



The Causes of America's Wars

SESSION 2: THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION – THE STRUGGLE FOR
UNITY

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)

The American Revolution Begins

In August 1776, British Army and Navy with 34,000 men (including 10,000 mercenary Hessians) and 45 warships land on Long Island to fight the American citizens in Continental Army assembled from several states and several states' militia soldiers numbering in total about 19,000.

The “material aspect” of the War begins.



The “immaterial” aspect began in 1763

“The Revolution was effected before the War commenced,” wrote John Adams in 1818. “The Revolution was in the Minds and Hearts of the People. A Change in their Religious Sentiments of their Duties and Obligations.”

How did this revolution in thought begin?



British Empire at the end of the Seven Years War

When SYW began, British national debt about £74 MM; end about £130 MM

- Fund raising for war was “sinews of power” for war for British and taken very seriously
- Much of this debt incurred funding Prussia in the SYW
- Annual interest on debt £4.7 MM of an £8.0 MM total government budget
- British government had promised Native Americans it would prohibit immigration of white people across the Appalachian mountains after the war
- Except for tax offices, no general British government offices or representation in the colonies though colonial governors are appointed by the King. Great Britain a geographic expression only for most colonial inhabitants

Parliament's beliefs in 1763 as it considers its new obligations

- Parliament supreme legislature in all Empire in all things; “Parliament is King.”
- Colonies are too conflicted among themselves to unite to resist Parliament, including with war or coordinated manufactures’ boycotts
- Colonists are generally loyal
- Colonists are of same mindset as British commoners re: meaning of political “representation” and need for aristocracy
- Colonists will see and appreciate the *equity* of “internal” taxes to pay for troops to “protect” them and uphold the promises of Britain in winning the SYW



- Colonists are bad soldiers based on performance in French and Indian War
 - Weak morale
 - Though some British officers argue they are good “irregular” fighters; this point generally ignored by Cabinets and Parliament (honor)
 - Would be no match for British army and navy (easy victory)
 - Assumed symmetrical battles
 - Though the British military was significantly reduced after F&I War for budget purposes (the “Whig clerks” in ascendency). And Navy ships not kept up.



- George III and the Cabinets warned several times by several American governors the colonists were showing signs of “uniting” on taxation issue and were hostile to new taxes to point of violence
- Some in Parliament and British military advocated colonies could not be conquered without 100,000 to 200,000 men but then only temporary
- In despite of all this, most of Parliament did not see a war with the American colonies turning out well and wanted to avoid it.



Salutary Neglect comes to an end with new obligations and a new King

25 year old George III (reigned 1760 – 1820) and Parliament decide to:

Reform duty collection in the colonies; and

Increase troops in North America to:

- man forts surrendered by the French; and
- protect the Americans and Native Americans from each other and to fulfill SYW promises made to the latter

To fulfill these:

- George issues non settlement proclamation to fulfill NA promise
- Cabinet and Parliament recommend in 1764 increase troops from 8,000 to about 10,000. Annual cost about £400,000.
 - Question: how could 10,000 men make a difference covering thousands of square miles without roads or vehicles?

Paying for Aspirations

To partially pay annual £400,000 troop and tax infrastructure expense, Parliament approves the Stamp Act taxes in 1765.

- Tax would be on newspapers, court filings, deeds, marriage licenses, etc.
- Projected tax revenue would never exceed £200,000



Colonial Reaction to the Stamp Act

- ❑ Stamp Act unconstitutional as it is a “revenue” tax and an “internal tax” that only representative assemblies can impose.
- ❑ “Stamp Act Congress” of colonial representatives appointed by colonial assemblies meet in New York to formulate boycotts in response to Act (unification begins)
- ❑ Bostonians riot and ransack houses of Thomas Hutchinson (governor) and Andrew Oliver (tax administrator), both American born. Oliver resigns before he can set up tax office (violence begins)
- ❑ Tax repealed in March 1766 after colonists and some Parliament members’ objections.
- ❑ The colonies are irritated with Parliament and begin questioning its other authority



