
UNIT 10 : POLITICAL CURRENTS

Structure

- 10.0 Objectives
- 10.1 Introduction
- 10.2 Land campaigns up to 1778
 - 10.2.1 Prelude to War
 - 10.2.2 Paul Revere's Ride and the Battles of Lexington and Concord
 - 10.2.3 The Siege of Boston and the Battle of Bunker Hill
 - 10.2.4 Washington takes Command
 - 10.2.5 The Battle for New York
 - 10.2.6 The Surrender at Saratoga and French Involvement
- 10.3 Land campaigns from 1778
 - 10.3.1 Setbacks in the North
 - 10.3.2 Final Campaigns in the South and the surrender of Cornwallis
- 10.4 The War at Sea
 - 10.4.1 The Status of Naval Forces at the Outbreak of War
 - 10.4.2 Early Engagements and Privateers
 - 10.4.3 French intervention and the decisive action at Virginia Capes
- 10.5 Aftermath
- 10.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 10.7 Key Words
- 10.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

10.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be able to know about the political condition before and during American Revolution.

10.1 INTRODUCTION

American Revolution, also called United States War of Independence or American Revolutionary War, (1775–83), insurrection by which 13 of Great Britain's North American colonies won political independence and went on to form the United States of America. The war followed more than a decade of growing estrangement between the British crown and a large and influential segment of its North American colonies that was caused by British attempts to assert greater control over colonial affairs after having long adhered to a policy of salutary neglect. Until early in 1778 the conflict was a civil war within the British Empire, but afterward it became an international war as France (in 1778) and Spain (in 1779) joined the colonies against Britain. Meanwhile, the Netherlands, which provided both official recognition of the United States and financial support for it, was engaged in its own war against Britain. From the beginning, sea power was vital in determining the course of the war, lending to British strategy a flexibility that helped compensate for the comparatively small numbers of troops sent to America and ultimately enabling the French to help bring about the final British surrender at Yorktown.

10.2 LAND CAMPAIGNS UP TO 1778

Americans fought the war on land with essentially two types of organization: the Continental (national) Army and the state militias. The total number of the former provided by quotas from the states throughout the conflict was 231,771 men, and the militias totalled 164,087. At any given time, however, the American forces seldom numbered over 20,000; in 1781 there were only about 29,000 insurgents under arms throughout the country. The war was therefore one fought by small field armies. Militias, poorly disciplined and with elected officers, were summoned for periods usually not exceeding three months. The terms of Continental Army service were only gradually increased from one to three years, and not even bounties and the offer of land kept the army up to strength. Reasons for the difficulty in maintaining an adequate Continental force included the colonists' traditional antipathy toward regular armies, the objections of farmers to being away from their fields, the competition of the states with the Continental Congress to keep men in the militia, and the wretched and uncertain pay in a period of inflation.

By contrast, the British army was a reliable steady force of professionals. Since it numbered only about 42,000, heavy recruiting programs were introduced. Many of the enlisted men were farm boys, as were most of the Americans. Others were unemployed persons from the urban slums. Still others joined the army to escape fines or imprisonment. The great majority became efficient soldiers as a result of sound training and ferocious discipline. The officers were drawn largely from the gentry and the aristocracy and obtained their commissions and promotions by purchase. Though they received no formal training, they were not so dependent on a book knowledge of military tactics as were many of the Americans. British generals,

however, tended toward a lack of imagination and initiative, while those who demonstrated such qualities often were rash. Because troops were few and conscription unknown, the British government, following a traditional policy, purchased about 30,000 troops from various German princes. The Lensgreve (landgrave) of Hesse furnished approximately three-fifths of that total. Few acts by the crown roused so much antagonism in America as that use of foreign mercenaries.

10.2.1 Prelude to War

The colony of Massachusetts was seen by King George III and his ministers as the hotbed of disloyalty. After the Boston Tea Party (December 16, 1773), Parliament responded with the Intolerable Acts (1774), a series of punitive measures that were intended to cow the restive population into obedience. The 1691 charter of the Massachusetts Bay Colony was abrogated, and the colony's elected ruling council was replaced with a military government under Gen. Thomas Gage, the commander of all British troops in North America. At Gage's headquarters in Boston, he had four regiments—perhaps 4,000 men—under his command, and Parliament deemed that force sufficient to overawe the population in his vicinity. William Legge, 2nd earl of Dartmouth, secretary of state for the colonies, advised Gage that

the violence committed by those, who have taken up arms in Massachusetts, have appeared to me as the acts of a rude rabble, without plan, without concert, without conduct.

From London, Dartmouth concluded that a small force now, if put to the test, would be able to conquer them, with greater probability of success, than might be expected of a larger army, if the people should be suffered to form themselves upon a more regular plan.

Gage, for his part, felt that no fewer than 20,000 troops would be adequate for such an endeavour, but he acted with the forces he had at hand. Beginning in the late summer of 1774, Gage attempted to suppress the warlike preparations throughout New England by seizing stores of weapons and powder. Although the colonials were initially taken by surprise, they soon mobilized. Groups such as the Sons of Liberty uncovered advance details of British actions, and Committees of Correspondence aided in the organization of countermeasures. Learning of a British plan to secure the weapons cache at Fort William and Mary, an undermanned army outpost in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, Boston's Committee of Correspondence dispatched Paul Revere on December 13, 1774, to issue a warning to local allies. The following day, several hundred men assembled and stormed the fort, capturing the six-man garrison, seizing a significant quantity of powder, and striking the British colours; a subsequent party removed the remaining cannons and small arms. That act of open violence against the crown infuriated British officials, but their attempts to deprive the incipient rebellion of vital war matériel over the following months were increasingly frustrated by colonial leaders who denuded British supply caches and

sequestered arms and ammunition in private homes. On April 14, 1775, Gage received a letter from Dartmouth informing him that Massachusetts had been declared to be in a state of open revolt and ordering him to “arrest and imprison the principal Actors and Abettors in the [Massachusetts] Provincial Congress.” Gage had received his orders, but the colonials were well aware of his intentions before he could act.

10.2.2 Paul Revere’s Ride and the Battles of Lexington and Concord

On April 16 Revere rode to Concord, a town 20 miles (32 km) northwest of Boston, to advise local compatriots to secure their military stores in advance of British troop movements. Two nights later Revere rode from Charlestown—where he confirmed that the local Sons of Liberty had seen the two lanterns that were posted in Boston’s Old North Church, signaling a British approach across the Charles River—to Lexington to warn that the British were on the march. Revolutionary leaders John Hancock and Samuel Adams fled Lexington to safety, and Revere was joined by fellow riders William Dawes and Samuel Prescott. The trio were apprehended outside Lexington by a British patrol, but Prescott escaped custody and was able to continue on to Concord. Revere’s “midnight ride” provided the colonists with vital information about British intentions, and it was later immortalized in a poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

Some 700 British troops spent the evening of April 18, 1775, forming ranks on Boston Common, with orders to seize the colonial armoury at Concord. The lengthy public display ensured that Gage had lost any chance at secrecy, and by the time the force had been transported across the Charles River to Cambridge it was 2:00 AM the following morning. The march to Lexington was an exercise in misery. It began in a swamp, and the British were forced to wade through brackish water that was, in places, waist deep. By the time the soaked infantrymen arrived in Lexington at approximately 5:00 AM, 77 minutemen were among those who had assembled on the village green. Officers on both sides ordered their men to hold their positions but not to fire their weapons. It is unclear who fired “the shot heard ’round the world,” but it sparked a skirmish that left eight Americans dead. The colonial force evaporated, and the British moved on to Concord, where they were met with determined resistance from hundreds of militiamen. Now outnumbered and running low on ammunition, the British column was forced to retire to Boston. On the return march, American snipers took a deadly toll on the British, and only the timely arrival of 1,100 reinforcements prevented the retreat from becoming a rout. Those killed and wounded at the Battles of Lexington and Concord numbered 273 British and 95 Americans.

