PART IV

Explorer Vasco de Gama kneels before the king under a Portuguese flag while his ship waits in the distance. European ventures in trade and exploration helped define a new world history period.

Chapter 21  The World Economy
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THE OVERVIEW: THE WORLD MAP CHANGES

These maps depict two of the big changes in world history that occurred between 1450 and 1750. Over these centuries, a number of new empires came into being, replacing smaller political units characteristic of the preceding postclassical period. Several European countries acquired overseas empires the first time this option had ever been so dramatically developed, while new land-based empires arose in Asia and eastern Europe. The Russian and Ottoman empires extended over both European and Asian territory, while the new Mughal Empire ruled much of the Indian subcontinent.

The second big change involved trade routes. In 1450 international trade focused on exchanges among Asia, Africa, and Europe across some overland routes but also via seaways in the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. By 1750, oceangoing routes across the Pacific and particularly the Atlantic had become increasingly important, although the Indian Ocean sea routes remained significant. For the first time, the Americas and, soon, Pacific Oceania were caught up in global exchanges, with results not only in these regions but for the rest of the world as well.

Change, of course, is never complete. Even as world geography shifted fundamentally, some political features persisted during the three early modern centuries. Trade routes also maintained some holdovers from the past.

Big Concepts

The contemporary period in world history organizes around global themes. A key concept involves the dissolution of global empires through decolonization. This was a major change, extending particularly from the 1920s through the 1970s that in some ways pushed back global forces in favor of new levels of nationalism and regional assertion. The contemporary era also, from 1914 onward, saw new global wars and conflict—including the recent global tensions associated with terrorism, another Big Concept for the period as a whole. New global institutions also emerged, at various points, in business, politics, finance, and even culture, a third organizing concept. Finally, particularly from the late 1940s onward and increasingly fueled by new technologies and explicit policies alike, new iterations of globalization form the final Big Concept for world history’s newest period.

TRIGGERS FOR CHANGE

Several developments sparked the beginning of the early modern period, distinguishing it from the postclassical period that preceded it. The first was the revival of empire building. A striking example of this development involved the Ottoman Turks, who conquered Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire. Soon the Ottomans extended their rule...
over most Byzantine territories and beyond, putting a Muslim power in charge of one of the great Christian cities and territories of the past. Worried Christian leaders elsewhere in the world turned to new activities to compensate for the loss of influence and territory. The second development visible by 1450—the steady progression of explorations by Europeans along the Atlantic coast of Africa—was motivated in part by the desire to find ways to trade with east Asia that would circumvent the centers of Islamic power. New European outreach would soon have wider effects.

New military technologies constituted the third development that played a vital role in defining the new framework for this period. European mariners began to use compasses and other navigational devices, first introduced by the Chinese and Arabs. Europeans also learned how to design better sailing ships. The most important new military technology was the growing use of guns and gunpowder, another Chinese invention now adapted by Europeans and others. New guns played a vital role in the creation of new empires both on land and overseas. Guns also affected political patterns within Africa, Japan, and Europe, though with less sweeping results.

Larger, sturdier ships, armed with cannon and featuring greater shipping capacity, sailed the new trade routes across the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Europeans exercised disproportionate dominance over these routes, and they employed the new military technologies in establishing their new overseas empires.

THE BIG CHANGES

The changes in world empires and trade routes depicted on the maps on page 447 and the effects of new naval and military technologies highlight the distinctive features of the early modern period. Every major society reacted differently, depending on world position and existing tradition. In general, however, these developments led to three broad changes: (a) the forging of a new global economy and through this the unfolding of an initial phase of globalization; (b) new biological exchanges of food, animals, and people; and (c) the new importance of large political units and their diplomatic and military interactions.

A New Global Economy and Proto-Globalization

International trade increased, for the first time including the Americas in the exchange. This was a major step in bringing the various regions of the world closer together and exposing them more widely to international influences. The result was a process called proto-globalization—a foretaste of the fuller range of contacts now called globalization but (hence the term “proto”) in a more preliminary sense.
Globalization involves intense and varied interactions among regions that help shape human lives; proto-globalization in this period helped set this process in motion. Several changes separated proto-globalization from the transcontinental network that had emerged in the postclassical period—though world trade still relied on some of the exchanges developed earlier, such as trade between East Africa and the Middle East. Most obviously, commerce was now global, including all major parts of the world and not just the three continents of Africa, Asia, and Europe. The intensity of contacts increased as well: trade, and production for trade, now involved more people, more effort, and it began to help shape political and social systems as well as commercial ones. Migration across oceans, some of it forced, was a new phenomenon as well. New consumer tastes developed in several societies that depended on goods imported from distant areas, going well beyond patterns in the earlier transcontinental network. Here, clearly, was an important step toward fuller globalization.

There was, however, still a gap between proto-globalization and the global patterns we see today. The new technologies that would revolutionize global travel and communication were still in the future. Trade contacts were important, but they had not yet reached more contemporary levels. There were no internationally shared games or political standards, in contrast to the surge of cultural and political globalization that would emerge later on. Like contemporary globalization, proto-globalization brought both advantages and disadvantages, depending on the groups and regions involved. Those who profited from the new system would ultimately help prepare additional kinds of global connections.

**Biological Exchange**

The inclusion of the Americas global trade set in motion a number of biological exchanges of enormous consequence. Foods from the Americas, like corn and the potato, began to be grown in Asia and, later, Europe. Combined with local improvements in agriculture, these new foods resulted in population increases. Europeans introduced new diseases into the Americas and Pacific island territories, decimating the native populations. Population loss encouraged new migrations, particularly from Europe and Africa, into the Americas. The massive African slave trade was in part a response to a labor shortage in the Americas. New animals, like the horse, greatly altered life in the Americas. These biological exchanges, called the "Columbian exchange," altered many relationships among populations. New foods helped generate population increase worldwide, trumping the devastation wrought by new diseases. But new diseases and unprecedented levels of death were agonizing realities for many regions.

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<td>1600 Dutch and British merchants begin activity in India</td>
<td>1652 Dutch colony South Africa</td>
<td>1713 New Bourbon dynasty, Spain</td>
<td>1756–1763 Seven Years War</td>
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<td>1600–1690 Scientific Revolution (Europe)</td>
<td>1658–1707 Aurangzeb reign, beginning of Mughal decline</td>
<td>1722 Fall of Safavid dynasty (Iran)</td>
<td>1763 Britain acquires &quot;New France&quot;</td>
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<td>1603 Tokugawa shogunate</td>
<td>1682–1699 Turks driven from Hungary</td>
<td>1759–1788 Reforms of Latin American colonial administration</td>
<td>1764 British East India Company controls Bengal (India)</td>
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<td>1607 First British colonies in North America</td>
<td>1689–1725 Peter the Great (Russia)</td>
<td>1770s European–Bantu conflicts in southern Africa</td>
<td>1772–1795 Partition of Poland</td>
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<td>1608 First French North American colonies</td>
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<td>1775–1783 American Revolution</td>
<td>1781 Indian revolts in New Grenada and Peru (Latin America)</td>
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<td>1637 Russian pioneers to Pacific</td>
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<td>1792 Slave uprising in Haiti</td>
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New Empires

The gunpowder empires formed large political units. Building and maintaining these new political structures required huge energies and huge expenses. New land-based empires in India, the Middle East, southeastern Europe, and Russia challenged political traditions in their imperial territories, while Spain, Portugal, France, England, and the Netherlands exerted pressure on their new overseas holdings.

The new empires also formed what would later be called "multinational" units, embracing different cultural and ethnic groups. The solidity of the multinational approach would be an important world history issue for the future.

The three main developments—the new global economy, the biological exchange, and the emergence of new empires—involved considerable shifts in world power. The world position of western Europe increased most obviously. Russia gained a new role as well. New masters ruled over many parts of the Americas, while portions of Africa found themselves immersed in novel orbits. Systematic patterns of inequality began to characterize some of the societies that supplied foods and raw materials to western Europe. Europe became wealthier and ever more powerful as it supplied processed goods and commercial services to these same regions, but several Asian societies headed by China also gained new wealth.

