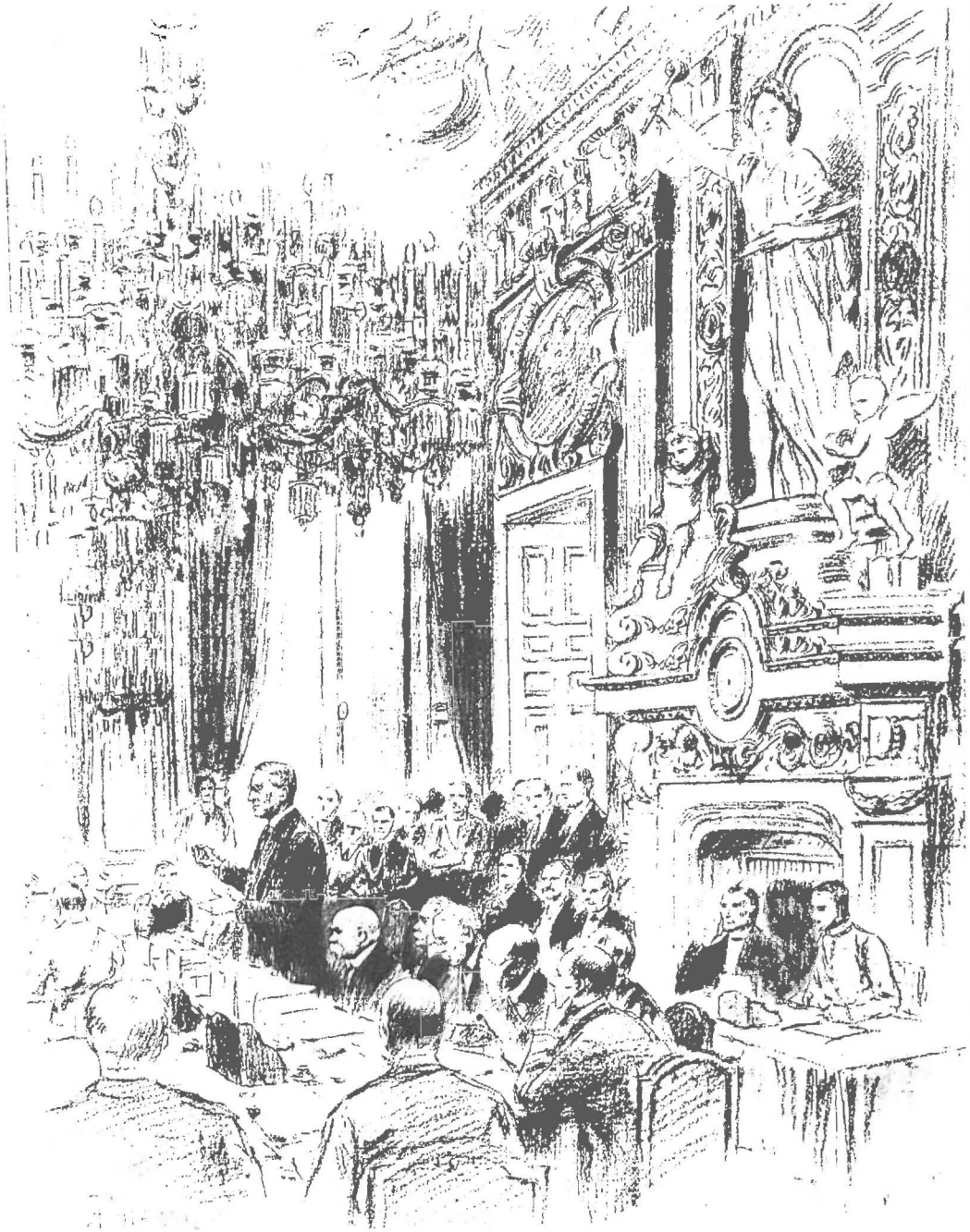

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SIMON & SCHUSTER PAPERBACKS
New York London Toronto Sydney

CHAPTER THREE

From Universality to Equilibrium: Richelieu, William of Orange, and Pitt

What historians describe today as the European balance-of-power system emerged in the seventeenth century from the final collapse of the medieval aspiration to universality—a concept of world order that represented a blending of the traditions of the Roman Empire and the Catholic Church. The world was conceived as mirroring the Heavens. Just as one God ruled in Heaven, so one emperor would rule over the secular world, and one pope over the Universal Church.

In this spirit, the feudal states of Germany and Northern Italy were grouped under the rule of the Holy Roman Emperor. Into the seventeenth century, this empire had the potential to dominate Europe. France, whose frontier was far west of the Rhine River, and England were peripheral states with respect to it. Had the Holy Roman Emperor ever succeeded in establishing central control over all the territories technically

under his jurisdiction, the relations of the Western European states to it might have been similar to those of China's neighbors to the Middle Kingdom, with France comparable to Vietnam or Korea, and England to Japan.

For most of the medieval period, however, the Holy Roman Emperor never achieved that degree of central control. One reason was the lack of adequate transportation and communication systems, making it difficult to tie together such extensive territories. But the most important reason was that the Holy Roman Empire had separated control of the church from control of the government. Unlike a pharaoh or a caesar, the Holy Roman Emperor was not deemed to possess divine attributes. Everywhere outside Western Europe, even in the regions governed by the Eastern Church, religion and government were unified in the sense that key appointments to each were subject to the central government; religious authorities had neither the means nor the authority to assert the autonomous position demanded by Western Christianity as a matter of right.

In Western Europe, the potential and, from time to time, actual conflict between pope and emperor established the conditions for eventual constitutionalism and the separation of powers which are the basis of modern democracy. It enabled the various feudal rulers to enhance their autonomy by exacting a price from both contending factions. This, in turn, led to a fractionated Europe—a patchwork of duchies, counties, cities, and bishoprics. Though in theory all the feudal lords owed fealty to the emperor, in practice they did what they pleased. Various dynasties claimed the imperial crown, and central authority almost disappeared. The emperors maintained the old vision of universal rule without any possibility of realizing it. At the fringes of Europe, France, England, and Spain did not accept the authority of the Holy Roman Empire, though they remained part of the Universal Church.

Not until the Habsburg dynasty had laid near-permanent claim to the imperial crown in the fifteenth century and, through prudent marriages, acquired the Spanish crown and its vast resources, did it become possible for the Holy Roman Emperor to aspire to translate his universal claims into a political system. In the first half of the sixteenth century, Emperor Charles V revived the imperial authority to a point which raised the prospect of a Central European empire, composed of what is today Germany, Austria, Northern Italy, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Eastern France, Belgium, and the Netherlands—a grouping so potentially dominant as to prevent the emergence of anything resembling the European balance of power.

At that very moment, the weakening of the Papacy under the impact of

the Reformation thwarted the prospect of a hegemonic European empire. When strong, the Papacy had been a thorn in the side of the Holy Roman Emperor and a formidable rival. When on the decline in the sixteenth century, the Papacy proved equally a bane to the idea of empire. Emperors wanted to see themselves, and wanted others to see them, as the agents of God. But in the sixteenth century, the emperor came to be perceived in Protestant lands less as an agent of God than as a Viennese warlord tied to a decadent pope. The Reformation gave rebellious princes a new freedom of action, in both the religious and the political realms. Their break with Rome was a break with religious universality; their struggle with the Habsburg emperor demonstrated that the princes no longer saw fealty to the empire as a religious duty.

With the concept of unity collapsing, the emerging states of Europe needed some principle to justify their heresy and to regulate their relations. They found it in the concepts of *raison d'état* and the balance of power. Each depended on the other. *Raison d'état* asserted that the well-being of the state justified whatever means were employed to further it; the national interest supplanted the medieval notion of a universal morality. The balance of power replaced the nostalgia for universal monarchy with the consolation that each state, in pursuing its own selfish interests, would somehow contribute to the safety and progress of all the others.

The earliest and most comprehensive formulation of this new approach came from France, which was also one of the first nation-states in Europe. France was the country that stood to lose the most by the reinvigoration of the Holy Roman Empire, because it might well—to use modern terminology—have been "Finlandized" by it. As religious restraints weakened, France began to exploit the rivalries that the Reformation had generated among its neighbors. French rulers recognized that the progressive weakening of the Holy Roman Empire (and even more its disintegration) would enhance France's security and, with good fortune, enable it to expand eastward.

The principal agent for this French policy was an improbable figure, a prince of the Church, Armand Jean du Plessis, Cardinal de Richelieu, First Minister of France from 1624 to 1642. Upon learning of Cardinal Richelieu's death, Pope Urban VIII is alleged to have said, "If there is a God, the Cardinal de Richelieu will have much to answer for. If not . . . well, he had a successful life."[1] This ambivalent epitaph would no doubt have pleased the statesman, who achieved vast successes by ignoring, and indeed transcending, the essential pieties of his age.

Few statesmen can claim a greater impact on history. Richelieu was the father of the modern state system. He promulgated the concept of *raison d'état* and practiced it relentlessly for the benefit of his own country. Under his auspices, *raison d'état* replaced the medieval concept of universal moral values as the operating principle of French policy. Initially, he sought to prevent Habsburg domination of Europe, but ultimately left a legacy that for the next two centuries tempted his successors to establish French primacy in Europe. Out of the failure of these ambitions, a balance of power emerged, first as a fact of life, then as a system for organizing international relations.

Richelieu came into office in 1624, when the Habsburg Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand II was attempting to revive Catholic universality, stamp out Protestantism, and establish imperial control over the princes of Central Europe. This process, the Counter-Reformation, led to what was later called the Thirty Years' War, which erupted in Central Europe in 1618 and turned into one of the most brutal and destructive wars in the history of mankind.

By 1618, the German-speaking territory of Central Europe, most of which was part of the Holy Roman Empire, was divided into two armed camps—the Protestants and the Catholics. The fuse that set off the war was lit that same year in Prague, and before long all of Germany was drawn into the conflict. As Germany was progressively bled white, its principalities became easy prey for outside invaders. Soon Danish and Swedish armies were cutting their way through Central Europe, and eventually the French army joined the fray. By the time the war ended in 1648, Central Europe had been devastated and Germany had lost almost a third of its population. In the crucible of this tragic conflict, Cardinal Richelieu grafted the principle of *raison d'état* onto French foreign policy, a principle that the other European states adopted in the century that followed.

As a prince of the Church, Richelieu ought to have welcomed Ferdinand's drive to restore Catholic orthodoxy. But Richelieu put the French national interest above any religious goals. His vocation as cardinal did not keep Richelieu from seeing the Habsburg attempt to re-establish the Catholic religion as a geopolitical threat to France's security. To him, it was not a religious act but a political maneuver by Austria to achieve dominance in Central Europe and thereby to reduce France to second-class status.

Richelieu's fear was not without foundation. A glance at the map of Europe shows that France was surrounded by Habsburg lands on all sides: Spain to the south; the Northern Italian city-states, dominated mostly by Spain, in the southeast; Franche-Comté (today the region above Lyon and Savoy), also under Spanish control, in the east, and the Spanish Netherlands in the north. The few frontiers not under the rule of the Spanish Habsburgs were subject to the Austrian branch of the family.

The Duchy of Lorraine owed fealty to the Austrian Holy Roman Emperor, as did strategically important areas along the Rhine in what is present-day Alsace. If Northern Germany were also to fall under Habsburg rule, France would become perilously weak in relation to the Holy Roman Empire.

Richelieu derived little comfort from the fact that Spain and Austria shared France's Catholic faith. Quite to the contrary, a victory for the Counter-Reformation was exactly what Richelieu was determined to prevent. In pursuit of what would today be called a national security interest and was then labeled—for the first time—*raison d'état,* Richelieu was prepared to side with the Protestant princes and exploit the schism within the Universal Church.

Had the Habsburg emperors played according to the same rules or understood the emerging world of *raison d'état,* they would have seen how well placed they were to achieve what Richelieu feared most—the pre-eminence of Austria and the emergence of the Holy Roman Empire as the dominant power on the Continent. Through the centuries, however, the enemies of the Habsburgs benefited from the dynasty's rigidity in adjusting to tactical necessities or understanding future trends. The Habsburg rulers were men of principle. They never compromised their convictions except in defeat. At the start of this political odyssey, therefore, they were quite defenseless against the ruthless Cardinal's machinations.

Emperor Ferdinand II, Richelieu's foil, had almost certainly never heard of *raison d'état.* Even if he had, he would have rejected it as blasphemy, for he saw his secular mission as carrying out the will of God, and always stressed the "holy" in his title as Holy Roman Emperor. Never would he have conceded that divine ends could be achieved by less than moral means. Never would he have thought of concluding treaties with the Protestant Swedes or the Muslim Turks, measures which the Cardinal pursued as a matter of course. Ferdinand's adviser, the Jesuit Lamormaini, thus summarized the Emperor's outlook:

> The false and corrupt policies, which are widespread in these times, he, in his wisdom, condemned from the start. He held that those who followed such policies could not be dealt with, since they practice falsehood and misuse God and religion. It would be a great folly for one to try to strengthen a kingdom, which God alone has granted, with means that God hates.[2]

A ruler committed to such absolute values found it impossible to compromise, let alone to manipulate, his bargaining position. In 1596, while still

an archduke, Ferdinand declared, "I would rather die than grant any concessions to the sectarians when it comes to religion."[3] To the detriment of his empire, he certainly lived up to his words. Since he was less concerned with the Empire's welfare than with obeisance to the will of God, he considered himself duty-bound to crush Protestantism even though some accommodation with it clearly would have been in his best interests. In modern terms, he was a fanatic. The words of one of the imperial advisers, Caspar Scioppius, highlight the Emperor's beliefs: "Woe to the king who ignores the voice of God beseeching him to kill the heretics. You should not wage war for yourself, but for God" (*Bellum non tuum, sed Dei esse statuas*).[4] For Ferdinand, the state existed in order to serve religion, not vice versa: "In matters of state, which are so important for our holy confession, one cannot always take into account human considerations; rather, he must hope . . . in God . . . and trust only in Him."[5]

Richelieu treated Ferdinand's faith as a strategic challenge. Though privately religious, he viewed his duties as minister in entirely secular terms. Salvation might be his personal objective, but to Richelieu, the statesman, it was irrelevant. "Man is immortal, his salvation is hereafter," he once said. "The state has no immortality, its salvation is now or never."[6] In other words, states do not receive credit in any world for doing what is right; they are only rewarded for being strong enough to do what is necessary.

Richelieu would never have permitted himself to miss the opportunity which presented itself to Ferdinand in 1629, the eleventh year of the war. The Protestant princes were ready to accept Habsburg political pre-eminence provided they remained free to pursue the religion of their choice and to retain the Church lands they had seized during the Reformation. But Ferdinand would not subordinate his religious vocation to his political needs. Rejecting what would have been a vast triumph and the guarantee of his Empire, determined to stamp out the Protestant heresy, he issued the Edict of Restitution, which demanded that Protestant sovereigns restore all the lands they had seized from the Church since 1555. It was a triumph of zeal over expediency, a classic case in which faith overrode calculations of political self-interest. And it guaranteed a battle to the finish.

Handed this opening, Richelieu was determined to prolong the war until Central Europe had been bled white. He put aside religious scruples with respect to domestic policy as well. In the Grace of Alais of 1629, he granted to French Protestants freedom of worship, the very same freedom the Emperor was fighting to deny the German princes. Having protected his country against the domestic upheavals rending Central Europe, Ri-

chelieu set out to exploit Ferdinand's religious fervor in the service of French national ends.

The Habsburg Emperor's inability to understand his national interests —indeed, his refusal to accept the validity of any such concept—gave France's First Minister the opportunity to support and to subsidize the Protestant German princes against the Holy Roman Emperor. The role of defender of the liberties of the Protestant princes against the centralizing goals of the Holy Roman Emperor was an unlikely one for a French prelate and his Catholic French King, Louis XIII. That a prince of the Church was subsidizing the Protestant King of Sweden, Gustavus Adolphus, to make war against the Holy Roman Emperor had revolutionary implications as profound as the upheavals of the French Revolution 150 years later.

In an age still dominated by religious zeal and ideological fanaticism, a dispassionate foreign policy free of moral imperatives stood out like a snow-covered Alp in the desert. Richelieu's objective was to end what he considered the encirclement of France, to exhaust the Habsburgs, and to prevent the emergence of a major power on the borders of France—especially the German border. His only criterion in making alliances was that they served France's interests, and this he did at first with the Protestant states and, later, even with the Muslim Ottoman Empire. In order to exhaust the belligerents and to prolong the war, Richelieu subsidized the enemies of his enemies, bribed, fomented insurrections, and mobilized an extraordinary array of dynastic and legal arguments. He succeeded so well that the war that had begun in 1618 dragged on decade after decade until, finally, history found no more appropriate name for it than its duration—the Thirty Years' War.

France stood on the sidelines while Germany was devastated, until 1635, when sheer exhaustion seemed once again to portend an end to the hostilities and a compromise peace. Richelieu, however, had no interest in compromise until the French King had become as powerful as the Habsburg Emperor, and preferably stronger. In pursuit of this goal, Richelieu convinced his sovereign, in the seventeenth year of the war, of the necessity of entering the fray on the side of the Protestant princes—and with no better justification than the opportunity to exploit France's growing power:

> If it is a sign of singular prudence to have held down the forces opposed to your state for a period of ten years with the forces of your allies, by putting your hand in your pocket and not on your sword, then to engage in open warfare when your allies can no longer exist without

> you is a sign of courage and great wisdom; which shows that, in husbanding the peace of your kingdom, you have behaved like those economists who, having taken great care to amass money, also know how to spend it. . . .[7]

The success of a policy of *raison d'état* depends above all on the ability to assess power relationships. Universal values are defined by their perception and are not in need of constant reinterpretation; indeed they are inconsistent with it. But determining the limits of power requires a blend of experience and insight, and constant adjustment to circumstance. In theory, of course, the balance of power should be quite calculable; in practice, it has proved extremely difficult to work out realistically. Even more complicated is harmonizing one's calculations with those of other states, which is the precondition for the operation of a balance of power. Consensus on the nature of the equilibrium is usually established by periodic conflict.

Richelieu had no doubt about his ability to master the challenge, convinced as he was that it was possible to relate means to ends with nearly mathematical precision. "Logic," he wrote in his *Political Testament,* "requires that the thing that is to be supported and the force that is to support it should stand in geometrical proportion to each other."[8] Fate had made him a prince of the Church; conviction put him in the intellectual company of rationalists like Descartes and Spinoza, who thought that human action could be scientifically charted; opportunity had enabled him to transform the international order to the vast advantage of his country. For once, a statesman's estimate of himself was accurate. Richelieu had a penetrating perception of his goals, but he—and his ideas—would not have prevailed had he not been able to gear his tactics to his strategy.

So novel and so cold-blooded a doctrine could not possibly pass without challenge. However dominant the doctrine of balance of power was to become in later years, it was deeply offensive to the universalist tradition founded on the primacy of moral law. One of the most telling critiques came from the renowned scholar Jansenius, who attacked a policy cut loose from all moral moorings:

> Do they believe that a secular, perishable state should outweigh religion and the Church? . . . Should not the Most Christian King believe that in the guidance and administration of his realm there is nothing that obliges him to extend and protect that of Jesus Christ, his Lord? . . . Would he dare say to God: Let your power and glory and the religion

> which teaches men to adore You be lost and destroyed, provided my state is protected and free of risks?[9]

That, of course, was precisely what Richelieu was saying to his contemporaries and, for all we know, to his God. It was the measure of the revolution he had brought about that what his critics thought was a *reductio ad absurdum* (an argument so immoral and dangerous that it refutes itself) was, in fact, a highly accurate summary of Richelieu's thought. As the King's First Minister, he subsumed both religion and morality to *raison d'état,* his guiding light.

Demonstrating how well they had absorbed the cynical methods of the master himself, Richelieu's defenders turned the argument of their critics against them. A policy of national self-interest, they argued, represented the highest moral law; it was Richelieu's critics who were in violation of ethical principle, not he.

It fell to Daniel de Priezac, a scholar close to the royal administration, to make the formal rebuttal, almost certainly with Richelieu's own imprimatur. In classically Machiavellian fashion, Priezac challenged the premise that Richelieu was committing mortal sin by pursuing policies which seemed to favor the spread of heresy. Rather, he argued, it was Richelieu's critics whose souls were at risk. Since France was the most pure and devoted of the European Catholic powers, Richelieu, in serving the interests of France, was serving as well the interests of the Catholic religion.

Priezac did not explain how he had reached the conclusion that France had been endowed with such a unique religious vocation. However, it followed from his premise that strengthening the French state was in the interest of the well-being of the Catholic Church; hence Richelieu's policy was highly moral. Indeed, the Habsburg encirclement posed so great a threat to France's security that it had to be broken, exonerating the French King in whatever methods he chose to pursue that ultimately moral goal.

> He seeks peace by means of war, and if in waging it something happens contrary to his desires, it is not a crime of will but of necessity whose laws are most harsh and commands most cruel. . . . A war is just when the intention that causes it to be undertaken is just. . . . The will is therefore the principal element that must be considered, not the means. . . . [He] who intends to kill the guilty sometimes faultlessly sheds the blood of the innocent.[10]

Not to put too fine a point on it, the end justified the means.

Another of Richelieu's critics, Mathieu de Morgues, accused the Cardinal of manipulating religion "as your preceptor Machiavelli showed the ancient Romans doing, shaping it . . . explaining it and applying it as far as it aids the advancement of your designs."[11]

De Morgues's criticism was as telling as that of Jansenius, and as ineffective. Richelieu was indeed the manipulator described, and did use religion precisely in the manner being alleged. He would no doubt have replied that he had merely analyzed the world as it was, much as Machiavelli had. Like Machiavelli, he might well have preferred a world of more refined moral sensibilities, but he was convinced that history would judge his statesmanship by how well he had used the conditions and the factors he was given to work with. Indeed, if, in evaluating a statesman, reaching the goals he sets for himself is a test, Richelieu must be remembered as one of the seminal figures of modern history. For he left behind him a world radically different from the one he had found, and set in motion the policy France would follow for the next three centuries.

In this manner, France became the dominant country in Europe and vastly expanded its territory. In the century following the Peace of Westphalia of 1648, ending the Thirty Years' War, the doctrine of *raison d'état* grew into the guiding principle of European diplomacy. Neither the respect in which statesmen of later centuries would hold Richelieu nor the oblivion which was the fate of his opponent, Ferdinand II, would have surprised the Cardinal, who was utterly without illusions, even about himself. "In matters of state," wrote Richelieu in his *Political Testament,* "he who has the power often has the right, and he who is weak can only with difficulty keep from being wrong in the opinion of the majority of the world"—a maxim rarely contradicted in the intervening centuries.[12]

Richelieu's impact on the history of Central Europe was the reverse of the achievements he garnered on France's behalf. He feared a unified Central Europe and prevented it from coming about. In all likelihood, he delayed German unification by some two centuries. The initial phase of the Thirty Years' War can be viewed as a Habsburg attempt to act as the dynastic unifiers of Germany—much as England had become a nation-state under the tutelage of a Norman dynasty and, a few centuries later, the French had followed suit under the Capetians. Richelieu thwarted the Habsburgs and the Holy Roman Empire was divided among more than 300 sovereigns, each free to conduct an independent foreign policy. Germany failed to become a nation-state; absorbed in petty dynastic quarrels, it turned inward. As a result, Germany developed no national political culture and calcified into a provincialism from which it did not emerge until late in the nineteenth century when Bismarck unified it. Germany was turned into the battleground of most European wars, many of which

were initiated by France, and missed the early wave of European overseas colonization. When Germany did finally unify, it had so little experience with defining its national interest that it produced many of this century's worst tragedies.

But the gods often punish man by fulfilling his wishes too completely. The Cardinal's analysis that success of the Counter-Reformation would reduce France to an appendage of an increasingly centralized Holy Roman Empire was almost certainly correct, especially if one assumed, as he must have done, that the age of the nation-state had arrived. But whereas the nemesis of Wilsonian idealism is the gap between its professions and reality, the nemesis of *raison d'état* is overextension—except in the hands of a master, and it probably is even then.

For Richelieu's concept of *raison d'état* had no built-in limitations. How far would one go before the interests of the state were deemed satisfied? How many wars were needed to achieve security? Wilsonian idealism, proclaiming a selfless policy, is possessed of the constant danger of neglecting the interests of state; Richelieu's *raison d'état* threatens self-destructive *tours de force.* That is what happened to France after Louis XIV assumed the throne. Richelieu had bequeathed to the French kings a preponderantly strong state with a weak and divided Germany and a decadent Spain on its borders. But Louis XIV gained no peace of mind from security; he saw in it an opportunity for conquest. In his overzealous pursuit of *raison d'état,* Louis XIV alarmed the rest of Europe and brought together an anti-French coalition which, in the end, thwarted his design.

Nevertheless, for 200 years after Richelieu, France was the most influential country in Europe, and has remained a major factor in international politics to this day. Few statesmen of any country can claim an equal achievement. Still, Richelieu's greatest successes occurred when he was the only statesman to jettison the moral and religious restraints of the medieval period. Inevitably, Richelieu's successors inherited the task of managing a system in which most states were operating from his premises. Thereby, France lost the advantage of having adversaries constrained by moral considerations, as Ferdinand had been in the time of Richelieu. Once all states played by the same rules, gains became much more difficult to achieve. For all the glory *raison d'état* brought France, it amounted to a treadmill, a never-ending effort to push France's boundaries outward, to become the arbiter of the conflicts among the German states and thereby to dominate Central Europe until France was drained by the effort and progressively lost the ability to shape Europe according to its design.

Raison d'état provided a rationale for the behavior of individual states,

but it supplied no answer to the challenge of world order. *Raison d'état* can lead to a quest for primacy or to establishment of equilibrium. But, rarely does equilibrium emerge from the conscious design. Usually it results from the process of thwarting a particular country's attempt to dominate, as the European balance of power emerged from the effort to contain France.

In the world inaugurated by Richelieu, states were no longer restrained by the pretense of a moral code. If the good of the state was the highest value, the duty of the ruler was the aggrandizement and promotion of his glory. The stronger would seek to dominate, and the weaker would resist by forming coalitions to augment their individual strengths. If the coalition was powerful enough to check the aggressor, a balance of power emerged; if not, some country would achieve hegemony. The outcome was not foreordained and was therefore tested by frequent wars. At its beginning, the outcome could as easily have been empire—French or German—as equilibrium. This is why it took over a hundred years to establish a European order based explicitly on the balance of power. At first, the balance of power was an almost incidental fact of life, not a goal of international politics.

Curiously enough, this is not how it was perceived by the philosophers of the period. Products of the Enlightenment, they mirrored the eighteenth-century faith that out of a clash of competing interests harmony and fairness would emerge. The concept of the balance of power was simply an extension of conventional wisdom. Its primary goal was to prevent domination by one state and to preserve the international order; it was not designed to prevent conflicts, but to limit them. To the hard-headed statesmen of the eighteenth century, the elimination of conflict (or of ambition or of greed) was utopian; the solution was to harness or counterpoise the inherent flaws of human nature to produce the best possible long-term outcome.

The philosophers of the Enlightenment viewed the international system as part of a universe operating like a great clockwork which, never standing still, inexorably advanced toward a better world. In 1751, Voltaire described a "Christian Europe" as "a sort of great republic divided into several states, some monarchical, the others mixed . . . but all in harmony with each other . . . all possessing the same principles of public and political law, unknown in other parts of the world." These states were "above all . . . at one in the wise policy of maintaining among themselves as far as possible an equal balance of power."[13]

Montesquieu took up the same theme. For him, the balance of power distilled unity out of diversity:

> The state of things in Europe is that all the states depend on each other. . . . Europe is a single state composed of several provinces.[14]

As these lines were being written, the eighteenth century had already endured two wars over the Spanish succession, a war over the Polish succession, and a series of wars over the Austrian succession.

In the same spirit, the philosopher of history Emmerich de Vattel could write in 1758, the second year of the Seven Years' War, that:

> The continual negotiations that take place, make modern Europe a sort of republic, whose members—each independent, but all bound together by a common interest—unite for the maintenance of order and the preservation of liberty. This is what has given rise to the well-known principle of the balance of power, by which is meant an arrangement of affairs so that no state shall be in a position to have absolute mastery and dominate over the others.[15]

The philosophers were confusing the result with the intent. Throughout the eighteenth century, the princes of Europe fought innumerable wars without there being a shred of evidence that the conscious goal was to implement any general notion of international order. At the precise moment when international relations came to be based on power, so many new factors emerged that calculations became increasingly unmanageable.

