



A Deeper Understanding of the American Revolution & the Age of Enlightenment

By Robert Porter Lynch V1.1 June 2022

April 19, 1775 was the historic day of the Battle of Lexington and Concord.

As a boy, my father reveled in telling me the story of my ancestor, Nathaniel Porter, aged 13, who marched nearly 25 miles from his farm just north of Salem to take up arms against the most powerful military in the world at that time, armed with only a one-shot, short range, hunting musket (that required up to a minute to reload).

As Americans today we should be asking the question:

What inner energy would cause men and boys, who were plowing and harrowing their fields for spring planting, to take up arms against the mightiest army?

Community militias in Massachusetts were rapidly reinforced by units from Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and Connecticut.

While popular lore created the legend that Paul Revere shouted “The British are coming! The British are coming!” the reality was the was warning every community surrounding Boston that the King’s troops were on the march to burn the gun powder arsenals held by local militia units in the villages and towns. Those simple farmers were, at that time loyal subjects to England’s King George the III. Real independence was by no means their highest priority; rather, the Minute Men assembled to defend their rights, as they understood them under long-standing English law.

The British mustered 700 soldiers to march in what was anticipated to be a stealth operation to destroy the local militia’s stores of flintlock muskets, gunpowder, and a few cannons the town of Concord. These militia were formed more than a century before to defend against attacks by Indians and the French, and never intended to treat the British as enemies.

The British had inadvertently triggered the Law of Unintended Consequences by their march: not only were more than 70 of the King’s seasoned troops lying dead on the road back to Boston, with a significant number seriously wounded, but it generated a long Revolution that left Britain stripped of its valuable American colonies.

More important, the dream of America was born and the world was forever changed.

How could so many Americans unite and sacrifice their lives to further a vision never realized before in the history of humankind?



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What Inspired America?

To understand this question, one must time-travel back to the 1770s to understand the mentality of Americans, who, at the beginning of the decade, were under the grips of Great Britain.

While America was growing and beginning to prosper, there was deep unrest across the 13 colonies. The anxiety came from a growing tension between what Colonists conceived as a fair system of governance should be and what people were receiving in reality. That “tension gap” kept growing wider as Americans named the gap “tyranny” and “oppression.”

Understanding the depth of thought of even earthy tillers of the soil means understanding the prevailing thinking during the Age of the Enlightenment, which emerged out of a Medieval world that preceded them – a world of skullduggery, feudal manipulation, irrational abuse of power, and the notion that the “divine right of kings” gave rulers carte-blanche to do anything they so desired, no matter how villainous. The Medieval churches teamed with royalty to exercise mind control over the people, creating a nearly impenetrable block against individual liberty and freedom.

The Renaissance – a Collective ReBirth

After the bubonic plague decimated half of the European population in the Middle Ages, there was widespread despair. Thought leaders broke out of this malaise with the ideals of the “Renaissance” -- the rebirth of values and vision, derived primarily from the Greeks, and secondarily Romans.

The Renaissance then evolved into the 18th century “Age of Enlightenment,” which produced America’s Founding Fathers, and inspired scores of leaders to create the resilient structures that now constitute the foundation of our modern civilization.

Divine Right of Kings?

One of the most regressive vestiges of the Dark and Middle Ages was the complete belief in the “divine right” of kings which asserted that they were anointed by God,¹ and held the power vested in them by God, and thus could do anything they wanted because they were the word of God in their realm of sovereignty.

Of course, today we think this to be outrageous, and it was then, but people *believed* it to be true. This became the key enabler that justified kings trampling over the rights of everyone, and overrule duly elected parliaments, and enact laws that were unjust.

But what motivated Americans to rebel all thirteen colonies with such energy and clarity of thought?

There’s a very big difference between scattered one-event protests, like the Boston Tea Party (1773) or the Burning of the *Gaspée* (1772), and a full blown, large scale, sustained Revolution (1775-1781).

