Agrégation

ANGLAIS

La Révolution américaine

1763-1783

Sous la direction de
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ellipses

Introduction
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Linda Garbaye

On entend généralement par « Révolution américaine », la période historique au cours de laquelle les colons britanniques d'Amérique du Nord firent l'expérience de changements socio-politiques et culturels, plus ou moins significatifs selon les cas, ainsi que la guerre avec pour objectif, pour les Insurgés, l'indépendance des colonies et la création d'une nouvelle entité – les États-Unis d'Amérique.

Les perspectives historiographiques sur la Révolution américaine sont multiples. L'objectif de cette brève introduction n'est pas de faire une présentation exhaustive des évolutions historiographiques sur cette thématique ; on se contentera donc de mentionner une évolution générale de la manière avec laquelle l'histoire de la Révolution américaine est présentée. En effet, les chercheurs prennent davantage en compte une diversité d'acteurs de la période révolutionnaire américaine, et pas uniquement des personnalités d'une élite ayant œuvré en faveur de l'indépendance des colonies.

Les chapitres qui suivent présentent des éclairages sur l'histoire de la Révolution américaine et sur des questions historiographiques spécifiques. Pour une analyse des causes et d'autres éléments à propos de la crise impériale britannique dans la seconde moitié du XVIII^e^ siècle (axe 1 de la question au programme), Pierre-François Peirano montre des débats présentés dans un certain nombre de pamphlets à la période coloniale. C'est le cas par exemple de la question de l'attachement des colonies pour leur monarque, et du lien constitutionnel permettant de préserver une prospérité économique.

Dans son chapitre, Patrice Dallaire souligne des insuffisances dans la littérature historique sur l'histoire de la Révolution américaine (axe 2). Cette révolution devrait être envisagée à l'échelle continentale également mais, en raison d'un récit longtemps tourné vers un exceptionnalisme du modèle révolutionnaire des États-Unis, cette histoire a souvent été circonscrite aux Treize Colonies britanniques d'Amérique du Nord. En réalité, le rôle joué par les acteurs canadiens est également à envisager, à partir de 1763 (Proclamation royale) et dans la décennie suivante également (Acte de Québec en 1774), pour mieux comprendre les choix et les initiatives de leurs voisins insurgés au sud. Cette littérature historique relativement incomplète a mis de côté le soutien des Canadiens francophones aux rebelles dans l'ancienne Province de Québec en 1775-1776. *In fine*, les intérêts divers, notamment économiques et politiques, des puissances européennes coloniales ont débouché sur l'abandon du Canada par le monarque français. Cela fut acté dans le Traité de Paris en 1783, acté dans le Traité de Paris en 1783.

Pour leur part, Francesca Genesio, Isabelle Sicard, et Anne-Claire Faucquez abordent, dans leur texte respectif, un aspect des préoccupations historiques et historiographiques sur la Révolution américaine pour l'axe 3. Francesca Genesio revient sur des articles et une partie de la correspondance de l'auteur Philip Mazzei[1], rédigés dans les années 1774 et 1776 dans deux publications principales : la première en Amérique, la *Virginia Gazette*, et la seconde en Toscane, la *Gazzetta Ufficiale*. Mazzei n'était pas un fervent partisan du modèle constitutionnel britannique (*mixed constitution*), qu'il considérait comme non pertinent et élitiste. Au contraire, il soutint l'égalité des droits et le modèle développé par des personnalités politiques en Virginie, et en particulier des essais comme celui de Thomas Jefferson, dans son (*Summary View of the Rights of British America*). Par ailleurs, il rédigea ses textes de manière suffisamment claire pour toucher un lectorat large. Dans ce cadre, cosmopolitisme et régionalisme se rejoignent, et les frontières entre espace régional et universel sont brouillées. Par ailleurs, l'auteur avait à cœur de ne pas laisser le savoir et la rationalité dans les seules mains des élites. Se considérant comme un « citoyen du monde », son expérience permet

1. "Between transatlantic cosmopolitanism and colonial regionalism: a Florentine-Virginian's early advocacy of the American cause."

de mettre en relief les diverses perspectives sur la Révolution américaine évoquées plus haut. Cette expérience souligne également une identité partagée, entre Europe et Amérique, entre Virginie et Toscane. Cette pluralité d'identités fut parfaitement assumée par l'écrivain.