The various dynasties henceforth concentrated on enhancing their security by territorial expansion. In the process, the relative power positions of several of them altered drastically. Spain and Sweden were sinking into second-rank status. Poland began its slide toward extinction. Russia (which had been entirely absent from the Peace of Westphalia) and Prussia (which played an insignificant role) were emerging as major powers. The balance of power is difficult enough to analyze when its components are relatively fixed. The task of assessing it and reconciling the assessments of the various powers becomes hopelessly intricate when the relative mights of the powers are in constant flux.

The vacuum created in Central Europe by the Thirty Years' War tempted the surrounding countries to encroach upon it. France kept pressing from the west. Russia was on the march in the east. Prussia expanded in the center of the Continent. None of the key Continental countries felt any special obligation to the balance of power so lauded by the philosophers. Russia thought of itself as too distant. Prussia, as the smallest of the Great Powers, was still too weak to affect the general

equilibrium. Every king consoled himself with the thought that strengthening his own rule was the greatest possible contribution to the general peace, and left it to the ubiquitous invisible hand to justify his exertions without limiting his ambitions.

The nature of *raison d'état* as an essentially risk-benefit calculation was shown by the way Frederick the Great justified his seizure of Silesia from Austria, despite Prussia's heretofore amicable relations with that state and despite its being bound by treaty to respect Austria's territorial integrity:

> The superiority of our troops, the promptitude with which we can set them in motion, in a word, the clear advantage we have over our neighbors, gives us in this unexpected emergency an infinite superiority over all other powers of Europe. . . . England and France are foes. If France should meddle in the affairs of the empire, England could not allow it, so I can always make a good alliance with one or the other. England could not be jealous of my getting Silesia, which would do her no harm, and she needs allies. Holland will not care, all the more since the loans of the Amsterdam business world secured on Silesia will be guaranteed. If we cannot arrange with England and Holland, we can certainly make a deal with France, who cannot frustrate our designs and will welcome the abasement of the imperial house. Russia alone might give us trouble. If the empress lives . . . we can bribe the leading counsellors. If she dies, the Russians will be so occupied that they will have no time for foreign affairs. . . .[16]

Frederick the Great treated international affairs as if it were a game of chess. He wanted to seize Silesia in order to expand the power of Prussia. The only obstacle he would recognize to his designs was resistance from superior powers, not moral scruples. His was a risk/reward analysis: if he conquered Silesia, would other states retaliate or seek compensation?

Frederick resolved the calculation in his favor. His conquest of Silesia made Prussia a *bona fide* Great Power, but it also set off a series of wars as other countries tried to adjust to this new player. The first was the War of the Austrian Succession, from 1740 to 1748. In it, Prussia was joined by France, Spain, Bavaria, and Saxony—which in 1743 switched sides—while Great Britain supported Austria. In the second war—the Seven Years' War, from 1756 to 1763—the roles were reversed. Austria was now joined by Russia, France, Saxony, and Sweden, while Great Britain and Hanover supported Prussia. The change of sides was the result of pure calculations of immediate benefit and specific compensations, not of any overriding principle of international order.

Yet a sort of equilibrium gradually emerged out of this seeming anar-

chy and rapine in which each state sought single-mindedly to augment its own power. It was due not to self-restraint but to the fact that no state, not even France, was strong enough to impose its will on all the others and thus form an empire. When any state threatened to become dominant, its neighbors formed a coalition—not in pursuit of a theory of international relations but out of pure self-interest to block the ambitions of the most powerful.

These constant wars did not lead to the devastations of the religious wars for two reasons. Paradoxically, the absolute rulers of the eighteenth century were in a less strong position to mobilize resources for war than was the case when religion or ideology or popular government could stir the emotions. They were restrained by tradition and perhaps by their own insecurity from imposing income taxes and many other modern exactions, limiting the amount of national wealth potentially devoted to war, and weapons technology was rudimentary.

Above all, the equilibrium on the Continent was reinforced and in fact managed by the appearance of a state whose foreign policy was explicitly dedicated to maintaining the balance. England's policy was based on throwing its weight as the occasion required to the weaker and more threatened side to redress the equilibrium. The original engineer of this policy was King William III of England, a stern and worldly Dutchman by birth. In his native Holland he had suffered from the ambitions of the French Sun King and, when he became King of England, set about forging coalitions to thwart Louis XIV at every turn. England was the one European country whose *raison d'état* did not require it to expand in Europe. Perceiving its national interest to be in the preservation of the European balance, it was the one country which sought no more for itself on the Continent than preventing the domination of Europe by a single power. In pursuit of that objective, it made itself available to any combination of nations opposing such an enterprise.

A balance of power gradually emerged by means of shifting coalitions under British leadership against French attempts to dominate Europe. This dynamic lay at the core of almost every war fought in the eighteenth century and every British-led coalition against French hegemony fought in the name of the selfsame European liberties which Richelieu had first invoked in Germany against the Habsburgs. The balance of power held because the nations resisting French domination were too strong to be overcome, and because a century and a half of expansionism progressively drained France of its wealth.

Great Britain's role as the balancer reflected a geopolitical fact of life. The survival of a relatively small island off the coast of Europe would have been jeopardized had all the resources of the Continent been mobi-

lized under a single ruler. For, in such a case, England (as it was before its union with Scotland in 1707) possessed much smaller resources and population and would have sooner or later been at the mercy of a Continental empire.

England's Glorious Revolution of 1688 forced it into an immediate confrontation with Louis XIV of France. The Glorious Revolution had deposed the Catholic King, James II. Searching for a Protestant replacement on the Continent, England chose William of Orange, ruler *(Stadthalter)* of the Netherlands, who had a tenuous claim to the British throne through his marriage to Mary, the daughter of the deposed King. With William, England imported an ongoing war with Louis XIV over what later became Belgium, a land full of important fortresses and harbors within perilously easy reach of the British coast (though this concern developed only over time). William knew that if Louis XIV succeeded in occupying these fortresses, the Netherlands would lose their independence, the prospects for French domination in Europe would multiply, and England would be directly threatened. William's resolve to send English troops to fight for present-day Belgium against France was a precursor of the British decision to fight for Belgium in 1914 when the Germans invaded it.

Henceforth, William would spearhead the fight against Louis XIV. Short, hunchbacked, and asthmatic, William did not at first glance appear to be the man destined to humble the Sun King. But the Prince of Orange possessed an iron will combined with extraordinary mental agility. He convinced himself—almost certainly correctly—that if Louis XIV, already the most powerful monarch in Europe, were permitted to conquer the Spanish Netherlands (present-day Belgium), England would be at risk. A coalition capable of reining in the French King had to be forged, not as a matter of the abstract theory of balance of power but for the sake of the independence of both the Netherlands and of England. William recognized that Louis XIV's designs on Spain and its possessions, if realized, would turn France into a superpower that no combination of states would be able to challenge. To forestall that danger, he sought out partners and soon found them. Sweden, Spain, Savoy, the Austrian Emperor, Saxony, the Dutch Republic, and England formed the Grand Alliance—the greatest coalition of forces aligned against a single power that modern Europe had ever seen. For about a quarter of a century (1688–1713), Louis waged almost constant wars against this coalition. In the end, however, France's pursuit of *raison d'état* was reined in by the self-interest of Europe's other states. France would remain the strongest state in Europe, but it would not become dominant. It was a textbook case of the functioning of the balance of power.

William's hostility to Louis XIV was neither personal nor based on any anti-French sentiment; it reflected his cold assessment of the Sun King's power and boundless ambition. William once confided to an aide that, had he lived in the 1550s, when the Habsburgs were threatening to become dominant, he would have been "as much a Frenchman as he was now a Spaniard"[17]—a precursor of Winston Churchill's reply in the 1930s to the charge that he was anti-German: "If the circumstances were reversed, we could equally be pro-German and anti-French."[18]

William was perfectly willing to negotiate with Louis XIV when he felt the balance of power could best be served by doing so. For William, the simple calculation was that England would try to maintain a rough balance between the Habsburgs and the Bourbons, so that whoever was weaker would maintain, with British help, the equilibrium of Europe. Ever since Richelieu, the weaker side had been Austria, and therefore Great Britain aligned itself with the Habsburgs against French expansionism.

The idea of acting as the balancer did not commend itself to the British public when it first made its appearance. In the late seventeenth century, British public opinion was isolationist, much like that of America two centuries later. The prevailing argument had it that there would be time enough to resist a threat, when and if the threat presented itself. There was no need to fight conjectural dangers based on what some country *might* do later on.

William played the equivalent of Theodore Roosevelt's later role in America, warning his essentially isolationist people that their safety depended on participation in a balance of power overseas. And his countrymen accepted his views far more quickly than Americans embraced Roosevelt's. Some twenty years after William's death, *The Craftsman,* a newspaper typically representative of the opposition, noted that the balance of power was one of "the original, everlasting principles of British politics," and that peace on the Continent was "so essential a circumstance to the prosperity of a trading island, that . . . it ought to be the constant endeavor of a British ministry to preserve it themselves, and to restore it, when broken or disturbed by others."[19]

Agreeing on the importance of the balance of power did not, however, still British disputes about the best strategy to implement the policy. There were two schools of thought, representing the two major political parties in Parliament, and substantially paralleling a similar disagreement in the United States after the two world wars. The Whigs argued that Great Britain should engage itself only when the balance was actually threatened, and then only long enough to remove the threat. By contrast,

the Tories believed that Great Britain's main duty was to *shape* and not simply to protect the balance of power. The Whigs were of the view that there would be plenty of time to resist an assault on the Low Countries after it had actually occurred; the Tories reasoned that a policy of wait-and-see might allow an aggressor to weaken the balance irreparably. Therefore, if Great Britain wished to avoid fighting in Dover, it had to resist aggression along the Rhine or wherever else in Europe the balance of power seemed to be threatened. The Whigs considered alliances as temporary expedients, to be terminated once victory had rendered the common purpose moot, whereas the Tories urged British participation in permanent cooperative arrangements to enable Great Britain to help shape events and to preserve the peace.

Lord Carteret, Tory Foreign Secretary from 1742 to 1744, made an eloquent case for a permanent engagement in Europe. He denounced the Whigs' inclination "to disregard all the troubles and commotions of the continent, not to leave our own island in search of enemies, but to attend our commerce and our pleasures, and, instead of courting danger in foreign countries, to sleep in security, till we are awakened by an alarm upon our coasts." But Great Britain, he said, needed to face the reality of its permanent interest in bolstering the Habsburgs as a counterweight to France, "for if the French monarch once saw himself freed from a rival on that continent, he would sit secure in possession of his conquests, he might then reduce his garrisons, abandon his fortresses, and discharge his troops; but that treasure which now fills the plains with soldiers, would soon be employed in designs more dangerous to our country. . . . We must consequently, my lords, . . . support the House of Austria which is the only power that can be placed in the balance against the princes of the family of Bourbon."[20]

The difference between the foreign-policy strategies of the Whigs and the Tories was practical, not philosophical; tactical, not strategic; and it reflected each party's assessment of Great Britain's vulnerability. The Whigs' policy of wait-and-see reflected the conviction that Great Britain's margin of safety was wide indeed. The Tories found Great Britain's position more precarious. Almost precisely the same distinction would separate American isolationists and American globalists in the twentieth century. Neither Great Britain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries nor America in the twentieth found it easy to persuade the citizenry that its safety required permanent commitment rather than isolation.

Periodically, in both countries, a leader would emerge who put before his people the need for permanent engagement. Wilson produced the League of Nations; Carteret flirted with permanent engagements on the

Continent; Castlereagh, Foreign Secretary from 1812 to 1821, advocated a system of European congresses; and Gladstone, Prime Minister in the late nineteenth century, proposed the first version of collective security. In the end, their appeals failed, because, until after the end of the Second World War, neither the English nor the American people could be convinced that they faced a mortal challenge until it was clearly upon them.

In this manner, Great Britain became the balancer of the European equilibrium, first almost by default, later by conscious strategy. Without Great Britain's tenacious commitment to that role, France would almost surely have achieved hegemony over Europe in the eighteenth or nineteenth century, and Germany would have done the same in the modern period. In that sense, Churchill could rightly claim two centuries later that Great Britain had "preserved the liberties of Europe."[21]

Early in the nineteenth century, Great Britain turned its *ad hoc* defense of the balance of power into a conscious design. Until then, it had gone about its policy pragmatically, consistent with the genius of the British people, resisting any country threatening the equilibrium—which, in the eighteenth century, was invariably France. Wars ended with compromise, usually marginally enhancing the position of France but depriving it of the hegemony which was its real goal.

Inevitably, France provided the occasion for the first detailed statement of what Great Britain understood by the balance of power. Having sought pre-eminence for a century and a half in the name of *raison d'état*, France after the Revolution had returned to earlier concepts of universality. No longer did France invoke *raison d'état* for its expansionism, even less the glory of its fallen kings. After the Revolution, France made war on the rest of Europe to preserve its revolution and to spread republican ideals throughout Europe. Once again, a preponderant France was threatening to dominate Europe. Conscript armies and ideological fervor propelled French armies across Europe on behalf of universal principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity. Under Napoleon, they came within a hairsbreadth of establishing a European commonwealth centered on France. By 1807, French armies had set up satellite kingdoms along the Rhine in Italy and Spain, reduced Prussia to a second-rank power, and gravely weakened Austria. Only Russia stood between Napoleon and France's domination of Europe.

Yet Russia already inspired the ambivalent reaction—part hope and part fear—that was to be its lot until the present day. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Russian frontier had been on the Dnieper; a century later, it reached the Vistula, 500 miles farther west. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Russia had been fighting for its existence

against Sweden at Poltava, deep in present-day Ukraine. By the middle of the century, it was participating in the Seven Years' War, and its troops were at Berlin. By the end of the century, it would be the principal agent in the partition of Poland.

Russia's raw physical power was made all the more ominous by the merciless autocracy of its domestic institutions. Its absolutism was not mitigated by custom or by an assertive and independent aristocracy, as was the case with the monarchs ruling by divine right in Western Europe. In Russia, everything depended on the whim of the tsar. It was entirely possible for Russian foreign policy to veer from liberalism to conservatism depending on the mood of the incumbent tsar—as indeed it did under the reigning Tsar Alexander I. At home, however, no liberal experiment was ever attempted.

In 1804, the mercurial Alexander I, Tsar of all the Russias, approached British Prime Minister William Pitt the Younger, Napoleon's most implacable enemy, with a proposition. Heavily influenced by the philosophers of the Enlightenment, Alexander I imagined himself as the moral conscience of Europe and was in the last phase of his temporary infatuation with liberal institutions. In that frame of mind, he proposed to Pitt a vague scheme for universal peace, calling for all nations to reform their constitutions with a view to ending feudalism and adopting constitutional rule. The reformed states would thereupon abjure force and submit their disputes with one another to arbitration. The Russian autocrat thus became the unlikely precursor of the Wilsonian idea that liberal institutions were the prerequisite to peace, though he never went so far as to seek to translate these principles into practice among his own people. And within a few years, he would move to the opposite conservative extreme of the political spectrum.

Pitt now found himself in much the same position vis-à-vis Alexander as Churchill would find himself vis-à-vis Stalin nearly 150 years later. He desperately needed Russian support against Napoleon, for it was impossible to imagine how Napoleon could be defeated in any other way. On the other hand, Pitt had no more interest than Churchill would later have in replacing one dominant country with another, or in endorsing Russia as the arbiter of Europe. Above all, British domestic inhibitions did not allow any prime minister to commit his country to basing peace on the political and social reform of Europe. No British war had ever been fought for such a cause, because the British people did not feel threatened by social and political upheavals on the Continent, only by changes in the balance of power.

Pitt's reply to Alexander I captured all of these elements. Ignoring the

Russian's call for the political reform of Europe, he outlined the equilibrium that would need to be constructed if peace was to be preserved. A general European settlement was now being envisaged for the first time since the Peace of Westphalia a century and a half before. And, for the first time ever, a settlement would be explicitly based on the principles of the balance of power.

Pitt saw the principal cause for instability in the weakness of Central Europe, which had repeatedly tempted French incursion and attempts at predominance. (He was too polite and too eager for Russian help to point out that a Central Europe strong enough to withstand French pressures would be equally in a position to thwart Russian expansionist temptations.) A European settlement needed to begin by depriving France of all her postrevolutionary conquests and, in the process, restore the independence of the Low Countries, thereby neatly making the chief British concern a principle of settlement.[22]

Reducing French preponderance would be of no use, however, if the 300-odd smaller German states continued to tempt French pressure and intervention. To thwart such ambitions, Pitt thought it necessary to create "great masses" in the center of Europe by consolidating the German principalities into larger groupings. Some of the states which had joined France or collapsed ignominiously would be annexed by Prussia or Austria. Others would be formed into larger units.

Pitt avoided any reference to a European government. Instead, he proposed that Great Britain, Prussia, Austria, and Russia guarantee the new territorial arrangement in Europe by means of a permanent alliance directed against French aggression—just as Franklin D. Roosevelt later tried to base the post–World War II international order on an alliance against Germany and Japan. Neither Great Britain in the Napoleonic period nor America in World War II could imagine that the biggest threat to peace in the future might prove to be the current ally rather than the yet-to-be-defeated enemy. It was a measure of the fear of Napoleon that a British prime minister should have been willing to agree to what heretofore had been so adamantly rejected by his country—a permanent engagement on the Continent—and that Great Britain should impair its tactical flexibility by basing its policy on the assumption of a permanent enemy.

The emergence of the European balance of power in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries parallels certain aspects of the post–Cold War world. Then, as now, a collapsing world order spawned a multitude of states pursuing their national interests, unrestrained by any overriding principles. Then, as now, the states making up the international order were groping for some definition of their international role. Then the

various states decided to rely entirely on asserting their national interest, putting their trust in the so-called unseen hand. The issue is whether the post–Cold War world can find some principle to restrain the assertion of power and self-interest. Of course, in the end a balance of power always comes about *de facto* when several states interact. The question is whether the maintenance of the international system can turn into a conscious design, or whether it will grow out of a series of tests of strength.

By the time the Napoleonic Wars were ending, Europe was ready to design—for the only time in its history—an international order based on the principles of the balance of power. It had been learned in the crucible of the wars of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that the balance of power could not be left to the residue of the collision of the European states. Pitt's plan had outlined a territorial settlement to rectify the weaknesses of the eighteenth-century world order. But Pitt's Continental allies had learned an additional lesson.

Power is too difficult to assess, and the willingness to vindicate it too various, to permit treating it as a reliable guide to international order. Equilibrium works best if it is buttressed by an agreement on common values. The balance of power inhibits the *capacity* to overthrow the international order; agreement on shared values inhibits the *desire* to overthrow the international order. Power without legitimacy tempts tests of strength; legitimacy without power tempts empty posturing.

Combining both elements was the challenge and the success of the Congress of Vienna, which established a century of international order uninterrupted by a general war.

A Concise History of Modern Europe

Liberty, Equality, Solidarity

Third Edition

David S. Mason

ROWMAN & LITTLEFIELD
Lanham • Boulder • New York • London

1

The Old Regime and the Enlightenment

The year of the French Revolution, 1789, marks the beginning of a new era of revolutionary change in Europe and the end of the **old regime** of absolutist **monarchy**, at least in France. But the overthrow of the old order in France had significance far beyond French borders for many reasons. In the eighteenth century, France was the most powerful country on the Continent, the most populous, and one of the most prosperous. French culture was admired and mimicked by the upper classes throughout Europe, and French was the language of the aristocracy and royal courts all over the Continent, including in Russia. The palace that France's King Louis XIV (r. 1643–1715) built at Versailles in the seventeenth century symbolized the grandeur, wealth, and power of **absolute monarchy**, and monarchs in other countries modeled their own palaces after it. Because of the French monarchy's influence across the Continent, its fall in 1789 sent shock waves across Europe. So it is important to understand the nature of the old regime in France and the factors that led to its downfall.

THE OLD REGIME IN FRANCE

Europe in the eighteenth century was composed almost entirely of absolute monarchies, countries run by a king or queen who inherited his or her position and would pass the crown to the eldest son or daughter. These monarchs knew few restraints on their power and claimed to rule on the basis of **divine right** as God's agents on earth. England was somewhat of an exception to this rule, as the Glorious Revolution of 1688

concluded a long struggle between Parliament and the Stuart kings and essentially replaced the absolute monarchy with a **constitutional monarchy**, in which laws limited the monarch's powers.[1] In most of the rest of Europe, throughout the majority of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the powers of the European monarchs actually increased as powerful monarchs gradually broke the power of feudal lords, centralized power, and created unified, more modern **states**.

In France, Louis XIV spent much of his reign strengthening the power of the monarchy and centralizing political authority in Paris or, more accurately, at his magnificent palace built at Versailles, ten miles south of Paris. Versailles was meant both to reflect the grandeur of Louis—the Sun King—and to facilitate his centralizing policy. In the past, the kings of France and their royal courts had traveled widely in the kingdom, visiting the royal domains and the provincial chateaus of powerful nobles. Louis XIV ruled from Versailles, and those nobles who sought royal favor had to live at Versailles for much of the year. Versailles, then, became the symbol both of the power of the king and of France itself. The influence and significance of this was not lost on other European monarchs: Russian **tsar** Peter the Great and Prussian king Frederick the Great both built palaces modeled on Versailles.

Famous portrait of King Louis XIV, the Sun King (1701), by Rigaud, depicting the power and pomp of an absolute monarch. © AAAC/Topham/The Image Works.

Old regime France—the term *old regime*, or ***ancien régime***, was introduced by the revolutionaries of 1789—was based on a rigid social hierarchy in which one's place in society was determined largely by birth, not by hard work or talent. The organization of society was explained by the Great Chain of Being, a concept prevalent since medieval times, which held that the entire world was organized hierarchically, from God and the angels at the top to inanimate objects, such as rocks, at the bottom, with human beings existing somewhere in between. At the top of the human chain stood the king, God's divine representative, expressed vividly in this 1766 proclamation of Louis XV (r. 1715–1774): "Sovereign power resides in my person alone. . . . It is from me alone that my policies take their existence and their authority; . . . it is to me alone that legislative power belongs, without dependence or division; . . . all public order emanates from me."[2] Louis XV's great-grandfather, the Sun King, put it a little more simply when he proclaimed, *"L'état c'est moi"* (I am the state).

Beneath the king, the rest of French society was organized into three classes, or *estates*, each with a distinct social responsibility and each hierarchically organized. The First Estate, the clergy, enjoyed their high status by virtue of their spiritual function and proximity to God, although the clergy comprised less than 1 percent of the population.

The Second Estate, the nobility or aristocracy, provided military support for the king and constituted between 1 and 2 percent of the population. The nobility was actually quite a varied group. The wealthiest and most powerful nobles, numbering only a few hundred families and known as *Les Grands*, owned large landholdings and elegant chateaus and exercised considerable political influence as councilors of state and local judges. More numerous and less exalted were the provincial nobles, *seigneurs*, who owned estates, often with many peasants working their lands under various arrangements. There were also nobles who had few possessions and lived in genteel poverty, holding their titles and very little else.

The Third Estate, the remaining 97 percent of the population, comprised everyone else and was responsible for the production of goods and provision of services. France, like all of Europe at the time, was overwhelmingly a rural society; the peasantry made up about 85 percent of the population and therefore the huge bulk of the Third Estate. Compared to other European countries, the French peasantry was relatively prosperous. Even so, fewer than 40 percent owned their own land. Most French peasants rented their land from landlords, either as tenant farmers or sharecroppers.

The old regime economy was, therefore, overwhelmingly rural and agricultural and dominated by subsistence farming, with peasants producing barely enough to meet their own needs; any surplus production was absorbed by rent, tithes, seigneurial dues (paid to the lord of the estate), and taxes. In the late eighteenth century, there was neither a national currency nor a uniform system of weights and measures, nor even a truly national market. A good network of royal highways existed, but it still took at least five days to travel by coach from Paris to Marseilles (about eight hours by car today).

Alongside this traditional agricultural sector, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, commercial trade was expanding, encouraged by royal policy. Since the seventeenth century, economic policy was guided

by mercantilist theory, which held that the wealth of a nation could best be enhanced by the accumulation of precious metals like silver and gold. Countries that did not have native deposits of such metals, like France, had to rely on trade to acquire them. The monarchy encouraged the development of manufacturing industries to provide goods for the international market, and France developed an international reputation for producing luxury goods such as silk, satin, lace, perfumes, and tapestries. The development of manufacturing and trade led to the growth of a new social class, the ***bourgeoisie***, or the middle class, and to the proliferation of many small merchants and shopkeepers, called the *petite bourgeoisie*. Near the end of the eighteenth century, the theory of **mercantilism**, with its emphasis on precious metals and government regulation, came under challenge both by alternative economic theories, such as Adam Smith's theory of a free market economy (see below), and by the bourgeoisie themselves.

Old regime France was overwhelmingly Roman Catholic, and Catholicism played an important role in the country, both as a religion and as an institution. Religion was pervasive in daily life, and religious services and celebrations were the most important events in most towns and villages. Those who attended school were taught by priests, and those without work depended on the church for charity. The church was also a powerful institution politically and was closely intertwined with the monarchy. French kings, as divine monarchs, were crowned in the cathedral at Reims, and the king appointed all bishops and other high officials of the church. The church owned extensive property, perhaps 10 percent of all the land in France, and the incomes from these properties were enormous, sometimes equal to half the annual income of the royal government.

This structure of state and society, described here for France, was similar to that of other European countries in the eighteenth century. Christian monarchs claiming divine right governed all of the major powers (the most important and powerful were France, Austria, Russia, Prussia, and England), which were characterized by a feudal or semifeudal and mercantilist economic system and a rigidly hierarchical social structure. The royal families of the European capitals, united by common bonds of religion, culture, and blood, were intent on preserving the old order and their positions in it. Since the middle of the seventeenth century, European monarchies had consciously pursued a policy of the balance of power, a system of shifting international alliances that prevented any one country from becoming too powerful. Wars were fought not so much for **ideology** or **nationalism** but to maintain the balance of power; consequently, these conflicts were relatively restrained. The victor did not want to crush the vanquished, as this would upset the balance; in any case, the defeated state might be a future ally.

This whole system, both domestic and international, was seriously challenged at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the

nineteenth, first by the ideas of the **Enlightenment**, then by the forces of the French Revolution of 1789, and later by the Industrial Revolution and the emergent power of the new middle class. Monarchy, Christianity, the church, hierarchy, and mercantilism would all be threatened with extinction at the turn of the nineteenth century. By 1815, order would be restored, but only temporarily.

THE ENLIGHTENMENT

The *ancien régime* in France and elsewhere in Europe was threatened not only by internal problems and tensions but also by new ways of thinking about society and the world. Emerging in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Enlightenment was both a movement and a set of ideas; it was also called the Age of Reason because of its emphasis on the power of the human mind to liberate the individual and improve society. Enlightenment philosophers argued that knowledge can be derived only from experience, experiment, and observation. They encouraged people to use their own critical reasoning to free their minds from prejudice, unexamined authority, and oppression by the church or the state. The German philosopher Immanuel Kant wrote in 1784 that enlightenment is "man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity." "Immaturity," he wrote, "is the inability to use one's own understanding without the guidance of another." The motto of the Enlightenment, in Kant's words, was therefore, "*Sapere aude!* Have courage to use your own understanding."[3] The French Enlightenment philosopher Voltaire made a similar point when he wrote, "The most useful books are those to which the readers themselves contribute half; they develop the idea of which the author has presented the seed." The consequence of this appeal to reason, science, and self-reliance was, of course, a serious undermining of the authority of the established institutions of the old regime, particularly the church and the state.

The principles of the Enlightenment were in some ways a continuation of the discoveries and theories of the Scientific Revolution in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when scientific observation and experiments challenged and threatened the worldview and authority of the church. In the sixteenth century, the Polish astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus proposed a theory of the universe that placed the Sun, rather than the Earth, at the center of the solar system. In the seventeenth century, the Italian Galileo Galilei constructed an astronomical telescope through which he confirmed Copernicus's heliocentric theory, bringing him into conflict with the church's inquisition for his heresy. The English philosopher and mathematician Isaac Newton, in his treatise *Principia* (1687), derived the

principles of gravity and motion; he described the universe as a machine and nature as governed by rational and consistent laws. Geologists in France discovered fossils that conflicted with the time scheme suggested in the Old Testament. All of these men used observation and experiments to draw conclusions that conflicted with the accepted wisdom of the time.

Enlightenment philosophers applied the methods of the Scientific Revolution to the study of society and of government rather than the material universe, believing that natural laws governed human behavior and institutions, just as they governed the universe. The principal forerunner of the Enlightenment was the Englishman John Locke (1632–1704), who first broached the notion that reason and knowledge are derived from experience. Human nature, Locke contended, is essentially good (unlike the biblical notion of original sin), and human character is a function of one's environment, upbringing, and education. It is possible, then, by shaping society and the environment and providing good education, to produce a better society. Locke also argued in his *Second Treatise of Civil Government* (1690) that man possesses natural and inalienable rights to life, liberty, and property. He wrote that political communities (i.e., governments) are formed by popular consent, implying a kind of contractual relationship between people and government that flew in the face of the widespread notion of divine right. Locke's ideas, and even his language, had an enormous influence on other Enlightenment-era political thinkers, including Thomas Jefferson across the Atlantic; these ideas are found later in both the U.S. Declaration of Independence and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man.

