holding secret congresses.⁶⁴ These rigid electoral laws, however, did serve the Czar as a cleverly designed handicap to reform-minded parties in the First Duma elections—just not clever enough to actually keep the Cadets out of the majority, once again indicating the fervor for reform awakened in the Russian populace. Furthermore, such statutes limiting the formation of political parties once again serves to cast significant doubt on the sincerity and the ultimate intentions of the reforms offered by Nicholas II.

Once the First Duma convened, the legislators and the executive branch soon clashed over a variety of issues, the most prominent being the Duma's proposed redistribution of imperial and Church lands to the Russian peasantry. Frustrated by these trends, Nicholas II dissolved the First Duma after a mere seventy-three days and forty actual sessions.⁶⁵ Clearly, this was not the action of a monarch truly committed to the process of political reform. Jacob Walkin, however, offers a cautionary note in relation to this turn of events:

It would be tempting, but a gross oversimplification, to view the events of 1906 and after as a duel between good and evil.... Whatever might have been the true attitude of the Czar at the time toward the concessions he had granted under the threat of revolution, there can be no doubt that the Cadets themselves...were unwilling to make the compromises necessary for collaboration with the government and its framework.⁶⁶

Regardless of the general unwillingness to compromise on the part of the Cadets in the Duma, however, the fact remains that the government that went into practice in 1906 under the Fundamental Laws differed significantly from the framework promised by the Czar under the October Manifesto of 1905.

⁶⁴ Walkin, *The Rise of Democracy in Pre-Revolutionary Russia*, 149-150.

⁶⁵ Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 410.

⁶⁶ Walkin, *The Rise of Democracy in Pre-Revolutionary Russia*, 225.

In the general elections following the dissolution of the First Duma, the czarist government went to great lengths to exert pressure on the electorate and ensure a Duma friendlier toward the Czar and his associates. Although the Duma personnel changed significantly in these elections, the liberal opposition remained firmly in control and was increasingly extreme in its composition. After convening on 5 March 1907, the Second Duma was dissolved three months later by Nicholas II—once again due primarily to disputes over land reform.⁶⁷ In a statement issued on 3 June 1907, Nicholas II stated that the Second Duma was convened to “cooperate, in conformity with [the Czar’s] supreme will, in the pacification of Russia” and that many members of the Duma “did not justify [the imperial government’s] expectations.”⁶⁸

Along with the second dissolution, the Czar and his new Prime Minister Pyotr Stolypin effectively circumvented the Fundamental Laws and enacted a new electoral law that limited the participation of peasants and workers and allowed the Minister of the Interior to manipulate electoral districts in an attempt to create a more cooperative Duma. When questioned, Nicholas II once again invoked the Czar’s God-given authority and historical precedent to justify this act.⁶⁹ As a result, the "reformed" elections for the Third Duma in 1907 not surprisingly resulted in an assembly more closely aligned with the policies and goals of Nicholas II. Consequently, both the Third and Fourth Dumas served their full five-year terms. By impeding the Duma's legislative role and eventually resorting to a fundamental alteration of the electoral law, the Czar essentially reasserted his traditional autocratic power.⁷⁰ Clearly, the rational-legal reforms of 1905 and 1906 were in fact not meant to replace Russia’s traditional/charismatic base of legitimacy, but rather to augment it.

After successfully reining in the reformist tendencies of the first two Dumas, Nicholas II turned to Prime Minister Stolypin to implement his own reform policies. In

⁶⁷ Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 410ff.

⁶⁸ “The Imperial Manifesto of June 3, 1907,” in *The Fall of the Russian Empire*, ed. Edward Chmielewski (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1973), 70.

⁶⁹ “The Imperial Manifesto of June 3, 1907,” in *The Fall of the Russian Empire*, ed. Chmielewski, 72.

⁷⁰ Borer, “War Loss and Political Reform,” 355.

turn, Stolypin went about a series of reforms that represented an odd merger of the autocratic interests of the czar and the encouragement of self-government on the local level. In many ways, in fact, Stolypin perhaps best personifies the dual character of Russian reform during the turbulent constitutional period, publicly declaring himself to be a “constitutionalist and not a parliamentarian.”⁷¹ Stolypin's primary duties during this period consisted of the "pacification" of destabilizing elements of Russian society and political reform. Nicholas V. Riasanovsky states that pacification essentially connoted "an all-out struggle against the revolutionaries, for, although the mass opposition movements characteristic of 1905 no longer threatened the regime, terrorism continued on a large scale."⁷² This struggle resulted in the execution of several thousand suspected “terrorists” from various opposition parties during 1906 (approximately 1,400 deaths) and 1907 (estimated as high as 3,000). As Riasanovsky goes on to note, the victims of these executions included numerous police officers and government agents, high and low governmental officials, and numerous innocent bystanders.⁷³ In this sense, the czarist government was reverting to the Russian traditions of state-mandated violence to further “shore up” its deteriorating legitimacy and credibility with the Russian populace.

On the other hand, Stolypin's agrarian reform program called for the abolishment of the heavy-handed peasant commune and the establishment of a class of strong individual farmers, as well as significant reforms in the general areas of labor and national defense. These reforms took a decidedly active role in making it easier for peasants to purchase land through a revitalization of the Peasant Land Bank.⁷⁴ As Stolypin himself stated, “I propose that, first of all, it is necessary to create a citizen, a peasant owner, a small landowner, and the problem [of the instability of the Russian

⁷¹ Alfred Levin, "Peter Arkad'evich Stolypin: A Political Appraisal," in *The Fall of the Russian Empire*, ed. Edward Chmielewski (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1973), 119-122.

⁷² Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 413.

⁷³ Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 413. Extreme opposition groups responded to these widespread executions with further terrorism, including a bombing of Stolypin's residence that killed 32 and wounded numerous others, including the Prime Minister's son and daughter.

⁷⁴ Alexander III originally created the Peasant Land Bank in the late nineteenth century. It served as a state-sponsored fund that essentially allowed peasants to purchase land more easily. As a part of his overall push to abolish the peasant commune, Stolypin helped make land even more readily available to Russian peasants and added additional formerly-state-held lands to those already available through the Land Bank. From Walkin, *The Rise of Democracy in Pre-Revolutionary Russia*, 91-94.

economic and political system] will be solved.”⁷⁵ Furthermore, Stolypin’s reform policies helped usher in a 1908 statute that called for the provision of adequate schooling of all Russian children by the year 1922. Analysts such as Ivar Spector have argued, in fact, that Stolypin’s reforms were aimed broadly at the nurturing of the emerging middle class in Russia by turning landless peasants into farmers—in effect, carrying to completion the one of the primary goals of the Great Reforms of Alexander II.⁷⁶ On the whole, however, Stolypin believed that constitutional reform and democracy were of little or no actual interest to the Russian peasantry, ascribing such concerns solely to the upper classes and the nascent middle and professional classes.⁷⁷ Despite these beliefs, Stolypin’s reforms mark what analyst Nicolai N. Petro denotes as the only point in the history of the *zemstvo* during which the local and provincial bodies were actually encouraged by the imperial government. In fact, during Stolypin’s reign as Prime Minister, the *zemstvo* expanded to nine additional Russian provinces and government ministries were instructed to be more attentive to the requests of these representative bodies.⁷⁸

As Alfred Levin argues, however, "Stolypin had to be alert to any infringement on the beclouded principle of autocracy, given the Czar's especial antipathy for the Duma."⁷⁹ Furthermore, his controversial agrarian reform led to a widespread terrorism perpetrated by the reactionary Right fighting to maintain the authority of the czarist state and, in turn, further terrorism by the Left. The terrorism of the Right, however, typically went unpunished by the state.⁸⁰ Although Stolypin's reforms made Russian peasants legally more equal to other classes, these policies avoided fundamental political reform in the interest of maintaining the ultimate authority of the Czar.⁸¹ Hence, through these trends, Stolypin’s dual nature truly emerges; while he took major steps to give the peasantry a meaningful voice in the Russian political landscape, Stolypin also carried out a bloody

⁷⁵ Levin, "Peter Arkad'evich Stolypin: A Political Appraisal," 135.

⁷⁶ Ivar Spector, *The First Russian Revolution: Its Impact on Asia* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1962), 26.

⁷⁷ Walkin, *The Rise of Democracy in Pre-Revolutionary Russia*, 93.

⁷⁸ Petro, *The Rebirth of Russian Democracy*, 46.

⁷⁹ Levin, "Peter Arkad'evich Stolypin: A Political Appraisal," 124.

⁸⁰ Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 415.

⁸¹ Borer, "War Loss and Political Reform," 355.

campaign of forceful suppression against those elements of society that remained in active opposition to the Czar. As a result, Stolypin served as a prime example of the volatile and oftentimes contradictory mixture of traditional/charismatic elements that formed the basis of Russian legitimacy and the state's experimentation with the grafting-on of rational-legal authority. His political career, however, was cut short when a police agent associated with a revolutionary group assassinated Stolypin on 14 September 1911. He was replaced as Russian Prime Minister by Count Vladimir Kokovtsov and then, two years later, Ivan Goremykin.⁸²

Following Stolypin's assassination, political and social reform was further rolled back and eventually came to a virtual standstill in Russia. His immediate successor, Count Kokovtsov, lacked Stolypin's reform-mindedness, as well as his influence with Nicholas II. The sweeping agrarian reforms implemented by Stolypin, however, made significant strides toward establishing a true Russian middle class for the first time in the country's history. Levin argues that Stolypin should not be judged by his aversion to constitutionalism, but rather by "his vision, his imagination which perceived the need for the adaptation of policy to a changing social and economic structure."⁸³ Such vision and imagination, however, was not a defining characteristic of his successors and, as a result, further reform in czarist Russia faltered. Therefore, I concur with these analysts and historians that Stolypin's role in carrying out reforms during this period—albeit not necessarily constitutional reforms—was critical. In fact, no less an expert on Russian revolution than Vladimir Lenin argued that had Stolypin's reforms been given further support from his successors and time to fully consolidate, it was likely that the radical revolution from the Left in October 1917 would not have transpired.⁸⁴

By 1914, Russia found itself involved in World War I, suffering significant battlefield losses that once again took their toll and shook the foundations of domestic political legitimacy. The Russian push into eastern Germany resulted in a series of striking defeats that once again played a role in the accentuation of Russia's continuing

⁸² Risanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 415.

⁸³ Levin, "Peter Arkad'evich Stolypin: A Political Appraisal," 139.

⁸⁴ Referenced in Walkin, *The Rise of Democracy in Pre-Revolutionary Russia*, 94.

technical backwardness. Major losses in 1914 included Tannenburg in August, a battle in which the Russian army lost 120,000 prisoners and its commander committed suicide.⁸⁵ A similar defeat transpired soon thereafter at the Masurian Lakes. By the summer of 1915, Russia had lost practically all of Poland to German forces. Furthermore, by this point in the war, the Russian army could supply only one-third of its army of six million soldiers with rifles.⁸⁶ The czarist state's inability to effectively wage war against Germany led many critics to argue that Russia's Western allies were "tethered to a corpse."⁸⁷ As Russia's performance in the Russo-Japanese War had previously called attention both the short- and long-term deficiencies of the absolutist state, similar military outcomes for Russia on the World War I battlefields again called into question the legitimacy of the beleaguered czarist government. The state's ability to exert its traditional/charismatic authority was waning by this time, and the liberal elements of the government such as the Cadets found themselves increasingly marginalized in the political process.⁸⁸

In 1915, the Duma made an attempt to take control of the army and, in turn, made a bid for the Russian Empire. Nicholas II refused to relinquish power, however, and, in a somewhat puzzling move, instead assumed direct control over the armed forces himself. Had Nicholas II's efforts actually turned the tide of World War I in Russia's favor, he may have managed to reestablish his charismatic authority as an exceptional war hero and leader. Such a turnaround on the battlefields, however, did not come to pass. As was the case in the Russo-Japanese War a decade earlier, Russia's overall lack of military modernization, coupled with incompetent leadership and a shortage of materials, proved to be the state's undoing. As a result, these losses essentially may have destroyed any remaining confidence the Russian people may have possessed in their government.⁸⁹ Meanwhile, at home, Nicholas II persisted in his refusal to cooperate with the newly created Progressive Bloc led by Cadet Party head Paul Miliukov. Instead of engaging in

⁸⁵ Roland N. Stromberg, *Europe in the Twentieth Century*, 4th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1997), 70.

⁸⁶ Stromberg, *Europe in the Twentieth Century*, 70-71.

⁸⁷ Stromberg, *Europe in the Twentieth Century*, 71.

⁸⁸ Walkin, *The Rise of Democracy in Pre-Revolutionary Russia*, 224-232.

⁸⁹ Borer, "War Loss and Political Reform," 355-356.

conciliatory tactics with his domestic opposition, the Czar instead depended increasingly on the counsel of his unstable wife Alexandra and the enigmatic peasant mystic, Gregory Rasputin. Historian Nicholas V. Riasanovsky contends that “a narrow-minded, reactionary, hysterical woman and an ignorant, weird peasant...had the destinies of an empire in their hands” as a series of governmental ministers were appointed and, soon thereafter, sacked.⁹⁰

As Russia continued to suffer major losses on the battlefield, General Krymov told a Duma delegation, "The spirit of the army is such that the news of a coup d'état would be welcomed with joy. A revolution is imminent and we at the front feel it must be so."⁹¹ The sentiment on the home front was much the same, with strikes and other forms of dissent reemerging throughout Russia with the opposition becoming increasingly radical—largely due to the growing influence of the Bolsheviks. Particularly salient were the peasant insurrections that began to flare up during 1917 and continued until 1918.⁹² Subsequently, revolution finally came about on 15 March 1917, as the Czar's authority simply collapsed in face of mass protests, with Nicholas II abdicating to his brother, who in turn abdicated to a Duma committee. As historian William H. Chamberlin notes regarding the February Revolution:⁹³

The collapse of the Romanov autocracy in March 1917 was one of the most leaderless, spontaneous, anonymous revolutions of all time...No one, even among the revolutionary leaders, realized that the strikes and bread riots which broke out in Petrograd on March 8 would culminate in the mutiny of the garrison and the overthrow of the government four days later.⁹⁴

In turn, the imperial regime, as Riasanovsky argues, "died with hardly a whimper."⁹⁵ Of course, it is an arguable point whether or not one should consider the tumultuous

⁹⁰ Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 421.

⁹¹ Borer, "War Loss and Political Reform," 356.

⁹² Skocpol, *States & Social Revolutions*, 98.

⁹³ The revolution occurred during the month of March on the Western calendar; on the Russian calendar, however, it transpired in February. Hence, it is most frequently referred to as the February Revolution of 1917.

⁹⁴ William Henry Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution, 1917-1921*, 2 Vols. (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1965) as quoted in Skocpol, *States & Social Revolutions*, 98.

⁹⁵ Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 455-456.

revolutions and reforms that transpired in Russia in the twelve years since the state's defeat in the Russo-Japanese War a whimper.

Analyst George F. Kennan cautions, however, against viewing Russia's losses in World War I as the singular source for the collapse of the czarist regime. To this end, Kennan states, "I was [initially] inclined to feel that had the war not intervened, the chances for survival of the autocracy and for its gradual evolution into a constitutional monarch would not have been bad. On reviewing once more the events of these last decades, I find myself obliged to question that opinion."⁹⁶ Kennan goes on to identify four major immediate causes for the downfall of the czarist regime: (1) the failure of the state to supplement its political system with a meaningful parliamentary institution, (2) the promotion of extremist Greater Russian nationalism, (3) the unstable personality of Nicholas II, and (4) the rise of the revolutionary movements in Russian politics. He also notes that such long-term factors as the state's failure to bring a meaningful degree of technical and economic modernization to Russian society also caused the czarist regime to lose the confidence and support of its citizens.⁹⁷ Clearly, each of these factors served to further challenge the waning legitimacy of the autocratic state. It is difficult to deny, however, that the grim outcomes of World War I for Russia played a crucial role in exacerbating the underlying factors identified by Kennan.

