

Period 3: 1754-1800

AP US History ■ Period 3

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What we will cover

- 1 The Seven Years' War and Its Consequences
- 2 Taxation Without Representation
- 3 The Ideas Behind the Revolution
- 4 The War and Its Wider Effects
- 5 From Confederation to Constitution
- 6 The New Republic



The Seven Years' War and Its Consequences

Period 3 runs from 1754 to 1800 – from the outbreak of the Seven Years' War to the end of John Adams's presidency. It contains the Revolution, but the exam treats the Revolution as an *effect*, so start with its cause.

- A **major expansion of territory** – France was removed from mainland North America.
- An **enormous war debt**, which Britain decided the colonies should help repay.
- **Restrictions on westward movement**, notably the **Proclamation of 1763** 1763, intended to prevent costly conflict with American Indians but resented by colonists who wanted the land they had just helped win.

The Seven Years' War and Its Consequences, continued

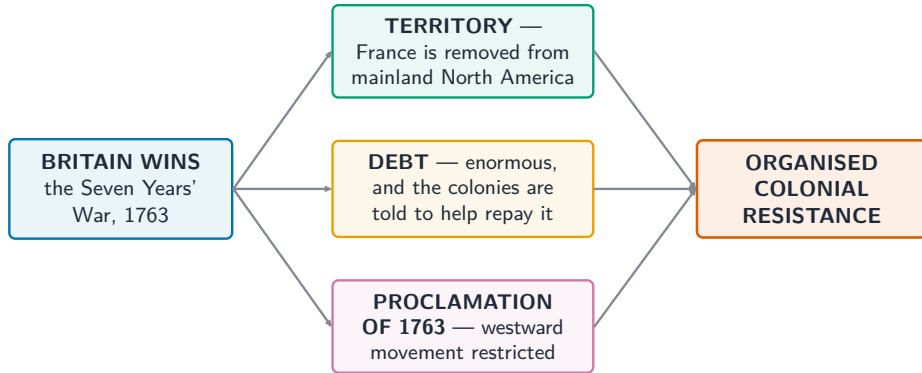
Colonial rivalry between Britain and France intensified in the mid-eighteenth century as a growing colonial population pressed westward. The **Seven Years' War**, known in North America as the **French and Indian War**, settled that rivalry.

That is the chain the exam wants: victory produced debt and new territory, and managing both required tighter control of the colonies.

One victory, three consequences, one response

- A **major expansion of territory** - France was removed from mainland North America.
- An **enormous war debt** , which Britain decided the colonies should help repay.
- **Restrictions on westward movement**, notably the **Proclamation of 1763** 1763.

One victory, three consequences, one response, in detail



Winning the war is what created the crisis: the debt, and the cost of holding the new territory, are why Britain began taxing the colonies at all.



Taxation Without Representation

New British efforts to **collect taxes** without the consent of colonial assemblies, and to assert imperial authority, provoked organised resistance.

Colonial leaders based their arguments on **the rights of British subjects**, on the **ideals of the Enlightenment**, and on their own long experience of self-government – the assemblies built up during Period 2.

Resistance was action as well as argument

boycotts

non-importation agreements starved British merchants of their American market

men and women

both took part – women's spinning and refusal to buy imported cloth made the boycotts work

crowd action

the Sons of Liberty, tarring and feathering, and the destruction of stamped paper

military occupation

in some regions British troops were quartered among civilians, which turned a tax dispute into a daily grievance

shortages

colonists faced real hardship, and enduring it **was** the political statement

The AP question is usually about **who participated**. Naming women's role in the boycotts is the difference between a general answer and a specific one.

Resistance, and the idea underneath it

Ordinary people

Boycotts of British goods, home manufacture, crowd action and committees of correspondence – **men and women** both took part, some under military occupation.

Benjamin Franklin

Leaders such as **Benjamin Franklin** energised the movement and carried the colonial case abroad.

The slogan

“No taxation without representation” – Parliament could not tax colonists who elected none of its members.

The idea

Enlightenment thinking put **individual talent over hereditary privilege** and asserted natural rights and the **sovereignty of the people**.

