The American Colonists: What Made them so Unique?

I. Prelude: Europe emerges from the Medieval period

A. Closure of the land route to China

1. Marco Polo – 1254-1324

a. Venice – traders, not conquerors

2. Moslem empires' conflicts with Christian nations

B. Search for routes for the Spice Trade, China

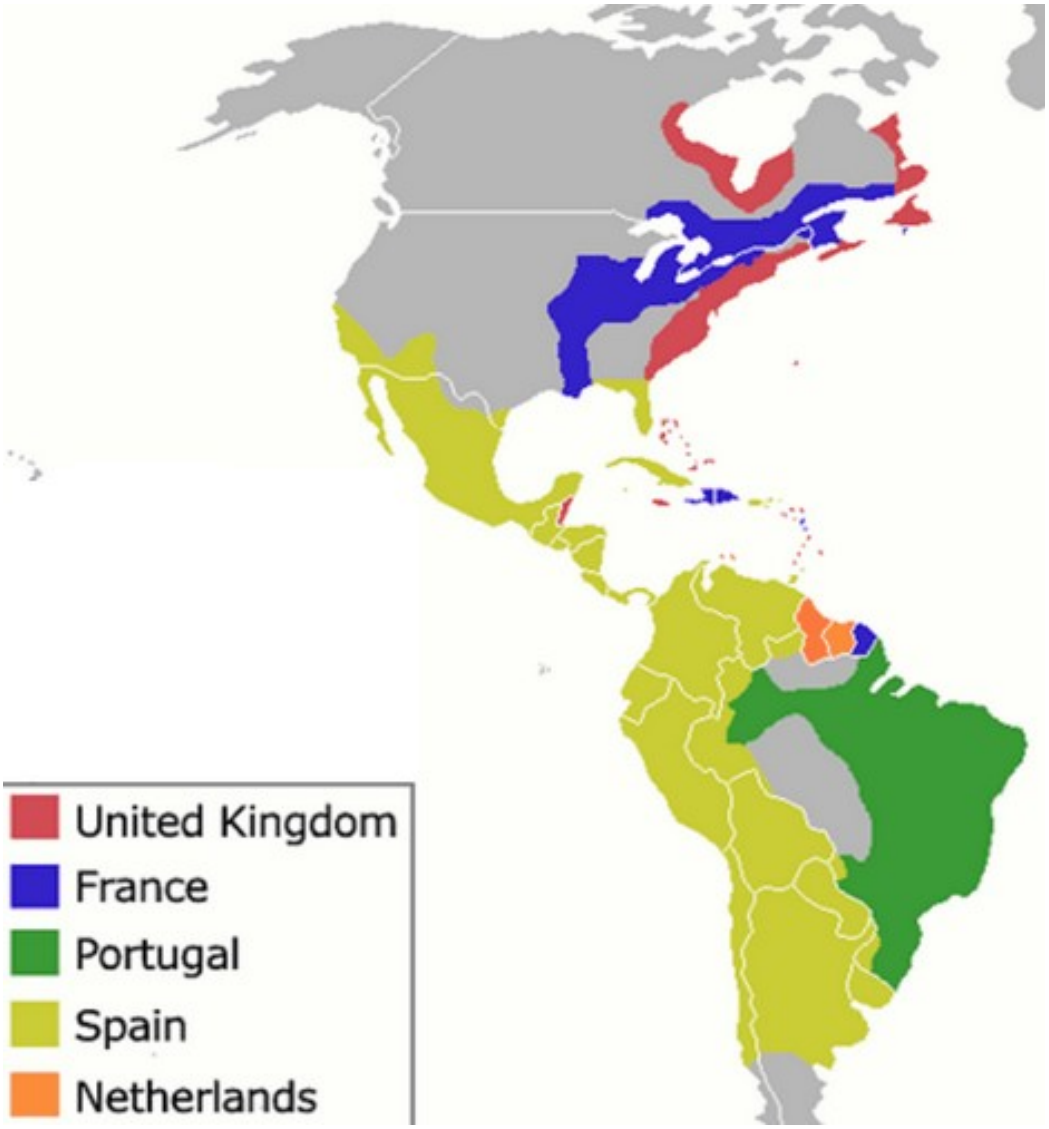
II. The Americas

A. What did Americas and its colonies represent?

1. Wealth for the parent European nation

2. Spread of Christianity for the Pope

B. Pope Alexander VI and the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494 divided the Earth outside Europe into Castilian and Portuguese global territorial hemispheres for exclusive conquest and colonization.



