Precedent, principle, and practice: The role of Ireland, Scotland, and Wales in the parliamentary debates on the American Revolution, 1765-1776

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

Nicole Maib

Department of Social and Political Sciences, Brunel University London

2026

Abstract

This thesis analyses the British parliamentary debates in the House of Commons and House of Lords from the years 1765-1776 and the private correspondence of select MPs and Peers to explain and discuss the arguments presented in Parliament during the course of the conflict between Britain and the American colonies which culminated in the Declaration of Independence on 4 July 1776. When viewed from the perspective of the parliamentary debates, MPs and Peers consistently based their decisions regarding the conflict on past precedents established within the realm of Great Britain and Ireland, thus the countries of Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. Parliamentarians used these precedents to argue for the case of principle (whether it was right to act) or practice (whether it was wise to do so) on the proposed measures, whether that be conciliatory or coercive. More significantly, Parliamentarians became increasingly concerned about how their responses and actions towards the American colonies could alter the terms of Parliament's sovereignty and its relations and authority over nations throughout its realm, most especially with Ireland and Scotland. There was real potential for the British American conflict to inspire and provoke similar rebellious movements for independence in other parts of the British realm, most particularly in Ireland. This thesis concludes that Parliament's steadfast reliance on and concern to uphold historic policy precedents set with Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, became a key strategy for managing the evolving political crisis with the American colonies during this period. This approach, however, failed to consider the American colonies' unique status within the realm. In turn, this clouded and impeded Parliament's decision-making process because, to Parliament, it was not purely a case of maintaining its authority and sovereignty over the American colonies, but also over those nations much closer to home, namely Ireland, Scotland, and Wales.

Contents

MPs and Peers

This is a complete list of all MPs/Peers who appear in this thesis. They are classified by the name which was predominantly used to describe them throughout the debates (and in this thesis). For example, Charles Pratt (Lord Camden) is classified as Lord Camden.

Key: [Capt.] Captain; [Col.] Colonel; [Drag.] Dragoons; [Ft. Gds.] Foot Guards; [GB] Great Britain; [Gen.] General; [Hon.] Honourable; [I] Ireland; [K.C.] King's Council; [Lt.] Lieutenant; [P.C.] Privy Council; [S] Scotland; [W] Wales.

Barré, Isaac (1726-1802)

MP for Chipping Wycombe 5 December 1761-1774; Calne 1774-1790; Ensign 32 Ft. 1746, Lieutenant 1755, Captain 28 Ft. 1760, Lieutenant-Colonel 106 Ft. 1761-2; Adjutant-General March-December 1763; Governor Stirling Castle April-December 1763; Retired 1773; P.C. 10 September 1766; Joint Vice-Treasurer [I] September 1766-October 1768; Treasurer of the Navy April-July 1782; Paymaster General July 1782-April 1783; Clerk of the Pells January 1784-d.

Irish; Military background from 1746-1773; Served in America during the Seven Years' War; Aligned with Shelburne.

One of the most "Americanists" in Parliament and warned from as early as 1770 that Britain faced an imperial crisis should they continue to fight the Americans. Barré's speeches in Parliament showed his exasperation at many MPs' views of America.

Barrington, Lord William Wildman (1717-1793)

MP for Berwick-Upon-Tweed 13 March 1740-1754, Plymouth 1754-24 May 1778; Lord of Admiralty February 1746-April 1754; Master of the Great Wardrobe April 1754-October 1755; P.C. 11 March 1755; Secretary at War October 1755-March 1761; Chancellor of the Exchequer March 1761-May 1762; Treasurer of the Navy June 1762-July 1765; Secretary at War July 1765-December 1778; Joint Postmaster General January-April 1782.

Second Viscount Barrington in Ireland.

Barrington's military involvement made his commitment to the Commander-in-Chief's position in America unsurprising.

Beauchamp, Lord (Francis Seymour Conway) (1743-1822)

MP for Lostwithiel 4 April 1766-1768, Orford 1768-14 June 1794; MP [I] 1761-76; Secretary to Lord Lieutenant [I] July 1765-August 1766; P.C. [I] 18 October 1765; Constable of Dublin Castle September 1766-d; Lord of Treasury 1774-80; P.C. [GB] 2 February 1780; Cofferer of Household 1780-March 1782; Master of the Horse 1804-6; Lord Chamberlain 1812-21; Lord Lieutenant of Warwickshire 1816-d.

MP in the Irish Parliament; Irish P.C.; Follower of North; Nephew of General Henry Seymour Conway.

Voted against the Tea Duties during the years of the Townshend crisis but felt particularly passionate about the application of the Treason Act in America. Beauchamp would go on to become a follower of Lord North, so his advocacy for aggressive measures is unsurprising.

Beckford, William (1709-1770)

MP for Shaftesbury 8 December 1747-1754, London 1754-21 June 1770; Alderman of London 1752; London Sheriff 1755-6; Lord Mayor of London 1762-3, 1769-1770.

West-Indies planter; West-Indian interests in Parliament; Chathamite; Former Jacobite; Radical.

As one of the first "Americanists", Beckford argued against the Stamp Act on the grounds that the colonists were British subjects and that there were no precedents for internal taxes in the colonies.

Burke, Edmund (1729-1797)

MP for Wendover 23 December 1765-1774, Bristol 1774-1780, Malton 7 December 1780-11 July 1794; Agent for New York 1771-5; Private Secretary to the First Lord of the Treasury July 1765-July 1766; P.C. 30 March 1782; Paymaster General March-July 1782, April-December 1783.

Irish; Cousin of MP William Burke; Rockinghamite.

Burke does not appear in this thesis until his conciliatory propositions in 1775. I consider Burke a "Conciliatory Imperialist." While he called for measures such as taxation by representation and constitutional security for the colonies, his ultimate vision was for Parliament to maintain its imperial governing role for the empire's dependencies while allowing certain local privileges.

Camden, Lord (Charles Pratt) (1714-1794)

MP for Downton 13 July 1757-January 1762; K.C. 1755; Attorney-General to Prince of Wales 1756-7; Attorney General July 1757-January 1762; Recorder, Bath 1759-d; Lord Chief Justice of the Common Pleas January 1762-July 1766; P.C. 15 February 1762; Lord Chancellor July 1766-January 1770; Lord President March 1782-March 1783, December 1784-d.

Lawyer; Chathamite.

This research shows that Lord Camden was clearly more involved in the colonial crisis than is depicted in the historiography. Consistently in opposition, his view that Parliament did not have the right to tax the colonies without representation was prominent in the

Stamp Act repeal debates and was arguably a catalyst in escalating the overall discussion on principle and imperial involvement.

Cathcart, Lord Charles Schaw (1721-1776)
Scottish Peer; Military background.

Cathcart's late appearance in the debates might indicate a limited overall involvement in the American crisis but his outspoken views on the necessity of favouring the ministry were influenced by his military career and participation in suppressing the 1745 Scottish rebellion.

Chatham, Lord (William Pitt the Elder) (1708-1778)
MP for Old Sarum 18 February 1735-1747, Seaford 1747-1754, Aldborough 1754-December 1756, Buckingham 7-11 December 1756, Okehampton 11 December 1756-July 1757, Bath 9 July 1757-4 August 1766; Cornet, Cobham's Horse 1731-6; Groom of Bedchamber to Prince of Wales 1737-45; P.C. 28 May 1746; Joint Vice-Treasurer [I] February-May 1746; Paymaster General 1746-55; Secretary of State for the Southern Department December 1756-April 1757, July 1757-October 1761; Lord Privy Seal July 1766-October 1768.

Prime Minister, 1766-1768; Credited with success in the Seven Years' War; Brother-in-Law to George Grenville.

In and out of Parliament during the American crisis due to illness, Chatham's opinions on American rights were often seen as unique, especially in relation to Parliament's right to tax versus Parliament's right to legislate.

Clare, Lord (Robert Nugent) (1709-1788)
MP for St. Mawes 1741-1754, Bristol 1754-1774, St. Mawes 1774-June 1784; Comptroller of the Household to the Prince of Wales 1747-51; Lord of the Treasury April 1754-December 1759; P.C. 15 December 1759; Joint Vice-Treasurer [I] January 1760-July 1765; First Lord of Trade December 1766-Jnuary 1768; Joint Vice-Treasurer [I] July 1768-March 1782.

Irish descent; Irish Peer: Viscount Clare for Ireland (Lord Clare), 1767; Grenvillite.

Even though a strong "Coercionist", Lord Clare's Irish background made him more favourable to proceedings that would prevent rebellion from spreading to his birthplace. For instance, during the Stamp Act repeal debates, he cautioned an imperial wide rebellion, especially in Ireland. However, when it came to matters involving the internal structure of the colonies, Clare was unashamed to advocate for the show of Parliament's authority in terms of the Massachusetts Government Act, yet, also in the belief that this would prevent rebellion in America.

Conway, Hon. Henry Seymour (1719-1795)

MP for Higham Ferrers 28 December 1741-1747, Penryn 1747-1754, St. Mawes 1754-1761, Thetford 1761-1774, Bury St. Edmunds 27 March 1775-1784; Lt. 5 Drag. 1737; Capt.-Lt. 8 Drag. 1740; Capt.-Lt. 1 Ft. Gds. And Lt.-Col. 1741; Capt. 1 Ft. Gds. 1742; Col. 1746; Col. 48 Ft. 1746-9, 34 Ft. 1749-51, 13 Drag. 1751-4, 4 Horse 1754-9; Major-General 1756; Lieutenant-General 1759; Colonel 1 Drag. 1759-64, 4 Drag. 1768-70, Royal Horse Guards 1770-d; Gen. 1772; Governor of Jersey 1772-d; Field Marshal 1793; MP [I] 1741-61; Groom of the bedchamber 1757-64; P.C. 10 July 1765; Secretary of State for the Southern Department July 1765-May 1766, Secretary of State for the Northern Department May 1766-January 1768; Lieutenant-General of Ordnance August 1767-October 1772; Commander-in-Chief of the army March 1782-December 1783.

MP for the Irish Parliament 1741-1761; Politically involved in American affairs; Served during 1745 Scottish rebellion; Uncle of Lord Beauchamp.

Despite his military involvement during the Scottish rebellion, Conway remained sympathetic to the American cause throughout the crisis, despite other members with a military background being much more supportive of coercive measures. Perhaps his stint as an Irish MP also made him sympathetic to those less favoured by the British government, especially as he ridiculed Parliament during the Coercive Acts debates by arguing that no MP would ever suggest taxing Ireland (despite their right in principle to tax both Ireland and America).

Cooper, Grey (c.1726-1801)

MP for Rochester 23 December 1765-1768, Grampound 1768-1774, Saltash 1774-1784, Richmond 7 February 1786-1790; Secretary to Treasury 1765-March 1782; K.C. duchy of Lancaster 1765-d; Lord of Treasury April-December 1783; P.C. 29 April 1796.

Lawyer; Rockinghamite.

Cooper's strong advocacy for the Boston Port Bill was due to his belief that the rebellion lay with the majority of Bostonians. Yet, his arguments portray the theme of principle v. practice. While he clearly believed coercive measures were the answer to the American crisis, Cooper wanted to act expediently (a further reflection of one of the common approaches of the Rockingham Party), hence his disapproval of the Massachusetts Justice Act.

Dartmouth, Lord (William Legge) (1731-1801)

Peer 1755; President of the Board of Trade 1765; Secretary of State for the Colonies 1772-1775; P.C. 1765-1782.

North's stepbrother; Rockinghamite.

Dartmouth does not consistently appear in this thesis, but solely for the reason that his speeches did not strongly reference precedents. However, he does appear a few times in relation to correspondence between him and other prominent Parliamentarians. Overall,

his key role as Secretary of State during major events in the American crisis made him a main character during the Revolutionary Era.

De Grey, William (1719-1781)

MP for Newport 7 December 1761-January 1770, Cambridge University 1 February 1770-26 January 1771; Solicitor-General to the Queen 1761-3; Solicitor-General December 1763-6 August 1766; Attorney-General 1766-71; Lord Chief Justice of Common Pleas 1771-80.

De Gery was involved in the first debate on the Treason Act in 1769. De Grey's legal background lent him particularly strong opinions on the principle of the Act, that it was in fact legal to apply to the colonies, but he did not think it was expedient to do so.

Dempster, George (1732-1818)

MP for Perth Burghs 1761-1768, 4 April 1769-1790; Secretary to the Order of the Thistle August 1765-d; Director of the East India Company 1769, 1772-3.

Scottish; Advocated for Scottish benefits; Rockinghamite.

Speaking for American rights in terms of local taxation towards the end of the debates, Dempster's Scottish background perhaps makes his position unsurprising as he fought for Scotland to receive favourable parliamentary measures as well.

Dowdeswell, William (1721-1775)

MP for Tewkesbury 1747-1754, Worcestershire 1761-6 February 1775; P.C. 10 July 1765; Chancellor of the Exchequer July 1765-July 1766.

Leader of Rockingham Party in the House of Commons, 1766-1775.

While Dowdeswell spoke mostly against coercive measures, it was not due to his favour of the colonies. Rather, like most Rockinghamites, Dowdeswell advocated for conciliatory measures due to expedience; for instance, allowing the colonists local trials when discussing the Treason Act. Dowdeswell in particular feared repercussions for Britain should they treat the Americans too harshly.

Dunning, John (1731-1783)

MP for Calne 1768-March 1782; Recorder, Bristol 1766-d; Bencher, M. Temple 1768, Reader 1776, Treasurer 1779; Solicitor-General January 1768-January 1770; P.C. 27 March 1782; Chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster March 1782-d.

Lawyer; Political alignment with Shelburne and Camden.

Despite Dunning's political allegiances (to those more sympathetic to the American cause), he advocated for both the application of the Treason Act in the colonies and Parliament's right to tax America. This ultimately shows that the American crisis caused so much conflict in Parliament, that it caused division even in political factions.

Effingham, Earl of (Hon. Thomas Howard) (1721-1783)

MP for Castle Rising 1747-1768, Malmesbury 1768-1774, Mitchell 29 December 1774-10 August 1779.

Lawyer; Possible Grenvillite.

Effingham does not appear until the debates of 1776 in which he warned of the possible threat from France.

Fox, Hon. Charles James (1749-1806)

MP for Midhurst 1768-1774, Malmesbury 1774-1780, Westminster 1780-1784, Tain Burghs 1784-4 March 1785, Westminster 4 March 1785-13 September 1806; Lord of Admiralty February 1770-February 1772; Lord of Treasury January 1773-February 1774; P.C. 30 March 1782, struck off 9 May 1798, restored 5 February 1806; Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs March-July 1782, April-December 1783, February 1806-d.

Opposition.

Fox was instrumental in the last two years of proceedings. His strong advocacy for Parliament to adhere strictly to precedents established in Ireland shaped the final years of debate almost solely around this question.

Fuller, Rose (?1708-1777)

MP for New Romney 8 December 1756-1761, Maidstone 1761-1768, Rye 1768-7 May 1777; Jamaican politics 1730s-40s.

Wealthy Jamaican planter; West Indian interests.

One of the consistent "Americanists" throughout the debates, Fuller warned of the potential crisis they faced with the unprecedented Stamp Act and against the extremity of the Boston Port Bill.

Germain, Lord George (Sackville) (1716-1785)

MP for Dover 1741-1761, Hythe 1761-1768, East Grinstead 1768-11 February 1782; Capt. 3 Horse 1737; Lieutenant-Colonel 28 Ft. 1740; Colonel of the Army 1745; Colonel 20 Ft. 1746-9, 12 Drag. 1749-50, 3 Horse 1750-7; Major-General 1755; Colonel 2 Drag. Gds. 1757-9; Lieutenant-General 1758; Lieutenant-General of the Ordnance 1758-9; Commander-in-Chief of the British forces, Germany October 1758; Dismissed the service 1759; M.P. [I] 1733-61; Ranger of Phoenix Park 1736-d.; Clerk of the Council [I] 1737-d.; P.C. [I] 19 Sept. 1751; Chief Secretary [I] 1751-5; P.C. [GB] 27 January 1758-25 April 1760, 20 December 1765-d.; Joint Vice-Treasurer [I] December 1765-July 1766; First Lord of Trade November 1775-November 1779; Secretary of State for America November 1775-February 1782.

Major role in Irish politics: MP in the Irish Parliament (1733-1761) and member of the Irish Privy Council (1751).

Germain had very aggressive views on the colonies and firmly believed coercive measures were the only way to proceed. While he did not appear prominently during the main debates in the period 1765-1776, his collection of political correspondence by many key figures, such as Governor Pownall and Benjamin Franklin, was invaluable.

Grafton, Duke of (Augustus Henry Fitzroy) (1735-1811)

MP for Boroughbridge 10 December-21 December 1756, Bury St. Edmunds 21 December 1756-6 May 1757; Lord of the bedchamber to the Prince of Wales 1756-7; Lord Lieutenant Suff. 1757-63, 1769-90; P.C. 10 July 1765; Secretary of State for the Northern Department July 1765-April 1766; 1st Lord of Treasury July 1766-January 1770; Chancellor of Cambridge University 1768; Lord Privy Seal June 1771-October 1775, March 1782-February 1783.

Prime Minister, 1768-1770.

The Duke of Grafton's opinions on limiting the Crown's authority when Parliament was challenged by the King's involvement with foreign troops spoke to the emerging complications on Parliament's view of their authority. Furthermore, his insistence that the American colonies were as equally a part of the realm as Scotland, underscored his position on Parliament's imperial governance.

Grenville, George (1712-1770)

MP for Buckingham 1741-13 November 1770; Lord of Admiralty 1744-7; Lord of Treasury 1747-54; P.C. 21 June 1754; Treasurer of Navy March 1754-November 1755, November 1756-April 1757, June 1757-May 1762; Secretary of State May-October 1762; First Lord of Admiralty October 1762-April 1763; First Lord of Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer April 1763-July 1765.

Prime Minister, 1763-5; Brother-in-Law of William Pitt and Lord Egremont; Brother of Lord Temple.

Most famous for his Stamp Act, Grenville's actions as Prime Minister arguably sparked and shaped the American crisis. He exhibited unflinchingly strong reactions against the Americans for questioning Parliament's authority. His passing in 1770 explains why he does not feature in this analysis of the parliamentary debates after this date.

Hamilton, Hon. Charles (1704-1786)

MP for Truro 1741-1747; MP [I] 1727-60; Clerk of the household to Frederick, Prince of Wales 1738-47; Receiver General of the Revenues of Minorca 1743-57.

MP in the Irish Parliament, 1727-1760.

Even though only appearing during the time of the Stamp Act repeal, he sensed the enormity of the situation with the colonies and the potential ramifications for England depending on their response.

Hartley, David (c. 1730-1813)

MP for Kingston-Upon-Hull 1774-1780, 6 June 1782-1784.

Financial analyst.

Hartley played a significant role in parliamentary proceedings in 1776. Hartley's vision of empire was quite surprising to Parliament when introduced. While suggesting that America be treated like Ireland, he also advocated for uniformity across all territories.

Harvey, Edward (1718-1778)

MP for Gatton 5 December 1761-1768, Harwich 1768-27 March 1778; Cornet 10 Drag. 1741, Lieutenant 1744; Captain 7 Drag. 1747, Major 1751; Lieutenant-Colonel 6 Drag. 1754; Colonel 1760; Major-General 1762; Colonel 12 Drag. 1763-4; Colonel 3 Horse 1764-75; Adjutant-General of the Forces 1765-d; Lieutenant-General 1772; Governor of Portsmouth 1773-d; Colonel 6 Drag. 1775-d.

Considered an ally of Fox, Bute, and Rockingham.

Harvey's military background most likely influenced his rather conservative attitudes towards the colonies and advocacy for Parliament's imperial authority.

Huske, John (1724-1773)

MP for Maldon 26 April 1763-October 1773; Chief Clerk and Deputy to the Treasurer of the Chamber December 1756-March 1761.

Born in New Hampshire; American political connections; Boston merchant; Rockinghamite.

Huske was one of the few to argue that the distinct circumstances, character, and history of the American colonies required a different approach to policy and process than Parliament was accustomed to.

Irnham, Lord (Simon Luttrell) (1713-1787)

MP for Mitchell 24 March 1755-1761, Wigan 1761-1768, Weobley 1768-1774, Stockbridge 1774-1780.

Irish; Irish Peer; Grenvillite; Father of Henry, James, John, and Temple Luttrell.

Despite Irnham's connection with Grenville, he feared the spread of rebellion to Great Britain and Ireland and ultimately conceded that the Americans should have the right to tax themselves, indicating a sympathy with the American cause possibly due to a sense of shared colonial rule born of his Irish roots.

Jenkinson, Charles (1729-1808)

MP for Cockermouth 1761-December 1766, Appleby 20 January 1767-July 1772, Harwich 7 August 1772-1774, Hastings 1774-1780, Saltash 1780-21 August 1786;

Private Secretary to Lord Holdernesse 1758-61; Under-Secretary of State March 1761-May 1762; Private Secretary to Bute as First Lord of Treasury, and Treasurer of the Ordnance May 1762-April 1763; Joint Secretary to the Treasury April 1763-July 1765; Auditor to the Princess Dowager July 1765-1772; Lord of Admiralty December 1766-December 1767, of Treasury December 1767-January 1773; Joint Vice-Treasurer [I] January 1773-October 1775; P.C. 5 February 1773; Clerk of the Pells [I] 1775-d; Secretary at War 1778-March 1782; Member of the Board of Trade 1784, President 1786-1804; Chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster 1786-1803.

Ally of Bute, Grenville, and North.

In 1775, Jenkinson declared Parliament's right to tax America, unsurprisingly, considering his political connections to those with more coercive views.

Jennings, Philip (1722-1788)

MP for Totnes 1768-14 January 1788; Lieutenant 36 Ft. 1741; Captain 8 Ft. 1744; Major I Troop Horse Gds. 1746; Lieutenant-Colonel 1761; Retired 1770.

Loosely connected as a Chathamite.

Jennings appears as a conciliatory MP who spoke against the Massachusetts Justice Act for fear of impartial trials should the accused be moved for trial.

Johnstone, George (1730-1787)

MP for Cockermouth 24 May 1768-1774, Appleby 1774-1780, Lostwithiel 1 December 1780-1784, Ilchester 22 February 1786-February 1787; Governor of West Florida 1763-7; Director of the East India Company 1784-6.

British naval service; Role in American politics.

Johnstone's position as Governor in the colonies made him uniquely aware and informed about the role of the Commander-in-Chief in the colonies, in particular, that the Governor should retain military power. Furthermore, Johnstone advocated for the Americans to have their own legislative authority and the ability to tax themselves. Finally, his military background made him particularly alive to the threat of an Irish rebellion.

Luttrell, Hon. Henry Lawes (?1737-1821)

MP for Bossiney 1768-April 1769, Middlesex 15 April 1769-1774, Bossiney 1774-1784, Plympton Erle 1790-February 1794, Ludgershall 28 June 1817-25 April 1821; Ensign 48 Ft. 1757; Lieutenant 34 Ft. 1759; Captain 16 Lieutenant Drag. 1759, Major 1762; Deputy Adjutant-General in Portugal and Local Lieutenant-Colonel 1762; Lieutenant-Colonel I Horse 1765; Adjutant-General [I] 1770-83; Colonel 1777; Major-General 1782; Lieutenant-General of Ordnance [I] 1787-97; Colonel 6 Drag. Gds. 1788-d; Lieutenant-General 1793; Commander-in-Chief [I] 1796-7; Master-General of Ordnance [I] 1797-1800; General 1798; MP [I] 1783-7.

Irish; Son of Lord Irnham (Simon Luttrell) and brothers with Parliamentarians James, John, and Temple Simon Luttrell; Addressed as Captain.

Luttrell warned that the oppressive parliamentary measures were actually contributing to the worsening of the rebellion.

Luttrell, Hon. Temple Simon (?1738 [sic]-1803)
MP for Milborne Port 10 February 1775-1780.

Irish; Son of Simon Lutrell (Lord Irnham) and brother of Henry, James, and John Luttrell.

Probably the most "Americanist" of his family, Luttrell went as far to claim that suggestions for a comparable Irish governance in America were offensive to the colonists.

Lyttelton, William Henry (1724-1808)
MP for Bewdley 9 December 1748-January 1755, 1774-1790; Sub-cofferer of the Household 1754-5; Governor of South Carolina 1755-60, of Jamaica 1760-6; Envoy to Lisbon 1766-71; Lord of the Treasury 1777-82.

Role in American politics; Supporter of Grenville and North.

Unlike many others who had a direct role in American politics, Lyttelton supported coercive measures since early discussions on the American crisis. He believed the colonists needed to be taxed as British subjects and thereby supported Parliament's advocacy for authority throughout.

Manchester, Duke of (George Montagu) (1737-1788)
MP for Huntingdonshire 1761-10 May 1762; Collector of Subsidies in Port of London 1762-d; Lord of the Bedchamber 1762-70; P.C. 10 April 1782; Lord Chamberlain of the Household April 1782-April 1783; Ambassador to Paris April-December 1783.

Rockinghamite.

An arguably understudied figure during the parliamentary debates, the Duke of Manchester's main arguments surfaced in 1776 when he claimed that the colonists were fighting for their British liberties, which they carried with them when they first migrated to America. Manchester warned that Parliament's coercive measures threatened the loss of British liberties everywhere.

Mansfield, Lord (Hon. William Murray) (1705-1793)
MP for Boroughbridge 29 November 1742-8 November 1756; K.C. 1742; Solicitor-General 1742-54; Attorney-General 1754-6; P.C. 19 November 1756; Lord Chief Justice King's Bench 1756-88.

Another understudied Parliamentarian during this time, Mansfield was a hard "Coercionist." Mansfield warned in the Stamp Act repeal debates that America aimed at

independence and that their rebellion movement was worse than the Scottish Rebellion of 1745, thereby necessitating Parliament's authority in taxation. He again reiterated his earlier warning of independence just months before the Declaration of Independence.

Marchmont, Lord (Lord Polwarth/Hugh Hume-Campbell) (1708-1794)

MP for Berwick-Upon-Tweed 1734-27 February 1740; First Commissioner of Police in Scotland 1747-64; Representative Peer for Scotland 1750-84; P.C. 22 November 1762; Governor of the Bank of Scotland 1763-90; Keeper of the Great Seal in Scotland 1764-d.

Scottish Peer.

Marchmont acknowledged the similarities in the Irish and American Declaratory Acts.

Mayne, Sir William (1722-1794)

MP for Canterbury 1774-1780, Gatton 1780-1790; MP [I] 1761-76.

MP in the Irish Parliament, 1761-1776; Business and merchant background.

Namier and Brooke note Mayne's consistent warnings in Parliament about impending American independence, as seen in the debate in 1775 when he refuted arguments claiming the colonists wanted taxation by representation, but bluntly stated that their true aim was independence.

Meredith, Sir William (?1725-1790)

MP for Wigan 1754-1761, Liverpool 1761-1780; Lord of Admiralty July 1765-December 1766; P.C. 9 March 1774; Comptroller of the Household March 1774-December 1777.

Associated with Rockingham; Former Jacobite.

Meredith spoke early against Parliament's actions, opposing the Stamp Act for the reason that it would alter colonial legislature, and therefore go against precedent, and the potential ramifications of this for Britain. He raised this issue again in 1774 and remained adamant that Parliament should not tax the British American colonies.

Newcastle, Duke of (Thomas Pelham-Holles) (1693-1768)

Secretary of State; First Lord of Treasury; Prime Minister 1754-1756, 1757-1762.

The Duke of Newcastle's involvement in the political crisis with the American colonies pre-empted the revolutionary crisis, however, he drew attention to the similarities with the Irish and American Declaratory Acts.

North, Frederick (1732-1792)

MP for Banbury 1754-4 August 1790; Lord of Treasury 1759-July 1765; Joint Paymaster General August 1766-October 1767; P.C. 10 December 1766; Chancellor of the Exchequer October 1767-March 1782; First Lord of Treasury January 1770-March 1782; Home Secretary April-December 1783.

Prime Minister, 1770-1782.

North was Prime Minister during the climatic years of the political conflict between Britain and America, as head of government during the implementation of the Coercive Acts through to the Declaration of Independence. While he did try to establish peace proposals in 1775, some viewed the efforts as insincere.

Northington, Lord Chancellor (Robert Henley) (c. 1708-1772)

MP for Bath 1747-30 June 1757; King's Council 1751; Bencher, I. Temple 1751; Recorder of Bath 1751; Solicitor-General to Prince of Wales 1751-4, Attorney-General to him 1754-6; Attorney-General November 1756-June 1757; P.C. 30 June 1757; Lord Keeper June 1757-January 1761; Lord Chancellor January 1761-July 1766; Lord Lieutenant Hants 1764-71; Lord President of the Council July 1766-December 1767.

Lawyer.

While only appearing in the debates on the repeal of the Stamp Act, Northington's law background made him quick to judge Camden's comments on the illegality of taxing the colonies as unconstitutional and warned that this alteration to principle and precedent would create detrimental favouritism throughout the realm.

Phipps, Hon. Constantine John (1744-1792)

MP for Lincoln 1768-1774, Huntingdon 31 January 1776-1784, Newark 1784-1790; Entered Royal Navy 1760; Lieutenant 1762; Captain 1765; Lord of Admiralty 1777-March 1782; P.C. 23 April 1784; Member of Board of Trade 1784-6, Board of Control 1784-91; Joint Paymaster General 1784-91.

During the Coercive Act debates, Phipps spoke against the expediency of both the Massachusetts Government Act and the Massachusetts Justice Act for fear that they would exacerbate rebellion.

Pownall, Thomas (1722-1805)

MP for Tregony 4 February 1767-1774, Minehead 31 December 1774-1780; Clerk at Board of Trade 1743-54; Secretary to Governor of New York 1753; Lieutenant-Governor of New Jersey May 1755; Governor of Massachusetts Bay 1757-9; First Commissary of Control in Germany 1761-3; Commissioner for Investigating Accounts in Germany 1763-6.

American Interests.

Pownall's position in American politics clearly influenced his opinions on the proceedings, such as his belief that the Governor should retain military power rather than the Commander-in-Chief. Pownall also urged that Parliament act with expediency and proposed that it needed a clear plan for their relationship with the colonies.

Richmond, Duke of (Charles Lennox) (1735-1806)

British Ambassador in Paris 1765; Secretary of State 1766; Master-General of Ordnance.

Peer; Rockinghamite; Nicknamed "the Radical Duke"; Uncle of Charles James Fox.

The Duke of Richmond, while present throughout the debates, did not significantly contribute to colonial proceedings until advocating for Parliament's power in terms of foreign troops in 1776.

Rigby, Richard (1722-1788)

MP for Castle Rising 24 October 1745-1747, Sudbury 1747-1754, Tavistock 1754-8 April 1788; Lord of Trade December 1755-January 1760; Secretary to Lord Lieutenant [I] January 1757-March 1761; Master of the Rolls [I] November 1759-d; P.C. [I] June 1760; Joint Vice-Treasurer [I] December 1762-July 1765, January-June 1768; Paymaster General June 1768-March 1782.

Held prominent positions in the Irish government.

Rigby was clearly concerned with the Irish analogy, probably due to his extensive experiences in Irish politics. Rigby's arguments were based on Parliament's taxation of Ireland, and whether America's status within the realm made this apply equally to them as well.

Rockingham, Lord (Charles Watson-Wentworth) (1730-1782)

Prime Minister 1765-1766, 1782.

Rockingham is best known throughout the American crisis for his repeal of the Stamp Act with the accompaniment of the Declaratory Act. His policies were based fully on expediency, as seen in the Stamp Act repeal and Declaratory Act, but also in his arguments against an American Parliament and against taxation, despite the right.

Sawbridge, John (1732-1795)

MP for Hythe 1768-1774, London 1774-1780, 28 November 1780-21 February 1795; Sheriff of London 1769-70; Alderman for London 1769; Lord Mayor of London 1775-6.

Radical.

John Sawbridge does not appear much in the debates, except as one of the few MPs who argued that the Boston Port Bill was an oppressive measure. Considered a "radical" in politics, going against the majority and ministerial measures is not surprising.

Shelburne, Earl of (Lord Wycombe/William Petty) (1737-1805)

MP for Chipping Wycombe 2 June 1760-14 May 1761; Lieutenant 20 Ft. 1757; Lord Granby's staff; Colonel December 1760; Major-General 1765; Lieutenant-General 1772; General 1783; First Lord of Trade April-September 1763; Secretary of State for the

Southern Department July 1766-October 1768; Secretary of State for Home Affairs March-July 1782; First Lord of Treasury July 1782-April 1783.

Irish.

Arguably, Shelburne can be classed as a "Pragmatic Americanist" as he was actively in favour of conciliatory measures throughout the debates to bring the crisis to a peaceful resolution. Even though he did not consider the Americans in rebellion early on, he did fear the repercussions for Britain. This fear presented itself again in 1776 when Shelburne warned that despite Parliament's authority, they should not tax the Americans and that coercive measures could bring the rebellion close to home.

Stanley, Hans (1721-1780)

MP for St. Albans 11 February 1743-1747, Southampton 1754-12 January 1780; Lord of Admiralty September 1757-July 1765; Envoy to Paris May-September 1761; P.C. 26 November 1762; Governor and Vice Admiral for the Isle of Wight 1764-6, 1770-d; Ambassador Designate to Russia 1766-7; Cofferer of Household December 1766-March 1774, October 1776-d.

Grenvillite.

Stanley's aggressive warning on the likely possibility of an American alliance with other European empires was, in hindsight, a legitimate concern and indicates that many more Parliamentarians were beginning to see that an imperial war was a very real possibility by May 1774.

St. John, Hon. John (?1746-1793)

MP for Newport (Isle of Wight) 4 April 1773-1774, Eye 1774-1780, Newport (Isle of Wight) 1780-1784; Surveyor General of Crown Lands 1775-84.

In-Law (and supporter) of North.

St. John agreed that the Massachusetts Justice Bill was applicable to the American colonies.

Thurlow, Edward (1731-1806)

MP for Tamworth 23 December 1765-3 June 1778; Solicitor-General March 1770-January 1771; Attorney-General January 1771-June 1778; P.C. 3 June 1778; Lord Chancellor June 1778-April 1783, December 1783-June 1792; Teller of the Exchequer July 1786-d.

Lawyer.

Outspoken during the latter years of the crisis, Thurlow strongly supported Parliament's coercive measures, arguing for their right to tax and America's impending independence.

Townshend, Hon. Charles (1725-1767)

MP for Great Yarmouth 1747-November 1756, Saltash 14 December 1756-1761, Harwich 1761-4 September 1767; Lord of Trade June 1749-April 1754, of Admiralty April 1754-December 1755; Treasurer of the Chamber November 1756-March 1761; Secretary at War March 1761-December 1762; First Lord of Trade February-April 1763; Paymaster General May 1765-July 1766; Chancellor of Exchequer July 1766-d.

Brother of Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, George Townshend; Great-Nephew of the Duke of Newcastle.

Most known for his implementation of the Townshend Acts, which were arguably used as a test for the American differentiation between internal and external taxation.

Townshend, Hon. George (1724-1807)

MP for Norfolk 1747-12 March 1764; P.C. 2 December 1760; Lieutenant-General of Ordnance April 1763-August 1767; Lord Lieutenant [I] August 1767-September 1772; Master General of the Ordnance October 1772-March 1782, April-December 1783; Military Career 1743-1796.

Irish politics; Brother of Charles Townshend.

George Townshend was one of the few Parliamentarians to call for a complete break with America in the latter years of the conflict.

Townshend Jr., Thomas (1733-1800)

MP for Whitchurch 1754-6 March 1783; Clerk of the Household to the Prince of Wales 1756-60; Clerk of the Green Cloth 1760-December 1762; Lord of the Treasury July 1765-December 1767; P.C. 23 December 1767; Joint Paymaster General December 1767-June 1768; Secretary at War March-July 1782; Home Secretary July 1782-April 1783, December 1783-June 1789; Chief Justice in eyre south of Trent June 1789-d.

Closely aligned with Rockingham, Chatham, and Germain.

Townshend's position on the colonies is difficult to classify. Despite his close alliance with Rockingham and Chatham (he advocated for repeal of the Stamp Act and was against the Treason Act) he also supported the Coercive Acts and Germain, who was considered one of the most aggressive politicians against the Americans.

Watson, Brook (1735-1807)

MP for London 26 January 1784-February 1793; Alderman of London 1784; Sheriff of London 1785-6; Lord Mayor of London 1796-7; Director of the Bank of England 1784-6, 1787-9, 1790-3, 1796-8, 1799-1801, 1802-4, 1805-6; Deputy Governor 1806-7; Chairman of Lloyds 1796-1806.

Watson spent about ten years as a businessman in America. Even though his parliamentary career was following the Revolution, his actions both during and after the

war clearly showed loyalty to Parliament, for instance, he spent time as a secret agent for the British forces. He appears in this thesis as the sender of the American work *Thoughts upon the Dispute between Great Britain and Her Colonies* to Lord Dartmouth, but his intentions are unclear.

Wilkes, John (1725-1797)

MP for Aylesbury 6 July 1757-20 January 1764, Middlesex 1768-4 February 1769, 16-17 February 1769, 1774-1790; Sheriff of Buckinghamshire 1754-5; Col. Buckinghamshire Militia 1762-3; Alderman of London 1769; Sheriff of London 1771-2; Lord Mayor of London 1774-5; City Chamberlain 1779-d.

Radical.

Wilkes had a distinct approach to the crisis with the colonies, especially in his suggestion that they be taxed based on ability to pay, yet still relied on Scottish precedent for this.

Yorke, Hon. Charles (1722-1770)

MP for Reigate 7 December 1747-1768, Cambridge University 1768-20 January 1770; Clerk of the Crown in Chancery 1747-d; Solicitor-General to Prince of Wales 1754-6; Solicitor-General November 1756-December 1761; Attorney-General January 1762-November 1763, August 1765-August 1766; Lord Chancellor 17 January 1770-d.

During the Stamp Act debates, Yorke delivered the persistent hard-line opinion on the colonies that would appear regularly throughout the crisis, in his advocacy for Parliament's right to tax and the necessity of Parliament's involvement in colonial governance.

Information for this section can be found in Sir Lewis Namier and John Brooke's *History of Parliament* Volumes I-III; The History of Parliament Online; GOV.UK; Britannica; The University of Michigan Library; Secondary literature such a Bernhard Donoughue's and Keith Perry's individual *British Politics* or Jerome R. Reich's *British Friends of the American Revolution* (Full citations provided in the Bibliography).

Introduction

The American Revolution, defined in this study as c. 1765-1776, was one of the most pivotal moments in British history as it led to the independence of the British American colonies from the British Empire in 1783. There exists a vast historiography focused on exploring why, as well as how, the colonies sought to achieve independence from one of the most powerful empires in the eighteenth century. While historians such as Ian R. Christie and Peter D.G. Thomas have dedicated their work to uncovering parliamentary practices and decisions made by key figures, such as George Grenville and Lord North, this thesis seeks to broaden the scope of study to include how decisions and proceedings were influenced by Parliament's perception of its authority within the realm of Great Britain and Ireland.[1] In particular, very few historians have recognised, and much less explored, how the status and history of the different countries that comprised Great Britain - England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland - played a significant and distinct role in shaping the debates in Parliament on the conflict between Britain and the American colonies. As this study reveals, members of Parliament, the House of Commons (MPs) and the House of Lords (Peers), throughout the revolutionary period consistently looked to their relationship and experiences with Ireland, Scotland, and Wales to determine and shape their responses to the American conflict. In their eyes, the American colonists' threat to parliamentary sovereignty mirrored past conflicts, particularly in Ireland and Scotland, that had challenged Parliament's authority within the realm of Great Britain. As a close analysis of the parliamentary debates in this period proves, Parliamentarians looked to Britain's - and most particularly, Parliament's - past and present political relationship with these countries when debating and

[1] Ian R. Christie, "A Vision of Empire: Thomas Whately and the Regulations Lately Made Concerning the Colonies," *The English Historical Review* 113, no. 451 (1998): 300–320; Ian R. Christie, "British Politics and the American Revolution," *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 9, no. 3 (1977): 205–26; Ian R. Christie, *Crisis of Empire: Great Britain and the American Colonies 1754-1783* (New York: WW Norton & Company Inc., 1966); Ian R. Christie and Benjamin W. Labaree, *Empire or Independence 1760-1776: A British-American Dialogue on the Coming of the American Revolution* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1976); Peter D.G. Thomas, "Charles Townshend and American Taxation in 1767," *The English Historical Review* 83, no. 326 (1968): 33–51; Peter D.G. Thomas, "The Cost of the British Army in North America, 1763-1775," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 45, no. 3 (1988): 510-16; Peter D.G. Thomas, "'The Great Commoner': The Elder William Pitt as Parliamentarian," *Parliamentary History* 22, no. 2 (2008): 145-163; Peter D.G. Thomas, *British Politics and the Stamp Act Crisis: The First Phase of the American Revolution, 1763-1767* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975); Peter D.G. Thomas, *Tea Party to Independence: The Third Phase of the American Revolution 1773-1776* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991); Peter D.G. Thomas, *The Townshend Duties Crisis: The Second Phase of the American Revolution 1767-1773* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987).

deciding how to handle the British American colonies. To fully understand why Parliament was so steadfast in defending and preserving its sovereignty, and the role that this played in the conflict, it is necessary to recognise the context in which sovereignty was discussed and debated. As this analysis shows, it was Parliament's past and ongoing relationship with Ireland and Scotland which provided a significant context for the debates on the American colonies. Examining the influences which Parliament's relationship with Ireland, Scotland, and Wales had on its policies towards the American colonies raises the question of whether the American Revolution was a struggle over Parliament maintaining sovereignty in the American colonies or a struggle about maintaining its sovereignty in Great Britain and Ireland. In analysing the Revolution from the perspective of Parliament, it becomes clear that it was a combination of indecision, conflict, and concern over the definition and remit of Parliament's sovereignty, in relation to the immediate and proximate British realms of England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland, that significantly shaped the actions towards the American colonies between 1765 and 1776 that so many Americans found objectionable.

To reach this conclusion, this study shows that the political conflict between Parliament and the American colonies, which led to the Declaration of Independence in 1776, was not entirely (or even primarily) about the relationship between these two entities. Seen from Parliament's perspective, it was a conflict with far wider implications that challenged Parliament's perception and vision of its role of governing the people and realms within Great Britain and Ireland. The overt resistance of American colonists against the Stamp Act was the first real attempt from an imperial territory, rather than one directly within the realm, to set limits to Parliament's sovereignty over it. Because of this, Parliamentarians chose to consistently rely on past and present policies with Ireland, Scotland, and Wales to define Parliament's relationship, and therefore, legislative authority, within the American colonies. In doing so, these discussions ignited debates in Parliament over the principles and practices involved in these precedents. Furthermore, the obsession with placing the American colonies within these defined precedential borders meant that Parliamentarians, for the most part, failed to analyse the situation in a way that acknowledged the rather unusual place the American colonies had within the realm of Great Britain and Ireland. From the beginning of the conflict in 1765, Parliament adopted a viewpoint which focused on how the conflict would impact and potentially alter its relationship and sovereignty towards the countries within its realm, closer to home, primarily Ireland and

Scotland. By the time the colonies declared independence, the American conflict had grown from discussions involving the principle and practice of local legislative authority to one that challenged Parliament's relationship with nations in the realm and its role as the central governing authority within Great Britain, in addition to its status as an imperial power.

In terms of methodology, this dissertation adopts a chronological rather than thematic approach, in order to illustrate how the debates unravelled over the course of the conflict. Most crucially, this approach both highlights and underscores just how repetitive the themes of the debates were, where MPs and Peers cycled back time and again to the same issues, principles, practices, and precedents to seek an understanding and resolution to the conflict. Arguments over taxation, for example, were revisited and rehearsed using the same precedents throughout this period, and to little avail. It can appear confusing to the reader that the same arguments were being repeated, but what this illustrates, as I argue throughout this thesis, is that MPs and Peers struggled to reach agreement over some of the key sticking points in the conflict, namely taxation, representation, and whether and at what point the colonies could or could not be deemed to be in rebellion. Similarly, we see MPs and Peers oscillate between arguments in favour of coercive policies or conciliatory policies, with some frequently changing their minds over the course of the conflict: showing that confusion, not clarity, predominated. In order to impose some clarity, for the sake of illustrating how the debates unfolded, their repetitive nature, and see-sawing back and forth on the main issues debated in Parliament, which altogether failed to produce a peaceful and diplomatic outcome to the conflict, I have employed sub-headings to make clear the overall focus and theme of the debates under analysis and the particular precedents which were used to shape the discussions.

The chapters of this thesis will expand the scope of analysis on Parliament's attitudes and policies towards the American colonies to consider the wider political factors that shaped parliamentary decision-making in this period: to recognise, in short, that the American revolutionary conflict was not, in Parliament's eyes, just about the American colonies but, even more so, about its sovereignty in the realm. This study will make three main arguments. Firstly, it will show that Parliamentarians consistently relied on Ireland, Scotland, and Wales from 1765-1776 to shape political opinions *and* policy on a wide variety of issues including taxation, administration, and representation. The debates on these took place as a result of American actions but were also the driving force for such initiatives as the Townshend Acts, which

purposely sought to contest the colonists' claim that there was a fundamental distinction between internal and external taxation. Secondly, it will explore and highlight the various factors, other than purely political (such as financial, familial, or personal connections with America), that influenced arguments in favour of coercive or conciliatory measures. Thirdly, it will prove that Parliamentarians were actually more concerned with how their actions regarding America would have an impact on Ireland and Scotland, in particular, and also, even more dangerously, that ideologies spawned from American resistance to such measures could burgeon into an empire-wide rebellion against Parliament's authority. The result of focusing on and analysing these elements in depth will be to establish that it was Parliament's preoccupation with its past relationship with Ireland and Scotland, in particular, and its reliance on precedent with these nations (and Wales) that foremost guided its actions towards the American colonies. This approach consistently framed the conflict with the American colonies in terms of the impact it would have on Parliament's sovereignty and, most especially, its continued authority over nations closer to home, those throughout the realm of Great Britain and Ireland. Yet, when faced with the specific conflict with the American colonies, which had developed separately and increasingly autonomously from issues related to Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, this approach actually drove the American conflict toward the very outcome that Parliamentarians feared.

Background

One of the main points of comparison between Britain's different colonies and territories was how they were acquired, and therefore, what law naturally applied to their governance. When the first seeds of conflict with the American colonies took root in the 1760s, Great Britain was already comprised of England, Wales, and Scotland. The Act of Union in 1707 united the English and Scottish Parliaments, yet, at the same time, Scotland retained some autonomy over local affairs.[2] Notwithstanding, issues regarding the perceived rightful heir to the Crown, and the political and economic consequences of the Union, made relations between the Scottish and

[2] David Eastwood, "Local Government and Local Society," in H.T. Dickinson, ed., *A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 2002), 44.

English far from perfect.[3] In fact, the Glorious Revolution of 1688-89 was essentially a nail in the coffin for Scotland's parliamentary authority.[4] Wales, on the other hand, had been incorporated into the kingdom since the mid-sixteenth century, and this long-term incorporation stunted the creation of a more diverse government.[5] Ireland's 'conquered' territory status, however, made the government and sovereignty in Ireland distinctive from Wales and Scotland.[6] Firstly, Ireland's conquered status meant that the Irish themselves were regarded as the most lowly of all within the realm.[7] Secondly, the British Parliament exercised substantial involvement in Irish proceedings while restricting direct legislative activity by the Irish Parliament.[8] The Irish were not represented in the British Parliament, unlike Wales and Scotland, and retained representation in their own Irish Parliament.[9] The Irish Parliament was composed of a House of Commons and House of Lords as in England, however, all legislature that was passed by the Irish Parliament had to be approved by the British Parliament.[10] That being said, representation was still very skewed, as the political sphere in Ireland was mostly controlled by the "Protestant Interest" and limited Catholic political rights. While seeking political reform, the later rebellion of 1798 also had the potential to arouse a Catholic emancipation, so to speak, thereby threatening the hierarchical system that dominated, and maintained, English Protestant supremacy.[11] Throughout the thesis, I acknowledge the backgrounds of those MPs and Peers who were Irish, Scottish or Welsh, because it often influenced their stance on the issue of sovereignty and

---

[3] P. Hume Brown, "The Union of the Parliaments of England and Scotland 1707," *The Scottish Historical Review* 4, no. 14 (1907): 121–34; William Ferguson, "Imperial Crowns: A Neglected Facet of the Background to the Treaty of Union of 1707," *The Scottish Historical Review* 53, no. 155 (1974): 22–44; Wm. S. McKechnie, "The Constitutional Necessity for the Union of 1707," *The Scottish Historical Review* 5, no. 17 (1907): 52–66.

[4] McKechnie, "The Constitutional Necessity," 55.

[5] Eastwood, "Local Government," 44.

[6] Jack P. Greene, *Peripheries and Center: Constitutional Development in the Extended Polities of the British Empire and the United States, 1607-1788* (Athens [GA] and London: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 7.

[7] R. Coupland, *The American Revolution and the British Empire* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1965), 57.

[8] Jack P. Greene, *The Constitutional Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge [England] and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 45-46.

[9] There were twelve Welsh constituencies represented in Parliament as well as forty-five Scottish members, Sir Lewis Namier and John Brooke, eds., *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1754-1790* (3 volumes, London: Boydell & Brewer, 1964), i, 37, 38; Coupland, *American Revolution*, 57.

[10] F.G. James, "The Active Irish Peers in the Early Eighteenth Century," *Journal of British Studies* 18, no. 2 (1979): 53.

[11] James Kelly, "Eighteenth-Century Ascendancy: A Commentary," *Eighteenth-Century Ireland / Iris an Dá Chultúr* 5 (1990): 175, 173-187; Jacqueline Hill, "Convergence and Conflict in Eighteenth-Century Ireland," *The Historical Journal* 44, no. 4 (2001): 1057-8; J.C. Beckett, "Anglo-Irish Constitutional Relations in the Later Eighteenth Century," *Irish Historical Studies* 14, no. 53 (1964): 20–38.

authority in the colonies. Moreover, when referring to an "Irish MP" in this study, I mean to indicate that the member was elected to the Irish Parliament and not just simply of Irish descent.

Both Ireland's and Scotland's rocky, to say the least, history with the English Parliament necessitated, in Parliament's opinion, rather strict measures to ensure balance within the kingdom.[12] Events related to questions of Parliament's sovereignty over these two nations had occurred at the beginning of the century, with the Scottish Union of 1707 and the implementation of the Irish Declaratory Act of 1720, which confirmed Parliament's right to legislate for Ireland. That being said, the American troubles, from Parliament's perspective, were effectively not over colonial legislative control, but rather about maintaining Parliament's control and sovereignty over Britain, Ireland, and the greater British realm. This justified Parliament's reliance on precedents established within their already defined role and presence in England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland as a way to maintain the established mode of practice and power derived from the Glorious Revolution (1688) which secured Parliament's right to govern the realm. Overall, understanding the British Parliament's relationship to Ireland, Scotland, and Wales provides a context for how and why the status and relationship of these countries to Britain played such a prominent and formative role in shaping Parliament's attitude and policies towards the American colonies.

A further essential component of Parliament's decision-making was its sense of its own history. The Glorious Revolution had established a historic increase of Parliament's authority over the Crown. Since then, the struggle of Parliament to maintain its power was exhibited many times throughout the next eighty years, through to the American crisis. At various times during its colonial rule, Parliament tried increasing its authority in the colonies. Yet the diverse forms of government in the colonies effectively halted these efforts, leading to an extensive period of "salutary neglect", which resulted in limited parliamentary involvement in colonial affairs in the American colonies. The Seven Years' War (1756-1763) however, saw a renewed interest in American colonial activities as Parliament sought to meet the costs of the war, with a concomitant increase in parliamentary imperial authority. The eleven years of crisis between

[12] Brown, "The Union of the Parliaments," 121–34.

Parliament and the American colonies which ensued thus came to be shaped by the historic political and ideological relationship between the ruler and ruled on the two continents.[13]

Parliament During the British-American Conflict

British politics in the eighteenth century was defined by tradition. The English constitution was not a physical document, like the American Constitution in 1789, instead it provided a structure for law based on history, tradition, and precedent.[14] Therefore, it was customary practice to rely on precedent in order to develop and shape policy. In this respect, it is not therefore surprising that Parliamentarians adopted this same approach when confronting the political crisis with the American colonies: in other words, looking back to the past to shape their response to the present. However, as this thesis argues, whilst this approach may have served Parliament well in the past, it provided few solutions to resolving the conflict with the American colonies. Indeed, MPs and Peers became too preoccupied with raking back over past events in which Parliament faced similar crises over their sovereignty and authority, which oftentimes distracted them from coming to grips with the conflict at hand. Throughout the debates we see how MPs and Peers struggled to conceive of any alternative approaches to managing the crisis with the American colonies other than by what had been established by history and precedent throughout the realm of Great Britain and Ireland.