Soon after the February Revolution and the abdication of the Czar, the Duma established a Provisional Government under the initial leadership of the moderate Prince George Lvov. Other key figures in this government included Cadet leader Miliukov as minister of foreign affairs, moderate Octobrist leader Alexander Guchkov as minister of war and the navy, and socialist Alexander Kerensky as minister of justice—a composition similar in composition and political outlook to the Duma's Progressive Bloc. After its establishment, the Provisional Government immediately went about such liberal reforms as guaranteeing all Russian citizens equality before the law, basic civil rights, the right to form unions and strike, and a greater degree of democratic participation in

⁹⁶ George F. Kennan, "The Breakdown of the Tsarist Autocracy," in *The Fall of the Russian Empire*, ed. Edward Chmielewski (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1973), 208.

⁹⁷ Kennan, "The Breakdown of the Tsarist Autocracy," 191.

governance. The influence of the *zemstvos* was once again increased, ethnic minorities received autonomy, and an eight-hour day was introduced for some categories of workers.⁹⁸ The Provisional Government, however, decided to continue Russia's failing efforts in World War I—against the apparent wishes of both the Russian people and of the state's depleted military forces.⁹⁹ After Russia had experienced a brief period of success with the Brusilov offensive of 1916,¹⁰⁰ the war effort once again took a turn for the worse in 1917 as losses continued abroad. By the summer of 1917, historian Roland Stromberg argues that the Russian army was essentially breaking up as its attention focused instead on domestic turmoil.¹⁰¹ As noted above, one of the major reasons that the czarist state was overthrown in 1917 was its insistence on carrying on with the state's losing effort involved in World War I. After assuming power at least partially as a result of this insistence of the part of the Czar, however, the Provisional Government had chosen to continue along the same lines and remain in World War I. As a result, the Provisional Government also assumed the same fundamental challenge to its legitimacy represented by the battlefield losses of the Great War.

As a result of the continuing war effort, the liberal Provisional Government faced immediate, fundamental challenges to its political legitimacy. Historian Jacob Walkin contends that as a result of the relative inexperience in statesmanship of the leaders of the Provisional Government and their overall lack of understanding of the realities of Russian political life, the Provisional Government was “hopelessly lost virtually from the beginning.”¹⁰² While Walkin's assessment of the individuals leading the Provisional Government may be overly harsh, his sentiment regarding the situation under which they came to power is quite accurate. The challenges to legitimacy faced by the new Russian government extended beyond merely war loss. At home, the Provisional Government also faced a severe economic downturn and out-of-control inflation that it failed to

⁹⁸ Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 455-457.

⁹⁹ Borer, "War Loss and Political Reform," 356-357.

¹⁰⁰ The Brusilov offensive is named for Russian General Alexei Brusilov. It was a campaign launched against Austrian forces that was initially met with great success. The Russian army, however, failed to capitalize on its successes as it soon ran out of supplies. Eventually, German troops bolstered the Austrian forces, but Russia had at least made an impact. As Stromberg notes, Brusilov was the only World War I commander after whom a great victory was named. From Stromberg, *Europe in the Twentieth Century*, 74-75.

¹⁰¹ Stromberg, *Europe in the Twentieth Century*, 78.

¹⁰² Walkin, *The Rise of Democracy in Pre-Revolutionary Russia*, 236.

effectively keep in check. Consequently, it found its authority challenged by the growing influence of the Bolsheviks and other revolutionary political parties. In fact, its very status as “provisional” served as a stumbling block to effectively establishing authority. Riasanovsky notes that the government’s members “were deeply conscious of the fact that they had acquired their high authority by chance...and that the future of Russia must be settled by a fully democratic constituent assembly.”¹⁰³ They delayed convening such an assembly, however, and subsequently they lost further credibility with the Russian populace. Throughout much of 1917, the Provisional Government was fundamentally striving to make the rational-legal gestures of Nicholas II a meaningful reality with their political reforms. Their failure to address the ongoing issue of war loss, however, coupled with their failure to convene a national assembly prevented such a reconstitution of legitimacy from fully occurring. As a result of these factors, revolts continued throughout the countryside and Russian industries were plagued by strikes. In turn, popular pressure ultimately led Miliukov and Guchkov to resign by the middle of May. The Provisional Government then reorganized itself under the leadership of the socialist Kerensky.¹⁰⁴

The democratic reforms of Russia’s Provisional Government were to be short-lived. As the government struggled to deal with the significant challenges it faced, Vladimir Lenin and the Bolsheviks were extremely active and gaining more support from the both peasants and workers by the day. In July 1917, for instance, a group of radical citizens—including many Bolsheviks—unsuccessfully attempted to seize power in Petrograd in the so-called “July days.”¹⁰⁵ Meanwhile, the increasingly unstable Provisional Government altered its leadership numerous times, managing to raise the ire of both the moderate and the leftist political elements in the process. As a result, Walkin contends that the Provisional Government—specifically the Kerensky Government—which had sought to serve as a bridge between the left and the right, lost the support of both.”¹⁰⁶ The issue of continued war loss abroad, coupled with the failure to convene a

¹⁰³ Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 457.

¹⁰⁴ Walkin, *The Rise of Democracy in Pre-Revolutionary Russia*, 239-243.

¹⁰⁵ Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 460.

¹⁰⁶ Walkin, *The Rise of Democracy in Pre-Revolutionary Russia*, 238.

national assembly, an economic malaise, the erosion of political support, and the increasing influence of the Bolsheviks ultimately resulted the rapid loss of legitimate authority on the part of the Provisional Government by the autumn of 1917.

After a mere eight months in power and the resurgence of nationwide labor strikes and scattered peasant revolts, the Provisional Government eventually fell to Lenin's Bolsheviks on 7 November 1917, as the Communists marched on the Winter Palace in the "Great October Revolution." They were met with little resistance and easily took the palace and arrested the remaining leadership of the Provisional Government. Two days later, a new government under the leadership of Lenin was organized under the name of the Council of People's Commissars. A few months later, the Bolshevik government negotiated the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk to withdraw from World War I and set about quelling the remaining elements of opposition to its authority throughout the state. In sum, Russia's experiment with constitutional government had come to an end.

THE OUTCOMES OF REVOLUTION

Although the October Manifesto created the political framework for at least limited democratic governance in Russia, the refusal of Czar Nicholas II to relinquish his traditional absolute power prevented these reforms from having the effects desired by liberal elements of Russian society. Perhaps Leon Trotsky best captured the character of Nicholas II's quasi-democratic reforms in the following passage:

So a constitution is granted [by the October Manifesto]. Freedom of assembly is granted, but the assemblies are surrounded by the military. Freedom of speech is granted, but censorship exists as before. Freedom of knowledge is granted, but the universities are occupied by troops. Inviolability of the person is granted, but the prisons are overflowing with the incarcerated.... A constitution is given, but the autocracy remains. Everything is given--and nothing is given.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ Sidney Harcave, "The Russian Revolution of 1905," in *The Fall of the Russian Empire*, ed. Edward Chmielewski (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1973), 23.

In the absence of either traditional/charismatic authority or true rational-legal authority, the constitutional government had little basis upon which to build its legitimacy. Despite the efforts of the Provisional Government to reverse these trends, the additional loss of the new regime's legitimacy that resulted from the continuation of Russia's disastrous war effort only facilitated the rise to power of Lenin's Bolsheviks, which put an effective end to meaningful democratic reform in Russia for over seventy years. Upon gaining power, the Bolsheviks rejected all but the outward trappings of the rational-legal reforms that had taken place over the course of the past decade. In turn, the Bolsheviks adopted a renewed form of the traditional/charismatic legitimacy and state-sponsored violence that the czars had employed for centuries. In many ways, the foundation of Russia's political authority after the Bolshevik Revolution was not far removed from that which dominated prior to the Revolution of 1905. Such issues of political legitimacy, in turn, will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 4.

In the aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution, an absolutist state once again reigned over the Russian populace—a coercive People's Government in the place of the czarist regime that had managed to maintain power since the time of Ivan III in the fifteenth century. In turn, the political reforms for which liberal elements of Russian society had fought for decades—at times with their lives—were consigned to the pages of history.

CHAPTER THREE: REFORM AND REVOLUTION IN CHINA

IMPERIAL CHINA PRIOR TO 1905

Much like Russia, China also experienced a brief flirtation with constitutional reform and self-government at the turn of the twentieth century. To grasp fully the significance of these constitutional reforms, however, one must first examine the political and social framework in which they took place. As discussed in the previous chapter, the power of the Russian Czar over his subjects was considered virtually absolute prior to the fall of the Romanovs in 1917. The authority of the Chinese Emperor was conceptualized in a similar fashion, as he or she was neither theoretically limited by law nor by any other power. This broad conceptualization, however, differed somewhat from common practice in imperial Chinese society by the time of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). As historian Ch'ien Tuan-Sheng notes, the presumed unlimited authority of the Emperor did have its practical limitations—particularly if the Emperor in question was wise and wished to maintain his position.¹ This reality was shaped by, I argue, three primary factors: the sheer size of the Chinese state, the administrative role of the landed gentry class in Chinese politics, and the traditional concepts of the Mandate of Heaven and the dynastic cycle.

In the predominantly agrarian China, the gentry represented both those segments of society that either held Confucian degrees and/or official government positions, as well as wealthy landowners not directly involved with the government.² Hence, the gentry class occupied a unique space in Chinese society, in many ways merging the fundamentally Western conceptualizations of the middle class and the aristocracy. In China, however, the gentry gained at least limited political influence due largely to the sheer necessity of the imperial government's reliance on the members of the landed gentry for a variety of purposes. Skocpol notes that the government depended on the dominant elements of the local gentry to extend control over and appropriate resources—

¹ Ch'ien Tuan-Sheng, *The Government and Politics of China: 1912-1949* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1950), 30.

² Theda Skocpol, *States & Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 72.

primarily agrarian—from the far-flung regions of China that were simply too difficult to administer from the confines of the Forbidden City. Military governors that answered directly to the imperial Court often assisted the gentry in these provincial administrative roles.³ Therefore, many members of the gentry class assumed a bureaucratic role within the imperial system. In this manner, the relationship between the landed gentry and the imperial government in China was similar to that which existed between the aristocracy and the czarist regime in Russia.

The interaction between the gentry class and the imperial government, however, was in fact a relationship of *interdependence*. The gentry depended on the imperial government to provide it with its administrative authority and military support, as well as employment and advancement opportunities within the imperial state itself. As analyst Jack Gray notes, “The scholars had come to unrivalled power, but as servants of the emperors.”⁴ Although the power of the Emperor was immense, this wide-ranging system of interdependence at least served as something of a check on its unbridled expression—somewhat similar the Russian aristocracy’s role in the state bureaucracy, but perhaps exhibiting more in common with the influence of the landed classes of France during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The sheer longevity of the imperial Chinese political system was a primary factor in the legitimacy of the emperor’s authority. The Chinese people traced their imperial dynasties as far back as 1500 B.C. and the rule of the Shang Dynasty—and back an additional 500 years in what is more aptly termed mythology than history.⁵ Furthermore, the Confucian elements that served as a major cornerstone of modern political thinking in China came into popular acceptance around 150 B.C. according to most sources.⁶ As a result, these basic tenets of Confucian philosophy played a crucial role in the administration and legitimization of the Chinese imperial state. The Emperor’s ultimate

³ Skocpol, *States & Social Revolutions*, 72.

⁴ Jack Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions: China from the 1800s to the 1980s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 15-16.

⁵ June Teufel Dreyer, *China’s Political System: Modernization and Tradition*, third ed. (Addison Wesley Longman, Inc., 2000), 26.

⁶ Tuan-Sheng, *The Government and Politics of China*, 20.

role, in fact, was to serve as the supreme patron of the Confucian scholars. In turn, analyst Jack Gray argues that by the time of the late Qing Dynasty, China was remarkably close to the ideal Confucian state, with a widespread class of small gentry and a bureaucratic state primarily dominated by the Confucian scholarly elite.⁷

In summary, Weber's concept of traditional legitimacy is perhaps more accurately applied to the power structure of imperial China than any other regime throughout history. To restate this notion, Weber's conceptualization of traditional legitimacy and the right to rule posits that a ruling institution remains in power largely due to the fact that its subjects perceive the present power and political structure as having always been in effect. In the case of the long-standing Chinese empire, however, this source of legitimacy transcended beyond mere perception. In effect, the imperial dynasties *had* always ruled over the people of China—at least for the entirety of their recorded history. Without a doubt, such a storied history provided the imperial regime with a significant degree of legitimacy to rule over the people of China. The sheer duration of this political arrangement, however, was not the only source of the emperor's legitimacy.

In addition to the long tradition of imperial rule in China, the Emperor also drew ostensibly upon elements of charismatic legitimacy to maintain authority—much like the Russian Czar. The Chinese people recognized the Emperor with the title of Son of Heaven, and he was considered to hold what was known as the Mandate of Heaven. In essence, the Mandate of Heaven was God-given approval of the ultimate authority of the Emperor to rule over the Chinese people—an Asian equivalent of the European concept of the Divine Right of Kings. Historian Ch'ien Tuan-Sheng encapsulates the charismatic elements of the Chinese emperor's legitimacy as such:

With political consciousness pointing toward a unified empire and an all-high emperor at the head, the religious element [of Chinese society] gradually lost its importance, and the Son of Heaven, as the only spokesman for Heaven, came to think and act for Heaven, practically nullifying Heaven as a kind of Supreme Being. Thereafter political

⁷ Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions*, 15.

thinking was absorbed into the maintenance of the all-might emperor and the all-inclusive empire.⁸

It is important to note, however, that the Chinese people typically perceived ultimate authority as being held by the institutions of the imperial state, rather than arising from the individual worth of a specific emperor. Therefore, in this sense, the traditional and charismatic elements of legitimate authority essentially overlapped. Moreover, a most intriguing aspect of the Mandate of Heaven—and a key distinction from similar European concepts—was its transitory nature. This characteristic of Chinese political thought, in turn, is derived from the powerful concept of the dynastic cycle in China's history.

At its most fundamental level, the dynastic cycle is an overarching cyclical perspective on the course of Chinese history. According to this principle, ruling legitimacy waxed and waned based on the following pattern: a moral individual establishes a dynasty to rectify existing societal evils (drawing upon his charismatic qualities), the first few emperors who immediately follow this ruler also fit this upright mold, but the dynasty will eventually descend into corruption and immorality.⁹ As time passed and the emperors declined in moral caliber, the initial charismatic authority of the regime made the transition toward more traditional elements of legitimacy. It was possible, however, for a dynasty to make a “midcourse correction,” but the dynasty would eventually succumb to the forces of corruption. On a broader scale, this corruption was thought to give rise to such ills as droughts, floods, plagues, and invasions—all significant challenges to the regime's ultimate legitimacy. Eventually, according to the principles of the dynastic cycle, the unjustly ruled will rise up against the present emperor, overthrow him, gain the Mandate of Heaven, and establish a new moral dynasty based once again on essentially charismatic authority. Subsequently, the process began once again with the new dynasty.¹⁰ For instance, the Qing (Manchu) Dynasty was established by foreign invaders who overthrew the increasingly corrupt Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) and, in turn, gained legitimacy through the Mandate of Heaven and the support of the Chinese people. Therefore, it was not without precedent in Chinese

⁸ Tuan-Sheng, *The Government and Politics of China*, 20.

⁹ Dreyer, *China's Political System*, 25.

