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The vision of "the Spirit of 1776" evokes a pride in our nation, and reinforces America's independent nature. What if this view of the war is incorrect? What if a large number of colonists were against the war, or were, at best, indifferent? What if the tyrant king of England was not really a tyrant? Does this change our identity as a nation? Does it change the reasons for which we fought the war for independence? This paper will argue that it does. This war was not a revolution, but a civil war fought between British subjects over land, and the desire to explore and settle the land as the colonists saw fit. There was, quite possibly, nothing revolutionary in the causes or nature of the war.

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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

AMERICAN WAR FOR INDEPENDENCE, 1775-1783: REVOLUTION OR CIVIL WAR?

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Title: American War for Independence 1775 – 1783: Revolution or Civil War?

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Thesis: The vision of "the Spirit of 1776" evokes a pride in our nation, and reinforces America's independent nature. What if this view of the war is incorrect? What if a large number of colonists were against the war, or were, at best, indifferent? What if the tyrant king of England was not really a tyrant? Does this change our identity as a nation? Does it change the reasons for which we fought the war for independence? This paper will argue that it does. This war was not a revolution, but a civil war fought between British subjects over land, and the desire to explore and settle the land as the colonists saw fit. There was, quite possibly, nothing revolutionary in the causes or nature of the war.

Conclusion: Prior to the war, the American colonists saw themselves as British subjects; reinforcing this point of view is the large number of Americans who remained loyal to the crown throughout the war. Because of the large number of American loyalists and rebels fighting one another, this alone could justify the claim that this was a civil war with a revolutionary result. It is only revolutionary in the sense that loyalty to the crown was replaced by loyalty to a select group of Americans who had influenced the policies of America prior to and during the War. It was a series of mistakes and misunderstandings which led to armed conflict, all of which led to the inevitable American independence from Britain.

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THE OPINIONS AND CONCLUSIONS EXPRESSED HEREIN ARE THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF EITHER THE MARINE CORPS COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE OR ANY OTHER GOVERNMENT AGENCY. REFRENCES TO THIS STUDY SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOREGOING STATEMENT.

Preface

This topic came about as a result of a conference group seminar covering the American Revolution. The question was asked if this was really a revolution and if so why? Being in a room with fourteen smart people this should have been an easy question to answer, if it was not. After an hour of debate the group left having not answered the question. As I began to research the question I stared to discover that it really was more of a civil war then revolution, a large part of this perception was based on the American Civil War and its causes. Putting the issue of slavery aside, the issues of the south were perceived as being very similar to that of the colonies.

I would like to thank Dr. Brad Wineman for presenting this question for discussion and for providing guidance and advice throughout this process

Introduction

From the first United States history class, the American War for Independence has been referred to as the American Revolution. There has been no debate, no wavering, and no discussion about this view. Each time the subject was presented, educators portrayed patriotic minute-men leaving their homes in large numbers, and fighting a guerilla war against the evil British Empire, to secure American liberties. The vision of the spirit of 1776 evokes a pride in our nation, and reinforces America's independent nature. What if this view of the war is incorrect? What if a large number of colonists were against the war, or were, at best, indifferent? What if the tyrant king of England was not really a tyrant? Does this change our identity as a nation? Does it change the reasons for which we fought the war for independence? This paper will argue that it does. This war was not a revolution, but a civil war fought between British subjects over land, and the desire to explore and settle the land as the colonists saw fit. There was, quite possibly, nothing revolutionary in the causes, or nature of the war.

To begin, it is important to define what it is we are talking about. Webster's dictionary gives the following definitions of a civil war, a rebellion, and a revolution:

Civil war, Function: *noun* **Date**: 15th century**:** a war between opposing groups of citizens of the same country.

Re·bel·lion, Pronunciation: \ri-□bel-yən\, **Function**: *noun,* **Date**: 14th century. **1 :** opposition to one in authority or dominance

2 a : open, armed, and usually unsuccessful defiance of or resistance to an established **government b :** an instance of such defiance or resistance mean an outbreak against

authority. **rebellion** implies an open formidable resistance that is often unsuccessful <open *rebellion* against the officers>.

