ALFRED THAYER MAHAN

THE INFLUENCE OF SEA POWER ON THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

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1793-1812

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INTRODUCTORY.

Outline of Events in Europe, 1783–1793.

THE ten years following the Peace of Versailles, September 3, 1783, coming between the two great wars of American Independence and of the French Revolution, seem like a time of stagnation. The muttering and heaving which foretold the oncome of the later struggle were indeed to be heard by those whose ears were open, long before 1793. The opening events and violences which marked the political revolution were of earlier date, and war with Austria and Prussia began even in 1792; but the year 1793 stands out with a peculiar prominence, marked as it is by the murder of the king and queen, the beginning of the Reign of Terror, and the outbreak of hostilities with the great Sea Power, whose stubborn, relentless purpose and mighty wealth were to exert the decisive influence upon the result of the war. Untiring in sustaining with her gold the poorer powers of the Continent against the common enemy, dogged in bearing up alone the burden of the war, when one by one her allies dropped away, the year in which Great Britain, with her fleets, her commerce, and her money, rose against the French republic, with its conquering armies, its ruined navy, and its bankrupt treasury, may well be taken as the beginning of that tremendous strife which ended at Waterloo.

To the citizen of the United States, the war whose results were summed up and sealed in the Treaty of Versailles is a landmark of history surpassing all others in interest and

importance. His sympathies are stirred by the sufferings of the many, his pride animated by the noble constancy of the few whose names will be forever identified with the birth-throes of his country. Yet in a less degree this feeling may well be shared by a native of Western Europe, though he have not the same vivid impression of the strife, which, in so distant a land and on so small a scale, brought a new nation to life. This indeed was the *great* outcome of that war; but in its progress, Europe, India, and the Sea had been the scenes of deeds of arms far more dazzling and at times much nearer home than the obscure contest in America. In dramatic effect nothing has exceeded the three-years siege of Gibraltar, teeming as it did with exciting interest, fluctuating hopes and fears, triumphant expectation and bitter disappointment. England from her shores saw gathered in the Channel sixty-six French and Spanish ships-of-the-line—a force larger than had ever threatened her since the days of the Great Armada, and before which her inferior numbers had to fly, for the first time, to the shelter of her ports. Rodney and Suffren had conducted sea campaigns, fought sea fights, and won sea victories which stirred beyond the common the hearts of men in their day, and which still stand conspicuous in the story of either navy. In one respect above all, this war was distinguished; in the development, on both sides, of naval power. Never since the days of De Ruyter and Tourville had so close a balance of strength been seen upon the seas. Never since the Peace of Versailles to our own day has there been such an approach to equality between the parties to a sea war.

The three maritime nations issued wearied from the strife, as did also America; but the latter, though with many difficulties still to meet, was vigorous in youth and unfettered by bad political traditions. The colonists of yesterday were thoroughly fitted to retrieve their own fortunes and those of their country; to use the boundless

resources which Divine Providence had made ready to their hands. It was quite otherwise with France and Spain; while Great Britain, though untouched with the seeds of decay that tainted her rivals, was weighed down with a heavy feeling of overthrow, loss and humiliation, which for the moment hid from her eyes the glory and wealth yet within her reach. Colonial ambition was still at its loftiest height among the nations of Europe, and she had lost her greatest, most powerful colony. Not only the king and the lords, but the mass of the people had set their hearts upon keeping America. Men of all classes had predicted ruin to the Empire if it parted with such a possession; and now they had lost it, wrung from them after a bitter struggle, in which their old enemies had overborne them on the field they called their own, the Sea. The Sea Power of Great Britain had been unequal to the task laid upon it, and so America was gone. A less resolute people might have lost hope.

If the triumph of France and Spain was proportionate to their rival's loss, this was no true measure of their gains, nor of the relative positions of the three in the years after the war. American Independence profited neither France nor Spain. The latter had indeed won back the Floridas and Minorca; but she had utterly failed before Gibraltar, and Jamaica had not even been attacked. Minorca, as Nelson afterwards said, was always England's when she wanted it. It belonged not to this power or that, but to the nation that controlled the sea; so England retook it in 1798, when her fleets again entered the Mediterranean. France had gained even less than Spain. Her trading posts in India had been restored; but they, even more than Minorca, were defenceless unless in free communication with and supported by the sea power of the mother-country. In the West Indies she returned to Great Britain more than the latter did to her. "France," says a French historian, "had accomplished the duties of her providential mission" (in freeing America); "her moral

interests, the interests of her glory and of her ideas were satisfied. The interests of her material power had been badly defended by her government; the only solid advantage she had obtained was depriving England of Minorca, that curb on Toulon, far more dangerous to us when in their hands than is Gibraltar." [1]

Unfortunately at this moment France was far richer in ideas, moral and political, and in renown, than in solid power. The increasing embarrassment of the Treasury forced her to stay her hand, and to yield to her rival terms of peace utterly beyond what the seeming strength of either side justified. The French navy had reaped glory in the five years of war; not so much, nearly, as French writers claim for it, but still it had done well, and the long contest must have increased the efficiency of its officers along with their growing experience. A little more time only was wanted for France, allied to Spain, to gain lasting results as well as passing fame. This time poverty refused her.

