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BRITAIN AND THE WORLD IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY: II, BRITONS AND AMERICANS

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IN my address last year I tried to offer some explanations for the great change of direction in Britain's territorial empire in the second half of the eighteenth century: the failure of empire over much of North America coinciding with the beginnings of great acquisitions in India.[1] I would like now to look more closely at the American débâcle. In trying to account for it, I stressed the yawning gap between British ambitions as they developed from mid-century and any capacity to realise them in the colonies, where, in the absence of a strong imperial presence or adequate machinery to enforce metropolitan wishes, the effective working of the empire depended on the willingness of local populations to co-operate. In the 1760s the majority of the colonial elites refused to co-operate with what they regarded as new departures from the long-established constitutional conventions of the empire. British attempts to resolve the ensuing crisis by armed coercion were to be frustrated in seven years of unsuccessful war.

Underlying British policies, I suggested, was a sense of national danger from the supposed ambitions of France. These ambitions had been checked by the Seven Years War, but revenge for that check seemed inevitable. Both the British Isles and the colonies were at risk and they must act together. There seemed to be clear evidence that at

[1] P. J. Marshall, 'Britain and the World in the Eighteenth Century: I, Reshaping the World', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., 8 (1998), 1–18.

I

least some colonies had pursued and were still pursuing narrow self-centred ends which were weakening the empire and might even fragment it. This would deprive Britain of the resources drawn from colonial trade that had been of crucial importance in enabling her to prevail against her enemies in the Seven Years War, and would leave the disunited colonies vulnerable to any renewed assault. Victory had given the empire an opportunity to regroup and by proper regulations to guarantee its strength and prosperity for the foreseeable future. Only the British parliament had the breadth of vision to lay down such regulations that would ensure that all parts of the empire would benefit. Resistance to the authority of parliament could not be countenanced.

   The determination of successive British governments to try to exert an effective imperial authority over the American colonies, while paying scant regard to the practical means by which such authority might actually be enforced is, I hope, a sufficient explanation of Britain's role in precipitating the great crisis that was ultimately to lead to the reconfiguration of the British empire. It is not, however, a complete one. Other sections of British society apart from the political elite were involved in empire in America, and other issues were at stake apart from the questions of national wealth and power and the constitutional arrangements appropriate for the empire which so dominated parliamentary debates and contemporary pamphlets and which continue to dominate the historiography of the British side of the Revolution.

   The ties of empire seem to have been growing stronger in the years immediately before the Revolution. These ties were diverse and affected wide sections of the British population. John M. Murrin has argued that 'economic, social and intellectual trends' were tying Britain and America ever closer to one another and were causing, in his suggestive phrase, a crisis of 'imperial *integration*' rather than preparing the ground for disintegration.[2] This suggests that disengagement from the thirteen colonies after a fruitless war would involve rather more than the fears for the loss of Britain's standing in the world which were to be quickly assuaged as the British elite began to recognise that the economic benefits of America could be harvested more effectively without the travails of trying to rule it. The loss of America would be the vivisection of a living empire in which many people were deeply committed for many different reasons.

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[2] 'The Great Inversion, or Court versus Country: A Comparison of the Revolution Settlements in England (1688–1721) and America (1776–1816)', *Three British Revolutions: 1641, 1688, 1776*, ed. J. G. A. Pocock (Princeton, 1980), 387.

I

There seems to be one notable exception to a pattern of closer imperial integration on the eve of the Revolution. Politically, Britain and the colonies seem to have been drifting apart. The British politicians who were increasingly preoccupied with America as a vital source of wealth and as a critical constitutional problem had few direct contacts with the colonies.[3] Governors or colonial politicians appear to have been more removed from the British political world than had been the case under Walpole or the Pelhams.[4] The work of Alison Olson has described the withering of the contacts long maintained by a wide variety of colonial interest groups with the London bureaucracy. In the past these contacts had given the colonies 'an informal but effective voice in the making of English decisions', but she describes how the increasing dominance of parliament over colonial policy from mid-century reduced the effectiveness of colonial lobbying.[5] The limited nature of the representation of the mainland colonies in the House of Commons was notorious at the time. The self-confidence of British ministers in their own judgement as to where the interest of the whole empire lay in any case made them less responsive to any lobbying. The colonial agents were increasingly disregarded after they had been actively patronised by the Rockingham administration for the repeal of the Stamp Act.[6]

If the empire was drifting apart politically, it was being tied closer together in many other ways. Integration was greatly facilitated by the 'shrinking' of the Atlantic, brought about not by spectacular changes in maritime technology but by greatly increased numbers of ships being operated more effectively and more cheaply. The volume of people, goods, news and information crossing the ocean was growing year by year.[7] Between the Seven Years War and the outbreak of the Revolutionary War the Atlantic economy experienced spectacular growth, if

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[3] Edmund Burke's *Speech on Conciliation with America* of 1775 is a pre-eminent exception to the failure of nearly all British politicians to envisage colonial America in concrete terms as a distinct society rather than as an abstract problem of governance and economic regulation.