CONTINUITY

Change is never complete. Even as world geography shifted, some political features persisted during the three centuries of the early modern period. Some existing trade routes continued to be important avenues of global exchange.

Many societies reacted to the big changes of the early modern period by preserving key features of their past. No sweeping, global cultural change occurred during this era. Notable developments took place within individual societies, such as the new influence of science in western Europe or the rise of Japanese Confucianism. The spread of world religions continued, with Islam reaching southeast Asia and parts of southeastern Europe and, even more dramatically, with conversions to Christianity in the Americas. But cultural stability described much of the world, and global contacts did not overturn regional culture patterns.

No systematic changes occurred in gender relations in the early modern period. The new African slave trade affected gender balances on both sides of the Atlantic. More men than women were seized in Africa; as a result, the lack of adequate numbers of husbands encouraged African polygamy. New ideas sparked some debate over women's conditions in western Europe, though little real change. Relations between men and women in most other societies adhered to established patriarchal patterns.

While political change, signaled by the rise of empires, was more general, several societies emphasized continuity in this realm as well. China prided itself on reviving and then maintaining its system of government. Many African societies preserved earlier traditions of divine kinship.

IMPACT ON DAILY LIFE: WORK

Changes of the early modern period profoundly affected ordinary people in many parts of the world. Indians in the Americas died by the thousands as European and African immigrants brought diseases like smallpox and measles. Europeans used silver to pay for desirable Chinese goods. Flush with new wealth, the Chinese government began to require that taxes be paid in silver, thus compelling ordinary Chinese to find new ways to obtain money. Often such efforts were unsuccessful, and as a result many Chinese fell ever deeper into poverty. Millions of Africans were seized from their homes and subjected to a terrifying and often deadly passage to the Americas. Those who managed to survive the voyage discovered that they were now compelled to live out their lives as slaves.

The most general social change during the early modern period was a growing pressure to work harder. The early modern world was increasingly commercial and crowded. Population increases in some regions demanded more from workers to help sustain larger families and villages. Many manufacturers and landowners tried to force their workers to increase their pace. The new forms of race-based slavery in the Americas placed greater emphasis on production. In western Europe, for example, Protestantism preached a work ethic that convinced many people that labor was a way to demonstrate God's grace.
People of all ages responded to the pressure to work harder. Child labor increased in many regions. Many European children were pressed into service as indentured laborers; for example, whole groups of orphans might be transported to work sites. By the 18th century, London orphans might be sent to work in new English factories or to North America as indentured servants. Even in old age, adults had to work if they wanted to survive. Master artisans, from makers of porcelain in China to gunsmiths in Europe, tried to compel their workers and apprentices to turn out more product. The pressure to work harder and longer was a personal side to the systemic changes that were reshaping the world.

The name commonly given to this period—early modern—captures complexity. The period is more recognizably modern than its predecessor. The renewed emphasis on political structures may strike a modern chord as well. But if modern, this was still early: many features, including the continued dominance of traditional agriculture even in the most advanced economies, make it clear that there were still many changes to come in world history after 1750.

**TRENDS AND SOCIETIES IN THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD**

The chapters that follow examine the differing reactions to the major developments and changes of the early modern period. Chapter 21 offers an overview of the new global trading patterns that followed from the changes in naval technology and warfare. New trading opportunities and colonial expansion were closely related to significant changes within western Europe, the subject of Chapter 22. European changes would ultimately affect other parts of the world as well. Russia, selecting aspects of Western society as a model for change, developed one of the most novel gunpowder empires, with major impact on the power balance in eastern Europe, east Asia, and part of the Muslim world. The story of Russia’s rise is told in Chapter 23. Chapters 24 and 25 return to the Atlantic world. The early modern era was a formative period for a new society in Latin America, born of interactions among native populations, Europeans, and Africans. Chapter 26, on the new Muslim states in the Middle East and southern Asia, concentrates on the emergence of other gunpowder empires. East Asia responded in its own, largely successful way to the new world economy. In these areas internal dynamics had more to do with developments that occurred between 1450 and 1750.

Each of the chapters in this part deals with reactions to world trade, biological exchange, and new pressures on labor. Each also highlights the diversity of patterns emerging in different parts of the world, depending on cultural orientation and shifts in positions of world power.
How did silver mined by conscripted South American Indians change China’s tax system? Silver quickly became the global currency of the early modern period. Production and use of silver show the power of the new world economy emerging after 1500. Silver had long been valued, of course, but new sources of production made it a commonly traded commodity. Japanese mines raised their output, trading with Europe and China. But it was European discoveries of silver in the Americas that really turned the tide. Mexican silver mines were important, but the big find, in the mid-16th century, was at Potosi, in Bolivia, where there was an enormous vein of ore. (Figure 21.1) Desperate for labor, the Spanish revived mita—the Inca system of drafting workers for short stints. By 1600 there were 150,000 miners at Potosi, more than a third of them conscripted through the mita system.

Latin American silver was a godsend to Europeans. The Spanish crown kept a fifth of the silver its colonies produced, and this was its chief gain from the American colonies. Silver allowed Spain to build massive armies and grand new public buildings. But most of the silver sent to Europe passed through Spain to merchants elsewhere. They, in turn, used silver primarily to buy Asian goods that had long been sought, such as Indian spices and Chinese porcelain and silk. The Spanish also sent considerable silver to the Philippines, where it was traded for Chinese products sent to elites in the Americas and Europe. Silver greased the wheels of international commerce, allowing Europeans to buy Asian imports that could not otherwise have been afforded.

China and India were the largest recipients of New World silver—a clear sign of Asia’s dynamism in the new world economy. Silver encouraged economic growth in Asia. It began to replace paper money. Merchants required silver even for purchases of common items like food. The Ming dynasty required periodic tax payments in silver. This reduced the number of tax collections (because each payment was now more valuable)—a reform known as “one whip of the lash.” Silver imports helped sustain a standard of living in China that, into the early 19th century, was superior to that of western Europe.

But there were also worries. Many Chinese observers thought that silver was creating a wider gap between rich and poor, and they pointed out that the poor had to struggle to find the silver needed to pay their taxes. A few Europeans mused about expending so much effort to obtain silver that would only be swallowed up in Asia, but most agreed that the new consumer goods were well worth the trouble. A very few Europeans, but undoubtedly lots of ordinary Latin Americans, worried about the harsh working conditions in the mines.

This chapter deals with the consequences of some key developments long celebrated in American school texts: the voyages of Columbus and other explorers and the empires built by European conquerors and missionaries. The result was a power shift in world affairs, but another set of crucial developments in world history also resulted: the redefinition of interchanges among major societies in the world.

The story is not, however, simply the familiar one. European countries did play a disproportionate role in causing global change, particularly the huge shifts affecting the Americas and Africa. But African and Asian contributions were active as well.

The West’s First Outreach: Maritime Power

Various European leaders, particularly merchants but also some princes and clergy, had become increasingly aware of the larger world around them since 1100. The Crusades brought knowledge of the Islamic world’s superior economy and the goods that could be imported from Asia. The Mongol...
Empire, which sped up exchanges between the civilizations of Asia, also spurred European interest. The fall of the khans in China disrupted this interchange, as China became once again a land of mystery to Europeans. Europe’s upper classes had by this time become accustomed to imported products from southeast Asia and India, particularly spices. These goods were transported to the Middle East in Arab ships, then brought overland, where they were loaded again onto vessels (mainly from Genoa and Venice, in Italy) for the Mediterranean trade.

Europeans entered into this era of growing contacts with several disadvantages. They remained ignorant of the wider world. Viking adventurers from Scandinavia had crossed the Atlantic in the 10th century, reaching Greenland and then North America, which they named Vinland. However, they quickly lost interest beyond establishing settlements on Greenland and Iceland, in part because they encountered indigenous warriors whose weaponry was good enough to cause them serious problems. Many Europeans were also fearful of distant voyages lest they fall off the world’s edge.

As Europeans launched a more consistent effort at expansion from 1291 onward, they were pressed by new problems: fear of the strength of the emerging Ottoman Empire and the lack of gold to pay for Asian imports. Initial settlements in island groups in the south Atlantic fed their hopes for further gains. However, the first expeditions were limited by the small, oar-propelled ships used in the Mediterranean trade, which could not travel far into the oceans.

