

The Atlantic Revolutions, 1750–1830



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Toppling The Statue Of King George III In New York

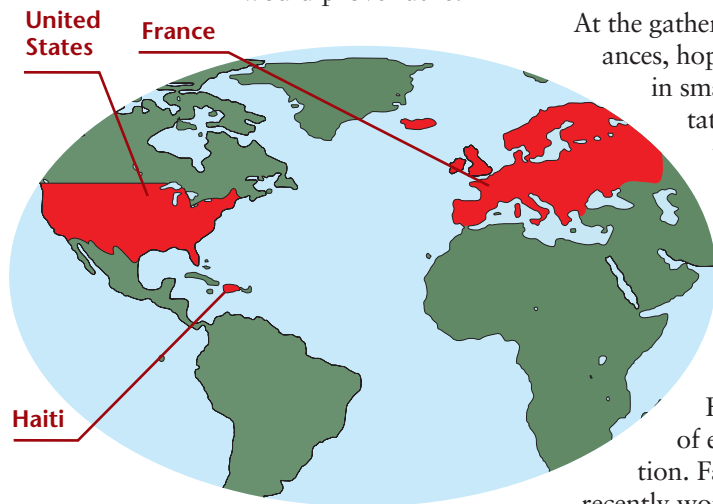
British North American colonists topple the statue of King George III in New York City shortly after the beginning of the American Revolution. Denounced in the Declaration of American Independence as a tyrant, George III's decision to use hired foreign mercenaries to suppress the rebellion earned him the hatred of many colonists (page 639).

The French winter of 1788–1789 was unusually cold, but political discussion throughout the land was heated. Members of France’s three classes—clergy, nobility, and commoners—gathered in churches, manors, shops, and taverns to elect delegates to the **Estates General**, a nationwide assembly summoned by the king for the first time in 175 years, to discuss the country’s financial crisis. France was alive with rumors: the king would ask for new taxes; the clergy and nobility would resist; the absolute monarchy would be transformed into a limited, constitutional one; or the whole exercise would prove futile.

At the gatherings, each voter was asked to state his grievances, hopes, and demands. Their comments were recorded in small notebooks that the delegates elected to the Estates General took with them to Versailles. Collectively, the notebooks convey excitement and high expectation as the people of France spoke out to determine their destiny.

Across the Atlantic, others were also determining their destiny that winter. In the French slave colony of Saint-Domingue (*SAN dō-MANG*), later known as Haiti, two competing sets of delegates were chosen for the French Estates General, setting in motion a series of events that would become the Haitian Revolution. Farther north, former British colonists, having recently won the American Revolution (1775–1783), held the first elections for their new United States government.

On both sides of the Atlantic, then, in the late eighteenth century, people were taking steps toward governing themselves. Although their situations differed substantially, the goals in each case involved greater freedom and equality, and the efforts to achieve them eventually involved violence.



Enlightenment ideas and warfare prepare the way for the Atlantic revolutions

The Background of the Atlantic Revolutions

Two very different developments laid the foundation for the Atlantic revolutions. One was the European Enlightenment, which produced a number of new ideas about government and society, including the notion that people have a right to decide their own form of government. These ideas eventually influenced societies around the world (Map 26.1). The other was Britain’s victory over France in the Seven Years War, creating conditions that helped set in motion the American, French, and Haitian revolutions.

New Ideas About Government and Society

During the European Enlightenment, prominent thinkers developed political and social ideas challenging the foundations of absolute monarchy and hereditary nobility. English philosopher John Locke, for example, argued that governments get their

FOUNDATION MAP 26.1 The North Atlantic World in 1750

By 1750, three Western European countries—Spain, France, and Britain—had claimed much of North America, often ignoring the cultures, traditions, and prior arrival of North American Amerinds. Notice that these colonial possessions had to connect with their mother countries across the North Atlantic. Those were difficult and often treacherous sea routes. How would this fact affect the chances that European powers could hold their colonial possessions over the long term?



authority, not directly from God, but from the people they rule. People have fundamental rights, he asserted, and governments have a duty to protect these rights; any regime that fails to do so can be replaced by its subjects. France's Baron Montesquieu proposed limits on absolute authority, advocating a separation of powers in which the ruler's power is checked by institutions that keep it from becoming oppressive. Swiss-born Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a passionate proponent of both liberty and equality, envisioned a society in which all members were free and equal in rights, working together for the common good.

These ideas did not cause the Atlantic revolutions, which arose from specific circumstances in America, Europe, and Haiti. But the new ideas did undermine the basic premise of absolutism, in which the ruler exercised unlimited power coming directly from God, and the premise of aristocracy, in which upper classes had rights and privileges not

Europe's Enlightenment advances ideas of freedom

shared by common people. In time the new ideas inspired and justified revolutions around the world that aimed to secure the people's rights and freedoms.

The Seven Years War

From 1689 to 1763, while Locke, Montesquieu, Rousseau, and others were advancing their ideas, Britain and France fought four major wars. Waged in Europe, North America, and the North Atlantic, involving colonial territories and Atlantic commerce, these were North Atlantic wars, not just European struggles.

The first three wars produced only minor territorial changes, but the fourth was decisive. Known in Europe as the Seven Years War (1756–1763), it was an effort by France, Austria, and Russia to combat the expansive ambitions of Britain and its ally, Prussia. In America, where growing British colonies sought to expand into regions claimed by France and inhabited by Amerinds (American Indians), British colonists called it the French and Indian War. Since fighting also occurred in India (Chapter 22), this multifaceted conflict was actually a global war.

The North American phase of this war at first went badly for Britain. In 1754, in an effort to block the westward expansion of Britain's colonies into the Ohio River valley, the French built a stronghold called Fort Duquesne (*doo-KĀN*) in what is now western Pennsylvania. The British sought to drive out the French, but in 1755 British forces were ambushed and slaughtered by the French and their various Amerind allies. In the next few years the French won further victories in Europe and America.

Responding to this in 1756, Britain's King George II appointed William Pitt, a brash but brilliant politician, to serve as prime minister. By sending able soldiers to America while relying on Prussia to tie down the French in Europe, and by setting up a naval blockade to stop French ports from shipping supplies and soldiers to America, Pitt soon placed Britain in a more favorable position. In 1759 the British captured both Quebec, the capital of New France, and Fort Duquesne, which they renamed Fort Pitt (later Pittsburgh) in honor of the architect of victory. When the conflict ended in 1763, France was forced to surrender almost all of its American empire, keeping only a few small islands and the Caribbean colony of Saint-Domingue. Britain's triumph was complete, and French humiliation was immense (Map 26.2).

The American Revolution

Britain's sweeping victory in the Seven Years War transformed the situation on both sides of the Atlantic. It altered Europe's **balance of power**, a situation in which no one nation would be strong enough to impose its will on the others. France, sensing that this balance of power had been changed in Britain's favor, was resentful and eager for revenge. The war ended the French threat to Britain's colonies, reducing their need for British military protection and thereby decreasing the colonists' dependence on their mother country. At the same time, it greatly increased Britain's state debt, leading its officials to seek ways to make colonists pay a share of the financial burden. And it brought France's former colonies under British rule, potentially putting them and their Amerind inhabitants at the mercy of British colonists eager for new landholdings.

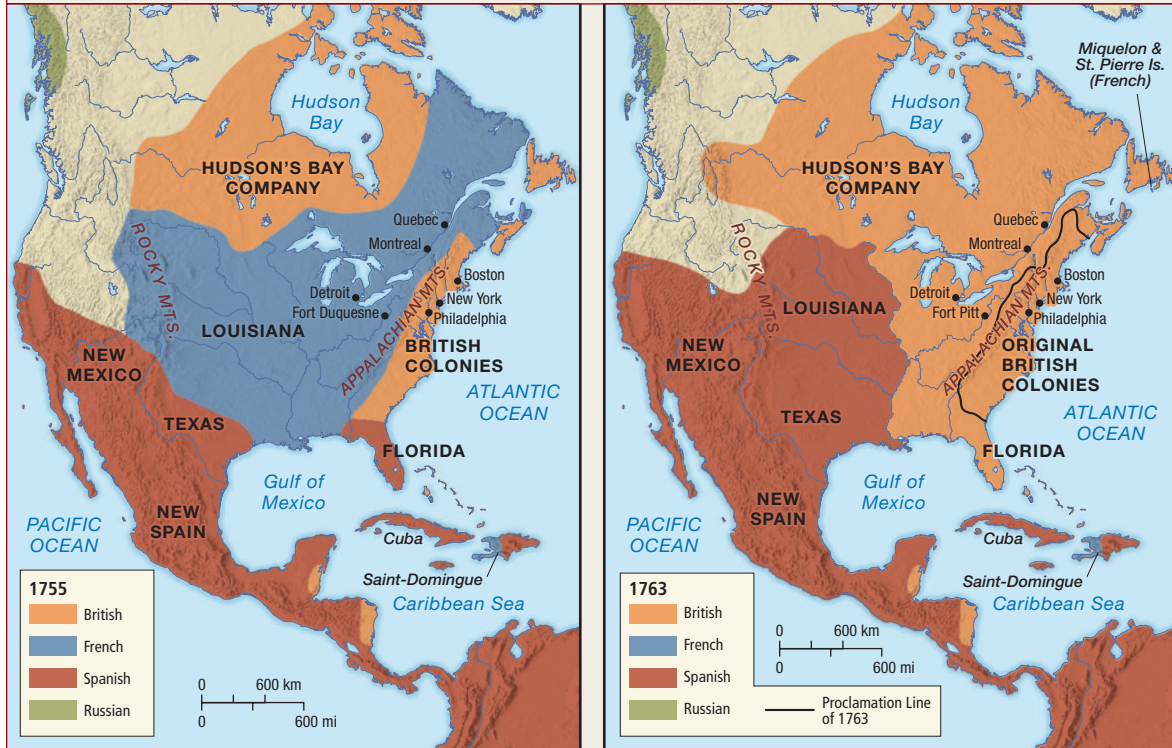
Seven Years War becomes a global conflict



A powder horn of the type used during the French and Indian War.

