

PART FIVE

THE EUROPEAN  
MOMENT IN WORLD  
HISTORY

1750–1900



Contents

Chapter 16. Atlantic Revolutions, Global Echoes, 1750–1900

Chapter 17. Revolutions of Industrialization, 1750–1900

Chapter 18. Colonial Encounters in Asia, Africa, and Oceania, 1750–1950

Chapter 19. Empires in Collision: Europe, the Middle East, and East Asia, 1800–1900

photos: left, Musée de la Ville de Paris, Musée Carnavalet, Paris, France/© RMN–Grand Palais/Art Resource, NY; center, © Topham/The Image Works; right, The Chinese Cake, from *Le Petit Journal*, 1898, lithograph by Henri Meyer (1844–1899)/Private Collection/Roger-Viollet, Paris, France/Bridgeman Images

## THE BIG PICTURE

---

# EUROPEAN CENTRALITY AND THE PROBLEM OF EUROCENTRISM

During the century and a half between 1750 and 1900, sometimes referred to as the “long nineteenth century,” two new and related phenomena held center stage in the global history of humankind and represent the major themes of the four chapters that follow. The first of these, explored in Chapters 16 and 17, was the creation of a new kind of human society, commonly called “modern.” It emerged from the intersection of the Scientific, French, and Industrial Revolutions, all of which took shape initially in Western Europe. Those societies generated many of the transformative ideas that have guided human behavior over the past several centuries: that movement toward social equality and the end of poverty was possible; that ordinary people might participate in political life; that nations might trump empires; that women could be equal to men; that slavery was no longer necessary.

The second theme of this long nineteenth century, which is addressed in Chapters 18 and 19, was the growing ability of these modern societies to exercise enormous power and influence over the rest of humankind. In some places, this occurred within expanding European empires, such as those that governed India, Southeast Asia, Africa, and Pacific Oceania. Elsewhere, it took place through less formal means—economic penetration, military intervention, diplomatic pressure, missionary activity—in states that remained officially independent, such as China, Japan, the Ottoman Empire, and various countries in Latin America.

Together, these two phenomena thrust Western Europe, and to a lesser extent North America, into a new and far more prominent role in world history than ever before. While various regions had experienced sprouts of modernity during the “early modern” centuries, it was in Western European societies that these novel ways of living emerged most fully. Those societies, and their North American offspring, also came to exercise a wholly unprecedented role in world affairs, as they achieved, collectively, something approaching global dominance by the early twentieth century.

But if Europeans were moving toward dominance over other peoples, they were also leading a human intervention in the natural order of unprecedented dimensions, largely the product of industrialization. The demand for raw materials to supply new factories and to feed their workers drove developments

### AP® EXAM TIP

The historical processes and events in Part Five make up 20 percent of the AP® World History exam.

across the globe, leaving a mark on such remote regions as the high peaks of the Andes, the guano islands of the Pacific, and the plains of Kansas and Argentina as well as on the industrial cities of Western Europe and North America. Growing numbers of scientists and other scholars now argue that humankind was then entering a new era, not only in human history but also in the history of the planet—its biological regime, its atmosphere, its climate, even its geology. They have called it the Anthropocene, or the “age of man.”

Historically, scientists have viewed human activity as incidental to the larger processes that have shaped the physical and biological evolution of the earth. But now they are suggesting that over the past several centuries, humankind itself has become an active agent of change in this domain, rapidly reshaping the planet. While these changes became more pronounced and obvious in the second half of the twentieth century, the European moment of the long nineteenth century takes on an added significance as the starting point of an epic transformation in the relationship of humanity to the earth, equivalent perhaps to the early stages of the Agricultural Revolution. While human beings have long felt themselves vulnerable to nature, in recent centuries unprecedented numbers of humans, possessing unprecedented powers and material desires, have left nature increasingly vulnerable to humans.

### *Eurocentric Geography and History*

The unprecedented power that Europeans accumulated during the long nineteenth century included the ability to rewrite geography and history in ways that centered the human story on Europe and to convey those views powerfully to other people. Thus flat maps placed Europe at the center of the world, while dividing Asia in half. Europe was granted continental status, even though it was more accurately only the western peninsula of Asia, much as India was its southern peninsula. Other regions of the world, such as the Far East or the Near (Middle) East, were defined in terms of their distance from Europe. The entire world came to measure longitude from a line, known as the prime meridian, which passes through the Royal Astronomical Observatory in Greenwich, England.

