

Road to the American Revolution

I. The American colonies prior to the American Revolution.

- A. In 18th century, large percentage of American colonists were proud to belong to British empire.
1. Newer studies suggest that by 1763 the American colonies had achieved tremendous integration within the empire; did not forget their "Britishness"
 2. On average, Americans had the highest standard of living in the world.
 - a. Drop in price of British goods meant American consumers had many choices.
 - b. Landownership opportunities far better than in Europe.
- B. **"Salutary neglect"** (beginning about 1713; although as early as 1689 after the "Glorious Revolution")
1. Between 1713 and 1763 American colonials saw reduced gov't intervention in colonial affairs.
 - a. **Whig** prime minister, Sir Robert Walpole, believed leaving the colonies alone to run their own affairs with little interference would produce more wealth and commerce, and cause less friction.
 - b. Britain would provide peace, protection, commerce, ensure law and send more immigrants to America to increase numbers of customers.
 - c. Britain was focused on major wars in Europe.
 - d. Colonies left to raise, equip & train own militia for protection against Amerindians.
 - e. In effect, colonies left alone; had to develop self-reliance; effective organization
 3. Development of self-government
 - a. 13 separate colonial governments emerged; often undermined the authority of Parliament.
 - b. Local gov't was much more responsive to local needs
 - c. Americans became used to regulating their own affairs without significant interference.
 - d. American manufacturing increased despite British policies to protect British manufacturers (Navigation Laws)
-- Cost of American goods increased making merchants wealthy.
 4. Smuggling became rampant as British policy became lax in 18th century.

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- C. Violent protests by western colonists toward eastern authority continued.
1. **Paxton Boys** (1764): Philadelphia Scots Irish dissenters revolted against Quaker leniency regarding gov't Indian policy:
-- 20 peaceful Indians killed, followed by a march on Philadelphia demanding better representation, protection against Indians on the frontier, and funds for internal improvements.
 2. **Regulator Movement** (1771)
 - a. Eastern farmers in N. Carolina frustrated with British tax policies, inadequate representation of western farmers in the colonial assembly, and legislation favoring wealthy planters in the east.
 - b. Fighting lasted for three years.
 3. These two rebellions were similar to Bacon's & Leisler's rebellions in 17th c. and two future rebellions: Shays' Rebellion in 1787 and Whisky Rebellion in 1794.

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II. The Mercantilist System

- A. **Mercantilism:** Colonies existed for benefit of the mother country
1. Colonies should add to empire's wealth, prosperity, and self-sufficiency.
 2. Colonies' benefit to Great Britain
 - a. Ensure British naval supremacy by providing ships, ships' stores, sailors and trade.
 - b. Provide raw materials: tobacco, indigo, lumber, fish, etc.
 - c. Provide a large consumer market for British goods.
 - d. Keep gold & silver in the empire through economic self-sufficiency.
-- Britain would not need to purchase good from foreign countries.
- B. **Navigation Laws**
1. Purpose: enforce the mercantilist system
 2. Motive: First enacted in 1651; aimed at rival Dutch shippers who were active in the American trade.
 3. Basic provisions of Navigation Laws passed in 17th and 18th centuries:
 - a. Restricted commerce to and from the colonies to English or American vessels.
 - b. Certain "**enumerated**" **articles** like tobacco couldn't be shipped to any other foreign market except England, despite higher prices in other markets.
 - c. All European goods going to America had to go through England first.

- d. Certain restrictions on colonial manufactures for export: British did not want manufacturing competition with the colonies.
 - i. Forbade exportation of woolen cloth produced in America.
 - ii. Beaver hats prohibited from exportation
 - iii. Encouraged colonists to produce pig and bar iron, but not build any new steel furnaces, slitting mills, or plating forges.
- e. **Molasses Act (1733)** -- Imposed heavy duties on all molasses, rum and sugar imported from French Caribbean.
 - i. Colonists traded heavily with the French West Indies
 - ii. Some rum produced in America was traded for slaves -- New England merchants heavily involved in slave trade

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C. Positive results of British Mercantilism

1. Until 1763, Navigation Laws did not adversely impact the colonial economy.
2. Colonials had rights of Englishmen and opportunities for self-government
3. Colonies had British military protection free of charge
4. Colonies greatly profited from manufacturing and trading.

