**Introduction to the Ideological origins of the American Revolution**

The theme of this section, the thesis, is that 1776 was a rebellion, a British rebellion against a British parliament, and that the American Revolution should be understood as inaugurated with the Constitution, with its ratification. This hardly solved major problems, it transformed old concerns, and introduced new ones. But the terrain socially and most importantly politically, understood here in terms of governance, its modes, its functions and responsibilities, that all changed. And even if one wants to insist on continuity, on a continuing preoccupation with the efficacy of monarchical rule, what has been referred to as those Americans who have been called Royalist Revolutionaries, John Adams for example, the ground changed with the Constitution. Even they washed in American waters.

But to get there, to understand this revolutionary document that was the constitution, utterly flawed as it was, and was recognized a by all, some work has to be done. 1176 has to be understood, as to what led to and were the consequences that flowed from it. 1776 acts therefore as the first signpost, the first definite American marker on the road to Philadelphia. But to bring it all back home 9 to quote the Noble Prize winner Bob Dylan) one needs first to go to England. It was English politics that shaped the framework and understanding of the colonists. It was there pamphlets, their understanding of their own history, of their current moment, that shaped the colonists understanding of what was happening to them. Acts happened here, the stamp Act, the Quartering of troops, extraterritoriality, for example, the latter the issue was the 19th grievance in the Declaration of Independence and that which also the grievance that started the recent Democratic Protest Movement in Hong Kong, these were all by themselves separate acts. What happened over time here was that through the lens of a particular British approach to politics, a practical political philosophy of the Whigs,, the colonists began to superimpose, in the sense of basic quantum theory, upon these acts that theory, that philosophy and synthesizing this Whig conceptual framework with their own practical experience which ultimately led them to rebel against Parliament and the Crown.

The Ratification of the Constitution will mark the end of Whig politics in this country. And that is the real beginning of the American Revolution.

**England**

To begin to establish one of two frameworks for understanding, because there is another argument concerning some of the leading American revolutionaries, that they were loyal to the Monarchy and its powers, and that shapes their contributions to 1776 and to the framing of the Constitution, and this will brought out later in the course because it is a quite serious argument with clear lines to contemporary American politics and the continual expansion of executive power, but to bring out one line, which will be a dominant line throughout, there has to be brief, what the English refre to as a potted history of England in the 17th and 18th century. Fear not.

What you need to know is that there had been in the middle of the 17th century a brutal civil war in England between Parliament and the King, Charles the First. The tensions between King and Parliament had been brewing for a while, particularly under Charles’s father James the First (who really should have done much better with such a fine first name, but alas), but ti reached a boiling point under Charles. The issue, surprisingly enough was about money and the King’s right to collect taxes unauthorized by Parliament. And there were also religious and other questions but ultimately it was about power and prerogative. Leaving this for a moment, in 1649 Charles, who was a Stuart, is executed for treason. Parliament, and thus power is in the hands of Oliver Cromwell who acts as a King but refuses the title. Cromwell eventually goes, order between the King and Parliament is restored and Charles the Second becomes King. The Civil War period by the way is when Hobbes writes the *Leviathan.* Charles is succeeded by James the Second , hid brother, who is a disaster. He is stupid and a bigot and antagonizes Parliament through his attempts to restore Catholicism to a position of prominence. Since Henry the Eight England the official Church of England and hence the Monarchy, was the Anglican Church, the Church of England. And this Church will be very prominent in the colonies. To attempt to restore Catholicism, threaten the power of the existing Anglican Church and seemingly undermined the religious authority of the monarchy, and gave rise to the baseless fears that England would become subordinate to the power of Rome. This was not about religion it was about politics. The result of all of this is that, Parliament invites William, of the Dutch House of Orange, with the idea of to come to England, with the idea of putting him on the throne. He was a Protestant, his mother was a daughter of Charles the First, and his wife was the eldest daughter of James the Second by his first Protestant wife. And he was also a leader of the opposition to Louis the Fourteenth of France. When William arrived in England and began his march to London, James’s support evaporates and he flees to France. In violation of all constitutional logic a Convention Parliament declares the throne vacant and invites William to become King. This is known as the Glorious Revolution.

The importance of the Glorious Revolution is that it acts as a political marker. It secured Parliament's existence, it could not simply be dismissed, and the changes made Parliament an indispensable partner in the governing process. The “Revolutionary Settlement”, a name given to a series of statues passed after 1689 over a ten-year period, guaranteed that parliament would meet annually and the life of the parliament would be three years, that the judges would hold office during good behavior instead of at the King’s pleasure, ensuring their independence, and that Dissenters could practice their religion openly. A Bill of Rights was passed, with Habeas Corpus, which provided a broad set of guarantees to individual liberty.

The why the system looked then was that there were different branches of government that worked together and balanced each other. Both the King and Parliament shared in legislative power. And the King who was the chief executive with hiss ministers put the laws into effect. And the Judiciary was independent.

There are two critically important points to note in this very potted history, though all of this will play out with the colonists. The first point concerns the issue of the royal “preogative”. These were the special powers of the monarch to be able to take unilateral and unaccountable action in the public interest. The right to suspend, dispense with, or veto legislation; to appoint ministers, to make war and treaties; this was really what was the heart of the struggles of the Stuarts and their parliaments. And it could be said it was the ultimate cause of the rebellion, civil war, and revolution in the seventeenth century.

Second it was during the period of the hysteria concerning James the second that men of country and court persuasions formed parties. The Whigs came from the country, and their ideology, their way of understanding politics, became known as country ideology. Now many things distinguished it, which will become clear over time. But here as a starting point understand that this country ideology stressed virtue in government, advocated vigilance to guard against the dangers of corruption, and strongly believed in a balanced framework. of government. They were in that sense Republicans, and they firmly opposed arbitrary power. Locke was a Whig, though oddly he was not completely hostile to the prerogative in times of dire emergency. John Milton fitted this.

I am going to begin the next lecture with Locke, whose picture lays unattended in my office and then I am going to talk about sovereignty and theories of representation.