Committee: International Criminal Court (ICC)
Topic 1: The American Revolution: Washington v. King George III
Chair: Lial Alodah

I. Introduction

The American Revolution (1775–1783) is historically marked as a defining conflict between Great Britain and its thirteen American colonies, fundamentally challenging the authority of the British Crown in the name of American sovereignty. Originally a dispute surrounding taxation and representation, the conflict soon erupted into armed rebellion.

At the center of these tensions stood Chancellor George Grenville, former British prime minister whose taxation policies (namely the Sugar, Currency, and Stamp Acts) intensified colonial resentment. On the opposing side was the newly appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army, George Washington. Their opposing political positions represent the broader struggle between British imperial authority and American demands for self-government.

In this historical simulation, delegates will examine the political decisions, military actions, and competing claims of the British Crown and American revolutionaries. Delegates must determine whether British authority over the colonies remains legitimate, whether colonial resistance is justified, and what measures should be taken to prevent further escalation.

II. Historical Background

- **1651 - The Navigation Act**: Required all goods shipped to and from the colonies to travel on English (or colonial) ships, cutting out foreign rivals
    - *The important historical distinction here is that at this point in time, Britain did not enforce any of its policies in the colonies, adopting the practice of salutory neglect. This is why patriots felt so strongly surrounding the enforcement of trade laws, since they'd been virtually self-sufficient for decades, nor partaking in the victories nor losses of its mother country, Britain.*
- **1763 - End of the Seven Years' War**: Britain emerged victorious but faced considerable national debt, prompting Parliament to seek additional revenue from its American colonies.
- **1765 - The Stamp Act**: Under George Grenville's government, Parliament introduced a tax on printed materials, legal documents, and newspapers. Colonists protested taxation without parliamentary representation.
- **1770 - Boston Massacre**: British soldiers killed five colonists during a confrontation in Boston, intensifying anti-british sentiment.

- **1773 - Boston Tea Party**: The Sons of Liberty protested British taxation by destroying shipments of tea belonging to the East India Company.
- **1774 - Intolerable Acts**: Britain imposed punitive measures on Massachusetts following the Boston Tea Party, prompting greater cooperation among the colonies but fostering intense resentment.
- **April 1775 - Battles of Lexington and Concord**: Armed confrontations between British troops and colonial militias marked the beginning of the Revolutionary War.
- **June 1775 - Continental Army**: The Second Continental Congress appointed George Washington Commander-in-Chief, establishing organized military resistance against British forces.

III. Legal Framework

The ICC did not exist during the American Revolution. For committee purposes, delegates will examine historical conduct through a simulated international judicial framework. Modern international criminal law may be used for comparison but cannot be applied legally.

- **The British Parliament**: Parliament maintained its sovereignty, expressing legislative authority over the American colonies, including the power to impose taxes and regulate trade.
- **The Colonial Stance**: American revolutionaries argued that taxation without elected representation violated their rights as British subjects.
- **Natural Rights**: Americans were inspired by the Enlightenment principles concerning liberty, social contract, and constitutional governance.
- **Laws and Customs of War**: Delegates are encouraged to examine the historical treatment of civilians, prisoners, military personnel, and property during armed conflict.
- **Modern ICC Principles**: Concepts such as command responsibility, civilian protection, and accountability for unlawful military conduct may guide hypothetical judicial discussions, without implying that the ICC possesses actual jurisdiction over eighteenth-century events.

IV. Current Situation

As of the committee's historical freeze date: June 1775

- Armed conflict has begun between British regular troops and colonial militias. The British military seeks to restore imperial control, while the Continental Army prepares for organized resistance.

- Colonial leaders remain divided over whether to pursue reconciliation with Britain or complete independence. (Only ~40% of Americans wanted to separate from Britain)
- British taxation policies, trade restrictions, and colonial boycotts have created significant economic disputes.
- Civilian consequences: Military confrontations/displacement/disruptions to trade threaten the stability of colonial communities.
- International implications: Britain must consider whether prolonged colonial resistance could weaken its imperial position and encourage intervention by rival European powers.

