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available, added further pain. The emperors could introduce dangerous Afghan, Abyssinian, or, worse, European mercenaries to do their fighting for them. They could hive off areas of revenue to such dangerous foreigners or "farm out" their revenues to their own over-mighty subjects in order to raise money to buy arms. Again, they could spend money and blood on constant campaigns of internal pacification against their local notables and peasantry. Any of these solutions could, and did, easily get out of hand. Much the same problem faced all the other Afro-Asian regimes during the same period. The Safavids and the Javanese succumbed first; the Ottomans struggled on into the nineteenth century, but in the meantime they had been forced to concede their richest provinces to powerful subjects. Effectively, they were caught in the same vice of rising military expenditure and stagnant or falling revenues.

WAR AND FINANCE IN EUROPE

A similar and related dilemma faced contemporary European governments. In 1700, their taxation systems and networks of internal control had generally been greater than those of the Asian and North African states. Yet, at the same time they also had wider global interests, which brought them regularly into conflict with each other and with Asians and Africans. Whereas in the seventeenth century, European wars had centered on religious belief and the power of the state to suppress dissidence and heresy, those of the eighteenth century were about dynastic resources and the control of towns, trades, and customs. European elites were beginning to supplement their incomes as landowners from the proceeds of the Atlantic slave economies and trading with the Mediterranean and Asia. So great corporations, such as the English, French, and Dutch East India companies or the branches of Spanish and Portuguese agency houses in Central and South America, gained considerably in political importance. Overseas commerce, therefore, reflected directly on European credit in a way which politicians and political economists could no longer ignore. European wars in the 1740s and 1760s became wars of the Asian and American littoral, with Britain often bargaining for advantage with the continental powers by using forts and trades it had captured in Asia or the Americas.

This sort of warfare was particularly costly: "breaking windows with guineas," as William Pitt the Elder, the British prime minister, called it. Naval forces swallowed up huge resources. Nelson's flagship, HMS *Victory*, cost five times as much as Abraham Crowley's steelworks, one of the most important investments of the Industrial Revolution.¹¹ The effect of new conventional military techniques and weapons, such as the flintlock gun which had been pioneered between 1680 and 1730, were now feeding through to all major conflicts. The stakes were raised by the disciplined methods of deploying firepower developed by Frederick the Great of Prussia. Smaller European and non-European powers began to employ European methods and to build new, scientifically engineered defensive fortresses by the middle of the eighteenth century. This further raised the costs of warfare.

A final escalation of costs in worldwide warfare was to result from the French Revolution itself. The idea of the mass levy of young men to defend the fatherland was adapted and extended by Napoleon. The emperor threw huge armies of men against Austria, Prussia, and Russia. This required a response from states such as Britain which did not have the same numbers of young men of military age. At the Battle of Minden in 1759, the British deployed a mere 5,000 infantrymen; at Waterloo in 1815, they had to use 21,000, itself a relatively small number by comparison with the huge German, French, and Russian armies.¹² What the British spent most of was money, not blood. They used their fiscal power to give huge subsidies to their allies in order to keep them in the war.

The problem for European states, then, was that although they were increasingly being forced into warfare worldwide, most of them did not have the resources to prosecute wars, which were so costly in terms of men and treasure. The mid- to late eighteenth century was no longer a time of rapid economic expansion. In fact, population growth seems to have outrun the capacity of farming to innovate in many parts of the continent. Governments were still dependent on cliques of large landowners, even in the relatively commercialized societies of northern Europe. The wealth-generating effects of industrialization were still minimal and would remain so for two generations. Governments fighting their wars inside and outside Europe with military and naval resources could scarcely cut into the earnings of the great landlords. This would risk revolt or undermine the positions of ministers in regard to the consultative assemblies which operated fitfully in much of Europe and to more serious effect in Britain and its Irish and North American dependencies. Equally, given the growth of large, unruly cities dependent on commerce and government jobs, the authorities could hardly tax the urban lower middle and laboring classes. Continuous riots over taxation, excise duties, and the cost of bread brought this home to all the European governments. Problems of this sort drove the attempts of the so-called enlightened despots of Germany, Russia, and Austria and their allies among the intelligentsia to try to reform some of the old European autocracies. As is well known, reforming governments are extremely vulnerable.

THE EUROPEAN MILITARY FISCAL CRISIS KICKS IN, 1756-89

It was in the 1760s that these discrete pockets of turbulence in Eurasia and the Americas flowed together more strongly, deepening conflict within and outside Europe. Events in the European-Atlantic sector were critical here. The Seven Years War (1756-63) in which Austria, Russia, Prussia, France, and Britain all took part, put a great strain on all European states. Inside Europe, war revealed the military and financial weaknesses of the great monarchies. Outside Europe, it became a costly game of grabbing colonies. In either case, the experience of war pushed governments into risky types of internal political

reform and external expansion. The Spanish monarchy, for one, attempted to rebuild income and honor by revamping its American empire after defeat by the British. Spain, however, was not strong enough to reassert firm control of its rich and populous colonies, whose most important residents increasingly identified with America, not the Old World. Latin American independence was not really on the cards until after Napoleon invaded Spain 30 years later. But the lines of battle between the Creole settlers and imperialist parties in Latin America were already firmly drawn in the 1770s and 1780s. The resources of Spain were sapped by the great effort of ruling its empire and suppressing the Amerindian revolts which resulted from its policy of squeezing the peasantry for cash.¹³