¹⁰ Dreyer, *China's Political System*, 25.

political thought for a ruler to eventually lose his charismatic legitimacy and, in turn, for this legitimacy—embodied in the Mandate of Heaven—to be transferred to another person or regime.¹¹

At first glance, the Confucian ethic that served as a foundation for Chinese governance may appear to embody elements of rational-legal authority, as well. It provided the basis for the state's legal system and, through the establishment of the competitive civil service examination system, set up a strikingly complex system of meritocracy in Chinese society.¹² While this system may have represented a rational-legal foundation during the early centuries of its implementation, such was not the case by the time of the late Qing Dynasty. Through the centuries, the imperial regime refused to substantially update the curriculum of the examination system to represent more modern learning. Whereas reform-minded members of the gentry called for the teaching of such topics as astronomy, economics, and later modernized Western technologies, the imperial state insisted on maintaining a system virtually unchanged from that established in the seventh century until the final years of the Qing Dynasty.¹³ Moreover, the initial equality of opportunity that the examination system eventually gave way to the children of the wealthy having access to better teachers and resources, as well as possessing the ability to purchase their degrees in some cases.¹⁴ Therefore, in a sense, the rational-legal trappings initially represented by the Confucian ethic essentially came to represent—and, furthermore, reinforce—another aspect of the state's traditional political authority.

Despite the power of the imperial state, however, elements of self-government were present within its power structure. The interdependent relationship discussed above between the imperial state and the wealthy and/or scholarly gentry in China gave rise to a highly bureaucratized political system to administer rule over the immense empire by the time of the Qing Dynasty. In turn, this bureaucratic power structure—based primarily on

¹¹ Frederic Wakeman, Jr., presents a more detailed and particularly insightful exploration of the moral, ritualistic, and voluntary aspects of the Chinese dynastic cycle in *The Fall of Imperial China* (New York: The Free Press, 1975), 55-70.

¹² Dreyer, *China's Political System*, 32-33.

¹³ Wakeman, *The Fall of Imperial China*, 19-24; Dreyer, *China's Political System*, 32.

¹⁴ Dreyer, *China's Political System*, 32-33.

the competitive imperial examination system—necessitated various institutions of local governance in order to operate. Below the level of the central government, Chinese officials administered the Chinese political system at the levels of the provinces, prefectures, counties, townships, and villages. In practice, however, the imperial bureaucracy seldom effectively extended farther down this ladder than the county level due to a lack of personnel.¹⁵ In turn, county magistrates frequently placed much of the responsibility for local government in the hands of prominent individuals and organizations at the local level. These individuals, as one might expect, were generally local members of the gentry class. A key organization, on the other hand, in administering local governance was *baojia*, a multigenerational familial institution. Every one hundred Chinese households in the countryside formed a *jia* with one head of household as their representative leader. Subsequently, every ten *jia* formed a *bao* with a designated head. In turn, the leader at each level of this hierarchy was held responsible—and was punishable—for the actions of those below him. The *baojia* were charged with providing various public goods and services and carrying out certain functions of local government, including the administration of justice.¹⁶ Generally speaking, the *baojia* operated independently of the immense Chinese bureaucratic structure.

In regards to the overall liberal character of local government in imperial China, however, historian June Teufel Dreyer states the following:

The resulting system of local-level government...was surely not democratic, since the power structure was governed by rigid norms of authority and status. It was not even true decentralization, since all local power was conditional on the approval of higher levels. Nor was it really local autonomy, since a higher level of government could intervene if it decided to.¹⁷

These “rigid norms of authority and status” described above are further expressions of the traditional authority of the Chinese imperial state. Despite these criticisms, however, it is

¹⁵ Ch'ien Mu, “The Ch'ing Government,” in *Modern China: From Mandarin to Commissar*, ed. Dun J. Li (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1978), 14-17; Dreyer, *China's Political System*, 30.

¹⁶ Dreyer, *China's Political System*, 30.

¹⁷ Dreyer, *China's Political System*, 31.

difficult to argue against the fact that the Chinese populace possessed at least had *some* experience in administering their own localities, either through the gentry or local organizations such as the *baojia*—limited as it may have been.

Furthermore, as Gray argues, one of the drawbacks of the large Chinese bureaucracy by the time of the Qing Dynasty was the fundamental fact that nearly all bureaucracies “tend to evade actions which may entail dangerous responsibilities, and to avoid novelty.”¹⁸ In turn, such bureaucracies tend to stagnate and become more traditional in terms of their legitimate authority over time. As a result of these systemic faults, there was limited accountability in imperial China for poor administration, as each “higher-up” had a tendency to conceal such behavior on the part of his subordinates (a problem not characteristic, for instance, of the responsibility structure of the local *baojia*). Gray goes on to note that the limits of local misgovernment in China “were simply the limits of what a patient population, devoted to the Confucian ideal of government...was willing to tolerate.”¹⁹ When this toleration was exhausted, the peasants were essentially faced with one of three options: legal petition, rioting, or becoming outlaws and joining a secret society or bandit group. Despite these shortcomings, however, various challenges to imperial legitimacy by the time of the late Qing Dynasty left China will no recourse other than to reevaluate the foundations of the political system that had dominated the state for millennia.

THE IMPACT OF THE WEST AND CHALLENGES TO LEGITIMACY

The Chinese imperial system suffered a number of fundamental blows to its governing legitimacy throughout the later years of the Qing Dynasty.²⁰ Moreover, it was the powerful forces of Western imperialism that landed many of these blows, beginning with the “opening” of China for commercial development in the nineteenth century. The Chinese considered “barbarian” invasion to be one of the primary portents of a dynasty in decline according to their Confucian principles. Unlike other invading forces, however,

¹⁸ Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions*, 16.

¹⁹ Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions*, 18.

²⁰ This period of the late Qing Dynasty is typically considered to extend from the rule of Yong Yan, which began in 1796, to the collapse of the imperial system in 1911-1912.

these Western barbarians were not simply absorbed into the fabric of Chinese society, as was the case with previous interlopers (including the founders of the Qing Dynasty). Instead, they persisted in their incursions and began to dramatically alter the face of traditional Chinese politics and society. This encroachment by the West reached an early apex with the Opium War of 1839-1842. This conflict, which resulted from Great Britain's heavy-handed marketing of opium to the Chinese populace, was a disaster for the Chinese. Unable to effectively fight against the mechanized British navy, the Chinese were soundly—and shockingly from the view of the Chinese leadership—defeated in battle after battle. Eventually, the Opium War ended in 1842, however, with a settlement that mandated major concessions on the part of the Chinese, including decidedly unfavorable trade and tariff agreements, redress for damages, and the surrender of Hong Kong to the British.²¹

Despite the disastrous outcome of the Opium War for China, historian John A. Harrison notes that after 1842, there had been a “hopeful and moderate element in government and, at the Court, men who were not intransigent about foreigners and who believed that they could, with some reasonable adjustments, save the situation.”²² However, another challenge to the imperial regime's legitimacy soon arose in the Chinese countryside: the Taiping Rebellion. This widespread revolt began in 1850 and lasted until 1864 and involved nearly all of China's eighteen provinces. In turn, it is considered by many observers to be one of the most destructive civil upheavals in recorded history.²³ The specific sources of the discontent that gave rise to the rebellion (or, more appropriately, series of rebellions) remain unknown. Although Marxist analysts typically cite its cause as the peasantry's resistance to landlordism, Gray contends that population pressures were a more likely source. These pressures, coupled with the perception by the masses that the imperial regime's legitimacy was called into question when China's “alien rulers...lost a war to a handful of barbarians,” a process

²¹ Immanuel C. Y. Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 5th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 168ff; Dreyer, *China's Political System*, 46.

²² John Armstrong Harrison, *China Since 1800* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1967), 46; Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 221-258.

²³ Harrison, *China Since 1800*, 34; Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*

similar to that identified by Borer in relation to war loss in Russia.²⁴ Although the Chinese government eventually brought the destructive Taiping Rebellion under control, it became increasingly clear that the Emperor's Mandate of Heaven and, in turn, the overall legitimacy of the imperial political system were facing serious challenges—both external and domestic.

After the Emperor Hsien-feng died in 1861, however, the Chinese government—its legitimacy seriously challenged both by the success of Britain's modernized gunboat diplomacy in the Opium War and the domestic turmoil of the Taiping Rebellion—did not proceed along Harrison's course of "reasonable adjustment." Hsien-feng's death and the ascension of a child emperor brought to power the skilled, ambitious, and—by many accounts—vengeful Empress Dowager Tongzhi as a regent. Under her leadership, the imperial government's military clashes with the West, and Britain and France in particular, continued. China, however, also had to deal with the challenges of other Asian powers such as Russia and, in particular Japan. Their ongoing disputes with Japan over various territorial issues culminated with the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895. Driven by conflicting Chinese and Japanese interests in an ongoing Korean rebellion, China officially declared war on 1 August 1894 after engaging the Japanese forces in Korea a month earlier. Within a month, China lost roughly two-thirds of its fleet to the more modernized Japanese navy. The war on land was met with similar results for the Chinese, as the Japanese forces seized significant portions of Chinese territory in both Manchuria and the Shantung peninsula.²⁵ Clearly, the China's so-called Self-Strengthening Movement²⁶ undertaken after the Opium War had not achieved its desired effects. Moreover, widespread bureaucratic corruption had diverted a significant amount of government funding intended for military modernization in the first place.²⁷ China was eventually left with little recourse but to accept Japanese peace terms, which

²⁴ Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions*, 54.

²⁵ Wakeman, Jr., *The Fall of Imperial China*, 192.

²⁶ The Self-Strengthening Movement was an imperial policy undertaken after China's losses in the Opium Wars. In aggregate, it called for a process of industrialization and military modernization. From Harrison, *China Since 1800*, 52-55.

²⁷ Dreyer, *China's Political System*, 50. As Dreyer notes, one salient example of this "misdirection" of funding was the Empress Dowager's order for the construction of an extravagant marble boat on the lake of her summer palace. Clearly, such excesses lent credence to the idea that the dynastic cycle was about to see the Mandate of Heaven passed on.

included the territorial cession of Taiwan and Liaotung and a massive indemnity payment.²⁸

In many ways, the loss of imperial legitimacy that resulted from China's crushing defeat by the Japanese forces was analogous to that which occurred a decade later when Japan defeated Russia in the Russo-Japanese War. As Frederic Wakeman argues, "Because it was such a profound psychological shock, the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895 did more than any other crisis to force the Chinese to evaluate their own strengths and weaknesses."²⁹ Coupled with the long "Century of Humiliations" suffered at the hands of Western imperialism, the Chinese political and social system faced serious challenges to its long-standing authority. As historian Ch'ien Tuan-Sheng contends:

The universal empire, sustained for two millennia by a mellow harmony of political principles and institutions, had finally to yield to a new order of things, when Western ideas of nationalism and constitutionalism and Western institutions of election and descended on China in full force.³⁰

Moreover, the adaptation and adoption on the part of the Qing Dynasty of these Western ideals—many transplanted through the very apparatus of Western imperialism—resulted in one of the most turbulent periods in modern Chinese history and, in turn, ultimately culminated with the utter collapse of the imperial order.

REFORM AND REVOLUTION IN CHINA

As analyst Jack Gray contends, war loss in the Sino-Japanese War was, in fact, far more shocking to the imperial state than its defeat at the hands of the British in the Opium War almost a half-century earlier. After all, as Gray contends, the victor was not a great Western power in the case of the Sino-Japanese War, but instead a small Asian country. Moreover, he contends that as a result of these events, the conservative elements of the Chinese political system were truly put on the defensive for the first time.³¹ One of the first challenges to their authority after the Sino-Japanese War was the

²⁸ Wakeman, Jr., *The Fall of Imperial China*, 192.

²⁹ Wakeman, Jr., *The Fall of Imperial China*, 192.

³⁰ Tuan-Sheng, *The Government and Politics of China*, 49.

³¹ Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions*, 126.

Reform Movement of 1898, also known as the Hundred Days Movement. The leader of this movement, Kang Youwei, was a traditional Confucian scholar who ultimately supported the maintenance of the Chinese monarchy. He also advocated, however, the integration of Western learning and administrative structures and, as a result, drew the ire of the increasingly xenophobic imperial Court.³² As Kang and his followers gained support with the Chinese populace, the Court saw the necessity to make at least ostensible concessions to their demands. Kang called for the elimination of many redundant governmental offices that did not correspond in any way to Western institutions, the revision of various military ordinances, and the modification of the examination system to account for tests of modern knowledge. In fact, the imperial government enacted these reforms for one hundred days before renegeing and sending military commander Yuan Shikai to deal with the “Kang situation.” As a result, several of Kang’s followers were executed and Kang himself fled to Japan. Furthermore, after the Reform Movement of 1898, the imperial Court placed an official ban on further political reforms.³³ In a sense, the initial gestures of reform on the part of the Court are somewhat analogous to the Russian October Manifesto of 1905. Moreover, the ultimate retraction of these gestures and the subsequent ban on further reform bears a similarity to the decidedly less-liberal Fundamental Laws that followed the October Manifesto in Russia.

Although one can trace constitutional reforms in China back to the groundwork laid with the initiation of a *laissez-faire* county administration during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and Kang Youwei's failed Hundred Days period of 1898, decentralization began in earnest in the aftermath of the Boxer Movement of 1900. June Teufel Dreyer asserts that the retraction of reform following the Hundred Days period strengthened extremist forces of both the Right and Left.³⁴ Subsequently, the xenophobic movement known as the “Fists of Righteous Harmony” (dubbed the Boxers by Westerners who observed their ritual calisthenics) launched a war against foreigners in China—a war which the Qing government at large supported and soon tacitly joined. Chinese

³² Tuan-Sheng, *The Government and Politics of China*, 51.

³³ Tuan-Sheng, *The Government and Politics of China*, 52.

³⁴ Dreyer, *China's Political System*, 52.

Christians, Western missionaries, and foreign officials were murdered and often mutilated by the Boxers. In response, a multinational military force³⁵ marched into Beijing to put an end to these atrocities. This response effectively ended the influence of the Boxer Movement and left the imperial Court with little recourse but to admit its overall shortcomings to the Chinese populace and, in turn, begin initiating many of the modernizing reforms that Kang Youwei and his followers called for two years earlier.³⁶

Faced with widespread criticism from both the conservative and modernizing elements of the Chinese elite and masses after the catastrophe of the Boxer Movement and its outcome, as noted above, the Empress Dowager Tongzhi had little choice but to initiate yet another a series of reforms. Over the next five years, the imperial state abolished several redundant central governmental offices, terminated the sale of governmental offices, and put an end to the traditional state examination system. Clearly, these political and social reforms—more thoroughgoing than those that briefly resulted from the Hundred Days Movement—marked a crucial transition toward concessionary reform of the traditional dynastic structure.³⁷ In addition, the initiation of reform by the imperial state indicated that the upper echelons of its leadership recognized that the traditional legitimacy of the government now required some form of reconstitution in order to maintain authority. In fact, based on her actions, one may assume that the Empress Dowager was at least implicitly aware of the Mandate of Heaven slipping from her grasp at the turn of the twentieth century and realized that such desperate times called for desperate measures—even if those desperate measures meant the initiation of liberal reform.

In the aftermath of the Russo-Japanese War, however, the Empress Dowager's reform policy took a dramatic shift. The political repercussions of this conflict and the ensuing Russian Revolution of 1905 extended beyond the borders of the empire of the Romanovs and made its mark on China's imperial Court. For instance, as M. Pavlovitch

³⁵ This force included troops from Germany, France, England, the United States, Russia, and Japan.

³⁶ Wakeman, *The Fall of Imperial China*, 216-221; Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions*, 136-139; Dreyer, *China's Political System*, 52-53.

