

The Road to Independence:

Imperial Reforms and Constitutional Conflicts

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April 21, 2024

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The Constitution and the revolution

From John Adams to Hezekiah Niles, 13 February 1818

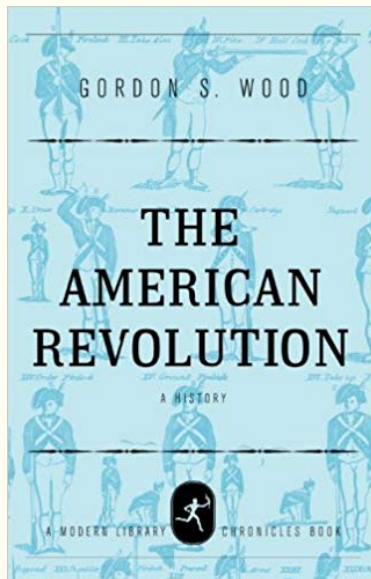
"But what do We mean by the American Revolution? Do We mean the American War? The Revolution was effected before the War commenced. The Revolution was in the Minds and Hearts of the People... While the King, and all in Authority under him, were believed to govern, in Justice and Mercy according to the Laws and Constitutions derived to them from the God of Nature, and transmitted to them by their Ancestors- they thought themselves bound to pray for the King and Queen and all the Royal Family, and all the Authority under them, as Ministers ordained of God for their good. But when they Saw those Powers renouncing all the Principles of Authority, and bent up on the destruction of all the Securities of their Lives, Liberties and Properties, they thought it their Duty to pray for the Continental Congress and all the thirteen State Congresses, &c...

This radical Change in the Principles, Opinions Sentiments and Affection of the People, was the real American Revolution."

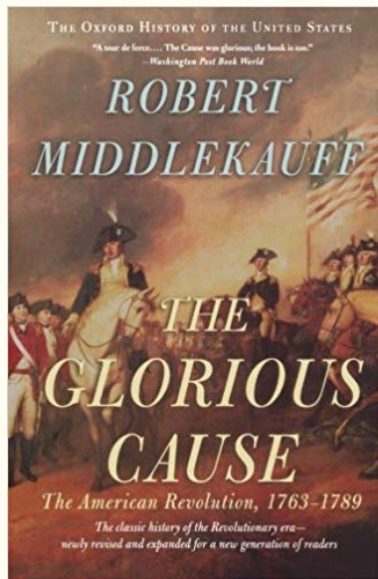
Three analytic steps

- We will not engage in a narrative history with plenty of facts and dates. No Boston Massacre, no Paul Revere's ride today.
- Also, we will focus relatively little in concrete persons, either founders (Washington, Adams, ...) or ordinary Americans.
- Instead, we will proceed to examine three analytic steps:
 1. What are the constitutional questions in the imperial crisis?
 2. What are the incentives and beliefs of each side of the dispute?
 3. What weight does contingency vs. structure have?

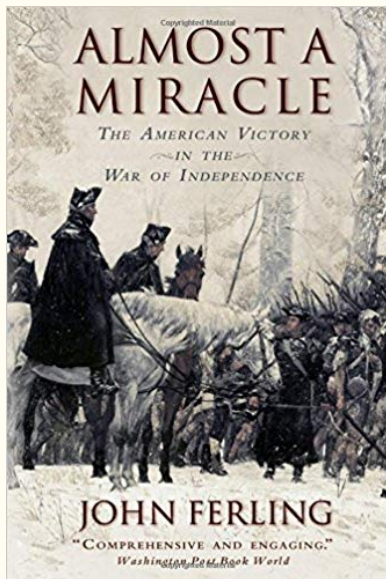
A recap (short)



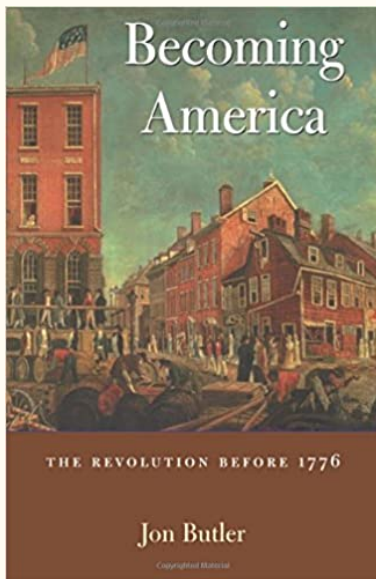
A recap (long)