The compelling rationale for the energy and focus was well conceived and articulated at the Continental Congress in Philadelphia, which resulted in the Declaration of Independence in 1776. Every signer understood that inking their name to the Declaration was, essentially, a death sentence.

¹ Some in America believed a modern version of Divine Right in 2016 when they believed that Donald Trump was sent by God to rule America by Divine Right. It made no more sense in 2016 than it did in 1716.



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What would compel these men, representing legislatures that appointed them from all the colonies, to decide to create an independent nation, risking a war and their lives and their property?

The Five Quests -- Core Beliefs of the Enlightenment

The answer lies in understanding the other key factor: the Founding Fathers² (those who signed the Declaration in 1776 and later created the Constitution) had a powerful set of core beliefs that then drove them to create a new nation based on a system of governance for a democratic republic.

They had a vision, a mission, now they needed an operating plan – that was first the Constitution, and then a government that could be controlled by the Constitution.

Fundamentally, the “gap” between their anger on the one hand and their vision on the other was so conspicuous that something had to give. Anger had to be transformed into a higher reality – that’s what the Age of the Enlightenment gave the Founding Fathers.



Guiding Principles of the Revolution

The Enlightenment was characterized by Five Core Beliefs (The Penta-Quest):

#1 – Reason & Logic:

By using logical thinking and reasoning, the philosophers analyzed truth in the world. Logic and reason can lead you to the right and moral answers. Reason is the primary source of authority and legitimacy. This embraces the idea of finding meaning and purpose as a fundament striving for all humans. Science will uncover new truths that should alter our core understandings about reality and nature.

#2 – Divine Natural Order:

All the forces and phenomenon in nature were part of the Creator’s plan. Thus, human behavior must be in alignment with the larger order of the universe. Nature was not random nor irrational. A strong moral/ethical character was borne into humans as part of Divine Order. All people were created equal. Understanding the Divine is an act of personal conscience, not to be imposed by any single organized religion. Integrating Divine Order, Reason, and Logic will help in the next principle. Ethics, from the Greek ethos, meant having a strong moral character upon which to base courageous decisions to uphold the greater good of a community.

Compare these core beliefs with today’s beliefs about America’s future.

What are our core beliefs today?

Perhaps our cynical world has no positive core beliefs.

Thus, we have no vision, no centre, no core, no inspiration.

² Generally, the Founding Fathers are considered the signers of the Declaration of Independence, the framers of the Constitution & Bill of Rights, plus Thomas Paine, the most articulate and passionate of the advocates.



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#3 – Power of Progression:

Affirming the belief that each human being, uniting as a civilization, should be on a steady trajectory of improvement. This commitment, embracing deep wisdom, emanated from our Greco-Judeo-Christian heritage that held the steadfast belief it was the duty of each citizen to continually striving to make their community better. Both society and individuals must dedicate themselves toward a never-ending process toward perfecting our flawed humanity and civilization. Each citizen should have the opportunity to own property and never be beholden to feudal landowners in the European form of serfdom, nor should any man be enslaved by another.

#4 -- Democratic Governance:

An enlightened and educated society of responsible, moral citizens must be capable of establishing a republic that existed for the people, by the people, and of the people. Building self-governing democratic communities, required balancing individual rights with social obligation. Forces of oppression should be able to be effectively neutralized and unalienable rights and liberties preserved. No religion should dominate, but each should be able to flourish and be protected. The endless cycles of war that sucked the life out of European economies was the result of illegitimate predatory despots and kings, who could not thrive in an educated society.

#5 – Happiness & Well-Being:

Unlike the medieval belief that life was meant for suffering and happiness to be acquired in the afterlife, happiness was part of the Creator's Natural Law. By engaging in the other four principles, a profound sense of well-being could be attained. People could trust their neighbors, trust their leaders, and trust that the universe in their world was a "friendly" place. This was not Hedonistic indulgence, nor unrestrained pursuit of self-interest – happiness was a balance of self-interest and mutual-interest, attained in creating a friendly community of well-being with people synergistically serving each other – the whole was greater than the sum of the parts. This was not to be a fully harmonious world of placid contentment, but a vibrant world with civil debate and dedication to the principles of justice and equity. The main purpose of government was to help ensure the well-being of its people.

