

## **Revolutionary Components Essay**

### *Directions:*

Complete a 2-3 page typed essay, describing the revolution that established the current political system of each core country.

Within your essay include:

- The revolutionary components, explaining how they were a part of the evolutionary era.
- Why the revolution began . . . explaining three reasons for its development.
- Why the revolution ended . . . explaining three reasons, or policies, that were implemented that ended the political strife and created the current government.

### **Revolutions:**

Iran – Islamic Revolution of 1979

Russia -- Downfall of the Soviet Union, 1984 - 1991

China -- Chinese revolution, 1920-1948

Mexico -- Mexican revolution, 1920-1945

Great Britain -- Glorious Revolution of 1688

Nigeria-- Revolution of 1960

## **Revolution Components Essay Check Rubric**

Thesis states one's position

Three causes of the revolution are stated accurately

Three revolutionary solutions are stated accurately.

Punctuation, spelling, syntax are accurate.

Key revolutionary components are defined.

Since the early twentieth centuries, global civilization has been wracked by dramatic political and economic changes seizing states far and wide, often in tandem. Core countries of study (Iran, Russia, China, Mexico, Great Britain, and Nigeria) have all exhibited qualities generally accepted to frequently precipitate these changes, and all have experienced some form of revolution--a form of political change that brings rapid, dramatic changes to society--at some point or another in their histories, most within the past 150 years. In the case of China and Russia, for example, a belabored shift towards industrialization coupled with the rapid introduction of new intellectualism of the West sparked revolution that instituted new, extreme governments. Sudden independence and divisive circumstances of representation in the new government of Nigeria precipitated revolution as well; the Mexican Revolution saw similar division over issues of the existing power structure, determined not by ethnicity or religion in this case, but by wealth and class. The unique outlier of these countries is the United Kingdom (Great Britain), which experienced peaceful revolution (1688) centuries before these countries most recent violent upheavals, exchanging two forms of government in a very short span of time with little blood being shed, caused by dissatisfaction over the distribution of power in the state. All these countries, however, can be identified as sharing causes of political and economic reform that follow a pattern resulting in revolution, and all ended up resolving revolution in some manner. Components of revolution (leader, followers, theme, cause, recognition, resources, oppressor, spark, propaganda) are all present in these core countries' revolutions.

The United Kingdom, to begin with, is set apart by its uniquely peaceful change in government in a time distant from the other core countries. It was shaped, perhaps, primarily by reactionary dissent fomenting revolutionary tendencies upon the birth of James II's son; the birth of a biological son destined the throne for yet another Catholic monarchy, something wholly undesirable to many British citizenry, who wanted to see the Protestant son-in-law of James II, William of Orange (the leader of the revolution), ascend to the throne instead. The persecution of Bishops who had petitioned James II for redress to concerns about growing Catholic influence and the decreasing power of Parliament against Absolute rule did not help matters. In 1688, William of Orange replaced James II as King of Britain through a bloodless revolution after arriving with his own forces. This revolution was precipitated primarily by a growing fear of Catholic tyranny in the country (evidenced by removal of the Test and Corporation Acts that had prohibited Catholics from holding office), followed by James II's suspension of penal laws against Catholics through his declaration of indulgence in 1687, as well as the dissolution of his parliament in 1687. The birth of a biological, male heir was the last straw, the spark, quite simply, and led to revolution. Immediately following the revolution, the impact was minimal, but soon great changes occurred: the Bill of Rights of England was put to writing, defining the power of regents; Parliament's powers and role in government were altered dramatically in subsequent year. Monarchical influence waned, replaced by a more powerful Parliament; in the British colonies, the changes brought by the revolution led to Protestant Revolution in Maryland and the end of anti-Puritan laws brought about by the reign of King James. These developments satisfied the revolutionaries by guaranteeing, in effect, an end to Catholic rule in perpetuity by overthrowing a Catholic monarchy, weakening the monarchy (so such could not occur again), and expanding the power of the Parliament (the forum by which these dissidents could express dissatisfaction with a government such as the Catholic one). Limiting the power of the monarch also satisfied people who sought greater political representation compared to the absolutism of preceding monarchs.