Although the Enlightenment was a Europe-wide phenomenon, the movement was dominated by French writers, thinkers, and philosophers, who were referred to as ***philosophes***. The Baron de Montesquieu (1689–1755), a critic of absolutist government, satirized the reign of Louis XIV, as well as elite society and the church (referring even to the pope as a magician). In his *Spirit of the Laws* (1748), he argued (in good Enlightenment fashion) that laws are derived from nature; he also developed the idea of the separation of powers—partitioning the executive, legislative, and judicial functions of government into separate institutions—another concept that was picked up by the Americans and incorporated by James Madison in his design of the U.S. Constitution.

Another important French Enlightenment thinker, the philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), elaborated on some of Locke's ideas about natural rights and popular sovereignty. "Man is born free," wrote Rousseau, "and everywhere he is shackled." Society corrupts and distorts man's natural freedom and equality, Rousseau argued, but a reformed society and government can restore the balance through civil liberty and equality, negotiated between the people and the government through a **social contract**. Rousseau described this ideal society in his *Social Contract* (1762), which, like many Enlightenment publications, was banned in France.

The most important publication of the French Enlightenment was the *Encyclopedia*, an effort to compile a comprehensive and systematic collection of knowledge using the new gospel of scientific empiricism. Most of the important thinkers of the time contributed to the *Encyclopedia*, which was published between 1751 and 1765 in seventeen volumes, numbering 16,288 pages. It was principally through the *Encyclopedia* that many Enlightenment ideas were disseminated; those of Locke and Montesquieu, for example, appeared under entries such as "political authority" and

BOX 1.1
The Play That Sparked a Revolution: *The Marriage of Figaro*

The Marriage of Figaro (1786) is mostly known as a delightful comic opera by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. But the opera was based on a highly successful and controversial play written in 1778, by Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais, a man who at various times was a musician, courtier, financier, diplomat, merchant, secret agent, publisher, and, one would have to say, an opportunist and something of a rogue. Even so, Beaumarchais was also a typical Enlightenment intellectual, a member of the nobility who satirized privilege and high society and a reformer, but not a revolutionary. At the time of the American Revolution, he urged the French king Louis XVI (r. 1774–1793) to support (secretly) the revolutionaries against the British and managed almost single-handedly to raise money to purchase and ship enough military equipment to support twenty-five thousand men in the colonies.

In between his many projects and adventures, he managed to write a number of plays, including two whose reputations have lasted mostly through operas: *The Barber of Seville* (composed by Rossini) and *The Marriage of Figaro* (by Mozart). In *Figaro*, the story line is a comic attempt by the title character to frustrate the efforts of the count to exercise his *droit du seigneur*, the supposed right of the lord of a manor to bed any new bride in his employ. But the play also makes much fun of numerous institutions of the old regime, including social hierarchy, inherited privilege, incompetent officials, censorship, and the courts. When the play was first written, Louis XVI was so appalled by its impertinence that he asserted it could never be performed. However, after several modifications and revisions (including transferring the setting of the play from France to Spain) and numerous additional reviews by the censors, the play was finally approved and performed by the *Comédie Française* in 1784. Despite its four-and-a-half-hour length, it was enormously popular, ran for sixty-eight successive performances, and became the greatest success of eighteenth-century theater in France.

The revolutionary leader Danton credited *Figaro* with "killing off the nobility" and Napoleon characterized the play as "the revolution already in action."

"natural liberty" and encouraged democratic tendencies in France and elsewhere. The coeditor of the *Encyclopedia*, Denis Diderot, was credited with saying that salvation would arrive when "the last King was strangled with the entrails of the last priest." The French government twice attempted to suppress the *Encyclopedia*, but publication proceeded, and it became a best seller.

One more philosopher must be mentioned, not so much because of his impact on French revolutionary tendencies per se, but because of his broader impact on the development of Europe and the West: the Scottish philosopher Adam Smith (1723–1790). Smith applied Enlightenment ideas about the natural state of things to the economy and the market, arguing that government interference in the economy violated the interplay of natural forces of competition and supply and demand. In his nine-hundred-page opus, *The Wealth of Nations*, Smith discussed how self-interest could work for the common good. By giving free rein to individual greed and the private accumulation of wealth, the "invisible hand" of the market would benefit society in the end, a formula sometimes characterized by the seemingly paradoxical aphorism "private vice yields public virtue." He argued for a system of ***laissez-faire*** (from the French, meaning "let do") in which the government abstained from interfering in the economy. These ideas shattered the prevalent doctrines of protectionism and mercantilism and became the basis for what would develop into capitalism. It is perhaps not entirely coincidental that *The Wealth of Nations* appeared in 1776, the same year as the U.S. Declaration of Independence.

The Enlightenment is often treated as one of the causes of the French Revolution of 1789, but it is important to recognize that it was not *the* cause of the Revolution. Most of the *philosophes* should more properly be thought of as reformers than revolutionaries. They were mostly from the upper classes themselves, and although they satirized and criticized old regime society, they mostly favored the creation of an enlightened, or constitutional, monarchy rather than a popular, or representative, form of government. The *philosophes* themselves did not constitute any political parties or revolutionary organizations; nor did they propose any very specific reform programs or policies. None of them was involved very directly in the revolutionary events of 1789.

Even so, the ideas raised by Enlightenment thinkers were profoundly unsettling and challenging to old regime society and political order. The *philosophes* attacked the very assumptions on which the *ancien régime* was built, and they held the existing institutions up to ridicule. Their emphasis on reason and independent thinking undermined the habits of blind obedience to the authority of the church and the state. The assertions of Locke, Montesquieu, and Rousseau that the ultimate object of government was to promote the happiness and dignity of the individual created

a whole new way of thinking about the political world, and not just in France. The very fact that these ideas were being aired and debated gave rise to a new phenomenon—public opinion—and the idea of government and politics as something "public."

Much cross-fertilization of ideas occurred between America and Europe at this time. Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin visited France, read the works of the *philosophes*, and were much influenced by the ideas of the Enlightenment. Similarly, the examples of the American revolutionaries, the Declaration of Independence, and the U.S. Constitution (1787) inspired both reformers and revolutionaries in France.

THE IMPACT OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT

The impact of the Enlightenment went far beyond France and America, however, affecting virtually every country in Europe and all levels of society. Some European monarchs even embraced the Enlightenment (or at least some parts of it) and used its principles to introduce reforms; these "enlightened despots" included Frederick the Great in Prussia, Catherine the Great in Russia, and Maria Theresa in Austria. In Holland and Britain, liberals within the political establishment used Enlightenment ideas to effect change. In Spain and Italy, as in France, intellectuals used them to criticize and prod the old regime. Enlightenment ideas provided inspiration for political ideologies emerging in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, from **liberalism** to **socialism** and **communism**. The emphasis on reason, experimentation, observation, and empiricism laid the foundation for modern social science and the way we study and understand human society today. But most importantly, the whole tenor of the Enlightenment laid the foundation for human rights, popular sovereignty, tolerance, and respect for law, values that lie at the core of modern European society.

2

The French Revolution and Napoleon

The year 1789 marks a signal event in European and world history: the overthrow of a monarchy through a popular revolution. Like most historical markers, the use of this one particular year, 1789, is a shorthand that masks a much more complex reality extending over many more years. Although 1789 marked the storming of the Bastille and the Declaration of the Rights of Man, the king, Louis XVI (r. 1774–1793), was not actually dethroned until 1792 and he was executed in 1793. And, much of the impact of the French Revolution was felt elsewhere in Europe only after Napoleon Bonaparte seized power in 1799. The Revolution was not fully concluded until the defeat of Napoleon and the restoration of the monarchy in 1815 (nor was it truly defeated even then).

That these events occurred in France had special significance for the rest of Europe. As noted in the previous chapter, France was in many ways the most important country on the Continent at the time of the Revolution. Louis XIV (r. 1643–1715), the Sun King, had established a standard for a rigorous, powerful, and elegant monarchy, and his luxurious palace at Versailles was admired all over Europe. With some twenty-eight million inhabitants, France was the most populous country on the Continent. It was the leading center of arts and sciences and the focal point of the intellectual ferment of the Enlightenment. French was the most widely used international language, the language both of diplomacy and of most of the royal courts of Europe.

As with all revolutions, the causes of the French Revolution of 1789 included both long-term and structural factors, as well as more immediate events. The former included the socioeconomic changes of the eighteenth

century, the ideas of the Enlightenment, and weaknesses in the monarchy. The short-term factors were primarily economic: government debt, a financial crisis, and a bad harvest year. The financial crisis led the king to convoke a meeting of the Estates General in 1789, and from there events cascaded out of control.

During most of the eighteenth century, France experienced both economic stability and growth. Agricultural productivity and industrial production increased steadily in the middle part of the century, and the literacy rate of the population grew from 21 percent at the beginning of the century to 37 percent at the end. However, as we saw in the previous chapter, it was also a time of economic and intellectual ferment. Industry and commerce were transforming the economic landscape and fostering the growth of cities and a new middle class (the bourgeoisie), who were agitating for more influence both in the economy and in the political realm. Enlightenment writers were broaching ideas of religious and cultural freedom, representative institutions, and legal equality. And, they were more generally pressing for change and progress. The eighteenth century saw a rapid expansion in the publication of books, periodicals, and pamphlets, which allowed wide dissemination of these new ideas and, with that, the early stages of public opinion.

By the end of the century, however, France was suffering serious problems. An inefficient system of taxation made it difficult for the monarchy to raise the money it needed. Furthermore, both the church and the nobility, which together owned much of the land in the country, were virtually exempt from taxes. The financial problems of the regime were made worse by the financial and material aid provided by France to the American colonies during their war of independence against Britain. For France, this was a strategic decision, rather than a moral or ideological one, as it was intended to weaken the country's chief rival, England, and to avenge the loss of French colonies in America and India during the Seven Years' War (the French and Indian War in North America). The combination of mounting debts and ineffective tax collection meant that, by 1787, payments on the debt absorbed about half of all the taxes that were collected.

The economic slump impacted the rest of the French population as well. The economic growth of the eighteenth century and the import of silver from the New World had fueled inflation in France, a phenomenon that was both new and alarming for many people. Between 1726 and 1789, the cost of living increased by 62 percent, whereas wages rose by only 25 percent. In the 1780s, increased competition from British textile manufacturers led to massive unemployment in the textile towns of northern France. Then, 1788 saw the worst grain harvest in France since 1709, causing increases in grain and food prices, food shortages, and even famine. All this provoked rising discontent in both the cities and the countryside.

One more problem was the weakness of the monarchy. Louis XIV had been a strong and vigorous leader, but his successors were neither, and Louis XVI was both weak and ineffectual. He was not able to control his ministers, and ministerial infighting made it difficult to deal with the financial crisis of the 1780s. Furthermore, Louis had become a virtual prisoner of Versailles, rarely leaving the Paris region, and he was consequently increasingly isolated from his subjects and the diverse regions of his kingdom.

1789: THE REVOLUTION BEGINS

In the face of the financial crisis and the refusal of the privileged classes to approve new taxes, Louis XVI decided to convoke the Estates General to address government reforms and the tax system. An assembly representing the three estates—the clergy, nobility, and the Third Estate—the Estates General had not met since 1614. The twelve hundred delegates of the Estates General met at Versailles beginning in May 1789, bringing with them the ***cahiers de doléances***, or list of grievances, that voters had drawn up in the electoral assemblies that selected the delegates. The *cahiers* generally called for rather moderate reforms of the judicial, tax, and seigneurial systems and were not on the whole revolutionary. Nevertheless, the very process of drawing up the lists had politicized the population and focused national attention on the assembly in Versailles.

Even before the delegates assembled, a debate arose on how voting was to be conducted at the Estates General. Traditionally, each of the three estates sent the same number of delegates to the Estates General, and the voting there was by order, not by head, meaning that the Third Estate, representing over 95 percent of the population, had only one vote of the three. But in some of the provincial assemblies meeting the previous summer, the Third Estate had been given half of all the delegates, and voting was by head, so there was some precedent for change. In an influential pamphlet entitled "What Is the Third Estate?" a theretofore obscure priest, Abbé Sieyès, answered the title question, "Everything," and suggested a similar formula for voting. Sieyès's pamphlet discussed more than voting procedures, though, and hinted at even more radical changes: "If the privileged order were abolished," he wrote, "the nation would be not something less but something more."

In June, the Third Estate essentially adopted the program set out in Sieyès's pamphlet and declared itself the National Assembly. When they next tried to assemble, they found the doors of their meeting place locked, so they moved next door to an indoor tennis court, where they swore the famous Tennis Court Oath: "Wherever we meet, there is the nation,"

they proclaimed, and vowed not to adjourn until France was given a new constitution. As the delegates and the city of Paris became more unruly, the king began to move troops into the city. With rumors that the regime was intent on dissolving the National Assembly, armed militias began to form throughout the city. On July 14, a crowd of eighty thousand stormed the Bastille, the old royal prison, in hopes of seizing ammunition stored there. Royal troops opened fire, killing a hundred people, but the crowd prevailed, seized the governor of the fortress, cut off his head, and carried it about town on the end of a pike. The fall of the Bastille, like the fall of the **Berlin Wall** two hundred years later, became an important symbol of the Revolution, and that day, Bastille Day, is still celebrated as a French national holiday, complete with fireworks and parades.

The Bastille may have had mostly symbolic importance, but in revolutions, symbols are crucial. The vulnerability of the monarchy was exposed, and its authority quickly evaporated. Word about the fall of the Bastille spread to the provinces, where peasants followed the Parisians by raiding the chateaus of their landlords. In August, the newly styled National Constituent Assembly officially abolished the remnants of **feudalism** and freed peasants from their payments under the seigneurial system.

The assembly then turned to the task of determining the principles on which a new political regime would be based. The result, passed by the assembly on August 26, was the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, similar in impact to the American Declaration of Independence and later the symbolic foundation of the French Republic. The declaration clearly reflects Enlightenment ideals and the ideas and language of Rousseau, Montesquieu, and Locke. It makes no mention of the authority of the monarch and declares instead "the natural, inalienable, and sacred rights of man." "Men are born and remain free and equal in rights" and these rights include "liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression."

King Louis XVI refused to sign the declaration, and most of the deputies at this point still assumed that his signature was necessary before the document could become official. Once again, the Parisian crowd took action, feeling that the king would be more responsive to the will of the people if he were in Paris rather than Versailles. A crowd of six thousand women, aggravated by the short supply of bread in city markets, marched the fifteen miles to Versailles and escorted the king back to Paris.

For the next two years, a kind of stalemate prevailed, with the Constituent Assembly working on a new constitution, debating the powers of the monarchy, and wrestling with the country's continuing financial crisis, while Louis looked on as a sort of de facto constitutional monarch. In an effort to deal with the country's continuing debts, the assembly confiscated all properties belonging to the church. They enacted the Civil

Constitution of the Clergy, which required public election of clergy and bishops and forced the clergy to sign an oath of loyalty to the nation. Finally, in June 1791, the new constitution was presented to the public, providing for an elected legislative assembly and granting the king only a suspensive veto; that is, the power to delay legislation but not to defeat it.

Dismayed by these developments, Louis XVI fled Paris disguised as a commoner and attempted to reach the French border to rally those opposed to the Revolution. Among them were virtually all of the European monarchs, who saw events in France as an ominous portent for their own rule. The empress of Russia, Catherine the Great, declared that "the affairs of France were the concern of all crowned heads." But Louis was captured and brought back to Paris. The new constitution was put into force, and a legislative assembly was elected. Prussia and Austria soon joined in a war against France, and when their troops began to move into France, charges that Louis was in collusion with foreign monarchs provoked a new insurrection in Paris. New elections were called, and in September 1792, the newly elected National Convention scrapped the recent constitution, abolished the monarchy, and declared the establishment of the first French republic.

BOX 2.1
Women on the Revolution

Women played an important part in the revolutionary events in France, including the march on Versailles to bring Louis XVI back to Paris, where he would be more accessible and accountable to the people. But the leaders of the Revolution were mostly men, and not all women were pleased with the accomplishments of the revolutionaries. The Declaration of the Rights of Man, for example, made no mention of women at all, leading French playwright Olympe de Gouges (1745–1793) to publish in 1791 a "Declaration of the Rights of Women," paralleling the articles of the original declaration, but replacing "man" with "woman." She addressed her appeal to the queen (Marie Antoinette) as a "mother and a wife," hoping to win support for her cause from this influential woman.

In Britain, the teacher and writer Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797) welcomed the Revolution in France and saw in it the possibility of a representative government that would respect the rights of both men and women. But she also was disappointed with the Declaration of the Rights of Man and even more angered when the French assembly limited the right to education to men only. She published *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), in which she described marriage as "legal prostitution" and attacked educational restrictions that kept women in a state of "ignorance and slavish dependence." It was the first book in Britain advocating women's right to vote and hold public office.

THE RADICAL REPUBLIC AND THE TERROR

The fall of the monarchy marked the triumph of popular democracy and a return to universal manhood **suffrage** (introduced in 1789 but abandoned in 1791). In Paris, charismatic leaders like Georges Danton and Maximilien Robespierre jockeyed for power and influence. Political clubs (like the radical Jacobins) and factions formed. Meetings of the assembly were attended by crowds of regular folk who jeered, cheered, shouted, and threw things at political leaders and speakers. Such crowd participation had a dramatic influence on both the policies adopted and changes in leadership, of which there were many. In Paris and the provinces, local clubs and "section assemblies" drew large numbers of *sans-culottes* (those "without fancy pants") into almost daily political activity.

In the National Assembly, the first order of business for the newly elected deputies was the fate of the former king. Some argued that he should be tried for treason; others argued that he should be executed immediately without trial, whereas conservatives held that he enjoyed royal immunity from either trial or prosecution. The deputies finally decided on a trial, conducted by the National Convention itself. Louis appeared twice in his own defense, but after a month, the deputies voted unanimously to convict him of collusion with foreign powers and then, by a narrow majority, to execute him. In January 1793, he was beheaded on the guillotine, as was his wife, Marie Antoinette, nine months later. The guillotine, a mechanical beheading device recently introduced as a painless (thus, more humane) and efficient means of execution, became another symbol of the Revolution.

BOX 2.2
Charles Dickens on the Guillotine

The legacy and meaning of the French Revolution are among the most hotly contested matters in all of history. It was, after all, a time of magnificent achievements but also of much suffering. In England, where political change had come in mostly peaceful ways, many people were appalled by the violence of the French Revolution. Charles Dickens, for example, who was born a generation after the Revolution, writes in *A Tale of Two Cities* of his revulsion of the worship of the guillotine during the Terror:

> It was the National Razor which shaved close. . . . It was the sign of regeneration of the human race. It superseded the Cross. Models of it were worn on breasts from which the Cross was discarded, and it was bowed down to and believed in where the Cross was denied.

Within a month of Louis's execution, Britain, Holland, and Spain joined Austria and Prussia in the war against France. The threat that the French revolutionaries posed to the monarchies of Europe was made more immediate and personal by the fact that Marie Antoinette was the sister of the ruler of Austria. In France, the combined threats of counterrevolution and foreign war strengthened the hand of more radical factions within the National Convention, which set up a Committee of Public Safety to defend the gains of the Revolution and eliminate its enemies. Led first by Danton and then by Robespierre, the committee officially proclaimed the Terror, responding both to internal enemies and the threat of foreign invasion. Those who opposed the Revolution were now classified as suspects subject to arrest and trial. As Robespierre put it, "To good citizens revolutionary government owes the full protection of the state; to the enemies of the people it owes only death."[1] The guillotine was the usual method of execution. Overall, about forty thousand people perished during the Terror. Within a year, the Terror had run its course, but not before consuming its own. Upon being led to the scaffold, Danton told the executioner, "Show them my head; it is a sight worth seeing." A few months later, Robespierre followed him to the guillotine.

After the death of Robespierre, the convention dismantled the revolutionary dictatorship, wrote yet another constitution, and established a five-man Directory to hold executive power. The Directory would last for four years, trying to find middle ground between radical revolution and royalist reaction. Still at war with the rest of Europe and facing continuing political ferment, the Directory increasingly came to rely for support on the military as its own political legitimacy waned. The directors themselves supported a ***coup d'état*** in late 1799, placing the levers of power in the hands of a dynamic young military officer named Napoleon Bonaparte.

NAPOLEON AND EUROPE

Napoleon had been made a general in 1793 at the age of twenty-four. Two years later, he made a name for himself by putting down a royalist uprising in Paris. The next year, he was given command of the French army of Italy, where he scored victory after victory against the supposedly superior forces of Austria. He returned to France a hero, and even after the coup of 1799, his popularity remained high. He was elected first consul for life in 1802, and two years later crowned himself Napoleon I, emperor of the French. He was to hold that title for ten years, and during most of that time, he and France dominated Europe.

Within France, Napoleon pursued the middle course of the Directory, trying to preserve the major gains of the Revolution while avoiding a

return either to radicalism or to monarchy. He emasculated representative institutions, censored the press, put down rebellions, and imprisoned or executed those caught in either royalist or republican conspiracies. He also made peace with the Catholic Church, signing a concordat with the pope and eliminating most of the harassment of the church and clergy that had been unleashed by the Revolution. Perhaps his most enduring legacy was the introduction of a new legal code, the Napoleonic Code, which remains today the basis for the legal systems of France and most of the rest of Europe (see box 2.3).

Napoleon formed mass armies and led them into other countries to spread the ideas of the Revolution and to enhance his own power and that of France. In 1805, he inflicted a punishing defeat on combined Austrian

Bonaparte Crossing the Alps *(1801) by Jacques-Louis David. David was a supporter of the Revolution whose paintings contributed to the heroic image of Napoleon. Reprinted with permission of the Musée National des Châteaux de Malmaison.*

BOX 2.3
The Napoleonic Code

Before the Revolution, royal law and church law both competed with local-level traditions in many French provinces. Napoleon commissioned a battery of lawyers to help establish a uniform code of law and personally played a hand in the project. The code, over two thousand articles in length, institutionalized many of the gains of the Revolution, including equality before the law, freedom of religion, and the rights of property owners. It also reflected Napoleon's traditional views of the family, which he considered a crucial intermediary between the state and the individual. Napoleon once complained, "Women are considered too highly. They should not be regarded as equal to men. In reality, they are nothing more than machines for producing children."[2] The new legal code reflected this patriarchal view, with women and children legally subordinate to and dependent on their husbands or fathers, and with men assigned control of family property. However, the code also required that inheritances be divided among all sons and daughters, thus ending the practice of primogeniture, which assigned all property to the eldest son. As an unexpected consequence, French couples began to limit themselves to two or three children, so their property would not be further divided.

The Napoleonic Code, applied or adopted throughout much of Europe, is still the basis for the legal systems of much of the Continent, including secular but Muslim Turkey, as well as of the state of Louisiana, which was a French colony at the time of the code's inception. Napoleon himself felt that his code was his most enduring legacy: "My glory is not to have won forty battles . . . what nothing will destroy, what will live eternally, is my Civil Code."[3]

BOX 2.4
The War of 1812

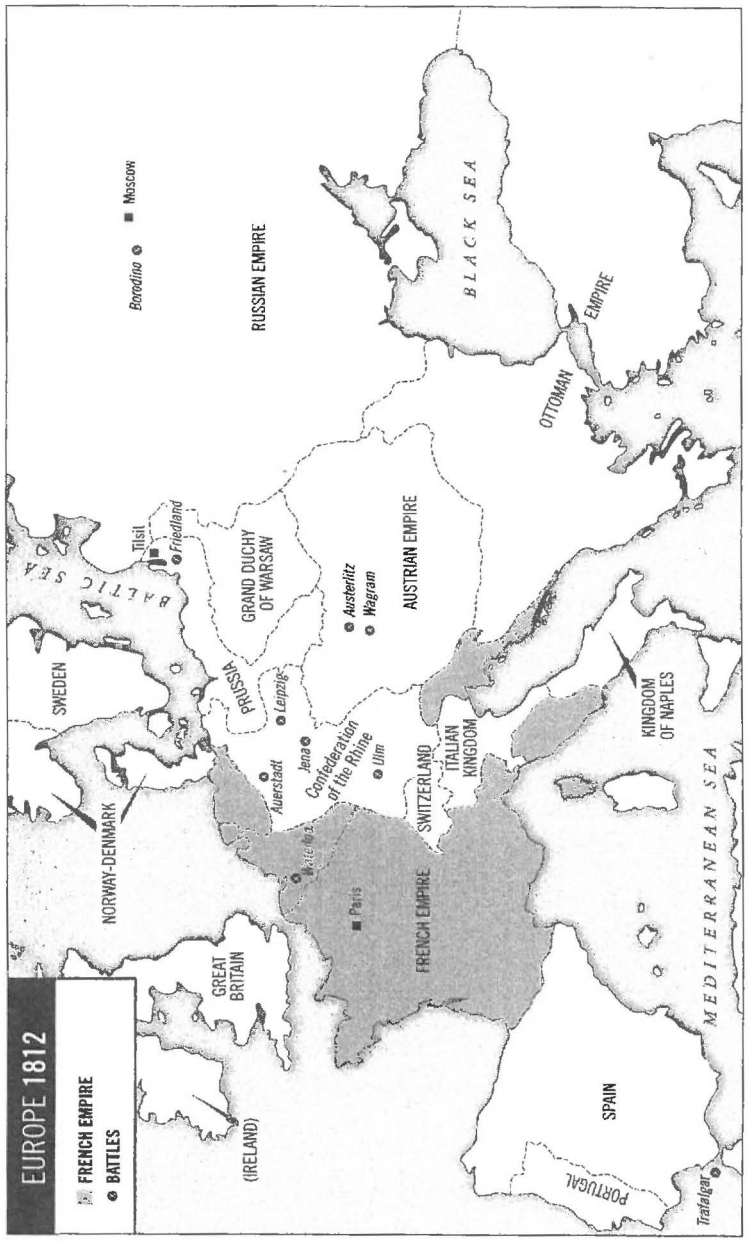
The War of 1812 between the United States and Britain was an indirect consequence of the Napoleonic Wars in Europe. The United States had remained neutral in the conflict between Britain and France, but there was much sympathy in the States for French revolutionary ideals and lingering gratitude for France's support of the American revolution a generation earlier. Continuing U.S. trade with France during the European wars prompted the British to blockade U.S. ports, intercept American merchant ships, and "impress" U.S. seamen suspected of being British deserters. The United States declared war on Britain in 1812, although this dispute remained a sideshow for Britain, which was focused on defeating Napoleon. When this finally happened, the blockade ended, as did the impetus for the conflict with the United States, which was concluded in 1815. Many Americans celebrated this as the country's "second war of independence," and the lyrics to the country's national anthem were composed by Francis Scott Key in 1814 after he witnessed the British naval bombardment of Baltimore's Fort McHenry.

and Russian forces at Austerlitz, in Austria. The next year, he crushed the Prussian army at Jena, in Germany, and occupied Berlin. At the height of the Napoleonic empire in 1810–1812, France controlled Spain, Italy, Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, and much of Germany, Poland, Croatia, and Slovenia.

Napoleon was not a revolutionary, but he solidified many of the revolutionary changes of 1789–1791, and he himself supported most of the ideas and proposals of Enlightenment *philosophes*. Through his military conquests, he spread many of the ideas of the Enlightenment and the Revolution across the Continent. In many of these areas, Napoleon established satellite republics complete with constitutions, declarations of rights, elected legislatures, and civil equality, and he implemented financial, judicial, and administrative reforms modeled on those of the French. In every part of the empire, he undermined feudalism, introduced a legal code, fostered notions of representative government, and awakened the spirit of nationalism. The peoples of these areas did not exactly welcome French rule per se, but they saw French innovations as tools to be used against their own repressive monarchies. The monarchs, of course, saw Napoleon as a threat, both to the old order and to the balance of power in Europe.

Eventually, though, Napoleon's extensive military conquests spread his power too thin. In 1812, he assembled an army of four hundred thousand soldiers and launched an attack on Russia. Napoleon had changed the nature of warfare in Europe by conscripting huge armies and infusing them with a commitment to fight for France and for "liberty, equality, and fraternity," the slogan of the Revolution. Almost everywhere, the size and spirit of these armies overcame the better trained, but mercenary, armies of European monarchs, whose soldiers fought for a salary rather than a cause. But the army of the Russian campaign dwarfed any previous one, and its size posed intractable problems of supply, movement, and logistics. By the time Napoleon's army reached Moscow, the Russian winter had set in and the city was in flames, probably set by the Russians themselves to deprive the French of shelter from the cold. In retreat, almost the whole French army either deserted or perished from cold, hunger, and guerrilla attacks by the Russians. Only seventy thousand made it back to France.

