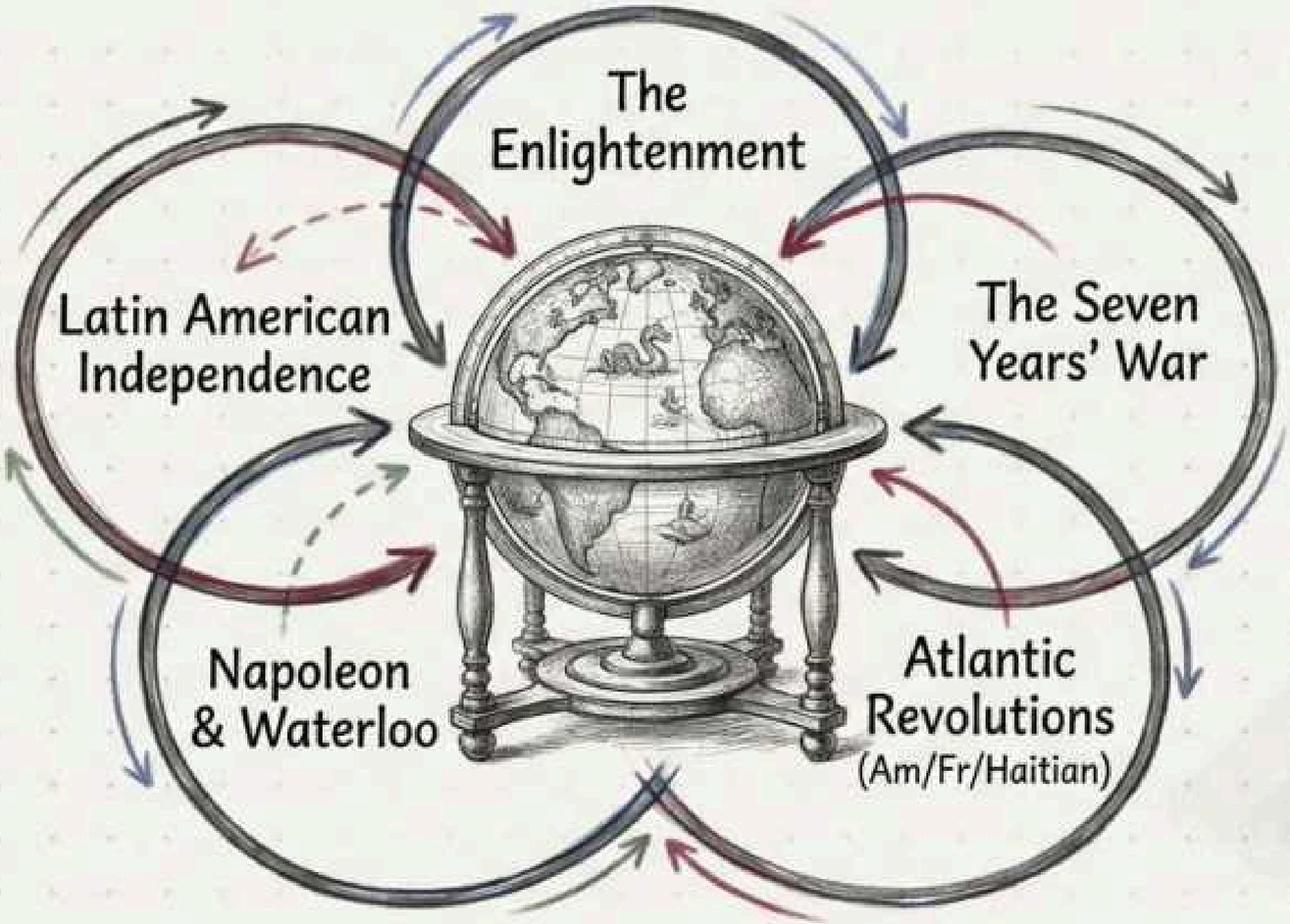
Welcome to the Age of Upheaval: Enlightenment and Revolutions (1700–1815)

¶ 2.1



At a glance: How upheavals spread ideas of rights and nations that still shape our politics.

The Long Eighteenth Century

¶ 2.2



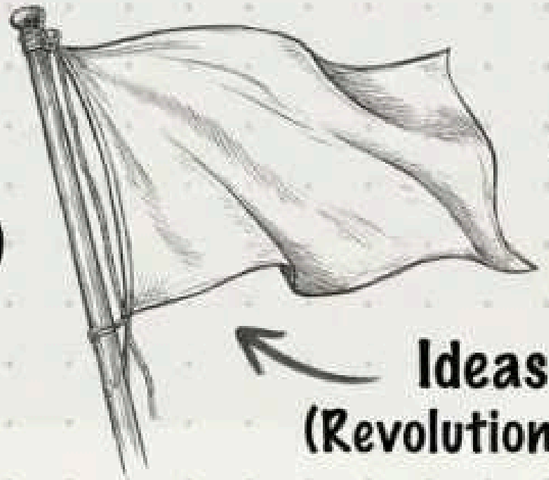
Ideas of Rights
(The Enlightenment)

1815
(Fall of Napoleon)

1700
(Start of Era)

Upheavals
(America, France,
Haiti, Latin America)

1815
(Fall of Napoleon)

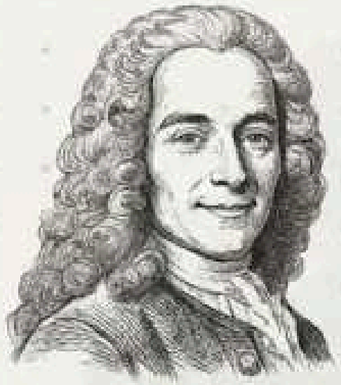


Ideas of Nations
(Revolutions & Independence)

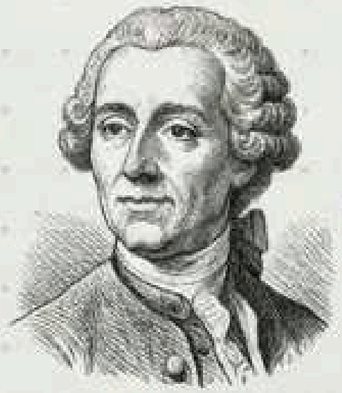
These upheavals spread ideas that continue to shape modern politics.