Spain, as for centuries back, still depended for her income almost wholly upon her treasure ships from America. Always risked by war, this supply became more than doubtful when the undisputed control of the sea passed to an enemy. The policy of Spain, as to peace or war, was therefore tied fast to that of France, without whose navy her shipping lay at England's mercy; and, though the national pride clung obstinately to its claim for Gibraltar, it was forced to give way.

Great Britain alone, after all her losses, rested on a solid foundation of strength. The American contest by itself had cost her nearly £100,000,000, and rather more than that amount had during the war been added to the national debt; but two years later this had ceased to increase, and soon the income of the State was greater than the outgo. Before the end of 1783, the second William Pitt, then a

young man of twenty-four, became prime minister. With genius and aims specially fitted to the restorative duties of a time of peace, the first of British finance ministers in the opinion of Mr. Gladstone, [2] he bent his great powers to fostering the commerce and wealth of the British people. With firm but skilful hand he removed, as far as the prejudices of the day would permit and in the face of much opposition, the fetters, forged by a mistaken policy, that hampered the trade of the Empire. Promoting the exchange of goods with other nations, simplifying the collection of taxes and the revenue, he added at once to the wealth of the people and to the income of the State. Although very small in amount, as compared with the enormous figures of later years, the exports and imports of Great Britain increased over fifty per cent between the years 1784 and 1792. Even with the lately severed colonies of North America the same rate of gain, as compared with the trade before the war, held good; while with the old enemy of his father and of England, with France, there was concluded in 1786 a treaty of commerce which was exceedingly liberal for those days, and will, it is said, bear a favorable comparison with any former or subsequent treaty between the two countries. "In the course of little more than three years from Mr. Pitt's acceptance of office as First Lord of the Treasury," says the eulogist of his distinguished rival, Fox, "great commercial and financial reforms had been effected.… The nation overcoming its difficulties, and rising buoyant from depression, began rapidly to increase its wealth, to revive its spirit, and renew its strength." [3]

Such was the home condition of the British people; but fully to appreciate the advantageous position to which it was rising, in preparation for the great conflict still unforeseen, it must be remembered that all things worked together to centre and retain the political executive power in the hands of Pitt. The feelings of the king, then a very real force in the

nation; the confidence of the people, given to his father's son and fixed by the wisdom of his own conduct and the growth of the moneyed prosperity so dear to the British heart; the personal character of his only rival in ability—all combined to commit the political guidance of the State to one man at the great crisis when such unity of action was essential to strength. Whether the great peace minister was equal to the wisest direction of war has been questioned, and has been denied. Certainly it was not the office he himself would have chosen; but it was a great gain for England that she was at this time able to give herself wholly to a single leader. He took office with a minority of one hundred in the House of Commons, held it for two months constantly out-voted, and then dissolving Parliament appealed to the country. The election gave him a majority of over a hundred—a foretaste of the unwavering support he received from the representatives of the people during the early and critical years of the French Revolution, when the yet fluid opinions of the nation were gradually being cast and hardened into that set conviction and determination characteristic of the race.

How different the state of France is well known. The hopeless embarrassment of the finances, hopeless at least under the political and social conditions, the rapid succession of ministers, each sinking deeper in entanglements, the weak character of the king, the conflict of opinions, the lack of sympathy between classes, all tending to the assembling of the Notables in February, 1787, and the yet more pregnant meeting of the States General, May 4, 1789, which was the beginning of the end. France was moneyless and leaderless.

But while the Western countries of Europe were by these circumstances disposed or constrained to wish for the continuance of peace, restlessness showed itself in other

quarters and in ways which, from the close relations of the European States, disquieted the political atmosphere. The Austrian Netherlands and Holland, Poland and Turkey, the Black Sea and the Baltic, became the scene of diplomatic intrigues and of conflicts, which, while they did not involve the great Western Powers in actual war, caused them anxiety and necessitated action.