By this time, Austria, Prussia, and Britain were allied with the Russians against Napoleon, whose military fortunes began to wane. The allied armies pressed on, entered Paris, and forced Napoleon to abdicate, sending him into exile on the island of Elba off the Italian coast. He escaped within a year, rallied support in France, and confronted the allied armies again, only to be finally defeated by a British and Prussian army at the famous battle of Waterloo, in Belgium, in 1815. This time, he was banished to a small island in the South Atlantic, St. Helena, where he died in 1821.



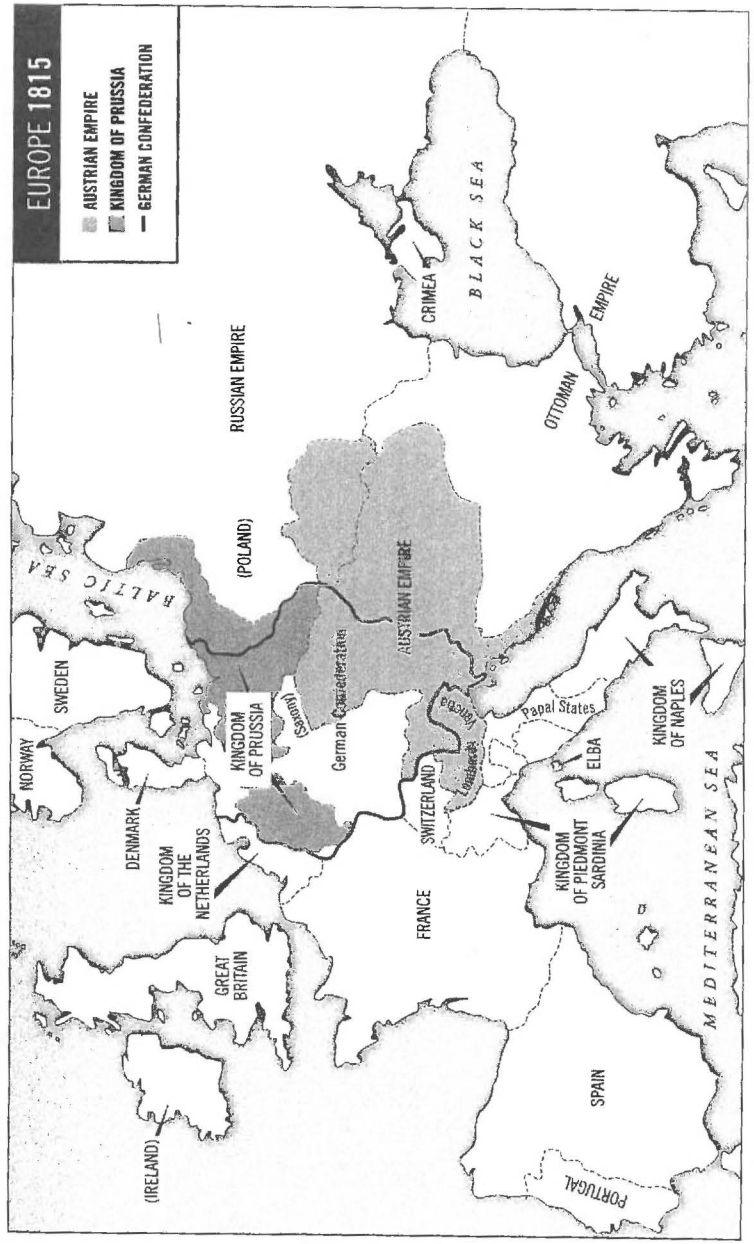
With the defeat of Napoleon, European monarchs attempted a restoration of the old order in France. Louis XVIII, brother of Louis XVI, was placed on the throne, thus restoring the Bourbon monarchy. The boundaries of France were returned to those of 1790. However, the revolutionary genie could not be put back into the bottle entirely. Louis XVIII issued a constitutional charter that incorporated many of the changes that had entered into French life and society since 1789, including a degree of freedom of speech and parliamentary government.

At the Congress of Vienna (1814–1815), the four triumphant Great Powers (Britain, Austria, Russia, and Prussia) confirmed the restoration of the old order, with some modifications, and put back in place the balance of power with the intent of preserving monarchical power and maintaining a lasting peace. And indeed, no continent-wide wars occurred in Europe for the next hundred years. But the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars had unleashed forces that would shake the foundations of European society. The first modern revolution occurred in 1789, and the 1792 French republic was the first modern experiment with democracy in Europe; these events have inspired democrats, liberals, socialists, and revolutionaries ever since. Napoleon spread ideas of democracy, liberty, and equality and planted the seeds of representative government all across Europe

BOX 2.5
Beethoven and Napoleon

The German composer Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) was also a revolutionary—in the world of music—and like many revolutionaries he had divided feelings about the French Revolution and Napoleon Bonaparte. Beethoven, himself a republican (favoring representative government), admired Napoleon as the embodiment of the values of the French Revolution and, in 1803, dedicated his Third Symphony to the general. But the next year, when Napoleon declared himself emperor of France, Beethoven became disillusioned and tore up the page dedicating the symphony to Napoleon, renaming it simply *Eroica*—the heroic symphony.

The way Beethoven wrote music, and the music itself, was revolutionary, and reflected the spirit of the times. His predecessors (including Franz Joseph Haydn and Mozart) had mostly written works commissioned by kings or princes, keeping the aristocratic audience in mind and performing in refined and elegant courts. Beethoven followed his own individual spirit, wrote with a passion and bombast that shocked his audiences, and performed at public concerts that people paid to hear. He took music to the streets. The *Eroica* symphony, like all of his major works, was a massive and lengthy composition, full of tension, emotion, tragedy, and joy. It was revolutionary music, and Beethoven himself became a symbol of freedom and individualism.



while causing military destruction and the loss of hundreds of thousands of human lives. Even Russia, which withstood the French attack in 1812, was affected: Russian soldiers who pursued the retreating French armies into France were exposed to French civilization, Enlightenment thinking, and revolutionary ideology. Back in Russia, some of them attempted to establish a constitutional monarchy, in the Decembrist revolt of 1825. This effort was crushed, but the Decembrists were an inspiration for the revolutionaries who sparked the next great modern revolution, in 1917, in Russia.

3

The Industrial Revolution and the Birth of Capitalism

The Industrial Revolution refers to the era in which economic production shifted from the use of hand tools to the use of power machinery, fueled primarily by coal and steam. Most of this process took place between 1750 and 1850 in Europe, although the most intense changes occurred in Great Britain in the half-century after 1780.[1] The Industrial Revolution occurred at about the same time as the French Revolution, although the two were quite separate. The former affected mostly England and mostly the economy; the latter affected France and the European continent, mostly in the political sphere. England was relatively immune from the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars, and Europe did not fully engage the Industrial Revolution until after 1820.

The impact of the Industrial Revolution was at least as great as that of the French Revolution. It soon spread from England to Western Europe, then to Eastern Europe, and then to the rest of the world, initiating a broader process of modernization that was to extend through the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. The mechanization of production allowed a huge increase in productivity and economic output, thus laying the groundwork for modern industrial society. It also had far-reaching social and political consequences, with the advent of assembly-line factories, urbanization, the transformation of the family, and the rise of a new social class, the urban working class, or **proletariat.**

Ultimately, both the Ottoman Empire and Persia were integrated into the world system as periphery. Integration and peripheralization would have a profound effect on the future of the region. Agricultural lands that had once been used for subsistence farming were turned over to the cultivation of cash crops like cotton, opium, and tobacco. By 1880, 20 percent of Persia's exports consisted of opium; on the eve of World War I, cotton comprised 80 percent of Egyptian exports. To facilitate these exports, European and local governments financed and built railroads and expanded ports to handle steamships, in the process changing the face of the region. Throughout the Middle East, a market economy, in which people produced commodities for sale, came to replace local marketplace economies, in which people produced mainly for their own consumption and used whatever surplus was left over to buy those items they could not produce themselves. Land itself became a commodity like any other to be bought and sold, once independent peasants became wage laborers on other peoples' estates, and tribal leaders became landlords while fellow tribespeople worked their lands as tenant laborers. In sum, Europe cultivated a colonial-style trade with Middle Eastern empires, and this relationship affected not only economic relations in the region, but social relations as well.

CHAPTER 4

War, Diplomacy, and the New Global Balance of Power

The last of the three sixteenth-century events that defined the modern world was the Protestant Reformation. From 1517 (the year of Martin Luther's public denunciation of church doctrines and practices) through 1648 (the end of the Thirty Years' War), Europeans engaged in numerous conflicts pitting Catholics against Protestants. The Protestant Reformation ended the dream of a universal Christian empire in Europe. The Peace of Westphalia that ended the Thirty Years' War recognized fixed territorial boundaries among the states of Europe and established the principle that the religion of a state's ruler would be the religion of the state. Europe was now permanently divided into a number of highly competitive sovereign states which sought to defend themselves against each other, gain advantage over their adversaries, and, at times, establish a balance among themselves. In effect, both the modern state and the international political order assembled from those states—the modern state system—might be traced to the Protestant Reformation. We shall discuss the spread of the modern state system to the Middle East in a later chapter. First, however, it is necessary to see how the emergence of modern states in Europe affected the region in other ways.

The Middle East was one of the places where the competition among European states played itself out. In the eastern Mediterranean, this competition came to be known as the "Eastern Question." At first, the Eastern Question involved Britain and France. Over the course of the nineteenth century, it came to include Britain, France, and Russia, then, finally, Britain, France, Russia, and Germany. On the northern frontier of Persia, a related competition pit Great Britain against Russia. This competition was known as the "Great Game," a term popularized by the British writer Rudyard Kipling in his novel *Kim*. Both competitions are the subject of this chapter.

Let us begin by looking at how the Eastern Question evolved. From its founding in the sixteenth century, the Ottoman Empire played a role in the European balance of power. The sixteenth century was the glorious era of Ottoman expansion. The empire pushed forward its borders in southeastern Europe at the expense

of the Habsburg Empire, the dominant power in much of central Europe and the Balkans. As mentioned before, the Ottomans even laid siege twice to the Habsburg capital of Vienna. On the seas, the Ottomans fought Venice for naval supremacy in the Mediterranean. By the last quarter of the sixteenth century, the Ottomans had conducted raiding expeditions on the Mediterranean as far west as Italy, and even captured the western Mediterranean port city of Tunis from the Spanish.

To ease their military expansion at the expense of Venice and the Habsburg Empire, the Ottomans made alliances with anti-Habsburg states that were more than anxious to encourage Ottoman diplomatic interference in European affairs. Thus, in 1533 (four years after the first siege of Vienna), the Ottomans sent ten thousand gold pieces to Francis I of France so that he might join with Britain and some German states in an alliance against the Habsburgs.

The Protestant Reformation played a direct role in Ottoman strategies with regard to Europe. The Ottomans viewed the Protestant movement and Protestant states as natural allies in their common struggle against the pretensions of the Catholic Habsburgs. The Ottomans supported Protestant movements because they viewed them as a potential fifth column in Europe, and actually encouraged Calvinist missionaries to propagate their doctrines in the Ottoman-controlled area that is now Hungary and Transylvania (yes, that Transylvania), a region in contemporary Romania. Likewise, Protestant and anti-Habsburg monarchs of Europe were not blind to the strategic value of Ottoman friendship. When Henry VIII of England broke with the Catholic Church and established the Church of England, he confiscated church property. Brass church bells were melted down and the tin they contained found its way to the Ottomans. Tin was an essential ingredient in the manufacture of artillery. It was scarce in the Ottoman Empire but not in the place the ancient Romans had once called the "Tin Islands"—Great Britain.

The Ottomans took the offensive in trade policy as well. In 1569, they granted the first effective capitulations to the French. Capitulations were clauses attached to treaties that granted special economic, commercial, legal, and religious rights and privileges to representatives of foreign powers in the Ottoman Empire. For example, capitulations might grant European traders the right to establish commercial enclaves in the Ottoman Empire, to construct a church for their exclusive use, to have recourse to the courts of their own nations, or to be exempt from taxes. The granting of capitulations was an important part of the Ottoman diplomatic arsenal. It enabled the Ottomans to gain the favor of potential allies in the Christian world. At the same time, capitulations enabled the imperial government to increase customs revenues and obtain goods needed by the empire. Here we see a perfect correspondence between the economic policies of the mercantilist states of Europe and those of the Ottoman Empire: Mercantilist states wanted to accumulate gold by exporting more than they imported; the Ottomans were concerned with maintaining stocks of vital commodities for which they were willing to pay. The capitulations provided both with the means to realize their economic strategies.

Since the capitulations encouraged European imports, European merchants and the governments that backed them used the capitulations to bring about the economic penetration of the Ottoman Empire. As a matter of fact, it might be said that during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the capitulations provided *the* means by which Europeans were able to penetrate Ottoman markets. After the French, the Ottomans granted the Dutch, the British, and the Russians capitulatory privileges. Capitulations were not abolished in most of the Ottoman domains until 1914. The end of capitulations in Egypt had to wait until 1937. Well before that time, capitulations had become a major bone of contention between the Ottomans and Europeans, particularly because Ottoman merchants felt they had to operate at a disadvantage compared to their European counterparts, who could avoid taxes and customs duties.

During the seventeenth century, the nature of Ottoman-European relations began to change. The Ottomans were no longer the unbeatable foe they had once been. In 1656, the Venetians destroyed the Ottoman fleet not far off the coast of Istanbul, and in 1699 the Ottomans were forced out of the territories of contemporary Hungary, Croatia, and parts of Romania by the Habsburg Empire. But worse was yet to come. New, more powerful states supplanted the Habsburgs and Venetians as the main Ottoman adversaries, and as the new Atlantic economy displaced the Mediterranean economy, a wider area for conflict between the Ottomans and Europeans emerged.

The Ottomans were thus pushed onto the defensive, and as the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries progressed, the problem faced by European statesmen was no longer how to defend against Ottoman expansion. Instead, the problem became what to do about an increasingly enfeebled Ottoman Empire. Ottoman collapse or retreat from Europe would, after all, have a disruptive effect on the balance of power in Europe. Thus, a series of new questions arose in international affairs. If the Ottoman Empire collapsed, what would become of the territory under its control, particularly the Turkish Straits (the narrow channel connecting the Black Sea with the Mediterranean)? If the Ottomans were pushed out of Europe, what would be the fate of its possessions in the Balkans, such as the territories that are now Greece, Bulgaria, and Serbia? What would be the role of Russia in the European balance of power, and since Russia was the strongest Orthodox Christian state, what would be Russia's relationship with Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Balkans and Middle East? All these questions were elements of the Eastern Question.

These questions were not posed in a void. Over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, three processes forced European statesmen to confront them time after time: the consolidation of the Russian imperial state under Peter the Great (r. 1689–1725) and Catherine the Great (r. 1762–1796) and its relentless drive to the south; the overflow of British-French rivalries into European, Mediterranean, and Indian affairs; and the internal fragmentation of the Ottoman Empire as a result of secessionist movements in the Balkans and attempts by leaders of Egypt to gain autonomy for their province. Over the course of two centuries, these processes created crisis after crisis for European and Ottoman diplomats.

Vignette

The Siege of Vienna Made Palatable

The second Ottoman siege of Vienna began in July 1683 and lasted for two months. For the inhabitants of the Austrian capital, the experience was horrific. According to one eyewitness account:

> After a Siege of Sixty days, accompanied with a Thousand Difficulties, Sicknesses, Want of Provisions, and great Effusion of Blood, after a Million of Cannon and Musquet Shot, Bombs, Granadoes, and all sorts of Fire Works, which has changed the Face of the fairest and most flourishing City in the World, disfigured and ruined most part of the best Palaces of the same, and chiefly those of the Emperor; and damaged in many places the Beautiful Tower and Church of St. Stephen, with many Sumptuous Buildings. After a Resistance so vigorous, and the Loss of so many brave Officers and Souldiers, whose Valour and Bravery deserve Immortal Glory. After so many Toils endured, so many Watchings and so many Orders so prudently distributed by Count Staremburgh, and so punctually executed by the other Officers. After so many new Retrenchments, Pallizadoes, Parapets, new Ditches in the Ravelins, Bastions, Courtins, and principal Streets and Houses in the Town: Finally, after a Vigorous Defence and a Resistance without parallel, Heaven favourably heard the Prayers and Tears of a Cast-down and Mournful People, and retorted the Terror on a powerful Enemy, and drove him from the Walls of Vienna.

With all due respect to Count Staremburgh, the decisive factor in forcing the Ottomans to abandon their siege and withdraw their forces was the arrival of a detachment of Polish cavalry under the command of Jan III Sobieski. The Viennese, who shortly before the siege was raised had been contemplating the horrifying consequences of defeat, now reveled in their seemingly miraculous victory. In keeping with the triumphant sentiment, Viennese bakers decided to celebrate the victory by baking their bread in the shape of the Ottoman symbol—the crescent moon—which their customers then symbolically ate. Thus were croissants invented.

There is another story about the culinary effects of the siege of Vienna which, according to most historians, does not stand up to scrutiny. Nevertheless, it is a good story and deserves repeating. According to this story, the Jewish bakers of Vienna decided that they, too, would bake their bread in a celebratory shape. Wishing to memorialize the heroic exploits of Jan III Sobieski's cavalry, the bakers decided to bake their bread in the shape of a stirrup—round, with a hole in its center. The German word for stirrup is *bügel*. Hence, of course, the invention of bagels. (While a good story, most etymologists trace the word "bagel" to the German verb "biegen," "to bend.")

During the eighteenth century, Russia became the principal antagonist of the Ottoman Empire. There were two reasons for this. First, the tsars and Orthodox establishment saw Russia as the center of Orthodox Christianity (after the Ottoman capture of Constantinople they called Moscow "the Third Rome") and protector of Orthodox populations outside its borders. Many of those populations lived within the Ottoman Empire. In addition—and probably more important—was the strategic factor that motivated Russian confrontation with the Ottoman Empire. Russia was landlocked for much of the year because freezing temperatures prevented use of its northern harbors. Russian governments therefore coveted the warm-water ports of the Black Sea and Turkish Straits as a commercial and naval outlet to the Mediterranean. Only one thing stood in the way of Russia's Mediterranean ambition: the Ottoman Empire.

Beginning in 1768 Russia and the Ottoman Empire became involved in a series of wars, all of which ended badly for the Ottomans. The first of these wars ended in 1774 with the signing of the Treaty of Kuchuk Kainarja. According to the terms of the treaty the Ottomans ceded to the Russians parts of the Crimean Peninsula, which gave Russia a foothold on the Black Sea. Just as bad for the Ottomans, the Russians won freedom of navigation on the sea and the right of their merchant ships to pass through the straits.

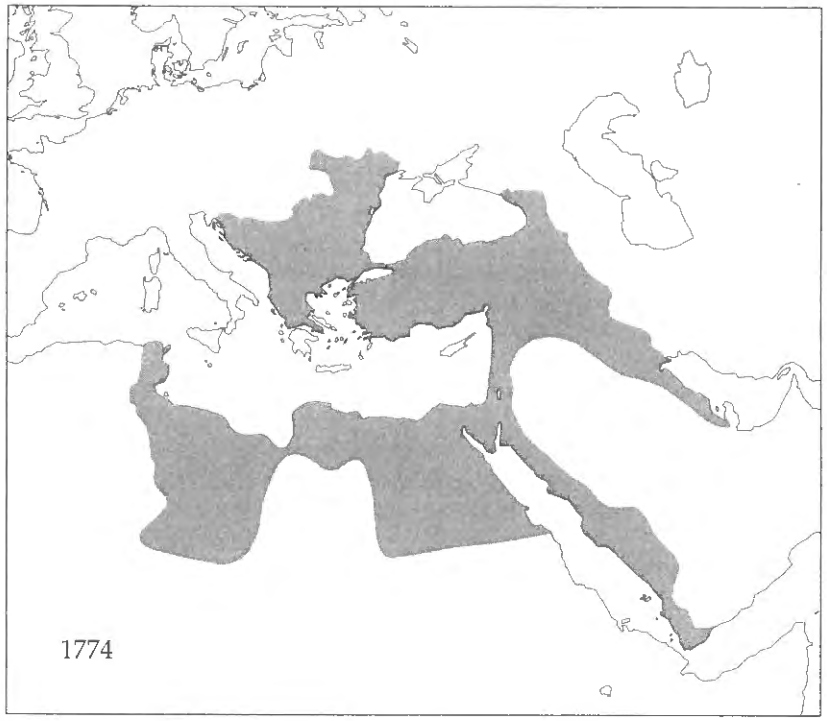
With Russia on the Black Sea and, after another war with the Ottomans, Russian influence guaranteed in the Caucasus, the Russians began to put pressure on Persia. In 1801, Russia incorporated the Kingdom of Georgia. Twelve years later,

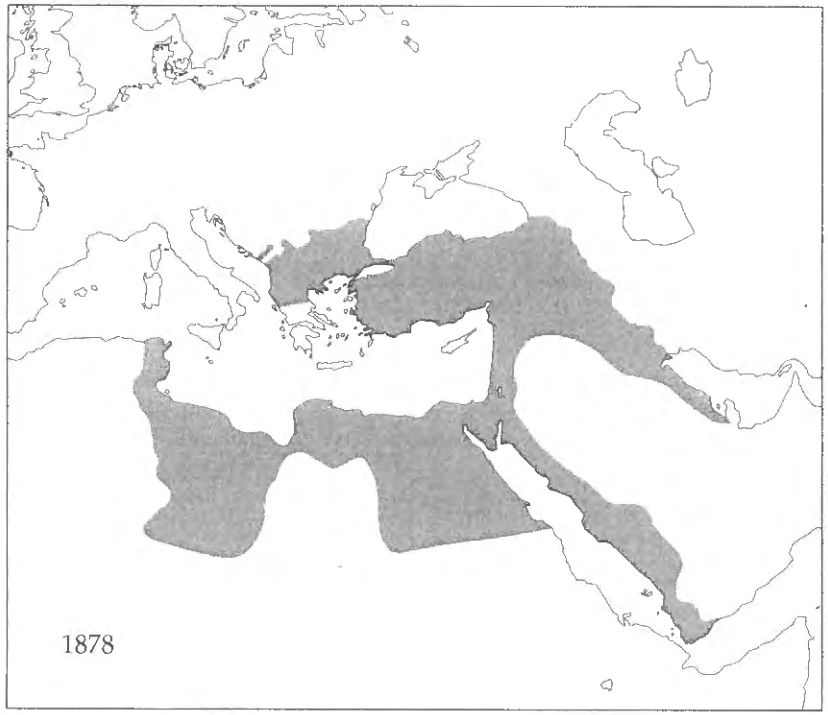
Russia won the exclusive right to have warships on the Caspian Sea. Nevertheless, the Russian drive south might have been of minimal concern to other European states, particularly Great Britain, had it not been for the second element of the Eastern Question: the British-French colonial rivalry.

In the eighteenth century the profitability of colonies established by France and Britain over the course of previous centuries declined. Each state sought to consolidate its possessions and frustrate the strategic ambitions of the other. Each state attempted to seize control of the other's colonies. The result was a series of long-forgotten wars, such as the War of the Spanish Succession and the War of the Austrian Succession, that dragged in most European powers and that were fought on several continents at the same time. The most important of these wars was the Seven Years' War (1756–1763), known in the United States as the French and Indian War. As a result of the war, France lost to Britain almost all its colonial possessions in North America east of the Mississippi and in India, retaining only a few scattered trading stations.

The Seven Years' War thus made Great Britain the dominant European power in India. For the next two centuries, protecting its position in India and protecting the route from Great Britain to India would be a primary concern for British governments.

With the virtual eradication of French power on the subcontinent, the greatest threat to that position came from the north—Russia. Hence, the Great Game, the competition between Russia and Britain for influence in Central Asia and Persia, considered by British strategists the gateway to India. George Nathaniel Curzon,


1774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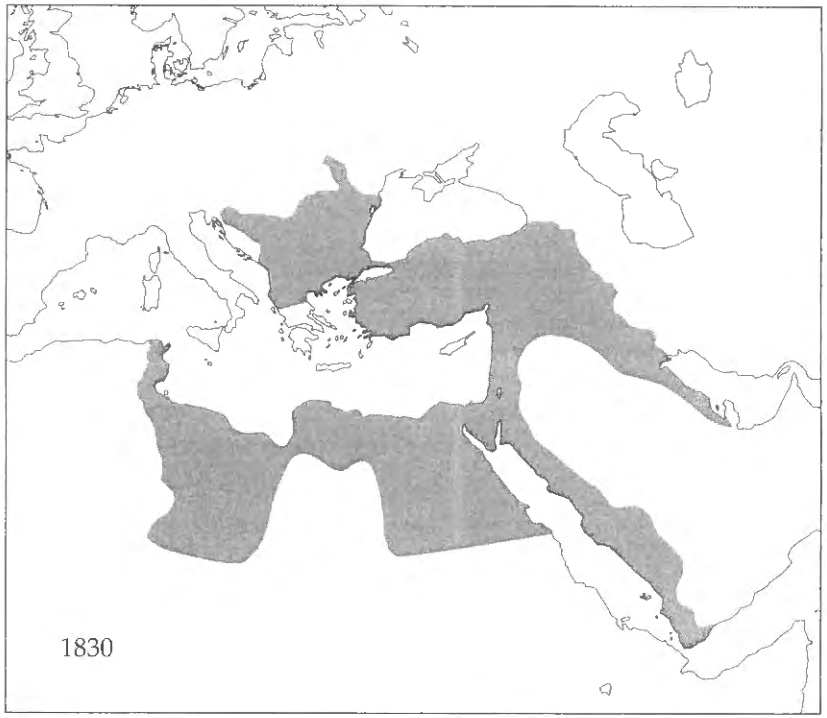
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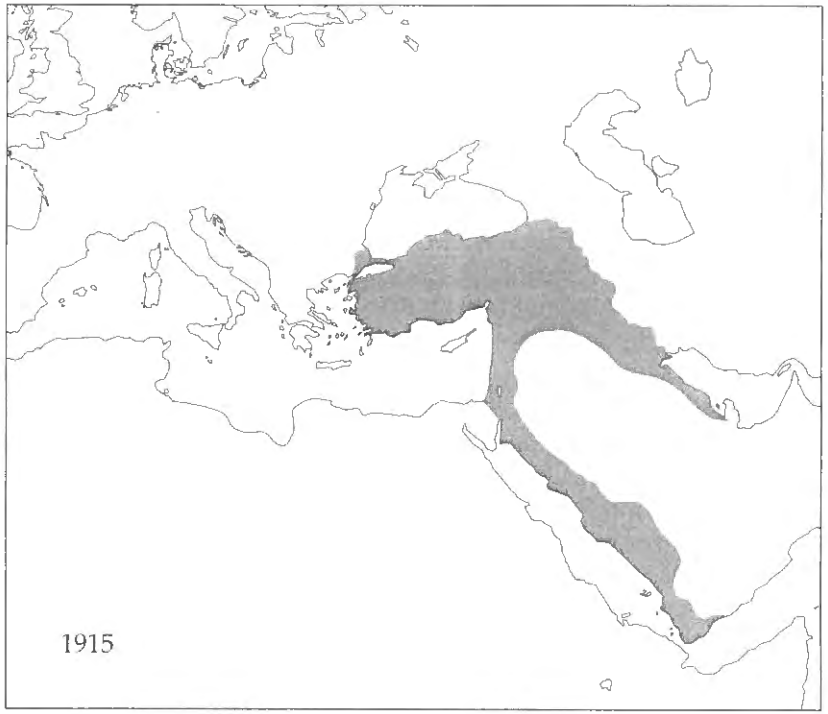

1915

British viceroy of India, wrote in 1892:

> Not content with a spoil that would rob Persia at one sweep of the entire northern half of her dominions, [Russia] turns a longing eye southwards, and yearns for an outlet upon the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean. The movements . . . along the south and east borders of Khorasan, the activity of her agents in regions far beyond the legitimate radius of an influence restricted to North Persia, her tentative experiments in the direction of Seistan—are susceptible of no other interpretation than a design to shake the influence of Great Britain in South Persia, to dispute the control of the Indian Seas, and to secure the long-sought base for naval operations in the east.

On the other hand, at the end of the Seven Years' War France had few options to obtain raw materials and market finished goods. France lacked control of the seas, had a growing urban population, and had an inadequate food supply. With the Atlantic under British domination, France began to focus on the Mediterranean. Over time, policy makers in France began to look to western North Africa as a site for colonization and to Egypt as a source of grain to overcome their overcrowding and food supply problems.