Map 26.2 Territorial Changes in North America Resulting from Seven Years War, 1756–1763

In losing the Seven Years War, France lost most of its North American empire, keeping only a few small islands and the Caribbean slave colony of Saint-Domingue. Britain took over French Canada and French claims east of the Mississippi River, while Spain took French claims to the west of that waterway. Note that to prevent clashes between its colonists and Amerinds, Britain issued a 1763 proclamation prohibiting its colonists from moving west of the Appalachian Mountains. How did British colonists react to this Proclamation of 1763?



Tensions Between Britain and Its Colonists

Up to this point, tensions between Britain and its colonists had been few. Under British protection, with low taxes and ways of getting around British trade restrictions, the colonies had grown and prospered. The northern ones were dotted with thriving farms and cities, while the South was covered with prosperous plantations, worked by more than half a million African slaves. The colonists had elected their own assemblies (modeled in part on Britain's parliament) and had grown accustomed to running their own affairs.

In 1763, however, relations began to deteriorate, due to a conflict called Pontiac's Rebellion and Britain's subsequent efforts to halt colonial expansion. In the Midwest a group of Amerind nations, trading partners with the French for decades, rebelled at the prospect of living under British rule. Chief Pontiac, head of the Ottawa nation, led a five-month siege against the British at Detroit, while other Amerinds attacked and destroyed

Amerinds rebel at the prospect of British rule

Britain's various frontier outposts. The British responded with deception and atrocity. During what were supposed to be peace talks at Fort Pitt, they gave the Amerind negotiators a “gift” of blankets infested with smallpox. This instance of biological warfare produced an epidemic that, combined with the force of British arms, put an end to the uprising.

Meanwhile, to prevent future clashes between colonists and Amerinds, in 1763 the British issued a proclamation closing the frontier and forbidding colonial settlements west of the Appalachian Mountains. This edict angered many colonists, who had dreams of developing the newly acquired lands in that region for themselves.

Equally disturbing to the colonists were Britain's attempts to raise revenue. The Seven Years War had doubled Britain's debt and left its people burdened by heavy taxation. Recognizing that colonists paid few taxes even though they relied on British troops for protection, in 1765 Parliament passed a Stamp Act, taxing colonial documents and newspapers by requiring that they be stamped with a royal seal. Since this tax was not approved by their colonial assemblies, many colonists perceived it as “taxation without representation”—a denial of their rights as English subjects to be consulted in such matters. Nine of the 13 colonies sent delegates to a Stamp Act Congress that declared the tax illegal. The Congress declared a boycott of British goods, hoping to force repeal of the tax. Ominously for Britain, the colonies for the first time were uniting in a common cause.

In response to the protest, the British government did repeal the stamp tax but insisted on Parliament's right to tax the colonies. In 1767 Parliament passed the Townshend Acts, which increased customs duties on colonial imports of glass, lead, paper, paint, and tea. But the colonists, having won the struggle over the stamp tax, imposed another boycott, and in 1770 London removed all these taxes except the one on tea. By this time, however, feelings on both sides had hardened.

Clashes in the Colonies

In 1773, aiming to improve the declining fortunes of the British East India Company, Parliament gave it a monopoly on tea sales to the colonies, allowing it to sell tea directly off its ships to consumers in ports such as Boston. Since this practice would lower the cost of tea to the colonists, company officers and British officials expected little resistance. But the colonists saw the plan as a scheme to conceal the tea tax while undercutting colonial merchants, who could no longer compete with the company's inexpensive tea. When company ships docked in Boston, colonists disguised as Mohawk Indians climbed aboard on a December evening and dumped the tea into the harbor.

The British reacted to this colonial protest, known as the **Boston Tea Party**, by enacting in 1774 the Coercive Acts, called by the colonists Intolerable Acts, closing the port of Boston, and turning elected Massachusetts officials into royal appointees. These measures further angered and united the colonists. In 1774 a Continental Congress, with delegates from 12 colonies, met in Philadelphia. It declared the acts illegal and called on Massachusetts to form a rival government. The British government then declared Massachusetts to be in a state of rebellion. In April 1775, British troops sent to confiscate weapons clashed with colonial militia at Lexington and Concord near Boston.

Even after this fighting, many colonists still hoped to avoid a break with the mother country. They simply wanted respect for their rights and for Britain to once again leave the colonies alone. But a Second Continental Congress, convening the next month, created a

British attempts to raise taxes anger colonists



Funeral procession for the Stamp Act following its repeal.

Colonists rebel against Parliament's tea taxation scheme

continental army, and King George III (1760–1820) decided to crush the rebels by sending in German hired troops (see page 633).

Finally, in July 1776, the Congress issued a Declaration of Independence in the name of all 13 colonies, linking them together as the “United States of America” and transforming the colonial conflict into a revolution. Drafted by Virginia’s Thomas Jefferson and reflecting the concepts of John Locke, the Declaration eloquently proclaimed the revolutionary ideals of individual rights and government by the people:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness—That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed, that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these Ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it. . . .

The Declaration gave the colonists an inspiring cause to fight for. In time, it changed the way people around the world viewed governance. The American Revolution had begun.

The Revolutionary War

The colonists, of course, needed more than words to fight Great Britain, one of the world’s foremost powers. With their separate assemblies and barely trained militias, the colonies lacked coherence and experience. Britain, on the other hand, had vast resources, a well-trained army, and a splendid navy that ruled the seas. Britain also had support from numerous **Loyalists**, colonists who opposed the revolt against their mother country, and **Amerinds**, who feared that a colonist victory would reopen the frontiers, bringing masses of settlers into Amerind country.

The colonists also had advantages, however. First, they were fighting on familiar terrain and had learned from the Amerinds to harass British positions while avoiding open-field battles, at which the British excelled. Second, the war was unpopular in Britain, whose people were weary of high taxes and prolonged conflicts. Third, British troops were fighting far from home with no real war aim except to crush the colonists. And finally the French, humiliated by defeat in the Seven Years War, decided to take revenge and restore the balance of power by assisting the rebels.

In the early fighting, British forces took the initiative, seizing New York City in 1776. The plan was for them then to move north to Albany, where they would link up with another British army moving south from Canada. This maneuver would have cut the New England colonies off from the rest, dividing the rebels. The British commander in New York, however, instead moved south to attack Philadelphia, the rebels’ capital city. Unsupported, the British army coming from Canada was soundly defeated in fall 1777 by colonial forces at Saratoga, north of Albany (Map 26.3).

The Battle of Saratoga changed the war’s momentum. Now convinced that the colonists could win, France joined the war on their side in 1778. On land the colonial commander, General George Washington, proved very capable, while at sea Captain John Paul Jones and the small United States Navy did surprisingly well. In 1781, after several years of stalemate, Washington forced the surrender of a British army at Yorktown, Virginia, with the help of



The Boston Tea Party.

The British are supported by Loyalists and Amerinds

British lose the early initiative with defeat at Saratoga

French soldiers and navy help the colonists defeat the British

Map 26.3 United States of America in 1783

In 1783, having lost the American Revolution, Britain ceded to its former colonies all of its claims south of Canada and east of the Mississippi River, thereby forsaking its Amerind allies by consigning their lands to the expansive new United States of America. Many British Loyalists fled to Canada (British North America), where they became rivals of the descendants of the earlier French settlers. Observe that while the Ohio country (present-day Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota) remained unstructured, states like Virginia, North Carolina, and Georgia claimed land as far west as the Mississippi River. What issues would need to be resolved before additional states could be added to the United States of America?



French forces. Extended negotiations followed, and the Treaty of Paris formally ended the conflict in 1783.

The Consequences of the American Revolution

The obvious winners of the revolution were the colonists, who gained independence and all lands east of the Mississippi River, south of British Canada, and north of Spanish Florida (Map 26.3). These were exciting times for the former colonies, now connected as autonomous states under Articles of Confederation drawn up during the war. But the new confederation, although called the United States, soon found it lacked the unity needed to deal with collective problems.