Rev·o·lu·tion, **Pronunciation**: \□re-və-□lü-shən\, **Function**: *noun*, **Etymology**: Middle English *revolucioun,* from Middle French *revolution,* from Late Latin *revolution-, revolutio,* from Latin *revolvere* to revolve, Date: 14th century **2 a :** a sudden, radical, or complete change **b :** a fundamental change in political organization; *especially* **:** the overthrow or renunciation of one **government** or ruler and the substitution of another by the governed **c :** activity or movement designed to effect fundamental changes in the socioeconomic situation **d :** a fundamental change in the way of thinking about or visualizing something **:** a change of paradigm <the Copernican revolution> **e :** a changeover in use or preference especially in technology <the computer revolution> <the foreign car revolution>.

Each of these definitions, at face value, can be used to describe the American War for Independence. This paper will argue the definition of civil war is the simplest and best description of the conflict between the American colonies and Britain. Rebellion does not fit as well due to the emphasis on the failure of the effort. Revolution does not fit, because, as this paper will demonstrate, there was no fundamental change in government, the socioeconomic situation remained basically the same, and the colonists' way of visualizing government fundamentally did not change.

While the actual fighting of the war was not revolutionary, we will concede that the results of what will be referred to as the first American Civil War was indeed revolutionary. These did not occur until 1787 with the framing of the Constitution, however, and were a later

result of the civil war, and not a cause. Therefore it will not be addressed in this paper. There are two arguments many Americans make to describe the war as revolutionary. One is the ability to self-govern the colonies, and as we will describe later, they already had this ability. The second is the nature of war the Americans waged. The irregular warfare made famous by the colonists was already an accepted form of warfare in Europe, and a form of war the British had used to fight the French in the Seven Years' War. Therefore, both arguments are null and void.

To pursue the war's motivations and loyalties, it is better to examine broader areas of developing conflict, the disagreements between Britain and America in the decade before Lexington and Concord, how they grew and who they impacted. First, the colonists' changing perceptions of military security and safety, and British soldiers and ships seen as the new threat. Second, the fight over the power, politics, and principles involved in the governmental relationships between Britain and the thirteen mainland colonies. Third, the economics involved, from mercantilism and trade practices to tax burdens and currency regulation.[1]

Most Americans will describe the Declaration of Independence as a revolutionary statement to England. While it did outline the grievances the "Founding Fathers" had against England, this document simply restated the issues already brought before Parliament. While eloquent, this document had no legal authority, nor did it outline any new grievances. It did, however, project these grievances at the monarch himself, and this was indeed something new. John Shy in A People Numerous and Armed states, "It would seem implausible that the American Republic was born out of a congeries of squabbling, unstable colonies, and that labor was induced by nothing more than a few routine grievances expressed in abstract, if elegant, prose."[2]

The Road to Independence

In Kevin Phillips' book The Cousins War, he contends that the seeds to the First American Civil War were sown with the English Civil War of the 1600s. This, he says, is due to the fact that many of the New England settlers were the descendants of the English who fought the King over reformation, and that these men carried this identity and distrust to the new world. When Puritans' descended New England launched the Revolution in 1775, some of its words and aspects echoed the old country cleavages of the 1640s. The early years of the English Civil War can be reread, from a transatlantic perspective, as almost an American pre-revolution.[3] Phillips further argues that, "there is an unmistakable thread of ethno cultural continuity: First, East Anglia led the Parliamentary side in the partly successful English Civil War. Later, New England, East Anglia's seventeenth-century Puritan offshoot, was the most aggressive formulator of the American rebellion."[4]

In the mid 1600s the American colonies saw England placing tighter controls upon their trade, as well as governance. This change in policy led to resentment toward the crown, as well as a sense of repression no Englishmen should have to endure. This was an awakening of colonial identity and sense of nationalism. Carr states, "On January 30, 1649 Parliament prohibited the office of the king and began a ten year period of governance as a commonwealth. In 1650 Parliament passed the Declaratory Act, which demanded the colonies be subordinate to, and dependent upon the English government, and subject to the laws of Parliament. The following year the Navigation Acts were passed, which controlled the trade and shipping of the

colonies. Both acts were seen in the colonies as the first threats to the liberties the American colonies had experienced during the first half century of colonization. At the end of this ten year period the office of the king was restored, but the damage was done with concern to the relationship between England and its American colonies.[5]

John Shy lists six factors that led to the growing dissent and, ultimately, war. By examining the American cultural landscape in the 1760s one can identify certain social characteristics of most, if not all, of the colonies that would strongly affect the armed struggle for independence from 1775-1783. At least six characteristics can be identified.