History textbooks as well often reflected a Europe-centered outlook, sometimes blatantly. In 1874, the American author William O. Swinton wrote *An Outline of the World's History*, a book intended for use in high school and college classes, in which he flatly declared that “the race to which we belong, the Aryan, has always played the leading part in the great drama of the world's progress.”<sup>1</sup> Other peoples and civilizations, by contrast, were long believed to be static or stagnant, thus largely lacking any real history. Most Europeans assumed that these “backward” peoples and regions must either imitate the Western model or face further decline and possible extinction. Until the mid-twentieth century, such ideas went largely unchallenged in the Western world.

They implied that history was a race toward the finish line of modernity. The fact that Europeans arrived there first seemed to suggest something unique, special, or superior about them or their culture, while everyone else struggled to overcome their inadequacy and catch up.

As the discipline of world history took shape in the decades after World War II, scholars and teachers actively sought to counteract such Eurocentric understandings of the past, but they faced a special problem in dealing with recent centuries. How can we avoid Eurocentrism when dealing with a phase of world history in which Europeans were in fact central? The long nineteenth century, after all, was “the European moment,” a time when Europeans were clearly the most powerful, most innovative, most prosperous, most expansive, and most widely imitated people on the planet.

### *Countering Eurocentrism*

At least five answers to this dilemma are reflected in the chapters that follow. The first is simply to remind ourselves how recent and perhaps how brief the European moment in world history has been. Other peoples too had times of “cultural flowering” that granted them a period of primacy or influence—for example, the Greeks (500 B.C.E.–200 C.E.), Indians of South Asia (200–600 C.E.), Arabs (600–1000), Chinese (1000–1500), Mongols (1200–1350), and Incas and Aztecs (fifteenth century)—but all of these were limited to particular regions of Afro-Eurasia or the Americas.<sup>2</sup> Even though the European moment operated on a genuinely global scale, Western peoples have enjoyed their worldwide primacy for at most two centuries. Some scholars have suggested that the events of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries—the end of colonial empires, the rise of India and especially China, and the assertion of Islam—mark the end, or at least the erosion, of the age of European predominance.

Second, we need to remember that the rise of Europe occurred within an international context. It was the withdrawal of the Chinese naval fleet that allowed Europeans to enter the Indian Ocean in the sixteenth century, while Native Americans’ lack of immunity to European diseases and their own divisions and conflicts greatly assisted the European takeover of the Western Hemisphere. The Industrial Revolution, explored in Chapter 17, likewise benefited from New World resources and markets and from the stimulus of superior Asian textile and pottery production. Chapters 18 and 19 make clear that European control of other regions everywhere depended on the cooperation of local elites. Such observations remind us that the remarkable—indeed revolutionary—transformations of the European moment in world history did not derive wholly from some special European genius or long-term advantage. Rather, they emerged from a unique intersection of European historical development with that of other peoples, regions, and cultures. Europeans, like everyone else, were embedded in a web of relationships that shaped their own histories.



A third reminder is that the rise of Europe to a position of global dominance was not an easy or automatic process. Frequently it occurred in the face of ferocious resistance and rebellion, which often required Europeans to modify their policies and practices. The so-called Indian mutiny in mid-nineteenth-century South Asia, a massive uprising against British colonial rule, did not end British control, but it substantially transformed the character of the colonial experience. In Africa, fear of offending Muslim sensibilities persuaded the British to keep European missionaries and mission schools out of northern Nigeria during the colonial era. Even when Europeans exercised political power, they could not do so precisely as they pleased. Empire, formal and informal alike, was always in some ways a negotiated arrangement.

Fourth, peoples the world over made active use of Europeans and European ideas for their own purposes, seeking to gain advantage over local rivals or to benefit themselves in light of new conditions. In Southeast Asia, for example, a number of highland minority groups, long oppressed by the dominant lowland Vietnamese, viewed the French invaders as liberators and assisted in their takeover of Vietnam. Hindus in India used the railroads, introduced by the British, to go on pilgrimages to holy sites more easily, while the printing press made possible the more widespread distribution of their sacred texts. During the Haitian Revolution, examined in Chapter 16, enslaved Africans made use of radical French ideas about “the rights of man” in ways that most Europeans never intended. The leaders of a massive Chinese peasant upheaval in the mid-nineteenth century adopted a unique form of Christianity to legitimate their revolutionary assault on an ancient social order. Recognizing that Asian and African peoples remained active agents, pursuing their own interests even in oppressive conditions, is another way of countering residual Eurocentrism.

