

## The Last French East India Company in the Revolutionary Atlantic

*By Elizabeth Cross*

The final incarnation of the French East India Company (*Compagnie des Indes*), established between the American and French Revolutions, is mainly associated with the financial and political scandals in Paris generated by the unexpected grant of its monopoly in 1785 and the corrupt circumstances of its liquidation in 1793. This article broadens this lens by examining the history of the “last” company in relation to the geopolitics of the revolutionary Atlantic. The company simultaneously aimed at rebuilding merchant networks in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, expanding informal French commercial power on the Indian subcontinent, establishing commercial ties with the new United States, and transforming France’s relationship with Britain into one of partnership. Although these ambitions ebbed by the time of the French Revolution, the company’s directors built upon them as they schemed to utilize their transatlantic connections to secure their trade under the auspices of American neutrality when French maritime commerce was threatened by naval war with Britain in 1793. The history of the last French East India Company reveals the fragility of a nonterritorial vision of commercial and imperial power that challenges understandings of eighteenth-century imperial geographies and political economy.