Anne-Claire Faucquez aborde la question de l'esclavage à l'époque révolutionnaire américaine. Quels sont les éléments permettant de mieux saisir le maintien de l'esclavage dans les jeunes États-Unis d'Amérique, à une période où le discours révolutionnaire soulignait les libertés individuelles et les droits inaliénables ? Le terme « paradoxe » pour parler de ce contraste est usité[2].

Dans son texte, intitulé « Le Paradoxe du Massachusetts révolutionnaire : la question religieuse », Isabelle Sicard, s'intéresse à un État en particulier, le Massachusetts. Ce texte illustre bien l'importance de l'histoire locale révolutionnaire ; elle est à considérer, selon les cas, dans le cadre d'un attachement local des populations qui y vivent. Les institutions et les principes pouvaient en effet varier d'un jeune État républicain souverain à un autre. Dans cet article, il est question d'étudier les relations entre Églises et État. Dans cet espace défini, l'État du Massachusetts, désormais républicain, les positions exprimées à propos du rôle de l'État en matière religieuse furent contrastées. Fallait-il, en particulier, préserver un impôt cultuel ?

Les chapitres suivants concernent l'expérience révolutionnaire des populations, en particulier les groupes sociaux minoritaires (axe 4). Les évolutions historiographiques, à partir des années 1960 et 1970 en particulier, permettent, entre autres, la présentation d'une histoire de la Révolution américaine plus inclusive. Dans ce cadre, le rôle et la place des femmes dans cette histoire sont donc davantage valorisés. Linda Garbaye explore l'agentivité des femmes à l'époque révolutionnaire américaine, et ce, en soulignant la diversité des milieux sociaux, des engagements féminins et des modes d'expression de ces engagements. Son texte met en avant les différentes échelles d'analyse de cette histoire également.

2. Par exemple, Edmund S. Morgan, "Slavery and Freedom, the American Paradox", *The Journal of American History*, vol. 59, No. 1, June 1972, p. 5-29.

L'histoire des Loyalistes est, elle aussi, est de moins en moins oubliée[3]. Dans ce volume, deux chapitres traitent de cette histoire. Seynabou Thiam-Pereira expose une histoire très précise et riche sur les Loyalistes noirs. Elle décrit l'histoire de régiments noirs pendant la guerre d'Indépendance : le Régiment Éthiopien et les Pionniers Noirs. Elle examine la situation des Loyalistes noirs se déplaçant de New York, alors sous contrôle des autorités britanniques, vers le Canada et leur expérience en demi-teinte dans leur nouveau lieu de résidence. La fin du texte porte sur un projet de migration vers la Sierra Leone dans la dernière décennie du XVIII^e siècle. Florence Petroff, quant à elle, parle également des Loyalistes, cette fois dans leur ensemble. Elle commence par définir ce qu'est le loyalisme et présente une historiographie sur ce point brièvement. Elle enchaîne ensuite sur une présentation des sources de l'engagement des Loyalistes, et de leurs parcours divers. Au total, les Loyalistes partageaient un même projet, même s'ils n'émanaient pas nécessairement du même milieu social.

3. Pour reprendre le titre d'un ouvrage collectif publié en 1991 aux Presses Universitaires de Nancy : Élise Marienstras et Bernard Vincent (dirs.), *Les Oubliés de la Révolution américaine, femmes, Indiens, Noirs, quakers, francs-maçons dans la guerre d'Indépendance*.

To provide new Guards for their future security: the international dimension in the "pamphlet debate" from 1763 to 1776

Pierre-François Peirano

In *The Rights of the British Colonies, Asserted and Proved*, a pamphlet defining the first ever theoretic political status of the Thirteen Colonies of North America and published in 1764, Boston lawyer James Otis wrote the following lines:

> We all think ourselves happy under Great-Britain (sic). We love, esteem and reverence our mother country, and adore our King. And could the choice of independency be offered the colonies, or subjection to Great-Britain (sic) upon any terms above absolute slavery, I am convinced they would accept the latter.[1]

