

Could the american
war of independence
have been avoided?



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Dating back to the 1600's Britain gained an extensive empire. America was one of her most influential settlements, she owned thirteen colonies which stretched along the East coast. These colonies were populated by settlers which were sent from Britain, before departing they agreed to live under the rule of the British Monarch and remain dependent on their mother country. In return they were to receive protection and be granted the same rights and privileges as the British public.

This union was harmonious for a time, yet this harmony gradually moved into resentment up until 1763 where this then turned into hostility which then led to open conflict in 1775/1776 when the American War Of Independence began. The question we must ask is not just why did America rebel against Britain, but was this avoidable? Was there any way in which Britain could have prevented it? There are many reasons why the colonists united against Britain, and many were brought on by the mother country. There were many long-term causes which contributed to conflict, one of which being the Old Colonial System. Britain's attitude towards America was that they were simply a way to gain profit for herself, she used America for raw materials and as a market which she could force to buy her products, this is described as " an economic system that was destined to fail.

" America, who had wanted to control her own economy, took this intrusion as a major blow. Another long-term cause was the Navigation Acts of 1651 and 1660 where only British ships could be used for trading and America could only export goods through Britain. America objected to them as they imposed great limitations, they had no way of making a profit without British intervention as Britain used these acts to control America's trade for her own

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profit. As well as the navigation acts America faced other limitations also which affected their industry which was striving to progress. Many of these limitations led to other long-term grievances within the individual colonies, each colony was used by Britain for different purposes and objected to the treatment they received.

New England resented being made a dumping ground for British produce. They also resented Britain as the original colonists had fled from Britain to avoid religious persecution, so this tradition was carried through the generations. The middle colonies had great potential for industry and were resentful of the fact that they were curtailed by Britain's control on trade, also they were forced into buying British produce which they had the ability to manufacture themselves. Finally the South which was made up of mostly rich planters, to them, the British were simply annoying, they disliked having to conform to the rule of the British government.

All of these gave the different colonies a meeting point and allowed them to unite against Britain. Another long-term cause was the physical distance which made communication difficult as it took weeks to pass messages between countries. Also the time difference was a factor. As new generations took over from the old, the bond between the colony and the mother country grew increasingly weaker. America was developing in her own right and was beginning to develop a sense of indifference as they were feeling more and more separate, much the same as a child growing and stemming away from their parent. America's new and developing "Independent spirit" after 50 years under the Whig government was somewhat limited when the Whig

Party left British Government and were replaced by the more constrictive Tories who attempted to tighten the grip on America.

So was this change in America's attitude inevitable? I feel that many of these areas of resentment could have been avoided if the new British government had recognised the potential for grievances and acted with more sensitivity towards her colony. Such as with the issues of trade, Britain should have realised that America would not take kindly to having to strictly obey rules which they had been previously allowed to ignore. If more tact had been used maybe Britain could have avoided America's revolt in the early stages. The Tories should have realised that America would react badly to their new strict control after the laxness of the Whig's spell in government. There were also many short-term which played a key role in the beginning of the American war of Independence.

Such as the ending of the seven years war which was a marked turning point in the way America viewed Britain. Up until 1763, when the war over land in America between Britain and France ended, America and Britain had existed in harmony, America seemed happy with their British rulers. After 1763, when the war had been won in favour of Britain and the colonies, the colonists felt that the victory should partly be credited to them as many of their men had fought within their own Militia and also thought that the threat had gone, this led to the feeling that they didn't need the protection that Britain was offering. The ending of the seven years war also brought about conflict over territory. The success of the war meant that Britain had gained land towards the West of America (the Frontiers).

The ever-growing colonies were eager to expand westwards and were outraged when Britain stopped them with the Proclamation Act of 1763, they did so to avoid the exploitation or conflict with the Native Americans. The colonists saw this as an attempt by the British to ensure control over them. Another short-term cause was the strict application of the Navigation Acts after 1763 which gave Britain complete control over American trade, this basically stated that any goods that America produced could not be directly exported but must be firstly sent to Britain who would then put a tax on them and sell them on to other countries. America grudgingly accepted Britain's ploy to gain profit although it did cause resentment to build.