D. Negative impact of mercantilism

1. Colonial manufacturing was hindered by British policies.
2. Southern colonies suffered as export prices dropped due to "enumeration."
 - Virginia especially affected; poor economic conditions resulted in unrest
3. New England resented favorable British policies toward Southern colonies (who produced tobacco, sugar and rice).
4. **Writs of Assistance**
 - a. Search warrants by British customs officers harassed colonial shipping.
 - b. Aimed to reduce colonial smuggling (e.g. illegal triangular trade.)
 - c. 1761, James Otis, a young Boston lawyer, demanded Parliament repeal the acts.
 - i. Parliament refused but Otis' efforts gained press throughout the colonies.
 - ii. Later, Otis wrote famous words "no taxation without representation."

E. End of "salutary neglect"

1. 1763 marked a new era in relations between England the colonies
 - a. **George Grenville** new Prime Minister, sought to enforce Navigation Acts.
 - Americans particularly angry about increased authority of admiralty courts that could now try smugglers, tax evaders, ship owners, and others accused of violating commercial restrictions; no trial by jury; located in Nova Scotia.
 - b. British debt from the Seven Years' War was enormous
 - i. Half the debt due to protection of the colonies
 - ii. British thought colonists should pay 1/3 of maintaining a garrison of 10,000 British soldiers to protect against Indian uprisings.
2. **King George III**
 - a. Very stubborn and surrounded himself with gov't officials that were often inexperienced, selfish & narrow-minded.
 - 5 different prime ministers during 1st 10 years of his reign.
 - b. Sought to exercise increased control over the colonies.
 - c. 50 years of Whig power was about to give way to a conservative gov't dominated by the king beginning in 1762.
3. **Proclamation of 1763**
 - a. Prohibited colonials to move west of the Appalachians
 - b. British aim: Settle land disputes with Amerindians fairly to prevent future uprisings like **Pontiac's Rebellion**.
 - c. Colonials infuriated
 - i. Many veterans had fought in the war and felt betrayed
 - ii. Land speculators believed Americans should have access to lands.
 - d. Colonists generally ignored the Proclamation
4. **Currency Act (1764)**
 - a. British restricted colonial printing of paper money
 - Wanted colonists to pay back debts and taxes with hard currency (gold and silver).
 - b. Trade deficit between England & America hurt the colonies
 - i. Most gold & silver flowed to England from colonies since the colonies imported more than they exported.
 - ii. Lack of gold meant lack of hard cash; bartering increased
5. **Sugar Acts, 1764** (updated version of Molasses Act of 1733)
 - a. First act ever passed specifically that raised revenue for the crown.
 - b. Aimed to regulate the illegal triangular trade by collecting duties that the colonists had not paid for many years.
 - c. Reduced taxes on molasses but taxed all molasses, not just molasses from French West Indies.
 - d. Not enforced effectively; duties eventually lowered after Stamp Act crisis.

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6. **Quartering Act, 1765:** Certain colonies required to provide food & quarters for British troops.

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III. Three great crises in the colonies led to the American Revolution: Stamp Act, Townshend Acts, & Tea Act

A. **The Stamp Act of 1765** -- Perhaps the single most important event leading to the American Revolution

1. Purpose: Raise revenues to support new military force in the colonies
2. Provisions:
 - a. Official stamps on paper would serve as proof of payment.
 - b. Tax applied to published materials and legal documents e.g., pamphlets, newspapers, diplomas, bills of lading, marriage certificates, death certificates, mortgages, insurance policies, liquor licenses, & playing cards.
 - c. Both Sugar Act and Stamp Act provided for trying offenders in **admiralty courts** where juries were not allowed
 - Burden of proof on defendants; were assumed guilty unless proved innocent.
3. Grenville's view
 - a. Stamp Act was reasonable and just
 - b. Only required colonials to pay fair share for colonial defense
 - c. Stamp Act in Britain had been much heavier and in effect for about 50 years.
4. Virginia Resolves (led by Patrick Henry)
 - a. VA leaders believed Stamp Act attacked colonial's rights as Englishmen
 - b. 5 of Henry's 7 resolutions adopted by the House of Burgesses including non-importation.
 - c. Claimed that Virginia could only be taxed by Virginians.
 - "**No taxation w/o representation**"
 - d. Assemblies of 8 other colonies passed resolutions similar to Virginia's.
5. Colonist views distinguished between "legislation" and "taxation"
 - a. Legislation, "**external taxes**," the right of Parliament regarding the empire; e.g. customs duties (tariffs)
 - b. Taxation, "**internal taxes**," exclusive right of local representative gov't.
 - British taxation was robbery; attacking sacred rights of property
 - c. Grenville's response: colonies had "**virtual representation**" in Parliament
 - All British subjects were represented, even those who did not vote for members in Parliament.

