



# The Causes of America's Wars

SESSION 1: PRELIMINARIES; THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION – THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER

1. The American Revolution – The Struggle for Power
2. The American Revolution – The Struggle for Unity
3. The Civil War – The Struggle for Union
4. World War I – The Struggle for Purity
5. World War II – The Struggle for a Liberal World Order
6. Korea – The Struggle for Containment
7. Vietnam - The Struggle for Containment Continued
8. The Iraq War – The Struggle after Containment  
Abandoned



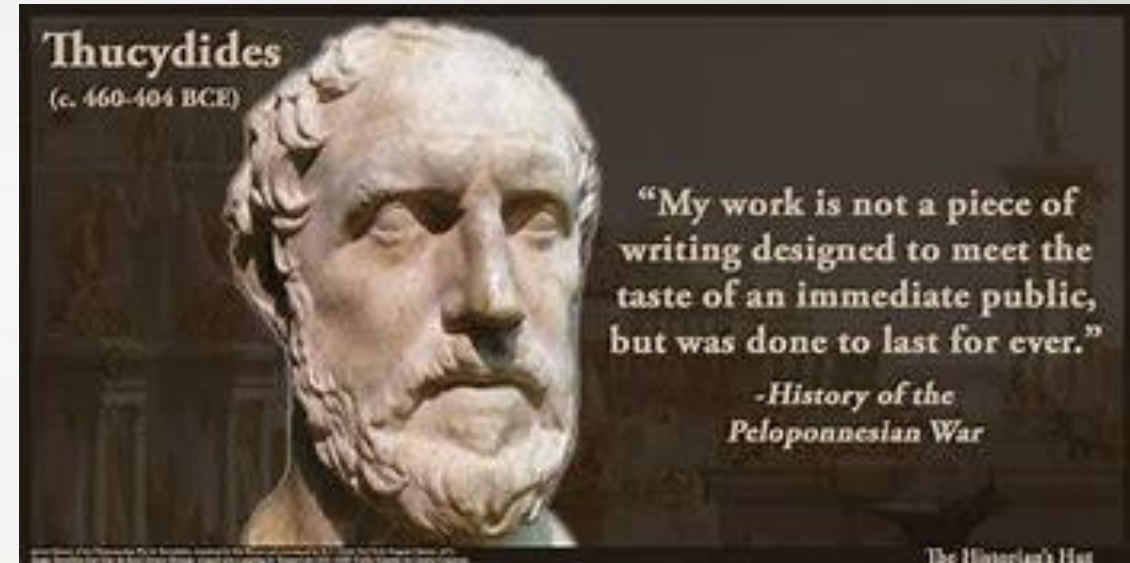
War is the continuation of politics by other means.

(Carl von Clausewitz)

## Preliminaries: Organizing our thinking

“It follows that it was not a very remarkable action, or contrary to the common practice of mankind, if we did accept an empire that was offered to us, and refused to give it up under the pressure [on ourselves] of three of the strongest motives, fear, honor, and interest.”

- Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*





## Thinking about Causes of Wars

1. Identifying or recognizing the problem or opportunity or interest
  - a. Identifying the national interest involved – “Does my country have a dog in this fight?”
    - (1) Necessary or Vital Components of National Interest
    - (2) Variable or Non-vital Components of National Interests.
  - b. Convincing those who need convincing (those whose help you need) that they should be interested in the “interest” (WW I and WW II)
  - c. Alternative goals and alternative actions and means (American Revolution)
  - d. Costs of action and inaction – difficulty valuing the “interest” (Iraq)



“Politics is the art of the possible,  
the attainable — the art of the next best.”