The Architecture of the Enlightenment: Improving Human Life Through Reason

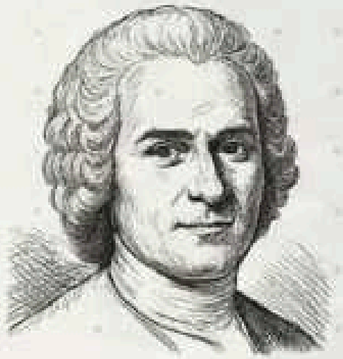
¶ 2.3



→ Attacks Intolerance



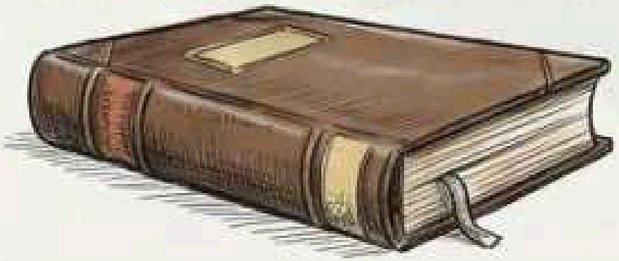
→ Separation of Government Powers



→ Popular Sovereignty



→ Natural Rights (Life, Liberty, Property)



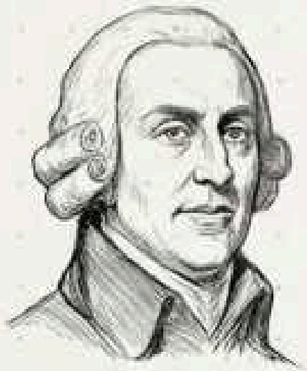


← Ideas spread rapidly through books, salons, and coffeehouses.

¶ 2.4

Economics and the Limits of Enlightenment

The Expansion of Ideas



→ Adam Smith (1776)
Free markets create national wealth.



→ Mary Wollstonecraft (1792)
Women deserve education.

The Excluded

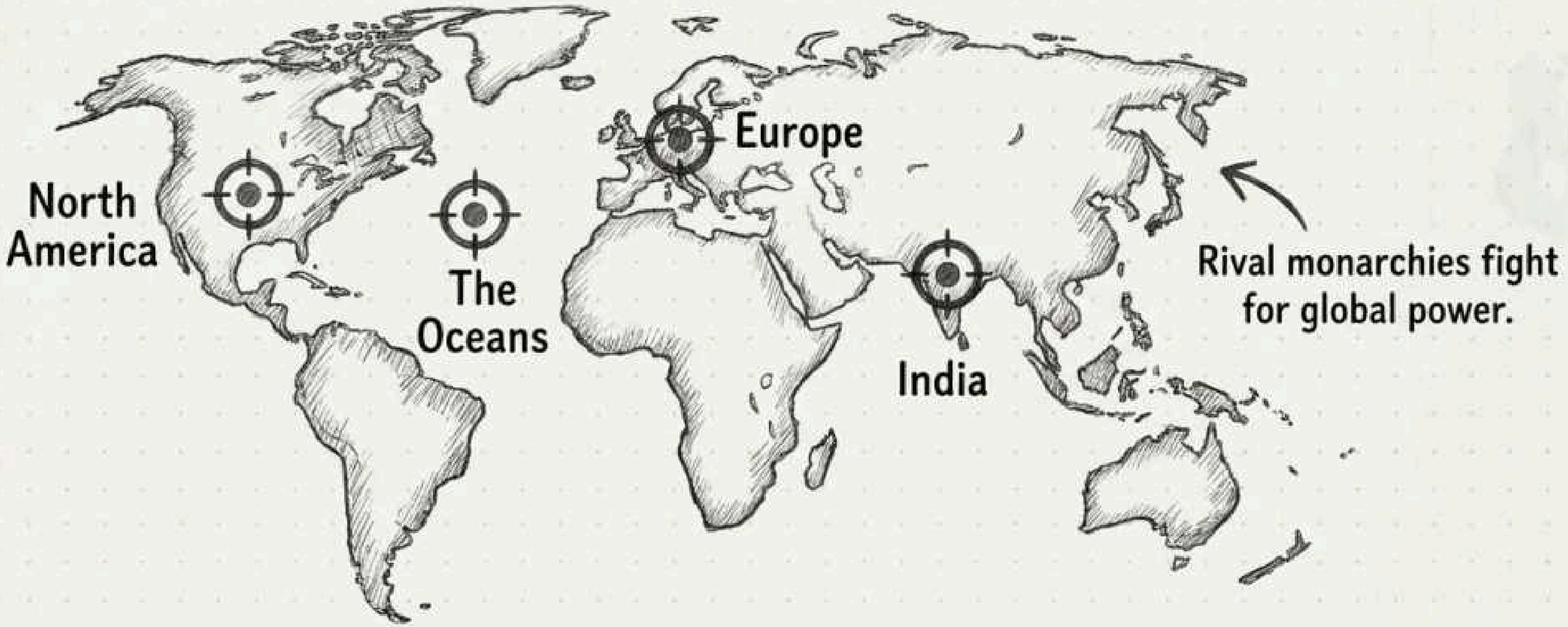
~~Women, Enslaved People, Non-Europeans (noting that some writers even justified racial hierarchy).~~

Enlightenment Ideals – Universal Application = Justification for Hierarchy

Later reformers would turn these exact same ideals against these injustices.