[4] This is the theme of the later chapters of Alison Gilbert Olson, *Anglo-American Politics 1660–1775: The Relationship between Parties in England and Colonial America* (Oxford, 1973). See also Stanley Nader Katz, *Newcastle's New York: Anglo-American Politics 1732–53* (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), 242–4.

[5] *Making the Empire Work: London and American Interest Groups 1690–1790* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992).

[6] Jack M. Sosin, *Agents and Merchants: British Colonial Policy and the Origins of the American Revolution* (Lincoln, Neb., 1965); Michael G. Kammen, *A Rope of Sand: The Colonial Agents, British Politics and the American Revolution* (Ithaca, NY, 1968).

[7] Ian K. Steele, *The English Atlantic, 1675–1740: An Exploration of Communications and Community* (New York, 1986).

punctuated by sharp recessions. In the years from 1770 to 1774 American exports to Britain were worth more than twice as much as they had been in the years before the Seven Years War, while North America now took about a quarter of all British exports.[8] To sustain these trades the colonies drew heavily on British credit, which was being made available on an ever-larger scale. The expanding Atlantic commercial world brought more and more British and American people into personal contact with one another. Scottish and English factors were taking up residence for long periods in America, especially around the Chesapeake. American merchants were coming to Britain in increasing numbers and forming the kind of connections with their British correspondents that made the great British merchant Richard Oswald 'the most intimate and respected friend' of his former client in South Carolina, Henry Laurens, who was to sit on the other side of the table from him at the peace negotiations in 1782.[9] Anglo-American marriages often reinforced commercial ties.

The spurt of emigration to the colonies on the eve of the Revolution has been fully documented. Over 100,000 British emigrants are estimated to have gone to North America between 1760 and 1775.[10] These included a good many people of some substance and ambition, going to better themselves as factors and agents, merchants in their own right or in professions, as well as indentured servants and convicts. The military garrison kept permanently in America after 1763 became in some degree Americanised, as colonials sought commissions and British officers married in America and bought land there.[11] The scale of the emigration from Scotland and northern Ireland in particular aroused much concern. It was conventionally assumed that the loss of such people weakened Britain.[12] In the Revolutionary War, however, recent immigrants, especially Highland Scots, were to be greatly valued as a source of strength to the empire. The first three provincial loyalist regiments embodied to fight with the British army were predominantly recruited from migrants from the Highlands.[13] Such people often chose to stay in the empire after the loss of the thirteen colonies, becoming

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[8] Table 4.6, Jacob M. Price, 'The Imperial Economy 1700–1776', *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. II, *The Eighteenth Century*, ed. P. J. Marshall (Oxford, 1998), 103.

[9] David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community 1735–1785* (Cambridge, 1995), 391.

[10] James Horn, 'The British Diaspora: Emigration from Britain 1660–1815', *Oxford History of British Empire*, II, 32.

[11] John Shy, *Toward Lexington: The Role of the British Army in the Coming of the American Revolution* (Princeton, 1965), 354–7.

[12] Bernard Bailyn, *Voyagers to the West: Emigration from Britain to America on the Eve of the Revolution* (1987), 53–4.

[13] Paul H. Smith, *Loyalists and Redcoats: A Study in British Revolutionary Policy* (Chapel Hill, 1964), 67–8.

a major element among the loyalists who settled in Canada.[14]

Movements of people from the colonies to Britain were on a much smaller scale than transatlantic British emigration and most Americans who crossed the ocean probably returned home. People of substance, if they did not have cause to come on business, made trips of pleasure as tourists and sent their children to complete their education, especially to learn the law at the Inns of Court or to obtain medical qualifications at Scottish universities. Dr Julie Flavell's forthcoming study suggests that affluent colonial families, whatever their allegiance was to be during the Revolution, seem to have remained convinced of the value of exposing their offspring to the polished world of London and that young Americans, even if they were given to lamenting the corruption and vice that were, they thought, rampant in the metropolis, still readily accepted British values.[15]

Emulation of things British remained the norm among colonial elites. Increasing imports from Britain spread British consumer tastes very widely. English houses were the models for affluent colonial town houses and for rural mansions which were furnished in the English manner. Accounts of British upper-class mores appropriate for those who lived in such houses were widely disseminated through the 'courtesy books' that enjoyed a vogue in aspiring colonial families.[16] English rhetoric and belles-lettres were taught in American colleges on the Scottish model to instil proper standards of taste, writing and speech.[17]