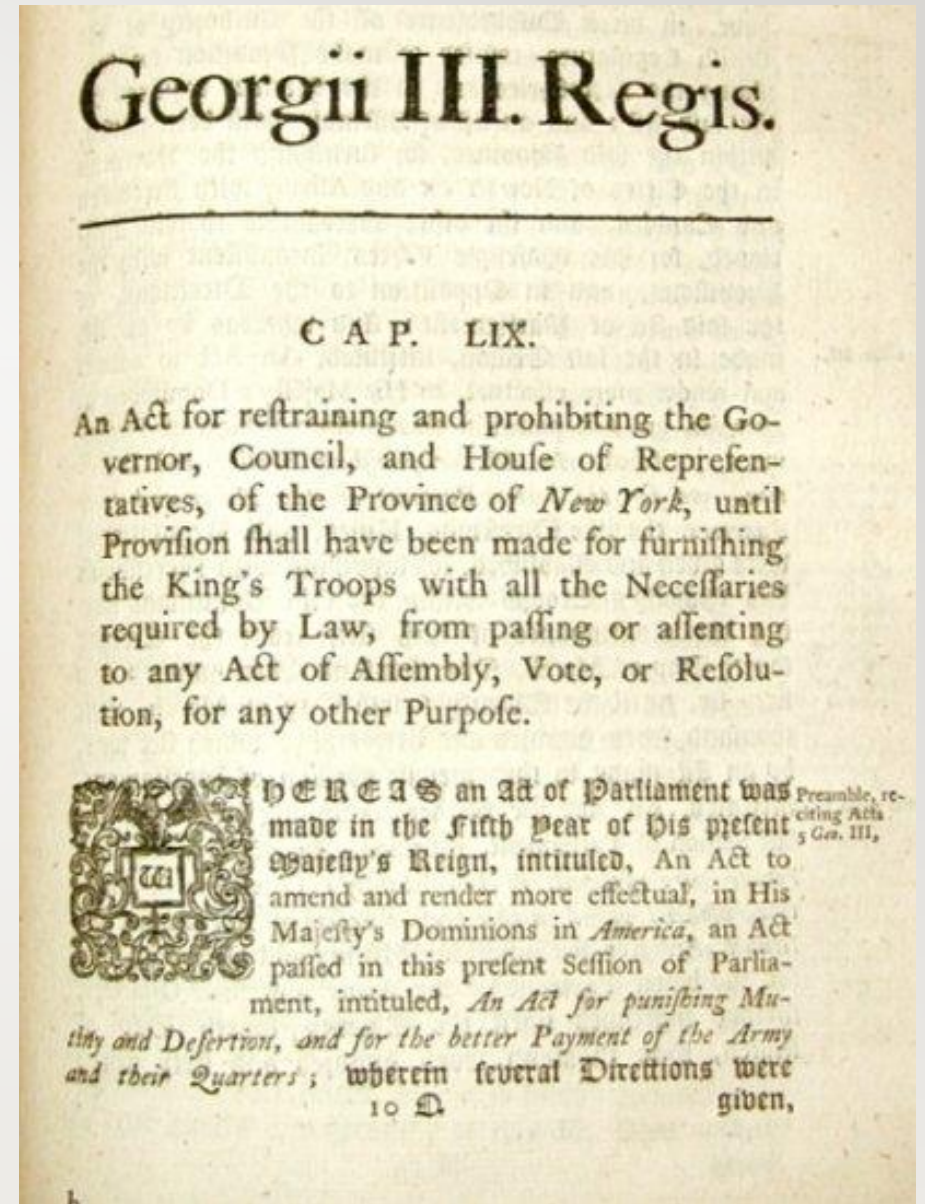
1765 American pottery

With Stamp Act repeal, Parliament also passes:

- ❑ The Declaratory Act of 1767 – in repeal of Stamp Act, Parliament declared right to legislate on all matters pertaining to American colonies. Parliament's Sovereignty asserted. Colonists shrug, importantly.

- ❑ The Restraining Act of 1767 - suspended the New York colonial assembly when it refused to comply with the (British army) Quartering Act of 1765 as many delegates felt it would place a heavy burden on the colonial budget.
 - ❑ Fearing the loss of self-government, the New York assembly appropriated funds to quarter troops before the Act could take effect.

 - ❑ Despite Stamp Act repeal, relations begin to deteriorate. Part of American worldview justified and alienation begins.



The Townshend Acts of 1767

Search for revenue continues by new PM Pitt. Charles Townshend assembles a “work around”

- Act taxed colonial imports of paper, paint, glass, lead, oil, and tea (Townshend did not think colonies could avoid by manufacturing these)
- Directed British Board of Trade to situs Board of Tax Commissioners in Boston to administer taxes.
- Revenue was to pay administration costs and New York governor salary
- Though an “external tax,” colonies object again and organize a boycott of British imports.