First, the population of the American colonies grew tenfold in only seventy-five years. This is likely the largest population growth of any culture or nation to this point.

Second, the availability of the virtually unlimited supply of land eliminated the periodic starvation, chronic malnutrition, and much of the epidemic disease that plagued Europe at the time.

Third, there was a very high rate of immigration after 1700. It is estimated that over 200,000 Scotch-Irish and almost 100,000 Germans immigrated to America from 1700-1775. The influx not only increased the population size, but expanded its diversity as well. These population growths lead to an increase in area of settlement of fivefold during this period.

Fourth, was an emerging social elite. This position of the social elites was precarious for several reasons. They ruled only by consent, the right to vote in America of 1760, so most voters simply deferred to their social betters. They also depended on the British government allowing them to exercise power, in the local provincial assemblies and local governments. And, finally, they were threatened by rapid growth and diversification of the population. The traditional face to

face methods by which the elite governed earlier in the century ceased to be effective when people became too numerous, too distant, and too different, as they were in 1760.

Fifth is a negative characteristic that may be labeled "institutional weakness." Underscoring the increasing problems of controlling this exploding society, and the precarious position of its governing elite was the lack of European-style maintenance of control.

Sixth and last, late colonial American society had a special quality that may be called "provincialism." This was an attitude towards themselves, and the outside world, which set Americans apart from European society.[6]

America's road to independence began in England and carried into the new world. With an abundance of land and natural resources, the colonies were not dependant on England for its economic and physical survival. With a population of individuals who are independent in nature and self reliant by necessity, ruling them from across an ocean would be difficult at best. The thirteen colonies, led by New England and Virginia, the oldest among them, revolted in 1775 because they were maturing toward a readiness for self-governance and were well able to imagine a new independent nation reaching to the Mississippi or beyond. But rebellion came also because their people were inheritors of the spirit of 1640 and 1688, and because the provocations of British colonial policy in America after 1763 re-summoned old ghosts of feared plots and tyrannies.[7] These issues combined to light the spark of separation from continental Europe.

America's Early Government

Each colonial government was unique, yet many of them were made of an elected assembly which established their own laws, collected taxes, and were responsible for their own

defense. "Most colonies had elected assemblies that established laws, allocated lands, and levied taxes under the authority of their charters or proprietors." [8] These colonial assemblies were fairly autonomous, so long as they provided raw materials to England and did not establish laws too different from Britain. These political freedoms led Americans to believe that they were not accountable to Parliament, and could, therefore, decide for themselves what laws they would or would not follow, and for a majority of their existence they were correct. One English historian wrote that America was "an anarchy of local autonomy," but that system suited the people. Each colony had its own individual charter from England, each one different from the other. Each had its own legislature, ran its own civil affairs, and collected its own taxes.[9] These taxes were used to benefit that particular colony and were applied directly by their colonial assemblies. This provided a sense of autonomy to the colonies, and a sense of self rule. The imposition of taxes by England were not opposed in principle, as prior to 1763 it was left to the colonies themselves to collect and enforce these policies and taxes. After 1763, King George III and Parliament placed verbiage into the legislation that added enforcement to the king's representative who was often located in England. This was seen as an affront to the independence of the colonies and produced a concern from colonial assemblies as to the amount of control England was trying to assert in America.

