

The American Revolution

Origins of Nation States

To understand the origins of nation states, we need to look back again at the late Middle Ages. As feudalism declined and trade and towns grew, wealth was generated that did not come from the land. The towns needed protection and ease of trade, the monarchs wanted taxes and more and more territory. Powerful monarchs sought to consolidate their power by taking over the territories of weaker neighbours and centralising power. Sometimes through diplomacy, but often through war, in the late 15th and early 16th century the modern nation states began to take on a recognisable shape.

Centralisation in states throughout Europe meant that law making was carried out in the capital city and these laws were applied and enforced throughout the kingdom. Trade flowed more freely across the kingdom as standard laws reduced local tolls, taxes, and regulation. Increased wealth and more efficient tax collection made monarchs more able to fund the professional armies that enabled them to defend and expand their territories still further. Power became increasingly concentrated.

The Thirty Years' War 1618-1648

There were many religiously motivated wars in the 17th century but the most significant was the Thirty Years' War. The Thirty Years' War was a war fought primarily in Central Europe between 1618 and 1648. One of the longest and most destructive conflicts in human history, as well as the deadliest European religious war in history, it resulted in eight million deaths. Initially a war between various Protestant and Catholic states in the fragmented Holy Roman Empire, the war became less about religion and more of a continuation of the France–Habsburg rivalry for European political pre-eminence. The Thirty Years' War devastated entire regions, with famine and disease resulting in high mortality in the populations of the German and Italian states. It was one of the reasons why European monarchs fought more limited wars in the century that followed.

The Peace of Westphalia 1648 ended the war, which had altered the previous political order of European powers. Perhaps the most significant political consequence was the rise of France under the Bourbon Kings. The Treaty of Westphalia not only established the right of monarchs to decide the official religion of their territory but also the modern concept of national sovereignty. This is the idea that there is no higher power than the power of the individual nation state and that no other body or state can have authority over what goes on within the state. The state is independent.

Colonizing America

The first successful English settlement was in Jamestown, Virginia (Named after Queen Elizabeth). The initial goal and hope were to find gold and profit from it. To their great sadness, they didn't find any. However, they found something else that went on to become highly popular and so far, non-existent in Europe: tobacco. Harsh winters made most of the colonists die and soon it was difficult to find new colonists that wanted to come to the New World, due to its short survival rate. However, the settlers started to offer big properties to those who came, and numerous big estates were established. Twelve years later, the first slaves arrived, and the farming of tobacco began on a big scale. The 'Pilgrim Fathers' ships later got blown off course and arrived in Massachusetts, only weeks before winter without sufficient food or farm animals. It was only thanks to the Native Americans that they didn't all die. A little while later, the pilgrims (what was left of them) held a feast

with the Native Americans which is still today celebrated as Thanksgiving, on the fourth Thursday of November, in remembrance of the pilgrim's survival thanks to the Native Americans.

Early Seeds 1651-1748

Navigation Acts 1651: As early as 1651, the English government had sought to regulate trade in the American colonies, and Parliament passed the *Navigation Acts* on October 9 to pursue a mercantilist policy intended to ensure that trade enriched Great Britain but prohibited trade with any other nations. The Acts prohibited British producers from growing tobacco and also encouraged shipbuilding, particularly in the New England colonies. Some argue that the economic impact was minimal on the colonists, but the political friction which the acts triggered was more serious, as the merchants most directly affected were also the most politically active.

The Dominion of New England 1686: *King Philip's War* ended in 1678, which the New England colonies fought without any military assistance from England and thereby contributed to the development of a unique identity separate from that of the British people. But King Charles II determined to bring the New England colonies under a more centralized administration in the 1680s to regulate trade to more effectively benefit the homeland. The New England colonists fiercely opposed his efforts, and the Crown nullified their colonial charters in response. Charles' successor James II finalized these efforts in 1686, establishing the consolidated *Dominion of New England*. Dominion rule triggered bitter resentment throughout New England; the enforcement of the unpopular Navigation Acts and the curtailing of local democracy angered the colonists. New Englanders were encouraged, however, by a change of government in England which saw James II effectively abdicate, and a populist uprising in New England overthrew Dominion rule on April 18, 1689. Colonial governments reasserted their control after the revolt, and successive Crown governments made no more attempts to restore the Dominion.

The Molasses Act 1733: Subsequent English governments continued in their efforts to tax certain goods however, passing acts regulating the trade of wool, hats, and molasses. *The Molasses Act of 1733* was particularly egregious to the colonists, as a significant part of colonial trade relied on molasses. The taxes severely damaged the New England economy and resulted in a surge of smuggling, bribery, and intimidation of customs officials. Colonial wars fought in America were also a source of considerable tension.