It is necessary to clarify how differently Parliament was configured and operated in the eighteenth century than nowadays. For example, there was no defined party-political system during the 1760s and 1770s as we would recognise it today. There were of course Parliamentarians who were frequently classified as Whig or Tory, but even the boundaries

---

[13] Some works that discuss the impact of the Glorious Revolution on Parliament's and the colonies' perception of each other's role in the empire: Randolph G. Adams, *Political Ideas of the American Revolution* (New York: Barnes & Noble Inc., 1958); H.T. Dickinson, "Introduction," and "Britain's Imperial Sovereignty: The Ideological Case against the American Colonists," in H. T Dickinson, ed., *Britain and the American Revolution* (London and New York: Addison Wesley Longman Limited, 1998), 5, 64-96; Greene, *Constitutional Origins*; James A. Henretta, *Salutary Neglect, Colonial Administration under the Duke of Newcastle* (Princeton [NJ]: Princeton University Press, 2015).

[14] John Phillip Reid, *Constitutional History of the American Revolution: The Authority to Tax* (Madison [WI]: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 23; Greene, *Constitutional Origins*, 142.

between these two political positions were often blurred.[15] Instead, it is more instructive to view the political affiliations of Parliamentarians and Parliament more broadly in terms of factions, rather than political parties. For further clarification, I have created a list of all the MPs and Peers who contributed to the debates in this period with a brief mention of their background, in the preface to this study. Each MP/Peer name appears in this thesis as it appeared in the source for the debate. Finally, during the 1760s and 1770s, the key administrations were: Grenville (1763-1765), Rockingham (1765-1766), Chatham (1766-1768), Grafton (1768-1770), and North (1770-1782).

The departments relating directly to the American colonies were the Secretary of State for the Southern Department and the Treasury.[16] The Treasury was very invested in the governance of the colonies because of the particular nature of the relationship between Great Britain and the American colonies. Following the Glorious Revolution and Britain's growing colonisation and settlement of North America, Parliament shifted a great deal of focus to securing a strong economic relationship with its new colonies, which also provided strength against imperial adversaries.[17] This was both articulated and secured through the Navigation Acts of 1660, which restricted colonial trade solely between Britain and her colonies.[18] Like the American colonies, Britain's relationship to Ireland was similarly based on providing economic benefits to Great Britain, reducing the Irish to that of "inferiors and dependents" compared to subjects inside the realm.[19] Throughout the debates during the American political crisis, Parliamentarians feared the American colonists were no longer prepared to comply with and maintain this system, thereby

---

[15] "Early in George III's reign there was no real party system operating in England to give a readily understandable pattern or framework to political debate. The terms 'Whig' and 'Tory' were often helpful as an indication of the political heritage of a Member, but they usually had no significance in terms of political *policies*…The denomination Whig had come by then to mean simply anyone who held or wanted public office: it defined the eighteenth-century Establishment," Bernard Donoughue, *British Politics and the American Revolution: The Path to War, 1773-75* (London: Macmillan & Co. Limited, 1964), 10-11; J.C.D. Clark, "A General Theory of Party, Opposition and Government, 1688-1832," *The Historical Journal* 23, no. 2 (1980): 295–325.

[16] Christie, *Crisis of Empire*, 11-12.

[17] Christie and Labaree, *Empire or Independence*, 253-254; Dickinson, *Britain and the American Revolution*, 5, 87; David S. Lovejoy, *The Glorious Revolution in America* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1972), xiv; Sir Lewis Namier, *England in the Age of the American Revolution* (London: Macmillan & Co LTD; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1963), 290-291; Keith Perry, *British Politics and the American Revolution* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 7.

[18] Christie, *Crisis of Empire*, 8.

[19] Coupland, *The American Revolution*, 57.

threatening the basis of their relationship while at the same time strengthening the economy of those around them, in particular, France.[20]

Historiography

The ongoing effort of documenting and analysing the causes and consequences of the American Revolution since the event itself has produced a vast and expansive literature on the subject. However, what the historiography has not done is acknowledge the critical issues relating to Ireland, Scotland, and Wales in the decision-making process between the years 1765-1776. An analysis of the parliamentary debates shows that despite the important work done by historians on the imperial, economic, and social histories of the American Revolution, the crisis itself was not confined to the relationship between the thirteen American colonies and the British Parliament, nor was it an instrumental and substantial period in British history as the literature suggests (especially the American perspectives) but rather, was a mere drop in the overwhelming and ongoing story of the British Isles and a continuation of the political/constitutional ideologies formed and disputed since the Glorious Revolution. Rather than exploring the British and American conflict as a colonial contest between the ruler and the ruled, or one which developed into a global conflict including other foreign powers, as others have done before, this study instead focuses on the conflict from Britain's perspective as an imperial power who viewed its interests overseas *within the context* of its interests to 'conquered' territories closer to home.

This study highlights three areas that have been otherwise neglected and limited in the American Revolution historiography: the British perspective, parliamentary perspective, and the inclusion and influence of the surrounding nations of Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. Firstly, in contrast to a growing trend to situate the American Revolution in a global and transnational context, this study redirects the historical spotlight back to Britain and on Parliament. While the British perspective has certainly been the subject of studies over the last seventy years, the scholarship has tended to be limited to the MPs/Peers and ministers deemed to be responsible for the conflict, such as John L. Bullion's *A Great and Necessary Measure: George Grenville and*

[20] Christie and Labaree, *Empire or Independence*, 253-254.

the Genesis of the Stamp Act 1763-1765 (1982), Don Cook's *The Long Fuse: How England Lost the American Colonies, 1760-1785* (1995), Andrew Jackson O'Shaughnessy's *The Men Who Lost America: British Leadership, the American Revolution, and the Fate of the Empire* (2013), or Nick Bunker's *An Empire on the Edge: How Britain Came to Fight America* (2014).[21] Historians have written profusely on the political, economic, and social conditions that impacted the growth of the revolutionary movement in their narrative and biographic histories of the American crisis. These analyses have regularly used the same private papers and newspaper articles, leading to an arguably skewed portrait and perception of the British perspective of the conflict.[22]

Secondly, the surprising lack of detailed analysis on the arguments advanced – and the language used in advancing them – in the parliamentary debates in these studies calls for research that encompasses the decision-making process of these individuals, which contributed so much to the conflict and eventual loss of the American colonies. R.C. Simmons and Peter D.G. Thomas have made strenuous efforts to locate and collate all the available source materials of the six volumes of House of Commons and House of Lords debates on the American crisis between 1754-1776.[23] Naturally, Thomas based his arguments on this material. He divided the revolutionary period into three parts: *British Politics and the Stamp Act Crisis: The First Phase of the American Revolution, 1763-1767* (1975), *The Townshend Duties Crisis: The Second Phase of the American Revolution 1767-1773* (1987) and *Tea Party to Independence: The Third Phase of the American Revolution 1773-1776* (1991). Each of these studies portrays exactly how the

---

[21] John L. Bullion, *A Great and Necessary Measure: George Grenville and the Genesis of the Stamp Act 1763-1765* (Columbia [MO] and London: University of Missouri Press, 1982); Nick Bunker, *An Empire on the Edge: How Britain Came to Fight America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014); Don Cook, *The Long Fuse: How England Lost the American Colonies, 1760-1785* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1995); Andrew Jackson O'Shaughnessy, *The Men Who Lost America: British Leadership, the American Revolution, and the Fate of the Empire* (New Haven [CT]: Yale University Press, 2013).

[22] See Colin Bonwick, *English Radicals and the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill [NC]: The University of North Carolina Press, 1977); James E. Bradley, *Popular Politics and the American Revolution in England: Petitions, the Crown and Public Opinion* (Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1986); Christie and Labaree, *Empire or Independence*; Cook, *The Long Fuse*; John W. Derry, *English Politics and the American Revolution* (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1976); O'Shaughnessy, *The Men Who Lost America*; Thomas, *British Politics*; Thomas, *The Townshend Duties Crisis*; Thomas, *Tea Party to Independence*. Biographies include Stanley Ayling, *Edmund Burke: His Life and Opinions* (London: Cassell, 1988); B.D. Bargar, *Lord Dartmouth and the American Revolution* (Columbia [SC]: The University of South Carolina Press, 1965); John Brooke, *The Chatham Administration, 1766-1768* (London: Macmillan & Co, 1956); Carl B. Cone, *Burke and the Nature of Politics: The Age of the America Revolution* (Lexington [KY]: University of Kentucky Press, 1957).

[23] R.C. Simmons and Peter D.G. Thomas, eds., *Proceedings and Debates of the British Parliaments Respecting North America, 1754-1783* (6 volumes, Millwood [NY]: Kraus International Publications, 1982).

proceedings unravelled in Parliament, highlighting everything from the major and minor figures who spoke in the debates to the behind-the-scenes conversations and discussions involving certain bills, and the outcomes of the voting lists and divisions. Thomas' works are invaluable in his detailed account of the parliamentary proceedings. Yet ultimately, these studies lack the analysis and closer inspection of the use of precedent and the instrumental role that Parliament's relations with Ireland, Scotland, and Wales played in MPs' and Peers' decisions on the proceedings.[24] Although Thomas has done this impressive groundwork, the daunting amount of material has still meant that historians have only lightly engaged with the detail of the parliamentary debates, as this study will do. The debates, where the actual arguments and decisions occurred, have great importance for understanding the reasons behind the policies and proceedings which took place. It was through scrutinising this source that it became evident how frequently and significantly MPs and Peers referred to and discussed Ireland, Scotland, and Wales in the course of the debates about the American colonial conflict, and how the discourse on the Americans by Parliamentarians was teeming with references to the history of these nations in the governance of the realm.

Thirdly, as this study reveals, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales played a central role in shaping both Parliament's policies towards the American colonies and how Parliament viewed its relationships and policies, in turn, with these nations, neither of which has been the subject of much of the American Revolution scholarship. There is a rich literature on Ireland's relationship with Great Britain in the eighteenth century, which provides invaluable material and insight to understanding Ireland's colonial status and identity in the British Empire, and naturally some of it relates directly to the relationship between Ireland and the American colonies, mostly to emphasise the ideological arguments that propelled and shaped both the American and Irish revolutionary movements, Ireland's financial and military connections with the colonies, and the similarities between America's and Ireland's imperial governance and structure in relation to Parliament.[25]

---

[24] Thomas, *British Politics*; Thomas, *Tea Party to Independence*; Thomas, *The Townshend Duties Crisis*. Other works include Peter D.G. Thomas, "'A Young Tory'? The Early Parliamentary Career of Charles James Fox 1768–74," *Parliamentary History* (Wiley-Blackwell) 37, no. 2 (2018): 212–25; Thomas, "Charles Townshend and American Taxation in 1767"; Peter D.G. Thomas, "New Light on the Commons Debate of 1763 on the American Army," *William and Mary Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (1981): 110-112; Thomas, "The Cost of the British Army in North America"; Thomas, "'The Great Commoner'".

[25] Neil Longley York, "The Impact of the American Revolution on Ireland" in Dickinson, *Britain and the American Revolution*, 205-232, compared and contrasted the American colonies and Ireland in this period, focusing

Studies of eighteenth-century Irish history also tend to focus on the American Revolution only in order to assess the extent to which it affected the independence movements in Ireland that followed the end of the American War of Independence.[26] Furthermore, Ireland features more prominently in studies on the American Revolution often through the adoption of a global framework, which has been the trend in recent scholarship.[27] Political biographies have also shed light on the ideas and debates that shaped the American conflict on both sides of the Atlantic and relates directly to the Irish/American relationship.[28] The significance in terms of timing cannot

---

on their relationship with Britain, their systems of governance, ideologies on parliamentary sovereignty, and how both the American colonists and Irish compared themselves to each other. Greene, *The Constitutional Origins* and *Peripheries and Center* refer to Ireland to note the similarities between the legislative systems in the American colonies and Ireland. Both the American colonists and Britons used a comparison with Ireland to shore up their arguments about Parliament's legislative authority. However, while the references to Ireland indicate an acknowledgement both by the colonists and Britons of a relationship between the two, they are only used by Greene to reinforce his overall argument about the differing perceptions of imperial authority over colonial affairs.

[26] Maurice O'Connell's *Irish Politics and Social Conflict in the Age of the American Revolution* (Philadelphia [PA]: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1965) similarly places the American Revolution in the context of Irish history in order to ascertain the impact the American Revolution had on, mainly middle-class, Irish society. O'Connell's study interprets Irish reform movements as they were happening concurrently in the American colonies. Maurice J. Bric, "Ireland, America and the Reassessment of a Special Relationship, 1760-1783," *Eighteenth-Century Ireland / Iris an Dá Chultúr* 11 (1996): 88-119, also examines the impact of the American Revolution on Ireland and incorporates Irish MPs' arguments on the possibility that the British Parliament would tax Ireland if they succeeded in their claim to tax the American colonies. While Vincent Morley, *Irish Opinion and the American Revolution, 1760-1783* (Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 2002) focuses on the Irish perspective, his analysis concentrates on the views of the Irish people towards the American colonies. Instead of analysing the views and position of Irish MPs in Westminster towards the American colonies, Morley instead examined the Irish Parliament's attitudes towards the American conflict. He reveals that the Irish Parliament believed that they were likely to be taxed if the British Parliament insisted on taxing the American colonies. Morley also used Irish newspapers as a source to uncover the affect the colonial rebellion had on Ireland's own path towards open rebellion against the British, which ultimately culminated in the 1798 rebellion for Irish independence. Other works include: J.C. Beckett, "Anglo-Irish Constitutional Relations in the Later Eighteenth Century," *Irish Historical Studies* 14, no. 53 (1964): 20-38; Homer L. Calkin, "American Influence in Ireland, 1760 to 1800," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 71, no. 2 (1947): 103-20; Thomas F. Moriarty, "The Irish Absentee Tax Controversy of 1773: A Study in Anglo-Irish Politics on the Eve of the American Revolution," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 118, no. 4 (1974): 370-408.

[27] Conway looks at Britain and the resulting consequences of the war, predominantly in terms of how the war influenced mobilisation, national identity, and the economy. Indeed, Conway's many studies on Ireland focus less on its constitutional and legislative connections with Britain and more on Ireland's relationship with Europe and the Atlantic. Conway presents the cultural, military, educational, and financial connections which England not only had with the rest of Europe, but also with Ireland, Wales, and Scotland: Stephen Conway, *The British Isles and the War of American Independence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Stephen Conway, *Britain, Ireland, and Continental Europe in the Eighteenth Century: Similarities, Connections, Identities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[28] Cone's *Burke and the Nature of Politics* placed the American Revolution in the context of Edmund Burke's political career. As Burke was Irish, this study unsurprisingly positioned the challenges which Parliament faced with Ireland alongside the American conflict, in the latter half of the eighteenth century. While Cone's objective was to use the American Revolution to highlight Burke's ideology in relation to the British constitution and Empire, he similarly used Parliament's politics with Ireland, and the East India Company, to explore Burke's imperial policy. David Noel Doyle, *Ireland, Irishmen and Revolutionary America, 1760-1820* (Dublin [Ireland]: Mercier Press, 1981); Conor Cruise Obrien, "Edmund Burke and the American Revolution," in Owen Dudley

be underestimated here, with Parliamentarians of Irish descent, like Edmund Burke, in Parliament at a time when it faced challenges from both the Irish and the Americans.[29] Nor should we underestimate the impact this had during the latter years of the revolutionary period, when those of Irish descent (and Scottish) used the revolutionary conflict to further defend and assert the political interests of these regions in British politics.

While these studies deepen our knowledge and understanding of Ireland's political history during the eighteenth century, and its connections to the American Revolution, it is evident from the historiography that historians have only touched lightly, and indirectly, on Ireland's role in the parliamentary debates and policies which were formed during the course of the long conflict between Britain and the American colonies. To date, no published study has made this the primary focus of analysis. Historians have noted in passing that MPs and Peers considered how their actions in America could affect their actions and relationship with Ireland, but this view has not been subject to detailed scrutiny.[30] In fact, John Phillip Reid, in *Constitutional History of the American Revolution: The Authority to Legislate* (1991), acknowledged that both the Parliamentarians and the American colonists used the comparison between Ireland and the American colonies to argue for and against Parliament's legislative authority. Yet, Reid then dismissed the idea that this analogy had any importance in the constitutional history of the American Revolution on the grounds that the difference in legislative systems between Ireland and the colonies made a comparison futile.[31] Disagreeing, this study proves that whether the analogies were appropriate or not, the frequent use and dedication to historical applications were an influential part of the decision-making process from 1765-1776. Furthermore, not only is the established literature on Ireland and the American Revolution now rather dated, but the majority of the literature confines itself to either an American or Irish perspective. Altogether, this further reinforces why it is vital not to dismiss, but in fact to take more seriously, the frequent analogy to Ireland in the parliamentary debates on the American conflict.

Edwards and George Shepperson, eds., *Scotland, Europe and the American Revolution* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1976).

[29] Cone, *Burke and the Nature of Politics*.

[30] O'Connell, *Irish Politics and Social Conflict*; Calkin, "American Influence in Ireland, 1760 to 1800," 114; Beckett, "Anglo-Irish Constitutional Relations," 25-6.

[31] John Phillip Reid, *Constitutional History of the American Revolution: The Authority to Legislate* (Madison [WI] and London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991).

To date, Scotland has attracted hardly any attention in the scholarship on the American Revolution. Its role and influence in the parliamentary debates remains almost completely overlooked as a factor in Parliament's proceedings with the American colonies.[32] Wales features even less in the literature on the American Revolution, despite its primary role in discussions on taxation and representation in the colonies.[33]

The British parliamentary debates remain conspicuously under-used and often entirely missing in the studies on the American Revolution. To date, there is no published study that explores the role that Ireland, Scotland, and Wales played in the parliamentary debates on the era of the American Revolution. In the voluminous historiography on the American Revolution, from either the American or British perspective, reference to the influence which these countries had in the British parliamentary debates and on policymaking with regards to the American colonies has received barely a mention by historians. Nor have historians scrutinised how Parliamentarians dedicated a significant amount of time, and whole parliamentary sessions, to deliberating over the possible consequences their policies towards the American colonies would have, *not on the American colonies,* but on those territories much closer to home, namely Ireland and Scotland. This study, therefore, will show that the focus in so many of the debates was on how Parliament's reaction and response to the challenges from the colonies would impact its relations with these border countries. This viewpoint and perspective are currently missing from the literature on the American Revolution, where the arguments which shaped and influenced the parliamentary debates has been almost fully overlooked. Therefore, this study makes a significant contribution to the literature on the American Revolution by providing a new perspective that scrutinises the key themes of the parliamentary debates in this period and

---

[32] Conway, *Britain, Ireland, and Continental Europe*; Stephen Conway's *War, State, and Society in Mid-Eighteenth-Century Britain and Ireland* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006) develops an interesting line of analysis on how Britain's engagement in different rebellions and wars during the eighteenth century shaped and defined its military, economy, and both domestic and international politics. In particular, the Scottish 'Forty-five' rebellion plays a key role in Conway's analysis. S.J. Connolly, "Varieties of Britishness: Ireland, Scotland and Wales in the Hanoverian State," in Alexander Grant and Keith J. Stringer, eds., *Uniting the Kingdom: The Making of British History* (London: Routledge, 1995); James Vance, "Constitutional Radicalism in Scotland and Ireland in the Era of the American Revolution c.1760-1789" (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Aberdeen, 1998), British Library; Edwards and Shepperson, *Scotland, Europe and the American Revolution*.

[33] Conway, *War, State, and Society* argued that because of Wales's long standing historical attachment to England, and the similarities of its governance, it did not present a threat to Britain's sovereignty or unity in the eighteenth century (197). Further arguments on identity appear in Geraint H. Jenkins, "Wales in the Eighteenth Century," in Dickinson, *A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Britain*, 392-402; Eastwood comments on the Welsh legislative system and portrays how the constitutions of local governments were different in each part of Great Britain, Eastwood, "Local Government," 40-54.

highlights the central role and influence that Ireland, Scotland, and Wales played in shaping their direction and outcome.

Sources

The debates in the House of Commons and House of Lords from 1765-1776 form the bedrock of this study. Hitherto, very few historians have paid much attention to the sources of the parliamentary debates. In contrast, this study undertakes a detailed investigation and analysis of the British House of Commons and House of Lords debates on the American conflict and includes additional evidence and insights from the private correspondence of select MPs and Peers between 1765 and 1776. The primary aim and focus of which is to identify and evaluate that Parliament's decision-making process during the American Revolution was influenced and shaped by Parliamentarians' attitudes towards Britain's relationship with Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. As is established throughout this study, this formed a key factor in determining Parliament's response to the American colonies and thus fills an important and significant gap in current understanding of the arguments that developed in support of (as well as against) Parliament's policies towards the American colonists during these critical years of conflict, between the Stamp Act and the Declaration of Independence.

It is important to acknowledge some of the challenges in using these sources as well as my reasoning for settling, principally, on R.C. Simmons' and Peter D.G. Thomas' *Proceedings and Debates of the British Parliaments Respecting North America, 1754-1783* (1982). Frequently termed as the "Unreported Parliament" for the period prior to 1774, major restrictions were placed on who was allowed to attend parliamentary sessions. This state of affairs forced newspapers to assume the task of collecting accounts of the parliamentary debates. To Thomas, this renders these reports suspect, as they were based on "hearsay from conversations in the lobby of the House or gossip in coffee houses."[34] Focusing solely on newspaper accounts carries

[34] Peter D.G. Thomas, "The Beginning of Parliamentary Reporting in Newspapers, 1768-1774," *The English Historical Review* 74, no. 293 (1959): 632; Lawrence Henry Gipson, "The Great Debate in the Committee of the Whole House of Commons on the Stamp Act, 1766, as Reported by Nathaniel Ryder," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 86, no. 1 (1962): 13.

some obvious risks as a single source of evidence. As Simmons and Thomas highlight, select and neglectful compilation of the speeches were printed and the wording consistently differed from other accounts.[35] In his article, "The Beginning of Parliamentary Reporting in Newspapers, 1768-1774" (1959), Thomas also notes that "sometimes reports were left unfinished; sometimes individual speeches were added to supplement earlier accounts."[36] Ian Harris's recent study, "What was Parliamentary Reporting? A Study of Aims and Results in the London Daily Newspapers, 1780-96" (2020), adds to this discussion by concluding that "a report therefore conveyed the writer's conception of what mattered in a debate", making it subject to political bias and the interpretations of the reporter.[37] Notwithstanding, he also concludes that in regard to the reporters, "they addressed most fully what contributed to argument", suggesting that despite the possibility of bias and misreporting, we can be generally confident of the accuracy of the newspaper reports of the debates.[38] Some historians' preference for using diary accounts of sitting MPs may well have been an effort to arrive at a more personal political viewpoint than that presented in the newspapers, but of course this raises questions about the objectivity of the diarist, who was not just an eye-witness, but a participant.

The way to compensate for such limitations is to triangulate between the different sources, balancing their strengths and weaknesses. These have all been gathered together by Simmons and Thomas in the six volumes of *Proceedings and Debates of the British Parliaments Respecting North America, 1754-1783* (1982).[39] The volumes before 1754 were edited by Leo Francis Stock who first began this compilation of parliamentary sources.[40] For each debate, Simmons and Thomas provide multiple reports from newspapers, diary accounts, and private correspondence, which when taken together produce a more comprehensive account of the debates and an opportunity to mitigate against bias (when using just one source of the accounts) through assessment of a variety of accounts of the debates. For instance, the Ryder Diary, frequently used as a source in this thesis, refers to Nathaniel Ryder's account of proceedings as a

---

[35] Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, v, vii.

[36] Thomas, "The Beginning of Parliamentary Reporting," 628.

[37] Ian Harris, "What Was Parliamentary Reporting? A Study of Aims and Results in the London Daily Newspapers, 1780-96," *Parliamentary History* 39, no. 2 (2020): 264.

[38] Ibid., 256.

[39] Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, i-vi.

[40] Ibid., i, vii; Leo Francis Stock, ed., *Proceedings and Debates of the British Parliaments Respecting North America* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1924-1941).

sitting MP from 1756-1776, mostly covering the Stamp Act crisis as a government supporter.[41] Another important source is the *London Evening Post*, owned and operated by John Almon, (who in his own right created a compilation of debates) which drew on his own field reporting as a political journalist.[42] A final point to note, Simmons and Thomas took the liberty of leaving out repetitive accounts of the debates, although such "repetitive information" was not jettisoned from their methodology, as they explained, it was used "to confirm and correct what has been included" and "after the fullest report had been selected those others that added significantly new or different information were included."[43] In sum, the Simmons and Thomas volumes strive to represent the most accurate and robust account of the parliamentary debates, notwithstanding the difficulties and challenges of achieving this. As an example, regarding use of the MP Henry Cavendish's diary, Simmons and Thomas explained that original manuscripts were used rather than more current editions that were significantly altered by the editor.[44] It is the range of assembled accounts, and the authors' applied awareness of their accuracy and representativeness, that makes these volumes a useful and vital primary source.

It is the arguments raised in the debates, rather than the manner or choice of rhetoric deployed, which forms the subject of this study. Since the debates may not be guaranteed to provide the exact wording, or indicate the atmosphere or interaction between Parliamentarians during the debates, this analysis therefore concentrates on identifying the content and context in which the debates were raised, who spoke during the debates, when the debates took place, how frequently the issues within the debates were discussed, and most importantly, the arguments of the MPs and Peers on the topics concerning the American colonies.[45] That being said, certain characterisations in this thesis are taken directly from wording in the debates. For instance, the terms "America" and "American" are used generously throughout this thesis because, despite there being no political "America" or an "American" people at this time, these terms were consistently and frequently used as classification by MPs and Peers. Overall, the debates are where the arguments and decisions on the American crisis took place, emphasising their importance in the history of the American Revolution. Using Simmons' and Thomas' volumes

---

[41] Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, i, viii.

[42] Thomas, "The Beginning of Parliamentary Reporting," 625-632; Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, v, vii-viii.

[43] *Proceedings*, i, vii, ix, x, vii-xi.

[44] Ibid., iii, vii, viii.

[45] Harris, "Parliamentary Reporting"; Thomas, "The Beginning of Parliamentary Reporting," 636.

provides invaluable insight into the ways in which Ireland, Scotland, and Wales featured in the parliamentary debates.

Combing through the debates proved invaluable in the effort to more accurately understand the context of the American Revolution. The five most relevant volumes, composed of between five to six hundred pages, were scrutinised multiple times, not only to grasp the themes of discussion, but also to identify the notable and frequent intervention of Ireland, Scotland, and Wales in the debates. Once the research question of this project was formed, the thousands of pages that formed these debates were reviewed once again in order to compile a dataset for each volume that highlighted each quotation from the source specifically citing one of these nations and the context in which they appeared.

Another complimentary source to the debates, included in Simmons' and Thomas' collection, is the petitions that the American colonists sent to Parliament that also used the example of Ireland and Scotland to plead their cause. In some cases, the arguments presented in the petitions appear to have shaped and influenced MPs' and Peers' views on the conflict and how to address it, whilst in other instances the arguments were entirely ignored or failed to have the desired impact.

This study also draws upon some of the private correspondence of MPs and Peers to shed further light on some of the topics discussed in the debates. It is worth noting, historians have exhaustively used the private papers of Parliamentarians who sat during the American revolutionary period, which have been used to make repeated claims that the ministry was the most responsible for the escalation of the conflict and the eventual loss of the American colonies. In doing so, they have extensively examined the private papers of key figures in the ministry, including George Grenville, Lord North, and Thomas Townshend. Similarly, historians have used the private papers of those who have been typically portrayed as being sympathetic to the American cause, for instance Edmund Burke and Lord Rockingham.[46] This study also explores

[46] Examples for George Grenville: Ian R. Christie, "The Cabinet during the Grenville Administration, 1763-1765," *The English Historical Review* 73, no. 286 (1958): 86–92; Dora Mae Clark, "George Grenville as First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1763-1765," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 13, no. 4 (1950): 383–97; Bullion, *A Great and Necessary Measure*; Lord North: Allan J. McCurry, "The North Government and the Outbreak of the American Revolution," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 34, no. 2 (1971): 141–57; Peter Whiteley, *Lord North: The Prime Minister Who Lost America* (London and Rio Grande [OH]: The Hambledon Press, 1996); Charles Townshend: Robert J. Chaffin, "The Townshend Acts of 1767," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 27, no. 1 (1970): 90–121; Edmund Burke: Cone, *Burke and the Nature of Politics*; Lord Rockingham: Stephen Farrell, "The Practices and Purpose of Party Leadership: Rockingham and the Lords, 1765-82," *Parliamentary History* 22, no. 1 (2003): 13-28.

the private correspondence of some of these key figures, but with a different aim from previous historians, namely to cross-check and identify whether the references to Ireland, Scotland, and Wales that emerged in the parliamentary debates on the American conflict also surfaced between Parliamentarians in their private correspondence.

Thousands of documents were located and examined in order to find letters that related to or referenced Ireland, Scotland, or Wales. As none of these documents were available online, I undertook extensive research in the British National Archives, British Library, Sheffield Archives, and the University of Michigan Library in the United States. While noting which Parliamentarians would most likely refer to these nations, each compilation and manuscript collection included hundreds of letters which had to be carefully and meticulously examined. Those that I assumed would have a lot of information frequently ended up providing little, making it necessary to expand the range of Parliamentarians covered. For instance, the Townshend Papers in Michigan provided mostly economic and trade accounts, rather than correspondence relating to the American proceedings. The Germain Papers, on the other hand, provided numerous references to these countries, despite his rather anonymous presence in the debates. Perhaps less surprisingly, the most helpful were the Rockingham and Burke Papers in Sheffield. The microfilm copies of Burke's papers necessitated extensive study of the microfilm sets and logbooks to accurately locate and review his letters. The Rockingham Papers were collected together in multiple volumes and provided a rich insight into his political views during this period. The Grenville Papers in the British Library were difficult to access (for the most part, his papers are scattered across other MPs' manuscript sets and not easily defined in catalogue descriptions) and unfortunately did not yield the same rich material as other private correspondence did on the role of these nations in the debates. Overall, the references to Ireland, Scotland, and Wales in the private correspondence examined for this study confirmed the influential role these nations played in the political debates and discourse in Parliament on the American crisis.

Structure

This study is a political history of the American conflict which led to the American War of Independence from the perspective of Parliament and the debates in the House of Commons and House of Lords and select private correspondence of individual parliamentary members and other influential revolutionary figures. It adopts a chronological approach, covering the key period of the crisis from the Stamp Act in 1765 to the specific discussion of how to treat the colonies like Ireland, in terms of taxation, in 1776, just a few months before the passage of the Declaration of Independence on 4 July.[47] I have focused on the main Acts and debates during this period, which inevitably means some Acts and political controversies are omitted, including the Quebec Act, for example. It can be argued that certain controversies, such as the Quebec Act or the Wilkes Affair, played an important role in Parliament's political decisions and policy-making in this period, but neither this Act nor the issues around it add any further insights into the role that Ireland, Scotland, and Wales played in the debates, which is the focus of this study. Furthermore, by adopting a chronological approach (and exploring the debates on the Acts and repeals in Parliament in this period), it is possible to trace the evolution and direction of the arguments developed by Parliamentarians. In doing so, it becomes clear that these nations consistently featured in the parliamentary debates over an eleven-year period. It also becomes clear that it was not just one or two Parliamentarians, such as Burke, who raised the significance of Ireland, or Scotland, or Wales in the context of the political crisis with the American colonies, but a substantial block of MPs and Peers on all sides of the political spectrum. Why they did so, in what context, and with what result, are the key lines of enquiry for this study.

Chapter One focuses on the debates on the introduction of the Stamp Act (1765), why MPs thought this measure was necessary, and the surrounding ideologies involving the colonies' relationship to Britain at this point. This chapter highlights the arguments made both for and against the Stamp Act and reveals that Parliament's taxation policies in Ireland formed a crucial part of this debate. While those in charge, particularly George Grenville, advocated for the necessity of maintaining Parliament's authority in the colonies, others argued for a potential alteration to past policies, with Ireland, in recognition of the distinctiveness of the American

[47] Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, vi, 567.

colonies. As this chapter argues, even as early as 1765, certain MPs raised fears of the potential repercussions of acting against precedent in the form of internal taxation, despite many myths to the contrary. While some MPs (George Grenville and Charles Yorke) argued that authoritative measures were needed to quell the American cause, as the tried and true method established with Ireland, others (William Beckford, Sir William Meredith, and Rose Fuller) insisted that a change in precedent to the taxation system in the colonies had the potential to establish this method, to their own dismay, in Great Britain and Ireland, and also risk serious backlash from the colonies. Despite the initial passing of the Act and the warnings which some MPs issued in response, these fears became a reality less than a year later. This chapter argues that as Parliament sought to implement a policy that was hitherto against established precedent in the American colonies, MPs naturally turned to their relationships inside the realm for comparison.

Chapter Two highlights the American colonists' response to the Stamp Act and Parliament's reaction to signs of increased colonial rebellion (1766). This provided the cue for Scotland to enter the debate as Parliamentarians compared the conduct of the American colonists to the most recent threat to its authority closer to home: the Scottish rebellion in 1745. This comparison provoked considerable controversy in Parliament, not least by prompting disagreements over whether the American actions could be branded rebellious. This was a debate that raged on for the next ten years, through to the Declaration of Independence, when presumably the question was unambiguously answered in the affirmative. As the debate shifted to consider taxation, so MPs and Peers shifted their attention to Ireland and Wales, as they discussed both the principle and practice of taxation without representation and its application in specific parts of the realm. In particular, this chapter argues that as the conflict challenged specific principles relating to Parliament's sovereignty, MPs and Peers grasped at each part of the realm to advocate for or against the application of precedent in the colonies based on Parliament's particular relationship with America.

Chapter Three centres on other proceedings with the colonies that hinged on Parliament's sovereignty that are forgotten in the rather infamous passing of the Townshend Duties in 1767. One includes the Treason Act which particularly highlighted diverse views on the colonies' status within the British realm, and therefore, the legal and appropriate application of the Act. The Commander-in-Chief position instigated discussions on Parliament's interference in local governments and was one of Parliament's first measures to significantly impact and increase its

direct authority in the colonies. This chapter highlights the growing references in Parliament to Ireland and Scotland as MPs and Peers wrestled with relating precedent to the new colonial predicament with the American colonies. It also argues that the controversies surrounding these measures, and the resulting indecision and inaction, far from resolving the conflict, only served to fuel further debate and division both in Parliament and the colonies over the remit and ramifications of Parliament's sovereignty and its authority in the American colonies.

Chapter Four provides a detailed examination of each of the Coercive Acts (1774), passed by Parliament in response to the Boston Tea Party in 1773. Despite the broad consensus of opinion among MPs and Peers that the colonists needed to be punished for their egregious actions, the intricate details and clear hard lines of the Acts left many to advocate for more conciliatory measures. This chapter argues that, based on careful scrutiny of the debates, many Parliamentarians greatly feared the impact that the Coercive Acts would have, not only in escalating rebellion in the American colonies, but also the repercussions of this in Ireland and Great Britain. As Scotland was the last place within the realm that had experienced a great rebellion movement, Parliamentarians relied heavily on the measures that had been taken then to press for coercive or conciliatory proceedings. Furthermore, Parliament's preoccupation with debating taxation reveals the inability of MPs and Peers to agree on its practice and principle in the American colonies, largely because they spent so much of their time debating why and how it was applied in Ireland and Great Britain and whether or not the same rules and principles should equally apply to the American colonies. This chapter underpins the wider thesis of this study by representing that this line of argument on taxation never became resolved, primarily because MPs and Peers could not agree on whether to treat and tax the American colonies in the same way as they did Ireland or even Scotland and Wales.

Chapter Five examines the debates leading to the outbreak of war in April 1775. Once again Ireland became a notable source of concern and consideration in the parliamentary debates, in the context of the crisis with the American colonies, because of the genuine fear among MPs and Peers that a similar such rebellion movement was forming in Ireland. As the debates in this period reveal, Parliament believed the crisis with the American colonies was now threatening to jeopardise its authority over Ireland, which could very well spell rebellion and loss of the country altogether. The debates disclose an anxiety among Parliamentarians that their actions were going to provoke a civil war with America. In this way, Parliament found itself wrestling with its

imperial authority, seeking to assert its sovereignty over colonies far away in America, whilst also fearing the implications of its decisions there on its future relationship with Ireland. This was also the first time Irish measures were explicitly advocated for in terms of its direct application to the American colonies. This chapter argues that proceedings towards the Americans were made by considering the impact they would have on Ireland and the realm of Great Britain. In other words, Parliament did not consider the American colonies as the only factor in their management of the crisis, they were compelled to consider the impact of their policies on Ireland and the nations that bordered England, namely Wales and Scotland. Calls to appease the American colonies and attempts to formulate an imperial ideology to support this were raised during the debates but were summarily dismissed in favour of staying the course and following previously established precedents - with Ireland, Scotland, and Wales - rather than forge a new *imperial* relationship with the colonies that few could yet conceive. This chapter shows that during the course of the debates in this period, Parliamentarians were coming to the stark realisation that American independence might be the price to pay for securing and maintaining Parliament's authority in the realm of Great Britain and Ireland.

Chapter Six explores the proceedings in Parliament following the outbreak of war and the months leading to the Declaration of Independence on 4 July 1776. The debates at this time in Parliament are essential to understanding the arguments over the American conflict in the final months before the colonial relationship was severed. We would perhaps expect that at this point, with war fully under way, MPs and Peers would be wholly focused on the American colonies and yet, remarkably, and perhaps one of the most surprising factors in the parliamentary debates, at this time, was that they did not do this. In fact, they persisted in the approach of past debates on the American crisis and viewed it in relation to the Scottish rebellion of 1745. For ten years, Parliamentarians had drawn comparisons between the two, to no avail and to no resolution. The clear confusion, and perhaps reluctance, to classify the American colonies in the same way as the Scottish rebels of 1745, reflects the hesitancy of Parliamentarians to accept that the conflict was one that required a different approach than that offered by steadfastly sticking to precedent. Debates over whether or not the American rebels should be treated like their Scottish counterparts were further complicated by fears that the disgruntled Irish would likely join the American cause. The fact that France might be tempted to join the fight against the British only added to Parliament's anxieties about its sovereignty and status. This was further fuelled when

the Crown stepped up its interference in the crisis and side-stepped Parliament's authority with regards to the use of foreign troops. Parliament thus felt threatened from all sides. Some MPs, like Edmund Burke, responded by arguing for a change in the imperial relationship. Yet such proposals for change or adaptation were met with little enthusiasm. As this study shows, time and again, MPs and Peers turned to past precedents established in Ireland, Scotland, and Wales to frame its relationship with the American colonies. This chapter concludes with one of the final debates in Parliament before the Declaration of Independence which explored applying the same taxation principles and measures in Ireland to America. This thesis thus comes full circle, reflecting the circular direction of the debates themselves, revisiting the same stumbling blocks of taxation and Parliament's sovereignty, with MPs and Peers refusing by and large to concede any political or ideological ground to the American colonies that would appear to weaken or alter Parliament's own sovereign status and authority, particularly among the nations in the realm of Great Britain and Ireland.

This analysis of the parliamentary debates, supported by private correspondence, shows the extensive and important role that Parliament's relationship with Ireland, Scotland, and Wales played in shaping and forming its responses and policies towards the American colonies between 1765 and 1776. In its careful scrutiny of the parliamentary debates and piecing together the threads that link each of the debates by the major themes that shaped the American crisis, not in short the principles and practices behind certain policies such as taxation, it reveals the long-overlooked reliance by MPs and Peers on Parliament's relationship with the nations of Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. In doing so, it calls for a reconsideration of the place of the American Revolution in British history, not solely as a British-American event, but as one which also shaped the history of Parliament, its sovereignty and authority, and especially so in the context of its relationship with the realm of Great Britain and Ireland.

Chapter One: The Stamp Act

The Stamp Act, passed by the British Parliament on 22 March 1765, is undoubtedly one of the most important moments of the American Revolution as it sparked the conflict that would eventually drive the American colonies to seek independence. Furthermore, the colonists' reaction to the passing of the Stamp Act represented the first major challenge to Parliament's sovereignty by its American colonies. As this study argues, Parliamentarians did not on the whole seek novel and innovative diplomatic or political solutions to the conflict with the colonies. Instead, they looked to their past and present relationships with Ireland and Scotland not only for solutions to the political crisis with the American colonies but also, simultaneously, to prevent both countries from launching similar such challenges to Parliament's sovereignty.[48] Thus from the outset, Parliament's response to the crisis triggered by the colonists' reaction to the Stamp Act involved a complex mixture of both domestic politics within the realm and imperial considerations, which saw MPs seeking to balance the importance and significance of their actions in relation to preserving their sovereignty over the American colonies whilst also not jeopardising their present and future sovereignty over Ireland and Scotland.

The proposal of the Stamp Act, which would impose a tax that required stamps for paper documents, and was therefore in effect a tax on legal, business, commercial, and property transactions, triggered a dispute over who had the right to tax the American colonies, Parliament or the colonists themselves.[49] On the one hand, it was a seemingly uncontroversial tax that was already used in Britain without eliciting significant political backlash; on the other hand, when imposed by Parliament on the American colonies, the stamp duty came to be seen in the eyes of the colonists as a dangerous imposition of an internal tax that broke with established practice. To them, such a tax could only be legislated by the colonies' own local assemblies.[50] This brought to

[48] John T. Maple, "Anglo-Norman Conquest of Ireland and the Irish Economy: Stagnation or Stimulation?" *The Historian* 52, no. 1 (1989): 61.

[49] Thomas, *British Politics*, 84.

[50] Thomas confirms that "Britain had had stamp duties since the reign of Charles II" in Thomas, *British Politics*, 69. This was also confirmed in Bullion, *A Great and Necessary Measure*, 104. Historians who have delved into the controversy surrounding the different interpretations of internal and external taxes can be seen in Thomas, *British Politics* and Edmund S. Morgan and Helen M. Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis: Prologue to Revolution* (Chapel Hill [NC]: The University of North Carolina Press, 1953).

the forefront of parliamentary and colonial discussions the question of who had the right to tax the colonies, and more significantly, how much sovereignty Parliament had over America.

When drawn to confront the fundamental issue of parliamentary sovereignty, when the Stamp Act was first proposed, and then, more acutely, when colonial reactions became known, MPs sought to be guided by precedent, as was customary in Parliament. In doing so, they were led to look for answers from similar such challenges and conflicts over Parliament's sovereignty and authority in the past, and in this instance, most notably with Ireland. MPs further used Ireland's status as a colonised country to seek to clarify the status of the American colonies. Centring Ireland in Parliament's response to the American colonies reflected the essential role that parliamentary precedent and history played in shaping MPs' proposed solutions to the conflict with America. Just as importantly, the debates which ensued over this, ignited a conflict in Parliament itself as MPs disagreed over how to interpret and apply historic political precedents with Ireland to address the current crisis with the American colonies. As will be shown, MPs' reliance on historic parliamentary precedent did not have the desired outcome of bringing the colonies to heel; it was an approach which overlooked the possibility that maintaining sovereignty over the American colonies might require a different political praxis than hitherto applied to Ireland, Scotland, or Wales. The failure to recognise and seek novel or alternative solutions to the American crisis arguably mired Parliament in a protracted political crisis which centred on recurring themes and debates in Parliament, on the past, present, and future of Parliament's sovereignty both as an imperial power, but perhaps even more importantly, as the central authority for the realm of Great Britain and Ireland.

The implementation of the Stamp Act was a direct result of the ending of the Seven Years' War, a long and drawn-out conflict between Britain and France from 1756-1763 which spread to their respective colonies in North America, where it became known as the French and Indian War. While the end of the war in North America resulted in Britain gaining Canada, also known as New France, it nonetheless left a fear of French retaliation and a crippling financial crisis in Britain. The parliamentary debates that followed the conclusion of the war reflect these dual concerns, with MPs arguing that an increased army within North America was necessary to guard the new territories from another French attack.[51]

[51] These arguments can be found in most historiographical accounts of the American Revolution including Bullion, *A Great and Necessary Measure;* Lawrence Henry Gipson, "The American Revolution as an Aftermath of

In order to raise money for the purpose of an expanded military force in the colonies, Parliament's answer, as Prime Minister George Grenville confirmed in the debate on Resolutions for American Duties on 9 March 1764, was "to raise the revenue in America for defending itself."[52] Despite the stated purpose to raise revenue to shore up the colonies' self-defence, arguably the debates reveal that it was also imposed to maintain Parliament's sovereignty in the colonies.[53] In doing so, it not only provoked strong reaction and debate in the American colonies, about which there is a voluminous historiography, but equally among MPs too, most especially over differing views and ideologies regarding Parliament's legislative authority, role, and status as a sovereign power over its colonies and realm. American colonists steadfastly insisted that internal taxes could only be raised and enforced by the colonial assemblies. This led MPs to pursue two opposing arguments: one aggressively combatting the colonists' position in order to assert Parliament's right to tax the colonies; the other arguing for the colonies to maintain their own legislative authority.

How Parliament and the colonies defined their relationship with one another, as conquered or settled territories, also raised questions over the type of English law each believed should be in place in the colonies, and, in turn, the sphere and remit of Parliament's authority. Jack P. Greene observes the colonists' perspective on this issue:

> The colonists' quest for explicit guarantees of their right to English laws was a recurrent subject of debate for more than a half century beginning around 1670. This debate revolved around two questions. The first was whether the colonies were conquered countries, to be governed at the will of the King, or settled territories whose inhabitants, enjoying the privileges of Englishmen as their birthright, were to be governed by the laws of England. If the latter, then a second question arose of which English laws should apply, the common law, statute law, or both?[54]

Greene argued that the colonists put into practice both "…common as well as statute, as it suited local and temporal needs and conditions", making this combination one of the reasons why there

---

the Great War for the Empire, 1754-1763," *Political Science Quarterly* 65, no. 1 (1950): 86–104; Morgan and Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis;* Jack M. Sosin, *Whitehall and the Wilderness: The Middle West in British Colonial Policy, 1760-1775* (Lincoln [NE]: University of Nebraska Press, 1961); Thomas, *British Politics*.

[52] Committee of Ways and Means: The Budget; resolutions for American duties on 9 March 1764 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, i, 488.

[53] This point is strongly made by Morgan and Morgan, who claim that "the battle was being transformed into a test of Parliament's authority. The main issue was no longer raising a revenue, but putting the Americans in their place," Morgan and Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis,* 88.

[54] Greene, *Constitutional Origins*, 15.

were so many difficulties defining colonial rights.[55] In response to this controversial question, both the colonists and MPs turned to Parliament's relationship with Ireland for the obvious reason that Ireland's legislative authority rested in the Irish Parliament rather than the British Parliament and was thus the closest equivalent system to the colonial assemblies. Consequently, Parliament, as well as the colonies, formed assertions on Parliament's legislative role based on arguments over the equivalent status of the American colonies and Ireland.[56]

The colonies' own view of their relationship with Parliament can even be seen prior to the Stamp Act in the Resolutions from the Massachusetts Assembly of June 1764 regarding the Sugar Act, signifying its prominence in discussions especially in times of distress. In the Resolution, the colonists argued that the Sugar Act should be repealed on grounds that Ireland was not taxed.[57] They argued:

> Ireland is a conquered Country which is not the Case with the Northern Colonies except Canada. Yet no Duties have been levied by the British Parliament in Ireland. No internal or external Taxes have been assessed on them but by their own Parliament. It may be said that if the Parliament have a right to lay Prohibitions, they can certainly lay Duties which is a less Burthen – Why then has this not been done to Ireland[?] Many prohibitions have been made by the British Parliament on Ireland. Yet we can find no precedent of a Duty imposed on them.[58]

The colonists acknowledged that even if Ireland, as a conquered territory unlike the colonies as argued here, was able to tax itself, then the colonies were even more deserving and justified of this right. Furthermore, they used historic precedent - that no internal taxes were laid in Ireland - to rationalise why no such precedent could be implemented in the colonies. In sum, the colonists'

---

[55] Ibid., 15, 15-16; Greene describes that Common Law was based on "…long usage and custom, as it was for the statute law passed by the Parliaments to which they sent representatives," 7.

[56] It is important to note Ireland's status as it could be considered both a sister kingdom and colony. Powell notes that "Ireland was not united with England, as was Wales and Scotland, and neither was it accorded the independence that might have been expected by a sister kingdom. It is certain that many British politicians regarded Ireland as a dependent of Britain, and therefore their preferred metaphor for the Anglo-Irish relationship would have been parent-child. In this sense it is certainly arguable that Ireland's status was similar to that of a colony," Martyn J. Powell, *Britain and Ireland in the Eighteenth-Century Crisis of Empire* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 2.

[57] The Sugar Act, otherwise known as the American Revenue Act, passed one year prior to the Stamp Act, was arguably the first internal tax on the colonies but there was debate around whether or not it could be considered an internal tax and therefore did not provoke the same reaction as the Stamp Act did, a guaranteed internal tax, Morgan and Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis*, 58.

[58] Townshend Papers, 8/22/17, p.5-6 in *List of and Extracts from several papers laid before the Parliament relative to the disturbances in America on account of the Stamp Act* in Charles Townshend Papers 8/20-8/22, William L. Clements Library, The University of Michigan.

classification of their status as unconquered territories in response to the Sugar Act was thus then used to justify their opposition to Parliament's imposition of the Stamp Act.

This same comparison to Ireland was used in Parliament in the Committee of Supply debate on Army Estimates on 23 January 1765 and showed the dilemma MPs had regarding which law applied to the colonies. This debate was almost a year following the proposal of the Stamp Act, yet the initial protests in the colonies prompted the need for MPs to more closely consider their relationship with the American colonies and led to a heated argument in the Commons between William Beckford, a radical Whig and former Jacobite who supported the Earl of Chatham (also known as Pitt the Elder, and who would become Prime Minister in 1766) and Charles Townshend, soon to be Chancellor of the Exchequer in Chatham's ministry and after whom the Townshend Acts, discussed later in this study, are named.[59] Townshend's insistence that "*the Colonies were not to be emancipated*" prompted a declaration from Beckford that "The Colonies…are more free than Ireland, for America had not been conquered; on the contrary, it was inhabited by the conquerors."[60] Like the colonists' own interpretation, Beckford's use of the term "conquerors" signals an ideological argument about Parliament's view of its authority in the colonies. Beckford's perception that the colonies were not conquered, unlike Ireland, implies that they should have the same rights as those born in England, and therefore, were part of the realm. The comparison to Ireland did more than determine Beckford's consideration of the laws that should be applied in the colonies, it also shaped his argument as to how they should proceed, just as it would influence numerous other MPs and Peers in the discussions on the American conflict. These examples underscore how factions on each side of the Atlantic turned to historic political precedents established in Ireland to argue their case. Since one aim of this study is to explore Parliament's decision-making process throughout the American conflict, the next section will show how the early comparison to Ireland during the Stamp Act crisis determined arguments on the propriety of taxing the colonies, establishment of Parliament's authority, and confirmation of the colonies' status within the realm and empire.

---

[59] Namier and Brooke, *The History of Parliament*, ii, 75-76; iii, 298, 540; Perry, *British Politics and the American Revolution*, 66.

[60] Horace Walpole Memoirs version of the discussion in the Committee of Supply: Army estimates on 23 January 1765 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, ii, 8.

Ireland and Taxation

The notion that the policies regarding taxation in the colonies should mirror those in Ireland can be seen early on in the parliamentary debates, with many MPs turning to Ireland to argue why it was within Parliament's rights to tax the colonies, as seen in the House of Commons debate on 6 February 1765. Beginning with his justification that the colonies were virtually represented, in response to many colonial claims they were not, Prime Minister George Grenville claimed that Parliament's rights, especially the right to tax, superseded all colonial charters, and he proceeded to reinforce his argument by listing previous taxes raised in the colonies by Parliament.[61] To further emphasise this point, Grenville referenced the British Parliament's response to Ireland in 1720 that confirmed their right to legislate. By which he meant the Declaratory Act that was passed to combat the idea that the Irish Parliament had legislative authority over Ireland rather than the British Parliament.[62] Grenville accepted the parallels between Ireland and America by arguing that the colonists, like the Irish, insisted that legislative authority was upheld locally rather than through Parliament. Therefore, as the colonies staked a claim for legislative authority that was inconsistent with Parliament's view of its sovereignty, so the Prime Minister justified the need to impose the Stamp Act.

In response to increased protests from America, including petitions and riots across the colonies, MPs continued to emphasise their legislative authority through Irish precedent, as seen in MP and Attorney-General Charles Yorke's argument on 15 February 1765.[63] Before exploring Yorke's arguments, however, it is necessary to give context to this by explaining how the petitions arguing against the proposed Stamp Act and for the right of the colonies to tax themselves influenced the direction of the debate in Parliament. Two points were made regarding the colonists' position: a petition from Virginia asked for "the Rights and Privileges they have so

---

[61] Morgan and Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis,* 51-58. Ryder Diary's version of the Committee of Ways and Means: Resolutions for colonial stamp duties on 6 February 1765 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, ii, 9-10. For instance, Grenville emphasised "Usage. 25th of Charles 2, imposes duty upon the plantations to be levied and collected within the plantation; and were then for the customs duties which were then payable by a subject of Great Britain within this Kingdom. And these customs have been collected and paid and brought to account and made a part of the aggregate fund. 9 Queen Anne, Post Office, which imposes an internal tax upon North America. 6th of George 2, imposes a duty on molasses. Act passed the last session of Parliament which imposed a tax upon many articles," Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* ii, 10.