The First World War: The Seven Years' War (1756–1763)

¶ 2.5



1756-1763 Global Conflict ⇨ British Victory (Taking Canada from France, gaining ground in India) ⇨ Enormous War Debt ⇨ Chain of Crises

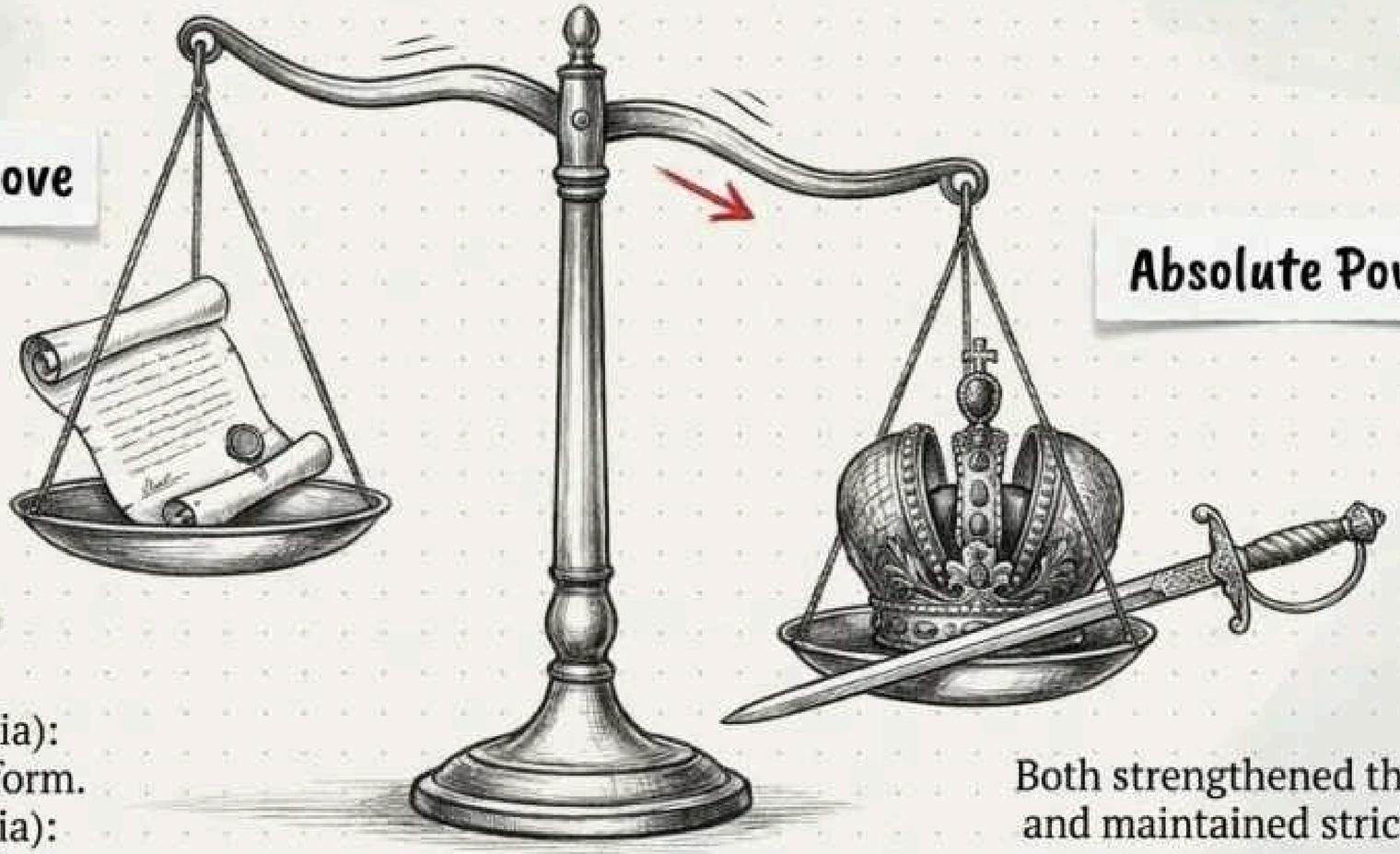
The "Enlightened" Despots

¶ 2.6

Reform from Above



Frederick the Great (Prussia): Religious toleration, law reform.
Catherine the Great (Russia): Corresponded with Voltaire.



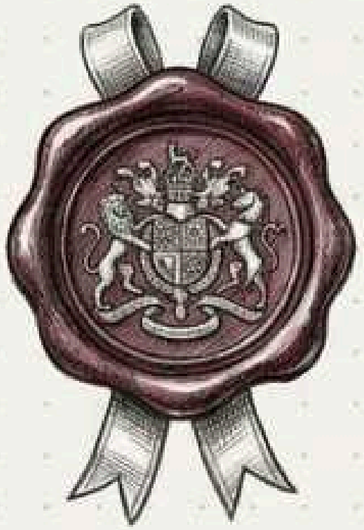
Absolute Power

Both strengthened their armies and maintained strict serfdom.

The ideals of the Enlightenment could serve monarchs just as effectively as revolutionaries.

Global Transformations Beyond Europe

¶ 2.7



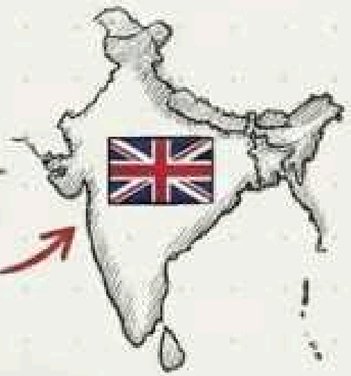
India Zone:

M मुगल (Mughal) power fragments (1707)

+

Battle of Plassey (1757)

= British East India Company begins rule in Bengal.





China Zone:

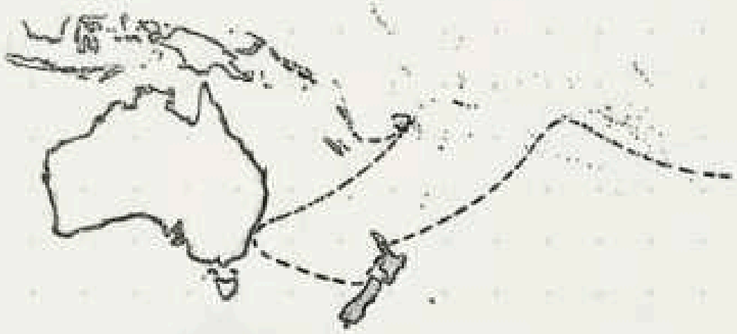
Qing Dynasty reaches its largest territorial extent under Emperor Qianlong (ruled until 1796).





Pacific Zone:

Captain James Cook's voyages open a new chapter for Australia and Polynesia.



