

A New Government for a New Republic

Chapter 7: Forging a New Republic, 1776-1789

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 - I. Government During the Early Years of Revolution
 - A. American Revolution 7/4/1776.
 - B. October 1781 British surrender at Yorktown
 - 1. Key to American defeat of English was French support. End of fighting in Yorktown
 - 2. Official end Treaty of Paris, 1783
 - C. Continental Congress faced challenges:

1. Training soldiers
 2. Feeding, clothing arming and financing army hard
 3. US gov't incurred huge debt from foreign countries and wealthy American citizens.
 4. Debt plays a role of instability under Articles of Confederation
- D. During fighting in 1770s center of government was really at the state level
- E. It was a loose confederacy with each state maintaining autonomy and sovereignty
- F. Very little power federally with Continental Congress strategies for winning, but after war some believe continental congress need more power
- G. So draft Articles of confederation in 1777

II. Articles of Confederation

- A. A of C gave federal government very little power
- B. Provisions of AoC (Articles of Confederation)
1. Single-body Congress
 2. Each state in Congress had 1 vote, regardless of state population
 3. In order for act of congress to pass the bill needed a 9 vote majority to pass, individual states and people had tremendous power to block legislation)
 4. Tough to get acts to pass over individual state desires
 5. Congress couldn't tax Americans
 6. Couldn't draft people into military service, could only ask states to tax or draft people
 7. Central government very weak
 8. Congress could pass for treaties but couldn't force states to abide by treaties
 9. No enforcement power whatsoever
 10. Set up this way on purpose to avoid what they believed was tyrannical government like England
 11. Could establish post offices
- C. Remember Americans believed the power to to tax was the power to destroy

- D. Feared press and repress
- E. Fear of too much central power
- F. **series of crisis in 1780s that served as call for stronger federal government

III. Why call for a stronger federal government

A. Economic Depression and Hardship

1. Economic continued to depress for a long time after the war
2. Trade disrupted during and after the war
3. Exports down due to American becoming in war and because no longer part of the British empire, so can't trade with British colonies
4. After war British goods flooded market with cheap goods
5. Upsets balance of trade, resulting in trade deficit for American and a lack of specie
6. Also state and federal governments heavily in debt from war loans
7. Now with war over people who lent money want money back in specie, not paper \$
8. States raises taxes in post-war, demanding payment for these taxes in specie so they can pay their war debt
9. This increases hardship for individual income
10. Most people bartered and didn't have specie, so couldn't pay taxes
11. So government confiscating farms, etc.
12. People hardest hit are those who exist on barter trade, these are the more rural areas
13. Some of these people thrown in jail and lose land
14. Lose their livelihood
15. Losing what they fought for, especially in Massachusetts
16. In Hampshire County, Mass in 1 year, 1/3rd of the men had debt suits against them for failing to pay taxes
17. Farmers become increasingly enraged

18. Threatened and oppressed
19. These people followed the rebellion of the American colonies against England
20. Many of them experienced the American revolution
21. Looked at petition, mob, protest, and started to do same things patriots did during revolutionary era
22. Called conventions like patriots had, circulated petitions
23. Began harassing judges just like had stamp collectors.

B. Shays' Rebellion, 1786-1787

1. Culmination of Economic and political frustration coupled with mob action
2. Western Massachusetts impossible to pay taxes owed
3. In 1786 sheriffs confiscating possessions and land and putting people in jail
4. Increasing number of men hauled in to jail
5. Mobs began springing up and forcing closure of court houses
6. Daniel Shays, a captain during the American Revolution, is leading these men
7. Men began taking up arms, marching on county governments, closing courts, threatening judges
8. And began to threaten the state too.
9. Protests taking place in east where courts are (trade, banks, merchants, etc)
10. Many people in Boston lent \$ to the government during the war
11. They can't afford to let farmers shut things down
12. Those these people raise and fund state militias to stop protestors
13. By spring 1787 militia crushes rebellion
14. Approximately 2500 ?? indicted? Inundated?
15. State legislatures in Boston and other colonies unhappy with occurrences
16. So Boston passed sum laws
17. Disqualifying Act: prohibited rebels from ever voting, holding public office, working as school masters or tavern operators