A recap (war)



A recap (before)



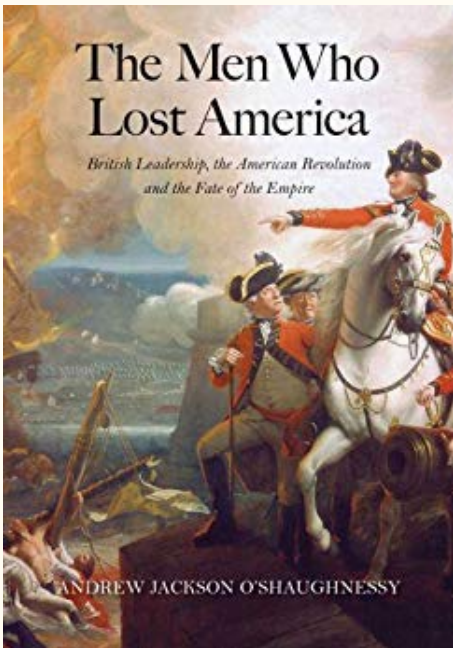
Incentives and divisions

- In particular, we want to also think from the perspective of the different British agents:
 1. King vs. Parliament.
 2. Tories vs. Whigs.
- Colonials are also divided among themselves:
 1. Among the colonies: Virginia and Massachusetts vs. Pennsylvania and New York. Sometimes close to an actual war.
 2. Within the colonies: Tidewater vs. Appalachian.
 - These divisions were closely related with original patterns of settlement.

The Men Who Lost America

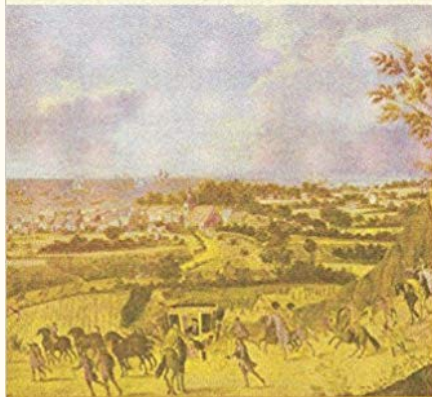
*British Leadership, the American Revolution
and the Fate of the Empire*

ANDREW JACKSON O'SHAUGHNESSY



AN EMPIRE DIVIDED

The American Revolution and the British Caribbean



ANDREW JACKSON O'SHAUGHNESSY

Patrick Spero





MAYA JASANOFF



LIBERTY'S EXILES

American Loyalists
IN THE
Revolutionary World

"A smart, deeply researched and elegantly written history."
—THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW

The first global war

- These divisions come to the front as a consequence of the Seven Years War (a.k.a. as the French and Indian War, 1754-1763).
- Let us look at the maps of Europe and North American in 1754.
- Multipolar 18th century Europe.
- Three European powers in North America: Great Britain, France, and Spain.