[62] Ibid; Greene, *Constitutional Origins,* 45.

[63] Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament,* iii, 675.

long and uninterruptedly enjoyed"; while Connecticut argued "That the Petitioners may be indulged in the Exercise of the Power of laying all internal Taxes on the said Colony."[64] Before diving into a discussion about the content and argument of the petitions, however, serious debate emerged in the House of Commons regarding the right of the colonists to petition Parliament in the first place about taxation, which in turn forced the debate toward considerations about British parliamentary history and political precedents to receive colonial petitions on taxation. For instance, Grenville argued that "no petition could be admitted against taxes" as confirmed by a "case in a West India petition [that was] rejected in March 8 1732."[65] This provoked debate when William Dowdeswell, MP for Worcestershire, who later in 1765 would briefly serve as Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Rockingham cabinet, declared he was "for the petition."[66] He argued, he "Had searched precedents, and found many for such petitions; three in the time of Charles II, nine in the time of William, many during Queen Anne."[67] MPs proceeded to fire arguments back and forth at one another as they variously sought historic examples to justify why they should or should not receive the colonists' petitions against taxation. This debate is just one of many that occurred throughout the next eleven years in which Parliamentarians became distracted and tangled up in arguments over practice and precedent rather than focused on resolving a particular political dilemma or crisis, as in this instance, Parliament's right to tax the colonies.

Charles Yorke sought to redirect the debate back to the matter at hand, namely the colonies' relationship with Parliament and Parliament's right to tax them. He argued that the American colonies should follow the example of Ireland and act according to their colonial status. Yorke believed that the arguments in the colonial petitions on the ability to tax themselves were a threat to Parliament. He concluded that "Britain, though an island, an immense Empire. Colonies carry our laws with them", thus justifying that the colonies were subject to the same legislature as those throughout the realm and empire.[68] Therefore, Parliament needed to "preserve their authority", because "Petitions, that touch on legislature, [are] dangerous."[69]

---

[64] Proceedings on 15 February 1765 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* ii, 25.

[65] Harris Diary version of the Stamp Bill: Petitions before Second Reading on 15 February 1765 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* ii, 26.

[66] Ibid.; Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament,* ii, 333.

[67] Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* ii, 26.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid., 27.

Yorke's justification was that the American colonies were being taxed in order to pay for their defence against the French. This, Yorke argued, was part of the "Aid and duty, to be expected from the common welfare."[70] In particular, it was required as part of their colonial status. To argue this, he concluded that, "Case of Ireland quoted, our principal colony. Here England voted a peace establishment of 12000 men, to be paid by Ireland. They obeyed, and [submitted] no petitions."[71] Yorke specifically regarded Ireland's past predicament and response as analogous to that of the American colonies. By drawing attention to the fact that Ireland did not petition against the taxation for their defence, he emphasised the duty that Ireland accepted as a colony and, in contrast, the lack of deference shown by the American colonists to Parliament in like circumstances. Yorke's comment was intended to put the colonies on the same firm footing as the Irish with regards to Parliament's authority and rule (in a quite different sense to how the colonists had used Ireland in the Resolutions against the Sugar Act).

The very character of America, being thirteen separate and distinct colonies, was further grounds to support the argument favouring Parliament's power to tax the colonies, according to Yorke:

> Case the same here, but as to their raising the sum by themselves, this [is] impossible to adjust, where the colonies are so numerous. [It] Could only be done [in] two ways. The first by a federal union. God forbid that. The plan [is] ingenious but he dreads it, their obedience owing to their particular weakness. The second way, to adjust quotas here, and leave the colonies to raise them. This would be endless. They would never acquiesce. Would always complain of being unequally charged one compared to another…It is for the wisdom of Parliament, to settle everything here at home, and the petitions should be rejected.[72]

Although Yorke implied that the American colonies and Ireland shared the same colonial status, he recognised the differences between them. While his statement alludes to the fact that Ireland was able to raise a revenue itself, he did not believe this was a possibility for the American colonies. Instead, he argued that the establishment of a federal union would mean a growing independence and that their status as colonies must be maintained through their continued dependence on Britain. Furthermore, he also alleged that colonial rivalries would impede the

[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid.

ability for self-taxation. Arguments favouring an assertion of Parliament's authority would be the eventual reason for securing the passage of the Stamp Act.

Notwithstanding, there were MPs who used the example of Ireland to argue in favour of allowing the Americans certain colonial privileges. When Grenville previously proposed the Stamp Act to Parliament on 9 March 1764, the debate had been uneventful and discussion focused on the practicalities of the American Revenue Act.[73] However, one MP who did see a potential problem was John Huske, MP for Maldon. It was perhaps the proposition of the stamp duty that encouraged Huske, who was himself born in New Hampshire, to draw attention to the issue of how they should proceed in implementing a tax within the colonies.[74] While agreeing to the notion of Parliament's "right to tax", Huske argued that, "Notice ought to be sent to North America of any important business which relates to them. It is done in case of Irish causes."[75] Huske immediately confirmed the colonies' status by suggesting the same legislative process take place when regarding American acts as they would with Ireland. While it seems like a generous suggestion to send advance notice to America, more importantly, it shows that Huske's view on colonial governance relied on tradition and history in Great Britain and Ireland. As he argued, "The people of America, not being represented here in Parliament, have the right to petition against the tax."[76] Notably, Huske reinforced the argument on the colonies' right to petition by raising the issue of representation. Petitioning during the committee stage was not customary, but Huske's point was that the colonists were in a position that entitled them to do so because they were not directly represented in Parliament. Huske's argument was somewhat contradictory; on one hand, suggesting that the colonies should be treated the same as Ireland, while on the other claiming that the "special circumstances of the colonists" should allow for bespoke processes that recognised and accommodated their unique circumstances.[77] Notably, the record does not show that Huske's argument roused any direct response from fellow Parliamentarians, but the seeds were already sown in March 1764 for the issue of representation to resurface in MPs' discussions over taxation.

---

[73] Ryder Diary version of the Committee of Ways and Means: The Budget; resolutions for American duties on 9 March 1764 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, i, 489.

[74] Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament*, ii, 658.

[75] Ryder Diary version of the Committee of Ways and Means: The Budget; resolutions for American duties on 9 March 1764 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, i, 490.

[76] Ibid.

[77] Bullion, *A Great and Necessary Measure,* 114.

Beckford, for example, though agreeing that Parliament had the right to *ex*ternally tax the colonies, in response to Grenville's arguments on 6 February 1765, argued they could not however *in*ternally tax the colonies, on the grounds that the colonies were not represented. Once again, Ireland was cited as an example; in this instance, though, to argue for the American colonies' own legislative authority. Beckford stated that "No precedent [can be] found of foreign taxation but the Post Office, and that certainly for the convenience of the colonies themselves. If this principle was established, why not tax Ireland; the produce of this would be indeed considerable."[78] Beckford's argument offered a warning to MPs, that how they managed and governed the American colonies, at least in the case of internal taxation, had the potential for impacting Parliament's role and relationship with its colonies and dominions elsewhere, notably with Ireland. Beckford's radical political background and former minority position as a Jacobite within the realm, makes his support of other marginalised people, in this case, the colonists, unsurprising.[79] As the Stamp Act brought into question the right of taxation, both sides of the debate used the example of Ireland to argue how Parliament should proceed in this arguably unprecedented crisis with America. Furthermore, these debates reveal the lines of conflict and disagreement among MPs in Parliament over how to resolve the crisis that would escalate over the course of the next eleven years and culminate in the American Declaration of Independence.

Impact on the Realm of Great Britain and Ireland

In the debates over the passage of the Stamp Act, MPs delivered early warnings that not allowing the colonies to tax themselves would have a greater impact on Britain's nations closer to home,

---

[78] Ryder Diary version of the Committee of Ways and Means: Resolutions for colonial stamp duties on 6 February 1765 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* ii, 11. Thomas notes that "The example most frequently cited as an instance of internal taxation was the American postal service, established in 1711. But taxation had not been the purpose, and the colonial Post Office did not begin to yield a surplus at all until 1764…All the evidence implied that Parliament had not yet deliberately and directly taxed the colonies and showed that such revenue as had been raised was a by-product of measures…for other purposes," Thomas, *British Politics,* 37. This was further confirmed by Dickinson who argued that "Only the Post Office Act of 1711 looked like a precedent for parliament's right to impose an internal tax on the colonies, but even this measure could be described as being a means of promoting commercial relations between the colonies," H.T. Dickinson, "Sovereignty in the American Revolution," in H.T. Dickinson and Michael Lynch, eds., *The Challenge to Westminster: Sovereignty, Devolution and Independence* (East Linton [Scotland]: Tuckwell Press, 2000), 54.

[79] Perry, *British Politics,* 66.

including Beckford's argument that their actions could set a new precedent for their management of Ireland. Yet, arguments in favour of enforcing Parliament's authority and sovereignty outnumbered and outweighed these concerns. Grenville, for instance, acknowledged that the Stamp Act could have such implications, but it was a risk he was willing to take. Indeed, he referred to an example of a Scottish tax (in the debate on 6 February 1765) to justify why it was appropriate to tax the colonies. Even though Scotland was not considered a colony, its status within the British realm suggests that Grenville interpreted Parliament's authority in the colonies as directly correlating with its authority throughout Great Britain and Ireland. He was further quoted as arguing for the "increase of the peace establishment", presumably referring to the Stamp Act's proceeds funding the military in the colonies.[80] Grenville continued, "If said, they [the American colonists] do not like it, no more does the west like the cyder tax; Scotland the beer tax; the middle of England, the land-tax."[81] Grenville used these other taxes to emphasise that the colonies can and should be taxed as established throughout the realm. His reasoning was that "The Parliament of Great Britain virtually represents the whole Kingdom", therefore allowing legislative authority to rest in Parliament.[82] Grenville's positioning of the American colonies within the context of the realm of Great Britain blatantly ignores the colonies' protest that they were only represented in their local assemblies, like Ireland, and not virtually represented like England and Scotland. Yet, Grenville clearly conceived of Parliament's authority in the realm as extending directly to the colonies, thus implying that the colonies' status was equivalent to those within the realm. Arguably, Grenville's refusal to tailor the tax in a way that was acceptable to the American colonies was enhanced by his insistence on Parliament's authority. In response to MPs' concerns about the impact of the Stamp Act, he recognised:

> Objection, that this tax will produce disturbance and discontent and prevent improvement among the colonies…But as to this objection, when will the time come when enforcing a tax will not give discontent, if this tax does produce it after what we have done and suffered for America? And therefore if we reject this proposition now, we shall declare that we ought not to tax the colonies. And we need not declare after a year's time that we ought not, for then we cannot.[83]

---

[80] Harris Diary version of the Committee of Ways and Means: Resolutions for colonial stamp duties on 6 February 1765 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, ii, 14.

[81] Ibid., 14-15.

[82] Ryder Diary's version of the Committee of Ways and Means: Resolutions for colonial stamp duties on 6 February 1765 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* ii, 9.

[83] Ibid., 10-11.

In other words, Grenville was prepared to gamble a backlash from the colonists now in order to maintain Parliament's ability to tax the colonies in the future.

Grenville's view did not stand unopposed. Sir William Meredith, MP for Liverpool, supporter of Rockingham, and former Jacobite, argued against his stance on Parliament's authority and warned that Parliament's actions with the Stamp Act would have all sorts of potentially damaging ramifications, not least for Britain's reputation and status in the American colonies.[84] Meredith argued:

> The safety of this country consists in this with respect that we cannot lay a tax upon others without taxing ourselves. This is not the case in America. We shall tax them in order to ease ourselves. We ought therefore to be extremely delicate in imposing a burden upon others which we not only not share ourselves but which is to take it far from us.[85]

Meredith's concern centred on the impact of the policy and how it would look to apply a burdensome tax on the colonists when the benefit was only to be felt in Britain, rather than whether it was legitimate or not. He offered a further warning about the impact on local governance in the colonies, observing that, "If we tax America we shall supersede the necessity of their assembling."[86] Meredith's arguments were a warning to Parliament that the Stamp Act had the potential to alter the colonies' legislative structure and authority, and therefore, Parliament's role in the colonies. It was common practice in the debates to fall back on political precedent in order to determine how Parliament should act and respond, and Meredith's approach was no different from his fellow MPs in this respect. His acknowledgement that the tax would alter the current system of colonial governance implies that by precedent, the colonies were taxed through their assemblies. He was not so much suggesting a change to Britain's relationship with America, but rather signalling a warning that a change could occur if they did not act wisely and if they upset the current political status quo. In the same debate, MP Rose Fuller, a wealthy Jamaican planter and advocate of West Indian interests in Parliament, similarly argued that he "Is afraid of the discord and confusion which it may produce. The Post Office is a very small instance of a tax forced by this country. This tax is intended to be laid upon very different

---

[84] Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament,* iii, 130, 131; Perry, *British Politics,* 70.

[85] Ryder Diary version of the Committee of Ways and Means: Resolutions for colonial stamp duties on 6 February 1765 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* ii, 13.

[86] Ibid.

principles."[87] Fuller acknowledged that the Stamp Act was unprecedented and therefore Parliament should be careful about how they chose to proceed with it.

Altogether, the arguments and debates about Grenville's Stamp Act exhibit the range of concerns which MPs had and that while there was support for the tax, it did not come without warnings and fears of the impact on the colonists. Grenville's primary concern was Parliament losing its authority in the colonies should they continue to tax themselves, even while he registered that it would likely provoke disturbance in the colonies. With the debates on the Stamp Act, the first of the measures to cause a crisis in Parliament's relationship with the American colonies, MPs acknowledged that the issue of taxation could have a much greater impact than a few protests. MPs and Peers had numerous occasions over the next eleven years to act in a more conciliatory way towards the American colonies, yet as the debates unfolded, calls to assert Parliament's authority, rather than concede to the colonists' demands, increasingly gained ground.

Conclusion

The passage of the Stamp Act and subsequent American response generated conflicting arguments among MPs on Parliament's authority and legislative rights in the colonies. MPs looked to political precedents with Ireland to confirm and justify the rationale behind the Act. Yet crucially, MPs became wrapped up in disagreements over historic parliamentary precedents and the possible impact and ramifications their actions could have on Britain's relationship with the American colonies *and* Ireland. Therefore, reliance on these precedents only escalated confusion in Parliament and was ultimately unhelpful in forming a plan to manage the American colonies. This was possibly due to the fact that the comparisons with Parliament's relationship and policies towards Ireland failed to give due recognition to the differences between Ireland and America, in so far as the latter was comprised of thirteen separate entities with legislative systems which were not as comparable to Ireland as MPs asserted. Furthermore, distance between the American colonies and Britain had allowed for years of "salutary neglect", meaning the colonies had

[87] Ibid.; Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament,* ii, 478, 479.

largely governed themselves with limited interference and direct involvement from Parliament, which was not the case with Parliament's relationship with Ireland. Indeed, Parliament's relationship with Ireland at the time of the Stamp Act was the outcome of Parliament asserting its authority over Ireland in the form of the 1720 Declaratory Act, which would serve as a blueprint for the 1766 Declaratory Act issued to the American colonies. From the Stamp Act onwards, MPs and Peers framed the issue of Parliament's authority over the American colonies in the context of its authority over Ireland, rather than viewing its relationship with the American colonies as requiring a different set of policies and practices. Indeed, the argument was that to treat the American colonies differently from Ireland would upset the latter's relationship with Britain. This approach set the direction and tone for the rest of the debates on the American crisis, through to the Declaration of Independence, which saw Parliamentarians increasingly concerned about how the American conflict had the potential to threaten Parliament's authority and relationship with Ireland, Scotland, and Wales.

Chapter Two: Stamp Act Repeal and Declaratory Act

The Stamp Act was repealed on 20 March 1766 under the new Prime Minister Lord Rockingham, following a year of widespread protests in the American colonies that took the form of non-importation agreements restricting the import of British merchandise, Resolutions from the colonies arguing against Parliament's right to internally tax them, and the formation of the Stamp Act Congress that created a unified movement against the tax.[88] The strong responses of the American colonies to the Stamp Act, as well as pressure from the English merchant community, exacerbated the financial instability and pressure on Parliament that followed the Seven Years' War.[89] This also resulted in increased conflict in Parliament as MPs and Peers discussed the expediency of repealing the Stamp Act and, more importantly, the principle of the Act, as disagreements over Parliament's right to tax the colonies gained ground. Even though it was not widely believed that Parliament did not have the right to tax the American colonies, conflict with the North American colonies nevertheless triggered a wider and deeper dispute among Parliamentarians over the remit of Parliament's sovereignty. In this way, political friction was no longer confined to the colonies but forced Parliament to reckon with principles and practices of its own sense of sovereignty, which itself ignited discord and divisions among MPs and Peers. Arguments concerned both principle (whether Parliament had the right to levy internal taxes in the colonies) and practice (whether it was wise to try and do so). MPs and Peers turned to their relationship with Ireland, Scotland, and Wales to define the scope of the colonists' rebellion and to argue why they should or should not exercise their authority in the form of taxation, and whether they could even do so. Political precedent arguably became more important in the debates in an effort to avoid conflict surrounding principles of parliamentary authority by relying on those already established in Ireland, Scotland, and Wales and, until recently, the American colonies. However, disagreement over which precedent was most suitable and applicable to the current crisis, in addition to a new government in Parliament headed by Lord Rockingham, conspired to produce indecision and confusion over the principle of Parliament's right to tax, resulting in the repeal of the Stamp Act and corresponding failure to

[88] Morgan and Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis*.

[89] Helen Henry Hodge, "The Repeal of the Stamp Act," *Political Science Quarterly* 19, no. 2 (1904): 252–76.

satisfactorily assert Parliament's authority over the American colonies, despite the implementation of the Declaratory Act which stated otherwise, as will be discussed.

Scotland and the Shadow of Rebellion

Confronted with increased rebellion in the American colonies in 1765, MPs and Peers were drawn to compare the crisis with the Scottish rebellion, a mere twenty years earlier, in 1745, when the Jacobites attempted to reinstate the Stuarts as the rightful heirs to the throne.[90] Challenged by unprecedented opposition from the American colonies, Parliamentarians seized on drawing comparisons with rebellious subjects who were much closer to home. The first debate to raise the spectre of the Scottish rebellion in the American context took place in the House of Lords on 17 December 1765, prompted by a discussion over whether an Amendment should be added in the Address to the King alerting him to the colonists' reaction to the Stamp Act, which specified "deep Concern and Indignation at the dangerous Tumults and Insurrections which have been raised and fomented in His Majesty's Dominions of *North America*, in Opposition to the Execution of the Laws, and in open Defiance of the Parliamentary Right, of *Great Britain*."[91] While this Amendment did not pass, by 80 to 24, it did nonetheless lead to a debate on the situation in the colonies and whether or not the rebellion was something to be feared; in other words, more than the disturbance predicted by Grenville in the previous debates on the Stamp Act.[92] Available accounts of the debates do not provide much detail of the discussions that took place in Parliament on this. However, a letter from the Anglo-Irish statesman, Lord Shelburne, who later as Prime Minister signed the Treaty of Paris concluding the War of Independence in 1783, to William Pitt (the Elder), includes his own opinion on the event and sheds light on the arguments which emerged in Parliament.[93] Shelburne argued, "I felt attaching the name of *rebellion* hastily, and *traitors*, to the Americans, and comparing them to the Scots at Derby-

[90] Conway, *War, State, and Society*, 198-9.
[91] Proceedings on 17 December 1765 in the House of Lords in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* ii, 54.
[92] Ibid., 55.
[93] Arthur Burns, "William Petty, 2nd Earl of Shelburne (Whig, 1782-1783)," No10 Guest Historian Series, GOV.UK, 26 August 2015, https://history.blog.gov.uk/2015/08/26/william-petty-2nd-earl-of-shelburne-whig-1782-1783/.

which was the language used-dangerous, and perhaps both imprudent and unjust."[94] Peers referred to the Jacobite rebellion during the debates on the repeal of the Stamp Act by way of comparing, unhelpfully in Shelburne's view, the American colonists' opposition to that of the Scots, as they grappled with trying to understand what sort of colonial actions they were now confronting. In particular, Shelburne's reference to the Scots at Derby refers to when the Jacobites made a significant advance into England, causing an extreme threat to Britain's security and political stability.[95] The fact that Peers compared the Jacobite rebellion to the American rebellion suggests that some believed, or at least feared, that the American rebellion threatened to have a similar impact, not in terms of military encroachment, but in terms of usurping the legitimacy of Parliament's authority and governance. Shelburne clearly thought that this comparison was misjudged in the context of the American colonists' resistance to the Stamp Act.

However, that is not to say that Shelburne's argument was grounded in sympathy for the colonists. Even though he was Secretary of State for the Southern Department at this time and very involved in the expansion and commercial aspects of the colonies, his view on America was pragmatic, he did not think it was the best policy, or very expedient, to treat the Americans as rebels.[96] In fact, in his account of the debate, Shelburne was

> acknowledging the power of parliament to be supreme, but referring the expediency of the act to be considered in a commercial view, regard being to be had [sic] to the abilities of the Americans to pay this tax, and likewise to the consequences likely to proceed, in any event, from the late violences.[97]

Therefore, rather than agreeing to the principle of the colonists' rebellion, at least from what we can see in the debates, Shelburne was more concerned with how a rebellion would affect

---

[94] Shelburne to Pitt (Chatham Papers) version of the Address on 17 December 1765 in the House of Lords in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* ii, 57.

[95] Jonathan Oates, "The Crisis of The Hanoverian State?" *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research* 81, no. 328 (2003): 308–29.

[96] Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament*, iii, 271; R.A. Humphreys argues that Shelburne "deplored the raising of a constitutional issue in the Declaratory Act. Expediency was the test of policy, expansion the end to be pursued" (pg. 258) in R.A. Humphreys, "Lord Shelburne and British Colonial Policy, 1766-1768," *The English Historical Review* 50, no. 198 (1935): 257-8.

[97] Shelburne to Pitt (Chatham Papers) version of The Address on 17 December in the House of Lords in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, ii, 57.

England's commercial interests.[98] It is hard to say whether Shelburne's argument directly influenced other Peers, but the fact that the proposed Amendment to express uneasiness over American rebelliousness was not approved, suggests that it was nonetheless widely shared by other Peers.

While Shelburne's concern was predominantly about the impact of the colonists' assertive responses on Britain's commercial interests, arguments over Parliament's authority was the driving factor throughout the debates on the colonists' reaction to the Stamp Act. Lord Mansfield, the Lord Chief Justice, urged for Parliament to exercise its muscle in response to the colonists.[99] According to Mansfield, "the connection between Great Britain and her colonies was analogous to the relation between parent and child", thus signalling the authority and power of Parliament over the American colonies.[100] If Parliament failed to act in its role as a parent and assert its authority, Mansfield warned, it would "destroy the relation" with the North American colonies.[101] The parent and child analogy shaped Mansfield's perception of the responsibility Parliament had to ensure and maintain its authority over its rebellious child. He further warned, "that they [the North American colonies] had been for some time endeavouring to shake off their dependence" and "That the next attempt of the colonies would be for ridding themselves of the Navigation Act."[102] To Mansfield, the colonists' protests against the Stamp Act logically signified a path towards greater independence – specifically from the economic structures that tied the colonies into the British economy. It was, moreover, his conviction that the colonies would continue to test their independence and rebel against other acts to rid themselves of parliamentary authority, that led him to reference the 1745 Scottish rebellion. "When the Pretender was at Derby did you enter upon a tame consideration of grievances?" Mansfield asked Peers, before concluding, "The present rebellion was more unnatural and not less notorious than that of 1745."[103] Mansfield's reference to the Jacobites was precisely the sort of fear that Shelburne had objected to. But Mansfield implied that the American rebellion was in fact worse than the Jacobite Rebellion, in fact "more unnatural", and as such he was astounded by

---

[98] Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament*, iii, 271-2; Humphreys, "Lord Shelburne," 257-8.

[99] Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament*, iii, 189. H. Hamersley to Governor H. Sharpe version of The Address on 17 December 1765 in the House of Lords in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* ii, 564-7.

[100] Ibid., 564.

[101] Ibid.

[102] Ibid., 565.

[103] Ibid.

Parliament's lacklustre response.[104] In his view, the 1745 rebellion provided a lesson for how Parliament should now act towards the American colonies, fully twenty years later, in 1765. For the time being, Peers did not heed Mansfield's caution or share his concern and remained aligned with Shelburne's view, not wishing to act hastily and excessively.

In the House of Commons, on the other hand, George Grenville, who was now in Opposition, having been replaced by Lord Rockingham, agreed with Mansfield that the American rebellion needed to be taken as seriously as the 1745 Scottish rebellion.[105] This occurred on the same day when the House of Commons discussed a similar Amendment to the Address, which would designate the colonies as rebellious, and also present a firm stance on "preserving and securing the legal Dependence of the Colonies upon this their Mother Country."[106] Yet, just as in the House of Lords, this Amendment that asserted Parliament's "just Resentment and Indignation at the outrageous Tumults and Insurrections" was not passed, an indication that more MPs shared Shelburne's rather than Mansfield's view that the Amendment was too harsh or hasty a judgement on the colonists' reaction.[107]

Nonetheless, just as in the Lords, the debate in the Commons focused on the state of the colonies and whether or not the actions of the American colonists could be considered a rebellion. In particular, the words "important Occurrences", as mentioned in part of the Address when specifying the situation in the colonies, struck Grenville as too insipid, prompting him to state that he "opposed on the words, important occurrence. This he thought far too weak for such an audacious attempt, which he called an open rebellion. Would you have called the rebellion in 1745 an important occurrence?"[108] Like Mansfield, Grenville insisted that the rebellion in the American colonies required a much stronger reaction from Parliamentarians. In fact, based on the debate, it looks as if it was Grenville who principally proposed the Amendment. In an echo of Mansfield's response in the Lords, Grenville's reaction reminded MPs of the not so long ago 1745 Scottish rebellion which greatly impacted Britain. Grenville considered the American

---

[104] Ibid.

[105] Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament,* ii, 543.

[106] Proceedings on 17 December 1765 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, ii, 58.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Ibid., 58; Harris Diary version of The Address on 17 December 1765 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, ii, 59.

rebellion to be analogous and for this reason he argued that the American colonists' response should be classified as a rebellion, not simply an "occurrence."[109]

It is no wonder that MPs and Peers sought to compare the American "occurrence" to that of the 1745 rebellion, as it was the most recent incident in political memory when Parliament's authority was challenged. Perhaps greatest of all was the fear of misunderstanding the rebellion, thus the need for MPs and Peers to define it by turning to the Scottish rebellion as a comparison. While the more widespread beliefs seemed to be that the American threat did not yet pose the same threat as the Scottish rebellion in 1745, MPs' and Peers' encouraged an assertion of Parliament's authority in the colonies and were arguably persuasive in Parliament's decision to issue the Declaratory Act (in many ways an echo of the Declaratory Act applied to Ireland in 1720), alongside the repeal of the Stamp Act, and introduce, only a year later, the Townshend Acts, both of which enforced Parliament's sovereignty in the colonies. Overall, the significance of the references to the Scottish rebellion shows that when Parliament was confronted with a show of force from the American colonies, MPs' and Peers' political instinct was to seek a response by turning to recent history when its authority was tested closer to home in Scotland.

Impact on the Realm of Great Britain and Ireland

As the records on the parliamentary debates reveal, MPs' and Peers' concerns about the present and future security and stability of Great Britain and Ireland were shaped by the Scottish rebellion and undeniably influenced their policies towards the rebellious American colonies. It is highly likely that the decision to exercise parliamentary muscle was guided by a concern that unrest, and possible rebellion, would spread to other parts of the realm. While the Stamp Act debates revealed that there was an awareness that the passage of the Act could have adverse effects, Parliamentarians gradually became more outspoken about their concerns that the American crisis had the potential to negatively impact Great Britain and Ireland. In an unaddressed letter, probably written to Charles Townshend, on 8 January 1766, Charles Hamilton, who for over three decades had sat in the Irish House of Commons, warned that the

[109] Ibid.

American colonies' growing independence would have repercussions for England, most especially financial.[110] Hamilton argued, "our Colonys already begin to feel their own Importance, and it seems to me as if what is done this Session, will be of greater Consequence to England, than any thing that has happen'd since the Union."[111] The Scottish Union of 1707 had a significant impact on Britain's political landscape, giving the Scots representation in the British Parliament by uniting the two Kingdoms. Hamilton's suggestion that how they proceeded with the American colonies would have as great an impact on England as the Union illustrates the sense of political magnitude felt at this point in time for England's future.

In the Committee on the Late Tumults in America in the House of Lords on 3 February 1766, Lord William Henry Lyttelton warned of the potential repercussions of American opposition to Parliament's right to tax, in the form of resistance to taxation in England by those not directly represented in Parliament: "The weight of taxes in England are heavy, and admit but this doctrine", he argued, "many thousands who have no vote in electing representatives, will follow their brethren in America, in refusing submission to any taxes."[112] Echoing concerns which had been raised during the Stamp Act debates, Lyttleton gave credence to one of the key issues of the American conflict, namely the colonists' objection to being taxed without representation. As the colonists argued that virtual representation did not apply to them, Lyttelton contended that fellow Englishmen who were taxed under this same principle would take the American stance and refuse to be taxed. As such, he called for Parliament to consider how their actions would affect *England's* stability and security. Lyttelton daringly challenged those in the House to accept that if they decided against taxation, it was a firm conclusion that the American colonists were in fact outside the realm, and consequently, not English subjects. This bold statement possibly influenced most Peers to agree that the colonists could be taxed as British subjects, in the fear of the potential ramifications of labelling the colonists as foreigners. Furthermore, as Lyttelton himself feared, that doing otherwise would lead other subjects not directly represented in Parliament to expect the same dispensation.[113] Lyttelton's previous role as

---

[110] "Hon. Charles Hamilton (1704-86)," in R. Sedgwick, ed., *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1715-1754* (Boydell and Brewer, 1970), https://historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1715-1754/member/hamilton-hon-charles-1704-86.

[111] Townshend Papers, 131/10, p. 2, Bowhill 1-18 (Box 295).

[112] Cobbett's Parliamentary History version of Committee on the late tumults in America on 3 February 1766 in the House of Lords in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, ii, 127.

[113] Ibid., 125-133.

Governor of South Carolina provided him with a unique outlook combining both British *and* American perspectives on the conflict, yet, unlike others with an American background in Parliament, he was not inclined to sympathise with the colonial cause.[114] Rather, his argument stressed that colonial governance should be determined by Parliament's role and authority in the British realm.

Lyttleton's fears were even more dramatically expressed by MPs in the House of Commons. In particular, during a debate on an Address "to give orders for enforcing the laws, and for carrying all Acts of the English Parliament into execution", Robert Nugent, who had just finished his first stint as Joint Vice-Treasurer of Ireland and would become Lord Clare in 1767, and spoke in favour of the Address, offered a chilling warning to the House: "the earthquake in North America will shake all his Majesty's dominions. Some vibrations have been felt in Ireland. It was formerly supposed that Ireland had been united with North America. The present Ministry will have the glory of joining two countries which the deluge separated."[115] Nugent's argument signals the growing concerns within Parliament that the colonial conflict with America could spread to Great Britain, and especially Ireland, where the stamp of parliamentary authority had only forty years previously been asserted through the 1720 Declaratory Act. Nugent raised the impact on Ireland to portray the gravity of the situation and the necessity for authoritative measures in order to prevent the spread of colonial rebellion closer to home.[116] At this point in the debates, however, his fears largely fell on deaf ears and, indeed, the Address failed to pass with 274 to 134 votes.[117] Later in the debates, as the political crisis with the American colonies deepened, Nugent's concerns about its impact on Parliament's authority over Ireland and the potential for Irish/American allyship were not so readily dismissed.

---

[114] Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament,* iii, 76.

[115] Ibid., 219; Walpole Memoirs version of American Committee: Motion to enforce the laws in the colonies on 7 February 1766 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* ii, 174; Ryder Diary version, 172.

[116] Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament*, ii, 218-222.

[117] Ryder Diary version of American Committee: Motion to enforce the laws in the colonies on 7 February 1766 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, ii, 173.

The American Colonists and Ireland

It is worth briefly pausing an analysis of MPs and Peers arguments at this critical point in the debates to acknowledge that Ireland was also used as a case in point by the American colonists in their arguments against Parliament. The Stamp Act Congress was formed by a majority of the colonies in October 1765 when delegates met in New York to discuss Parliament's actions.[118] This political unity between American colonies was seen as a sign of growing independence, as MPs described the formation of Congress as a "dangerous federal union", threatening a unified front that would separate from Parliament's sovereign rule.[119] In a petition sent to Parliament, the colonies argued that they were only represented in their local assemblies and therefore could not be taxed by Parliament, inferring that taxes could only be raised by their representative government in the colonies. To emphasise their rights, the colonies compared their status to Ireland. The petition argued: "that their remote Situation and other Circumstances render it impracticable, that they should be represented but in their respective subordinate Legislatures; that the Parliament, adhering strictly to the Principles of the Constitution, have hitherto never taxed *Ireland* or any other of the Subjects without the Realm."[120] Both the American colonies and Ireland were not part of Great Britain, as Wales and Scotland. Therefore, they required different legislative systems and procedures, especially when representation was required. Both Wales and Scotland had representatives in Parliament, whereas Ireland and the colonies relied on local representatives through the Irish Parliament and colonial assemblies. Ireland was used as an example to make the case to Parliament that all colonies in the same position to Parliament, including the American colonies, needed to be treated according to the same constitutional principles. Unfortunately, there is not much surviving documentation to indicate how MPs responded to this, but their characterisation of a "dangerous federal union" clearly indicates the level of concern which it provoked in Parliament.[121] It is furthermore unsurprising that some

[118] Morgan and Morgan, *Stamp Act Crisis*, 103.

[119] Walpole Memoirs version of Motion to bring up Stamp Act Congress Petition on 27 January 1766 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, ii, 111.

[120] Proceedings on 27 January 1766 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, ii, 109.

[121] Walpole Memoirs version of Motion to bring up Stamp Act Congress Petition on 27 January 1766 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, ii, 111.

MPs reacted by arguing for a show of increased parliamentary authority, especially as the colonies challenged Parliament's right to tax without direct representation.

In an effort to understand the Americans' line of argument on taxation, MPs invited testimony from the American colonists, including from Benjamin Franklin, who at the time was the agent for Pennsylvania.[122] Following many questions on the temperament of the colonists before the Stamp Act on 13 February 1766, Franklin used Ireland to clarify how they saw Parliament's authority in the colonies. Parliament asked, "Considering the resolutions of parliament, as to the right, do you think, if the stamp-act is repealed, that the North-Americans will be satisfied?" Franklin replied: "I believe they will."[123] Parliament then asked, "Why do you think so?" Franklin concluded:

> I think the resolutions of right will give them very little concern, if they are never attempted to be carried into practice. The colonies will probably consider themselves in the same situation, in that respect, with Ireland; they know you claim the same right with regard to Ireland, but you never exercise it. And they may believe you never will exercise it in the colonies, any more than in Ireland, unless on some very extraordinary occasion.[124]

In a curious echo of some of Parliament's discussions on Ireland and taxation, Franklin argued for the American colonies having the same approach to taxation as in Ireland, but with the crucial acknowledgement that while Parliament had the right to tax, they did not, in practice, do so. Franklin's comparison between the two did not end there. When he was asked, "How then can they think they have a right to levy money for the crown, or for any other than local purposes?"[125] He responded:

> They understand that clause to relate to subjects only within the realm; that no money can be levied on them for the crown, but by consent of parliament. The colonies are not supposed to be within the realm; they have assemblies of their own, which are their parliaments, and they are, in that respect, in the same situation with Ireland. When money is to be raised for the crown upon the subject in Ireland, or in the colonies, the consent is given in the parliament of Ireland, or in the assemblies of the colonies. They think the

---

[122] Thomas, *British Politics,* 26.

[123] Almon Debates version of American Committee: Examination of witnesses on 13 February 1766 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* ii, 241.

[124] Ibid., 241.

[125] Ibid., 248.

> parliament of Great-Britain cannot properly give that consent till it has representatives from America.[126]

Franklin's argument drew attention to the colonies' particular definition of their relationship with Parliament. Because he believed the colonies were not politically a part of Britain's *realm*, he made clear that the law ensuring Parliament's right to levy money did not apply. Rather, their assemblies gave them the right to levy money in the colonies. This argument was enhanced by Franklin's comparison to the Irish Parliament's ability to raise money for Ireland without interference from the British Parliament. Franklin's direct comparison of Ireland's and the American colonies' legislative authorities was clearly intended to persuade Parliament, in alignment with the approach of MPs' arguments to date, that parliamentary precedent dictated that the American colonies and Ireland should be treated no differently; in Franklin's view, this boiled down to the fact that neither the colonies nor Ireland were directly represented in the British Parliament.

One final note that emphasises the close comparison of Ireland's and America's relationship to English authority is highlighted not only in colonial petitions and testimonies, but in the non-importation agreements taken up in the colonies. As Sean Moore has observed, the colonists were inspired by similar such actions in Ireland decades earlier in 1720. The reaction of the British Parliament to these protests were performed once again in America, in the Declaratory Act of 1766 that will be discussed later in this chapter.[127]

Both the colonies' petition, Franklin's corresponding arguments, and identical protest movements to Parliament's authority in America (1765) and Ireland (1720) reveal how and why Ireland was also harnessed to shore up the American colonists' position, even while it was also used as an example by MPs and Peers to shore up Parliament's authority over the American colonies. It all depended on interpretation and emphasis, principle and (or versus, as noted above) practice.

---

[126] Ibid.

[127] Sean Moore, "The Irish Contribution to the Ideological Origins of the American Revolution: Nonimportation and the Reception of Jonathan Swift's Irish Satires in Early America," *Early American Literature* 52, no. 2 (2017): 333–62.

Wales and Ireland: Taxation, Legislative Authority, and Representation

As the colonial rebellion continued, Parliamentarians turned to political precedent with both Ireland *and* Wales as they wrestled with the principle of Parliament's right to tax the colonies, and consequently to the related themes of representation and the scope of legislative authority. While debates on the passage of the Stamp Act were mostly about expediency, an analysis of the Stamp Act repeal debates illustrates that some Parliamentarians were beginning to question the principle of taxing the colonies. While still only forming a minority, the significance lies not only in the fact that some of these MPs and Peers were prominent members in their respective Houses, but also in proving that Parliament was not singularly united on this question or on the scope of Parliament's sovereignty, and that Parliamentarians flipped positions on this. Indeed, those MPs and Peers who challenged the majority opinion in Parliament used the example of Wales to argue that Parliament did not have the right to tax the colonies while they were not directly represented. According to historians Edmund and Helen Morgan, Pitt the Elder (Lord Chatham) was one among a minority who loudly and forcefully argued that legislation and taxation could be separated.[128] Pitt was not present during the debates on the passage of the Stamp Act, thus his concerns over the issue were not raised then but only heard once he appeared in the debates on the repeal of the Act.[129] He was vigorously outspoken in the Commons debate on the Address on 14 January 1766, as MPs again discussed the correct and most appropriate term to employ to describe the situation in the colonies. In the debate, Pitt argued, "Taxation is no part of the governing or legislative power" and the power to tax lay with the colonies' local assemblies where they were represented.[130] To further clarify this position later in the debate, Pitt referred to Parliament's past relationship with Wales. In an interaction between Pitt and Grenville, that was described to be like "a boxing match", Pitt responded to Grenville's assertion that taxation was not dependent on representation, arguing:

> I myself would have cited the two cases of *Chester* and *Durham*. I would have cited them, to have shewn, that, even under any arbitrary reigns; Parliaments were ashamed of

[128] Morgan and Morgan, *Stamp Act Crisis,* 273; 341-344. Addressed as Mr. Pitt throughout the debate so my analysis uses the name Pitt instead of Chatham.

[129] Thomas, "'The Great Commoner'," 156-7.

[130] Almon Debates version of The Address on 14 January 1766 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, ii, 86.

> taxing a people without their consent, and allowed them representatives. Why did the gentleman confine himself to *Chester* and *Durham*? He might have taken a higher example in *Wales*; *Wales*, that never was taxed by Parliament, 'till it was incorporated.[131]

Pitt's reference to Wales was yet another example to underscore why Parliament could not tax the colonies, on the grounds they held a similar status to Wales prior to its incorporation into Britain: in short, the American colonies were similarly unincorporated, or as Franklin had put it, were outside the *realm*. Pitt, known for his great oratorical skills, pulled no punches by deliberately stoking MPs' fears about the impact of an American rebellion, warning that the entire foundation of British society, government, and constitution rested on the course of action they chose to pursue with the American colonies. Should they continue with the Stamp Act, he argued, "In such a cause, your success would be hazardous-*America,* if she fell, would fall like the strong man. She would embrace the pillars of the state, and pull down the constitution along with her."[132] In other words, an all-out American rebellion would spell ruin for Britain.[133] Pitt's success at leading Britain to victory during the Seven Years' War gave him great popularity in Parliament, which in some ways lent credence and weight to his argument.[134] Yet, Peter D.G. Thomas confirms that most MPs in Parliament did not agree with repealing the Act based on principle, but rather on expediency.[135]

Even though Pitt believed that the Stamp Act should be repealed because, in his opinion, Parliament did not have the authority to tax without representation, he did nonetheless argue that Parliament's legislative authority should be enforced "in every circumstance."[136] This view became an influential part of the proceedings moving forward, especially when debates turned to the passing of the Declaratory Act.[137] Indeed, Thomas argues that "[Pitt's] advocacy of repeal had an incalculable but undoubted impact on Parliamentary opinion; and it enabled Rockingham to convince reluctant colleagues like Yorke that repeal was both the inevitable course of action for the ministry and a practical policy if accompanied by the Declaratory Act."[138] In other words,

---

[131] Harris Diary version of The Address on 14 January 1766 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, ii, 81; Almon Debates version, 88.

[132] Ibid, 90.

[133] Ibid., 84-91.

[134] Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament,* iii, 294.

[135] Thomas, *British Politics,* 174.

[136] Almon Debates version of The Address on 14 January 1766 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* ii, 85.

[137] Ibid.; Morgan and Morgan, *Stamp Act Crisis,* 277.

[138] Thomas, *British Politics,* 173.

repeal was an expedient policy, whereas the Declaratory Act was an affirmation of the principle of Parliament's authority. Rockingham was therefore able to sweep aside Pitt's argument about the principle of unincorporated territories not being subject to parliamentary taxation by focusing instead on his argument for asserting legislative authority, in order to reassure MPs that the Stamp Act would be repealed on the grounds of expediency. The eventual repeal of the Stamp Act and passage of the Declaratory Act confirms that Parliament favoured expediency over arguments on the principle of Parliament's right (or not) to tax the colonies.

Notwithstanding, Pitt himself was not prepared to have his arguments cast aside and continued to argue for the principle of taxation and representation in the debates which followed, now turning to Ireland to strengthen his case. The question of the debate in the Commons on 4 March 1766 was whether the words, "in all Cases whatsoever", should be left out of the Declaratory Act.[139] Pitt agreed with the principle of the Declaratory Act, but he voted for this phrase to be left out, most likely because, as mentioned, he believed that "Taxation is no part of the governing or legislative power."[140] Pitt began by reminding the House of "his former opinion about the right" of Parliament to tax the colonies, recollecting his argument that it did not have the authority to do this because the colonies were not represented. In order to justify this view, Pitt turned to Ireland.[141] Pitt "Read a few sentences out of the pamphlet against Molineux to prove that even the adversaries of Molineux thought that the passing laws for imposing taxes upon colonies which were not represented was improper and against the Great Charter of English liberties."[142] The controversial pamphlet, produced by the Anglo-Irish writer, William Molyneux, *A Case of Ireland's Being Bound by Acts of Parliament in England Stated* (1698) had had a profound effect on Irish attitudes towards parliamentary rule ever since it was published. Part of Molyneux's argument was that taxation went hand in hand with representation.[143] Pitt clarified to

---

[139] Proceedings on the 4 March 1766 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, ii, 310. The Declaratory Act will be discussed at the end of this chapter. However, the Act declared that "Parliament assembled, had, hath, and of Right ought to have, full Power and Authority to make Laws and Statutes, of sufficient Force and Validity to bind the Colonies and People of *America,* Subjects of the Crown of *Great Britain,* in all Cases whatsoever," Proceedings on 24 February 1766 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* ii, 293.

[140] Almon Debates version of The Address on 14 January 1766 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* ii, 86.

[141] Ryder Diary version of the Declaratory Bill: Passage on 4 March 1766 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* ii, 311.

[142] Ibid.

[143] Edith Mary Johnston, *Ireland in the Eighteenth Century* (Dublin [Ireland]: Gill and Macmillan Limited, 1974), 60-1.

Parliamentarians that even those who did not agree with the pamphlet nonetheless agreed with this principle, insinuating that this was a principle that was universally believed to be a right of those in Great Britain and Ireland.

Pitt proceeded to offer another example about the separation of taxation and legislative rights. This time turning to a "quotation out of one Atwood, who was an adversary likewise to Molineux. He says that the right of taxing does not necessarily follow the right of governing, and that the power which England has claimed over Ireland does not naturally introduce the power of taxing them without their consent."[144] While the second statement relates directly to Pitt's view that those who were not represented could not be taxed, the first statement refers to another principle Pitt believed to be an essential element of parliamentary government: that Parliament's legislative authority did not include taxation. By quoting "Atwood", presumably William Atwood, who authored *The Fundamental Constitution of the English Government* (1690), and who largely opposed Molyneux's arguments, Pitt underscored his point that this was a principle that even adversarial authors could agree on and thus might be considered universally agreed upon.[145] He was unequivocal that this line of argument should be applied to the American colonies. Ireland provided the perfect example to support Pitt's discourse for two obvious reasons: because, unlike Scotland and Wales, it was not represented in Parliament, and it too had been the subject of a Declaratory Act. Unfortunately, the accounts of the debates do not actually provide much more detail on this debate: we simply know that the Declaratory Act "passed without a division."[146] In other words, most MPs did not support Pitt's view. In fact, Ian R. Christie notes that Pitt's line of argument on taxation was so unusual that ministers manipulated his views to undermine his arguments and prevent them from having too much influence, given Pitt's political gravitas and reputation as a statesman.[147]

In early 1766, in contrast to the previous year's debates on whether the colonies could be said to be in a state of rebellion, there was a growing tide of opinion calling for Parliament to exercise and implement more authoritative measures towards the American colonies. This shift

---

[144] Ryder Diary version of the Declaratory Bill: Passage on 4 March 1766 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, ii, 311.

[145] Ian McBride, "*The Case of Ireland* (1698) in Context: William Molyneux and His Critics," *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy: Archaeology, Culture, History, Literature* 118C (2018): 201–30.

[146] Ryder Diary version of the Declaratory Bill: Passage on 4 March 1766 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* ii, 312.

[147] Christie, *Crisis of Empire*, 62-3.

can be seen during a heated exchange in the House of Lords in the Committee on the Late Tumults on America on 3 February 1766. When discussing the Resolution (which would become the Declaratory Act) that described Parliament as having the "full Power and Authority to make Laws and Statutes of sufficient Force and Validity to bind the Colonies and People of America, Subjects of the Crown of Great Britain, in all Cases whatsoever", only five members voted against it.[148] One of those was Lord Camden, a supporter of Pitt, who in July 1766 became Lord Chancellor.[149] Camden interjected in the debate to raise the example of Wales to argue that Parliament did not have the right to tax the colonies because they were not represented: "Wales, my lords, was not taxed till it was united to England, when it was forthwith represented."[150] To further reinforce his point, he provided a plethora of historical examples when Parliament chose not to tax a county or territory because of their status, either not requiring or not yet providing representation, including the county palatine of Chester and the dependencies of Guernsey, Jersey, and the Isle of Man.[151] Like his friend Pitt, Camden was one of the few Parliamentarians to argue on principle, using the example of Wales and elsewhere, in this instance, to argue that Parliament did not have the right to tax the American colonies.

In a final effort to drive home his argument, he, like others before him, turned to Ireland to underscore his case. Thus he stated, "Ireland was conquered originally, but was settled by the English. They tax themselves, and the parliament here has no right to tax them."[152] As discussed in the last chapter, how Parliament chose to define their relationship with the colonies, especially in terms of being conquered or settled, determined how they viewed its sovereignty. Camden was evidently of the opinion that the American colonies shared a similar status to Ireland and hence he claimed Parliament should act according to the precedent established there, meaning that the right of taxation should lie with local representation. But others vehemently disagreed. Lord Chancellor Northington (Robert Henley), for example, quickly responded to Camden's arguments, going so far as to label them "unconstitutional."[153] Furthermore, in response to

---

[148] Proceedings on 3 February 1766 in the House of Lords in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* ii, 124.

[149] There is surprisingly little information in historical literature about Camden's time in office considering he was very active in the debates and was one of the main proponents against coercion. However, we can learn a lot about his stance from the debates, Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament,* iii, 322.

[150] Parliamentary History version of the Committee on the late tumults in America on 3 February 1766 in the House of Lords in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, ii, 127-128, 128.

[151] Ibid., 128.

[152] Ibid.

[153] Ibid.

Camden's argument on "expediency" and "that the colonies had a right to tax themselves", Northington warned Parliament that if they repealed the Act, "you will tell 12 millions of your subjects of Great Britain and Ireland, that you prefer the colonists."[154] Northington sharply counteracted Camden's argument - to treat the Americans like the Irish - by instead warning of the detrimental impact this would have on how the British and Irish viewed Parliament's favourable treatment of the American colonies.

Mansfield also opposed Camden's viewpoint. Harking back to English settlement of the American colonies to underscore his argument about the colonists' identity, and therefore their "rights", he argued "That the colonists, by the condition on which they migrated, settled, and now exist, are more emphatically subjects of Great Britain than those within the realm."[155] While Camden used his argument to justify that the colonists should receive the same rights as those in Ireland, and therefore the ability to tax themselves, Mansfield argued to the contrary: the colonists were English and only American by migration, and therefore were subject to Parliament's full legislative authority. He went on to argue, in opposition to Camden's previous examples, that all territories "were bound by acts of parliament" despite their status in the realm.[156] Mansfield furthermore addressed the now frequently cited example of Wales, which Camden had used to make his argument, saying that:

> It has been said negatively, that Wales never paid taxes till it sent members to parliament. This was in 27 Henry 8. Now in several statutes for laying taxes before that period, Wales in *nominatim* excepted, and the reason given for that exception in the statutes is, that they paid *mises* (which was a tax) to the king; and it is in like manner excepted out of several statutes after 27 Henry 8, till these *mises* were taken away, and then it was taxed with the other part of the realm. But as a distinction has been taken between the power of laying taxes and making laws, I must declare, that after the most diligent searches on this head, I cannot find any distinction or difference whatever.[157]

The first part of Mansfield's statement, before launching into his argument here, addressed Camden's argument that "Wales, my lords, was not taxed till it was united to England, when it was forthwith represented."[158] This is an instance where differing interpretations of the same

---

[154] Ibid., 128 (Camden's argument), 129 (Northington's argument).
[155] Ibid., 130.
[156] Ibid., 131.
[157] Ibid.
[158] Ibid., 128.

historical precedent influenced Parliamentarians' arguments about the American colonies. Mansfield's correction was used to argue that every part of Britain was subject to Parliament's legislative authority despite its status and that Parliament had always exerted its authority in this way, even in the past. The final part of his statement refers to Pitt's distinction between Parliament's right to tax and its right to legislate. Mansfield acknowledged this distinction but arrived at a different conclusion, which was that Parliament had legislative authority in all cases including taxation. The direction of this debate is a good example of how Parliamentarians became bogged down in wrangling over the interpretation of process and application of historical precedent, citing examples from Wales, Ireland, and elsewhere in Great Britain, to argue their case. What emerges is Parliamentarians' repetitive use of these examples, often for competing ends, and that each was determined to hold their position and not concede. When the same case was used to argue different positions, it is hard to see how any agreement was to be reached.

Camden's refusal to relinquish the argument about Wales is a case in point. Seemingly in response to Mansfield's assertion that Wales paid taxes (mises) prior to incorporation, Camden reused the case of Wales on 7 March 1766 in the House of Commons. He reiterated his insistence "that the British parliament have no right to tax the Americans", shaped by his opinion that "taxation and representation are inseparably united."[159] In order to clarify this view and show that this principle was followed throughout Parliament's history, Camden argued that:

> Much stress has been laid upon Wales, before it was united as it now is, as if the King, standing in the place of their former princes of that country, raised money by his own authority; but the real fact is otherwise; for I find that, long before Wales was subdued, the northern counties of that principality had representatives, and a parliament or assembly.[160]

Thus, Camden dismissed Mansfield's argument that Wales did pay taxes in the form of mises and shifted the argument to representation by arguing that Wales still had representatives at this time in their own assemblies. In sum, the case of Wales was the same as the American colonies, and therefore, Camden asserted, Parliament should allow the colonies to tax themselves.