There was also an economic conflict which arose from the ending of this war which was fundamental cause for the war. The war had been expensive for Britain and she looked to America for funds, as it was them she was protecting, she went about this collection of money by taxing her American colonies. Britain imposed the Stamp Act of 1765, which upset the influential classes in America, this act was later repealed but in the same year, 1766, the Declaratory Act was passed which stated that Britain had the right to tax, this was a dangerous move for the British as it outraged the colonists. They claimed that Britain had no right to tax them as it was unconstitutional; they coined the phrase "No taxation without representation" which basically meant that they couldn't be taxed as they were not represented in the English Parliament. They were only willing to pay taxes to their own councils and claimed that they had already paid their tolls through the profits that Britain gained with control of American trade.

The colonists were angered further by the introduction of the Townshend Duties, 1767, this was the introduction of indirect taxes on everyday items, this outraged the colonists and they began to boycott taxed items. Due to this failure, the duties were repealed, apart from that on tea. Were there any ways in which these short term causes could have been avoided? If Britain hadn't gone against the constitution and simply used the money gained from control of trade, conflict may have been avoided at this sensitive time. Yet, Britain did repeal many of its attempts to tax, but this wasn't enough. Also with the introduction of the new king George III, who wanted to tighten the grip on America, areas of conflict may have in fact been inevitable.

With all these areas of tension, direct conflict could only be anticipated. Like with the " Boston Massacre" where British soldiers killed five Americans, the soldiers were acquitted but the story spread and bred anti-British feelings. Yet another cause of the war stemmed directly from the tax which still remained on tea. Britain allowed the East India Tea Company to export straight to America, this would help the company out of financial difficulty and at the same time allow Britain to put a tax on the tea. This angered America and led to the " Boston Tea Party" in 1773 where a band of colonists threw millions of pounds worth of tea into the sea in Boston Harbour, this infuriated Britain.

George III declared " There will be no more compromises, concessions have made matters worse" The Punishment of Massachusetts was then introduced in March 1774, Boston's Port was closed, their constitution was modified, trial by jury was suspended and British troops were billeted in colonial homes. These were known as the " Intolerable Acts" by the Americans and <https://assignbuster.com/could-the-american-war-of-independence-have-been-avoided/>

have been described as “ the final straw leading to revolt by the colonies” This tension grew and grew and led to the immediate causes of the war. The First Continental Congress was held in Philadelphia on 5th September 1774. The colonies were becoming more united as a result of the excessive punishment of Massachusetts America stated that they had still had no wish to fight, yet still refused to give up their freedom and greatly feared enslavement. This congress was “ neither republican nor belligerent.

” Britain chose to ignore what was said and declared New England in a state of rebellion, the King stated “ The Cause must decide if they are to be a subject of this country or independent” Shortly after this the British army were told to prepare for combat. This move towards war made America defensive and led to the Skirmish at Lexington in April 1775 where the first blood was spilled. After this the situation snowballed out of control. There was then the Battle at Bunker Hill which although lost by America, showed the British that they had much to fear, they lost many men and saw America’s amazing spirit, up until then Britain hadn’t anticipated that the war was going to be too difficult to win. This was then followed by the Second Continental Congress, where America still expressed her want for peace rather than war. The “ Olive Branch Petition” was sent to George III, but he refused to consider it, this again shows Britain’s ignorance.

For the American’s this rejection was seen as the final straw, Britain was foolish here when she refused to even consider a peaceful solution. After the plea for peace from America was ignored, war was basically inevitable.

America attempted their most formal defiance with the Trade Declaration by Congress in 1775, where the trade restrictions were thrown off and America <https://assignbuster.com/could-the-american-war-of-independence-have-been-avoided/>

opened up her trade to the world. Then in 1776, America finally cut herself off from Britain completely with the Declaration of Independence which “ showed the spirit of America” and stated their right to freedom, justice, equality, democracy and property. This spelled out the fact that America was going to fight for her independence and free herself from the mother country of Britain. Therefore could the American War of Independence have been avoided? This could never definitely be concluded, but I think that Britain could have kept her American colony for longer.

Of course there were causes of the war which were impossible to avoid, like America’s bond with Britain naturally becoming weaker as the generations moved on. Yet it is apparent that the colonists did hold a large amount of respect for Britain up until conflict over trade. Even after the war many people were still loyal to Britain. Also the physical time and difference between America and Britain was a problem which couldn’t be solved.

Yet we must consider how long a mother country can hold on to a colony which is more advanced than them, America had become more democratic than Britain. But, there were still too many factors which could have been avoided quite easily. I conclude that if Britain had taken time to overcome her ignorance of her American colonies, in situations such as the Punishment of Massachusetts which were doing more harm than good, then the war could have been avoided.