



**The Continental Congress and the Atlantic Powers: The Pre-Revolutionary
American Crisis**

Chairs: Avery Lanuza, Haven Tamlino, Kennedy Coffey
a.lanuza@holychildrye.org

Committee Overview:

The year is 1775. Following a series of violent clashes in New England, Britain's thirteen North American colonies are engaged in an active military rebellion against British troops, yet they remain legally tied to the British Crown. This committee operates under General Assembly rules of procedure: delegates represent colonies, governing bodies, regional tribes, or foreign empires swept into the escalating conflict. The goal of the committee is to draft a comprehensive treaty or resolution to resolve the pre-Revolutionary American Crisis. Possible outcomes include finding a pathway to constitutional reconciliation with the British Empire, formalizing a complete declaration of independence as a unified nation, splitting into regional republics, or securing foreign military alliances.

Historical Context:

The Aftermath of the Seven Years' War and Taxation: For over a century, Britain practiced a policy of salutary neglect, leaving the colonies to govern and tax themselves through locally run assemblies. However, the 1763 Treaty of Paris left the British Empire victorious against the France in the Seven Years' War, but saddled with massive national debts. To pay for the expense of their expanded frontier and war debts, the British Parliament implemented heavy taxes on the colonies.

A series of legislative acts placed on the colonies were met with immediate resistance:

1. **The Stamp Act (1765):** First direct tax levied on the American colonists, requiring a revenue stamp on all paper goods, legal documents, newspapers, and playing cards. The act ignited widespread protests, the formation of the Sons of Liberty, and the popularization of the revolutionary slogan, "No taxation without representation." It was repealed in 1766 following colonial boycotts.
2. **The Townshend Acts (1767):** A series of orders that placed indirect taxes on imported goods like glass, lead, paint, paper, and tea. The revenue was specifically designated to pay the salaries of colonial governors and judges; removed the colonies' power over their

own local officials. The Acts sparked aggressive boycotts and led to the militarization of Boston, culminating in the 1770 Boston Massacre.

3. **The Tea Act (1773) & the Boston Tea Party:** The Tea Act was imposed on the colonies to support the financially struggling British East India Company by granting the company a monopoly on American tea trade and undercutting colonial merchants. In protest, the Sons of Liberty disguised themselves as Mohawk Native Americans on December 16, 1773, and dumped 342 chests of tea into the Boston Harbor.
4. **The Coercive Acts (1774) “Intolerable Acts”:** Parliament’s punitive response to the Boston Tea Party closed the port of Boston, dismantled the Massachusetts colonial charter to ban town meetings to attempt to prevent revolutionary scheming, allowed the royal governor to move trials of British officers to England, and expanded the Quartering Acts to force local assemblies to build barracks to house British troops. The result of these acts was not an isolated Massachusetts, as Parliament intended, but inter-colonial unity.

The result of England’s punitive measures was the formation of the **Continental Congress (1774)** by the thirteen colonies to enforce a total economic boycott, escalating the dispute over taxation into military conflict by the spring of 1775. The British attempt to seize colonial weapon caches in Massachusetts led to the **April 1775 Battles of Lexington and Concord**, marking the official start of armed hostilities. Shortly after, the **Battle of Bunker Hill (June 1775)** proved that colonial militias were capable against the British Army. In response, Congress formed the Continental Army under General George Washington and sent the **Olive Branch Petition** to King George III in a final attempt at peace. The King’s rejection of the petition in late 1775 shattered hopes of a simple compromise. **The committee meets at a tipping point in which armed conflicts have broken out, but political options to resolve further conflict still remain open.**

Agenda Topics:

1. What should be the political and legal status of the American colonies moving forward?
2. How will the current armed conflict be resolved, and what security measures will govern the American frontier?

Positions:

A. American Colonies & Provinces

- a. **Province of Massachusetts Bay:** The heart of the American rebellion, pushing for total independence and military cooperation.
- b. **Colony of Virginia:** The wealthiest and most populated colony, balancing agrarian economic interests with strong revolutionary involvement and leadership.
- c. **Province of Pennsylvania:** A moderate, deeply divided yet patriot-leaning colony trying to maintain peace and protect its commercial and manufacturing hub.
- d. **Province of New York:** Consists of a massive loyalist population deeply concerned about the negative economic impacts that would arise from breaking ties with London.
- e. **Province of Georgia:** The youngest and most vulnerable colony; loyalist-leaning due to heavy dependence on the British military for protection against both native tribes and foreign powers.
- f. **Province of Nova Scotia:** A British Atlantic colony that chose not to join the Continental Congress. Its main role is a staging ground for the British Royal Navy.

B. British Empire

- a. **The British Parliament:** Represents London's imperial government and the Crown, committed to maintaining parliamentary supremacy over colonies and collecting high taxes.
- b. **The Parliamentary Opposition (The Whigs):** A minority faction in Parliament sympathetic to colonial resentment and against the economic ruin that would arise from war against the colonies.

C. Foreign Powers

- a. **The Kingdom of France:** Britain's primary rival, looking for an opportunity to avenge their defeat in the Seven Years' War and disrupt British trade.
- b. **The Kingdom of Spain:** A massive colonial empire weighing whether to help weaken Britain while simultaneously fearing the possibility of an independent American republic inspiring revolution in Spanish America.
- c. **The Dutch Republic:** A global financial and trading powerhouse primarily interested in bypassing British maritime restrictions to trade directly with the colonies.

D. Regional Powers

- a. **The Iroquois Confederacy:** Located in the New York/Pennsylvania region and consisting of a six-nation alliance trying to maintain neutrality while facing both British and American pressure and internal division.
- b. **The Cherokee Nation:** Native militant power located in the Southeastern frontier focused on driving colonial expansion away from its borders.