The statement, which could also be accounted for by the need to bypass censorship, nonetheless reflected the then attachment of the colonies to the British Crown in the early years of the debate on imperial taxation. However, it could also reveal indirect evidence about the main reason for the persisting link between the colonies and the metropolis—i.e., the propriety of the constitutional ties between the former and the latter, a guarantee for mutual prosperity. The publication of numerous pamphlets in the period from 1763 to 1776 was one of the privileged means of discussing the issues that set the colonies astir, to such a point that the importance of the circulation of such writings or the expression "pamphlet debate" were successively pointed out by prominent historians such as Jack P. Greene or Gordon S. Wood.[2] The

1. James Otis, *The Rights of the British Colonies, Asserted and Proved* (1764), *in* Gordon S. Wood (ed.), *The American Revolution: Writings from the Pamphlet Debate, 1764-1772*. New York, The Library of America, 2015, p. 91.
2. Jack P. Greene, *Understanding the American Revolution: Issues and Actors*, Charlottesville and London, University of Virginia Press, 1995, p. 78 ; Gordon S. Wood, *idem.*, introduction, p. xiii.

writings, the works of both opponents to and partisans of the measures voted by the British Parliament and aimed at as extended a readership as possible, mainly dealt with the issues of taxation and representation, as well as thorough and far-reaching reflection over the nature of the ties between the British Empire and the Thirteen Colonies. However, a closer reading of the main pamphlets published in the "pre-revolutionary" period reveals continuous references to other events such as the consequences of the Seven Years' War, the foreign policy of the Empire or other factors related to the importance of "external" events in the debate fuelled by the successive publications of pamphlets. Such a hypothesis could both give further substance to the "transatlantic perspective" that could have underpinned the American Revolution, as well as broaden the debate over its actual causes, in which geopolitics and the safety of the Empire in North America probably played a prominent role.

Over the period, the outlook on international affairs varied as the territories gained after the Seven Years' War were progressively administered and better controlled by the Empire and the following question could thus be raised: was the debate in the "pre-revolutionary" period fuelled by international considerations or did the latter rather reflect the discussion over the nature of the constitutional ties and the issue of taxation? The present article will thus be divided into three parts. First, the alleged "superiority" of the British colonial model—as compared to that of other European powers – will be studied. Then the question of the perpetuation of the prosperity of the Empire will be raised. Lastly, particular attention will be paid to the different outlook on the matter after 1773, as a change in the perspective on international affairs could be noticeable and led to further reflection on how to administer an Empire now disrupted by constitutional crisis.

I. A vindication of British "superiority"

As the Seven Years' War is now often interpreted as the first conflict that took place worldwide, mentioning the then arch rivals of Britain on the world stage was an indirect way of pointing out their evil intentions in the aftermath of the Treaty of Paris, as did James Otis in 1764: "The late acquisitions in America, as glorious as they have been, and as beneficial as they are to Great-Britain, are only a security to these colonies against

the ravages of the French and Indians".[3] More than evidence of the then instability of the regions – those bordering the Frontier, in particular –, the wish to make the colonies thrive and ensure their development remained at the heart of the colonists' concerns and the cession of French Canada had been the result of harsh negotiations, during which the possibility of the British taking over the French islands in the Caribbean had momentarily cropped up, before the strategic importance of acquiring New France prevailed. However, the flaws in the settlement of the French colonies were also mentioned by Otis: "The French unable to push their settlements effectually on the continent, have bent their views to the islands, and poured vast numbers into them".[4] The model of the British Colonies, which were settlement colonies *per se*, was thus undoubtedly preferrable and the Crown had apparently taken every precaution to ascertain its dominance over the Northern portion of the continent, as wrote Thomas Whately, one of the main drafters of the Stamp Act:

> The Possession of those in *North America* ensures the safety of the other Colonies there; insomuch, that our only dangerous Neighbours, the *French* […], have avowedly given up for ever those great Objects, for which alone they began the War. The ceded Islands are of almost equal Consequence, for Protecting our own, and for Annoying the Settlements of the *French* and *Spaniards*, if they should be again our Enemies.[5]

The strategic importance of the colonies, both for their inhabitants and the British Crown, is thus fully revealed and, in the aftermath of the Seven Years' War, the need to resolve the debate over imperial taxation and representation in Parliament was also one of the main reasons for guaranteeing the prosperity of the already existing ones, as well as the newly acquired territories. Attempting to define the political singularity of the British colonies as opposed to that of the other countries was thus paramount and this wish could be found in the pamphlets in favour of the taxation measures – and those against them alike.