— Otto von Bismarck

## Elements of National Interests

National Interest: *“The ultimate national interest is survival—the protection of physical, political and cultural identity against encroachments by other nation-states.” — Hans Morgenthau*

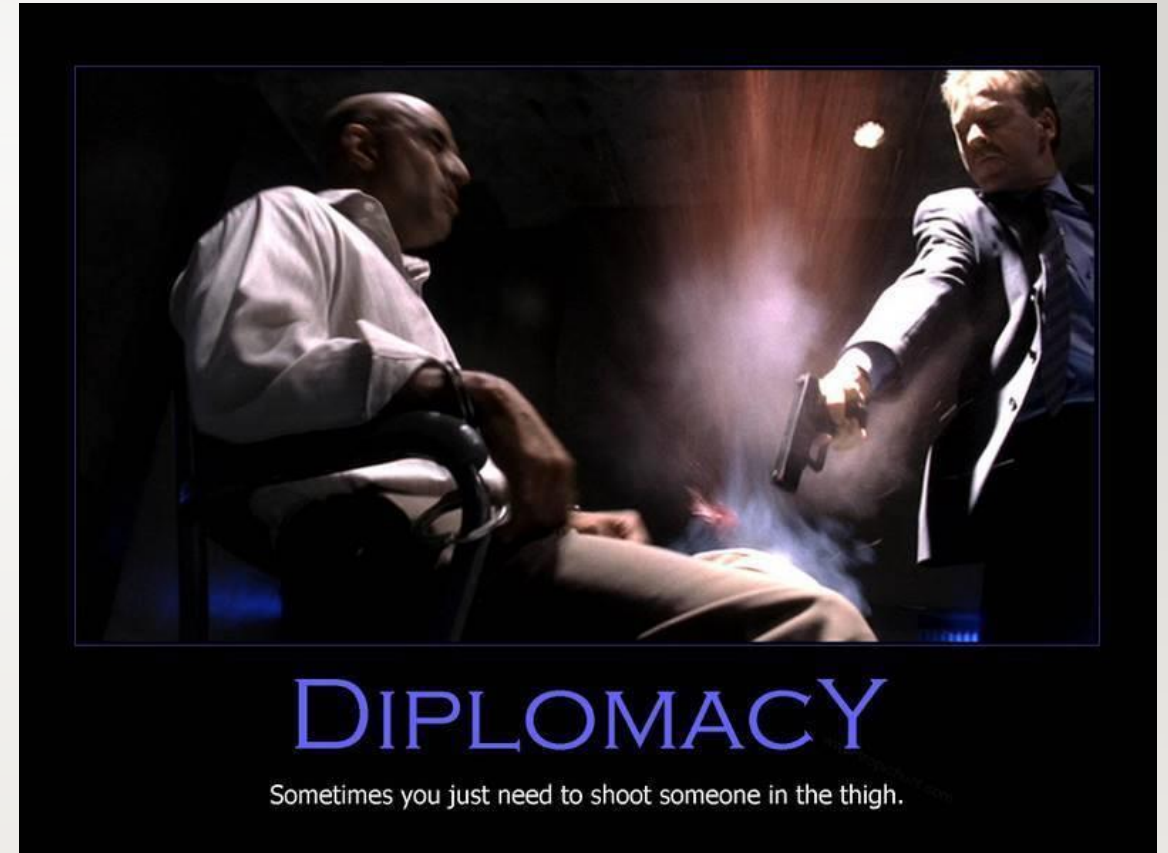
- ❑ 1<sup>st</sup>: “Reasons of State” or survival
- ❑ Physical identity includes territorial identity
- ❑ Political identity means politico-economic system
- ❑ Cultural identity means historical values that are upheld by a nation as part of its cultural heritage
- ❑ These vital components essential for the survival of the nation; can be easily identified and examined.
- ❑ A nation goes to war to secure or protect her perceived vital interests





Five popular methods or instruments which are usually employed by a nation for securing interests in international relations:

1. Diplomacy (the “brains” of foreign relations that manages “power”)
2. Propaganda (persuading others including own citizens and opponents)
3. Economic means (ex: sanctions, payments and trade deals)
4. Alliances and Treaties
5. Coercive means (example: war)