The loyalist George Chalmers recalled that after the Seven Years War 'Every man, who had credit with the ministers at home, or influence over the governors in the colonies, ran for the prize of American territory. And many land-owners in Great Britain, of no small importance, neglected the possessions of their fathers, for a portion of wilderness beyond the Atlantic.'[18] This is only a slightly exaggerated account of a great scramble in Britain for land in North America between 1763 and 1775, both in some of the existing colonies and in new ones taken from the French or the Spanish. Claimants

[14] J. M. Bumsted, 'The Cultural Landscape of Early Canada', *Strangers within the Realm: Cultural Margins of the First British Empire*, ed. Bernard Bailyn and Philip D. Morgan (Chapel Hill, 1991), 384.

[15] I am grateful to Dr Flavell for letting me consult sections of her forthcoming work.

[16] Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York, 1992), chap. ii.

[17] Robert Crawford, *Devolving English Literature* (Oxford, 1992), 39; William Smith, 'An Account of the College and Academy of Philadelphia', *Discourses on Several Public Occasions During the War in America* (1759), 218–21.

[18] *An Estimate of the Comparative Strengths of Great Britain during the Present and Four Preceding Reigns*, new edn (1794), 141. British interest in land, resources and profitable offices in North America is analysed in my 'Empire and Opportunity in Britain, 1763–1775', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., 5 (1995), 111–28.

operated on their own, in partnerships and in great combines seeking grants for huge areas. People resident in the colonies and in Britain tended to join together in the more grandiose schemes, British people contributing their political influence, Americans their local knowledge. On the British side, interest was usually confined to illusory hopes of quick profits with the minimum outlay, but men of capital and commercial experience also bought land in the hopes of improving the resources of the empire as well as of making profits for themselves.[19] Similarly, although Americans complained that British manufacturing interests sought to impose restrictions wherever they saw competition, some in Britain took a wider imperial view, such as those members of the Society of Arts who offered premiums for colonial inventions regardless of 'unreasonable Jealousies'.[20] Americans were welcomed as corresponding members of the Society as they were to the Royal Society, which elected seven residents of North America to the fellowship after 1763.[21]

By the middle of the eighteenth century, some religious denominations, such as Congregationalists, Baptists or Presbyterians, had become 'Americanized', that is, unlike the Anglicans or the Quakers, they no longer owed allegiance to parent churches in Britain.[22] But whether Americanised or not, right up to the Revolution religious denominations still maintained close links with like-minded Christians across the Atlantic. Through these links they sought to enlist imperial authority to protect their interests or to gain new privileges, as for instance, in the conflicts over the project for a colonial bishop or over the rights of dissenters in Virginia. Religious denominations were also heavily engaged in the expansion of education in America, especially in trying to cope with the needs of the greatly increased populations in the middle colonies. Numerous British teachers and much British money crossed the Atlantic. Money was sent to set up schools for the Pennsylvania Germans. Presbyterians from Ulster and Scotland opened schools in the backcountry. Scottish Presidents and Scottish curricula had a formative influence on new colleges, notably in New Jersey and Philadelphia.[23] In all, American colleges are estimated to have collected

[19] Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, 170–1.
[20] W. Shipley to Franklin, 1 Sept. 1756, cited in D. G. C. Allen, ' "The Present Unhappy Disputes": The Society and the Loss of the American Colonies, 1774–83', *The Virtuoso Tribe of Arts and Sciences: Studies in the Eighteenth-century Work and Membership of the London Society of Arts*, ed. D. G. C. Allen and John L. Abbot (Athens, Ga., 1992), 216.
[21] R. P. Stearns, 'Colonial Fellows of the Royal Society of London, 1661–1788', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 3 (1946), 246–65.
[22] Boyd Stanley Schlenther, 'Religious Faith and Commercial Empire', *Oxford History of the British Empire*, II, 135.
[23] Douglas Sloan, *The Scottish Enlightenment and the American College Ideal* (New York, 1971).

some £24,000 in Britain between 1749 and 1775,[24] money mostly being subscribed through denominational connections. The Anglican church in America received large subventions from Britain raised by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel to support the seventy-seven missionary clergy in post on the eve of the Revolution. To sustain its work in America the Society was spending some £5,000 a year. Through many channels a flow of charitable donations from Britain was going to the colonies on a scale comparable to the sums being raised for major domestic appeals.

Evangelically minded people in England, Scotland and the colonies felt themselves to be united by a common experience of the Holy Spirit working through religious revivals that transcended denominational and geographical boundaries. Following Whitefield's missionary journeys in the 1740s, ministers in Boston, Edinburgh, Glasgow and London exchanged news among themselves about the progress of the awakening in different parts of the British world.[25] A 'concert of prayer' linked America and Scotland.