In 1798, Napoleon Bonaparte, then a general acting under the orders of the French Revolutionary Directorate, invaded Egypt. Some in the directorate had wanted Napoleon to attack Britain, but this seemed too risky to the general. Instead, he landed troops in Egypt to gain access to Egyptian grain and to threaten the British route to India from the Mediterranean. Napoleon did not think that his invasion would create difficulties between France and the Ottoman Empire. Under the latter-day mamluks, Egypt had been virtually independent, and Napoleon claimed he was willing to govern Egypt in the name of the sultan. But the French invasion created economic chaos in the Ottoman Empire. Prices of grain and coffee doubled in Istanbul within the year, and the Ottomans were not fooled by Napoleon's declarations of disinterest. Thus, the Ottomans allied themselves with the British (and the Russians). In the Battle of the Nile, the British destroyed Napoleon's communication lines with France and made Napoleon's position in Egypt risky. The British and Ottomans eventually forced the surrender of the French army in Egypt. By that time, Napoleon had already sailed back to France to seize power there.

The French adventure in Egypt is important for two reasons. The first is the emergence of Mehmet Ali, the leader of an Albanian contingent attached to the Ottoman army that fought the French in Egypt. After the French, British, and most other Ottoman troops had left Egypt, Mehmet Ali took advantage of the chaos they had left and assumed power. He and his heirs would rule Egypt, first as Ottoman governors, then, after 1914, as kings. The Mehmet Ali dynasty of Egypt lasted until 1953.

In addition to the emergence of the Mehmet Ali dynasty in Egypt, the French adventure forced Britain to reassess its role in the eastern Mediterranean. Napoleon's invasion of Egypt demonstrated to the British the vulnerability of their communication and supply lines to India. For the most part, British policy would

Vignette

Provoking a Global War

During the eighteenth century, European powers fought a series of wars that were global in scope. For the Middle East, the most significant of these wars was the Seven Years' War (1756–1763), which was fought in Europe, the Mediterranean, the Caribbean, the Pacific, Africa, and North and South America. As a result of the war, the French adopted their "Mediterranean strategy" and Britain, now the undisputed European power in India, came to view the protection of the route to India as its overriding imperial interest.

As in the case of many other momentous conflicts throughout history, a minor incident sparked the Seven Years' War. Worried about French expansion into the Ohio River Valley, Governor Robert Dinwiddie of the British Virginia colony appointed an untested twenty-one-year-old surveyor to lead a detachment of troops to warn the French out of the area. Coming upon a French encampment in an area that is now western Pennsylvania, the Virginians surrounded their adversaries and opened fire. They killed ten of the French party and captured another twenty. The French protested, calling the incident an unprovoked attack on a diplomatic party. After they captured the surveyor, the French even got him to sign a statement in which he called the killing of the leader of the French party "*l'assassinat*," an assassination. Britain and France soon went to war. In the words of British statesman Horace Walpole, "The volley fired by a young Virginian in the backwoods of America set the world on fire." Perhaps the young Virginian panicked. Perhaps he was correct to assume that the French party was a war party. Whatever the case, the young Virginian whose action sparked a global war would later redeem himself to posterity. Acting in concert with the French, George Washington, as commander-in-chief of the Continental Army, went on to eliminate much of the British empire in North America—an empire built in the wake of his youthful impetuousness.

remain one of ensuring the survival, and sometimes the territorial integrity, of the Ottoman state, if only to prevent competition from one or another European power in the eastern Mediterranean. The occasional deviation notwithstanding, this policy was only reversed with the onset of World War I in 1914.

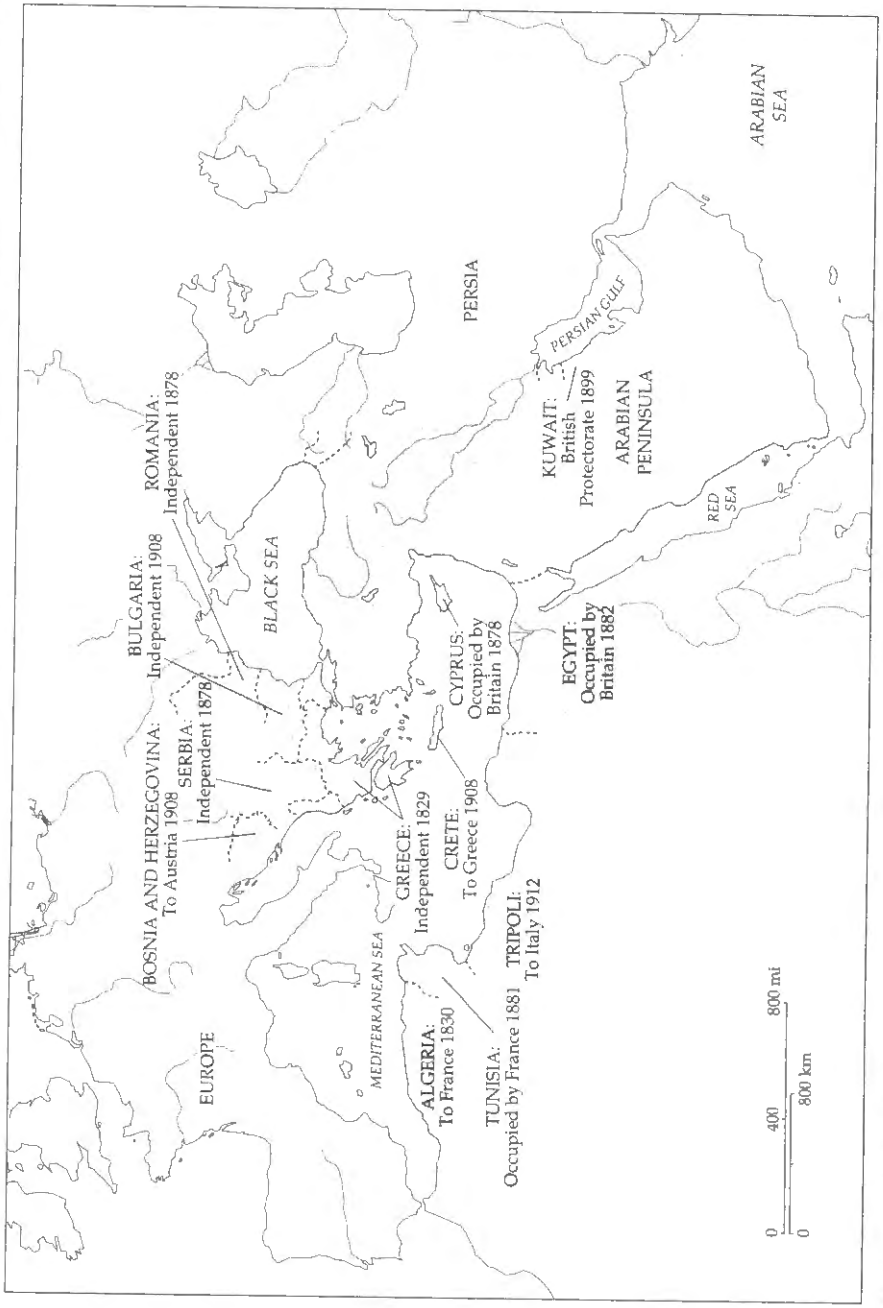
At the close of the Napoleonic era, the third process mentioned above—the internal fragmentation of the Ottoman Empire—began to redefine the nature of the Eastern Question. For the rest of the nineteenth century, the Eastern Question was concerned with the conflict between the Ottoman government and its Balkan subjects, on the one hand, and between the Ottoman government and its unruly governors in Egypt, on the other. When Balkan nationalists demanded independence, or when Mehmet Ali and his descendants demanded greater autonomy for Egypt, the Ottoman government resisted, as imperial governments are wont to do. Often, European powers stepped into the fray in an attempt to find some solution that would protect the interests of each state while not upsetting the overall balance of power in Europe.

There were several reasons for the rise of Balkan nationalism during the immediate post–Napoleonic period. Most important was the consolidation and spread of the world system of nation-states. Starting in the nineteenth century, the nation-state became the gold standard for political organization worldwide. At the root of any modern nation-state lies the belief that because a given population shares (or can be made to share) certain identifiable characteristics—religion, language, history, and so on—it merits an independent existence. Any people that wanted to play in the big leagues of international politics had to join the world system of nation-states and be recognized as the local franchise of the system.

Nationalism emerged in the Balkans during the early nineteenth century for another reason as well. Nationalist movements can only emerge under a proper set of circumstances. The appearance of these circumstances does not guarantee the emergence of nationalist movements; rather, the circumstances form the preconditions without which nationalist movements could not exist. We can identify three such circumstances that enabled the emergence of nationalism in the Balkans. First is the emergence of an intelligentsia that could articulate the doctrines and rationale for nationalist movements. This intelligentsia acts as a mediator between the international community and the population. Such an intelligentsia emerged in the Balkans during the nineteenth century. The second circumstance necessary for the emergence of nationalism is the spread of market relations among a population. Market relations unite the population economically and create a division of labor within proposed national boundaries. It just so happened that there was an enormous economic growth and internal economic differentiation in the Balkans in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars. Finally, there is the presence of a clearly identifiable "other" against which nationalist movements might mobilize. This "other" is anyone who does not share whatever distinguishing characteristics a nationalist movement credits to the nation. In the case of Balkan nationalisms, this "other" was usually the Turkish-speaking Muslim elites who governed them, although in some cases "Greeks" would do.

This is not to say that the Ottoman Empire was an alien power that imposed its presence on preexisting nations of Bulgarians, Greeks, Serbs, and so on. That would be the equivalent of saying that nations are timeless and natural entities rather than entities that are modern and fabricated. While some would argue that the former is the case, most scholars of nationalism working today do not agree. Instead, most would say that once the logic of nationalism is accepted—the oneness of a population on the basis of shared characteristics—those who do not share those characteristics become unabsorbable "others."

The final reason for the emergence of Balkan nationalisms was that these nationalisms were encouraged from the outside. The Russians, for example, wanted allies in the Balkans. If independent states in the region were to emerge from the Ottoman Empire, those states would, more likely than not, want to use Russia as a counterweight to the Ottoman Empire. In return, the Russians would be able to gain their strategic goal. The Russians were not alone in supporting Balkan nationalisms, however. Throughout Europe the cause of Greek independence,



The Ottoman Empire, 1798–1914

for example, became a *cause célèbre*, drawing in a diverse group of liberals and Romantics, including the English poet Lord Byron. He described the struggle of his idealized Greece thus:

> The isles of Greece, the isles of Greece!
> Where burning Sappho loved and sung,
> Where grew the arts of war and peace,
> Where Delos rose and Phoebus sprung!
> Eternal summer gilds them yet,
> But all, except their sun, is set....
>
> The mountains look on Marathon—
> And Marathon looks on to sea;
>
> And musing there an hour alone,
> I dream'd that Greece might still be free;
> For standing on the Persians' grave,
> I could not deem myself a slave....

And William Gladstone, the sometime prime minister of Britain during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, coined the term "unspeakable Turk" in his 1876 pamphlet, "The Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East." Gladstone used his pamphlet as a stick to beat his political rival, Benjamin Disraeli, who quite logically seemed more concerned about maintaining Britain's strategic position than about Bulgarian independence.

Thus, starting in the second decade of the nineteenth century a series of revolts took place against Ottoman control in the Balkans. From these revolts, a host of independent states emerged, from Serbia and Greece to Romania and Bulgaria. These states arose at the confluence of three empires: the Ottoman, the Habsburg, and the Russian. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Balkans had thus become a tinderbox, arraying nationalist movements against each other, empires against nationalist movements, and empires against each other. The Prussian foreign minister Otto von Bismarck once remarked that a world war would one day be sparked by some "damned fool incident in the Balkans." He was, of course, right.

The Greek revolt of 1821 is particularly important, for it endangered the balance of power in Europe by threatening the very integrity of the Ottoman Empire. To put down the revolt, the Ottomans called on their nominal vassal, Mehmet Ali, who had by this time built the best army in the empire. The Ottomans promised Mehmet Ali control over Syria if he suppressed the revolt. At first Mehmet Ali's army was successful in putting down the insurgents. But when reports reached Europe that Egyptian troops had conducted mass deportations—ethnic cleansing—the great powers intervened. At the Battle of Navarino a combined British/French/Russian fleet destroyed the Egyptian fleet and ultimately forced the Ottoman Empire to accept Greek autonomy, then Greek independence.

Nevertheless, for Mehmet Ali a deal was a deal, and Syria belonged to him. In 1831, his army invaded Syria and then, when the Ottomans protested, it began a march on Istanbul. To save themselves, the Ottomans initially threw themselves

into the arms of Russia—an act which naturally worried the British. In response, the British for the first time committed themselves to protecting the integrity of the Ottoman Empire, issuing the following statement:

> His majesty's government attach great importance to the maintenance of the integrity of the Ottoman Empire, considering that state to be a material element in the general balance of power in Europe.

In 1840, the British and Ottomans together forced the Egyptians out of Syria. To ensure that Russian influence over the Ottoman Empire would be limited, the British organized a conference in London that made the concert of European powers—not any single power—the ultimate guarantor of the Ottoman Empire.

Overall, the concert of European powers managed both to protect the interests of the individual European nations in the Ottoman Empire and to diffuse crisis after crisis through diplomacy. Only once during the remainder of the century—during the Crimean War of 1853–1856—did European nations go to war to resolve a dispute involving the Ottoman Empire. But the establishment of a united Germany in 1871 disrupted the European balance of power, and thus disrupted the concert of Europe. And the end of the concert of Europe in 1914 heralded the end of the Ottoman Empire. But here we are getting ahead of ourselves.

future international weight of the United Provinces and Sweden had been imaginable in 1500, but their importance, too, had come and gone by 18[illegible] they were then still important nations, but of the second rank. France was still to be a front-rank power in an age of national states as she had been in the days of sixteenth-century dynastic rivalry. Indeed, her power was relatively greater and the peak of her dominance in western Europe was still to come. But she faced a new challenger too, and one which had already defeated her. From the little English kingdom of 1500, cooped up in an island off the coast of Europe under an upstart dynasty, had emerged the world power of Great Britain.

This was a transformation almost as surprising and sudden as Russia's. It transcended the old categories of European diplomacy quite as dramatically. From what some historians have called 'the Atlantic Archipelago' of islands and kingdoms, ruled intermittently in varying measure and extent by Tudor and Stuart monarchs, had emerged a new oceanic power. Besides its new unity, it enjoyed unique institutional and economic advantages in deploying its influence worldwide. In 300 years, the major zones of European conflict and dispute had migrated from the old battlegrounds of Italy, the Rhine and the Netherlands, moving from them to central and eastern Germany, the Danube valley, Poland and Carpathia, and the Baltic, but also – the greatest change of all – across the oceans. A new age had indeed begun, signalled not only by the remaking of eastern Europe, but by the wars of Louis XIV, the first world wars of the modern era, imperial and oceanic in their scope.

5

Europe's Assault on the World

There was a striking change in world history after 1500 and it was quite without precedent. Never before had one culture spread over the whole globe. Even in prehistory, the cultural tide had seemed set towards differentiation. Now it began to turn. Even by the end of the eighteenth century, the essentials of what was going on were evident. By then, European nations, including Russia, had already laid claim to more than half the world's land surface. They actually controlled (or believed they controlled) about a third of it. Never before had those sharing one particular civilization managed to acquire for their own use so great a territory.

The consequences, moreover, had already begun to be shown in irreversible changes. Europeans had transplanted crops and animal species to begin what was to be the greatest reshaping of ecology ever to take place. To the western hemisphere they sent populations which, already in 1800, constituted new centres of civilization, equipped with European institutions of government, religion and learning. A new nation had emerged from former British possessions in North America, while to the south the Spanish had destroyed two mature civilizations to implant their own.

To the east, the story was different, but equally striking. Once past the Cape of Good Hope (where something like 20,000 Dutch lived), an Englishman travelling on an East Indiaman in 1800 would not land at European colonial communities like those of the Americas unless he wandered as far off course as Australia, just beginning to receive its settlers. But in East Africa, Persia, India, Indonesia he would find Europeans coming to do business and then, in the long or short run, planning to return home to enjoy the profits. They could even be found in Guangzhou (Canton) or, in very small numbers, in the closed island kingdom of Japan. Only the interior of Africa, still protected by disease and climate, seemed impenetrable.

The remarkable transformation thus begun (and to go much further) started as a one-way process, but soon it became a process of integration. The conveyors were the oceans and the coasts that surrounded them, and the methods were trade and foreign settlement. Europeans did most of the

settling, but the imperial networks they created also brought with them Africans (mostly, though not exclusively, as slaves) to the New World, Chinese to South-East Asia and Indians to almost everywhere. The world was becoming new, in terms of travel, knowledge and population.

This was a great transformation of world relationships and it happened because of profound changes in Europe. Underpinning it lay layer upon layer of exploration, enterprise, technical advantage and governmental patronage. The trend seemed irreversible by the end of the eighteenth century and, in a sense, so it was to prove, even if direct European rule was to dissolve more quickly than it was built up. No civilization had been more rapidly and dramatically successful, so untroubled in its expansion by any but temporary and occasional setbacks or so arrogant in its assumptions.

One advantage possessed by Europeans had been the powerful motives they had to succeed. The major thrust behind the Age of Reconnaissance had been their wish to get into easier and more direct contact with Asia, the source of things badly wanted in Europe, at a time when the major countries of Asia wanted virtually nothing Europe could offer in exchange. When Vasco da Gama showed what he had brought to give to a king, the inhabitants of Calicut laughed at him; he had nothing to offer which could compare with what Arab traders had already brought to India from other parts of Asia. It was indeed just the legendary superiority of so much of the civilization of the Orient that spurred Europeans on to try to reach it on some more regular and assured basis than the occasional trip of a Marco Polo. Coincidentally, China, India and Japan were all going through major transformations – in society, culture and politics – during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The land blockade of eastern Europe by the Ottomans made them even more attractive to Europeans than they had been before. There were huge profits to be made and great efforts could be justified.

If the expectation of reward is a good recipe for high morale, so is the expectation of success. In the sixteenth century enough had been done for the business of exploration and new enterprise to be attacked confidently; there was a cumulative factor at work, as each successful voyage added both to knowledge and to the certainty that more could be done. As time went by, there would also be profits for the financing of future expansion. Then there was the psychological asset of Christianity. Soon after the establishment of settlements this found a vent in missionary enterprises, but it was always present as a cultural fact, assuring the European of his superiority to the peoples with whom he began to come into contact for the first time.

In the next four centuries, Christianity was often to have disastrous effects. Confident in the possession of the true religion, Europeans were

impatient and contemptuous of the values and achievements of the peoples and civilizations they disturbed. The result was always uncomfortable and often brutal. It is also true that religious zeal could blur easily into less avowable motives. As the greatest Spanish historian of the American conquests put it when describing why he and his colleagues had gone to the Indies, they thought 'to serve God and his Majesty, to give light to those who sat in darkness and to grow rich as all men desire to do'.

Greed quickly led to the abuse of power, to domination and exploitation by force. In the end this led to great crimes – though they were often committed unconsciously. It sometimes brought about the destruction of whole societies, but this was only the worst aspect of a readiness to dominate which was present from the outset in European enterprise. The adventurers who first reached the coasts of India were soon boarding Asian merchantmen, torturing and slaughtering their crews and passengers, looting their cargoes and burning the ravaged hulks. Europeans could usually exact what they wanted in the end because of a technical superiority which exaggerated the power of their tiny numbers and for a few centuries turned the balance against the great historic agglomerations of population and civilization.

The next Portuguese captain after da Gama to go there provided a fitting symbol of this by bombarding Calicut. A little later, when, in 1517, the Portuguese reached Guangzhou, they fired a salute as a gesture of friendship and respect; the noise of their guns horrified the southern Chinese, however, who at first called the adventurers *folangki* – a remote corruption of 'Franks'. These weapons were different from anything China had. There had long been guns in Asia, and the Chinese had known about gunpowder centuries before Europe, but the technology of artillery had not developed far there. European craftsmanship and metallurgy had in the fifteenth century made great strides, producing weapons better than any available elsewhere in the world. Asia had to play catch-up with European weapons technology. But from the late eighteenth century, when the most dramatic improvements in the weaponry of European great powers were to take place, Asia was to fall further and further behind, right up to the mid-twentieth century.

This progress had been and was to be, again, paralleled in other fields, notably in the developments in shipbuilding and handling which have already been touched upon. When combined, such advances produced the remarkable weapon with which Europe opened up the world, the sailing-ship which was a gun-carrier. Again, evolution had barely begun in 1517, but already the Portuguese had been able to fight off the fleets organized by the Turks to keep them out of the Indian Ocean. (The Turks had more success in the Red Sea, in whose narrower waters the oar-propelled galley,

which closed with its enemies to grapple and board, retained more of its usefulness. Even there, though, the Portuguese were able to penetrate as far north as the Suez isthmus.) The Chinese war-junk would do no better than the rowed galley. The abandonment of the oar for propulsion and the mounting, broadside, of large numbers of guns, enormously multiplied the value of Europe's scanty manpower.

This advantage was clear to contemporaries. As early as 1481 the pope forbade the sale of arms to Africans. The Dutch in the seventeenth century were very anxious to keep to themselves the secrets of gun-founding and not to allow them to pass into the hands of Asians. Yet pass they did. There had been Turkish gunners in India in the fifteenth century, and before they reached China the Portuguese were supplying the Persians with cannon and teaching them how to cast more in order to embarrass the Turks. In the seventeenth century their knowledge of gun-founding and gunnery was one of the attractions which kept the Jesuit Fathers in favour with the Chinese authorities.

Yet even when, as the Dutch feared, the knowledge of up-to-date gun-founding penetrated oriental societies, it did not offset the European advantage. Chinese artillery remained inferior in spite of the Jesuits' training (though more than good enough for the Qing to dominate their own region). There was more to the technological disparity between Europe and the world than mere know-how. One of the assets Europe enjoyed at the beginning of her era was not only new knowledge, but an attitude to knowledge different from that of other cultures. There was a readiness to bring it to bear upon practical problems, a technological approach. In it lay the roots of what would become a characteristic of European élites during the Enlightenment, their growing confidence in the power to change things.

Africa and Asia were the first targets against which Europeans' advantages were deployed. In these continents, the Portuguese led for a century and more. They figured so largely and were so successful in the opening of routes to the East that their king took the title (confirmed by the pope) 'Lord of the conquest, navigation and commerce of India, Ethiopia, Arabia and Persia', which sufficiently indicates both the scope and the eastern bias of Portuguese enterprise, though slightly misleading in its reference to Ethiopia, with which Portuguese contacts were small. Penetration of Africa was impossible on any more than a tiny and hazardous basis. The Portuguese suggested that God had especially set a barrier around the African interior with its mysterious and noxious diseases (which were to hold Europeans at bay until the end of the nineteenth century). Even the coastal stations of West Africa were unhealthy for Europeans and could only be tolerated because of their importance in the slave trade and the substructure of long-

range commerce. The East African stations were less unhealthy, but they, too, were of interest not as jumping-off points for the interior, but because they were part of a commercial network created by Arabs, whom the Portuguese deliberately harried so as to send up the cost of the spices passed by way of the Red Sea and the Middle East to the Venetian merchants of the eastern Mediterranean.

The successors of the Portuguese were to leave the interior of Africa alone as they had done, and the history of that continent for another two centuries was still to move largely to its own rhythms in the fastnesses of its forests and savannahs, its inhabitants only coming into corrosive and occasionally stimulating contact with Europeans at its fringes. It is also true, though, that the opening of the European age in Asia showed that none of the powers concerned was in the beginning interested in the subjugation or settlement of large areas. The period down to the middle of the eighteenth century was marked by the multiplication of trading posts, concessions in port facilities, protective forts and bases on the coast, for these by themselves would assure the only thing early imperialism sought in Asia – secure and profitable trade.

The Portuguese dominated this trade in the sixteenth century; their firepower swept all before them and they rapidly built up a chain of bases and trading posts on which rested the first global empire. Twelve years after Vasco da Gama arrived at Calicut the Portuguese established their main Indian Ocean trading station some 300 miles further up the western Indian coast, at Goa. It was to become a missionary as well as a commercial centre; once established, the Portuguese empire strongly supported the propagation of the faith, and the Franciscans played a large part in this. In 1513 the first Portuguese ships reached the Moluccas, the legendary spice islands, and the incorporation of Indonesia, South-East Asia and islands as far south as Timor within the European horizon began. Four years later the first Portuguese ships reached China, and opened direct European trade by sea with that empire. Ten years later they were allowed to use Macao as a trading base; in 1557 they obtained a permanent settlement there. When Emperor Charles V gave up to them the rights which Spain had claimed as a result of exploration in the Moluccas, keeping only the Philippines, and renouncing any interest in the Indian Ocean area, the Portuguese were in possession of a monopoly of eastern empire for the next half century. Later they would connect it to their possessions in Brazil and Africa, viewing their overseas strongholds as the anchorages of a sea-borne trading empire.

The Portuguese not only traded between the outside world and Europe; there was much business to be done as carriers between Asian countries. Persian carpets went to India, cloves from the Moluccas to China, copper

and silver from Japan to China, Indian cloth to Siam (Thailand), all in European ships. The Portuguese and their successors found this a profitable source of income to offset some of the costs of Europe's unfavourable balance of trade with Asia, whose inhabitants long wanted little from Europe except silver. The only serious competitors at sea were the Arabs and they were controlled effectively by Portuguese squadrons operating from the East African bases, from Socotra, at the mouth of the Red Sea, where they had established themselves in 1507, from Ormuz, on the northern coast of the entrance to the Persian Gulf, and from Goa. From these places the Portuguese expanded their commerce eventually to trade into the Red Sea as far as Massawa and up to the head of the Persian Gulf, where they established a factory at Basra. They had also secured privileges in Burma and Siam and in the 1540s were the first Europeans to land in Japan. This network was supported by a diplomacy of agreements with local rulers and the superiority of Portuguese fire-power at sea. Even if they had wished to do so, they could not have so developed their power on land because they lacked men, so that a commercial empire made not only economic sense but was all that could be created with the means available.

Portugal's supremacy in the Indian Ocean disguised fundamental weaknesses: a lack of manpower and a shaky financial base. It lasted only until the end of the century and was then replaced by that of the Dutch, who carried the technique and institutions of commercial empire to their furthest point. The Dutch were the trading imperialists par excellence, though in the end they also settled to plant colonies in Indonesia. Their opportunity arose when Portugal was united with Spain in 1580. This change provided a stimulus to Dutch seamen now excluded from the profitable re-export trade of oriental goods from Lisbon to northern Europe, which had been mainly in their hands. The background of the Eighty Years War with Spain was an additional incentive for the Dutch to enter areas where they might make profits at the expense of the Iberians. Like the Portuguese they were few in number, barely 2 million people, and their survival depended on a narrow base; commercial wealth was therefore vitally important to them. Their advantages lay in the pool of naval manpower, ships, wealth and experience built up by their ascendancy in fishing and carrying in northern waters, while commercial expertise at home made it easy to mobilize resources for new enterprises. The Dutch were assisted, too, by the simultaneous recovery of the Arabs, who took back the East African stations north of Zanzibar as Portuguese power wavered in the aftermath of the Spanish union.

The first decades of the seventeenth century therefore brought the collapse of much of the Portuguese empire in Asia and its replacement by the

Dutch. For a time, too, the Dutch established themselves in Pernambuco, the sugar-producing region of Portuguese Brazil, though they were not able to retain it. The main objective of the Dutch was the Moluccas. A brief period of individual voyages (sixty-five in seven years, some around the Strait of Magellan, some around Africa) ended when in 1602, at the initiative of the States General, the government of the United Provinces, there was set up the Dutch United East India Company, the organization which was to prove the decisive instrument of Dutch commercial supremacy in Asia.

Like the Portuguese before them, the company's servants worked through diplomacy with native rulers to exclude competitors, and through a system of trading stations. How unpleasant the Dutch could be to rivals was shown in 1623, when ten Englishmen were murdered at Amboyna; this ended any English attempt to intervene directly in the spice trade. Amboyna had been one of the first Portuguese bases to be seized in a rapid sweeping-up of Portuguese interests, but it was not until 1609, when a resident governor-general was sent to the East Indian islands, that the reduction of the major Portuguese forts could begin. The centre of these operations was the establishment of the Dutch headquarters at Jakarta (renamed Batavia) in Java, where it was to remain until the end of Dutch colonial rule. It became the centre of an area of settlement, where Dutch planters could rely upon the company to back them up in a ruthless control of their labour force. The early history of the Dutch colonies is a grim one of insurrection, deportation, enslavement and extermination. The trade of local shippers – and of the Chinese junks – was deliberately destroyed in order to concentrate all sources of profit in the hands of the Dutch.