---

[159] Parliamentary History version of the Declaratory Bill: Second Reading and Commitment on 7 March 1766 in the House of Lords in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* ii, 322.

[160] Ibid., 323.

Not content to leave it there, Camden circled back to Ireland and reminded Peers that the Irish too had once sent representatives to England: "As to Ireland, my lords, before that kingdom had a parliament as it now has, if your lordships will examine the old records, you will find, that when a tax was to be laid on that country, the Irish sent over here representatives."[161] The political debate between Camden, Mansfield, and Northington was indicative of the approach which Parliamentarians took in discussions over the conflict with the American colonies, characterised by a deeply introspective examination of Parliament's past policies and procedures with Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and elsewhere in Great Britain, to seek justification for their present and future actions. Parliamentarians sought reassurance from established regulations throughout other parts of the British realm to determine the appropriate actions in the colonies. What often resulted from these debates, however, was further disagreement and discord among MPs and Peers as they competed over varying interpretations of British law and practice, particularly in regard to taxation and representation. Thus there was not only conflict over the use of a particular precedent, but also a considerable degree of quibbling over the nature and impact of the actual precedent itself, at the time of its creation; this method of argument meant Parliamentarians became tangled up in debates over what had happened in the past, in some cases over a century past, rather than focused on understanding the crisis with the American colonies. At no point thus far did MPs or Peers appear to have questioned this approach, presumably, because historic precedence mattered precisely because of England's recent turbulent history with Ireland and Scotland, and the consequent need to preserve the British realm. In other words, the predominant concern in the debates in 1765 and 1766 hinged largely on the impact that Parliament's actions might have on its future relations with Ireland and Scotland.

Ireland and the Declaratory Act

The Declaratory Act, passed alongside the repeal of the Stamp Act, was more or less a copy of the Irish Declaratory Act passed forty years earlier, declaring that Parliament had authority "in all

[161] Ibid.

Cases whatsoever."[162] It is the most explicit example of Parliament's reliance on historic precedent to resolve the political crisis with the American colonies. The similarities in the passage of the two Acts are worth noting. The Irish Declaratory Act was in response to Irish claims and protests that the recent taxation policies by the British following the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714) would have a detrimental impact on the Irish economy and denied the Irish their rights of taxation and representation.[163] In response, Parliament passed the Irish Declaratory Act of 1719 (also known as the Declaratory Act of 1720) stating:

> that the King's Majesty, by and with the Advice and Consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal and Commons of *Great Britain* in Parliament assembled, had, hath, and of Right ought to have full Power and Authority to make Laws and Statutes of sufficient Force and Validity, to bind the Kingdom and People of *Ireland*.[164]

Almost in mirror form, the financial difficulties, and consequent taxation of the American colonies following the Seven Years' War, incited a series of protests regarding taxation and representation just as in Ireland. In response to this perceived threat to Parliament's authority, the repetition of another Declaratory Act was undoubtedly inspired by Parliament's previous response to similar claims, only forty years prior. The American Declaratory Act of 1766 stated:

> That the King's Majesty, by and with the Advice and Consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, of *Great Britain*, in Parliament assembled, had, hath, and of Right ought to have, full Power and Authority to make Laws and Statutes, of sufficient Force and Validity to bind the Colonies and People of *America,* Subjects of the Crown of *Great Britain,* in all Cases whatsoever.[165]

One can easily deduce Parliament's direct inspiration for their response to colonial protests. The debates in Parliament, as discussed below, further exhibit the clear acknowledgement of the Declaratory Acts' similarities and rationale for implementation.

---

[162] Proceedings on 24 February 1766 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* ii, 293.

[163] Moore, "The Irish Contribution," 338-9.

[164] Josef L. Altholz, *Selected Documents in Irish History* (Armonk [NY] and London: M.E. Sharpe, 2000), 59.

[165] Proceedings on 24 February 1766 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, ii, 293.

The accepted reason for repeal of the Stamp Act was expediency, due to the threat the colonial, and English, protests posed to Britain's financial and commercial interests. The passage of the Act signals the majority opinion in Parliament on the assertion of its authority.[166] Few, if any, proposed in debate that the Declaratory Act should not be passed on principle. Notwithstanding, Peers drew similarities between the American Declaratory Act and the Irish Declaratory Act, which was established in 1720 under similar circumstances, and used this as a basis to argue for and against different parts to be included in the Bill.[167]

While the passage of the Declaratory Act made its way through the House of Commons "without a division and without any amendment", there was a discussion on the Preamble and Enacting Clause during the Declaratory Bill Committee debate in the House of Lords on 10 March 1766.[168] When referring to the Enacting Clause, Lord Marchmont, a Scottish peer, claimed that "[The] Noble Lord has said that there is a mistake in this part of the Bill and supposes it to have been copied from a Precedent which had no resemblance to this, but I hope to shew Your Lordships from the Journals of both Houses that the cases are the same."[169] Marchmont listed the cases when the Irish Parliament questioned the British Parliament's legislative authority and claimed the rights of their own Parliament, just as the American colonies with their assemblies.[170] Eventually, the British Parliament thought the only way to proceed was to establish the Declaratory Act to restrain the Irish Parliament. By comparing the situation in Ireland to that of the American colonies, Marchmont made clear his view that Parliament's authority was once again being questioned and undermined by its colonial subjects.

The Duke of Newcastle also felt the need to acknowledge the similarities between the Irish and American Declaratory Acts. According to the account of the debate:

> [the] Duke of *Newcastle* reads the Declaratory part of the Act made on occasion of Ireland's behaving in [the] same way as America-the Enacting or Declaratory words in the Irish Act [are the] same as those in the Act at present before Committee. [He] could

---

[166] Morgan and Morgan, *Stamp Act Crisis,* 276.

[167] Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, ii, 328-330.

[168] Ryder Diary version of the Declaratory Bill: Passage on 4 March 1766 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, ii, 312; Proceedings on 10 March 1766 in the House of Lords in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* ii, 327.

[169] Hardwicke's Report version of the Declaratory Bill: Committee on 10 March 1766 in the House of Lords in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* ii, 328; Sedgwick, "Hume Campbell, Hugh, Lord Polwarth (1708-94)", https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1715-1754/member/hume-campbell-hugh-1708-94.

[170] Ibid., 328-9.

> have wished that this question had never come before House but it was the fault of Americans who by their Resolutions and their opposition to Law first made the question.[171]

Newcastle agreed that the Act was the same as that of Ireland and even had the same wording, although this account sheds little light on Newcastle's overall opinion on the Declaratory Bill. The Declaratory Act was in many ways a logical culmination to a series of arguments that framed the conflict with the American colonies in the context of past conflicts over taxation and representation, predominantly with Ireland. Given that Parliamentarians looked to Ireland as a measure of the scope of their authority and power, it is in that context that they resorted to passing the very same policy, in places almost verbatim, in the American colonies as they had in recent history passed in Ireland. Ultimately, the passage of this Act shows that despite earlier reluctance to label the colonies to be in a state of rebellion, the majority of Parliamentarians voted in favour of Parliament to assert its authority in no uncertain terms, just as they had done with Ireland.

Conclusion

The repeal debates exposed a division of opinion among MPs and Peers over the scope and remit of Parliament's authority. Albeit only a few disagreed over the principle of Parliament's right to tax the colonies, their voices arguably forced a stronger reaction from those calling for Parliament to assert its authority. Most significantly, as MPs and Peers sought to understand the colonists' reaction to the Stamp Act and explore the arguments justifying its repeal, they focused on the ways in which, in recent British history, Parliament's authority had been challenged and contested and used these cases to shape their response to the colonists. Thus, as MPs and Peers grappled with understanding the American rebellion, they saw worrying echoes of the 1745 rebellion in Scotland and used this to convince others of the present threat to Parliament's authority by the American colonies. As the colonists continued to protest Parliament's right to tax, influential members like Pitt the Elder vocally sided with the American colonists and openly

[171] Ibid., 329.

contested Parliament's right to tax them, based on the principle of the colonies not being represented. Camden also advocated this line, using Wales and Ireland to argue that Parliament should proceed based on precedent and principles established in the past. Yet this line of argument was far from clear and simple. For MPs and Peers themselves did not fully agree on the detail and appropriateness of these precedents and, repeatedly, used the same example of Wales and Ireland to offer opposing and contradictory arguments. Ultimately, it was a broad agreement on the need for Parliament to assert its authority, setting aside contentious debates on whether or not it was justified to impose the tax in the first place, without representation, that led to the passage of the Declaratory Act regarding the American colonies. The debates between 1765 and 1766 reveal that the initial approach MPs and Peers took in response to the political conflict with the American colonies was to hark back to its past policies and principles enacted in Great Britain and Ireland, most especially where the lines of conflict mirrored that with Ireland and Scotland. Therefore, decisions were fully based on Parliament's relationship and governance within the British realm. Yet, what occurred was further disagreement over the use of such precedents and clashes over the remit of Parliament's authority and sovereignty. The clearest sign that both the repeal and Declaratory Act had not had the desired effect of quelling discontent among the colonists *and* cementing Parliament's authority over them was the resurrection of debates over taxation and the passage of the Townsend Acts, in the following year.

Chapter Three: A Growing Imperial Crisis and Parliamentary Uncertainty

This chapter discusses how MPs and Peers used parliamentary precedents with Ireland and Scotland to shape and determine their policies towards the American colonies between 1767-1772. These years saw increased rebellion across all American colonies in the form of petitions and attempted boycotts of British merchandise as a result of the imposition of British government taxation, including the Townshend Duties enacted in 1767.[172] To date, the historiography mostly focuses on the Townshend Duties and colonial responses to them and ignores other policies debated in Parliament during this time, such as the Treason Act, Commander-in-Chief position, and Mutiny Act that also caused considerable controversy in the colonies and Parliament. These proceedings reminded Parliamentarians of similar past and present policies established in Ireland and Scotland, thereby again prompting MPs and Peers to base their decision-making on parliamentary precedent. However, as seen in previous chapters, Parliamentarians did not always agree on the rationale and impact of political precedent and its relevance and meaning in the context of Parliament's relationship with the American colonies. Such disagreements only increased as MPs and Peers began to blame past policies, and their implementation, for the escalating rebellion of the American colonies. Furthermore, the rotation of ministries (between 1767 and 1770, there were three Prime Ministers: the Earl of Chatham, the 3rd Duke of Grafton, and Lord North) allowed for both conciliatory and coercive measures to have a place in parliamentary discussion, adding to the confusion and escalation of conflict in Parliament over the direction of their actions with the American colonies and scope of parliamentary sovereignty.[173] Indecision over these policies was arguably enhanced by Parliament's consistent view that the crisis with the American colonies could not be resolved without taking into consideration how it continued to rule and apply its authority over those nations closer to home, namely Ireland and Scotland.

---

[172] Christie, *Crisis of Empire*, 72. Furthermore, the Townshend Duties also implemented a new salary system for government officials that played into Parliament's authoritative hold on the colonial system, as noted by Bernhard Knollenberg, *Growth of the American Revolution 1766-1775* (New York: The Free Press, 1975), 44.

[173] Thomas, *The Townshend Duties Crisis*, 36-7.

Impact on the Realm of Great Britain and Ireland

While there were similar warnings made during the Stamp Act repeal debates, the debates in both Houses in 1770 show that MPs and Peers continued to consider the repercussions of their actions, particularly with reference to Ireland.[174] Indeed, Colonel Isaac Barré, who largely supported the American colonists, calling them "Sons of Liberty", in an Address to the House of Commons on 13 November spoke of how irresponsible it would be to engage in conflict with America, in view of the present state of Ireland:

> the unprovided condition of our fleets and armies, the defenceless state of our fortifications and garrisons of Ireland and the colonies, the fishing, and the West India Islands. The inattention of the ministry to these great objects, notwithstanding the warnings which had been given them (particularly by the opposition in the course of the last session) upon the divisions at home, the dissensions in Ireland, and the discontents in the colonies, all which he charged upon the ministers, and thence inferred that we were in very ill circumstances to commence a war.[175]

Barré, who himself was from Ireland, had served as a British army officer in the Seven Years' War, and also supported repeal of the Stamp Act, warned against the endangered state of their empire and that they were facing an *imperial* crisis rather than one solely confined to the American colonies.[176]

Similarly, in response to the King's Address to the House of Lords on 9 January 1770, the Earl of Chatham disagreed with Parliament's snap judgement that the colonists' actions were "unwarrantable, and calculated to destroy the Commercial Connection between them and the Mother Country" and warned "That it was passing a sentence without hearing the cause, or being acquainted with the facts, and might expose the proceedings of the House to be received abroad

---

[174] Hume Letters version of The Address on 9 January 1770 in the House of Lords in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* iii, 166-167.

[175] "Sons of Liberty" termed in the Fitch Papers' version of the Committee of Ways and Means: Resolutions for colonial stamp duties on 6 February 1765 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* ii, 16; Trumball Papers version of The Address on 13 November 1770 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, iii, 344.

[176] Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament,* i, 50.

with indifference or disrespect."[177] Chatham believed that actions like this could threaten their relationship with the colonies and other parts of the empire:

> Let us be cautious how we invade the liberties of our fellow subjects, however mean, however remote; for be assured, my lords, that in whatever part of the empire you suffer slavery to be established, whether it be in America or in Ireland, or here at home, you will find it a disease which spreads by contact, and soon reaches from the extremities to the heart.[178]

Chatham's inclusion of Ireland, and for that matter England too, alongside America is a telling sign of the importance and concerns which Parliamentarians placed on examining the impact of the American conflict in a wider imperial and domestic context. It was a stark recognition that both the rebellion in America and Parliament's response to it could very well have unintended and undesirable repercussions closer to home. Chatham used this threat to suggest a more reasonable and conciliatory approach towards the American colonies, such as "look[ing] for other remedies. That the discontent of two million people deserved consideration; and the foundation of it ought to be removed."[179]

Chatham was so concerned about the ballooning crisis that he requested, on multiple occasions, that Parliament be dissolved. In a motion on 14 May 1770 in the House of Lords, he insisted on its dissolution due to his lack of confidence that Parliament would produce a wise response to the recent Boston Massacre and growing fears of an escalating crisis with the colonies.[180] At the heart of his concern was a sense that the public too had lost confidence in Parliament to act in their best interests: "He stated the public discontents in England, Ireland, and America: affirmed that the people had no confidence in the present House of Commons, who had betrayed their trust; and showed, from the situation of public affairs, the great necessity of having a Parliament in whom the people can place a proper confidence."[181] The explicit reference to the Americans, Irish, *and* English illustrates the breadth of his concern with Parliament's policies.

---

[177] Proceedings and Parliamentary History version of The Address on 9 January 1770 in the House of Lords in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, iii, 164, 165.

[178] Ibid., 166.

[179] Ibid., 165.

[180] Thomas, *Townshend Duties,* 183.

[181] Parliamentary History version of the Motion for Address for dissolution of Parliament on 14 May 1770 in the House of Lords in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* iii, 328.

However, it is worth noting that his request "was resolved in the Negative", a clear sign that his warnings were not heeded.[182]

Notwithstanding, a whole year later, Chatham was still convinced Parliament was failing to act appropriately and needed to be dissolved. On 1 May 1771 in the House of Lords, he concluded: "Great Britain, Ireland, and America, are equally dissatisfied, and have reason to be dissatisfied, with the Ministry. The impolitic taxes laid upon America, and the system of violence there adopted, have unfortunately soured the minds of the people, and rendered them disaffected to the present Parliament, if not to the King. Ireland has various reasons to complain…"[183] Chatham, like a few others, saw Parliament's actions towards the American colonies as inextricably linked to its relationship with Ireland and Great Britain. Here he spoke candidly about how Parliament's actions over the past couple of years were the reason for its deteriorating relationship with the American colonies *and* Ireland. He explicitly referenced the scope of discontent across the British realm to warn of possible repercussions. Tellingly, his arguments were met with ridicule and mockery – Chatham's influence in Parliament was not what it had been.[184]

Indeed, perhaps MPs and Peers ought to have shown more concern that the rebellion might spread to other parts of the realm, particularly Ireland. In fact, fear of receiving similar treatment as Ireland convinced the American colonists why rebellion was necessary. According to the propaganda pieces of the *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania to the Inhabitants of the British Colonies* (1767-8) by the American John Dickinson, the colonists were well aware that they were becoming as subordinated as the Irish. The colonists saw that the financial misdeeds of the English in Ireland were being mirrored in America: "We may perceive, from the example of Ireland, how eager ministers are to seize upon any settled revenue, and apply it in supporting their own power."[185] Dickenson concluded: "From this conduct towards Ireland, in open violation of law, we may easily foresee what we may expect, when a minister will have the

---

[182] Proceedings on 14 May 1770 in the House of Lords in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* iii, 328.

[183] Chatham Papers version of the Motion for Address for dissolution of Parliament on 1 May 1771 in the House of Lords in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, iii, 400.

[184] Walpole Memoirs version of the Motion for Address for dissolution of Parliament on 1 May 1771 in the House of Lords in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* iii, 400; Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament,* iii, 298-299.

[185] John Dickinson, *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania to the Inhabitants of the British Colonies* (11 letters, Philadelphia, 1767-8), x, 102.

whole revenue of America, in his own hands, to be disposed of at his own pleasure."[186] Furthermore, Dickinson argued in the Eleventh Letter that the colonists were fully aware that Parliamentarians were reverting to precedents as the base for passing coercive measures, and he railed against this.[187] Certainly, the American colonists felt confident that the Irish were on their side.

As Benjamin Franklin's letter to the American Dr. Samuel Cooper on 27 April 1769 confirmed: "All Ireland is strongly in favor of the American Cause. They have reason to sympathize with us. I send you four Pamphlets written in Ireland or by Irish Gentlemen here, in which you will find some excellent well said Things."[188] Another letter written from Franklin to Dr. Cooper, almost a year later on 14 April 1770, also argued that "All Europe is attentive to the dispute between Britain & the Colonies."[189] That Ireland and Europe were being seen to keep a close watch over the crisis lends weight to Chatham's warning that Parliament's actions in America could have widespread unintended implications, especially in Ireland. Franklin continued, "I send you also a late Edition of Molineuxs Case of Ireland, with a new Preface shrewdly written. Our part is warmly taken by the Irish in general, there being in many Points a similarity in our Cases."[190] As we saw in the previous chapter where Franklin pleaded the cause of the Americans by referring to Parliament's treatment of the Irish, here he once again acknowledged the similarities between the American and Irish causes and why it was hardly surprising that the Irish would support the Americans. By juxtaposing Franklin's views with those in Parliament at this time, we can see that Franklin was lining up allies for the American cause, whilst Parliament was still dithering over exactly what the American cause was all about and how to respond. Once again, we see the real concern among Parliamentarians that their actions in the colonies could very well have an impact on relationships close to home. Yet, the lack of responsiveness to these warnings is telling, especially as these addresses by the

---

[186] Ibid., 105.

[187] Dickinson used the precedents of a standing army and excise taxes to argue his point. He furthermore warned that Parliament, by the institution of the Townshend Duties, was wishing to establish a precedent itself: "that the late act of Parliament is only designed to be a precedent," Dickinson, *Letters from a Farmer,* xi, 124, 129, 117-131; Knollenberg wrote "The eleventh letter brilliantly elaborated this theme by showing how in England seemingly innocuous precedents had been used as the basis for extremely oppressive measures," in Knollenberg, *Growth of the American Revolution,* 53.

[188] Dr. B. Franklin to Dr. Cooper on 27 April 1769 in *George Sackville Germain Papers, 1683-1785* (v. 22, p. 9) William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan; Thomas, *Townshend,* 214.

[189] Dr. B. Franklin to Dr. Cooper on 14 April 1770 in *Germain Papers* (v. 22, p. 11).

[190] Ibid., 12.

Americans prove that they too were placing their relationship with Parliament within a wider context of British colonial rule, in terms of how they saw Parliament's unfair actions towards Ireland mirrored in America, and in their conviction that the Irish were on their side.

The Treason Act

Ireland *and* Scotland were both summoned as examples in debates over whether the application of Henry VIII's Treason Act of 1534, which would result in accused rebel colonists being tried in England rather than locally, was or was not applicable to the American colonies.[191] As a result of the Massachusetts Assembly's insistence that Parliament did not have authority to tax them, and their encouragement for other colonies to argue the same, Parliament declared the Assembly's position "illegal and unconstitutional" and concluded that its actions were an effort "to set up a new and unconstitutional Authority, independent of the Crown of *Great Britain*."[192] The *Liberty* ship riots furthermore caused the Lords to present an Address to the King advising that the main proponents of the riots in Massachusetts be brought to England and tried according to Henry VIII's Treason Act.[193] A contentious debate followed in the Commons on 26 January 1769 to discuss Parliament's resolutions and Address. William Dowdeswell spoke early on and immediately asserted the inexpediency of enforcing the Treason Act in the colonies. Rather than suggesting that it be executed as it was always intended, Dowdeswell told Parliament incredulously that "The Act could not at the time it was made apply to the colonies. We had no colonies at the time."[194] In order to elaborate that the colonies' circumstances were unique, Dowdeswell used the example of Ireland:

---

[191] I.D. Thornley, "The Treason Legislation of Henry VIII (1531-1534): Alexander Prize Essay, 1916," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 11 (1917): 88.

[192] Proceedings on 16 December 1768 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* iii, 51.

[193] Ibid., 52; Thomas, *Townshend Duties Crisis,* 83, 109; The *Liberty* riots were in response to the seizure of Sons of Liberty leader John Hancock's vessel due to smuggling suspicions, D. H. Watson, "Joseph Harrison and the Liberty Incident," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 20, no. 4 (1963): 585–95.

[194] Cavendish Diary version of the Committee on American Papers. Motions to agree to the Resolutions and Address of the House of Lords on 26 January 1769 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, iii, 65-66.

> I should hope, he said, that no Act about Ireland will extend to America. All the instances to be found of trials are of persons who were at that time in England. That was the intention of the law, for treasons were committed in foreign countries, as well as in England. I believe there was some particular person in view in that reign. Of the instances of Irish, I believe they are most of them of persons apprehended in England, and tried here in the place where they were found. There are two instances: McGuire, and Macmahon, Irish rebels, at a time when the Parliament was in possession of the whole authority of this country. The case is different with regard to the American. The case is this: he is a subject of Great Britain, and entitled to the laws of his country, which say that crimes are local, and shall be tried where they are committed.[195]

Dowdeswell's main argument was that the Act could not extend to America as it did Ireland on the grounds that the American colonists were in fact British. This fact determined Dowdeswell's argument for the rights he believed the colonists were entitled to, in this case, local trials. Dowdeswell's comparison was clearly filtered through a British context. Furthermore, Dowdeswell's arguments were grounded in his fear of the consequences for Britain rather than agreement with American actions.[196]

William De Grey, the Attorney General, however, countered Dowdeswell's argument and reasoned that if the Act applied to Ireland, it was also applicable to the American colonies.[197] After listing several Irish examples where it was determined that the Treason Act (of 35 Henry VIII) applied, he concluded: "How is Ireland different from the colonies? They complain of it as a matter of hardship: they carried with them the 25 Edward III, and shall they not carry with them the 35 Henry VIII? Suppose the whole colonies are in rebellion; will it be said, that such persons shall be tried by persons as guilty as themselves?"[198] In this case, De Grey was rightly concerned that justice would not be fairly and impartially dispensed, where most of the colonists were in rebellion.[199] Instead, he hoped that if the colonists knew the Act was applicable to them, then "It may save the colonies from entering into rebellion."[200]

---

[195] Ibid., 66.

[196] Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament,* ii, 334.

[197] Ibid., 308.

[198] Cavendish Diary version of the Committee on America Papers. Motions to agree to the Resolutions and Address of the House of Lords on 26 January 1769 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, iii, 68.

[199] De Grey's legal background made him likely to contribute to the debates involving the legality of such measures as the Treason Act, Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament,* ii, 308.

[200] Cavendish Diary version of the Committee on America Papers. Motions to agree to the Resolutions and Address of the House of Lords on 26 January 1769 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, iii, 69.

Lord Frederick North, who would soon be the Prime Minister for the remainder of the American crisis, shared De Grey's optimism that a rebellion would be deterred if it could be established that the colonists would have to face an English jury. Just as De Grey did, North used the case of Ireland to justify why the Act should apply to the colonies:

> It was said, there was no instance of Parliament interposing to inquire into crimes in order to punish: there is an instance which comes very near. In 1689, there was an Address to the Crown for indicting such as had been in rebellion in Ireland. That is not leaving people in the hands of an angry man. To people who have been so near committing treason, it is not a cruelty, it is a warning. It is proper to give them notice, that they are not to depend upon impunity from an American jury, but to depend upon an English jury. We have the advantage of them in justice. It is an unequal combat between firmness and injustice.[201]

Thus, North argued, the Act should be applicable to the colonies based on precedent established in Ireland. Convinced that the colonies' actions were close to treason, he believed this would offer a necessary warning and deterrent. In retrospect, North's rather uncompromising attitude towards the American colonies is unsurprising, considering he would be responsible for the Coercive Measures that would help to push the colonies to declare independence. In the end, the Address passed 155 to 89 and "the numbers were 213 to 81 for agreeing with the Lords in the resolutions in general."[202] Therefore, most Parliamentarians agreed that the Act should be enforced in the colonies.

Lord Beauchamp was the next to note the similarities of the Irish case in the House of Commons on 8 February 1769 to argue that the 35 Treason Act must be applicable to the American colonies. In response to arguments that the Act did not apply to America, Beauchamp argued:

> With regard to the application of it, the instance I mentioned before of a person apprehended for treason in Ireland, taken from that country on account of the turbulent state of that country, and brought over. If it was deemed in this man's case to extend to Ireland, if Hale says upon a parity of reasoning the operations of this statute could extend

---

[201] Ibid., 77.

[202] Trumball Papers version of the Committee on American Papers. Motions to agree to the Resolutions and Address of the House of Lords on 26 January 1769 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, iii, 81.

> to other islands, I can't conceive it is any unnatural construction of the Act to make it extend to America.[203]

Beauchamp justified that precedent established in Ireland automatically determined its suitability for America, or rather there was no reasoning against it. Yet, he also considered the expediency and practicality of applying the Act:

> The dependence of the courts of justice is one reason for the dependence of Ireland, the *forum delicti* of this kingdom. The rejection of the present measure will be attended with the worst consequences because America will naturally conclude that the sense of Parliament has been taken whether treasons committed in America can be tried or not, and that Parliament has declared in the negative.[204]

Beauchamp was fearful that neglecting to introduce this Act would diminish Parliament's sovereignty in the eyes of the colonists. Therefore, he undoubtedly used the example of Ireland to argue that it was necessary for Parliament to enact more coercive measures to prevent further rebellion and steps towards independence. Beauchamp's extensive role in Irish politics unsurprisingly made him acutely aware of the comparisons between Ireland and the American colonies. Yet, interestingly, despite his opposition to the Townshend Duties and Tea Act, Beauchamp remained firm that an aggressive show of Parliament's authority was the only answer under the Treason Act.[205]

No comparison was so bluntly stated as that made by the MP John Dunning, also the Solicitor General, when he argued that "It is agreed that Act is an existing one. It is applicable to America. Every case that proves the Act to be applicable to Ireland, proves it to be applicable to America."[206] Dunning's connections with Shelburne and Camden, who were responsible for his parliamentary career, make his remarks somewhat uncharacteristic, as both spoke openly against the ministry's coercive measures in the Stamp Act repeal debates. Yet his position as Solicitor General perhaps persuaded him that judicially, the Treason Act 35 (Henry VIII) was as applicable

---

[203] Cavendish Diary version of the Report from the Committee on the American Papers. Motion to recommit the Address on 8 February 1769 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, iii, 95.

[204] Ibid., 96.

[205] Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament,* iii, 424.

[206] Cavendish Diary version of the Report from the Committee on the American Papers. Motion to recommit the Address on 8 February 1769 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, iii, 99.

to America as to Ireland.[207] Again, most Parliamentarians agreed that the colonists' actions were unconstitutional, with a final vote of 169 to 65.[208]

The discussion of whether or not the Americans should be brought to England to be tried also prompted Parliamentarians to look to Scotland, specifically to examples of past legislation during the time of the Scottish rebellion in 1745. In the Committee on American Papers on 26 January 1769, George Grenville used the example of the Scottish rebellion of 1745 to argue against the practicality of applying the Treason Act to the American colonists:

> Trial out of the King's dominions; so the Americans will say, we are out of his Majesty's dominions. There have been disputes, whether the preamble can affect the body of the Act of Parliament. In 1745 there was a law for trying people in England for grievances committed in Scotland. Laws upon turnpikes. In the present instance, it is the most futile provision; I would not be guilty of the crime, but for a very few pounds I would run the hazard of a process which must occasion four journeys across the Atlantic, and this to get a speedy remedy. Witnesses must have so many journeys, that it would be a most curious kind of proceeding indeed.[209]

Grenville acknowledged that the colonies' distance from England made the application of the Act impractical, and therefore, different from the Scottish case. This was a very uncharacteristic response from Grenville who, as seen repeatedly, had been a strong advocate for more coercive measures in the colonies. However, his response was not due to a growing sympathy for the American cause, rather, he "opposed them, upon the ground of their insufficiency, and the improbability that such a measure could answer any valuable purpose."[210]

Taking up a similar point, on 8 February 1769, MP John Huske reminded Parliament that the application of the 35 Treason Act to Scotland had been judged to be dubiously applied, a fact of which the American colonists were all too aware: "The Act of Henry VIII is not an existing Act. The Act with regard to Newfoundland. The twelve judges, with regard to Scotland, said the

---

[207] Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament,* ii, 367-8.

[208] Cavendish Diary version of the Report from the Committee on the American Papers. Motion to recommit the Address on 8 February 1769 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, iii, 102.

[209] Cavendish Diary version of the Committee on American Papers. Motions to agree to the Resolutions and Address of the House of Lords on 26 January 1769 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, iii, 73.

[210] Trumball Papers version of the Committee on American Papers. Motions to agree to the Resolutions and Address of the House of Lords on 26 January 1769 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, iii, 80.

Act was doubtful. An *ex post facto* law to try the rebels in 1746. Henry VIII obtained this Act of Parliament by violence. This order is already in America in the newspapers."[211] Huske's mention of the *ex post facto* law likely refers to a statute passed in 1746 that allowed the Scottish to be tried in England.[212] Huske noted that the enactment of this statute was necessary for the Scottish case because the Act of 35 Henry VIII did not naturally apply. Therefore, what Huske seemed to be suggesting was that as in the case of Scotland, a separate Act was necessary for trying the Americans in England. Huske's somewhat defensive position is not surprising considering his largely sympathetic views towards the colonies throughout the debates thus far. After all, he was previously a Boston merchant, and this likely influenced his opinion on conciliatory measures, and his stance here.[213]

Thomas Townshend Junior also agreed that the Treason Act 35 (Henry VIII) should not be applied in the colonies. He argued, "It is a method of trial which can't do for America, though it might do for Ireland or Scotland."[214] Townshend was closely allied with both Chatham and Rockingham, and thus urged for a more conciliatory approach to the American colonies.[215] In his view, it did not serve the situation well to compare and treat the American colonies as one and the same with Ireland and Scotland. Townshend was one of the first to suggest that such an analogical approach was not an appropriate or suitable course of action.

Others disagreed: just as Dunning argued the Treason Act was applicable to America as it was in Ireland, he argued that the Scottish case further reinforced measures here:

> The necessity and equity of proceeding upon it, he maintained by the stronger case (as he said) of Scotland, from whence the rebels in 1746 were, by an *ex post facto* law, brought to England, tried, and executed here; and, upon this ground especially, that this being a controversy in which all the people of North America were concerned, and had taken part, they were all therefore so far interested, and even parties, that justice was not to be expected, nor could be reasonably hoped for, on trials by juries of that country of offences of this nature, in which they were all, in some degree, involved.[216]

---

[211] Cavendish Diary version of the Report from the Committee on the American Papers. Motion to recommit the Address on 8 February 1769 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* iii, 90.

[212] Lisa Steffen, *Defining a British State: Treason and National Identity, 1608-1820* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire [England] and New York: Palgrave Publishers Ltd., 2001), 76-77, 69-96.

[213] Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament,* ii, 658-662.

[214] Cavendish Diary version of the Report from the Committee on the American Papers. Motion to recommit the Address on 8 February 1769 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* iii, 93

[215] Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament,* iii, 555, 554-556.

[216] Trumball Papers version of the Report from the Committee on the American Papers. Motion to recommit the Address on 8 February 1769 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* ii, 103.

The mention of the 1746 measure that enabled the Scottish rebels to be tried in England is possibly the same statute mentioned by Huske. Yet rather than use this example to argue why the Act of 35 Henry VIII did not apply, Dunning appeared to call for the establishment of a similar measure. Dunning furthermore used the colonists' own opinions that the Scottish rebels could not be tried in Scotland, to argue why the same case could be made for the Americans.

Yet, despite much debate on this topic, Knollenberg notes that "In the event, no one was arrested in Massachusetts to be sent to England for trial."[217] Rather, he concludes:

> No evidence has been found that Gov. Bernard of Mass. tried to carry out Hillsborough's instruction of Feb., 1769, to secure information of treason or misprision of treason on which to arrest and send the alleged offenders to Great Britain for trial. But, as brought out in the discussion of the *Gaspee* affair in R.I. in 1772, efforts were then made to secure evidence on which persons could be indicted and sent from R.I. to Great Britain to be tried for treason.[218]

While there were mixed and strongly expressed opinions on whether the Treason Act 35 should be applied to the colonies, with Parliamentarians returning time and again to the same cases of Ireland and Scotland to argue their position, even "most of the ministers seemed to have regarded this move as no more than a gesture, for later, during the debates in the Commons."[219] While these discussions may not have had an impact in Parliament, at least until 1772, it had an adverse effect in the colonies. Knollenberg concludes that "the fact that Parliament proposed to have the government apply the ancient treason act of Henry VIII to the colonies was alarming enough."[220] Therefore, even though there was not an immediate implementation of this Act, the discussion itself gave the colonists cause to continue to resist both concrete and proposed coercive measures. Finally, arguments on the Treason Act made it undoubtedly clear that most Parliamentarians could not conceive of addressing the colonial issues except by established precedents within the British realm.

---

[217] Knollenberg, *Growth of the American Revolution*, 69.
[218] Ibid., 326 (note 40).
[219] Christie and Labaree, *Empire or Independence*, 125.
[220] Knollenberg, *Growth of the American Revolution,* 69.

Commander-in-Chief

Another aspect of colonial policy that was derived from the context of Great Britain and Ireland was the position of the Commander-in-Chief, with many Parliamentarians comparing it to that of the Lord Lieutenant in Ireland. The post of Commander-in-Chief was established in the colonies in 1763 to maintain the placement of 10,000 troops following the Seven Years' War.[221] Yet, following the Boston Massacre it became evident that there was disagreement over who had control of the military, the Governor or the Commander-in-Chief.[222] The Commons acknowledged "that Misunderstandings and Disputes have arisen, in almost every one of His Colonies in *America,* between the Civil Governors and Military Commanders, since the Appointment of a Commander in Chief."[223] This issue was addressed on 8 May 1770 in the debate on the "examination of the power of the civil and military authorities in North America" where the Commons proposed an Address to the King with the facts:

> That we find, that in One of His Majesty's Provinces, the Representatives of His People in the Great and General Court assembled, have complained, that according to the Arrangement of Commands in *America,* there is a Military Power within the said Province, without any Check by the Power of the Civil Government of the said Province, and uncontroulable by the supreme executive Power of the Province, which they conceive to be within the Limits of the same; the just and full Representative of the supreme Executive Power of the whole Empire, in as full and ample Manner as is the Lord Lieutenant of *Ireland*, or any other His Majesty's Lieutenants in the Dominions to the Realm of *Great Britain* appertaining.[224]

The colonies' grievance was clearly against the encroachment of Parliament's authority on the civil government. Furthermore, similarities of the Commander-in-Chief to the position of the

---

[221] Thomas, *Townshend Duties Crisis,* 51-2.

[222] Ibid., 185-186; According to Christie, "Each royal governor held a key position in his colony as head of the local administration and as the link connecting the colony with the King's government in Britain. He had various, but not exclusive, responsibilities for appointing the other officials within his colony-though this prerogative was invaded both by the ministers at home and by the provincial assemblies. He had a general authority and responsibility for supervising the activities of the executive government within his province. This included the enforcement both of the law contained in provincial legislation and of British statutes extending to the colonies. In theory, but rarely in practice, he had full control of salaries and expenditure for government purposes. He also had full military and naval powers. His commission gave him the military authority virtually of a commander-in-chief; and he received a separate commission as vice-admiral," Christie, *Crisis of Empire*, 17.

[223] Proceedings on 8 May 1770 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, iii, 269.

[224] Ibid., 270, 269.

Lord Lieutenant of Ireland were clear. This presumably was regarded as an offence and an acknowledgement that Ireland was limited by Parliament in ways the colonies had yet to experience, until now. This comparison was a stark realisation that they were becoming as subject to Parliament's control as Ireland. In response to the growing controversy, Parliamentarians also turned to the Irish analogy to conclude whether the civil and military powers should be separated.

Governor Thomas Pownall was quite concerned with this topic, and as a former Governor of Massachusetts, was well qualified to argue against the practicalities of separating the powers:

> By the 13th of Charles II, it was declared that his Majesty's predecessors ever had the command and disposition of all the forces, etc. These have been constantly kept together and never separated. It never has been separated in Ireland. There was an attempt in King James' time. He did attempt it, because it backed his designs upon England to give Lord Tyrconnel the same power that the ministers are now attempting to give to the Commander in Chief. Lord Clarendon would not submit. He superseded Lord Clarendon. But this will be better explained to you, who is master of this subject. This military power has never been separated in the colonies. The Governor is his Majesty's *locum tenens*, so he was supreme military commander.[225]

In order to argue that military command should remain with the Governor, Pownall reminded MPs that based on parliamentary practice, neither in Ireland nor the colonies were military powers ever separated, it was only attempted in Ireland, and now possibly America. Pownall repeated his position in a letter to Dr. Cooper on 11 April 1770: "This supreme Military Command never has been nor never can be separated from this supreme Civil Office of <u>King</u> within the Realm."[226] He continued: "Whenever this Office has been Delegated, as to the L^{d}. Lieu^{t}. of Ireland, and to the Kings Locum [Tenens] in America, the supreme military command <u>has always</u> been inseparably annexed to it.- <u>It can never be otherwise</u>."[227] Pownall emphasised that precedent always stipulated that military command remain with the governing official.

Almost immediately following Pownall's speech, Governor George Johnstone agreed that the military command could not be separated. In a similar analogy to Pownall, Johnstone argued

---

[225] Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament*, iii, 316; Cavendish Diary version of the Motion for an Address asking for an examination of the power of the civil and military authorities in North America on 8 May 1770 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, iii, 274.

[226] Governor Pownall to Dr. Cooper in *Germain Papers* (v. 22, p. 184).

[227] Ibid.

that "The matter was likewise attempted by James II in Ireland. When James II thought of altering the whole Irish government, and new modelling the army there, he gave a commission to Lord Tyrconnel superseding Lord Clarendon. They will therefore see the impossibility of those two existing."[228] Johnstone used this example to argue the impracticality and inexpediency of separating the military. Johnstone's prior experience as Governor of West Florida "brought him into conflict with the military authorities, whose prior responsibilities to the commander-in-chief in America he refused to recognize."[229] He thus drew on his own experience in America, in hand with his knowledge of the case of Ireland, to argue why there should be no Commander-in-Chief.

In contrast, Lord William Barrington, who was the next to speak on this occasion, insisted that it was proper to have a Commander-in-Chief for the purpose of security. Particularly, Barrington mentioned the Native American and French threat along their borders: "This is the difference between Ireland. The troops for Ireland are for Ireland only. They have no connection with any other country."[230] The various threats posed to the American colonies necessitated organisation that stretched beyond colony borders. Therefore, Barrington argued, they could not compare the case of Ireland, who faced no threat. Barrington's previous position as Secretary at War during the Seven Years' War likely informed his view.[231] The motion was passed "without a division", meaning that most Parliamentarians were willing to consider the roles of the Governor and Commander-in-Chief as inseparable, seemingly due to the controversy it caused in the colonies.[232] However, Thomas states that "when the legal opinion was given, on 16 May, it proved highly satisfactory to Barrington and Gage. The law officers ruled that the military powers in the commissions of colonial governors applied only to provincial troops and not to the regular army."[233] Therefore, legally it was concluded that the Commander-in-Chief had responsibility for the military. The confirmation of the Commander-in-Chief's position

---

[228] Cavendish Diary version of the Motion for an Address asking for an examination of the power of the civil and military authorities in North America on 8 May 1770 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* iii, 276.

[229] Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament,* ii, 684.

[230] Cavendish Diary version of the Motion for an Address asking for an examination of the power of the civil and military authorities in North America on 8 May 1770 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* iii, 278, 277-8.

[231] Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament,* ii, 55.

[232] Charles Garth to South Carolina Assembly version of the Motion for an Address asking for an examination of the power of the civil and military authorities in North America on 8 May 1770 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* iii, 295.

[233] Thomas, *Townshend Duties Crisis,* 187.

ultimately neglected the suggestions of those with experience in America, and therefore presumably with more insight into American sentiment, such as Pownall and Johnstone, who seemingly feared a break from parliamentary practice as was established in Ireland, again hinting that the majority of Parliament was still ignorant on American issues.

An American Parliament

Following the recent implementation of the Townshend Duties, Scotland and Ireland were used to examine the idea and possibility of an American Parliament, in order to address the recurring issue since the Stamp Act of representation and taxation. On 15 August 1768, George Grenville wrote to William Knox:

> The Kings of England for many Centuries constantly exercisd the Right of creating Corporations with the Power of chusing Members to Parl[t]. & vested that Power in Many or in a Few at their Discretion. Some of these particularly the two Universities were I think incorporated for that Purpose so late as the Reign of K[g]. James: I. & unless it is restraind by the Act of Union of the two Kingdoms, I do not know that this Power has ever been taken away.[234]

In falling back on his old argument of "virtual representation", Grenville acknowledged that this concept was not affected even after the Scottish and English Parliaments were united, implying that there were no circumstances that altered this principle.[235] Therefore, the English Parliament still represented the American colonists.

Another response to representation was the idea of an American Parliament, similar to the Irish. Lord Rockingham wrote to Lord Dartmouth in 1769 of the differences between Ireland and America and why such a scenario was undesirable. Firstly, Rockingham acknowledged the colonial unity that resulted from the Stamp Act crisis. He believed that the proposed plan would only do more to "serve as the foundation for their erecting themselves into a State Independent of

---

[234] George Grenville to William Knox on 15 August 1768 in *William Knox Papers, 1757-1811* (Box 1, v. 1: 33, p. 4-5), William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan.

[235] Ibid., (Box 1, v. 1:33, p. 1-19).

the Mother Country."[236] Furthermore, Rockingham did not believe that an American Parliament was practical: "The particular circumstances of Ireland & N: America are very different: Ireland has indeed a Parliaᵗ:, but British Government has great weight in it, arising in great measure from the local situation; its great proximity."[237] Rockingham acknowledged the ties that Irishmen and Englishmen had over land, family, and work (including men in the government), something that was missing from American connections.[238] He continued, "The Weight & influence of British Government over the Members, of a N: American Parliaᵗ:, compared with the Parliaᵗ: of Ireland would fall very short indeed."[239] Finally, he did not think it was practical because he believed the colonies would quarrel among themselves over "local Interests" and "Number of Representatives."[240] This argument is telling considering Rockingham and his followers were some of the most sympathetic Parliamentarians to the colonists to date. Therefore, his lack of enthusiasm for this proposal denotes both the probable impossibility of its implementation, but also, that even some conciliatory suggestions were considered too extreme.

Even from the American perspective, Samuel Cooper did not believe an American Parliament would be acceptable to British politicians or American colonists. In a letter to Governor Pownall on 1 January 1770, he wrote on the similarities between the American colonies and Ireland in regard to taxation and representation:

> I do not wonder that the Patriots of that Kingdom have a sympathy for America-Common Dangers & sufferings are apt to unite us…Ireland, I have ever thought, has had hard measure; but the Privilege of granting their own property is still left-Should this natural, this constitutional, this unalienable Right be once torn from these Colonies, I do believe we should be as opprest and miserable a People, as any under Heaven.[241]

Cooper argued the importance of being taxed only through representation: "We are sensible that before the late Revenue Acts, we were upon a better Footing than that of Ireland...& yet we do not wish for an Establishment like Ireland."[242] Furthermore, he stated: "They mean to establish an American Parliament chosen by the several Legislatures of the Colonies. I have no

---

[236] *Rockingham Papers* (WWM/R/1/1244, p. 3; 1-3), Sheffield City Archives, Sheffield England.
[237] Ibid., (WWM/R/1/1244, p. 3).
[238] Ibid., (WWM/R/1/1244, p. 3-5).
[239] Ibid., (WWM/R/1/1244, p. 6).
[240] Ibid., (WWM/R/1/1244, p. 5).
[241] Dr. Cooper to Governor Pownall on 1 January 1770 in *Germain Papers* (v. 22, p. 252).
[242] Ibid., (v. 22, p. 253).

expectation from this Proposal imagining it would neither be agreeable to Government at home, from the union it proposes, nor to the generality here for other reasons."[243] In Cooper's view, an American Parliament was simply impractical. In short, the idea of an American Parliament was quickly off the table and even those in favour of conciliatory policies towards the Americans, such as Rockingham, were not persuaded that the creation of an American Parliament, on the lines of the Irish Parliament, would resolve the current crisis. Even though not implemented, the discussions on the proposition of an American Parliament were still based on British governance and policy, a further example of how solutions to the American crisis were explored through the prism of precedent with Great Britain and Ireland.

Mutiny Act/Quartering Troops

In 1769, Parliament considered altering the 1765 Mutiny Act to make it permissible for troops to be forcibly quartered in private houses, causing considerable controversy in the American colonies, especially in Massachusetts and New York.[244] In order to closely look at this provision, Parliamentarians compared the alteration with practices in Scotland and Ireland. Shelburne's notes on "The Practice relating to quartering troops in Ireland and Scotland", were seemingly to argue why they should not quarter troops in private houses in America.[245] "In Scotland, Troops are to be quarter'd…as the practice was before the Union. But this practice has never been precisely stated. They often quarter upon private houses where the public are not sufficient; The necessity of it is seen & generally (tho' not always) submitted to."[246] Similarly, "The practice in Ireland is to quarter upon private houses, the public being rarely numerous enough."[247] In both cases, Shelburne noted that troops were quartered in private houses when public housing was unsuitable, with the implication that this would not apply to the American colonies where public housing should be sufficient.

---

[243] Ibid.

[244] Christie and Labaree, *Empire or Independence,* 49; Cook, *The Long Fuse*, 108-9; Thomas, *Townshend Duties Crisis,* 8, 78, 128.

[245] Shelburne's notes in *William Petty, 1st Marquis of Lansdowne, 2nd Earl of Shelburne Papers 1665-1885* (v. 58, p. 129) William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan.

[246] Ibid., (v. 58, p. 129-130).

[247] Ibid., (v. 58, p. 132).

Barrington agreed with Shelburne that the process of quartering troops in Scotland was a precedent set before the Union. In fact, in a letter written to Commander-in-Chief General Thomas Gage on 28 November 1769, Barrington believed that it was not likely for ministers to enforce the quartering in the colonies because it was not practiced in England or Scotland:

> …I think there is no chance of persuading the Ministers that any private Houses in America should have Soldiers quartered on them, when the same Species of house is not liable to the like burden here. Troops are quartered in Scotland according to the ancient practice of that Kingdom before the Union.[248]

Barrington was perhaps signalling the possible repercussions of enforcing policies in the colonies that Parliamentarians themselves did not find acceptable. Otherwise, he clearly viewed the success or failure of such an Act in the colonies through its success or failure in Scotland.

From the American perspective, Benjamin Franklin also argued that Parliament did not have the right to keep a standing army or quarter troops, as was the case in Ireland. In a letter written from Franklin in London to Dr. Cooper on 8 June 1770, he argued:

> As to the Standing Army kept up among us in time of Peace, without the Consent of our Assemblies, I am clearly of Opinion that it is not agreeable to the Constitution. Should the King by the Aid of his Parliaments in Ireland & the Colonies, raise an Army and bring it into England, quartering it here in time of Peace without the Consent of the Parliament of Great Britain, I am persuaded he would soon be told that he had no right so to do, and the Nation would ring with Clamours against it. I own that I see no Difference in the Cases.[249]

Just as Parliament would have to approve an Irish and colonial army to be quartered in England, Franklin argued that the American assemblies would have to give their consent for British troops to be quartered. He continued that "our having the same Head or Sovereign, the King" meant that neither Parliament nor the assemblies had more authority than the other.[250] Instead, "the several States ha[d] equal Rights and Liberties, and being only connected, as England and Scotland were

---

[248] Lord Barrington to General Thomas Gage on 28 November 1769 in *Thomas Gage Papers 1754-1807, 1759-1775* (v. 16 ES, Folder 10, p. 1-2), William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan.

[249] Dr. B. Franklin to Dr. Cooper on 8 June 1770 in *Germain Papers* (v. 22, p. 17).

[250] Ibid.

before the Union, by having one common Sovereign, the King."[251] If this was "an Inconvenience", then Franklin challenged Parliament to change it. He gave the example:

> England and Scotland were once separate States, under the same King. The Inconvenience found in their being separate States, did not prove that the Parliament of England had a Right to Govern Scotland. A formal union was thought necessary, and England was an hundred years soliciting it, before she could bring it about. If Great Britain now think such an Union necessary with us, let her propose her Terms, and we may consider of them.[252]

Franklin argued that Parliament was only able to govern the colonies following a union, including any decisions regarding the quartering of troops. This was rather an extreme adjustment to views on Parliament's authority only a few years prior, when the colonists' original protests were over the accepted illegality of internal taxation. While these few Parliamentarians considered the impact the Mutiny Act could have in the colonies and urged for more conciliatory measures to be applied, there was no significant response to this alteration. Rather, Parliament's constant adjustments to the Act went fairly unnoticed and would only cause significant upheaval in the colonies a few years later when introduced as part of the Coercive (or Intolerable) Acts.[253] However, the significance lies particularly in that Franklin was now challenging Parliament's authority directly, rather than solely in terms of taxation. In doing so, he unashamedly used the political manoeuvre of the Scottish Union to argue the colonists' case, claiming that Parliament's role in the colonies could only be adjusted through the lens of its relationship with Scotland.

Conclusion

The parliamentary debates and correspondence between 1767-1772, reveal that there was little widespread consensus on how Parliament should respond to the colonies' continued protests against taxation. Indeed, it is clear some notable Parliamentarians did not even regard the

[251] Ibid., (v. 22, p. 18).
[252] Ibid., (v. 22, p. 19-20).
[253] Christie and Labaree, *Empire or Independence,* 192; Don R. Gerlach, "A Note on the Quartering Act of 1774," *The New England Quarterly* 39, no. 1 (1966): 82, 80-88.

American colonists as being in rebellion, even after all that had happened. Whether discussing the Treason Act, the role of the Commander-in-Chief, or the Mutiny Act, MPs and Peers disagreed over the principles and practices of applying such policies to the American colonies. Both sides of the arguments looked to the examples of Ireland and Scotland to explore each of these issues in turn, yet, arguably, this only increased and further exposed the divisions in Parliament over the American crisis. Furthermore, a close analysis of the debates also reveals the increasing animosity among MPs and Peers over past decisions which many blamed for their current predicament. Most significantly, because of divisions in Parliament and an apparent failure of confidence in their policies, past and present, both their approach and proposals offered no clear direction for resolution of the crisis, as Parliamentarians vacillated between coercion and conciliation. In each case, Parliamentarians sought to define the crisis and the appropriate action through their experiences with Ireland and Scotland. Yet, the decision to do so could be viewed as a mistake, as colonial resistance to measures imposed from London only increased. In turn, this produced considerable unease in Parliament about the state of its authority and relationship with Ireland and Scotland, and the possible adverse effects its decisions could have throughout the realm, especially as the colonists themselves supported an American/Irish alliance.

Chapter Four: Coercive Acts

Resistance to the Tea Act of 1773 in the colonies escalated into what became known as the Boston Tea Party, when on the night of 16 December 1773, a group of colonists dumped 340 chests of tea into the Boston harbour. Following this, Parliament decided to enforce a series of regulations in 1774, known to the British as the Coercive Acts and to the Americans as the Intolerable Acts, which included the Boston Port Act, Massachusetts Government Act, Administration of Justice Act, and the Quartering Act. Yet, both those for and against more coercive measures consistently used past precedents established in Scotland, Ireland, and Wales to guide their decisions regarding the rather unprecedented show of colonial defiance to Parliament's imperial authority. While most Parliamentarians agreed that punishment was needed as a result of the Tea Party, arguments focused on the expediency of the measures and the consequences that could follow. Arguably, the concern was not with the colonies, but rather the potential for the colonists' actions to inspire and provoke similar resistance within England's neighbouring territories. That being said, Parliamentarians were well aware that their response could equally ignite a movement for demanding similar liberties inside the realm of Great Britain and Ireland. Therefore, while there were many arguments urging for more conciliatory measures, in fear of colonial retaliation, ultimately the extreme show of rebellion in Boston convinced many that enforcing coercive measures was the only sure way of reinforcing, and reminding, the colonies of their place within the imperial system, while simultaneously, and perhaps more importantly, stamping out any potential rebellious movements closer to home.