New Technology: A Key to Power

During the 15th century, a series of technological improvements began to change the equation. Europeans developed deep-draft, round-hulled sailing ships for the Atlantic, capable of carrying heavy armaments. They were using and improving the compass. Mapmaking and other navigational devices improved as well. Finally, European knowledge of explosives, another Chinese invention, was
adapted into gunnery. European metalwork, steadily advancing in sophistication, allowed Western metalsmiths to devise the first guns and cannons. Though not very accurate, these weapons were awesome by the standards of the time (and terrifying to many Europeans, who had reason to fear the new destructive power of their own armies and navies). The West began to forge a military advantage over all other civilizations of the world, at first primarily on the seas—an advantage it would retain into the 20th century. With an unprecedented ability to kill and intimidate from a distance, western Europe was ready for its big push.

**Portugal and Spain Lead the Pack**

The specific initiative came from the small kingdom of Portugal, whose Atlantic location made it well suited for new initiatives. Portugal's rulers were drawn by the excitement of discovery, the harm they might cause to the Muslim world, and a thirst for wealth—a potent mix. A Portuguese prince, Henry the Navigator (Figure 21.2), organized a series of expeditions along the African coast and also outward to islands such as the Azores. Beginning in 1434 the Portuguese began to press down the African coast, each expedition going a little farther than its predecessor. They brought back slaves, spices such as pepper, and many stories of gold hoards they had not yet been able to find.

Later in the 15th century, Portuguese sailors ventured around the **Cape of Good Hope** in an attempt to find India, where direct contact would give Europeans easier access to luxury cloths and spices. They rounded the cape in 1488, but weary sailors forced the expedition back before it could reach India. Then, after news of Columbus's discovery of America for Spain in 1492, Portugal redoubled its efforts, hoping to stave off the new Spanish competition. Vasco da Gama's fleet of four ships reached India in 1498, with the aid of a Hindu pilot picked up in east Africa. The Portuguese mistakenly believed that the Indians were Christians, for they thought the Hindu temples were churches. They faced the hostility of Muslim merchants, who had long dominated trade in this part of the world, and they brought only crude goods for sale, like iron pots. But fortunately they had some gold as well. They managed to return with a small load of spices. A later trip involved more violence, as Europeans substituted force for their lack of attractive items for world trade. Da Gama used ships' guns to intimidate, and his forces killed or tortured many Indian merchants to set an example.
In the early years of exploration, Spanish and Portuguese voyagers surveyed much of the coast of South America and some choice ports in Africa and Asia.

Da Gama’s success set in motion an annual series of Portuguese voyages to the Indian Ocean, outlined in Map 21.1. One expedition, blown off course, reached Brazil, where it proclaimed Portuguese sovereignty (Figure 21.3). Portugal began to set up forts on the African coast and also in India—the forerunners of such Portuguese colonies as Mozambique, in east Africa, and Goa, in India. By 1514 the Portuguese had reached the islands of Indonesia, the center of spice production, and China. In 1542 one Portuguese expedition arrived in Japan, where a missionary effort was launched that met with some success for several decades.

Meanwhile, only a short time after the Portuguese quest began, the Spanish reached out with even greater force. Here also was a country only reconquered from Muslim rule, full of missionary zeal and a desire for riches. The Spanish had traveled into the Atlantic during the 14th century. Then in 1492, the same year that the final Muslim fortress was captured in Spain, the Italian navigator Christopher Columbus, operating in the name of the newly united Spanish monarchy, set sail for a westward route to India, convinced that the round earth would make his quest possible. As is well known, he failed, reaching the Americas instead and mistakenly naming their inhabitants “Indians.” Although Columbus believed to his death that he had sailed to India, later Spanish explorers realized that they had voyaged to a region where Europeans, Africans, and Asians had not traveled previously. One expedition, headed by Amerigo Vespucci, gave the New World its name. Spain, eager to claim this new land, won papal approval for Spanish dominion over most of what is now Latin America, although a later treaty awarded Brazil to Portugal.

Finally, a Spanish expedition under Ferdinand Magellan set sail westward in 1519, passing the southern tip of South America and sailing across the Pacific, reaching the Indonesian islands in 1521 after incredible hardships. It was on the basis of this voyage, the first trip around the world, that Spain claimed the Philippines, which it held until 1898.

Portugal emerged from this first round of exploration with coastal holdings in parts of Africa and in the Indian port of Goa, a lease on the Chinese port of Macao, short-lived interests in trade with Japan, and finally, the claim on Brazil. Spain asserted its hold on the Philippines, various Pacific islands, and the bulk of the Americas. During the 16th century, the Spanish backed up these
claims by military expeditions to Mexico and South America. The Spanish also held Florida and sent expeditions northward from Mexico into California and other parts of what later became the southwestern United States.

**Northern European Expeditions**

Later in the 16th century, the lead in exploration passed to northern Europe, as newly strong monarchies, such as France and England, got into the act and zealous Protestants in Britain and Holland strove to rival Catholic gains (Map 21.2). In part this shift in dynamism occurred because Spain and Portugal were busy digesting the gains they had already made; in part it was because northern Europeans, particularly the Dutch and the British, improved the design of oceanic vessels, producing lighter, faster ships than those of their Catholic adversaries. Britain won a historic sea battle with Spain in 1588, routing the massive Spanish Armada. From this point onward, the British, the Dutch, and to some extent the French vied for dominance on the seas, although in the Americas they aimed mainly northward because they could not challenge the Spanish and Portuguese colonies. Only in the sugar-rich West Indies did northern Europe seize islands initially claimed by Spain.

The new adventurers, like their Spanish and Portuguese predecessors, appreciated the economic potential of such voyages. Britain and Holland, now Protestant countries, emphasized religious interests less than European Catholics did at this point. Two 16th-century English explorers, trying to find an Arctic route to China, were told to keep an eye out for any native populations en route, for such people would provide a perfect market for warm English woolens. And if the territory was unpopulated, it might be put to use as a source of fish for Britain. A quest for profit had become a dominant policy motive.

French explorers crossed the Atlantic first in 1534, reaching Canada, which they claimed. In the 17th century, various expeditions pressed down from Canada into the Great Lakes region and the Mississippi valley.
Causation and the West’s Expansion

Because of their interest in social change, historians inevitably deal with causation. What prompted the fall of Rome? Why did Islam spread so widely? What factors explain why most agricultural civilizations developed patriarchal family structures?

Historical causation differs from the kinds of causation many scientists test. When experiments or observations can be repeated, scientists can gain a fairly precise understanding of the factors that produce a phenomenon: remove an ingredient, for example, and the product changes. Historical causation is more complex. Major developments may resemble each other, but they never happen the same way twice. Definitive proof that factor X explains 40 percent of the spread of Buddhism in east Asia is impossible. This is why historians often disagree about causation. But if precision is impossible, high probability is not. We can get a fairly good sense of why things happen, and sloppy causation claims can be disproved. Furthermore, probing causation helps us explore a phenomenon itself. We know more about the nature of Western expansion in the 15th and 16th centuries if we discuss what caused it.

Some historians and other social scientists look to a single kind of cause as the explanation of a variety of circumstances. Some anthropologists are cultural determinists. They judge that a basic set of cultural factors, usually assumed to be very durable, causes the ongoing differences between societies: Chinese and Greeks, on average, respond differently to emotional stimuli because of their different cultural conditioning. More common is a technological or economic determinism. Some historians see technological change as setting other changes in motion. Others, including Marxists, argue that economic arrangements—how the economy is structured and what groups control it—produce at least the basic framework for innovations. At another pole, some historians used to claim “great men” as the prime movers in history. The causes of change thus became Chinggis Khan or Ashoka, with no need to look much further.

Various approaches to causation have been applied to the West's explorations and colonial conquests in the early modern period. There is room for a “great man” analysis. Many descriptive accounts that dwell on explorers and conquerors (Vasco da Gama and Cortés, for example) and on leaders who sponsored them (such as Henry the Navigator) suggest that the key cause of the West’s new role stemmed from the daring and vision of exceptional individuals.