After the Seven Years War, missions to Native Americans became a special object of evangelical expectations and religious charity on both sides of the Atlantic. Missions to Indians were regarded as an inescapable obligation in return for the divine favour shown to Britain and British America in granting victories over the French anti-Christ in the late war. The conversion of the Indians seemed to be the next stage in the divine plan. America was said by the Massachusetts agent in 1759 to lie 'near the heart of the children of God in England', who were 'particularly importunate for the spread and success of the Gospel among the natives that the Heathen may hear and know the joyful sound, and your western end of the earth, become the willing subjects of the Divine Emanuel, who is promised the ends of the earth for his possession.'[26] Such millennial expectations were shared by some Anglicans. William Smith, Provost of the Philadelphia College, told the Archbishop of Canterbury that 'God has pre determined some future period in the Gospel for the final conversion of the Heathens inhabiting these parts and that the time of this Conversion seems to be near at hand.'[27] The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel was seeking support in 1771 for 'an extensive plan' for 'additional Settlements of

[24] Beverly McAnear, 'The Raising of Funds by the Colonial Colleges', *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 38 (1952), 606.

[25] Michael J. Crawford, *Seasons of Grace: Colonial New England's Revival Tradition in its British Context* (New York, 1991).

[26] D. de Berdt to E. Wheelock, 24 March 1759, 'Letters of Dennys de Berdt 1757–70', *Publications of the Colonial History Society of Massachusetts*, 13 (1910–11), 413.

[27] Letter of 26 Aug. 1760, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 1123, no. 196.

Missions and Schools' beyond the work it was already undertaking.[28] The Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge had collected money to support the work of the famous missionary David Brainerd and was still very active in the North American missionary field. The sum of £12,000 was collected throughout England and Scotland in 1765–6 for Eleazor Wheelock's Indian school at Lebanon, Connecticut.[29]

II

On the eve of the Revolution the ties that bound the American colonies to the British Isles were very diverse indeed. The valuable material which Professor Jacob Price assembled in answer to his question, 'Who cared about the Colonies?' can be considerably amplified.[30] Many British people seem to have cared in ways that went beyond his careful quantification.

The multiplicity of ties suggests the growing vitality of empire up to the point of disruption, but it was a vitality marked by tensions as well as by many common interests. The gains of an expansive commerce seemed ambiguous to some. Old securities appeared to dissolve as more and more people were drawn into market transactions, arousing anxieties about the spread of luxury and a growing dependence on foreign goods. For all the opportunities created by an expanding British market and access to British credit, Americans became vulnerable to the importunities of their creditors and to economic disruptions across the Atlantic, such as that of 1772 caused by the failure of Scottish banks. As Jonathan Clark's *Language of Liberty* has stressed, competition between religious denominations was sharp and often bitter. A more assertive Anglicanism on both sides of the Atlantic was being matched by a militant heterodoxy of some sections of dissent.[31] The money expended by the new British garrison helped the colonies to balance their payments with Britain, but there was also anxiety about the presence of a standing army on American soil. In allocating American land the

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[28] [Robert Lowth], *A Sermon Preached before the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel at their Anniversary Meeting . . .* (1771), 24.

[29] William Kellaway, *The New England Company 1649–1776: Missionary Society to the American Indians* (1961), 191.

[30] 'Who Cared about the Colonies? The Impact of the Thirteen Colonies on British Society and Politics, circa 1714–1775', in *Strangers within the Realm*, 395–436.

[31] *The Language of Liberty: 1660–1832: Political Discourse and Social Dynamics in the Anglo-American World* (Cambridge, 1994).

crown was sometimes accused of favouring 'British gentlemen' rather than deserving colonials.[32]

Into these already turbulent waters British governments threw their sticks of dynamite, the Stamp Act, the Townshend Duties, the Coercive Acts and the eventual deployment of troops. The result was to create even greater turbulence in which a clear pattern is not always easy to see. Long-standing conflicts of debtor and creditor, Anglican and dissenter, tidewater and backcountry, western settler and native American, were exacerbated. Much of the fighting in America that spilled out beyond the operations of the continental army and the regular royal troops seems to have been about winning local supremacy or paying off old scores. Contention within English boroughs and counties as to whether to pledge loyalty to the king against his rebellious colonies or to beg him to call off the military repression of America could be an outlet for ideological divisions that went far beyond the specific question of America. To refer to petitioners for conciliation as 'pro-American', as is usually done, can be misleading; colonial grievances were generally seen in terms of a perceived threat by Lord North's government to the constitution and to religious liberty at home.[33]

Such a confused pattern of conflicts on both sides of the Atlantic suggests that the war that broke out in 1775 can perhaps best be interpreted as a civil war, or more accurately as a series of civil wars on both sides of the Atlantic. So in a real sense it was. Yet a single divide eventually superimposed itself on other antagonisms and rivalries: that was the divide between Britons and Americans. By measures which, until the clumsy attempts to isolate Massachusetts in 1774, were aimed at all the colonies, British governments did much to consolidate them into a united opposition, while by invoking the authority of parliament for these measures they created a situation in which it would be increasingly difficult for British opinion to condone this opposition.