- d. Colonists dismissed "virtual representation"
 - i. "No taxation w/o representation"
 - ii. Did not really want "**direct representation**" (actual representation)
 - Would mean increased taxes (as in Britain)
 - Increased responsibilities to the crown
 - Colonial reps. would be heavily outnumbered in Parliament
- 6. **Stamp Act Congress** (1765) -- brought together 27 delegates from 9 colonies
 - a. Massachusetts invited colonies who adopted Virginia Resolves to meet.
 - b. Drew up a statement of their rights and grievances and demanded that the king and Parliament rescind the Stamp Act.
 - c. Largely ignored in England; of little consequence in the colonies
 - d. Significance: Brought together reps from different & rival colonies and set precedent for future resistance to British rule.
 - Helped break down sectional suspicions within the colonies.
 - e. Non-importation agreements against British goods.
 - England economy suffered from non-importation but non-importation was not decisive in reversing Parliament's decision
- 7. **Sons of Liberty** led by **Samuel Adams** violently enforced nonimportation agreements against violators; (tarring & feathering was one painful tactic).
 - a. Houses of pro-British officials vandalized, theft occurred, and the warehouse where stamps were stored was destroyed.
 - b. All stamp act agents were forced to resign; no one risked selling stamps.
- 8. Stamp Act repealed in 1766
 - a. Lord Rockingham saw the Stamp Act as a possible cause of civil crisis and encouraged British merchants to write Parliament to rescind the tax. (Rockingham replaced Grenville)
 - b. Parliament passed the **Declaratory Act** at the same time
 - i. Purpose was partly to save face
 - ii. Claimed Parliament had right to tax colonies in the future.
 - c. Sugar Act tax lowered significantly

B. **Townshend Acts (1767)**

- 1. Charles Townshend took control of Parliament and sought to Punish the colonies for the Stamp Act uprising.
- 2. Provisions:
 - a. Small import duty placed on glass, white lead, paper, paint, silk and tea.
 - Tax was an indirect customs duty ("external tax")

- b. Revenues from taxes to pay salaries of royal governors and judges
 - c. Established a commission and vice-admiralty courts for enforcement.
 - Royal judges would be allowed to grant "writs of assistance" in private homes, shops or warehouses.
3. Colonial reaction
- a. Colonies angrily interpreted the act as an inappropriate tax to raise revenue
 - b. **John Dickinson, *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania***
 - i. Challenged distinction between "internal" and "external" taxes.
 - ii. Denied right to levy taxes for purpose of revenue.
 - iii. Prompted the Massachusetts Circular Letter
4. **Massachusetts Circular Letter** (Feb. 1768)
- a. Massachusetts legislature, urged by Sam Adams and James Otis, supported Dickinson's arguments and called for other colonies to pass petitions calling for Parliament to repeal the Townshend Acts.
 - b. In response, British sent troops to Boston and threatened to dissolve Massachusetts' legislature if the letter not retracted.
 - Other colonies that voted for the circular would be dissolved.
 - c. Some colonies reenacted previous nonimportation agreements
 - British exports to America fell 40% over the next few months.
 - d. Several colonial legislatures dissolved as they supported Massachusetts: MA, MD, VA, DE, SC
5. **Boston "Massacre"**
- a. (Peaceful) arrival of troops in Boston aroused American resistance
 - Colonials fearful of standing armies; believed Britain sought to suppress colonial liberties.
 - b. March 5, 1770 British soldiers (having been provoked) fired on a crowd
 - i. Eleven civilians killed or wounded
 - ii. Crispus Attucks, a mulatto merchant seaman, the "first to die in the revolution," and alleged leader of the unruly mob.
 - iii. Word of the "massacre" spread throughout the colonies (esp. by Sons of Liberty)
 - iv. Colonial propaganda grossly exaggerated the event.

6. Townshend Acts repealed
 - a. Lord North, bowing to pressure, got Parliament to repeal the act in 1770.
 - i. Nonimportation agreements were pinching British manufacturers
 - ii. Three-pence tax on tea remained to demonstrate Parliament's right to tax.
 - Taxed tea still cost less than smuggled tea.
 - b. Half the troops in Boston removed.
 - c. Until 1773, relations improved after Townshend Acts were repealed.

7. Gaspee Incident (1771) one of only a few incidents between 1770-1773 to cause conflict
 - a. British warship "Gaspee" ran aground near in RI, pursuing smugglers.
 - Ship was notorious for extorting smaller vessels and allowing men to steal cattle and cut fruit trees on local farms for firewood.
 - b. Sons of Liberty members, dressed as Indians, took crew off the ship and set it on fire; the commander was wounded
 - c. "Gaspee" Commission was created to seek retribution but could not find the guilty parties; would have sent them to England for trial.