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C. Primary colonial settlements
   1. Spain – focus on conquest, spreading religion
      a. Central America
      b. South America except Brazil
      c. southwestern North America
   2. Portugal – focus on economic growth
      a. Brazil
   3. France – settlement driven by King – a "larger" France
      a. northeastern and central North America
   4. England – settlement driven by companies for profit
      a. Hudson Bay area and lands to its west
      b. Atlantic coast from Maine to Georgia

III. Spain – considered "most Catholic" by Pope
   A. 1492 – Discovery of America by Christopher Columbus
      1. Four voyages total
      2. Maintained he had found route to the (East) Indies
      3. Never acknowledged discovery of the New World
   B. 1494 – granted ownership of Americas except Brazil by Pope
      1. Conquest of Indians
      2. Pope ordered Spain to convert Indians to Christianity
   C. Prior to Jamestown settlement in 1607, travelled through / mapped
      1. Caribbean
      2. Latin America
      3. Kansas
      4. Great Smoky Mountains of Tennessee
      5. Grand Canyon
      6. Oregon
      7. Canadian Maritimes
      8. Settlements in New Mexico
         a. Santa Fe's ***Palace of the Governors*** – oldest public building in U.S.
      9. St. Augustine, Florida, 1565 – oldest city in U.S. city
      10. Short-lived settlements in Georgia, Virginia

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Depiction of Spanish atrocities

D. Discovery of gold and silver
   1. Shiploads sent to Spain
   2. Money spent on wars against Protestant Europe
      a. Spain bankruptcy in November 1575
      b. 1588 – Spanish Armada – against England
   3. by 1648
      a. Protestant countries stronger than ever
      b. Could not afford further development of North America
         1) New Mexico, Texas, California, Arizona, Colorado
            a) Texas Governor had to live in jailhouse
         2) extreme poverty due to taxes, no schools, high illiteracy
         3) culture different from that of Mexico
         4) religion remained key element of colonial policy
         5) dictated what to produce, but not competitive in trade
            a) cost of travel made products too expensive
      c. All travel required to go through Mexico City
         1) 1,500-mile journey by caravans of oxen-pulled carts

2) Six months each way
3) To travel overseas: from Mexico City east to Veracruz port
4) Foreign trade forbidden
5) No roads connecting settlements

E. Few Spanish women came to Americas
1. By 1700 mestizos were majority of the population

F. Forced cultural assimilation practices of Indians de facto slavery
1. Escaped "neophytes" hunted down and publicly flogged

G. Forced immigration of Hispanics to assigned location – by crown or church
1. Manufacturing forbidden; taxes, travel costs quadrupled costs of imports
2. No self-government; no elections; military commanders were governors
3. Loyalty of peons to patron expected (a la Middle Ages serfs and lord)
a. Patronage still influences elections in Texas, New Mexico, etc.

IV. Portugal

A. Vasco da Gama sailed around Africa to India 1498
1. Phoenicians sailed around Africa in 3 years for Pharaoh – about 600BC
a. Phoenicians – traders, not conquerors

B. Claimed and named Labrador (northeastern corner of North America)
1. Cod fishing
2. Counter-claim to exploration by England's John Cabot
a. Per Pope's decree

C. Brazil
1. Exploration of coastline began 1497
2. first colony established 1532 – Sao Vicente
a. São Vicente, by its democratic municipal prerogatives (in the tradition of Portuguese municipalism since the Middle Ages) and by the general elections to its first Câmara (City Council) on August 22, 1532, is symbolically considered the birthplace of democracy in the Americas.
b. Established sugar cane industry with its intensive labor demands, met via Native and later African slaves.
3. Rio de Janeiro founded March 1567
4. 1775 – Portugal united its three colonies (the State of Brazil, the State of Maranhão and Piauí; and the State of Grão-Pará and Rio Negro) as the State of Brazil. As a result, upon independence Brazil did not split into several countries, as Spanish colonies did (due to separate revolts).