The spice trade to Europe was the centre of Dutch attention and was a huge prize. It accounted during most of the century for over two-thirds of the values of the cargoes sent back to Amsterdam. But the Dutch also set about replacing the Portuguese in the valuable East Asian trade. They could not expel the Portuguese from Macao, although they sent expeditions against it, but they did succeed in setting themselves up in Formosa, from which they built up an indirect trade with the mainland of China. In 1638 the Portuguese were expelled from Japan and the Dutch succeeded them there. In the next two decades, the Portuguese were replaced by the Dutch in Ceylon, too. Their successful negotiation of a monopoly of trade to Siam, on the other hand, was overtaken by another power, France. This country's connection with the area was opened by accident in 1660 when circumstance took three French missionaries to the Siamese capital. Thanks to their establishment of a mission centre, and the presence of a Greek adviser at the Siamese court, there followed a French diplomatic and

military mission in 1685. But these promising beginnings ended in civil war and failure and Siam again moved out of the sphere of European influence for another two centuries.

In the early eighteenth century there thus existed a Dutch supremacy in the Indian Ocean and Indonesia, and an important Dutch interest in the China seas. To a remarkable degree this reproduced the earlier Portuguese pattern, although there survived Portuguese stations such as Goa and Macao. The heart of Dutch power was the Malacca Strait, from which it radiated through Malaysia and Indonesia, to Formosa and the trading links with China and Japan, and down to the south-east to the crucial Moluccas. This area was by now enjoying an internal trade so considerable that it was beginning to be self-financing, with bullion from Japan and China providing its flow of currency, rather than bullion from Europe as in the early days. Further west, the Dutch were also established at Calicut, in Ceylon and at the Cape of Good Hope, and had set up factories in Persia. Although Batavia was a big town and the Dutch were running plantations to grow the goods they needed, this was still a littoral or insular commercial empire, not one of internal dominion over the mainland. In the last resort it rested on naval power and it was to succumb, though not to disappear, as Dutch naval power was surpassed.

This was clearly beginning to happen in the last decades of the seventeenth century. The unlikely challenger for Indian Ocean supremacy was England. At an early date the English had sought to enter the spice trade. There had been an East India Company under James I, but its factors had got bloody noses for their pains, both when they tried to co-operate with the Dutch and when they fought them. The upshot of this was that by 1700 the English had in effect drawn a line under their accounts east of the Malacca Strait. Like the Dutch in 1580, they were faced with a need to change course and did so. The upshot was the most momentous event in British history between the Protestant Reformation and the onset of industrialization – the acquisition of supremacy in India.

In India the main rivals of the English were not the Dutch or Portuguese, but the French, and what was at stake did not emerge for a long time. The rise of British power in India was very gradual. After the establishment of Fort St George at Madras and the acquisition of Bombay from the Portuguese as a part of the dowry of Charles II's queen, there was no further English penetration of India until the end of the century. From their early footholds (Bombay was the only territory they held in full sovereignty) Englishmen conducted a trade in coffee and textiles less glamorous than the Dutch spice trade, but one which grew in value and importance. It also changed their national habits, and therefore society, as the establishment of

coffee-houses in London showed. Soon, ships began to be sent from India to China for tea; by 1700 the English had acquired a new national beverage, and a poet would soon commemorate what he termed 'cups that cheer but not inebriate'.

As a defeat of the East India Company's forces in 1689 showed, military domination in India was unlikely to prove easy. Moreover, it was not necessary to prosperity. The Company therefore did not wish to fight if it could avoid it. Though at the end of the century a momentous acquisition was made when the Company was allowed to occupy Fort William, which it had built at Calcutta, the directors in 1700 rejected the idea of acquiring fresh territory or planting colonies in India as quite unrealistic. Yet all preconceptions were to be changed by the collapse of the Mughal empire after the death of Aurangzeb in 1707. The consequences emerged slowly, but their total effect was that India dissolved into a collection of autonomous states with no paramount power.

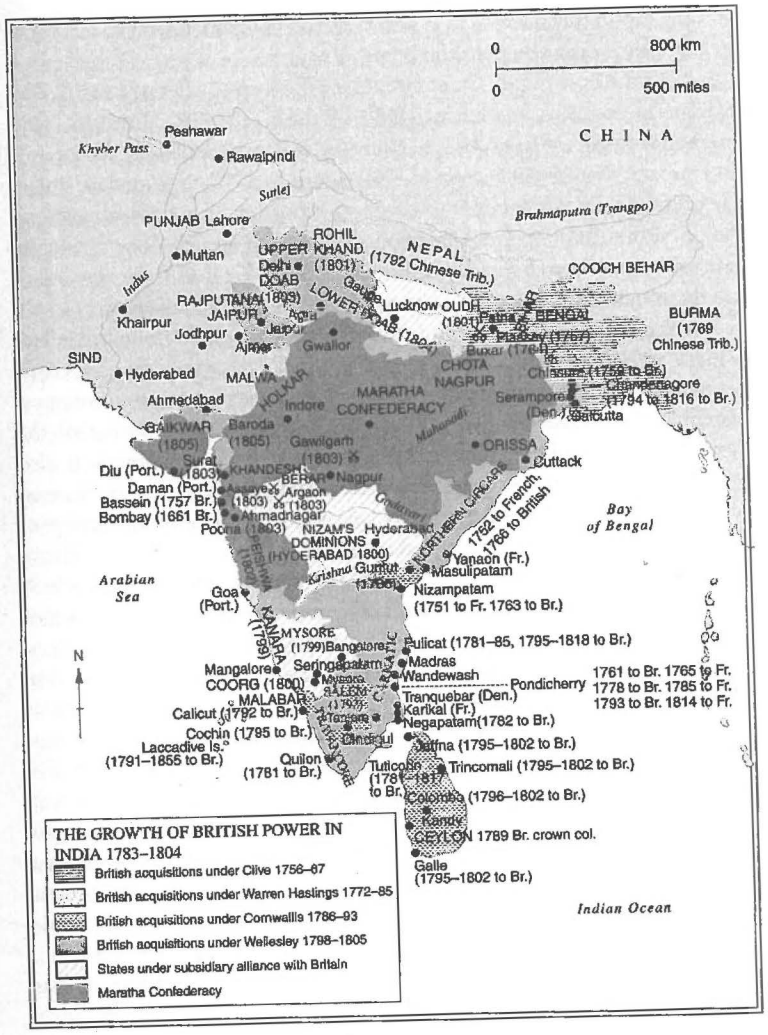
The Mughal empire had already before 1707 been troubled by the Marathas. The centrifugal tendencies of the empire had always favoured the *nawabs*, or provincial governors, too, and power was divided between them and the Marathas with increasing obviousness. The Sikhs provided a third focus of power. Originally appearing as a Hindu sect in the sixteenth century, they had turned against the Mughals but had also drawn away from orthodox Hinduism to become virtually a third religion with it and Islam. The Sikhs formed a military brotherhood, had no castes, and were well able to look after their own interests in a period of disunion. Eventually a Sikh empire appeared in north-west India which was to endure until 1849. Meanwhile, there were signs in the eighteenth century of an increasing polarity between Hindu and Muslim. The Hindus withdrew more into their own communities, emphasizing the ritual practices which publicly distinguished them. The Muslims reciprocated. On this growing dislocation, presided over by a Mughal military and civil administration which was conservative and unprogressive, there fell also a Persian invasion in the 1730s and consequent losses of territory.

There were great temptations to foreign intervention in this situation. In retrospect it seems remarkable that both the British and the French took so long to take advantage; even in the 1740s the British East India Company was still less wealthy and powerful than the Dutch. This delay is a testimony to the importance still attached to trade as their main purpose. When they did begin to intervene, largely moved by hostility towards the French and fear of what they might do, the British had several important advantages, although they had no concept of empire as such. The possession of a station at Calcutta placed them at the door to that part of India which was

potentially the richest prize – Bengal and the lower Ganges valley. They had assured sea communications with Europe, thanks to British naval power, and ministers listened to the East India merchants in London as they did not listen to French merchants at Versailles. The French were Great Britain's most dangerous potential competitors, but their government was always likely to be distracted by its European continental commitments. Finally, the British lacked missionary zeal; this was true in the narrow sense that Protestant interest in missions in Asia quickened later than Catholic, and also, more generally, in that they had no immediate urge to interfere with native custom or institution but only – somewhat like the Mughals – to provide an overarching structure of power within which Indians could carry on their lives as they wished, while the commerce from which the Company profited prospered in peace. This was empire as a result of commercial opportunity, not the other way around.

The way into an imperial future led through Indian politics. Support for rival Indian princes was the first, indirect, form of conflict between French and British. In 1744 this led for the first time to armed struggle between British and French forces in the Carnatic, the south-eastern coastal region. India had been irresistibly sucked into the worldwide conflict between British and French power. The Seven Years War (1756–63) was decisive. Before its outbreak, there had in fact been no remission of fighting in India, even while France and Great Britain were officially at peace after 1748. The French cause had prospered under a brilliant French governor in the Carnatic, Dupleix, who caused great alarm to the British by his extension of French power among native princes by force and diplomacy. But he was recalled to France and the French Indian company was not to enjoy the wholehearted support of the metropolitan government which it needed to emerge as the new paramount power. When war broke out again, in 1756, the *nawab* of Bengal attacked and captured Calcutta. His treatment of his English prisoners, many of whom were suffocated in the soon legendary 'Black Hole', gave additional offence. The East India Company's army, commanded by its employee, Robert Clive, retook the city from him, seized the French station at Chandernagore and then on 22 June 1757 won a battle over the *nawab*'s much larger armies at Plassey, about a hundred miles up the Hooghly river from Calcutta.

It was not very bloody (the *nawab*'s army was suborned) but it was one of the decisive battles of world history. It opened to the British the road to the control of Bengal and its revenues. On these was based the destruction of French power in the Carnatic; that opened the way to further acquisitions which led, inexorably, to a future British monopoly of India. Nobody planned this. The British government, it is true, had begun to grasp what



was immediately at stake in terms of a threat to trade, and sent out a battalion of regular troops to help the Company; the gesture is doubly revealing, both because it recognized that a national interest was involved, but also because of the tiny scale of this military effort. A very small number of European troops with European field artillery could be decisive. The fate of India turned on the Company's handful of European and European-trained soldiers, and on the diplomatic skills and acumen of its agents on

the spot. Upon this narrow base and the need for government in a disintegrating India was to be built the British Raj.

In 1764 the East India Company became the formal ruler of Bengal. This had by no means been the intention of the Company's directors, who sought not to govern but to trade. However, if Bengal could pay for its own government, then the burden could be undertaken. There were now only a few scattered French bases; the peace of 1763 left five trading posts on condition that they were not fortified. In 1769 the French *Compagnie des Indes* was dissolved. Soon after, the British took Ceylon from the Dutch and the stage was cleared for a unique example of imperialism.

The road would be a long one and was for a long time followed reluctantly, but the East India Company was gradually drawn on by its revenue problems and by the disorder of native administrations in contiguous territories to extend its own governmental aegis. The obscuring of the Company's primary commercial role was not good for business. It also gave its employees even greater opportunities to feather their own nests. This drew the interest of British politicians, who first cut into the powers of the directors of the Company and then brought it firmly under the control of the Crown, setting up in 1784 a system of 'dual control' in India which was to last until 1858. In the same Act were provisions against further interference in native affairs; the British government hoped as fervently as the Company to avoid being dragged any further into the role of imperial power in India. But this was what happened in the next half century, as many more acquisitions followed. The road was open which was to lead eventually to the enlightened despotism of the nineteenth-century Raj. India was quite unlike any other dependency so far acquired by a European state in that hundreds of millions of subjects were to be added to the empire without any conversion or assimilation of them being envisaged except by a few visionaries and at a very late date. The character of the British imperial structure would be profoundly transformed by this, and so, eventually, would be British strategy, diplomacy, external trade patterns and even outlook.

Except in India and Dutch Indonesia, no territorial acquisitions in Asia in these centuries could be compared to the vast seizures of lands by Europeans in the Americas. Columbus's landing had been followed by a fairly rapid and complete exploration of the major 'West Indian' islands. It was soon clear that the conquest of American lands was attractively easy by comparison with the struggles to win North Africa from the Moors, which had immediately followed the fall of Granada and the completion of the Reconquest on the Spanish mainland. Settlement rapidly made headway, particularly in Hispaniola and Cuba. The cornerstone of the first cathedral in the Americas was laid in 1523; the Spaniards, as their city-building was

intended to show, had come to stay. Their first university (in the same city, Santo Domingo) was founded in 1538, and the first printing-press was set up in Mexico in the following year.

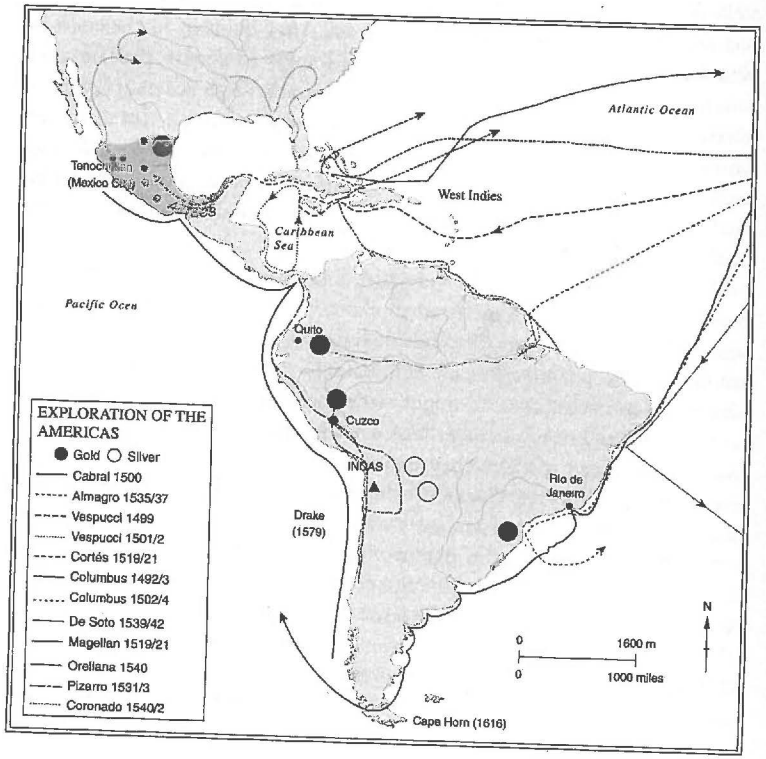
The Spanish settlers looked for land, as agriculturalists, and gold, as speculators. They had no competitors and, indeed, with the exception of Brazil, the story of the opening up of Central and South America remains Spanish until the end of the sixteenth century. The first Spaniards in the islands were often Castilian gentry, poor, tough and ambitious. When they went to the mainland they were out for booty, though they spoke as well of the message of the Cross and the greater glory of the Crown of Castile. The first penetration of the mainland had come in Venezuela in 1499. Then, in 1513, Vasco de Balboa crossed the isthmus of Panama and Europeans for the first time saw the Pacific. His expedition built houses and sowed crops; the age of the *conquistadores* had begun. One among them whose adventures captured and held the imagination of posterity was Hernán Cortés. Late in 1518 he left Cuba with a few hundred followers. He was deliberately flouting the authority of its governor and subsequently justified his acts by the spoils he brought to the Crown. After landing on the coast of Vera Cruz in February 1519, he burnt his ships to ensure that his men could not go back and then began the march to the high central plateau of Mexico, which was to provide one of the most dramatic stories of the whole history of imperialism. When they reached the city of Tenochtitlán itself, they were astounded by the civilization they found there. Besides its wealth of gold and precious stones, it was situated in a land suitable for the kind of estate cultivation familiar to Castilians at home.

Though Cortés's followers were few, and their conquest of the Aztec empire which dominated the central plateau heroic, they had great advantages and a lot of luck. The people upon whom they advanced were technologically primitive, easily impressed by the gunpowder, steel and horses the *conquistadores* brought with them. And Aztec resistance was hampered by an uneasy feeling that Cortés might be an incarnation of their god, whose return to them they one day expected. The Aztecs were very susceptible to imported diseases, too. Furthermore, they were themselves an exploiting race and a cruel one; their Indian subjects were happy to welcome the new conquerors as liberators, or at least as a change of masters. Circumstances thus favoured the Spaniards. Nevertheless, in the end their own toughness, courage and ruthlessness were the decisive factors.

In 1531 Francisco Pizarro set out upon a similar conquest of Peru. This was an even more remarkable achievement than the conquest of Mexico and, if possible, displayed even more dreadfully the rapacity and ruthlessness of the *conquistadores*. Settlement of the new empire began in the

1540s and almost at once there was made one of the most important mineral discoveries of historical times, that of a mountain of silver at Potosi, which was to be Europe's main source of bullion for the next three centuries.

By 1700, the Spanish empire in the Americas nominally covered a huge area, from the modern New Mexico to the River Plate. By way of Panama and Acapulco it was linked by sea to the Spanish in the Philippines. Yet this huge extent on the map was misleading. The Californian, Texan and New Mexican lands north of the Rio Grande were very thinly inhabited; for the most part occupancy meant a few forts and trading posts and a larger number of missions. Nor, to the south, was what is now Chile well settled. The most important and most densely populated regions were three: New Spain (as Mexico was called), which quickly became the most developed part of Spanish America; Peru, which was important for its mines and intensively occupied; and some of the larger and long-settled Caribbean islands. Areas unsuitable for settlement by Spaniards were long neglected by the administration.



The Indies were governed by viceroys at Mexico and Lima as sister kingdoms of Castile and Aragon, dependent upon the Crown of Castile. They had a royal council of their own, through which the king exercised direct authority. This imposed a high degree of centralization in theory; in practice, geography and topography made nonsense of such a pretence. It was impossible to control New Spain or Peru closely from Spain with the communications available. The viceroys and captains-general under them enjoyed effective independence in their day-to-day business. But the colonies could be run by Madrid for fiscal advantage and, indeed, the Spaniards and Portuguese were the only powers colonizing in the western hemisphere for over a century who managed to make their American possessions not only pay for themselves but return a net profit for the metropolis. This was largely because of the flow of precious metals. After 1540, silver flooded across the Atlantic, to be dissipated, unfortunately for Spain, in the wars of Charles V and Philip II. By 1650, 16,000 tons of silver had come to Europe, to say nothing of 180 tons of gold objects.

Whether Spain got other economic benefits is harder to say. She shared with other colonizing powers of the age the belief that there was only a limited amount of trade to go around; it followed that trade with her colonies should be reserved to her by regulation and force of arms. Furthermore, she endorsed another commonplace of early colonial economic theory, the view that colonies should not be allowed to develop industries which might reduce the opportunities available to the home country in their markets. Unfortunately, Spain was less successful than other countries in drawing advantage from this. Though they prevented the development of industry apart from the processing of agricultural crops, mining and handicrafts in America, the Spanish authorities were increasingly unable to keep out foreign traders (interlopers as they came to be called) from their territories. Spanish planters soon wanted what metropolitan Spain could not supply – slaves, especially. Apart from mining, the economy of the islands and New Spain rested on agriculture. The islands soon came to depend on slavery; in the mainland colonies, a Spanish government unwilling to countenance the enslavement of the conquered populations evolved other devices to assure the supply of labour. The first, started in the islands and extended to Mexico, was a kind of feudal lordship: a Spaniard would be given an *encomienda*, a group of villages over which he extended protection in return for a share of their labour. The general effect was not always easily distinguishable from serfdom, or even from slavery, which soon came to mean African slavery.

The presence from the start of large pre-colonial native populations to provide labour did as much as the nature of the occupying power to

differentiate the colonialism of Central and South America from that of the North. Centuries of Moorish occupation had accustomed the Spanish and Portuguese to the idea of living in a multi-racial society. There soon emerged in Latin America a population of mixed blood. In Brazil, which the Portuguese finally secured from the Dutch after thirty years' fighting, there was much interbreeding, both with the indigenous peoples and with the growing black population of slaves, who had first been imported to work on the sugar plantations in the sixteenth century. In Africa, too, the Portuguese showed no concern at racial interbreeding, and its lack of a colour bar has been alleged to have been a palliative feature of Portuguese imperialism.

None the less, though the establishment of racially mixed societies over huge areas was one of the enduring legacies of the Spanish and Portuguese empires, these societies were stratified along racial lines. The dominant classes were always the Iberian-born and the creoles, persons of European blood born in the colonies. As time passed, the latter came to feel that the former, called *peninsulares*, excluded them from key posts and were antagonistic towards them. From the creoles there led downwards a blurred incline of increasing gradations of blood to the poorest and most oppressed: the pure Indians and African slaves. Though Indian languages survived, often thanks to the efforts of the Spanish missionaries, the dominant languages of the continent became, of course, those of the conquerors.

This change in language was the greatest single formative influence making for the cultural unification of the continent, though another of comparable importance was Roman Catholicism. The Church played an enormous part in the opening of Spanish (and Portuguese) America. The lead was taken from the earliest years by the missionaries of the regular orders – Franciscans, in particular – but for three centuries their successors worked away at the civilization of native Americans. They took Indians from their tribes and villages, taught them Christianity and Latin (the early friars often kept them from learning Spanish, to protect them from corruption by the settlers), put them in trousers and sent them back to spread the light among their compatriots. The mission stations of the frontier determined the shapes of countries which would only come into existence centuries later. They met little resistance. Mexicans, for example, enthusiastically adopted the cult of the Blessed Virgin, assimilating her with the native goddess Tonantzin.

For good and ill the Church saw itself from the start as the protector of the Indian subjects of the Crown of Castile. The eventual effect of this would only be felt after centuries had brought important changes in the demographic centre of gravity within the Roman communion, but it had many implications visible much earlier than this. It was in 1511 that the

first sermon against the way the Spanish treated their new subjects was preached (by a Dominican) at Santo Domingo. From the start, the monarchy proclaimed its moral and Christian mission in the New World. Laws were passed to protect the Indians and the advice of churchmen was sought about their rights and what could be done to secure them. In 1550 an extraordinary event took place when the royal government held a theological and philosophical enquiry by debate into the principles on which the New World peoples were to be governed. But America was far away, and enforcement of laws difficult. It was all the harder to protect the native population when a catastrophic drop in its numbers created a labour shortage. The early settlers had brought smallpox to the Caribbean (its original source seems to have been Africa) and one of Cortés's men took it to the mainland; this was probably the main cause of the demographic disaster of the first century of Spanish empire in America.

The Church, meanwhile, was almost continuously at work to convert the natives (two Franciscans baptized 15,000 Indians in a single day at Xocomilcho) and then to throw around them the protection of the mission and the parish. Others did not cease to make representations to the Crown. The name of one, Bartolomé de Las Casas, a Dominican, cannot be ignored. He had come out as a settler, only to become the first priest ordained in the Americas and thereafter, as theologian and bishop, he spent his life trying to influence Charles V's government, and not without success. He brought to bear the discipline of refusing absolution even in the last rites to those whose confessions left him unsatisfied over their treatment of Indians, and argued against opponents on a thoroughly medieval basis. He assumed, with Aristotle, that some men indeed were 'by nature' slaves (he had black slaves of his own) but denied that the Indians were among them. He was to pass into historical memory, anachronistically, as one of the first critics of colonialism, largely because of the use made of his writings 200 years later by a publicist of the Enlightenment.

For centuries, the preaching and rituals of the Church were virtually the only access to European culture for the Amerindian peasant, who found some of Catholicism's features sympathetic and comprehensible. To European education, only a few had access; Mexico had no native bishop until the seventeenth century, and education, except for the priesthood, did not take a peasant much further than the catechism. The Church tended, in fact, for all the devoted work of many of its clergy, to remain an imported, colonial Church. Ironically, even the attempts of churchmen to protect the native Christians had the effect of isolating them (by, for instance, not teaching them Spanish) from the routes to integration with the possessors of power in their societies.

Perhaps this was inevitable. The Catholic monopoly in Spanish and Portuguese America was bound to mean a large measure of identification of the Church with the political structure: it was an important reinforcement for a thinly spread administrative apparatus and it was not only crusading zeal which made the Spanish enthusiastic proselytizers. The Inquisition was soon set up in New Spain and it was the Church of the Counter-Reformation which shaped American Catholicism south of the Rio Grande. This had important consequences much later; although some priests were to play important parts in the revolutionary and independence movements of South America, and though in the eighteenth century the Jesuits were to incur the wrath of the Portuguese settlers and government of Brazil for their efforts to protect the natives, the Church as an organization never found it easy to adopt a progressive stance. In the very long run, this meant that in the politics of independent Latin America, liberalism would take on the associations of anti-clericalism it was to have in Catholic Europe. This was all in marked contrast to the religiously pluralistic society which was taking root contemporaneously in British North America.

For all the spectacular inflow of bullion from the mainland colonies, it was the Caribbean islands which were of the greatest economic importance to Europe throughout most of the early modern period. This importance rested on their agricultural produce, above all on sugar, introduced first by the Arabs to Europe, in Sicily and Spain, and then carried by Europeans first to Madeira and the Canaries, and then to the New World. Both the Caribbean and Brazil were transformed economically by this crop. Medieval man had sweetened his food with honey; by 1700 sugar, though still expensive, was a European necessity. It was, with tobacco, hardwood and coffee, the main product of the islands and the tap-root of the burgeoning African slave trade. Together, these exports gave the planters great importance in the affairs of their metropolitan countries.

The story of large-scale Caribbean agriculture began with the Spanish settlers, who quickly started growing fruit (which they had brought from Europe) and raising cattle. When they introduced rice and sugar, production was for a long time held back by a shortage of labour, as the native populations of the islands succumbed to European ill-treatment and disease. The next economic phase was the establishment by later arrivals of parasitic industries: piracy and smuggling. The Spanish occupation of the larger Caribbean islands – the Greater Antilles – still left hundreds of smaller islands unoccupied, most of them on the Atlantic fringe. These attracted the attention of English, French and Dutch captains who found them useful as bases from which to prey on Spanish ships going home from New Spain, and for contraband trade with the Spanish colonists who

wanted their goods. European settlements appeared, too, on the Venezuelan coast where there was salt to be had for preserving meat. Where individuals led, governmental enterprises in the form of English royal concessions and the Dutch West India Company followed in the seventeenth century.

By then, the English had for decades been looking for suitable places for what contemporaries called 'plantations' – that is, settler colonies – in the New World. They tried the North American mainland first. Then, in the 1620s, they established their first two successful West Indian colonies, on St Christopher in the Leeward Isles, and Barbados. Both prospered; by 1630 St Christopher had about 3,000 inhabitants and Barbados about 2,000. This success was based on tobacco, the drug which, with syphilis (believed to have been in Europe at Cadiz in 1493) and the cheap automobile, some have thought to be the New World's revenge for its violation by the Old. These tobacco colonies rapidly became of great importance to England, not only because of the customs revenue they supplied, but also because the new growth of population in the Caribbean stimulated demand for exports and provided fresh opportunities for interloping in the trade of the Spanish empire. Soon the English were joined by the French in this lucrative business, the French occupying the Windward Isles, the English the rest of the Leewards. In the 1640s there were about 7,000 French in the West Indies, and over 50,000 English.

After this time the tide of English emigration to the New World was diverted to North America, and the West Indies were not again to reach such high figures of white settlement. This was partly because sugar joined tobacco as a staple crop. Tobacco can be produced economically in small quantities; it had therefore suited the multiplication of smallholdings and the building up of a large immigrant population of Europeans. Sugar was economic only if cultivated in large units; it suited the big plantation, worked by large numbers, and these workers were likely to be black slaves, given the decline of the local population in the sixteenth century. The Dutch supplied the slaves and aspired to the sort of general commercial monopoly in the western hemisphere which they were winning in eastern Asia, working out of a base at the mouth of the Hudson River, New Amsterdam. This was the beginning of a great demographic change in the Caribbean. In 1643 Barbados had 37,000 white inhabitants and only 6,000 African slaves; by 1660 there were over 50,000 of the latter.

With the appearance of sugar, the French colonies of Guadeloupe and Martinique took on a new importance and they, too, wanted slaves. A complex process of growth was under way. The huge and growing Caribbean market for slaves and imported European goods was added to that already

offered by a Spanish empire increasingly unable to defend its economic monopoly. This fixed the role of the West Indies in the relationships of the European powers for the next century. They were long a prey to disorder, the Caribbean an area where colonial frontiers met and policing was poor and there were great prizes to be won (in one year a Dutch captain captured the great *flota* bearing home the year's treasure from the Indies to Spain). Not surprisingly, they became the classical and, indeed, legendary hunting-ground of pirates, whose heyday was the last quarter of the seventeenth century. Gradually, the great powers fought out their disputes until they arrived at acceptable agreements, but this was to take a long time. Meanwhile, through the eighteenth century the West Indies and Brazil provided the great market for slaves and sustained most of that trade. As time passed, it too became involved in another economy besides those of Europe, Africa and New Spain: that of a new North America.