In 1643, the New England Confederation was formed, with the Articles of Confederation reading, in part, "Whereas in our settling (by a wise providence of God) we are further dispersed upon the sea coasts and rivers than was first intended, so that we cannot according to our desire with convenience communicate in one government and jurisdiction; and whereas we live encompassed with people of several nations and strange languages which hereafter may prove injurious to us or our prosperity." This began a period of benign neglect by England and a period

of increased self rule by the colonies.[10] These articles outline the unique challenges governing the colonies would produce. Parliament did not understand the differences between the colonies and their independent attitudes. This ignorance of the people they were trying to govern led to a disillusionment of the English government and eventually led to a distrust of Parliament and King George III.

Period of Benign Neglect

The leaders in England had no real concern for the day-to-day politics of their colonies. Early British leaders understood that by allowing the colonies freedom to self rule, they would remain happy and productive, and this has been referred to as benign neglect. The peaceful allegiance of the American colonies to the English Crown was largely the fruit of a wise and benevolent policy laid down early in the century by Sir Robert Walpole. Walpole took the enlightened view that if the colonies were left to run their own local affairs with minimal interference from London, they would produce more wealth and commerce, prosper, and give less trouble.[11] During the early years of colonial settlement, England was enduring political and religious strife, which required the full attention of the king and parliament. As a result the American colonies experienced a period of autonomy and developed a sense of religious, economic, and political rights and self government.[12]

"For the English colonies in America, the fifty year period of benign neglect that had enabled them to establish their own systems of governance with bicameral, elected legislatures, and elected governors in most colonies was about to end. The English men, women, and children who had risked so much to settle in the new world had endured great hardships but had also enjoyed liberties and opportunities unequaled in the mother country. A sense of

independence and right to self-governance had become cherished components of the emerging American character."[13] This is an important statement as to the American mindset leading into the Seven Years War. The colonial governments established a system very similar to that of England. In that the colonists elected members into colonial assemblies in much of the same manner that Members of Parliament were elected, these assemblies also voted on taxes and laws in a system modeled after the British parliamentary system. The colonists were able to exercise their rights as Englishmen, sometimes with more freedom than the people of Britain. Whatever its oligarchy, England was in many ways a democracy of free speech and boisterous public opinion. Critics of the King and government were both numerous and noisy. Political debate was plentiful in Parliament, coffeehouses, and country side. The people could demonstrate, write what they thought, and say what they liked.[14] Both the American and British shared these freedoms prior to the First American Civil War, thus negating the argument that there was a radical change in political philosophy, or a radical change in the political system in place, or expansion of personal freedoms.

Benign Neglect Ends

In 1663, King Charles took steps to strengthen the Navigation Acts in an attempt to curb Dutch enterprise, deciding that only English ships with English crews could trade with English colonies. This prevented colonial merchants from hiring cheaper transportation in ships from other nations. In addition to this, Charles also designated certain commodities as enumerated, meaning tobacco, rice, indigo, and sugar could only be shipped to England. This removed vast profits from direct colonial trade. This policy was not a dramatic change from the English system of mercantilism, which was practiced throughout its colonies. It was however a new constraint placed upon the Americans'. These restraints placed upon the American colonies

made sense from the British perspective, as England owned the colonies and established them for an increase in trade and natural resources. A year after the Navigation Act, England declared war with the Dutch and annexed New Amsterdam in America. This put a tremendous strain on the English economy which was also reeling from the onset of the plague. Because of this, the King saw the colonies as a significant source of revenue, and increased taxes on that trade. This crippled the economies of Virginia and Maryland, which led to a severe depression in those two colonies. This depression led to the first rebellion against royal rule in the colonies.[15] This first rebellion never really gained momentum, but it does show the American resistance to outside influence into its daily affairs. By limiting trading partners, it severely hampered early American trading opportunities and limited the markets into which American goods and resources could be sold. This led to an overabundance of these commodities, which led to a significant drop in prices and revenue.

