

**THE IDEOLOGICAL ORIGINS  
OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION**

**AN ABSTRACT OF  
A THESIS  
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This study, in order to validate an ideological view of the American Revolution, made reference to abstract or intangible beliefs related to economics, government and the function of man in society. An examination of the basic tenets of the Mercantile Theory as an economic doctrine was a requisite to understanding why nations sought to develop colonial empires early in the seventeenth century. To discover why a group of loosely allied colonies should sever economic ties with the mother country responsible for their prosperity was the concern of this study. The conclusions are as follows:

1. The American colonies reached economic maturity much sooner than other colonial establishments in the British Empire and in the process outgrew the restrictive mercantile system.
2. Democracy as a form of government has flourished best in an atmosphere of economic security. Therefore with a sound economic base the Americans came of age politically as well, and were willing to go it alone as an independent republic.
3. Arguments for the final break with England were based on interpretation of constitutional principles, natural law, and the philosophy of

government; i.e., Who should rule?

4. The eighteenth century philosophers with their enlightened views on government and the application of natural law to the affairs of men in society provided a sound philosophical argument for American independence. The Enlightened view of economics as proposed by the French Physiocrats and Adam Smith was not an important factor in American Revolutionary thought.

This thesis, utilizing the library research method, has traced and evaluated interpretations of American history through various periods in which the religious, nationalistic, economic, and revisionist interpretations were the dominant themes. Moreover, reform movements, reflected in progressivism, among others, were factors that influenced the views held by many notable historians. The last group discussed, and they seem to be dominating historiography today, are the post World War II historians. Associated with no particular school of thought, they are doing yeoman work in clarifying many of the controversial issues still hotly debated.

Each period and corresponding school of interpretation has reflected attitudes conditioned by environment, circumstance and time. Each school of interpretation has developed solid foundations upon which present day historians continue to build. Contemporary historians readily acknowl-

edge their debt to past generations of historians. They are taking the best of former interpretations in an effort to accurately mirror the past, and in the process have produced abundant evidence in support of the view which states that the American Revolution was, considering all aspects of former interpretations, ideological in origin.