Cultural causation can also be invoked. Somehow, Europe's expansion must relate to the wonders of innovation introduced by the Renaissance. The link with Christian culture is even easier to prove, for a missionary spirit quickly supplemented the efforts of early explorers, leading to more voyages and settlements in Asia and the Americas.

Political causation enters in, if not in causing the initial surge, at least in confirming it. Starting in the 16th century, rivalries between the nation-states motivated a continuing quest for new trade routes and colonies.

There is also room for a simpler, technologically determinist approach. In this view, Europe's gains came from a handful of new inventions. Benefiting from knowledge of advances in China and the Middle East, Europeans introduced naval cannons. Along with steady improvements in navigation and ship design, new techniques explain why Europe gained as it did. Except in the Americas, where they had larger technical and organizational advantages, Europeans advanced in areas they could reach by sea and dominate by ships' guns—port cities, islands, and trade routes—and not elsewhere. Put simply, Europe gained because of these few technological edges.

Like all determinisms, however, this technological approach raises as many questions as it answers. Why were Europeans so ready to adopt new inventions? What caused the cause? Why did other societies that were aware of Europe's innovations, such as China, deliberately scorn any adoption of Western naval techniques? Here a different culture determined a reaction different from that of the West. Technology and culture went hand in hand. Clearly, some combined causal framework is needed in this case.

We cannot expect uniform agreement on a precise ordering of causation. However, we can expect fruitful debate—the kind of debate that has already moved our understanding beyond surface causes, such as the powerful personalities of a few people, to a grasp of more underlying contexts.

QUESTIONS If you had to choose a single determinism (cultural, technological, or economic) as basic to social change, which one would you pick? Why? In what ways might the professed motives of Western explorers and colonists have differed from their real motives? Would they necessarily have been aware of the discrepancy?

The British also turned their attention to North America, starting with a brief expedition as early as 1497. The English hoped to discover a northwest passage to spice-rich India, but they accomplished little beyond exploration of the Hudson Bay area of Canada during the 16th century. England's serious work began in the 17th century, with the colonization of the east coast of North America. Holland also had holdings in North America and, for a time, in Brazil.

The Dutch entered the picture after winning independence from Spain, and Holland quickly became a major competitor with Portugal in southeast Asia. The Dutch sent many sailors and ships
During the 17th century, northwestern Europe took the initiative in explorations, venturing into North America and seeking convenient trading stations elsewhere. To the region, ousting the Portuguese from the Indonesian islands by the early 17th century. Voyagers from the Netherlands explored the coast of Australia, though without much immediate result. Finally, toward the mid-17th century, Holland established a settlement on the southern tip of Africa, mainly to provide a relay station for its ships bound for the East Indies.

The Netherlands, Britain, and France all chartered great trading companies, such as the Dutch East India Company. These companies were given government monopolies of trade in the regions designated, but they were not rigorously supervised by their own states. They had rights to raise armies and coin money on their own. Thus, semiprivate companies, amassing great commercial fortunes, long acted almost like independent governments in the regions they claimed. For some time, a Dutch trading company effectively ruled the island of Taiwan off the coast of China. The British East India Company played a similar role in parts of India during much of the 18th century. The companies in North America traded actively in furs.

No matter where in Europe they came from, explorers and their crews faced many hardships at sea. The work was tiring and uncertain, with voyages lasting many months or years, and diseases such as scurvy were rampant. One expedition accepted only bachelors for its crew because married men would miss their families too much. A sailor on another trip complained that “he was tired of being always tired, that he would rather die once than many times, and that they might as well shut their eyes and let the ship go to the bottom.”

**Map 21.2 French, British, and Dutch Holdings, c. 1700** During the 17th century, northwestern Europe took the initiative in explorations, venturing into North America and seeking convenient trading stations elsewhere.

**Europe’s new maritime strength and new trade patterns generated wider changes, developing from the 1490s onward. One was the Columbian exchange of foods, diseases, and people. New global economic inequalities and new overseas empires also emerged.**

**Toward a World Economy**

Europe’s new initiatives added to existing intercontinental trade patterns. The range and significance of exchange began to increase steadily—a key manifestation of proto-globalization. Simply including the Americas, making exchanges truly global, affected almost all major regions.
The Columbian Exchange of Disease and Food

The impact of wider exchange became visible quickly. The extension of international contacts spread disease (see Chapter 26). The greatest victims were millions of Native Americans who had not previously been exposed to Afro-Eurasian diseases such as smallpox and measles and who therefore had no natural immunities (Figure 21.4). During the 16th and 17th centuries, they died in huge numbers. Overall, in North and South America, more than half the native population would die; some estimates run as high as 80 percent. Whole island populations in the West Indies were wiped out. This was a major blow to earlier civilizations in the Americas as well as an opportunity for Europeans to forge a partially new population of their own citizens and slaves imported from Africa. The devastation occurred over a 150-year period, although in some areas it was more rapid. When Europeans made contact with Polynesians and Pacific Coast peoples in the 18th century, the same dreadful pattern played out, again undermining vibrant cultures.

Other exchanges were less dire. New World crops were spread rapidly via Western merchants. American corn and sweet potatoes were taken up widely in China (where merchants learned of them from Spaniards in the Philippines), the Mediterranean, and parts of Africa. In some cases these productive new crops, along with local agricultural improvements, triggered large population increases. For example, China began to experience long-term population pressure in the 17th century, and new crops played a key role. When Europeans introduced the potato around 1700, major population upheaval occurred there as well.

Indeed, food played a key role in the world system created during the early modern period. About 30 percent of the foods consumed in the world today come from plants of American origin. Corn became a staple in the African diet. Europeans, ironically, were more conservative. Rumors spread that American foods spread disease. It took more than a century for the potato to gain ground, but fried potatoes (French fries) were being sold on the streets of Paris by the 1680s.

Animal husbandry became more similar across the world as European and Asian animals, such as horses and cattle, were introduced to the New World. The spread of basic products and diseases formed an important backdrop to world history from the 16th century on, with varying effects on population structures in diverse regions.

Figure 21.4 This 16th-century print portrays Aztecs suffering from smallpox during the Cortés invasion (1518–1519).
The West’s Commercial Outreach

Europeans did not displace all Asian shipping from the coastal waters of China and Japan, nor did they completely monopolize the Indian Ocean (see Chapter 27). Along the east African coast, while a few European bases were established, Muslim traders remained active, and commerce continued to move toward the Middle East. Generally, however, western Europe dominated a great deal of oceanic shipping, even muscling in on trade between other societies, as between India and southeast Asia. This greatly increased Europe’s overall profits, and disproportionate control by the great merchant companies increased the European ability to determine the framework for international trade. In the eastern Mediterranean, for example, a Spanish-directed fleet defeated the navy of the Ottoman Empire in the battle of Lepanto in 1571. With this setback, any hope of successful Muslim rivalry against European naval power ended. The Turks rebuilt their fleet and continued their activity in the eastern Mediterranean, but they could not challenge the Europeans on the larger international routes.

Although western Europe did not conquer much inland territory in Africa or Asia, it did seek a limited network of secure harbors. Led by Spain and Portugal, then followed by the various northern powers, European ports spread along the west coast of Africa, several parts of the Indian subcontinent, and the islands of southeast Asia by the 17th century. Even in China, where unusually strong governments limited the Europeans’ ability to seize harbors outright, the Portuguese won effective control over the island port of Macao. European-controlled ports served as areas for contact with overland traders (usually local merchants) and provided access to inland goods not directly within the reach of the West.

Where direct control was not feasible, European influence led to the formation of special Western enclaves in existing cities, where Western traders won special legal rights. This was the pattern in the Ottoman Empire, where Western merchants set up colonies within Constantinople, and in Russia, where Western factors (shipping agents) set up first in Moscow and then in St. Petersburg. Elements of this system even emerged in Japan after a firm isolationist policy was launched about 1600, as Dutch traders were given special access to the port of Nagasaki. The point was obvious: international trade gained growing importance in supplementing regional economies. Because western Europe now ran this trade, it won special rights of access.