V. France

A. King's intention to establish feudal culture with nobles and commoners

1. No democracy, no equality

B. 1604 – island in north of Maine on St. Croix River (Maine-Canada border)

C. Quebec, Great Lakes, Mississippi River to Louisiana

D. Intention to coexist with Indians in a friendly, respectful alliance

1. Intermarriages became common
2. Commoners left treatment as peasantry to live freely with Indian tribe
3. Failure, bankruptcy of feudal system resulted

E. Populations by mid-1700s

1. Quebec – 62,000
2. Louisiana Territory – a few thousand
3. English colonies – over a million

F. France lost its colonies at the end of the Seven Years War (in America: "French and Indian War") in 1863

VI. Dutch – United Provinces of the Netherlands

A. 26 July 1581 – Act of Abjuration declaring independence from Spain

B. Ultimately successful war of independence vs. monarchy of Spain

C. Declaration of an inborn human right to rebel against an oppressive government

D. Creation of a republic

E. In early 1600s most modern country on Earth

1. Arts, laws, business practices, modern banking

F. New Amsterdam – 1624

1. Dutch West India Company
2. Commercial – fur trade; diversity, tolerance, upward mobility
3. Population: Dutch; French Walloons; Lutherans from Poland, Finland, Sweden; Catholics from Ireland, Portugal; Anglicans, Puritans, Quakers from New England; Indians; Moroccan Muslim; 20% Africans – slave, free, half-free; Jews; 1607 – Pilgrims
4. Conquered by British – 1664, renamed New York
   a. Population 1,500

VII. England

A. 1215 – Magna Carta

B. Monarchs since 1509

1. Henry VIII r.1509-1547
   a. English Reformation
      1) Protestant Reformation
         a) Martin Luther 1483–1546
            i) Ninety-five Theses 1517

b) John Calvin 1509-1564

i) Broke with Catholic Church about 1530

2) Divorce, Catholic excommunication 1533

b. divine right of kings as argument against papal supremacy

2. Edward VI r.1547-1553
   a. Pro Church of England
3. Mary r.1553-1558
   a. Catholic
   b. Attempted to reverse Reformation; persecuted Protestants
   c. Married to (Catholic) Spanish King Phillip II; Queen of Spain
4. Elizabeth r.1558-1603
   a. Pro Church of England
   b. France, Spain major European powers
   c. Spanish Armada 1588
5. James I r.1603-1625
6. Charles I r.1625-1649
   a. believed in the divine right of kings
   b. Supported by "Cavaliers" nobles of semi-feudal north, west England
   c. Supported by Virginia General Assembly
   d. Opposed by Massachusetts Puritans, Puritans in Parliament
   e. Executed 1649

C. 1628-1644 – **Institutes of the Lawes of England** written by Sir Edward Coke
   1. Coke interpreted Magna Carta protections and rights to apply not just to nobles, but to all British subjects
   2. Influenced the 1787 U.S. Constitutional Convention
   3. Cited in over 70 cases decided by the Supreme Court of the United States, including several landmark cases, such as Roe v. Wade (1973)

D. English civil war – 1640s
   1. Wars of the Three Kingdoms 1639-1653
   2. Parliament
      a. Dominated by Puritans
      b. Pro- "free market reforms"

E. Commonwealth of England Republic 1649-1660

F. Restoration of Stuart monarchy
   1. Charles II r.1660-1685
      a. Tories: benevolent monarchy

b. Whigs: terrible despotism

2. James II r.1685-1688
   a. Inspired by absolutist monarchy of France's Louis XIV r.1643-1715
   b. Actions taken in American colonies
      1) Merge colonies
      2) Dissolve representative assemblies
      3) Impose crippling taxes
      4) Place military commanders in control
      5) See consequences below
   c. Overthrown 1688 – "***The Glorious Revolution***"

