Chapter 5: The American Revolution and Confederation, 1774 - 1787

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1. **The First Continental Congress**
   1. Intolerable Acts drove colonies to send delegates to First Continental Congress
   2. wanted to discuss how colonies should react to threat to their rights/liberties; not about independence
   3. The Delegates
      1. radicals- **Patrick Henry** of Virginia, **Samuel Adams** and **John Adams** of Massachusetts
      2. moderates- **George Washington** of Virginia and **John Dickinson** of Pennsylvania
      3. conservatives- **John Jay** of New York and **Joseph Galloway** of Pennsylvania
      4. Loyalists unrepresented
   4. Actions of the Congress
      1. rejected **Joseph Galloway**’s plan was to reorder relations with Parliament and formed a union of the colonies within the British empire
      2. rejected in favor of the **Suffolk Resolves** which called for the immediate repeal of the Intolerable Acts and for the colonies to boycott British goods
      3. **Declaration of Rights and Grievances**- petition urging king to repeal the oppressive legislation but also recognized Parliament’s authority to regulate commerce; seemingly contradictory message reflected the conflicts among the delegates
      4. **The Association** wanted committees to enforce nonimportation, nonexportation and nonconsumption
      5. also started to make military preparations for defense against possible British attack
      6. if it doesn’t work out, then **second congress in May 1775**
      7. **Conciliatory Propositions**- colonies tax themselves, but at Britain’s demand
         1. Britain’s response to the colonies was too late
2. Fighting Begins
   1. king declared Massachusetts to be rebellious and sent additional troops to that colony
   2. **Lexington and Concord** (April 18, 1775)  
      “Ths shots heard around the world”
      1. **General Thomas Gage** (British commander in Boston) sent a large force to seize colonial military supplies in the town of Concord
      2. **Paul Revere** and **William Dawes** warned the militia of Lexington
   3. **Bunker Hill** (June 17, 1775) (Really fought in Breed’s Hill)
      1. British took the colonists’ hill, but Americans succeeded in inflicting heavy losses on the attacking British army
   4. **Battle of Long Island**- gives New York off to Brits, solidified holdings, fought in Brooklyn
3. **Second Continental Congress**
   1. two groups: New Englanders who wanted to declare independence and middle colonists who wanted to negotiate a new relationship with Great Britain
   2. Military Actions
      1. **Declaration of the Causes and Necessities for Taking Up Arms** asked colonists to provide troops  
         The British government had left the American people with only two alternatives, “unconditional submission to the tyranny of irritated ministers or resistance by force.”
      2. **George Washington** now commander-in-chief, kept the army together
      3. **Benedict Arnold** leads Quebec raid
      4. navy and marine corps organized to attack British shipping
   3. Peace Efforts
      1. **Olive Branch Petition**- pledged loyalty and asked king to secure peace and protect colonial rights
      2. initially, many colonists did not want independence; identified as Englishmen and valued Britain’s protection
      3. England rejected the Olive Branch Petition in favor of Parliament’s **Prohibitory Act** which declared colonies to be in rebellion
      4. all trade and shipping between England and colonies prohibited
   4. more colonists now wanted independence because:
      1. financial and human cost of war so high that merely changing the relationship didn’t seem like enough
      2. British were ruthless in war, recruiting Indians, black slaves and foreign mercenaries
      3. British government forced them toward independence by passing the Prohibitory Act
      4. but some Loyalists still supported the King
   5. Thomas Paine’s **Common Sense** argued that it was contrary to common sense for a large continent to be ruled by a small and distant island and for people to pledge allegiance to a king whose government was corrupt and whose laws were unreasonable
      1. expanded American anger from just a few parliamentary measures to the entire English system
   6. political moves toward independence
      1. American ports open to all countries but Britain
      2. talked with foreign powers
      3. told colonies that they should establish governments independence of the British Empire
   7. The Declaration of Independence (July 4, 1776)
      1. June 7, 1776- **Richard Henry Lee** of Virginia introduces independence resolution
      2. included specific grievances and basic principles that justified revolution
         1. natural rights, which are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness
      3. effects:
         1. inspired the French Revolution’s Declaration of the RIghts of Man
         2. declared America a sovereign nation, more foreign aid and laid the groundwork for French intervention
4. The War
   1. 40%- American Patriots, 20-30%- Loyalists/Tories
   2. Patriots
      1. mostly from New England or Virginia, reluctant to leave their home states
      2. General Washington’s army was never more than 20,000, was always short of supplies, poorly equipped and rarely paid
      3. African Americans in the war were mostly freemen, bought with the promise of freedom
   3. Loyalists (Tories)
      1. majority in New York, New Jersey, and Georgia
      2. Revolutionary War like a civil war between anti-British Patriots and pro-British Loyalists
      3. tended to be wealthier and more conservative
      4. most government officials and Anglican clergymen
   4. most natives remained neutral, but some Native Americans supported the British who promised to limit colonial settlements in the West
      1. after the war, Americans loosened land restrictions b/c they were associated with British oppression, encroaching further on native land
      2. goodwill toward natives also decreased b/c of their involvement in the war
   5. mobilizing for war
      1. supply shortages because no access to British markets
      2. financing war difficult
         1. under the Articles of Confederation, Congress no authority to tax the people
         2. little hard money around, so states unable to tax as well
         3. bonds unsold because Americans couldn’t afford them
         4. no choice but to print paper money, which caused inflation
         5. forced to borrow money from foreign nations
      3. people reluctant to volunteer for military service
   6. British advantages: best navy and army in the world, lots of resources, coherent structure of command