3. James Otis, *The Rights of the British Colonies, Asserted and Proved* (1764), *op. cit.*, Gordon S. Wood (2015), p. 83.
4. *Idem.*, p. 114-115.
5. Thomas Whately, *The Regulations Lately Made Concerning the Colonies, and the Taxes Imposed upon Them, Considered* (1765), *ibid.*, p. 168.

The hypothesis that recurrent references to historical events and trends were to be found could be put forward, in the sense that the colonists were looking for "external" factors that could shed light on the then tangled web and strive to use the past to explain their position. In the pamphlets, the history of the ties between Great Britain and the colonies is thus frequently narrated, starting with the coming to power of the King James VI and I, in 1603, and the long-term significance of the 1620 Mayflower Compact, but the linear, even teleological vision of events was often counterbalanced by the recalling of episodes tending to show that the same causes might lead to the same consequences. The sixth publication in John Dickinson's *Letters from a Pennsylvania Farmer* (1768) is one of the most relevant pieces of evidence of this "cyclic" vision and he warned about the threat of warping fundamental liberties into tyrannical use:

> Thus the *Caesars* ruined the *Roman* liberty, under the titles of *tribunicial* and *dictatorial* authorities – old and venerable dignities, known in the most flourishing times of freedom. In imitation of the same policy, *James* II, when he meant to establish popery, *talked* of liberty of conscience, the most sacred of all liberties.[6]

As a consequence, it was up to the colonists to take necessary action so that history does not repeat himself. Jack P. Greene claimed that Dickinson "did not consider the wider problems of the relationship between metropolis and colonies",[7] but references to the past were not absent either and tended to prove that they were taking the present debate as a starting point to, then, look beyond the stricter framework of the propriety of taxes and of representation in Parliament. Borrowing frequent examples from the "Glorious Revolution" could also reveal that the colonists considered their struggle as the continuation of the debate that had cropped up almost a century earlier – for the common good of the British nation as a whole.

It is a widely accepted fact that, at the outcome of the Seven Years' War, the colonists took pride in the victory of the British Empire, whose model of governance guaranteed, in theory, equal fundamental rights and liberties

6. John Dickinson, *Letters from a Pennsylvania Farmer* (1768), *ibid.*, p. 441.
7. *Op. cit.*, Jack P. Greene (1995), p. 81.

for all its subjects – even if the definition of the later term was narrower than the contemporary one –, as well as the development of trade in the colonies. In *The Rights of the British Colonies, Asserted and Proved*, James Otis expounded on the newly-asserted superiority of the British through another comparison with rival colonial powers: "Modern Dutch or French maxims of state, never will suit with a British constitution. It is a maxim, that the King can do no wrong; and every good subject is bound to believe his King is not inclined to do any".[8] In 1763, Great Britain found itself in possession of "the greatest and richest empire since the fall of Rome"[9] but, in the pamphlets, criticism and concerns arose as to the ownership of such vast stretches of land. Over the long term, they could prove to be harmful to the cohesion of the territory and its population, as Cato, an anonymous English pamphleteer, wrote in *Thoughts on a Question of Importance Proposed to the Public*, published in 1765, a few years after the cession of French territories had been announced. According to him, being in possession of too large a territory may have disastrous consequences in the future: "Settling small Colonies may do such Services as to Counterbalance an inconsiderable Loss of People; but settling vast Tracts may exhaust the Mother Country, and prove Destruction".[10] The alleged "superiority" of the British model could thus be threatened by a lack of internal cohesion, the result of the acquisition of foreign territories after the Seven Years' War – which was still considered as a pivotal moment in the history of the relationships between the colonies and the metropolis.

One of the key issues in the debate, once the then extent of the British Empire had been acknowledged and confirmed in the aftermath of Seven Years' War, which coincided with a period of relative political uncertainty, resided in the perpetuation of its prosperity and its "international" character could henceforth not be evaded.