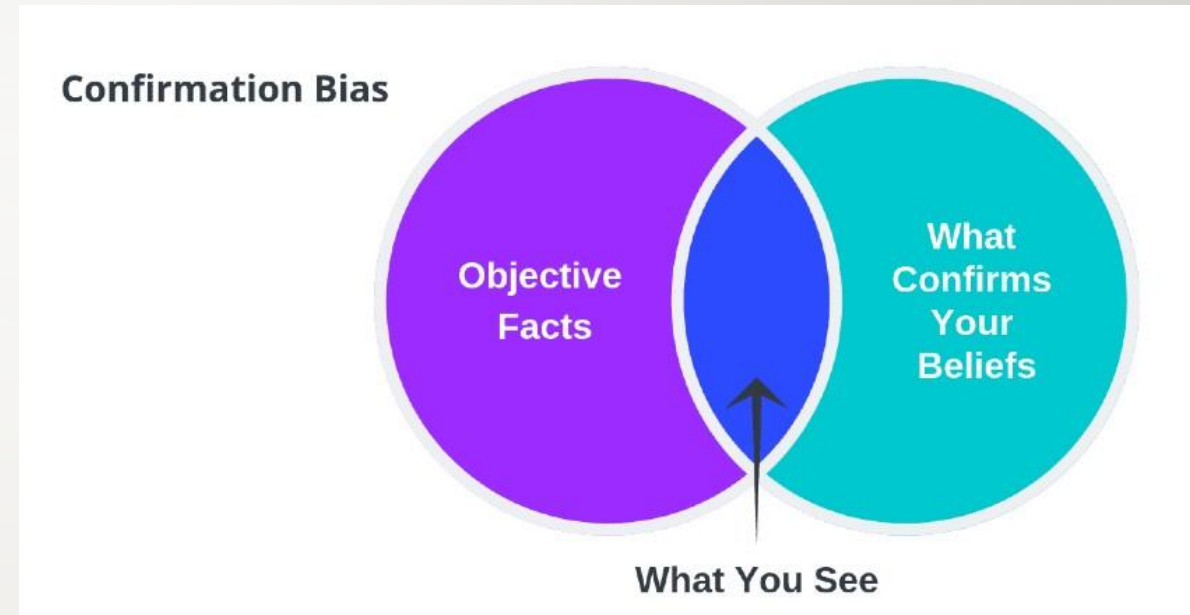
## 2. Considerations in going to war

- a. What will other states think and/or how will they react? (WW I; Civil War; Iraq)
- b. Resources: material and moral and time itself (American Revolution; WW I; WW II)
- c. How a country views its mission and purpose – ideology (Civil War; WW I and II)



### 3. Impediments to thinking about interests and international politics

- a. Too little time, imagination and/or brain power
- b. inattention and distractions (American Revolution)
- c. Too much or little information (All)
- d. Anchoring ideas (American Revolution; WW I)
- e. Confirmation bias (American Revolution)
- f. Wishful thinking (WW 1; WW 2; Civil War)
- g. Bad analytical/analogical thinking (Vietnam, Iraq)
- h. Over estimation of own resources or underestimation of opponent's resources (All and often)





i. Not understanding the problem (American Revolution; Iraq; WW I)

j. Sunk cost fallacy (WW I)

k. Ignoring or discounting other threats (American Revolution; WW I)

l. Satisfied with a solution too soon (Vietnam; American Revolution; Iraq)

m. Non-correlation between state's needs and decision makers' needs (American Revolution; WW I)