Boston Port Act and Scotland

The North government, led by Prime Minister Lord Frederick North, proposed the Boston Port Act, the first of the coercive measures, which sought to close the port of Boston "till they [the Bostonians] have made ample satisfaction to the East India Company."[254] While Captain Phipps

[254] Brickdale Diary version of the Boston Port Bill. Leave to introduce on 14 March 1774 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, iv, 75.

acknowledged that "The proceedings of Boston being without precedent it's no wonder if none should be found to apply to their case", MPs and Peers could not conceive of addressing the American situation without having recourse to precedents of similar acts of rebellion in Scotland, in order to decide whether it was just to punish a whole city despite the majority of its population not being involved in the offending action.[255] Most MPs agreed that the extremity of the colonists' actions specifically against Parliament's authority required equally extreme consequences. On 14 March 1774 in the House of Commons, Prime Minister North argued that it was within their rights to punish whole towns, as they had done in Scotland:

> In Edinburgh, Porteous was murdered; Parliament fined the inhabitants. There was a riot at Glasgow, a gentleman's house was pulled down; Parliament fined Glasgow by sequestering part of their revenues. Boston does not stand on so good footing as even either of these. No one therefore I dare say will be against their being at least equally punished.[256]

These two cases had similarities to the American rebellion. The Porteous Riot in 1736 was a rebellion against taxes, resulting in a two thousand pound fine.[257] Similarly, the Scottish rebels in the Malt Tax Riots, occurring in 1725 in Glasgow, "had both economic and constitutional reasons for opposing the tax, with many worrying that capitulation to the measure would weaken Scotland's position within the British union."[258] The Americans too feared the economic repercussions of the taxes imposed on the colonies, but also, more importantly, the constitutional implications on their rights as English subjects. The similarity of these cases was not lost on North as he also reminded MPs of Glasgow's punishment for the Malt Tax Riots, a fine of five thousand pounds, to conclude that there were justified and successful precedents for the punishment of Boston.[259] Overall, North's argument was to persuade MPs on the principle of the matter: that Parliament's authority perfectly justified its actions. In fact, North went as far to say that their actions had not been coercive enough, when he noted that "Our lenity to America has

---

[255] Ibid., 76.

[256] Ibid., 75.

[257] Timothy D. Watt, "Taxation Riots and the Culture of Popular Protest in Ireland, 1714-1740," *The English Historical Review* 130, no. 547 (2015): 1441; Amy Watson, "Patriotism and Partisanship in Post-Union Scotland, 1724–37," *The Scottish Historical Review* 97, no. 1 (2018): 80.

[258] Watson, "Patriotism and Partisanship," 63.

[259] Cavendish Diary version of the Boston Port Bill: Committee on 23 March 1774 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* iv, 89.

proved hurtful."[260] However, while many agreed that American actions were unwarrantable, there were voices in Parliament who urged that the practicality of the Bill needed further assessment before being enacted.

The comparison of Boston to Edinburgh and Glasgow re-appeared in subsequent debates on the Boston Port Bill, such as on 21 March 1774 in the House of Commons, but to offer an alternative plan to the one proposed. Rose Fuller, possibly from his experience as a planter and involvement in the government in Jamaica, knew that closing the port of Boston would be catastrophic for British commerce.[261] This convinced him to argue that they instead "Follow the example of Edinburgh and Glasgow" and implement a fine of fifteen or twenty thousand pounds.[262] However, Fuller also qualified this by suggesting "If [they do] not pay it by such a day, then all the provisions of that Bill should take place", and the Boston port could be closed.[263] Fuller's concern was about British rather than American interests, only using the examples in Scotland as a preliminary punishment and for expediency. While the accounts of the debate were limited to a description of Fuller's arguments, "the Bill [was to] be committed to a Committee of the whole House", indicating that the majority of MPs believed that more authoritative measures were needed.[264]

During the Committee stage of the Boston Port Bill on 23 March 1774 in the House of Commons, Fuller again argued the importance of the port of Boston and that there was no previous precedent similar to the Boston Port Bill. Furthermore, he proposed a £25,000 fine.[265] He proceeded to remind MPs of "Things of a like nature in this Kingdom. Edinburgh: the most outrageous violation of the peace of the country, respited by the royal authority: in that case the town of Edinburgh was fined. Edinburgh was fined £2000. That was paid. The next that of Glasgow: the word fine was not made use of, but it was enacted that £5000…"[266] Fuller elaborated on the Edinburgh precedent:

---

[260] Brickdale Diary version of the Boston Port Bill. Leave to introduce on 14 March 1774 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, iv, 75.

[261] Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament,* ii, 478.

[262] Cavendish Diary version of the Boston Port Bill: Motion to commit on 21 March 1774 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, iv, 86.

[263] Ibid.

[264] Proceedings on 21 March 1774 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* iv, 85.

[265] Cavendish Diary version of the Boston Port Bill: Committee on 23 March 1774 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceeding,* iv, 90.

[266] Ibid., 89.

> The second, Edinburgh: not carried so far; nothing, but a mere fine. The courts of law not taken from Edinburgh. [Nothing] which they enjoyed [was] taken from them. The harbour of Boston is by nature there of. I think [it] unprecedented. I think it contrary to the known laws, and usage of this kingdom: in cases where damages are committed, and the author not found, the laws suppose they are capable of resisting, and ought to resist them.[267]

While there was no precedent for closing ports, Fuller continued that the proposed Act was far too extreme for the first offence and would only cause the colonies to further unite.[268] These warnings by Fuller were not the first, in fact, he had spoken out against the passage of the Stamp Act, fearing early on the likely outcome of Parliament's proceedings in the colonies. In all, he argued that they should fine Boston for damages first before moving on to more extreme measures, concluding that this action "has precedent of the cases of Glasgow and Edinburgh."[269] Fuller's suggestions were possibly the most concrete of any in Parliament in calling for a lesser punishment, which aligned with precedent, to be applied to the colonies. While a few voices spoke out to suggest more lenient measures, such as Charles James Fox, a well-known Americanist, who heartily agreed with Fuller's suggestions, these voices were outweighed and "Fuller's amendment was rejected without a vote."[270]

Disagreeing with Fuller that this was the first offence, North argued that they must respond with a strong show of authority:

> But the honourable gentleman, Sir, is in the right when he says that the precedents of Edinburgh, Glasgow…go more immediately to fining the town than this measure. I acknowledge, when I quoted these...instances, it was to show that Parliament in cases of riots inflicted punishment to the whole town for what was not [ ] by the whole town. Not the precedent of blocking up the harbour, of blocking up the town, but the cases were very different. The cases of...Edinburgh, and Glasgow; sudden riots, violent riots, very reprehensible, very punishable, but riots in towns that acknowledged the authority of this country, riots in towns that did not dispute the supreme authority of Parliament and that would certainly submit to a fine. Is [ ] that the town of Boston, with as much regularity in the opinion that Parliament has no right to tax, no right to control by laws, will immediately submit to a fine imposed by the Parliament of Great Britain? Sir, we do not know that.[271]

---

[267] Ibid.
[268] Ibid., 89-90.
[269] Ibid., 90.
[270] Thomas, *Tea Party to Independence*, 55.
[271] Cavendish Diary version of the Boston Port Bill: Committee on 23 March 1774 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceeding,* iv, 92; 91.

Fuller had used the examples of Glasgow and Edinburgh to argue that they had never been so extreme in their punishments of previous riots, but to North the more important point was to illustrate how these precedents dictated that Parliament was justified in punishing an entire city for the actions of a few men. North did not believe a fine was an effective punishment because the Americans had rebelled against Parliament's authority, were still rebelling against Parliament's authority, and therefore were highly unlikely to pay a fine.

The final debate to raise the examples of the Scottish riots occurred during the Motion to Pass the Boston Port Bill on 25 March 1774 in the House of Commons. Grey Cooper, Secretary to the Treasury, argued "That the spirit of riot and insurrection proceeds with the whole town. It is not in the case of Edinburgh, Glasgow…It is in a state of the greatest riot that ever was."[272] Like North, Cooper viewed the Boston Tea Party not only as the culmination of the riotous nature of the city in general, but as the greatest rebellion Parliament had ever witnessed.

MP John Sawbridge, a radical soon to represent London and historically an opponent of the ministry, provided an alternative view on the debate.[273] Rather than being in opposition to this Act for its inexpediency, like Fuller, he was against it in principle, for being "an oppressive measure of the legislature of this country", and that "This mode of punishment is calculated, Sir, not to punish the guilty but to punish the innocent."[274] Sawbridge did not believe the same punishment in Edinburgh or Glasgow should be applied:

> With respect to the cases quoted…the case of Edinburgh, the case of Glasgow. Why I will say, for every one of these cases, that they were a most iniquitous practice…They were *ex post facto* laws…they were iniquitous, a power for punishing innocent people for the fault of the guilty. They were most iniquitous. They were not so iniquitous as this law, because here the punishment extends to a much greater length.[275]

Like Fuller, Sawbridge argued that the punishment inflicted on the American colonists was more extreme than those imposed on Edinburgh and Glasgow. But more significant was his overall assessment of Parliament's response to the American colonists to date, and the grave

---

[272] Cavendish Diary version of Boston Port Bill: Motion to pass on 25 March 1774 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* iv, 127; Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament,* ii, 250.

[273] Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament,* iii, 409-11; Namier and Brooke, "Hythe" in Constituencies, https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1754-1790/constituencies/hythe.

[274] Cavendish Diary version of Boston Port Bill: Motion to pass on 25 March 1774 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* iv, 131.

[275] Ibid.

consequences of this: that "The unjust oppressive measures of this legislature have brought us into the state we are."[276]

Agreeing that the city of Boston should not be punished because of the actions of a few men, another version of the debate gives an account of Rockinghamite William Dowdeswell's reference to Edinburgh and Glasgow.[277] Dowdeswell asked, like many other MPs, why do "you single out Boston for your particular resentment?" naming other colonies like New York that also engaged in rebellion.[278] Dowdeswell argued, "You find yourselves, says he, much at a loss about this bill, and are much hurt, because the innocent are likely to be involved in the same punishment with the guilty."[279] He continued:

> You are now going to censure them, in the same manner as was done in the case of Edinburgh and Glasgow, where the people at large were to suffer for the neglect of their magistrates. There is a great difference between the magistrates of Edinburgh and those of Boston; those at Edinburgh are chose[n] by the people; those at Boston are not; they are appointed by the council, and the council are elected by the province at large.[280]

Dowdeswell was persuaded that the people of Massachusetts were not to blame for the actions of a few, and, therefore, punishing the innocent with the guilty would only "stir up a contention you will not be able to pacify and quiet."[281] Dowdeswell's attachment to Rockingham makes his argument unsurprising, especially as he previously advocated for more conciliatory measures in the form of hearing early petitions from the colonists regarding the Stamp Act, and argued against the Treason Act on the grounds of expediency and the potential consequences to Britain. However, he was only one of the few to disagree with the Port Bill, as its passing in the House of Commons was recorded as culminating in "very few negatives."[282] Overall, only a handful of Parliamentarians contested the principle and expediency of the Act, using the examples of past riots in Scotland to argue for a more measured and lenient approach, fearing the Act would further galvanise the American colonists against Britain. Yet, the more drastic decision to close

---

[276] Brickdale Diary version of the Boston Port Bill: Motion to pass on 25 March 1774 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* iv, 137.

[277] Thomas, *Tea Party to Independence*, 51.

[278] *London Evening Post* version of the Boston Port Bill: Motion to pass on 25 March 1774 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* iv, 139.

[279] Ibid.

[280] Ibid.

[281] Ibid.

[282] Ibid., 144.

the port was in response to the majority belief that the actions in Boston were worthy of more extreme measures than those applied to Scotland and necessary to secure Parliament's sovereignty, otherwise, nothing would prevent protests against other or future measures. Altogether, the Boston Port Bill debates reveal that even ten years after the initial protests by the colonists, there were still remarkably mixed opinions in Parliament on the scope and extent of rebellious attitudes in Boston. While many believed that a majority of Bostonians did not agree with the actions on 16 December, others were convinced there was no innocent party. Ultimately, MPs were persuaded that the city had to be punished, irrespective of the rebelliousness actions of a few.

Boston Port Act and the Americans

The colonists were well aware of the arguments made in Parliament regarding the proposed Coercive Acts and in turn, petitioned Parliament in hope of appeasement. Yet, they were also aware of the examples used by Parliamentarians, like the case of Edinburgh, to influence their decisions on how to proceed. The colonists, in turn, resorted to the same examples, just as we saw in the previous chapter that Franklin had done with reference to Ireland, to plea their own cause to Parliament. For instance, in one petition sent from "several Natives of *North America*" and discussed in the Commons on 25 March 1774, the colonists argued against the Boston Port Bill.[283] Upon hearing of the past precedents raised in Parliament, the colonists responded:

> the Petitioners cannot comprehend by what Rule of Justice the Town can be punished for a Civil Injury committed by Persons not known to belong to them; and the Petitioners conceive, that there is not an Instance, even in the most arbitrary Times, in which a City was punished by Parliamentary Authority, without being heard, for a Civil Offence not committed in their Jurisdiction, and without Redress having been fought at Common Law.[284]

[283] Proceedings on 25 March 1774 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* iv, 115.

[284] Ibid.

Following this, they argued that they were not given the opportunity for a fair trial for the Boston Tea Party as the people were given in Edinburgh. The petition further warned that if Britain continued to treat the colonists differently, compared to their other subjects, then it would "alienate their Affections from this Country."[285] Just as in Parliament, the colonists knew that precedent was a very influential factor in how MPs and Peers viewed the current situation. Yet, the petition was voted down by 170 to 40, albeit not on the grounds of the American argument, but rather the illegality of the agent who presented the petition. Notwithstanding, Parliament refused to heed the warnings issued by the petitioners, and respective MPs, that they risked losing the colonists' "affections" towards Britain by their actions.[286]

Massachusetts Government Act and Scotland

The Massachusetts Government Act, which was an alteration of the Massachusetts Bay Charter, was also part of the Coercive Acts and prompted many MPs and Peers to refer to the Scottish Union of 1707 to justify its expedience. In particular, the proposed Act planned to alter the Council, making positions appointed by the Crown rather than elected by the House of Representatives, due to the Council's increasing passivity in the face of rebellious movements like the Tea Party.[287]

In the Committee stage of the Massachusetts Government Act on the 27 April 1774 in the House of Commons, Captain Phipps used the Scottish Union to argue why he did not believe the Council should be changed. While Phipps did approve of the Bill overall, he thought that altering the Council was not expedient because it would lose the respect of the people. Furthermore, he used the Scottish Union of 1707 to argue that the colonists deserved equal representation:

> Before the colony as it stands at present was composed of three colonies. There is a provision that some of the Council should be from each of these. There is nothing of this in the Bill. Two of the colonies, instead of being incorporated, became annihilated, as in the Union. So many Scotch peers sit in Parliament. It was at that time thought necessary

[285] Ibid., 116; 115-116.
[286] Ibid.
[287] Jack M. Sosin, "The Massachusetts Acts of 1774: Coercive or Preventive?" *Huntington Library Quarterly* 26, no. 3 (1963), 250; Christie and Labaree, *Empire or Independence*, 173, 203.

> that there should be some persons of that respectable nomination, that these two provinces shall have a seat in the Council.[288]

The Scottish Union united the Scottish and English Parliaments, effectively providing one legislative system in the English Parliament for both countries, whilst still allowing Scottish representatives. Like this Union, the three provinces of Massachusetts (Plymouth, Massachusetts Bay, and Maine) became one colony, and one legislature, in 1691.[289] Phipps argued that the Bill did not secure representatives from each of the provinces in Massachusetts as was the practice.[290] Therefore, he argued against it not just for practical reasons, but also for the sake of preventing further rebellion. In his view, the colonies had not abused their privileges, and, therefore, Parliament would be inciting an unnecessary reaction from the colonists by interfering in local government: "These people are pretty much heated without just cause. Will you give them a just cause?"[291]

The Union was once again referred to on 28 April 1774 when discussing the Massachusetts Government Act, yet the focus of the debate was whether they should consider the petition of William Bollan, agent for the Massachusetts Council, addressing the alteration of the Charter. In a rather trifling debate on the legality on the Council's ability to elect Bollan, Robert Nugent, Lord Clare, responded, "There have been numberless alterations of the constitution of this country…Yet I do not recollect that in any of these instances that those who were deprived of those rights were heard in objection to these acts. [It] was undoubtedly an alteration in this constitution, a salvation of this country, the Act of Union in Scotland…"[292] Clare used the Act of Union to argue that the Scottish were not given time to refute the Union of Scotland and England, and to argue that Parliament's sovereignty was final and did not require approval. Finally, he believed that allowing colonial agents and petitions would increase rebellion. Therefore, while disagreeing with Phipps on the execution of the Act, both arguments were

---

[288] Cavendish Diary version of the Massachusetts Government Bill: Committee on 27 April 1774 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* iv, 286.

[289] This also included the islands of Martha's Vineyard, Nantucket, and parts of Nova Scotia in the "Inter-charter Period (1686-1692)," Massachusetts Archives Collection Overview, Massachusetts State Archives, https://www.sec.state.ma.us/divisions/archives/collections/mass-archives-collection.htm.

[290] *London Evening Post* version of the Massachusetts Government Bill: Committee on 27 April 1774 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* iv, 293-4.

[291] Cavendish Diary version of the Massachusetts Government Bill: Committee on 27 April 1774 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* iv, 288.

[292] Cavendish Diary version of the Massachusetts Government Bill. Report. Motion to bring up petition of William Bollan on 28 April 1774 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, iv, 299-300.

grounded in fear of colonial retaliation: Phipps believing more conciliatory measures were needed to prevent future conflict, while Clare believed an absence of authority would encourage greater rebelliousness.

Another version of the debate provides more context for Clare's assertion of authority, further illustrating that his argument rested on a desire to contain and curb rebellion, something he had been warning about since the Stamp Act repeal discussions. Yet rather than preventing coercive measures as in that case, Clare now called for a show of authority, believing that this posture would put a stop to the escalating conflict. "They are now in rebellion", he stated:

> Our proceeding properly now may prevent much bloodshed. In 1745, when the Rebellion was crushed, we made regulations and divested many of the Scotch of the privileges they before enjoyed. They were heard, its true, but not till peace was restored. Under the mode of now choosing the Council, the colony can't be useful.[293]

Clare's warning was rooted in his argument for a show of stronger parliamentary authority and that petitions should not be heard until the conflict was contained. Drawing an analogy with the Scottish rebellion also led Clare to imply the removal of the privilege of electing members for the Massachusetts Council until the rebellion ceased, as had been the case with the Scottish rebels. One might expect Clare's Irish background to encourage some sympathy towards the American colonists, but he was a Grenvillite and thus favoured Parliament adopting a strong response and authoritative measures with regards to the American colonies.[294]

What was a seemingly trivial debate on the legality of Bollan's elected position, where arguably the main concern should have been the grievances addressed by the colonists rather than the mode of receiving the petition, nonetheless pushed Parliamentarians to consider the actions of the Council, whether legal or illegal. As seen in the two arguments by Phipps and Clare, the issue was well debated, as Parliamentarians considered their own "legality" on altering the Charter, which was seen as a precedent itself. Yet, how could Parliament determine the answer to these questions, when there was no consensus on whether America was technically even in rebellion? MP John Dunning argued that only when this question was answered could

---

[293] Brickdale Diary version of the Massachusetts Government Bill. Report. Motion to bring up petition of William Bollan on the 28 April 1774 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, iv, 309.

[294] Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament,* iii, 218-222.

they move forward with the correct course of action.[295] Others, like Colonel Isaac Barré, did not believe the colonies were as yet in rebellion, as he remarked: "The question is whether you will reconcile your colonies to your government by sober, temperate and wise measures, or whether by the most tyrannical conduct force the unfortunate inhabitants of those provinces into a rebellion."[296] After a long debate that stretched into the middle of the night, and despite many voices favouring conciliation, the Massachusetts Government Act passed by 239 to 64 votes in the House of Commons.[297] As anticipated by many MPs, the alteration to the Massachusetts government did indeed unite the colonies over fears of Parliament's increasing encroachment on colonial government, ironically aggravating the rebellion, contrary to the expectation of so many that it would more likely be suppressed if authoritative measures were imposed.[298]

Massachusetts Justice Act and Scotland

On the Massachusetts Justice Act, or the Administration of Justice Act, discussions were focused on trial by juries, renewing the controversy of where and whether the Americans were to be tried for treason, either in the colonies or in England.[299] In reference to the Act of 35 Henry VIII, historian Neil L. York summarised the fears that shaped the opposing sides in the debate:

> Whereas advocates of utilizing the earlier act were driven by a fear that there would be no convictions by local juries of colonists being tried for crimes against the crown, advocates of the latter were driven by the fear that no imperial administrator accused of a capital offense could expect to be acquitted by a colonial jury.[300]

---

[295] Cavendish Diary version of the Massachusetts Government Bill: Third Reading on 2 May 1774 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, iv, 331.

[296] Ibid., 344.

[297] Ibid., 374.

[298] Knollenberg, *Growth of the American Revolution,* 118.

[299] It is worth noting that the Boston Massacre had taken place since the debates on the Treason Act in the last chapter. The Boston Massacre, occurring on 5 March 1770 when a group of British soldiers fired into a riotous crowd in Boston, killed five men. While it might be supposed that the soldiers would be rendered guilty of murder by the local jury, instead, they were cleared of all charges. This case was undoubtedly on the mind of most, if not all, Parliamentarians. It was whether Parliamentarians chose to use this case to argue for fair trials in the colonies (as a few did) or instead, ignore this occurrence to argue for the necessity of an English trial.

[300] Neil L. York, "Imperial Impotence: Treason in 1774 Massachusetts," *Law and History Review* 29, no. 3 (2011): 675-6 (note).

In a debate in the House of Commons on the Massachusetts Justice Bill on 29 April 1774, Francis Seymour Conway, Lord Beauchamp, made the case, as he did in 1769 when arguing that the Treason Act's application in Ireland made it suitable for America, for bringing the colonists to England, now using a Scottish precedent. He continued:

> Whether from one country to another, or from one part of the King's dominions, the principle is equally true. The honourable gentleman has talked much of a long sea voyage. Land voyage. What did you do in 1745? You brought them up from very remote parts, evidence from very remote parts. What is the situation of the people of that country? You innovated lest guilty persons should be found innocent. You innovate here lest innocent men should not have a fair trial.[301]

In order to argue that the original residence of the colonists should not be considered a problem, Beauchamp used the example of rebels brought from very remote parts of Scotland following the 1745 rebellion. This was to ensure justice, in his view, so that the guilty would not go unpunished in Scotland. His concern in mentioning "[the] situation of the soldier without this Bill" was that he did not believe that justice would be served to the American rebels in the American colonies and therefore, like the Scottish rebels, they would need to be brought to England for trial.[302]

On 2 May 1774 in the House of Commons, John St. John used the comparison of Ireland, Wales, and Scotland to explain why the Massachusetts Justice Act was acceptable. St. John argued:

> If our constitution could at any period afford a suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, it may well afford this temporary law, founded on principles which in various cases and under various modifications have given rise to similar Acts of Parliament affecting all the dependent parts of this Empire, Scotland, Ireland, Wales and America itself already in the name of treason. Two of these Acts calculated, not for the prevention of improper condemnations as in this case, but, which is much stronger, for the prevention of improper acquittals.[303]

---

[301] Cavendish Diary version of the Massachusetts Justice Bill: Committee on 29 April 1774 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, iv, 322.

[302] Ibid.; York, "Imperial Impotence," 675-6 (note); Thomas notes how many were concerned that soldiers and government officials would not have a fair trial if left in the colonies, Thomas, *Tea Party to Independence,* 71-2.

[303] Cavendish Diary version of the Massachusetts Government Bill: Third Reading on 2 May 1774 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, iv, 355.

St. John confirmed that an alteration was made at various times in the past, including in the surrounding countries of Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. If it was acceptable to enforce a similar act in these countries, in St. John's opinion in much stronger cases, then it was acceptable in America.[304]

Massachusetts Justice Act and Ireland

As MPs discussed the Massachusetts Justice Bill in the House of Commons on the 29 April 1774, they returned to the issue of *where* the colonists should be tried. Yet, instead of using the 1745 Scottish rebels as an example, MPs turned to Irish rebels to inform their opinion on the matter, just as they had done when debating the Act of 35 Henry VIII previously. In order to argue against the proposal of the Act, Colonel Philip Jennings reminded MPs of the case of a riot in Ireland, where the rebels were sent to Dublin for trial:

> The jury was so convinced of the hardship of those people being brought to trial, they acquitted every man of them. Government upon the second trial had another party tried upon the spot. Every man condemned, and executed. That shows the opinions of Irish and English men correspond together. The opinion of every man corresponds with the opinion of every man in America.[305]

By first arguing that "The Bill [was] unnecessary, unlawful, unjust", Jennings used the case of Ireland to show that the application of this Act risked the colonists being found innocent on account of the hardships they would have faced during their travel to England.[306] By suggesting that guilty colonists remain in America for trial, Jennings believed that the majority of colonists condemned the Boston Tea Party, and therefore, would proceed with a fair trial.

Just as Beauchamp used the case of the Scottish rebels to argue for the Americans to be brought to England, so he also used an example from Ireland. Beauchamp argued that the Bill in Ireland, even though originally opposed, was accepted by the Irish Parliament on the grounds

---

[304] Ibid.

[305] Cavendish Diary version of the Massachusetts Justice Bill: Committee on 29 April 1774 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* iv, 320.

[306] Ibid.

that there would not be fair trials should the rebels be left in Ireland. Beauchamp noted that the Act was repealed when it was no longer necessary, implying that the same mode of action be taken for the American case. Possibly in response to Jennings, Beauchamp advocated:

> The honourable gentleman alludes to Acts of Parliament in Ireland. State the situation of Ireland at that time...Riots arising from oppression which the lower sort of people had met with. The Bill when proposed met with great opposition, because many gentlemen denied the necessity of that Bill. It was upon the supposition that the juries did not do their duty. The present case is different. Here the opposition founded upon speculative principles. The principle of it was admitted by the Irish Parliament. It passed by a great majority. Since repealed, because the necessity of [it] had ceased.[307]

Beauchamp clearly pressed for the Americans to be treated as had been consistently done with rebellious citizens inside the realm of Great Britain and Ireland. In fact, Beauchamp saw the application of the Act as Parliament's duty. While not straying away from the protests that the journey would be too much for jurors, he acknowledged, "Undoubtedly great inconvenience to the persons, but when that country is in a most singular situation [it] becomes the legislature to balance inconvenience."[308]

Massachusetts Justice Act and Wales

Welsh cases were also used to justify why the colonists should not be brought to England for trial. When discussing the Massachusetts Justice Bill on 15 April 1774, Phipps argued that the removal of the colonists to England for trial was not the proper method and contemplated that perhaps the removal to a neighbouring colony was more practical. It was in this context that he used the example of Wales to argue that it was "Not absolutely inadmissible to remove the trial to a neighbouring province. Some time ago a crime committed in Wales, [was] tried in England."[309] It seems that the geographic location of Wales to England made the comparison applicable to the colonial case. Phipps' argument was based on expediency and fear of the

[307] Ibid., 322.
[308] Ibid.
[309] Cavendish Diary version of the Committee on America: Motion for leave for Massachusetts Justice Bill on 15 April 1774 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, iv, 167.

repercussions it would have in the colonies should the colonists be forced to travel to Britain to stand trial.

On 29 April 1774 in the House of Commons, Cooper argued that the colonists should be brought to England "Only in case of necessity."[310] He began by claiming "The law of England is certainly that the cause shall be tried near where the fact shall be committed, but it has made exceptions to that rule for the purpose of a fair trial."[311] For instance:

> The Act of the 2 Henry IV states these words, 'No Englishman can be convicted at the suit of any Welshman, except by English judges, etc., etc'…A stronger case in 1724, a motion made for a *certiorari* to remove out of Wales…indictment removed into an English county. Granted without affidavit. Instance of this being a constant maxim. There are exceptions. America. Not trust them to see the effect. They deny the law under which the magistrate who is to execute the law is constituted. Very objectionable to send them to England. Only in case of necessity.[312]

Cooper's reference to the Act of the 2 Henry IV implied that the soldiers in the colonies would not be tried by Englishmen as was the precedent set in Wales. Furthermore, he used another Welsh case to argue that an "indictment removed into an English county", again implying there was a necessary exception to "be tried near where the fact shall be committed."[313] Even though Cooper's argument suggested the Americans be brought to England, he also insisted that it was an exception on the grounds that the Americans did not believe the English magistrates to have authority. His argument exhibited a greater familiarity than most MPs with the different legal statutes and exceptions in England and Wales, likely owing to his prior career in law. Notwithstanding, neither he nor any other MP presented a case which produced a parliamentary consensus on this point.[314]

Indeed, Parliamentarians used the examples of Scotland, Ireland, and Wales to variously argue for *and* against the expediency of bringing the colonists to England to be tried. Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the arguments involving this Act was that there were cases used from all three countries to argue different viewpoints, resulting in confusion and controversy over the

---

[310] Cavendish Diary version of the Massachusetts Justice Bill: Committee on 29 April 1774 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* iv, 320.

[311] Ibid.

[312] Ibid.

[313] Ibid.

[314] Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament,* ii, 250.

practicality of applying this Act in the American colonies. In this context, it is perhaps not altogether unsurprising that even though the Massachusetts Justice Act was passed in the House of Commons by 127 to 24, MPs and Peers remained unwilling to follow through on prosecuting the Americans for treason, given that there were some who believed it would have serious implications for Britain's relationship with the colonies.[315] To make matters even more complicated, Parliamentarians were *still* unsure how to characterise the Boston Tea Party, and the conflict with the American colonists more generally. There was as yet no consensus in Parliament whether Britain was facing an imperial rebellion from the American colonies as a whole, or whether the resistance was confined to certain disaffected groups within the colonies.[316] What these debates reveal is that while a number of Parliamentarians confidently argued in favour of coercive measures, on the one hand, there was still considerable unease about taking actions that may be construed as punishing the majority for the actions of a minority. Consistent references to past rebellious activities by the Irish and Scottish were prominent in these debates and shaped how Parliamentarians sought to work out how to contain the American rebels. In doing so, however, they became bogged-down in revisiting past rebellions and Parliament's responses to them, which in turn sparked lengthy debates about how similar or not these rebellions were to the current resistant movements by the American colonies. Most importantly, this line of debate did not yield any real solutions to the present conflict, except to show that MPs and Peers were in disagreement over how to respond. Overall, Parliament seemed unwilling or unable to conceive of an alternative approach from that which had been applied to Ireland, Scotland, or Wales and one that might set a new precedent in imperial governance.

Quartering Act and Scotland

The altering of the original Quartering Act had been controversial a few years prior, however the notable lack of controversy in the discussion now was due to most MPs and Peers agreeing that it was a necessity in the wake of the Boston Tea Party. Nevertheless, there was one notable, lone

[315] Proceedings on 6 May 1774 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* iv, 396; York, "Imperial Impotence," 657-701.

[316] York, "Imperial Impotence," 677 (note).

voice of opposition, Lord Chatham, who invoked the case of the Scottish rebels to make his argument against the Act. In a discussion on 26 May 1774 in the House of Lords, it was reported that "[Chatham] opposed the Quartering Bill, which was the business of the day because he thought it quite unnecessary, as they were in a state of open Rebellion, and no such Bill was proposed when the Rebellion was in Scotland."[317] In Chatham's view, the American colonists were as unequivocally in a state of "open Rebellion" as the Scottish had been in 1745 and therefore should be treated in a like manner. Notwithstanding, his arguments and appearance after a long absence due to illness were met with ridicule and were roundly ignored as the debate ended in the passage of the Act in the House of Lords by 57 to 16.[318]

Taxation and Ireland

By the early months of 1774, MPs and Peers began a deeper exploration into the causes of the American rebellion and concluded almost immediately that taxation triggered the initial protest movements and continued to be the source of conflict, as seen in the Boston Tea Party in direct response to the Tea Act. In the course of their deliberations, MPs and Peers returned to the case of Ireland. Lord Rockingham's response to an unsigned letter from the colonies on 5 February 1774 agreed with Irish comparisons. The original letter from the colonies argued that the Declaratory Act was made for both Ireland and America, and therefore, the author questioned why Parliament taxed America but not Ireland.[319] The author continued:

> the Sovereignty of Parliament is equally assumed in both Cases, & if because the British Parliament have full Power, & Authority to make Laws, & Statutes of sufficient Force, & Validity to bind, the Parliament may also tax, & there is no difference between a Law to regulate, & a Law to tax, why may not the British Parliament in point of Right (I say nothing of the Point of Prudence) tax the Irish, as well as the Americans?[320]

---

[317] Soame Jenyns to Hardwicke version of the American Quartering Bill: Third Reading on 26 May 1774 in the House of Lords in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, iv, 441.

[318] Thomas, *Tea Party to Independence*, 84-5; Proceedings on 26 May 1774 in the House of Lords in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, iv, 438.

[319] *Rockingham Papers* (WWM/R/1/1480, p. 13-14).

[320] Ibid., (WWM/R/1/1480, p. 14).

Ultimately, the author tactically advised a reconsideration of Parliament's hypocritical decision to not tax Ireland, despite the Declaratory Act's inference of the right to do so, as currently established with America.

The author expanded his argument by urging Parliament to take a different view of the Boston Tea Party, by recalling riots experienced in England, Ireland, and Scotland, where violence perpetrated by the latter, the author claimed, was far worse than that unleashed by the American colonists.[321] And yet representatives from these nations were still allowed in Parliament. He hoped, therefore, that MPs and Peers would show more understanding towards the Americans:

> Riots, my Lord, are not peculiar to the Climate of America. their Violence has been experienced in England, & in Ireland, & worse than the Turbulence of Mobs has been experienced in Scotland, & yet the Sixteen Peers, and forty five Members sit in Parliament, whose Moderation, I would fain hope, when they reflect upon the Disorders which a Spirit of Rebellion has produced in their own Country, without any vindictive Statute against all the People of it, will be induced to make indulgent Allowances for the Irregularity of an American Mob irritated by Oppression, & I have great pleasure in counting Sixty one Members of Parliament representing the Peers, & Commons of Scotland (besides other Natives of that Country having Seats in Parliament) who can't but oppose with Energy…every Attempt of a revengeful Minister to punish many Innocent, as well as a few guilty Men, by a Measure of indiscriminating Rigour.[322]

Rockingham's response on 13 September 1774 can be seen in a letter to William Dempster, where he summarised the anonymous author's arguments: "The Writer seems to think, that tho' there is a Declaratory Bill in regard to Ireland nearly similar to the one made in respect to the Colonies, yet that Ireland is not Taxable by a British Parlia[t]:-I trust in policy it will not be attempted, but as to the Right, it undoubtedly is held to be so."[323] Rockingham agreed on the right to tax Ireland but advised against it, acknowledging the same reasoning be applied to the American case. "The instance of what has occurr'd in regard to Ireland since the declaratory Bill respective to Ireland is a degree of proof that these sort of abstract speculative Rights may lay long, & perhaps for ever unagitated again."[324] Ultimately, Rockingham was persuaded that the

---

[321] Ibid., (WWM/R/1/1480, p. 15).
[322] Ibid., (WWM/R/1/1480, p. 16).
[323] *Rockingham Papers* (WWM/R/1/1504, p. 3).
[324] Ibid., (WWM/R/1/1504, p. 5-6).

impact of the Declaratory Act in Ireland was proof that the same could be achieved in the American colonies, if the question of taxing the colonists was left alone.

It is also worth noting that the author believed that the Scottish Parliamentarians were against all oppressive measures applied to the American colonies, largely owing, in his view, to the history between Scotland and England. As seen in the colonial petitions and arguments previously discussed in this study, the colonists believed they shared in a similar colonial history with their Irish and Scottish counterparts in the realm. On this, Rockingham wrote, with some humour:

> You will allow me to joke you [sic] about a degree of confidence express'd by the Writer, that the 45, N: British Members, & the sixteen peers, w^{d}: be strong advocates for Mild Measures: I hope the time will come when They, & all those of his Majestys Ministers who are violent in the American Disputes, will have seen their Error, & become desirous of Conciliation."[325]

While not betraying whether he thought the author's beliefs were accurate, Rockingham nonetheless agreed that he wished MPs and Peers would be more conciliatory towards the American colonies. That there were those in Parliament who equally believed that the American cause might inspire support from similarly disaffected parts in the realm, namely in Ireland and Scotland, underscored the arguments for such an approach.

On 22 April 1774 in the House of Commons when discussing the Massachusetts Government Bill, General Conway argued they could not tax the colonies as they did not tax Ireland. Conway chastised Parliament's actions, arguing they were the reason why America was in rebellion:

> Will any Irish member of Parliament say you have the right to lay a land tax in Ireland? If any [were] to get up would any member not laugh in your face if you were to say [that]?....I think actually the same with regard to America. We give and take the money of other people to save our own…[It] will involve this country in more distress. I wish it may not ruin this country.[326]

---

[325] Ibid., (WWM/R/1/1504, p. 4).

[326] Cavendish Diary version of the Massachusetts Government Bill: Second Reading on 22 April 1774 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, iv, 266.

Conway's stint as a member of the Parliament in Dublin from 1741-1761 ensures his awareness of Irish sentiments on the issue of taxation.[327] He understood that continuing to provoke the colonists over the issue of taxation was counterproductive as it would only lead to more harm for England through an escalation of the present conflict.

Conway's argument, however, did not go unchallenged. Richard Rigby, previously Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland and Joint Vice Treasurer of Ireland, while underscoring his position on America, stated he would nevertheless see Ireland taxed, if necessary:

> I think this country has a right to tax America; but I do not say I would put any new tax on at this particular crisis; but when things are returned to a peaceable state, I would then begin to exercise it. And I am free to declare my opinion, that I think we have a right to tax Ireland, if there was a necessity so to do, in order to help the mother country. If Ireland was to rebel and resist our laws, I would tax it. The mother country has an undoubted right and control over the whole of its colonies.[328]

Historian R.B. McDowell rather disparagingly described Rigby as "a shrewed if notoriously self-interested politician", and that as "An old parliamentary hand, he was sensitive to the possibility of any change in the rules of the game at which he was so adept."[329] Rigby's intervention in the debate played somewhat to both sides, allowing for taxation if and when necessary, all the while underscoring the need for Parliament to assert its authority.

To Charles James Fox, it was not principle but practice that mattered most. As he argued, in response to Rigby, "The honourable gentleman tells us also, that we have a right to tax Ireland; however I may agree with him in regard to the principle, it would not be policy to exercise it; I believe we have no more right to tax the one than the other."[330] Fox's argument is significant because he was known to champion the American cause in Parliament.[331]

---

[327] Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament,* ii, 244.

[328] *London Evening Post* version of the Massachusetts Government Bill: Second Reading on 22 April 1774 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, iv, 280; Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament*, iii, 356-7.

[329] R.B. McDowell, *Ireland in the Age of Imperialism and Revolution 1760-1801* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 209, 210.

[330] *London Evening Post* version of the Massachusetts Government Bill: Second Reading on 22 April 1774 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, iv, 280.

[331] Moreover, he prided himself on being part of the Opposition, Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament,* ii, 455, 455-461.

The debate over whether Parliament had the right to tax the American colonies, by comparison to Ireland, remained unsettled and in fact continued through to 2 May 1774, in the House of Commons. John Dunning, in order to elaborate on his argument that Britain had every right to tax America, concluded:

> It may be asked [what] are the cases in which I admit it is possible this right may be rightly exercised…Can they be stated? I think they can be stated. I agree for the right of taxing [America], right of taxing Ireland, and Scotland. The same right with the same limit, to the same extent unquestionably applies to both…State my American politics. Ireland, a right to tax that which is nearer to us…[332]

Dunning admitted the principle of Parliament's right to tax Ireland and Scotland to conclude that this authority also extended to America. His reference to Scotland is unusual, as Ireland was the obvious and appropriate analogy in most cases in the debates on taxation. Notwithstanding, according to Dunning, the American colonies occupied an equal place in the realm alongside Ireland and Scotland.

Agreeing with Dunning, Rigby addressed his previous argument on the ability to tax Ireland, arguing:

> How I mentioned the kingdom of Ireland. It was mentioned by the honourable gentleman. No right to tax America. Do you pretend to tax [Ireland]? What I said in answer, being fully convinced of not only the right to tax America but the necessity of exercising that right, I said we had a right in certain circumstances to tax Ireland. Any gentleman will find [the] statute...to make laws binding the kingdom of Ireland to all intents and purposes. I had the satisfaction to hear it laid down out of a learned mouth, this country had a right to tax Ireland. I think I should not have been animadverted upon in a very full House...Don't anybody mean that I think we ever shall. Do I say that we shall always tax America? But I do [say the] Declaratory [Act of] 1766 [was a] most foolish law...I think the right of taxation is vindicated as far as their authorities go.[333]

Rigby's response was unambiguously defensive, and he was clearly upset that his prior comments had aroused criticism "in a very full House."[334] It is a good example of how the debate was unfolding at this point, between the issue of principle and the matter of practice. Introducing

---

[332] Cavendish Diary version of the Massachusetts Government Bill: Third Reading on 2 May 1774 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* iv, 337.

[333] Ibid., 356.

[334] Ibid.

the case of Ireland appears only to have muddied the debate further, as Parliamentarians became side-tracked into deliberating the differences or not between Ireland and the American colonies.

Conway also leapt to the defensive, justifying his previous argument regarding Ireland. He asserted, "I did never maintain that Great Britain had no right to tax America; I said that taxation and legislation had no connection; I allowed that we had an abstract right to tax Ireland, and also America, in the declaratory act; but I do not know the time when it will be proper and right so to tax."[335] Thus, Conway concluded that in principle Parliament had a right to tax, as established in the Declaratory Act for both Ireland and America. However, he, like others, did not believe it was expedient to do so.

In line with previous arguments, Fox vehemently reproached members who advocated that refusing to tax America was essentially overturning the British constitution. He argued:

> But the noble lord says we can't repeal the Tea Act without giving up the constitution of Great Britain. I never yet heard that was a part of the constitution of Great Britain, to tell [the colonies] they ought to be taxed without their consent. I never could conceive it was an essential part of the constitution of this country that persons should be taxed [by] Great Britain [in] America. America, who are upon the same footing as Ireland is with regard to this country. Is it an essential principle of the constitution of this country that Ireland or America ought to be taxed by the legislature of this country?[336]

Fox clearly thought this a nonsensical line of argument and continued to give it short shrift as he carefully drew out the distinction between principle and practice:

> How it can be giving up the constitution of this country to give up the taxation I can't understand. It is not precisely the predicament of Ireland. Is there not a Declaratory Act with regard to Ireland, and America? How is any gentleman to say we give up our right to tax Ireland, because we do not tax Ireland, or that we give up our right to tax America, because we do not tax America?[337]

Ireland was the fitting example to use in this argument because it enabled him to distinguish possessing the right to tax and exercising that right. As in both Ireland and America, the

---

[335] *London Evening Post* version of the Massachusetts Government Bill: Third Reading on 2 May 1774 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* iv, 380.

[336] Cavendish Diary version of the Massachusetts Government Bill: Third Reading on 2 May 1774 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* iv, 360-1.

[337] Ibid., 361.

Declaratory Act implied Parliament's right to tax. Fox argued that the authority of the declaration was not diminished by their refusal to tax Ireland and would not be diminished if they chose not to tax America. Ultimately, his concern stemmed from a fear that Britain was losing the "affections" of the colonies, as the 1774 petitioners to the Boston Port Bill had put it, and thus it was more prudent for Parliament to act as they did with Ireland, who remained part of the realm.[338]

In stark contrast, the argument of Attorney General Edward Thurlow showed why many believed the right to tax should in fact be implemented.[339] The Attorney General was not at a loss for words to convey his irritation and anger with those who argued for equal treatment of the Americans and Irish:

> I see no reason upon earth why they should not be as much taxed as any of the rest of the King's subjects. But we are told Ireland has not been taxed. We are told Ireland ought not to be taxed. [They] must be ignorant of our history to fancy any one purpose that bears the last resemblance between Ireland and America, who can imagine that its origins, its titles are bottomed upon pretensions similar to the colonies. What makes it more amazing [ ] those gentlemen who have laboured the comparison. They don't hold in any one respect in the world. But it is…to make that they are alike, and that all argument from that similarity is fair.[340]

Thurlow's comments are significant beyond the terms of the debate on taxation because they highlight how Parliamentarians, at the time, took note of the extensive overuse of the analogies to other parts of Britain's realm, most especially Ireland. Thurlow's argument serves as an endorsement of the thesis advanced in this paper, that the constant comparisons and decisions based primarily on precedents, arguably did more to escalate rather than deflate the colonial conflict. Thurlow seemed to project his argument in exasperation, and that it was obvious, from his perspective, that the principles and policies towards the American colonies needed to be based on Parliament's unique relationship and circumstances with those colonies, and not with how similar or not they were to Ireland, Scotland, or Wales.

---

[338] Proceedings on 25 March 1774 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* iv, 116.

[339] Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament*, iii, 530.

[340] Cavendish Diary version of the Massachusetts Government Bill: Third Reading on 2 May 1774 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* iv, 364.

Growing concern among Parliamentarians over attitudes in America towards Parliament's policies and seemingly intractable debates over the principle or practice of taxing the American colonies eventually prompted MPs to question whether Parliament should consider more extreme measures or even more extreme consequences of their actions. Sir William Meredith, for example, began by summarising the dilemmas in Parliament:

> Trying to draw that line of distinction, whether this legislature ought, or ought not to tax America…One right honourable gentleman pretty severely objected to [the] right to tax Ireland, or America. His argument did not go beyond that very case of necessity. The honourable gentleman says we have a right to America. Another honourable gentleman said for the very exercise of that right we were the aggressors.[341]

Meredith then moved to give his own opinion on the matter: "My opinion with regard to Ireland and America. We owe to America and Ireland both protection of property, as well as freedom in their persons...Member of Parliament who lays a tax upon his countrymen, pays it himself. Directly opposite is the case of America."[342] Meredith's argument relates to the colonies' lack of representation in Parliament. America had no representatives and any tax in America would not be equally shared by Parliament. Therefore, taxing America had no repercussions for MPs. Meredith had made this same argument during the debates on the passage of the Stamp Act, fearing the repercussions in America if only Britain was to gain from taxes, and he urgently reminded MPs nine years later of the same fate. But now he pressed the argument further, asking Parliament to consider at once: "whether we should carry on that very great commerce with America now, or whether we should break it."[343] Meredith understood the nature of the colonies' greater struggle and that on the issue of taxation, it would not relinquish. In speaking after Meredith, MP Hans Stanley developed the argument, urging MPs to consider a different relationship with the colonies, not as future subjects but as allies:

> What I have heard sometimes avowed here, more frequently insinuated, and what I believe secretly entirely operates in the minds of many gentlemen. I mean that of determining the connection between Great Britain and America is at the event of its

[341] Ibid., 337.
[342] Ibid., 338.
[343] Ibid.

> expiration. From whence it is inferred, that it is right and necessary for government [to] rather court the alliance of the colonies, than to insist upon their obedience…[344]

Stanley's insight was deeper than Meredith's and he maintained that America "would not become an independent state" but would rely "upon the dependence upon some European state."[345] Stanley's warning of a possible relationship between America and an European state may have been born of his time as an MP during the Scottish rebellion of 1745, when the rebellious Scots threatened an alliance with France, something which Stanley did not see as out of the realms of possibility with the Americans.[346] This argument indicates an emerging view among Parliamentarians of the real possibility that the American threat could pose a greater imperial threat, should they align with foreign powers and take American trade elsewhere.

The comparison to Ireland throughout the arguments on taxation show that, even almost ten years into the debates, MPs and Peers still wrangled over the relevance and appropriateness of comparing its relationship to Ireland with the American colonies. As the Attorney General argued, the comparison might well not have been a particularly helpful one, given the length of time Parliamentarians spent arguing for and against the comparison, without arriving at a consensus regarding how it might serve to resolve the crisis with the colonies. It is also worth noting, that even those "Americanists" who more consistently favoured a conciliatory approach to the conflict, for the most part, agreed in principle to Parliament's right of taxation, the difference in the debates being over practice and expediency. Overall, the debate on taxation, a full ten years after the original debate on taxation regarding the Stamp Act, underscored that this continued to be the central issue in the conflict, with various factions in Parliament contending why their arguments, conciliatory or coercive, would have the desired outcome to bring the colonists back into Parliament's fold.

---

[344] Ibid., 340.
[345] Ibid.
[346] Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament,* iii, 468; Oates, "The Crisis of The Hanoverian State?," 308-329.

Taxation and Ireland: The American Perspective

Throughout the period of conflict covered in this analysis, the American colonists sent numerous petitions to Parliament against the impending Coercive Acts. Notable in these petitions were the colonists' references to Britain's relationship with Ireland as evidence of how they believed they should and should not be treated. A petition from the "Natives of *America*" was presented to the House of Commons on 2 May 1774 in which the petitioners turned to the example of Ireland, claiming it was the "Right of the Subject, by the Authority of all great Constitutional Writers, and by the uninterrupted Practice of *Ireland* and *America*, who have ever voted their own Supplies to the Crown, all which combine to prove that the Property of an *English* Subject, being a Freeman or a Freeholder, cannot be taken from him but by his own Consent."[347] In other words, there could be no taxation without representation. In this petition, the colonists positioned themselves in regard to Ireland, pleading their case to be treated equally. Thus, just as the MPs and Peers compared the situation of America and Ireland within the British realm, so too did the American colonists. Unfortunately, this petition was followed by the passage of the Massachusetts Government Act, suggesting that the colonial petitions were rarely considered or taken seriously enough when discussing proceedings.[348]

Conclusion

This detailed analysis of the debates in Parliament throughout 1774 proves that there was more contention in Parliament over the Coercive Acts than is acknowledged in the historiography. While it is true that the Coercive Acts passed with a significant majority vote in each case, many Parliamentarians called for conciliation, largely because of growing fears that their actions could have serious repercussions for Britain. And rightly so, for the Coercive Acts provoked another

---

[347] Proceedings on 2 May 1774 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, iv, 328.

[348] In fact, Brown notes that a later petition from the Continental Congress "was sent to England, received by the King, and referred to the House of Commons, where it was thrown into a bundle labelled 'American Papers' and left for the scrutiny of future historians. The British ministry thought American professions were false, and George III induced a majority of the cabinet to reject all conciliatory propositions. Lord North wished to pursue a more peaceful policy, but was silenced for a time," Weldon A. Brown, *Empire or Independence: A Study in the Failure of Reconciliation, 1774-1783* (University [LA]: Louisiana State University Press, 1941), 20.

widespread protest movement in the colonies, leading to the creation of the Continental Congress that aimed to unify the colonies in resolutions and boycotts against Britain.[349] Yet, even these conciliatory voices agreed that the Boston Tea Party necessitated some show of punishment, with the debates thereafter focused on the expediency of the measure, rather than the principle of it. Notwithstanding, the arguments in favour of expediency were mired in confusion and disagreement over the extent of rebellious attitudes in America and comparisons with past rebellions in Ireland and Scotland and Parliament's responses to these. Yet the disagreements that arose by drawing on these examples begs the question, as indeed asked at the time, why were MPs and Peers comparing examples of very different rebellions? Was it because they feared that their actions would set an unfavourable precedent in the realm? Thurlow spoke bluntly against the application of these analogies to the Boston Tea Party and emphasised it was a misguided approach. Overall, the Coercive Acts passed because Parliament concluded that the American colonies would only be brought to heel with a show of force. In retrospect, this was a poor judged manoeuvre, for the Coercive Acts, named the Intolerable Acts in America, only further convinced the American colonists that their rebellion was just and necessary to retain the freedoms they felt they once enjoyed as Englishmen.

[349] Christie, *Crisis of Empire*, 92-3.