For a long time, by all the standards of classical colonial theory, settlement in North America was a poor second in attractiveness to Latin America or the Caribbean, not to mention the riches of Asia. Precious metals were not discovered there, and though there were furs in the north there seemed to be little else that Europe wanted from that region. Yet there was nowhere else to go, given the Spanish monopoly to the south, and a great many nations tried it. The Spanish expansion north of the Rio Grande need not concern us, for it was hardly an occupation, more of a missionary exercise, while Spanish Florida's importance was strategic, for it gave some protection to Spanish communications with Europe by the northern outlet from the Caribbean. It was the settlement of the Atlantic coast which drew other Europeans. There was even briefly a New Sweden, taking its place beside New Netherlands, New England and New France.

The motives for settling North America were often those which operated elsewhere, though the crusading, missionary zeal of the Reconquest mentality was almost entirely missing further north. For most of the sixteenth century the Englishmen, who were the most frequent explorers of North American possibilities, thought there might be mines there to rival those of the Spanish Indies. Others believed that population pressure made emigration desirable, and increasing knowledge revealed ample land in temperate climates with, unlike Mexico, very few native inhabitants. There was also a constant pull in the lure of finding a north-west passage to Asia.

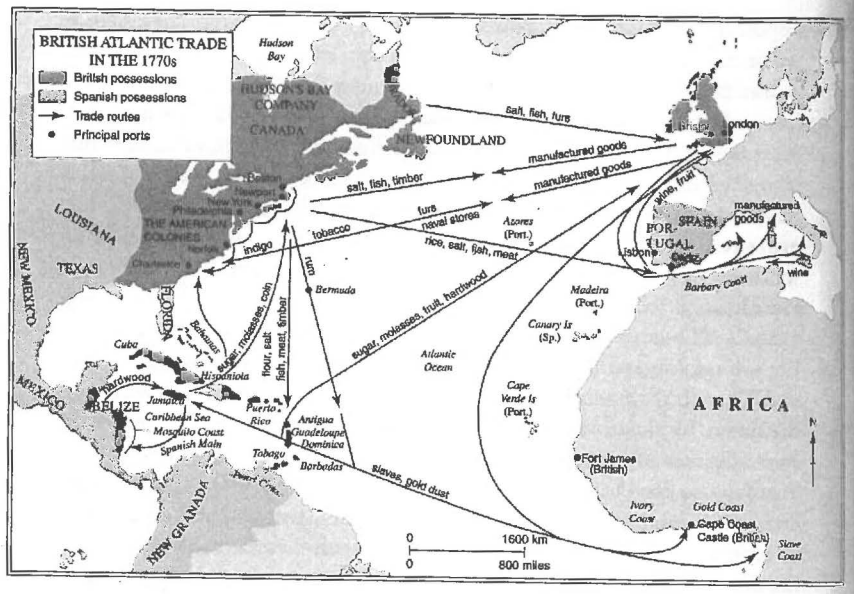
By 1600, these impulses had produced much exploration, but only one (unsuccessful) settlement north of Florida, at Roanoke, Virginia. The English were too weak, the French too distracted, to achieve more. With the seventeenth century there came more strenuous, better-organized and better-financed efforts, the discovery of the possibility of growing some

important staples on the mainland, a set of political changes in England which favoured emigration, and the emergence of England as a great naval power. Between them, these facts brought about a revolutionary transformation of the Atlantic littoral. The wilderness of 1600, inhabited by a few Indians, was a hundred years later an important site of civilization. In many places settlers had pushed as far inland as the mountain barrier of the Alleghenies. Meanwhile the French had established a line of posts along the valley of the St Lawrence and the Great Lakes. In this huge right-angle of settlement lived about half a million white people, mainly of British and French stock.

Spain claimed all North America, but this had long been contested by the English on the ground that 'prescription without possession availeth nothing'. The Elizabethan adventurers had explored much of the coast and gave the name 'Virginia', in honour of their queen, to all the territory north of thirty degrees of latitude. In 1606 James I granted a charter to a Virginia company to establish colonies. This was only formally the beginning; the company's affairs soon required revision of its structure and there were unprofitable initiatives in plenty, but in 1607 there was already established the first English settlement in America, which was to survive, at Jamestown, in modern Virginia. It only just came through its early trials but by 1620 its 'starving time' was far behind it and it prospered.

In 1608, the year after Jamestown's foundation, the French explorer Samuel de Champlain built a small fort at Quebec. For the immediate future the French colony was so insecure that its food had to be brought from France, but it was the beginning of settlement in Canada. Finally, in 1609, the Dutch sent an English explorer, Henry Hudson, to find a north-east passage to Asia. When he was unsuccessful he turned completely around and sailed across the Atlantic to look for a north-western one. Instead, he discovered the river that bears his name and established a preliminary Dutch claim by doing so. Within a few years there were Dutch settlements along the river, on Manhattan and on Long Island.

The English were in the lead and remained so. They prospered for two reasons. One was the technique, of which they were the first and most successful exponents, of transporting whole communities, men, women and children. These set up agricultural colonies which worked the land with their own labour and soon became independent of the mother country for their livelihood. The second was the discovery of tobacco, which became a staple first for Virginia and then for Maryland, a colony whose settlement began in 1634. Further north, the availability of land which could be cultivated on European lines assured the survival of the colonies; although interest in the area had originally been awoken by the prospects



of fur-trading and fishery there was soon a small surplus of grain for export. This was an attractive prospect for land-hungry Englishmen in a country widely believed in the early seventeenth century to be over-populated. Something like 20,000 went to 'New England' in the 1630s.

Another distinctive feature of the New England colonies was their association with religious dissent and Calvinistic Protestantism. They would not have been what they were without the Reformation. Although the usual economic motives were at work in the settlements, the leadership among immigrants to Massachusetts in the 1630s of men associated with the Puritan wing of English Protestantism bore fruit in a group of colonies whose constitutions varied from theocratic oligarchy to democracy. Though sometimes led by members of the English gentry, they shed more rapidly than the southern colonies their inhibitions about radical departures from English social and political practice, and their religious nonconformity did as much as the conditions in which they had to survive to bring this about. At some moments during the English constitutional troubles of the mid-century it even seemed that the colonies of New England might escape from the control of the Crown altogether, but this did not happen.

After the Dutch settlements of what was subsequently New York State had been swallowed up by the English, the North American littoral in 1700 from Florida north to the Kennebec river was organized as twelve colonies

(a thirteenth, Georgia, appeared in 1732) in which lived some 400,000 whites and perhaps a tenth as many African slaves. Further north lay still disputed territory and then lands that were indisputably French. In these, colonists were much thinner on the ground than in the English settlements. There were perhaps 15,000 French in North America in all and they had benefited from no such large migrations of communities as had the English colonies. Many of them were hunters and trappers, missionaries and explorers, strung out over the length of the St Lawrence and dotted about in the Great Lakes region and even beyond. New France was a huge area on the map, but outside the St Lawrence valley and Quebec it was only a scatter of strategically and commercially important forts and trading posts.

Nor was density of settlement the only difference between the French and English colonial zones. New France was closely supervised from home; after 1663 a company structure had been abandoned in favour of direct royal rule and Canada was governed by a French governor with the advice of the *intendant* much as a French province was governed at home. There was no religious liberty; the Church in Canada was monopolistic and missionary. Its history is full of glorious examples of bravery and martyrdom, and also of bitter intransigence. The farms of the settled area were grouped in seigneuries, a device which had some value in decentralizing administrative responsibility. Social forms therefore reproduced those of the Old World much more than those in the English settlements, even to the extent of throwing up a nobility with Canadian titles.

The English colonies were very diverse. Strung out as they were over almost the whole Atlantic seaboard, they contained a great variety of climate, economy and terrain, and their origins reflected a wide range of motives and methods of foundation. They soon became somewhat ethnically mixed, for after 1688 Scottish, Irish, German, Huguenot and Swiss emigrants had begun to arrive in appreciable numbers, though for a very long time the predominance of the English language and the relatively small numbers of non-English-speaking immigrants would maintain a culture overwhelmingly Anglo-Saxon. There was religious diversity and even, by 1700, a large measure of effective religious toleration, though some of the colonies had close association with specific religious denominations. All this increased the colonies' difficulty in seeing themselves as one society. They had no American centre; the Crown and the home country were the foci of the colonies' collective life, as English culture was still their background. None the less, it was already obvious that the English North American colonies offered individuals opportunities for advancement unavailable either in the more strictly and closely regulated society of Canada or at home in Europe.

By 1700, some colonies had already shown a tendency to grasp whatever

freedom from royal control was available to them. It is tempting to look back a long way for evidence of the spirit of independence which was later to play so big a part in popular tradition. In fact, it would be a misconception to read the prehistory of the United States in these terms. The 'Pilgrim Fathers' who landed at Cape Cod in 1620 were not rediscovered or inserted in their prominent place in the national mythology until the end of the eighteenth century. Yet they had, indeed, wanted to make a New England. What can be seen much earlier than the idea of independence is the emergence of facts which would in the future make it easier to think in terms of independence and unity.

One such fact was the slow strengthening of a representative tradition in the first century of settlement. For all their initial diversity, in the early eighteenth century each colony settled down to work through some sort of representative assembly which spoke for its inhabitants to a royal governor appointed in London. Some of the settlements had needed to co-operate with one another against the Indians at an early date, and in the French wars this had become even more important. When the French loosed their Huron allies against the British colonists, it helped to create a sense of common interest among the individual colonies (as well as spurring on the British to enlist on their side the Iroquois, the hereditary foes of the Huron).

From economic diversity, too, a measure of economic interrelatedness was emerging. The middle and southern colonies produced plantation crops of rice, tobacco, indigo and timber; New England built ships, refined and distilled molasses and grain spirits, grew corn and fished. There was a growing feeling, and an apparent logic in thinking, that the Americans might perhaps be able to run their affairs in their own interest – including that of the West Indian colonies – better than in that of the mother country. Economic growth was changing attitudes, too. The northern mainland colonies of New England were on the whole under-prized and even disliked in the mother country. They competed in shipbuilding and, illegally, in the Caribbean trade; unlike plantation colonies, they produced nothing that the mother country wanted. Besides, they were full of religious dissenters.

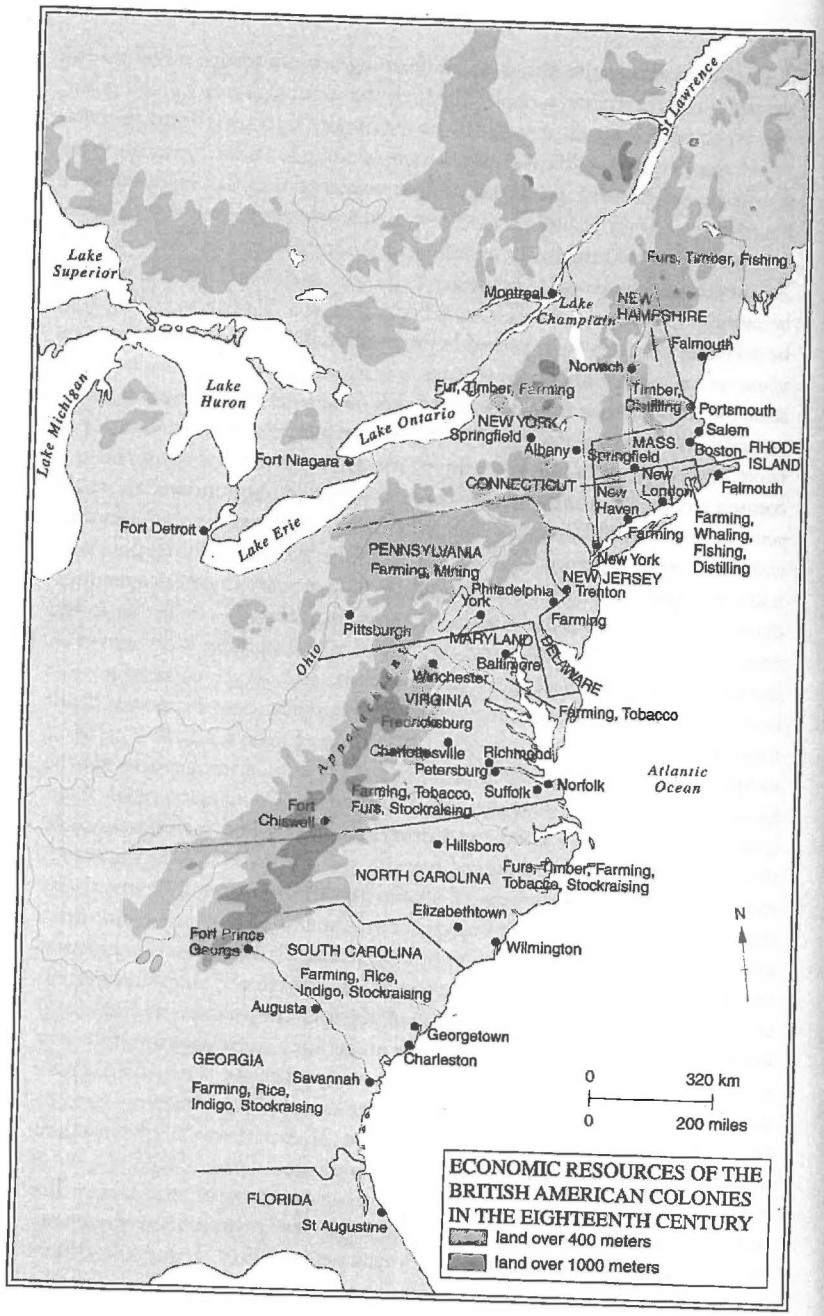
In the eighteenth century British America made great progress in wealth and civilization. The total colonial population had continued to grow and was well over a million by halfway through the century. It was being pointed out in the 1760s that the mainland colonies were going to be worth much more to Great Britain than the West Indies had been. By 1763, Philadelphia could rival many European cities in stylishness and cultivation. A great uncertainty had been removed in 1763, too, for Canada had been conquered and was by the peace treaty of that year to remain British. This changed the outlook of many Americans, both towards the value of the protection afforded by the imperial government and towards the question

of further expansion to the west. As farming settlers tended to fill up the coastal plain they came to press through the mountain barrier and down the river valleys beyond, eventually to the upper Ohio and the north-west.

The danger of conflict with the French as a result of this expansion was now removed, but this was not the only consideration which faced the British government in handling the westward movement after 1763. There were the rights and the likely reactions of the Indians to take into account. To antagonize them would be to court danger, but if Indian wars were to be avoided by holding the colonists back, then the frontier would have to be policed by British troops for that purpose, too. The result was a decision of government in London to impose a western land policy which would limit expansion, to raise taxes in the colonies to pay for the costs of the defending forces, and to tighten up the commercial system and cease to wink at infringements in its working. It was unfortunate that all this was coming to a head in the last years in which the old assumptions about the economics of colonial dependencies and their relationship to the mother country were accepted without demur by the makers of colonial policy.

By then about two and a half centuries had gone by since European settlements in the New World began. The overall effect of expansion in the Americas upon European and world history had already been immense, but is far from easy to define. Eventually, it is clear, all the colonial powers had, by the eighteenth century, been able to extract some economic profit from their colonies, though they did so in different ways. The flow of silver to Spain was the most obvious, and this had, of course, implications for the European economy as a whole and even for Asia. Growing colonial populations also helped to stimulate European exports and manufactures. In this respect the English colonies were of the greatest importance, pointing the way to a growing flow of people first from Europe and Africa, and then from Asia, which was to culminate in the last of Europe's major folk-migrations in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. To colonial expansion, too, must be linked the enormous growth of European shipping and shipbuilding. Whether engaged in slaving, contraband trading, legal import and export between metropolis and colony or fishing to supply new consumer markets, shipbuilders, ship-owners and captains benefited. There was an incremental and incalculable effect at work. It is thus very hard to sum up the total effect of the possession of American colonies on the imperialist powers in the first age of imperialism.

Of the overriding cultural and political importance of that fact in the long run we can speak with more confidence: the western hemisphere was to be culturally European. Spanish, Portuguese and English might be different, but they offered edited versions of the same text. They all brought



selections from European civilization with them. Politically, that was to mean that from Tierra del Fuego to the Hudson Bay, two immense continents would eventually be organized on European legal and administrative principles even when they ceased to remain dependent on colonial power. The hemisphere was also going to be Christian; when Hinduism or Islam eventually made their appearance there, it would be as the possession of small minorities, not as rivals to a basically Christian culture.

The significance of this is of course enormous. In the Americas, as later in Oceania and Siberia, the Europeans did not just conquer; they exterminated local cultures and peoples and replaced them with their own. The last sparsely populated regions on earth were to be filled, at least in their modern formative stages, by people of European stock. This is a development so surprising given a longer perspective on human history that it still gives reason for pause even today. The particular timing of the European advance meant that much older cultures were to be cut off from populating the new worlds or setting their mark on them. In a new age of Asian nationalism, in the twentieth century, this was to be seen as a true sign of Europe's rapaciousness and a birthmark of injustice in international affairs as created by force by the European great powers.

The ecological consequences of the European colonial expansion were also gigantic. Thousands of species became extinct, since they had no defence against the new human populations that moved in or against the animals or their illnesses that they brought with them. But at the same time animals and plants moved along the colonial routes back to the Old World. Three plant species, crucial for the later explosion in human population, originated in the Americas: potato, sweet potato and maize. Domesticated animals went in the opposite direction: pigs, sheep and chickens. This 'Columbian exchange' was, perhaps, more fundamental to human history than anything that happened in politics or society.

But politics mattered as well, with great importance connected to the further differentiation of the Americas, north and south. It had been true that in cultural terms North American native life could offer no such impressive human achievements as the civilizations of Central and South America. But colonialism was a differentiating fact, too. It is not fanciful to recall ancient parallels. The colonies of the ancient Greek cities were set up by their parent states as communities largely independent, in a way similar to the English settlements of the North American littoral. Once established, they tended to evolve towards a self-conscious identity of their own. The Spanish empire displayed the deployment of a regular pattern of institutions essentially metropolitan and imperial, rather as had done the provinces of imperial Rome.

It took time for it to be clear that the basic forms already given to the evolution of British North America were to shape the kernel of a future world power. That evolution was therefore to prove a shaper of world as well as American history. Two great transforming factors had still to operate before the North American future was fixed in its main lines: the differing environments revealed as the northern continent filled up by movement to the west, and a much greater flow of non-Anglo-Saxon immigration. But these forces would flow into and around moulds set by the English inheritance, which would leave its mark on the future United States as Byzantium left its own on Russia. Nations do not shake off their origins; they only learn to view them in different ways. Sometimes outsiders can see this best. It was a German statesman who remarked towards the end of the nineteenth century that its most important international fact was that Great Britain and the United States spoke the same language.

6

World History's New Shape

In 1776 there began in America the first of a series of colonial revolts, which were to take several decades to work themselves out. Besides marking an epoch in the history of the American continents, these upheavals also provide a convenient vantage-ground from which to consider the first phase of European hegemony as a whole. In other parts of the world, too, something of a change of rhythm was marked by such facts as the elimination of serious French competition to the British in India, and the opening of Australasia, the last discovered and habitable continent, to settlement. At the end of the eighteenth century there is a sense of completing one era and opening another; it is a good point for an assessment of the difference made by the previous three centuries to the history of the globe.

During them, outright conquest and occupation were the main form of European hegemony. They provided wealth Europe could use to increase still further its relative superiority over other civilizations and they set up political structures which diffused other forms of European influence. They were the work of a handful of European states, which were the first world powers in the geographical range of their interests, even if not in their strength: the Atlantic nations, to which the age of discoveries had given opportunities and historical destinies distinct from those of other European states.

The first to seize these opportunities had been Spain and Portugal, the only great colonial powers of the sixteenth century. They had long passed their zenith by 1763, when the Peace of Paris, which ended the Seven Years War, was signed. This treaty is a convenient marker of a new world order which had already replaced that dominated by Spain and Portugal. It registered the ascendancy of Great Britain in her rivalry with France overseas, which had preoccupied her for nearly three-quarters of a century. The duel was not over and Frenchmen could still be hopeful that they would recover lost ground. Great Britain, none the less, was the great imperial power of the future. These two nations had eclipsed the Dutch, whose empire had been built, like theirs, in the seventeenth century, in the era of declining

order and not multiply causes of civil strife and disaffection with the government. Second, the Persian conceptions of sacred kingship they brought to India were universalistic in vision and appealed to a realm of ideas that overspilled the boundaries between religions, especially ideas of astrology, millennialism, time cycles, and the interpretation of omens. Here again India and Iran were cultural cousins, Iran being a conduit of astrology and astronomy from Mesopotamia and the Hellenistic world for India, and India returning the favor at other times. Astrology in particular was a "science" that circulated freely among Muslims, Christians, and Hindus from India to Europe.[34]

It is a mistake, therefore, to view the relation of Islam to Indian civilization through a "clash of civilizations" model, with its assumption of mutual exclusion, as if they were closed systems. On the contrary, Islam developed its distinctive Perso-Islamic culture within the penumbra of Indian Civilization, in Abbasid times. Part of the appeal of Islam to Indians was that aspects of it were already familiar, such as sacred kingship and the devotionalism and mysticism of Sufism; aspects of it, indeed, were Indian, although in a new configuration that gave prominence to the tradition of the prophets.

CHAPTER 10

Europeans

European Merchants
British Rule
India and European Civilization

India was deeply affected by the astonishingly successful expansion of Islam and Islamic states across much of Europe and Asia from about the eighth century. This expansion had created a cosmopolitan world of trade, diplomacy, taste, and knowledge that penetrated and blended, in different ways, with Indian Civilization, drawing on it and adding to it. It was through the Islamic world that Indian ideas and inventions reached Europe in late medieval times, including what al-Adli of Baghdad, a ninth-century writer on chess problems, called India's three contributions to the world: the game of chess; the collection of folktales and animal fables called the *Panchatantra;* and the zero, that is, the place-notation of the number system—what in English is called the Arabic numerals, although they derive, ultimately, from India.

Some eight centuries after the Asia-wide expansion of Islam had begun, from the time of Columbus, European nations began an expansion of their powers, which crossed Asia and Africa and encompassed the New World, as well. It was a truly worldwide expansion, broader than that of Islam, but made possible by building on the accumulated geographical knowledge of the Muslim countries and by new technologies of navigation. Indian Civilization was again profoundly affected, although by different means and in novel ways.

European Merchants

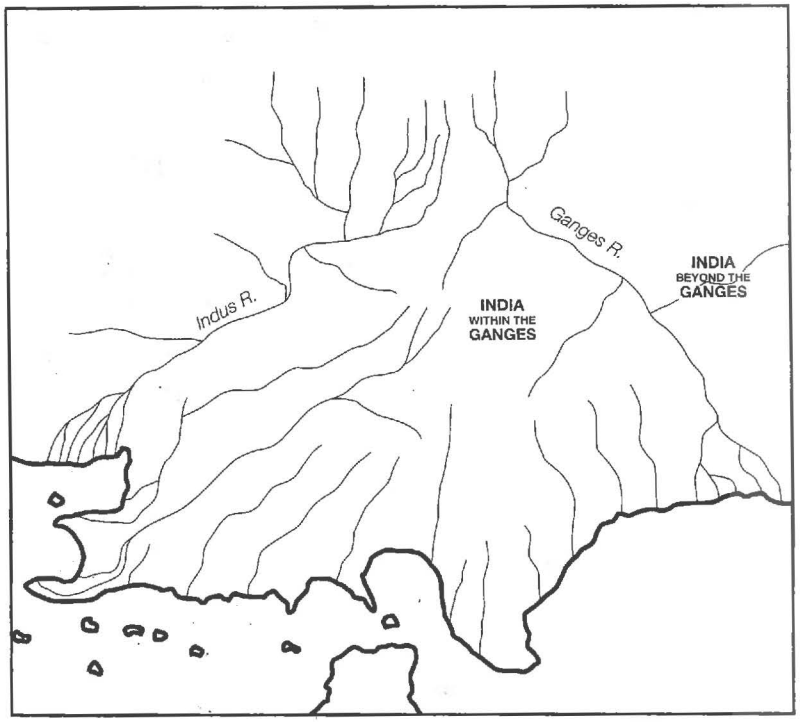
Before the worldwide expansion of European power, for medieval Christian Europe, India was the edge of the earth, a distant horizon,

a strange land where things were very different. The strangeness of India for Europeans could take monstrous or pleasant forms virtually without limit, because they were unchecked by experience. It was commonly stated in medieval bestiaries or books about animals, for example, that the elephant had pillar-like legs that lacked knee joints and had to sleep standing up, leaning against a tree, because it could not get up if it fell down. It was said that hunters would saw a tree half through in hopes that an elephant would lean against it and fall, unable to rise again. This and other fanciful ideas about India were legacies of ancient Greek writers, endlessly reproduced.

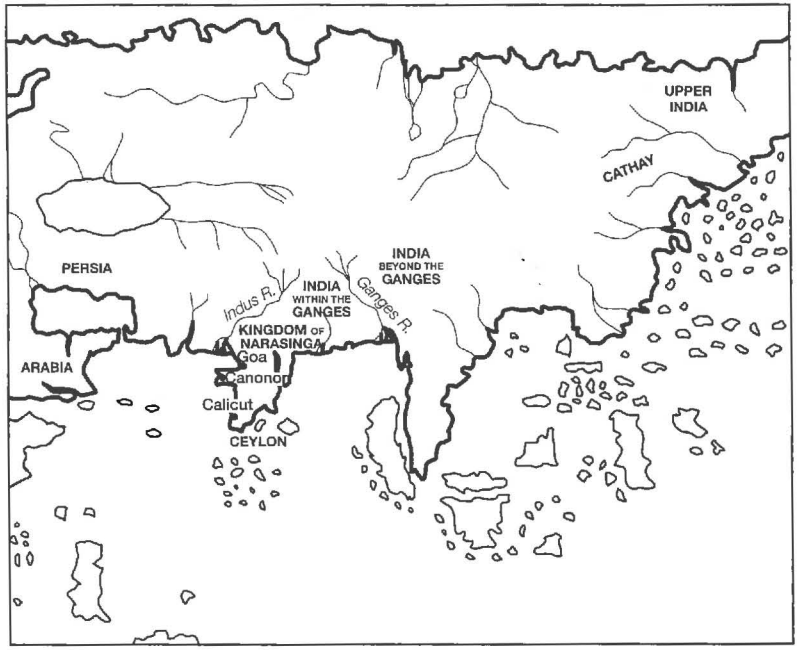
Images of India in medieval Europe have a dream-like character, but they were not free inventions and, on the contrary, had their own history. The legacy of Greco-Roman antiquity was one great fund of such images, and from it medieval Europeans drew the most exotic pictures of India. Thus in the *Nuremberg chronicle*,[35] for example, published in 1493 at the beginning of print in the West and at the outset of the great voyages that would take European merchant venturers to India, we find pictures of fantastic races of people in India such as the mouthless people who are nourished by smells and the backward-foot people, which go way back to the hearsay reports of the Greek writer Ctesias in the fifth century BCE (see Chapter 4). Besides images of repellant, freakish strangeness, Europeans also entertained pleasing images of India as a land of luxury and wealth and the source of desirable and expensive things such as diamonds, silk, exotic animals, and spices. This reputation for wealth was certainly a function of the trade of ancient times, for, as noted earlier, only the most precious commodities could repay the very high costs of transportation over so long a distance. India had been a source of exotic and expensive items of trade since the time of Solomon in the Bible, and it was a supplier of luxuries to Rome in ancient times, such as pearls, ivory, silk, and precious stones, to a degree that caused alarm because of the drain of wealth it entailed, as we saw in Chapter 8. Indian goods again made their way to Europe as its economy recovered from the collapse of the Roman Empire and slowly began to grow in the course of the Middle Ages. Now, however, India was a part of the large Asian trading world created with the spread of Islam, and Muslim merchants and states now intervened between Europe and India. The creation (in 1299 CE) and spread of the Ottoman Empire in Turkey, and its revival of the institution of the caliph as head of the worldwide community of Islam, further solidified Muslim centrality to the trade of Eurasia. The Islamic countries, unlike those of Europe,

had direct knowledge of India and a vastly superior and more rational understanding of the geography of Eurasia developed through the trade, exploration, and conquests of Islamic forces in India and elsewhere. Europeans drew on this fund of geographical knowledge and built on it from experience as their own trade grew and expanded to India and beyond, and the real India began to come into focus.