The slogan is the surface; the claim underneath is that authority comes from the governed, not from birth.



The Ideas Behind the Revolution

Two ideas do most of the work in essays:

- **Republicanism** – government rests on the consent of the governed, and citizens must show virtue by placing the public good above private interest.
- **Natural rights** – rights that exist before government, which government is created to protect, and whose violation justifies resistance.

Republicanism and natural rights are not synonyms

REPUBLICANISM

NATURAL RIGHTS

WHERE POWER COMES FROM

the consent of the governed

rights exist before any government does

WHAT IT ASKS OF A CITIZEN

virtue — the public good above private
interest

nothing; the duty falls on the government

WHAT IT DOES IN AN ESSAY

explains the kind of government they built justifies the decision to resist

They are not synonyms. **Natural rights** licenses the break; **republicanism** explains what was built afterwards

The ideas, and what the Convention had to compromise

Enlightenment ideas

led American thinkers to emphasise **individual talent over hereditary privilege**

the Constitutional Convention

1787 – a stronger national government built on **compromise**

Great Compromise

a Senate with equal state representation, a House by population

the three-fifths compromise

counted three of every five enslaved people for representation and taxation

ratification was contested

Federalists argued the government was strong enough to govern yet checked enough to be safe; **Anti-Federalists** feared it would swallow the states

The Bill of Rights was the price of ratification. Saying *that* – rather than listing its contents – is what the essay question rewards.



The War and Its Wider Effects

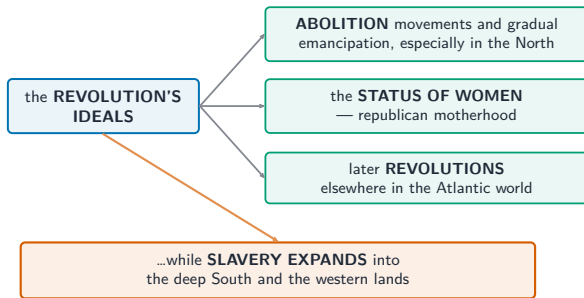
The war for independence succeeded through a combination of colonial resolve, difficult terrain, and crucially **foreign assistance**, above all from France.

- They inspired **movements to abolish slavery**, especially in the North, and gradual emancipation laws.
- They raised questions about the **status of women**, expressed in the idea of **republican motherhood** – that women shaped the republic by raising virtuous citizens.
- They influenced later revolutions elsewhere in the Atlantic world.

The War and Its Wider Effects, continued

At the same time the **expansion of slavery** into the deep South and adjacent western lands continued, alongside rising **antislavery** sentiment – a contradiction the course returns to repeatedly.

The ideals spread, and slavery expanded



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The powers that moved, and the ones that did not

After declaring independence, leaders wrote new **constitutions and declarations of rights** that reflected republican ideals, generally limiting executive power.

The **Articles of Confederation** created a deliberately weak central government: no power to tax, no power to regulate commerce, no executive, and no national judiciary.

Two documents worth naming

Northwest Ordinance

The Confederation's one real success: it organised western settlement, set out how territories became states, and barred slavery north-west of the Ohio.

Washington's Farewell Address

George Washington urged national unity and warned against political factions and permanent foreign alliances – a warning issued as the first party system was already forming.

Naming a document *and* what it did converts a date into evidence.

The new republic's first arguments

the central dispute

under **Washington** and Adams, leaders split over the **national-state balance of power**

Hamilton's programme

a national bank, assumed state debts – a **broad** reading of federal power

Jefferson's objection

a strict reading, and an agrarian republic of independent farmers

the French Revolution

war between France and Britain forced hard choices; the government pursued **neutrality** and diplomatic initiatives

a national culture

developed in art, literature and architecture – **alongside** continued regional variation

American Indian nations

repeatedly **re-evaluated their alliances** with European powers and the new republic

The first party system grew out of a constitutional argument, not a policy one – which is why it was so bitter so quickly.

Moving west, and the competition it caused

Migration west

Growing numbers of migrants moved west, intensifying competition over **resources, boundaries, and trade**.

Shifting alliances

American Indian groups repeatedly **evaluated and adjusted their alliances** with European powers and the new United States as circumstances changed.