The synergistic impact of these five principles working in unison cannot be overstated.

These five guiding principles were spread among the network of colleges, newspapers, and pulpits, coupled with the vast network of influence created by the linkages in the Committees of Correspondence. Consequently, the Penta-Quest of the Age of Enlightenment became imbedded in colonial thinking. Belief systems in both people and communities were elevated and enlivened, simultaneously being grounded in reality. Colonist became aligned and unified.



Declaring Enlightenment Ideals

To illustrate these five quests, Thomas Jefferson's opening paragraphs of the Declaration of Independence personifies Enlightenment thinking:

"When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.—That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, —That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness."

The 18th century Age of Enlightenment invigorated leaders to think and act rationally, to build morality and character into community decision-making, to provide a full, well-balanced education to all, to explore new lands, to invent breakthrough technologies and advance scientific progress, to question and create, to unify in diversity, to ensure basic freedoms and liberties, to secure vibrant religious expression with the separation of church and state, and advance constitutional democracy with checks and balances to avoid extremes and mob rule.

In essence, the Penta Quests became "top-of-mind" for a generation of people in the late 1700s. Attention was focused, debate prolific, and ideation profound. The energy around these core issues generated its own synergy and self-fulfilling prophecies.

What was *implicit* in the Penta Quests was that there was a high degree of cooperation and collaboration needed to execute the strategies. In [Creating the Age of ReEnlightenment](#), which addresses the new American Age of ReEnlightenment, we will make this idea of Collaborative Excellence explicit, and operational that would reflect the architecture of where the arch of the earlier Age of Enlightenment might have taken us. This is not to advocate we base our foundation on the unaltered perspective of the 18th century, but instead to upgrade the core of this thinking to build common unity (community) to build the cornerstones of our future.

Loosing the North Star

Today, America has strayed far off the mark from the Founder's essential central vision and values. We have lost our "north star" that guides leaders and culture to produce extraordinary results. When most of us read the Penta Quests, we may treat them with nonchalance or intellectual indifference. And that's part of the problem.

To the Founders, these Five Quests ignited passionate engagement as they aligned to solve the great challenges of humanity. We should be responding the same way today, but instead we chase the latest Tweet or the impunity of adolescent name-calling.

The Founders knew that passionate emotions would never go away, but human energy needed to be channeled to *support* the Five Quests, *not be the prominent force of reaction* as we experience today.



Leader as Architect & Visionary

Roger Williams fled Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1636 (same year as Harvard's founding) to establish the colony of Rhode Island. It was, in retrospect, one of the biggest bets and leaps of faith in world history – to choose the path of a democratic republic founded on core principles of the forthcoming Age of Enlightenment – based on fundamental freedoms of religion, speech, and equity. These were embodied

A century later the Founders had to come to grips that -- regardless of all the eloquent words of Locke and Rousseau in Europe and Thomas Paine in America -- the power of an idea and ideal is hollow unless placed in the hands of an expert team of architects, designers, and builders who can turn a vision into a real structure that can survive the winds and quakes and assaults on its structure.

*Where there is no vision,
the people perish.*

Old Testament, Book of Proverbs

In the important formative years before the outbreak of hostilities in 1775, the emerging Founding Fathers, including hundreds of leaders at the state and community levels, served as collaborative leaders and organizational architects: they could take a concept, design a simple framework for governance, cross-brace it to be strong, interlink it to be effective, and put it into operation that would last for centuries, while adapting to change.

The idea of “leader as organizational architect” goes deep into the roots of American genius, but is today largely overlooked.

