

The Origins, Course, and Outcome of the American Revolution

A. Origins of Revolution: British Colonial Theory and Practice, 1650-1763

I. Theory

A. In theory: British colonial system was centralized in the Crown-in-Parliament. What was the basis of this theory?

1. The Colonial models: Spain and France
2. Economic theory: Mercantilism
3. Political theory: Sovereignty is indivisible

II. Attempts to Put Theory into Practice

A. Colonial Administration in England

1. King and the Privy Council
2. The Board of Trade and Plantations (1696)
3. Parliament

B. Attempt to Regulate and Centralize the Colonial System

1. Five Navigation Acts (1651-96): Regulate Empire's economic activities for the benefit of Britain.
2. Royalization of colonies: 8 of 13 colonies Royalized
3. Governance of colonies: Royal Governors

III. Practice

A. Real Practice: The British North American Colonies had grown tremendously and were essentially ruling themselves by 1750.

- B. Population and Economic Growth
C. Lower Houses of Assembly

IV. French & Indian War Exposed Discrepancy between Theory & Practice

A. French and Indian War, 1754-63

B. Treaty of Paris (1763)

C. Conclusions

1. New Situation in North America
2. British Debt

B. New British Measures and the Conservative Colonial Stance, 1763-73

I. 1763: End of the French and Indian War

A. Proclamation of 1763

B. 7,500-10,000 Troops left in North America

C. British Debt

II. 1765-66, First Constitutional Battle: Stamp Act Crisis

- A. Stamp Act Passed by British Parliament
- B. Stamp Act Congress, New York
- C. "All Due Subordination"
- D. "No Taxation without Representation"
- E. The Issue of Representation
- F. Colonial Boycott
- G. Repeal of Stamp Act, 1766
- H. Passage of the Declaratory Act (same day)

III. 1767-1770, Second Constitutional Battle: Townshend Duties

- A. Townshend Duties Passed by British Parliament
- B. John Dickinson, *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania*
- C. Customs Commissioners arrive in Boston (1767)
- D. Colonial Boycott of British Goods
- E. British Troops Arrive in Boston
- F. Boston "Massacre" (1770)
- G. Repeal of Townshend Duties (Except on Tea)
- H. Colonial Boycott collapses

IV. 1770-1773, Period of Relative Calm

- A. Colonials resume good commercial relations with England
- B. Import tax on tea paid
- C. British Troops leave Boston

V. 1773-1774, Third Constitutional Battle: Tea Act

- A. Tea Act Passed by British Parliament (1773)
- B. Boston Tea Party
- C. The Coercive Acts Passed by British Parliament (1774)

C. The Radical Revolution, 1774-1776

I. Reaction to the Coercive Acts:

- A. The First Continental Congress (Sept. 5 – Oct 27, 1774)
- B. British Response

II. Military Crisis Develops

- A. Virginia: Governor Dunmore and Patrick Henry
- B. Battles of Lexington and Concord (April 19, 1775)
- C. Battle of Bunker Hill (June 17, 1775)

III. Reaction to the Fighting:

- A. The Second Continental Congress (May 1775 - 1781)
- B. British Response

IV. Thomas Paine, *Common Sense* (January 1776)

V. Declaration of Independence (July 4, 1776)

A. When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

B. We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. --That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, --That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.

D. The Three Phases of the American Revolutionary War

I. The New England Phase: April 1775-Spring 1776

- A. Battles of Lexington and Concord (18-19 April 1775).
- B. Washington's Siege of Boston (April 1775 to 7-17 March 1776).
- C. Failed Invasion of Canada (Fall-Winter 1775).

II. The Middle Atlantic Phase: Summer 1776-Summer 1778

- A. July 1776, the British navy arrived in New York Harbor: British take **New York**
- B. **1777, Saratoga Campaign**: Gen. Burgoyne's forces surrender (17 Oct. 1777)
 - 1. Possibly most important campaign of the war.
 - 2. Saratoga led to **French Alliance** (Feb 1778)
 - 3. Same time, British captured Philadelphia (26 Sept. 1777)
 - 4. But Philadelphia empty victory for British, Congress gone. Not a war of posts.
- C. 1779 World War: Spain enters on side of French.

III. The Southern Phase: Winter 1778-Fall 1781

- A. British move the war south to get support of slaves and loyalists.
- B. British capture Savannah, GA (29 Dec. 1778) and Charleston, SC (12 May 1780).
- C. By Dec 1780, British occupation of the South had lasted six months.

- D. Nathaniel Greene -- lost tactically, but won strategically
- E. **The British won battles, but could not win because they could not:**
 - 1. hold territory
 - 2. cement loyalty
 - 3. create functioning administrations
 - 4. restore the authority of the crown
- F. **Yorktown Campaign (14 Aug-17 Oct. 1781)**
 - 1. Siege of Yorktown begins (28 Sept. 1781).
 - 2. By 17 October 1781, Cornwallis was ready to give up.
 - a. Cornwallis surrendered 8000 men on 17 Oct. 1781.
 - b. Washington had: 9000 Americans; 7000 Frenchmen.
 - 3. The Revolutionary War ended with this British defeat.

IV. The Peace Process

- A. Yorktown major victory, but it did not destroy British army. In fact, it still held NYC.
- B. However, after 6 years of war, the British no closer to victory than in 1775.
- C. Lord Rockingham formed a new government and negotiated to end the war.
- D. Three American negotiators: John Jay (NY); John Adams (Mass.); Ben Franklin (PA).
- E. **Treaty of Paris (3 Sept. 1783)**
 - 1. Treaty a diplomatic triumph for the US.
 - 2. Jay, Adams, and Franklin violated instructions and signed separate peace with British.
 - 3. Britain ceded everything East of the Mississippi River -- south of Canada -- to US.
 - 4. British gave Florida to Spain.
 - 5. Britain also promised to withdraw troops from US territory.
 - 6. British concede the right of free navigation of the Mississippi River to its source.
 - 7. British promised to compensate masters who lost slaves during war.
 - 8. The US promised two things: it would compensate the Loyalists for property confiscated during the war; it would not create obstacles to impede British merchants from recovering money owed them.

E. The Results of the War

I. British North American Colonies Become Independent States (1781)

II. The States Unite in New Constitutional Pact

- A. Articles of Confederation (1781)
- B. Constitution of the United States (1787; 1789)

III. New Social/Governmental Ideas

- A. Subjects to Citizens
- B. Vision of Government presented in Declaration of Independence
- C. Republican Government
- D. Limits of change