

- Once begun, the American Revolution ushered in a century-long process of political and cultural transformation in Europe and the Americas.
- By the end of this revolutionary century, the authority of monarchs had been swept away or limited by constitutions, and religion has lost its dominating place in Western intellectual life.
- Also, the medieval idea of social order determined by birth had been replaced by a capitalist vision that emphasized competition and social mobility.

Causes of Revolution

- As settlers pushed west into Amerindian lands, the government saw the likelihood of renewed conflict and rising military expenses.
- Britain tried to limit settler pressure on Amerindian lands and get colonists to shoulder more of the costs of imperial defense and administration.
- Britain did this through the Proclamation of 1763 and a series of fiscal reforms and new taxes.
- Colonial legislatures formally protested these measures and angry colonists organized boycotts of British goods.
- Organizations such as the Sons of Liberty held public meetings, intimidated royal officials, tar and feather officials, and developed committees to enforce the boycotts.

Course of Revolution

- As the crisis mounted, patriot leaders created new governing bodies that made laws, appointed justices, and even took control of colonial militias.
- Congress assumed the powers of government, creating a currency and organizing an army led by George Washington.
 - When representatives elected to the Continental Congress in 1775, blood had already been shed.
- Popular support for independence was given a hard edge by the angry rhetoric of street corner speakers and the inflammatory pamphlet Common Sense.
- In July 1776 Congress approved the Declaration of Independence.
 - The Declaration's affirmation of popular sovereignty and individual rights would influence the language of revolution.

- The Revolution began in April 1775 with the battle of Lexington and Concord.
- British forces won many battles, but Washington slowly built a competent Continental army and civilian support that provided resources.
- The British defeat at Saratoga convinced France to enter the war as an ally of the United States in 1778.
- With the American army supported by French soldiers and a French fleet, Cornwallis surrendered to Washington at Yorktown.
- The Treaty of Paris (1783) granted unconditional independence for the colonies. The US promised to repay war debts to Britain and allow loyalists to recover property.

Republican institutions

- Even before the Declaration of Independence, many colonies had created new governments independent of British authorities.
- Each of the new states summoned constitutional conventions to draft formal charters and submitted the results to voters for ratification.
- Many state constitutions placed severe limits on executive authority, but granted legislatures greater authority than in colonial times. Most also contained a bill of rights to provide for further protection against government tyranny.
- The first plan of government for the new nation was the Articles of Confederation.
- The Constitutional Convention met in 1787 and secretly undertook the creation of a new constitution.
- The new Constitution included compromise solutions.
 - Separation of Powers
 - Federalism – division of authority between federal and state government
 - Great Compromise – bicameral legislature
 - Electoral College
- The US Constitution created the most democratic government of the era. However, only a minority of the adult population were given full rights.