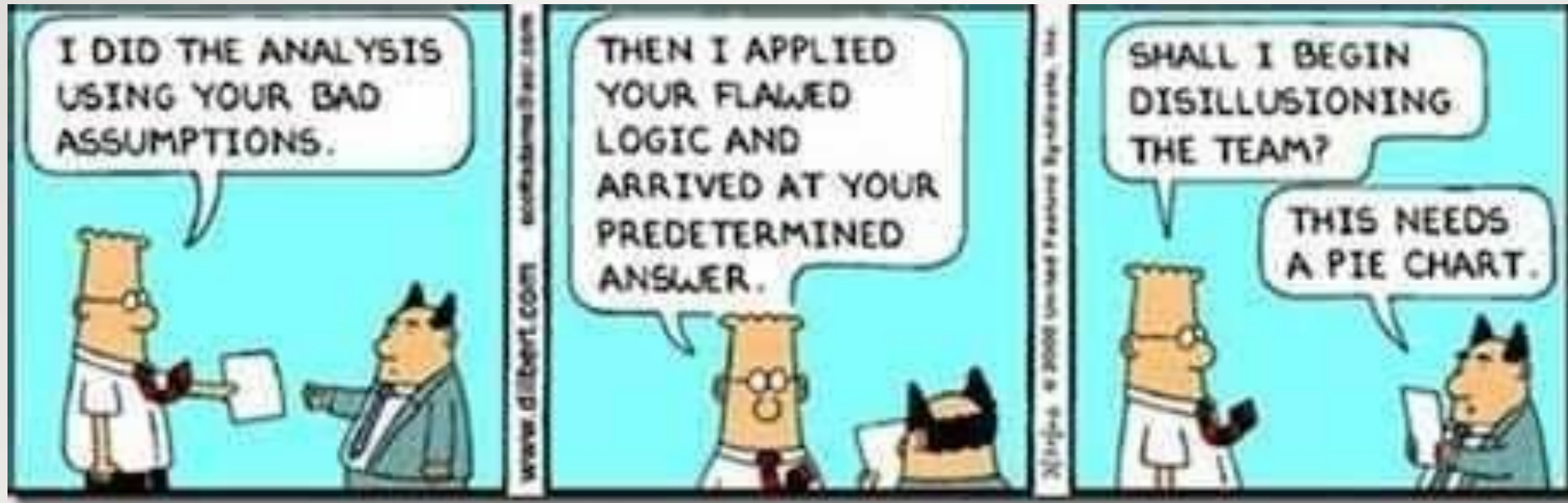
Woodrow Wilson



Wilhelm II

n. Assumptions regarding the mindset/rationality of the opponent (WW II; American Revolution, Civil War; Iraq)

o. Preference over preference bias (WW I)



## The American Revolution – The Struggle for Power

*“The rulers of Great Britain have, for more than a century past, amused the people with the imagination that they possessed a great empire on the west side of the Atlantic.”*

- Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, 1776

### An Accidental Empire – How colonies got to 1763

The *commercial empire* of England, then Great Britain, was assembled without much central (English) government thought or effort.

England (then Great Britain beginning in 1707) viewed and used its “overseas possessions” as markets for its “manufactures” and as sources of raw materials.

This use dictated the kind of society the colonies would produce – consumer, producing raw materials

Britain’s customs and traditions dictated that the American colonies would be “free”

Britain’s freedom dictated the colonies be somewhat self governing



# British Empire, 1763



Britain regulated its commercial empire, mainland and its colonies, through the Navigation Acts

- Required all shipping within the Empire to be in British ships
- Enumerated goods to pass through British ports before being shipped to other parts of the Empire or being shipped to non-Empire ports
- Imposed tariffs/duties on goods both Empire and non-Empire





## *Objectives of Acts*

- Promote British shipping (merchant and war ships with experienced sailors that could be impressed into British Navy in time of war)
- Regulate trade with tariffs and prohibitions to protect British manufacturing
- Keep sea lanes open with the most powerful Navy in the world

Empire was seen as a commercial or “Mercantile Empire”

Navigation Acts was Parliament’s “light” hand on the tiller of “empire;” Parliament’s presence in the empire; a “light” demonstration of sovereignty.

In 1763 generally accepted by American colonists as common good and as Constitutional (under British constitution)