The Communist Revolution experienced by China as a result of the Chinese Civil War presents a stark contrast to the relative peace experienced in England during the Glorious Revolution (although this peace was not experienced in Scotland or Ireland).

Stagnation under the Manchu rule of the Qing had created a backwards society in China, an agrarian anachronism in an industrial age; this precipitated great poverty as heavy revenue burdens were imposed on the peasants to support the government, both under the Qing and the following Beiyang Republic; this poverty was only worsened by the warlords period post-Qing, as the warlords and army generals demanded high taxes with too great a frequency. Communism gained popularity as a result of these conditions and Soviet influences, offering hope to the peasantry. The Kuomintang government of Chiang Kai-Shek largely reunited the Chinese Republic and ended the warlords period, but this new government once again failed to provide for the peasantry, operating under heavy corruption and inefficiency; this circumstance was not aided by further destruction wrought by the Second Sino-Japanese War. Prior to that war, however, fighting began in earnest between the Communists and Kuomintang after the Shanghai April 12<sup>th</sup> massacre of Communist dissidents by Kuomintang soldiers; the KMT began a crackdown against Communists, who were perceived as threatening the future of the Republic. This was the spark that led to open Civil War with many peasants supporting the Communists. The Communist Revolution's causes can therefore be marked as being the prevailing poverty of the peasantry, the corruption and inefficiency of Kuomintang government, and military repression by the Kuomintang government. The revolution, while put on pause during the Second Sino-Japanese War, continued after 1945 and came to an end in 1950 after the 1949 declaration of the People's Republic of China by Mao Tse-Tung (leader of the Communist Party and the revolution, inspiring the masses) and the capture of former Kuomintang territory on the mainland of the country. The immediate effects of the revolution were dramatic, as the effects of revolution often are; being that the revolutionaries had been radicals who had desired fundamental change to be wrought to fix a broken system, a new centralized, Communist government was instituted along with a command economy; this addressed peasant concerns over government function and economics. Segmented plans for development were also implemented, seeking to rapidly industrialize the country; this addressed concerns over China's lack of modernization relative to the rest of the globe. The Cultural Revolution and intense nationalism also brought many under the same banner, ending issues of disunity and military repression, as the latter was no longer perceived, for no one was a dissident for an extended period of time. The theme of resolving the issues of the peasantry was met.

The Mexican Revolution was rooted in many of the same issues that pervaded in China at the time of its revolution; poverty and high class stratification along with an oppressive government were present. The revolution was fomented by the 1910 election seeing the revolution's first leader, Francisco Madero, imprisoned; this simultaneously sparked support amongst his followers, and he urged them to being violent uprisings against the oppressor, Porfirio Diaz; further factors that precipitated successful revolution were propaganda by the revolutionaries (such as the glorification of Pancho Villa and Zapata) and a recognition of oppression embodied by Porfirio Diaz and foreign interests. The revolution, after many years of bloody fighting for the theme of political participation and an end to stark class division, came to a successful end (relatively). Solutions to the revolution included the 1917 Constitution, consolidation of power around President Venustiano Carranza under a Constitutionalist alliance (which included the assassination of former revolutionary leaders such as Pancho Villa and Zapata), and institution of land reform. These addressed concerns regarding the theme of the revolution by offering greater political participation and decreasing the power of the wealthy compared to the impoverished.