Now home government has a genuine dilemma.

- Objection one thing but basis of objection makes this serious
- Challenged based on authority of Parliament to legislate anything, including Navigation Acts (the basis of Empire)?
- But if resolve with “violence,” will Massachusetts take all the other colonies with it?
- In fall 1768 General Gage, general in chief of all 8,000 forces in America (spread from Florida to Canada) goes to Boston with about 4,000 troops to create “order.” It doesn’t.
- Request by Governor Thomas Hutchinson, who did not have the power to deal with Boston “chaos,” including not enough patronage money.

THOMAS GAGE
(1720-1787)

SOCIAL STATUS
The Better Sort

OCCUPATION
British General
Royal Governor

Political Views:

Patriot Moderate Loyalist

Photograph © 2011 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Detail.

The infographic features a portrait of Thomas Gage in a red military coat. Below the portrait is a horizontal scale for 'Political Views' ranging from 'Patriot' (marked with a star icon) to 'Loyalist' (marked with a crown icon). A red arrow points to the 'Moderate' position on the scale.

Tensions mount in Boston

British troops circulating in Boston often meet hostile aggravating population culminating in:

- Boston “Massacre” of March 1770
 - Confrontation in Boston on March 5, 1770; nine British soldiers shot five people of a crowd of three or four hundred who were harassing soldiers verbally and throwing various projectiles.
 - Event was heavily publicized as “a massacre” by leading Patriots such as Paul Revere and Samuel Adams.
 - Publicized in newspapers throughout the colonies and via pamphlets (propaganda as a vehicle of unification)
 - Have British already “lost” the colonies?



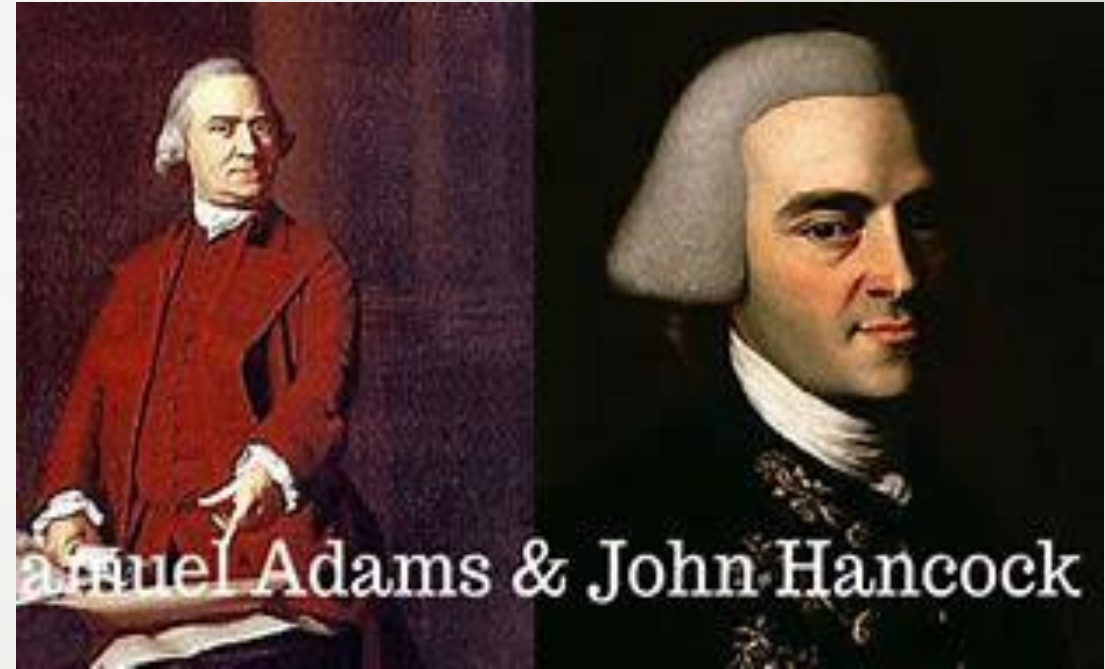
Engraved print made and sold by Paul Revere

