Susana Perez Garcia

Enter the Name of Instructor

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The debate over taxation and representation

# British Perspective

After the conclusion of the seven years’ war (widely known as the French- Indian War), Britain’s annexed long patches of land in North America. The war which Britain fought for seven years cost a lot in terms of finances to Britain. They could not retain the spillover effect of the war on their domestic economy (Braudel and Mayne). In order to support the other voyages and to retain the statue of the domestic economy, Britain started looking for ways to pay the debt. For the reason of depleted economy in Britain, the British government refrained from imposing new taxes on people in Britain. In order to meet the demanding gap, they found the American colonists as the right resource to help meet the financial crisis. Another reason for the growing attention toward the North American colonies was to prevent the effect of French- Indian collaboration. The French- Indian collaboration was viewed as threatening for the British Empire.

In order to limit the influence of France, Britain reasserted its position over the North American colonies in many ways. At first, through the Proclamation Act of 1973, Britain stopped the Westward expansion. The only reason it stopped the westward expansion was to develop the North American colonies in an orderly manner. Another manner used by Britain to influence the Northern colonies was to increase the revenue generation (Jennings). It increased the duties over colonies related to trade and development. In 1764, it enacted the Sugar law over the colonies. The sugar act helped Britain in limiting bribery and smuggling. The British Parliament then passed the stamp act in 1765. The colonists in America resented strongly to the stamp act. They were unable to understand the reason for paying tax on documents. The impression that colonists are not liable to pay the taxes was strongly criticized by Britain. From Britain’s perspective, the new taxes were imposed, so that the Americans can share the burden of the collateral economy with Britain (Chomsky and Dieterich).

The colonies in Northern America were under the control of Great Britain. Since the early days in the colonies, Britain saw the colonies as a source of wealth, especially after the discovery of gold and the plantation of tobacco. Since the colonist was dependent for the very basic needs over Britain, and they had Britain as the only major trading partner, therefore, Britain considered it a right to further colonize the colonies. Although gradually, Britain started losing the grip over colonies, trade links and defense of the colonies largely remained with Britain. Since a mighty part of their defense remained with Britain, so Britain considered this the right to look after the matters of colonies which they considered as their inheritance.

# American perspective

From the American perspective, things were quite different. Each American viewed the growing imposition of taxes as a financial burden. They were not ready to accept the fact that Britain was doing this all under the financial constraint it was facing. Another reason is that the colonists rejected the imposition of taxes was the weak economic conditions. There was no rapid production which could have made them able to pay taxes. Secondly, the Northern and Southern both were associated with small businesses (Braudel and Mayne). In Massachusetts, only the fishing industry was producing that wealth which could have paid huge new taxes imposed by Britain. Other than Massachusetts, the other colonies relied upon self-sufficiency. Colonists used to produce products of daily usage by themselves and the concept of industrial-scale was lacking. In large colonies like Carolina and Virginia, people relied on imported items to meet their domestic requirements. These imports by colonists benefited the markets of London, Bristol, and Liverpool (Chomsky and Dieterich).

However, as the colonies grew the process of industrialization developed. The colonists who were associated with agriculture and livestock used to pay the taxes, though the tax burden for them increased. Later on, with the development of the industries and growth in agriculture, Britain expanded the tax ration. They also encouraged the colonists to expand the trade networks with Britain in order to support Britain's economy. With the imposition of general taxes and the stamp act tax specifically, the anti- Britain impression among the colonists became strong. Many colonists who were associated with trade started facing declines and gradually they took their shares out of the mighty economy. Although it was hurting for the economy of both Britain and colonies, the Britishers continued to exploit the economy of the colonies. The American impression which was anti- Britain from decades started materializing, which resulted in wars and frequent clashes.

For Americans, the relationship with Britain was crucial. For each little endeavor, they were dependent on support from Britain (Stoler). During the early years of colonization, the colonists considered their relationship with Britain as important for their defense against the French- Indian collaboration. Later on, for political support and economic assistance, Britain was so crucial for the colonies. However, with time, Britain started expanding its political control over the colonies which was becoming simply unbearable for the colonies. Another reason, the colonists were fed up with Britain’s control was the development of their own army (Stoler). Gradually, it all helped the colonies to stand on their feet a strong and growing nation. For colonists, the relationship with Britain soon became a burden which they believed must be sided away.

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