The Empress-Queen of Austria and Hungary, Maria Theresa, had died in 1780. Her son, the Emperor Joseph II., came to the throne in the prime of life, and with his head full of schemes for changing and bettering the condition of his dominions. In 1781, the weakness of Holland being plainly shown by her conduct of the war with Great Britain, and the other countries having their hands too full to interfere, he demanded and received the surrender of the fortified towns in the Austrian Netherlands; which, under the name of the "barrier towns," had been held and garrisoned by Holland since the Peace of Utrecht in 1713, as a bridle upon the ambition of France. At the same time the circumstances of the great maritime contest, which during the American Revolution covered all the seas of Europe, impelled every neutral nation having a seaboard to compete for the carrying trade. Holland for a time had shared this profit with the nations of the North; but when Great Britain, rightly or wrongly, forced her into war, the trade which had been carried on through Holland and her great rivers reaching into the heart of Germany, being denied its natural channel, sought a new one through the Austrian Netherlands by the port of Ostend. The growth of the latter, like that of Nassau during the Civil War in the United States, was forced and unhealthy—due not to natural advantages but to morbid conditions; but it fostered the already strong wish of the emperor for a sea power which no other part of his dominions could give.

This movement of Belgian commerce was accelerated by the disappearance of the British carrying trade. As in the days of Louis XIV., before he had laid up his ships-of-the-line, so in the American War the cruisers and privateers of the allies, supported by the action of the combined fleets occupying the British navy, preyed ravenously on British shipping. In the days of the elder Pitt it had been said that commerce was made to live and thrive by war; but then the French great fleets had left the sea, and British armed ships protected trade and oppressed the enemy's cruisers. Between 1778 and 1783 Great Britain was fully engaged on every sea, opposing the combined fleets and protecting as far as she could her colonies. "This untoward state of things reduced the English merchants to difficulties and distresses, with respect to the means of carrying on their trade, which they had never experienced in any other war. Foreign vessels were used for the conveyance of their goods, and the protection of a foreign flag for the first time sought by Englishmen." [4] The writer forgot the days of Jean Bart, Duguay-Trouin, and Forbin; we may profitably note that like conditions lead to like results.

Thus, while America was struggling for life, and the contests of England, France, and Spain were heard in all quarters of the world, Netherland ships showed abroad on every sea the flag of an inland empire, and Ostend grew merrily; but if the petty port and narrow limits thus throve, how should the emperor bear to see the great city of Antwerp, with its noble river and its proud commercial record, shut up from the sea as it had been since the Treaty of Westphalia? His discontent was deep and instant; but it was the misfortune of this prince that he took in hand more than his own capacity and the extent of his estates would let him complete. His attention being for the moment diverted to southeastern Europe, where Austria and Russia were then acting in diplomatic concert against the Porte, the question of

Antwerp was dropped. Before it could be resumed, the Peace of Versailles had left Great Britain, France, and Holland—all so vitally interested in whatever concerned Belgium—free, though loath, to enter into a new contention. Matters having been for the time arranged with Turkey, the emperor again in 1784 renewed his demands, alleging, after the manner of statesmen, several collateral grievances, but on the main issue saying roundly that "the entire and free navigation of the Scheldt from Antwerp to the sea was a *sine qua non*" to any agreement.

The arguments—commercial, political, or founded on treaty—which were in this instance urged for or against the natural claim of a country to use a river passing through its own territory, to the sea that washes its shores, are not here in question; but it is important to analyze the far-reaching interests at stake, to note the bearing of this dispute upon them and so upon the general diplomacy of Europe, and thereby trace its intimate connection with that Sea Power whose influence upon the course of history at this period it is our aim to weigh. Though modified in expression by passing events, and even at times superficially reversed, like natural currents checked and dammed by contrary winds, these underlying tendencies—being dependent upon permanent causes—did not cease to exist during the storm of the Revolution. Ever ready to resume their course when the momentary opposition was removed, the appreciation of them serves to explain apparent contradictions, produced by the conflicts between transient necessity and enduring interests.

From that great centre of the world's commerce where the Scheldt, the Meuse, the Rhine, and the Thames meet in the North Sea, near the Straits of Dover, there then parted two principal lines of trade passing through European waters—through seas, that is, along whose shores were planted

many different powers, foreign and possibly hostile to each other. Of these two lines, one ended in the Baltic; the other, after skirting the coasts of France and the Spanish peninsula and running the gantlet of the Barbary corsairs, ended in the Levant or Turkish Seas. The great Empire of Russia, which only made itself felt in the sphere of European politics after the Treaty of Utrecht, in 1713, had since then been moving forward not only its centre, which bore upon the continent of Europe, but also both its wings; one of which touched and overshadowed the Baltic on the North, while the other, through a steady course of pressure and encroachment upon the Turks, had now reached the Black Sea. This advance had been aided by the fixedness with which France and England, through their ancient rivalry and their colonial ambitions, had kept their eyes set upon each other and beyond the Atlantic; but the Peace of Versailles forced the combatants to pause, and gave them time to see other interests, which had been overlooked through the long series of wars waged, between 1739 and 1783, over commerce and colonies. It was then realized that not only had Russia, in the past half-century, advanced her lines by the partition of Poland and by taking from Sweden several provinces on the Baltic, but also that she had so added to her influence upon the Black Sea and over the Turkish Empire by successive aggressions, wresting bits of territory and establishing claims of interference in behalf of Turkish subjects, as to make her practical supremacy in Eastern waters a possibility of the future.