10.2.3 The Siege of Boston and the Battle of Bunker Hill

Rebel militia then converged on Boston from all over New England, while London attempted to formulate a response. Generals Sir William Howe, Sir Henry Clinton,

and John Burgoyne were dispatched at once with reinforcements, and Charles Cornwallis followed later. Those four commanders would be identified with the conduct of the principal British operations. The Continental Congress in Philadelphia, acting for the 13 colonies, voted for general defensive measures, called out troops, and appointed George Washington of Virginia commander in chief. Before Washington could take charge of the 15,000 colonial troops laying siege to the British garrison in Boston, Gage ordered Howe to drive the Americans from the heights in Charlestown.

The Americans provoked the assault by entrenching on Breed's Hill, the lower of two hills overlooking the British position. The placement of American artillery on the heights would have made the British position in Boston untenable, so on June 17, 1775, Howe led a British frontal assault on the American fortifications. In the misleadingly named Battle of Bunker Hill (Breed's Hill was the primary locus of combat), Howe's 2,300 troops encountered withering fire while storming the rebel lines. The British eventually cleared the hill but at the cost of more than 40 percent of the assault force, and the battle was a moral victory for the Americans.

10.2.4 Washington takes Command

On July 3 Washington assumed command of the American forces at Cambridge. Not only did he have to contain the British in Boston, but he also had to recruit a Continental army. During the winter of 1775–76 recruitment lagged so badly that fresh drafts of militia were called up to help maintain the siege. The balance shifted in late winter, when Gen. Henry Knox arrived with artillery from Fort Ticonderoga in New York. The British fort, which occupied a strategic point between Lake George and Lake Champlain, had been surprised and taken on May 10, 1775, by the Green Mountain Boys, a Vermont militia group under the command of Col. Ethan Allen. The cannons from Ticonderoga were mounted on Dorchester Heights, above Boston. The guns forced Howe, who had replaced Gage in command in October 1775, to evacuate the city on March 17, 1776. Howe then repaired to Halifax to prepare for an invasion of New York, and Washington moved units southward for its defense.

Meanwhile, action flared in the North. In the fall of 1775 the Americans invaded Canada. One force under Gen. Richard Montgomery captured Montreal on November 13. Another under Benedict Arnold made a remarkable march through the Maine wilderness to Quebec. Unable to take the city, Arnold was joined by Montgomery, many of whose troops had gone home because their enlistments had expired. An attack on the city on the last day of the year failed, Montgomery was killed, and many troops were captured. The Americans maintained a siege of the city but withdrew with the arrival of British reinforcements in the spring. Pursued by the British and decimated by smallpox, the Americans fell back to Ticonderoga. British Gen. Guy Carleton's hopes of moving quickly down Lake Champlain, however, were frustrated by Arnold's construction of a fighting fleet. Forced to build one of

his own, Carleton destroyed most of the American fleet in October 1776 but considered the season too advanced to bring Ticonderoga under siege. As the Americans suffered defeat in Canada, so did the British in the South. North Carolina patriots trounced a body of loyalists at Moore's Creek Bridge on February 27, 1776. Charleston, South Carolina, was successfully defended against a British assault by sea in June.

10.2.5 The Battle for New York

Having made up its mind to crush the rebellion, the British government sent General Howe and his brother, Richard, Admiral Lord Howe, with a large fleet and 34,000 British and German troops to New York. It also gave the Howes a commission to treat with the Americans. The British force sailed on June 10, 1776, from Halifax to New York and on July 5 encamped on Staten Island. The Continental Congress, which had proclaimed the independence of the colonies, at first thought that the Howes were empowered to negotiate peace terms but discovered that they were authorized only to accept submission and assure pardons.

Their peace efforts getting nowhere, the Howes turned to force. Washington, who had anticipated British designs, had already marched from Boston to New York and fortified the city, but his position was far from ideal. His left flank was thrown across the East River, beyond the village of Brooklyn, while the remainder of his lines fronted the Hudson River, making them open to a combined naval and ground attack. The position was untenable since the British absolutely dominated the waters about Manhattan. Howe drove Washington out of New York and forced the abandonment of the whole of Manhattan Island by employing three well directed movements upon the American left. On August 22, 1776, under his brother's guns, General Howe crossed the narrows to the Long Island shore with 15,000 troops, increasing the number to 20,000 on the 25th. He then scored a smashing victory on August 27, driving the Americans into their Brooklyn works and inflicting a loss of about 1,400 men. Washington skillfully evacuated his army from Brooklyn to Manhattan that night under cover of a fog.

On September 15 Howe followed up his victory by invading Manhattan. Though checked at Harlem Heights the next day, he drew Washington off the island in October by a move to Throg's Neck and then to New Rochelle, northeast of the city. Leaving garrisons at Fort Washington on Manhattan and at Fort Lee on the opposite shore of the Hudson River, Washington hastened to block Howe. The British commander, however, defeated him on October 28 at Chatterton Hill near White Plains. Howe slipped between the American army and Fort Washington and stormed the fort on November 16, seizing guns, supplies, and nearly 3,000 prisoners. British forces under Lord Cornwallis then took Fort Lee and on November 24 started to drive the American army across New Jersey. Though Washington escaped to the west bank of the Delaware River, his army nearly disappeared. Howe then put his army into winter quarters, with outposts at towns such as Bordentown and Trenton.

On Christmas night Washington struck back with a brilliant riposte. Crossing the ice-strewn Delaware with 2,400 men, he fell upon the Hessian garrison at Trenton at dawn and took nearly 1,000 prisoners. Though almost trapped by Cornwallis, who recovered Trenton on January 2, 1777, Washington made a skillful escape during the night, won a battle against British reinforcements at Princeton the next day, and went into winter quarters in the defensible area around Morristown. The Trenton-Princeton campaign roused the country and saved the struggle for independence from collapse.

10.2.6 The Surrender at Saratoga and French Involvement

Britain's strategy in 1777 aimed at driving a wedge between New England and the other colonies. An army under Gen. John Burgoyne was to march south from Canada and join forces with Howe on the Hudson. But Howe seems to have concluded that Burgoyne was strong enough to operate on his own and left New York in the summer, taking his army by sea to the head of Chesapeake Bay. Once ashore, he defeated Washington badly but not decisively at Brandywine Creek on September 11. Then, feinting westward, he entered Philadelphia, the American capital, on September 25. The Continental Congress fled to York. Washington struck back at Germantown on October 4 but, compelled to withdraw, went into winter quarters at Valley Forge.

In the North the story was different. Burgoyne was to move south to Albany with a force of about 9,000 British, Germans, Indians, and American loyalists; a smaller force under Lieut. Col. Barry St. Leger was to converge on Albany through the Mohawk valley. Burgoyne took Ticonderoga handily on July 5 and then, instead of using Lake George, chose a southward route by land. Slowed by the rugged terrain, strewn with trees cut down by American axmen under Gen. Philip Schuyler, and needing horses, Burgoyne sent a force of Germans to collect them at Bennington, Vermont. The Germans were nearly wiped out on August 16 by New Englanders under Gen. John Stark and Col. Seth Warner. Meanwhile, St. Leger besieged Fort Schuyler (present-day Rome, New York), ambushed a relief column of American militia at Oriskany on August 6, but retreated as his Indians gave up the siege and an American force under Arnold approached. Burgoyne himself reached the Hudson, but the Americans, now under Gen. Horatio Gates, checked him at Freeman's Farm on September 19 and, thanks to Arnold's battlefield leadership, decisively defeated him at Bemis Heights on October 7. Ten days later, unable to get help from New York, Burgoyne surrendered at Saratoga.