In London, a lax and benevolent attitude toward the colonies was changing under King George III, to one of stern and tightening imperial rule and control. In the American colonies, there was not the slightest doubt at that time about the loyalty of the colonial population to King George III. Some twenty-five thousand Americans had joined militias or provincial units to fight alongside the English in the Seven Years' war. But America was also imbued with a heightened sense of independent political and economic strength, and a vision of expansion and destiny. The colonies simply wanted to be left alone to run their own affairs, and to grow and expand on their own-nevertheless, as a loyal part of the British Empire.[16] This was a problem for the British who had yet to deal with a colony as rich in land and resources as America. With its distance from Briton and expanse of land, America had new and different challenges that had to be addressed differently from those of other colonies. Had parliament understood these

differences, and the independent attitude derived from this space and available land, they might have avoided war altogether by instituting a system of government, similar to that of Canada, prior to 1775.

The desire to become an independent nation was vexing for Parliament; they could not understand how a people could claim to be loyal to the crown and yet desire to separate themselves from the king and Parliament. Americans were prepared to solve their problems with England and remain within the British Empire as a self governing entity, but the 'little minds' of England would not have it.[17] The governing minds in England could not understand how Americans, largely of English stock and professing loyalty to king George, had become a different people, how the vastness of America was shaping the politics of independence and a new nation. It was beyond the comprehension of the British upper-class how colonials could claim the same rights as Englishmen, or could declare that the English Parliament had no right to declare taxes upon them.[18]

During the early stages of the French and Indian war, Governor William Shirley of Massachusetts wrote London: "Apprehension has been entertained that the colonies will in time throw off their dependency upon the mother country and set upon one general government among themselves."[19] It makes no sense to contend, as some historians have, that New England, with its heritage of rebellion, and its scent of manifest destiny, would have been tame in 1775 if France, beaten in 1763, had been allowed to keep Canada. Had King Louis' regiments still menaced the northern borders, the argument goes, that would have obliged the American colonials to continue to shelter under British protection.[20] In 1757 Benjamin Franklin went to London to speak with Parliament and the Privy Council regarding colonial complaints and issues related to the governance of the colonies. The following is an excerpt of the discussion between

Franklin and Lord Granville. It is easy to see how the issues discussed escalated as both sides felt they were correct, and could not see the issues from the other's perspective.

Lord Granville, "You Americans have wrong ideas regarding your constitution; you contend that the King's instructions to his governors are not laws, and think yourselves at liberty to regard or disregard them at your own discretion. They are drawn up by judges learned in the laws, they are considered debated, and perhaps amended by the council, after which they are signed by the King, they are then so far as they relate to you, the law of the land for the King is the legislator of the colonies."

To this Franklin replied, "I had always understood from our charters that our laws were to be made by our assemblies, to be presented indeed to the King for his royal assent, but that being once given the King could not repeal or alter them. And as the Assemblies could not make permanent laws without his assent, so neither could he make a law for them without theirs.[21] As Americans, it is easy to understand the colonial perspective. Intellectually, Lord Granville is correct in that the king was the legislator of the colonies, and they were subject to the laws of Parliament."

Seven Years' War and Its Political Impacts

Upon the successful conclusion of the Seven Years War, the tension between England and America increased at an alarming rate. This tension was more than just taxation; it was about the expansion west into the Mississippi and Ohio River Valley. The Seven Years war would decisively terminate the imperial presence of France in North America. The war can thus be said to have decided the cultural and institutional future of the vast area between the Appalachian crest and the Mississippi River, stretching from the Gulf of Mexico to Hudson's

Bay. Since the late 18th century, it has been argued that the removal of France made possible, or even inevitable, America's movement for independence.[22] Both England and the colonies understood the benefits of westward expansion, and each wanted to control the natural resources in these areas. Britain ultimately controlled this area and limited colonial expansion, as they wanted the colonists to settle north into the areas formerly controlled by France, and south into the sparsely populated areas in Georgia. Trans-Appalachia, no longer a dueling ground of Hanoverians and Bourbons, was now a battle ground of British and American ambition. The British essentially opposed emigration to where the colonists wanted to go, westward over the Appalachians into the Ohio River Valley.[23] Following the Seven Years' War England controlled all of North America, and all of the difficulties associated with it. The largest of these was dealing with the Indians. With the increased pressure from American settlers into Indian lands, conflict erupted between colonists and Indians. To alleviate this pressure, England instated the Proclamation of 1763. This essentially provided a sanctuary for the Indian people, and pushed settlement into the lands formally occupied by the French in North America. The colonists realized that the lands west of Appalachia were suitable for farming, and rich in natural resources, and therefore they wanted it for settlement. In addition to this desire for land, some of the colonial charters had a western boundary established as the Pacific Ocean, which led to resentment and legal dispute in Parliament as to the legality of the 1763 proclamation.