To remedy this situation, a convention at Philadelphia in 1787 drafted the Constitution of the United States, a document based on Enlightenment principles and Montesquieu's notion of separation of powers. It created a federal republic in which the states and national government shared power. The national, or federal, government had an elected executive called the president, a two-house legislature called Congress, and an independent judiciary headed by a Supreme Court. In 1789, after ratification by the states, the new constitution went into effect. War hero Washington was elected the first president.

The apparent losers were the British, whose humbling defeat cost them their most prosperous North American colonies. But Britain's loss was not as devastating as it appeared. In the wake of the war, some 60 thousand Loyalists relocated from United States territory to Canada, counterbalancing that colony's French Catholics with English-speaking Protestants, thus consolidating Britain's hold on its newest and largest possession. And British trade with America actually increased, as commercial and cultural ties continued to link the mother country with its former colonies. Indeed, slave-grown raw cotton from the United States provided an important raw material for the industrial revolution in Britain, adding immensely to that country's wealth and power (Chapter 27).

Far more severe were the losses of North American Amerinds, whose hopes of preventing white settlers from moving west of the Appalachians were crushed when the British signed the peace treaty giving these lands to the new American nation. The victors ruthlessly punished those Amerinds, including many who had fought on the British side: their villages and farms were deliberately destroyed and their people scattered. But even Amerinds who did not fight the colonists were similarly treated. As more and more white settlers, now calling themselves Americans, expanded across the continent, the original Americans were largely dispossessed. Drastically diminished by diseases, and driven from their ancestral homelands, the Amerinds who survived were eventually forced to live on reservations—marginal lands set aside for them by the United States government. There some strove to retain a hint of their heritage, with mixed results.

The most surprising losers were the rulers of France, which fought on the winning side. Aside from the satisfaction of helping to beat Britain, the French government gained little from the war but debt, already enormous as a result of the earlier Atlantic wars. Essentially, France was bankrupt. Within a few years, its efforts to address this financial crisis by taxing its nobles set off another revolution. This struggle, monumental in its impact, justified the destruction of the monarchy in France with some of the same ideals that had inspired the American Revolution.



Surrender of British forces at Yorktown.

Amerinds are displaced and dispossessed by the new United States

Debts from war in America deepen France's financial crisis

The French Revolution

France, indeed, was beset by serious problems. Its monarchy was wasting away under King Louis XVI, a well-meaning but barely competent ruler who would rather repair clocks than handle state affairs. Its treasury had been bankrupted by costly foreign wars, including the American Revolution. Its ability to raise revenues to pay down its debts was hampered by a tax system that exempted the wealthiest two classes—the clergy, or First Estate, and the nobility, or Second Estate—who together controlled more than half of the country’s landed wealth. The burden of taxation thus fell on the peasants and bourgeoisie, who made up the Third Estate and who resented the privileged position of the other two classes.

France, however, was a wealthy country, whose flourishing farmlands and thriving businesses made it the envy of Europe. France had the resources to resolve its fiscal crisis, if only the tax system could be changed.

The Estates General and the Onset of Revolution

As described at the start of this chapter, in 1788 Louis XVI, faced with impending French bankruptcy, summoned the Estates General, an assembly of delegates from all three estates, to meet the following spring. Since the Estates General could restrict the king’s power, no king had convened it since 1614; but since it alone could change the tax system, Louis had little choice. He wanted the nobles to give up their tax exemptions and they were inclined to do so, but only in return for a greater role in governance. The Third Estate’s leaders likewise wanted more authority, but they sought a written constitution that would guarantee the political participation of all the people.

In May 1789, amid great excitement, the Estates General assembled at Versailles, in the grandiose seventeenth-century palace built by King Louis XIV. But the Third Estate, constituting 98 percent of the population, had only half the delegates. Moreover, since the king and first two estates insisted the estates must meet separately, as in the past, with each estate having one collective vote, the Third Estate could easily be outvoted 2 to 1 by the clergy and nobility. When the Third Estate delegates protested this traditional system and refused to meet separately, they took the first step toward revolution.

Faced with this bold opposition, Louis XVI wavered. On June 17, sensing his weakness, the Third Estate declared itself the National Assembly of France and invited the other two Estates to join. Only a few clergy from the First Estate actually did so, but the Assembly nonetheless claimed to speak for the entire French people. Three days later, barred from their meeting hall by order of the king, the Assembly delegates crossed the street to an indoor tennis court and there swore the **Tennis Court Oath**, vowing not to go home until France had a written constitution.

On June 27, after many more clergy and even some nobles joined the National Assembly, Louis appeared to give in, ordering all three estates to meet together as one. But his order was only a delaying tactic. During the next two weeks he summoned loyal soldiers from outlying areas to Versailles to disperse the Assembly. By July 10 they began to arrive.

In Paris, only seven miles from Versailles, news of the troops’ arrival touched off riots. To protect the Assembly and themselves, mobs of citizens sacked arsenals and stole firearms. On July 14, about 25 thousand of them surrounded a prison called the **Bastille**,

Louis XVI summons Estates General to deal with fiscal crisis



A commoner awakens on a pile of weapons, frightening a clergyman and an aristocrat.

In Paris, a mob attacks the Bastille

a large medieval fortress where guns were supposedly stored. When the prison commandant panicked and lowered the drawbridge, the crowd surged into the courtyard, sending the guards fleeing and killing the commandant. The rioters then started tearing down the prison stone by stone.

When word of the Bastille's fall reached Versailles, the king panicked. Assuming that a mob big enough and well-armed enough to seize such a fortress could easily overwhelm his troops, he came to Paris on July 17 and endorsed what was now called the French Revolution: the end of absolutism and its replacement by a government in which power would be shared between the king and the National Assembly. On August 4, in a frenzy sparked by news of peasant uprisings against noble landowners throughout rural France, the Assembly formally abolished all class privileges. On August 26 it issued a Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, proclaiming that "Men are born and remain free and equal in rights." Nothing, however, was said about rights for women (see "Excerpts from Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen").

In September, considering these developments far too radical, the king once again ordered troops to Versailles. Paris reacted violently. On the cold, rainy morning of October 5, six thousand women, unable to buy bread because of supply shortages, marched the seven miles to Versailles to confront the king. The **March of the Women** threatened physical harm to the royal family, forcing the king to move with his family to the Tuileries (*TWĒ-luh-rēz*) Palace in Paris, where he was kept under house arrest to stop him from trying to reverse the revolution. Many nobles, aghast at such spectacles and angered at their loss of status, fled the country and plotted against the revolution from abroad.

The National Assembly issues a Declaration of Rights

Women march to Versailles and force the king to go to Paris

The Constitutional Monarchy and Its Demise

Meanwhile, with mixed success, the National Assembly confronted major challenges, including France's financial crisis, the opposition of many Catholic clergy, and the resistance of a treacherous king.

The Assembly turned first to France's immense debt. Since land was the main source of wealth in France, the Assembly promptly confiscated the property of nobles who had fled the country and all the land used by the Catholic Church for nonreligious purposes. The aim was to auction these lands and use the proceeds to pay France's debts while also creating a class of small landowners who would have a stake in supporting the new government. But selling so much land would take years, so in the meantime the assembly issued bonds called *assignats* (*ah-SĒN-yaht*), which could be used as money and redeemed after the lands were sold. Unfortunately, however, by increasing the amount of money in circulation, the issuing of the *assignats* resulted in runaway **inflation**, a situation in which money declines in value and prices of goods and services rise. This weakened the French economy further and caused suffering in the general population, especially among poor people.

Having taken the Church's income-producing property, the Assembly then made the clergy civil servants with salaries paid by the government. This action ensured their financial well-being but also required them, like other civil servants, to swear an oath of allegiance to the state. Some clergy took the oath, but many refused to swear support for a revolutionary government. Thus the Church split into friends and enemies of the revolution.



An assignat.

The Assembly subordinates clergy to the state, alienating many in the Church

Document 26.1 Excerpts: Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen

After the fall of the Bastille (July 14, 1789) and the revocation of the privileges of the nobility (August 4, 1789), the National Assembly drafted, approved, and published a declaration of rights, inspired to some extent by the English Declaration of Rights of 1689 (Chapter 24) and designed to safeguard the liberties of the French people against arbitrary actions by the executive power. Excerpts from this declaration follow.