³⁷ Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 408-411.

contends, "In the life of the Asian peoples, the Russian Revolution (of 1905) played the same tremendous role as the great French Revolution formerly played in the lives of Europeans."³⁸ In the specific case of the Chinese, the Russian Revolution of 1905 served as an immediate impetus for the most thoroughgoing political reforms in two millennia. Immanuel C. Y. Hsü argues, "To many Chinese, the defeat of the large autocratic power by a tiny Oriental constitutional monarchy [Japan] was proof of the effectiveness of constitutionalism."³⁹ As a result, Ch'ien Tuan-Sheng contends that many of even the more conservative elements of Chinese society began to see some of the advantages of both Western society and its institutions.⁴⁰ Consequently, a desire for constitutional governmental reform spread both among the Chinese elites and masses. As was the case in Russia at the turn of the twentieth century, political reform in China was carried out within an international context, resulting from something of a globalization of ideas regarding modernization and liberalism. Defeat at the hands of both the West and Japan in the nineteenth century led Chinese reformers to the conclusions that modernization and, in turn, constitutionalism were key to the state's success. Moreover, when the time arrived for the imperial state to reconstitute itself along such modernized lines, the traditionally isolationist China looked abroad for models upon which to base its system.⁴¹

On 1 September 1906, the Empress Dowager issued an edict calling for the framing a constitution based on the study of foreign models. This followed the decision of the empress in 1905 to send forth numerous emissaries, the *Kaocha Zhengzhi Guan*,⁴² to visit Japan, the United States, and various European countries to observe their governments.⁴³ Recognizing the crumbling legitimacy of the imperial regime, these emissaries returned and reported that the adoption of a constitutional government patterned after that of Japan was the only means of forestalling revolution in China.

³⁸ M. Pavlovitch, *Revolutsionnyi Vostok*, Part I, "SSSR I Vostok," (Moscow-Leningrad, 1927), 21-35, as quoted in Ivar Spector, *The First Russian Revolution: Its Impact on Asia* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.), 29.

³⁹ Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 412.

⁴⁰ Ch'ien Tuan-Sheng, *The Government and Politics of China*, 52. For a far more detailed and insightful analysis of the effects of the Russian Revolution of 1905 on China and Asia as a whole, please see Ivar Spector's *The First Russian Revolution: Its Impact on Asia*.

⁴¹ Ch'ien Tuan-Sheng, *The Government and Politics of China*, 52.

⁴² Literally, the Commission to Examine Government as Practiced Abroad.

⁴³ John H. Fincher, *Chinese Democracy: The Self-Government Movement in Local, Provincial, and National Politics, 1905-1914* (London: Crom Helm, 1981), 70; Ch'ien Tuan-Sheng, *The Government and Politics of China*, 52.

Furthermore, the commission clarified that “the form of government best suited to the needs of the times” would be “a constitutional polity in which the supreme authority will be vested in the crown but all questions of government shall be considered by a popular assembly.”⁴⁴ The government chose to emulate the Japanese constitution largely due to the fact that, in order of importance, Japan’s system placed the concentration of power in the central government above the establishment of a national assembly. Moreover, the constitutional commission reported that while the constitutions of Germany and Great Britain were “almost perfect,” they also noted that China’s political, social, and economic conditions more closely matched those of its fellow Asian power, Japan. Therefore, they reported that China could not “do better in the circumstances than copy the constitution of Japan.”⁴⁵ As a result, the imperial government organized a Constitutional Reference Bureau in 1905 (later replaced by Constitutional Government Commission in 1907) to introduce Western-style laws and prepare drafts of a forthcoming constitution.⁴⁶ As one member of the constitutional commission stated following his report to the Empress Dowager, “[t]he establishment of a constitution is in the interest of the state and in the interest of the people. It can enhance the prosperity of the state. It will not weaken the authority of the monarch.”⁴⁷

Meanwhile, although the Empress Dowager's original edict made mention of a national congress (*guohui*), initial efforts by government officials in 1906 and 1907 focused on forming an advisory cabinet rather than a parliament. An imperial edict of 8 July 1907 clarified the principles of constitutionalism encapsulated in the forthcoming reforms as follows: “The essence of constitutional government is harmony between those above and those below, unity between those within and those without, repudiation of selfishness and adherence to the public interest, collective planning for the management of state affairs.”⁴⁸ No national legislative or advisory body was formed, however, that

⁴⁴ Fincher, *Chinese Democracy*, 71.

⁴⁵ Norbert Meienberger, *The Emergence of Constitutional Government in China (1905-1908): The Concept Sanctioned by the Empress Dowager Tz'u-hsi* (Bern, Germany: Peter Land, 1980), 32ff, 45.

⁴⁶ Fincher, *Chinese Democracy*, 71.

⁴⁷ Tai Hung-tz'u, *Ch'u-shih chiu-kuo jih-chi* (August 12, 1906), 333 quoted in Meienberger, *The Emergence of Constitutional Government in China*, 32.

⁴⁸ “Imperial Edict of July 8, 1907” in Norbert Meienberger, *The Emergence of Constitutional Government in China (1905-1908): The Concept Sanctioned by the Empress Dowager Tz'u-hsi* (Bern, Germany: Peter Land, 1980), 5.

rivalled the power of the Qing Imperial Court. At the provincial level, on the other hand, these reforms increasingly devolved power from the military commanders and placed it in the hands of civil governors. In July 1907, however, the first assembly at the local level was popularly elected in Tianjin—a first in Chinese history outside of the various elections held in the foreign concessions.⁴⁹

The Empress Dowager also initiated ostensibly liberal reforms at the level of the imperial state's central administration. For instance, with the imperial reorganization of 1906, the number and titles of several governmental ministries were changed to reflect a more Westernized institutional structure. In substance, however, these reforms had relatively little impact on the broader Chinese political landscape. From a practical standpoint, on the other hand, the personnel that staffed these positions and the overall power and influence of the ministers themselves remained unchanged. Moreover, after the reforms, the imperial Court continued to wield its virtually unchecked power over the administration of these governmental ministries.⁵⁰ Subsequently, the Chinese government perpetrated a similar reorganization of the imperial ministries again in 1911, but history has shown doing so was too late to stem the revolutionary tide that had already emerged by that point in time.

Despite these superficial gestures of reform, the question of a parliament continued to dominate the Chinese political landscape. On 27 August 1908, the Imperial Court issued an "Outline of Constitution" (also known as the Constitutional Principles of 1908). This parliamentary law also called for the convocation of a preparatory National Assembly in Beijing in 1910, to be replaced by a nationally-elected Parliament in 1917. Moreover, a finalized constitution would become effective after a nine-year period of "tutelage."⁵¹ Much like the Fundamental Laws in Russia, the Qing "Outline" retracted much of the original liberal character of the political reforms underway and reaffirmed the emperor's vast power, including ultimate executive, legislative, and judicial authority. The document stressed that the emperor would "rule supreme over the Qing Empire for

⁴⁹ Fincher, *Chinese Democracy*, 72-79.

⁵⁰ Tuan-Sheng, *The Government and Politics of China*, 52-53.

⁵¹ Fincher, *Chinese Democracy*, 79-81.

one thousand generations in succession and be honored forever” and that his “sacred majesty...must not be offended against.”⁵² As Hsü argues, the Empress’ “Outline of Constitution” was fundamentally little more than an “instrument of imperial procrastination” to placate the reform-minded constitutionalists and further consolidate dynastic power.⁵³ Ch’ien Tuan-Sheng goes a step further to charge that as a result of the enactment of these principles in 1908 and subsequent revised electoral laws, China was not “any nearer to constitutionalism, as constitutionalism was then understood in English-speaking and Western European democracies” than prior to the reforms initiated in 1905.⁵⁴

While progress toward the formation of the Chinese National Assembly was slow at first, the movement toward provincial self-government began in earnest nearly a month prior to the announcement of Nine Year Plan in August 1908 with the formation of provincial assemblies (*ti-fang tzu-chih chü*) throughout China.⁵⁵ The Court granted these provincial assemblies the power to oversee changes in provincial administration, supervise local self-government societies, estimating and fixing the provincial budget, and serve as the primary channel of communication between “the people” and the National Assembly in Beijing. Moreover, the Imperial Court called specifically for the selection of “upright gentry and officials” to fill these governmental posts.⁵⁶ Whereas the constitutionalist elements of Chinese society perceived these provincial bureaus both to provide a form of meaningful local representation, as well as to train the people in modern political practices, the Court envisioned a far more traditional role for local governance. As the regulations issued by the Court stated, the self-government bureaus in the provinces were intended to “make up for the inefficiencies of official rule...under official control and not independent of it.”⁵⁷ Therefore, the evidence continued to indicate that the Court’s desire for meaningful reform was limited.

⁵² “The Principles of the Constitution, 1908” in Norbert Meienberger, *The Emergence of Constitutional Government in China (1905-1908): The Concept Sanctioned by the Empress Dowager Tz’u-hsi* (Bern, Germany: Peter Land, 1980), 91.

⁵³ Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 415-416.

⁵⁴ Tuan-Sheng, *The Government and Politics of China*, 54.

⁵⁵ Wakeman, Jr., *The Fall of Imperial China*, 235.

⁵⁶ Fincher, *Chinese Democracy*, 100-101, 108-109.

⁵⁷ Quoted in Wakeman, Jr., *The Fall of Imperial China*, 236.

In addition, the electoral regulations of 22 July 1908 limited the franchise to males over the age of twenty-five and included numerous restrictive property, education, and civil service requirements. The requirements to serve in the assemblies also changed as a result of these new regulations. Consequently, nine out of ten elected assemblymen held Confucian degrees under the old, unreformed examination system.⁵⁸ Furthermore, these regulations created an electorate of roughly 1.7 million eligible voters. Approximately 60 percent of these voters across China participated in the 1909 elections, creating popularly elected provincial assemblies that would later appoint representatives to the National Assembly planned for the following year.⁵⁹ As a result of these new statutes, no more than .0004 percent of the total Chinese population actually cast a vote in these elections.⁶⁰ These changes in electoral statutes that took place in 1908 greatly reduced the franchise from what previous imperial pronouncements had promised and, in turn, served as a major stumbling block for genuinely representative government in China. Furthermore, the imperial governors continued to play the principal role in the actual administration of provincial government.⁶¹ Hence, the imperial government was hesitant to even trust provincial administration to the elitist institutions it mandated through its own revised electoral regulations. Nevertheless, the establishment of these representative assemblies and the ultimate election of their members—however illiberal it was—arguably signified at the very least incremental progress for the institution self-government in imperial China.

The first Chinese National Assembly convened in Beijing on 3 October 1910, following the appointment of its members by the provincial assemblies. Its membership consisted of approximately 5 percent of the total provincial assemblymen elected under the electoral laws of 1908.⁶² For the assemblymen, economic and political modernization were the primary focuses of this first session. In addition, the National Assembly openly

⁵⁸ “The Outlines of the Electoral Law, 1908” in Norbert Meienberger, *The Emergence of Constitutional Government in China (1905-1908): The Concept Sanctioned by the Empress Dowager Tz'u-hsi* (Bern, Germany: Peter Land, 1980), 93; Wakeman, Jr., *The Fall of Imperial China*, 236.

⁵⁹ Fincher, *Chinese Democracy*, 115.

⁶⁰ Wakeman, *The Fall of Imperial China*, 236.

⁶¹ Fincher, *Chinese Democracy*, 115.

⁶² Wakeman, *The Fall of Imperial China*, 237.

criticized the centralized nature of the Chinese government and called for the Imperial Court to hasten the formation of a Parliament from its original timetable under the so-called Nine Year Plan.⁶³ The conflicting expectations of the reform-minded constitutionalists and the Court soon came to the forefront during the first session of the Chinese National Assembly. Historian Frederic Wakeman argues that the imperial government essentially envisioned the National Assembly (*Tzu-cheng yuan*—literally, “Court to Assist the Government”) as little more than a body of notables serving the government by writing political treatises on reform for the Imperial Court to subsequently contemplate. As the Outline of Constitution noted, the imperial state intended for the Parliament to have “only deliberative powers.”⁶⁴ Wakeman goes on to assert that the constitutionalist leadership of the Assembly, on the other hand, came to Beijing “to constitute a new government, not advise an old one.”⁶⁵ In this sense, the differing perspectives held by the imperial government and the assemblymen on the functional role of the Parliament was markedly similar to the disputes that arose in Russia’s First and Second Dumas. As a result of the Court’s perception of the National Assembly’s role in Chinese politics, however, many of the initial objectives of the reform-minded representatives of the Assembly failed to come to fulfillment and, in turn, led to their further frustration with the regime. Furthermore, as Wakeman notes, these frustrations on the part of the assemblymen were closely linked with a growing protest movement throughout the provinces. The failure of the imperial state to follow through with its promises of a meaningful, representative National Assembly had led directly to the further deterioration of the regime’s already-damaged legitimacy.⁶⁶

Faced with strong provincial support for adjusting Nine Year Plan’s original timetable, the Court issued an edict on 4 November 1910 that designated 1913 for the opening of the Parliament, rather than 1916.⁶⁷ Throughout its first session, however, the National Assembly generally found itself (not surprisingly) at odds with the Imperial

⁶³ Fincher, *Chinese Democracy*, 168-170.

⁶⁴ “The Principles of the Constitution, 1908” in Meienberger, *The Emergence of Constitutional Government in China*, 93.

⁶⁵ Wakeman, Jr., *The Fall of Imperial China*, 237.

⁶⁶ Wakeman, Jr., *The Fall of Imperial China*, 237.

⁶⁷ Gray, *Rebellions and Revolution*, 141; Fincher, *Chinese Democracy*, 168-170.

Court and the Chinese Grand Council in trying to administer many of its proposed reforms—particularly regarding taxation in the provinces. Moreover, on 8 May 1911, the Court announced the formation of a "Royal Cabinet" that was not responsive to the interests of provincial elements and, in many ways, superceded the authority of the National Assembly. When the provincial leadership protested, the Court reminded them that the 1908 "Outline of Constitution" granted it ultimate power to control all governmental appointments.⁶⁸ Clearly, the autocratic elements of the traditional Chinese government were not willing to let loose the reins of power in favor of legitimate self-government without at least tacit resistance.

As the Chinese populace at large grew increasingly disenchanted with the imperial regime's quasi-constitutional reforms, revolutionary movements distinct from the constitutionalist movement gained momentum and popular support. As the National Assembly continued to encounter resistance at every turn from the imperial government, the revolutionary elements of Chinese society became the driving forces of political change—although in a more extremist manner than the constitutionalists.⁶⁹ Focused primarily in southern China (northern and central China tended to favor the Qing Dynasty as a result of years of preferential treatment under the examination system), these revolutionary movements called for radical solutions to the state's problems, including advocating the outright overthrow of the imperial regime in some cases. Sun Yatsen's Nationalist Party (*Kuomintang*, or KMT), in turn, was the most prevalent of these groups. Although the Western-educated Sun began his political career as a reformer, he soon turned to revolutionary tactics when he found the imperial regime to be generally intractable on such issues. Other revolutionary groups also flourished throughout the Chinese countryside during the waning days of the Qing Dynasty. Furthermore, many of the more extremist groups resorted to terrorism to convey their political frustrations. In fact, a series of railway bombings and revolts perpetrated by such groups eventually proved to be the immediate precursor to the Qing Dynasty's ultimate collapse.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 415; "The Principles of the Constitution, 1908" in Meienberger, *The Emergence of Constitutional Government in China*, 93.

⁶⁹ Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions*, 142.

⁷⁰ Ch'ien Tuan-Sheng, *The Government and Politics of China*, 57-59; Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions*, 143-144.