Imbalances in World Trade

The most active competition in world trade emerged between European nations themselves. Spain briefly dominated, thanks to its imports of silver from the Americas. But it lacked a good banking system and could not support a full commercial surge. England, France, and Holland, where merchants had firmer status, soon pulled in the lion’s share of profits from world trade. Western Europe quickly expanded its manufacturing operations, so that it could export expensive finished goods, such as guns and cloth, in return for unprocessed goods, such as silver and sugar, traded by other societies. Here was another margin for profit.

The dominant core nations in the new world system supplemented their growing economic prowess by self-serving political policies. The doctrines of mercantilism, which urged that a nation-state not import goods from outside its own empire but sell exports as widely as possible in its own ships, both reflected and encouraged the new world system. Tariff policies discouraged manufacturing in colonial areas and stimulated home-based manufacturing.

Beyond western Europe lay areas that were increasingly enmeshed in the world economy but as dependants to the core nations. These areas produced low-cost goods: precious metals and cash crops such as sugar, spice, tobacco, and later cotton. Human labor was a vital item of exchange. Parts of sub-Saharan Africa entered the new world economy mainly as suppliers of slaves. The earlier west African patterns of trade across the Sahara yielded to a dominant focus on the Atlantic and therefore to activities organized by Western shippers. In return for slaves and unprocessed goods, Europeans traded their manufactured items, including guns, while profiting from their control of commercial and shipping services.
VISUALIZING THE PAST

West Indian Slaveholding

The following table describes the rise of the plantation system, and attendant slaveholding, on the British West Indian island of Antigua, where sugar growing for export gained increasing hold. Trends of the sort indicated in this table raise further analytical issues about cause and effect. What might have caused the main changes in Antigua’s estate system? How might the changes have related to the larger framework of the world economy? What do the trends suggest about the European demand for sugar and about production methods used to meet this demand?

What impact would the trends have had on slaves themselves? Laws in the British Caribbean soon began to enforce the estate system, exempting masters from murder charges when slaves died from beatings administered as punishment and fining groups such as the Quakers for daring to bring slaves to religious meetings. How do the statistical trends help explain the imposition of new laws of this sort?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1688</th>
<th>1706</th>
<th>1767</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taxables</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slaveholders</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planters with 20+ slaves</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planters with 100+ slaves</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slaves</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>1,150</td>
<td>5,610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acreage</td>
<td>5,811</td>
<td>5,660</td>
<td>12,350</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

QUESTIONS What trends in the social and economic structure of this part of Antigua during the 18th century do these figures suggest? Did the estate economy become more or less labor intensive, given the acreage involved and the comparative growth rates of owner and slave populations? What do the trends suggest about the nature of the European-born or European-derived elite of Antigua?

A System of International Inequality

The new world economic relationships proved highly durable. Most of the areas established as dependent by the 17th century still carry some special burdens in world trade today. In dependent areas such as Latin America and the slave-supplying parts of Africa, not all people were mired in poverty. African slave traders and princes who taxed the trade might grow rich. In Latin America the silver mines and commercial estates required regional merchants and farmers to supply food. Furthermore, many peasants in Latin America and even more in Africa were not yet involved in a market economy at all—whether regional or international—but rather produced for local subsistence with traditional motives and methods. However, significant minorities were involved in production for the world market. Also, most African and Latin American merchants and landlords did not fully control their own terms of trade. They might prosper, but their wealth did not stimulate much local manufacturing or general economic advance. Rather, they tended to import European-made goods, including (in the case of American planters) art objects and luxury items.

Coercive labor systems spread. Because dependent economies relied on cheap production of unprocessed goods, there was a tendency to build a system of forced labor that would cost little even when the overall labor supply was precarious. In the Americas, given the population loss from disease, this led to the massive importation of African slaves. Also, for many Native Americans and mestizos (people of mixed European and Native American blood), systems of estate management developed that demanded large amounts of labor. More limited examples of estate agriculture, in which peasants were forced into labor without the legal freedom to leave, arose for spice production in the Dutch East Indies and, by the 18th century, in British-dominated agricultural operations in India.

How Much World in the World Economy?

Asia, though not sponsoring the most active merchant ventures, participated strongly, and often profitably, in the world economy. The Chinese government, having renounced large-scale international trade of its own early in the 15th century, deliberately avoided involvement with international trade on someone else’s terms. It did copy some firearms manufacturing from the Europeans, but at a fairly low level. Beyond this it depended on extensive government regulation, backed up by a coastal navy, to keep European activities in check. Most of the limited trade that existed was channeled through Macao. European visitors wrote scornfully of China’s disdain for military advances.
A Jesuit wrote that “the military . . . is considered mean among them.” The Chinese were also disparaged for adhering to tradition. One Western missionary in the 17th century described how, in his opinion, the Chinese could not be persuaded “to make use of new instruments and leave their old ones without an especial order from the Emperor to that effect. They are more fond of the most defective piece of antiquity than of the most perfect of the modern, differing much in that from us who are in love with nothing but what is new.”

So China managed to avoid trying to keep up with European developments while also avoiding subservience to European merchants. Chinese manufacturing gains led to a strong export position, which is why Europeans sent a great deal of American silver to China to pay for the goods they wanted. Indeed, at the end of the 18th century, a famous British mission, appealing to the government to open the country to greater trade, was rebuffed. The imperial court, after insisting on extreme deference from the British envoy, haughtily informed him that the Chinese had no need for outside goods. European eagerness for Chinese goods—attested to by the habit adopted in the 17th century of calling fine porcelain “china”—was simply not matched by Chinese enthusiasm, but a trickle of trade continued. Westerners compensated in part by developing their own porcelain industry by the 18th century, which contributed to the early Industrial Revolution, particularly in Britain. Still, there were hopes for commercial entry to China that remained unfulfilled.

Japan, though initially attracted by Western expeditions in the 16th century, also more fully pulled back. So did Korea. The Japanese showed some openness to Christian missions, and they were fascinated by Western advances in gunnery and shipping. Artists captured the interest in exotic foreigners. Guns had particular relevance to Japan’s ongoing feudal wars, for there was no disdain here for military life. Yet Japanese leaders soon worried about undue Western influence and the impact this could have on internal divisions among warring lords, as well as the threat guns posed to samurai military dominance. They encouraged a local gunmaking industry that matched existing European muskets and small cannon fairly readily, but having achieved this they cut off most contact with any world trade. Most Japanese were forbidden to travel or trade abroad, the small Christian minority was suppressed, and from the 17th until the 19th centuries Japan entered a period of almost complete isolation except for some Chinese contact and trading concessions to the small Dutch enclave near Nagasaki.

Other societies participated variously in world trade. The rulers of India’s new Mughal Empire in the 16th century were interested in Western traders and even encouraged the establishment of small port enclaves. India also sold goods—not only spices but also manufactured cottons textiles and other items—in return for New World silver. Most attention, however, was riveted on internal development and land-based expansion and commerce; world trade was a sideline. The same held true for the Ottoman and Safavid empires in the Middle East through the 17th century, despite the presence of small European enclaves in key cities. Russia lay partially outside the world economic orbit until the 18th century. A largely agricultural society, Russia conducted much of its trade with nomadic peoples in central Asia, which further insulated it from west European demands.

The Expansionist Trend

The world economy was not stationary; it tended to gain ground over time, as the centerpiece of the process of proto-globalization. The process also linked to the formation of new kinds of empire. South America, the West Indies, a part of North America, and some regions in west Africa were first staked out as colonial dependencies beginning in the 16th century, and the list later expanded. Portions of southeast Asia that produced for world markets, under the dominance of the great Western trading companies, were brought into the orbit by the 17th century.

By the early 18th century, Western traders were advancing in India as the Mughal Empire began to fall apart. The British and French East India Companies staked out increasing roles in internal trade and administration. Early in the 18th century, Britain passed tariffs against the import of cotton cloth made in India as a means of protecting Britain’s own cotton industry. The intent was to use India as a market for British-processed goods and a source of outright payments of gold, which the British were requiring by the late 18th century. Indian observers were aware of the shifting balance. An 18th-century account noted,

But such is the little regard which they [the British] show to the people of this kingdom, and such their apathy and indifference for their welfare, that the people under their dominion groan everywhere, and are reduced to poverty and distress.
India maintained a complex regional economy still, with much internal manufacturing and trade; it was not forced into such complete dependency as Latin America, for example. However, what had initially been a position outside the world economy was changing, to India’s disadvantage. Manufacturing began to decline.