Royal Proclamation of 1763: redrew boundaries of the lands west of newly-British Quebec and west of a line running along the crest of the Allegheny Mountains, making them indigenous territory and barred to colonial settlement for two years. The colonists protested, and the boundary line was adjusted in a series of treaties with indigenous tribes. The treaties opened most of what is present-day Kentucky and West Virginia to colonial settlement.

Thirteen Colonies

The English continued to set up more colonies, until by 1760 there were thirteen in all. In 1760 there were two and a half million people living in the thirteen colonies. About two million of the settlers had emigrated from Europe, most of them from Britain and Ireland. They went for various reasons. Some wanted to escape from religious persecution. Others hoped to make their fortunes in a new world where land was cheap and work plentiful. About half a million Americans had no such hopes. They were the slaves. They had been captured in Africa and sold as slaves to white Americans who needed labourers to grow cotton, sugar, and tobacco in the hot southern colonies. They and their children and their children's children could never hope to enjoy the freedom of the new world.

How Britain ruled its American Colonies

The thirteen colonies were part of the British Empire. In 1760 its king was George III. George ruled his Empire with the advice of his parliament, which was made up of wealthy landowners. George appointed a governor to rule each colony in his name. Each colony also had an elected Assembly which advised the governor about what the colonists wanted. For many years this system worked well. The colonists had a great deal of freedom. They could raise their own taxes and decide how to spend most of the money. But the governor kept them in touch with what the king wanted.

The Seven Years' War 1756-1763

The Seven Years' War was a global conflict fought between 1756 and 1763. It involved every European great power of the time and spanned five continents, affecting Europe, the Americas, West Africa, India, and the Philippines. The conflict split Europe into two coalitions, led by the Kingdom of Great Britain (including Prussia, Portugal, Hanover, and other small German states) on one side and the Kingdom of France (including the Austrian-led Holy Roman Empire, the Russian Empire, Bourbon Spain, and Sweden) on the other. The war was successful for Great Britain, which gained the bulk of New France in North America, Spanish Florida, some individual Caribbean islands in the West Indies, the colony of Senegal on the West African coast, and superiority over the French trading outposts on the Indian subcontinent.

The Seven Years' War was significant for two reasons. Firstly, for the French the cost of the war and the territorial losses incurred, seriously weakened the monarchy. This financial debt and the later cost of military support against the British became a central cause of the French Revolution. Secondly, for the British, the cost of defending their colonies had been enormous. The British Government decided to make the colonialists help pay towards the cost of the war by raising their taxes. The colonists protested at this. They said it was not right that a parliament in England, elected by people who lived over 3,000 miles away could tax them. They felt that they should only pay taxes imposed by an Assembly (parliament) they had elected themselves. The British ignored their protests. In 1765 the London Parliament introduced the Stamp Act. It put a tax on documents like contracts and wills. News of the Stamp Act caused outrage in the American colonies. Groups of men known as the 'Sons of Liberty' organised resistance to it. Their slogan was 'No taxation without representation'.

Taxes imposed and withdrawn 1764-1766

Sugar Act: In 1764 Parliament passed the *Sugar Act*, decreasing the existing customs duties on sugar and molasses but providing stricter measures of enforcement and collection. That same year, Prime Minister George Grenville proposed direct taxes on the colonies to raise revenue, but he delayed action to see whether the colonies would propose some way to raise the revenue themselves.

Stamp Act: Parliament finally passed the *Stamp Act* in March 1765, which imposed direct taxes on the colonies for the first time. All official documents, newspapers, almanacs, and pamphlets were required to have the stamps—even decks of playing cards. The colonists did not object that the taxes were high; they were actually low. They objected to their lack of representation in the Parliament, which gave them no voice concerning legislation that affected them. The British were, however, reacting to an entirely different issue: at the conclusion of the recent war the Crown had to deal with approximately 1,500 politically well-connected British Army officers. The decision was made to keep them on active duty with full pay, but they—and their commands—also had to be stationed somewhere. Stationing a standing army in Great Britain during peacetime was politically unacceptable, so they determined to station them in America and have the Americans pay them through the new tax. The soldiers had no military mission however; they were not there to defend the colonies because there was no current threat to the colonies.

Sons of Liberty: formed shortly after the Act in 1765, and they used public demonstrations, boycotts, and threats of violence to ensure that the British tax laws were unenforceable. In Boston, the Sons of Liberty burned the records of the vice admiralty court and looted the home of chief justice Thomas Hutchinson. Several legislatures called for united action, and nine colonies sent delegates to the Stamp Act Congress in New York City in October. Moderates led by John Dickinson drew up a *Declaration of Rights and Grievances* stating that taxes passed without representation violated their rights as Englishmen, and colonists emphasized their determination by boycotting imports of British merchandise.