APPROVED BY THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF FRANCE, AUGUST 26, 1789 The representatives of the French people, organized as a National Assembly, believing that the ignorance, neglect, or contempt of the rights of man are the sole cause of public calamities and of the corruption of governments, have determined to set forth in a solemn declaration the natural, unalienable, and sacred rights of man, in order that this declaration, being constantly before all the members of the Social body, shall remind them continually of their rights and duties; in order that the acts of the legislative power, as well as those of the executive power, may be compared at any moment with the objects and purposes of all political institutions and may thus be more respected, and, lastly, in order that the grievances of the citizens, based hereafter upon simple and incontestable principles, shall tend to the maintenance of the constitution and redound to the happiness of all. Therefore the National Assembly recognizes and proclaims, in the presence and under the auspices of the Supreme Being, the following rights of man and of the citizen:

Articles:

1. Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. Social distinctions may be founded only upon the general good.
2. The aim of all political association is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man. These rights are liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression.
3. The principle of all sovereignty resides essentially in the nation. No body nor individual may exercise any authority which does not proceed directly from the nation.
4. Liberty consists in the freedom to do everything which injures no one else; hence the exercise of the natural rights of each man has no limits except those which assure to the other members of the society the enjoyment of the same rights. These limits can only be determined by law.
5. Law can only prohibit such actions as are hurtful to society. Nothing may be prevented which is not forbidden by law, and no one may be forced to do anything not provided for by law . . .
7. No person shall be accused, arrested, or imprisoned except in the cases and according to the forms prescribed by law. Any one soliciting, transmitting, executing, or causing to be executed, any arbitrary order, shall be punished. But any citizen summoned or arrested in virtue of the law shall submit without delay, as resistance constitutes an offense . . .
9. As all persons are held innocent until they shall have been declared guilty, if arrest shall be deemed indispensable, all harshness not essential to the securing of the prisoner's person shall be severely repressed by law.
10. No one shall be disquieted on account of his opinions, including his religious views, provided their manifestation does not disturb the public order established by law.
11. The free communication of ideas and opinions is one of the most precious of the rights of man. Every citizen may, accordingly, speak, write, and print with freedom, but shall be responsible for such abuses of this freedom as shall be defined by law.
12. The security of the rights of man and of the citizen requires public military forces. These forces are, therefore, established for the good of all and not for the personal advantage of those to whom they shall be entrusted . . .
17. Since property is an inviolable and sacred right, no one shall be deprived thereof except where public necessity, legally determined, shall clearly demand it, and then only on condition that the owner shall have been previously and equitably indemnified.

SOURCE: *Declaration of the Rights of Man—1789 (The Avalon Project at Yale Law School, 1996–2007)* <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/rightsof.htm>

In 1791, having created serious inflation and divided the Church, the Assembly issued France's first written constitution. It gave the king an absolute veto and the authority to appoint ministers and conduct diplomacy, but it also forced him to share power with an elected Legislative Assembly. A strong, clever king could have dominated such a government, but Louis XVI was neither strong nor clever. Rather than accept the constitution, he decided to escape to the lands of the Holy Roman Emperor, Leopold II, brother of Louis's queen, Marie Antoinette. There Louis hoped not only to find sanctuary but also to convince Leopold to invade France and restore its absolute monarchy.

In June 1791, the king, queen, and their two children fled Paris under cover of darkness and headed for the border. However, since Louis was identifiable from his images on French money, and since he insisted on stopping at a place where he could sleep on a comfortable feather bed, he was recognized and arrested about twenty miles from the border. The royal family was returned to Paris.

The flight of the king was disastrous for the Constitution of 1791. Louis and his ministers tried to pretend it was all a misunderstanding, but no one believed them. Clearly France was a constitutional monarchy ruled by a king who opposed the constitution. Then, fearing that other monarchs might invade France to stop the spread of revolution before it reached their countries, the Legislative Assembly in the spring of 1792 called for war against Austria and Prussia. Louis gladly approved, hoping for a French defeat that would restore him to absolute power.

Beset by inexperienced leadership, since many of its former officers were nobles who had fled the country, France's army at first fought poorly. In August 1792, interpreting French defeats as a sign that Louis was conspiring with the enemy, radical workers in Paris stormed the Tuileries Palace, almost killing the king and his family. Louis survived, but a search of his apartments revealed that he had indeed been collaborating with France's foes. The discovery dealt a deathblow to the constitutional monarchy.

War with Austria sparks a new uprising

The National Convention and the Reign of Terror

The Assembly now summoned a National Convention to meet in September to draft a new constitution. Formally abolishing the monarchy, the Convention moved to put Louis on trial for treason. At the same time, French armies finally halted the Austrians and Prussians well inside France's borders, giving the Convention time to try the king.

Louis XVI's trial reflected the new governance concepts embodied in the Enlightenment and American Revolution. Under the old concepts, the people served the king, who was thus considered incapable of treason because that crime was defined as "an act against the king." Under the new concepts, however, the government served the people, whom Louis had betrayed by conspiring with France's enemies. The only real suspense, then, involved the method of punishment. By a vote of 361 to 360, the Convention condemned Louis to death. On January 21, 1793, Louis was executed by **guillotine**, a scaffold devised to release a heavy blade that instantly beheaded its victims. His queen, Marie Antoinette, was guillotined later that year.

Having thus renounced one-person rule, the Convention formed committees to run the government. Most notable was the **Committee of Public Safety**, a group of officials given broad powers to protect France from enemies foreign and domestic. Initially led by

A new National Convention abolishes the French monarchy



Execution of Louis XVI.

The Committee of Public Safety issues a mass call-up to service

moderates, who failed to deal forcefully with these foes, by July 1793 it was under the control of an outspoken radical named Maximilien Robespierre (1758–1794).

To deal with foreign foes, the Committee enacted a *levée en masse* (*luh-VĀ awn MAHSS*), calling the whole country into service: “The young men shall go to battle; the married men shall forge arms and transport provisions; the women shall make tents and clothing and serve in the hospitals.” This mass call-up created a new type of army: untrained and inexperienced, but huge and enthusiastic, it dwarfed the small, professional armies of France’s enemies. The *levée* also drafted many talented men who would not otherwise have enlisted, providing effective officers to replace the nobles who had fled. By 1794, the new army had driven the forces of Austria and Prussia out of France.

To deal with internal foes, Robespierre and his Committee established revolutionary tribunals to try anyone suspected of being an enemy of the Revolution. Before long these tribunals were conducting a **Reign of Terror**, condemning suspects by the thousands to the guillotine, crassly called the “national razor.” By mid-1794 hundreds of thousands of people had been executed, including some of the country’s most notable politicians. No one in France seemed safe.

The Thermidorian Reaction terminates the Reign of Terror

By this time, however, with the Austrians and Prussians in retreat, and with most counterrevolutionaries either executed or in exile, the terror had outlived its usefulness. In July, known as Thermidor (the month of heat) on a new calendar created by the revolutionary regime, Robespierre was denounced by the Convention and sent to the guillotine himself. A “Thermidorian Reaction” followed, with conservative elements hunting down and killing his supporters. The Revolution’s most radical phase was over.

The Role of the Lower Classes

Along with these political upheavals, the French Revolution also involved social rebellion: a struggle by the common people to transform French society, historically structured unequally. To achieve “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity,” the rallying cry of the French Revolution, the lower classes fought to destroy noble power and privilege, a struggle that proved difficult, traumatic, and bloody.

In seizing the Bastille in July 1789, the lower classes demonstrated that a determined mob could overcome the power of the king. The next month, peasants rose in revolt across rural France, burning the records of noble class privilege and sometimes the nobles’ manors. Meanwhile middle-class townspeople, also determined to destroy class privilege, seized control of provincial city governments. In October, the Women’s March to Versailles showed that even poor urban women could force change by taking revolutionary action.

The working class sans-culottes assert their power

Revolutionary leaders, seeing the danger of defying the masses, hastened to show solidarity with the *sans-culottes* (*SAHN coo-LAHT*), the urban working poor, “without culottes,” who wore ordinary trousers instead of the culottes (knee-breeches) worn by nobles. In 1792, as foreign armies neared Paris, the *sans-culottes* arose to arrest the king and install a more radical government. By 1793, as inflation ravaged France and food grew scarce under wartime conditions, these destitute men and women blamed their situation on conspirators and traitors. The *sans-culottes* cried out for vengeance, and the Committee of Public Safety, itself determined to destroy France’s internal enemies, obliged the lower classes with the Reign of Terror.

But the lower classes were not unanimous in demanding radical change. Louis XVI's execution provoked a massive peasant uprising in western France, where Catholic farmers were appalled at the murder of a ruler they regarded as anointed by God. Many of the Reign of Terror's worst atrocities, including the mass butchery of captured peasant rebels, were committed in response by revolutionary soldiers, told by their leaders that the rebellious peasants were subversives and foreign agents.

The Directory and the Rise of Napoleon

The Thermidorian Reaction following Robespierre's fall ended the Reign of Terror, but not the financial crisis. After rampant inflation sparked a working-class uprising in Paris in May 1795, the National Convention dispersed, and a new two-house legislature chose a five-man Directory to run the country.

Hampered by weakness and corruption, the Directory sought to unite France against its foreign foes. These now included Britain and Spain, which had joined Austria and Prussia against France. The new coalition posed a grave threat to the new French army, which had great size and enthusiasm but lacked outstanding leaders.

Then the Directory found Napoleon Bonaparte, who proved to be the leader France needed. Born in 1769 on the Italian island of Corsica, which had come under French control in 1763, he had been sent as a young man to military school in France. He learned to write French superbly but always spoke it with a thick Italian accent. A loner and outsider, a man who relied on immense brainpower rather than noble ancestry, he was commissioned an artillery officer in 1788. The wars against Austria and Prussia that began in 1792 provided ample opportunity for promotion based on talent, and few soldiers ever have been as talented as Napoleon. By late 1793 he was a 24-year-old general, and a rising star.