In the 21st century, this idea of making the “systems architecture” of governance work for the people has been lost in the fracas of political maneuvering. Those who serve the people were supposed to be of the highest moral character – not Machiavellians whose main purpose is to aggrandize power. The political parties and the media were supposed to purge Authoritarians from the ranks of power; now they are a havens for the beasts. (see [Beware the Authoritarian Dark Triad](#))

The governed were supposed to be educated and have refined moral character so they could distinguish truth from deception, and recognize corrupt leaders from those with moral standards.

We are failing on every dimension, with potentially disastrous results, as our democracy crashes on the rocks of power and self-interest.

How the Enlightenment Beliefs Guided America

The Penta Quest formed an integrated belief system that energized, aligned, and synergized individuals like Sessions and Hopkins and Adams deflecting the Admiralty and Crown, and later Madison, Jefferson, Franklin, Adams, Jay, Hamilton and Mason in framing the Declaration of Independence, Constitution and Bill of Rights. These men were not the arm-chair philosophers like Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, or Kant, they were practical men who absorbed philosophy but were challenged with making things work in the crucible of action.

Their task was to think, evaluate, find solutions, then try to turn an idea into a movement that would be accepted by leaders and the public.

*If you want to understand an
organization, just try to change it.*

Kurt Lewin, father of the field of Organization
Development



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The American Enlightenment was a transformational paradigm-shift – an extremely difficult process in any era.

The ideas of the European philosophers also required major adaptations to make them practical in a newly formed democracy. While America was not shackled with the European burdens of class divisions and feudal cultural dogmas, we had our own growing pains and another war in 1812 where Britain's intent was to take back their former colonies. Yet these pains, to a large extent, were ameliorated by the blossoming spirit of growth, opportunity, and technical invention.

The power of their beliefs enabled them to overcome often major personal and philosophical differences. The Founders and Framers realized they were designing a destiny, not just a set of documents.

As illustrated by the Learning Loop, a sharp mind will attempt to refine and align the steps in the sequence of paradigm shifting. *Beliefs* will become fine-tuned to enable *Perceptions* of what's possible and what might go wrong, which, in turn, enable the mind to *Conceive* new ideas and plans, then *Achieve* high-spirited goals, which then produce a set actions, that manifest in the results *Received*, which can be used to reconfigure or elevate the next cycle in the Learning Loop. Because the Founders and Framers had a high degree of integrity and trust in each other, they engaged in a highly "co-creative" process that evolved dramatically from the first meetings of the Continental Congress in 1774 to the final Constitution in 1789.



When a community collectively starts to develop a like-minded set of beliefs, a synergistic effect occurs as multiple people join together with an alignment of ideas that catalyze a myriad of possible innovations that help enable the community to shift to a higher level of thinking, problem solving, and innovations that create paradigm shifts. This is what happened in the culture of Athens that gave birth to extraordinary thinkers, like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, to name just a few. The same phenomenon happened in Colonial America with the Founding Fathers. They were energized because they were on a quest that *elevated the dignity of the human spirit*.

Rights AND Responsibilities

What has gone unsaid in all too many of the discussions about *liberties* and *rights*, is the other side of the equation: the *responsibilities* not just of government, but of every citizen to participate in building community. This *dutiful bond* was an accepted and understood element of the "fabric" of our early American culture, at the family, friendship, community, and national levels.



My father, who thought more like an 18th century patriot (it was part of his upbringing that transferred the values of that era to me), always reminded me:

"Hold your rights as dearly as your responsibilities."

When patriots of the Revolution spoke of the liberties and rights, they were equally aware of the duties as a citizen to work for the good of the community; it was an assumed duty and need not be stated during the era of the Revolution; but it needs to become reintegrated into American culture.

"The world owes nothing to any man, but every man owes something to the world."

— [Thomas A. Edison](#)



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The Spiritual Centre of America

Some may say that God must be our Spiritual Centre, and they are right; however, there is more to this question of our Spiritual Centre than just God; it must also be dedicated to *Elevating the Dignity of the Human Spirit*, and more.