Another fissure in the international system which widened after 1757 was the almost ceaseless warfare between Britain and France. They fought in the Caribbean, Canada, and India. Following a series of stunning victories against the French, Britain met its own nemesis. After 1763 it tried to recoup the vast cost of its wars against France and Spain in North America. The British ministry determined to raise taxes in the Americas, and also stationed a large royal army in the Thirteen Colonies to police the territories newly conquered from France and protect them from possible Indian attack in the west. This offended the fiercely independent local American legislatures, to whom centralized royal government, especially royal government by High Anglicans, was an anathema. American pamphleteers were particularly suspicious of the East India Company, which monopolized their trade to the east. This they saw as an engine of corruption specially protected by ministers in London.¹⁴ The American Revolution started on a small scale as a revolt against taxation and petty tyranny. It aimed to restore the powers of local assemblies, which were being eaten away by the intrusion of the Crown. Americans were jealous of their religious freedoms and doubted the good faith of the British establishment, which had already allowed French Catholics in Canada extensive rights. The entry of France and Spain into the war on the American side in 1779, however, ensured British defeat and transformed a regional conflict into a worldwide convulsion. The French saw this as an opportunity to break Britain's growing stranglehold on international trade, which was only too evident after her victories in Canada and India.¹⁵

The loss of the colonies did not prove fatal to the British political system, in part because Britain retained the wealthy Caribbean islands.¹⁶ Yet defeat in the Americas did introduce significant changes into British imperial policies, which fueled the gathering crisis of the Eastern world. British government in Asia became more grasping and more interventionist. A generation of South Asian historians have argued that the expansion of the East India Company from its Bengal base to conquer much of India between 1783 and 1818 was largely due to its voracious need to finance its military forces. The Company forced Indian rulers to pay for its troops or, alternatively, seized their revenue-bearing territories. The prize of India's trade goods was dimmed by comparison with the riches of its territorial revenues. British eyes began to fall on China, too, within ten years of the American defeat. The China trade began to

bulk largely in ledgers of the embattled and cash-strapped East India Company. There was an almost infinite demand for China tea in Britain, and Indian raw cotton and opium provided valuable resources with which to purchase it. Britain sailed successfully through the choppy waters caused by its American defeat partly by exploiting its Asian and Caribbean colonies.

Ironically, therefore, it was the French monarchy and ruling classes, rather than the British, which were to be the most visible victims of the financial problems and political controversies created by the American war in which the country had ostensibly triumphed. Unsettling ideological change was in the air, too. The American cry of "No taxation without representation" was particularly meaningful in France. Volunteers in France paraded singing American songs and were mobilized by the French hero of the American war, the marquis de Lafayette. The American example brought to Europe ideas of reform and representation through popular assemblies which were rapidly to germinate on French soil. The free-trade philosopher Condorcet wrote that "the spectacle of the equality which reigns in the United States . . . will be useful to Europe."¹⁷ More prosaically, the large financial burden taken on by the French Crown in order to help the Americans pushed royal ministers into risky, but incoherent, programs of reform. These gradually undermined the basis of the monarchy itself. In order to push through political changes, ministers needed a degree of elite and popular consent. Yet they were never bold enough really to trust the old powers and assemblies, or far-sighted enough to enlist the support of the lawyers and new professional men of Paris and the other big cities. In the end, the reforms simply stimulated more opposition. In order to resolve this crisis, many experts argued that a new, American-style constituent assembly was essential. But as no agreement could be reached, the older, more cumbersome representative body, the Estates General was summoned in 1789. Because the Estates worked on the archaic principle of the representation of orders, conflicts between nobility, church, and the middle classes become more and more bitter.

The resulting impasse in France's central government in 1789 and 1790 allowed a whole host of local revolts and social conflicts to catch fire, to become nationalized in a sense.¹⁸ Peasant protests, anticlerical explosions, and constant outbreaks of popular disorder in Paris and other large cities buffeted a succession of ministers, who were pushed in more and more radical directions. Already, by 1792, the elements of the coming struggle were in place. The fragmentation of the old order had allowed full rein to strong feelings of regional and local autonomy which had continued to exist under the surface of royal government. The "federalists," represented in Paris by the so-called Girondins, were faced by a bloc of radical centralists, the Jacobins. The Jacobins believed that strong government could create a "republic of virtue" and sweep away church, nobility, and monarchy in a single purge. The volatile crowds of Paris and other large cities, which had been increasingly active on the cities' streets during the previous generation, fed the sense of panic. Conservative reaction, especially in the northwest of the country, where landowners, clerics, and a pious peasantry tried to thwart the aims of

THE END OF THE OLD REGIME

anticlerical republicans, enraged the radicals and drove them to institute the bloody massacres of the Terror of 1793.¹⁹

CLIMACTERIC: REEXPORTING THE WORLD REVOLUTION FROM FRANCE, 1789–1815

The thing that did most to radicalize the Revolution was the invasion of France by the great powers, horrified by the execution of the king and the aristocracy, but keen to gain the lands, colonies, and territories which they had eyed throughout the wars of the previous century. The presence of foreign armies on French soil released a wave of resistance which was to sweep the Revolution and, later, the armies of Napoleon Bonaparte across the borders of France, and even those of Europe itself. Radicals committed to the ideals of the Declaration of the Rights of Man came together in alliance with those richer peasants and bourgeois who were fearful of losing the aristocratic and church lands which they had occupied. Together they empowered an extraordinary



ILLUSTRATION 3.1 Transatlantic revolution: The execution of the duc d'Orléans, 1793. Contemporary print.