- Massachusetts (and other colonies' citizens) organize militia around the same time, smuggling gun power, arms and ammunition and storing around Boston (Salem, Lexington, Concord)
- Committees on Correspondence begin their work of propaganda to other colonies to gather support

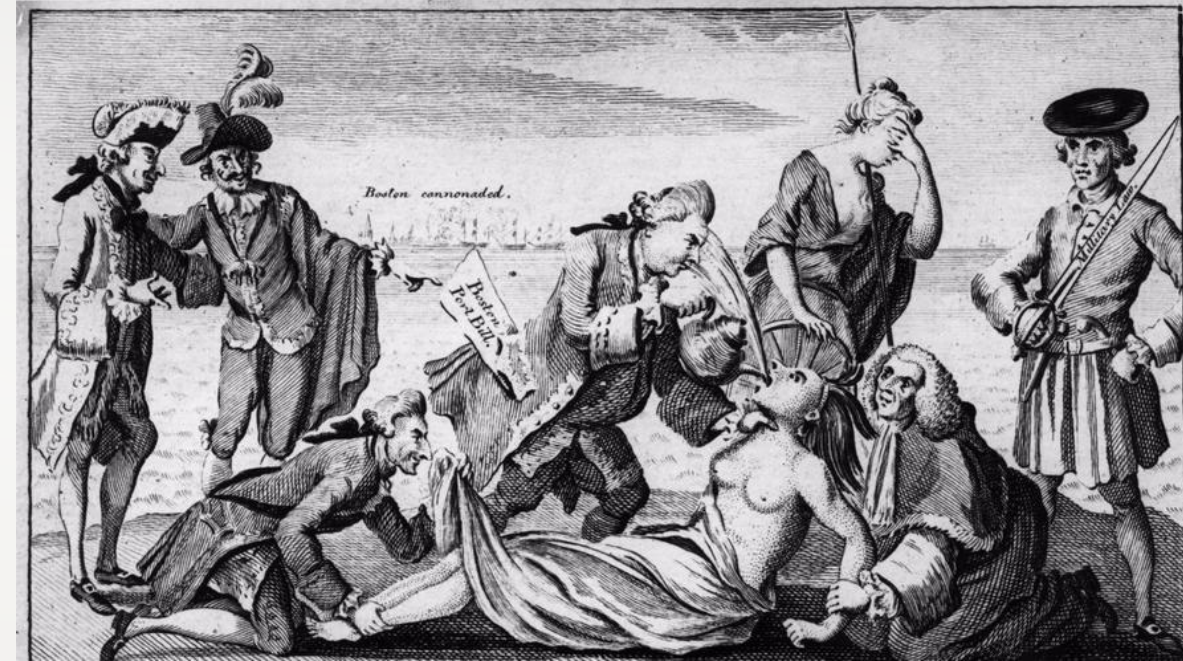


Boston Tea Party of December 1773

- 342 chests of tea worth about £10,000 belonging to the British East India Company thrown from merchant's ships into Boston Harbor in protest of Tea Act of 1773 granting tea monopoly in American market to East India Company (which had excess tea in London warehouses)
- John Hancock and Samuel Adams, who regularly smuggled tea from Netherlands to America, suspected being leaders behind riot



- Parliament Reacts: Passes by large majority Coercive or Intolerable Acts of 1774 as retribution and a warning to the colonists (fulfilling colonial fears)
 - Boston Port Act, closing that city's harbor until restitution was made for the destroyed tea.
 - Massachusetts Government Act abrogating the colony's charter of 1691, replacing the elective local council with an appointive one, enhancing the powers of the military governor Gen. Thomas Gage, and forbidding town meetings without approval.

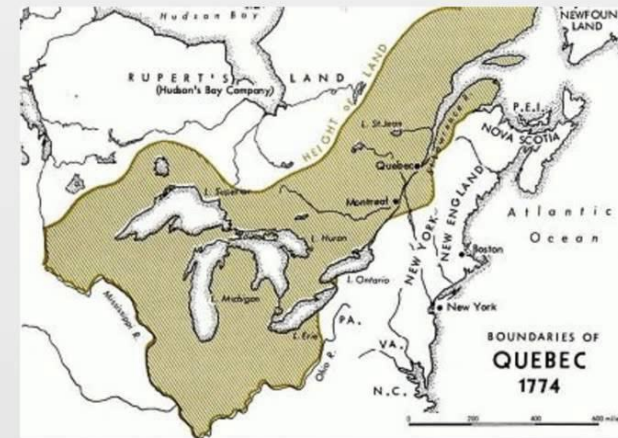


- New Quartering Act for housing British troops in occupied American dwellings
- Quebec Act granting to Quebec the shaded area. Punishment of all the colonies as many claimed land west of the Appalachians.