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THE GLOBAL SEVEN YEARS WAR

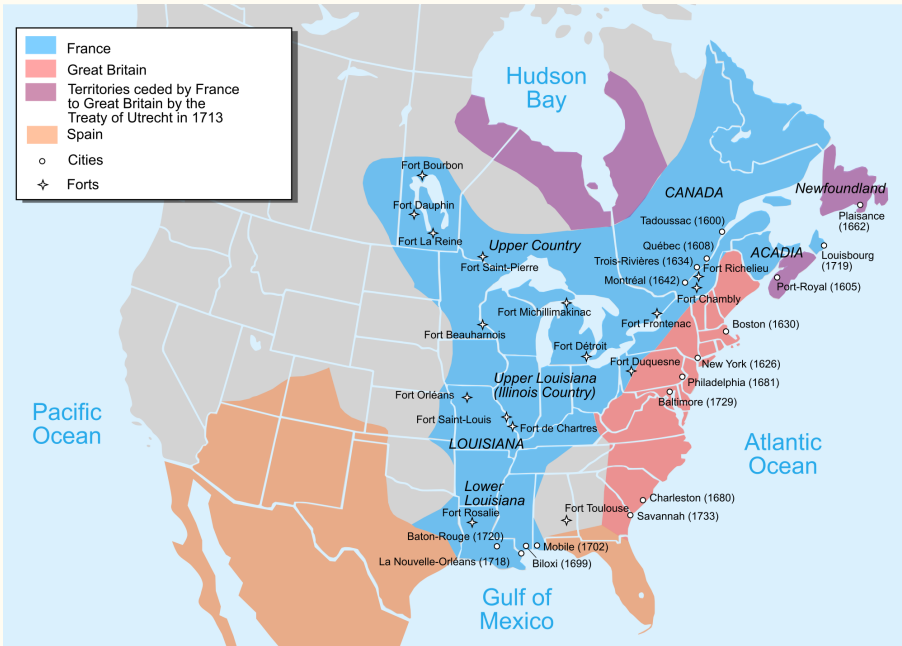
1754–1763



Daniel Baugh

Europe 1765





Seven Years' War: 1756-1763, I

- The Diplomatic Revolution of 1756: under the direction of Prince of Kaunitz-Rietberg, Austria switches allies from Great Britain to France.
- Prussia does the reverse (Convention of Westminster) and, to preempt a Franco-Austrian attack, Frederick the Great (r. 1740-1786) invades Saxony in the late summer of 1756 (Third Silesian War).
- War starts early in North America (French and Indian War, 1754-1763): Battle of Jumonville Glen.
- Part of a "Second One Hundred Years War" (1688-1815) between Great Britain and France for European hegemony.







Seven Years' War: 1756-1763, II

- This round of the “Second One Hundred Years War” ends up in a “tie” in Europe and return to *status quo ante bellum*.
- However, there are deep structural changes that go mostly unnoticed at the time.
- Among those:
 1. It consolidates Prussia as a large continental power.
 2. It creates tensions within the French monarchy that will lead to the revolution in 1789.
- But the most crucial change is that thanks to William Pitt's strategic vision, the Seven Years' War should be considered the first world war: resounding British victories in Bengal and North America that catapult Britain to world superpower.





Seven Years' War: 1756-1763, III

- British plus Iroquois, Catawba, and Cherokee against French and Abenaki Mi'kmaq, Algonquin, Lenape, Ojibwa, Ottawa, Shawnee, and Wyandot.
- Early French successes.
- However, after Pitt comes to power, the British concentrate enough resources to reverse the situation.
- End of French power in North America: Wolfe's decisive victory in the Battle of the Plains of Abraham (September 13, 1759).
- French and Spanish intervention in the Revolutionary War after 1777 will be a consequence of this conflict.

"Promises to revolutionize our understanding of one of America's most important wars." —Jill Lepore, author of *The Name of War*

CRUCIBLE of WAR

*The Seven Years'
War and the
Fate of Empire
in British
North America,
1754-1766*

FRED ANDERSON





Je me souviens/ Que né sous le lys/ Je crois sous la rose



"Remarkable. . . One of the most important books on the American Revolution published in this decade." —*The Dallas Morning News*

BROTHERS *at* ARMS

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE AND
THE MEN OF FRANCE AND SPAIN WHO SAVED IT

LARRIE D. FERREIRO

PULITZER
PRIZE
FINALIST





The fiscal-military state

Raimondo, Count of Montecuccoli

For war, you need three things: 1. Money. 2. Money. 3. Money

- A fiscal-military state is a state capable of sustaining large-scale warfare through taxation and fiscal innovation, such as the creation of a national debt or credit-providing institutions.
- A fiscal-military state becomes imperative after the 1560-1660 military revolution brought by the development of effective portable firearms.
- British built a more capable fiscal-military state than its rivals.
- This was probably the secret of the British success in the “Second One Hundred Years War” (1688-1815).
- Why? Long vs. short-run reasons (1688, Norman rule, ...).