V. Major Actors Involved

- **George Washington**: Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army, responsible for organizing colonial military resistance against British forces.
- **George Grenville**: Former British Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer whose taxation policies contributed to colonial unrest. *(For the purpose of this committee, we will move his death date from 1770 to 1780)*
- **King George III**: British monarch whose government seeks to preserve imperial sovereignty over the American colonies.
- **Lord North**: British Prime Minister during the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, overseeing Britain's political response to colonial resistance.
- **Continental Congress**: The primary political assembly coordinating colonial opposition to British rule, responsible for establishing the Continental Army and organizing collective resistance.
- **John Hancock**: President of the Second Continental Congress, influential Patriot leader, and prominent advocate of colonial rights.
- **Thomas Jefferson**: Virginia political leader and advocate of colonial rights who would later become the principal author of the Declaration of Independence.
- **Benjamin Franklin**: American statesman and diplomat who advocated colonial interests and previously sought reconciliation with Britain.
- **Thomas Paine**: English-born American revolutionary, writer, and advocate of colonial independence whose writings challenged British monarchical authority and promoted republican ideals. He would later publish Common Sense (1776), a pamphlet that helped galvanize public support for American independence.
- **Sons of Liberty**: A secretive group of American Patriots, including Samuel Adams and Paul Revere, who organized protests, boycotts, and resistance against British taxation. They played a major role in events such as the Boston Tea Party, helping unite colonists against British rule.

VI. Key Issues For Debate

- **British authority:** Does Britain still have the right to govern the thirteen colonies when the colonists have no direct say in Parliament?
- **Taxation without representation:** Was Britain justified in taxing the colonies, or were these taxes an unfair violation of colonial rights?
- **Military accountability:** Should British and American military leaders be held responsible for violence and misconduct committed by their troops?
- **Rebellion versus resistance:** When does fighting against your government become a justified fight for freedom rather than an act of rebellion?
- **Continental Congress:** Does the Continental Congress have the right to speak for all thirteen colonies and organize an army against British rule?
- **Civilian protection:** How can both sides protect innocent civilians, prisoners, and communities caught in the fighting?
- **Peace versus independence:** Is there still a chance for Britain and the colonies to reach an agreement, or has the conflict gone too far for reconciliation?

VII. Possible Stances

- **British Crown and Loyalists:** Maintain that Parliament possesses legitimate authority over the colonies. Colonial rebellion threatens public order, imperial stability, and the unity of the British Empire.
- **American Patriots:** Argue that continued taxation, political exclusion, and military coercion have undermined the legitimacy of British rule. Colonial self-government and protection of individual liberties are central demands.
- **Moderate Colonial Representatives:** Seek negotiation, parliamentary concessions, and guarantees of colonial rights while remaining open to reconciliation with Britain.
- **British Military Leadership:** Emphasize the restoration of order, protection of British troops and officials, and suppression of armed resistance.
- **European Powers:** May view the conflict through the lens of trade, imperial competition, and the possibility of weakening British influence overseas.

VIII. Possible Solutions

- Negotiate a political settlement granting the colonies equal representation/autonomy
- Repeal controversial taxation policies
- Establish a temporary ceasefire between Great Britain and the colonies
- Pursue diplomatic mediation through mutually acceptable representatives

- Negotiate a peaceful transition toward colonial independence away from Britain, if reconciliation is no longer feasible

IX. Conclusion

The American Revolution represents more than a military confrontation between Great Britain and its American colonies. It is a struggle over sovereignty, political representation, individual liberty, and the limits of governmental authority.

Delegates must navigate conflicting interpretations of legitimacy and resistance while addressing the human consequences of escalating warfare. British representatives must consider the preservation of imperial authority, while American delegates must defend their demands for political rights and self-determination.

Ultimately, the committee must confront a fundamental question: When does loyalty to a government cease to be an obligation, and resistance become a right?

***Note**: due to the historical/judicial nature of this committee, resolutions will take the form of judicial verdicts and legal recommendations rather than traditional MUN resolutions. Delegates are expected to examine historical evidence, determine accountability for alleged violations, and propose appropriate legal or diplomatic measures. All proceedings will operate under a fictional ICC framework adapted to the historical context of the American Revolution.*

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