In response to the aforementioned formation of the Royal Cabinet to oversee the National Assembly, a United Conference of Provincial Assemblymen convened in Beijing in May 1911, serving as a de facto parliamentary body largely indifferent to the Imperial Court. Despite attempts to maintain order by Prince Chun (Empress Dowager's functional successor), "fewer and fewer people were listening to edicts they did not want to hear."⁷¹ Jack Gray further notes that Chinese reformers "were disappointed by the delay of constitutional changes" and "disgusted by the manipulation of recent changes in favor of the Manchu nobles."⁷² With the Court's push toward railway nationalization (a highly contested issue at all levels of government), provinces throughout the southern and western regions of China revolted and declared their independence with the opening of their assemblies on 22 October 1911. These declarations of independence generally transpired under the leadership of both the provincial assemblymen and various low-ranking imperial soldiers.⁷³ In an attempt to ensure the regime's survival and to suppress "bandits" throughout the countryside, Prince Chun agreed to dismiss the Royal Cabinet and promoted the popular, reform-minded general Yuan Shikai to the office of Chinese premier on 1 November 1911.⁷⁴

Although Yuan managed to put down the revolts before they spread throughout the provinces, Chinese society as a whole remained in turmoil. Largely discredited among the Chinese population due to refusal to follow through with meaningful reform, the young Qing Emperor Pu Yi abdicated on 12 February 1912 after extensive bargaining. On that date, the Qing Court made the following statement regarding their exhausted legitimacy:

It is clear that the minds of the majority of the people are in favor of the establishment of a republican form of government...the universal desire clearly expressed the Will of Heaven, and it is not for us to oppose the

⁷¹ Fincher, *Chinese Democracy*, 198.

⁷² Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions*, 144.

⁷³ Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions*, 144.

⁷⁴ Harrison, *China Since 1800*, 96-99; Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 470.

disapproval of the millions of people entirely for the sake of the privileges and power of a single House.⁷⁵

In turn, Yuan Shikai officially assumed control of the government and the office of president on 10 March 1912, bringing to an end centuries of imperial rule in China. After building its authority on a relatively firm foundation of traditional and charismatic sources for millennia—and, more recently, augmenting that authority with attempts at rational-legal reform for the past decade—the Qing Dynasty could no longer legitimately draw support for its rule from the discontent Chinese people. Thus, the Mandate of Heaven passed to the popular Yuan Shikai, a military commander at least nominally predisposed toward democratic reform. As the events of the following half-decade would bear out, however, the Mandate of Heaven was perhaps too fleeting for Yuan to fully secure.

June Teufel Dreyer contends that the 1911 revolution "was better at tearing down than building up. The dynasty had been weak and corrupt, with its intellectual and ethical underpinnings badly deteriorated. What to replace it with was another matter."⁷⁶ In comparing the Chinese Revolution of 1911 to the Russian Revolution of 1905, Mao Zedong went further to declare that while the latter was victorious, the former was little more than a "miscarriage."⁷⁷ After the Qing abdication, Yuan established the Republic of China with support from Sun Yatsen and his *Kuomintang* Nationalist Party. Almost immediately, Yuan set sweeping reforms into motion, removing the former voting restrictions and expanding the electorate from roughly 1.7 million under the prior regime to over 40 million.⁷⁸ The provisional constitution also included several limitations on the power of the president, insisted upon by both Yuan's political opponents and those allies generally disquieted by his assumption of presidential power. These restrictive policies included, for instance, constitutional provisions placing fundamental state power in a cabinet responsible to the elected Parliament. Initially, according to Gray, the Chinese masses in general saw these limitations on the popular Yuan as unnecessary and, in turn,

⁷⁵ Jerome Ch'en, *Yuan Shi-k'ai 1859-1916* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966), 129, as quoted in Harrison, *China Since 1800*, 100.

⁷⁶ Dreyer, *China's Political System*, 55.

⁷⁷ Quoted in Spector, *The First Revolution: Its Impact on Asia*, 85.

⁷⁸ Fincher, *Chinese Democracy*, 223.

accused those who insisted upon their enactment of radicalism.⁷⁹ As historian John A. Harrison contends, however, many prominent elements in the new Chinese polity recognized the potential for autocratic rule in the personal character of their new president.⁸⁰ Furthermore, the Republic's provisional constitution established that a bicameral parliament would be elected in December 1912. In this election, the KMT won a landslide victory and soon thereafter began promulgating further policies to keep the power of President Yuan in check.⁸¹

Yuan resented these attempts at limiting his power and began acting in the increasingly autocratic manner that his former KMT allies had feared. Early examples of these tendencies included his attempt to nullify the election of a KMT candidate to the position of provincial governor in favor of a candidate more to his own liking within a few short weeks of taking office. Illiberal acts such as this quickly cost Yuan his longstanding popularity with the Chinese people.⁸² Soon, Sun Yatsen and other elements of the political opposition realized that constitutional and parliamentary reforms would not be sufficient to keep Yuan's increasingly autocratic tendencies in check.⁸³ When several Nationalist governors again declared independence in protest of his policies in 1913, Yuan's military and police forces easily crushed this attempt at a "Second Revolution." After using thinly-veiled threats of force against the electorate, Yuan won the presidential election of 1913 and transformed the status of the Chinese Republic from provisional to permanent. The following May, a new Constitutional Compact was drafted that extended the president's term to ten years, renewable by re-election without limit. In addition, the president was granted the right to choose his own successor.⁸⁴ Regarding these autocratic acts on the part of the Chinese president, Frederic Wakeman argues the following:

Yuan Shikai himself realized that a presidency which had betrayed the electorate could not unite the country. He also discovered that he was

⁷⁹ Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions*, 147.

⁸⁰ Harrison, *China Since 1800*, 101.

⁸¹ Dreyer, *China's Political System*, 55.

⁸² Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions*, 148.

⁸³ Gray, *Revolutions and Rebellions*, 149.

⁸⁴ Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 478-479.

beginning to lose control over the Peiyang generals, whose loyalty was proving to be short-lived. Searching for an unimpeachable source of unity and authority, he fell back on the old imperial model.⁸⁵

Hence, Yuan continued his attempts to restore the traditional and charismatic sources of legitimacy and authority that had effectively held China together for so many years. These attempts were not met with particular success, and, as subsequent revolts would suggest, the Chinese people did not want to embrace Yuan on these old principles, but rather those of constitutional governance.

Therefore, democratic reform reached a standstill as these autocratic trends continued, eventually culminating in the full-fledged reinstatement of the monarchy under Yuan in 1915 and the end of China's brief period of experimentation with limited self-government. As one might expect, his assumption of the title of Emperor was not met with widespread public support. Analyst Jack Gray goes so far as to contend, "It would be difficult to find a parallel case of a reversal of popular judgment so swift and so complete."⁸⁶ In this sense, Yuan Shikai bears a striking resemblance to French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte. Like Napoleon, Yuan came to power during a time when state reform had given rise to chaos. Although he initially brought order and initiated limited political reforms, Yuan soon took a more conservative approach, began consolidating power around his office, and ultimately assumed the mantle of emperor as Napoleon had done in France over a century prior. Also like Napoleon, while Emperor Yuan no longer held legitimacy with many segments of the Chinese people, he had the support of sufficient portions of the military to maintain his authority through force. Therefore, one might argue that the progressive reforms of China's ancient political system had come full circle with the reinstatement of the monarchy. As author John H. Fincher contends, "The representative institutions which best symbolize the Chinese democracy were opened by one kind of autocrat in the wake of the Russo-Japanese War and closed by another kind of autocrat on the eve of the First World War."⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Wakeman, Jr., *The Fall of Imperial China*, 252.

⁸⁶ Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions*, 149.

⁸⁷ Fincher, *Chinese Democracy*, 30.

THE OUTCOMES OF REVOLUTION

Drawing upon the methodological approaches of such scholars as John Fincher, I essentially conclude my historical analysis in 1915 with Yuan Shikai's reinstatement of the Chinese monarchy.⁸⁸ Whereas in Russia the rise of the Communists also signaled the end of constitutional reform, the present set of constitutional reforms initiated in 1905 were already long dead before Mao Zedong came to power. Furthermore, when the KMT assumed power in 1928, they faced a decidedly different set of circumstances following the warlord period⁸⁹ that dominated the Chinese political landscape after Yuan's death in 1916. Therefore, for this paper's purpose in comparing China's early twentieth-century constitutional period with that of Russia, I contend that it is more appropriate to conclude the analysis at this point in 1915 rather than carrying it out to the ascension to power of the Communists in 1949.

By way of overview, however, the period after Yuan's reinstatement of the monarchy was marked by turmoil. As noted above, in the decade following Yuan's death in 1916, China descended into a tumultuous decade of warlordism marked by almost constant clashes over the control of Beijing. Frederic Wakeman sets forth the following thought-provoking question regarding this era: if there still was a Mandate of Heaven in the minds of the Chinese people by this point in time, to whom did it belong?⁹⁰ Eventually, by 1928, Chiang Kai-shek's KMT Nationalists emerged from the fracas of the warlord era to claim legitimate rule of China. While Sun Yatsen had been rather liberal and reform-minded in terms of his political thought, Chiang represented a more traditional element of Chinese society. For instance, under his leadership, the KMT attempted to reestablish the gentry class as a dominant element of society. Furthermore, Chiang's KMT went to great lengths to rehabilitate the Confucian ethic in Chinese society, including requiring military officers to study the Confucian classics and the

⁸⁸ Fincher uses a similar historical "cut-off" in *Chinese Democracy: The Self-Government Movement in Local, Provincial, and National Politics, 1905-1914*.

⁸⁹ The warlord period is considered to have begun with Yuan Shikai's death in 1916 and extended until the rise of the KMT in 1928. In essence, civil war, rebellions, and severe resource shortages marked these years. During this period, a series of military leaders took control of Beijing and, as a result, the apparatus of the imperial government. While foreign states generally carried out relations with whomever controlled Beijing at any given time, they also attempted to financially support some warlords for their own interests. From Dreyer, *China's Political System*, 55-56.

⁹⁰ Wakeman, Jr., *The Fall of Imperial China*, 254.

reinstitution of the *baojia* to assist in local administration.⁹¹ In this sense, the KMT's policies under Chiang represented a merger of rational-legal authority coupled with more traditional elements of Chinese legitimacy. While such reforms were not necessarily forward-looking, they at least marked a welcome respite from the disorder of the warlord period.

The mandate of the KMT, however, was soon challenged by the growing influence of Mao Zedong's Communists with China's peasant population. This challenge to the regime's legitimacy was further exacerbated by the Japanese invasion of China in the 1930s, which claimed significant territorial gains in Manchuria and northern China. While these forces were driven out by a joint effort between the Communists and the KMT, the damage had already been done to the KMT government.⁹² Therefore, war loss once again played a crucial role in the regime's weakened legitimacy. Ultimately, after a bitter civil war that lasted from 1941 until 1949, Mao's Communists defeated the KMT (who, in turn, fled to Taiwan) and seized control of Beijing. Almost immediately, they set about a process of consolidating power that would eventually bring unchallenged authority not unlike that of the dynastic emperors into the hands of Mao Zedong.⁹³

Before moving on, I will briefly return to China's constitutional period of 1905 to 1915. Despite the many stumbling blocks faced by liberal reformers in the years prior to the First World War, analyst John Fincher argues that nation's experience was self-government not meaningless, stating:

Though [the representative institutions formed between 1905 and 1914 are] ordinarily dismissed as rubber stamps...these assemblies had an enormous nuisance value over the six or eight years of their first appearance in Chinese history even when their autonomy seemed in question.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Dreyer, *China's Political System*, 61.

⁹² Harrison, *China Since 1800*, 172ff.

⁹³ Dreyer, *China's Political System*, 78-84.

⁹⁴ Fincher, *Chinese Democracy*, 16.

Furthermore, despite setbacks at the national level, democratic reform was at least marginally effective at establishing self-government throughout the provincial assemblies. The failure of the authoritarian Chinese leadership to respect the norms of self-government, however, eventually led to the downfall of both the imperial dynasty and the quasi-democratic republic that followed it.

The next chapter will focus on an analysis of why reform failed in both Russia and China at the turn of the twentieth century, as well as why this failure ultimately led to revolution in both states. After a comparison of societal factors in each state and the similarities and differences in their constitutional experiences, the analysis will turn to what role fluctuations in political legitimacy played in these periods in both states.

CHAPTER FOUR: SOURCES OF FAILED REFORM AND REVOLUTION

The chapter that follows presents a detailed analysis of the sources of revolution at the turn of the twentieth century in Russia and China. The chapter opens with a brief comparison of preexisting societal norms in Russia and China during this period, as well as their respective experiences with reform and revolution. An analysis of why reform failed in these states follows, stressing such factors as the lack of a civic culture, the illiberal character of the reforms initiated, and the traditional behavior of the imperial monarchs actually enacting the reforms. Then, the chapter examines the writings of numerous scholars regarding revolution—both in general and in specific relation to the Russian and Chinese cases under present consideration. Finally, I put forth an analysis of the interconnectedness of reform and revolution in terms of Weber’s concept of political legitimacy as discussed in Chapter One. To restate my hypothesis, I believe that a historical analysis of these periods of reform in Russia and China support the assessment that constitutionalism arose from a combination of external and domestic challenges to the legitimacy of the traditional power structures in both states. Furthermore, I maintain that while the ongoing challenges to legitimacy that these regimes faced at this time led to constitutional reform, the ultimate failure of these reforms further deteriorated state legitimacy. In turn, I argue that this failure of political reform and the resulting further deterioration of state legitimacy fomented the revolutions that eventually brought an end to early twentieth-century experiments in constitutionalism for Russia and China.

RUSSIA AND CHINA COMPARED

At this point in my analysis, it is appropriate to review some of the fundamental similarities and differences between the political arrangements of Russia and China at the turn of the twentieth century, as well as their respective experiences with reform and revolution. Both Russia and China were traditional autocracies the time of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In Russia, the Czar’s power essentially ran unchecked due to the lack of political influence held by the aristocracy and the emerging middle classes. The Russian aristocracy, however politically impotent it may have been, did form the backbone of the state’s highly bureaucratized apparatus. Similarly, in the

bureaucratic state of China, the wealthy and/or scholarly gentry played a significant role in the administration of the state's authority. Their political influence, however, hinged on their continued support from the imperial regime. Around the turn of the twentieth century, both Russia and China suffered crushing military defeats (Russia in the Russo-Japanese War and China in its encounters with the West and the Sino-Japanese War) that subsequently called into question the legitimate authority of their respective traditional power structures. In turn, following these crises of legitimacy and the resulting trends civil unrest, the autocratic monarchs in each state gave in to programs of modernization and political reform.

It is important to note the catalysts behind these constitutional reforms in Russia and China at the turn of the twentieth century. In both cases, I argue that two driving forces served as a basis for reform efforts: liberalization and modernization. The manner in which these forces interacted, however, was distinct in the case of each state. In Russia, as noted in Chapter Two, the rise of liberal thought throughout Europe in the nineteenth century (and the writings that resulted from these predominantly middle-class movements) played a significant role in tempering the reforms undertaken by the czarist regime during the early years of the twentieth century. Certainly, crushing defeat in the Russo-Japanese War served to highlight Russia's lack of military modernization. As Laura Engelstein argues, however, Western European ideals of liberalism were at the forefront of Russian reform movements during this period.¹ On the other hand, modernization seemed to play the more prominent role at the turn of the twentieth century in propelling constitutional reform in China. Beginning with the Self-Strengthening Movement after the Opium Wars, China began a gradual process of technical and economic modernization. Such efforts continued throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.² Although the Chinese had extensive contact with the West during the nineteenth century, however, liberal thought—at least in the Western sense of the term—did not penetrate China in the manner that it had Russia. Hence, whereas Russia looked to the liberal examples of Europe in forming its constitutional monarchy,

¹ Laura Engelstein, *The Keys to Happiness: Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-de-Siècle Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 1-2.

² John Armstrong Harrison, *China Since 1800* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1967), 52-53.

China instead emulated Japan in its modernizing reforms. Therefore, I argue that global factors—specifically global trends of liberalism and modernization—played a significant role in terms of inspiring political reform in Russia and China during the early years of the twentieth century. In essence, both states recognized the military power of their international competitors, as well as the possible advantages of their alternative models for organizing society. While the imperial regimes in both Russia and China were hesitant to fully transplant such models into their own states, they began a process of grafting on such elements to their existing autocratic systems.

