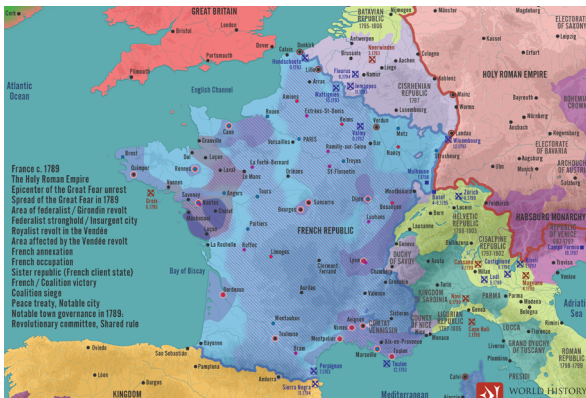


Map of the American War of Independence, 1775-1783

After the initial Articles of Confederation proved ineffectual in governing the diverse states, a new Constitution was proposed that would balance the need for a centralized government with the desire of the states for local control. The Constitution went into effect on June 21, 1788, with George Washington elected as the first President of the United States. Yet the language of universal of equality for this new government stood in stark contrast to the to the reality of brutal enslavement of large numbers of Black people as well as limits on access to voting rights to just propertied white men.

During the American Revolution, Marquis de Lafayette, a French aristocrat, fought alongside Washington and secured France’s financial support for the American colonists. Inspired by the success of the American Revolution and Constitution, thousands of French people discontent with the monarchy began the French Revolution in the summer of 1789. Like the American colonists, the



Map of the French Revolution, 1789-1799

revolutionaries in France wanted to trade their antiquated monarchy for a new government based on the ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity. But some French revolutionaries felt that the new constitutional republic championed by Lafayette and others did not go far enough. A radical phase of revolution began in 1792, creating chaos that led to a 1799 military coup by Napoleon Bonaparte, returning monarchy to France. In later decades, France vacillated between forms of monarchy and republic, but living up to the revolution’s ideals remained important to large groups of people.

As the events of the French Revolution were unfolding, in 1791 slaves working French colonial plantations on the Caribbean colony of Saint-Domingue—the western part of the island of Hispaniola—rebelled against the violence and oppression of slavery. They invoked the revolutionary ideals of freedom, natural rights, and representative government under the leadership of general Toussaint Louverture, who himself had been born into slavery. The Revolutionary govern-

The American Revolution took place after Britain’s North American colonies declared their independence in the summer of 1776. General George Washington and a poorly equipped army patched together from colonial militias defeated Britain in a final decisive battle at Yorktown, Virginia in the fall of 1781. The former colonies then proceeded to create a representative democracy without the

leadership of a king. After the initial Articles of Confederation proved ineffectual in governing the diverse states, a new Constitution was proposed that would balance the need for a centralized government with the desire of the states for local control. The Constitution went into effect on June 21, 1788, with George Washington elected as the first President of the United States. Yet the language of universal of equality for this new government stood in stark contrast to the to the reality of brutal enslavement of large numbers of Black people as well as limits on access to voting rights to just propertied white men.

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