Chapter Five: Rebellion to War - Part 1

The colonial response to the Coercive Acts had a domino effect on relations between the colonies and Parliament, by simultaneously encouraging further unity in the colonial resistance movement, while negatively affecting Parliament's ongoing proceedings. Only a few months before war broke out in April 1775, MPs and Peers were confronted with the repercussions of the Coercive Acts, especially as resistance became consolidated and strengthened with the creation of the First Continental Congress, whose initial approach was to passively protest the recent measures through continued boycotts, while also preparing for a possible military conflict.[350] Most significantly, Congress sent a passionately worded petition to the King, asking for their relationship to be restored to how it had been in 1763, which ironically was also being suggested by many Parliamentarians in 1775 and 1776.[351] This unified colonial response represented the most significant threat to Parliament thus far, as it began to face the significance and danger of thirteen unified colonies directly opposed to its authority. As MPs and Peers considered that the spirit of this rebellion could easily spread to Britain's dominions and even to England itself, it made the threat no longer an abstract or distant possibility, but one that felt increasingly too close to home. As Parliamentarians (mostly those usually in favour of appeasement) addressed these concerns, they contemplated their actions thus far and called more urgently for conciliatory measures in the form of allowing the colonists to tax themselves, while also contemplating the colonies' place and relationship to Britain in the realm. Perhaps the most telling show of urgency can be seen in Lord North's call for peace measures, given his characteristic advocacy for aggressive and authoritative measures, even he saw the warning signs of a conflict that could reach a breaking point with the colonies. As Parliamentarians considered the future of the Americans' place within the realm of Great Britain and Ireland as either independent and

---

[350] Brown, *Empire or Independence,* 10-31; Christie, *Crisis of Empire,* 90-3; Knollenberg, *Growth of the American Revolution,* 145. Congress also drafted a document, arguably a precursor to the Declaration of Independence, titled *Declaration and Resolves of the First Continental Congress* (passed on 14 October 1774) which highlighted the colonists' particular grievances against the Coercive Acts, taxation policies, and corruption of British rights in general. Finally, the Quebec Act of 1774, which established religious freedom for Catholics in this territory, escalated fears of tyranny that was no longer confined to three thousand miles away, but presented itself just north of the thirteen mainland American colonies, "Declaration and Resolves of the First Continental Congress," The Avalon Project, Lillian Goldman Law Library, 2008, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/resolves.asp.

[351] This was the petition rejected by the King and Parliament, as noted above, Brown, *Empire or Independence*, 19-20.

separate or under the full sovereignty of the British Parliament, they once again reverted to formula and looked to the precedents established with Ireland, Scotland, and Wales.

Threat of Rebellion

During discussions of the Coercive Acts, MPs and Peers increasingly expressed concern about the repercussions of their measures in the colonies closer to home. As the conflict between the colonies and Parliament escalated, there were Parliamentarians who acknowledged, and warned, that they could be creating a much greater threat in and from Ireland. For an unknown reason, Brook Watson, who had a strong American business background and would become heavily involved in London politics from the 1780s onwards, sent a copy of William Smith Jr.'s *Thoughts Upon the Dispute Between Great Britain and Her Colonies* (1765-7) to Lord Dartmouth on 20 January 1775.[352] Smith, an American whose career spread across colonial politics and law, adds legitimacy to his proposals for a reconsidered relationship between Great Britain and the colonies.[353] With impressive insight that few seemed to have had early on about the scope of Parliament's authority, Smith acknowledged that taxation was "the Origin of the present unhappy Controversy."[354] He suggested an American Parliament be formed for the purpose of self-taxation and argued that "the Colonies under their present forms of Government will never be less assuming than they are now, should the Disgusts now raised Continue they may become a Nest for the disaffected & designing even in Great Britain & Ireland."[355] Smith feared the impact the conflict, and in particular the colonists' arguments, could have on peace and stability in Britain and Ireland, hence his suggestion the colonists tax themselves. Historian Robert Calhoon argues that it is an unfortunate fact that Smith's work was for the most part unread and overlooked by his colleagues.[356] However, his clear outline of the root cause of

---

[352] Robert M. Calhoon, "William Smith Jr.'s Alternative to the American Revolution," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 22, no. 1 (1965): 111; Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament,* iii, 611; Brook Watson to Lord Dartmouth on 20 January 1775, extracts of *Thoughts upon the Dispute between Great Britain and Her Colonies* in *Germain Papers* (v. 3, document 49, p. 1).

[353] Calhoon, "William Smith Jr.'s," 106.

[354] Extracts of *Thoughts upon the Dispute* in *Germain Papers* (v. 3, document 49, p. 1); Ibid., 107.

[355] Ibid., (v. 3, document 49, p. 5).

[356] Calhoon, "William Smith Jr.'s," 110-111.

distress between the colonies and Parliament and the solutions he provided was, in hindsight, a clear plan for the future if Parliament was to retain its relationship with the colonies. In fact, Smith was a notable Loyalist, therefore, significantly, it was not just those in favour of the American cause that argued for a compromise, but those that feared a greater impact on the safety and security of Great Britain and Ireland in general.[357] Perhaps Watson's motive for sending Dartmouth this tract, almost ten years after it was written, was because he thought Smith's arguments were especially pertinent and applicable to the current situation: both with growing resentment in Ireland, and as Parliament considered more closely how taxation was the root of their issues with the colonies.

Warnings that the American rebellion might arouse anti-colonial sentiments in Ireland emerged during an Address on 20 January 1775 in the House of Lords, which requested the removal of troops from Boston for fear of escalating the conflict. In a long speech regarding the "important danger" to the colonies' relationship to Britain and the necessity of removing the troops, Chatham also warned, again, of the repercussions of taxation without representation, particularly in Ireland.[358] In line with his arguments throughout the American crisis thus far, Chatham argued, "In that country, joined as it is with the cause of the Colonies, and placed at their head, the distinction I contend for, is and must be observed.-This country superintends and controuls their trade and navigation; but they *tax themselves*."[359] Chatham's warning identified that the Irish stood with the American cause regarding taxation and representation. Another version of the debate quoted Chatham pointing to the overwhelming support of those opposed to Parliament's coercive measures, "The whole Irish nation, all the true English Whigs, the whole nation of America, these combined make many millions of Whigs, averse to the system."[360] While not explicitly stating so, it was understood that the potential impact in Ireland was a far more dangerous threat, being so close to home. However, while some agreed with Chatham's urge for peace and that the removal of troops was necessary, the Address did not pass because

[357] "William Smith Jr. Papers," Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, 2025, https://archives.nypl.org/mss/2796.

[358] Hugh Boyd version of the Motion for an Address to remove the troops from Boston on 20 January 1775 in the House of Lords in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* v, 275, 276.

[359] Ibid., 278.

[360] Almon version of the Motion for an Address to remove the troops from Boston on 20 January 1775 in the House of Lords in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* v, 270.

many of those opposed to the North administration agreed that it was instead necessary to show Parliament's authority.[361]

Even those who suggested the colonial situation was not comparable to Ireland faced a backlash from fellow Parliamentarians. For instance, when originally discussing whether they could justifiably define Massachusetts as being in rebellion in the House of Commons on 2 February 1775, Attorney General Edward Thurlow argued that it was undoubtedly so and therefore, coercive measures should be implemented just as if Ireland was in rebellion:

> if we heard that such menacing circumstances as I have mentioned were breaking out in Scotland, in Ireland, or Cornwall, would not the ministry deserve impeachment, if they took no previous measures to smother those seeds of rebellion before they grew up too powerful for resistance. Should they wait till all the parties had joined, and were on one march to London? The cases are similar.[362]

Thurlow used this hypothetical situation to argue for the American colonies to be treated no differently to Ireland:

> …their [the Americans] intentions are to open hostility against the troops, and to become independent of this country; and nothing can prevent their throwing off their allegiance, and becoming independent states, and this country losing all the commercial advantages from them she ever enjoyed, but a vigorous adherence to the measures now proposed.[363]

Thurlow's fear of an impending declaration of independence by the Americans underpinned his conviction that coercive measures were needed, following his previous conviction of Parliament's superiority regarding the right to tax in the previous session.

Yet, disagreeing with Thurlow, Captain Henry Lawes Luttrell took an opportunity to warn that Parliament's actions could in fact escalate conflict, as in the case of Ireland. Luttrell argued:

> Sir, the Queen, as impatient to subdue the Irish as you have been the Americans, sent a large army into that country: and did it immediately answer the end proposed? By no means, the Irish continued to gain strength daily; insomuch, that the Queen demanding of her ministers to know the cause of it, received for answer, that her majesty's army being

[361] Ibid., 268, 268-287.

[362] Parliamentary History version of the Committee on American Papers: Motion for Address that a state of rebellion exists, etc on 2 February 1775 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* v, 347.

[363] Ibid.

> there was the true reason…Sir, let us look towards America, and see if this anecdote is not applicable to the present times.[364]

Luttrell used this distant example from Queen Elizabeth I's reign to argue that the deployment of military force in Ireland made the rebellion worse, thus predicting the same would happen in America. Others agreed with Luttrell, and another account of the debate even went as far to argue that the passage of the Address "was a *vote for a civil war*."[365] In particular, Luttrell warned of the likelihood of French and Spanish involvement should the situation worsen. Unfortunately, Luttrell's warnings were dismissed, and the motion to recognise that Massachusetts was in a state of rebellion passed with an overwhelming majority of 296 to 106, as most MPs fell in line behind the view of the ministry.[366] While the votes portray an evident consensus on labelling Massachusetts in rebellion, it is important to underline the voices portrayed here that distinctly warned against continued coercive measures, indicating that there was still a persistent and underlying lack of confidence in Parliament's proceedings.

Notwithstanding, MPs continued to issue dire warnings about the repercussions of the coercive measures close to home. On 6 February 1775, in discussing an Address in the House of Commons that claimed "a Rebellion at this Time actually exists within the said Province [Massachusetts]", the Irish peer Lord Irnham, the father of Henry Lawes Luttrell, agreed that they needed to be cautious in their actions.[367] Irnham concluded that they needed to consider "First, Sir, your vast and beneficial territories in America; your kingdom of Ireland; your unpensioned and unwarped neighbours of Scotland."[368] To this, Irnham argued that "these are all averse to this dreadful and dangerous Civil War, and are attached and rivetted to the cause I now espouse."[369] Irnham presented the dangers of so many close to home being averse to the measures taken against America, especially in his fear that American sentiments would become shared and extolled by the Irish, Scots, and English. Irnham noted, "Oppressed by an overgrown

---

[364] Ibid., 349.

[365] Walpole Journals version of the Committee on American Papers: Motion for Address that a state of rebellion exists, etc on 2 February 1775 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* v, 345.

[366] Parliamentary History version of the Committee on American Papers: Motion for Address that a state of rebellion exists, etc on 2 February 1775 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* v, 351; Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament,* iii, 67.

[367] Proceedings on 6 February 1775 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* v, 356; Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament,* iii, 69.

[368] *London Evening Post* version of the Report from Committee on American Papers: Motion to recommit resolution for Address on 6 February 1775 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* v, 363.

[369] Ibid.

army, the liberty of America and Ireland (for *that* stands next in the ministerial plan) and afterwards that of Great Britain, will follow of course."[370] The spirit that presided in America and Ireland would not stop at their borders but continue to spread until it reached the borders of Britain itself. Irnham feared the implications if the Americans were not allowed their rights as Englishmen. While considered a Grenvillite by other politicians at the time, Irnham's warnings against the coercive measures were about its implications.[371] Therefore, despite his natural advocacy for coercive measures, presumably, the deep fear of a spreading rebellion prompted him to question the wisdom of aggressive measures. The Luttrell family's long history in Ireland also likely lent him a particular perspective and interest in the analogy with Ireland.[372] Yet again, the Address was passed and the House of Commons proceeded to declare that Massachusetts was in rebellion.[373] We know now of course that the outbreak of war was only two months away and, moreover, that the Irish did indeed rise in rebellion in 1798, thus in hindsight such warnings would have been wise to heed. Nevertheless, it is clear from the debates that MPs and Peers on both sides feared that a break between Britain and the colonies was impending and were convinced that the coercive measures were the best way of preventing it by reasserting Parliament's authority.

Taxation and Scotland

Parliamentarians' warnings about the possible impact of an escalation of the American conflict prompted suggestions for conciliatory measures to be adopted, most especially following widespread acceptance that the root of conflict was indeed taxation, and less than a year following the implementation of the Coercive Acts, the debates on which had by and large ignored the handful of calls for conciliation. Yet, unabated colonial resistance (as mentioned, the formation of the Continental Congress and reinstated boycotts) inspired a deeper look at the initial, and continued, causes of the conflict. In hopes of appeasement, Parliamentarians looked

---

[370] Ibid, 364-5.
[371] Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament,* v, iii, 69.
[372] Ibid., 67, 68.
[373] Proceedings on 6 February 1775 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* v, 356.

to precedent, yet again, and to practices used in Scotland. On 6 February 1775 in the House of Commons, John Wilkes, Lord Mayor of London at this time, suggested they adapt a system of taxation to fit the needs of the Americans in order to avoid an impending civil war with America.[374] Alongside his proposal that "the parliament of Great Britain and the deputies of the several colonies to meet together, and to be jointly empowered to regulate the various quotas to be paid by each province to the general treasury of the whole empire", Wilkes further argued:

> I would in addition to that plan propose, that a regulation similar to what actually takes place with respect to Scotland, be adopted as to America. The proportion of each colony might be settled according to the land tax in England, at one, two, or more shillings in the pound. I am not deep politician enough to know what the proportion should be of each province, and they will vary greatly in half a century, but I speak of their quota being always to be regulated according to the land tax of this country. The very flourishing colonies of the Massachusset's Bay [sic], Virginia, and South Carolina, for instance, should contribute more, the smaller and poorer colonies of New Hampshire and New Jersey less: but, Sir, I insist not a single shilling can be taken without their consent.[375]

Wilkes relied on the Scottish precedent to form his rather innovative idea for a taxation system in the colonies, that, like Scotland, they tax the colonies based on the wealth of the region.[376] This compromise allowed for taxation to occur only by the consent of Parliament and colonial representatives as well as acknowledging the limitations of a colony's ability to pay a universal tax. While the accounts of the debates do not note any direct responses to Wilkes's proposals, there were disagreements on the general arguments on taxation, with Sir William Mayne going as far to argue "that it is not a common mixed representation with Great-Britain they wish to enjoy, but a free and independent legislature of their own."[377] Perhaps the lack of enthusiasm for Wilkes's argument is not surprising considering he was a radical and controversial figure, but the refusal to have the Address re-committed by 288 to 105 votes, indicates that MPs were not inclined to consider any compromise on taxation.[378] Doing so could potentially set a rather

---

[374] Almon version of the Report from Committee on American Papers: Motion to recommit resolution for Address on 6 February 1775 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* v, 365.

[375] Ibid., 367.

[376] J. Hoppit, "Scotland and the Taxing Union, 1707-1815," *Scottish Historical Review* 98, no. 1 (2019): 45-70.

[377] Almon version of the Report from Committee on American Papers: Motion to recommit resolution for Address on 6 February 1775 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* v, 371.

[378] Proceedings on 6 February 1775 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* v, 356; Wilkes was involved in a political drama involving his election as representative to Middlesex. He was banned from Parliament, causing controversy among the English population and members in Parliament against the

dangerous precedent for Parliament, one that defined its authority as limited and negotiable if faced with enough resistance.

On 20 February 1775 in the House of Commons, Governor Pownall also used Scottish precedent to justify why a compact between Britain and America was needed for fear of an impending civil war. Pownall argued:

> Parliament must necessarily have a right to interfere, and I think should so far interfere, as to examine, to settle, and to give the several colonies *once for all*, such a constitution as is fit for such dependent communities within the empire; by settling with them and for them, such articles, terms and conditions as may be confirmed by act of Parliament, in like manner as was done in the union of the two parts of the present kingdom, which articles when once confirmed by Parliament, cannot, according to the law of nations, of justice and policy, be altered without the consent of the parties; until the colonies, holding their governments under the terms of dependency on the empire, shall break those conditions, or endeavour to emancipate themselves from them.[379]

Pownall believed that Parliament should regulate their conditions with the colonies in clear terms just as with the union with Scotland, believing this would save future controversy over the authority of taxation. While always advocating for a plan with the colonies, as early as his 1764 publication of *The Administration of the Colonies*, this argument is not surprising especially considering his prior position in colonial politics, as Lieutenant-Governor of New Jersey and Governor of Massachusetts Bay.[380]

The Honourable Temple Luttrell responded to North's Conciliatory Proposition (to be discussed later) in the Commons on 27 February 1775 by acknowledging that their governing of the colonies was against the founding principles by which they governed their own country: "Sir, I ever will contend, that the united parliaments of England and Scotland cannot legally impose a tax on the subjects in any other part of the British dominions, without the consent of such

---

constitutionality of this action, eventually a cause for parliamentary reform. Therefore, Wilkes's own experiences involved in controversial parliamentary politics made it unsurprising he would fight for the colonists' liberty in this area.

[379] Almon version of the Committee on American Papers: Motion for Lord North's Conciliatory Proposition on 20 February 1775 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, v, 443-4.

[380] Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament,* iii, 316; Reich argues that Pownall's "plan for a dominion type of government…[as] developed in the *Administration of the British Colonies* were too advanced for the time and were not as accepted as governmental policy until well into the nineteenth century, when they became the basis for the British Commonwealth of Nations," Jerome R. Reich, *British Friends of the American Revolution* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1998), 165.

subjects, either by themselves in person, or by their representatives."[381] Parliament's attack on the colonies was an incidental attack on Britain due to the colonists' direct connection as subjects of the Crown: "infringement on the constitution of the colonies, which rest upon the same fundamental principles that uphold the property and uphold the franchises of every native of this island."[382] How were they to justify their actions if it challenged Britain's founding principles? Finally, Luttrell warned that the measures were "adding *insult to injury.*"[383] As analysis of the arguments in this point of the debates reveals, Parliamentarians were beginning to acknowledge that there needed to be compromise (not further coercion) with the colonies in order to address the cause of rebellion and stop an impending civil war with America; but it was to Scottish precedents which they turned for insight and experience on how to do this, as Parliamentarians urgently sought to define the relationship between the American colonies and the realm of Great Britain and Ireland.

Taxation and Wales

Wales, too, featured in debates about taxation and representation as a way to argue for conciliatory measures. To further clarify that the cause of American rebellion was taxation without representation, in his same speech on Scotland, Wilkes briefly acknowledged that "Much has been said of the palatinate of Chester, and the principality of Wales, and the period of their taxation."[384] While this was a brief statement and ultimately Wilkes claimed that the more powerful example was "Calais in France, when it belonged to the imperial crown of these realms, was not taxed till it sent representatives to parliament", his inclusion of Wales within this argument proves that as in the case of Calais, Wales was not taxed until it received representatives.[385] While Wilkes began by making a novel argument proposing they tax the

[381] Almon version of the Report from Committee on American Papers of resolution for Lord North's Conciliatory Proposition on 27 February 1775 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, v, 469.

[382] Ibid.

[383] Ibid., 473.

[384] Almon version of the Report from Committee on American Papers: Motion to recommit resolution for Address on 6 February 1775 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* v, 366.

[385] Ibid.

colonies based on the Scottish precedent, these established views of parliamentary representation underscore that the chief political modus operandi for seeking to contain and resolve the conflict was parliamentary precedent with neighbouring British dominions.

In order to criticise Parliament's authoritative stance and to argue for taxation and representation, the Rockinghamite and historically distinguished politician of this age, Edmund Burke, urged Parliament to consider his conciliatory propositions in a speech on 22 March 1775, whereby he acknowledged how similar their proceedings with America were to previous proceedings with the Welsh, and in particular, how Parliament came to establish constitutional principles in Wales. After speaking for almost three hours, Burke finally turned to Wales:

> Sir, during that state of things, parliament was not idle. They attempted to subdue the fierce spirit of the Welsh by all sorts of rigorous laws. They prohibited by statute the sending all sorts of arms into Wales, as you prohibit by proclamation (with something more of doubt on the legality) the sending arms to America. They disarmed the Welsh by statute, as you attempted, (but still with more question on the legality) to disarm New England by an instruction. They made an Act to drag offenders from Wales into England for trial, as you have done (but with more hardship) with regard to America. By another Act, where one of the parties was an Englishman, they ordained, that his trial should be always by English. They made Acts to restrain trade, as you do; and they prevented the Welsh from the use of fairs and markets, as you do the Americans from fisheries and foreign ports. In short when the Statute-book was not quite so much swelled as it is now, you find no less than fifteen Acts of penal regulation on the subject of Wales.[386]

As other speakers had done when delving into precedents as a guide for present policy, Burke stepped deep into the past for parallels to the current situation. Looking back to the reign of Henry VIII (and before), Burke used these examples to draw a parallel between the aggressive show of authority in Wales and their actions in America. He argued that rebellion ceased in Wales once England "gave to the Welsh all the rights and privileges of English subjects", bluntly asserting that the conflict would end with America if they too were given constitutional security.[387] While Burke's comparison of America and Ireland are frequently analysed in current historiography, less so is Burke's comparison to Wales. Arguably, due to the less frequent

[386] Parliamentary History version of Edmund Burke's Propositions on 22 March 1775 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, 617-8; 594, 595.

[387] Ibid., 618.

mention of Wales in both the debates and historiography, its detailed comparison here by Burke adds even more weight to his argument.

Burke questioned why the principles of taxation and representation applied to Wales but not the colonies. He reasoned thus:

> Now, if the doctrines of policy contained in these preambles, and the force of these examples in the acts of parliaments, avail any thing, what can be said against applying them with regard to America? Are not the people of America as much Englishmen as the Welsh? The preamble of the Act of Henry 8 says, the Welsh speak a language no way resembling that of his majesty's English subjects. Are the Americans not as numerous?[388]

He used the comparison to Wales to show that the colonies' circumstances did not mean representation did not apply to them, since the same circumstances applied to Wales. He continued:

> But America is virtually represented. What! does the electric force of virtual representation more easily pass over the Atlantic, than pervade Wales, which lies in your neighbourhood: or than Chester and Durham, surrounded by abundance of representation that is actual and palpable? But, Sir, your ancestors thought this sort of virtual representation, however ample, to be totally insufficient for the freedom of the inhabitants of territories that are so near, and comparatively so inconsiderable. How then can I think it sufficient for those which are infinitely greater, and infinitely more remote?[389]

He noted the hypocrisy in the arguments made towards the Americans regarding virtual representation and wondered how it was deemed insufficient for Wales or even the county palatines, being so close, but acceptable for the colonies based three thousand miles away. Overall, Burke argued that the system needed to be reinvented in order to allow the colonies to be justly taxed as their rights as English subjects allowed. Just as with Scotland, Parliamentarians used precedents with Wales to argue for compromise and conciliatory measures with the colonies. But Burke's arguments failed to dent the loyalty of most MPs to the ministry, who insisted on asserting the principle that Parliament had the authority to tax the colonies. His

[388] Ibid., 619.
[389] Ibid.

motion failed by 78 to 270.[390] Burke's previous position as agent for New York gave him a unique and undeniable connection to the American colonies, allowing him to understand, arguably more so than many of his fellow Parliamentarians, the colonial arguments for rebellion.[391] Furthermore, it is worth noting that while this was not Burke's first prominent appearance in the parliamentary debates on the American crisis, it was nonetheless a desperate plea for Parliament to consider the repercussions of their actions, and it was ignored. Despite Burke's prominence in parliamentary history, the historiography to date fails to recognise Burke's inclusion of nations throughout the British realm and Ireland in his decision-making process. Historian Carl B. Cone comes the closest to acknowledging this while noting the closeness of Burke's imperial thinking on Irish and American policies, but does not identify the greater degree to which Burke's opinions on the American issue was in fact shaped by the Irish analogy.[392] This oversight is significant as this analysis reveals that Burke's vision of authority was in fact shaped by his understanding of Parliament's role and relationship with the realm of Great Britain and Ireland.

Taxation and Ireland

Burke continued his conciliatory propositions by rebutting arguments that the colonies' own legislative authority would lead to disunity within the imperial realm, and he referred to the example of Ireland to acknowledge the absurdity of this argument. Burke's Irish background no doubt further underscored his authority to speak on and for the Irish system.[393] He continued:

> The very idea of subordination of parts, excludes this notion of simple and undivided unity. England is the head; but she is not the head and the members too. Ireland has ever had from the beginning a separate, but not an independent, legislature; which, far from distracting, promoted the union of the whole.[394]

---

[390] [James Harris] to Hardwicke and Almon versions of Edmund Burke's Propositions on 22 March 1775 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* v, 594, 597.

[391] Edwin P. Tanner, "Colonial Agencies in England During the Eighteenth Century," *Political Science Quarterly* 16, no. 1 (1901): 31.

[392] Cone, *Burke and the Nature of Politics.*

[393] Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament,* ii, 145.

[394] Parliamentary History version of Edmund Burke's Propositions on 22 March 1775 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, v, 626.

This legislative system allowed Ireland to tax itself. In fact, Burke noted, "This country cannot be said to have ever formally taxed her."[395] Furthermore, this separate legislature helped create more peaceful relations between the two nations, implying that no disunity existed because of it. Burke concluded, "I do not see that the same principles might not be carried into twenty islands, and with the same good effect. This is my model with regard to America, as far as the internal circumstances of the two countries are the same."[396] He argued that this same equation could be applied directly not only to America in the form of colonial assemblies but could be perfected in every part of the empire. His argument fully articulated his vision of the imperial realm and America's place in it, which in sum was almost identical to that of Ireland. After ten years of comparison, it is perhaps not surprising that Burke's vision of empire revolved around Britain's intricate history with and current relationship to Ireland.

Burke furthermore argued that the colonies would be more willing to remain a part of the imperial system if "they were given an *interest in the constitution*."[397] In order to underscore the rationale and effectiveness of this approach, he elaborated:

> by the examples of Ireland, Wales, and the counties palatine, that whenever any part, under the British dominions, was not admitted to the essential privilege of granting their own money, they were unquiet, dangerous, and useless; but that as soon as they were given an *interest in the constitution*, they became at once orderly, serviceable, and a substantial part of the strength of this country.[398]

He argued that the territories of Ireland and Wales were quite unruly prior to being given the same privileges guaranteed to English subjects by the constitution. There were two different ways the constitutional principles were established in these countries: "Where the districts could be taken into the constitution, they were *united*, as in the case of Wales. Where that was not the case, the constitution was sent to them, as in Ireland."[399] Wales was incorporated into England, therefore, the Welsh were subject to the same rights and government as those in England. However, in Ireland's case, the Irish were allowed to govern themselves but ultimately were

---

[395] Ibid., 617.
[396] Ibid., 626-7.
[397] Almon version of Edmund Burke's Propositions on 22 March 1775 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* v, 596.
[398] Ibid.
[399] Ibid.

under the jurisdiction of the British Parliament. Either way, the British constitution was enacted in both countries. Burke further argued, in relation to the colonial charters, that "Similar constitutions, agreeably to their circumstances, were given to the colonies; and as long as the spirit of these constitutions was preserved we were all happy. When it was violated, every thing fell into confusion."[400] He acknowledged that similarly to the Welsh and Irish, the American colonies thrived under their charters because they were established on British constitutional principles. Chaos and conflict ensued when these constitutional principles, such as taxation by representation, were attacked. In order to remedy the situation, "His whole plan therefore was to go back to our old policy; and to record it upon the journals, as a settled ground of future parliamentary proceedings, in order to guard against the mischiefs of our late inconstancy."[401] In blaming the current predicament on the fickleness of Parliament, Burke believed the best course of action was to outline Parliament's role in the colonies to establish a new precedent and prevent future conflict. His plan for the colonies was grounded in precedent established in Ireland and Wales while also acknowledging that a framework needed to be established for an imperial relationship between the American colonies and Parliament. While Burke is often praised in the historiography for his advanced visions of imperial governance in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, this analysis highlights that his arguments and beliefs were grounded in precedents and policies established throughout the realm of Great Britain and Ireland.

As this analysis of the parliamentary debates has revealed, Ireland was frequently used as an analogy for determining Parliament's legislative authority in the colonies, especially in arguing that Parliament should not tax the colonies as it chose not to in Ireland. Since the Stamp Act crisis, a majority of MPs and Peers determined that the right to tax was included in Parliament's right to legislation and it was necessary to exercise and defend that right. In order to justify that this assertion was not necessary or even true, Governor Johnstone argued on 16 December 1774 in the House of Commons "that legislation may exist without the power of taxation."[402] Johnstone used Ireland as an example:

> The *kingdom of Ireland*, within our own dominion, is a proof of what these learned gentlemen assert to be so impossible. A worthy member, in my eye, being pressed with

[400] Ibid.
[401] Ibid., 597.
[402] Almon version of the Committee of Supply: Army estimates on 16 December 1774 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* v, 253.

> this argument in the last session of Parliament, from the fairness of his mind, he avowed, as his opinion, *that we could tax Ireland*...Next day the worthy member chose to make some apology to his friends. He said, no parallel could be drawn between Ireland and the colonies; for Ireland had a *paraphernalia*; and this satisfied both the English and Irish members. For my part, I do not see what difficulty can occur, in leaving the different colonies on the same footing of raising money by requisition, as from the people of Ireland.[403]

According to Johnstone, the Irish example proved that Parliament could have legislative authority without exercising taxation. Johnstone recommended that they allow the American colonies to raise money through their own means as in the case of the Irish Parliament. This measure was advocated by the American colonists since the Stamp Act, and being Governor of West Florida from 1763-7 and having firsthand experience protesting government action, Johnstone spoke with some degree of authority when it came to identifying the steps Parliament needed to take to secure peace between the American colonies and Parliament.[404] Furthermore, his argument was underpinned by his concern that Parliament's proceedings not only threatened the rights and liberties of the American colonists, but would eventually threaten the rights and liberties of those within Britain. Johnstone argued, "while we are thinking of depriving our fellow-citizens of their just and legal rights in America, we may, as a proper punishment, lose our own."[405]

Charles James Fox agreed with Johnstone that the Irish analogy could represent Parliament's proceedings with the colonies. Fox added that "it was proper to include Ireland in all the debates upon American taxation, in order to ascertain the Parliamentary right of taxation over every part of the British dominions."[406] He concluded that the Irish analogy was *necessary* to determine not only their decisions regarding Parliament's role in the American colonies but imperial governance in general. While this was the first time this argument was made in such an explicit way, it was the logical culmination of years of discussion over Ireland's rights in relation to the colonies' rights. It was now determined, at least by Fox, that Ireland was the official gauge by which Parliamentarians judged and determined Parliament's respective rights as the central governing authority. More significantly, Fox's assertion essentially concluded that Parliament's

---

[403] Ibid.

[404] Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament*, ii, 684.

[405] Almon version of the Committee of Supply: Army estimates on 16 December 1774 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* v, 252.

[406] Ibid., 254.

decisions regarding its authority over the American colonies would determine its right to rule throughout the *realm.* After years of debate in which Ireland had been used as an example to guide Parliament's response to the crisis with the American colonies, Parliamentarians were becoming more persuaded that the best course was to emulate their proceedings in Ireland.[407]

The overall move toward conciliation during this time was perhaps best exhibited in Prime Minister North's Conciliatory Propositions made to appease the colonies on 20 February 1775 in the House of Commons. These propositions speak volumes to the change in attitude toward the American conflict, as North was one of the most dominant proponents of coercive measures. Notably, however, these propositions still limited colonial legislative authority. It would allow the colonies "to make provision, according to the condition, circumstances and situation of such province or colony, for contributing their proportion to the common defence…also for the support of the civil government and the administration of justice…[to] be approved by his Majesty and the two Houses of Parliament."[408] If they were to do this, they would not have to raise other taxes "except…for the regulation of commerce."[409] In response on 27 February 1775 in the House of Commons, Governor Johnstone connected North's propositions to the Irish system, arguing that taxes could be raised locally in America:

> He supposed, if America consented to the grants now proposed, that they would in time be managed as the Irish are, and that douceurs out of the sums raised would be distributed with equal success among the colonists, and what could not be effected one way, would surely be carried another.[410]

While the account does not provide Johnstone's opinion of this system, it acknowledges that North, either knowingly or unknowingly, had the Irish system in mind when considering a future system of taxation in the colonies. While North's appeasement plan seemed to make strides by way of solving the American conflict, most of those who had opposed his hard line measures disapproved of his conciliatory policy and labelled it as "not genuine."[411] Despite North's

---

[407] Ibid., 251-256.

[408] London Chronicle version of the Committee on American Papers: Motion for Lord North's Conciliatory Proposition on 20 February 1775 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, v, 433.

[409] Ibid.

[410] Almon version of the Report from Committee on American Papers of resolution for Lord North's Conciliatory Proposition on 27 February 1775 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, v, 478.

[411] Brown, *Empire or Independence*, 58, 42-60.

propositions eventually being accepted by Parliament, they were met with disdain in the colonies.[412] For while his propositions appeared conciliatory, they failed to address colonial grievances and as a result failed to appease the colonies.

Despite such steps towards appeasement, support for the necessity of coercive measures remained strong. For instance, responses to Burke's conciliatory measures underscore that MPs refused to acknowledge that the Americans had any rights that technically did not align with their prior view of colonial rights, and by extension, parliamentary sovereignty. An account of the debate written in response to Burke's arguments reported how the ministry side-stepped his arguments:

> The ministerial side did not in general so much object to this plan, as repeat and inforce [sic] their general arguments on the supremacy of the British parliament, and in favour of the policy and necessity of American taxation. They denied that the American assemblies ever had, at any time, a legal power of granting a revenue to the crown. That this was the privilege of Parliament only, and could not be communicated to any other body whatsoever.[413]

Even though many MPs at this time had suggested various ways of compromising on their taxation policy, the refusal to embrace Burke's proposals, by a large majority of 270 to 78, shows MPs' refusal to adapt their perception of Parliament's authority to fit the colonies' circumstances.[414]

In particular, Charles Jenkinson's response argued that "The right of taxing was inherent in the supreme power; and by being the most essential of all powers, was the most necessary, not only to be reserved in *theory*, but exercised in *practice*; or it would, in effect, be lost, and all other powers along with it."[415] Jenkinson continued:

---

[412] Ibid., 60; Brown also notes that "North's supporters finally rallied under his banner. Despite the general dissatisfaction with the proposal, they thought it better to pass the measure than give the opposition a victory by rejecting it. Elliot's speech strengthened this belief by showing that the motion if accepted by America could in the future be varied to fit the circumstances. This flexibility lessened the extent of their objections. Many who had previously declared themselves directly opposed to the motion voted with the ministry to carry the measure by a vote of 274 to 88," Ibid., 52.

[413] Almon version of Edmund Burke's Propositions on 22 March 1775 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, v, 597.

[414] [James Harris] to Hardwicke version of Edmund Burke's Propositions on 22 March 1775 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, v, 594.

[415] Almon version of Edmund Burke's Propositions on 22 March 1775 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, v, 597.

> It was, he said, a great mistake, that the establishment of a parliament in Ireland precluded Great Britain from taxing that kingdom. That the right of taxing it, had always been maintained and *exercised* too, whenever it was thought expedient, and ought undoubtedly always to be so, whenever the British parliament judged proper; having no other rule in this respect, but its *own discretion*. That all inferior assemblies were only like the *corporate towns* in England, who had a power, like them, of making bye-laws, and nothing more.[416]

Jenkinson argued that Britain maintained its legislative authority, but only through the use of their rights when it was deemed necessary. He believed local assemblies were there to carry out British laws and maintain order. Historians Sir Lewis Namier and John Brooke note that Jenkinson was a longtime member of Parliament, but one with "the typical eighteenth-century view that government was mainly a matter of precedent and law" and he mostly aligned with Grenville since the beginning of the crisis.[417] Therefore, Jenkinson's view that Parliament had the right to tax America was embedded in his understanding of Parliament's imperial role, one of authority and precedent.

In an opposing opinion to Chatham on the issue of allowing the colonies to tax themselves on 20 January 1775 in the House of Lords, Lord Viscount George Townshend, brother of Charles Townshend, questioned if it was even wise to continue a relationship with the colonies, arguing that Ireland was much more deserving of concessions.[418]

> The question, he said, was not now barely a question of revenue; but whether that great commercial system, on which the strength and prosperity of Great-Britain, and the mutual interests of both countries, vitally depended, should be destroyed, in order to gratify the foolishly ambitious temper of a turbulent ungrateful people…[Townshend] contended strongly, if concessions of that nature were to be made, restrictions taken off, and trade allowed to flow, in what was called its natural channels, Ireland, who helped to man our fleets and armies; who had contributed so generously and freely to the common support; who had so chearfully assisted in alleviating our burthens; was much better entitled to it than America.[419]

Townshend's argument took the debate in an altogether different direction, by advocating for greater concessions to Ireland than America. Townshend fought against the 1745 rebellion in

---

[416] Ibid., 598.
[417] Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament,* ii, 675, 674-5.
[418] Ibid., iii, 549.
[419] Almon version of the Motion for an Address to remove the troops from Boston on 20 January 1775 in the House of Lords in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, v, 274.

Scotland and his position as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland makes his argument for coercive measures unsurprising given his firsthand knowledge and experience of discontent in other parts of the realm.[420]

Agreeing that Ireland was the exception, Captain Edward Harvey's argument on 6 February 1775 in the House of Commons justified that Parliament undoubtedly, as the central governing authority for the realm of Great Britain and Ireland, had full legislative rights in every part of the kingdom, a common view among Parliamentarians who wanted coercive measures to be applied to the American colonies. By gauging the severity of the situation, Harvey feared that the colonies were "to shake off their dependence, and become a separate state."[421] In response, he believed it was necessary to show authority in the American colonies, arguing:

> Either the legislative power of a kingdom has authority over all its dominions, or it has none over any part of them: it cannot be partial; nor do I think any one branch of that legislature can, by any act or charter whatever, exempt any particular set of its subjects from the authority of the whole legislature. Could that be done, Sir, and could a preference be given to any, I am very sure this House would long ago have turned their eyes towards our sister kingdom of Ireland, who has every claim to that preference in our affections and for our assistance, being as remarkable for their loyalty and obedience, as they are for their industry, and (I am sorry to say) for their poverty.[422]

Harvey believed that there was no exception for limiting Parliament's authority, arguing that if they could, Ireland would be the exception rather than the American colonies. Like Townshend, Harvey's military background during the time of the Scottish rebellions likely shaped his arguments which would undoubtedly guide his arguments for Parliament's authority and potential ramifications should it not be enforced.[423] As noted in these two examples, the American conflict was causing Parliamentarians to pay closer attention to their relationship with Ireland, to the extent that some, like Harvey, felt compelled to state that maintaining a relationship with Ireland was more important than preventing the American colonies' independence.

---

[420] Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament,* iii, 549, 552.

[421] Almon version of the Report from Committee on American Papers: Motion to recommit resolution for Address on 6 February 1775 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, v, 369.

[422] Ibid.

[423] Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament,* ii, 594-5.

The next day, Lord William Henry Lyttelton used the example of Ireland to insist that Parliament's authority stretched to all parts of the British realm, including the American colonies, when debating an Address on 7 February 1775 in the House of Lords that declared "a Rebellion at this Time actually exists within the said Province [Massachusetts Bay]."[424] Lyttelton

> contended without reserve for the legislative supremacy of Parliament over every part of the British dominions in America, the East and West Indies, in Africa, in Asia, in every part and quarter of the globe, nay over Ireland itself, if it should become necessary; the right of taxation and legislation being indivisible and unconditional, over every place to which our sovereignty extended.[425]

Lyttelton, as a former governor of South Carolina and Jamaica, thus spoke with a degree of authority when it came to imperial governance, and therefore, it is unsurprising that he would advocate for Parliament's authority in all places.[426] Lyttelton used Ireland to argue that if Parliament had legislative rights in Ireland, albeit only when necessary, then they undoubtedly had the right in America. During the Stamp Act repeal debates, he had argued that the colonists needed to be taxed as other British subjects to prevent rebellion from spreading, a foundation that was applicable here. The majority agreed with Lyttelton and the Address was passed.[427]

Conclusion

On the brink of war, a plea for conciliatory measures rang throughout the debates. The clear fear of an impending civil war with America drove these arguments, especially as MPs and Peers, really for the first time, seriously considered the impact the rebellion could have on their neighbouring territories, and within Britain itself. Parliamentarians advocated for the colonists to have the same right of taxation by representation as British subjects and advocated that their "rebellion" was justifiable on the grounds they were being denied constitutional protection. While still rooted in precedent, more Parliamentarians were becoming open to the idea that a

---

[424] Proceedings on 7 February 1775 in the House of Lords in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* v, 380.

[425] Almon version of the Motion to concur in Address on state of the colonies on 7 February 1775 in the House of Lords in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, v, 392-3.

[426] Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament,* iii, 76.

[427] Proceedings on 7 February 1775 in the House of Lords in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* v, 381.

change, or at least a redefinition or new form of compact, was needed in the imperial relationship between the colonies and Britain if it was to continue. The persistent and overwhelming use of precedents, and the explicit statement by Fox that Ireland be fully used as their gauge for imperial governance with the American colonies, confirms that Ireland, Scotland, and Wales were not used to merely enhance their arguments, but in fact played a vital role in shaping and even determining their mindset on future proceedings and the course of action they would take with regards to the American colonies. Increasingly, Parliamentarians spoke openly of their concern for the consequences of their actions in America on the realm of Great Britain and Ireland.

Yet, ultimately, the fear of Parliament compromising or altogether losing its sovereignty outweighed the fear of a civil war with America. Despite Burke's conclusion "that they do not attack the *Sovereignty itself,* but *a certain exercise and use of that Sovereignty*", and strides taken towards conciliatory propositions, the hesitation even in North's measures to fully adjust to the colonists' view of liberty, shows that Parliament was devoted to its own full supremacy and unwilling to forgo efforts that did not maintain imperial authority.[428] Even proposals suggesting that the principles and policies applied to Ireland might be equally applied to the American colonies, ultimately appeared to concede too greatly to the colonial cause. Instead, Parliament was moving entirely to the conclusion, whether an empty threat or not, that the solution was either independence or full obedience. Unknowingly, it was only a matter of months before this abstract threat would become a reality.

[428] *London Evening Post* version of the Report from Committee on American Papers: Motion to recommit resolution for Address on 6 February 1775 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* v, 360.

Chapter Six: Rebellion to War - Part 2

The growing conflict and tension in America culminated in the first battle of the war that began on 19 April 1775 between British soldiers and American colonists. As military engagement convinced many Parliamentarians that the American colonists were seeking no less than to break away from imperial authority completely, it also threatened to provoke an engagement of Irish rebels, both in the form of direct support for the American colonists but also the possibility of a rebellion movement in Ireland, thus possible military action much closer to England. Moreover, the Crown's interference proved greater than at any other time during the revolutionary period, with far-reaching consequences not only for the direction of the American rebellion but also for the debates in Parliament. For not only did King George III prematurely dissolve Parliament in order to carry out his coercive policies, but by hiring foreign troops - without Parliament's approval - he also threatened a reversion to pre-Glorious Revolution Crown authority. In doing so, the enforcement of Parliament's authority and imperial role was undermined from within.[429] As the political conflict between Britain and the American colonies reached a climax, it became clear that the issues which had dominated the parliamentary debates for the last eleven years, primarily centred on Parliament's right to tax the colonies, had escalated into an internal domestic conflict between Parliament, the Crown, and Britain's territories closer to home.

Scotland and the Shadow of Rebellion: Ten Years Later

Bearing in mind that the actual outbreak of war was only two months away, MPs and Peers were still weighed down in arguments over whether the American colonies could or should be classified as in a state of rebellion, with the fear being "that when once that declaration was passed by the legislature, the civil American war would be commenced."[430] By way of dodging

[429] Brown, *Empire or Independence*, 35; Cook, *The Long Fuse*, 196; Knollenberg, *Growth of the American Revolution*, 170.

[430] London Chronicle version of the Committee on American Papers: Motion for Address that a state of rebellion exists, etc on 2 February 1775 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* v, 353.

such an irrevocable decision to label the colonies thus, there was a general agreement in the House of Commons on 2 February 1775 that colonial actions were not to be considered as a rebellion because "real rebellion never wants a declaratory vote to prove it; it is seen and acknowledged by all the world. In the two rebellions of 1715 and 1745 there was no such vote."[431] The previous chapter revealed that a few Parliamentarians believed the colonists were fighting for their British liberties rather than attacking Parliament's authority. These arguments were used to persuasively urge Parliament to act in a more conciliatory manner towards the American colonies, on the brink of open war. It seems likely that these arguments surfaced in the hope of deterring an impending civil war with America, as Parliamentarians framed it, one that many feared would lead to the independence of the colonies or financial ruin for Britain.[432]

These arguments continued even following the outbreak of the war in April 1775, despite the change in Parliament's focus from preventative measures to being on the defence. In a rehearsal of previous debates, Scotland was used as an example to make the case. In the motion on the petition of the American Congress on 10 November 1775, the Duke of Manchester argued that the Scottish and American rebellions were not comparable because they differed in principle. The report noted the "Duke of *Manchester* opposed the comparison of America with Scotland at the time of the Rebellion, and said they materially differed, the latter being a dispute about his Majesty's title to the Crown; whereas the former was a struggle of the Americans for their liberty, attempted to be wrested from them through the influence of administration."[433] On par with an understanding of the American cause, the Duke of Manchester's critical view of an equivalent response to that of the 1745 rebellion, prompted his proposal for more conciliatory measures towards their fellow British (American) subjects.

The Duke of Manchester even continued that the proposed measures against the colonies were far worse than those imposed on Scotland, despite the Jacobites' direct threat to England. On 15 December 1775 in the House of Lords in response to the Prohibitory Bill that would "prohibit all Trade and Intercourse with the Colonies", Manchester argued:

> When a rebellion raged in the northern part of this island, a rebellion fomented and carried on against the establishment in church and state, no such prohibition as the

[431] Ibid., 354.
[432] Ibid., 352-4.
[433] *London Evening Post* version of Examination of Richard Penn and motion on petition of the American Congress on 10 November 1775 in the House of Lords in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, vi, 235.

> present was thought on. Many of the people in that part of the kingdom, remained firm and loyal. In such a case, an act of this nature would be impolitic and unjust. We have been told frequently, by several noble lords on the other side of the House, that great numbers of people in America continue friends to government. Why then punish them? Why adopt such a plan of indiscriminate injustice? Why involve the innocent and guilty in one general judgment?[434]

The Duke's argument, however, reflects the general understandings of the American colonial rebellion. Many were firmly convinced that the rebellious actions to date were spearheaded by a minority of colonists. Furthermore, the Duke predicted potential, and detrimental, ramifications should Parliament enforce this Act. He concluded:

> This bill, my lords, may establish in future a claim, at least an expectation, which I dare say, your lordships do not foresee. Suppose, my lords, that another rebellion should break out in the northern part of this island, or in the southern part; would not the soldiery in such a case, have as good a right to expect the plunder and confiscations consequent on the reduction of the rebels, as the seamen are given by this bill? I see no reason that they should not. It would operate as an *encouragement*, and every motive would apply in one case, that can possibly operate in the other.[435]

The Duke warned that this American Act would establish a negative precedent for future rebellions, thereby underscoring the view that Parliament's response towards the American colonies could not be conceived and enacted in isolation of its wider governance of the realm of Ireland and Britain. While he acknowledged the negative repercussions for Britain, his acknowledgement of the colonies' plight for British rights and principles suggests he may well have understood the American cause more so than many other Parliamentarians and was a knowledgeable advocate for the colonists during this time.

In tune with the debates thus far, many Parliamentarians agreed with handling the crisis in a similar way to the Scottish conflict. In responding shortly after the Duke of Manchester, Lord Charles Cathcart argued in support of the ministry:

---

[434] Proceedings on 12 December 1775 in the House of Lords in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, vi, 350; Almon version of the Bill to prohibit American Trade: Second Reading and Committal on 15 December 1775 in the House of Lords in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* vi, 356.

[435] Almon version of the Bill to prohibit American Trade: Second Reading and Committal on 15 December 1775 in the House of Lords in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* vi, 356.

> Admitting England to be in the worst plight imaginable, the noble lord recollected a period when her distresses were equal. Although many Peers in the House might remember the rebellion in 1745, the noble speaker had at that time drawn his sword against the rebels. Their successes at Derby had thrown the kingdom into consternation: the whole interest of the country was assemblaged in one stake, and risqued on the event of the battle of Culloden. Happily the casualties of war turned out favourable for England. But what contributed most to the welfare of the empire? The assistance so willingly afforded by all ranks of people.[436]

Cathcart's own military experience during the 1745 rebellion altered his perspective and influenced his alignment with the ministry. He acknowledged that England needed the same support of the people as was given thirty years prior and asked that the "Ministry should be assisted, not impeded in their measures."[437] The Lords chose not to acknowledge the conciliatory measures proposed in the colonists' petition by a vote of 60 to 27.[438]

Despite North's proposals for peace the year prior, the outbreak of the war clearly hardened his response to the colonies, and he quickly changed his tune. Comparing the American rebellion to the Irish and Scottish rebellions, he hoped that MPs and Peers would realise the necessity of introducing *more* coercive measures. As war had been raging for almost a year by 29 February 1776, Parliament moved to discuss the deployment of foreign troops, which in consequence prompted varied reactions from Parliamentarians, with some horrified at the thought of doing so. Others, like North, argued that it was necessary for peace:

> Lord *North* expressed his surprise at hearing so much stress laid on the impropriety of carrying on a war against our fellow-subjects. For his part, he always imagined, that a civil war called most urgently for a speedy and effectual suppression. Such wars were no novelties in this country. Were not the Irish our fellow-subjects in 1690? Were not the Scotch so in 1715, and 1745? And did any person ever assign it as a reason that those rebellions should not be crushed, because the rebels were our fellow-subjects?[439]

In a way, North's indignation at the adverse reaction to waging war against the colonists is unsurprising considering his comments clearly show that Parliament did not show restraint when

---

[436] Almon version of the Examination of Richard Penn and motion on petition of the American Congress on 10 November 1775 in the House of Lords in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* vi, 229.

[437] Ibid.

[438] Proceedings on 10 November 1775 in the House of Lords in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, vi, 220.

[439] Almon version of the Motion to refer Hessian subsidy treaties to Committee of Supply on 29 February 1776 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, vi, 411.

previously threatened. An overwhelming majority of MPs agreed with the proposed movement by 242 to 88.[440] While North accurately discredited the arguments against foreign troops, it is important to note that while the debates throughout the last ten years had been about preventative measures, the outbreak of war shifted discussions to the defensive. Now, arguments about whether or not it was responsible to wage war, and resort to the Scottish comparison, was no longer an abstract fear, but a reality.

Relationship with Ireland

It is telling that as the political crisis exploded into violence in Massachusetts, many Parliamentarians continued to have the Irish analogy in the forefront of their minds. MPs and Peers feared the impact this conflict could have on Parliament's relationship with Ireland, especially those Parliamentarians who had constantly warned about the implications for Ireland, as we have seen. Edmund Burke received a letter from a certain John Ridge on 25 September 1775 concerning feelings in Ireland toward the Americans: "All the Protestants as far as I can see, especially the Presbyterians, except a few who have connexions in the army at Boston… [are] friends to the American cause", noting that the Roman Catholics also did not agree with parliamentary measures due to their own unfavourable predicament in Ireland, and thereby, felt a kinship with the colonists.[441] He continued, "For my part I can't see on what principle a man of any other denomination in this Kingdom who is a native of any property, can be unfriendly to a people who think they are fighting the cause of liberty, and ultimately…the cause of Ireland herself."[442] While it is unclear who John Ridge was or his tie with Burke, his argument significantly reiterated the potential threat Parliament's actions would pose to their borders. By acknowledging the colonial cause lay in specific principles that formed a foundation for British governance, it was only a matter of time until those who were denied these principles chose to support the American colonists, and/or took up their own ideological cause. The significance is

---

[440] Proceedings on 29 February 1776 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, vi, 404.

[441] Letter from John Ridge to Edmund Burke on 25 September 1775 in *Correspondence and Papers of Edmund Burke* (WWM/Bk P/1/743-1, p. 3, 4), Sheffield City Archives, Sheffield England.

[442] Ibid., (WWM/Bk P/1/743-1, p. 4).

that again, rather than an abstract fear, the outbreak of the war made an Irish rebellion much more of a possibility. Parliament was thus compelled to consider how their actions could alter and affect territories closer to home in England, as the American conflict became ever more about a test of power and governance as much without as *within* the realm of Great Britain and Ireland.

Only a few weeks later, Ridge wrote again to Burke on 11 October 1775, indicating that the seeds for Ireland's political involvement in the American conflict had been sown through the issues raised, principally on taxation, during the British parliamentary debates. Possibly in reference to discussions in the Irish Parliament regarding whether America could be considered in rebellion, Ridge observed: "That if the British Parliament's taxing America, could in any sort infer a similar right in them to tax Ireland, the arguments used by the opponents to this part of the address would be unanswerable."[443] Furthermore, he added, "I rather think he [an Irish MP] considered the cause of the Colonists, the Cause of Ireland."[444] The fact that the Irish Parliament was reported as discussing their rights in relation to the Americans indicates the possible implications and repercussions for Parliament's actions and reaffirms why MPs and Peers were correct to be concerned about the wider implications of the American conflict for Britain's relationship to Ireland.

When Parliament discussed the content of the American Congress' petition on 10 November 1775, Lord William Henry Lyttelton claimed that the Americans' relationship with Ireland soured any possible conciliation program:

> Those audacious rebels, who came and endeavoured to impose on his Majesty with insidious, traitorous, false expressions of loyalty to him, and of obedience to the British Parliament, while they in the same breath appeal to the people of Great Britain and Ireland, abuse the Parliament, deny their power, invite their fellow-subjects to make a common cause of it, and thus at once endeavour to involve every part of this great empire in one general scene of rebellion and bloodshed, in order to resist that very Parliament for which they pretend to profess such perfect obedience and submission-Are these the men you would treat with? Is this the cause the pretended friends of this country would endeavour to defend? or would you, by agreeing with this motion, relinquish your

[443] The letter was sent from Dublin, thereby hinting that the reports were from the Irish Parliament but does not directly confirm. Letter from John Ridge to Edmund Burke on 11 October 1775 in *Papers of Edmund Burke* (WWM/Bk P/1/756, p. 2).