The most-significant result of Burgoyne's capitulation was the entrance of France into the war. The French had secretly furnished financial and material aid since 1776. Now they prepared fleets and armies, although they did not formally declare war until June 1778.

10.3 LAND CAMPAIGNS FROM 1778

Meanwhile, the Americans at Valley Forge survived a hungry winter, which was made worse by quartermaster and commissary mismanagement, graft of contractors, and unwillingness of farmers to sell produce for paper money. Order and discipline among the troops were improved by the arrival of the Freiherr von (baron of) Steuben, a Prussian officer in the service of France. Steuben instituted a training program in which he emphasized drilling by officers, marching in column, and using firearms more effectively.

The program paid off at Monmouth Court House, New Jersey, on June 28, 1778, when Washington attacked the British, who were withdrawing from Philadelphia to New York. Although Sir Henry Clinton, who had replaced Howe, struck back hard, the Americans stood their ground. Thereafter (except in the winter of 1779, which was spent at Morristown) Washington made his headquarters at West Point on the Hudson, and Clinton avowed himself too weak to attack him there.

French aid now materialized with the appearance of a strong fleet under the comte d'Estaing. Unable to enter New York harbour, d'Estaing tried to assist Maj. Gen. John Sullivan in dislodging the British from Newport, Rhode Island. Storms and British reinforcements thwarted the joint effort.

10.3.1 Setbacks in the North

Action in the North was largely a stalemate for the rest of the war. The British raided New Bedford, Massachusetts, and New Haven and New London, Connecticut, while loyalists and Indians attacked settlements in New York and Pennsylvania. The Americans under "Mad" Anthony Wayne stormed Stony Point, New York, on July 16, 1779, and "Light-Horse Harry" Lee took Paulus Hook, New Jersey, on August 19. More lasting in effect was Sullivan's expedition of August 1779 against Britain's Indian allies in New York, particularly the destruction of their villages and fields of corn. Farther west, Col. George Rogers Clark campaigned against British posts on the northwest frontier. With a company of volunteers, Clark captured Kaskaskia, the chief post in the Illinois country, on July 4, 1778, and later secured the submission of Vincennes. The latter was recaptured by Gen. Henry Hamilton, the British commander at Detroit, but, in the spring of 1779, Clark raised another force and retook Vincennes from Hamilton. That expedition did much to free the frontier from Indian raids, gave the Americans a hold upon the northwest, and encouraged expansion into the Ohio valley.

Potentially serious blows to the American cause were Arnold's defection in 1780 and the army mutinies of 1780 and 1781. Arnold's attempt to betray West Point to the British miscarried, and his British contact, Maj. John André, was captured by the Americans and hanged as a spy. Mutinies were sparked by misunderstandings over terms of enlistment, poor food and clothing, gross arrears of pay, and the decline in

the purchasing power of the dollar. Suppressed by force or negotiation, the mutinies shook the morale of the army.

10.3.2 Final Campaigns in the South and the surrender of Cornwallis

British strategy from 1778 called for offensives that were designed to take advantage of the flexibility of sea power and the loyalist sentiment of many of the people. British forces from New York and St. Augustine, Florida, occupied Georgia by the end of January 1779. Gen. Augustine Prevost, who had commanded in Florida, made Savannah his headquarters and defended that city in the fall against d'Estaing and a Franco American army. Hrabia (count) Kazimierz Pułaski, a Polish officer who was serving on the American side, was mortally wounded in an unsuccessful assault on Savannah on October 9, 1779.

Having failed to achieve any decisive advantage in the North in 1779, Clinton headed a combined military and naval expedition southward. He evacuated Newport on October 25, left New York under the command of German Gen. Wilhelm, Freiherr von Knyphausen, and in December sailed with some 8,500 men to join Prevost in Savannah. Cornwallis accompanied him, and later Lord Rawdon joined him with an additional force. Marching on Charleston, Clinton cut off the city from relief and, after a brief siege, compelled Gen. Benjamin Lincoln to surrender on May 12, 1780. The loss of Charleston and the 5,000 troops of its garrison—virtually the entire Continental Army in the South— was a serious blow to the American cause. Learning that Newport was threatened by a French expeditionary force under the comte de Rochambeau, Clinton returned to New York in June, leaving Cornwallis at Charleston.

Cornwallis, however, took the offensive. On August 16 he shattered General Gates's army at Camden, South Carolina, and German Continental Army Officer Johann Kalb was mortally wounded in the fighting. The destruction of a force of loyalists at Kings Mountain on October 7 led Cornwallis to move against the new American commander, Gen. Nathanael Greene. When Greene put part of his force under Gen. Daniel Morgan, Cornwallis sent his cavalry leader, Col. Banastre Tarleton, after Morgan. At Cowpens on January 17, 1781, Morgan destroyed practically all of Tarleton's column. Subsequently, on March 15, Greene and Cornwallis fought at Guilford Courthouse, North Carolina. Cornwallis won but suffered heavy casualties. After withdrawing to Wilmington, he marched into Virginia to join British forces sent there by Clinton.

Greene then moved back to South Carolina, where he was defeated by Rawdon at Hobkirk's Hill on April 25 and at Ninety Six in June and by Lieut. Col. Alexander Stewart at Eutaw Springs on September 8. In spite of that, the British—harassed by partisan leaders such as Francis Marion (whose guerrilla tactics earned him the nickname "the Swamp Fox"), Thomas Sumter, and Andrew Pickens—soon retired to the coast and remained locked up in Charleston and Savannah.

Meanwhile, Cornwallis entered Virginia, reaching Petersburg on May 20, 1781. Sending Tarleton on raids across the colony, the British asserted a sphere of control as far north as Fredericksburg and west to Charlottesville. There Thomas Jefferson, then the governor of Virginia, barely escaped capture by Tarleton's men. Cornwallis started to build a base at Yorktown, at the same time fending off American forces under Wayne, Steuben, and the marquis de Lafayette.

Learning that the comte de Grasse had arrived in the Chesapeake with a large fleet and 3,000 French troops, Washington and Rochambeau moved south to Virginia. By mid-September the Franco-American forces had placed Yorktown under siege, and British rescue efforts proved fruitless. Cornwallis surrendered his army of more than 7,000 men on October 19. Thus, for the second time during the war, the British had lost an entire army.

Thereafter, land action in America died out, though the war persisted in other theatres and on the high seas. Eventually Clinton was replaced by Sir Guy Carleton. While the peace treaties were under consideration and afterward, Carleton evacuated thousands of loyalists from America, including many from Savannah on July 11, 1782, and others from Charleston on December 14. The last British forces finally left New York on November 25, 1783. Washington then re-entered the city in triumph.

10.4 THE WAR AT SEA

Although the colonists ventured to challenge Britain's naval power from the outbreak of the conflict, the war at sea in its later stages was fought mainly between Britain and America's European allies, the American effort being reduced to privateering.

10.4.1 The Status of Naval Forces at the Outbreak of War

The onset of the Revolution found the colonies with no real naval forces but with a large maritime population and many merchant vessels employed in domestic and foreign trade. That merchant service was familiar not only with the sea but also with warfare. Colonial ships and seamen had taken part in the British naval expeditions against Cartagena, Spain, and Louisburg, Nova Scotia, during the nine years of war between Britain and France from 1754 to 1763. Colonists also had engaged in privateering during the French and Indian War, the American phase of that broader conflict (the European phase of which was known as the Seven Years' War).

