ECO 303Y1:

The Economic History of Modern Europe to 1914

Topic No. 3 [6]: Warfare and the Industrial Revolution, 1700 - 1815

All readings are listed in the chronological order of their original publication.

READINGS: asterisks (*) indicate the more important readings

A. War and the British Economy, 1700 - 1820: General


(b) Peter Mathias, ‘Swords and Ploughshares: The Armed Forces, Medicine, and Public Health in the Late Eighteenth Century’, pp. 73-90.

** (c) Phyllis Dean, ‘War and Industrialisation’, pp. 91-102.


(a) Part II, ca. 1640-ca. 1740, esp. chapters 10-13.
(b) Part III, ca. 1740-ca. 1950, esp. chapter 15.

For the earlier period, see also the following articles by Nef:


** B. Taxation, Fiscal, Monetary and Other State Policies Related to Warfare


Mathias-O'Brien in no. 4, above. Their reply is in the following:


C. General Studies: Overviews on War and the Economy


Suggested Debate Topic:

‘Resolved: That warfare delayed the coming of the British Industrial Revolution’

QUESTIONS for Reading and Discussion

1. Did warfare and expenditures on military forces stimulate or retard British economic development in the following periods:
   
   (a) 1700 - 1763  
   (b) 1763 - 1792  
   (c) 1792 - 1815

   In each period, what sectors of the economy benefited from warfare, and which sectors suffered?

2. What role did military power and naval warfare play in the transfer of economic power from Holland to England in the 18th century? Did warfare similarly permit England to gain at France's expense, before the Napoleonic wars? At Spain's expense, also? [See also topics nos. 6 and 16].

3. What effect did British fiscal and monetary policies concerning warfare have upon the economy, in terms of the following:
   
   (a) levels and structure of taxation: impact of such taxation upon consumer demand and capital investment;  
   (b) inflation, especially during the era of the ‘paper pound’ or ‘Bank Restriction’ period of 1797-1815;  
   (c) tariffs as fiscal measures to raise revenues;  
   (d) government borrowing and the rate of interest.

   Note: T.S. Ashton has written extensively on high rates of interest as a negative force in British economic development during the 18th century. Consider his arguments in particular.

4. How did Britain manage to finance both industrialization and the French Revolutionary - Napoleonic Wars (1793-1815): i.e. both ‘guns and butter’? Were these wars financed at the expense of the living standards of the British populace? [See also topic no. 15].

5. In what respects did warfare and military expenditures stimulate technological innovations and economic expansion in the following industries: shipbuilding; iron, coal, and steel, and other metallurgical industries; textiles; chemicals?

6. Were 18th-century European wars essentially economic in their origins? Were they the result, in particular, of ‘mercantilist’ or protectionist economic policies pursued by various European states -- the result of competitive economic nationalism? See also topic no. 5 on ‘Mercantilism and Economic Nationalism’.
7. Who gained and who lost by the costs of the French-Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars (1793 - 1815): Britain, the Netherlands, France, Germany, Spain? [See also topic no. 6]

8. Did Britain owe her economic supremacy in 19th-century Europe, at least in the period 1815 - 1885, chiefly to her military power (including naval power)? Did Britain ‘rule the waves’ -- or ‘waive the rules’ because of her military power? Did ‘trade follow the flag’?

9. Napoleon's wartime economic policies: did they promote or retard French economic development in the 19th century? Did warfare and defeat delay the coming of industrialization to France in the 19th century? [See also topic no. 16]

10. In what respects did 18th-century warfare differ from modern warfare in its economic consequences?