[444] Ibid., (WWM/Bk P/1/756, p. 3).

> domination over those worst of rebels, and tamely submit to transfer the seat of empire from Great Britain to America.[445]

Lyttelton's evident rage at the colonists' conduct was clearly not aimed at persuading and cautioning Peers against any conciliation measures with the colonists, and underscored his previous arguments for coercive measures that he had been repeating ever since the repeal of the Stamp Act.[446] His outburst was likely made in response to Congress' recent petition to Ireland, which pointed to Parliament's egregious treatment of the American colonies and called for the brotherly support from those who were similarly oppressed within the realm.[447] Lyttelton's argument illustrates the dramatic escalation and scope of the American rebellion over the last ten years. From originally only contemplating a few negative reactions to the Stamp Act, to now fearing that the cause of liberty would ignite a similar rebellion in Ireland; Parliamentarians were rightly concerned of the possibility of an imperial-wide rebellion or movement for independence. Or even worse, as Lyttelton warned, with America becoming the new seat of the British Empire.

Lord Mansfield also acknowledged colonial actions in relation to Ireland and went as far to suggest that an American separation from the British Empire could stir up an independence movement in Ireland. On 20 December 1775 in the House of Lords, warning that the colonies aimed at independence, and "[were] not carrying on a war merely defensive", Mansfield pointed to the growing danger of the bond between the Americans and Irish, saying "They seize the ships belonging to Ireland, yet they style the Irish their friends and fellow-subjects; yes, but is it necessary to wound England through the sides of those friends."[448] This clear attack by the American colonists was not only an attack on Britain's political and economic relationship with Ireland, but threatened an alliance between the colonies against Britain. Mansfield had warned of America's designs toward independence as early as 1765, as he urged for coercive measures in the belief that the colonists were exhibiting worse behaviour than the Scots thirty years prior. He

---

[445] Almon version of the Examination of Richard Penn and motion on petition of the American Congress on 10 November 1775 in the House of Lords in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, vi, 228.

[446] Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament,* iii, 76-7.

[447] Neil Longley York, "The Impact of the American Revolution on Ireland," 215; "Journals of the Continental Congress-Address to the People of Ireland; July 28, 1775," The Avalon Project, Lillian Goldman Law Library, 2008, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/contcong_07-28-75.asp.

[448] St. James's Chronicle version of the Bill to prohibit American Trade: Third Reading and Passage on 20 December 1775 in the House of Lords in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, vi, 381.

was *finally* proven correct as the British and American colonists were *finally* engaged in a military conflict, and only months away from the Declaration of Independence.

Unlike Lyttelton and Mansfield who would leap to pin the blame on the American colonists should there be a rebellion movement throughout the realm, Thomas Howard, Earl of Effingham, who was a Grenvillite, argued that there existed an even greater threat, warning that Britain could be brought into an imperial war with France were they not to act more judiciously with Ireland.[449] This was perhaps the most significant danger to England thus far. Indeed, in responding to foreign troops placed in the colonies, the Earl of Effingham also warned that a "situation nearer home" could make Britain susceptible to a threat from France.[450] On 5 March 1776 in the House of Lords, he warned:

> France has also prepared a considerable force. May not their late misfortune at Algiers make them wiser; if zeal for religion be supposed to actuate them, is it not possible that France may convince them, that by going to Ireland they would serve both their spiritual and temporal interests. I appeal to a noble Viscount in my eye, if more than half that kingdom is not in their interest; they would be joined by numbers, the moment they land, between Cork and Shannon; and what force have you to oppose them either by sea or land?[451]

Because Irish and French Catholics were likely allies, Effingham was concerned that France would appeal to Catholic Ireland, which could well pave the way for a war closer to home. In sum, he warned that their attention should not be entirely focused on the American colonies, but instead they must consider the impact of the conflict in other parts of the realm, not least, in this instance, Ireland. However, he also thought it necessary to comment on the American cause. To show his rejection of the anti-taxation arguments spouted by the American Patriots, he sarcastically declared, "the moment I am satisfied of the truth of these arguments, I shall become a most determined and zealous Jacobite, and shall hold myself bound in conscience and honour, to go all lengths, and risque all I hold dear as an Englishman, in atonement of having approved the Revolution..."[452] Effingham intentionally compared the colonial Patriots to those of the Jacobites to highlight the extreme, and dangerous, nature of the American colonial cause.

---

[449] Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament,* ii, 646.

[450] Almon version of the Motion for Address on Brunswick, Hesse and Hanau treaties on 5 March 1776 in the House of Lords in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* vi, 440.

[451] Ibid.

[452] Ibid.

Overall, ever since 1765/6, MPs and Peers had expressed strong concerns about the impact of the American conflict on their relationship with Ireland, yet they were largely ignored, even after war broke out. While Ireland did not join the war immediately, their own rebellion in 1798 would be inspired by their American counterparts.[453]

Military Involvement and Ireland

Following the outbreak of fighting, the King's decision to send German troops to the American colonies was viewed by MPs and Peers as a breach in the British constitution and Parliament's powers and stoked fears that the Crown was exhibiting dangerous behaviour in acting without Parliament's approval. Parliament felt it was under attack from all sides and, more concerningly, that the American conflict was now threatening to pit Crown and Parliament against each other, with the former overstepping its authority to the detriment of the latter's sovereignty. In other words, the American-imperial crisis was becoming a British-domestic crisis, not only a test of Parliament's authority over Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, but also over the Crown.[454]

On 1 November 1775 in the House of Lords, the Duke of Manchester provided a recent example in Ireland to argue why the King's actions were unconstitutional and threatened Parliament's authority. He argued that "…keeping a standing army within the kingdom, without consent of parliament, is against law" and:

> that as it may be necessary to keep up, for the defence of Ireland, 12,000 men, in order to give some assistance to the foreign garrisons, the army should be increased to 15,235, all natural born subjects. We see here the King calling for assistance of the British parliament, in order to increase the army in Ireland. He does not, even at the head of the parliament of that kingdom, think his authority sufficient, without sanction of the parliament of Great Britain, to make the least addition to his forces.[455]

---

[453] York, "The Impact of the American Revolution on Ireland," 205-232.

[454] Dickinson, "Britain's Imperial Sovereignty," 64-96; Dickinson further described: "Fears of the kind of political instability experienced in the seventeenth century had generated the widely held belief that, in every state and in every empire, there had to be a final authority against whose decision there could be no appeal and that this authority ought to rest in the legislature which made laws and raised taxes-in the case of Britain this was the combined legislature of King, House of Lords and House of Commons," Ibid., 81-82.

[455] Parliamentary History version of the Motion on Electoral and Foreign Troops on 1 November 1775 in the House of Lords in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, vi, 144.

The Duke of Grafton (Augustus Henry Fitzroy) agreed, using his own experience to appeal to legislative measures to convince Parliament of the Crown's wrongdoings:

> His grace likewise remarked, in answer to something which dropped from the two noble lords who opposed the motion relative to the legality of augmenting the standing forces in any part of the British dominions out of this kingdom, that when he had the honour to preside at the Treasury, and to be one of his Majesty's advisers in the year 1768, on the augmentation of the troops on the Irish establishment, from 12 to 15,000 men, he applied to the first law officer of the crown at that time, whether the measure would be justifiable in point of legality, as it was repugnant to the disbanding Act of William 3, which provided that the standing military force in England should not exceed 7,000 men, nor in Ireland 12,000 in time of peace; but that able man gave his opinion, that the proposed augmentation of the Irish troops would require an act of parliament for its aid.[456]

The Duke of Grafton's prior experience in government, as Secretary of State, the First Lord of Treasury, and Prime Minister, lent weight to his arguments on the limitations of the Crown's authority.[457] They highlight Parliament's central involvement and authority in military matters in past relations with Ireland and underscored that the present situation required the same approval from Parliament's imperial role. In other words, military engagement with the colonies provoked a further test of Parliament's authority: not only in relation to the colonies, but also, equally problematically, *vis a vis* the Crown.

The Earl of Shelburne, as the former Lord Wycombe, justified Parliament's approval while also commenting on the danger of keeping foreign troops in their dependencies, as in the case of Ireland. He argued:

> The only principle that can be suggested is the danger to be apprehended by keeping a standing force without the consent of parliament. To do this within the limits of the kingdom, and in time of peace, is more dangerous, and carries with it less colour of necessity. To do the same in Ireland, Gibraltar, or any of the dependencies of the kingdom, may be less dangerous; but will any man say, there is no danger?[458]

---

[456] Ibid., 146-7.

[457] Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament,* ii, 435.

[458] Parliamentary History version of the Motion on Electoral and Foreign Troops on 1 November 1775 in the House of Lords in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, vi, 153.

In line with fears of Irish involvement in the American crisis, Shelburne warned that the undermining of their authority presented a military concern within the realm. His understanding of the practicality of their measures was the motive behind many of his arguments throughout the debates. From his perspective, and in increasing agreement with his fellow MPs and Peers, the conflicts arising from the American crisis, such as this case with the army, meant that the political crisis facing Parliament was no longer confined to its territories three thousand miles away, but also had ramifications for its authority over Ireland and more widely within the British Isles.

On 15 November in the House of Lords, Shelburne continued to warn of the effects of the Crown's past actions and encroachment on Parliament's authority in Ireland:

> The fatal effects of this encreased [sic] strength in the crown, has been severely felt in another kingdom. It was to guard against it, in some measure, that the act passed in the reign of King William, for limiting the army serving in Ireland to 12,000 men. Though the army, till very lately, was continued at that number, other means were devised to employ the power of the crown in that country, to purposes operating nearer home.[459]

The fear of a reversal of parliamentary power to the days before the so-called Glorious Revolution justified an increasing insistence on its authority (over and above the Crown's) throughout the American crisis, and most especially as the Crown's mounting interference in the conflict threatened Parliament's overall perception of its authority throughout the realm of Great Britain and Ireland.

The fear of an erosion of Parliament's authority by the Crown was perhaps best exhibited in the Duke of Manchester's arguments regarding the loss of British liberties should the Crown continue to exert its authority. On 5 March 1776 in the House of Lords, the Duke of Manchester escalated this fear:

> The *unconstitutional doctrine* held in this House, setting up the power of the prerogative above the power of Parliament, the attempt to introduce foreign troops into Ireland, without even asking the opinion of the British Parliament, all concur to bear strong

[459] Almon version of the Motions for addresses on states of British and American forces on 15 November 1775 in the House of Lords in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, vi, 255.

> testimonies, that an *abridgment* of British, as well as American liberty, would not be disagreeable to some of our present rulers.[460]

This argument significantly highlights the opposing, and perhaps misunderstood, views of the colonists and Parliament. While the colonists long believed that the source of British tyranny stemmed from Parliament, the Duke of Manchester warned that it was in fact the Crown's actions that were the real threat to British *and* American liberties, a position which was eventually articulated in the Declaration of Independence when the colonists' identified the King as the source of their grievances.

While Ireland was a common and accepted analogy for acting against the Crown's imposition, on 1 December 1775 in the House of Commons, Attorney General Thurlow once again asserted that the Irish and American situations were not comparable and that they should not use the Irish precedent to determine policy towards the colonies:

> [He] insisted no troops had been offered to Ireland, as asserted by his learned friend [Mr. Dunning] who, he feared, laid too much stress upon news-paper information. Even if the fact was so, this was not the proper time to debate it, nor could he perceive what kind of relation there was between the supposed offer made to Ireland, and the bill under consideration.[461]

While Thurlow does not elaborate on his opinion of the matter, his prior arguments in favour of Parliament's sovereignty throughout previous years suggest that he preferred to maintain Parliament's authority and limit the Crown's. It would be easy to say that Thurlow's argument was about the use of troops, yet, arguably, it was more about the constant comparison of the two colonies, just as he railed against in 1774. Thurlow's declaration was perhaps one of the most bluntly stated throughout the debates regarding the American and Irish comparison. He shifted the debate from arguments about the encroachment of the Crown back to the effectiveness (or not) of using precedent and Parliament's persistent comparison of the American colonies to Ireland. Even at this late stage in the debates, MPs and Peers could not resist squabbling over the

---

[460] Almon version of the Motion for Address on Brunswick, Hesse and Hanau treaties on 5 March 1776 in the House of Lords in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, vi, 436.

[461] Almon version of the Bill to prohibit American Trade: Second Reading. Motion to commit on 1 December 1775 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, vi, 318.

application of these analogies in determining their decisions and actions, even when it came to a subject that most Parliamentarians agreed upon, such as limiting the Crown's authority.

Military Involvement and Scotland

Scotland provided further examples why the use of foreign troops in America was unacceptable because of the Crown's encroachment on Parliament's authority. In the same 1 November 1775 debate, discussed above, Manchester warned, "the King's prerogative I conceive to be no greater in one part of his dominions than another; the subject is equally protected by the laws, whether shivering in the highlands of the north, or scorching upon Gibraltar's rock."[462] Subjects, despite location, were equally deserving of British rights, Manchester reminded Peers. Manchester feared that the King's actions were shocking and "dangerous" to "the constitution."[463] His warning implied a concern for the loss of British liberties even at home should the Crown continue to exercise its authority over Parliament. In a similar vein, Charles Lennox, Duke of Richmond, argued for precedent:

> It had been said, early in the debate, that the Hessians had been brought over in 1745, without any previous parliamentary communication: but nothing could be more erroneous; for though they were not called over by an express act of parliament, either then or in 1756, both Houses consented to it by an address to the throne, in one instance; and where that sanction was wanting, by some existing treaty, ratified by parliament.[464]

For some Parliamentarians, the Crown's actions in America established a worrying precedent for the use of foreign troops throughout the realm of Great Britain and Ireland.

As expressed by the Duke of Grafton, who determined that the colonies were as equally part of the kingdom as Scotland, and therefore:

> Certainly, if 'within the kingdom,' did not comprehend the possessions of England, foreign troops, to any number, and on any occasion, might be legally introduced into

[462] Parliamentary History version of the Motion on Electoral and Foreign Troops on 1 November 1775 in the House of Lords in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* vi, 144.

[463] Ibid., 143.

[464] Ibid., 152.

> Scotland; for the argument went fairly to this, Scotland being not within the kingdom at the time the Bill of Rights was passed, foreign troops may be introduced, and kept on foot there, without consent of parliament.[465]

Grafton's comparison of Scotland's and the American colonies' position within the realm highlights one of the main points of controversy and confusion that had existed since the Stamp Act crisis. The American conflict forced an acknowledgement of the colonies' relationship to Britain, and consequently, the laws that applied. Yet, the differing interpretations of the relationship and laws by both Parliamentarians and the colonists actually prolonged and exacerbated the conflict and ultimately failed to produce a solution that avoided war and a declaration of independence.

Lord Mansfield's argument on 15 November 1775 underscores how these fears harked back to the American colonists' challenge to Parliament's authority in the years prior. In particular, the colonists claimed that it was the King that bound them to Britain, rather than Parliament.[466] In this, Mansfield framed the colonists' perception of their place in the realm to that of Scotland: "In fine, they would stand in relation to Great Britain as Hanover now stands; or, more properly speaking, as Scotland stood towards England, previous to the treaty of Union."[467] Before the Union, Scotland was only united to England by King James. It was only after the Union, when the parliaments were combined, that the English Parliament became sovereign over Scotland.[468] The American colonists claimed the same relationship in connection with the King rather than Parliament, thereby reducing Parliament's role as a sovereign power over them.[469] As mentioned previously, Mansfield had feared American independence for years: "the views of America were directed to independence; that Great Britain could not concede without relinquishing the whole, which he supposed was not intended."[470] The American

---

[465] Ibid., 146.

[466] Dickinson, "Britain's Imperial Sovereignty," 64-96; Dickinson elaborated: "In seeking to reject parliamentary sovereignty, the Americans insisted that their colonial assemblies alone could tax, and legislate for, the people of the colonies and that the colonists were subordinate and owed allegiance solely to the king. To many in Britain this meant a return to the pre-1763 situation, when Britain had been able to exercise little authority over the colonies or, more alarmingly if the colonies did accept only the king's authority, it threatened to increase the power of the crown to a dangerous degree and to undermine the liberties of the king's British subjects," Ibid., 89.

[467] Almon version of the Motions for addresses on states of British and American forces on 15 November 1775 in the House of Lords in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, vi, 254.

[468] Cook, *The Long Fuse,* 158; Knollenberg, *Growth of the American Revolution,* 88-9.

[469] Dickinson, "Britain's Imperial Sovereignty," 89.

[470] Almon version of the Motions for addresses on states of British and American forces on 15 November 1775 in the House of Lords in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* vi, 254.

colonists' views on Parliament's limited authority in the colonies, combined with their perception that their tie to Britain was through the Crown rather than Parliament, threatened Parliament's perception of its central governing role throughout the realm. With the Crown's encroachment on Parliament's authority in the deployment of foreign troops, Parliament's sovereignty was further challenged.

These discussions illustrate that the crisis with the American colonies evolved and escalated into an internal domestic conflict over the course of the debates. The Crown's actions threatened Parliament's perception of its authority and role in the realm. Not only did Parliamentarians fear the loss of British liberties, but they also grew concerned with the American colonists' arguments that their bond was with the Crown directly, rather than Parliament, amounting to a denial of Parliament's authority and sovereignty over them. This fear was not without reason. According to historian Sean Moore, the revolutionary Irishman Jonathan Swift expressed similar notions: "Borrow[ed] from a longer Irish legislative tradition, he argued that Ireland was, like England, a separate kingdom whose Parliament was answerable only to the Crown, not to the English kingdom's Parliament."[471] Therefore, as Parliament was once again confronted with ideas that undermined its sovereign role and place in the realm, it became increasingly concerned about stemming the flow of the conflict to those regions deemed most vulnerable to ideas of liberty, namely Ireland. It is clear throughout the debates in this period that Parliamentarians were by this point in time much more unified than in previous sessions in their stance against increasing interference by the Crown. While calls for conciliation were resurrected one again in the debates, as Parliament experienced threats to its authority from both outside as well as within, from the Crown, so arguments shifted back to the adoption of coercive measures and away from ideas of conciliation, in yet another sign of Parliament's inconsistent and see-sawing response to the American crisis.

[471] Moore, "The Irish Contribution," 341.

Taxation and Ireland

As the last chapter revealed, there was a growing call for more conciliatory measures in the hopes of stopping the impending civil war with America, as it was termed, especially in the form of granting the colonists the right to tax themselves as in Ireland. Once war began, there were Parliamentarians who stuck to their conviction that conciliation was the best way forward, whilst others fully embraced the view that coercive measures were the only way to prevent the colonies severing all ties with Britain.

Favouring conciliatory measures, Governor George Johnstone argued that the American colonists should have their own independent legislature, as in Ireland. In a long response to the House of Commons' Address on 26 October 1775 that acknowledged with certainty that America was in rebellion and aimed at "an independent Empire", Johnstone argued, "You assert they aim at independency; I assert they wish for nothing more than a constitutional dependence on Great Britain, according as they have subsisted from their first establishments, and according as Ireland depends on the British legislature at this moment."[472] Johnstone used the example of Ireland to portray the type of constitutional dependence he believed the colonies should have with Britain and also the type of dependence the colonists, he believed, were seeking. In line with his earlier arguments for the colonists to tax themselves, he believed this type of dependence allowed for Ireland to provide for its own legislative authority while remaining dependent on the British legislature for approval. He also observed that many were against the war in the American colonies: "I maintain that the sense of the best and wisest men in this country, are on the side of the Americans; that three to one in Ireland are on their side."[473] By portraying the widespread discontent with their conflict with America, Johnstone's reference to Ireland signalled a warning that a greater crisis possibly loomed should the American struggle spark an Irish rebellion or should Irishmen choose to fight with the colonists. In the end, the passage of the Address by 278 to 108 illustrates that coercive measures were ultimately preferred in the face of growing fears of American independence.[474]

---

[472] Proceedings on 26 October 1775 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, vi, 88; Almon version of The Address on 26 October 1775 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* vi, 106-7.

[473] Ibid., 107.

[474] Ibid., 119.

MP George Dempster contributed to this argument the following day when he argued for the colonies to be permitted to tax themselves, in the debate on 27 October 1775 in the House of Commons. Dempster acknowledged that "I think the claim of the Americans is just and well founded, to be left in the free exercise of the right of taxing themselves in her several provincial assemblies, in the same manner that Ireland now does and always has done."[475] Very involved in the finances of the empire, especially as a one-time director of the East India Company, Dempster's Scottish background likely shaped his perspective on the American cause as he fought for improved systems of governance in Scotland as well.[476] His example relied not on a unique taxation system to be newly established in the colonies, but one that was already effectively established in Ireland.

As Charles James Fox had argued earlier, Shelburne insisted that Ireland ought to be the yardstick for judging what course of action to take with the American colonists, in response to a petition by the American Congress in November 1775. In the debate in the House of Lords on the motion "To resolve, that the Matter of the said Petition affords Ground of Conciliation of the unhappy Differences subsisting between the Mother Country and the Colonies; and that it is highly necessary that proper Steps be immediately taken for attaining so desirable an Object", and in response to arguments against the petition "That to yield to the proposal of the colonists was to give up the point of taxation", Shelburne declared that Parliament did not have the right to tax the colonists in the first place.[477]

> Taking money without the consent of the people, was so fundamentally wrong, that the more we consider it, the more we must be convinced that we have no right to tax America. No subtlety of lawyers can subvert this truth; nothing could be more directly in point than the example of Ireland. Ireland had been the place chosen for a trial of skill, because Ireland stood in so similar a predicament with America, that an acquiescence in the matter of taxation would afford a precedent to ministers, for coercing America with right on their side.[478]

---

[475] Almon version of the Report of the Address on 27 October 1775 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, vi, 140.

[476] Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament,* ii, 315, 317.

[477] Proceedings on 10 November 1775 in the House of Lords in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* vi, 220; Almon version of the Examination of Richard Penn and motion on petition of the American Congress in the House of Lords in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* vi, 224.

[478] Ibid., 224.

Shelburne flatly denied Parliament's authority to tax the colonies. In fact, he implied his support for the American cause as he insisted that the colonists were right in their justification and pursuit of British principles. As seen throughout much of the debates discussed here, Shelburne was also concerned with how their actions might be received in Ireland:

> if it was just to tax America, it was equally so to tax Ireland. That the latter was a much fitter object of taxation than the former; for if any position could be infallible, it was, that a colony could not be an object of revenue while it consumed our manufactures. This was the case of America, and not of Ireland. The quota from the latter was not adequate to its abilities, though the proportion was unequally distributed; the rich were spared, and the poor overburthened.[479]

Shelburne's Irish background likely shaped his outlook, but he was not alone in drawing the similarities between America and Ireland, nor in venting his exasperation and pleading for the security of taxation rights in the colonies.[480] For if Parliament continued to insist on its authority to tax America, then it would establish a precedent for taxing Ireland. Not once throughout the debates did any Parliamentarian propose they tax Ireland, besides the general abstract suggestion that they would if necessary, indicating a genuine fear of Irish retaliation should it be enforced. While the accounts of the debates show few interactions among the Peers, adopting the colonists' conciliatory propositions was rejected by 60 to 27, thereby signalling that a majority of Peers remained in favour of the need to apply coercive measures.[481]

However, this argument was raised again on 15 November 1775 in the House of Lords, signifying what had become by now a longstanding pattern in the parliamentary debates of revisiting the same arguments, with the same examples, with no resolution to the crisis. Thus in this manner, Shelburne returned to the principle of taxation by representation, discussed again and again by MPs and Peers ever since the Stamp Act in 1765, and once again he drew the analogy with Ireland:

> for I always have, and ever shall think, that both Ireland and America are subordinate to this country; but I shall likewise retain my former opinion, that they have rights, the free and unimpaired exercise of which should be preserved inviolate. The principal, the

---

[479] Ibid., 227.

[480] Burns, "William Petty," GOV.UK.

[481] Proceedings on 10 November 1775 in the House of Lords in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* vi, 220.

> fundamental right, is that of granting their own money. The Irish have always exercised that right uninterrupted, so has America till very lately; and that this invaluable privilege is going to be wrested from them, I take to be the true grievance; remove that away, and every thing, I dare say, will soon return into its former channel.[482]

Shelburne's solution was presented as if it were clear and simple: "if the claim of taxation was fairly relinquished, without reservation, I am confident the supremacy of the British Parliament would be acknowledged and acquiesced in by America, and peace between both countries be once more happily restored."[483] Most Parliamentarians believed, by this stage, that the conflict could be resolved following such a concession, especially in light of the colonists' claims, as seen in the Congressional petition, that agreed to Parliament's taxing as long as it "[was] made in the accustomed and constitutional way."[484] While Shelburne's initial arguments on the American crisis (1765/1766) were predominantly in favour of expediency rather than principle, at this point, perhaps because the crisis had failed to de-escalate, he shifted his argument to embrace the actual principle of taxation and representation. That being said, his proposal failed to adequately consider just how deep and wide the crisis had become; what had begun as a dispute over taxation had escalated into a much more significant assault on Parliament's sovereignty and actual military conflict which appeared to render it almost impossible for a conciliation plan to be accepted by both sides.

A well-known advocate for the American colonies in Parliament at this time was David Hartley, who made several propositions for appeasement on 7 December 1775 in the House of Commons, including permitting local legislative authority in terms of taxation and elections of the Massachusetts Council.[485] In his speech regarding these proposals, Hartley argued:

> You may have that revenue, if you will receive it in a constitutional way, otherwise than that, you never will, nor ever ought to have it. Even if you could make out your right to tax America, yet justice, which is above all rights, requires that you should abandon that supposed right. It is the prerogative of the Commons of England to give and grant by their own representatives. The Commons of Ireland possess the same prerogative. The Commons of America have ever enjoyed the same. Had every thing been the direct

---

[482] Almon version of the Motions for addresses on states of British and American forces on 15 November 1775 in the House of Lords in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* vi, 255.

[483] Ibid.

[484] Proceedings on 7 December 1775 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* vi, 330-2; Almon version of the Motion for Address for suspension of arms in America during negotiations on 7 December 1775 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* vi, 337.

[485] Ibid., 332, 337; Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament,* ii, 592.

> contrary, that even the right of taxing unrepresented America had been undisputed, and the exercise customary and notorious; I contend, that when the oppression and grievances of unrepresented taxation had been laid before the Parliament, that it would have been their bounden duty to have rectified their constitutions to our own model. If we boast, that taxation by representation is the prerogative blessing of our own constitution, reason and justice demand that we should have given the same to every part of the empire.[486]

Hartley was also under the impression that the best way of ending the conflict was "to reinstate the commons of America in the inestimable privilege of freely giving and granting their own property as the commons of Great Britain and of Ireland do, and as the Americans have always hitherto done."[487] Again, there was a failure to understand that the American cause had spread beyond the issue of taxation, even among those with a knowledge of America. Despite his pleas, each motion was "passed in the Negative."[488]

Undiscouraged, Hartley reiterated this argument on 1 April 1776 in a debate in the House of Commons, comparing Parliament's relationship with Ireland and British North America. In short, he maintained that Ireland be used as a gauge and blueprint for handling the American colonies, rather than looking for new solutions to the crisis. Yet in tune with other MPs and Peers, he was also concerned about how Parliament's actions towards the American colonies would affect their position towards Ireland. He argued:

> The substance of the proposition is to put the American colonies upon the same footing of taxation that Ireland is, and always has been; and to give them security for charters. If you do not meditate to introduce the same innovations into the mode of taxation in Ireland, which you have attempted in America, then put them both upon the same ground, and let them be mutually a security to each other. The example of Ireland is entirely pertinent to the case of the colonies; your provinces in America have always hitherto been upon the same footing in taxation as Ireland. Let them be simply replaced as they were, and then the principles and uniformity of your provincial governments in all your dependencies will be maintained.[489]

---

[486] Almon version of the Motion for Address for suspension of arms in America during negotiations on 7 December 1775 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* vi, 334.

[487] Ibid., 337.

[488] Proceedings on 7 December 1775 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* vi, 332.

[489] Almon version of the Motions for naval estimate, etc. on 1 April 1776 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings*, vi, 499.

These suggestions are the foundation for Hartley's vision of empire. His proposals would establish uniformity, keep Parliament accountable for its regulations, and secure constitutional liberties for their imperial subjects. Unfortunately, the account of the debate does not provide reactions from fellow MPs and Peers, except Lord North's claims that the proposals were far too expensive to consider.[490]

Hartley continued this argument with "an address to the King for specific terms of peace to be offered to the colonies."[491] The address in particular stated that the colonies receive "full security of all their constitutional rights."[492] One way this was to be done was to implement the same regulations as in Ireland, similar to the argument examined above.[493] This address, which was eventually made into a motion debated on 10 May 1776, argued "That his Majesty's colonies in America shall be put upon the same footing of giving and granting their own money, by their own representatives, as his Majesty's subjects in Ireland are, and always have been."[494] Hartley's proposition surfaced in a letter sent by Sir George Savile to Edmund Burke on 28 March 1776. Savile wrote, "to follow the motion of Finance by another offering to the Colonies that they should be put on the footing of Ireland and have a security for their Charters. Judging as I did before I still think is a well conceiv'd proposition in its outline & not ill circumstanced as to time."[495] Hartley's proposal shows how influential the analogy between Ireland and America had become in the thought process of Parliamentarians as they tried to determine how to respond to the American colonies and ward off independence. This debate occurred only months before the Declaration of Independence, confirming that as the conflict with the American colonies worsened, Parliamentarians increasingly relied on comparisons with Ireland to find a solution. The refusal to grant concessions to the colonists, in particular allowing for their own legislature, was a principle sticking point in the failure to reach conciliation as the motion was rejected 115 to 33.[496]

---

[490] Ibid., 497.
[491] Ibid., 499.
[492] Ibid., 500.
[493] Ibid.
[494] Ibid.; Debate on the Motion that the American colonies should be allowed, like Ireland, to grant money by their own representatives on 10 May 1776 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* vi, 567.
[495] Letter from Sir George Savile to Edmund Burke on 28 March 1776 in *Papers of Edmund Burke* (WWM/Bk P/1/848, p. 3).
[496] Proceedings on 10 May 1776 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* vi, 567.

While Temple Luttrell agreed in principle with this measure, he did not agree with the Irish analogy, as seen on 10 May 1776 in the House of Commons. He argued:

> if he was to form a constitution for the colonies to satisfy his own mind, he would have their interests and happiness better provided for than by giving them a constitution on the model of that of Ireland. A people so wretched, so oppressed, were scarcely to be found in any civilized part of the globe.[497]

Luttrell was rather insulted by Hartley's proposal. Yet, his objection to the motion rested on his criticism of the oppressive British approach to Ireland, clarified by his example of the British ministry's actions regarding hereditary legislators. Luttrell continued, "nor could a more substantial injury, or a more humiliating insult be offered by a paramount nation to one of its dependencies, than what Ireland would experience at the hands of a British ministry within forty-eight hours, if his information proved authentic."[498] This action would be "to create hereditary legislators for that island from the clans of the mountains of Scotland."[499] He criticized the ministry for making Scots, who were essentially convicted rebels for their actions in 1715 and 1745, the hereditary legislators for Ireland rather than Irishmen. As he argued:

> Was this acting for the public good? To bestow those privileges and pre-eminencies which are attached to the peerage of a kingdom, on persons whose names and families are utterly unknown to the natives of such kingdom, and without any ties of property, of local services or affection? Barons whose blood having been tainted by an open violation of the laws of their own country, are, in preference to the best gentlemen of Ireland, sent over there to possess the most honourable seats in the senate; to enact public statutes, and adjudge upon personal inheritances in the dernier resort.[500]

It is not surprising that Luttrell castigated English colonisation of Ireland as he was the son of Lord Irnham, an Irishman, and thus seized the opportunity in this debate, not to argue for a better deal for the American colonists, but for Ireland.[501] Yet, Lord Irnham, possibly responding to his son, urged that while the Irish establishment may be undesirable, the ability to tax themselves

---

[497] Almon version of the Motion that the American colonies should be allowed, like Ireland, to grant money by their own representatives on 10 May 1776 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* vi, 568.

[498] Ibid.

[499] Ibid.

[500] Ibid.

[501] Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament,* iii, 68, 70.

was enough. Irnham argued "that, however defective the constitution of Ireland might be in some respects, yet the power of taxing themselves was sufficiently perfect for a ground-work of conciliation with America, if immediately proffered."[502]

Hartley concluded the debate by reiterating a call for conciliatory measures by treating the American colonies and Ireland equally:

> I likewise took the liberty a second time in this session, to suggest to the House the proposition of putting the colonies upon the footing of Ireland, with regard to the right of giving and granting their own money, and to give them security that their charters should be maintained inviolable. The proposition of putting them upon the footing of Ireland as expressed in the motion of this day, has only respect to that one article of being masters of their own grants of money, in answer to a kind of objection which has been started, that if we had not a right of taxing them, such an exemption would constitute an *imperium in imperio*. The case of Ireland is therefore adduced as an argument and example in point.[503]

Hartley's argument was the last in the debate, and hence there were no responses to it, but the fact that the motion passed in the negative by a great majority of 115 to 33 confirms that most MPs wanted to impose unlimited authority in the colonies rather than show any degree of compromise or conciliation.[504] On the brink of independence, which was only months away, Hartley valiantly made one final plea for restitution with the colonies, by means of Ireland, to preserve the realm. His arguments on empire and on Britain's relationship with the colonies have been seen as exceptional.[505] However, as shown here, the central thrust of his argument was consistent with those points that had been raised repeatedly by a number of Parliamentarians since the Stamp Act crisis: to shape the colonies' legislative authority according to the example of Ireland. In fact, conciliatory measures like Hartley's proposal, as we have seen, had been made far more frequently by MPs and Peers than historians have recognised.

Hartley's line of argument also points to the incremental rise of ideologies of empire emerging in the course of the parliamentary debates through the ten years of the conflict with the American colonies, as Parliamentarians ventured greater comparisons with Ireland, Scotland, and

---

[502] Almon version of the Motion that the American colonies should be allowed, like Ireland, to grant money by their own representatives on 10 May 1776 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* vi, 570.

[503] Ibid., 571.

[504] Proceedings on 10 May 1776 in the House of Commons in Simmons and Thomas, *Proceedings,* vi, 567.

[505] Namier and Brooke, *History of Parliament,* ii, 592-3.

Wales. Original comparisons to Ireland, for example, had been grounded on allowing local legislative authority. As the American conflict spiralled, it raised questions about imperial governance and the remit of Parliament's authority, and the inclusion of Ireland spoke to fundamental visions of empire, as most eloquently expressed by Burke previously, and Hartley here. As we have seen in this chapter and the previous, innovative ideas about Parliament's colonial relationship and the colonies' place in the imperial system were questioned, especially as Parliament's authority was tested and challenged. Parliamentarians began to situate the colonies within the realm of Ireland, Scotland, and Wales as they explored a vision of empire that centralised Parliament while allowing for certain privileges, such as local taxation.

Conclusion

As rebellion eventually turned to war, the King's military actions and threat to Britain's relationship with Ireland forced Parliament to consider its overall authority and relationship throughout the realm of Great Britain and Ireland. As this close analysis of the debates has revealed, decisions were shaped and made by recourse to analogy, comparison, and precedent. Comparisons with Ireland, Scotland, and Wales were made since the beginning of the conflict mainly to explore issues of taxation and how to respond to the colonies' rebelliousness, which then sowed the seeds of some novel ideas on imperial governance. Yet, ultimately, MPs and Peers found it impossible to break out of long-established approaches based on past principles and policies. In hindsight, arguably this was perhaps a mistake, as the differences between the American colonies and Ireland were too great for the latter to be used as a blueprint to manage the conflict with the former. Furthermore, disagreements in Parliament over the use of certain precedents created a controversy that arguably became less about the colonial crisis and more about the definition and character of Parliament's imperial sovereignty. The conviction that authoritative measures were necessary and the only appropriate response to the American colonies largely drowned out the voices of those who called for conciliation. Overall, Parliament's reluctance to consider an alternative relationship to the colonies and an adaptation to the imperial system, which saw the American colonies treated differently from Ireland and

Scotland, for example, was fundamental to influencing the outcome of this crisis, resulting in revolution, independence, and war.

Conclusion

This study has addressed a gap in the current literature on the political crisis between the British Parliament and American colonies that led to the American Revolution and Declaration of Independence in 1776. This detailed and close scrutiny of the parliamentary debates and private correspondence of MPs and Peers reveals that Parliament increasingly viewed and responded to the conflict as a threat to its identity and sovereignty. To defend and assert its authority and sovereignty over the American colonies, it passed a series of Acts from the Stamp Act in 1765 through to the proposed conciliatory measures of 1776. Historians have long debated why these Acts were passed and with what impact. This study has instead shifted the focus to *how* MPs and Peers decided upon them, in particular the content and arguments put forward in the debates in Parliament that led to these Acts. In doing so, it has exposed a hitherto overlooked factor in Parliament's policymaking towards the American colonies during this political crisis: Parliamentarians did not view the import and impact of the colonial crisis exclusively or exceptionally in the context of the American colonies. Indeed, Parliamentarians consistently looked to precedents established in the history of Parliament's relationship with Ireland, Scotland, and Wales to inform and influence their handling of the conflict with the American colonies. As has been shown throughout this thesis, Parliament's insistence on asserting its authority, and introducing Acts to reinforce this, rested in MPs' and Peers' understanding that the American colonies were equally as part of the realm as the nations of Ireland, Scotland, and Wales and therefore needed to be treated as such. It was only a small number of Parliamentarians who argued that it would be wiser to recognise that the American colonies warranted a quite different status as part of a wider British Empire with a different relationship to Parliament than the more proximate parts of the realm. Yet, the uncanny similarities between past rebellion movements in the realm, namely in Ireland and Scotland, and the American conflict, encouraged comparison and established a way forward by virtue of precedent. Early on, there was no obvious reason why Parliamentarians would in fact choose otherwise than follow an established and well-proven approach that, to all intents and purposes, had thus far worked to manage political discontent in Ireland and Scotland.

This study concludes that when the attitudes of Parliamentarians are placed at the centre of an analysis of the conflict with the American colonies, the American Revolution appears not

only as an imperial struggle between Britain and the American colonies, but also as a struggle by Parliament to maintain its sovereignty and authority throughout Great Britain and Ireland. The arguments that shaped the debates in this period provide overwhelming evidence that Parliamentarians became increasingly concerned with the consequences of the conflict with the American colonies closer to home, and how it was threatening Parliament's authority throughout the realm, most particularly in Ireland.

A thorough examination of the debates from 1765 to 1776 confirms that Parliament was unclear about the nature of its relationship with the American colonies when the first reaction to the Stamp Act took place, particularly over whether or not they could and should be considered within or outside the British realm, and therefore what laws were applicable to its governance. Disagreement over how the American colonies should be defined in terms of this relationship to Britain led MPs and Peers to seek comparisons with Parliament's historic relationship with Ireland, Scotland, and Wales to solve the dilemmas they faced regarding the scope, remit, and assertion of their authority over the American colonies. In doing so, Parliamentarians used these precedents as guiding principles to confront the American crisis. A significant problem, however, was that MPs and Peers could not agree over whether or not the precedents they themselves raised, particularly over taxation and sovereignty, were legal or even applicable to the American colonies. The reliance on precedent instead pitted principle against practice, as MPs and Peers not only disagreed over Parliament's prescribed right in each case, but whether it was expedient to enforce the proposed measure. Therefore, as this study on the debates has shown, a staggering amount of time was spent by Parliamentarians quarrelling over, for example, the historic details of taxing the Irish and Welsh, which typically redirected the debate and distracted Parliamentarians from focusing on the particular arguments and grievances of the American colonists. The reluctance, and resistance in many cases, to adapt precedents or seek an alternative or innovative framework for governing the American colonies meant Parliament's response was limited and constrained to measures that, ultimately, prevented a peaceful or diplomatic outcome to the crisis.

Chapter One focused on the Stamp Act and revealed the initial arguments over the colonists' status within the realm and whether the colonies (and therefore their populations) should be regarded as a conquered territory, as in the case of Ireland, or were English subjects who migrated there. This determined whether the colonists retained the right to tax themselves,

like the Irish, or could be legitimately taxed by the British Parliament. Grenville, in particular, argued that not proceeding with the Stamp Act would give the impression that Parliament's authority was limited in the colonies, irrespective of whether it was agreed they were inside or outside the realm. Others argued that taxation through Parliament would alter the precedent of local taxation set thus far in the colonies, something a few MPs (such as William Beckford and Sir William Meredith) were hesitant to do out of fear that a change in precedent would create unrest throughout the colonies. Not only would it alter proceedings in the American colonies, but it also had the potential to establish a precedent for taxation in Ireland, which would almost certainly create a further political crisis for Parliament. Thus, in the debates over the Stamp Act we see the first signs of concern among MPs regarding the potential impact of Parliament's actions towards America on their nations closer to home. Decisions regarding the Stamp Act, one of the most significant moments in this history, since it marked the beginning of the political conflict that eventually led to revolution and independence, was in fact determined by Parliament's relationship and precedents established with Ireland and, in turn, the impact its actions could have on its relationship with Ireland.

Chapter Two examined the debates which led to the repeal of the Stamp Act, following the wave of political opposition and public violence in the American colonies against the Act. In their deliberations, Parliamentarians were prompted to look back to past events when Parliament's authority was challenged, particularly only twenty years previously with the Scottish Rebellion of 1745. How Parliament dealt with the Scottish rebels was raised as a blueprint to determine the severity of their response to the American colonists, especially as colonial resistance began affecting England's financial security and threatened a growing colonial unity and murmurs of independence. In these debates, we hear the first expressions of deep concern that the American resistance could spread to Ireland, Scotland, and even England. Taxation was raised again in the context of Ireland as Parliamentarians once more debated the principle and practicality of permitting the colonists a system of local taxation. Wales was also introduced in discussions over representation, yet disagreements over historical precedents in Wales, going back to the sixteenth century, no less, brought confusion and conflict into Parliament, tying Parliamentarians in knots over how to respond appropriately to the colonial demands and distracting them from seeking innovative measures that could have been established instead (as suggested by William Pitt). Despite repealing the Stamp Act, which might

appear as a political U-turn or at least a reconsideration of their stance towards the colonies, Parliament then passed the Declaratory Act: an unequivocal assertion that it had not surrendered ultimate sovereignty over the American colonies. This was perhaps the clearest instance of Parliamentarians using precedent by resorting to the same measure - the Declaratory Act of 1720 - that Parliament had passed in relation to Ireland and reviving it, in some parts almost word for word, to assert its authority over the American colonies. Discussions during the Stamp Act repeal crisis were significantly affected by parliamentary precedents that had been established not just with Ireland, but also Scotland, Wales, and England, as Parliamentarians believed it was now even more necessary to make decisions that took into account the possibility of provoking rebellion in Ireland and Great Britain.

Chapter Three delved into the long forgotten, and overlooked in the historiography, series of Acts and measures Parliament imposed on the American colonies between 1767 and 1772. These debates reveal the intense disagreements in Parliament yet again over the colonies' place within the realm and consequently what precedents were applicable to its governance, going as far back as the Treason Act of Henry VIII established in the sixteenth century. To discuss its application, Parliamentarians harked back to this historical example set long ago in Ireland and Scotland. Yet, the failure of its implementation was possibly due to growing alignment between the Americans and Irish. Not only did Parliament fear a possible rebellion movement by their neighbour to the west, but there were signs that Europe was also keenly aware of the growing dispute between the American colonies and Britain, and thus Parliament faced a potential threat on several fronts. Strong disapproval from Rockinghamites, for instance William Dowdeswell and Thomas Townshend Junior, towards the Treason Act were met with a serious backlash from traditional authoritative figures (such as Lord North) who thought more coercive measures would deter any future rebellious actions. The introduction of the Commander-in-Chief position caused considerable controversy in the colonies as it was almost identical to that of the Lord Lieutenant in Ireland. This appeared to the colonies as an exercise of Parliament's authority that they believed overstepped the boundaries of its remit, and even worse, appeared to confirm that the colonists were deemed to have the same status in the realm as the Irish. Comparisons to Ireland and Scotland were furthermore used to explore whether an American Parliament was possible and whether the Quartering Act was applicable, depending on the similarities of the colonies to Scotland before the Union. Yet, Parliamentarians were not united on how to interpret, translate,

and apply the laws and principles that governed their relationship with these nations to the American colonies and frequently found themselves wrestling with arguments over the impact their actions could have on those nations within the realm. Overall, it would be fair to characterise the debates during this period as one of indecision and confusion in Parliament, which not unsurprisingly led to inaction and a continued failure to define Parliament's relationship to the colonies.

Chapter Four explored the debates over the Coercive Acts (1774), which were intended as a show of authority following the Boston Tea Party. Despite consensus that there needed to be punishment for those involved in the Tea Party, Parliament was seemingly thrown into confusion over the colonists' outright show of defiance. This prompted the question of whether the conflict could be officially classified as a rebellion, with comparisons to the Scottish rebellion of 1745 serving as a guide for both defining the nature of the rebellion and the punishment to be meted out against the rebels. Despite fears that continuing with coercive measures would only escalate the conflict, the majority of MPs and Peers nonetheless favoured a strong show of authority, as Parliament sought deeper involvement in colonial governance, through the alteration of the Massachusetts Charter and a revival of the Treason Act. Yet significantly, the lack of consensus on whether the state of affairs in America amounted to actual rebellion meant that indecision and confusion persisted in Parliament, leading to heated arguments about the application of such measures in Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. For instance, John Sawbridge was vocally opposed to the principle of the Boston Port Bill, while William Dowdeswell warned of the greater rebellion that Parliament's aggressive actions would produce. The debates reveal that as indecisiveness gripped Parliament, MPs and Peers relied more heavily on historical precedents that they tailored to their specific arguments. This was proven again in the re-emergence of discussions on taxation. Many cautioned that while Parliament certainly had the right to tax Ireland, and by consequence America, it was unwise to do so for fear of retaliation (as argued, for example, by Lord Rockingham and Charles James Fox), once again pitting principle against practice. By this logic, Parliamentarians became increasingly convinced that whatever principles and policies they applied to the American colonies could not be decided in isolation of the impact on its continued authority in Ireland. As the conflict deepened, without any sign of resolution, so MPs and Peers turned increasingly to the examples of resistance and rebellion in Ireland and Scotland to shape and influence their response to the American colonies.

Chapter Five analysed the debates that emerged in Parliament following the passage of the Coercive Acts and the subsequent backlash from the American colonists. Some Parliamentarians (such as John Wilkes and Edmund Burke) sought to offer alternative, even innovative, suggestions on how to view and respond to the crisis, in particular over taxation, representation, and constitutional rights. While these suggestions were tailored to the colonies' unique governance, they were still rooted in the precedents of taxation in Scotland and constitutional rights in Wales, for instance. Indeed, the majority of Parliamentarians were not persuaded that there was another path to pursue other than that of following exact precedents established with the nations of Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. MPs and Peers resisted giving serious consideration to adapting the remits of Parliament's authority, whether over taxation or sovereignty or both, to address the colonies' grievances. This could not be done, in Parliament's view, without severe repercussions for its relationship with Ireland and within Great Britain. Put differently, the crisis with the American colonies, from Parliament's perspective, was more than the sum of its parts, meaning it was never exclusively or exceptionally an American crisis: it also became a test of Parliament's power and sovereignty over those territories and nations closer to home. In fact, arguably, this was the point upon which MPs and Peers largely agreed: the need to secure and assert Parliament's sovereignty. During this point in the debates, as Parliament's role as an imperial power began to emerge in MPs' and Peers' discourse, it became increasingly clear that its sense of status as an imperial government was inextricable from an understanding of its role and authority, not only over the American colonies, but also in the realm of Great Britain and Ireland. Indeed, we see an acknowledgement that America's place in the realm was almost identical to that of Ireland, thereby determining Ireland's centrality to discussions of the American situation. Ireland became the official gauge by which Parliament judged its respective rights as the governing authority in the British realm and in a wider imperial context, as articulated by Charles James Fox. As the debates in this chapter revealed, while Parliamentarians continued to cling to precedents established with Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, they were becoming aware that Parliament's relationship with the American colonies required clearer definition and clarification, whether as an imperial relationship or one defined by the colonies' position in the realm. By 1775, Parliamentarians were acknowledging that in order to save Parliament's sovereignty throughout the realm - foremost, Great Britain and Ireland - there was

no middle ground with the American colonies, it was either independence or complete obedience to Parliament.

Chapter Six delved into the debates that emerged in Parliament in reaction to the shift from political agitation and riotous conduct to armed military engagement in 1775. Discussions on the nature of rebellion were once again resurrected as Parliamentarians rehearsed debates that by now had repeatedly taken place in the Commons and Lords over the severity of American actions and appropriate response to them through comparison with the 1745 Scottish rebellion. The debates during this time reveal a notable political sea-change from prevention to being on the defence, especially as Parliamentarians acknowledged the real possibility of an imperial war, encompassing nations within the realm, most particularly Ireland, and outside of it, namely France, when the Earl of Effingham highlighted the possible alliance between Catholic Ireland and France. Furthermore, the Crown's interference in military matters, and the colonies' claim that their ties and loyalties were to the Crown directly, not to Parliament, additionally threatened and undermined Parliament. This served only to further justify in the minds of MPs and Peers a vigorous defence of Parliament's authority within the realm. A minority of Parliamentarians made a final plea for a direct application of taxation policies in Ireland to be implemented in America before the conflict escalated even further, but this largely fell on deaf ears. In particular, David Hartley advanced a vision of empire built on ideas of uniformity, accountability, and constitutional liberties, all of which had a basis in Parliament's relationship with Ireland, but this too attracted little enthusiastic response from other members of the House of Commons. Indeed, as the colonial conflict intensified and imperial ideologies threatened to establish a newfound concept of authority, the majority of Parliamentarians were even more convinced of an approach which situated the American colonies within the British realm and positioned Parliament's sovereignty at the centre of the relationship.

Through a close and detailed examination of the parliamentary debates and private correspondence between 1765 and 1776, this study has shown how MPs and Peers understood the political conflict and crisis with the American colonies to have wider ramifications and implications in terms of the threat it posed to Parliament's sovereignty and authority within the realm of Great Britain and Ireland. Parliamentarians relied on precedents with Ireland, Scotland, and Wales to define Parliament's relationship and governance within the colonial system as well as to deal with the American rebellion, not least because problems in both Ireland and Scotland

had also, in recent history, posed challenges to Parliament's authority. Parliament's historic responses to these nations provided something of a blueprint for how to assert control over the rebellious American colonists. This thesis concludes that MPs and Peers could not conceive of an alternative approach or strategy largely because of a widely felt conviction that to do so would threaten to provoke the Irish, and possibly the Scots, to demand similar such concessions or limitations regarding British rule, or worse still, to rise in rebellion. As the American crisis threatened to fuel further discontent in Ireland, in particular, Parliamentarians became increasingly concerned about maintaining authority over those nations within the realm and close to home. Maintaining Parliament's authority within the realm was perhaps the only area of consensus among MPs and Peers, as they were divided and disagreed over so much else in the debates, not least over whether to impose coercive or conciliatory measures, or between principle and practice. Throughout this thesis, both the American colonists and Parliamentarians acknowledged the increasing support for the American cause in Ireland as the similarities between the two colonies became more obvious. In hindsight, MPs and Peers were right to fear an Irish rebellion. In 1782, only a year before the Treaty of Paris, the British Parliament repealed the Declaratory Act of 1720 in Ireland following increased political agitation there inspired by the American conflict.[506] In 1798, a little over twenty years after the Declaration of Independence, the Irish rose in rebellion, which ironically, after it was crushed, resulted in the union of the Irish and British Parliaments.[507] By 1776, the motivating factor behind Parliament's actions was to prevent rebellion in Ireland and the British realm, at the same time as debating whether bringing the colonies back from the brink of independence was even a wise decision. As history shows, Parliament was decidedly not prepared to relinquish the American colonies without a fight, but as the debates during Parliament over the course of the conflict reveal, the politics of the American Revolution was never only about the American colonies, but rather, to Parliament, it was *also* a matter of preserving its sovereignty and authority, arguably, perhaps even more importantly, in Great Britain and Ireland.