The Western Question, as it may fitly be called, had been settled by the birth of a new nation, destined to greatness and preponderance in the western hemisphere; the Eastern Question, phrase now so familiar, soon loomed on the horizon. Was it to receive a like solution? Was a great nation, already close to the spot, to win a position of exceptional advantage for dominating in eastern waters as America

must do in western? for it must be remembered that, although the Levant was then only the end of a European trade route, both the history of the past and the well understood possibilities of the future pointed to it as one of the greatest centres of commerce, and therefore of human interest and political influence, in the world. The Levant and Egypt had then, and still keep, the same interest that is now being felt in the Isthmus of Panama and the Caribbean; and it is hard to imagine a more threatening condition of naval power than the possession of the Black Sea and its impregnable entrance, by a vigorous nation, so close to the Eastern highway of the world. The position in 1783 was the more dangerous from the close alliance and respective abilities of the rulers of Austria and Russia; the cool-headed and experienced Catharine, through her influence on her weaker colleague, directing the resources of both empires in a path most favorable to Russia.

The tendency of Russian growth, and the historic events which marked its progress, were, of course, well enough known in England long before; but there is a difference between knowing facts and realizing their full meaning. Circumstances alter cases; and men's minds, when strongly bent one way, do not heed what is passing elsewhere. Hence, in 1785, we find the attitude of Great Britain toward Russia very different from that of fifteen years earlier, when the empress and the Porte were at war. In 1770, British officers commanded Russian fleets and ships, and a British admiral had leave to take a place in the Russian Admiralty, with the promise of his home rank being restored to him. The Czarina sent a fleet of twenty sail-of-the-line from the Baltic to the Levant. They stopped and refitted in Spithead; Russian soldiers were landed and camped ashore to refresh themselves; English sergeants of marines were employed to drill them; a Russian eighty-gun ship, flying the flag of an Anglo-Russian admiral, was docked in Portsmouth and cut

down to improve her sailing qualities. Thus comforted and strengthened they sailed for the Mediterranean; and, receiving further damage from the poor seamanship of their crews, they were again fitted at Port Mahon—then an English dockyard—for action in the Levant. [5] When, among the hard knocks of the two following years, the Russians destroyed a Turkish fleet of fifteen ships-of-the-line in a port of Asia Minor, British lieutenants commanded the fire-ships, and a British commodore the covering squadron.

To us now, with our remembrance of Kars and Silistria, of the Crimea and Hobart Pasha, of Cyprus and Besika Bay, these things seem like a dream; and the more so, that the Mediterranean powers of the earlier day viewed the Russian approach with ill-concealed mistrust, and laid severe restrictions upon the use of their ports. But Turkey then, though a good friend to Great Britain, was a yet better friend to France; the Turkish alliance had been useful to the latter country by making diversion in her wars with Austria, Great Britain's natural ally; the French were the favored nation by Turkish commercial treaties, and a naval war in eastern waters could not but be injurious to their commerce. Difficulties about trade might even bring about a collision between France and Russia, which at least could do no harm to Great Britain at a time when her rival was known to be steadily building up her navy with a view to revenge past defeats; just as now she is thought to be looking for a day of reckoning with Germany. The Baltic trade was also of immense value, and the friendship of Russia was necessary thereto. Altogether, in 1770, the Russian nation, notwithstanding the French leanings of the Czarina, was, upon the whole, the friend of Great Britain's friends, and the opponent of her enemies—especially of the one traditional, or, as even generous Englishmen used to say, the *natural* enemy, France. Russia bore especially against Sweden, Poland, and Turkey; and these it was the consistent aim of

the best school of French statesmen to court and strengthen.

But in 1785 a great change had taken place. The war of 1770 had planted Russia firmly on the Black Sea. The treaty of Kainardji in 1774 admitted her trade freely to the Mediterranean—a privilege which other trading nations, in the narrow spirit of the day, considered their own loss. Russian frigates had entered the Dardanelles on their way to the Black Sea; and though the Porte, terrified at the consequences of its action, stopped them at Constantinople, the move was none the less significant. Then there had come, in 1774, the partition of Poland, universally condemned as unrighteous and dangerous to the balance of power, though submitted to by the other States. If Great Britain, though restless over this, saw still some compensation in the injury done to France by the weakening of her allies, and hugged herself with the belief that her insular position made the continental balance of less moment, she had had a severe reminder of Russia's growing strength and power to injure, in the Armed Neutrality of 1780. This unfriendly blow, aimed by a State she had looked upon as almost a natural ally, which she had so greatly helped but ten years before, and which had now chosen the moment of her direst straits to attack what she considered her maritime rights, probably completed the alienation, and opened the eyes of British statesmen to the new danger with which they were threatened by the position of Russia upon the Baltic and close to the Mediterranean.