Moreover, what was borrowed from Europe was always adapted to local circumstances. Thus Japanese or Russian industrial development did not wholly follow the pattern of England’s Industrial Revolution. The Christianity that took root in the Americas or later in Africa evolved in culturally distinctive ways. Ideas of nationalism, born in Europe, were used to oppose European imperialism throughout Asia and Africa. Russian and Chinese socialism in the twentieth century departed in many ways from the vision of Karl Marx. The most interesting stories of modern world history are not simply those of European triumph or the imposition of Western ideas and practices but those of encounters, though highly unequal, among culturally different peoples. It was from these encounters, not just from the intentions and actions of Europeans, that the dramatic global changes of the modern era arose.

A fifth and final antidote to Eurocentrism in an age of European centrality lies in the recognition that although Europeans gained an unprecedented prominence on the world stage, they were not the only game in town, nor were they the sole preoccupation of Asian, African, and Middle Eastern peoples. While China confronted Western aggression in the nineteenth century, it was also

absorbing a huge population increase and experiencing massive peasant rebellions that grew out of distinctly Chinese conditions. The long relationship of Muslim and Hindu cultures in India continued to evolve under British colonial rule, as it had for centuries under other political systems. West African societies in the nineteenth century experienced a wave of religious wars that created new states and extended and transformed the practice of Islam, and that faith continued its centuries-long spread on the continent even under European colonial rule. A further wave of wars and state formation in southern Africa transformed the political and ethnic landscape, even as European penetration picked up speed.

None of this diminishes the significance of the European moment in world history, but it sets that moment in a larger context of continuing patterns of historical development and of interaction and exchange with other peoples.

# Landmarks in World History (ca. 1750–ca. 1900)

1750

1775

1800

1825

## EUROPE

**1780s**  
Beginnings of  
abolitionist movement

**1780–1850**  
Beginnings of  
Industrial Revolution

**1789–1799**  
French Revolution

**1825**  
Decembrist revolt  
in Russia

**1799–1814**  
Reign of Napoleon  
Bonaparte

## THE AMERICAS AND PACIFIC OCEANIA

**1775–1787**  
Revolution in North America

**1791–1804**  
Haitian Revolution

**1768–1779**  
Voyages of Captain James  
Cook in Pacific Oceania

**1803**  
Louisiana Purchase

**1808–1825**  
Latin American wars of independence

## ASIA

**1740–1818**  
Wahhabi movement of  
Islamic renewal in Arabia

**1755**  
British takeover of India begins

**1788**  
Initial British settlement  
of Australia

**1793**  
Chinese rejects British requests  
for expanded trade

## AFRICA

**1798**  
Napoleon's invasion of Egypt

**1750–1800**  
High point of the Atlantic slave trade

**1815–1840**  
*Mfecane*; rise of Zulu  
kingdom in South Africa

**1830–1847**  
Initial French conquest  
of Algeria

**1804–1817**  
Fulbe Wars; Sokoto caliphate  
established in West Africa

**1834–1846**  
Great Trek in  
South Africa

1850

1875

1900

1925

■ 1848

Publication of *The Communist Manifesto* by Karl Marx

■ 1858

British government assumes control of India

1859–1871

Charles Darwin presents his ideas on evolution

■ 1861

Emancipation of serfs in Russia

■ 1870–1871

Unification of Germany and Italy

1875–1900

European "scramble for Africa"

■ 1905

First Russian Revolution

■ 1846–1848

Mexican–United States War

■ 1867

Dominion of Canada established

■ 1836–1888

Cuba and Brazil abolish slavery

■ 1848

Women's Rights Convention, Seneca Falls, New York

1870–1899

Colonial annexation of Pacific islands

1898–1902

Spanish-American War

1861–1865

U.S. Civil War; abolition of slavery

After 1865:

Rapid industrialization in United States

1838–1842

First Opium War in China

■ 1868

Meiji Restoration in Japan

1894–1895

Japanese war against China

1869

Opening of Suez Canal

1839–1876

Tanzimat reforms in Ottoman Empire

1898–1901

Boxer Uprising

1904–1905

Russo-Japanese War

1850–1864

Taiping Uprising in China

1857–1858

Indian Rebellion

1858–1893

French conquest of Indochina

1911–1912

Collapse of imperial China

■ 1847

Liberia established by American freed slaves

1850s

High point of East African slave trade

1875–1914

European colonial conquest of Africa

1882–1898

Samori Toure's resistance to French aggression in West Africa

1896

Battle of Adowa; Ethiopia defeats Italian forces

1899–1902

Boer War in South Africa



# UNDERSTANDING AP® THEMES IN PART FIVE

---

## Industrial and Global Integration

Part Five of this text corresponds to Period 5 of the AP® course outline and constitutes 20 percent of the AP® exam. The 150 years addressed in these chapters have great historical significance in many ways. Environmentally, they mark the advent of the Anthropocene era, when human activity began to affect the planet in ways that will be apparent for centuries to come. Much of this activity was occasioned by the Industrial Revolution (IR), a thorough transformation of economic life that began in Europe but grew to global dimensions. That economic transformation, in turn, lay at the heart of what we have come to call “modernity,” as new kinds of social life and new cultural outlooks began to take shape. In political terms, all of this led to a mounting influence of European peoples and countries, amounting to an unprecedented, albeit temporary, dominance of one part of the world over the entire globe.

Environment	Cultures	State Building	Economies	Social Structures
<p>Industrial Revolution (IR) and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Population growth</li> <li>Energy shortage</li> <li>Ecological windfall from the Americas</li> </ul> <p>Environmental effects of IR</p> <p>Romantic poets and early environmentalism</p> <p>IR as beginning of the Anthropocene era</p> <p>Changing roles of agriculture in industrial economies</p> <p>Disease in the colonial world</p> <p>Environmental effects of cash-crop agriculture: ex.: Burma and Vietnam</p> <p>Ecological damage of Bantustan policy in South Africa</p> <p>American food crops and Chinese population growth</p>	<p>Enlightenment ideas and revolution in the Atlantic world</p> <p>Cultural expressions of nationalism</p> <p>Marxist socialism as an idea and a movement</p> <p>Ideologies of imperialism</p> <p>Colonial racism and racial identity</p> <p>Colonial education and westernization</p> <p>Missionaries and "female circumcision"</p> <p>Africanization of Christianity</p> <p>"Tribalism" and pan-Africanism</p> <p>Hinduism: emergence of a distinct tradition in India and spread to the West</p> <p>Ottoman ideologies: Islamic modernism, secularism, nationalism</p> <p>Japanese westernization</p>	<p>Revolutions compared and connected: North American, French, Haitian, Latin American, Decembrist</p> <p>Post-independence state building in U.S., Haiti, Latin America</p> <p>U.S. "informal empire" in Latin America</p> <p>European empires and the IR</p> <p>Conquest and colonial states in Asia and Africa</p> <p>Taiping Uprising in China</p> <p>Opium Wars</p> <p>The end of imperial China</p> <p>Contraction and reform in Ottoman Empire</p> <p>Meiji Restoration in Japan</p> <p>Meiji Japan and women's rights</p> <p>Japan as an imperial power</p>	<p>Industrial Revolutions compared: British, French, U.S., Russian, Japanese, Latin American</p> <p>Destruction of plantation economy in Haiti</p> <p>Post-slavery labor regimes in the Americas</p> <p>"Dependent development": Latin America in the world economy</p> <p>Colonial economies compared</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Forced labor systems</li> <li>Cash-crop production</li> <li>Mining economies</li> <li>Settler economies</li> </ul> <p>Scarcity of colonial industrialization</p> <p>Taiping Uprising and the devastation of China's economy</p> <p>Opium trade and its outcomes</p> <p>Failure of Chinese industrialization</p> <p>Japan's industrial revolution</p>	<p>Women in Atlantic revolutions</p> <p>Early feminism</p> <p>Abolition of slavery</p> <p>End of serfdom in Russia</p> <p>Class in colonial North America</p> <p>Class and gender outcomes of French Revolution</p> <p>Class, race, and social upheaval in Haiti</p> <p>Absence of social change in Latin American revolutions</p> <p>Class and IR: aristocracy, middle classes, artisans, workers</p> <p>Gender and IR: domesticity and return to the workforce</p> <p>Patterns of migration: European, Asian, African</p> <p>African women and colonial economies</p> <p>New and old elites in colonial regimes</p> <p>Gender policies of Taiping rebels</p> <p>Tokugawa society and social change</p> <p>Women and reform in Meiji Japan</p>