Chapter 5

The American Revolution: From Elite Protest to Popular Revolt, 1763–1783
Breakdown of Political Trust

- Seven Years’ War left colonists optimistic about future
- Most important consequence of Seven Years’ War – Britain left with enormous debt
- 1760—George III ascends throne
  - He believes he should make policies for the empire - wants active role in government
Breakdown of Political Trust

• Parliament disagrees with King
• Hard for Parliament to get adequate information on colonies – little understanding of colonies
• Parliamentary sovereignty is central issue
  • English officials assume that Parliament must have ultimate authority
  • Colonies want ultimate authority
No Taxation without Representation: The American Perspective

- Colonists try to reserve internal colonial authority for their own legislatures
- Colonists assume their legislatures equal in some ways to Parliament
- Americans not represented at all in Parliament
No Taxation without Representation: The American Perspective

- British officials promote “virtual representation”
- Colonists insist only colonial assemblies should represent Americans
- Colonists have strong belief that their own colonial assemblies represent them – not Parliament
Eroding the Bonds of Empire

- British army left in America after Seven Years’ War
- Colonists doubt the army’s value
- Colonists want to settle west of Appalachians
- Proclamation of 1763 bans settlement
- Colonists see army as there to enforce proclamation
Paying Off the National Debt

- Prime Minister George Grenville attempts to reduce England’s war debt
- Revenue Act of 1764 (the Sugar Act)
- Merchants and gentry protest; most colonists ignore
Popular Protest

- 1765—Stamp Act requires all colonists purchase stamps – effects everyone
- Stamp Act Congress petitions the King and Parliament for repeal – show restraint and conciliation
- Radical colonial group called Sons of Liberty protest - includes riots, mob violence, and boycotts by women
- An elite movement turned into mass movement
- Patrick Henry denounced British taxation with Virginia resolves – main form of communication, newspapers, printed resolves
Failed Attempts to Save the Empire

- 1766—Parliament repeals Stamp Act
- Repeal tied to Declaratory Act of 1766
  - Parliament sovereign over America “in all cases whatsoever”
  - Parliament believes in its own sovereignty
- Controversy estranges colonists from English officials
Fueling the Crisis:
The Townshend Duties

- Charles Townshend: chancellor of the exchequer
- 1767—Townshend Duties tax American imports of paper, lead, glass, and tea
- Sons of Liberty organize boycott
- Circular letter from Massachusetts House urges protest and ways to avoid the law
Fatal Show of Force

- English government moves 4000 troops to Boston
- Troops clash with Boston’s population
- English soldiers fire on civilian crowd, kill five Americans
  - Incident labeled the “Boston Massacre”
  - Victims seen as martyrs
  - Increased possibility of colonial armed resistance
  - Showed that British would resort to violence to restore order
  - Showed that colonists had lost respect for Britain
- Townsend Duties repealed 1770, except tea – symbolize Parliament’s power to tax Americans
Last Days of the Old Order, 1770–1773

- Radicals like Samuel Adams protest tea tax as violation of American rights
- Committees of correspondence build up alternative political structure
- Samuel Adams was a true revolutionary
The Final Provocation: The Boston Tea Party

- 1773—Parliament passes Tea Act
  - Designed to save the East India Company by making the sale of its tea cheaper in America
- Americans interpret this as a subtle ploy to get them to consume taxed tea
- Boston protestors dump the tea into the harbor
- In reaction, British pass the Coercive Acts
The Coercive Acts or Intolerable Acts

- Port of Boston closed until tea paid for
- Massachusetts government re-structured
  - Upper house made appointive body
  - Town meetings permitted only once a year
- Accused officials to be tried in England
- Army authorized to quarter troops wherever needed
- Colony put under military governor
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Legislation</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Provisions</th>
<th>Colonial Reaction</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sugar Act</td>
<td>April 5, 1764</td>
<td>Revised duties on sugar, coffee, tea, wine, other imports; expanded jurisdiction of vice-admiralty courts</td>
<td>Several assemblies protest taxation for revenue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stamp Act</td>
<td>March 22, 1765; repealed March 18, 1766</td>
<td>Printed documents (deeds, newspapers, marriage licenses, etc.) issued only on special stamped paper purchased from stamp distributors</td>
<td>Riots in cities; collectors forced to resign; Stamp Act Congress (October 1765)</td>
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<td>Quartering Act</td>
<td>May 1765</td>
<td>Colonists must supply British troops with housing, other items (candles, firewood, etc.)</td>
<td>Protest in assemblies; New York Assembly punished for failure to comply, 1767</td>
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<td>Declaratory Act</td>
<td>March 18, 1766</td>
<td>Parliament declares its sovereignty over the colonies “in all cases whatsoever”</td>
<td>Ignored in celebration over repeal of the Stamp Act</td>
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<td>Townshend Revenue Acts</td>
<td>June 26, 29, July 2, 1767; all repealed—except duty on tea, March 1770</td>
<td>New duties on glass, lead, paper, paints, tea; customs collections tightened in America</td>
<td>Nonimportation of British goods; assemblies protest; newspapers attack British policy</td>
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<td>Tea Act</td>
<td>May 10, 1773</td>
<td>Parliament gives East India Company right to sell tea directly to Americans; some duties on tea reduced</td>
<td>Protests against favoritism shown to monopolistic company; tea destroyed in Boston (December 16, 1773)</td>
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<td>Coercive Acts (Intolerable Acts)</td>
<td>March–June 1774</td>
<td>Closes port of Boston; restructures Massachusetts government; restricts town meetings; troops quartered in Boston; British officials accused of crimes sent to England or Canada for trial</td>
<td>Boycott of British goods; First Continental Congress convenes (September 1774)</td>
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<td>Prohibitory Act</td>
<td>December 22, 1775</td>
<td>Declares British intention to coerce Americans into submission; embargo on American goods; American ships seized</td>
<td>Drives Continental Congress closer to decision for independence</td>
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Steps Toward Independence