THE SINEWS OF POWER

*War,
Money and
the English State,
1688-1783*



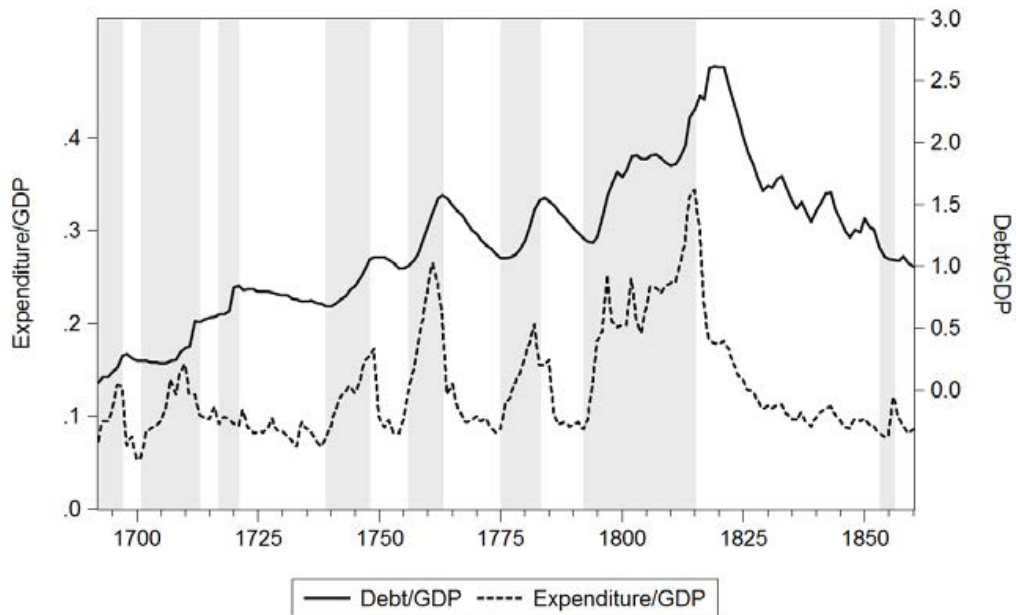
JOHN BREWER

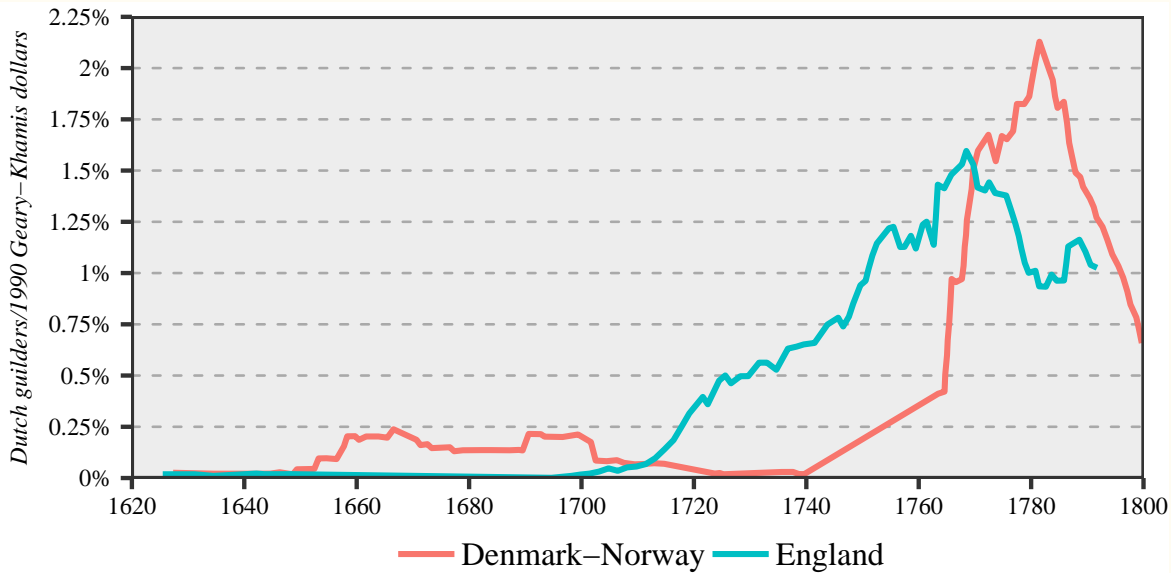
THE FINANCIAL
REVOLUTION IN ENGLAND

A Study in the Development of
Public Credit, 1688-1756

P.G.M. DICKSON

R





- Mid-18th century witnesses broad attempts at imperial reform.
- For instance, Charles III (r. 1759-1788) re-centralizes the ruling of the Spanish empire.
- Goals:
 1. Reorganize and rationalize territorial administration.
 2. Control colonies from the metropolis more tightly.
 3. Increase revenue to pay off debt and sustained permanent armies in the Americas.

*The Spanish Atlantic World
in the Eighteenth Century*

WAR AND THE BOURBON REFORMS,
1713-1796



Allan J. Kuethe • Kenneth J. Andrien

Imperial dilemmas, II

- Why?
- Constant necessary upgrade of the fiscal-military state in 18th-century Europe.
- Much resistance in other empires (several tax revolts in the Spanish Empire, such as the Rebellion of Túpac Amaru II, 1780-c.1782).
- In the case of British, also need to improve relations with Native Americans, which mostly sided with the French during the war.
- Key players in Britain: Townshend brothers (George and Charles) and Board of Trade.

Consequence in British America

- Busy with the problems of the Stuart dynasty (Civil War, Cromwell, 1688, Jacobite rebellions, etc.), the London government had largely left the colonies to fend for themselves (either through private companies, religious minorities, or wealthy aristocrats).
- Although the British government had always helped the colonies. For example, subsidies to migration.
- New powerful London elite wants to end of the “salutary neglect.”

Edmund Burke (1775)

“When I know that the colonies in general owe little or nothing to any care of ours, and that they are not squeezed into this happy form by the constraints of watchful and suspicious government, but that, through a wise and salutary neglect, a generous nature has been suffered to take her own way to perfection; when I reflect upon these effects, when I see how profitable they have been to us, I feel all the pride of power sink, and all presumption in the wisdom of human contrivances melt and die away within me.”



- The 1763 Proclamation Line.
- Why?
- Strong opposition.
- However, no constitutional principle at stake.



FRONTIER REBELS