Desperate for able generals, the Directory appointed him in 1796 to lead an invasion of northern Italy (Map 26.4), which was then dominated by Austria. Surprising the Austrians by crossing the Alps mountains in early spring, Napoleon defeated them in 1796–1797 and seized northern Italy from Austrian control. Then he created three northern Italian republics under French puppet regimes, exceeding his authority and alarming the Directory. Napoleon was an obviously exceptional soldier, but he was also a politically clever and ambitious man. That combination of qualities made him dangerous.

Yet the Directory continued to find Napoleon useful. In September 1797, when French royalists, after winning recent elections, conspired with British agents to overthrow the French republic, the Directory called on General Bonaparte. He sent a subordinate to occupy Paris and overturn the election results, an action that gave the military a central role in French politics. When French leaders considered military action against Britain, once again they turned to Napoleon.

Sent north to examine the possibility of invading Britain across the English Channel, Napoleon decided that France lacked the naval power to do so. If the British fleet caught a French armada at sea, France could lose both army and navy in a single battle. Instead he proposed invading Egypt as the first step toward an eventual French invasion of British India. The Directory gladly agreed: if Napoleon succeeded, it could take the credit; if he failed and was killed, it would be rid of a formidable rival.

Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798 was a tactical triumph. He defeated Egyptian armies in the Battle of the Pyramids near Cairo, and then marched his victorious forces



Clothing of a *sans-culotte*.

The new Directory tries to unite France in war

Napoleon conquers and dominates northern Italy



Napoleon.

Bonaparte conquers Egypt while the British defeat the French navy

Map 26.4 Napoleon's Campaigns in Italy and Egypt, 1796–1799

In seizing northern Italy from the Austrians in 1796–1797, Napoleon Bonaparte proved himself France's ablest general. By conquering Egypt the next year he enhanced his reputation, despite the fact that his forces were trapped there when the British destroyed his fleet at Aboukir Bay. Notice Napoleon's willingness to travel more than a thousand miles to attack the British in Egypt, rather than traveling twenty miles to cross the English Channel and attack them in Britain itself. What accounts for this behavior?



throughout the region (Map 26.4). He also advanced the science of Egyptology: archeologists accompanying him discovered what came to be known as the Rosetta Stone (Chapter 2), a slab inscribed in ancient times with Greek and Egyptian writing that enabled linguists to decipher Egyptian hieroglyphics. But the campaign against Britain was

a strategic disaster. In the Battle of the Nile (1798), British Admiral Horatio Nelson destroyed the French fleet at Aboukir (*ab-oo-KEER*) Bay near Alexandria, stranding Napoleon's army. With escape impossible, the next year Napoleon abandoned his troops, riding horseback across North Africa and eventually sailing for France.

The Consulate: Consolidation of the Revolution

Arriving in France at the same time as news of his first victories in Egypt, Napoleon received a hero's welcome. While the Directory was furious that he deserted his troops, it was about to lose its authority. Conspirators seeking a stronger government turned to Napoleon, and in a comic-opera coup, in which Napoleon was knocked unconscious, his brother rallied the troops to overthrow the Directory. It was replaced with a three-person executive body called the Consulate, which Napoleon would dominate as First Consul. The plotters hoped the new regime could restore order, preserve the revolution's reforms, and defeat France's enemies.

Napoleon did not disappoint them. Abroad, he defeated the anti-French coalition, forcing England to make peace in 1802. At home, he eased the financial crisis by creating the Bank of France, a private corporation empowered to issue currency and regulate the amount of money in circulation. *Assignats* were abolished and inflation controlled. He affirmed the revolutionary land settlement, letting peasants keep lands acquired from nobles who had fled France, thereby winning the devoted support of the rural masses. His codification of French Laws, known as the **Napoleonic Code**, ensured the integrity of private property while guaranteeing all male citizens equality before the law.

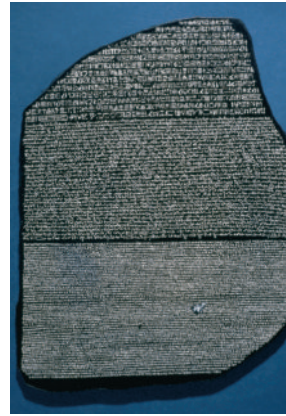
To implement these changes, Napoleon established a central bureaucracy, staffed by well-paid officials who depended on him for their positions and promotions. He also created a new nobility based on merit instead of heredity, granting titles as rewards for service, and opening careers to the most talented people.

Napoleon also healed the split in the French Catholic Church. Personally indifferent to religion, he nonetheless saw the Church as a social cement that could bind the nation together. In 1801 he and the pope signed a *Concordat*, a treaty granting French Catholics freedom of worship. In return, the Vatican recognized the French clergy's status as civil servants. The Church was thereby enlisted in service to the state.

Increasingly, however, Napoleon subverted the revolution's democratic spirit. He never stood for election, instead asking voters to approve his actions in votes held after the fact, and he largely disregarded France's elected assemblies. Disdaining free speech and a free press, he used censorship, propaganda, and police spies to ensure support for his regime, arresting numerous real and imagined foes. The Consulate, which lasted from 1799 to 1804, thus marked both the consolidation and the end of the revolution. Napoleon fulfilled many of its fondest hopes, but also converted its hard-won democracy into a military dictatorship.

The Revolution and the Rights of Women

Napoleon's disdain for democratic ideals was likewise reflected in his attitude toward the rights of women. In this attitude, however, he was no different from the revolutionary governments preceding him.



The Rosetta Stone.

Napoleon's Concordat enlists the Catholic Church in the service of the state

Women gain little despite their key role in the revolution

Almost from the beginning, women had played a crucial role in the French Revolution, joining the crowds that propelled it forward, and radicalizing it by marching to Versailles in October 1789. Still, the various revolutionary regimes, controlled by middle-class men, did little to advance women's status. Some early reforms increased their rights to inherit property and obtain a divorce, but no actions were taken to permit women to hold government office or to vote in national elections. Liberty and equality, as enshrined in the ideals and actions of the French Revolution, were thus reserved mainly for men.

Attempting to call attention to this disparity, Olympe de Gouges (*aw-LAMP duh GOOZH*), a talented writer of political pamphlets, wrote a Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen in 1791. Amplifying the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, de Gouges's document advocated equal rights for people of both sexes. "Woman is born free and lives equal to man in her rights," she declared; "male and female citizens, being equal in the eyes of the law, must be equally admitted to all honors, positions, and public employment according to their capacity and without other distinctions besides those of their virtues and talents" (see Excerpts from Declaration of the Rights of Women and the Female Citizen).

De Gouges is guillotined for her loyalty to the king

Although Olympe de Gouges's arguments were democratic, her political sympathies were monarchist. Daughter of a butcher, neither her success as a self-made actress and journalist nor her impassioned feminism diminished her loyalty to the king. Her disturbing blend of monarchism and feminism made her suspect in the eyes of male revolutionary leaders. In 1793, after strongly criticizing Robespierre and his Committee of Public Safety, she was guillotined for treason.

The Directory and the Napoleonic Code sustain women's subjugation

The governments that followed the Committee of Public Safety proved even less flexible toward women. The Directory, focused mainly on restoring stability and defeating France's enemies, was neither interested in nor capable of radical reforms. Then Napoleon rolled back women's rights to their prerevolutionary status. The Napoleonic Code actually increased the subjugation of women, depriving them of the right to own property, execute written agreements, and maintain bank accounts—restrictions that endured in France until 1947.

American and French revolutionary ideals inspire opposition to slavery

The Haitian Revolution

Women in France were not the only French subjects lacking freedom and rights. Much worse was the condition of the African slaves who worked the plantations in France's Saint-Domingue colony.

The ideals of liberty and equality that were enshrined in the American and French revolutionary declarations implicitly challenged the age-old institution of slavery. In a hierarchical society, with rights and privileges determined by hereditary status, slavery could be accepted. But in a system based on freedom and equal rights, slavery contradicted core values. Thus, as ideals of liberty and equality spread around the world, so would a movement to end slavery. It began in the 1790s in Saint-Domingue, where slaves, inspired by the revolutions in America and France, decided to liberate themselves.

Document 26.2 Excerpts: Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen

Following the publication of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen*, Olympe de Gouges, a skillful author of political pamphlets and a well-known figure in Parisian social circles, took exception to that document's implication that human rights were reserved for men alone. Her refutation of that position remains one of the most eloquent assertions of female rights ever written.

THE RIGHTS OF WOMAN Man, are you capable of being just? It is a woman who poses the question; you will not deprive her of that right at least. Tell me, what gives you sovereign empire to oppress my sex? Your strength? Your talents? Observe the Creator in his wisdom; survey in all her grandeur that nature with whom you seem to want to be in harmony, and give me, if you dare, an example of this tyrannical empire . . .