G. Philosopher John Locke b.1632-d.1704
   1. Puritan parents
   2. bachelor's degree 1656, master's degree 1658
   3. **Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina** 1669
   4. **Essay Concerning Human Understanding** 1689
   5. **Letter Concerning Toleration** 1689
   6. **Two Treatises of Government** 1689

H. Monarchs since the Glorious Revolution
   1. Time periods
      a. England (to 1707)
      b. Great Britain (England and Scotland) (1707-1801)
      c. United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland (1801-1927)
      d. United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (1927+)

   2. Mary II r.1689-1694, and William of Orange r.1689-1702
   3. Anne r.1702-1714
   4. George I r.1714-1727
   5. George II r.1727-1760
   6. George III r.1760-1820
   7. George IV r.1820-1830
   8. William IV r.1830-1837
   9. Victoria r.1837-1901
   10. Edward VII r.1901-1910
   11. George V r. 1910-1936
   12. Edward VIII r.1936 (abdicated)
   13. George VI r.1936-1952
   14. Elizabeth II r. 1952-2022
   15. Charles III r.2022-current

I. 1707 – Acts of Union
   1. End of England as sovereign state
   2. Beginning of Great Britain – England and Scotland combined

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J. Colonization of North America

1. Jamestown - 1607
    a. Intention: enslave Indians
    b. Indian Chief Powhatan ruled 30 tribes, 24,000 people
        1) Tribute paid by subordinate chiefs
        2) Intended to make English vassals
    c. Wars continued for decades
        1) By 1669
            a) Indian population 2,000 – 8% of original
            b) English population 40,000
    d. Tobacco imported from West Indies, grown as a cash crop
    e. Indentured servants
        1) 80-90% of 150,000 European immigrants
        2) Twenty were African bought from Dutch traders in 1619
            a) Treated same as Europeans
2. New England
    a. Pilgrims – 1621
        1) fleeing religious persecution
        2) ship Mayflower
    b. Puritans - 1630
    c. 70% came as families
    d. Middle-class
    e. Well-educated
        1) Expected to read the Bible, so had to be literate
        2) Of original 15,000 129+ graduates of Oxford, Cambridge
    f. Roughly equal in wealth
    g. Opposed to Virginia-style landed aristocracy
    h. No indentured servants
    i. Each community self-governing
    j. 1620 – Pilgrims
    k. Puritans left England en masse in 1630s – 25,000 in 12 years
        1) Dissenters banished
    l. No ties to nobles
    m. 50% from East Anglia
        1) Champions of Germanic notions of freedom
    n. Population 60,000 by 1660

The American Colonists: What Made them so Unique?

3. Separate, uncoordinated responses of colonies in 1686 against actions taken by King James II **(re list above)**
   a. Massachusetts, Long Island, New York City, Virginia, Maryland
      1) Arrested royal governors, seized forts, naval ships
   b. Charleston, Philadelphia too small to participate; i.e., populations of only a few hundred

VIII. American colonies to the United States

The American Colonists: What Made them so Unique?

A. Disliked some Acts but loyal to the King and Country – i.e., typical politics
   1. Post Office (Revenues) Act of 1710
   2. Hat Act of 1731
   3. Molasses Act of 1733 – never effectively collected due to colonial evasion
   4. Iron Act of 1749

B. The Trigger – Inexorably, Step by Step Progressing towards Revolution
   1. From the pulpit – 1750
      a. Political ideology was often expressed in sermons from the pulpit
      b. Rev. Jonathan Mayhew
         1) 1750 Sermon – *A Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission and Nonresistancey to the Higher Powers*
            a) "**Connecting link**" between
               i) Locke's theoretical arguments for revolution, and
               ii) The actions of New England revolutionaries of 1760s, 1770s.
            b) John Adams – "read by everybody, celebrated by friends, and abused by enemies.
            c) With Locke's Second treatise served as a guidebook for revolution.
         2) Lockean resistance to unjust government
            a) Rulers who violate the rights of their citizens and who violate the "constitutions and laws of government" are truly and properly **rebels**.
            b) Like the sword of Damocles, **Locke's moral right to revolution** is meant to hang over the rulers' heads as a constant reminder to hew to the principles that make their positions legitimate and to justify the people's trust.
            c) The people's moral right to alter or abolish the standing government actually serves a profoundly **conservative** function.
   2. Samuel Adams b.1722-d.1803
      a. 1768 Massachusetts Circular Letter
         1) led to Britain stationing troops in Boston
         2) ultimately led to Boston Massacre
      b. 1772 committee of correspondence system