“Virtual Representation”: the Parliament at Westminster saw itself as the supreme lawmaking authority throughout the Empire and thus entitled to levy any tax without colonial approval or even consultation. They argued that the colonies were legally British corporations subordinate to the British Parliament, and they pointed to numerous instances where Parliament had made laws in the past that were binding on the colonies. Parliament insisted that the colonies effectively enjoyed a "virtual representation" as most British people did, as only a small minority of the British population elected representatives to Parliament, but Americans such as James Otis maintained that there was no one in Parliament responsible specifically for any colonial constituency, so they were not "virtually represented" by anyone in Parliament at all.

Repealing the tax: The Rockingham government came to power in July 1765, and Parliament debated whether to repeal the stamp tax or to send an army to enforce it. Benjamin Franklin made the case for repeal, explaining that the colonies had spent heavily in manpower, money, and blood defending the empire in a series of wars against the French and indigenous people, and that further taxes to pay for those wars were unjust and might bring about a rebellion. Parliament agreed and repealed the tax on February 21, 1766, but they insisted in the *Declaratory Act* of March 1766 that they retained full power to make laws for the colonies "in all cases whatsoever". The repeal nonetheless caused widespread celebrations in the colonies.

Townshend Acts and the Tea Acts 1767-1773

Townshend Acts 1767: placed duties on several staple goods, including paper, glass, and tea, and established a Board of Customs in Boston to execute trade regulations more rigorously. The new taxes were enacted on the belief that Americans only objected to internal taxes and not to external taxes such as custom duties. However, in his widely read pamphlet, *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania*, John Dickinson argued against the constitutionality of the acts because their purpose was to raise revenue and not to regulate trade. Colonists responded to the taxes by organizing new boycotts of British goods. These boycotts were less effective, however, as the goods taxed by the Townshend Acts were widely used.

Assembly of Massachusetts Bay 1768: issued a circular letter to the other colonies urging them to coordinate resistance. The governor dissolved the assembly when it refused to rescind the letter. Meanwhile, a riot broke out in Boston in June 1768 over the seizure of the sloop *Liberty*, owned by John Hancock, for alleged smuggling. Customs officials were forced to flee, prompting the British to deploy troops to Boston. A Boston town meeting declared that no obedience was due to parliamentary laws and called for the convening of a convention. A convention assembled but only issued a mild protest before dissolving itself. In January 1769, Parliament responded to the unrest by reactivating the *Treason Act 1543* which called for subjects outside the realm to face trials for treason in England. The governor of Massachusetts was instructed to collect evidence of said treason, and the threat caused widespread outrage, though it was not carried out.

Boston Massacre 1770: On March 5, 1770, a large crowd gathered around a group of British soldiers on a Boston Street. The crowd grew threatening, throwing snowballs, rocks, and debris at them. One soldier was clubbed and fell. There was no order to fire, but the soldiers panicked and fired into the crowd. They hit 11 people; three civilians died of wounds at the scene of the shooting, and two died shortly after the incident. The event quickly came to be called the *Boston Massacre*. The soldiers

were tried and acquitted (defended by John Adams), but the widespread descriptions soon began to turn colonial sentiment against the British. This accelerated the downward spiral in the relationship between Britain and the Province of Massachusetts.

Withdrawing taxes 1770: A new ministry under Lord North came to power in 1770, and Parliament withdrew all taxes except the tax on tea, giving up its efforts to raise revenue while maintaining the right to tax. This temporarily resolved the crisis, and the boycott of British goods largely ceased, with only the more radical patriots such as Samuel Adams continuing to agitate.

Committees of Correspondence 1772: it became known that the Crown intended to pay fixed salaries to the governors and judges in Massachusetts, which had been paid by local authorities. This would reduce the influence of colonial representatives over their government. Samuel Adams in Boston set about creating new *Committees of Correspondence*, which linked Patriots in all 13 colonies and eventually provided the framework for a rebel government. Virginia, the largest colony, set up its Committee of Correspondence in early 1773, on which Patrick Henry and Thomas Jefferson served. A total of about 7,000 to 8,000 Patriots served on Committees of Correspondence at the colonial and local levels, comprising most of the leadership in their communities. Loyalists were excluded. The committees became the leaders of the American resistance to British actions, and later largely determined the war effort at the state and local level. When the *First Continental Congress* decided to boycott British products, the colonial and local Committees took charge, examining merchant records and publishing the names of merchants who attempted to defy the boycott by importing British goods.