The American Revolution: Genesis

¶ 2.8

British War Debts → Taxation on Colonies → Protest: No Representation in Parliament → War Begins (1775)



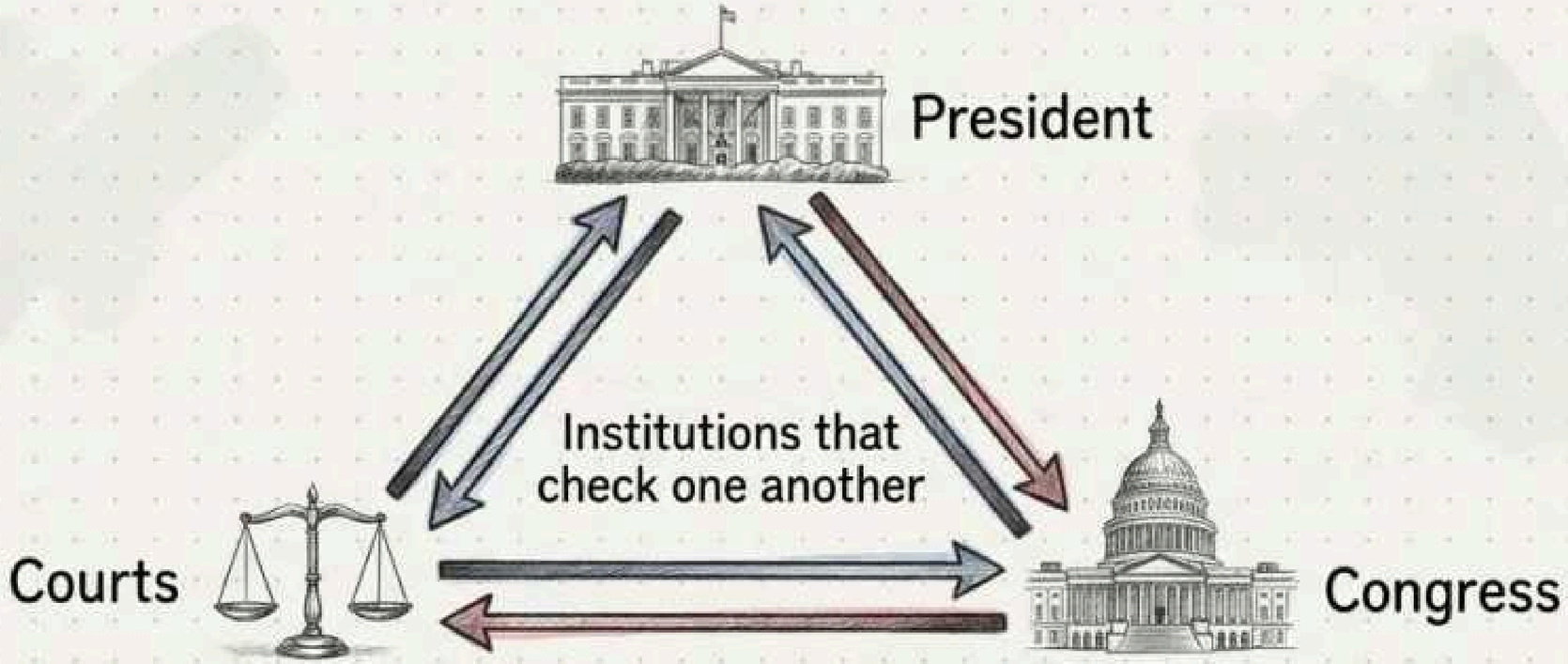
July 4, 1776
(Declaration of Independence)

With vital French assistance, the Americans win.