After the Revolution, the “Quest” to attain the five Enlightenment principles became a “central core” of what made America blossom. These five principles created a force of alignment for both leaders and the citizenry.

The economy flourished, colleges sprung up across the land, and people in oppressed Europe fled to America to farm its lands, set up shops, build its industry, and fish its coasts.

People believed in the future of a great nation.

Alexis de Tocqueville, French political philosopher and historian, traveled to the United States in the 1830s to study its democracy. His book, *Democracy in America*, is considered one of the most insightful works ever written about American culture, and his observations about American culture were profound:

- **Individualistic and Egalitarian.** Americans were more likely to value their own independence and self-reliance than to rely on traditional institutions or social hierarchies.
- **Strong Sense of Civic Engagement and Participation.** Americans were active in voluntary associations and town meetings, and that they were eager to participate in the political process.
- **Religion** played an important role in American life, helping to promote civic virtue and social cohesion.
- **Optimistic** about the future and driven to achieve material success. Americans believed in equality and opportunity.
- **Importance of the family** as the foundation of American society. Families were close-knit and supportive, and that they played an important role in socializing children and transmitting values.
- **Role of women in society.** American women were more independent, empowered and active in public life than women in other societies.
- **Importance and Number of Associations** that played an important role in promoting civic engagement and social cohesion.

But he did raise a note of caution: the American commitment to individualism and equality could lead to a tyranny of the majority. He believed that it was important to balance individual liberty with the common good.



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Certainly, the period after the Revolution was not idyllic, there were rocky times and adversarial animosities. Slavery threatened to derail the quest.

As John Ruskin stated two generations after the American Revolution:

The highest reward for a man's toil is not what he gets for it but what he becomes by it.

He who has truth at his heart need never fear the want of persuasion on his tongue.

Really great men have a curious feeling that the greatness is not in them, but through them.

America has had an on-going struggle to find the right balance and centre of gravity between liberty and freedom on the one hand and the responsibility to adhere to order and the greater good. Such a centre of gravity requires an enlightened set of synergistic “guiding principles” that a “north star” to keep our ship of state on course, ever innovating, while buffeted by whirling storms and heavy chaotic seas.

For this reason, the Founding Fathers carefully studied past successes and failures, particularly the ideals of Greece and the fall of the Roman Empire.³

Lessons to Guide Our Future

It's imperative to understand how the Age of the Enlightenment influenced the course of American's *destiny*, because its lessons can guide us out of our befuddled state of affairs. Americans of this era believed in themselves; they held an intimate confidence that their Creator and the Quest would ultimately, despite the struggles, give each person, both individually and collectively, a realizable goal with a brighter future than any other alternative Europe, which, in its post-feudal governance, could not provide. In other words, America was a golden land of the better

In particular, the disparity between the upper royal class and the lower serfdom class roiled Americans, who were resoundingly committed to overturn such injustice. This injustice was equally evident in the European system of governance that still bowed to the authority of kings; America was committed to be sure it did not repeat the pathways of injustice. In the north, by 1790, when the Constitution was ratified, the abolitionist movement had gathered steam to remedy the injustice of slavery. Tragically the free labor afforded by slavery was too strong to be overturned by moral argument, and we pay the price to this day.

³ Many of the Founding Fathers were trained classically and understood both Greek and Latin. They studied classic works, such as *Plutarch's Lives*, which compared Greek and Latin leaders; studied the works of Polybius, the Greek political systems analyst of the early Roman era for insights about what constituted a great republic; as well as devouring Edward Gibbon's 1776 book *The Fall of the Roman Empire*, which they were determined to avoid.



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opportunities than the past. Authors of the era wrote stories that personified the struggle, the quest, and heroics needed to conquer fear and malaise.

Americans believed they were destined for greatness. For some this destiny was to cure the wrongs of European culture – the horrible inequities of a class-ridden society imposed on people.⁴

As we will see, the Founders were seeking more than a system of justice or governance, there was a much greater yearning – to evolve a democracy that was synergistic based on people working together.