Tea Act 1773: Parliament passed the *Tea Act* to lower the price of taxed tea exported to the colonies to help the British East India Company undersell smuggled untaxed Dutch tea. Special consignees were appointed to sell the tea to bypass colonial merchants. The act was opposed by those who resisted the taxes and by smugglers who stood to lose business. In most instances, the consignees were forced by the Americans to resign and the tea was turned back, but Massachusetts governor Hutchinson refused to allow Boston merchants to give in to pressure. A town meeting in Boston determined that the tea would not be landed and ignored a demand from the governor to disperse.

Boston Tea Party 1773: On December 16, 1773, a group of men, led by Samuel Adams and dressed to evoke the appearance of indigenous people, boarded the ships of the East India Company, and dumped £10,000 worth of tea from their holds (approximately £636,000 in 2008) into Boston Harbor. Three hundred and forty-two tea chests were destroyed. It was said at the time that the pile of dumped tea was so high in the harbour that some of it was falling back onto the ships. Later some people went so far as to give up eating fish caught in Boston harbour 'because they had drunk of the East India Tea'.

Intolerable Acts and Quebec Acts 1774-1775

Intolerable Acts 1774: The British government responded by passing several Acts which came to be known as the *Intolerable Acts*, that further darkened colonial opinion towards the British. They consisted of four laws enacted by the British parliament which restricted town meetings, British soldiers were to be tried in Britain, not in the colonies, closed the port of Boston until the British had been compensated for the tea lost in the Boston Tea Party, and allowed royal governors to house British troops in the homes of citizens without requiring permission of the owner. In response, Massachusetts patriots issued the *Suffolk Resolves* and formed an alternative shadow government known as the *Provincial Congress* which began training militia outside British-occupied Boston. In September 1774, the *First Continental Congress* convened, consisting of representatives from each colony, to serve as a vehicle for deliberation and collective action. During secret debates, conservative Joseph Galloway proposed the creation of a colonial Parliament that would be able to approve or disapprove of acts of the British Parliament, but his idea was not accepted. Congress

called for a boycott beginning on 1 December 1774 of all British goods; it was enforced by new committees authorized by the Congress.

Military Hostilities

Battles of Lexington and Concord April 1775: Massachusetts was declared in a state of rebellion in February 1775 and the British garrison received orders to disarm the rebels and arrest their leaders, leading to the *Battles of Lexington and Concord* on 19 April 1775. On the night of 18 April 1775, British troops set out for Concord. But the rebels learned of their plans and sent messengers to warn the surrounding countryside. The most famous messenger was Paul Revere. At Lexington, on the road to Concord, rebels clashed with British troops. Eight Americans were killed and ten were wounded. Later that day a second battle took place in Concord. The British were forced to retreat to Boston. The Patriots laid siege to Boston, expelled royal officials from all the colonies, and took control through the establishment of Provincial Congresses.

Battle of Bunker Hill June 1775: A British victory—but at a great cost: about 1,000 British casualties from a garrison of about 6,000, as compared to 500 American casualties from a much larger force. The Second Continental Congress was divided on the best course of action, but eventually produced the *Olive Branch Petition*, in which they attempted to come to an accord with King George. The king, however, issued a *Proclamation of Rebellion* which declared that the states were "in rebellion" and the members of Congress were traitors.

Quebec: In the winter of 1775, the Americans invaded newly-British Quebec under generals Benedict Arnold and Richard Montgomery, expecting to rally sympathetic colonists there. The attack was a failure; many Americans who weren't killed were either captured or died of smallpox.

March 1776: the Continental Army forced the British to evacuate Boston, with George Washington as the commander of the new army. The revolutionaries now fully controlled all thirteen colonies and were ready to declare independence. There still were many Loyalists, but they were no longer in control anywhere by July 1776, and all of the Royal officials had fled.^[50]

Creating New State Constitutions

Following the *Battle of Bunker Hill* in June 1775, the Patriots had control of Massachusetts outside the Boston city limits, and the Loyalists suddenly found themselves on the defensive with no protection from the British army. In all 13 colonies, Patriots had overthrown their existing governments, closing courts and driving away British officials. They held elected conventions and "legislatures" that existed outside any legal framework; new constitutions were drawn up in each state to supersede royal charters. They proclaimed that they were states, not colonies.

On January 5, 1776, New Hampshire ratified the first state constitution. In May 1776, Congress voted to suppress all forms of crown authority, to be replaced by locally created authority. Virginia, South Carolina, and New Jersey created their constitutions before July 4. Rhode Island and Connecticut simply took their existing royal charters and deleted all references to the crown. The new states were all committed to republicanism, with no inherited offices. They decided what form of government to create, and how to select those who would craft the constitutions and how the resulting document would be ratified. On 26 May 1776, John Adams wrote James Sullivan from Philadelphia warning against extending the franchise too far.