1783 Treaty of Paris formally recognizes the United States.

The US Constitution (1787) & Unkept Promises

¶ 2.9



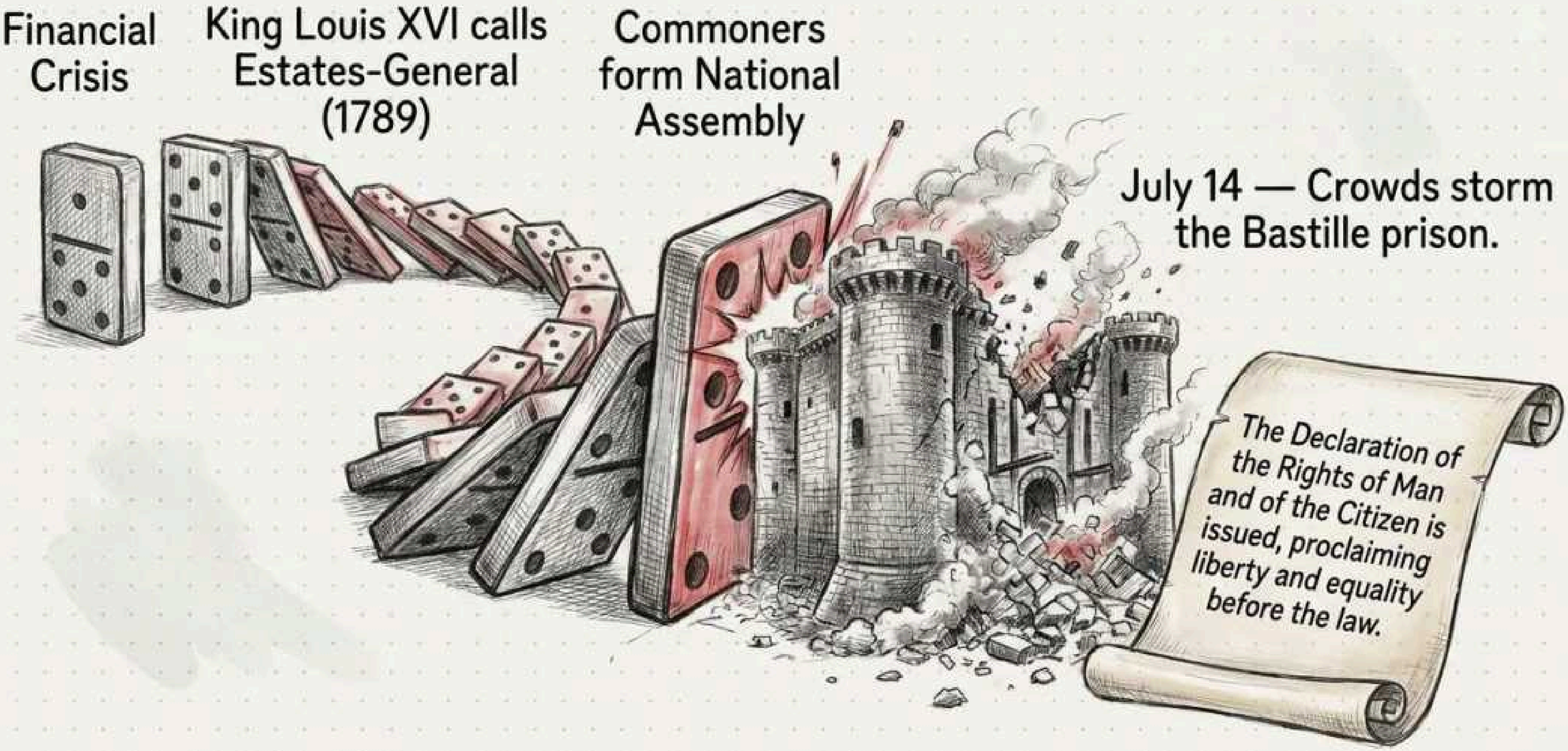
The Paradox

The revolution proclaimed “All men are created equal.”
YET: Slavery continued, and women and Native Americans were entirely left outside the republic’s promise.

Later reformers would use the republic’s own foundational words to demand more.

The French Revolution: Eruption

¶ 2.10



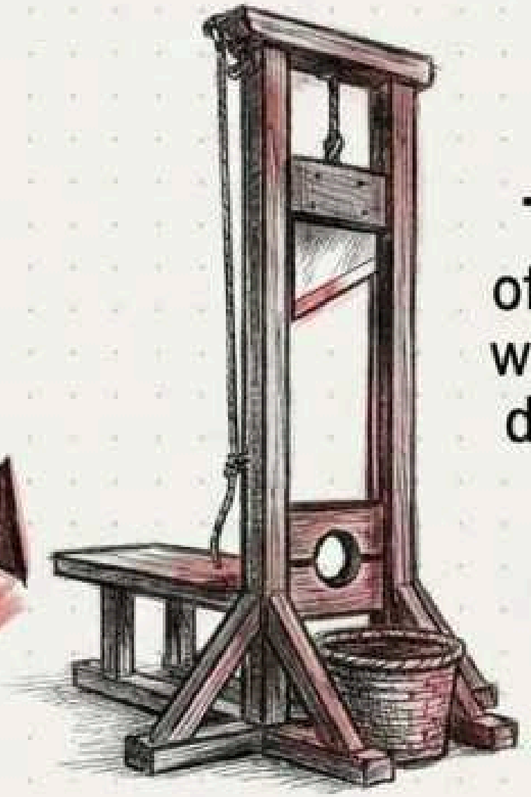
Radicalization and The Terror

¶ 2.11

January 1793:
King executed.

Republic Formed &
War breaks out with
much of Europe.

The Red Zone (The Terror):
Led by Maximilien Robespierre
and the Commitee of Public Safety.



The Toll: 17,000 official executions, with countless more dead in prisons and civil war.

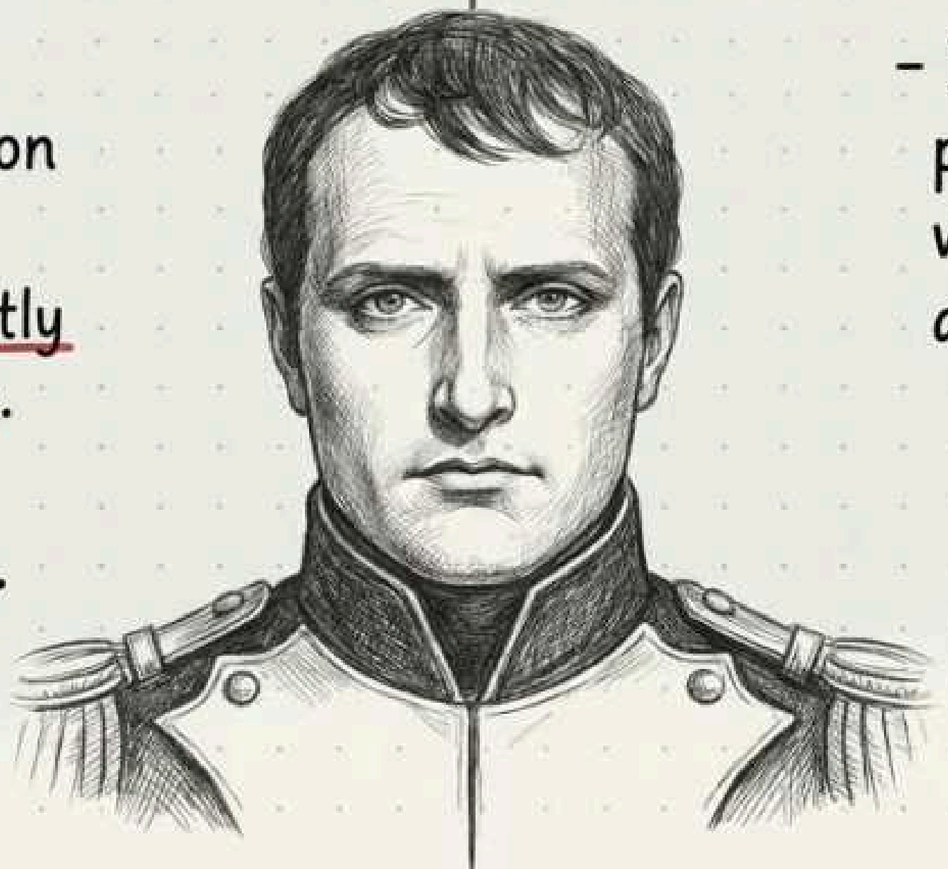
¶ 2.12

The Paradox of Napoleon

Seized power in 1799, crowned Emperor in 1804

The Reformer

- Issued the Civil Code (uniform laws, protection of property).
  - Note: This code explicitly limited women's rights.
- Spread revolutionary reforms across Europe.