The British understood that with this new territory they had to increase their military presence to secure the new border. In 1763 it was decided that 10,000 British troops would be stationed permanently in America. Secretary of War Welbore Ellis decided that the army stationed in America would be supported in the first year by England, and afterwards by the colonies.[24] These troops were not just there to guard the border, but also to prevent the colonists

from expanding west into these new areas. The colonists were unwilling to pay for these new troops to be stationed in America, as the colonists did not want them there in the first place. To add insult to injury, the Americans were forced to quarter soldiers under the updated Mutiny Act. During the French Indian war, Britain's Mutiny Act, which mandated local assistance to the soldiers, had been held not to apply to the colonies. In order to support peacetime military activities, Parliament passed the American Mutiny and Quartering Act of 1765, which required colonial assemblies to provide food and drink, as well as public or private accommodations, limited to empty homes and barns.[25]

Additionally, the British felt that the colonies benefitted from the war, and therefore should have to pay a portion of the cost of the war. The huge cost of the 1754-1763 mobilization and fighting of the Seven Years War appalled the British ruling elite. Skyrocketing debt led the crown to levy painful taxes. Because the need for postwar regular troops to guard the colonial frontier, and the Mississippi and Ohio Valley lands surrendered by France promised to continue this unwelcome expense, the government determined to move as much burden as possible to colonial taxpayers.[26] These new conditions led to an increased American distrust of England.

By 1775, changing colonial perceptions of American security and public safety had become a major irritant. This was less because the removal of French troops from Canada in 1763 freed otherwise satisfied colonists to rebel, than because resentment of British redcoats and Royal Navy vessels grew enough over the next decade to rekindle old fears of an abusive military. Colonists no longer worried about French warships off Nantucket, or French Indians whooping out of the Pennsylvania wilderness. The emerging bogyman of the pre-Revolutionary decade was British.[27]

England Taxes the Colonies

After 1762, King George III began to take a proactive approach to the governance of his colonies in America. In doing so, he saw the potential for increased wealth for England, and the ability to offset much of the debt incurred in the Seven Years War. This increased interest in the colonies, and subsequent taxes, led to colonial unrest. This anger over taxation was hard for Parliament to understand as theses taxes were similar, if not identical, to those already paid by Britons.

The Sugar Act, designed to raise revenue for the upkeep of soldiers, was no great innovation. It replaced the old Molasses Act, with its rarely enforced duty on molasses of six pence a gallon. This legislation reduced the tax to three pence a gallon, but bristled with naval and customs enforcement provisions designed to crack down on large scale illicit trade between New England rum producers, who were enormous producers, and the sugar growers of the West Indies. Despite infuriating New England rum distillers, the new tax enforcement, during its first year, raised one-seventh of the cost of the transatlantic army. This shortfall called into play a contingent provision of the Sugar Act: a next stage imposition on the stamp duties on the colonies, excise taxes that people in England already paid.[28] It was the concept of taxation for British revenue that angered the colonists more than taxation itself.

Until the Sugar Act's inflammatory inclusion of the word revenue, missing from the old Molasses Act, the government in London had not tried to tax the colonies. Duties on imports were not taxes. Thus the irony: it was to pay for stationing redcoats where colonial Americans did not want them. This provoked the famous legal protest of "no taxation without representation." While the colonists felt this tax unfair, their claim of taxation without

representation was not valid, as Parliament had offered colonial representation to Parliament on more than one occasion; in each instance the colonies declined the invitation. This representation was to be actual representatives in Parliament, but the colonists understood these numbers were to be so small and distant from the colonies as to be completely ineffective.