THE FIGHT FOR INDEPENDENCE
in the AMERICAN WEST, 1765–1776



PATRICK SPERO

Imperial reforms, II

- The Stamp Act of 1765.
- Four progressively more pointed questions:
 1. Direct vs. indirect taxes (i.e. tariffs).
 2. External vs. internal taxes (really, a proxy for internal vs. external affairs of the colonies).
 3. Virtual vs. actual representation (rotten boroughs).
 4. Parliamentary supremacy vs. sovereignty.

Declaratory Act of 1766

“(Parliament) had hath, and of right ought to have, full power and authority to make laws and statutes of sufficient force and validity to bind the colonies and people of America ... in all cases whatsoever.”

Anno quinto

Georgii III. Regis.

C A P. XII.

An Act for granting and applying certain Stamp Duties, and other Duties, in the *British Colonies and Plantations in America*, towards further defraying the Expences of defending, protecting, and securing the same; and for amending such Parts of the several Acts of Parliament relating to the Trade and Revenues of the said Colonies and Plantations, as direct the Manner of determining and recovering the Penalties and Forfeitures therein mentioned.



WHEREAS by an Act made in the last Session of Parliament, several Duties were granted, continued, and appropriated, towards defraying the Expences of defending, protecting, and securing, the *British Colonies and Plantations in America*: And whereas it is just and necessary, that Provision be made for raising a further Revenue within Your Majesty's Dominions in America, towards defraying the said Expences: We, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal Subjects, the Commons of Great Britain in Parliament assembled,



Different views on the Constitution

- Sir Edward Coke: old “whig” constitution.
- Sir William Blackstone: new “whig” constitution that comes from the Glorious Revolution of 1688.
- Also, related to:
 1. King-in-Parliament and the monarchical theory of representation (superintendent of the realm).
 2. Radical republican ideas of the 17th century (mix of humanist thought and “Old Testamentalism”).
 3. National-Protestant concerns about crypto-Catholic threads in mainstream Anglican Church and tyrannical monarchical powers plus a tradition of conspiracy thought (Richard J. Hofstadter called it “the paranoid style in American politics”).
 4. The appointment of bishops in America.