The most important factor shaping human existence is the goal of building a community of free and happy human beings who, by constant endeavor, strive to liberate themselves from the inheritance of anti-social and destructive instincts. – Albert Einstein

E Pluribus Unum

Upon the founding of the United States, the motto “E Pluribus Unum” (Latin: *out of many: one*)⁵ was chosen to symbolize unifying the original thirteen colonies. The original shield also showed symbols of the six major cultures (English, Scotch, Irish, Dutch, French, German) that composed the thirteen colonies.

The European Union’s motto: “*Unity in the Diversity*” is closer to where we need to be thinking today given the passage of the last 250 years.

Minting coins that state “In God We Trust” was to symbolize the spiritual importance of Divine Natural Law on the direction of America, as well as our commitment to the natural rights and responsibilities of government to protect and guide its people at a higher order of thinking.

Building Upon a Vision

The *ideals* and *beliefs* of the Enlightenment Quest has value only if its foundational beliefs can be

- *perceived* as opportunities, possibilities, and differentiated from current realities, then
- *conceived* as a probabilities, strategies, plans, and visionary realities, and subsequently then
- *achieved* by being translated into concrete actions that produce measurable results

The time of the Revolution emboldened leaders to forsake the past and build a bold new vision for humankind. Then the Enlightenment Quest was guiding and driving their destiny – today we are befuddled without a Quest, without a central theme, without a common vision, without mutual values for mutual benefit, without which we default into the darkness of demagoguery, distrust, and divisiveness.



⁴ It wasn't until the great social upheaval of 1849 that riots and strikes rolled like thunder across Europe that any quantum change was to happen in the European system of justice and governance.

⁵ Probably from Greek philosopher [Heraclitus](#): “The one is made up of all things, and all things issue from the one” (ἐκ πάντων ἓν καὶ ἐξ ἑνὸς πάντα)



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Well-Being

Looking back at the founding of America, when one reads of writing of Jefferson and many of his contemporaries, one is struck with the sense of optimism, vision, and expanding possibilities that the new America will provide. It was the Age of the Enlightenment – a time when people believed in and sought solutions aimed at the ultimate perfectibility of human nature and humanity's conditions of the world. The harmonized integration of governance, nature, economics, technology, and community was the aim of many of the leaders of the time. Jefferson's vision of "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness"⁶ was an aspirational goal universally accepted as worthy of collective energy.

To best understand this *alignment of energies* – otherwise known as *synergies* – it's valuable to hear the words of those on the scene in their own words:

"It may in truth be said, that in no part of the world are the people happier ... or more independent than the farmers of New England." – Encyclopedia Britannica 1797 ⁷

Deep Roots of Democracy

Lest we forget, the roots of American democracy and freedom are deeply embedded in the foundations of our culture. The Founders understood that that the democratic ideal should always be aiming for bettering the condition of the people.

This ideal of well-being of the people is reflected in three of the original colonies incorporating the name "Commonwealth" in the name and charter (Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Virginia). Massachusetts chose the name for the expressed purpose of expressing the ideal that "the people ... form themselves into a free, sovereign, and independent body politic, or state." This thinking comes from earlier Enlightenment English thinkers that believed in the goal of creating a political entity for the common good, which expressed the ideals of a new democratic state.

From the outset, democratic self-rule was top-of-mind and centre-of-heart. Four hundred years ago, in 1620, *before* the passengers on the *Mayflower* landed in Plymouth, they signed the *Mayflower Compact*. It was a truly historic event, because it marked the first time a diverse group (40% religious Pilgrim separatists, 60% freedom seekers) outlined a democratic form of government, with fair laws, and elected governance. In the Compact (which was brief – only about 200 words – a conciseness of thinking that seems to elude lawyers today), the signers pledged to abide by those laws and regulations that served "for the general good of the colony." In New England it sprang from adapting congregational patterns of their church behavior to their civil governance, embracing fundamental principles of self-government and common consent

When Sessions, Hopkins, and Adams teamed together to blunt and beguile the British, it was to preserve and protect the hard-won heritage of their ancestors, just as many historians do today.