The resulting constitutions in states such as Maryland, Virginia, Delaware, New York, and Massachusetts featured:

- Property qualifications for voting and even more substantial requirements for elected positions (though New York and Maryland lowered property qualifications)
- Bicameral legislatures, with the upper house as a check on the lower

- Strong governors with veto power over the legislature and substantial appointment authority
- Few or no restraints on individuals holding multiple positions in government
- The continuation of state-established religion

In Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New Hampshire, the resulting constitutions embodied:

- universal manhood suffrage, or minimal property requirements for voting or holding office (New Jersey enfranchised some property-owning widows, a step that it retracted 25 years later)
- strong, unicameral legislatures
- relatively weak governors without veto powers, and with little appointing authority
- prohibition against individuals holding multiple government posts

The radical provisions of Pennsylvania's constitution lasted only 14 years. In 1790, conservatives gained power in the state legislature, called a new constitutional convention, and rewrote the constitution. The new constitution substantially reduced universal male suffrage, gave the governor veto power and patronage appointment authority, and added an upper house with substantial wealth qualifications to the unicameral legislature. Thomas Paine called it a constitution unworthy of America.

Independence and Union

Halifax Resolves April 1776: the North Carolina Provincial Congress issued the *Halifax Resolves* explicitly authorizing its delegates to vote for independence. By June, nine Provincial Congresses were ready for independence; one by one, the last four fell into line: Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and New York. Richard Henry Lee was instructed by the Virginia legislature to propose independence, and he did so on June 7, 1776. On June 11, a committee was created by the Second Continental Congress to draft a document explaining the justifications for separation from Britain. After securing enough votes for passage, independence was voted for on July 2.

The Declaration of Independence was drafted largely by Thomas Jefferson and presented by the committee; it was unanimously adopted by the entire Congress on July 4, and each colony became an independent and autonomous state. The next step was to form a union to facilitate international relations and alliances.

Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union 1777: The Second Continental Congress approved the *Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union* for ratification by the states on November 15, 1777; the Congress immediately began operating under the Articles' terms, providing a structure of shared sovereignty during prosecution of the war and facilitating international relations and alliances with France and Spain. The Articles were fully ratified on March 1, 1781. At that point, the Continental Congress was dissolved and a new government of the *United States in Congress Assembled* took its place on the following day, with Samuel Huntington as presiding officer.

The British Return 1776-1777

According to British historian Jeremy Black, the British had significant advantages, including a highly trained army, the world's largest navy, and an efficient system of public finance that could easily fund the war. However, they seriously misunderstood the depth of support for the American Patriot position and ignored the advice of General Gage, misinterpreting the situation as merely a large-scale riot. The British government believed that they could overawe the Americans by sending a large military and naval force, forcing them to be loyal again.

Battle of Brooklyn July 1776: Washington forced the British out of Boston in the spring of 1776, and neither the British nor the Loyalists controlled any significant areas. The British, however, were massing forces at their naval base at Halifax, Nova Scotia. They returned in force in July 1776, landing

in New York and defeating Washington's Continental Army in August at the *Battle of Brooklyn*. Following that victory, they requested a meeting with representatives from Congress to negotiate an end to hostilities.

Staten Island Peace Conference: A delegation including John Adams and Benjamin Franklin met British admiral Richard Howe on Staten Island in New York Harbor on September 11 in what became known as the *Staten Island Peace Conference*. Howe demanded that the Americans retract the Declaration of Independence, which they refused to do, and negotiations ended. The British then seized New York City and nearly captured Washington's army. They made the city and its strategic harbor their main political and military base of operations, holding it until November 1783. The city became the destination for Loyalist refugees and a focal point of Washington's intelligence network.

The British also took New Jersey, pushing the Continental Army into Pennsylvania. Washington crossed the Delaware River back into New Jersey in a surprise attack in late December 1776 and defeated the Hessian and British armies at Trenton and Princeton, thereby regaining control of most of New Jersey. The victories gave an important boost to Patriots at a time when morale was flagging, and they have become iconic events of the war.

Battle of Saratoga October 1777: In 1777, the British sent Burgoyne's invasion force from Canada south to New York to seal off New England. Their aim was to isolate New England, which the British perceived as the primary source of agitation. Rather than move north to support Burgoyne, the British army in New York City went to Philadelphia in a major case of mis-coordination, capturing it from Washington. The invasion army under Burgoyne was much too slow and became trapped in northern New York state. It surrendered after the *Battles of Saratoga* in October 1777.