18. Denys political voice and power
19. Shut'em down in order to limit their influence
20. Samuel Adams said rebels should be lynched, suffer death, how can he say this when cause is similar to revolution
21. Republic virtuous
22. Monarchy tyrannical

VI. Historiography: Was the American Revolution Radical

C. Progressives and Neo Progressives (Father of this "school" is Charles Beard)

3. General Overview

- i. Interpret everything through the lens of class.
- ii. Revolution was a conservative movement meant to stop change.
- iii. Elite groups in colonies stayed in the saddle the entire time.
- iv. Poor didn't rise up, nor did working class. The elite and rich held on to power.
- v. Rebellion for independence to free us from English corruption and contamination.
- vi. Revolution to preserve the status quo, to preserve how things work.
- vii. Not to change economic, political, or social systems.
- viii. Progressive historians tend to argue that three basic problems permeate our society, unsolved, unrelenting problems.
- ix. The question is how did the revolution affect these three basic problems.
- x. FIRST MAJOR PROBLEM IN AMERICAN SOCIETY: UNEQUAL OF WEALTH AND POWER IN AMERICA, the fact that some people have a lot of money and power, and the great majority do not.
- xi. If we ask this question: How did the Revolution affect the distribution of wealth in America we would have to say it had very little affect on the distribution of power. Those Tories, those loyalists who had lots and lots of land who fled to England, their land not broken into tiny plots and given to poor and communal farms. Land sold to highest bidder. The same situation occurred with those Americans spreading west of the Appalachian mountains. They didn't get the land for free. Land was sold to people in the west.

- xii. Real issue is land vs. mercantile
- xiii. No universal vote in America after the Revolution. There is an electoral college and an appointment US Senate.
- xiv. Those in power before the Revolution remain in power after the Revolution.
- xv. We shouldn't be surprised this Revolution was not fought to remove the ruling class that lived in the colonies. It presented no challenge to the elite.
- xvi. Government changes in the sense that Americans no longer owe allegiance to the king and parliament. We're no longer part of the British empire, except economically. There we'll see a change. But the question is, what was Revolutionary about exchanging one group of elites for another?
- xvii. SECOND MAJOR PROBLEM IN AMERICAN SOCIETY: THE QUESTION OF THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN SOCIETY.
- xviii. If you look at the affect of the revolution on the status of women in the society you'd have to say the Revolution made little change on the rights and privileges that women had in society.
- xix. Women, at that time, had no civil or legal existence, unless they were widows. Husbands and fathers mediated women's relationship to the state. Could not vote. Couldn't sit on juries. Women couldn't own businesses. Women were not even entitled to their earnings. (We talked about this when we explored European society earlier in the semester).
- xx. The Revolution fails to alter the husband-wife relationship, an indenture between master and servant. The husband provides support; the wife provides obedience and children.
- xxi. THE THIRD MAJOR PROBLEM IN SOCIETY: A PROBLEM YET TO BE SOLVED, THE ISSUE OF RACE, DISCRIMINATION AND INEQUALITY BASED ON FOLKS SKIN COLOR.
- xxii. Surface changes take place as a result of the Revolution. The North outlaws slavery, not immediately, but gradually over a 20 to 30 year period. Enough time for owners to sell their property down South. Read Joanne Pope Melish's book, Disowning Slavery.
- xxiii. As colonists spoke of the conspiracy, the attack on liberty the attack on rights, and the forging of chains upon the people, looked about and said my goodness I hold people as slaves; I hold human beings as slaves (Slavery and

Propaganda book) Slavery, Propaganda, and the American Revolution by Patricia Bradley.

- xxiv. And some reflected and that is why they passed laws, manumission laws, making it easier to free ones slaves.
- xxv. But if you look at the effect over 20 to 30 years, the changes touched few African Americans.
- xxvi. Slavery ends in areas where dependence upon it was minimal and minor.
- xxvii. Southern states, as we begin exploring over the next few weeks, grip tightly to their slavery; in the south , income outweighed human values and human rights.
- xxviii. Again, we shouldn't be surprised. This is not a typical revolution, not a revolution to free the slaves, not a revolution to free women, not a revolution to raise the poor. Therefore it couldn't have been radical, perhaps it was no revolution at all.
- xxix. Those few voices who talked about equality among the races, equality among men and women, and talked about the rising of the poor, their voices were muffled, barely even heard.
- xxx. So then the question remains how is the American Revolution revolutionary or radical.

