THE PROSPERITY OF LIBERAL CAPITALISM IN THE NORTH ATLANTIC

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The appetite for resources and greater profit motivated early colonization. Strategies for conquering varied depending on the European country; however, the consensus was to “consider whether it is very advantageous to lose the profit, which is brought from these countries every year.”¹ The discovery of the New World provided cheaper options for goods and new products not commonly available in Europe, such as figs, sugar, and oils.² The maintenance and monopolization of these resources led to the establishment of permanent settlements in the New World. Although governments sanctioned these settlements, private chartered companies organized the colonies with elected democratic governments. However, the frequent interference and ignorance of the *home* governments led to revolutions that restructured the world’s political landscape. Constitutional monarchies and republicanism replaced absolute monarchism. The power of the monarchy and the clergy diminished while the people fought and successfully attained their rights and liberties. New nations in the west, especially the Atlantic, began to rise as significant competitors to European nations. Centuries of conquest, expansion, and hardship led to the achieved transformation of empire colonies, such as the United States, to liberal and independent states. Violence, colonial living, and the shift in political ideologies explained the success of expansion and consolidation of liberal capitalism in the North Atlantic world in the early modern period.

¹ Pierre Biard, “Reasons why the Cultivation of New France ought to be Undertaken in Earnest,” in *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents* 4, ed. Rueben Gold Thwaites (Cleveland: 1894), 113.

² Richard Hakluyt, the elder, “Inducements to the Liking of the Voyage Intended towards Virginia [1585],” in *New American World: A Documentary History of North America to 1612* 3 ed. David B. Quinn (London: Macmillan, 1979), 64-69.

Violence was an integral part of European colonial expansion and consolidation. Indigenous communities populated the New World, however, over the centuries, their relationships with the Europeans wavered. The ignorance of the Europeans about the Natives, along with other underlying factors caused the destruction of the Indigenous population. Europeans knew North America had been inhabited prior to their arrival, however they noted the noticeable *emptiness*.³ Historical evidence suggests that the era of the Columbian Exchange was the reason for this notion.⁴ The arrival of Europeans invited unknown bacteria and diseases that affected Natives. Although disease greatly decimated the Indigenous population, internal conflicts ultimately led to the reduction of Indigenous authority and paved the way for colonial expansion. Initially, the establishment of settlements occurred through treaty agreements between the Europeans and Natives; however, changes in authority and misunderstandings often resulted in the neglect of the agreed conditions.⁵ This, especially for the English, resulted in bitter and hostile relations with the local populations. Ultimately, violence was inevitable for the establishment and expansion of the colonies.

Early colonial conflict that significantly changed the demographic in North America was King Philip's War (1675-1678). The English colonies, such as Virginia and Massachusetts, faced internal and external pressure. Internally, the growth of the colonies increased wealth and, as a result, promoted more expansion.⁶ However, at the same time, the Indigenous population was

³ Amos Adams, *A Concise Historical View of the Perils, Hardships, Difficulties, and Discouragements which have Attended the Planting and Progressive Improvements of New-England* (Boston: 1769), 9-13.

⁴ Alfred W. Crosby, "Infectious Disease and the Demography of the Atlantic Peoples," *Journal of World History* 2, no. 2 (1991): 119-133.

⁵ Daniel R. Mandell, *King Philip's War: Colonial Expansion, Native Resistance, and the End of Indian Sovereignty* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2010), 32-59.

⁶ Michael Driedger and Daniel Samson, "Module 3: Lesson 14: Colonial Societies, Money and Power in the Atlantic World" (lecture, Brock University, St. Catharines, 2018).

pushing back the English expansion. Unlike the French, who colonized to solidify trading, the English strategy was to bring in as many settlers to *plant* colonies, therefore pressuring Indigenous communities into surrendering control and power in the New World.⁷ The cause of King Philip's War was years of conflicts between Indigenous and Europeans groups. For instance, both communities accused one another of killing their members for no apparent reason.⁸ At the same time, the Indigenous suspected European missionaries of causing disease among their people.⁹ In the end, the defeat of the Wampanoag people would result in further confinement of the Indigenous people and expansion of the English colonies.

It is important to mention here that religion played a crucial part in early colonization. Until the late eighteenth century, one of the purposes of exploration and conquest was to spread Christianity. Europeans felt that it was their duty to save Indigenous people by implementing religion into their lives, and those who opposed such teachings were *heathens*. Carole Blackburn highlights that the “absence of a system of alphabetical writing quickly came to be interpreted as a sign of absence of civilization and as evidence of the inferiority of New World peoples.”¹⁰ The Europeans saw themselves as *teachers* to the Indigenous people because, compared to the colonists, they reportedly lacked civilization and direction. Cotton Mather argues, “the devil decoyed [the New England Natives], in hopes that the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ would never come here to destroy or disturb his absolute empire over them.”¹¹ Mather further explains that by royal charter, it is their responsibility to “incite the natives of that country to the

⁷ Driedger and Samson, “Module 3: Lesson 14: Colonial Societies,” 2018.