[506] Beckett, "Anglo-Irish Constitutional Relations," 21.
[507] Calkin, "American Influence in Ireland," 118-119.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Unpublished Primary Sources (Manuscripts)

British Library
- Hardwicke Papers
- Additional Grenville Papers (Add. MSS)
- Newcastle Papers

Sheffield City Archives
- Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments
  - Correspondence and Papers of Edmund Burke (WWM/Bk P)
  - Papers of Charles Watson-Wentworth, 2nd Marquis of Rockingham (1730-1782) (WWM/R)

U.K. National Archives
- Board of Trade: Minutes (CO 391/72)
- William Pitt, 1st Earl of Chatham: Papers (PRO 30/8/97)
- Privy Council: Registers (PC 2/111-117)

William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan
- William Dowdeswell Papers, 1765-1774
- Benjamin Franklin Collection, 1766-1788
- Thomas Gage Papers, 1754-1807, 1759-1775
- Charles Garth Letterbook, 1758-1766
- George Sackville Germain Papers, 1683-1785
- William Knox Papers, 1757-1811
- William Henry Lyttelton Papers, 1730-1806, 1755-1761
- William Petty, 1st Marquis of Lansdowne, 2nd Earl of Shelburne Papers, 1665-1885
- Charles Townshend Papers, 1660-1804
- Alexander Wedderburn, 1st Earl of Rosslyn Papers, 1676-1801

Published Primary Sources (Monographs)

Altholz, Josef L. *Selected Documents in Irish History.* Armonk [NY] and London: M.E. Sharpe, 2000.

Dickinson, John. *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania, to the Inhabitants of the British Colonies.* 11 letters, Philadelphia, 1767-8.

Simmons, R.C., and Peter D.G. Thomas, eds. *Proceedings and Debates of the British Parliaments Respecting North America, 1754-1783*. 6 volumes, Millwood [NY]: Kraus International Publications, 1982.

Stock, Leo Francis, ed. *Proceedings and Debates of the British Parliaments Respecting North America*. Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1924-1941.

Published Primary Sources (Websites)

Massachusetts State Archives. “Inter-Charter Period (1686-1692).” Massachusetts Archives Collection Overview. https://www.sec.state.ma.us/divisions/archives/collections/mass-archives-collection.htm.

The Avalon Project. “Declaration and Resolves of the First Continental Congress.” Lillian Goldman Law Library, 2008. https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/resolves.asp.

The Avalon Project. “Journals of the Continental Congress-Address to the People of Ireland; July 28, 1775.” Lillian Goldman Law Library, 2008. https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/contcong_07-28-75.asp.

The New York Public Library. “William Smith Jr. Papers.” Manuscripts and Archives Division, 2025. https://archives.nypl.org/mss/2796.

University of Michigan Library Digital Collections. "The peerage of Scotland: containing an historical and genealogical account of the nobility of that kingdom, ... collected from the public records, and ancient chartularies of this nation, ... Illustrated with copper-plates. By Robert Douglas, Esq;." In the digital collection Eighteenth Century Collections Online. https://name.umdl.umich.edu/004896980.0001.000.

Secondary Sources

Monographs

Adams. Randolph G. *Political Ideas of the American Revolution.* New York: Barnes & Noble Inc., 1958.

Andrews, Charles M. *The Colonial Background of the American Revolution: Four Essays in American Colonial History.* New Haven [CT] and London: Yale University Press, 1924, 1931.

Ayling, Stanley. *Edmund Burke: His Life and Opinions*. London: Cassell, 1988.

Bailyn, Bernard. *Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*. Cambridge [MA]: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967.

Bailyn, Bernard, and Philip D. Morgan, eds. *Strangers within the Realm: Cultural Margins of the First British Empire.* Chapel Hill [NC] and London: University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1991.

Bargar, B.D. *Lord Dartmouth and the American Revolution*. Columbia [SC]: The University of South Carolina Press, 1965.

Beer, George Louis. *British Colonial Policy 1754-1765*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1907.

Bellot. Leland J. *William Knox: The Life & Thought of an Eighteenth-Century Imperialist.* Austin [TX] and London: University of Texas Press, 1977.

Black, Jeremy. *Debating Foreign Policy in Eighteenth-Century Britain*. Farnham [England]: Ashgate, 2011.

Black, Jeremy. *Eighteenth-Century Britain, 1688-1783.* Basingstoke [England]: Palgrave, 2001.

Black, Jeremy. *George III: America's Last King.* New Haven [CT] and London: Yale University Press, 2006.

Black, Jeremy. *Parliament and Foreign Policy in the Eighteenth Century*. Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Black, Jeremy. *Pitt the Elder*. Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Bonwick, Colin. *English Radicals and the American Revolution.* Chapel Hill [NC]: The University of North Carolina Press, 1977.

Bonwick, Colin. *The American Revolution*. Charlottesville [VA]: University Press of Virginia, 1991.

Bradley, James E. *Popular Politics and the American Revolution in England: Petitions, The Crown and Public Opinion.* Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1986.

Brewer, John. *Party Ideology and Popular Politics at the Accession of George III.* Cambridge [England] and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976.

Brown, Weldon A. *Empire or Independence: A Study in the Failure of Reconciliation, 1774-1783.* University [LA]: Louisiana State University Press, 1941.

Bullion, John L. *A Great and Necessary Measure: George Grenville and the Genesis of the Stamp Act 1763-1765*. Columbia [MO] and London: University of Missouri Press, 1982.

Bunker, Nick. *An Empire on the Edge: How Britain Came to Fight America.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014. Kindle.

Christie, Ian R. *Crisis of Empire: Great Britain and the American Colonies 1754-1783.* New York: WW Norton & Company Inc, 1966.

Christie, Ian R. *Myth and Reality in Late-Eighteenth-Century British Politics and Other Papers.* Berkeley and Los Angeles [CA]: University of California Press, 1970.

Christie, Ian R. and Benjamin W. Labaree. *Empire or Independence 1760-1776: A British-American Dialogue on the Coming of the American Revolution.* New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1976.

Clark, Dora Mae. *British Opinion and the American Revolution*. New Haven [CT]: Yale University Press, 1930.

Colley, Linda. *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837.* New Haven [CT] and London: Yale University Press, 1992.

Cone, Carl B. *Burke and the Nature of Politics: The Age of the America Revolution*. Lexington [KY]: University of Kentucky Press, 1957.

Conway, Stephen. *Britain, Ireland, and Continental Europe in the Eighteenth Century: Similarities, Connections, Identities.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Conway, Stephen. *The British Isles and the War of American Independence.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Conway, Stephen. *War, State, and Society in Mid-Eighteenth-Century Britain and Ireland.* Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Cook, Don. *The Long Fuse: How England Lost the American Colonies, 1760-1785.* New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1995.

Coupland, R. *The American Revolution and the British Empire.* New York: Russell & Russell, 1965.

Derry, John W. *English Politics and the American Revolution.* London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1976.

Dickinson, H.T., ed. *A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Britain*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 2002.

Dickinson, H.T., ed. *Britain and the American Revolution.* London and New York: Addison Wesley Longman Limited, 1998.

Donoughue, Bernard. *British Politics and the American Revolution: The Path to War, 1773-75*. London: Macmillan & Co. Limited, 1964.

Doyle, David Noel. *Ireland, Irishmen and Revolutionary America, 1760-1820.* Dublin [Ireland]: Mercier Press, 1981.

Du Rivage, Justin. *Revolution Against Empire: Taxes, Politics, and the Origins of American Independence*. New Haven [CT] and London: Yale University Press, 2017.

Edwards, Owen Dudley, and George Shepperson, eds. *Scotland, Europe and the American Revolution*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University, 1976.

Feiling, Keith Grahame. *The Second Tory Party 1714-1832.* London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1951.

Fowler, Jr., William M., and Wallace Coyle, eds. *The American Revolution: Changing Perspectives*. Boston [MA]: Northeastern University Press, 1979.

Gibbons, Luke. *Edmund Burke and Ireland: Aesthetics, Politics, and the Colonial Sublime.* Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Gipson, Lawrence Henry. *The Coming of the American Revolution, 1763-1775.* New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1954.

Gould, Eliga H. *The Persistence of Empire: British Political Culture in the Age of the American Revolution.* Chapel Hill [NC]: University of North Carolina Press, 2000.

Gould, Eliga H., and Peter S. Onuf., eds. *Empire and Nation: The American Revolution in the Atlantic World*. Baltimore [MD]: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005.

Grant, Alexander, and Keith J. Stringer, eds. *Uniting the Kingdom? The Making of British History*. London and New York: Routledge, 1995.

Greene, Jack P. *Evaluating Empire and Confronting Colonialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain.* Cambridge [England] and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Greene, Jack P., ed. *Exclusionary Empire: English Liberty Overseas 1600-1900*. Cambridge [England] and New York: University Press, 2010.

Greene, Jack P. *Peripheries and Center: Constitutional Development in the Extended Polities of the British Empire and the United States, 1607-1788.* Athens [GA] and London: University of Georgia Press, 1986.

Greene, Jack P. *The Constitutional Origins of the American Revolution*. Cambridge [England] and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Greene, Jack P., ed. *The Reinterpretation of the American Revolution 1763-1789*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1968.

Greene, Jack P. and J.R. Pole, eds. *A Companion to the American Revolution.* Malden [MA]: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 2000.

Griffin, Patrick and Francis D. Cogliano, eds. *Ireland and America: Empire, Revolution, and Sovereignty.* Charlottesville [VA] and London: University of Virginia Press, 2021.

Henretta, James A. *Salutary Neglect: Colonial Administration under the Duke of Newcastle.* Princeton [NJ]: Princeton University Press, 2015.

James, Francis Godwin. *Ireland in the Empire 1688-1770: A History of Ireland from the Williamite Wars to the Eve of the American Revolution*. Cambridge [MA]: Harvard University Press, 1973.

Jensen, Merrill. *The Founding of a Nation: A History of the American Revolution, 1763-1776*. New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1968.

Jensen, Merrill, ed. *Tracts of the American Revolution 1763-1776*. Indianapolis [IN] and Cambridge [MA]: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2003.

Johnston, Edith Mary. *Ireland in the Eighteenth Century*. Dublin [Ireland]: Gill and Macmillan Limited, 1974.

Knollenberg, Bernhard. *Growth of the American Revolution 1766-1775.* New York: The Free Press, 1975.

Lecky, William Edward Hartpole. *A History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century: Volume II*. London, Bombay, and Calcutta: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1913.

Lovejoy, David S. *The Glorious Revolution in America*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1972.

McDowell, R.B. *Ireland in the Age of Imperialism and Revolution, 1760-1801.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979.

McFarland, E.W. *Ireland and Scotland in the Age of Revolution: Planting the Green Bough*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994.

McIlwain, Charles Howard. *The American Revolution: A Constitutional Interpretation*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1923.

McKinnon, Robert. *The Jacobite Rebellions*. London: Wayland Publishers, 1973.

Morgan, Edmund S. and Helen M. Morgan. *The Stamp Act Crisis: Prologue to Revolution.* Chapel Hill [NC]: The University of North Carolina Press, 1953.

Morley, Vincent. *Irish Opinion and the American Revolution, 1760-1783.* Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Namier, Sir Lewis. *England in the Age of the American Revolution.* London: Macmillan & Co LTD; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1963.

Namier, Sir Lewis and John Brooke. *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1754-1790*. Volumes I-III. London: Boydell & Brewer, 1964 (I: Introductory Survey, Constituencies, Appendices; II: Members A-J; III: Members K-Y).

O'Brien, Michael J. *A Hidden Phase of American History: Ireland's Part in America's Struggle for Liberty.* New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1919.

O'Connell, Maurice. *Irish Politics and Social Conflict in the Age of the American Revolution.* Philadelphia [PA]: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1965.

Olwell, Robert, and James M. Vaughn, eds. *Envisioning Empire: The New British World from 1763 to 1773.* London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019.

O'Shaughnessy, Andrew Jackson. *The Men Who Lost America: British Leadership, the American Revolution, and the Fate of the Empire.* New Haven [CT]: Yale University Press, 2013.

Perry, Keith. *British Politics and the American Revolution.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990.

Pocock, J.G.A., ed. *Three British Revolutions: 1641, 1688, 1776*. Princeton [NJ]: Princeton University Press, 1980.

Pole, J.R. *Political Representation in England and the Origins of the American Republic*. London: Macmillan and Company Limited, 1966.

Powell, Martyn J. *Britain and Ireland in the Eighteenth-Century Crisis of Empire*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

Reich, Jerome R. *British Friends of the American Revolution.* New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1998.

Reid, John Phillip. *Constitutional History of the American Revolution: The Authority of Law*. Madison [WI] and London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1993.

Reid, John Phillip. *Constitutional History of the American Revolution: The Authority of Rights*. Madison [WI]: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1986.

Reid, John Phillip. *Constitutional History of the American Revolution: The Authority to Legislate.* Madison [WI] and London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1991.

Reid, John Phillip. *Constitutional History of the American Revolution: The Authority to Tax*. Madison [WI]: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1987.

Reid, John Phillip. *In a Defiant Stance: The Conditions of Law in Massachusetts Bay, the Irish Comparison, and the Coming of the American Revolution*. University Park [PA]: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1977.

Reid, John Phillip. *The Concept of Representation in the Age of the American Revolution*. Chicago [IL] and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989.

Ritcheson, Charles R. *British Politics and the American Revolution.* Norman [OK]: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954.

Schuyler, Robert Livingston. *Parliament and the British Empire: Some Constitutional Controversies Concerning Imperial Legislative Jurisdiction.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1929.

Shumate, Ken. *1764: The First Year of the American Revolution*. Yardley [PA]: Westholme Publishing, LLC., 2021.

Simmons, R.C. *The American Colonies: From Settlement to Independence.* New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1976.

Sosin, Jack M. *Agents and Merchants: British Colonial Policy and the Origins of the American Revolution, 1763-1775*. Lincoln [NE]: University of Nebraska Press, 1965.

Sosin, Jack M. *Whitehall and the Wilderness: The Middle West in British Colonial Policy, 1760-1775*. Lincoln [NE]: University of Nebraska Press, 1961.

Steffen, Lisa. *Defining a British State: Treason and National Identity, 1608-1820.* Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire [England] and New York: Palgrave Publishers Ltd., 2001.

Stone, Lawrence, ed. *An Imperial State at War: Britain from 1689-1815*. London and New York: Routledge, 1994.

Thomas, Peter D.G. *British Politics and the Stamp Act Crisis: The First Phase of the American Revolution, 1763-1767.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975.

Thomas, Peter D.G. *Politics in Eighteenth-Century Wales*. Cardiff [Wales]: University of Wales Press, 1998.

Thomas, Peter D.G. *Sources for Debates of the House of Commons, 1768-1774*. London: The Athlone Press, 1959.

Thomas, Peter D.G. *Tea Party to Independence: The Third Phase of the American Revolution 1773-1776.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991.

Thomas, Peter D.G. *The House of Commons in the Eighteenth Century*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971.

Thomas, Peter D.G. *The Townshend Duties Crisis: The Second Phase of the American Revolution 1767-1773.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987.

Toohey, Robert E. *Liberty and Empire: British Radical Solutions to the American Problem 1774-1776.* Lexington [KY]: The University Press of Kentucky, 1978.

Whiteley, Peter. *Lord North: The Prime Minister Who Lost America.* London and Rio Grande [OH]: The Hambledon Press, 1996.

Wood, Gordon S. *The American Revolution: A History*. New York: Modern Library, 2005.

Wood, Gordon S. *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992.

Essays

Connolly, S.J. "Varieties of Britishness: Ireland, Scotland and Wales in the Hanoverian State." In *Uniting the Kingdom: The Making of British History*, edited by Alexander Grant and Keith J. Stringer. London: Routledge, 1995.

Dickinson, H.T. "Sovereignty in the American Revolution." In *The Challenge to Westminster: Sovereignty, Devolution and Independence*, edited by H.T. Dickinson and Michael Lynch. East Linton [Scotland]: Tuckwell Press, 2000.

Obrien, Conor Cruise. "Edmund Burke and the American Revolution." In *Scotland, Europe and the American Revolution*, edited by Owen Dudley Edwards and George Shepperson. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1976.

Journal Articles

British Parliamentary Politics

Anson, William R. "The Cabinet in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries." *The English Historical Review* 29, no. 113 (1914): 56-78.

Aoki, Yasushi. "Members of Parliament and their Connections to Constituencies in the Eighteenth Century: A Study in Quantitative Political History." *Parliament, Estates and Representation* 18, no. 1 (1998): 71-82.

Barrow, Thomas C. "Background to the Grenville Program, 1757-1763." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 22, no. 1 (1965): 93-104.

Beer, George Louis. "British Colonial Policy, 1754-1765." *Political Science Quarterly* 22, no. 1 (1907): 1-48.

Beer, Samuel H. "The Representation of Interests in British Government: Historical Background." *The American Political Science Review* 51, no. 3 (1957): 613-50.

Black, Jeremy. "Eighteenth-Century English Politics: Recent Work." *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 35, no. 1 (2003): 25-52.

Black, Jeremy. "Parliament, the Press and Foreign Policy." *Parliamentary History* 25, no. 1 (2006): 9-16.

Brown, Weldon Amzy. "The Howe Peace Commission of 1776." *The North Carolina Historical Review* 13, no. 2 (1936): 122-42.

Bullion, John L. "British Ministers and American Resistance to the Stamp Act, October-December 1765." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 49, no. 1 (1992): 89-107.

Bullion, John L. "Security and Economy: The Bute Administration's Plans for the American Army and Revenue, 1762-1763." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 45, no. 3 (1988): 499-509.

Bullion, John L. "'The Ten Thousand in America': More Light on the Decision on the American Army, 1762-1763." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 43, no. 4 (1986): 646-57.

Burn, W.L. "Property Qualifications in the House of Commons." *Parliamentary Affairs* 2, no. 3 (1949): 274-283.

Carter, Clarence E. "The Significance of the Military Office in America, 1763-1775." *The American Historical Review* 28, no. 3 (1923): 475-88.

Chaffin, Robert J. “The Declaratory Act of 1766: A Reappraisal.” *The Historian* 37, no. 1 (1974): 5-25.

Chaffin, Robert J. “The Townshend Acts of 1767.” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 27, no. 1 (1970): 90-121.

Christie, Ian R. “A Vision of Empire: Thomas Whately and the Regulations Lately Made Concerning the Colonies.” *The English Historical Review* 113, no. 451 (1998): 300-320.

Christie, Ian R. “British Politics and the American Revolution.” *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 9, no. 3 (1977): 205-26.

Christie, Ian R. “The Cabinet during the Grenville Administration, 1763-1765.” *The English Historical Review* 73, no. 286 (1958): 86-92.

Christie, Ian R. “The Earl of Chatham and American Taxation, 1774-1775.” *The Eighteenth Century* 20, no. 3 (1979): 246-59.

Christie, Ian R. “Was There a “New Toryism” in the Earlier Part of George III's Reign?” *Journal of British Studies* 5, no. 1 (1965): 60-76.

Clark, Dora Mae. “George Grenville as First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1763-1765.” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 13, no. 4 (1950): 383-97.

Clark, J. C. D. “A General Theory of Party, Opposition and Government, 1688-1832.” *The Historical Journal* 23, no. 2 (1980): 295-325.

Clark, J. C. D. “The Decline of Party, 1740-1760.” *The English Historical Review* 93, no. 368 (1978): 499-527.

Colley, Linda. “The Politics of Eighteenth-Century British History.” *Journal of British Studies* 25, no. 4 (1986): 359-79.

Connors, Richard. “‘The Grand Inquest of the Nation’: Parliamentary Committees and Social Policy in Mid-Eighteenth-Century England.” *Parliamentary History* 14, no. 3 (1995): 285-313.

Connors, Richard and Ben Gilding. “‘Hereditary Guardians of the Nation’: The House of Lords and the East India Company in the Age of the American Revolution.” *Parliamentary History* 39, no. 1 (2020): 159-189.

Conway, Stephen. “The Politics of British Military and Naval Mobilization, 1775-83.” *The English Historical Review* 112, no. 449 (1997): 1179-201.

Corbitt, D. L. “William Pitt and the American Colonies.” *The North Carolina Historical Review* 3, no. 4 (1926): 637-41.

Cross, N. “Did Great Britain Offer the American Colonies a Representation in Parliament?” *The American Historical Magazine* 5, no. 2 (1900): 124-27.

Dickinson, H.T. “George III and Parliament.” *Parliamentary History* 30, no. 3 (2011): 395-413.

Dickinson, H. T. “The Eighteenth-Century Debate on the Sovereignty of Parliament.” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 26 (1976): 189-210.

Dickinson, H. T. “The Failure of Conciliation: Britain and the American Colonies 1763-1783.” *The Kyoto Economic Review* 79, no. 2 (167) (2010): 2-20.

Dudley, Christopher. “Party Politics, Political Economy, and Economic Development in Early Eighteenth-century Britain.” *The Economic History Review* 66, no. 4 (2013): 1084-100.

Ernst, Joseph Albert. “The Currency Act Repeal Movement: A Study of Imperial Politics and Revolutionary Crisis, 1764-1767.” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 25, no. 2 (1968): 177-211.

Farrell, Stephen. “The Practices and Purpose of Party Leadership: Rockingham and the Lords, 1765-82.” *Parliamentary History* 22, no. 1 (2003): 13-28.

Galiani, Sebastian, and Gustavo Torrens. “Why Not Taxation and Representation? British Politics and the American Revolution.” *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization* 166 (2019): 28-52.

Gerlach, Don R. “A Note on the Quartering Act of 1774.” *The New England Quarterly* 39, no. 1 (1966): 80-88.

Gipson, Lawrence Henry. “The Great Debate in the Committee of the Whole House of Commons on the Stamp Act, 1766, as Reported by Nathaniel Ryder.” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 86, no. 1 (1962): 10-41.

Greene, Jack P. “Competing Authorities: The Debate over Parliamentary Imperial Jurisdiction, 1763-1776.” *Parliamentary History* 14, no. 1 (1995): 47-63.

Greene, Jack P. “[Political Mimesis: A Consideration of the Historical and Cultural Roots of Legislative Behavior in the British Colonies in the Eighteenth Century]: Reply.” *The American Historical Review* 75, no. 2 (1969): 364-67.

Greene, Jack P., and Richard M. Jellison. “The Currency Act of 1764 in Imperial-Colonial Relations, 1764-1776.” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 18, no. 4 (1961): 485-518.

Green, Stuart A. “Notes and Documents: Repeal of the Stamp Act: The Merchants’ and Manufacturers’ Testimonies.” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 128, no. 2 (2004): 179-97.

Gruber, Ira D. “Lord Howe and Lord George Germain, British Politics and the Winning of American Independence.” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 22, no. 2 (1965): 225-43.

Guttridge, G. H. “The Whig Opposition in England during the American Revolution.” *The Journal of Modern History* 6, no. 1 (1934): 1-13.

Hackmann, W. Kent. “George Grenville and English Politics in 1763.” *The Yale University Library Gazette* 64, no. 3/4 (1990): 158-66.

Harris, Ian. “What Was Parliamentary Reporting? A Study of Aims and Results in the London Daily Newspapers, 1780-96.” *Parliamentary History* 39, no. 2 (2020): 255-275.

Heasman, D.J. “The Ministerial Hierarchy.” *Parliamentary Affairs* XV, no. 3 (1962): 307-330.

Hodge, Helen Henry. “The Repeal of the Stamp Act.” *Political Science Quarterly* 19, no. 2 (1904): 252-76.

Humphreys, R. A. “Historical Revision: LXIX.—British Colonial Policy and the American Revolution, 1763–1776.” *History* 19, no. 73 (1934): 42-48.

Humphreys, R. A. “Lord Shelburne and a Projected Recall of Colonial Governors in 1767.” *The American Historical Review* 37, no. 2 (1932): 269-72.

Humphreys, R.A. “Lord Shelburne and British Colonial Policy, 1766-1768.” *The English Historical Review* 50, no. 198 (1935): 257-277.

Humphreys, R. A. “Lord Shelburne and the Proclamation of 1763.” *The English Historical Review* 49, no. 194 (1934): 241-64.

Hutson, James H. “The Partition Treaty and the Declaration of American Independence.” *The Journal of American History* 58, no. 4 (1972): 877-96.

Johnson, Victor L. “Internal Financial Reform or External Taxation: Britain's Fiscal Choice, 1763.” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 98, no. 1 (1954): 31-37.

Kammen, Michael G. “The Colonial Agents, English Politics and the American Revolution.” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 22, no. 2 (1965): 244-63.

Labaree, Benjamin W. “The Idea of American Independence: The British View, 1774-1776.” *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 82 (1970): 3-20.

Lakin, Stuart. “Debunking the Idea of Parliamentary Sovereignty: The Controlling Factor of Legality in the British Constitution.” *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies* 28, no. 4 (2008): 709-34.

Langford, Paul. “Old Whigs, Old Tories and the American Revolution.” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 8, no. 2 (1980): 106-130.

Langford, Paul. “Property and ‘Virtual Representation’ in Eighteenth-Century England.” *The Historical Journal* 31, no. 1 (1988): 83-115.

Laprade, William T. “The Stamp Act in British Politics.” *The American Historical Review* 35, no. 4 (1930): 735-57.

Lawson, Philip. “George Grenville and America: The Years of Opposition, 1765 to 1770.” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 37, no. 4 (1980): 562-76.

Lawson, Philip. “Sources, Schools and Separation: The Many Faces of Parliament's Role in Anglo-American History to 1783.” *Parliamentary History* 14, no. 1 (1995): 5-27.

Lewis, Theodore B. “A Revolutionary Tradition, 1689-1774: ‘There Was a Revolution Here as Well as in England.’” *The New England Quarterly* 46, no. 3 (1973): 424-38.

Lord, Donald C., and Robert M. Calhoon. “The Removal of the Massachusetts General Court from Boston, 1769-1772.” *The Journal of American History* 55, no. 4 (1969): 735-55.

Lowe, William C. “George III, Peerage Creations and Politics, 1760-1784.” *The Historical Journal* 35, no. 3 (1992): 587-609.

Lucas, Paul. “A Note on the Comparative Study of the Structure of Politics in Mid-Eighteenth-Century Britain and Its American Colonies.” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (1971): 301-9.

Maier, Pauline. “Whigs against Whigs against Whigs: The Imperial Debates of 1765–76 Reconsidered.” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 68, no. 4 (2011): 578-82.

McCahill, Michael, and Ellis Archer Wasson. “The New Peerage: Recruitment to the House of Lords, 1704-1847.” *The Historical Journal* 46, no. 1 (2003): 1-38.

McCurry, Allan J. “The North Government and the Outbreak of the American Revolution.” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 34, no. 2 (1971): 141-57.

McElroy, Robert McNutt. “The Representative Idea and the American Revolution.” *Proceedings of the New York State Historical Association* 17 (1919): 44-55.

McGovney, Dudley Odell. “The British Privy Council’s Power to Restrain the Legislatures of Colonial America: Power to Disallow Statutes: Power to Veto.” *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 94, no. 1 (1945): 59-93.

Morgan, Edmund S. “The Postponement of the Stamp Act.” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 7, no. 3 (1950): 353-92.

Mowat, Charles L. “The Southern Brigade: A Sidelight on the British Military Establishment in America, 1763-1775.” *The Journal of Southern History* 10, no. 1 (1944): 59-77.

Mullett, Charles F. “English Imperial Thinking, 1764-1783.” *Political Science Quarterly* 45, no. 4 (1930): 548-79.

Musson, A.E. “Parliament and the Press: A Historical Survey-II.” *Parliamentary Affairs* IX, no. 3 (1955): 277-288.

North, Lord, and Edward Hughes. “Lord North’s Correspondence, 1766-83.” *The English Historical Review* 62, no. 243 (1947): 218-38.

Oates, Jonathan. “The Crisis of The Hanoverian State?” *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research* 81, no. 328 (2003): 308-29.

Oats, Lynne, and Pauline Sadler. “Accounting for the Stamp Act Crisis.” *The Accounting Historians Journal* 35, no. 2 (2008): 101-43.

Olson, Alison G. “The London Mercantile Lobby and the Coming of the American Revolution.” *The Journal of American History* 69, no. 1 (1982): 21-41.

O’Shaughnessy, Andrew J. “The Formation of a Commercial Lobby: The West India Interest, British Colonial Policy and the American Revolution.” *The Historical Journal* 40, no. 1 (1997): 71-95.

Pares, R. “George III and the Politicians.” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 1 (1951): 127-51.

Peters, Marie. “State, Parliament and Empire in the Mid 18th Century: Hudson’s Bay and the Parliamentary Enquiry of 1749.” *Parliamentary History* 29, no. 2 (2010): 171-191.

Phillips, John A. “Popular Politics in Unreformed England.” *The Journal of Modern History* 52, no. 4 (1980): 599-625.

Phillips, John A. “The Structure of Electoral Politics in Unreformed England.” *Journal of British Studies* 19, no. 1 (1979): 76–100.

Pollock, Frederick. “Sovereignty in English Law.” *Harvard Law Review* 8, no. 5 (1894): 243-51.

Ritcheson, Charles R. “The Elder Pitt and an American Department.” *The American Historical Review* 57, no. 2 (1952): 376-83.

Ritcheson, Charles R. “The Preparation of the Stamp Act.” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 10, no. 4 (1953): 543-59.

Schweizer, Karl W. “William Pitt, Lord Bute, and the Peace Negotiations with France, May-September 1761.” *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 13, no. 3 (1981): 262-75.

Schweizer, Karl W., and John Stuart. “A Lost Letter of John Stuart, 3rd Earl of Bute, to George Grenville, 13 October 1761.” *The Historical Journal* 17, no. 2 (1974): 435-42.

Sosin, Jack M. “A Postscript to the Stamp Act: George Grenville’s Revenue Measures: A Drain on Colonial Specie?” *The American Historical Review* 63, no. 4 (1958): 918-23.

Sosin, Jack M. “The Massachusetts Acts of 1774: Coercive or Preventive?” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 26, no. 3 (1963): 235-252.

Spindel, Donna J. “The Stamp Act Crisis in the British West Indies.” *Journal of American Studies* 11, no. 2 (1977): 203-21.

Stanlis, Peter J. “British Views of the American Revolution: A Conflict over Rights of Sovereignty.” *Early American Literature* 11, no. 2 (1976): 191-201.

Thomas, Peter D.G. “‘A Young Tory’? The Early Parliamentary Career of Charles James Fox 1768–74.” *Parliamentary History* (Wiley-Blackwell) 37, no. 2 (2018): 212-25.

Thomas, Peter D.G. “Charles Townshend and American Taxation in 1767.” *The English Historical Review* 83, no. 326 (1968): 33-51.

Thomas, Peter D.G. “Check List of M.P.s Speaking in the House of Commons, 1768 to 1774.” *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 35, no. 92 (1962): 220-226.

Thomas, Peter D.G. “George III and the American Revolution.” *History* 70, no. 228 (1985): 16-31.

Thomas, Peter D.G. “New Light on the Commons Debate of 1763 on the American Army.” *William and Mary Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (1981): 110-112.

Thomas, Peter D.G. “The Beginning of Parliamentary Reporting in Newspapers, 1768-1774.” *The English Historical Review* 74, no. 293 (1959): 623-36.

Thomas, Peter D. G. “The Cost of the British Army in North America, 1763-1775.” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 45, no. 3 (1988): 510-16.

Thomas, Peter D. G. “‘The Great Commoner’: The Elder William Pitt as Parliamentarian.” *Parliamentary History* 22, no. 2 (2008): 145-163.

Thomas, Peter D. G. and Roger Newdigate. “Sir Roger Newdigate's Essays on Party, c. 1760.” *The English Historical Review* 102, no. 403 (1987): 394-400.

Thomas, Robert Paul. “British Imperial Policy and the Economic Interpretation of the American Revolution.” *The Journal of Economic History* 28, no. 3 (1968): 436-40.

Thornley, I.D. “The Treason Legislation of Henry VIII (1531-1534): Alexander Prize Essay, 1916.” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 11 (1917): 87-123.

Van Alstyne, Richard W., and Thomas Walpole. “Thomas Walpole’s Letters to the Duke of Grafton on American Affairs, 1776-1778.” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (1966): 17-33.

Van Themaat, H. Ver Loren. “The Equality of Status of the Dominions and the Sovereignty of the British Parliament.” *Journal of Comparative Legislation and International Law* 15, no. 1 (1933): 47-53.

Varga, Nicholas. “The New York Restraining Act: Its Passage and Some Effects, 1766-1768.” *New York History* 37, no. 3 (1956): 233-58.

Watson, Derek. “The Rockingham Whigs and the Townshend Duties.” *The English Historical Review* 84, no. 332 (1969): 561-65.

Wickwire, Franklin B. “John Pownall and British Colonial Policy.” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 20, no. 4 (1963): 543-54.

York, Neil L. “Imperial Impotence: Treason in 1774 Massachusetts.” *Law and History Review* 29, no. 3 (2011): 657-701.

York, Neil. “William Dowdeswell and the American Crisis, 1763–1775.” *History* 90, no. 300 (2005): 507-531.

Ireland, Scotland, and Wales

Bartlett, Thomas. “Opposition in Late Eighteenth-Century Ireland: The Case of the Townshend Viceroyalty.” *Irish Historical Studies* 22, no. 88 (1981): 313-30.

Bartlett, Thomas. “The Augmentation of the Army in Ireland 1767-1769.” *The English Historical Review* 96, no. 380 (1981): 540-59.

Bartlett, Thomas. “The Irish House of Commons’ Rejection of the ‘Privy Council’ Money Bill in 1769: A Re-Assessment.” *Studia Hibernica*, no. 19 (1979): 63-77.

Bartlett, Thomas. “Viscount Townshend and the Irish Revenue Board, 1767-73.” *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy. Section C: Archaeology, Celtic Studies, History, Linguistics, Literature* 79 (1979): 153-75.

Beckett, J.C. “Anglo-Irish Constitutional Relations in the Later Eighteenth Century.” *Irish Historical Studies* 14, no. 53 (1964): 20-38.

Bogart, Dan. “Political Party Representation and Electoral Politics in England and Wales, 1690–1747.” *Social Science History* 40, no. 2 (2016): 271-303.

Bric, Maurice J. “Ireland, America and the Reassessment of a Special Relationship, 1760-1783.” *Eighteenth-Century Ireland / Iris an Dá Chultúr* 11 (1996): 88-119.

Brown, P. Hume. “The Union of the Parliaments of England and Scotland 1707.” *The Scottish Historical Review* 4, no. 14 (1907): 121-34.

Calkin, Homer L. “American Influence in Ireland, 1760 to 1800.” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 71, no. 2 (1947): 103-20.

Canny, Nicholas P. “The Ideology of English Colonization: From Ireland to America.” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (1973): 575-98.

Cunningham, John. “Divided Conquerors: The Rump Parliament, Cromwell’s Army and Ireland.” *The English Historical Review* 129, no. 539 (2014): 830-61.

Donnelly, J. S. “Irish Agrarian Rebellion: The Whiteboys of 1769-76.” *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy. Section C: Archaeology, Celtic Studies, History, Linguistics, Literature* 83C (1983): 293-331.

Ferguson, William. “Imperial Crowns: A Neglected Facet of the Background to the Treaty of Union of 1707.” *The Scottish Historical Review* 53, no. 155 (1974): 22-44.

Graveson, R. H. “The Unification of Law in the British Isles.” *The International and Comparative Law Quarterly* 17, no. 1 (1968): 118–36.

Hill, Jacqueline. “Convergence and Conflict in Eighteenth-Century Ireland.” *The Historical Journal* 44, no. 4 (2001): 1039-63.

Hoppit, J. “Scotland and the Taxing Union, 1707-1815.” *Scottish Historical Review* 98, no. 1 (2019): 45-70.

Howe, Stephen. “Questioning the (Bad) Question: ‘Was Ireland a Colony?’” *Irish Historical Studies* 36, no. 142 (2008): 138-52.

James, F. G. “The Active Irish Peers in the Early Eighteenth Century.” *Journal of British Studies* 18, no. 2 (1979): 52-69.

Kelly, James. “Eighteenth-Century Ascendancy: A Commentary.” *Eighteenth-Century Ireland / Iris an Dá Chultúr* 5 (1990): 173-87.

Maple, John T. “Anglo-Norman Conquest of Ireland and the Irish Economy: Stagnation or Stimulation?” *The Historian* 52, no. 1 (1989): 61-81.

McBride, Ian. “*The Case of Ireland* (1698) in Context: William Molyneux and His Critics.” *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy: Archaeology, Culture, History, Literature* 118C (2018): 201-230.

McKechnie, Wm. S. “The Constitutional Necessity for the Union of 1707.” *The Scottish Historical Review* 5, no. 17 (1907): 52-66.

McLynn, F. J. “Issues and Motives in the Jacobite Rising of 1745.” *The Eighteenth Century* 23, no. 2 (1982): 97-133.

Miller, John. “The Earl of Tyrconnel and James II’s Irish Policy, 1685-1688.” *The Historical Journal* 20, no. 4 (1977): 803-23.

Moore, Sean. “The Irish Contribution to the Ideological Origins of the American Revolution: Nonimportation and the Reception of Jonathan Swift’s Irish Satires in Early America.” *Early American Literature* 52, no. 2 (2017): 333-62.

Morgan, Hiram. “Extradition and Treason-Trial of a Gaelic Lord: The Case of Brian O’Rourke.” *Irish Jurist* 22, no. 2 (1987): 285-301.

Moriarty, Thomas F. “The Irish Absentee Tax Controversy of 1773: A Study in Anglo-Irish Politics on the Eve of the American Revolution.” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 118, no. 4 (1974): 370-408.

Morley, Vincent. “The Idea of Britain in Eighteenth-Century Ireland and Scotland.” *Studia Hibernica*, no. 33 (2004): 101-24.

Murphy, Kathleen S. “Judge, Jury, Magistrate and Soldier: Rethinking Law and Authority in Late Eighteenth-Century Ireland.” *The American Journal of Legal History* 44, no. 3 (2000): 231-56.

O’Brien, Gerard. “The Unimportance of Public Opinion in Eighteenth-Century Britain and Ireland.” *Eighteenth-Century Ireland / Iris an Dá Chultúr* 8 (1993): 115-27.

Ohlmeyer, Jane. “Seventeenth-Century Ireland and the New British and Atlantic Histories.” *The American Historical Review* 104, no. 2 (1999): 446-62.

Powell, Martyn J. “British Party Politics and Imperial Control: The Rockingham Whigs and Ireland 1765-1782.” *Parliamentary History* (2008): 325-350.

Riley, P. W. J. “The Union of 1707 as an Episode in English Politics.” *The English Historical Review* 84, no. 332 (1969): 498-527.

Walsh, Patrick A. “The Fiscal State in Ireland, 1691 — 1769.” *The Historical Journal* 56, no. 3 (2013): 629-56.

Ward, Alan J. “Models of Government and Anglo-Irish Relations.” *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 20, no. 1 (1988): 19-42.

Watson, Amy. “Patriotism and Partisanship in Post-Union Scotland, 1724–37.” *The Scottish Historical Review* 97, no. 1 (2018): 57-84.

Watt, Timothy D. “Taxation Riots and the Culture of Popular Protest in Ireland, 1714-1740.” *The English Historical Review* 130, no. 547 (2015): 1418-1448.

Whatley, Christopher A. “Economic Causes and Consequences of the Union of 1707: A Survey.” *The Scottish Historical Review* 68, no. 186 (1989): 150-81.

Whetstone, Ann E. “The Reform of the Scottish Sheriffdoms in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries.” *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 9, no. 1 (1977): 61-71.

Colonial Reactions/Colonial Politics

Barnwell, Joseph W. “Hon. Charles Garth, M.P., the Last Colonial Agent of South Carolina in England, and Some of His Work.” *The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 26, no. 2 (1925): 67-92.

Black, Barbara Aronstein. “Massachusetts and the Judges: Judicial Independence in Perspective.” *Law and History Review* 3, no. 1 (1985): 101-62.

Black, Barbara A. “The Constitution of Empire: The Case for the Colonists.” *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 124, no. 5 (1976): 1157-1211.

Brunhouse, R. L. “The Effect of the Townshend Acts in Pennsylvania.” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 54, no. 4 (1930): 355-73.

Hartwell, Edward M. “Primary Elections in Massachusetts 1640-1694.” *Proceedings of the American Political Science Association* 7 (1910): 210-24.

Hrdlicka, James F. “‘The Attachment of the People’: The Massachusetts Charter, the French and Indian War, and the Coming of the American Revolution.” *The New England Quarterly* 89, no. 3 (2016): 384-420.

Kim, Daeryoon. “In Search of ‘Affectionate Regard’: American Merchant Lobbies and the State during the Atlantic Imperial Crisis.” *Parliamentary History*, 30 (2011): 324-342.

Knight, Carol Lynn H. “A Certain Great Commoner: The Political Image of William Pitt, First Earl of Chatham, in the Colonial Press.” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 123, no. 2 (1979): 131-42.

Morgan, Edmund S. “Colonial Ideas of Parliamentary Power 1764-1766.” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 5, no. 3 (1948): 311-41.

Nelson, Eric. “Patriot Royalism: The Stuart Monarchy in American Political Thought, 1769–75.” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 68, no. 4 (2011): 533-72.

Newcomb, Benjamin H. “Effects of the Stamp Act on Colonial Pennsylvania Politics.” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 23, no. 2 (1966): 257-72.

Olson, Alison G. “Eighteenth-Century Colonial Legislatures and Their Constituents.” *The Journal of American History* 79, no. 2 (1992): 543-67.

Pearl, Christopher. “Franklin’s Turn: Imperial Politics and the Coming of the American Revolution.” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 136, no. 2 (2012): 117-39.

Rogers, J. Alan. “Colonial Opposition to the Quartering of Troops During the French and Indian War.” *Military Affairs* 34, no. 1 (1970): 7-11.

Surrency, Erwin C. “The Courts in the American Colonies.” *The American Journal of Legal History* 11, no. 3 (1967): 253-76.

Tucker, Bruce. “The Reinvention of New England, 1691-1770.” *The New England Quarterly* 59, no. 3 (1986): 315-40.

Walett, Francis G. “The Massachusetts Council, 1766-1774: The Transformation of a Conservative Institution.” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 6, no. 4 (1949): 605-27.

Watson, D.H. “Joseph Harrison and the Liberty Incident.” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 20, no. 4 (1963): 585-95.

Background and Context

Barrow, Thomas C. “The American Revolution as a Colonial War for Independence.” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 25, no. 3 (1968): 452-64.

Bolton, G. C. “The Founding of the Second British Empire.” *The Economic History Review* 19, no. 1 (1966): 195-200.

Bonwick, Colin. “The American Revolution as a Social Movement Revisited.” *Journal of American Studies* 20, no. 3 (1986): 355-73.

Bourke, Richard. “Liberty, Authority, and Trust in Burke’s Idea of Empire.” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 61, no. 3 (2000): 453-71.

Bowen, H.V. “British Conceptions of Global Empire, 1756-83.” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History.* 26, no. 3 (2008): 1-27.

Breen, T. H. “Ideology and Nationalism on the Eve of the American Revolution: Revisions Once More in Need of Revising.” *The Journal of American History* 84, no. 1 (1997): 13-39.

Burnard, Trevor. “Making a Whig Empire Work: Transatlantic Politics and the Imperial Economy in Britain and British America.” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 69, no. 1 (2012): 51-56.

Burset, Christian R. “Redefining the Rule of Law: An Eighteenth-Century Case Study.” *The American Journal of Comparative Law* 70, no. 4 (2022): 657-694.

Calhoon, Robert M. “William Smith Jr.’s Alternative to the American Revolution.” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 22, no. 1 (1965): 105-118.

Carrington, Selwyn H. H. “The American Revolution and the British West Indies’ Economy.” *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 17, no. 4 (1987): 823-50.

Conway, Stephen. “Britain and the Impact of the American War, 1775–1783.” *War in History* 2, no. 2 (1995): 127-50.

Conway, Stephen. “From Fellow-Nationals to Foreigners: British Perceptions of the Americans, circa 1739-1783.” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (2002): 65-100.

Conway, Stephen. “Locality, Metropolis and Nation: The Impact of the Military Camps in England during the American War.” *History* 82, no. 268 (1997): 547-62.

Conway, Stephen. “The British Army, “Military Europe,” and the American War of Independence.” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 67, no. 1 (2010): 69-100.

Conway, Stephen. “War and National Identity in the Mid-Eighteenth-Century British Isles.” *The English Historical Review* 116, no. 468 (2001): 863-93.

Egnal, Marc and Joseph A. Ernst. “An Economic Interpretation of the American Revolution.” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (1972): 4-32.

Fraser, Peter. “Public Petitioning and Parliament Before 1832.” *History* 46, no. 158 (1961): 195-211.

Gipson, Lawrence Henry. “The American Revolution as an Aftermath of the Great War for the Empire, 1754-1763.” *Political Science Quarterly* 65, no. 1 (1950): 86-104.

Gould, Eliga H. “American Independence and Britain's Counter-Revolution.” *Past & Present*, no. 154 (1997): 107-41.

Gould, Eliga H. “A Virtual Nation: Greater Britain and the Imperial Legacy of the American Revolution.” *The American Historical Review* 104, no. 2 (1999): 476-89.

Gould, Eliga H. “Entangled Atlantic Histories: A Response from the Anglo-American Periphery.” *The American Historical Review* 112, no. 5 (2007): 1415-22.

Gould, Eliga H. “The Question of Home Rule.” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 64, no. 2 (2007): 255-58.

Greene, Jack P. “The American Revolution.” *The American Historical Review* 105, no. 1 (2000): 93-102.

Greene, Jack P. “The Social Origins of the American Revolution: An Evaluation and an Interpretation.” *Political Science Quarterly* 88, no. 1 (1973): 1-22.

Hayton, D.W. “Sir Lewis Namier, Sir John Neale and the Shaping of the History of Parliament.” *Parliamentary History* 32, no. 1 (2013): 187-211.

Ihalainen, Pasi and Kari Palonen. “Parliamentary Sources in the Comparative Study of Conceptual History: Methodological Aspects and Illustrations of a Research Proposal.” *Parliaments, Estates and Representation* 29, no. 1 (2009): 17-34.

Innes, Joanna. “Parliament and the Shaping of Eighteenth-Century English Social Policy.” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 40 (1990): 63-92.

Kaplanoff, M. D., Edward M. Cook, and J. Leitch Wright. “England, America, and the American Revolution.” *The Historical Journal* 21, no. 2 (1978): 409-27.

Marshall, Peter. “The British Empire and the American Revolution.” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 27, no. 2 (1964): 135-45.

Marshall, P. J. “Presidential Address: Britain and the World in the Eighteenth Century: II, Britons and Americans.” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 9 (1999): 1-16.

Middleton, Richard. “British Historians and the American Revolution.” *Journal of American Studies* 5, no. 1 (1971): 43-58.

Morgan, Edmund S. “The American Revolution: Revisions in Need of Revising.” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 14, no. 1 (1957): 3-15.

Nelson, Paul David. “British Conduct of the American Revolutionary War: A Review of Interpretations.” *The Journal of American History* 65, no. 3 (1978): 623-53.

Nelson, William H. “The Revolutionary Character of the American Revolution.” *The American Historical Review* 70, no. 4 (1965): 998-1014.

Pincus, Steve. “Reconfiguring the British Empire.” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 69, no. 1 (2012): 63-70.

Rachum, Ilan. “From ‘American Independence’ to the ‘American Revolution.’” *Journal of American Studies* 27, no. 1 (1993): 73-81.

Rice, Geoffrey W. “British Foreign Policy and the Falkland Islands Crisis of 1770–1.” *The International History Review* 32, no. 2 (2010): 273-305.

Ritcheson, Charles R. “The American Revolution: Its Influence on the Development of the British Empire.” *Parliamentary Affairs* IV, no. 2 (1950): 245-260.

Russell, Conrad. “The Theory of Treason in the Trial of Strafford.” *The English Historical Review* 80, no. 314 (1965): 30-50.

Sainsbury, John. “The Pro-Americans of London, 1769 to 1782.” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (1978): 423-54.

Schlesinger, Arthur Meier. “The American Revolution Reconsidered.” *Political Science Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (1919): 61-78.

Schuyler, Robert Livingston. “The Britannic Question and the American Revolution.” *Political Science Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (1923): 104-14.

Scott, H. M. “Cathcart, Charles Schaw, Ninth Lord Cathcart (1721–1776), Army Officer and Diplomat.” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.* 2004.

Sellers, Mortimer N.S. “The Doctrine of Precedent in the United States of America.” *The American Journal of Comparative Law* 54 (2006): 67-88.

Smelser, Marshall. “An Understanding of the American Revolution.” *The Review of Politics* 38, no. 3 (1976): 297-312.

Smith, Robert A. H. “The Grenville Papers.” *The British Museum Quarterly* 37, no. 3/4 (1973): 112-18.

Stacy, William R. “Matter of Fact, Matter of Law, and the Attainder of the Earl of Strafford.” *The American Journal of Legal History* 29, no. 4 (1985): 323-48.

Sweet, Rosemary. “Freemen and Independence in English Borough Politics c.1770-1830.” *Past & Present*, no. 161 (1998): 84-115.

Tanner, Edwin P. “Colonial Agencies in England During the Eighteenth Century.” *Political Science Quarterly* 16, no. 1 (1901): 24-49.

Turner, Edward Raymond. “The Cabinet in the Eighteenth Century.” *The English Historical Review* 32, no. 126 (1917): 192-203.

Van Alstyne, Richard W. “Parliamentary Supremacy versus Independence: Notes and Documents.” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 26, no. 3 (1963): 201-33.

Ver Steeg, Clarence L. “The American Revolution Considered as an Economic Movement.” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 20, no. 4 (1957): 361-72.

Wahrman, Dror. “The English Problem of Identity in the American Revolution.” *The American Historical Review* 106, no. 4 (2001): 1236-62.

Wahrman, Dror. “Virtual Representation: Parliamentary Reporting and Languages of Class in the 1790s.” *Past & Present*, no. 136 (1992): 83-113.

Wilson, Kathleen. “Inventing Revolution: 1688 and Eighteenth-Century Popular Politics.” *Journal of British Studies* 28, no. 4 (1989): 349-86.

Wood, Gordon S. “Rhetoric and Reality in the American Revolution.” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 23, no. 1 (1966): 4-32.

Wood, Gordon S. “The Problem of Sovereignty.” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 68, no. 4 (2011): 573-77.

Reviews

Clark, J. C. D. Review of *English History’s Forgotten Context: Scotland, Ireland, Wales* by Ronald M. Sunter, John Robertson, J. G. Simms, D. W. Hayton, Gerard O’Brien, S. J. Connolly, Gareth Elwyn Jones, Prys Morgan, David W. Howell, and Victor Edward Durkacz. *The Historical Journal* 32, no. 1 (1989): 211-28.

Dickinson, H. T. Review of *Irish Radicalism in the Late Eighteenth Century*, by Neil Longley York, Nancy J. Curtin, David Dickson, Dáire Keogh, Kevin Whelan, Jim Smyth, E. W. McFarland, Nicholas Furlong, Daniel Gahan, and A. T. Q. Stewart. *History* 82, no. 266 (1997): 266-84.

Price, Jacob M. Review of *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons, 1754-1790* by Lewis Namier, John Brooke. *Political Science Quarterly* 80, no. 3 (1965): 427-29.

Thomas, Peter D. G. *Review: Voting Records of the British House of Commons, 1761-1820, vols I-VI* by Donald E. Ginter. *The English Historical Review* 111, no. 441 (1996): 391-394.

Thorpe, F.J. Review of *Proceedings and Debates of the British Parliaments Respecting North America 1754–1783* ed. by R.C. Simmons, P.D.G. Thomas. *The Canadian Historical Review* 64, no. 2 (1983): 239-240.

Williamson, Arthur H. Review of *From the Invention of Great Britain to the Creation of British History: A New Historiography* by R. R. Davies, Roger A. Mason, and Brian P. Levack. *Journal of British Studies* 29, no. 3 (1990): 267-76.

Theses/Dissertations

Barrett, Raymond J. "A Comparative Study of Imperial Constitutional Theory in Ireland and America in the Age of the American Revolution." Ph.D. Thesis, Trinity College in Dublin, 1958.

Vance, James. "Constitutional Radicalism in Scotland and Ireland in the Era of the American Revolution c.1760-1789." Ph.D. Thesis, University of Aberdeen, 1998. British Library.

Websites

Britannica. "Charles Lennox, 3rd Duke of Richmond." 2025. https://www.britannica.com/biography/Charles-Lennox-3rd-duke-of-Richmond.

Britannica. "William Legge, 2nd Earl of Dartmouth." https://www.britannica.com/biography/William-Legge-2nd-earl-of-Dartmouth.

Burns, Arthur. "William Petty, 2nd Earl of Shelburne (Whig, 1782-1783)." No10 Guest Historian Series. GOV.UK. 26 August 2015. https://history.blog.gov.uk/2015/08/26/william-petty-2nd-earl-of-shelburne-whig-1782-1783/.

GOV.UK "Augustus Henry Fitzroy, 3rd Duke of Grafton." https://www.gov.uk/government/history/past-prime-ministers/augustus-henry-fitzroy-3rd-duke-of-grafton.

GOV.UK. "Thomas Pelham-Holles 1st Duke of Newcastle." https://www.gov.uk/government/history/past-prime-ministers/thomas-pelham-holles-1st-duke-of-newcastle.

The History of Parliament: British Political, Social & Local History. The History of Parliament Trust 1964-2020. From *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1715-1754*, edited by R. Sedgwick. Boydell and Brewer, 1970. https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/.