## Organization of American colonies

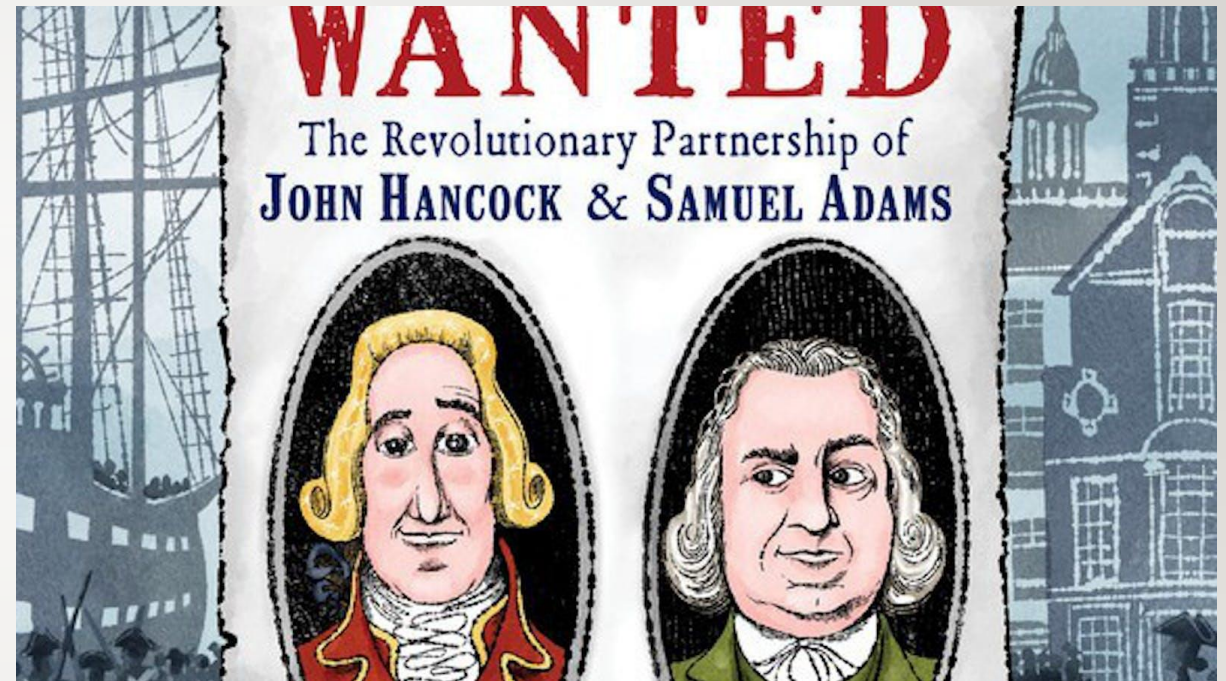
- Political structure was initially commercial charters within which colonies built their own political structures.
- American colonies in 1763 were governmentally semi self-sufficient
  - As of 1763, Colonies had gradually built up power of popular assemblies at the expense of King appointed governors and colonial councils (senates)
  - Assemblies authored legislation supposedly subject to Kings approval and all tax legislation
    - Since at least 1628 with English Bill of Rights; popular legislature required to approve all taxes
    - British taxation of American colonies before the SYW was between nil and very low as compared to England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales



King George III (1760-1820)

## Britain's management of the colonies

- Since 1600s American colonies subject to “salutary neglect” in government and self imposed “internal” taxation (Edmund Burke phrase in 1765 speech)
- American colonies:
  - Sometimes profitably evaded Navigation Acts to trade directly with European countries and non-Britain West India colonies, especially in sugar
  - Were hard pressed for hard currency
  - Were a resource supplier to Britain and West Indies holdings, generating “hard” currency





## Government of under the British Constitution



- Unwritten but comprising statutory and common law and traditions – not one written document
- Parliament was supreme; King was “in Parliament” and semi subject to Parliament
  - Parliament won its supremacy through series of civil wars and political maneuvering in 17<sup>th</sup> century
  - *English Civil War (1642-1649)* ended in execution of King Charles I
- Tradition that revenue taxes were “gifts” to King and prohibited unless commons of Parliament voted on; taxation required representation.
- In view of Parliament and American colonies, Navigation Act tariffs and duties were regulatory in nature, not revenue raising taxes



## American before The French and Indian War (1754-1763)

- Status quo before War was French and American fur trading with Native peoples in the Ohio territories (present day Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin) and Canada
- Quebec had a substantial French civilian presence
- Americans were more “aggressive” traders, e.g., (cheaters) toward Native peoples than French
- French less interested in “settling” western North America
- Americans of New England concerned about the Roman Catholic culture of French Canada