⁸ John Mason, “A Brief History of the Pequot War: Especially of the Memorable Taking of Their Fort at Mistick in Connecticut in 1637,” in *History of the Pequot War*, ed. Charles Orr (Cleveland: 1894), 6-7.

⁹ Carol Blackburn, *Harvest of Souls: The Jesuit Missions and Colonialism in North America, 1632-1650* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000), 106-109.

¹⁰ Blackburn, 109.

¹¹ Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana* (Boston: 1855), 556.

knowledge and obedience of the only true God and Saviour of mankind.”¹² As mentioned in the previous paragraph, those who opposed assimilation and conversion to Christianity faced violent consequences. Once the Natives and Europeans began to mix, the idea of expansion became complicated, and it became clear that North America was too small to share.

The outcome of the Seven Years’ War (1756-1763) monopolized colonial rule and trading for the Europeans, especially Britain. The defeat of France and the French-allied Natives altered the geography of North America and global trading patterns. Fear engulfed several Indigenous communities, especially those who allied with France during the war. Choctaw leader Alibamo Mingo worried of their new relationship, but hoped for the “race of white men come amongst us bearing the same abundance... to gain the affection of [his] people.”¹³ The issue was that the English were more aggressive and brutal than the French. The Creeks and the Cherokees told Alibamo, “Wherever the English went they caused disturbances for they lived under no government and paid no respect either to wisdom or station. I hoped for better things.”¹⁴ Unfortunately, the end of the Seven Years’ War clearly hinted this was “the last serious moment of power and influence for the Indigenous peoples in eastern North America.”¹⁵ At this point, Indigenous authority no longer existed, and the west was now under the heavy influence of the British. At the same time, although the war was marked as a British victory, the British government quickly learned that their ignorance towards their North American colonies would become costly.

¹² Mather, 557.

¹³ *Alibamo Mingo, Choctaw leader reflects on the British and the French, 1765.*

¹⁴ *Alibamo Mingo, Choctaw leader reflects on the British and the French, 1765.*

¹⁵ Michael Driedger and Daniel Samson, “Module 3: Lesson 16: The Seven Years’ War, Money and Power in the Atlantic World” (lecture, Brock University, St. Catharines, 2018).

Sources highlight the transparent motivators to fight in the Seven Years' War; Britons fought to contain the French, while the American-Britons fought to secure the frontier for expansion. Although a united front of British and colonist troops fought the French, the colonies began to realize their capabilities in efficiently financing and supporting themselves without British assistance. Prior to the 1693 Royal Proclamation, the British sanctioned the colonies, yet private chartered companies organized the colonies to run independently under a democratic government.¹⁶ However, these post-Seven Years' War policies threatened the liberal living, which the colonists had enjoyed. This ongoing struggle led to the American Revolution, which resulted in the separation of the 13 British colonies from the empire. Gordon Wood explains, although "the revolution had begun as a political crisis... by 1776; it was no longer merely a colonial rebellion."¹⁷ The motivated colonists expanded the British colonies to increase their wealth and power, however, the "British Empire was not in the business of setting up shop for others to make money."¹⁸ These new policies were implemented to prevent autonomy, however, this second-class treatment, along with increased taxes and lack of representation, pushed the colonies against Britain. Corrina Centritto notes that in Thomas Paine's reading:

Americans feel... 'Oppressed' by the British and possess the right to have control over their own system of government.¹⁹ Through the British imposing their influence, it acts as a dividing force... Paine feels as though Americans "have an undoubted privilege to inquire" [and] "reject" the control of the British monarchy in America (Paine, 1776).²⁰

¹⁶ Driedger and Samson, "Module 3: Lesson 16: The Seven Years' War," 2018.

¹⁷ Gordon S. Wood, *The American Revolution: A History* (New York: Modern Library, 2002), 91.

¹⁸ Michael Driedger and Daniel Samson, "Module 4: Lesson 18: The Seven Years' War, Money and Power in the Atlantic World" (lecture, Brock University, St. Catharines, 2018).

¹⁹ Thomas Paine, *Common Sense* (1776).

²⁰ Corrina Centritto, "Re: American Revolution," *Forum Discussion*, June 16, 2018, <https://lms.brocku.ca/portal/site/f347d20d-d597-4c4d-90f3-1de6d3d4f563/tool/3e4f350a-37df-4bcc-967a-e69b906f9753/discussionForum/message/dfViewThread>.