Man alone has raised his exceptional circumstances to a principle. Bizarre, blind, bloated with science and degenerated—in a century of enlightenment and wisdom—into the crassest ignorance, he wants to command as a despot a sex which is in full possession of its intellectual faculties; he pretends to enjoy the Revolution and to claim his rights to equality in order to say nothing more about it.

DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF WOMAN AND THE FEMALE CITIZEN For the National Assembly to decree in its last sessions, or in those of the next legislature:

PREAMBLE Mothers, daughters, sisters [and] representatives of the nation demand to be constituted into a national assembly. Believing that ignorance, omission, or scorn for the rights of woman are the only causes of public misfortunes and of the corruption of governments, [the women] have resolved to set forth a solemn declaration the natural, inalienable, and sacred rights of woman in order that this declaration, constantly exposed before all members of the society, will ceaselessly remind them of their rights and duties; in order that the authoritative acts of women and the authoritative acts of men may be at any mo-

ment compared with and respectful of the purpose of all political institutions; and in order that citizens' demands, henceforth based on simple and incontestable principles, will always support the constitution, good morals, and the happiness of all.

Consequently, the sex that is as superior in beauty as it is in courage during the sufferings of maternity recognizes and declares in the presence and under the auspices of the Supreme Being, the following Rights of Woman and of Female Citizens.

ARTICLE I Woman is born free and lives equal to man in her rights. Social distinctions can be based only on the common utility.

ARTICLE II The purpose of any political association is the conservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of woman and man; these rights are liberty, property, security, and especially resistance to oppression.

ARTICLE III The principle of all sovereignty rests essentially with the nation, which is nothing but the union of woman and man; no body and no individual can exercise any authority which does not come expressly from it (the nation).

ARTICLE VI The law must be the expression of the general will; all female and male citizens must contribute either personally or through their representatives to its formation; it must be the same for all: male and female citizens, being equal in the eyes of the law, must be equally admitted to all honors, positions, and public employment according to their capacity and without other distinctions besides those of their virtues and talents.

ARTICLE X No one is to be disquieted for his very basic opinions; woman has the right to mount the scaffold; she must equally have the right to mount the rostrum, provided that her demonstrations do not disturb the legally established public order.

(continued)

Document 26.2 (continued)

ARTICLE XVII Property belongs to both sexes whether united or separate; for each it is an inviolable and sacred right . . . no one can be deprived of it, since it is the true patrimony of nature, unless the legally determined public need obviously dictates it, and then only with a just and prior indemnity.

POSTSCRIPT Woman, wake up; the tocsin of reason is being heard throughout the whole universe; discover

your rights . . . Regardless of what barriers confront you, it is in your power to free yourselves; you have only to want to. . . .

SOURCE: Olympe De Gouges, *Declaration of the Rights of Woman, 1791*. <http://www.library.csi.cuny.edu/dept/americanstudies/lavender/decwom2.html>. From Darline Gay Levy, Harriet Branson Applewhite, and Mary Durham Johnson, eds., *Women in Revolutionary Paris, 1789–1795* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1980) 87–96.

The French import many African slaves to work Saint-Domingue plantations

The Saint-Domingue Slave Colony

In the 1600s, the western part of the Caribbean island of Hispaniola, a Spanish colony since the time of Columbus, came under French control and was named Saint-Domingue (Map 26.5). In the 1700s, eager to make a profit, French investors set up plantations there, producing sugar, coffee, cotton, cacao, and indigo. Since the island's Arawak Indians had died from European diseases, the French imported African slaves to work the plantations.

After 1763, when defeat in the Seven Years War cost France its North American empire, Saint-Domingue emerged as the most important and profitable French colony. By the time of the French Revolution, it had more than three thousand plantations, accounting for well over half of French colonial investments. Its half million slaves made up almost 90 percent of its population; the rest of its inhabitants were divided between white French colonists and **people of color**—a term applied to former slaves and persons of mixed racial heritage, legally free but treated by the whites as social inferiors.

The Revolt of Toussaint Louverture

Events in France triggered Saint-Domingue's revolution. When the Estates General was summoned in 1789, the colony's white settlers and people of color each sent separate delegations, the former hoping for greater independence from France, the latter seeking greater equality with the white colonists. During the next few years of turbulence, as French radicals sided with Saint-Domingue's people of color, the tensions between them and the white colonists turned into all-out civil war.

In 1791, as the colony's free people fought each other, the slaves of Saint-Domingue seized the opportunity to rebel. Led by François-Dominique Toussaint, who called himself Toussaint Louverture (*too-SAN loo-vair-TOOR*), the rebels soon gained the advantage, helping themselves to the lands of the former slave owners. Toussaint, a former domestic slave, had been taught to read and write by a Catholic priest, and quickly developed superb organizational and leadership skills. Escaping slaves flocked to his camps, and within two years he had constructed a cohesive, well-disciplined fighting force of 20 thousand men.

The French Revolution sparks the Saint-Domingue slave rebellion

Map 26.5 Saint-Domingue and the Haitian Revolution, 1791–1804

Inspired by events in North America and France, and inflamed by brutal repression, slaves in France's Saint-Domingue colony rose in rebellion and beat back invasions by the British and French, finally proclaiming in 1804 the independent nation of Haiti. Note that Haiti occupies only 25 percent of the island of Hispaniola, sharing it with the Spanish colony of Santo Domingo (the present-day Dominican Republic). How did the success of the Haitian Revolution affect Spain's empire in the western hemisphere?



In 1793 two of France's European enemies intervened in the Saint-Domingue rebellion. The British feared that the slave revolt threatened their Caribbean holdings (especially Jamaica, with its 300 thousand slaves), while the Spanish, who still controlled the eastern part of Hispaniola, hoped to take the whole island. Toussaint and his slave army were willing to support any regime that abolished slavery, but it soon became clear that neither invader cared much about abolition.

Toussaint's forces now allied with France, judging that their best hope for emancipation lay with the mother country, governed in 1793 by the radical National Convention. Their combined forces defeated the Spanish in 1794, but the British hung on, sickening and dying from yellow fever and malaria. They finally withdrew in 1798 after suffering 100 thousand casualties. Toussaint then had the delicate task of governing Saint-Domingue, supposedly on behalf of France, while preparing to oppose any French efforts to restore slavery. In France, after the Convention was dissolved in 1795, its successors, first the Directory and then Napoleon's Consulate, were far less supportive of abolition.

An assembly controlled by Toussaint proclaimed a constitution in 1801, making him governor-general for life and abolishing slavery. But it did not declare independence from France. By remaining a French colony, though a largely autonomous one, Toussaint hoped to avoid French intervention.

Britain and Spain intervene in Saint-Domingue



Toussaint Louverture.

Napoleon, however, was by this time convinced that only the restoration of slavery and full French authority would make the colony profitable again. He was so contemptuous of the abilities of black soldiers that he assumed a small French army could defeat them in a few weeks. The British, of course, having lost 100 thousand soldiers in Saint-Domingue during the previous decade, could have told him otherwise. French soldiers died by the thousands of yellow fever and malaria, and also encountered serious problems of supply and logistics. Napoleon counted on Jamaica and the United States to provision his expeditionary force, but both were suspicious of his motives, fearing he intended to expand French holdings in the Caribbean.

The Success and Impact of the Revolution

Dessalines defeats France and declares Haiti independent

For a time the French appeared to be winning. Defeated by invading French forces in 1802, Toussaint was arrested and sent to France, where he died the next year in a frigid prison. But his successor, Jean Jacques Dessalines (*des-sahl-LĒN*), was a relentless killer who hated Europeans and gave the French no mercy. When Britain declared war on France in 1803, plundering French possessions in the Caribbean as it did so, Napoleon decided to cut his losses in the western hemisphere. He sold to the United States the Louisiana territory, a vast stretch of central North America recently reacquired by France from Spain, and pulled his forces out of Saint-Domingue after suffering some 40 thousand casualties. The French had proven as vulnerable as the British to tropical diseases and the military skills of the former slaves. On January 1, 1804, Dessalines declared independence, renaming the new nation “Haiti,” an Arawak word meaning “mountainous,” succinctly describing the terrain.

Haiti was the second colony, after the United States, to break from its mother country. But the Haitian Revolution differed from the revolutions in North America and France: it was more social than political, and it was clearly racial, pitting black slaves against white slave owners as well as people of color against both. Moreover, its focus on land usage related more to the rebels’ African origins (since most had been farmers in Africa) than to French notions of liberty and equality. The Haitians wanted to center their lives on the land rather than on abstract political ideals. Toussaint misunderstood the strength of this desire, and when he invited white planters to return and distributed confiscated plantations to his black generals, he lost the support of his ex-slave soldiers. It took a man like Dessalines, who understood those desires and worked ruthlessly to fulfill them, to consolidate Haiti’s revolution.