The importance of sea power was recognized early. In October 1775 the Continental Congress authorized the creation of the Continental Navy and established the Marine Corps in November. The navy, taking its direction from the naval and marine committees of the Congress, was only occasionally effective. In 1776 it had 27 ships against Britain's 270. By the end of the war, the British total had risen close to 500, and the American total had dwindled to 20. Many of the best seamen available had

gone off privateering, and Continental Navy commanders and crews both suffered from a lack of training and discipline.

10.4.2 Early Engagements and Privateers

The first significant blow by the navy was struck by Commodore Esek Hopkins, who captured New Providence (Nassau) in the Bahamas in 1776. Other captains, such as Lambert Wickes, Gustavus Conyngham, and John Barry, also enjoyed successes, but the Scottish-born John Paul Jones was especially notable. As captain of the *Ranger*, Jones scourged the British coasts in 1778, capturing the man-of-war *Drake*. As captain of the *Bonhomme Richard* in 1779, he intercepted a timber convoy and captured the British frigate *Serapis*.

More injurious to the British were the raids by American privateers on their shipping. During peace, colonial ships had traditionally travelled the seas armed as a protection against pirates, so, with the outbreak of war, it was natural that considerable numbers of colonial merchant vessels should turn to privateering. That practice was continued on a large scale until the close of the war under legal authorization of individual colonies and of the Continental Congress. Records are incomplete but indicate that well over 2,000 private armed vessels were so employed during the course of the war, carrying more than 18,000 guns and some 70,000 men. In addition, several of the colonies organized state navies which also preyed upon hostile commerce. Those operations were of such a scale that they must be regarded as one of the significant American military efforts of the war. Together with the operations of a few Continental vessels, they constituted the only sustained offensive pressure brought to bear by the Americans, which materially affected the attitude of the British people toward peace. By the end of 1777 American ships had taken 560 British vessels, and by the end of the war they had probably seized 1,500. More than 12,000 British sailors also were captured. Such injury was done to British commerce that insurance rates increased to unprecedented figures, available sources of revenue were seriously reduced, and British coastal populations became alarmed at the prospect of Yankee incursions. By 1781 British merchants were clamouring for an end to hostilities.

Most of the naval action occurred at sea. The significant exceptions were Arnold's battles against Carleton's fleet on Lake Champlain at Valcour Island on October 11 and off Split Rock on October 13, 1776. Arnold lost both battles, but his construction of a fleet of tiny vessels, mostly gondolas (gundalows) and galleys, had forced the British to build a larger fleet and hence delayed their attack on Fort Ticonderoga until the following spring. That delay contributed significantly to Burgoyne's capitulation at Saratoga in October 1777.

10.4.3 French intervention and the decisive action at Virginia Capes

The entrance of France into the war, followed by that of Spain in 1779 and the Netherlands in 1780, effected important changes in the naval aspect of the war. The

Spanish and Dutch were not particularly active, but their role in keeping British naval forces tied down in Europe was significant. The British navy could not maintain an effective blockade of both the American coast and the enemies' ports. Because of years of neglect, Britain's ships of the line were neither modern nor sufficiently numerous. An immediate result was that France's Toulon fleet under d'Estaing got safely away to America, where it appeared off New York and later assisted Sullivan in the unsuccessful siege of Newport. A fierce battle off Ushant, France, in July 1778 between the Channel fleet under Adm. Augustus Keppel and the Brest fleet under the comte d'Orvilliers proved inconclusive. Had Keppel won decisively, French aid to the Americans would have diminished and Rochambeau might never have been able to lead his expedition to America.

In the following year England was in real danger. Not only did it have to face the privateers of the United States, France, and Spain off its coasts, as well as the raids of John Paul Jones, but it also lived in fear of invasion. The combined fleets of France and Spain had acquired command of the English Channel, and a French army of 50,000 waited for the propitious moment to board their transports. Luckily for the British, storms, sickness among the allied crews, and changes of plans terminated the threat.

Despite allied supremacy in the Channel in 1779, the threat of invasion, and the loss of islands in the West Indies, the British maintained control of the North American seaboard for most of 1779 and 1780, which made possible their Southern land campaigns. They also reinforced Gibraltar, which the Spaniards had brought under siege in the fall of 1779, and sent a fleet under Adm. Sir George Rodney to the West Indies in early 1780. After fruitless maneuvering against the comte de Guichen, who had replaced d'Estaing, Rodney sailed for New York.

While Rodney had been in the West Indies, a French squadron slipped out of Brest and sailed to Newport with Rochambeau's army. Rodney, instead of trying to block the approach to Newport, returned to the West Indies, where, upon receiving instructions to attack Dutch possessions, he seized Sint Eustatius, the Dutch island that served as the principal depot for war materials shipped from Europe and transhipped into American vessels. He became so involved in the disposal of the enormous booty that he dallied at the island for six months.

In the meantime, a powerful British fleet relieved Gibraltar in 1781, but the price was the departure of the French fleet at Brest, part of it to India, the larger part under Adm. François-Joseph-Paul, comte de Grasse, to the West Indies. After maneuvering indecisively against Rodney, de Grasse received a request from Washington and Rochambeau to come to New York or the Chesapeake.

Earlier, in March, a French squadron had tried to bring troops from Newport to the Chesapeake but was forced to return by Adm. Marriot Arbuthnot, who had

succeeded Lord Howe. Soon afterward Arbuthnot was replaced by Thomas Graves, a conventional-minded admiral.

Informed that a French squadron would shortly leave the West Indies, Rodney sent Samuel Hood north with a powerful force while he sailed for England, taking with him several formidable ships that might better have been left with Hood. Soon after Hood dropped anchor in New York, de Grasse appeared in the Chesapeake, where he landed troops to help Lafayette contain Cornwallis until Washington and Rochambeau could arrive. Fearful that the comte de Barras, who was carrying Rochambeau's artillery train from Newport, might join de Grasse and hoping to intercept him, Graves sailed with Hood to the Chesapeake. Graves had 19 ships of the line against de Grasse's 24. Though the battle that began on September 5 off the Virginia Capes was not a skillfully managed affair, Graves had the worst of it and retired to New York, thus sealing the fate of Cornwallis's army at Yorktown. Graves ventured out again on October 17 with a strong contingent of troops and 25 ships of the line, while de Grasse, reinforced by Barras, now had 36 ships of the line. No battle occurred, however, when Graves learned that Cornwallis had surrendered.

Although Britain subsequently recouped some of its fortunes, by Rodney defeating and capturing de Grasse in the Battle of the Saints off Dominica in 1782 and British land and sea forces inflicting defeats in India, the turn of events did not significantly alter the situation in America as it existed after Yorktown. A new government under Lord Shelburne tried to get the American commissioners to agree to a separate peace, but, ultimately, the treaty negotiated with the Americans was not to go into effect until the formal conclusion of a peace with their European allies.

10.5 AFTERMATH

Preliminary articles of peace were signed on November 30, 1782, and the Peace of Paris (September 3, 1783) ended the U.S. War of Independence. Great Britain recognized the independence of the United States (with western boundaries to the Mississippi River) and ceded Florida to Spain. Other provisions called for payment of U.S. private debts to British citizens, American use of the Newfoundland fisheries, and fair treatment for American colonials loyal to Britain.

In explaining the outcome of the war, scholars have pointed out that the British never contrived an overall general strategy for winning it. Also, even if the war could have been terminated by British power in the early stages, the generals during that period, notably Howe, declined to make a prompt, vigorous, intelligent application of that power. They acted, to be sure, within the conventions of their age, but in choosing to take minimal risks (for example, Carleton at Ticonderoga and Howe at Brooklyn Heights and later in New Jersey and Pennsylvania) they lost the opportunity to deal potentially mortal blows to the rebellion. There was also a grave lack of understanding and cooperation at crucial moments (as with Burgoyne and Howe in

1777). Finally, the British counted too strongly on loyalist support they did not receive.

