Chapter 5: DEFINING AMERICAN WAR AIMS
Objectives:

• Identify the major debates in the Second Continental Congress, and their outcomes.
• Assess the impact of Thomas Paine’s Common Sense on the colonial view of the war with Britain.
• Study the early war aims of the American Revolution.
2Co_3:17 Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.
DEFINING AMERICAN WAR AIMS

• Three weeks after the battles of Lexington and Concord, the Second Continental Congress met in Philadelphia.

• All states were present except Georgia which would send a representative the following Autumn.

• The members agreed to support the war but they disagreed at times profoundly at its purpose.
DEFINING AMERICAN WAR AIMS

• At one side a group led by John and Samuel Adams (cousins), Richard Henry Lee of Virginia, and others who favored complete independence from Great Britain.

• At the other pole were moderates like John Dickinson from Pennsylvania who hoped for modest reforms and reconciliation with Great Britain.
Most of the delegates tried to find some middle ground between these positions.

They approved one last conciliatory appeal to the King, “Olive Branch Petition” which the British government rejected.
DEFINING AMERICAN WAR AIMS

• They adopted a more blunt “Declaration of the Causes of Necessity of Taking Up Arms.”

• It proclaimed that the British Government had left American people with only two alternatives “unconditional submission to the tyranny of irritated ministers or resistance by force.”
DEFINING AMERICAN WAR AIMS

• At first most Americans believed they were not fighting for independence but for a redress of grievances within the British Empire.

• But the first year of the war, many changed their minds.
• First: the cost of war, human and financial were so high that the original war aims began to seem too modest to justify them.
• Second: what lingering affection American Patriots retained for England greatly diminished when the British began trying to recruit Indians, African slaves, and foreign mercenaries (the hated Hessians) against them.
• Third: the most important colonists came to believe that the British government was forcing them toward independence by rejecting the Olive Branch Petition and instead enacting a “Prohibitionary Act.”

• It closed the colonies to all oversea trade and made no concessions to American demands except an offer to pardon repentant rebels.
Thomas Paine

- Americans became bold for Independence with the publication of the pamphlet *Common Sense* by Thomas Paine on January 1776.
- He emigrated from England fifteen months ago and a failure in various trades became a success as Revolutionary propagandist.
- His pamphlet helped change the American outlook toward the war.
Thomas Paine

- Paine considered not parliament or the King as the root of the problem, rather it was the English constitution itself.
- It was this system that produced such a oppressive leadership.
- A government that could drag Americans into wars in which America had no interest.
- The island kingdom of England was no more fit to rule the American continent.
The Decision for Independence:

- The Continental Congress moved slowly and tentatively toward a final break with England.
- It declared American ports open to the ships of all nations except Great Britain.
- It entered into communication with foreign powers.
- It recommended the various colonies that they establish new governments independent of the British Empire, which they were already doing.
The Decision for Independence:

- Congress also appointed a committee to draft a formal declaration of independence.
- On July 2, it adopted a resolution to break all ties with Great Britain.
- On July 4, Congress approved the Declaration of Independence itself which provided the formal justifications for the actions the delegates had in fact taken two days earlier.
The Decision for Independence:

• Thomas Jefferson, a thirty three year-old delegate from Virginia wrote most of the Declaration, with the help from Benjamin Franklin and John Adams.

• Jefferson brought to eloquence words that have already been stated from the Sons of Liberty and other organizations.
The Decision for Independence:

• The document had two parts.
• First: the declaration restated the familiar contract theory of John Locke:
  • That governments were formed to protect the rights of life, liberty, and property;
• Jefferson gave the theory a more idealistic tone by replacing “property” with “the pursuit of happiness.”
The Decision for Independence:

• The Second part listed the alleged crimes of the king who with the backing of Parliament had violated his “contract” with the colonists and thus had forfeited all claim to their loyalty.