The Stamp Act was likely one of the most hated acts of the English Parliament. This provision mandated a tax on every form of legal correspondence such as mail, graduate certificate, marriage, death, or will, without first purchasing a stamp. This tax was ultimately designed to pay for the new redcoats stationed in America. That alone would have been cause enough in the colonists' eyes to revolt against this tax. As a result, most of the colonies refused to adhere to the Stamp Act, and burned the Stamps and collection houses, or simply declined to let the ship carrying the stamp land in their colonies. This refusal led to a deficit in England, and the King realized that trying to enforce the Stamp Act was costing him more money than he was earning. This led to the King repealing these acts. By repealing these acts the king gave the colonists momentum in airing their displeasure in Parliament and the crown, and gave some legitimacy to the colonists' claims of being taxed unlawfully.

One argument for the Americans' displeasure in these acts is their reliance on illegal methods, namely smuggling, and the military enforcement of these new laws. Unlawful trade was so important economically, that colonial courts and juries rarely convicted smugglers. One unpopular provision of the Sugar Act set up a new superior vice admiralty court with jurisdiction over violations of the trade laws.[29] To the colonists, the vice admiralty courts were an overt threat to liberty. As naval, rather than civilian, tribunals, these courts dispensed with juries, which was contrary to the rights of Englishmen. Boston, the epicenter of colonial smuggling, was particularly on edge. The Liberty, a large merchant vessel owned by John Hancock, was

seized in the summer of 1768, Samuel Adams, already a much heated local agitator, complained to the Boston Gazette about 'the aid of military power, a power ever dreaded by all the lovers of peace and good order of the province.'[30] For the first time the crown's policies to curb smuggling had the necessary powers of enforcement, and removed the ability of the smugglers to land and off- load their cargo prior to British capture.

The Politics Behind The War

There are two versions of the war that one must question, if not discredit altogether. One interpretation turns the British military failure into a hymn to the American spirit, recounting how revolutionary courage, belief, and solidarity frustrated every British design. The other interpretation would reverse the emphasis; according to it nothing but luck, timely French intervention, and a small group of dedicated men who stood between American liberties and British repression.[31]

Some historians argue that the British effort was doomed from the start. This, however, is untrue, based on the number of loyalists located in America and the ambivalent attitude towards both England and the revolutionaries. They had an opportunity to turn the majority of the populace toward England's cause. Beyond Yankee New England, however, from New York to Georgia, two thirds of the remaining colonies that were debating independence in 1775 and 1776 had major concentrations of loyalists, and would be neutrals. Here were the places in which the fighting became a bitter civil war, and the effort may have been lost.[32]

One miscalculation the British made was the strength and vitality of the loyalists, and the effectiveness of the rebel militia. The loyalists were essential because none of the great maxims of strategy applied in America. The weighing of ends and means, the magnitude of the object

against the cost of achieving it, provided little guidance. For both sides, the political objects of the struggle were absolute. For the Americans, before the first British counter stroke was launched, the object was defined as absolute independence. For the British, the object was the overthrow of the revolutionary government.[33]

Had England been opposed by a united population, her effort to recover the rebellious colonies would have been in vain from the beginning. She might have destroyed the continental army, occupied all centers of population, and dispersed the rebel assemblies. But what would have followed? The causes of the rebellion might have remained, and the bitterness of the civil war would certainly have survived. Guerrilla fighting might have continued indefinitely till Britain tired of the contest and withdrew from a country it could not govern.[34] During the war, the British army's attitude was ambivalent. They were professionals doing a duty, but they could not forget that they were fighting against men of their own race. 'Here pity imposes' wrote General Phillips, 'and we cannot forget that when we strike, we wound a brother.' Even the king, whose heart was hardened against the rebels, never forgot they were his subjects.[35]

Conclusion

There was not a reasonable man in England, least of all the King himself, who desired war. The memory of the last war was too fresh, the debt too great, the disturbance of trade already too distressing, the issue of a struggle with America too problematic for any thinking man to desire to plunge lightly into such a conflict. The British government, therefore, tried hard to avert war by passing a new measure bringing the dispute back to its original issue with the promise to exempt, from imperial taxation, any province which would, of its own accord, make

proper contribution to the common defense of the empire, and a fixed provision for the support of the civil government.[36]