Valley Forge: From early October 1777 until November 15, a siege distracted British troops at Fort Mifflin, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and allowed Washington time to preserve the Continental Army by safely leading his troops to harsh winter quarters at Valley Forge.

American Alliances after 1778

France: The capture of a British army at Saratoga encouraged the French to formally enter the war in support of Congress, and Benjamin Franklin negotiated a permanent military alliance in early 1778; France thus became the first foreign nation to officially recognize the Declaration of Independence. On February 6, 1778, the United States and France signed the *Treaty of Amity and Commerce* and the *Treaty of Alliance*. William Pitt spoke out in Parliament urging Britain to make peace in America and to unite with America against France, while British politicians who had sympathized with colonial grievances now turned against the Americans for allying with Britain's rival and enemy.

The Spanish and the Dutch became allies of the French in 1779 and 1780 respectively, forcing the British to fight a global war without major allies, and requiring it to slip through a combined blockade of the Atlantic. Britain began to view the American war for independence as merely one front in a wider war and the British chose to withdraw troops from America to reinforce the British colonies in the Caribbean, which were under threat of Spanish or French invasion. British commander Sir Henry Clinton evacuated Philadelphia and returned to New York City. General Washington intercepted him in the *Battle of Monmouth Court House*, the last major battle fought in the north. After an inconclusive engagement, the British retreated to New York City. The northern war subsequently became a stalemate, as the focus of attention shifted to the smaller southern theatre.

The British Move South 1778-1783

The British strategy in America now concentrated on a campaign in the southern states. With fewer regular troops at their disposal, the British commanders saw the "southern strategy" as a more viable plan, as they perceived the south as strongly Loyalist with a large population of recent immigrants

and large numbers of slaves who might be tempted to run away from their masters to join the British and gain their freedom.

Battle of Camden 1778: Beginning in late December 1778, the British captured Savannah and controlled the Georgia coastline. In 1780, they launched a fresh invasion and took Charleston, as well. A significant victory at the *Battle of Camden* meant that royal forces soon controlled most of Georgia and South Carolina. The British set up a network of forts inland, hoping that the Loyalists would rally to the flag. Not enough Loyalists turned out, however, and the British had to fight their way north into North Carolina and Virginia with a severely weakened army. Behind them, much of the territory that they had already captured dissolved into a chaotic guerrilla war, fought predominantly between bands of Loyalists and American militia, and which negated many of the gains that the British had previously made.

Battle of Chesapeake 1781: The British army under Cornwallis marched to Yorktown, Virginia, where they expected to be rescued by a British fleet. The fleet did arrive, but so did a larger French fleet. The French were victorious in the *Battle of the Chesapeake*, and the British fleet returned to New York for reinforcements, leaving Cornwallis trapped. In October 1781, the British surrendered their second invading army of the war under a siege by the combined French and Continental armies commanded by Washington.

The End of the War

Washington did not know if or when the British might reopen hostilities after Yorktown. They still had 26,000 troops occupying New York City, Charleston, and Savannah, together with a powerful fleet. The French army and navy departed, so the Americans were on their own in 1782–83. The American treasury was empty, and the unpaid soldiers were growing restive, almost to the point of mutiny or possible *coup d'état*. Washington dispelled the unrest among officers of the *Newburgh Conspiracy* in 1783, and Congress subsequently created the promise of a five years bonus for all officers.

Historians continue to debate whether the odds were long or short for American victory. John E. Ferling says that the odds were so long that the American victory was "almost a miracle". On the other hand, Joseph Ellis says that the odds favoured the Americans, and asks whether there ever was any realistic chance for the British to win. He argues that this opportunity came only once, in the summer of 1776, and the British failed that test. Admiral Howe and his brother General Howe "missed several opportunities to destroy the Continental Army Chance, luck, and even the vagaries of the weather played crucial roles." Ellis's point is that the strategic and tactical decisions of the Howes were fatally flawed because they underestimated the challenges posed by the Patriots. Ellis concludes that, once the Howe brothers failed, the opportunity "would never come again" for a British victory.

Support for the conflict had never been strong in Britain, where many sympathized with the Americans, but now it reached a new low. King George wanted to fight on, but his supporters lost control of Parliament and they launched no further offensives in America on the eastern seaboard. However, the British continued formal and informal assistance to Indian tribes making war on US citizens over the next three decades, which contributed to a "Second American Revolution" at the 1812–1815 War of 1812. In that war against Britain, the US permanently established its territory and its citizenship independent of the British Empire.

Why did the British lose?