8. James Otis, *The Rights of the British Colonies, Asserted and Proved* (1764), *in op. cit.*, Gordon S. Wood (2015), p. 79.
9. Gordon S. Wood, *idem.*, p. xv.
10. Cato, *Thoughts on a Question of Importance Proposed to the Public, Whether It Is Probable That the Immense Extent of Territory Acquired by This Nation at the Late Peace, Will Operate towards the Prosperity, or the Ruin of the Island of Great Britain?* (1765), *idem.*, p. 11.

II. Perpetuating the prosperity of the Empire?

The newly acquired dimension of the Empire did not question the fact that trade remained the main asset of the colonies. Even though the interests of Great Britain were often thought to prevail over those of the colonies, particularly after 1773 and the passing of the Tea Act, the importance of this activity was hardly questioned and the writings reflected the concern that taxation would lead to imbalance and perhaps impose too many duties on colonists, thus drastically reducing trade, as Daniel Dulany wrote in *Considerations on the Propriety of Imposing Taxes in the British Colonies*, published in 1765 in Annapolis:

> The former Trade of the Colonies, which enabled them to keep up their Credit with Great-Britain (sic), by applying the Balance they gained against Foreigners, is now so fettered with Difficulties, as to be almost prohibited. [...] The Income also of the Colonies, which was before invested in their Trade, will be diminished in Proportion to the Produce of the Stamp-Act, and therefore the Amount of that Produce must be drawn out, which will create a further Reduction of the Trade.[11]

Through the issue of trade, the conception of Great Britain and of the colonies as different entities thus started to take shape and "external" decisions, even taken by the British Parliament, had consequences on the activities performed across the ocean. In *Common Sense* (1776), Thomas Paine equally praised the status of the colonies as "free ports" and went one step further, as the commercial links with other European countries were recalled and described as indispensable to the well-being and the protection of the British possessions, still considered as a single entity: "Our plan is commerce, and that, well attended to, will secure us the peace and friendship of all Europe; because, it is the interest of all Europe to have America a free port. Her trade will always be a protection, and her barrenness of gold and silver secure her from invaders".[12] The pamphlets could thus reveal that economic activities could be translated into political

11. Daniel Dulany, *Considerations on the Propriety of Imposing Taxes in the British Colonies, for the Purpose of Raising a Revenue, by Act of Parliament* (1765), *ibid.*, p. 291.
12. Thomas Paine, *Common Sense* (1776), *in* Gordon S. Wood (ed.), *The American Revolution: Writings from the Pamphlet Debate, 1773-1776*, New York, The Library of America, 2015, p. 670.

perspectives, as exchanges with the European continent led to questioning the measures that were applied and could contradict the much-sought-after equality between all the regions of the Empire.

In the same domain, further reflection also led the respective writers of the pamphlets to compare the status of the Thirteen Colonies with those of the other British ones, thus leading to chronological accounts that came to question the imperial policy at large. One of the most recurrent topics was that of Ireland, whose contradictory status[13] was pointed out by the opponents to the taxation policies, in order to denounce the abuses of both the Parliament and the Crown:

> *Ireland* is a conquered kingdom, the greater part of its inhabitants *Papists*, who in England pay double tax. […] If the Parliament of Great-Britain claims a right to tax them, they never yet have made use of the right, […] in the very bill that determines their dependency, they are not said to be dependent on the British Parliament, nor yet on crown and Parliament, but only on the crown of *Great-Britain*.[14]

In 1774, William H. Drayton even came to state that the lot of Ireland was preferrable to that of the Thirteen Colonies: "Sorely as Ireland is pressed, how preferable is her political Situation to that of America! […] Ireland hath a Parliament of its own."[15] The status of other colonies such as Jamaica[16] was also being debated in James Wilson's *Considerations on the Nature and the Extent of the Authority of the British Parliament*, published in 1774: "*That the Acts of Parliament or Statutes of England were not in force in Jamaica*. This decision is explicit in favour of America; for whatever was resolved concerning Jamaica is equally applicable to every American Colony".[17] Such outlooks contributed to give substance to the hypothesis that the colonists