France, also, had little less interest than England in this condition of things, and certainly felt no less. From the days of Henry IV. and Colbert, and even before, she had looked upon the Levant as peculiarly her own field, the home of a faithful ally, and the seat of a lucrative trade which was almost monopolized by her. Although so far foiled in India,

she had not yet lost her hopes of overcoming and replacing the British hold upon that land of fabled wealth, and she understood the important bearing of the Levant and Egypt upon the security of tenure there. It need not then surprise us, in the great maritime war which we are approaching, to find Napoleon—for all his greatness, the child of his generation—amid all the glory and bewildering rush of his famous Italian campaign, planning conquest in Egypt and the East, and Nelson, that personification of the British sea power of his day, fighting his two most brilliant battles in the Levant and in the Baltic. Nor will we be unprepared to see an importance equal to that of Gibraltar and Mahon in former days, now attached to points like Malta, Corfu, Taranto, Brindisi, as well as to Sicily and Egypt, by the statesmen, generals, and admirals, whose counsels directed the military efforts of the belligerents. Many of these points had heretofore lain out of the field of action of the Western Powers, but the rising Eastern Question was bringing them forward.

Nor was it in the Levant alone that questions vitally affecting the rival States awaited solution. The trade interests of the Baltic, as the outlet through which great rivers and the products of immense regions found their way to the world beyond, made its control also an object of importance to both the chief parties in the coming struggle—to Great Britain who strove to drive her enemy off the sea, and to France who wished to shut out hers from the land. But, besides its commercial importance, the secluded character of the sea, the difficulty of the approach—aggravated by the severe climate—and the immense preponderance in strength of Russia over Sweden and Denmark, made always possible an armed combination such as that of 1780, which was in fact renewed in 1800, seriously threatening the naval supremacy of Great Britain. Such a coalition it was vital to the latter to prevent, and

most desirable to her enemy to effect. If formed, it was a nucleus around which readily gathered all other malcontents, dissatisfied with the harsh and overbearing manner in which the great Sea Power enforced what she considered her rights over neutral ships.

The nearness of England to the Baltic made it unnecessary to have naval stations on the way for the repair or shelter of her shipping, but it was most undesirable that the ports and resources of Holland and Belgium, lying close on the flank of the route, and doubly strong in the formidable outworks of shoals and intricate navigation with which nature had protected them, should be under the control of a great hostile power. Jean Bart, and his fellow-privateersmen of a hundred years before, had shown the danger to British shipping from even the third-rate port of Dunkirk, so situated. Where Dunkirk sent squadrons of frigates, Antwerp could send fleets of ships-of-the-line. The appearance of Russia, therefore, and her predominance on the Baltic, made weightier still the interest in the political condition of the Low Countries which, for generations past, Great Britain had felt on account of her commercial relations with them, and through them with Germany; an interest hitherto aroused mainly by the ambition of France to control their policy, if not actually to possess herself of a large part of their territory. She had to fear that which was realized under Napoleon—the conversion of Antwerp into a great naval station, with free access to the sea, and the control of its resources and those of the United Provinces by a strong and able enemy.

Great Britain, therefore, had in 1781 seen with just apprehension the aggressive attitude of Joseph II. toward the Dutch, and the fall of the "barrier towns." It is true that these fortresses had ceased to afford much protection to Holland, owing to her military decline, but the event

emphasized her exposure to France; while the power of Austria to defend her own provinces, or the Dutch, was notoriously less than that of France to attack, owing to the relative distance of the two from the scene, and the danger to troops, on the march from Austria, of being assailed in flank from the French frontier. Now, again, in 1784, she was forced to look with anxiety—less on account of Austria than of France—upon this raising of the question of the Scheldt. There was little cause to fear Austria becoming a great sea power now, when she had held the Netherlands three fourths of a century without becoming such; but there was good reason to dread that the movements in progress might result in increasing her rival's sea power and influence—perhaps even her territory—in the Low Countries. All these things did come to pass, though not under the dying monarchy.