Venice made its fortune through this trade in precious goods from the Muslim east, but other European nations and their merchants soon were searching for passages to India that would bypass the Muslims. Columbus surmised that he could reach India by sailing west around the world, and when he reached the New World he thought he was in India. This supposition was assisted by two features of early printed maps of the world, deriving from the geography of Ptolemy (c. 150 CE). On the one hand, there was no effective means of determining longitude, and world maps based on Ptolemy greatly overestimate the east–west



MAP 8 India in Ptolemy



MAP 9 India as seen from Europe, 1545

dimension of the Eurasian landmass. By putting the coast of Asia too far to the east, one could infer that the distance from Europe to Asia in the other direction, across the Atlantic Ocean, is not very great. The other feature of these maps is that countries are named but no boundaries are drawn around them, and India tends to sprawl across Asia eastward to the coast. In Ptolemy's map (Map 8) India proper is called "India within the Ganges," something called "India beyond the Ganges" is the name for Southeast Asia (the Ganga River was thought to flow due south, separating the two Indias), and in northern China one finds "upper India"; India is practically a name for Asia as a whole. Map 9 shows a Ptolemaic map of 1545 modified by improved knowledge of India due to European voyages.[36]

Spain soon lay claim to the Americas and the Philippines, but Portugal made the first effective explorations in the other direction, of the southern route around Africa to the coast of India, beginning with the voyage of Vasco da Gama in 1498 (Figure 18). For about a century Portugal dominated the European trade of Asia. The Portuguese created

FIGURE 18 Vasco da Gama

a watery empire of trade, consisting of a few small land bases established by treaty with the local powers, reaching from Goa on the west coast of India to Macao in the south of China. Portugal enforced its domination of the seaborne trade through a far-flung network of armed ships that required all ships of other countries to take a *cartaz* or charter from the Portuguese and trade only with the Portuguese in certain items. In this way Portugal came to dominate the trade in spices, and much else besides. In exchange the Portuguese brought American crops to Asia that had a lasting impact: potatoes and corn (maize) that allowed farming in soils and seasons where it was otherwise difficult; new luxuries like tobacco and pineapple; and two foods so completely integrated into Indian cooking that it is hard to imagine that they are really fairly recent introductions: tomatoes and chili peppers.[37] As we saw in Chapter 9, the Portuguese played an important role in the success of the South Indian empire of Vijayanagara by supplying it with horses, which were very scarce in the south and badly needed for warfare against their northern neighbors.

The Portuguese brought Catholic Christianity with them to India and Catholic missionaries from various countries who set about learning Indian languages and making converts, and establishing the Pope's supremacy over the ancient community of Thomas Christians in South India, who claimed to have been led to Christianity by the apostle Thomas. The missionary enterprise was pulled in different directions by contrary forces promoting assimilation with Indian culture and isolation from it. At the one extreme, the attempt of Jesuits to present Christianity in a form acceptable to Indians led to the work of the Italian Jesuit Roberto Nobili, who adopted the dress and way of life of a brahmin renouncer. This impulse was canceled by Rome, however, in the upshot of a "quarrel of the rites," in China as well as India, and the suppression of the Jesuit order by the Pope somewhat after. At the other extreme was the Inquisition instituted at Goa to enforce orthodoxy among Catholics, in response to anxiety that lingering Hindu beliefs and practices were compromising the purity of Christianity in India. During the heyday of Portuguese control of the India trade, the Portuguese language was widely used on both coasts of India as a medium of trade, and a sprinkling of Portuguese words in Indian languages, such as Hindi *almari* (Indian English *almirah*, a wardrobe or chest of drawers) and *tauliya* (towel), persist as vestiges of that period.

The ambitions of Spain and Portugal soon clashed, and their rivalry was resolved by the Pope, who drew a vertical line on the globe through South America that awarded Portugal everything eastward of Brazil and Spain everything to the west of it. Other European nations and their merchant companies began to push their way forward, however, and intra-European rivalry proved a powerful force in the expansion of European economic and political power around the world, beginning about 1600. East India companies were formed by the English, the Dutch, the Danes, the French, and some others, with monopoly rights over their nation's trade with India. The most effective of these were the Dutch and the English, and they and the Portuguese formed a three-cornered struggle for the India trade. The ultimate outcome of the struggle was that the Portuguese were confined to a few small trading stations on the Indian coast, the Dutch concentrated their power on Indonesia and the Spice Islands, and the English came to dominate the trade of India itself.

In many ways the European trade with India, leading up to colonial rule, was continuous with the old Roman trade, in the sense that India supplied Europe with rare commodities such as spices and gems, and luxurious manufactured goods, especially fabrics, in exchange for silver and gold. But while these terms of trade were in broad terms stable over a very long period, the trading methods of the period of European expansion were quite new, involving the creation of merchant companies that had monopoly powers of their country's Asian trade and arms to protect and enforce them on their rivals. These companies did not promote free and peaceful trade but instead monopolies maintained by force. They entered into political relations with Indian powers to establish and maintain small enclaves on land in which to collect tradable goods for shipment homeward and to sell goods shipped out from Europe. East India trading companies of the different European nations had to be political actors, negotiating relations with Indian rulers, and not just commercial ventures. These circumstances led to European rule of Indian territory and people by a body of foreign merchants, something entirely novel in India's history.

British Rule

The rivalry of European nations among themselves was a driving force for the international expansion of European imperial power in the

seventeenth century and after, and these rivalries were projected on the whole world. The rivalry of England and France especially had momentous consequences in the middle of the eighteenth century: the extinction of French rule in Canada by the British; the revolt of the thirteen colonies of America from British rule with French assistance; and the establishment of British territorial rule in the eastern part of India (Bengal). Conquest of Indian territories came about when armies of the British East India Company and its Indian allies fought the armies of the French East India Company and its Indian allies—the beginnings of the British Indian Empire.

In the course of the warfare in Europe and Canada of the French and English nations, the French and English East India Companies entered the fray by fighting one another in India and implicating their Indian allies in the struggle. Thus in India the rivalry between the two was not carried out by the governments of the two countries but by joint-stock corporations of merchants and the Indian princes who gave them trading privileges and leased them small patches of territory on the coast for their trading posts. These "factories," as they were called, were not places of manufacture but essentially warehousing facilities, so called because they were governed by someone called a "factor" or commercial agent of the company. Some factories were fortified and protected by Indian soldiers under European officers. These armed forces of the merchant companies now became war-making entities that drew Indian governments and their armies into the commercial and national struggle between the British and the French. The upshot of a long and complicated struggle was that the British East India Company army, under Robert Clive, defeated the Mughal governor of Bengal, Siraj ud Daula, at Plassey in 1757. Clive's victory was secured by a prior secret agreement with two of Siraj ud Daula's generals, who held back their armies, and Clive replaced Siraj ud Daula with one of them, Mir Jafar, as Bengal's governor. Within a few years the East India Company became the effective co-ruler of Bengal, and was given a charter authorizing its new powers by the Mughal emperor in Delhi. He granted it the *diwani,* or fiscal administration of the country, in concert with the existing political and military administrator. The situation was highly anomalous; a merchant company from England had become a territorial ruler in Bengal under a grant of authority from the emperor of India. In a sense the East India Company was a Mughal vassal, but that was only the legal clothing in

which the military power and diplomatic maneuvering of the Company was dressed.

In later years the British liked to say that they acquired an empire in India "in a fit of absent-mindedness." The process was not so thoughtless and innocent as this phrase wants us to believe. The Company had in fact aimed at territorial dominion, following the Dutch model, in the past, although without success, and had the Dutch example before it in Ceylon (Sri Lanka), where the Dutch governed large lowland territories as the kingdom of Ceylon retreated to the mountainous interior. But the immediate cause of British rule in India was the worldwide struggle of England and France, which the English and French East India Companies joined in, the consequences of which—the diwani of Bengal—were unanticipated.

In any case the transformation of the Company was profound, from a trading company with negligible territorial holdings on the coast of India for the purposes of turning a profit to a governing power ruling vast and increasing agrarian territory from which it had to collect taxes and over which it had to maintain law and order. It was the beginning of the period of *Company rule,* which lasted for about a hundred years, from 1765, when the Company acquired administrative powers in Bengal (the diwani), ending in 1858 when, at the close of the Rebellion of 1857, the British government put an end to Company rule and imposed *Crown rule,* which is to say, direct rule of British India by the British government. Crown rule also lasted about a hundred years, from 1858 to independence in 1947.

An utterly new kind of empire in India was created by the British East India Company. Previous foreign rulers had come with land armies as conquering powers; this one had evolved from trading company to territorial ruler. Previous invaders came and settled in India, making it their home and the home of their descendants; the British sent out its young men, aged seventeen or eighteen, to be civil servants and military officers, but they all intended to retire to Britain at the end of their careers, and considered Britain their home—those who remained in India were mostly the rather large number of Britons who died of illness before their time and were buried there. Although ideas of colonizing India with European settlers, on the model of America, Canada, and South Africa, were floated from time to time, the East India Company strongly resisted. It wanted to avoid creating situations of conflict between a large European population with ideas of its own

superiority and the much vaster population of Indians, which would unsettle British rule. For the same reason the Company assiduously prevented the admission of nonofficial Europeans, including missionaries. Indeed, the numbers of Europeans in the British Indian government were kept very small—three to five thousand in the civil service, more in the army—supervising very large numbers of Indian employees. The connectedness with the home country depended on sailing vessels of improved design and speed, but the voyage often took six months. Nevertheless, the relatively faster means of communication made for an altogether new kind of empire in which small numbers of East India Company officials were born, schooled, and (if they were lucky to live long enough) buried in Britain but spent most of their adult life in India, participating in its governance or the Company's commerce, under the direction of Company headquarters, East India House, in faraway London. For all these reasons the political, institutional, and religious character of India's relation to Europe through the agency of British rule was shaped quite differently from its relation to the Islamic world. At the same time, India as a colony of the growing British empire was under very different conditions of rule than the British settler colonies of Canada, the thirteen colonies of America, Australia, New Zealand, the West Indies, and, later, South Africa.

The Company's military successes in India were accomplished by large numbers of Indian soldiers under British command, and smaller numbers of British soldiers. The means of success lay not so much in military technology, which was not very different from that of the Mughals and other Indian powers, which were fully in the gunpowder era, using artillery and matchlocks or flintlocks. The European advantage lay in the rapidity and massing of firepower achieved through close formations of well-drilled men. The new organizational techniques yielded, at the beginning, outsized victories in the sense that smaller forces under British command bested much larger Indian armies. This advantage could not last forever, and indeed Indian princes very quickly learned to make use of European officers (especially those left unemployed by the defeat of Napoleon) to train their own officers and troops in the European techniques of battlefield organization. As they did so, ever-larger British and allied forces were needed to defeat their opponents in India.[38]

The other contributing factor to British military success in India was the alliances that the British made with Indian rulers against other

Indian opponents. Such allies retained the rule of their own countries throughout the period of British rule, although at a price, which included leaving their foreign affairs in the hands of the British-Indian government while contributing to the maintenance of the Indian army, sometimes through ceding territories to pay their obligations. These "princely states" remained formally outside British India and managed their own regimes of taxation and administration, and their own armed forces, but each of them had a British "resident" who kept them apprised of British policy, and often interfered with the internal governance and the succession to the kingdom. The Indian princes played a large role in the system of alliances that extended and consolidated British rule in India, but over time their political functions shrank, although the British came to regard their military forces as a valuable and inexpensive supplement to the army of British India and in the world wars. Their presence throughout the two centuries of British rule gave the political map of British India a patchwork quality, with large areas of direct British rule interrupted by the princely states, some of them large as Britain itself, some smaller than an American county (Map 10). In aggregate the princely states covered a third of the landmass of India, right up to the end of British rule.

In 1857 a mutiny of Indian *sepoys* or soldiers against their British officers in Meerut, near Delhi, spread and morphed into a broad rebellion against British rule that engulfed much of North India. Causes of discontent were many, but the immediate one was the introduction of the Enfield rifle, the cartridges of which were greased with animal fat, and the belief that the grease was beef tallow and pig fat gave offense to Hindu and Muslim sepoys alike. Army mutinies had occurred before, and been contained, notably the Vellore mutiny of 1806 in South India. That mutiny, too, had in it an element of feeling that religion was under attack, in the form of orders imposing a new uniform code that included European hats and forbid beards, earrings, and marks of religious identity on the forehead. Whereas the mutinies at Vellore and other garrisons were quickly suppressed and did not spread, the 1857 mutiny and the resentments out of which it originated grew and fused with the bitterness that Indian princely allies felt over their treatment by the British and the continuing loss of their powers. One of the chief causes of alarm was the policy of "lapse," by which a princely state was dissolved if there was no direct heir, a policy that, in the long run, would lead to the winding up of all the princely states and their disappearance

MAP 10 British India in 1939

into British India. The mutiny quickly boiled into a full-scale military insurrection attempting to restore the old regime of India prior to the British, the regime of the Mughal, the ruler of the Marathas called the Peshwa, and the Indian princes, and to drive the British out of India. The insurgents took Delhi and declared the Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah II emperor of India, as indeed, he always had been in a formal sense, remembering that British India began when the Mughal emperor granted the diwani of Bengal to the Company. The Rebellion also spread to Kanpur, where it was led by Nana Sahib, discontented son of the last Peshwa, to Lucknow, and to parts of central India where the Rani (queen) of Jhansi led a heroic resistance. The mutiny spread

through army garrisons in various parts of North India, but garrisons elsewhere remained loyal to the British and were used to put it down. After a year the mutiny was finally suppressed. It had been a war of independence, led by the army and the elites of the old regime of the princes, but it was not unified. The Rebellion failed, and India's independence from British rule was to come nearly a century later, under the leadership of quite new elites with quite different ideas of the nation. Although the Rebellion of 1857 did not achieve India-wide extension of its power, it was India-wide in its visibility, and it served to advertise and make vivid the disaffection of many Indians from the colonial regime.

The aftermath of the failed Rebellion was a complex mixture of repression and conciliation by the British. The mutineers themselves, at least those thought to be directly involved in the killing of Britons, were harshly and publicly punished, some of them being tied to the ends of cannon and blown in half. The Mughal Empire was formally abolished, Bahadur Shah being exiled to Burma (Myanmar) to end his days there. Company rule was also brought finally to an end when, in a proclamation of November 1, 1858, Queen Victoria formally assumed the government of India, which in effect meant that India was now ruled directly by Parliament in London rather than by the Company under a charter from Parliament. The royal proclamation, in offering assurances that Indian religions would not be interfered with and that the rights and territory of the princely states would not be encroached on, identified religious alarm over British attempts to reform Indian society and the discontent of the allies as the principal causes of the insurrection, and seemed to abandon the reform program for Indian society formulated in the 1830s. The army was reorganized. In India there had always been an Indian army with British officers and Indian noncommissioned officers and sepoys, as well as a British army with British officers and troops. Now the number of British officers in the Indian army was increased, and the size of the British army was increased as well. Perhaps the most important outcome was the bitterness of feeling that divided Britons and Indians as a result of the killings of British civilians besieged by the insurrectionists and the harsh punishments that followed. Henceforth, resistance to British rule was to take new forms under new leadership, inspired by a new goal—to turn India into a nation-state like those of Europe and the Americas.

India and European Civilization

British colonial rule was the means by which India came into close contact with the civilization of Europe, and the specifics of that rule shaped the ways in which India was affected by Europe.

It was only gradually that the British developed policies that promoted the introduction of aspects of European civilization in India. The initial conditions of British rule all favored the opposite policy, namely, one of minimal of interference with the customs and traditions of the Indians. The British in India were the servants of a joint stock company that was there to make a profit for its shareholders in Britain, not to undertake costly and profitless projects for the Europeanization of Indian society. Its government was minimal and provided little beyond a law-and-order function; it had, for example, to be forced by the British Parliament to set aside the pitifully small sum of 100,000 rupees for education and the revival of learning. It was very much a government on the cheap and took no responsibility for the education, reform, and uplift of the people. Moreover, it was believed that British rule would not last long and its tenure could be cut short if it provoked Indian unrest by taking measures offensive to Indians. Given that foreign rule is inescapably irksome and unwelcome, the object of government was to "lessen the weight of the chain by which the natives are held in subjection," in the words of Warren Hastings, the first governor-general—to make its rule as light a burden as possible in every matter that did not touch the profit of the Company and the security of its rule. This mindset had several policy outcomes, the most telling of which concerned religion, the family, and land revenue.

Catholic missionaries, especially Jesuits, had long been resident in India and promoted the spread of Christianity, with the active assistance of the Portuguese. One of the most successful missionary ventures was the production of an abundance of Christian writings in Tamil by the Italian Jesuit Constantius Beschi, who became a virtuoso in that language. The Protestants were slower to get involved. The first were the Danes, at their trading stations in South India (Tranquebar) and Bengal (Serampore, near Calcutta). Lutheran missionaries from Halle, in Germany, were patronized by the Danish king and formed a long and continuing connection with South India.

But the East India Company prohibited missionary activity in its territories, on grounds that it would antagonize Indians, Hindu and

Muslim, and so jeopardize its operations. Thus the first American missionary to sail out of New England after the War of 1812 to promote Christianity in India, Adoniram Judson, was clapped in jail when he reached Madras, and had to turn his attentions to Burma instead. The ban on missions certainly removed a potential source of dissatisfaction of Indians with British rule, but it was intensely criticized in England, so it was not maintained without cost, especially with the rising tide of evangelical religion in England in the opening years of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless the ban lasted many decades until pro-missionary opinion in England successfully pressured Parliament to end it when the East India Company's charter was renewed in 1813. By that time British Baptist missionaries, Carey, Marshman, and Ward, had been working out of Danish Serampore (Srirampur), near Kolkata, with some success, long before the Church of England had missions in the field. Although the numbers of conversions were tiny in relation to the whole population of India, the missions had a number of significant effects, most notably through their schools, but also through their critiques of Hinduism, as we shall see.

Although the Company's policy of keeping missionaries out had at last to give way, its noninterference stance toward the family had consequences that last to this day. In England, matters of family law were adjudicated in ecclesiastical courts of the Church of England, and in India the colonial government, with the English pattern in mind, undertook at an early stage to recognize in India a distinct Hindu law and Mohammedan or Muslim law governing matters of marriage and inheritance in its courts, whereas criminal and contract law were made uniform for all Indians. Thus in family matters the colonial regime perpetuated the authority of the ancient Sanskrit law books (Dharmashastra) for Hindus and the Sharia law of the Islamic jurists for Muslims, and if anything the authority of these ancient texts became greater, insofar as it tended to replace local customary practices. The British government was wary about interfering with these bodies of law, and legislated on family matters in only a very limited way. One of the consequences was that at a time when the possibility of civil marriage (i.e., marriage outside of religion) was being invented in Europe, there was and remains limited scope for civil marriage in India and most marriages are performed by religious authorities. Although Parliament in independent India has taken charge of creating new laws for marriage and inheritance for Hindus and others, Muslim law in India remains a

separate domain, essentially unchanged from the Anglo-Mohammedan law (as it was called) of the colonial period. The Indian Parliament, with its Hindu majority, undertook to set aside the authority of the Dharmashastra and legislate on family matters for Hindus, but it has felt it too politically sensitive to interfere with the existing religiously based law for Muslims because of their being in the minority, with the result that there is no uniform law of marriage and inheritance for all Indians. (By contrast, the parliaments of Pakistan and Bangladesh, where Muslims are the majority, have not hesitated to legislate concerning marriage.) This impasse has been a source of continuing friction between Hindus and Muslims in the Republic of India, as the law for Hindus has been reformed to bring it in line with current sentiment, but the law for Muslims remains in the hands of religious authorities and is deemed unchangeable by Parliament.

Finally, in the matter of land revenue the early tendency of the Company was also in the direction of minimal interference, and it decided on a policy of permanently settling the revenue obligation of large landlords, called *zamindars,* holding hundreds of villages. The idea behind the Permanent Settlement, as it was called, was that the zamindars, having a fixed, unchanging amount of revenue to be paid every year, would be induced to increase the output of agriculture by investing in improvements, because every additional increment of production by the peasantry would yield the zamindar a pure profit that he would not have to share with the government. The Permanent Settlement was also convenient to the British rulers in that it put the burden of collecting revenue from the cultivators on the shoulders of the zamindar, and relieved the government of the obligation to maintain large numbers of petty officials for this purpose.

In various ways the policy stance of minimal interference and no reform came under increasing pressure in the opening decades of the nineteenth century, when various independent forces converged to create an overwhelming British interest in reform of India along European lines. The change began with the land revenue. Because the overwhelming majority of Indians were farmers it was the main form of government income. The way in which agricultural production was taxed had large consequences both for the rulers and the ruled. When territories of the interior of South India fell to the British in 1792, Thomas Munro was one of the army officers involved in surveying the newly acquired tracts and settling the revenue from them. He settled it,

not on large landholders or zamindars, but on individual cultivators or *ryots* (Hindi *raiyat*). Through Munro's advocacy the *Ryotwari* system became the standard for future revenue settlements in South India and the region of Mumbai, rather than the *Zamindari* system. It sought to give the cultivator a strong property right in his land and so make the land-owning peasant, not some rich zamindar, into an agent for the improvement of agriculture. This entailed a revolution in government. To hold the individual cultivator responsible to pay the land tax, the government needed an army of petty revenue officers to measure each individual field to assess and collect the taxes, under a British collector appointed in each district of every province. Because these revenue officers had low pay and abundant opportunities for peculation and extortion, the collector was given virtually unlimited powers to investigate and dismiss members of his staff. In addition, whereas the executive powers of collectors were originally separated from the judicial powers of the courts set up by the East India Company, collectors now were given extensive judicial powers as well, which was a substantial departure from British governmental principles of separation of powers between the executive, legislative, and judicial functions. This, then, was the pattern of rural government from then on: a highly paid British collector with great executive and judicial power fielding a lowly paid and numerous army of Indian revenue officials. In this way government reached every cultivator directly and not through the intermediacy of a large land owner.

Besides the reform of land revenue, with its liberal ideology of promoting improvement through private property rights and the incentive of personal gain (under the oversight of a distinctly nonliberal collector), the turn to reform was also promoted by the convergence of two distinct strands of liberal reform coming out of England: Utilitarianism that sought government reform and the evangelical movement that sought social reform. These forces as they concerned India were represented by James Mill, leader of the Utilitarians, and Thomas Babington Macaulay and Charles Trevelyan, who had evangelical connections. They were not natural allies, and in fact Macaulay had published a devastating attack on Mill's famous essay on government. Circumstances brought them together, however, especially in India. Mill greatly favored the Munro system of revenue; Macaulay and Mill promoted education of Indians in English rather than the classical languages of Indian law, Sanskrit, Persian, and Arabic. Both sides promoted a policy stance of

changing India for their perception of India's good by the massive introduction of European ideas. The decade of the 1830s was a period of massive reform in England as well, with the broadening of voting rights and the reform of parliamentary government to make it more representative and responsible to the voters. It is a paradox that the great era of liberal reform in England promoted in India the idea of liberalism directed from above by a government that was not responsible to the people it ruled, but rather to the Parliament in faraway Britain, a kind of liberal despotism. This new policy stance was justified by a new theory of government in India. Whereas earlier British rulers in India were under no illusions that they were there for the good of anyone but the stockholders of their company, the new reform-minded rulers persuaded themselves and others that they were there for the good of the Indians, to prepare them for self-rule in some distant future, through a policy of gradual social and political reform toward a European model of civilization.

Over the course of British rule the tide of reform and Europeanization ebbed and flowed. For example, after the Rebellion of 1857 the British concluded that Indian resistance to British rule had been provoked by too much Europeanizing reform and that a more conservative policy was needed to calm Indian fears about their religion and way of life being eroded by government policy. Thus matters of religion and social custom, especially family law, were to be closed off from reform along European lines. Despite this policy, European power and the circulation in India of ideas from Europe created revolutionary effects on Indians. Let us draw up a list of these, which were not always clear-cut and often were contradictory.

As to family and kinship, the impulse to maintain ancient laws of marriage and inheritance perpetuated the existence of separate legal spheres for Hindus and Muslims and, if anything, extended the scope of the Sanskrit shastras and the Muslim Sharia law in Indian society. Thus in the main family and kinship matters remained firmly under religious authority, upheld by government law courts, and were little touched by reform through the making of new law, except through the decisions of judges in lawsuits. In this respect the effect of British rule was deeply conservative. On the other hand, the critique of Hinduism and Islam by Christian missionaries had a strong focus on the family and on the place of women, fastening on such issues as child marriage and the seclusion of women. This missionary critique of Hindu social

practices did not create large numbers of conversions to Christianity, but it did provoke a movement among Indians for the reform of family law that issued eventually in important changes, such as a raising of the age of marriage and the equal inheritance of sons and daughters.

It was in the political realm that the effects of European civilization were most deeply felt, because the British, without wishing to, brought before Indians the idea of popular sovereignty as a model of government. The government of India was under the sovereignty of the people of Britain, not of India, and in that sense we could say that with respect to India the government was a despotism, the opposite of the popular sovereignty ideal. Increasingly exposed to European practices and ideas in the newly created colonial institutions of higher education through the English language, Indians could not help learning that popular sovereignty as an ideal was sweeping Europe and the Americas, creating what has since become the international norm for government. Indians had known republican forms of government (*sangha*) in the ancient past, but kingship (*rajya*) had long since won out as the normative form, so that by the time of colonial rule the idea of popular sovereignty was both very old and indeed largely forgotten, and at the same time very new in India. In a sense popular sovereignty was at the heart of the liberal ideology of empire, as Indian self-governance was the endpoint of the idea of British tutelage. However, the idea that the people are the only legitimate source of government authority was certainly in contradiction to the colonial relation, and it soon inspired a movement for national self-government, the first stirrings of which were seen by the middle of the nineteenth century. This led to the nationalist struggle against British rule and, ultimately, independence.

The third main head of the effects of European civilization on India concerns higher learning, science especially, and technology. Here the timing of empire had significant consequences, because just after Britain acquired territorial rule in India it underwent the Industrial Revolution, making it the first industrial country in the world. The effects of the Industrial Revolution profoundly reshaped Britain, and they changed Britain's economic relations with India just as profoundly. Up to about 1800 Europe had paid dearly for luxury goods from India, especially fine textiles of all kinds, and a great many words for textiles came into English from that trade, such as *calico, muslin, chintz,* and *bandana.* The English were great traders of woolen cloth in Europe, but could not sell it in India, and had to acquire New World silver in the

Amsterdam markets to trade for Indian textiles. These terms of trade were largely unchanged from the times of the Roman trade with India, in which again India supplied manufactured goods in exchange for coined money. After 1800 the terms of the India trade began to change, and change drastically, as English industrialists in Manchester developed a machine-based textile industry for the manufacture of cotton cloth. This new industry made cotton cloth so cheap that it undercut handloom-made cotton cloth in India, even with the transportation costs of shipping American or Mediterranean cotton to Manchester, and Manchester cloth to India added on. Moreover, British rule ensured that cotton cloth from Manchester met no tariff barriers in India, as it would have if Indians had been ruling their own country. To be sure, the effects of industrialization were also socially disruptive in Britain, whose handloom industry was also destroyed and whose self-employed weavers lost their livelihood and were forced to become industrial factory workers at a wage. These effects have spread worldwide and could not be stopped, although they could have been slowed and made less harsh in their social effects in India if it had had national self-government. The overall result was that India became a supplier of raw materials and an importer of (now machine-made) manufactured goods, a complete reversal of the former terms of trade. The destruction of the handicraft industry of cloth production was not, however, the end of the story. Over the long run, Indian entrepreneurs, importing English machinery at first, created a machine-based textile industry in India that has since undercut the textile industry of England. Thus the long-term effect has been a spread of the new technology that, under conditions of free trade, favored India's entrepreneurial know-how and its low industrial wages.

The story of textiles is one of the major ways in which new technologies from Europe were dramatically changing India; the introduction of railways was another, which has since become completely domesticated to the Indian scene, and indispensable to the daily life of people everywhere. Indians quickly took to engineering and science and made them their own. India's former advancement in mathematics and astronomy had made a contribution to the scientific eminence that Europe achieved in the Renaissance and provided a fund of knowledge on which Indians could draw in coming to terms with the new science and technology emanating from Europe. India's ancient engagement with science had left an imprint on the Indianate world it created in Central, East, and Southeast Asia, and its engagement with phonology

and grammar now shaped Europe through the European study of Sanskrit and the discovery of Indo-European. The exchange of ideas was not an equal one, but it was not all one-sided, either.

In the end, perhaps the profoundest effects of European learning on India lie in the idea of history. European scholarly study of ancient India completely revolutionized the understanding of India's deep past, from its representation in the Mahabharata, the Ramayana and the Puranas, and connected it with the history of other countries and civilizations. The new history, and the new political ideal of the nation-state, could be combined to create a new idea of India and of its trajectory toward the future, toward independence.