• “All men are created equal” inspired movements all around the world.
The Decision for Independence:

- The Declaration boldly claimed that the American colonies were now a sovereign nation.
- “The United States of America” led to seek increase foreign aid for the struggling rebels and prepared the way for French intervention in their side.
- The declaration inspired Americans that were opposing the British to fight on and reject the idea of a peace that stopped short of winning independence.
RESPONSES TO INDEPENDENCE:

• While many cheered the declaration, there were some who did not.
• While some disapproved of the war since the beginning.
• Others had been willing to support it only so long as it aims did not conflict with their basic loyalty to the king.
• Such people were a minority but a substantial one.
• They called themselves loyalists and they were called Tories by those who wanted independence.
RESPONSES TO INDEPENDENCE:

- Colonies now began to call themselves states.
- That they are their own sovereign entity.
- Even though Parliament suspended representative governments in America, the suspension did not end colonial self-government.
- It increased self government since the colonial assemblies continued to meet.
RESPONSES TO INDEPENDENCE:

• After the declaration, the former colonies began writing formal Constitutions for themselves and established Republican governments.

• At a national level, the process of forming a government was less successful.

• There was question whether Americans wanted a national government and virtually everyone considered the individual colonies (Now states) the real centers of authority.
RESPONSES TO INDEPENDENCE:

• Yet fighting required a national center.
• Americans did what they are doing even today;
• Balance the commitment to state and local autonomy against the need for some centralized authority.
RESPONSES TO INDEPENDENCE:

• In November 1777, Congress Adopted the Articles of Confederation (not ratified until 1781).
• It merely confirmed a real central government already in operation.
• The Continental Congress would survive as the chief coordinating agency of the war effort.
• Its powers over the individual states were very limited.
Mobilizing for War:

• The new governments of the states and the nation faced a series of overwhelming challenges: raising and organizing armies, providing them with supplies and equipment and finding a way to pay for it all.

• Without the access to the British markets, which colonists were dependent on, finding necessary supplies was exceptionally difficult.

• Americans had many gunsmiths, but they could not come close to meeting the wartime demand for guns and ammunition.

• Let alone the demand for heavy arms.
Mobilizing for War:

- They relied heavily on weapons and material they were able to capture from the British.
- But they got most of their war supplies from European nations, mainly France.
Mobilizing for War:

- Financing the war was a huge issue.
- Congress had no authority to levy taxes directly on the people, it had to requisition funds from the State governments.
- Hard money was scarce in America, and the states were little better equipped to raise it than Congress was.
- Congress tried to raise money by selling long-term bonds but few Americans can afford them.
- It had to resort to print paper money.
- States also printed their own paper money.
Mobilizing for War:

• This caused inflation (prices rose as the value of money plummeted).

• Farmers preferred to doing business with the British who paid in gold and silver coins.

• This is one reason why George Washington and the Continental Army starved because farmers refused to sell to them.
Mobilizing for War:

• Congress finally found a temporary stop gap by borrowing heavily from other nations the necessary funds.

• After the first surge of patriotism faded, few Americans volunteered for the army.

• States as a result had to resort to persuasion and force to paying bounties to attract new recruits and to drafting them.

• But those recruited remained under the control of their respective states.
Mobilizing for War:

• Congress tried to correct this by creating a Continental army with a single commander and chief, George Washington in the Spring of 1775.

• The 43 year old Virginian planter who commanded the forces that resulted in the French and Indian War.

• Washington possessed more experience than any other American-born officer available.
Mobilizing for War:

• Washington was an early advocate for independence and he was admired, respected, and trusted by nearly all Patriots.
• Washington faced difficulties and discouragements that would break lesser men.
• From low morale to lack of supplies and equipment he pressed on.
• Although he had shortcomings as a military commander, he was a great war leader.
Mobilizing for War:

- Washington was aided by foreign military experts such as Marquis de Lafayette from France and Baron von Steuben from Prussia.
- He succeeded in holding an army fewer than 10,000 men along with state militias prevailed against the greatest military power in the world.
- Washington provided the army and the people with a symbol of stability around which they could rally.
- He may not have been the most brilliant of the early leaders but he was most successful in holding the new nation together.
Essay Response:

One page and an half essay (Double Spaced): What side would you choose between the Patriots and Moderates? Complete Independence or ask for modest reforms and reconciliation? Due on September 25, 2015.