The Haitian Revolution fuels global antislavery and liberation movements

The revolution’s success transformed not only Haiti. It also gave momentum to Britain’s growing antislavery movement, and served as a warning to Spanish and Portuguese America and to slaveholders in the United States. In Haiti, victory proved disappointing. The previously prosperous colony of Saint-Domingue lost nearly all its educated elite in the revolutionary wars. Its sugar, cotton, and coffee production were largely destroyed by warfare, leaving the new nation without the financial and educational resources needed to rebuild. In Britain, Haiti’s liberation energized the antislavery movement led by William Wilberforce, a devoutly Christian Member of Parliament, who fought the slave trade with moral and religious fervor. In 1807, Parliament passed his bill banning the African slave trade, and Britain’s Royal Navy then pressured other nations to stop trafficking in human beings. The United States banned the trade in 1808.

Although France first abolished, then restored slavery, increasingly the institution was condemned. By the end of the nineteenth century it had been abolished throughout the world. Finally, the Haitian Revolution, combined with the earlier American Revolution, helped inspire independence movements throughout Latin America (Chapter 28).

The Napoleonic Empire

Haiti's independence, important as it was for the Americas, had little impact on its former mother country. Even as he was reluctantly giving up his hopes for France's colonial empire in the Americas, Napoleon was building a French Empire in Europe. With his exceptional military skills and his powerful French army, he defeated France's enemies and conquered much of the continent. In the process, he proclaimed himself emperor. Eventually, however, his ambitions grew beyond his capacity, leading to his personal downfall and the end of his empire.



Napoleonic forces in battle.

The Formation and Expansion of the Empire

Napoleon built his empire on military genius, especially his ability to make the most of mobility, deception, and surprise. His armies often appeared where no one expected and performed maneuvers few other forces could match. In the smoke and chaos of battle, Napoleon unfailingly chose the right time and place to attack the enemy's lines. Needing only three hours' sleep a night, he consistently outworked his opponents; possessing an exceptionally nimble mind, he constantly outthought them. His remarkable memory for names and details gave him an added advantage, which he embellished by cheating whenever possible. Fighting Napoleon was no fun.

By 1804, after five years as First Consul, Napoleon had not only stabilized France and consolidated its revolution; he had also defeated most of its enemies and expanded its borders. France by then controlled most of Italy, the Netherlands, and Germany as far east as the Rhine River (Map 26.6). As the all-powerful ruler of a growing territorial empire, Napoleon decided that he needed a title to match his actual status. So in 1804, in an elaborate ceremony at Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, he crowned himself Emperor of the French. Fifteen years after the onset of revolution, and 11 years after the execution of Louis XVI, France again was a monarchy.

France again also terrified its neighbors. In 1805, alarmed by Napoleon's seemingly boundless ambitions, Austria, Russia, Sweden, and Britain formed a new coalition against him. That October, Britain's fleet destroyed the French navy in the Battle of Trafalgar, off the Spanish coast near Gibraltar. Admiral Nelson engineered his nation's greatest naval triumph before dying in combat.

No one, however, could figure out how to beat Napoleon on land. His talented subordinates, most of whom had been forced to join the army by the *levée en masse*, helped him win a crushing victory at Austerlitz, in east-central Europe, in December 1805. There Napoleon, outnumbered by Russian and Austrian forces, maneuvered his armies brilliantly to divide and conquer his foes. The next year he established control over much of Central Europe, defeating Prussia, occupying Berlin, and abolishing the Holy Roman Empire. In 1807 he routed the Russians again, and then concluded a treaty of alliance

Napoleon expands French rule and crowns himself emperor

The British destroy French naval power at Trafalgar

Napoleon defeats Austria, Russia, and Prussia to dominate Europe

Map 26.6 The Napoleonic Empire, 1804–1814

Having crowned himself emperor in 1804, Napoleon in the next few years defeated the forces of Austria, Prussia, and Russia, making him the master of Europe. But a British naval triumph that destroyed his fleet at Trafalgar in 1805, a debilitating campaign in Spain that began in 1808, and a disastrous invasion of Russia in 1812 eventually proved his undoing. Compare the size of Napoleon's empire with that of the Roman Empire (Map 8.4). Do you see any similarities in the eventual collapse of both these empires?



with Tsar Alexander I. As the year ended, the 38-year-old Corsican upstart was the master of Europe.

Yet Napoleon had been unable to conquer Britain, whose naval triumph at Trafalgar had discouraged invasion by France. The French emperor turned to commercial warfare, and in 1806, hoping to undermine Britain's economy by cutting off its commerce, created the **Continental System**. Essentially a Europe-wide boycott of British goods by countries under French influence, the system damaged the British economy but failed to destroy it. Smugglers evaded the boycott, while Britain managed to gain new markets in Latin America, following one of Napoleon's worst blunders: invasion of Portugal and Spain.

When Portugal, linked with England since 1386 in one of history's most enduring alliances, refused to join the Continental System, Napoleon dispatched an invading force. It occupied Lisbon in 1807, while Portugal's royal family escaped to Brazil on British ships. Napoleon next tried to make Spain a puppet monarchy under his brother Joseph, but the French occupation of Madrid in 1808 was challenged by guerrilla forces loyal

to Spain's Borbón dynasty. Joseph's coronation in turn prompted revolts in Spain's American colonies, which had no loyalty to this French usurper.

Britain took advantage of Napoleon's Spanish blunder. First, it shipped goods to Spanish America, capturing markets abandoned by Spain because of the war at home, thus helping Britain survive the Continental System. Second, it sent troops to help Spain's guerrillas fight the French, tying down Napoleon's best troops in a drawn out, debilitating conflict.

The Russian Campaign and the Empire's Collapse

In 1810, however, Napoleon's Spanish mistake seemed only a minor annoyance. Confident in his control of Europe, he turned to domestic matters, divorcing his wife Josephine, with whom he had no children, and marrying Maria Louisa von Habsburg, daughter of the Austrian emperor. The marriage was designed to build ties between Austria and France; it also gave Napoleon an heir, born in 1811 and titled the "King of Rome." Yet just as the Bonaparte dynasty seemed secure, Russia reopened its ports to British trade. Tsar Alexander was upset that Napoleon had spurned a Russian candidate for marriage and troubled by the Continental System's damage to Russia's economy, for Britain had been Russia's main trading partner. Napoleon responded by preparing for war. In June 1812 he invaded Russia with a Grand Army of 600 thousand men.

Troubled Russia resumes ties with Britain

The Russian campaign proved disastrous for Napoleon. His Grand Army was not nearly as powerful as it appeared. With more than 200 thousand seasoned French troops tied down fighting in Spain, Napoleon had had to draft two-thirds of his soldiers from his satellite nations throughout Europe. Reluctant to lay down their lives for France, many eventually deserted. Moreover, the Grand Army's sheer size actually worked against it. As always, Napoleon sought to come to grips with his foes and destroy them. Tsar Alexander's generals, noting that the Russians were outnumbered three to one, disobeyed his orders to fight Napoleon and retreated into Russia's interior. Had the Grand Army been smaller, the Russian generals would have had to stand and fight.

The retreat proved strategically sound, as Napoleon was drawn ever deeper into Russia. By September his forces occupied Moscow, but this did not force Tsar Alexander to surrender, as he was safe in the capital, Saint Petersburg. Then fires, which may have been deliberately set, burned much of Moscow to the ground. With no place to house his forces for the winter, Napoleon began withdrawing in October, retreating over the same route by which he had arrived. Lacking adequate food, and beset by harsh weather, his men died by the thousands from cold, hunger, and disease. The Grand Army that crossed back into French-controlled Europe in December had only 20 thousand men.

The French occupation of Moscow is followed by Napoleon's calamitous retreat

But Napoleon was not beaten. He raced back to Paris and raised another army, rejecting an Austrian peace plan and thereby prompting Austria and Prussia to join with Britain and Russia. The new alliance then declared a war of liberation from French rule. In 1813, in the Battle of the Nations at Leipzig, Germany, the allies soundly defeated the French. In April 1814, Napoleon gave up his throne and was exiled to Elba, a Mediterranean island. King Louis XVIII, younger brother of the guillotined Louis XVI, was restored to the French throne by the victorious alliance (Louis XVI's only son, Louis XVII, disappeared in 1795 and was never found).

In early 1815, however, while allied leaders were meeting at Vienna to restructure Europe, they were interrupted by startling news: Napoleon had escaped from Elba and

returned to France. Louis XVIII sent soldiers to arrest him, but they deserted to their former emperor. Louis then unwisely sent a whole army corps under one of Napoleon's former generals, who turned the entire corps over to his old leader. Napoleon then informed the king: "Sire, there is no need to send me more troops; I have enough."

Louis XVIII fled, and Napoleon reclaimed his throne, but his new reign lasted only a hundred days. The allies regrouped and Napoleon marched north to meet them. At the Belgian town of Waterloo, on June 18, 1815, he was once again defeated. This time the allies sent the former emperor to the remote South Atlantic island of Saint Helena, where he died six years later of stomach cancer at age 51.

Restoration and Rebellion

Final victory over Napoleon enabled allied leaders at Vienna to complete a comprehensive peace settlement. Resolved to restore stability to a continent torn by decades of revolution and war, they worked to reestablish the old order that had existed before 1789. Although they developed plans to use force to suppress any future revolutions, they proved unable to extinguish the new ideas about equality and freedom that the Atlantic revolutions had released.