c. coordinated resistance to what he saw as the British government's attempts to violate the British Constitution at the expense of the colonies

d. actively involved with colonial newspapers publishing accounts of colonial sentiment over British colonial rule, which were fundamental in uniting the colonies

3. Parliament Acts unpopular, but not cause for revolution

a. Post- Seven Years War (after 1763)

1) Parliament: American colonies to help pay war debts

2) New policy – 10,000 British troops to be stationed in colonies

a) Over 1,000,000 British subjects in colonies

b) Colonies to share in paying the expense

b. Sugar Act of 1764

1) halved molasses tax

2) required detailed ship manifest records

3) but now enforced in admiralty courts, not civil jury courts

c. Stamp Act of 1765

1) imposed direct tax on the British colonies in America; required many printed materials in the colonies be produced on stamped paper from London which included an embossed revenue stamp.

2) Printed materials included legal documents, magazines, playing cards, newspapers, and many other types of paper used throughout the colonies.

3) Paid in British currency, not in colonial paper money.

d. These two acts were the impetus for the formation of America's increasing

1) distrust of government power, and

2) revolutionary mindset

e. 1767-1768 – Townshend Acts

f. 5 March 1770 – Boston Massacre

g. 1764-1775 – English constitution viewed as greatest political check on abuse of power ever invented

1) English "constitution"

a) not a single document

b) partially unwritten

c) included common law – court cases

d) included Acts of Parliament

h. John Adams – "They think that the Liberties of Mankind and the Glory of human Nature is in their Keeping," and they "know that Liberty has been skulking about in Corners from the Creation, and has been hunted and persecuted, in all Countries, by cruel Power."

i. Liberty was a state or condition that was secured only by constitutionalizing power.

1) "a government so *constitutionally checked and controlled*, that proper provision is made against its being otherwise executed."

j. By 1775 forced to obey laws to which they had not given their consent

1) **Saw an active and organized conspiracy of power** led by British imperial officials and their Loyalist supporters; a deliberately organized plan to destroy the English constitution and to enslave them through several coordinated steps.

2) The *search for the moral causes that motivated British imperial officials* is the distinguishing feature of Americans' response to events of 1760s, 1770s.

C. Driven to Rebellion

1. Tea Act, 10 May 1773

2. Boston Tea Party, 16 December 1773

3. Intolerable Acts / Coercive Acts, 1774 – punitive response

a. Boston Port Act, Massachusetts Government Act, Administration of Justice Act, Massachusetts Government Act, Quartering Act, Quebec Act

b. The Vice-Admiralty Court Act – gave Royal naval courts jurisdiction over all matters concerning customs violations and smuggling, rather than colonial courts. Before the Act, customs violators could be tried in an admiralty court in Halifax, Nova Scotia if royal prosecutors believed they would not get a favorable outcome using a local judge and jury. The Vice-Admiralty Court Act added three new royal admiralty courts in Boston, Philadelphia and Charleston to aid in more effective prosecutions. These courts were run by judges that were appointed by the Crown and who received a 5% award when they found someone guilty. The decisions were made solely by the judge without the use of trials by jury, which was considered to be a fundamental right of British citizens. In addition, the accused person had to

travel to the location of the court of jurisdiction at his own expense and if he didn't show up he was automatically considered guilty. This system made it hard for an accused person to get a fair trial.