In order to stem domestic revolutionary tides, both the Russian Czar and the Chinese Empress initially made promises of sweeping constitutional reform through the October Manifesto in Russia and the announcement of plans to study foreign constitutional models in China. The rulers of each state, however, soon rescinded these liberal gestures after once again establishing a sense of order—through the channels of the Russian Fundamental Laws of 1906 and the Chinese Outline of Constitution. Moreover, both the Russian czar and the Chinese emperor continued to act in decidedly illiberal and intractable fashions. As political reform failed to provide meaningful representative government in Russia and China, reformers lost faith in the ability and willingness of their traditional regimes to provide such a polity and, as a result, revolution eventually came to pass. In Russia, a democratic Provisional Government came to power, only to be toppled by the growing influence of Lenin’s Bolsheviks eight months later. In China, Yuan Shikai became president of a new republic amidst revolution in 1911, but soon turned toward autocratic rule after a brief period of liberal reform. This transition away from constitutional reform culminated with the reinstatement of the Chinese monarchy in 1915.

The similarities and differences present in the political structures of Russia and China around the turn of the twentieth century, as well as the ultimate societal transformations that occurred in these states is summarized below in Table 2.

Table 2
Sources and Outcomes of Revolution in Russia and China³

	Monarchy/Dominant Class	International Pressures	Societal Transformations
Russia	Highly bureaucratic absolutist state; landed nobility has little political power.	Extreme. Defeats in 1850s and 1905. Prolonged participation and defeat in WWI.	1860s-90s: Bureaucratic reforms from above. 1905: Unsuccessful revolutionary outbreak. 1917: Dissolution of state; widespread peasant revolts; establishment of Provisional Government; rise of Bolsheviks.
China	Landed-commercial dominant class has limited leverage with bureaucratic absolutist state.	Strong. Defeats in wars and imperialist intrusions.	1911: Breakdown of Imperial state; spreading agrarian disorder; assumption of imperial title by Yuan Shikai.

Therefore, despite some fundamental differences in the preexisting power and bureaucratic structures of Russia and China, I contend that each state suffered similar challenges to its legitimacy around the turn of the twentieth century—perhaps most notably war loss. In turn, these challenges resulted in similar outcomes of initial constitutional reform, imperial retraction of reform, and ultimately revolution. The reasons that reform failed and gave rise to revolution in these states, in turn, is explored in the following sections.

WHY DID REFORM FAIL?

Having examined Russia and China at the turn of the twentieth century from a comparative standpoint, the question remains: why did constitutional reform in these states fail to produce ultimately democratic outcomes? In the case of both states, I have argued that challenges to their fundamental legitimate authority—war loss, the lack of modernization, long-term societal and economic inequalities—initially gave rise to such reforms. What further effect, however, did the disingenuous character of constitutional reform as implemented by the czarist and imperial regimes have on their foundations of legitimacy? Moreover, how did the characteristics of constitutional reform in early twentieth-century Russia and China lead to the eventual failure of these movements and

³ Adapted from Skocpol, *States & Social Revolutions*, 155-157.

the resultant rise of the more revolutionary segments of their respective societies? The following section will explore these questions at greater length.

Throughout the history of scholarly political thought, numerous writers have stressed the vital importance of the middle class in establishing effective representative government. Aristotle, for instance, emphasized that the “best form of political association is one where power is vested in the middle class.”⁴ Writing on the Russian Revolution of 1905, Vladimir Lenin stated, “The democratic revolution is bourgeois in nature...there is not, nor can there be, any other path to real freedom for the proletariat and the peasantry, than the path of bourgeois freedom and bourgeois progress.”⁵ Subsequently, Robert J. Morris offers a more contemporary conceptualization of the role of the middle class in constituting a modern liberal state.⁶ Morris argues that the emergence of an independent middle class in many Western states in turn gave rise to an associational culture of voluntary horizontal affiliations separate from the state. In turn, he contends that such an associational culture served to nurture the growing civic consciousness of these segments of society during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁷ Such concepts are a common thread throughout the body of literature focused on civil society. The traditional power structure of czarist Russia and imperial China, however, greatly hindered the development of such an associational culture in these states.

As discussed in Chapters Two and Three, however, the middle class—or its functional equivalents in Russian and Chinese society—lacked significant political influence or horizontal affiliations separate from the state in czarist Russia and late imperial China. In turn-of-the-twentieth-century czarist Russia, for instance, the

⁴ Aristotle, *The Politics*, translated by Ernest Barker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 158-159.

⁵ Vladimir Lenin, “Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution,” in Richard Sakwa, ed., *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Union: 1917-1991* (London: Routledge, 1999), 12.

⁶ In “The Civil Society Debate and the British Experience: The Imperfect Fit,” Morris focuses at large on issues of British liberal reform. In a broader scope, however, his article also addresses key points of interest regarding the role of the middle class in liberal reform that I contend also apply to the present cases of Russia and China at the turn of the twentieth century.

⁷ Robert J. Morris, “Civil Society, Subscriber Democracies, and Parliamentary Government in Great Britain,” in Nancy Bermeo and Philip Nord, eds., *Civil Society Before Democracy: Lessons from Nineteenth-Century Europe* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), 111ff.

aristocracy and the nascent middle class were, for all practical purposes, absent in the political process. Hence, as historian Jacob Walkin contends, czarist Russia was effectively a “state without a society.”⁸ Analyst Laura Engelstein goes further to characterize Russian civil society under the czarist regime as “primordial” and “lacking a spine” due in part to the absence of meaningful political participation on the part of the Russian middle classes.⁹ Although Engelstein makes a somewhat valid point regarding the political influence of the Russian aristocracy, I would contest the severity of her assessment. As discussed above, the Russian gentry at least had a role in the bureaucratic administration of the czarist regime, despite their dependence on the regime for title and employment. In the case of imperial China, the gentry class—a functional equivalent of the Western notion of the middle class—similarly possessed limited political influence. Their influence, however, came about through an essentially top-down, interdependent relationship with the imperial state. The imperial government depended on the gentry to administer rule over the provinces of China, whereas the gentry depended on the imperial government to ensure their social status.¹⁰ Hence, despite some deviation on the part of reform-minded members of the gentry such as Kang Youwei, the class as a whole had little incentive to engage in systemic reform of the imperial state and, in turn, few associations independent of the state gained significant influence.

As a result of the politically-weak middle classes in Russia at the turn of the twentieth century and the gentry’s traditional support for the regime in late imperial China, these elements of society—while calling for change—had little active role in the initial conceptualization and implementation of political reform following the legitimacy crises that arose in these states at this time. In turn, the constitutional reforms that these regimes promulgated beginning in 1905 were enacted with virtually no prior consultation with the reform-minded elements of society. In essence, these political changes were

⁸ Jacob Walkin, *The Rise of Democracy in Pre-Revolutionary Russia: Political and Social Institutions Under the Last Three Czars* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962), 16.

⁹ Laura Engelstein, “The Dream of Civil Society in Tsarist Russia: Law, State, and Religion,” in Nancy Bermeo and Philip Nord, eds., *Civil Society Before Democracy: Lessons from Nineteenth-Century Europe* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), 38.

¹⁰ Jack Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions: China from the 1800s to the 1980s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 15-16.

“reforms from above”¹¹ in the truest sense of the phrase; the rulers and their ministers initiated, conceptualized, and enacted constitutional reform with precious little input from the elements of society they were meant to appease.

Furthermore, as the regimes first enacted reform and soon began to rescind their initial liberal gestures, the reform-minded middle class elements in both states found themselves further marginalized from the political process. In the case of Russia, such trends are evident in Nicholas II’s dismissal of the first two Dumas as he searched for a representative body more disposed to his political goals of maintaining authority. The Chinese imperial regime, on the other hand, resorted to delaying the formation of a national assembly and greatly restricting the franchise for political participation. Thus, constitutional reform in Russia and China at the turn of the twentieth century not only failed to meaningfully incorporate the middle classes, but it eventually resorted to their active marginalization. While reforms were meant to pacify these reform-minded elements, as well as the dissatisfied peasants and workers in each state, they were not meant to give any of these groups a lasting political voice within the authoritarian regimes. In turn, I argue that this lack of incorporation of the reform-minded elements of Russian and Chinese society into the reform process played a significant role in the failure of reform.

One must be cautious, however, in applying what are essentially Western models of associational culture to Russia and China. While these norms of interaction may not have existed when constitutional reforms were enacted, the chance remains that they may have ultimately developed had constitutional monarchy remained in effect in both states. Analyst Philippe C. Schmitter, for instance, has argued at a general level that the common belief that a “civic culture”—a democratically minded citizenry—must precede democracy is in fact a fallacy. Instead, he argues instead that civic culture is effectively the result of practicing democracy.¹² Timing, however, played a critical role in the

¹¹ David Blackbourn and Geoff Elay discuss the subject of reform from above at length in relation to nineteenth-century Germany in *The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

¹² Philippe C. Schmitter, “Democracy, the EU, and the Question of Scale,” in Marc F. Plattner and Aleksander Smolar, eds., *Globalization, Power, and Democracy* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 43ff.

failure of constitutional reform in Russia and China. Perhaps a civic culture may have arisen from these experiments in limited constitutionalism if given the necessary time. The reality of the matter, however, is that the crises of legitimacy faced by both the Russian and Chinese regimes eventually toppled the nascent constitutional monarchies before any such societal-level changes could transpire.

To draw upon Ellen Comisso's fundamental typology of procedural and substantive democracy as discussed in Chapter Two, both Russia and China were more concerned during their periods of constitutional reform at the turn of the twentieth century with procedural elements of democracy than the more substantive outcomes. Each state created national, provincial, and local representative bodies during this period (or augmented existing functional equivalents), fulfilling a fundamental "requirement" of procedural democracy. Both Russia and China, however, purposefully limited the overall political influence of their respective representative institutions, rendering them little more than advisory bodies and thus violating the substantive spirit of these reforms. In a similar fashion, the imperial regimes of Russia and China each called for the founding of free elections to fill these representative institutions. Yet, in the case of both Russia and China, the regimes soon altered electoral statutes to ensure that conservative elements of society would be more likely to gain office. Moreover, as the reform-minded elements of Russian and Chinese society continued to prove problematic, the autocratic rulers of both regimes willfully violated the rule of law in order to maintain their own ultimate authority. In the case of Russia, Nicholas II proceeded to dismiss two Dumas until he found one friendlier in political composition to his interests. The Chinese Empress, on the other hand, formed the Royal Cabinet in 1911 to supercede the authority of the democratically elected National Assembly. Clearly, the rulers of both states considered the trappings of democracy more important—or at least more appropriate considering their circumstances—than its substantive spirit.

The behavior of the Russian and Chinese rulers themselves played a significant—if not the most significant—role in the failure of reform. First, neither Nicholas II nor the Empress Dowager commanded the degree of charismatic authority that some of their

predecessors held. For instance, analyst George Kennan offers this damning critique of the last Czar's character:

Poorly educated, narrow in intellectual horizon, a wretchedly bad judge of people, isolated from Russian society at large, in contact only with the most narrow military and bureaucratic circles, intimidated by the ghost of his imposing father and the glowering proximity of his numerous gigantic uncles, helpless under the influence of his endlessly unfortunate wife: Nicholas II was obviously inadequate to the demands of his exalted position.¹³

Similarly, the Empress Dowager failed to inspire admiration with many segments of the Chinese populace. As the first example of consort rule in China's long history, coupled with the fact that many viewed her ascent to power as a somewhat nefarious coup, she faced immediate challenges to her legitimacy. While generally considered brilliant by most contemporary observers in terms of her skillful politicking and her ability to maintain power after her formal "retirement" in 1889, she became a target for the dissatisfaction felt by many Chinese citizens by the turn of the twentieth century.¹⁴

In turn, by the end of the Russo-Japanese and Sino-Japanese Wars, the respective populaces of Russia and China ardently petitioned their monarchs for political reform. Laura Engelstein, for instance, equates the ardor for reform embodied in those individuals that executed and supported the Russian Revolution of 1905 with that of erotic passion.¹⁵ Similarly, Norbert Meienberger stresses that numerous segments of Chinese society—students and scholars, officials and nonofficials—rather enthusiastically urged the imperial government to adopt constitutional reforms by 1904 and 1905 and viewed the regime's initial conciliatory gestures as welcome proof of such a trend.¹⁶ In essence, the expectations among the respective Russian and Chinese populaces were quite high regarding constitutional reform. In turn, the harsh realities of insincere reform in Russia

¹³ George F. Kennan, "The Breakdown of the Tsarist Autocracy," in *The Fall of the Russian Empire*, ed. Edward Chmielewski (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1973), 205.

¹⁴ Frederic Wakeman, Jr., *The Fall of Imperial China* (New York: The Free Press, 1975), 210-211.

¹⁵ Engelstein, *The Keys to Happiness*, 215ff.

¹⁶ Norton Meienberger, *The Emergence of Constitutional Government in China (1905-1908): The Concept Sanctioned by the Empress Dowager Tz'u-hsi* (Bern, Germany: Peter Lang, 1980), 22.

and China at the turn of the twentieth century—resulting primarily from the illiberal actions of the respective rulers of these states—essentially gave rise to Weber’s aforementioned “disenchantment” among reform-minded segments of society.

The empirical evidence derived from the actions of the Russian czar and the Chinese emperor indicates that neither Nicholas II nor the Empress Dowager had very little intention of establishing genuine constitutional monarchies in their states—either in a procedural or substantive sense. As Sidney Harcave argues, Russia’s political system following the declaration of the October Manifesto resulted from “the efforts of the Czar and the bureaucracy to carry out the letter of the manifesto while preserving the spirit of the autocracy.”¹⁷ In a similar vein, Immanuel C. Y. Hsü contends, the Empress Dowager’s support for constitutional reform essentially arose due to the fact that her “hatred for revolution exceeded her distaste for constitutionalism.”¹⁸ Both Nicholas II and the Empress Dowager entered into reform fundamentally to placate the liberal elements of their respective societies that arose and gained mass support as a result of the crises of legitimacy that each state faced. The historical evidence indicates that these constitutional reforms essentially served as a means of “buying time” until the autocratic Russian and Chinese regimes could reassert themselves in a more traditional manner. However, by raising the expectations of their citizens with promises of sweeping, Western-style liberal reforms, however, and soon thereafter rescinding on these gestures (most clearly through the Russian Fundamental Laws of 1906 and the Qing Outline of Constitution), Nicholas II and the Empress Dowager helped transform societies calling for reform into those fiercely advocating more extreme substantive and procedural overhauls. Insincere reform, disingenuously initiated on the part of the Russian czar and the Chinese empress, therefore not only crippled any chances of for the rise of truly meaningful constitutional governance, but also helped shift support toward revolutionary elements like the Bolsheviks in Russia and the KMT Nationalists and Communists in China that eventually toppled these regimes.

¹⁷ Sidney Harcave, “The Russian Revolution of 1905,” in *The Fall of the Russian Empire*, Edward Chmielewski, ed. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1973), 25.

¹⁸ Immanuel C. Y. Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China* (New York, 1970): “The Constitutional Movement, 1905-1911,” 493-500 as quoted in Meienberger, *The Emergence of Constitutional Government in China*, 9.

Hence, I have presented a number of reasons that constitutional reform failed to give rise to democratic governance in turn of the century Russia and China. The question remains, however, as to why the failure of reform ultimately gave rise to revolution instead of the full-fledged reassertion of authoritarianism or further liberal reform within the context of the imperial regimes. In the following section, I address the writings of various scholars and analysts on the sources of revolution—both in general and in the specific cases of early twentieth century Russia and China. Moreover, I offer a theory of the relationship between political legitimacy, reform, and revolution in relation to the Russian and Chinese cases under consideration.

WHY DID FAILED REFORM GIVE WAY TO REVOLUTION?