This growing divide can be traced through linguistic usage. Colonial usage in the mid-eighteenth century varied considerably, but in general expressions of loyalty seem to have embraced two entities. There was talk of 'country' (*patria* by classical analogy), which usually meant the colony in which one lived, and there was talk of 'nation', which invariably meant 'Britain' or 'England', a term usually signifying much more than a geographical England, but extended to include values and rights associated with an ideal England. These two loyalties were in no way incompatible. The colonial American elites' view of their place in

[32] Paragraphs inserted by Franklin in the British press in 1767, *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, ed. L. W. Labaree *et al.*, 33 vols to date (New Haven, 1959–), XIV, 113, 131.

[33] For published collections of petitions, see *American Archives*, ed. Peter Force, 9 vols (Washington, 1837–53), 4th ser., III, and James E. Bradley, *Popular Politics and the American Revolution in England: Petitions, the Crown and Public Opinion* (Macon, Ga., 1986), 218–33.

the world, as recent scholarship has suggested, was not essentially different from that of the post-Union Scots or of Protestant Irish 'patriots'. Pride in one's homeland, be it South Carolina, Massachusetts, Jamaica, Lowland Scotland or Ireland, was not a kind of nationalism challenging what were taken to be the universal values of Englishness.[34] These values were proudly asserted and 'the rights of Englishmen' were endlessly cited as the inalienable rights of people in the colonies or in Ireland against anything that seemed to be discrimination against them by crown or parliament. A sense of 'America' that served either as an extended *patria* or as an alternative 'nation' seems not to have been well developed until the 1770s, when 'America', 'Americans' or Jefferson's term 'British Americans' became the standard usage, especially in controversy with Britain. When Americans finally renounced their loyalty to Britain, they often implied that they had been forced to do so because Britain had rejected them and betrayed its own English ideals.[35]

Until the 1770s, people in Britain were probably more given to generalising about Americans and to endowing them with common qualities than were people in the colonies. The Seven Years War encouraged such generalisations. Although British regular regiments recruited in America, the British and the 'American' soldier (from whatever colony he might come) were assumed to be different species. As a British officer put it, 'the native Americans are naturally an unmanageable and ungovernable people, utterly unacquainted with the nature of subordination in general' and therefore needing to be taught an entirely different pattern of drill.[36] The fighting qualities of 'Americans' or the contribution that 'America' as a whole appeared to be making to the war in terms of men, money and support for the British armies were frequently discussed in public debate, rarely to the advantage of America. A stereotype of a rich America, relying on Britain to defend it and making no adequate recompense for that defence, while even indulging in profitable trade with the enemy on the side, seems to have gained ground. Franklin took it upon himself in 1759 to correct items in the press that tended 'to render the colonies

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[34] S. J. Connolly, 'Varieties of Britishness: Ireland, Scotland and Wales in the Hanoverian State', *Uniting the Kingdom? The Making of British History*, ed. Alexander Grant and Keith J. Stringer (London, 1995), 193–207; Jacqueline Hill, *From Patriots to Unionists: Dublin Civic Politics and Irish Patriotism, 1660–1840* (Oxford, 1997); Colin Kidd, 'North Britishness and the Nature of Eighteenth-century British Patriotisms', *Historical Journal*, 39 (1996), 361–82. For a warning against seeing the Revolution in nationalist terms, see Clark, *Language of Liberty*, 19–20, 50–7.

[35] See T. H. Breen, 'Ideology and Nationalism on the Eve of the American Revolution: Revisions *Once More* in need of Revising', *Journal of American History*, 34 (1997), 13–39.