Check Your Progress

1. Explain the Siege of Boston and the Battle of Bunker Hill.

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2. Write a note on the Battle for New York

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10.6 LET US SUM UP

British mistakes alone could not account for the success of the United States. Feeble as their war effort occasionally became, the Americans were able generally to take advantage of their enemies' mistakes. The Continental Army, moreover, was by no means an inept force even before Steuben's reforms. The militias, while usually unreliable, could perform admirably under the leadership of men who understood them, like Arnold, Greene, and Morgan, and often reinforced the Continentals in crises. Furthermore, Washington, a rock in adversity, learned slowly but reasonably well the art of generalship. The supplies and funds furnished by France from 1776 to 1778 were invaluable, while French military and naval support after 1778 was essential. The outcome, therefore, resulted from a combination of British blunders, American efforts, and French assistance.

10.7 KEY WORDS

Landgrave : a count having jurisdiction over a territory.

Maneuvering : act in order to achieve a certain goal.

10.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress

1. See Sub-Section 10.2.3
2. See Sub-Section 10.2.5

UNIT 11 : SOCIO-ECONOMIC ISSUES

Structure

- 11.0 Objectives
- 11.1 Introduction
- 11.2 Social Issues
 - 11.2.1 Impact of Slavery
 - 11.2.2 A Revolution in Social Law
 - 11.2.3 Republican Motherhood
- 11.3 Economic Issues
 - 11.3.1 Western Land Policies
 - 11.3.2 Tax Policies
 - 11.3.3 Boycotts
 - 11.3.4 The Tea Act
 - 11.3.5 The First Continental Congress
 - 11.3.6 The Second Continental Congress
 - 11.3.7 Economic Incentives for Pursuing Independence: Taxation
 - 11.3.8 The Burden of the Navigation Acts
 - 11.3.9 American Expectations about Future British Policy
- 11.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 11.5 Key Words
- 11.6 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

11.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be able to know different social and economic issues of American Revolution.

11.1 INTRODUCTION

The American Revolution of the late 18th century has been regarded as a war of Independence which lacked the social radicalism of the great revolutions like the French Revolution of 1789. However, by destroying monarchy and creating a

republic the Americans changed not only their government but also their society. The American Revolution played an important role in the social transformation of America into a democratic and capitalist society; though 'democratic revolutions' were bringing about social change in western Europe too about this time - late 18th to early 19th century - the American Revolution helped to democratize American politics and society more substantially than in Europe. In the subsequent sections we will discuss social and economic issues of American Revolution.

11.2 SOCIAL ISSUES

Liberty, republicanism, and independence are powerful causes. The patriots tenaciously asserted American rights and brought the Revolution. The Revolution brought myriad consequences to the American social fabric. There was no reign of terror as in the French Revolution. There was no replacement of the ruling class by workers' groups as in revolutionary Russia. How then could the American Revolution be described as radical? Nearly every aspect of American life was somehow touched by the Revolutionary Spirit. From slavery to women's rights, from religious life to voting, American attitudes would be forever changed.

Some changes would be felt immediately. Slavery would not be abolished for another hundred years, but the Revolution saw the dawn of an organized abolitionist movement. English traditions such as land inheritance laws were swept away almost immediately. The Anglican Church in America could no longer survive. After all, the official head of the Church of England was the British monarch. States experimented with republican ideas when drafting their own constitutions during the war. All these major changes would be felt by Americans before the dawn of the nineteenth century.

The American Revolution produced a new outlook among its people that would have ramifications long into the future. Groups excluded from immediate equality such as slaves and women would draw their later inspirations from revolutionary sentiments. Americans began to feel that their fight for liberty was a global fight. Future democracies would model their governments on ours. There are few events that would shake the world order like the success of the American patriotic cause.

11.2.1 Impact of Slavery

Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness simply did not seem consistent with the practice of chattel slavery. How could a group of people feel so passionate about these unalienable rights, yet maintain the brutal practice of human bondage? Somehow slavery would manage to survive the revolutionary era, but great changes were brought to this peculiar institution nevertheless.

The world's first Antislavery Society was founded in 1775 by Quakers in Philadelphia, the year the Revolution began. By 1788, at least thirteen of these clubs were known to exist in the American colonies. Some Northern states banned

slavery outright, and some provided for the gradual end of slavery. At any rate, the climate of the Revolution made the institution unacceptable in the minds of many Northerners, who did not rely on forced labour as part of the economic system. Northerners did not, however, go as far as to grant equal rights to freed blacks. Nonetheless, this ignited the philosophical debate that would be waged throughout the next century.

Many slaves achieved their freedom during the Revolution without formal emancipation. The British army, eager to debase the colonial economy, freed many slaves as they moved through the American South. Many slaves in the North were granted their freedom if they agreed to fight for the American cause. Although a clear majority of African Americans remained in bondage, the growth of free black communities in America was greatly fostered by the War for American Independence. Revolutionary sentiments led to the banning of the importation of slaves in 1807.

Slavery did not end overnight in America. Before any meaningful reform could happen, people needed to recognize that the economic benefit was vastly overshadowed by the overwhelming repugnance, immorality, and inhumanity of slavery.

11.2.2 A Revolution in Social Law

During the colonial era, Americans were bound by British law. Now, they were no longer governed by the Crown or by colonial charter. Independent, Americans could seek to eliminate or maintain laws as they saw fit. The possibilities were endless. Republican revolutionary sentiment brought significant change during the immediate post-war years.

Huge changes were made regarding land holding. English law required land to be passed down in its entirety from father to eldest son. This practice was known as Primogeniture. This kept land concentrated in the hands of few individuals, hardly consistent with revolutionary thinking. Within fifteen years of the Revolution, not a single state had a primogeniture law on the books. The cries of the landless, those who formerly paid Quitrents and fees to the Crown, could now be heard. Huge estates of the Loyalists were divided into smaller units. These land seizures were harshest in New England, but existed to some extent throughout the American colonies. The sale of the Penn family estate yielded over a million dollars to the new government. In addition, the Treaty of Paris granted the United States land out to the Mississippi River, which created a great opportunity for land hungry citizens to go west. Despite the fact that much of this land was gobbled up by rich land speculators, the removal of the Loyalists served to be a great social leveler.

The fight for separation of church and state was on. In Virginia, it hardly seemed appropriate to support the Anglican Church of England with tax dollars. The Anglican Church itself broke from its English hierarchy and renamed itself

the Episcopalian Church. Soon they were appointing their own American clergy. Thomas Jefferson helped win the battle for religious freedom in Virginia. The Congregational Puritan churches in New England held on longer; however, by 1833, all states abandoned the practice of a state-supported church. The Revolution had sparked great changes indeed.

11.2.3 Republican Motherhood

Women's role in society was altered by the American Revolution. Women who ran households in the absence of men became more assertive. **Abigail Adams**, wife of John, became an early advocate of women's rights when she prompted her husband to "**Remember the Ladies**" when drawing up a new government.

Pre-Revolutionary ministers, particularly in Puritan Massachusetts, preached the moral superiority of men. Enlightened thinkers rejected this and knew that a republic could only succeed if its citizens were virtuous and educated. Who were the primary caretakers of American children? American women. If the republic were to succeed, women must be schooled in virtue so they could teach their children. The first American female academies were founded in the 1790s. This idea of an educated woman became known as "**Republican Motherhood.**"

As in the case of the abolition of slavery, changes for women would not come overnight. But the American Revolution ignited these changes. Education and respect would lead to the emergence of a powerful, outspoken middle class of women. By the mid nineteenth century, the **Seneca Falls Declaration** on the rights of women slightly alters Thomas Jefferson's words by saying: "*We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men and women are created equal...*"

11.3 ECONOMIC ISSUES

Prior to the conclusion of the Seven Years War there was little, if any, reason to believe that one day the American colonies would undertake a revolution in an effort to create an independent nation-state. As a part of the empire the colonies were protected from foreign invasion by the British military. In return, the colonists paid relatively few taxes and could engage in domestic economic activity without much interference from the British government. For the most part the colonists were only asked to adhere to regulations concerning foreign trade. In a series of acts passed by Parliament during the seventeenth century the Navigation Acts required that all trade within the empire be conducted on ships which were constructed, owned and largely manned by British citizens. Certain enumerated goods whether exported or imported by the colonies had to be shipped through England regardless of the final port of destination.