The Congress of Vienna and the Congress System

Able directed by Austria's foreign minister, Prince Klemens von Metternich, the Congress of Vienna (1814–1815) based its deliberations on three principles. First was *legitimacy*, the right of former rulers or ruling families to regain the positions they lost in the Napoleonic Wars. Second was *compensation*, the reimbursement of nations that had sacrificed lives and resources to defeat Napoleon. Third was an effort to maintain peace by establishing a *balance of power*, a situation in which no one nation would be strong enough to impose its will on the others, or to dominate Europe as France had under Napoleon.

To implement these principles, the Congress redrew the map of Europe (Map 26.7). France was returned to its 1789 borders, deprived of all the lands it had gained since the revolution. In Spain, and throughout the Italian peninsula, regimes that had ruled before Napoleon were restored to power. The Holy Roman Empire, abolished in 1806, was replaced by a new Germanic Confederation. Prussia received some German territory west of the Rhine River, and Russia gained control of Finland.

Aiming in part to balance France's power by forming a strong nation to its North, the Congress created a Kingdom of the Netherlands, uniting Belgium (formerly the Austrian Netherlands) with the Dutch Netherlands under Dutch rule. The Congress also reconstituted Poland, earlier partitioned among Russia, Prussia, and Austria (Chapter 25), but agreed to let Russia's tsar serve as Poland's king, effectively making it a Russian satellite.

To further sustain stability and peace, Metternich persuaded the Congress to establish an ongoing mechanism known as the **Congress System**. It called for Europe's main powers to hold periodic meetings to deal with pressing problems and thus to preserve order by preventing wars and revolutions. Congresses were held at various European cities in 1818, 1820, 1821, and 1822; among other things they authorized armed interventions by Austria in Naples and by France in Spain to crush rebellions and restore royal rule.

The Congress of Vienna
redraws European
borders

Map 26.7 Europe in 1815

Seeking to restore stability in Europe and establish a balance of power, the Congress of Vienna in 1815 returned France to its prerevolutionary borders, restored regimes that had been ousted by Napoleon, and created a Germanic Confederation in place of the old Holy Roman Empire. A Kingdom of Poland was restored in name but was still ruled by Russia's tsar. Observe that both Germany and Italy were fragmented, while the rest of Europe was composed of unified states. What difficulties would this pose for nineteenth-century Germans and Italians?



Renewed Attempts at Revolution

In 1821, however, a Greek rebellion against the Ottoman Turks began to divide the powers. In Britain and France, the western parliamentary monarchies, the revolt was seen as a heroic bid to liberate Greece, the cradle of Western culture, from Islamic rule. But the eastern absolute autocracies—Austria, Prussia, and Russia—fearing the appeal of freedom, opposed all efforts at revolutionary change. Even Russia, despite its view of the Turks as foes and the Greeks as fellow Orthodox Christians, initially opposed the revolt, and by mid-1822 the Turks seemed to have suppressed it. But the rebels persisted, and the situation changed.

In December 1825 a group of young Russian army officers from the Napoleonic Wars, viewing their country as backward and repressive in comparison with the Western European countries they had marched through while conquering France, rebelled upon the death of Tsar Alexander I, hoping to force his successor to grant a constitution. Their brief insurrection, the “Decembrist Revolt,” was crushed by loyal troops.

Revolt in Greece creates tensions among the powers

Western ideals prompt a failed rebellion in Russia

The Greek Revolt succeeds with support from Russia and the West

Revolution spreads in 1830 to France, Belgium, and Poland

The new tsar, Nicholas I, reacted by striving for the next 30 years to maintain the old order in Russia through police state mechanisms and military force. In Greece, however, he was willing to intervene to advance Russia's interests.

Hoping that a liberated Greece would be Russia's friend and client, Nicholas broke with Austria and Prussia to support the Greek rebels. In 1827 the Russian, French, and British navies challenged the Turks, and the next year Russian armies attacked them. The resulting Russo-Turkish War of 1828–1829 brought independence to Greece and inspired revolts in 1830 in France, Belgium, and Poland.

France's revolt was an aftershock of the 1789 revolution. Realizing that its ideals could not be wholly obliterated, King Louis XVIII, who reigned from 1814 to 1824, had issued a charter affirming such rights as liberty, equality, property, and freedom of religion. In July 1830, however, his reactionary successor, King Charles X, issued ordinances aimed at undermining these rights. The result was an upheaval in Paris deposing Charles. But instead of ending the monarchy, the July Revolution brought to power a royal cousin, King Louis Philippe, who reigned from 1830 to 1848 as a moderate. Remembering the Reign of Terror, the French were not ready to try another republic.

The other two revolts, like the one in Greece, were efforts to gain freedom from foreign rule. The Belgians rebelled in August 1830 against the Kingdom of the Netherlands; the revolt succeeded, and Belgium soon became independent. The Poles, also seeking independence, arose in November against Russian rule, but Nicholas I's army ruthlessly crushed their revolt. The struggle between the old and new orders unleashed by the Atlantic revolutions was by no means over.

Chapter Review

Putting It in Perspective

The Atlantic revolutions, although they occurred in North America, Europe, and Haiti, had implications and repercussions far beyond these regions. Distinctive as these revolutions were, by challenging such entrenched institutions as monarchy, aristocracy, colonialism, and slavery, they helped introduce a new vision of society, centered on ideals of political liberty and social equality.

The American Revolution, and subsequently the United States Constitution, established the precedent that people could decide their own form of governance, discarding structures they deemed oppressive and creating new ones that better served their needs. In freeing themselves from colonial rule, Americans set an example for freedom-seeking colonies in Latin America, and later throughout the world. And in forming a republic with elected officials accountable

to the people and governing institutions limited by separation of powers, the United States proved that Enlightenment principles could be put into practice.

The French Revolution showed not only that kings could be overthrown and nobles disinherited, but also that common people could play a key role in shaping their own destiny. In fighting for liberty and equality, the rebels undermined monarchy and aristocracy, first in France and later throughout Europe and Latin America. Napoleon curtailed democratic freedoms and formed a military dictatorship, but he also promoted equality under law and careers based on talent, spread these concepts across Europe by his conquests, and opened the way to Latin American liberation by invading Portugal and Spain.

The Haitian Revolution demonstrated not only that the American and French experiences could be repeated elsewhere, but also that slaves could liberate themselves by organizing to expel their oppressors. African slaves also proved they could defeat European armies, while skillfully playing off Europeans against one another. In blending European ideas of freedom

and equality with African concepts of land use, the Haitians took significant steps toward ending both colonialism and slavery.

The Atlantic revolutions, nonetheless, marked only the onset of a long struggle between the old and new orders. Monarchs and aristocrats, backed by supporters of stability and tradition, sought forcefully to restore their status after Napoleon's defeat. But their efforts were soon challenged by a new wave of rebellions, and ultimately subverted by an industrial revolution, already under way in Britain, that in time would revolutionize the entire world.

Reviewing Key Material

KEY CONCEPTS

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ASK YOURSELF

- How did the ideals of the Enlightenment, and Britain's victory in the Seven Years (French and Indian) War, contribute to the American, French, and Haitian revolutions?
- In what ways were these three revolutions similar, and in what ways did they differ? What impact did each of them have on events in the other two countries?
- What roles did the working classes and women play in the French Revolution? How did they help make it increasingly radical from 1789 to 1794?
- In what ways did Napoleon advance the ideals and consolidate the accomplishments of the French Revolution, and in what ways did he violate its ideals and undermine its accomplishments?
- How did Napoleon rise from obscurity to become the master of Europe? How and why was he eventually defeated? How did his conquerors try to restore Europe's peace and stability?
- How do the Atlantic revolutions compare and contrast with earlier rebellions elsewhere, such as the major lower-class revolts in China (Chapter 21) and Russia (Chapter 25)? Why did the Atlantic revolutions have a greater global impact?

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Key Dates and Developments

1756–1763	Seven Years War (French and Indian War)
1763	Pontiac's Rebellion; proclamation closing the frontier
1775–1783	American Revolutionary War
1787–1789	Composition and Ratification of U.S. Constitution
1789	Outbreak of French Revolution
1791	Flight and capture of Louis XVI
1791–1803	Haitian Revolution
1792	Onset of French wars against European powers
1793	Execution of Louis XVI
1793–1794	Committee of Public Safety's Reign of Terror
1795–1799	The Directory
1796–1799	Napoleon's victories in Italy and Egypt
1799–1804	The Consulate
1804	Haiti declares independence
1804–1814	The Napoleonic Empire
1806	Creation of the Continental System
1807–1808	Invasions of Portugal and Spain
1812	Invasion of Russia
1814	Napoleon's defeat and exile to Elba
1814–1815	Congress of Vienna
1815	Napoleon's return and defeat at Waterloo
1821–1829	Greek rebellion against Ottoman Turks
1825	Decembrist Revolt in Russia
1830	French, Belgian, and Polish Revolts