[36] A. Johnson to Lord Loudoun, 20 Dec. 1756, Huntington Library MSS, LO. 2371.

despicable, and even odious to the mother country'.[37] William Smith, on a mission to raise funds for the college at Philadelphia, found such prejudices still alive after the war. He reported from Liverpool in 1763 that it was believed that Americans 'had got all the advantages of the war, had born little of the burden, and were impudent beggars that would do nothing for ourselves'.[38]

The war made British people increasingly aware of a generic category of 'Americans'. How they understood the connection between themselves and these Americans is not very clear. Imperial idealists, such as Thomas Whately, William Knox or Arthur Young, insisted that the people of the colonies and of the British Isles were 'the same people' and constituted 'one nation' in Whately's and Young's words.[39] On the other hand, Lord Halifax, another imperial enthusiast, thought it realistic to suppose that 'the people of England' considered the inhabitants of the colonies as 'foreigners'.[40] Use of that term can certainly be found, as when an exasperated MP complained in 1766 of concessions being made 'to please these foreigners'.[41] The legal and official view was that Americans were British subjects, that is fellow subjects of the crown, and as such that they should be permitted to enjoy as wide a share of the rights of British subjects in the British Isles as was appropriate for them. The extent of their rights was not, however, for them to determine. It became increasingly the complaint of Americans in Britain that British opinion in general accepted that Americans were British subjects, but interpreted this to mean, not that they shared in a common inheritance of rights but that they were subjects of the British people as well as of the British crown. As Franklin famously put it, 'Every Man in England seems to consider himself as a Piece of a Sovereign over America; seems to jostle himself into the Throne with the King, and talks of OUR *Subjects in the Colonies*.'[42]

The great controversy between imperial authority and colonial rights that began in 1765 gave British opinion a sharper sense of a collective American identity and of American difference. Reports of riots through-

[37] Letter to *London Chronicle*, 9 May 1759, *Franklin Papers*, VIII, 340–56.

[38] Letter to T. Penn, 23 July 1763, Pennsylvania Historical Society, Smith MSS, reel XR 439.1.

[39] Whately, *The Regulations lately made concerning the Colonies and the Taxes imposed upon them, Considered* (1765), 39; Young, *Political Essays Concerning the Present State of the British Empire* (London, 1772), 1. For Knox the peoples of the colonies were 'members of the British community or state', *The Controversy between Great Britain and her Colonies Reviewed* (1769), 18.

[40] Letter to Archbishop of Canterbury, 6–7 May 1763, *Calendar of Home Office Papers of the Reign of George III, 1760–5* (1873), 279.

[41] Diary of James Harris, 14 April 1766, *Proceedings and Debates of the British Parliament Respecting North America 1754–1783*, ed. R. C. Simmons and P. D. G. Thomas, 6 vols to date (Milwood, NY, 1982–) II, 368–9.

[42] Letter to Lord Kames, 25 Feb. 1767, *Franklin Papers*, XIV, 67.

out the colonies, of a Stamp Act Congress claiming to speak for all 'the British colonies on this continent' and of co-ordinated non-importation agreements all implied an 'America' in opposition, according to one's point of view, to the policies of a specific British government or to the authority of Britain as a whole. This opposition seemed to adopt a uniformly radical tone with its stress on the natural right of the individual to consent to acts of government, above all to taxation. Allegations, which had been made during the Seven Years War, that Americans were infected with 'levelling' and old 'Oliverian' principles, seemed to be abundantly confirmed. The South Carolina Committee of Correspondence might complain in December 1765 that although the epithet 'republican' was being maliciously applied to the colonies, 'No people in the world can be more averse to republicanism than the British Americans',[43] but that was a lost cause and South Carolina did nothing to save it by voting a grant of £1,500 to Wilkes in 1769. As Americans appeared to identify their cause with the cause of English radicalism, what were taken to be American principles were increasingly seen as a challenge to properly constituted authority.

The Rockingham administration of 1765–6 was able to portray American recalcitrance as directed against specific policies and not against British authority in general. In so doing they were responding to, and in some degree stimulating, a considerable body of opinion outside parliament in petitions from ports and manufacturing areas for repeal of the Stamp Act. Thereafter the argument that American resistance was solely aimed at malign ministers and their tyrannical policies became increasingly difficult to sustain. From 1767 Americans in London noted with dismay the hardening of opinion, both among politicians and, as far as they could gauge it, out of doors, against Americans in general. 'America has few friends', William Johnson of Connecticut wrote on 9 June 1767. Though British opinion wished 'to keep all the colonies disunited, yet they seem too ready to impute to *all* the transgressions of any one of them, and consider them as all alike disaffected to this country and seeking an entire independency upon all Parliamentary restraint and authority...'.[44]

Governments after 1767 did not make policy for America in a vacuum. Even had they been inclined to do so, overtly renouncing parliamentary sovereignty or condoning some particularly flagrant piece of American defiance would have aroused strong opposition in parliament and outside it. Resorting to armed coercion in America in 1775 was another matter. That split the politicians, although not to an

extent that endangered the government, and, as James E. Bradley's meticulous research has clearly revealed,[45] it split opinion. Both members of the parliamentary opposition and some of those who signed petitions in such large numbers made efforts to reclaim Americans for the nation as an argument against war. Edmund Burke continued to refer to Americans as members of a single 'English' or, more rarely, 'British' 'race' or 'nation' until the later stages of the war.[46] Those who petitioned the king for conciliation referred to Americans not only as their 'fellow subjects', but often as their 'brethren'.[47]