It was this group of Boston centered Puritans that propagated across New England, and inculcated their thinking about congregations into their political structures. The hundreds of small towns that sprung up

⁶ In Jefferson's philosophy, happiness could only be attained by leading a moral, ethical life.

⁷ See Marx, Leo; *The Machine in the Garden – Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*; Oxford University Press, 1964, page 73 (this book is a noteworthy documentation of the exuberance of the era).



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were democracies. They believed that self-rule was a divine gift, and their loyalty to the King was subordinate to God, whose laws were paramount. To this day, most small New England towns still have their annual Town Meeting, ⁸where residents now approve the annual budget. In colonial times they conducted all major affairs through the Town Meeting structure. Sessions and Hopkins used the Town Meetings to unify the Sons of Liberty.

Conclusion

Importance of Leadership

Leadership is one critical dimension often overlooked by historians. A distinguishing factor that differentiates the American Revolutionary leadership was its ability to gain consensus, making decisions collaboratively that aligned people and unified efforts. The leaders had enormous levels of character, integrity, and moral standards that engendered trust in those whose lives they touched.

Harvard Professor Paul R. Lawrence observed there is a truth that prevails across the ages:

***“Trust determines the Course of History,
the Destiny of Nations,
and the Fate of People.”⁹***

This is one of the primary reasons why America won the Revolutionary War, and why we selected George Washington to be our first President – He was America’s most trusted man -- a lesson we must not forget.

History should also be about lessons in leadership, because,
more than any other factor, leaders mold history.

The volatile Revolution of 1775-6 was composed of a seemingly unprepared cluster of colonial organizers, with few resources except for their passionate commitment, wit, and guile, with a rag-tag militia and vagabond navy confronting the most powerful and feared authority in the world. All aimed at a fulfilling a dream that had yet to be designed.

The events set in motion by prior to the Revolution, such as the *Gaspée* Affair¹⁰ (1772) or the Boston Tea Party (1773) were extraordinary in that they bolstered the spirits and unified the intentions of key leaders of the emerging Revolutionary movement. The unfolding of these events demanded neither money nor sacrifice of life, just the alignment of interests and the commitment to honor their mutual pledge to disable the illegitimate authority that deprived them of their “divine rights granted by natural law.”

Timing is the often-overlooked factor in history because it is invisible. As Napoleon said:
“I can recover lost ground,
but not lost time.”

⁸ This should not be confused with “Town Hall Meetings” today, which are essentially gatherings where politicians can hear the opinions of local folks.

⁹ Told to the Author in personal discussion, March, 2009 (my friend, mentor, and co-author)

¹⁰ See [Darius Sessions -- Collaborations to Win the American Revolution](#) History’s Hidden Heroes -- by Robert Porter Lynch



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Like the Founding Fathers who soon after gathered in Philadelphia first in 1774, the leaders of towns and villages throughout the colonies reached deep into their souls to propagate a spirit of unity to reach higher than the onerous laws and brutality of the British.

The arrogance of the British was the primary reason they lost the American Revolution “chess game.” This was exemplified in every way – from the British governors of the colonies, to their ranking counterparts in British Army and Navy, and the King’s attitude toward the lowly colonies. Had their attitude been more congenial and open to compromises, the result would have been decidedly different. In the end, the camaraderie of Sons of Liberty ultimately sealed the Crown’s fate.

None of the Founders, nor the members of the Continental militias were geniuses; but collectively their stratagems displayed remarkable master-mind capabilities. A shared vision, common high-order values contained in a crucible of trust, and the courage of their convictions produced synergies well exceeding the sum of the individuals and their roles.