11.3.1 Western Land Policies

The movement for independence arose in the colonies following a series of critical decisions made by the British government after the end of the war with France in 1763. Two themes emerge from what was to be a fundamental change in British economic policy toward the American colonies. The first involved western land. With the acquisition from the French of the territory between the Allegheny Mountains and the Mississippi River the British decided to isolate the area from the rest of the colonies. Under the terms of the Proclamation of 1763 and the Quebec Act of 1774 colonists were not allowed to settle here or trade with the Indians without the permission of the British government. These actions nullified the claims to land in the area by a host of American colonies, individuals, and land companies. The essence of the policy was to maintain British control of the fur trade in the West by restricting settlement by the Americans.

11.3.2 Tax Policies

The second fundamental change involved taxation. The British victory over the French had come at a high price. Domestic taxes had been raised substantially during the war and total government debt had increased nearly twofold. Furthermore, the British had decided in 1763 to place a standing army of 10,000 men in North America. The bulk of these forces were stationed in newly acquired territory to enforce its new land policy in the West. Forts were to be built which would become the new centers of trade with the Indians. The British decided that the Americans should share the costs of the military build-up in the colonies. The reason seemed obvious. Taxes were significantly higher in Britain than in the colonies. One estimate suggests the per capita tax burden in the colonies ranged from two to four per cent of that in Britain. It was time in the British view that the Americans began to pay a larger share of the expenses of the empire.

Accordingly, a series of tax acts were passed by Parliament the revenue from which was to be used to help pay for the standing army in America. The first was the Sugar Act of 1764. Proposed by England's Prime Minister the act lowered tariff rates on non-British products from the West Indies as well as strengthened their collection. It was hoped this would reduce the incentive for smuggling and thereby increase tariff revenue. The following year Parliament passed the Stamp Act that imposed a tax commonly used in England. It required stamps for a broad range of legal documents as well as newspapers and pamphlets. While the colonial stamp duties were less than those in England they were expected to generate enough revenue to finance a substantial portion of the cost the new standing army. The same year passage of the Quartering Act imposed essentially a tax in kind by requiring the colonists to provide British military units with housing, provisions, and transportation. In 1767 the Townshend Acts imposed tariffs upon a variety of imported goods and established a Board of Customs Commissioners in the colonies to collect the revenue.

11.3.3 Boycotts

American opposition to these acts was expressed initially in a variety of peaceful forms. While they did not have representation in Parliament, the colonists did attempt to exert some influence in it through petition and lobbying. However, it was the economic boycott that became by far the most effective means of altering the new British economic policies. In 1765 representatives from nine colonies met at the Stamp Act Congress in New York and organized a boycott of imported English goods. The boycott was so successful in reducing trade that English merchants lobbied Parliament for the repeal of the new taxes. Parliament soon responded to the political pressure. During 1766 it repealed both the Stamp and Sugar Acts. In response to the Townshend Acts of 1767 a second major boycott started in 1768 in Boston and New York and subsequently spread to other cities leading Parliament in 1770 to repeal all of the Townshend duties except the one on tea. In addition, Parliament decided at the same time not to renew the Quartering Act.

With these actions taken by Parliament the Americans appeared to have successfully overturned the new British post war tax agenda. However, Parliament had not given up what it believed to be its right to tax the colonies. On the same day it repealed the Stamp Act, Parliament passed the Declaratory Act stating the British government had the full power and authority to make laws governing the colonies in all cases whatsoever including taxation. Policies not principles had been overturned.

11.3.4 The Tea Act

Three years after the repeal of the Townshend duties British policy was once again to emerge as an issue in the colonies. This time the American reaction was not peaceful. It all started when Parliament for the first time granted an exemption from the Navigation Acts. In an effort to assist the financially troubled British East India Company Parliament passed the Tea Act of 1773, which allowed the company to ship tea directly to America. The grant of a major trading advantage to an already powerful competitor meant a potential financial loss for American importers and smugglers of tea. In December a small group of colonists responded by boarding three British ships in the Boston harbor and throwing overboard several hundred chests of tea owned by the East India Company. Stunned by the events in Boston, Parliament decided not to cave in to the colonists as it had before. In rapid order it passed the Boston Port Act, the Massachusetts Government Act, the Justice Act, and the Quartering Act. Among other things these so-called Coercive or Intolerable Acts closed the port of Boston, altered the charter of Massachusetts, and reintroduced the demand for colonial quartering of British troops. Once done Parliament then went on to pass the Quebec Act as a continuation of its policy of restricting the settlement of the West.

11.3.5 The First Continental Congress

Many Americans viewed all of this as a blatant abuse of power by the British government. Once again a call went out for a colonial congress to sort out a response. On September 5, 1774 delegates appointed by the colonies met in Philadelphia for the First Continental Congress. Drawing upon the successful manner in which previous acts had been overturned the first thing Congress did was to organize a comprehensive embargo of trade with Britain. It then conveyed to the British government a list of grievances that demanded the repeal of thirteen acts of Parliament. All of the acts listed had been passed after 1763 as the delegates had agreed not to question British policies made prior to the conclusion of the Seven Years War. Despite all the problems it had created, the Tea Act was not on the list. The reason for this was that Congress decided not to protest British regulation of colonial trade under the Navigation Acts. In short, the delegates were saying to Parliament take us back to 1763 and all will be well.

11.3.6 The Second Continental Congress

What happened then was a sequence of events that led to a significant increase in the degree of American resistance to British policies. Before the Congress adjourned in October the delegates voted to meet again in May of 1775 if Parliament did not meet their demands. Confronted by the extent of the American demands the British government decided it was time to impose a military solution to the crisis. Boston was occupied by British troops. In April a military confrontation occurred at Lexington and Concord. Within a month the Second Continental Congress was convened. Here the delegates decided to fundamentally change the nature of their resistance to British policies. Congress authorized a continental army and undertook the purchase of arms and munitions. To pay for all of this it established a continental currency. With previous political efforts by the First Continental Congress to form an alliance with Canada having failed, the Second Continental Congress took the extraordinary step of instructing its new army to invade Canada. In effect, these actions taken were those of an emerging nation-state. In October as American forces closed in on Quebec the King of England in a speech to Parliament declared that the colonists having formed their own government were now fighting for their independence. It was to be only a matter of months before Congress formally declared it.

11.3.7 Economic Incentives for Pursuing Independence: Taxation

Given the nature of British colonial policies, scholars have long sought to evaluate the economic incentives the Americans had in pursuing independence. In this effort economic historians initially focused on the period following the Seven Years War up to the Revolution. It turned out that making a case for the avoidance of British taxes as a major incentive for independence proved difficult. The reason was that many of the taxes imposed were later repealed. The actual level of taxation appeared

to be relatively modest. After all, the Americans soon after adopting the Constitution taxed themselves at far higher rates than the British had prior to the Revolution. Rather it seemed the incentive for independence might have been the avoidance of the British regulation of colonial trade. Unlike some of the new British taxes, the Navigation Acts had remained intact throughout this period.