It may be presumed that the wise Catharine of Russia, without in the least foreseeing the approaching French convulsion which shook her plans as well as those of other European rulers, realized the true relations between her country and the Western powers, when she so heartily supported the emperor in his claim for the free navigation of the Scheldt. There was no likelihood then, as there is little likelihood now, that Great Britain and France would act together in the Eastern Question, then too new to outweigh former prejudices or to unite old enemies. If the contention of Austria were successful, Russia would secure a friendly port in a region naturally hostile to her pretensions. If unsuccessful, as things then looked, the result would probably be the extension of French influence in the Netherlands and in the United Provinces; and French gain there meant gain of sea power, with proportionate loss of the same to Great Britain. The empress could still reckon on their mutual antagonism; while the British navy, and the way in which it was used in war, were more serious dangers

to Russia than the French armies. Whatever her reasoning, there is no doubt that at this time her policy was drawing closer to France. The French ministers in the East mediated between her and the Sultan in the unceasing disputes arising from the treaty of Kainardji. A commercial treaty on most favorable terms was concluded with France, while that with Great Britain was allowed to lapse, and its renewal was refused during many years.

Such were the ambitions and the weighty solicitudes, well understood on all hands, which, during the eight years succeeding the emperor's demand for the opening of the Scheldt, underlay and guided the main tendencies of European policy, and continued so to do during the revolutionary wars. The separate events which group themselves round these leading outlines, up to the outbreak of war in 1793, can only be hastily sketched.

Notwithstanding the close family relationship between Louis XVI. and the emperor, the French government looked coldly upon the latter's action in the matter of the Scheldt. The long-standing struggle in the United Provinces between partisans of Great Britain and France was just now marked by the preponderance of the latter, and, consequently, of French influence. As Austria seemed resolved to enforce her claims by war, the king first offered his mediation, and, when that was unavailing, told the emperor he would interpose by arms. His troops were accordingly massed on the Belgian frontier. It was understood that the king of Prussia, who was brother-in-law to the stadtholder, would act with France. Russia, on the other hand, proclaimed her intention to support Austria. Sweden, as the enemy of Russia, began to put ships in commission and enlist soldiers; while from Constantinople came a report that, if war began, the sultan also would improve so good an opportunity of regaining what he had lately lost. While the quarrel about

the Scheldt was thus causing complications in all quarters, an incident occurred upon the chief scene of trouble, which under such conditions might well have precipitated a general war. An Austrian brig was ordered to sail from Antwerp to the sea, to test the intentions of Holland. Upon passing the boundary she was fired upon and brought to by a Dutch armed ship. This happened on the 8th of October, 1784.

Yet after all war did not come, owing to Joseph's volatile attention being again drawn from the matter immediately in hand. He proposed to the elector of Bavaria to take the Netherlands in exchange for his electorate. This transfer, which by concentrating the possessions of Austria would greatly have increased her weight in the Empire, was resisted by the whole Germanic body with Frederic the Great at its head. It therefore came to naught; but the slackening of the emperor's interest in his Scheldt scheme promoted, under French auspices, a peaceful arrangement; which, while involving mutual concessions, left the real question substantially untouched. Its solution was not reached until the storm of the Revolution swept city and river into the arms of the French republic. This compromise was shortly followed by a treaty of the closest alliance between France and the United Provinces, engaging them to mutual support in case of war, fixing the amount of armed ships or men to be furnished, and promising the most intimate co-operation in their dealings with other States. This agreement, which, as far as compacts could, established French preponderance in the councils of Holland, was ratified on Christmas Day, 1785.

This treaty gave rise to serious and regretful consideration in Great Britain; but the growing financial embarrassment and internal disturbance of France were rapidly neutralizing her external exertions. The following years were marked by

new combinations and alliances among States. In 1786 Frederic the Great's death took away an important element in European politics. The quarrel between the two factions in Holland had reached the verge of civil war, when an insult offered by the French party to the wife of the stadtholder, sister to the new king of Prussia, led to an armed interference by this sovereign. In October, 1787, Prussian troops occupied Amsterdam and restored to the stadtholder privileges that had been taken from him. Even France had strongly condemned the act of those who had arrested the princess, and advised ample satisfaction to be given; but, nevertheless, when the French party appealed for aid against the Prussian intervention, she prepared to give it and notified her purpose to Great Britain. The latter, glad again to assert her own influence, replied that she could not remain a quiet spectator, issued immediate orders for augmenting her forces by sea and land, and contracted with Hesse for the supply of twelve thousand troops upon demand. The rapid success of the Prussians prevented any collision; but Great Britain had the gratification, and France the mortification, of seeing re-established the party favorable to the former.

In February, 1787, the Assembly of Notables, which had not met since 1626, was opened by Louis XVI. at Versailles. But the most striking event of this year was the declaration of war against Russia by Turkey, which determined no longer to wait until its enemy was ready before engaging in an inevitable conflict. The Turkish manifesto was sent forth August 24; Russia replied on the 13th of September.