Eastern Europe also was brought into a growing relationship with the world economy and the west European core. The growth of cities in the West created a growing market for imported grains by the 18th century. Much of this demand was met by east European growers, particularly in Prussia and Poland but also in Russia. Export grains, in turn, were produced mainly on large estates by serfs, who were subjected to prolonged periods of labor service. This relationship was similar to that which prevailed in Latin America, with one exception: outside of Poland, east European governments were much stronger than their Latin American counterparts.

Colonial Expansion

Opportunities to establish colonies were particularly inviting in the Americas, where European guns, horses, and iron weapons offered special advantages and where political disarray and the population losses provided openings in many cases (see Chapter 24).

The Americas: Loosely Controlled Colonies

Spain moved first. The Spanish colonized several West Indian islands soon after Columbus’s first voyage, starting with Hispaniola and then moving into Cuba, Jamaica, and Puerto Rico. Only in 1509 did they begin settlement on the mainland, in search of gold. The first colony was established in what is now Panama, under an able but unscrupulous adventurer, *Vasco de Balboa*. Several expeditions fanned out in Central America, and then a separate expedition from Cuba launched the Spanish conquest of the Aztecs in Mexico. Another expedition headed toward the Inca realm in the Andes in 1531, where hard fighting was needed before ultimate victory. From this base several colonial expeditions spread to Colombia, other parts of the Andes, and portions of Argentina.

Expansion resulted from the efforts of a motley crew of adventurers, many of them violent and treacherous, like *Francisco Pizarro* (1478–1541), admittedly one of the more successful examples (Figure 21.5). Pizarro first came to the Americas in 1502 and settled on the island of Hispaniola. Later, he joined Balboa’s colony in Panama, where he received a cattle ranch. Learning of wealth in Peru, he joined with an illiterate soldier and a priest, mounting two expeditions that failed. In 1528 he returned to Spain to gain the king’s support and also his agreement that he would be governor of the new province. With these pledges and a force of about 180 men, he attacked the divided Inca Empire. Capturing Emperor Atahualpa, he accepted a large ransom and then strangled him. Several revolts followed during Pizarro’s rule from Lima, a coastal city he founded. But the Spanish king ennobled Pizarro for his success. At a dinner in 1541, Pizarro was assassinated by a group of Inca rebels.

Early colonies in the Americas typically were developed by small bands of gold-hungry Europeans, often loosely controlled by colonial administrations back home. Colonial rulers often established only limited controls over native populations at first, content to exact tribute without imposing detailed administration and sometimes leaving existing leaders in place. Gradually, more formal administration spread as agricultural settlements were established and official colonial systems took shape under control of bureaucrats sent from Spain and Portugal. Active missionary efforts, designed to Christianize the native peoples, added another layer of detailed administration throughout the Spanish holdings in North and South America.
Western Conquerors: Tactics and Motives

In the first passage quoted here, Columbus writes to the Spanish monarchy on his way home from his 1492 expedition. In the second passage, the brother of Francisco Pizarro, the Spanish conqueror of Peru, describes in 1533 how the Inca ruler, Atahuallpa, was defeated.

Columbus’s 1492 Expedition

Sir, believing that you will take pleasure in hearing of the great success which our Lord has granted me in my voyage, I write you this letter, whereby you will learn how in thirty-three days’ time I reached the Indies with the fleet which the most illustrious King and Queen, our Sovereigns, gave to me, where I found very many islands thickly peopled, of all which I took possession without resistance for their Highnesses by proclamation made and with the royal standard unfurled. To the first island that I found I gave the name of San Salvador, in remembrance of His High Majesty, who hath marvelously brought all these things to pass; the Indians call it Guanaham. . . .

Espanola is a wonder. Its mountains and plains, and meadows, and fields, are so beautiful and rich for planting and sowing, and rearing cattle of all kinds, and for building towns and villages. The harbours on the coast, and the number and size and wholesomeness of the rivers, most of them bearing gold, surpass anything that would be believed by one who had not seen them. There is a great difference between the trees, fruits, and plants of this island and those of Juana. In this island there are many spices and extensive mines of gold and other metals. The inhabitants of this and of all the other islands I have found or gained intelligence of, both men and women, go as naked as they were born, with the exception that some of the women cover one part only with a single leaf of grass or with a piece of cotton, made for that purpose. They have neither iron, nor steel, nor arms, nor are they competent to use them, not that they are not well-formed and of handsome stature, but because they are timid to a surprising degree. . . .

Although I have taken possession of all these islands in the name of their Highnesses, and they are all more abundant in wealth than I am able to express . . . yet there was one large town in Espanola of which especially I took possession, situated in a locality well adapted for the working of the gold mines, and for all kinds of commerce, either with the main land on this side, or with that beyond which is the land of the great Khan, with which there is great profit. . . .

I have also established the greatest friendship with the king of that country, so much so that he took pride in calling me his brother, and treating me as such. Even should these people change their intentions towards us and become hostile, they do not know what arms are, but, as I have said, go naked, and are the most timid people in the world; so that the men I have left could, alone, destroy the whole country, and this island has no danger for them, if they only know how to conduct themselves. . . . Finally, and speaking only of what has taken place in this voyage, which has been so hasty, their Highnesses may see that I shall give them all the gold they require, if they will give me but a very little assistance; spices also, and cotton, as much as their Highnesses shall command to be shipped; and mast, hitherto found only in Greece . . . slaves, as many of these idolators as their Highnesses shall command to be shipped. . . .

But our Redeemer hath granted this victory our illustrious King and Queen and their kingdoms, which have acquired great fame by an event of such high importance, in which all Christendom ought to rejoice, and which it ought to celebrate with great festivals and the offering of solemn thanks to the Holy Trinity with many solemn prayers, both for the great exaltation which may accrue to them in turning so many nations to our holy faith, and also for the temporal benefits which will bring great refreshment and gain, not only to Spain, but to all Christians.

France, Britain, and Holland, though latecomers to the Americas, also staked out colonial settlements. French explorations along the St. Lawrence River in Canada led to small colonies around Quebec, from 1608 onward, and explorations in the Mississippi River basin. Dutch and English settlers moved into portions of the Atlantic coastal regions early in the 17th century. Also in the 17th century, all three countries seized and colonized several West Indian islands, which they soon involved in the growing slave trade.

British and French North America: Backwater Colonies

Colonies of European settlers developed in North America, where patterns differed in many respects from those in Latin America and the Caribbean. English colonies along the Atlantic received religious refugees, such as the Calvinists who fled religious tensions in Britain to settle in New England. Government grants of land to major proprietors such as William Penn led to explicit efforts to recruit settlers. New York began as a Dutch settlement but was taken over easily by an English expedition in 1664.