11.3.8 The Burden of the Navigation Acts

One early attempt to quantify the economic effects of the Navigation Acts was by Thomas. Building upon the previous work of Harper, Thomas employed a counterfactual analysis to assess what would have happened to the American economy in the absence of the Navigation Acts. To do this he compared American trade under the Acts with that which would have occurred had America been independent following the Seven Years War. Thomas then estimated the loss of both consumer and produce surplus to the colonies as a result of shipping enumerated goods indirectly through England. These burdens were partially offset by his estimated value of the benefits of British protection and various bounties paid to the colonies. The outcome of his analysis was that the Navigation Acts imposed a net burden of less than one percent of colonial per capita income. From this he concluded the Acts were an unlikely cause of the Revolution. A long series of subsequent works questioned various parts of his analysis but not his general conclusion. The work of Thomas also appeared to be consistent with the observation that the First Continental Congress had not demanded in its list of grievances the repeal of either the Navigation Acts or the Sugar Act.

11.3.9 American Expectations about Future British Policy

Did this mean then that the Americans had few if any economic incentives for independence? Upon further consideration economic historians realized that perhaps more important to the colonists were not the past and present burdens but rather the expected future burdens of continued membership in the British Empire. The Declaratory Act made it clear the British government had not given up what it viewed as its right to tax the colonists. This was despite the fact that up to 1775 the Americans had employed a variety of protest measures including lobbying, petitions, boycotts, and violence. The confluence of not having representation in Parliament while confronting an aggressive new British tax policy designed to raise their relatively low taxes may have made it reasonable for the Americans to expect a substantial increase in the level of taxation in the future. Furthermore a recent study has argued that in 1776 not only did the future burdens of the Navigation Acts clearly exceed those of the past, but a substantial portion would have borne by those who played a major role in the Revolution. Seen in this light the economic incentive for independence would have been avoiding the potential future costs of remaining in the British Empire.

Check Your Progress

1. Write a note on impact of Slavery on American society.

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2. Give an account on the Second Continental Congress.

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3. Discuss the American expectations about future British policy.

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11.4 LET US SUM UP

Possibility of acquiring land by westward movement and the relative weakness of the aristocracy in the American society had a strong influence in the emergence of democratic politics in America. Their concern for liberal and egalitarian rights made the Americans vocal to resist the British imperial assertiveness. The American Revolution not only challenged the imperial system but also dealt a big blow to monarchical society and aristocratic privilege. Among the significant results of the Revolution were American independence and friendly economic trade with Britain.

11.5 KEY WORDS

Lobbying : the act of trying to persuade governments to make decisions or support something.

Tenaciously : with a firm hold of something; closely.

11.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress

1. See Sub-Section 11.2.1
2. See Sub-Section 11.3.5
3. See Sub-Section 11.3.9

UNIT 12 : THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Structure

- 12.0 Objectives
- 12.1 Introduction
- 12.2 Creation of State Constitutions
- 12.3 End of Mercantilism
- 12.4 Establishment of a Republic
- 12.5 Formation of American National Identity
- 12.6 Beginning of a New Political Order
- 12.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 12.8 Key Words
- 12.9 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

12.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be able to know significance or consequences of American Revolution.

12.1 INTRODUCTION

The American Revolution was shaped by high principles and low ones, by imperial politics, dynastic rivalries, ambition, greed, personal loyalties, patriotism, demographic growth, social and economic changes, cultural developments, British intransigence and American anxieties. It was shaped by conflicting interests between Britain and America, between regions within America, between families and between individuals. It was shaped by religion, ethnicity and race, as well as by tensions between rich and poor. It was shaped, perhaps above all else, by the aspirations of ordinary people to make fulfilling lives for themselves and their families, to be secure in their possessions, safe in their homes, free to worship as they wished and to improve their lives by availing themselves of opportunities that seemed to lie within their grasp.

No one of these factors, nor any specific combination of them, can properly be said to have *caused* the American Revolution. An event as vast as the American Revolution is simply too complex to assign it neatly to particular causes. Although we can never know the *causes* of the American Revolution with precision, we can see very clearly the most important *consequences* of the Revolution. The Revolution had a significance far beyond the North American continent. It attracted the attention of a political intelligentsia throughout the European continent. Idealistic notables such as Thaddeus Kosciusko, Friedrich von Steuben, and Marquis de Lafayette joined its ranks to affirm liberal ideas they hoped to transfer to their own nations. Its success strengthened the concept of natural rights throughout the Western world and furthered the Enlightenment rationalist critique of an old order built around hereditary monarchy and an established church. In a very real sense, it was a precursor to the French Revolution, but it lacked the French Revolution's violence and chaos because it had occurred in a society that was already fundamentally liberal.

12.2 CREATION OF STATE CONSTITUTIONS

Like the earlier distinction between “origins” and “causes,” the Revolution also had short- and long-term consequences. Perhaps the most important immediate consequence of declaring independence was the creation of state constitutions in 1776 and 1777. The Revolution also unleashed powerful political, social, and economic forces that would transform the post-Revolution politics and society, including increased participation in politics and governance, the legal institutionalization of religious toleration, and the growth and diffusion of the population. The Revolution also had significant short-term effects on the lives of women in the new United States of America. In the long-term, the Revolution would also have significant effects on the lives of slaves and free blacks as well as the institution of slavery itself. It also affected Native Americans by opening up western settlement and creating governments hostile to their territorial claims. Even more broadly, the Revolution ended the mercantilist economy, opening new opportunities in trade and manufacturing.

The new states drafted written constitutions, which, at the time, was an important innovation from the traditionally unwritten British Constitution. Most created weak governors and strong legislatures with regular elections and moderately increased the size of the electorate. A number of states followed the example of Virginia, which included a declaration or “bill” of rights in their constitution designed to protect the rights of individuals and circumscribe the prerogative of the government. Pennsylvania’s first state constitution was the most radical and democratic. They created a unicameral legislature and an Executive Council but no genuine executive. All free men could vote, including those who did not own property. Massachusetts’ constitution, passed in 1780, was less democratic but underwent a more popular

process of ratification. In the fall of 1779, each town sent delegates—312 in all—to a constitutional convention in Cambridge. Town meetings debated the constitution draft and offered suggestions. Anticipating the later federal constitution, Massachusetts established a three-branch government based on checks and balances between the branches. Unlike some other states, it also offered the executive veto power over legislation. 1776 was the year of independence, but it was also the beginning of an unprecedented period of constitution-making and state building.

The Continental Congress ratified the Articles of Confederation in 1781. The Articles allowed each state one vote in the Continental Congress. But the Articles are perhaps most notable for what they did not allow. Congress was given no power to levy or collect taxes, regulate foreign or interstate commerce, or establish a federal judiciary. These shortcomings rendered the post-war Congress rather impotent. Political and social life changed drastically after independence. Political participation grew as more people gained the right to vote. In addition, more common citizens (or “new men”) played increasingly important roles in local and state governance. Hierarchy within the states underwent significant changes. Locke’s ideas of “natural law” had been central to the Declaration of Independence and the state constitutions. Society became less deferential and more egalitarian, less aristocratic and more meritocratic.

12.3 END OF MERCANTILISM

The Revolution’s most important long-term economic consequence was the end of mercantilism. The British Empire had imposed various restrictions on the colonial economies including limiting trade, settlement, and manufacturing. The Revolution opened new markets and new trade relationships. The Americans’ victory also opened the western territories for invasion and settlement, which created new domestic markets. Americans began to create their own manufacturers, no longer content to rely on those in Britain.