For those who addressed the king with professions of loyalty, Americans were 'unnatural' rebels. Much was made of American ingratitude. They had been nurtured by Britain and saved in the last war by the expenditure of British blood and treasure.[48] Addresses from weaving towns in Wiltshire complained that Americans owed their 'Protection and Prosperity' to the exertions of their 'poorer Fellow Subjects' and would contribute nothing in return.[49] When the king's speech on 26 October 1775 invoked the high 'Spirit of the *British* Nation', Americans were most certainly not included.[50] The Prohibitory Act with its provisions that American ships and trade were 'the Ships and Effects of open Enemies' put the colonies out of the nation beyond any conceivable doubt.[51] Congress confirmed this by its declaration of independence and by seeking the alliance of the Bourbon powers.

III

At the end of the war Lord Shelburne and his colleagues in the peace-making process had aspirations for a continuing union of peoples, but once peace had been made and Britain had been able to dictate the terms of the post-war commercial relationship, her new political leadership seems to have taken as little interest in developments in the United States as their predecessors in the 1760s had done in developments in the thirteen colonies. It was therefore largely left to merchants, religious communities, promoters of emigration and indi-

[45] *Popular Politics and the American Revolution* and *Religion, Revolution and English Radicalism: Non-Conformity in Eighteenth-Century Politics and Society* (Cambridge, 1990).

[46] *The Speeches and Writings of Edmund Burke*, 7 vols to date (Oxford, 1980–), III, ed. Warren M. Elofson and John A. Woods, 248, 251, 303, 328, 350, 354.

[47] See, for instance, the protest of the Freeholders of Middlesex, 26 Sept. 1775, against sending 'armed legions of Englishmen thence to cut the throats of Englishmen' (*American Archives*, 4th ser., III, 786).

[48] For example, Dundee petition, *London Gazette*, 4–7 Nov. 1775.

[49] Ibid., 17–21 Oct. 1775.

[50] *Journals of the House of Commons*, XXXV, 398.

[51] 16 Geo. III, c. 5.

viduals of all sorts to try to knit together the arteries slashed through by war and separation.

Some things were restored relatively easily. British–American trade revived quickly, although there were casualties among the old British firms.[52] British emigration across the Atlantic also revived. Irish people began to return to the new republic almost at once in even larger numbers than before 1775; Scots at first tended to head further north to what was still British territory.[53] There was a forced emigration of loyalists to Britain. They continued to use the concepts of the 'country' from which they were exiled and the 'nation' to which they now looked for justice.[54] They rarely seem to have felt themselves at home when they crossed the Atlantic; 'Ironically the loyalists only realized how American they were after they had abandoned America.'[55] British opinion seems to have been in no doubt that they were his majesty's loyal American subjects, not part of the British nation, and the great bulk of them settled not in Britain but in surviving British colonies.

The Revolution produced a vigorous republican critique of imported tastes in favour of home-grown American simplicity, but, as Richard Bushman puts it, 'The multifaceted criticism of gentility did not impede in the slightest the pursuit of refinement.'[56] Refinement was still deemed to come from Europe, above all from England, and American visitors continued to come to Britain to improve themselves and their offspring.

The war weakened transatlantic religious networks. All American religious denominations asserted their independence from churches in Britain. A powerful sense of a unique American providential destiny replaced pre-revolutionary ideals of a single elect nation on both sides of the Atlantic. British–American projects for the redemption of the Indians foundered, although the enemies of slavery and the slave trade on both sides of the ocean increasingly made common cause after 1783.[57] The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel abandoned its mission to the old thirteen colonies, leaving the seriously damaged American Anglican church to fend for itself. British dissenters no longer acted as the patrons of their colonial brethren who were now nominally at least emancipated from religious establishments and any sort of

[52] Olson, *Making the Empire Work*, 182–3.

[53] T. C. Smout, N. C. Landsman and T. M. Devine, 'Scottish Emigration in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', L. M. Cullen, 'The Irish Diaspora of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', *Europeans on the Move: Studies on European Migration, 1500–1800*, ed. Nicholas Canny (Oxford, 1994), 97–8, 148.

[54] *The Case and Claim of the American Loyalists Impartially Stated and Considered* [1783], 2.

[55] Mary Beth Norton, *The British–Americans: The Loyalist Exiles in England 1774–89* (1974), 41.

[56] *The Refinement of America*, 195.