In Canada, the first substantial European settlements were launched by the French government under Louis XIV. The initial plan involved setting up manorial estates under great lords whose rights were carefully restricted by the state. French peasants were urged to emigrate, although it proved difficult to develop an adequate labor force. However, birth rates were high, and by 1755 New France had about 55,000 settlers in a peasant society that proved extremely durable as it
those of Latin America, with large estates based on imported slave labor, a wealthy planter class bent
produced tobacco and sugar, and then cotton, became important. Patterns there were similar to
to economic regulation. As a result, some merchant and manufacturing activities emerged
was not nearly as great as profits from the Caribbean or Latin America, so much less attention was
their North American colonies. The value of North American products, such as timber and furs,
their Asian colonies. British and French leaders valued their West Indian holdings much more than

Why and How Atahualpa Was Defeated
The messengers came back to ask the Governor to send a Chris-
to Atahualpa, that he intended to come at once, and that he
would come unarmed. The Governor sent a Christian, and
presently Atahualpa moved, leaving the armed men behind him.
He took with him about five or six thousand Indians without arms,
except that under their shirts they had small darts and slings with
stones.
He came in a litter, and before went three or four hundred In-
dians in livers, cleaning straws from the road and singing. Then
came Atahualpa in the midst of his chiefs and principal men, the
greatest among them being also borne on men’s shoulders. ... A
Dominican Friar, who was with the Governor, came forward to tell
him, on the part of the Governor, that he waited for him in his
lodgings, and that he was sent to speak with him. The Friar then
told Atahualpa that he was a Priest, and that he was sent there to
teach the things of the Faith, if they should desire to be Christians.
He showed Atahualpa a book ... and told him that book contained
the things of God. Atahualpa asked for the book, and threw it on
the ground, saying: “I will not leave this place until you have re-
stored all that you have taken in my land. I know well who you are,
and what you have come for.” ... The Friar went to the Governor
and reported what was being done, and that no time was to be lost.
The Governor sent to me; and I had arranged with the Captain of
the artillery that, when a sign was given, he should discharge his
pieces, and that, on hearing the reports, all the troops should come
forth at once. This was done, and as the Indians were unarmed, they
were defeated without danger to any Christian. Those who carried
the litter, and the chiefs who surrounded Atahualpa, were all killed,
falling around him. The Governor came out and seized Atahualpa,
and in protecting him, he received a knife cut from a Christian in
the hand. The troops continued the pursuit as far as the place where
the armed Indians were stationed, who made no resistance what-

Next morning the Governor ordered us to go to the camp of
Atahualpa, where we found forty thousand pesos worth of gold
and two or three pounds of silver. ... The Governor said that he had not
come to make war on the Indians, but that our Lord the Emperor, who
was Lord of the whole world, had ordered him to come that he might
see the land, and let Atahualpa know the things of our Faith. ... The
Governor also told him that that land, and all other lands, belonged to
the Emperor, and that he must acknowledge him as his Lord. He
replied that he was content, and, observing that the Christians had col-
lected some gold, Atahualpa said to the Governor that they need not
take such care of it, as if there was so little; for that he could give them
ten thousand plates, and that he could fill the room in which he was up
to a white line, which was the height of a man and a half from the floor.

QUESTIONS What were the main bases for initial European
judgments about the characteristics of Native Americans? How
might the native peoples have judged the Europeans? What mo-
tives does Columbus appeal to in trying to interest Spanish rulers
in the new land?
These documents raise obvious problems of interpretation.
They interpret interactions with another, very foreign culture from
the European standpoint only. They also attribute motives to the ad-
venturers that may or may not have been predominant. Figuring out
how to gain useful, valid information from documents of this sort,
which are essential in interpreting key developments in world his-
tory, is a major challenge. What parts of the accounts seem most reli-
able, and what criteria can be used to sort out degrees of accuracy?
on importing luxury products from western Europe, and weak formal governments. Still, in world historical terms, the Atlantic colonies in North America were of limited value amid the larger colonial holdings staked out in the early modern centuries.

Yet European settlers did arrive. Driven by religious dissent, ambition, and other motives, Europeans, many from the British Isles, colonized the Atlantic coastal region, where native populations were quickly reduced by disease and war. The society that developed in the British colonies was far closer to west European forms than was that of Latin America. The colonies operated their own assemblies, which provided the people with political experience. Calvinist and Quaker church assemblies gave governing power to groups of elders or wider congregations. Many colonists thus had reason to share with some west Europeans a sense of the importance of representative institutions and self-government.

Colonists were also avid consumers of political theories written in Europe, such as the parliamentary ideas of John Locke. There was also wide reading and discussion of Enlightenment materials. Institutions such as the 18th-century American Philosophical Society deliberately imitated European scientific institutes, and hundreds of North Americans contributed scientific findings to the British Royal Society. The colonies remained modest in certain cultural attainments. Art was rather primitive, although many stylistic cues came from Europe. There was no question that in formal culture, North American leaders saw themselves as part of a larger Western world.

By the late 18th century, some American merchants were trading with China, their ships picking up medicinal herbs along the Pacific coast and exchanging them for Chinese artifacts and tea.
Great Britain tried to impose firmer limits on this modestly thriving local economy after the Seven Years War. It hoped to win greater tax revenues and to guarantee markets for British goods and traders, but the effort came too late and helped encourage rebellion in key colonies. Unusual among the colonies, North America developed a merchant class and some stake in manufacturing in a pattern similar to that taking shape in western Europe itself.

The spread of Western values in the Atlantic colonies and in British and French settlements in Canada was facilitated by the modest impact of Native Americans in these settled areas (Figure 21.7). The native population of this part of North America had always been less dense than in Central America or the Andes region. Because few Native American groups in these regions practiced settled agriculture, instead combining hunting with slash and burn corn growing, European colonists found it easy to displace them from large stretches of territory. The ravages of European-imported disease reduced the indigenous population greatly. Many forest peoples were pushed westward. Some abandoned agriculture, turning to a new horse-based hunting economy on the plains (the horse was brought to Mexico by the Spaniards). Many territorial wars further distracted the Native American groups. The net result of these factors was that although European colonists interacted with Native Americans, learned from them, and feared and mistreated them, the colonists did not combine with them to forge new cultural groups like those emerging in much of Latin America.

By 1700, the importation of African slaves proved to be a more important addition to the North American experience, particularly in the southern colonies. The practice of slaveholding and interactions with African culture distinguished North American life from its European counterpart. By the 18th century, 23 percent of the population of the English colonies was of African origin.

**North America and Western Civilization**

On balance, most white settlers intended to transplant key Western habits into their new setting. For example, family patterns were similar. American colonists were able to marry slightly earlier than ordinary western Europeans because of the greater abundance of land, and they had larger families. Still, they reproduced most features of the European-style family, including the primary emphasis on the nuclear unit. The new Americans did have unusual concern for children, if only because they depended so heavily on their work in a labor-scarce environment. European visitors commented on the child-centeredness of American families and the freedom of children to speak up. These variations, though significant, played on trends also becoming visible in Europe, such as the new emphasis on family affection.

Even when key colonies rebelled against European control, as they did in 1776, they moved in the name of Western political ideas and economic goals against the dependency the British tried to impose. They established a government that responded to the new Western political theories, implementing some key ideas for the first time.

**Africa and Asia: Coastal Trading Stations**

In Africa, Europeans for the most part contented themselves with small coastal fortresses, negotiating with African kings and merchants but not trying to claim large territories of their own. They sold Asian products, like Indian cotton, and European guns and decorative items in return for slaves. Generally, Europeans were deterred by climate, disease, and non-navigable rivers from trying to reach into the interior. Mostly, they dealt with West African governments and traders. There
were two important exceptions. From initial coastal settlements, Portugal sent expeditions into Angola in search of slaves. These expeditions had a more direct and more disruptive impact in this part of southwestern Africa than elsewhere along the Atlantic coast. More important still was the Cape Colony planted by the Dutch on the Cape of Good Hope in 1652. The intent was to form another coastal station to supply Dutch ships bound for Asia. But some Dutch farmers were sent, and these Boers (the Dutch word for farmers) began to fan out on large farms in a region still lightly populated by Africans. They clashed with local hunting groups, enslaving some of them. Only after 1770 did the expanding Boer settlements directly conflict with Bantu farmers, opening a long battle for control of southern Africa that raged until the late 20th century in the nation of South Africa.

European colonies in Asia were also exceptional. Spain set up an administration for the Philippines and sent active Catholic missionaries. The Dutch East India company administered portions of the main islands of present-day Indonesia and also (for a time) Taiwan, off the China coast.

Colonization in Asia entered a new phase as the British and French began to struggle for control of India, beginning in the late 17th century when the Mughal Empire weakened. Even before the Mughals faltered after the death in 1707 of their last great emperor, Aurangzeb, French and British forts dotted the east and west coasts, along with Portuguese Goa. As Mughal inefficiency increased, with a resultant surge of regional states ruled by Indians, portions of the subcontinent became an arena for the growing international rivalry between Britain and France.

The British East India Company had two advantages in this competition. Through negotiation with local princes, it had gained a station at Calcutta, which gave it some access to the great wealth of the Ganges valley. Furthermore, the company had enormous influence over the British government and, through Britain’s superior navy, excellent communication on the ocean routes. Its French rivals, in contrast, had less political clout at home, where the government often was distracted by European land wars. The French also were more interested in missionary work than the British, for Protestants became deeply committed to colonial missions only in the 19th century. Before then, the British were content to leave Hindu customs alone and devote themselves to commercial profits.