*Courage enlarges, cowardice diminishes resources.
In dangerous straits, the fears of the timid
aggravate the dangers that imperil the brave.*

– Christian Neville Bouvee (1820-1904)

The real significance of the strategic minds America’s divinely inspired leaders was that their adroit handling of a potentially explosive situation changed the course of history, steering America’s ship of fate toward a bold new future – a future where people believed that freedom meant a mutual pledge to defend the rights of each member of a community of states in a great nation.

Protecting an individual’s divine rights was the responsibility and duty of every citizen: a noble cause worth the sacrifice because it gave the nation an identity and its citizens a deep meaning and purpose.

Today Americans are in search of our National Identity.

Too often some cynic seems to delight in finding the chinks in the armour of an historical leader or hero.

We must never forget that *greatness is not purity and perfection* -- for all those who journey the heroic path are mere humans with flaw and fallibilities.

*The standard of excellence of a great leader is marked by how high
they rose above human banality to the challenges of their times.*

A great leader’s impact emanates from their transformative capabilities to turn...

**TRAGEDY INTO TRIUMPH,
ADVERSITY INTO ADVANTAGE,
ANXIETY INTO ACTION,
CHAOS INTO CLARITY,
FEAR INTO FORTITUDE,
PAIN INTO POSSIBILITY,
CALAMITY INTO COURAGE, &
VISION INTO VALUE.**



Afterword

Western civilization has been hallmarked by cultures that progressed with an inner confidence in their future, contrasted with those caught in a regressive spinning gyre. A century ago, in the aftermath of the “Great War” that was to end all wars, William Butler Yeats wrote in his poem *the Second Coming*:

*Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.*

We are still trapped in that retrograde spiral which is growing worse.

We all know something is wrong with our world, and we need a massive shift in thinking.

Looking back to the Revolution for insights about a centre that *will* hold, Connecticut delegate to the Continental Congress, Silas Deane, remarked:

Times like these call up Genius which slept before, and stimulate it in action to a degree that eclipses what might before have been fixed as a Standard.¹¹

Elevating the dignity of the human spirit was recounted by surgeon David Ramsey, a delegate to the Continental Congress, pointing out in his 1789 history of the American Revolution how it:

“... called forth many virtues and gave occasion for the display of abilities, which, but for that event, would have been lost to the world....It seemed as if the war not only required, but created talents... Men whose minds were warmed with the love of liberty... spoke, wrote, and acted with an energy far surpassing all expectations which could be reasonably founded on their previous acquirements [accomplishments] ... the necessities of the country gave a spring to the active powers of the inhabitants and set them on thinking, speaking and acting in a line far beyond that to which they had been accustomed.”¹²

Writing regretfully about the American Revolution forty years ago, historian Edmund Morgan doubted we could ever recreate such results. After a thorough study of the Founding Fathers, he lamented it:

“... does not bring us any closer to an explanation of why the Revolution created such an array of talent. If we knew what the conditions were for generating talent of this kind, we ought all to be busy trying to reproduce them, for we certainly need it now. Unfortunately, I do not know how the Revolution created talent.”¹³

This question has vexed scholars for centuries. However, the conditions for creating extraordinary talent can be reproduced using formulae originally created by the Greeks and replicated in extraordinary times. It is all about *Collaborative Excellence*: how leaders build a culture of trust and innovation. This architecture is revealed in our other studies focused on “cracking the synergy code.”¹⁴

¹¹ Silas Deane Letter to his wife Elizabeth Deane, July 1st, 1775, in Paul Smith edition of *Letters of Delegates to Congress, 1774-1789*, p 567

¹² David Ramsay, *The Advantages & Disadvantages of the American Revolution and Its Influence on the Minds & Morals of the Citizens-The History of the American Revolution 1789*

<https://americainclass.org/sources/makingrevolution/independence/text2/ramsayhistoryamerrev.pdf>

¹³ Edmund S. Morgan, *The Genius of George Washington*, Norton, 1980, p 4

¹⁴ See <https://iclinstitute.org/resources/publications/>