4. What to do?
   a. Unified discussion, decision, and action (vs. 1686)
   b. **First Continental Congress** – 5 September to 26 October 1774
      1) 12 of 13 colonies – Georgia did not send delegate
      2) sent entreaties to King to stop the Intolerable Acts
5. Persistent oppression that points clearly in the direction of despotism is the tripwire justifying revolution.
6. First battles of the American Revolution
   a. Concord and Lexington, 19 April 1775
7. Second Continental Congress – 10 May 1775 to …
   a. All 13 colonies sent delegates
   b. Took charge of war effort – prior ad hoc, uncoordinated
   c. 14 June 1775 – formed Continental Army
      1) George Washington named Commander
   d. 17 June 1775 – Battle of Bunker Hill
   e. 6 July 1775 – declaration of causes for taking up arms
   f. 8 July 1775 – Olive Branch Petition sent to King
   g. assumed all the functions of a national government, including appointing ambassadors, signing treaties, raising armies, appointing generals, obtaining loans from Europe, issuing paper money called "Continentals", disbursing funds
   h. requested money, supplies, troops from states; no authority to levy taxes
   i. 10 May 1776 – passed resolution recommending any colony with a government not inclined toward independence should form one that was
   j. 15 May 1776
      1) advised throwing off oaths of allegiance, suppressing the authority of the Crown in any colonial government that still derived its authority from the Crown
      2) Virginia Convention instructed its delegation in Philadelphia to propose a resolution that called for a declaration of independence, the formation of foreign alliances, and a confederation of the states

k. 7 June 1776 – Richard Henry Lee offered a resolution declaring the colonies independent

l. 2 July 1776 – approved the resolution of independence

m. 4 July 1776 – Declaration of Independence

D. 1775-1783 – American Revolutionary War

IX. The United States of America

A. 15 November 1777 – Articles of Confederation

B. Upon winning independence, General Washington did not become King as would be typical in Europe or anywhere else in the world

C. 25 May – 17 September 1787 – Constitutional Convention

1. influenced by

a. the study of the Magna Carta

b. the study of other federations ancient and current

c. Due Process Clause of the Constitution was partly based on common law and on Magna Carta (1215), which had become a foundation of English liberty against arbitrary power

d. Separation of Powers mainly due to Montesquieu and John Locke

e. Locke advanced the principle of consent of the governed in his Two Treatises of Government. Government's duty under a social contract among the sovereign people was to serve the people by protecting their rights. These basic rights were life, liberty and property.

D. 21 June 1788 – ratified by 9th of 13 states

E. 17 September 1788 – Congress adopted the Constitution as the law of the land

F. 4 March 1789 – first day of government under the new Constitution

X. The Present

A. U.S. Constitution is <u>above</u> the government, defining its structure and limiting its scope.

1. Should Congress and/or the President pass a law or take an action that is illegal, the Supreme Court will rule it invalid and void.

2. Ongoing challenges continually define the limits of power for Congress and/or the President with regard to specific issues.

B. The Federal government cannot change the U.S. Constitution.

1. Congress can propose amendments, but three-fourths of the states (currently, 38 of 50) must approve any change. The states will never approve changes that increase Federal powers.

a. Further facilitates Separation of Powers

b. Provides more stable political environment – minimal change

C. The U.S. Constitution is the oldest written constitution still active in the world

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XI. The Future – Knowing the past, where do we go from here?

- A. We know what works
- B. Now have a clearer picture why it works
- C. As well as a picture of what has been tried in the past and why it does not work

XII. AMERICA IS UNIQUE BECAUSE OF ITS UNIQUE HISTORY SINCE 1215: THE THOUGHTS THAT LED TO CONSTRUCTIVE ACTIONS, IN CONTRAST TO THE HISTORICAL NORM OF DESTRUCTIVE VIOLENCE. EIGHT CENTURIES OF POLITICAL IDEAS, NECESSARILY IN A SEQUENCE, BUILT ONE UPON ANOTHER, PRODUCED A DISTINCT STRUCTURE, WITH EACH STAIR-STEP A REQUIRED PREREQUISITE AND FOUNDATION FOR WHAT FOLLOWED.

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