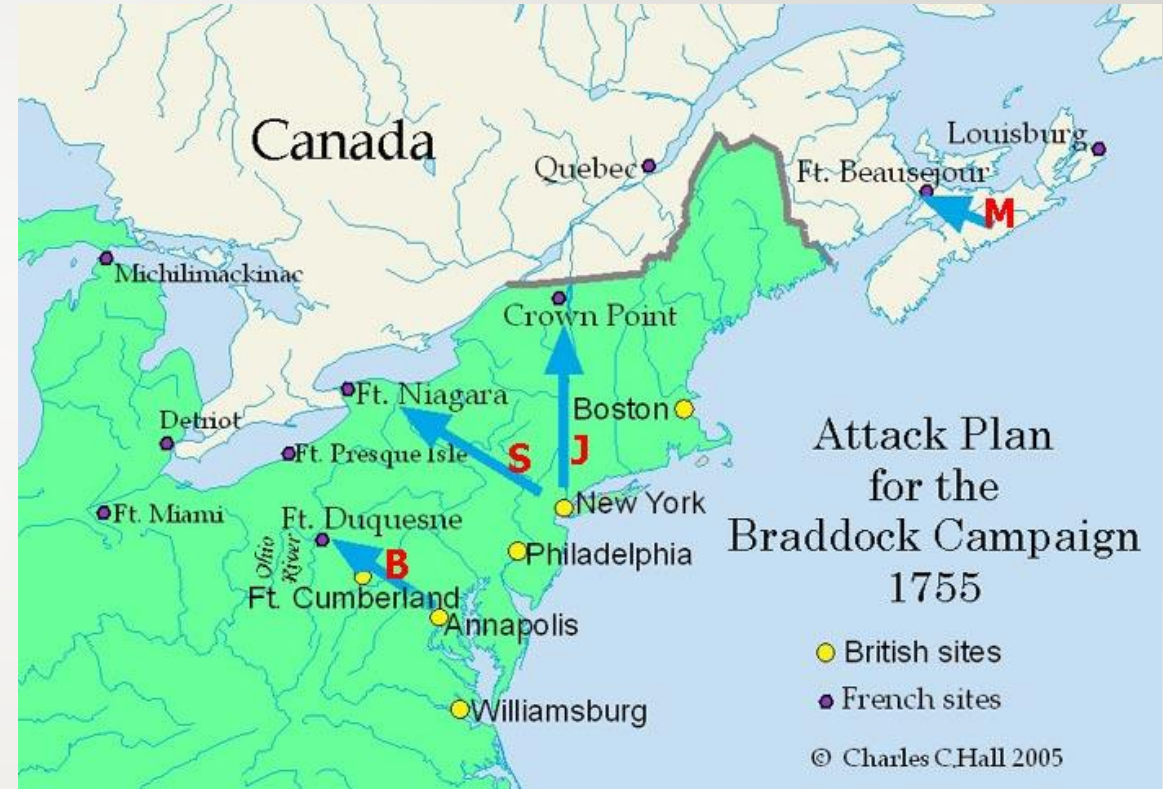
alamy

Image ID: FF783E  
www.alamy.com



## The Seven Years War (or the French and Indian War) 1754-1763

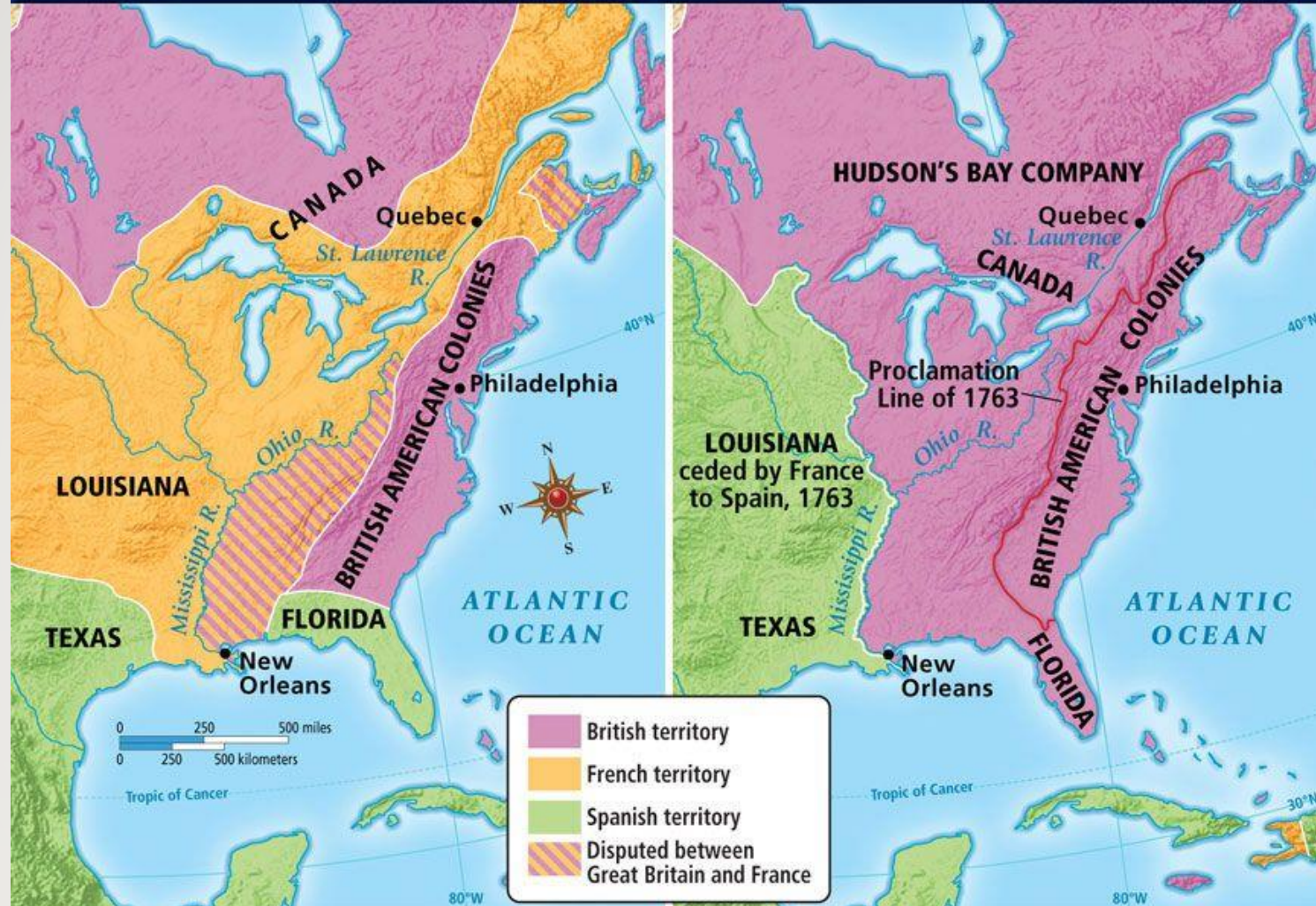
- The war in America was to secure for Great Britain American colonies on mainland and Caribbean from French encroachment
- British and French fought in America, Africa, Caribbean, Philippines and indirectly in Europe
- Began when a certain Major George Washington led a Virginia militia regiment to Fort Duquesne to expel French soldiers and Native Americans





## Prewar Boundaries 1754

## Postwar Boundaries 1763





## French and Indian War settlement

- French granted Ohio valley and southwest (between Carolinas and Mississippi River) to English
- Spain granted parts of present day Florida to English
- France granted Spain Louisiana territories
- English granted back to France Caribbean sugar islands captured by English
  - Controversy in England whether to keep the islands as more valuable than North American mainland regions
- France saw West Indies islands more valuable than Canada, etc.
- What is not in Treaty? Any restrictions on French rearming.
- Many expected another war between England and France. 5 between 1689 and 1763.



Soon after Treaty of Paris of 1763, Pontiac's War begins in Northern America and Canada as Native Americans fear English colonial encroachment on Ohio/New York lands

- During Seven Years War colonies did contribute men and supplies but were reimbursed by English government
- During Pontiac's War, Americans asked for same but without promise of reimbursement and little provided





## Managing the Indian Problem

To avoid native Americans conflict, King George III “proclaims” in 1763 no American settlements beyond Appalachians to:

- avoid conflict with other American colonists
- avoid conflict native Americans
- reduce British troop costs
- uphold promises to NAs made during Seven Years War
- encourage American emigration to Canada and Florida
- Proclamation not considered serious by colonists. The “3000 mile” problem begins





In 1763 British government indebtedness is  
£130 MM.

How will this be addressed?

Next Week:

The American Revolution – The Struggle for  
Unity