   7. American advantages: fighting on own land, so British resources had to travel far, Patriots committed to winning the war while British didn’t really care, also had substantial financial aid
   8. Initial American Losses and Hardships
      1. first three years were bad because of Washington’s poorly trained and equipped army
      2. by 1777, British occupied New York and Philadelphia
      3. British occupation of American ports led to 95 percent decline in trade - economic problems
   9. Alliance with France
      1. **Horatio Gates** and **Benedict Arnold**’s victory at **Saratoga** was a turning point in the war
      2. surprising victory persuaded France to aid the Americans, not for ideological reasons but to weaken Great Britain
      3. France openly allied itself in 1778, giving money, troops and leaders (Lafayette)
      4. impacts: Spain and Holland also joined in European war, forced British to divert military resources away from America
   10. Victory
       1. faced with larger war, British consolidated northern forces in New York and then its southern forces in Virginia and the Carolinas
       2. **Yorktown-** last major battle, George Washington defeated **General Charles Cornwallis**
       3. **Treaty of Paris (1783)**
          1. war had become unpopular in England because it placed economic strain on the government’s finances
          2. Cornwallis’ defeat was the straw that broke the camel’s back
          3. treaty included:
             1. Britain recognizes US as an independent nation
             2. Mississippi River is the western boundary, Great Lakes are northern boundary, Florida is southern boundary
             3. Florida ceded back to Spain
             4. US has fishing rights off the coast of Canada
             5. Americans pay debts to British merchants and honor Loyalist claims for property confiscated during the war
          4. natives, slaves, or women still had no rights
5. Organization of New Governments
   1. during the Revolutionary war, each colony wanted to become independently governed states while the Congress wanted to create a central government
   2. wanted a government based on independent landowning and equality
   3. State Governments
      1. conflict between conservatives who stressed law and order and liberals who wanted to protect individual rights and prevent future tyrannies
      2. all included:
         1. list of inalienable rights like jury trials and freedom of religion
         2. separation of powers to prevent tyranny of overpowerful executive
            1. legislative powers to an elected two-house legislature
            2. executive powers to an elected governor
            3. judicial powers to a system of courts
         3. voting extended to all property owning, white males
         4. property owning prerequisite for running for office
   4. **The Articles of Confederation** (ratified in March 1781)
      1. written by **John Dickinson**, adopted by Congress in 1777
      2. confirmed weak central government during the war
      3. ratification delayed over dispute over who would own the lands westward of the Alleghenies; Virginia and New York gave up their claims
      4. consisted only of a unicameral legislature, each state with a vote
      5. unanimous vote required to amend the Articles
      6. Congress had the power to wage war, make treaties, send diplomatic representatives and borrow money
      7. Congress did *not* have the power to regulate commerce or to collect taxes, so it had to rely upon taxes voted by each state and lacked any executive power to enforce its own laws
      8. Accomplishments
         1. US government could claim some credit for Washington’s eventual victory and for negotiating favorable terms in the Treaty of Paris (1778)
         2. **Land Ordinance of 1785**- a policy for surveying and selling the western lands to raise money since the Articles of Confederation could not tax, set aside one section of land for public education
            1. organized land by grid
         3. **Northwest Ordinance of 1787**- ceded all unsettled lands to the federal government, prohibited slavery there and set up statehood procedure
            1. didn’t want to create second-class citizens in subordinate territories
         4. came at the expense of conflict with natives
      9. Problems
         1. financial- war debts were unpaid, paper money was worthless
            1. because congress had no taxing power
         2. foreign- Britain and Spain threatened to take advantage of US, they had no respect for new nation that couldn’t pay debts
            1. British didn’t pay back slaveowners for their slaves
            2. southern states didn’t want to agree to giving up the Mississippi River to Spain
         3. domestic- **Shay’s Rebellion** in Massachusetts, farmers were already burdened under debt, but also had to pay taxes
6. Social Change
   1. Abolition of Aristocratic Titles
      1. no more titles of nobility or recognition of primogeniture (first born son’s right to inherit parents’ property
      2. Loyalist estates were confiscated, subdivided and sold to raise money for the war; many fled the country
   2. religion
      1. **Statute of Religious Liberty** promoted separation of church and state- refusal to give financial support to any religious group
      2. Anglicans (Loyalists) and Quakers (pacifists) lost support, while Catholics (French troops) gained popularity
   3. women
      1. worked as cooks and nurses in the armed camps
      2. some actually fought, like **Mary McCauley** **(Molly Pitcher)** at the **Battle of Monmouth** or **Deborah Sampson**
      3. maintained the colonial economy by running the family farms and businesses
      4. despite their contributions, women remained inferior
      5. “I desire that you would remember the ladies and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors.” - Abigail Adams
      6. afterwards, **Judith Sargent Murray** called for equal education for boys and girls
      7. married women had no property rights and could not earn independent wages
      8. war caused women to reevaluate their role in society
   4. slavery
      1. some blacks took advantage of the war to escape
      2. slaveowners were afraid of the revolutionary movement because it also meant antislavery
      3. survived because of racial supremacy, economic attachment to slavery and lack of alternatives to slavery
   5. economy
      1. during the war, Americans were forced to become independent b/c they no longer had access to British ports
      2. Americans now able to trade with the whole rest of the world
      3. homespun goods to help with the economy