Samuel P. Huntington defines a revolution as a “rapid, fundamental, and violent domestic change in the dominant values and myths of a society, in its political institutions, social structure, leadership, and government activities and policies.”¹⁹ Alternatively, Lenin described revolutions as “festivals of the oppressed and exploited. At no other time are the masses of the people in a position to come forward so actively as creators of a new social order.”²⁰ Certainly, both descriptions are appropriate when applied to the present cases in Russian and Chinese history. In the case of Russia, the Revolution of 1905 transformed the czarist state into a constitutional monarchy. Later, the February Revolution of 1917 further transformed the state into a democracy that lasted until the Bolsheviks rose to power in October of that year. China, on the other hand, instituted constitutional reforms without widespread revolution. As these reforms failed to establish representative government, however, numerous provinces revolted and eventually brought down the imperial regime. In turn, Yuan Shikai established a republic that, between 1911 and 1949, gave way to autocracy, warlordism, another republican period, and the eventual rise of the Chinese Communists. Certainly, Huntington’s notion

¹⁹ Huntington quoted in Theda Skocpol, “France, Russia, and China: A Structural Analysis of Social Revolutions” in *Social Revolutions in the Modern World* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1994), 133.

²⁰ Lenin quoted in Skocpol, “France, Russia, and China: A Structural Analysis of Social Revolutions” in *Social Revolutions in the Modern World*, 133.

of “rapid, fundamental, and violent domestic change in the dominant values and myths of a society” would apply to these tumultuous series of events in both Russia and China.

The writings of Karl Marx on revolution are among the most influential of the modern era. Based on a materialistic interpretation of the philosophies of Hegel, Marx foremost viewed revolution as the driving force of history.²¹ Furthermore, in the Communist Manifesto, Marx goes on to make one of his most notable assertions: “The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.”²² As noted above, Lenin also concurred that the key to democratic governance—at least in the Communist conceptualization of the phrase—could only come about through bourgeois revolution. In a strict sense, however, these theories of revolution are something of an ill fit for Russia and China at the turn of the twentieth century. As noted above and in Chapters Two and Three, neither Russia nor China developed the independent bourgeois class upon which Marxist theories of revolution are fundamentally contingent. While capitalism had made inroads in both countries—particularly in Chinese agriculture—neither state was typified the mature, modern capitalist society that Marx envisioned for communist revolution. That said, however, class-consciousness and struggle *did* play a significant role in both the Chinese and Russian revolutions. Certainly, the lack of meaningful political participation of the middle and lower classes acted as a significant source of revolutionary trends in both states. Furthermore, strikes and peasant revolts served as immediate impetuses for full-fledged revolution and the toppling of the imperial regimes. Hence, while neither Russia nor China precisely fit the Marxist mold for modern revolution, it remains a telling fact that nominally Marxist regimes ultimately came to power in each state.

Analyst Theda Skocpol, on the other hand, deals specifically with the early twentieth century revolutions in both China and Russia. She presents three fundamental reasons that the October Revolution of 1917 in Russia and the Revolution of 1911-1949 in China transpired: “1) the collapse...of central administrative and military machineries;

²¹ Karl Marx, “The German Ideology,” in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W. W. Norton & Company. 1978), 164.

²² Karl Marx, “Manifesto of the Communist Party, 1848,” in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W. W. Norton & Company. 1978), 473.

2) widespread peasant rebellions; and 3) marginal elite political movements.”²³ In the first case, whereas Nicholas II could count on the Russian military to quell dispute and maintain control, this was not the case by 1917 as the state was immersed in World War I. In a similar fashion, the Chinese Revolution of 1911 arose when the Qing Dynasty found itself unable to effectively put down revolts throughout its provinces without the assistance of the popular general, Yuan Shikai. Furthermore, as noted above, peasant rebellions—attributed by Skocpol largely to the persistence of the regimes’ premodern agrarian economies—served as a significant “immediate” source of revolution in Russia and China.²⁴ Finally, the rise of marginal elite political movements played an unquestionable role in revolution in both Russia and China. As noted above, the failure of reform to yield meaningful democratic outcomes allowed revolutionary groups such as the Bolsheviks in Russia and the KMT (and, ultimately, the Communists) in China to gain momentum and public support. Hence, Skocpol’s analysis offers a wide-ranging set of both long-term and immediate sources of revolution in Russia and China.

Other analysts offer similar approaches to Russian and Chinese revolutionary experiences in the early years of the twentieth century. Writing specifically on the collapse of imperial China, Barrington Moore notes that the failure to adopt commercial agriculture and the virtual collapse of governmental bureaucracy in the state played a crucial role in fomenting revolution.²⁵ Alternatively, Ted Gurr focuses his analysis on social-psychological assumptions when describing revolutions in general. He argues that revolutions occur when discontentment arises among individuals regarding what they feel they are legitimately entitled to (whether political influence, economic prosperity, or otherwise) and what they feel they are capable of attaining under the present status quo.²⁶ In this sense, Gurr’s theories of revolution bear a striking similarity to the aforementioned concept of “disenchantment” as discussed by Weber. William Sewell, on the other hand, focuses primarily on the role of conflicting ideologies in the sociology of revolutions,

²³ Skocpol, “France, Russia, and China: A Structural Analysis of Social Revolutions,” 135.

²⁴ Skocpol, “France, Russia, and China: A Structural Analysis of Social Revolutions,” 135ff.

²⁵ Barrington Moore, Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), 162ff.

²⁶ Ted Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970) referenced in Barbara Salert, *Four Theories: Revolutions and Revolutionaries* (New York: Elsevier Scientific Publishing Company, 1976), 12.

basing his theories on the case study of the French Revolution.²⁷ In the case of the Russian and Chinese revolutions, however, such conflicting ideologies also played a significant role. In each state, a wide range of political ideologies arose during the early twentieth century, ranging from conservative elements in support of the imperial regimes to constitutional reformers to outright revolutionaries and other extremist elements. While the inherent contradictions in these conflicting ideologies played themselves out against backdrop of the political realities of each state, revolutionary elements ultimately came to the fore as noted above.

Certainly, each of the scholars and analysts discussed above offer insightful perspectives on both revolutions in general, and specifically revolutions in Russia and China around the turn of the twentieth century. I argue, however, that the theories of revolution put forth by Marx, Skocpol, Moore, Gurr, Sewell, and others can also be perceived as components of a broader theory of failed reform and revolution constituted on the Weberian concepts of legitimacy discussed in Chapter One. Many of the factor discussed by the scholars above—class struggle, lack of modernization, the collapse of the military and state bureaucracy—play a significant role in the more general crises of legitimacy faced by Russia and China as a result of war loss and the failure of constitutional reform in the early years of the twentieth century.

To reiterate points initially made in Chapters Two and Three, the imperial states of Russia and China based their legitimate authority on a combination of traditional and charismatic elements by the time of the turn of the twentieth century. Traditional authority, as defined by Weber, arises from the belief on the part of the governed that a state's power structure is valid due to the fact that the power structure has, if effect, always existed through the "virtue of the sanctity of age-old rules and powers."²⁸ Therefore, under a system of traditional legitimacy, the *institutions* of the state and, in turn, their longevity are the ultimate sources of the power structure's validity. In the case

²⁷ William H. Sewell, "Ideologies and Social Revolutions: Reflections on the French Case," in *Social Revolutions in the Modern World*, 169ff.

of Russia, the czarist regime had controlled the political system since the late fifteenth century, giving the government more than four centuries upon which to build a cultural understanding of legitimate authority.²⁹ China, on the other hand, could date the origins of its political power structure back almost two thousand years by the time of the late Qing Dynasty.³⁰ Thus, both regimes had history on their side.

Furthermore, both czarist Russia and imperial China supplemented the authority derived from the significant longevity of their regimes with initially charismatic elements of legitimacy as well. To restate, charismatic authority arises from the belief of the governed that an individual personality is imbued with “supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities.”³¹ It is important to note that in such a case of charismatic power structure, ultimate validity is placed in the *individual* that controls or rules over the state. For instance, the Czar’s supreme authority was traditionally considered (as well as legally conceptualized) to flow from the supreme sanction of God. Moreover, the Russia populace accepted this divine basis of authority and, as a result, the czars generally maintained high levels of popular support through the centuries.³² In a similar fashion, the Chinese people considered their Emperor to be the supreme patron of the Confucian scholars, as well as the so-called Son of Heaven.³³ When empowered by the Mandate of Heaven, the Chinese emperor’s power was, in effect, without limits. As noted in Chapters Two and Three, however, this charismatic element of authority was perhaps more a matter of traditional respect for the monarch by the time of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries than a cultural reality. Many segments of both the Russian and Chinese populations, as discussed above, hardly considered the persons of Nicholas II and the Empress Dowager as being imbued with any supernatural or exceptional qualities that separated them from the leaders of the

²⁸ Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology, Volume One*, Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, ed. (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1978), 226; Max Weber, *On Charisma and Institution Building (Selected Papers)*, S. N. Eisenstadt, ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 12.

²⁹ Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 5th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 66.

³⁰ June Teufel Dreyer, *China’s Political System: Modernization and Tradition*, third ed. (Addison Wesley Longman, Inc., 2000), 26.

³¹ Weber, *Economy and Society*, 241.

³² Jacob Walkin, *The Rise of Democracy in Pre-Revolutionary Russia: Political and Social Institutions Under the Last Three Czars* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962), 27, 33.

³³ Jack Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions: China from the 1800s to the 1980s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 15-16.

reform movements in their respective states. Hence, the charismatic elements of the authority of the Russian Czar and the Chinese Empress were perhaps more accurately described by this era as another manifestation of traditional legitimacy.

Therefore, as established above, traditional political legitimacy in czarist Russia and imperial China rested fundamentally with both the institutions of these states and, to a much lesser degree, in the persons of their rulers. In turn, around the turn of the twentieth century, both states discovered the foundations of their political legitimacy under challenge from both long-term factors (societal and economic disparities, lack of political participation, and so forth) and immediate crises (such as humiliating losses in the Russo-Japanese and Sino-Japanese Wars, respectively). No longer capable of simply “falling back” on their traditional and charismatic sources of authority, both regimes attempted to reconstitute their validity with the people over whom they governed in a more “modern” rational-legal framework. By initiating such a reconstitution, however, the Russian and Chinese regimes, in effect, further deteriorated the already tenuous foundations of traditional authority they still maintained at that point.

To reiterate, traditional authority arises from the belief on the part of the governed that the state’s political institutions have always existed and are therefore valid. If the state itself undertakes a significant overhaul of its power structure, it modifies “that which has always been,” causing it, in effect, to no longer be—at least in the form under which the governed had traditionally recognized it. Therefore, such changes rob the institutions of much of their remaining traditional authority. Moreover, the admission of a (theoretically) divinely guided monarch that his or her political system requires modification and that he or she may require consultation by a representative body of some sort fundamentally calls into question his recognized unerring authority. Therefore, the legitimacy of the individual—in this case the Russia Czar and the Chinese Emperor—is further called into question when met with a full-fledged crisis of legitimacy under which authority must be reconstituted.

The government of Russia and China, respectively, each found itself facing crises of legitimacy that necessitated the reconstitution of their political authority at the turn of the twentieth century. Moreover, each state chose to address these crises in the same manner: by introducing rational-legal reforms to regain the support of their populaces and, in turn, “shore up” the authority of the existing traditional institutions and charismatic rulers. As noted above and presented throughout Chapters Two and Three, however, the populaces of Russia and China perceived little or no legitimacy left in these traditional and charismatic foundations of authority. The manner in which these regimes carried out reform, however, failed to establish foundations of rational-legal authority that could gain legitimacy over time. After quelling initial unrest with promises of constitutional reform, both the Russian Czar and the Chinese Emperor revised these original goals of liberal reform and attempted to reassert traditional authority through decidedly illiberal channels. These attempts at traditional reassertion first came in the form of the retraction of promised liberal reform with the Russian Fundamental Laws of 1906 and the Chinese Outline of Constitution in 1908 and continued later through such acts as the dissolution of the Russian Duma and the limiting of the Chinese franchise with the electoral laws of 1908. Clearly, the rulers of both Russia and China viewed constitutional reform as a “quick fix” for dissatisfaction with their continued reign growing among their respective populaces. As a result, both China and Russia failed to establish a meaningful or legitimate foundation for rational-legal authority. Furthermore, such trends further disillusioned reformers and helped give rise to more revolutionary elements of Russian and Chinese society, intent on reconstituting the legitimate political authority of the state on their own terms.

Therefore, although initial reforms had alleviated the immediate sources of discontent in Russia and China resulting respectively from the Russo-Japanese and Sino-Japanese Wars, the failure of the regimes to carry through with these reforms gave rise to an entirely new crisis of legitimacy. Many of the long-term deficiencies of the regimes (social and economic inequality, an overall lack of modernization, and so forth) persisted and, by initiating reform to deal with the more immediate crises, the Russian and Chinese regimes had effectively nullified their already-tarnished sources of traditional and

charismatic legitimacy. The unwillingness of the imperial regimes to relinquish ultimate authority, however, coupled with their respective tendencies to actively retract promises of liberal reform, prevented the Russian and Chinese regimes from establishing a rational-legal foundation for political authority. In turn, with traditional and charismatic sources depleted and the failure to establish rational-legal norms, Russia and China were fundamentally left with no basis of legitimate authority in the eyes of their populaces.

As Weber contends, “Compliance with authority imposed by one man or several, insofar as it does not depend on fear or is derived from motives of expediency, always presupposes *a belief* in the legitimate authority of the source imposing it.”³⁴ Hence, as a result of the initial challenges to legitimacy and subsequent failed constitutional reforms, the people of Russia and China no longer perceived their regimes as something actually worth believing in as a source of legitimate authority. As social unrest and external challenges to legitimacy continued and revolutionary movements increased in support in each state, both Russia and China ultimately gave way to revolt and the overthrow of the political power structures that had dominated each state for centuries. In turn, my conceptualization of this progression of challenged legitimacy, political reform, and revolution as it pertains to Russia and China at the turn of the twentieth century is once again summarized in Table 3 below.

Table 3

Progression of Challenged Legitimacy, Political Reform, and Revolution In Early-Twentieth Century Russia and China
<p><u>STAGE 1</u></p> <p>War Loss (external) → Social Unrest (internal) → Loss of Traditional/Charismatic Legitimacy → Political Reform and Reconstitution of Legitimacy</p>
<p><u>STAGE 2</u></p> <p>Failure and/or Retraction of Political Reform (internal) → Loss of Rational-Legal and remaining Traditional/Charismatic Legitimacy + War Loss (external) and/or Social Unrest (internal) → Revolution</p>

³⁴ Max Weber, *Basic Concepts in Sociology*, translated by H. P. Secher (New York: The Citadel Press, 1969), 83. Emphasis added.

It should be noted that the progression of legitimacy summarized in Table 3 deals extensively in ideal types in its conceptualization. Just as legitimacy was a fundamental aspect of much of Max Weber's writings, issues of political legitimacy and challenges thereto lie at the heart of this period of analysis. Therefore, when czarist Russia and imperial China could no longer draw upon any significant sources of legitimate political authority to govern over their people, their regimes collapsed and gave rise to revolutionary forces that eventually reconstituted legitimacy on their own terms in each state. Although it is possible that, given time, these regimes may have survived and possibly evolved into more genuine constitutional monarchies, both external pressures (such as Russia's continuing war loss in World War I) and internal factors (the 1911 provincial revolts in China and the rise of revolutionary political parties in both states) served to deal the *coup de grace* to these regimes before such developments could occur.