- September 1774—First Continental Congress in response to Coercive Acts
- Problem: delegates unfamiliar with each other and various colonies
- Some support “Suffolk Resolves” urging forcible resistance to Coercive Acts and some want to go slow
- Intercolonial “Association” halts commerce with Britain until Coercive Acts repealed
Shots Heard Around the World

• April 19, 1775—skirmish breaks out in Lexington, Massachusetts
• Fighting spreads along road between Lexington, Concord, and Boston
• English retreat to Boston with heavy losses
• June 17, 1775—colonists inflict heavy losses on British in Battle of Bunker Hill
Beginning “The World Over Again”: Early War Effort

- British colonial governments collapse
- Second Continental Congress—prepare for war
  - June, 1775—Congress appoints George Washington commander-in-chief
  - Congress issues paper money to buy war supplies
  - Debates whether to declare independence
Beginning “The World Over Again”: Early War Effort

- British action that makes compromise unlikely:
  - December 1775 Prohibitory Act—British blockade colonists’ trade and would not allow the colonies to trade with rest of world
  - German mercenaries hired to put down rebellion
  - Virginia Governor Dunmore urges slaves to take up arms against their masters
Beginning “The World Over Again”: Decision for Independence

- January, 1776—Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense*
- Convinces ordinary colonists to sever ties with Britain – gives them justification for declaring independence
  - Europe, not England, “is the parent country of America”
Beginning “The World Over Again”: Decision for Independence

- Jefferson writes Declaration of Independence
- “all men are created equal” and blamed George III for problems
- Acceptance
  - July 4, 1776—Declaration of Independence issued
Fighting for Independence

- British confident of victory
  - Four times larger population, more resources
  - Strongest Navy in world
- Britain’s tasks
  - Supply troops an ocean away
  - Crush the popular spirit of independence
- British underestimate Americans’ commitment to their political ideology and have poor war strategy
Building a Professional Army

- Washington wants professional army – rejects guerrilla warfare strategy
- Continental army is to be a fighting force and symbol of the republican cause
- Militia’s role minor but they do maintain political control in areas not occupied by British troops
Building a Professional Army

- African Americans in the Revolution
  - New England militias attract slaves with promises of emancipation
  - Southern slaves more likely to side with British
Testing the American Will

- Summer 1776—fighting shifts to New York
- American army routed on Long Island
- New York City captured
- Washington forced to retreat through New Jersey
- British think rebels will soon capitulate
“Times That Try Men’s Souls”

• General Howe issues pardon for all who swear loyalty to Britain
  • 3000 accept
• Washington’s bedraggled army needs win
• December 25, 1776—Washington captures 900 Hessians in Trenton
• January 3, 1777—Washington captures Princeton
Victory in a Year of Defeat

- British strategy
  - Cut off New England from other colonies
  - Lure Continental army into decisive battle
- The plan for cutting off New England
  - Burgoyne’s army moves in from Canada
  - Howe’s army moves up from New York
  - They meet in Albany
Victory in a Year of Defeat

- Burgoyne defeated at Saratoga
- Howe takes Philadelphia instead
- Washington’s army winters at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania
The French Alliance

- French help colonists to get back at Britain for defeat in Seven Years’ War
- Benjamin Franklin essential to alliance with France
- Effects of Saratoga
  - Convinces France that colonists are serious enough to become formal allies
  - British sue for peace to prevent Franco-American alliance
The French Alliance

- British offer repeal of all laws since 1763, respect for colonial taxation rights
- February 1778—Alliance with France concluded
The Final Campaign

- British feel last chance for victory is in the South - believe Loyalists stronger in southern colonies, so fighting shifts there
- English capture Savannah and Charleston
- American army routed at Camden, South Carolina
- Continental army rallies under Nathaniel Greene
The Final Campaign

- Cornwallis moves British into Yorktown, Virginia,
- 1781—Cornwallis surrenders to Washington’s combined French and American forces
The Loyalist Dilemma

- Loyalists see rebellion as endangering “life, liberty, and property”
- More than 100,000 loyalists leave U.S. at war’s end
- Loyalists came from all occupations and social classes
- Loyalists treated poorly by both sides
  - British never fully trust Loyalists and treat them as second class citizens
  - Patriots seize property, imprison, execute some
Winning the Peace

- American negotiators – John Jay, Benjamin Franklin and John Adams
- Peace Treaty of Paris - 1783
  - U.S. independence recognized
  - U.S. gets all territory east of Mississippi River, between Canada and Florida
  - U.S. secures fishing rights in North Atlantic
  - U.S. will help British merchants and Loyalists collect debts
Preserving Independence

- The end of the American Revolution begins construction of new form of independent government.
- Questions remain: a government of the elite or a government of the people?
- How should political power be distributed?
- How to ensure equality for all?
- How to divide power between state and federal?