The emperor, as the ally of Russia, declared war against Turkey on the 10th of February, 1788. Operations were carried on by the Austrians around Belgrade and on the Danube. The Russians, bent on extending their power on the Black Sea, invested Oczakow at the mouth and on the right

bank of the Dnieper—Kinburn on the left side having already been ceded to them by the treaty of Kainardji. The czarina also decided to renew in the Mediterranean the diversion of 1770, again sending ships from the Baltic. When the distance and inconvenience of this operation, combined with the entire lack of any naval station in the Mediterranean, are considered in connection with the close proximity of Russia to that sea in mere miles, there will be felt most forcibly her tantalizing position with reference to commerce and sea power, to whose importance she has been keenly alive and to which she has ever aspired since the days of Peter the Great. It is difficult to understand how Russia can be quiet until she has secured an access to the sea not dependent upon the good-will of any other State.

Notwithstanding the many causes of displeasure she had given to Great Britain, Catharine went on with her arrangements as though assured of the good-will and help before received. Pilot boats were engaged to meet the ships in British waters, and take them to British dockyards. Under her orders, British merchants chartered eighteen large ships to convey artillery and stores after the fleet. All these arrangements were quietly frustrated by Pitt's ministry, which forbade seamen to serve in any foreign ships; and, upon the ground that the nation was to be strictly neutral, made the contractors renounce their engagements. Catharine then turned to Holland, which also refused aid, pleading the same purpose of neutrality. This concert of action between the two maritime States forced Russia to abandon so distant an expedition and illustrated the advantage she would have obtained from the emperor's claim to the Scheldt. It was at this time that the celebrated Paul Jones, who had distinguished himself by his desperate courage in the American Revolutionary War, took service in the Russian Navy and was given a high command; but his appointment so offended the British officers already serving

in the fleet, whom their government had foreborne to recall, that they at once resigned. The Russians could not afford to lose so many capable men, and Jones was transferred from the Baltic to the Black Sea.

Soon a fourth State took part in the contest. On the 21st of June, 1788, Sweden advanced her troops into Russian Finland, and on the 30th war against her was declared by Russia. It now proved fortunate for the latter that she had not been able to get her fleet away from the Baltic. The fighting on land was there mainly confined to the north coast of the Gulf of Finland, while in the waters of the Gulf several very severe actions took place. These battles were fought not only between ships-of-the-line of the usual type, but by large flotillas of gunboats and galleys, and were attended with a loss of life unusual in naval actions.

War being now in full swing throughout the East, Great Britain and Prussia drew together in a defensive treaty, and were joined by Holland also, under the new lease of power of the stadtholder and British party. The quota of troops or ships to be furnished in case of need by each State was stipulated. The allies soon had occasion to act in favor of one of the belligerents. Denmark, the hereditary enemy of Sweden, and now in alliance with Russia, took this opportunity to invade the former country from Norway, then attached to the Danish crown. On September 24, 1788, twelve thousand Danish troops crossed the frontier and advanced upon Gottenburg, which was on the point of surrendering when the sudden and unexpected arrival of the king, in person and alone, prevented. There was not, however, force enough to save the town, had not Great Britain and Prussia interfered. The British minister at Copenhagen passed over hastily into Gottenburg, induced the Swedish king to accept the mediation of the two governments, and then notified the Danish commander

that, if the invasion of Sweden was not stopped, Denmark would be by them attacked. The peremptory tone held by the minister swept away the flimsy pretext that the Danish corps was only an auxiliary, furnished to Russia in accordance with existing treaty, and therefore really a Russian force. There was nothing left for Denmark but to recede; an armistice was signed at once and a month later her troops were withdrawn.

The true significance of the alliance between the two Western Powers, to which Holland was accessory, is markedly shown by this action, which, while ostensibly friendly to Sweden, was really hostile to Russia and a diversion in favor of the sultan. Great Britain and Prussia, in consequence of the growing strength and influence of Russia in the Baltic, the Black Sea, and the Continent, and to check her progress, followed what was then considered to be the natural policy of France, induced by ties and traditions long antedating the existing state of things in Europe. Sweden then, and Turkey later, traditional allies of France, and in so far in the opposite scale of the balance from Great Britain, were to be supported by the demonstration—and if need were by the employment—of force. This was done, not because France was as yet less dreaded, but because Russia had become so much more formidable. It was again the coming Eastern Question in which, from the very distance of the central scene of action from Western Europe, and from the character of the interests and of the strategic points involved, Sea Power, represented chiefly by the maritime strength and colonial expansion of Great Britain, was to play the leading and most decisive part. It was the dawning of the day, whose noon the nineteenth century has not yet seen, during which Nelson and Napoleon, Mohammed Ali and Ibrahim Pasha, the Sultan Mahmoud and the Czar Nicholas, Napier, Stopford, and Lalande in 1840, the heroes of Kars, Silistria,

and the Crimea, and of the Russo-Turkish war of 1877, were to play their parts upon the scene.

