imports picked up in 1763 essentially where they had left off in 1756. The available evidence suggests that the French economy continued to grow after the war at approximately the same rate as before.[65]

Meanwhile, there was little public outcry over the war's expense because the crown had funded its prodigious military outlays principally by borrowing and then held taxes steady in the postwar period simply by continuing to borrow.[66] This policy created dire problems for the French treasury by the 1780s, but in the short run the absence of a taxpayers' revolt and the continuation of creditor confidence permitted the state to address its highest priorities: rebuilding and reforming the armed forces. Beginning in 1763, the navy constructed new ships at such a rate, and with such high standards of quality, that by 1778 it could confront the British Atlantic fleet on terms close to parity.[67] During that same period, the army raised the pay of its soldiers and greatly improved their training, discipline, housing, and medical care, invested in state-of-the-art armaments, and founded new academies to educate cadets in the arts of war. Most important, the government reformed the army's notoriously corrupt system of recruitment and gradually abolished the proprietary rights of officers, starting with the colonels who literally owned the regiments they commanded as a kind of private property.[68] With more mixed success, the king and his ministers also attempted to streamline France's civil administration and law courts and generally sought to reduce the accretions of aristocratic privilege that hampered the government's ability to raise revenues, even to function at all.[69]

The goal was to turn the tables on Britain in the next war. As the comte de Vergennes, who became foreign minister in 1774, informed the king, "It is enough to read the Treaty of Paris . . . to realize the ascendancy which England has acquired over France and to judge how much that arrogant nation savours the pleasure of having humiliated us." Therefore, he concluded, France was obligated to take revenge when the opportunity appeared, as indeed it soon did, in the breach between Britain and its colonies.[70] In this way defeat produced considerable unity of purpose in policy, while the ineptitude that commanders had shown during the war kept the military establishment's leaders from mounting an effective resistance to reform after the return of peace.

Defeat, particularly the humiliating losses of Havana and Manila, also forced Spain to rearm—something it, too, did with alacrity—and compelled it to rethink and reorganize its state system in relation to the empire. The Bourbon king Charles III came to the throne in 1759 with strong absolutist

principles and soon translated them into a program of reform. With the help of vigorous ministers, Charles pursued the expansion of royal authority by increasing the number of military and civil officers who were directly beholden to the crown while undermining the old centers of privilege—the Church, the nobles who dominated municipal corporations, the merchant guilds, and other institutions—that tended to resist his initiatives. The reformers also adopted a forward-looking approach to public finance that emphasized not just the enhancement of revenues but the strengthening of the economy as a whole by improving agriculture, encouraging population growth, and fostering trade.

To defend Spain's commercial and territorial interests in the Americas, the crown extended its absolutist program to the colonies in the so-called Bourbon Reforms. Unlike the old Habsburg regime, which valued colonies principally for the silver they could produce, the Bourbon reformers understood them in mercantilist terms as an economic complement to the metropolis. Charles and his ministers therefore liberalized commerce by stages until free trade was possible throughout the empire in 1789. Simultaneously, the crown attacked long-established bastions of privilege in the colonies—the Church, monopolist merchant guilds, administrators who had purchased their offices, and Mexico City, among others—while offering new privileges to secure the loyalty of such potentially sympathetic groups as merchants in the port cities, residents of provincial towns, and creole landholders.[71]

While it may seem paradoxical that the reformers fought the ill effects of privilege by creating newly privileged groups, the imperial history of Spain in effect gave them no alternative. For more than two centuries the rules and regulations that defined relations between the New World viceroyalties and the metropolis had accumulated like barnacles on the immense, creaking Habsburg ship of state. New Spain, the viceroyalty that included Mexico and southwestern North America, had evolved a baroque system of governance in which race and place of birth determined the social and political standing of the empire's subjects and corporate institutions, each with its own obligations and specified rights or liberties, mediated social relations.[72] Spanish-American society functioned not as a collectivity of individuals but as an alliance of unequal groups, situated along a spectrum of legal privileges and customary rights. At the high end were *peninsulares*—colonists born in Iberia—and *criollos* (creoles)—colonists of pure Spanish blood born in the New World. In the middle were the *castas,* or free persons

of mixed blood, of whom the most important were *mestizos,* the offspring of Spanish-Indian unions. At the bottom were purebloods of another sort, Indians (by far the most numerous group) and African slaves.[73]

Given this social and institutional complexity, the monarchy's desire to centralize control required it to encourage the growth of new centers of influence to counter the established power of dominant groups.[74] To curtail the power of the *corregidores* and *alcaldes mayores,* old-style urban magistrates who purchased their offices and regarded them as proprietary possessions, the reformers created twelve territorial intendancies (the forerunners of Mexico's modern states) governed by crown-appointed bureaucrats, the *intendentes*, and a variety of subdelegates who answered directly to them. The reformers even renewed the military power of the crown by the creation and manipulation of privilege. To encourage enlistments the Spanish government promised relief from paying tribute to the crown, offered the right to wear uniforms and medals, and granted the privilege of *fuero militar*, or trial by a special jury. Service in the army and membership in the militia effectively freed men from being treated as ordinary colonial subjects; it also integrated the army into the colonial society and polity by enabling colonists to understand it not as a metropolitan intrusion but as an extension of local and provincial authority. *Peninsulares* predominated in the highest positions of army command, but even the *peons* who stood in the ranks found that the military offered an avenue to a more cosmopolitan world and a better, more dignified life. The creole elite embraced military leadership and the direct association with royal power that it symbolized.[75]

Thus in the aftermath of the Seven Years' War the Spanish crown successfully revived its authority in the empire and laid the groundwork for a late-eighteenth-century economic boom. The population, which had grown only slowly for a century before the war, increased more rapidly, until by 1810 it had doubled its prewar level. The shock of defeat, in short, promoted an imperial renaissance that shored up metropolitan authority and bought a new, half-century-long lease on life for Spain's empire in the New World.