The Battle of Bunker Hill: At this time, an American army was besieging General Gage's troops in Boston. Washington set out to lead it, but before he arrived the Americans were defeated in a battle at Bunker Hill. Washington found the American army in terrible shape. He set out to impose discipline. Soldiers who deserted were executed and one officer was whipped in front of his men. Washington wanted to drive the British from Boston. In March 1776 he began to bombard the city

with cannon fire. American troops now surrounded Boston and the British commander General Howe realised that he could not hold out. On the night of 17 March, the British troops left Boston.

Thomas Paine and Common Sense: Although war had started, the Patriots were still not sure if they wanted to leave the British Empire. Most of them were descended from British settlers and they were still loyal to King George. All this changed in January 1776 when a pamphlet called Common Sense appeared. It was written by an Englishman, Thomas Paine. In a plain and easy-to-understand style, he urged Americans to declare their independence and become a republic. Over 150,000 copies of Common Sense were sold, and it had a huge impact on the Patriots.

The Declaration of independence: On 4 July 1776 the Congress issued the Declaration of Independence. Thomas Jefferson, a delegate from Virginia, wrote it. It claimed that King George had failed to protect the rights of the American people and stated that: 'A Prince, whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a tyrant, is unfit to be a ruler of a Free People.'

'We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable 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 those ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it and to institute new government.'

The ideas contained within this extract were very advanced for the time. It says that a person has certain rights given to him/her from God. To protect these rights, people form governments. If governments fail to protect these rights, then the people have a right to form a new government. Jefferson is saying that the British government, by behaving as it did, lost the confidence of the American people. Therefore, a new government should be formed in its place.

The Declaration of Independence raised American spirits but in 1776 and 1777 the war went badly for them. Washington found it hard to keep his army together. Unlike the British, who had full-time soldiers, his army was made up of ordinary men who joined up for six months at a time. Many of them were farmers and when their six months was up, they often went home to look after the farm

Trenton and Valley Forge: In September 1776, the British captured New York, which became the British base for the rest of the war. Washington, fearing that his cause would inevitably collapse as short-term enlistment into the Continental Army expired, launched a risky attack on the little town of Trenton, held by a brigade of Hessians (German troops in British service) on Boxing Day 1776. He won this battle, and although the victory was small in tactical terms, it had a wider strategic impact, showing that the patriots were still in the fight.

In 1777, British forces under Lord Cornwallis captured Philadelphia where the Congress met. This was a major blow to the new republic. Washington and his men were forced to retreat to a wild and lonely spot called Valley Forge. Here his army spent the winter of 1777-8 in horrible conditions. Food was short and rations were reduced to one-eighth of normal. Disease was widespread and over 2,500 men died. Many soldiers deserted, and Washington and his officers struggled to maintain discipline. Washington won the admiration of his men by remaining with them at Valley Forge. A French nobleman, the Marquis de Lafayette, was there too. He greatly admired what the Americans were doing. Later he played a major role in the French revolution.

France comes to the aid of the Americans: But while Washington and his men were suffering in Valley Forge, another American army defeated the British at Saratoga. When news of this reached Europe, King Louis XVI of France decided the Americans might win. He declared war on Britain. He wanted revenge for the British conquest of Canada. French help was vital to the Americans. French troops were useful, but the French navy was even more important. It made it difficult for the British

navy to bring guns, ammunition, and fresh soldiers to equip the British armies in America.

The final event in the war showed how important the French fleet was. Washington trapped a small British army under their commander-in-chief, Lord Cornwallis, in Yorktown. Cornwallis had made the mistake of allowing himself to be cornered. A French fleet arrived in the harbour and prevented Cornwallis from escaping. Cornwallis had no option but to surrender. He said he was ill and sent his second-in-command, General O'Hara. Washington sent his second-in-command, General Benjamin Lincoln, to accept the British surrender on 19 October 1781. When the British Prime Minister, Lord North, heard this news he said, 'Oh God! It is all over!' It was. The British had lost their thirteen American colonies.

The Treaty of Versailles 1782

In November 1782 a peace treaty was signed at the French king's palace at Versailles: It stated: *"His Britannic Majesty acknowledges the said United States. ..to be free sovereign and independent states, that he treats with them as such, and/or himself, his heirs, and successors, relinquishes all claims to the government, propriety, and territorial rights of the same and every part thereof."*

The Treaty came into effect a year later. On 25 November 1783 George Washington entered New York, as the last British troops left America. He then gave up his command of the army and returned to his plantation in Virginia.