England's willingness to repeal mandatory taxation and to allow its colonies to volunteer to contribute to the common wealth, demonstrates England's desire to maintain its relationship with America. England understood that Americans desired to remain loyal subjects, yet through distance, government, and west ward expansion, the colonies were destined to become a country of its own. Both England and America understood this, the question was, how was this going to be accomplished. One can question Americans' true motives in refusing to pay taxes to England. They surely understood they were not being asked to do more than any other loyal subject. One has to assume they were truly angry over the restrictions on their westward expansion. They understood the benefits of acquiring new land, and developing new resources to increase revenue for the colonial governments. The period of benign neglect gave the Americans the impression they were truly their own country, answerable only to themselves. It was not unreasonable for England, who founded the colonies, and provided the protection from other global powers, to expect the colonists to follow English laws and directions. While researching the War for Independence, it became clear that the Americans did not develop any new form of government, or warfare, as a direct result of this war. They did, however, evolve from a British form of government in the Articles of Confederation, to a Constitutional Democracy. This was a revolutionary change that has lasted for two hundred years, yet which developed as a result of the failures of the Articles of Confederation, and not as a direct result of the war or how it was envisioned by the drafters of the Declaration of Independence.

The First American Civil War 1775 – 1783 led to revolutionary change. The argument that this was a civil war can be agreed upon by both American and British historians. Prior to the war,

the American colonists saw themselves as British subjects. Reinforcing this point of view is the large number of Americans who remained loyal to the crown throughout the war. Because of the large number of American loyalists and rebels fighting one another, this alone could justify the claim that this was a Civil War with a revolutionary result. Would history view the war differently had the colonies split on their decision to fight for the course of independence, as Nova Scotia refused to leave Britain. This the author argues that it would. England understood the difficulties of fighting a war across the Atlantic, and also understood the connection both nations held to one another. The cause of the war was simply that a small group of individuals no longer wanted to be held accountable, and like petulant children, acted out against the figure of authority.

NOTES

[1] (Phillips 1999) Phillips, Kevin. *The Cousins' War.* New York: Basic Books, 1999. Pg 81
[2] John. Shy. *A People Numerous and Armed.* Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 1990. Pg 236
[3] (Phillips 1999)Pg xviii

[4] (Phillips 1999) Pg XV
[5] Carr, J. Revell. *Seeds of Discontent.* New York: Walker & Company, 2008. Pg 12

[6] (Shy 1990)Pg 122-125

[7] (Phillips 1999) Pg 80

[8] (Carr 2008) Pg 11
[9] Cook, Don. *How England Lost The American Colonies, 1760 - 1785.* New York: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1995. Pg 3

[10] (Carr 2008) Pg 11
[11] (Cook 1995) Pg 3
[12] (Carr 2008) Pg 11
[13] (Carr 2008) Pg 13
[14] (Cook 1995) Pg 16
[15] (Carr 2008) Pg 14-15
[16] (Cook 1995) Pg 2
[17] (Cook 1995) pg 6
[18] (Cook 1995) Pg 6
[19] (Cook 1995) pg 34
[20] (Phillips 1999) pg 82
[21] (Cook 1995) pg 40
[22] Anderson, Fred. *A Peoples Army: Massachusetts Soldiers and Society ib the Seven Years War.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984. Pg 6

[23] (Phillips 1999) pg 87
[24] (Cook 1995) pg 35
[25] (Phillips 1999) pg 86
[26] (Phillips 1999) pg 84
[27] (Phillips 1999) pg 84
[28] (Phillips 1999) Pg 86-87
[29] (Phillips 1999) pg 88
[30] (Cook 1995) pg 89
[31] (Shy 1990) pg 235
[32] (Phillips 1999) Pg xix
[33] (Shy 1990) pg 32
[34] (Shy 1990) pg 511
[35] MacKesy, Piers. *The War for America.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965. pg 33

[36] Fortescue, John. *The War for Independence: The British Army in North America, 1775-1783.* London: Greenhill Books, 2001. Pg 1-2

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