But in the years after the Peace of Versailles this was a new question, upon which opinions were unformed. It was true that, to quote from a contemporary writer, "England had had full leisure to ruminate upon, and sufficient cause to reprobate, that absurd and blind policy, under the influence of which she had drawn an uncertain ally, and an ever-to-be-suspected friend, from the bottom of the Bothnic Gulf to establish a new naval empire in the Mediterranean and Archipelago." [6] These meditations had not been fruitless, as was seen by the consistent attitude of Pitt's ministry at this time; but on the other hand, when it was proposed in 1791 to increase the naval force in commission, in order "to add weight to the representations" [7] being made by the allies to the belligerents—in order, in other words, to support Turkey by an armed demonstration—Fox, the leader of the Whigs, said that "an alliance with Russia appeared to him the most natural and advantageous that we could possibly form;" [8] while Burke, than whom no man had a juster reputation for political wisdom, observed that "the considering the Turkish Empire as any part of the balance of power in Europe was new. The principles of alliance and the doctrines drawn from thence were entirely new. Russia was our natural ally and the most useful ally we had in a commercial sense." [9] That these distinguished members of the opposition represented the feelings of many supporters of the ministry was shown by a diminished majority, 93, in the vote that followed. The opposition, thus encouraged, then introduced a series of resolutions, the gist of which lay in these words: "The interests of Great Britain are not likely to be affected by the progress of the Russian arms on the borders of the Black Sea." [10] In the vote on this, the minister's majority again fell to eighty, despite the

arguments of those who asserted that "the possession of Oczakow by the empress would facilitate not only the acquisition of Constantinople, but of all lower Egypt and Alexandria; which would give to Russia the supremacy in the Mediterranean, and render her a formidable rival to us both as a maritime and commercial power." After making every allowance for party spirit, it is evident that British feeling was only slowly turning into the channels in which it has since run so strongly.

France, under the pressure of her inward troubles, was debarred from taking part with her old allies in the East, and withdrew more and more from all outward action. On the 8th of August, 1788, the king fixed the 1st of May, 1789, as the day for the meeting of the States General; and in November the Notables met for the second time, to consider the constitution and mode of procedure in that body, the representation in it of the Third Estate, and the vote by orders. They were adjourned after a month's session; and the court, contrary to the judgment of the majority among them, proclaimed on the 27th of December, 1788, that the representatives of the Third Estate should equal in number those of the two others combined. No decision was given as to whether the votes should be individual, or by orders.

Oczakow was taken by the Russians on the 17th of December, 1788, and during the following year the Eastern war raged violently both in the Baltic and in southeastern Europe. Turkey was everywhere worsted. Belgrade was taken on the 8th of October by the Austrians, who afterwards occupied Bucharest and advanced as far as Orsova. The Russians reduced Galatz, Bender, and other places. Besides losing territory, the Turks were defeated in several pitched battles. The conduct of the war on their part was much affected by the death of the reigning sultan.

The Swedish war was in its results unimportant, except as a diversion in favor of Turkey. To keep it up as such, subsidies were sent from Constantinople to Stockholm. Great Britain and Prussia were obliged again to threaten Denmark, in 1789, to keep her from aiding Russia. The British minister, speaking for both States, expressed their fixed determination to maintain the balance of power in the North. A defensive alliance was then formed between Russia and Austria on the one hand, and France and Spain on the other. The Bourbon kingdoms pledged themselves to a strict neutrality in the Eastern War as it then existed; but if Russia or Austria were attacked by any other State, they were to be helped—Austria, by an army of sixty thousand men; Russia, by a fleet of sixteen ships-of-the-line and twelve frigates. The latter provision shows both the kind of attack feared by Russia and the direction of her ambition.

On the 4th of May of this year, 1789, the States General met at Versailles, and the French Revolution thenceforth went on apace. The Bastille was stormed July 14th. In October the royal family were brought forcibly from Versailles to Paris by the mob. The earlier events of the Revolution will hereafter be summarily related by themselves, before going on with the war to which they led. It will here be enough to say that the voice of France was now silent outside her own borders.

In 1790 the Eastern War was practically brought to an end. On the 31st of January a very close treaty of alliance was made between Prussia and the Porte—the king binding himself to declare war at a set time against both Russia and Austria. The emperor died in February, and was succeeded by his brother Leopold, who was disposed to peace. A convention was soon after held, at which sat ministers of Austria, Prussia, Great Britain, and the United Provinces; the two latter acting as mediators because Prussia had taken such a pronounced attitude of hostility to Austria. A treaty