8. **Committees of Correspondence**
 - a. Some colonial discontent continued as British redoubled efforts to enforce the Navigation Laws.
 - b. **Samuel Adams** used propaganda to whip up colonial resentment
 - c. Adams organized local committees of correspondence in Mass., Nov, 1772.
 - d. Chief function was to spread propaganda and information by interchanging letters in order to keep opposition to British policy alive.
 - e. In particular, letters from British gov't including those of Gov. Hutchinson showed that Britain was acting on Hutchinson's advice and wishes.
 - f. Intercolonial committees of correspondence emerged
 - g. Intercolonial groups evolved directly into the first American congresses.

C. The Tea Act Crisis and the First Continental Congress

1. Tea Act (1773)

- a. British gov't granted **British East India Company** a monopoly of the American tea trade.
 - i. BEIC on the verge of bankruptcy which would have cost the British government huge revenues.
 - ii. Price of tea would be even lower than existing prices, even with the tax.
- b. Americans reacted angrily: saw Tea Act as an attempt to trick colonies into accepting the tax through cheaper tea.

2. Boston Tea Party, Dec. 16, 1773

- Sons of Liberty, dressed as Indians, boarded three ships, smashed 342 chests open, and dumped the tea into the harbor.

3. "Intolerable Acts" (Coercive Acts), 1774

- a. 1774, Parliament passed the Coercive Acts to punish Boston.
- b. Boston Port Act: harbor remained closed until damages were paid and law and order restored.
- c. Massachusetts charter revoked
 - i. King had power to appoint the Governor's Council, not the assembly
 - ii. Forbade town meetings except for election of town officials.
- d. Enforcing officials who killed colonists could now be tried in England instead of the colonies (thereby avoiding colonial justice).
- e. Quartering Act: Provided for the quartering of troops once again in Boston.

4. Quebec Act, 1774

- a. Coincidentally accompanied "Intolerable Acts"; *not* intended to punish the colonies
- b. French in Canada were guaranteed right to practice Catholicism
- c. Quebec territory was extended down to the Ohio river, next to NY & PA
- c. French allowed to keep old customs and institutions which did not include a representative assembly or trial by jury in civil cases.
- d. The act was actually an enlightened extension of British freedoms.
- e. Colonial reaction:
 - Viewed act as insidious attempt to create a new French Canadian and Amerindian threat in the Ohio Valley region.
 - Anti-Catholic sentiment arose; seen as an attack on Protestantism

5. The First Continental Congress, 1774

- a. In response to "Intolerable Acts," the committees of correspondence urged the colonies to act quickly.
- b. Bostonians agreed to end all trade with Great Britain and invited other colonies to join the resistance.
- c. First Continental Congress deliberated from in the fall of 1774
 - i. 12 of 13 colonies present (except Georgia)
 - ii. Delegates included S.Adams, J. Adams, G. Washington, & Patrick Henry.
- d. 1st Step: endorse several resolutions known as the Suffolk Resolves.
 - i. Denounced "Intolerable" Acts
 - ii. Urged colonies to organize militia for defensive purposes
 - iii. Called on colonies to suspend all trade with rest of British empire
 - iv. Urged citizens not to pay taxes.
- e. Rejection of Galloway Plan
 - i. Joseph Galloway called for a colonial union required to approve all parliamentary laws affecting the colonies (like Franklin's Albany Plan).
 - ii. Most members far too conservative to endorse such a radical view
- f. Main purpose: Petition for redress of grievances (***Declaration and Resolves***)
 - i. Gave colonists the legal right to assemble in order to seek redress.
 - ii. "Bill of Rights": established structure for the Declaration of Independence (preamble, list of grievances, mutual pledge)
- g. **The Association**: most significant action of the Congress
-- Called for a complete boycott of British goods: nonimportation, nonexportation, and nonconsumption.
- h. Yet, Congress restated allegiance to the King
-- No real desire to be independent; merely wanted grievances redressed.
- i. King and Parliament did not respond to *Declaration and Resolves*.
-- Would have recognized Congress's right as a legislative body.

6. Lexington and Concord -- "The Shot Heard around the World"

- a. Parliament ordered General Gage, new Gov. of Massachusetts, to arrest leaders of the rebellion and prepare for military action.
-- Gage sought to prevent bloodshed by disarming the local militia.