13. Ireland was, *de jure*, an autonomous kingdom with its own Parliament but, *de facto*, a client state controlled by the monarch of Great Britain.
14. John Joachim Zubly, *An Humble Enquiry into the Nature of the Dependency of the American Colonies upon the Parliament of Great-Britain* (1769), *in* Gordon S. Wood (ed.), *op. cit.*, Gordon S. Wood, *1764-1772* (2015), p. 602-603.
15. William H. Drayton, *A Letter from Freeman of South-Carolina, to the Deputies of North-America"* (1774), *op. cit.*, Gordon S. Wood, *1773-1776*, p. 181.
16. From 1707 to 1866, Jamaica was a British colony.
17. James Wilson, *Considerations on the Nature and the Extent of the Authority of the British Parliament* (1774), *op. cit.*, Gordon S. Wood, *1773-1776*, p. 135.

did not only reflect upon the status of the Thirteen Colonies to add further arguments to the debate. They also looked towards new horizons and the close scrutiny of the status of other parts of the British Empire either led them to reject what they considered as intolerable measures or to warn about future formidable threats to the colonies, as the successive measures voted in Parliament might be the thin end the wedge.

As early as 1765, the debate over the Stamp Act had reached such a scale that the issue of holding the Thirteen Colonies – as well as the Empire – together came to the fore and its very homogeneity was debated. In this perspective, the place of foreigners in the colonial society was already questioned and, among them, foreign Protestants: "The act of the thirteenth of his late majesty, entitled, *An act for naturalizing of foreign protestants*, had better have been omitted by his honour; for if that act is to be the measure of the colonists rights, they will be more circumscribed than he would willingly chuse".[18] Not only was the origin of such and such group mentioned: faith had its importance as well and, when describing Ireland, the Catholics were mentioned as "Papists" in John Joachim Zubly's afore-mentioned pamphlet. The hypothesis that the inclusion, within the Empire, of the various worshippers and the people of various origins was detrimental to its long-term prosperity could be raised and, once again, external factors were given paramount importance by the writers of the pamphlets. The years following the Seven Years' War also witnessed the need for preserving the borders of the colonies, all the more so as the influence on the newly acquired territories was not considered as solid enough and Benjamin Franklin's remarks before an assembly in Philadelphia, in 1766, indirectly echoed the growing animosity of the colonists towards the British Empire after the end of the Seven Years' War:

> Q. What was the temper of America towards Great Britain before the year 1763?
> A. The best in the world. They submitted willingly to the government of the Crown, and paid, in all their courts, obedience

18. Martin Howard, Jr., *A Letter from a Gentleman in Halifax, to his Friend in Rhode-Island* (1765), *op. cit.*, Gordon S. Wood, *1764-1772*, p. 157.

> to acts of parliament. Numerous as the people are in the several old provinces, they cost you nothing in forts, citadels, garrisons or armies, to keep them in subjection.[19]

Internal and external factors were thus intertwined in the preservation of the Empire, whose extension gave rise to issues also reflected in the various pamphlets.

In 1766, Richard Bland wrote, in *An Inquiry in to the Rights of the British Colonies*, that "The next Moment 'the Colonies are unconnected with each other, different in their Manners. […] This happy Division, which was effected by Accident, is to be continued throughout by Design'".[20] Assuming that the British Crown could act so as to plant the seeds of division within the colonies was an indirect call for sustained union against "external" forces, whatever they may be, and this wish was indirectly confirmed after 1773 and the passing of the Tea Act. The international dimension of the pamphlets was given further scope as the crisis worsened and the afore-mentioned issues now came to be dealt with differently in the pamphlets.

III. Continuity and change in the outlook after 1773

As evidence of the continuity in the debate, the Seven Years' War was still mentioned as a key event in the pamphlets published after the passing of the Tea Act, in May, 1773. Ebenezer Baldwin traced back to the beginning of the conflict the greater interest in colonial affairs from the metropolis: "As America was much the seat of the last war, the troops sent here from the mother country, opened a much freer communication between Great Britain and the Colonies, the state of the colonies was much more attended to in England, than it had been in times past".[21] The apparent objective tone, however, conceals criticism, as the inhabitants of Great Britain are said to thrive and use the resources of North America and the craftsmanship of the colonists to their own advantage. Joseph Galloway, in *A Candid Examination of the Mutual Claims of Great-Britain, and the Colonies*, published in 1775,