The American Republic challenged the “practices of [the] monarchy... republics demanded far more morally from their citizens... If republics were to have order, it would have to come from below, from the people.”²¹ The American Revolution changed the global political landscape. The colonists introduced a constitution that solely gave the people power to elect a democratic government to represent the people. Overall, the three global conflicts played important roles in the consolidation and expansion of the North Atlantic. When ideas of power and colonization begin to differ, it is difficult to maintain and control areas without violence, and this was evident prior to each conflict, especially the American Revolution. Prior to this revolution, Britain pushed for territorial control. However, once they began to venture towards Asia, the American colonies became a liability. While the Americans emphasized expansion, Britain was no longer interested, and this resulted in a split.

The establishment of colonies in North America provided individuals a new opportunity to build their lives. Although the settlements were to imitate the European lifestyle, colonial living changed the ideas of social order and consumerism, which became integral to colonization. John Hector St. John de Crevecoeur in “*What is an American*” (1782) highlights the lack of class differentiation. Crevecoeur explains, “Here are no aristocratic families, no courts, no kings, bishops... no great refinements of luxury. The rich and the poor are not so far removed from each other as they are in Europe.”²² The divide was not so prominent. In most towns, lawyers, and merchants carried the greatest job titles, while the rest of the population was dependent on farming. Social order in the New World was not dependent on the Great Chain of Being; instead, new social structures were established. Crèvecoeur argues that England was “A

²¹ Wood, 94.

²² Michel-Guillaume Jean de Crèvecoeur, *What Is an American?* (London: 1782), 2.

country that had no bread for him... who met with nothing but the frowns of the rich, the severity of the laws, with jails and punishments.”²³ The New World gave those who suffered in their respective countries an opportunity to rebuild their lives. Upon their arrival, colonists received lands and titles, along with laws that protected them. Enlightened thinkers dominated the social spheres in America. Interestingly, Woods mentions, “Equality... predicted an end to incessant squabbling over position and rank and the bitter contentions of factional politics that had afflicted the colonial past... the adoption of republicanism promised a new era of social harmony.”²⁴ Once social structures were altered, it became difficult to determine class divides, and in a sense, this was important. TH Breen²⁵ explains the deception of the North American society; “there is scarce distinction between persons of great fortune, and people of ordinary rank. The eighteenth century marked the merging of social classes, making it difficult to point out differences between individuals.”²⁶ When individuals saw one another as equals, the fight for rights and liberty was much more meaningful.

The introduction of new resources brought forth a rise in consumerism. In the Medieval era, peasants and the working class produced and traded “for what housed, fed and clothed them.”²⁷ Added wealth for the majority of the population allowed the purchase of luxury items, such as sugar, tea and expensive clothes. The rise in consumerism provides a “glimpse into the beginnings of a capitalist society with the shift from farming into the marketing of consumer

²³ Crèvecoeur, 3.

²⁴ Wood, 100.

²⁵ T.H. Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (New York: Oxford, 2005), 156.

²⁶ Taranjot Dhillon, “Re: Settler Societies and Consumer Culture,” *Forum Discussions*, June 8, 2016, <https://lms.brocku.ca/portal/site/f347d20d-d597-4c4d-90f3-1de6d3d4f563/tool/3e4f350a-37df-4bcc-967a-e69b906f9753/discussionForum/message/dfViewThread>.

²⁷ Driedger and Samson, “Module 3: Lesson 15: Settler Societies: Commercial Expansion, and Consumer Culture” (lecture, Brock University, St. Catharines, 2018).

goods... [this] will definitely give the colonists a means to have ownership over those goods... [their] own capitalist identity,”²⁸ separate from Britain. The break from British social norms and the rise of luxurious consumerism created a new social environment in the colonies, one with liberal freedom and creativity.

The final dimension that was significant to the establishment of liberal capitalism was the shift in political ideologies. For pre-modern rulers and subjects, the Protestant Reformation era questioned the legitimacy of the church and magnified the flaws of the Great Chain of Being.

Prior to the Reformation, King James VI/I argued in a parliamentary speech:

Authority [is] given... by god, and ‘to dispute what God may do is blasphemy’... Without the king, parliament has no power... he argues that his power should not be disputed and ‘not meddle with the main points of government’, by doing so his power is weakened. As such, a king's right to reign was through the power of god.²⁹

At the time of Charles I's reign, relations with the government were extremely poor. Charles' demand for absolute monarchism and the royal prerogative resulted in the English Civil War and his execution, thus forever changing England's political structure. In opposition to the monarchy's abuse of power, new social-political groups, such as the Levellers and Diggers, rose to power.³⁰ These political groups advocated equality and the right to appoint a government that represents the people. Although Jacques Bossuet agreed with James VI/I, he argued that the king was “not born for himself, but for the public.”³¹ Similarly for the Levellers, Bossuet mentioned

²⁸ Lisa Marie Sherren, “Re: Settler Societies and Consumer Culture,” *Forum Discussion*, June 7, 2018, <https://lms.brocku.ca/portal/site/f347d20d-d597-4c4d-90f3-1de6d3d4f563/tool/3e4f350a-37df-4bcc-967a-e69b906f9753/discussionForum/message/dfViewThread>.