- b. April 1775, 700 British redcoats sent secretly to nearby Lexington & Concord to seize gunpowder and arrest Sam Adams & John Hancock.
 - Paul Revere and William Dawes warned the militia (Minutemen).
- c. Battle of Lexington and Concord began when Minutemen refused to disperse on Lexington Green and shots were fired.
 - i. 8 Americans killed, 10 wounded. Who fired the first shot?
 - ii. Redcoats continued on to Concord. 6 miles away.
- d. Concord -- British forced to retreat by American reinforcements
 - i. Militia picked-off British soldiers as they retreated to Boston
 - ii. By day's end, 273 British casualties; 95 American
- e. Minutemen encamped outside the city and lay siege to Boston.

IV. British Strengths and Weaknesses during the American Revolution

A. British Strengths

1. Population favored Britain: 7.5 million to 2.5 for the colonies.
2. Superior monetary advantage and best navy in the world
3. 20,000 slaves in Carolinas and Georgia joined British (only 5K for rebels)
 - a. British promised slaves freedom if they fought on their side
 - b. Many fled with the British after the war and left the country
4. Many Amerindians also sided with Britain and attacked Americans along the frontier
 - British represented last hope for keeping land-hungry colonists out.
5. Britain possessed a 50,000 man professional army
 - King George hired an additional 30,000 German "Hessians" as mercenaries.
6. British also enlisted about 50,000 loyalists

B. Weaknesses

1. Enormous distance from England to the Colonies
 - Communication was inefficient for immediate action.
2. America too large a region for Britain's army to effectively occupy; population was too dispersed
3. British generals in America were poor leaders
 - a. Many British soldiers did not want to kill Americans, whom they saw as their countrymen.
 - b. Provisions for the army were poor
4. Americans had only to tie in order to win; British had to win outright.
5. France was waiting for an opportunity to exact revenge
6. British gov't ineffective; King George & Lord North inadequate
 - Whig factions in Parliament cheered American victories at the outset

V. American Strengths and Weaknesses

A. Strengths

1. Outstanding leadership e.g., George Washington; Benjamin Franklin (diplomat)
2. Economic aid from France at the outset; later military aid was decisive.
3. Defensive military tactics worked to their advantage
4. Agriculturally self-sustaining
5. Colonials were competent marksmen; better than the redcoats
6. Moral advantage from belief in a just cause

B. Weaknesses

1. Badly organized for the war and lacked unity from the beginning.
 - a. Continental Congress was weak and ineffective
 - b. Fought almost the entire war without a constitution
2. Jealousy among colonies
 - a. Regarded themselves as sovereign
 - Resisted Congress' to exercise its weak power
 - b. Quarrels over the appointment of military leaders
3. Economic difficulties
 - a. Little metal money
 - i. Paper money printed to the point that it was worthless
 - ii. Individual colonies had to later print paper money
 - b. Soldiers deserted due to economic difficulties of their families
 - c. Debtors paid their debts with seriously depreciated money.
4. Military challenges
 - a. Military supplies were inadequate esp. firearms and gunpowder
 - b. Militiamen highly unreliable
5. Morale in the Revolutionary army undermined by greedy American profiteers
 - a. Sold goods to British for payment in gold
 - b. Speculators forced prices sky-high
 - c. Boston merchants made profits of 50-200% while soldiers were dying.
6. Only a select minority of Americans truly committed themselves to the cause.

Terms to Know

"salutary neglect" Whig ideology Paxton Boys Regulator Movement Mercantilism Navigation Laws enumerated articles Molasses Act writs of assistance James Otis George Grenville King George III Proclamation of 1763 Pontiac's Rebellion Currency Act Sugar Acts Quartering Act Stamp Act admiralty courts "no taxation without representation" "internal taxes" "external taxes"	virtual representation direct representation Stamp Act Congress Samuel Adams Sons of Liberty Declaratory Act Townshend Acts John Dickinson, <i>Letters From a Farmer in Pennsylvania</i> Massachusetts Circular Letter Boston Massacre Committees of Correspondence Tea Act British East India Company Boston Tea Party "Intolerable" Acts Quebec Act First Continental Congress <i>Declaration and Resolves</i> The Association Lexington and Concord
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Essay Questions

Note: This sub-unit is part of Unit 2 which is a very high probability area for the AP exam. In the past 10 years, 5 questions have come wholly or in part from the material in this unit. Below are some questions that will help you study the topics that have appeared on previous exams.

1. Analyze how the American colonies developed a sense of identity and unity during the period of "salutary neglect."
2. Analyze the political and economic causes for the American colonies' resistance to British imperial rule between 1763 and 1775.
3. Analyze the ideology behind the American colonies' resistance to British imperial.

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