**Prompt:** Compare the reactions to Western (including the United States) influence in 2 of the following areas between 1750 and 1900: Egypt, Latin America, Japan, Ottoman Empire, Qing China, Russia

**ESSAY #1**

Between 1750 and 1900, both Latin America and Japan westernized their politics by adopting features of a republic. However, Japan industrialized on a large scale and Latin America did not. It remained an economic dependency on the west while Japan became a core nation.

Between 1750 and 1900, both Latin America and Japan were inspired to create new forms of government that reflected a Western style of republican government. During the decades of 1810 and 1830, Portuguese and Spanish colonies in Latin America successfully pursued independence movements. Most were led by Creoles with the aid of mestizos, mullatos, natives, and slaves who wanted more rights, including civil liberties and access to land. Revolutionary leaders like Simon Bolivar and Jose de San Martin desired the establishment of independent republics with constitutions that would guarantee many of these rights. Immediately after independence was gained, all but two Latin American nations were western-style republics. Brazil and Mexico began as imperial monarchies, though these didn’t last forever. Although these republics had legislatures, most came to be dominated by charismatic caudillos who rose to power promising liberal reform, but turned into dictators. These republics were weak. Japan, also introduced features of a western republic.

Latin America did not industrialize and remained a dependency of the west. Before independence, colonies in Latin America mainly produced cash crop items and precious metals for export to Western Europe. These items included cotton, tobacco, sugar, silver, and gold. This export economy was driven by mercantilism. After independence in the early 19th century, Latin American nations remained tied to western demand. They failed to industrialize on a large scale. Industrialization failed to happen because Creoles, who had the wealth to fund industrialization, were content with the wealth they made off of exporting raw materials to western industrialized nations. Therefore, they saw no need to alter the Latin American economy. It remained a dependency of the west. It exported goods needed in the west’s industrialization process like rubber, copper, oil. They also exported foods that were needed in the west’s industrial cities like tropical fruit, coffee, and sugar.
ESSAY #2

Throughout the era of western hegemony, between 1750 and 1900, most Western European nations, in addition to the newly-formed United States, saw unprecedented economic and imperial growth. This was primarily encouraged through their industrialization efforts. However, most of the world outside of the West was unprepared for the strength of the West. Two of these nations were Russia and Japan. As a result of Western influence, both Russia and Japan underwent a freeing of their peasant class in order to begin an industrialization process that imitated the West. However, whereas Japan reformed itself through selective-westernization without any major internal radical movements, Russia was plagued by them.

In reaction to growing threats by the West and in order to become globally competitive, both Russia and Japan understood that it was critical to abolish aspects of their former feudal system – in particular their peasant class. The reason for this common action was that, a strict feudal structure prevented a large number of potential laborers from taking jobs in critical industrial jobs. Because feudal structures tied peasants, or serfs, to the land and their aristocratic landlords, a freeing of that class had to occur first. This occurred first in Russia. Following the Crimean War in the 1850s, Russia understood its backwardness compared to the west despite earlier selective-westernization attempts under Peter the Great and Catherine the Great. Czar Alexander II, in 1861, emancipated the serfs so that they could leave the countryside and boyar control to take jobs in the cities of Moscow and St. Petersburg. This allowed the process of industrialization to begin. However, most serfs remained unhappy with the Russian aristocracy because serfs were still tied to the land until they could afford to make redemption payments to the boyars. Only then could the freed serfs truly move away from the farming estates. Because few serfs could make these payments immediately, industrialization began at a slower pace in Russia. Likewise, in Japan, under the Meiji government, most aspects of the feudal system were abolished after 1868, including the position of peasants. The Meiji era embraced selective westernization, including industrialization on a large scale. Unlike in Russia, peasants were completely freed from their obligations under the old feudal system as the shogun, daimyo, and samurai were also abolished as feudal ranks. This meant that the Japanese could quickly take on new jobs in factory cities like Tokyo. Many former peasants took jobs in zaibatsu like Mitsubishi. By the late 1800s, Japan had industrialized so rapidly that it was ready to create an empire of its own in Asia, just like the nations of the West.

Although Japan largely avoided any major internal radical threats as it responded to the West, Russia experienced radical movements on a grand scale – some of which were inspired by
western ideals. This difference may be accounted for in the fact that unlike in Russia, there was a
greater sense of national pride in Japan due to the massive overhaul of the social, political, and
economic system there. The Japanese people had much more to be proud of than the Russians.
Radical movements appeared in Russia because, even though serfdom was technically abolished,
few rights were given to the common people. Absolute power of the czar and influence of the
boyars continued. Censorship and secret police silenced anyone who dared speak out against the
government. Because of this, groups like anarchists and Marxist (communist) Bolsheviks sought
to create a new society free of government oppression. Marxism was originally a western idea
that became popular amongst Russia’s radical intelligentsia and industrial workers. It called for a
revolution of workers to establish a new world based on equality. Anarchists regularly targeted
government officials, including Czar Alexander II who was assassinated. This was not a problem
in Japan, however. Japan’s people had a sense of pride in the imperial government, especially the
emperor. Under Shintoism, the emperor was revered as divine. Also, the fact that the Meiji
government began western-style political reforms such as the creation of a parliament (Diet),
political parties, and a near-complete abolition of the feudal system satisfied most Japanese. A
stronger sense of nationalism without the threat of radicalism gave Japan greater strength in
contrast to Russia by the late 19th century.

From 1750 to 1900, Russia and Japan saw fundamental changes in order to industrialize
such as the abolition of their peasant or serf class, but they both had different experiences with
radicalism. While Japan was able to avoid radicalism as it selectively westernized, Russia’s
government faced radical movements regularly by the late 19th century due its failure to fully
embrace western political freedoms.