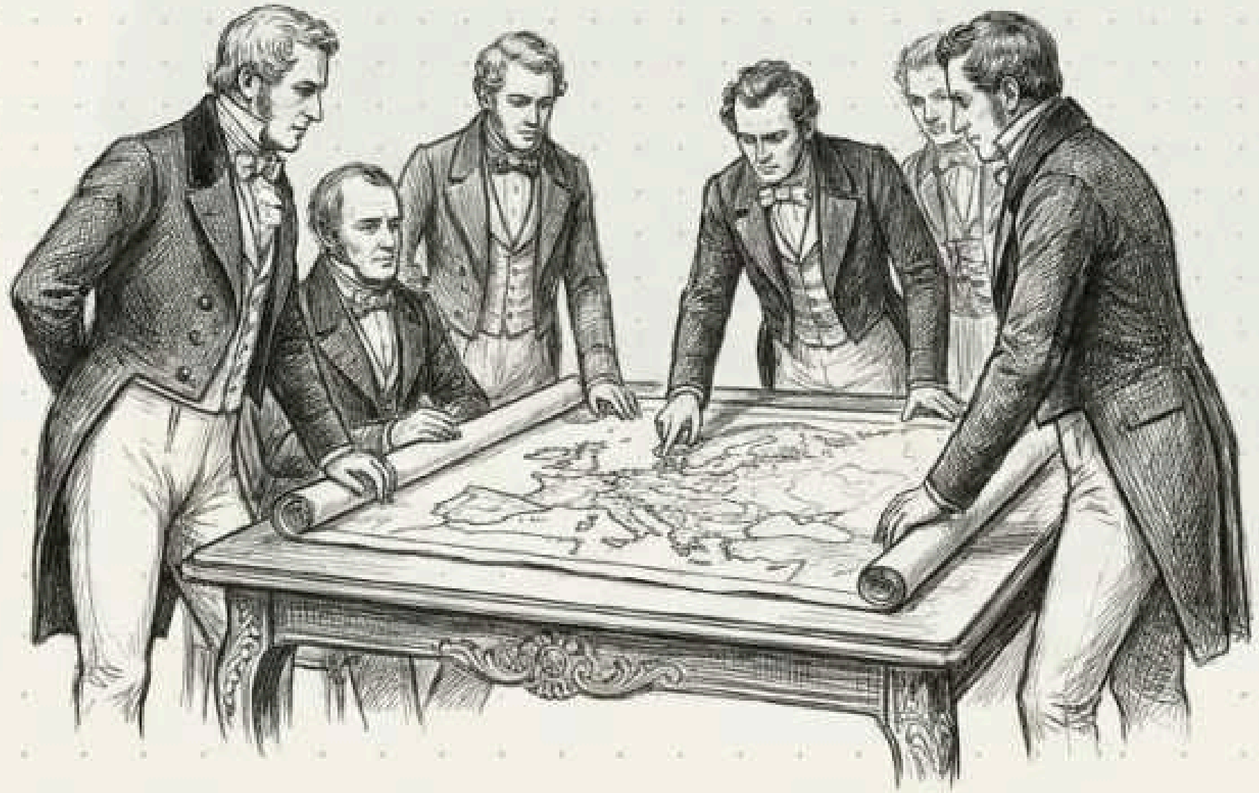
The Conqueror

- Imposed rule by force, provoking fierce and widespread resistance across the continent.

The Fall of an Empire

1812 Invasion of Russia × (Distance + Winter + Hunger) ⇒ Destruction of the Army

★ 1815 — Final defeat at Waterloo and subsequent exile.



Diplomacy (The Congress of Vienna)

The great powers attempt to restore the old order and establish a "Balance of Power" to preserve general peace in Europe for decades.

The Most Radical Revolution: Saint-Domingue





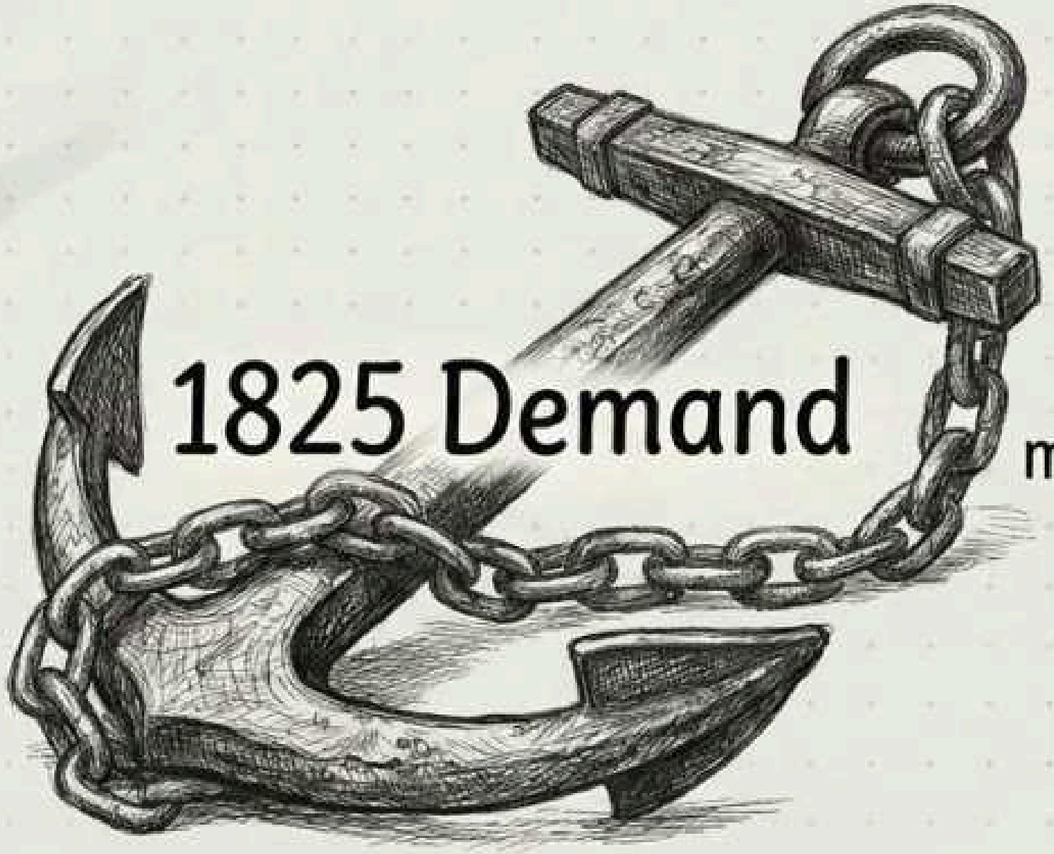
- The Catalyst: 1791 — Enslaved people rise up in the brutal sugar colony.
- The Leadership: Toussaint Louverture, a formerly enslaved man, becomes their great general.
- The Victory: They successfully defeat the army Napoleon sends to restore slavery.
- The Result: 1804 — Declaration of the independent Republic of Haiti.

