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When the colonists came to North America, they shared the kings and politics with citizens who remained in Great Britain. Parliament had the ability to enact laws that affected life and trade in the thirteen colonies, but these laws were passed to benefit the British economy and not the colonists. In addition, the colonists were not given any representatives to support their arguments in Parliament. Benjamin Franklin wrote, “. . . a right to lay internal taxes was never supposed to be in Parliament, as we are not represented there “ (Digitalhistory. uh. edu).

The issues the people living in the British colonies held were unfair and the taxes and legislation against their freedoms lead the Americans to create their own government. This paper is an overview of the origins of American independence that lead to the American Revolutionary War and the creation of the United States of America.

TRADE

There were a number of acts concerning trade that served to cause the colonists to resent Great Britain. Mercantilism is the term for the policy adopted by the British government where raw materials came from the colonies to Great Britain was used to make goods that sold for a higher price than the imports (Foner, p., 95). The Triangular Trade routes allowed for Americans to exchange their excess goods for those they needed; however, this allowed all gold, silver, and domestic money to stay in England. In an attempt to regulate colonial trade, the Navigation Acts were created. These promoted British shipping and let Great Britain to keep all the trade in the colonies for the merchants in Britain. The policy of Salutary Neglect in 1696 allowed colonists to have more freedom in matters of trade, but between

1763 and 1775, the British return to enforcement of the Navigation Acts to raise money for war debt. New taxes on goods were also imposed. One of these was the Tea Acts in 1773 which allowed the British East India Company to sell inexpensive tea to the colonists which prevented the merchants from the colonies from selling their tea.

GOVERNANCE

One of the major reasons for the split of the colonies from Great Britain had to do with how the mother country governed the Americans. This was seen in the taxes and trade arrangements that angered the colonists to the point of separation.

The English Bill of Rights in 1689 allowed citizens protection for their liberties and rights, but the Americans did not think they were granted the same protection. The Debt Recovery Act passed by Parliament in 1732 said that slaves and land could be sold to pay back debt the colonists owed to merchants from Great Britain. The Wool Act in 1699 prohibited the export of cloth from one colony to another, the Hat Act in 1732 kept hats made by colonists from being sold, and the Iron Act in 1750 stopped colonists from using their own iron to make products, keeping the ore exported to Great Britain.

Settlers that moved into new settlements were in conflict with the Indians and wanted them removed; they also felt they deserved better representation with the local governments (Historymatters. gmu. edu).

Parliament issued the Proclamation of 1763 that tried to separate Indian country from colonial settlements, but Americans thought Great Britain was

on the side of the native Indians.

Paper money could not be issued in the colonies due to the Currency Act of 1764. To make sure the colonists understood they had to obey these laws, the Declaratory Act was passed. In a reaction to the Boston Tea Party rebellion, the Intolerable Acts were passed. One of these was the Quartering Act of 1765 that made people provide food and housing to British troops; this was very unpopular because families were afraid of having soldiers in their homes since the Boston Massacre four years earlier. Others included the Administration of Justice Act which allowed royal officials to be returned to Britain for trials, the Boston Port Act which closed the Boston port until the tea destroyed by the Boston Tea Party was repaid, and the Quebec Act which pushed British territory into Canada.

TAXATION

Acts of Parliament that influenced taxes included: 1) the Navigation Act of 1733 (also known as the Molasses Act) which put high taxes on sugar, 2) the Sugar Act in 1764 that taxed molasses and sugar, raising the cost of rum made in New England, 3) the Stamp Act in 1765 raised prices on pamphlets, newspapers, and legal papers but the reaction by the colonists was so violent it was repealed in 1766, 4) in 1767, the Townshend Acts taxed many items imported by colonists including paper, tea, glass, paints, and lead.

AMERICAN POLITICAL ACTIONS

While the violence that finally happened when Americans is another cause of the American Revolution, the move toward self-governing was the final incentive for independence. After the Intolerable Acts were passed,

delegates from 12 of the 13 colonies (Georgia did not attend) held a session in September 1774 that resulted in sending a declaration to England discussing their rights (Foner, p. 195-6).

The group of men in the session became the First Continental Congress. The group met again in 1775, becoming the government of the colonies. After the Olive Branch Petition was sent to King George, he told them they would all hand for treason. This was the final spark that would lead to the Declaration of Independence and brought about the Revolutionary War.

THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

In order to fight a decisive battle against the British, John Adams created the Model Treaty protecting trade and shipping rights in return for having the French as an ally in 1778 (History. state. gov). Although the British surrendered at Yorktown, the war was not finished until the Treaty of Paris in 1783 involving Great Britain, Spain, and France. This treaty defined the boundaries of the new country, and the United States of America received full independence.

The Revolutionary War visibly moved to the southern area of the conflict in 1778 where the British thought to use the poor relationships between small farmers and wealthy landowners (Foner p. 210, p. 212). The Congress was out of money and troops went months without pay. Loyalists still remaining in the colonies joined with British troops in disrupting trade and agriculture in order to negatively influence the economy. However, the harsh treatment of civilians turned the citizens against them and, combined with guerrilla tactics, turned the direction of the war toward victory for the Americans.

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