²⁹ Taranjot Dhillon, “Re: The Obedience to God and King,” *Forum Discussion*, May 4, 2018, <https://lms.brocku.ca/portal/site/f347d20d-d597-4c4d-90f3-1de6d3d4f563/tool/3e4f350a-37df-4bcc-967a-e69b906f9753/discussionForum/message/dfViewThread>.

³⁰ Tony Benn, “The Levellers and the Tradition of Dissent,” *BBC History*, 17 February 2011, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/civil_war_revolution/benn_levellers_01.shtml.

³¹ Taranjot Dhillon, “Re: The Obedience to God and King,” *Forum Discussion*, May 4, 2018.

that kings were not above the law and must be removed if accused of abusing power. The demands offered to Charles I were outlined in “the Agreement of the Free People of England, Agreement ‘V’ and ‘VII,’” however he chose to oppose the Levellers, and ultimately ended his reign and absolute monarchy.³²

During the Enlightenment Era, when philosophy, math, and science became more prominent, the existing social order was challenged, creating the basis for the American and French Revolutions. The Age of Enlightenment questioned and threatened the aristocratic way of life and promoted notions of liberty and equality, which was a fundamental component of the revolutions.³³ The previous political culture lacked such conditions. However, Paine argues, “Mankind being originally equals in the order of creation... the distinctions of rich and poor... In the early ages of the world, according to scripture chronology there were no kings...”³⁴ This division in the population was manmade and oppressive; only a small minority possessed the most power, while the rest struggled. The refusal to give up power and control ultimately led to these revolutions. The basis of the French Revolution was to “bring forth bread to the poor, democracy to the people.”³⁵ The country was in debt due to their involvement in international conflicts and the monarchy’s indulgences, and, for these reasons, the Crown lost the loyalty of the people. Grievances for a revolution and equality echoed in its new constitution. The constitution argued that, “men are born and remain free and equal in rights,” while another article mentioned, “Every citizen may, accordingly, speak, write, and print with freedom.”³⁶ The

³² *The Agreement of the People* (1649).

³³ Michael Driedger and Daniel Samson, “Module 4: Lesson 19: The French Revolution, Money and Power in the Atlantic World” (lecture, Brock University, St. Catharines, 2018).

³⁴ Paine, *Common Sense* (1776).

³⁵ *The French Revolution*, produced by Beth Dietrich Segarra (New York: The History Channel, 2005), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5pXxoyk5wOo>.

³⁶ *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* (1789).

issue with these constitutions was who deserved these rights, because, after all, the purpose of the revolutions was to fight for the rights of all individuals. The French struggled to give black slaves their freedom because the economy and trade depended on their labour. As a result, the Haitian Revolution led to the country's independence from France and became the first to abolish slavery and give equal rights to all individuals.³⁷ Similarly, this was the issue with the global abolition of slavery because the wealth generated for the economy was initially from the plantations, and many countries hesitated to create abolition laws. Abolition was not until the US and British markets noticed a "relative decline in the importance of the colonial plantation products and the relative rise of domestic industrial production" to consider anti-slavery laws.³⁸ Ultimately, the shift in political ideologies influenced liberal capitalism in North America. The introduction of elected democratic governments and constitutions that protected the people influence liberalism in all aspects of society.

Therefore, it was clear that the most important dimensions that explained the success of expansion and consolidation of liberal capitalism in the North Atlantic was violence, a shift in colonial living, and the modification of political ideologies. The establishment of new social and political societies was dependent on the revolutions that consisted of conflicts and warfare between the suppressors and "rebels." It is transparent that change is always necessary regardless of the success of the current systems. In order for liberal capitalism to remain relevant in the modern world, it must encompass the rights and creative liberties of all individuals. Without such equality, liberalism is unable to prosper.

³⁷ Michael Driedger and Daniel Samson, "Module 4: Lesson 20: The Haitian Revolution, Money and Power in the Atlantic World" (lecture, Brock University, St. Catharines, 2018).

³⁸ Michael Driedger and Daniel Samson, "Module 5: Lesson 22: Abolition, Money and Power in the Atlantic World" (lecture, Brock University, St. Catharines, 2018).

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