The Price of Haitian Independence

¶ 2.15

The Reaction

The victory inspired enslaved people but deeply alarmed slaveholders across the Americas, leading to international isolation.



The Anchor

France demands a massive financial payment as the explicit price of diplomatic recognition.

The Legacy

This crushing debt burdened Haiti for generations. Historians still discuss how this history explains the country's later poverty.

Latin American Independence

¶ 2.16

The Catalyst: Napoleon invades Spain (1808)

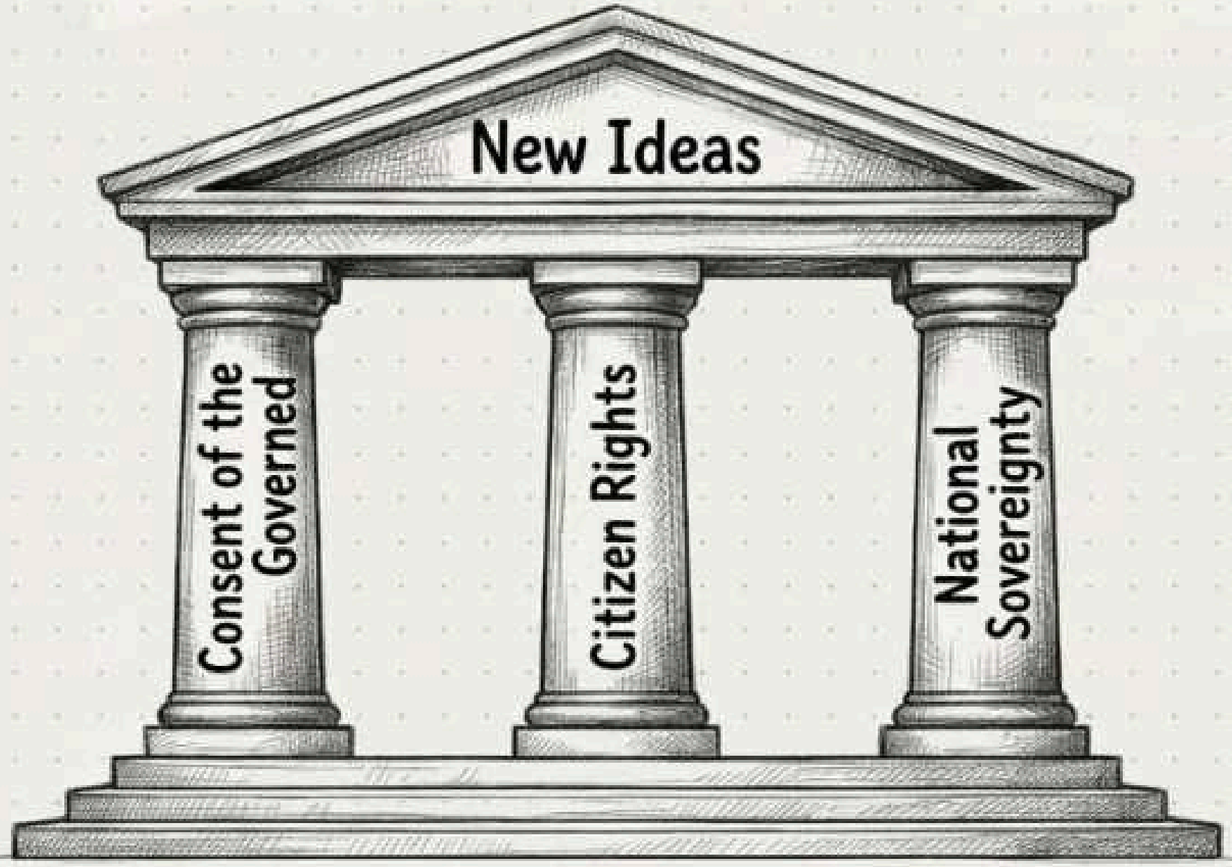
Weakens Spanish colonial rule.

The Liberators: Simón Bolívar and José de San Martín lead wars of independence. By the 1820s, most of Spanish America is free.

The Exception: Brazil separates peacefully from Portugal in 1822.

The Outcome: The new nations were often politically unstable, and wealthy landowners retained much of the power.