The Nigerian decolonization effort, 1962 Parliament riots, and subsequent Biafran War can be made to constitute the 'Nigerian Revolution'. In this 'revolution', the oppressors were perceived to be the Hausa-Fulani and Muslim interests of the North, as

well as those responsible for the 1966 military coup and counter-coup; the revolutionaries were the Biafrans and Nigerian reformers in government, supported by the persecuted Igbo and Christians. The success of this 'revolution' is debatable, as it ended in military defeat for Biafra but precipitated constitutional and governmental changes in Nigeria in the cause of greater federalism and unity. Ethnic tensions between competing groups, religious tensions between Muslims and Christians, and political tensions over the power of the North compared to Biafra all contributed to the eventual war. After bloody fighting, the solutions to the fighting came in the form of the Second Republic, the 1978 Constitution, and resumption of civilian rule by 1979. These solutions addressed earlier revolutionary themes concerning political equality, political participation, and the power of military rule.

The Islamic Revolution of 1979 created the modern government that is the Islamic Republic of Iran. Precipitated by an ailing economy, pushback to forced Westernization, and political and societal repression by the Shah and his military, reactionaries rose up against the oppressor Shah and established a new government. Intellectuals joined forces with the Shi'ite clerics in order to end the Shah's reign in hopes of jumpstarting a new government with greater political participation. The primary theme of the revolution, however, was a return to Islamic tradition and the potential beginning of new prosperity for Iran in terms of infrastructure, jobs, and an end to the financial woes of the people. Propaganda hailing Ruhollah Khomeini as a great religious leader and highlighting the political repression of the Shah spurred on the followers of the Shi'ite clerics, who were led by Khomeini himself. The new government that was established at the end of the revolution was headed by him as Ayatollah Khomeini. Political dissidence was swept away as an issue because of overwhelming support of the government at the start; a return to Muslim tradition and the implementation of a government heavily rooted in theocratic dogma satisfied traditionalists; and the Iran-Iraq war distracted from the financial woes of the country. The revolutionaries began to quarrel amongst themselves post-revolution, but the fundamentalists of Khomeini succeeded in suppressing these dissidents and silencing opposition within the government, maintaining an illusion of popular support. Thus, the modern Iranian state was born.

The final core country, the Russian Federation, was birthed in 1991 following the 1984-1991 collapse of the Soviet Union. This was a drawn-out end for what was once an eminent power, but revolution came and brought it to its knees. In the late 1980s, the Soviet Union had begun to show its cracks after Brezhnevian Stagnation. Consumer goods, essentials products, were fast growing scarce in the Soviet Union; in satellite states, political dissidence was fast becoming uncontrollable in the face of growing economic and political concern; attempts at reform by Gorbachev (Perestroika and Glasnost) and other Communist leaders ended up backfiring by empowering dissidents. Soon, the entire empire was collapsing. Revolution after revolution overthrew the former Soviet-backed governments in the satellite states in the Baltics, in Central Europe, and elsewhere. By the time the 1990s were fast approaching, the writing was on the wall. Leaders such as Boris Yeltsin called for an end to 'corrupt government' and oppression by the Soviet military, which had attempted to crack down on the revolutionary movements throughout the dominated territory; deaths of dissidents in the Baltics were hailed as martyrs. Division amongst the people and the military meant that resources for the revolutionaries were actually made available as the playing field was effectively leveled. Propaganda was employed by both sides in an attempt to gain the popular advantage, but in the end, the people who backed leaders such as Yeltsin and Sakharov and other reformers claimed final victory. The theme of a reformed Soviet Union, or of achieving greater political participation and economic solvency, as well as achieving greater independence from a dysfunctional government played out. The Belavezha Accords effectively ended the Soviet Union, the Alma-Ata Accords created the successor states and Commonwealth of

Independent States (satisfying those who had been motivated by independence from a corrupt government), and the reforms in satellite states (such as the reunification of Germany) brought satisfaction to movements who desired freedom from Soviet influence. Economic issues pervaded despite attempts being made to successfully transition socialist economies to market economies (middling success to failure was the result, partially satisfying revolutionaries).

Components of revolution (leader, followers, theme, cause, recognition, resources, oppressor, spark, propaganda) are all clearly present in the revolutions experienced by these core countries, having varying degrees of importance. All these countries can be identified as sharing causes of political and economic reform that follow a pattern resulting in revolution, and all ended up resolving revolution in some manner.