[57] Betty Fladeland, *Men and Brothers: Anglo-American Anti-Slavery Co-operation* (Urbana, 1972).

discrimination. The flow of charitable donations from Britain dried up.[58] Scots professors were still being imported, but a new basis for a national and republican education was being sought. When the Royal Society asked Arthur Lee for arrears in his subscription, he replied that 'since the establishment of American independence he had considered himself as no longer a fellow of the Royal Society'. In 1788 the Society duly elected the president of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, but from the list of 'foreign candidates'.[59]

Although there were strong continuities with the pre-revolutionary past, much could not be restored. Links for which the empire had provided the framework weakened or snapped when that empire foundered. The proposition that British ministers, motivated by a high-minded sense of national necessity but abysmally ignorant of American realities, had driven the empire onto the rocks seems irrefutable. Yet responsibility for the wreck of empire by no means rests exclusively with ministers. Far from entreating the ship's officers to change course, a large contingent of the British passengers and crew, especially those who enjoyed the more comfortable berths, had cheered them on.

Ministerial policies had forced the peoples of the empire in the last resort to choose between a British or an American allegiance. British people might esteem individual Americans and value empire, but for most of them it must be an empire in proper subordination to Britain, which was the focus for their loyalty. Only during the campaign against the Stamp Act, a campaign which had the support of the then administration, is there evidence of significant dissent in parliament or outside it for the policies that had asserted parliamentary supremacy over the colonies. As the great petitioning movement of 1775 demonstrated, many British people who accepted the subordinate status of the colonies within the British empire did not wish to fight a war to enforce that subordination. Yet Bradley, who has done so much to reveal the strength of dissent against the war, shows that people of power and influence in society tended strongly to the government side in England in 1775: Anglican clergy, the law, office-holders, members of corporations, 'a large complement of gentlemen, baronets and esquires and at least half the merchants in any given setting'.[60] In Scotland the preponderance among such people would have been even greater. British army officers accepted the duty of suppressing rebellion with relatively little dissent.[61] Americans liked to believe that those with a practical interest in the empire would in general support conciliation.

[58] Olson, *Making the Empire Work*, 186.
[59] Stearns, 'Colonial Fellows', 251–2, 267–8.
[60] *Religion, Revolution and English Radicalism*, 394.
[61] Stephen Conway, 'British Army Officers and the American War for Independence', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 41 (1984), 265–76.

This was not necessarily so. To care about the colonies did not always entail sharing colonial points of view. Merchants with colonial connections in London, Bristol and Lancashire seem to have been split over the war,[62] while Glasgow's delay, unlike other Scottish burghs, in formally pledging its loyalty seems to have been a tactical response to the vulnerability of the tobacco trade.[63]

In what they rejected in 'Americans', people of substance in British society defined their own beliefs. The American and the Irish doctrine of a series of autonomous *patriae*, enjoying the full rights of Englishmen, united by allegiance to the crown and at the best by the recognition of an ill-defined superiority owed to the Westminster parliament, was unacceptable. In the first place, the interpretation of the rights of Englishmen with its emphasis on individual consent was thought to be out of date. British people now enjoyed a freedom that depended on accepting the authority of the legislature and obeying the due processes of law. Secondly, autonomous *patriae* were incompatible with the needs of national survival in an age of fierce international rivalry. The British empire was based on freedom, but this must be tempered by obedience to central authority on vital issues. Those, like the Scots, who were willing to accept a full parliamentary union could be incorporated into the British nation. That solution was, however, impractical for trans-oceanic colonies and in any case the Americans by their reluctance to co-operate for the common good and later by their flagrant defiance of the British legislature had ruled themselves out of any such privilege. All that could be done was to attempt by persuasion and ultimately by force to bring them back to their obedience as subjects of crown and parliament. Those who dissented from the war against the colonies could later reassert their Britishness in the war against the traditional Bourbon enemies of Britain.

The American crisis brought out starkly the limitations on evolving British concepts of nationhood. It could not be exported beyond the British Isles. Nevertheless, a territorially limited doctrine of nationhood was by no means incompatible with grandiose imperial ambitions. Common subjecthood was not a status that need be confined to people of British origins. While British Americans were rejecting it, it was being extended to French people in America and events were taking place in India which would mean its eventual extension to millions of people in Asia.

[62] Bradley, *Popular Politics and the American Revolution*, 81–2, 190; John Sainsbury, *Disaffected Patriots: London Supporters of Revolutionary America 1769–1782* (Kingston, 1987), 117; Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715–1785* (Cambridge, 1995), 270.
[63] T. M. Devine, *The Tobacco Lords: A Study of the Tobacco Merchants of Glasgow and their Trading Activities*, c. *1740–90* (Edinburgh, 1975), 124.