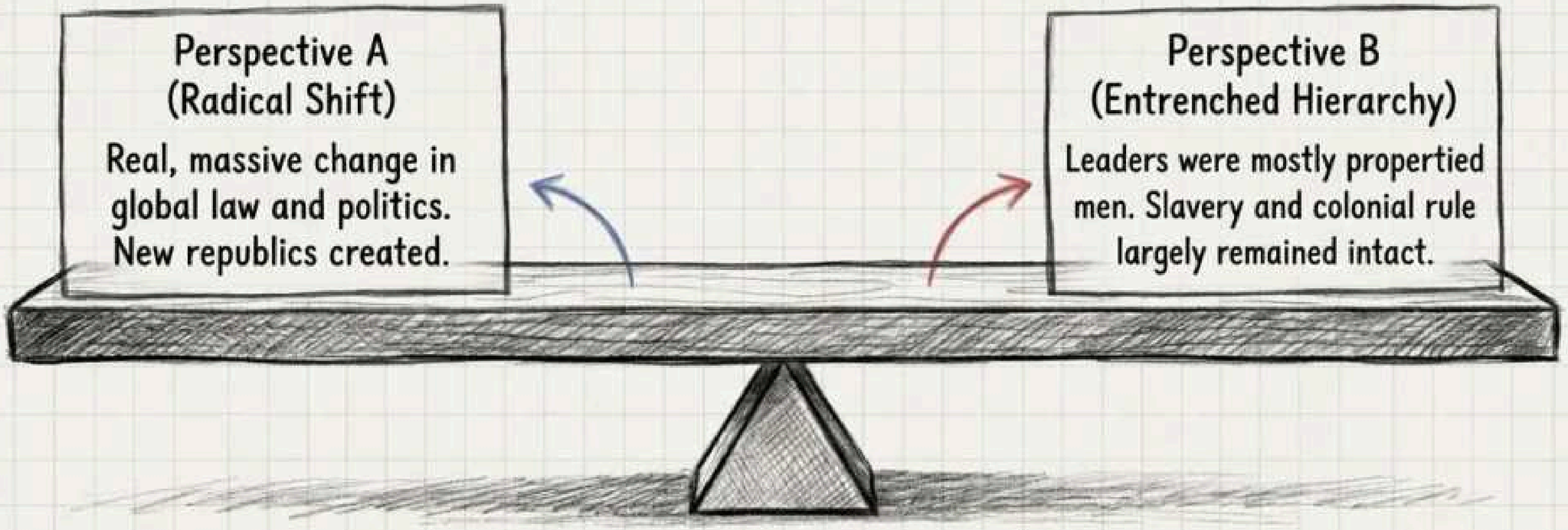
Synthesis: The Atlantic Revolutions



Atlantic Ideals = Inspiration for Liberty Movements + Surging Nationalism

(which would reshape the 19th century).

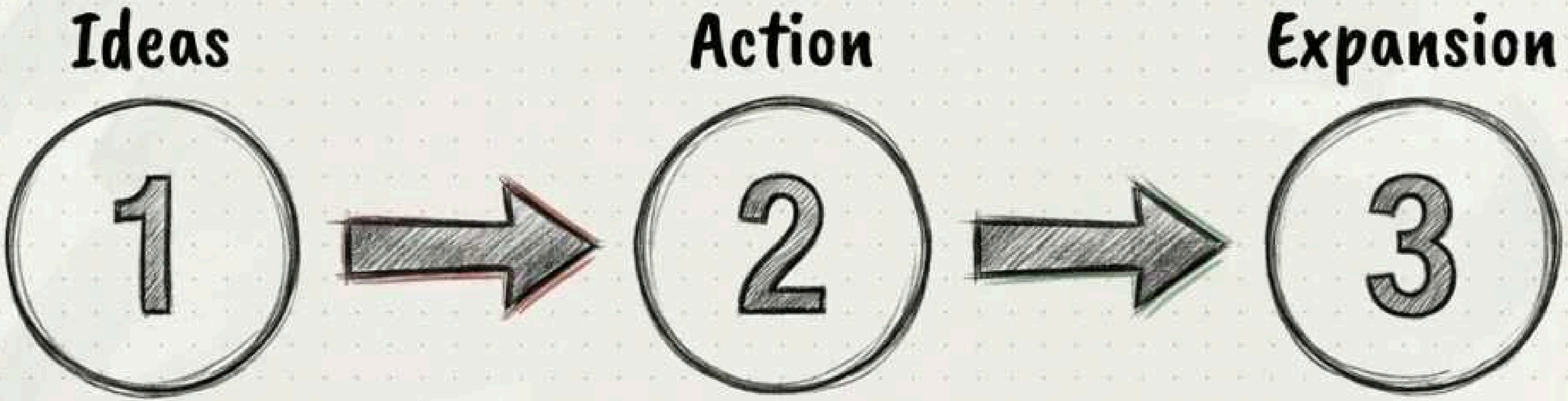
Historiography: How Revolutionary Were They?



Fair Judgment (Synthesis)

They irreversibly changed the world, yet they left many promises unkept.

Recap of the Era



Enlightenment thinkers argue that reason and natural rights should guide government.

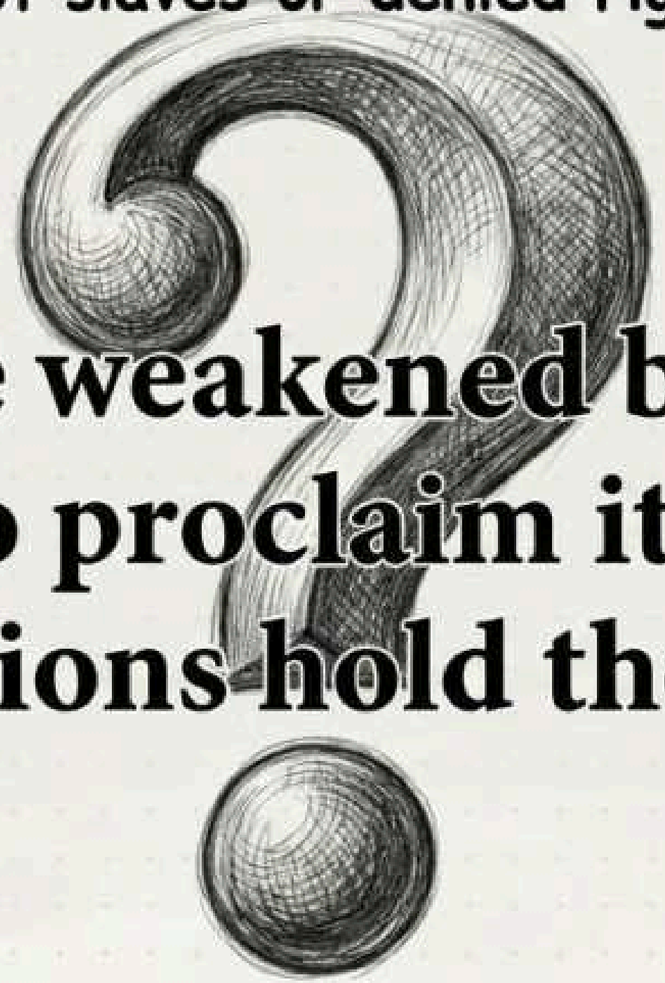
American and French revolutions turn ideas into republics; Napoleon spreads reforms by force.

Haiti and Latin America prove that the language of freedom could be claimed by enslaved and colonized peoples.

The Central Takeaway Question

¶ 2.20

The revolutionaries declared that all people had rights,
yet many kept slaves or denied rights to women.



Is a principle weakened by the failures of those who proclaim it, or can later generations hold them to it?

Looking Ahead: Industry and Empire

¶ 2.21

In Lecture 3, we transition from the age of political revolution to a new era.

- Steam power and factories transform Britain, then the world.

- New nations are built.
- European powers, the US, and Japan carve up much of Asia and Africa.