19. *The Examination of Doctor Benjamin Franklin, Before an August Assembly, Relating to the Repeal of the Stamp Act* (1766), *idem*., p. 339.
20. Richard Bland, *An Inquiry in to the Rights of the British Colonies* (1766), *ibid*., p. 326-327.
21. Ebenezer Baldwin, *"The Heavy Grievances the Colonies Labour under from Several Late Acts of the British Parliament"* (1774), *op. cit*., Gordon S. Wood (2015), *1773-1776*, p. 352.

dug into the very causes of the conflict, back in 1754, quoting a message from the Council and the House of Representatives of Massachusetts: "The French have but one interest, and keep but one point of view: The English government have different interests, are disunited: some of them have their frontiers covered by their neighbours; and not being immediately affected seem unconcerned".[22] The conflict contributed to make up for the initial disorganization of the colonies but, according to the author, the danger of a future French has not dwindled and the past concerns should still be looked into by the authorities, in order to guarantee the security of the colonies. The Seven Years' War was thus still considered as a pivotal moment, but from more nuanced points of view: it either drew more attention from Great Britain and thus inaugurated a prosperous era for the colonies or, on the contrary, was the main reason for the successive restrictions of fundamental liberties on the part of the British Crown. Thomas Paine's statement in *Common Sense* leaves no ambiguity: he takes a more general view and, according to him, the successive wars – particularly, the past conflict with France – have had disastrous consequences on the colonies as a whole: "Europe is too thickly planted with kingdoms to be long at peace, and whenever a war breaks out between England and any foreign power, the trade of America goes to ruin, *because of her connection with Britain*".[23]

The homogeneity of the Empire remained, however, a most acute issue and the consequences of the 1774 Quebec Act, which granted to the French inhabitants of the province the right to their customary civil law and the practice of Catholicism, should not be neglected either and accounted for the fact that the colonists were also wary of the measures enforced in other colonial territories. According to Baldwin, the act both questioned and threatened the homogeneity of the North American colonies: "Again (sic) *the Quebec government act* the colonies have just reason to complain. First as it establishes the popish religion. […] Tythes are collected by law for it's (sic) support; which shews a disregard for the protestant religion."[24]

22. Joseph Galloway, *A Candid Examination of the Mutual Claims of Great-Britain, and the Colonies* (1775), *ibid.*, p. 444.
23. Thomas Paine, *Common Sense* (1776), *ibid.*, p. 671.
24. Ebenezer Baldwin, *The Heavy Grievances the Colonies Labour under from Several Late Acts of the British Parliament* (1774), *ibid.*, p. 365.

Dealing with this question indirectly led to ponder over the necessity to protect the colonies from potential invaders, but also from possible inner divisions. Famous writer Samuel Johnson, in *Taxation No Tyranny* (1775) attempted at legitimating colonial domination, in a claim that went against that of the colonists:

> The Colonies of England differ no otherwise from those of other nations, than as the English constitution differs from theirs. […] An English Colony has very liberal powers of regulating its own manners and adjusting its own affairs. But an English individual may by the supreme authority be deprived of liberty, and a Colony divested of its powers, for reasons of which that authority is the only judge.[25]

In the same vein, Charles Inglis, in *The True Interest of America* (1776), a detailed criticism of *Common Sense*, reasserted the need to protect the Thirteen Colonies from the ambition of rival colonial powers. The historical perspective was recalled to give more substance to his argument and a comparison with Spain seemed to reveal, according to him, that prosperous trading mattered far more to a colony than being endowed with natural riches:

> Spain was one of the most flourishing, powerful monarchies in Europe, when this continent was discovered. Peru and Mexico then poured their immense treasures into her lap, […] yet Spain, ever since, has been on the decline. […] The country that abounds in fertile fields and luxuriant pasturage […] and the articles for an extensive commerce; such a country, though barren of gold and silver, is the most inviting to ambition, the most exposed to invasion, and such a country is North America.[26]

The broadening of the debate, in which the strategic position of the colonies played an even more crucial role, led to the emergence of the hypothesis that, from then on, Great Britain was even considered as a foreign power and was deprived of any legitimacy to impose its decisions on distant ground. Through a series of hypotheses, Moses Mather, in *America's*

25. Dr Samuel Johnson, *Taxation No Tyranny* (1775), *ibid.*, p. 471.
26. Charles Inglis, *The True Interest of America* (1776), *ibid.*, p. 747.