CONCLUSIONS

As Mary C. Wright argues regarding China in the final days of the Qing Dynasty—and I would contend that the same applies to the waning days of Romanov rule in Russia—“reform destroyed the reforming government.”³⁵ Political reform had effectively undermined the foundations of traditional and charismatic legitimacy in these states, and the deficiency of each regime in establishing meaningful norms of participatory and representative government to replace these foundations failed to provide a rational-legal basis of authority in their place. As a result, with its sources of legitimate authority depleted in the eyes of its populace, each state gave way to revolution. In the case of Russia, revolution initially gave way to a reform-minded democratic Provisional Government in 1917 that in turn persisted for approximately eight months. In China, revolution in 1911 resulted in reforms that subsequently shaped the foundation of a Chinese republic, which soon gave way to autocracy, warlordism, and yet another period of republican government. In both cases, however, the ultimate result was the same: the

³⁵ Mary C. Wright, ed., *China in Revolution: The First Phase, 1900-1913* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 50 as quoted in Skocpol, *States & Social Revolutions*, 78.

eventual rise of authoritarian Communist regimes that, in turn, dominated the Russian politics for over seventy years and continues to govern over China to the present day.

In the brief epilogue that follows this chapter, I will present an overview of contemporary politics and reform in Russia and China. The significant amount of time that has elapsed since the events of the early twentieth century in Russia and China virtually rules out any direct connection with contemporary reform in these states. I will argue, however, that many of the challenges to legitimacy faced by Russia and China at the turn of the twentieth century, as well as their responses of these challenges, have parallels in their contemporary political landscapes at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

EPILOGUE: RUSSIA AND CHINA TODAY

The following epilogue briefly explores some of the parallels in terms of both political legitimacy and reform that exist between contemporary Russia and China and the experiences of these states at the turn of the twentieth century. Based on the data provided by the preceding historical accounts, the frequently asserted "fact" that neither Russia nor China can claim prior experience with representative government clearly merits reconsideration. What, if any, are the contemporary implications of each nation's respective period of experimentation with constitutional reform in the early years of the twentieth century? I would argue that the sheer amount of time that has passed since 1905 and the intervening period of Communist rule, coupled with the overall failure of meaningful reforms during the early twentieth-century period, suggests that constitutional movements in Russia and China engendered no meaningful legacy in terms of contemporary reforms in these states. While it is injudicious to posit any direct connection between early twentieth-century constitutionalism and contemporary reform in Russia and China, however, I argue that similarities exist both in the fundamental motivations for reform, as well as their outcomes between the two distinct eras.

Political and economic reform in the Soviet Union began in earnest during the late 1980s with the institution of Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev's twin policies of *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (restructuring). These significant reforms included the introduction of limited aspects of capitalism, decentralization, and freedom of speech and the press.¹ Clearly, *perestroika* and *glasnost* represented a sweeping reconstitution of the political, social, and economic norms that had governed the Soviet Union for approximately seventy years. Analyst Douglas A. Borer contends that continued war loss in the Soviet Union's ill-fated Afghanistan invasion left the regime bankrupt in terms of its coercive state authority.² As a result of this external challenge to the state's ultimate authority, a domestic crisis of legitimacy arose, threatening the foundations of the Soviet

¹ Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 5th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 592-593.

² Douglas A. Borer, *Superpowers Defeated: Vietnam and Afghanistan Compared* (London: Frank Cass, 1999), 231ff.

system. As Gorbachev stated following the enactment of his substantive political and economic reforms in 1985:

“Perestroika is an urgent necessity arising from the profound processes of development in our socialist society. The society is ripe for change. It has long been yearning for it. Any delay in beginning perestroika could have led to an exacerbated internal situation in the near future, which, to put it bluntly, would have been fraught with serious social, economic, and political crises.”³

Clearly, Gorbachev recognized the crisis of legitimacy facing the Soviet Union, as evident both in the statement above and his generally reform-minded actions as Soviet premier. Following the superpower’s withdraw from Afghanistan in 1989, Gorbachev’s *perestroika* policies ultimately resulted in the abolishment of Article 6 of the 1977 Soviet constitution in 1990, ending the Communist Party’s monopoly on political power.⁴ By the end of 1991, no longer capable of exercising the coercive authority that had held the regime together for decades and facing competition from elements of its population calling for further liberal reforms, the Soviet Union collapsed and left in its place fifteen sovereign states.

Following the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia quickly went about reconstituting its political legitimacy along rational-legal lines through a complete overhaul of the political and economic systems that had dominated the state for nearly seventy years. As a result, prominent reformer Boris Yeltsin soon rose to power as the first president of Russia. As analyst Lilia Shevtsova contends, however, the “prevailing political mentality of Russia’s new statehood was still, not surprisingly, derived to a large degree from the Soviet past.”⁵ Soon after assuming the office, Yeltsin began a process of consolidating power around himself and the office of the presidency. In turn, Yeltsin's frequent flirtation with neo-authoritarian tactics—perhaps most apparent in his bombardment of

³ Mikhail Gorbachev, *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1987), 3.

⁴ Douglas A. Borer, "War Loss and Political Reform: An Ongoing Pattern in Russian History," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 20, no. 4 (1997): 363.

⁵ Lilia Shevtsova, *Yeltsin's Russia: Myths and Reality* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999), 19.

the Parliament in September 1993—illustrated a striking continuity with the political maneuvering of Nicholas II relative to his own Duma after the Revolution of 1905. Attempts to maintain his own ultimate authority at the expense of the democratic process, in fact, characterized much of Yeltsin's tenure in office as he faced such challenges to political legitimacy as Russia's failing economy and separatist tensions in Chechnya. Moreover, Yeltsin's successor as president, former KGB spymaster Vladimir Putin, has continued along this quasi-democratic path, stating at one point during the 2000 Russian presidential election, for instance, "Democracy is the dictatorship of the law. The stronger the state is, the freer the individual."⁶ Therefore, I contend that at the dawn of the twenty-first century, Russia's political landscape stands at a crossroad between the maturation of rational-legal reform and the sporadic reversion to more traditional illiberal tendencies.

This crossroad between traditional and modern political arrangements confronted by post-Soviet Russia at the turn of the twenty-first century bears a striking similarity to the situation faced by czarist Russia at the turn of the twentieth century. As noted above, war loss played an immediate role in prompting the political reforms undertaken both in czarist Russia under Nicholas II and in the Soviet Union under Gorbachev. A challenge to legitimacy in both cases—most notably losses in the Russo-Japanese War and the Afghan invasion, respectively—necessitated a reconstitution of political authority in order for the regime to remain in power. Moreover, at both historical junctures under consideration, Russia turned to rational-legal reforms to reconstitute its right to rule. Neither post-1905 Russia nor the constitutional state of Russia that ultimately emerged from Gorbachev's reforms in the early 1990s, however, was willing to fully commit to the procedural and substantive elements of democracy. As a result, both Nicholas II and Yeltsin continued to revert to autocratic tactics when their ultimate authority came under attack. The similarities between these two figures are perhaps most striking in terms of the tumultuous relationship that each leader maintained with his respective Duma. In observing Yelstin's ongoing conflicts with the parliament throughout 1993 (as well as

⁶ "What They Said (And Wished They Hadn't) During the Campaign," *Russia Today*, <<http://www.russiatoday.com/features.php3?id=145320>>, 23 March 2000.

those experienced by Putin in 2001),⁷ it is difficult to deny the parallels with Nicholas II's dissolution of the first two Dumas in search of a representative body that would more accurately reflect the interests of the imperial government. As a result of these similarities, Nicolai Petro delineates this complex merger of liberal reform and continued autocratic behavior as "constrained autocracy" and identifies it as a Russian cultural trait that may be traced back as far as the Great Reforms of Alexander II.⁸ While the Russian czars could recognize the societal need for political reform, they also intended for their own traditional power to remain as absolute as possible. In turn, traditional elements of Russia political culture were also present in the post-Soviet figure of President Yeltsin.

Despite these similarities, however, one should not overlook the fundamental differences between Russian political reforms that occurred both in the early and late years of the twentieth century. For instance, whereas political reform in Russia was immediately precipitated by statewide revolution in 1905, this was not the case when Gorbachev implemented his policies of *perestroika* and *glasnost*. Instead, Gorbachev undertook the risk of his own accord and instituted these reforms in hopes of strengthening the Soviet Union so such a revolution would not transpire when the regime's legitimacy was called into question by both internal and external factors.⁹ Moreover, while Nicholas II remained in control of the Russian government as constitutional reforms were implemented, Gorbachev's authority gave way to Boris Yeltsin as the former's policies culminated in the ultimate collapse of the Soviet Union and the establishment of a constitutional framework in its place. Also, while Nicholas II's retraction of liberal reform led to mass and elite discontent at the turn of the twentieth century, the merger of liberalism and neo-authoritarianism under Yeltsin and Putin in the contemporary era has generally been met with electoral support from the Russian masses.¹⁰

⁷ Peter Baker, "Putin Signals Move to Dissolve Duma," *Washington Post*, 6 March 2001.

⁸ Nicolai N. Petro, *The Rebirth of Russian Democracy: An Interpretation of Political Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 28ff.

⁹ Gorbachev, *Perestroika*, 3.

¹⁰ While Yeltsin's popularity unquestionably waxed and waned through his tenure in office, he managed to secure a surprisingly overwhelming electoral victory in 1996. Similarly, Putin experienced a significant level of public support in the presidential elections of 2000. From *OMRI Russian Presidential Election Survey*, No. 13, (4 July, 1996); Michael Wines, "Election in Russia: The Overview; Putin Wins Russia Vote in First Round, but His Majority is Less than Expected," *New York Times*, 27 March 2000.

In summary, it is difficult to predict whether the merger of rational-legal reforms with the held-over elements of autocratic rule in post-Soviet Russia will result in the fundamental instability of the system and the resultant revolution that occurred under Nicholas II. The mass electoral support for Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin—and, by extension, the post-Soviet political system in general—seems to refute such a grim prognosis. As Yeltsin’s former Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar once stated regarding the state’s rather uncertain future, however, “Russia is today not a bad subject for long-term prognostication, and a very inappropriate subject for short-term analysis.”¹¹

The People’s Republic of China, on the other hand, began its gradual series of political reforms following the death of Chairman Mao Zedong in 1976. While China had not suffered war loss abroad in any way comparable to the Soviet experience in Afghanistan, they faced a significant domestic crisis of legitimacy resulting from the excesses of the Maoist period such as the failed Great Leap Forward. Chief among these challenges to legitimacy, however, was the disastrous outcome of the Cultural Revolution of 1966-1976. To briefly summarize, the Cultural Revolution was an attempt by the Maoist regime to restore revolutionary purity to the Chinese populace that began with the censorship and harassment of artists and scholars and culminated in all-out warfare against supposedly “counter-revolutionary” elements of society. As historian June Teufel Dreyer contends, many Chinese citizens “blamed the country’s leadership for what had happened, thereby further weakening the CCP’s [Communist Chinese Party] legitimacy.”¹² Mao’s successor, Deng Xiaoping, therefore faced the challenge of restoring some sense of valid authority to a state ravaged by the sheer devastation and irrationality of the Cultural Revolution a few years earlier. Deng, in turn, chose to set about a gradual program of political and economic reform over the course of the following decades.

¹¹ Petro, *The Rebirth of Russian Democracy*, 1.

¹² June Teufel Dreyer, *China’s Political System: Modernization and Tradition*, third ed. (Addison Wesley Longman, Inc., 2000), 103, 98-103.

It should be noted that Deng's reform process clearly lacked the sweeping quality of, for instance, the Qing Dynasty's concession to constitutional reform at the turn of the twentieth century. Instead, Deng's reforms operated within the confines of the overarching authoritarian framework of the Chinese system, while making adjustments to the substructure. These reforms included the introduction of economic incentives and limited free market structure into the Communist economy of the People's Republic, as well as significant legal rationalization, electoral restructuring, and political reform that increasingly devolved power to provincial and local governing units.¹³ Perhaps most significantly, Deng's reforms also began the separation of the monolithic Chinese Communist Party apparatus from both the government and the military, thus decreasing the overall direct influence of the CCP over the lives of Chinese citizens.¹⁴ Despite the trends of decentralization and both gradual political and economic liberalization under Deng and his successor Jiang Zemin, however, programs of social control and the intolerance toward reform encapsulated by the Tiananmen Square incident of 1989 serve as reminders that the Chinese leadership has not yet abandoned the methods of autocracy to achieve its goals and maintain authority.

I would argue that Communist China faced challenges to its legitimacy in the post-Maoist era not unlike those that confronted the Qing Dynasty around the turn of the twentieth century. Whereas the traditional authority of the imperial state came under criticism primarily as a result of external pressures such as war loss at the hands of both Western imperialists and the Japanese, however, the challenges faced by Deng following Mao's death were predominantly internal in origin. Yet, it is important to note that in both cases, the Chinese regimes instituted reforms from above that effectively managed to stem any revolutionary tides (at least temporarily in the case of the Qing Dynasty) that emerged as a result of these challenges to legitimacy. Furthermore, I would argue that the reforms initiated by both the Empress Dowager and Deng Xiaopeng focused more squarely on concerns of modernization rather than the ideals of Western liberalism—a key point of departure from the previously described trends in Russia.

¹³ Dreyer, *China's Political System*, 111-113.

¹⁴ An Chen provides a detailed and insightful analysis of post-Maoist reform in China in *Restructuring Political Power in China: Alliances & Opposition, 1978-1998* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999).

While the circumstances and challenges to legitimacy leading up to reform in the post-Mao period were somewhat similar to those present in the final years of the Qing Dynasty, the nature of the reforms themselves were quite distinct. For instance, the reforms promulgated at the turn of the twentieth century sought to restructure the national government, adding a national representative assembly to serve as the primary legislative body. While the establishment of such an assembly proved problematic, the reforms that the Qing Dynasty carried through were at least ostensibly aimed as such a restructuring on the national level. On the other hand, Deng's reforms did not attempt to significantly alter the apparatus of the central government of the People's Republic. Instead, it focused more on transforming the manner in which the state dealt with local and provincial governance.¹⁵ Moreover, whereas the Qing Dynasty's efforts toward decentralization ultimately fell to the wayside with the onset of the warlord period after Yuan Shikai's death, Deng's reforms at least somewhat successfully devolved a degree of political influence to the provinces and local governing bodies. Furthermore, the continued liberalization of the post-Mao Chinese economy has led many observers to argue that further political liberalization is also at hand at some point in the future.

As scholar An Chen contends, "Neither Gorbachev nor Deng intended for his reform to introduce a capitalist system and Western-style democracy."¹⁶ In this sense one may perhaps consider Deng's reforms far more successful, as Gorbachev's essentially hastened the collapse of the Soviet Union. Deng's, on the other hand, effectively restored much of the legitimacy that the excesses of the Maoist era had depleted. At the present, both Russia and China occupy a unique position in a political sense, incorporating rational-legal elements of political reform with more traditional instances of power politics and the utilization of coercive force to maintain authority. Although political reform in post-Maoist China has yet to reach the degree of that in post-Soviet Russia, complex syntheses of political liberalization and authoritarian legacies have re-emerged

¹⁵ Dreyer, *China's Political System*, 103.

¹⁶ An Chen, *Restructuring Political Power in China*, 9.

in both states—circumstances reminiscent in many ways of those prevalent in the brief periods of constitutional reform in each state prior to the First World War.

In conclusion, I contend that numerous parallels exist between the political challenges facing Russia and China in recent years and those that each state faced at the turn of the twentieth century. Each state, in turn, has attempted fundamental reconstitution of its legitimate political authority in recent decades. Russia first went about this reconstitution through reform of the Soviet system under Gorbachev and later in its wholesale collapse and replacement with the present democratic Russian polity. Post-Soviet Russia, however, has shown occasional indications under the leadership of Yeltsin and Putin of reversion to authoritarian techniques within its liberal political framework. China, on the other hand, has undergone a far more gradual decentralization and devolution of power of power in the years since Mao's death. The Chinese Communist regime remains, however, an autocratic state prone to decidedly illiberal actions. Although it is difficult to predict what direction political reform will continue to take in Russia and China at the turn of the twenty-first century, I contend that the exploration of such developments through the conceptual lenses of the legitimacy crisis and the resulting reconstitution of authority is a fitting analytical tool.

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CURRICULUM VITA

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