French–British rivalry raged bitterly through the mid-18th century. Both sides recruited Indian princes and troops as allies. Outright warfare erupted in 1744 and then again during the Seven Years War. In 1756, an Indian ruler in Bengal attacked and captured the British base at Calcutta. In the aftermath of the battle, English prisoners were placed in their own jail, where humidity and overcrowding led to perhaps as many as 120 deaths before Indian officials became aware of their plight and released them. The English used this incident, which they dubbed the “black hole of Calcutta,” to rally their forces. The East India Company’s army recaptured Calcutta and then seized additional Indian and French territory, aided by abundant bribes to many regional princes. French power in India was destroyed, and the East India Company took over administration of the Bengal region, which stretched inland from Calcutta. Soon after this, the British also gained the island of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) from the Dutch.

The full history of British India did not begin until late in the 18th century, when the British government took a more active hand in Indian administration, supplementing the unofficial government of the East India Company (Figure 21.8). Indeed, British control of the subcontinent was incomplete. The Mughal Empire remained, although it was increasingly weak and it controlled scant territory, as did other regional
kingdoms, including the Sikh state. Britain gained some new territories by force but was also content to form alliances with local princes without disturbing their internal administration.

In most colonies, European administration long remained fairly loose. Few settlers arrived, except in south Africa and the Americas. Outside the Americas, cultural impositions were slight. Missionary activity won many converts in the Philippines but not elsewhere in Asia or in Africa at this point. The main impact of colonies supplemented the more general development of the world economy: colonial administrations pressed for economic advantage for the home country by opening markets and prompting commercial production of cheap foods and raw materials. Here, of course, the consequences to colonial peoples were very real.

**Impact on Western Europe**

Western Europe was hugely affected by its own colonial success, not only economically but also diplomatically. Colonial rivalries and wars added to the existing hostilities between key nation-states. England and Holland early turned against Spanish success, with great effect. The Dutch and the English competed, engaging in many skirmishes in the 17th century. Then attention turned to the growing competition between the British and the French. This contest had extensive geographic scope: the Seven Years War (1756–1763), fought in Europe, India, and North America, has been called the first world war.

There were also less obvious but equally dramatic effects on European society, including daily life. For example, from the mid-17th century onward, the use of colonially produced sugar spread widely. Previously, sugar had been a costly, upper-class item. Now for the first time (salt had been the one previous exception), a basic product available to ordinary people was being traded over long distances. The spread of sugar had cultural as well as social and economic significance in giving ordinary Europeans the ability to obtain pleasurable sensations in quick doses—an interesting foreshadowing of later features of Western consumer behavior. It also promoted a growing role for dentists by the 18th century.

More broadly, the profits Europeans brought in from world trade, including the African slave trade, added wealth and capital. Many Europeans turned to manufacturing operations, as owners and workers, partly because of opportunities for export in world trade. These developments enhanced Europe’s commercial character, while reducing dependence on agriculture alone. They provided additional tax revenues for growing governments and their military ambitions.

**The Impact of a New World Order**

The development of the world economy and European colonialism had immense impact. The range of unfree labor systems, to supply goods for world trade, became more widespread than ever before. Slavery and serfdom deeply affected Latin America and eastern Europe, while the slave trade disrupted west Africa, and millions of individual lives as well.

Yet the world economy brought benefits as well as hardships, quite apart from the profits to Europe. New foods and wider trade patterns helped some societies deal with scarcity. Individual merchants and landowners gained new wealth virtually everywhere. China prospered from the imports of silver, though rapid population growth limited gains overall. The mixture of profits and compulsion brought more and more people and regions into the world economy network.

**Global Connections**

**The World Economy—And the World**

Buoyed by its growing role in the world, western Europe unquestionably saw its economy and military power increase more rapidly than those of any other society during the early modern period. As the next chapter shows, Europe changed internally as well, often in dramatic ways. Because of these facts, it is tempting to see the early modern centuries as a European drama in which other regions either played supporting roles or watched in awe.

Yet the relationships to the world economy were in fact quite complex. They ranged from conscious isolation to controlled participation to undeniable dependency. Many societies retained vibrant political systems and internal economies. Some, although attracted
to certain Western features, wanted to stand apart from the values and institutions that world economic success seemed to involve.

Even societies that had changes thrust upon them, like Latin America, were hardly passive. Pressed by missionaries, Latin Americans did not simply adopt European-style Christianity, but rather blended in traditional beliefs and practices and many distinctive artistic forms. The world was growing closer, but it was not necessarily becoming simpler.

Further Readings


On slavery and its trade, see Pamela Scully and Diana Paton, eds., Gender and Slave Emancipation in the Atlantic World (2005); Eric Williams, Capitalism and Slavery (1964); Orlando Patterson, Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study (1982); and D. B. Davis, Slavery and Human Progress (1984); the last two are important comparative and analytical statements in a major field of recent historical study. See also Philip D. Curtin, Atlantic Slave Trade (1972), and his edited volume, Africa Remembered: Narratives by West Africans from the Era of the Slave Trade (1967). A good recent survey of developments in Africa and in the period is Paul Bohannan and Philip Curtin, Africa and Africans (1988).


On the Web

An interactive webpage on European exploration and trade can be found at http://www.lerner.org/interactives/renaissance/exploration.html (click on "Read More" at end of opening file). Biographies of leaders of the European age of discovery, from Henry the Navigator to Vasco da Gama, are offered at http://www.win.tue.nl/cs/fm/engels/discovery/. This site also traces the lives of the world’s great explorers of every region and era. Though seemingly a lesson plan, http://www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/1992/2/92.02.01.x.html#a offers excellent overviews of Euro-American contacts and a superb bibliography. Massive on-line text retrieval system for articles on the age of discovery is located at http://www.millersville.edu/~columbus/a-c.html.

A virtual version of an exhibit mounted by the Library of Congress and other materials that look at the multicultural dimensions of the events of 1492, the life of Christopher Columbus, and the Columbian exchange his voyages initiated can be found at http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/1492/. Other such exhibits and analyses of his career can be found at http://www.ibiblio.org/expo/1492/exhibit/c-Columbus/columbus.html and http://xroads.virginia.edu/~cap/COLUMBUS/c03.html.

Most discussions on the nature of that exchange rightly focus on the material outcomes of the Atlantic slave trade, such as the development of plantation economies and the exchange of crops, animals, and diseases. However, http://daphne.palomar.edu/scrot/clex.htm also examines what it admits to be the controversial notion that the indigenous peoples of the Americas may have contributed toward the evolution of important modern ideas, including Western conceptions of liberty, ecology, and even corporate structure. At the very least, such speculation reminds us that the relationship between the indigenous people of the Americas and their European conquerors was complex.
The complex lives and motives of the conquistadors are studied at http://www.pbs.org/opb/conquistadors/home.htm.

The relationship between conquistador Hernán Cortés and Donna Maria, La Malinche, his female Nahuatl-speaking translator, certainly was as complicated as Cortés’s relations with his Aztec-hating Mesoamerica allies. Both relationships are discussed at http://thedagger.com/archive/conquest/conquest1.html. Another site, http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/aztecs1.html, offers a text of the discussions between Cortés and Moctezuma that Malinche facilitated as a translator and that foreshadowed the end of the Aztec Empire. Malinche’s role in the Columbian exchange is examined at http://www.mexconnect.com/mex_/history/malinche.html and http://thedagger.com/archive/conquest/malinche.html.

Francisco Pizarro’s encounter with Inca leaders and the imposition of Spanish rule over their empire is presented at http://www.ucalgary.ca/applied_history/tutor/eurvoya/inca.html.

The controversy over the demographic catastrophe that accompanied the conquest of Mexico is analyzed from the perspective of contemporary Spanish and Nahuatl records at http://www.hist.umn.edu/~rmccaa/vircatas/vir6.htm (or scroll down to this subject in 1998 files at http://www.hist.umn.edu/~rmccaa/).