4. Charles Beard

- a. The Constitution
- b. Beard examines how the constitution guarantees that the newly formed nation would pay its debts to Washington and other leaders who invested in the revolution. Under the AofC leaders had no way to recover the money they lent the government during the Revolution.
- c. In his book, An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States (1913) extends a thesis of Carl Becker that the scrapping of the AofC in favor of the Constitution represents class conflict. Carl Becker, two revolutions, one against Britain to obtain Home Rule, and a second to determine who would rule at home.
- d. Beard argues the Constitution represents a counter-Revolution. The rich bond holders opposing the farmers sought to make a return on their investment.

- e. Beard claims the framers intended the constitution to reverse the radical democratic tendencies unleashed by the Revolution among the common people, especially farmers and debtors.
- f. Beard believes that in 18—farmers and debtors overthrew capitalists and established a Jeffersonian democracy.
- g. Beard argued that those who supported the Constitution were the wealthy and powerful, large slave and landowners, as well as those with concentrated commercial interest.

D. Revisionist Historians

1. Gordon Wood and Pauline Meier

- a. Meier: The Revolution represented political revolution. Not radical that Americans declared independence, but that they declared a Republic, where no office could be inherited. The only other republic at the time was the Dutch republic and it had hereditary positions. The American Republic every aspect of the government was directly or indirectly representative!

British representation in the House of Commons coupled with their neglect of the American colonies for more than 100 years enabled American colonists to establish a long-standing framework for representative government.

First Written Constitution

- b. Wood: the Revolution represented social revolution, and “was the most radical and most far-reaching event in American history.”

ii. America took what Britain detested, their mediocrity and humble beginnings and made it their strength. Prior to the revolution, American colonists strived to be British. George Washington. And the Brits, as you all displayed well in your debated, distained them, thought of them as inferior country bumpkins. Americans took this aspect of meager birth and working their way up, think of Franklin and the self-made-man and made it something to be proud of rather than to be ashamed, something that revealed their strength, their ability, and most importantly, their freedom from the ability to be corrupted.

The Revolution gave dignity to ordinary people who performed menial labor.

The Revolution remade what it meant to be American, bringing popular politics and a new kind of democratic office holder, a meritocracy.

Wood, Becker and Beard have it wrong. In the eighteenth century, government, not class, seen as corrupting people.

The social changes, not the origins of the Revolution, that make it radical, “by transformations in the relationships that bound people to each other. The revolution was “a momentous upheaval that not only fundamentally altered the character of American society but decisively affected the course of subsequent history.

It altered the trajectory of history for the entire world.

The Dec of Independence and the Revolution set the bench mark. They made the women’s rights and abolitionists movements possible. These movements and documents lay at the heart of our current egalitarian thinking and are the reason people of any sexual orientation, people with disabilities, people of various races, can all demand equality.

The Revolution “made the interests and prepsperity of ordinary people—their pursuits of happiness—the goal of scoeity and government.””

2.

3. Robert Thomas’s case study of the Virginia Constitutional Convention

- a. By looking at the demographics of the Federalists vs. the anti-federalists in VA, Thomas argues that “the line of cleavage for and against the Constitution was not between substantial personality interests on the one hand and the small farming and debtor interests on the other, instead the leaders of both parties were recruited from the same class, and the contest over ratification of the federal constitution in Virginia was essentially a struggle between competing groups within the aristocracy, a contest over region, farming vs. urban, regardless of class.

	Anti-Federalists	Federalists
Lawyers	8	13
Doctors	2	3
Ministers	1	0

- b. If you consider slaves “personality”/wealthy, which they were in Virginia, a preponderance of large slave owners voted Anti-federalists, demonstrating that in Virginia the Federalists were poorer than the anti-federalists.

4.d

E.

F. f

VII. Was America Founded as a Christian Nation

A. Civic Virtue necessary for a Republic to survive and thrive.

B. Founders Quotes

C. Are we a Christian Nation