The American Constitution

Once the British left, the thirteen colonies had to decide how they would govern themselves. Should they have a king or a president, and how much power should they give him? The political ideas of the Enlightenment proved to be very influential. It took them six years to work out a new Constitution (a set of laws for governing a country). It took a long time because the 13 states could not agree. Should the bigger states have more power than the smaller states? Should there be one representative assembly or two? Who should have tax raising powers? In 1787, one of the most extraordinary meetings of all time took place in Philadelphia. The outcome was very unexpected. Here are some of the points in the American Constitution:

1. The head of the government would be the president. He was to be elected and hold office for four years.
2. There were to be two Houses of Congress (parliament): the House of Representatives to represent the people (elected every two years), and the Senate (one third elected every two years) to represent the states (formerly the colonies). Congress was to make laws and approve taxes.
3. The Constitution guaranteed human rights to citizens. These included the right to free speech, to a fair trial and to freedom of religion □ John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau
4. A Supreme Court would make sure that all laws passed agreed with the Constitution.
5. Importantly, each of the three political bodies was meant to act as a check on the others, to prevent a concentration of power in any one of them. This is referred to as the checks and balances of the constitution □ Charles Montesquieu

President Washington: after the Americans agreed on the Constitution, they invited Washington to be the first President of the United States in 1789.

The Flag: its distinguishing feature is thirteen 5-pointed stars arranged in a circle representing the 13 colonies.

The Monroe Doctrine 1823

As early as 1783 the United States adopted the policy of isolation and announced its intention to keep out of Europe affairs. Ironically it was helped in this by Great Britain which was keen to prevent any rival European powers from intervening in its trading relationship with the USA. In the first years of its independence, the USA depended on the British navy to protect its independence. By 1823 the USA was ready to pronounce on its relationship with the rest of the world. The Monroe Doctrine was issued on December 2, at a time when nearly all Latin American colonies of Spain and Portugal had achieved independence from the Portuguese and Spanish Empires. It stated that further efforts by various European states to take control of any independent state in North or South America would be viewed as "the manifestation of an unfriendly disposition toward the United States."

Consequences of the Revolution

After the Revolution, genuinely democratic politics became possible in the former American colonies. The rights of the people were incorporated into state constitutions. Concepts of liberty, individual rights, equality among men and hostility toward corruption became incorporated as core values of liberal republicanism. The greatest challenge to the old order in Europe was the challenge to inherited political power and the democratic idea that government rests on the consent of the governed. The example of the first successful revolution against a European empire, and the first successful establishment of a republican form of democratically elected government, provided a model for many other colonial peoples who realized that they too could break away and become self-governing nations with directly elected representative government.

Inspiring other Independence Movements: The first shot of the American Revolution at the Battle of Lexington and Concord is referred to as the "shot heard 'round the world" due to its historical and global significance. The ensuing Revolutionary War not only established the United States as the first modern constitutional republic but marked the transition from an age of monarchy to a new age of freedom by inspiring similar movements worldwide. The American Revolution was the first of the "Atlantic Revolutions": the French Revolution, the Haitian Revolution, and the Latin American wars of independence. Aftershocks contributed to rebellions in Ireland, the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, and the Netherlands.

Constitution: The U.S. Constitution, drafted shortly after independence, remains the world's oldest written constitution, and has been emulated by other countries, in some cases verbatim. Some historians and scholars argue that the subsequent wave of independence and revolutionary movements has contributed to the continued expansion of democratic government; 144 countries, representing two-third of the world's population, are full or partially democracies of same form.

Ireland: The Revolution had a strong, immediate influence in Great Britain, Ireland, the Netherlands, and France. Many British and Irish Whigs in Parliament spoke glowingly in favor of the American cause. In Ireland, the Protestant minority who controlled Ireland demanded self-rule. Under the leadership of Henry Grattan, the Irish Patriot Party forced the reversal of mercantilist prohibitions against trade with other British colonies. The King and his cabinet in London could not risk another rebellion on the American model, and so made a series of concessions to the Patriot faction in Dublin. Armed volunteer units of the *Protestant Ascendancy* were set up ostensibly to protect against an invasion from France. As had been in colonial America, so too in Ireland now the King no longer had a monopoly of lethal force.

Rights: The Revolution, along with the Dutch Revolt (end of the 16th century) and the 17th century English Civil War, was among the examples of overthrowing an old regime for many Europeans who later were active during the era of the French Revolution, such as the Marquis de Lafayette. The American Declaration of Independence influenced the French *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* of 1789. The spirit of the Declaration of Independence led to laws ending slavery in all the Northern states and the Northwest Territory, with New Jersey the last in

1804. States such as New Jersey and New York adopted gradual emancipation, which kept some people as slaves for more than two decades longer.