✓ Was Parliament's reaction to the Boston Tea Party disproportionate?

✓ If so, what are the dangers of a disproportionate reaction?

Quebec Act



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Quebec_Act_1774.JPG

The colonies react to the Intolerable Acts

- Other colonial Assemblies form committees to determine their response
- Colonies meet in 1st Continental Congress in 1774 to form a unified response including petitions to home office and boycotts of British manufactures.
- Other colonies are concerned: are they next?



Violence accelerates

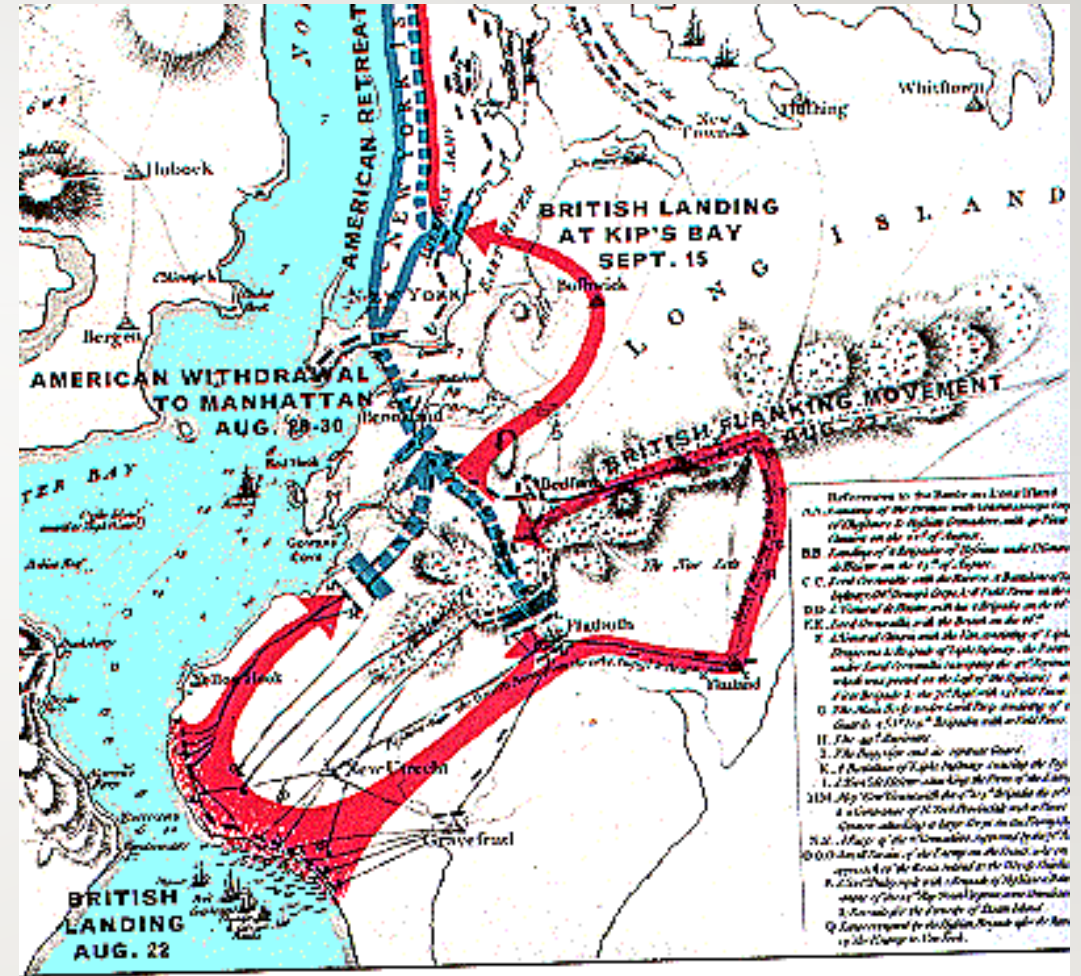
- General Gage, under direction of home office begins raiding Boston vicinity militia ammunition storages locations in 1774. Salem first. No blood shed though until . . .
- As part of these raids, on April 19, 1775 Gage “secretly” sent 740 men to raid suspected ammunition storage in Concord and Lexington outside Boston and to capture Samuel Adams and John Hancock and met armed resistance. Publicized in lurid terms throughout the colonies (unity continues)
 - Army will fire on citizens in Lexington fearing attack.
 - Gage’s casualties about 100 incurred in retreat to Boston
 - Gage would write Foreign Minister he needed 20,000 to 30,000 additional troops to control New England
 - Instead of sending troops, homeland determined Gage needed to be replaced for lack of courage, initiative and planning. Howes and Clinton would be sent as Gage’s subordinates until Howe takes charge.