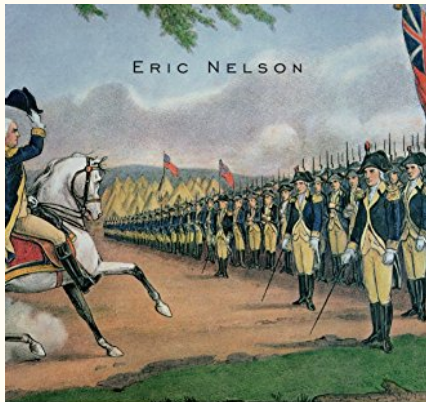


How Blackstone Lost the
Colonies: English Law, Colonial
Lawyers, and the American
Revolution (Distinguished
Studies in American Legal &
Constitutional History)

Zweiben, Beverly

Note: This is not the actual book cover





THE ROYALIST REVOLUTION

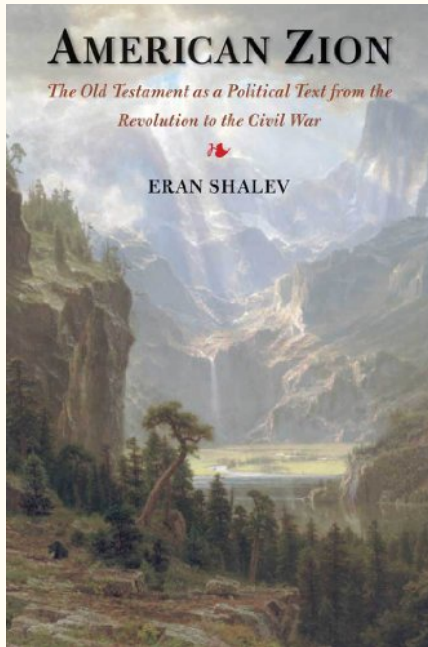
MONARCHY AND THE AMERICAN FOUNDING

AMERICAN ZION

*The Old Testament as a Political Text from the
Revolution to the Civil War*



ERAN SHALEV



Abridged Edition

CONSTITUTIONAL HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION



John Phillip Reid

Imperial reforms, III

- 1764 Sugar Act.
- Townshend Acts.
- 1751 and 1764 Currency Acts.
- 1773 Tea Act.
- 1774 Quebec Act.

Imperial reforms, IV

- 1774 Intolerable Acts:
 1. The Boston Port Act.
 2. The Massachusetts Government Act.
 3. The Administration of Justice Act.
 4. The Quartering Act.
- After the intolerable acts are widely known in the colonies, there is no way to back down for the colonial elites.
- Contingency: what if?

Political-economic considerations in Britain

- Declaration of independence focuses on George III, not parliament.
- This is not a random choice.
- Colonials want to have a direct relationship with the monarch (federalism theory of divided sovereignty) similar to later Dominions.
- Parliament is extremely worried about this:
 1. 1688 and the Stuart experience.
 2. Coup in Sweden.
 3. Political-economy of Ireland.
 4. Structure of mercantilism.
 5. Demographic dynamism of the colonies.
- Interestingly, later in the war George III becomes more of a hard-linear than Parliament.



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Verdi
Un Ballo in Maschera

LUCIANO PAVAROTTI
MARGARET PRICE · RENATO BRUSON



National Philharmonic Orchestra
SIR GEORG SOLTI

Photograph of Luciano Pavarotti by ROBERT CAMEN
Photograph of Sir Georg Solti by PATRICK LICHFIELD

Additional considerations

- Communication technology.
- Old republican ideas by Algernon Sidney and others.
- Tropes of political corruption: *Cato's Letters* by John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon.
- Internal British politics is much subtler than we often think: *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III* by Lewis Namier.





The Structure of Politics

At the Accession of George III

Lewis Namier
Second Edition



Open University Set Book