12.4 ESTABLISHMENT OF A REPUBLIC

The American Revolution established a republic, with a government dedicated to the interests of ordinary people rather than the interests of kings and aristocrats. The United States was the first large republic since ancient times and the first one to emerge from the revolutions that rocked the Atlantic world, from South America to Eastern Europe, through the middle of the nineteenth century. The American Revolution influenced, to varying degrees, all of the subsequent Atlantic revolutions, most of which led to the establishment of republican governments, though some of those republics did not endure. The American republic has endured, due in part to the resilience of the Federal Constitution, which was the product of more than a decade of debate about the fundamental principles of republican government. Today most of

the world's nations are at least nominal republics, due in no small way to the success of the American republic.

12.5 FORMATION OF AMERICAN NATIONAL IDENTITY

The American Revolution created American national identity, a sense of community based on shared history and culture, mutual experience and belief in a common destiny. The Revolution drew together the thirteen colonies, each with its own history and individual identity, first in resistance to new imperial regulations and taxes, then in rebellion, and finally in a shared struggle for independence. Americans inevitably reduced the complex, chaotic and violent experiences of the Revolution into a narrative of national origins, a story with heroes and villains, of epic struggles and personal sacrifices. This narrative is not properly described as a national myth, because the characters and events in it, unlike the mythic figures and imaginary events celebrated by older cultures, were mostly real. Some of the deeds attributed to those characters were exaggerated and others were fabricated, usually to illustrate some very real quality for which the subject was admired and held up for emulation. The revolutionaries themselves, mindful of their role as founders of the nation, helped create this common narrative as well as symbols to represent national ideals and aspirations.

American national identity has been expanded and enriched by the shared experiences of two centuries of national life, but those experiences were shaped by the legacy of the Revolution and are mostly incomprehensible without reference to the Revolution. The unprecedented movement of people, money and information in the modern world has created a global marketplace of goods, services and ideas that has diluted the hold of national identity on many people, but no global identity has yet emerged to replace it, nor does this seem likely to happen any time in the foreseeable future.

12.6 BEGINNING OF A NEW POLITICAL ORDER

The American Revolution committed the new nation to ideals of liberty, equality, natural and civil rights, and responsible citizenship and made them the basis of a new political order. None of these ideals was new or originated with Americans. They were all rooted in the philosophy of ancient Greece and Rome, and had been discussed, debated and enlarged by creative political thinkers beginning with the Renaissance. The political writers and philosophers of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment disagreed about many things, but all of them imagined that a just political order would be based on these ideals. What those writers and philosophers imagined, the American Revolution created—a nation in which ideals of liberty, equality, natural and civil rights, and responsible citizenship are the basis of law and the foundation of a free society.

The revolutionary generation did not complete the work of creating a truly free society, which requires overcoming layers of social injustice, exploitation and other forms of institutionalized oppression that have accumulated over many centuries, as well as eliminating the ignorance, bigotry and greed that support them. One of the fundamental challenges of a political order based on principles of universal right is that it empowers ignorant, bigoted, callous, selfish and greedy people in the same way it empowers the wise and virtuous. For this reason, political progress in free societies can be painfully, frustratingly slow, with periods of energetic change interspersed with periods of inaction or even retreat. The wisest of our revolutionaries understood this, and anticipated that creating a truly free society would take many generations. The flaw lies not in our revolutionary beginnings or our revolutionary ideals, but in human nature. Perseverance alone is the answer.

Our independence, our republic, our national identity and our commitment to the high ideals that form the basis of our political order are not simply the consequences of the Revolution, to be embalmed in our history books. They are living legacies of the Revolution, more important now, as we face the challenges of a world demanding change, than ever before. Without understanding them, we find our history incomprehensible, our present confused and our future dark. Understanding them, we recognize our common origins, appreciate our present challenges and can advocate successfully for the revolutionary ideals that are the only foundation for the future happiness of the world.

Slaves and free blacks also impacted (and were impacted by) the Revolution. The British were the first to recruit black (or “Ethiopian”) regiments, as early as Dunmore’s Proclamation of 1775 in Virginia, which promised freedom to any slaves who would escape their masters and join the British cause. At first, Washington, a slaveholder himself, resisted allowing free blacks and former slaves to join the Continental Army, but he eventually relented. In 1775, Peter Salem’s master freed him to fight with the militia. Salem faced British Regulars in the battles at Lexington and Bunker Hill, where he fought valiantly with around three-dozen other black Americans. Salem not only contributed to the cause, but he earned the ability to determine his own life after his enlistment ended. Salem was not alone, but many more slaves seized upon the tumult of war to run away and secure their own freedom directly.

Between 30,000 and 100,000 slaves deserted their masters during the war. In 1783, thousands of Loyalist former slaves fled with the British army. They hoped that the British government would uphold the promise of freedom and help them establish new homes elsewhere in the Empire. The Treaty of Paris, which ended the war, demanded that British troops leave runaway slaves behind, but the British military commanders upheld earlier promises and evacuated thousands of freedmen, transporting them to Canada, the Caribbean, or Great Britain. But black loyalists continued to face social and economic marginalization, including restrictions on land

ownership. In 1792, Black loyalist and Baptist preacher David George resisted discrimination, joining a colonization project that led nearly 1,200 former black Americans from Nova Scotia to Sierra Leone, in Africa.

The fight for liberty led some Americans to manumit their slaves, and most of the new northern states soon passed gradual emancipation laws. Manumission also occurred in the Upper South, but in the Lower South, some masters revoked their offers of freedom for service, and other freedmen were forced back into bondage. The Revolution’s rhetoric of equality created a “revolutionary generation” of slaves and free blacks that would eventually encourage the antislavery movement. Slave revolts began to incorporate claims for freedom based on revolutionary ideals. In the long-term, the Revolution failed to reconcile slavery with these new egalitarian republican societies, a tension that eventually boiled over in the 1830s and 1840s and effectively tore the nation in two in the 1850s and 1860s.

Native Americans, too, participated in and were affected by the Revolution. Many Native American tribes and confederacies, such as the Shawnee, Creek, Cherokee, and Iroquois, sided with the British. They had hoped for a British victory that would continue to restrain the land-hungry colonial settlers from moving west beyond the Appalachian Mountains. Unfortunately, the Americans’ victory and Native Americans’ support for the British created a pretence for justifying the rapid, and often brutal expansion into the western territories. Native American tribes would continue to be displaced and pushed further west throughout the nineteenth century. Ultimately, American independence marked the beginning of the end of what had remained of Native American independence.

Check Your Progress

1. Discuss the important of State Constitutions created after the American Revolution.

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2. Write a note on formation of American National Identity.

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3. Explain the New Political Order prevailed after the American Revolution.

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12.7 LET US SUM UP

Despite these important changes, the American Revolution had its limits. Following their unprecedented expansion into political affairs during the imperial resistance, women also served the patriot cause during the war. However, the Revolution did not result in civic equality for women. Instead, during the immediate post-war period, women became incorporated into the polity to some degree as “republican mothers.” These new republican societies required virtuous citizens and it became mothers’ responsibility to raise and educate future citizens. This opened opportunity for women regarding education, but they still remained largely on the peripheries of the new American polity.

12.8 KEY WORDS

Bigoted : obstinately or unreasonably attached to a belief, opinion, or faction, in particular prejudiced against or antagonistic towards a person or people on the basis of their membership of a particular group.

Callous : showing or having an insensitive and cruel disregard for others.

Proclamation : a public or official announcement dealing with a matter of great importance.

12.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress

1. See Section 12.2
2. See Section 12.5
3. See Section 12.6

SUGGESTED READINGS :

- Gipson, L.H. (1931) Connecticut Taxation and Parliamentary Aid Preceding the Revolutionary War. *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 36, No. 4.
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- Holton, W. (1999) *Forced Founders, the Making of the American Revolution in Virginia*. USA: University of North Carolina Press.
- Wahlke, J. C. (1973) *The Causes of the American Revolution*. Massachusetts: Heath and Company.
- Wood, G. S. (1991) *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*. New York: Vintage Books.