- The Boston militia assembles to harass the British soldiers holed up in Boston.
- British attack and take militia occupied Breed's Hill and Bunker Hill in June 1775 but suffer abt. 1,000 casualties, encouraging colonial rebels. Victory published throughout colonies

Then:

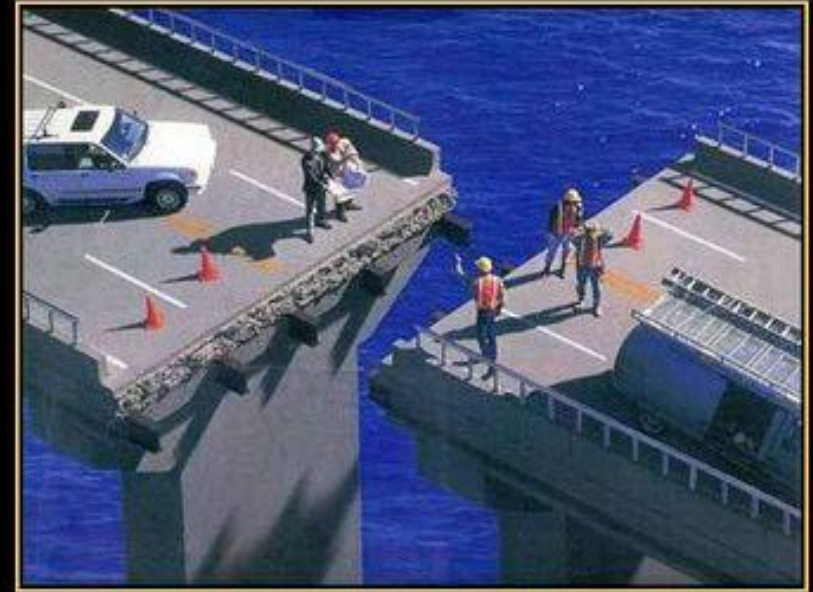
- In reaction, 2nd Continental Congress approves formation of a Continental Army in June 1775 headed by George Washington
- After suffering bombardment in Boston in fall 1775, British will abandon Boston by ship in the winter of 1776 to Halifax.
- Will invade Long Island and take New York in August 1776. The War begins.



The Battle of New York

What caused the Revolutionary War?

- Two irreconcilable positions re authority.
 - Government realized Parliament had to assert its authority but doing so would jeopardize its legitimacy and its position in the colonies.
 - Did not form a comprehensive grand strategy to address American problem but acted ad hoc, sometimes deferring the decision
 - Structural failure in lack of centralized decision making
- British troops in Boston set up a situation that could go wrong in a multitude of ways, and it did.
- Over reacted to Boston Tea Party



INCOMPETENCE

WHEN YOU TRULY BELIEVE THAT YOU CAN COMPENSATE FOR LACK OF SKILL BY DOUBLING YOUR EFFORTS, THERE'S NO END TO WHAT YOU CAN'T DO.

- When it went to war:
 - Parliament over estimated the number and strength of American loyalists (power) to support an army
 - Parliament underestimated strength and spread of rebellion (despite being warned; confirmation bias)
 - Parliament underestimated the resilience, courage and strategical ability of the Patriots (power; bad analogical thinking)
 - Parliament discounted the chances of French participation as the war extended in time (wishful thinking; weak Treaty of Paris of 1763)



As a result, British guilty of that great bug-a-boo of empire, overextension, and found themselves at war with an entire coastline of 13 colonies instead of just a New England police action.

Next Week: The Civil War – The Struggle for Union