An ambiguous status

The relationship between the federal government and American Indian tribes stayed **ambiguous**, and conflict recurred.

In the Southwest

Spain expanded its **mission system**, supported by the bonded labour of local American Indians.

Westward expansion is the period's clearest *continuity*: independence changed the government, not the pressure on Native land.

The powers that moved, and the ones that did not, in detail

	Articles of Confederation	The Constitution	Why it mattered
Taxation	no power to tax; could only request funds	Congress may lay and collect taxes	<i>war debts went unpaid</i>
Commerce	no power to regulate trade between states	Congress regulates interstate and foreign trade	<i>states taxed each other</i>
Executive	no president	a single executive with defined powers	<i>no one could enforce law</i>
Judiciary	no national courts	a federal judiciary	<i>no way to settle disputes</i>
Amendment	unanimous consent of all states	three-quarters of states	<i>reform was impossible</i>

After declaring independence, leaders wrote new **constitutions and declarations of rights** that reflected republican ideals, generally limiting executive power.





The powers that moved, and the ones that did not, continued

The **Constitutional Convention** of 1787 moved exactly the four powers the Articles had withheld: the new government could **tax**, could **regulate commerce**, and gained an **executive** and a **national judiciary**.

What did **not** move is as examinable: the states kept their own governments, and the new powers were **checked** rather than pooled – which is what let **Federalists** call the government strong enough to govern yet safe enough to trust.

Argue from the **specific weakness** a clause was written to fix. “The Articles were too weak” earns nothing; “no power to tax, so the war debt could not be paid” is the evidence.

The price of the new powers

Great Compromise

representation by **population** in one house and by **state** in the other – the price of keeping the small states in the union

the slavery compromises

counting enslaved people for representation, and postponing any ban on the slave trade – the Convention bought agreement by leaving the question open

Federalists

the new government is strong enough to govern and **checked** enough to be safe

Anti-Federalists

centralised power is the danger; individual liberties must be written down – and that demand produced the **Bill of Rights**

Ratification was contested, and the Bill of Rights was its **price** – not an afterthought, and not part of the document the Convention sent out.



Continuity and Change in Period 3

The period's reasoning skill is **continuity and change** .

The strongest answers hold both: political institutions changed radically, while slavery, westward expansion, and conflict with American Indians continued and intensified.

Worked example – describe one effect

2025 exam, short answer part B: *“Briefly describe one effect of the Seven Years’ War from 1754 to 1765.”*

- **Full marks:** *“Britain emerged from the war with a large debt, which led Parliament to impose new taxes such as the Stamp Act on the colonies to help pay for imperial defence.”*
- One effect, named – and the **causal link stated**:
debt → new taxes.
- *“Britain won the war”* is a result, not an effect;
“the colonies were angry” is too vague to credit.

Describe one effect is a two-part instruction: say what happened *next*, and say why the war produced it. One sentence can hold both.

Exam tips

- Learn the causal chain: war → debt and new territory → taxes and the Proclamation of 1763 → colonial resistance → independence.
- Republicanism and natural rights are the two ideas to name; do not just write "Enlightenment ideas".
- For the Constitution, argue from the specific weakness it fixed – no power to tax, no power to regulate commerce, no executive.
- Keep Federalist and Anti-Federalist positions straight, and remember the Bill of Rights was the price of ratification.
- The Revolution's effects on slavery and women are examinable, and both are partial: ideals spread further than rights did.
- On continuity-and-change prompts, give one of each. An answer that only lists changes has answered half the question.



Period 3 – key takeaways

1

Chain

war → debt → taxes &
Proclamation → independence

2

Ideas

name republicanism and natural
rights

3

Constitution

fix a named weakness: tax,
commerce, executive

4

C&C

ideals spread further than rights
(slavery, women)

Check yourself

- 1 What did the Seven Years' War leave Britain with?
- 2 Name the two ideas, not just "Enlightenment".
- 3 Why was the Bill of Rights added?
- 4 On a C&C prompt, what must you give?

Answers: debt and new territory ▪ republicanism and natural rights ▪ the price of ratification
▪ one continuity and one change