While France and Spain righted themselves in the wake of defeat, Britain floundered in the tide of victory. Much of what happened in the British empire can be traced to the administrative imperatives of acquiring half a continent and integrating as new subjects a hundred thousand French-speaking Catholics and about twice that many Indians, many of them former enemies. Even more pressing was the fiscal crisis that attended

the near doubling of the national debt in less than a decade, an expansion that left the Exchequer with barely enough revenue to cover interest payments and the fixed costs of government. Much can be traced, too, to the psychological effects of the tremendous string of victories won between 1758 and 1762. Britain's chief ministers, accustomed to thinking of their nation as militarily invincible, adopted a peremptory style in dealing with the empire's inhabitants. Perhaps understandably, colonists found this attitude impossible to distinguish from arrogance.

The result was a series of unanticipated developments, astonishing to contemporaries in Britain and North America alike. First was the great Indian war that we still miscall Pontiac's Rebellion (1763–65), triggered by the efforts of the British commander in chief, Jeffery Amherst, to economize and reform long-standing practices in Indian trade and diplomacy. Late in the war he put a stop to diplomatic gift-giving and the subsidized Indian trade, suspended the sale of alcohol, and strictly limited the quantities of ammunition and arms supplied to Indians. Amherst wanted to reduce the profiteering and corruption of the Northern Indian Commissioner Sir William Johnson, Johnson's assistant George Croghan, and the Indian traders with whom they cooperated so closely: reasonable goals, surely, for a commander in chief who was personally honest and conscientious in the performance of his duties.

Amherst believed that his measures would not only save money and end abuses but also encourage order and industry among the Indians, since the higher prices of trade goods and the absence of debilitating rum would make them more eager and efficient hunters. What he failed to grasp was that generous diplomatic gifts and openhanded trading policies had been the very basis of comity with the Indians; in destroying this foundation he created the conditions that produced a vast insurrection. It was a war that eventually extended to virtually every native nation that had previously been allied with the French; a war that cost the redcoats at least 400 lives and the Anglo-American colonists more than 2,000 in the first year alone, reduced Britain's military presence in the West to three isolated posts, and once again emptied the frontiers of Anglo-American settlers. In the end, the Indian "rebels" ceased fighting not because British soldiers subdued them but because the French were no longer around to provide the arms, ammunition, and other supplies they needed to sustain their attacks.[76]

The Indians had never intended to destroy the English altogether, only to teach them a lesson about how to behave: not as a master but as a "father"

cast in the mold of the French original, Onontio—a figure who would mediate disputes, give the gifts needed to cover the dead and prevent the eruption of mourning wars, act as an ally, and superintend trade on fair terms. Thus when the British made peace at conferences sponsored by Sir William Johnson, they were victors only in their own minds. The Indians got back the terms of trade they wanted, creating what they thought was a viable middle-ground relationship with the British, who promised, in the Royal Proclamation of 1763, to keep their settlers from encroaching on Indian lands beyond the Appalachian crest. The British, it is true, reoccupied the interior forts they had lost, but the garrisons they put in place were weak and grew increasingly ghostly until the forts were abandoned, as even Fort Pitt was in 1772. From the Indians' perspective, the treaties that ended Pontiac's War signaled a native, not a British, victory.

The Indians who rebelled against British control tried, in the only way they knew, to maintain local autonomy and customary rights against an imperial authority heedless of local conditions and values. In that sense the breakdown of Anglo-Indian relations following Britain's great victory predicted the future of the empire with almost eerie accuracy. In as unmistakable a way as can be imagined, the Indian uprisings showed the limited potential of coercion as a basis for imperial control. To a degree no one in the British ministry understood, they also discredited the redcoats as protectors in the eyes of the frontier settlers, while the prohibition of western settlements by the Proclamation of 1763 alienated both gentry speculators and the Indian-hating backwoodsmen who went ahead and squatted on Indian lands anyway. But British ministers, fearing insolvency at home and looking across the Atlantic at colonies prone to the kind of localist, self-interested behavior that Washington had deplored on the wartime frontier, failed to see the potential for future conflict arising from their settlement of Pontiac's War. Instead of pausing to take stock, they moved to create a program of imperial reform based on enforcing the sovereign power of the metropolitan government. These financial and administrative measures brought to the forefront what long had been, and long remained, the central antagonism in Anglo-American political culture: the intractable conflict between the claims of imperial and local authority.

Defenders of local privilege usually controlled the legislatures of the British colonies; when they did not predominate, they vigorously, vocally opposed the exercise of executive power. Their localism arose only in part from the three thousand miles of ocean that lay between Britain and North America. Just as important was the colonists' tendency to understand liberty

in a *negative* sense: as the absence of metropolitan interference in the activities of local elites and the societies they dominated. This idea contradicted the *positive* definition that prevailed in Britain. There liberties were understood as concessions that a sovereign power made to its subjects: grants of specific rights like taxation by consent and trial by jury or privileges such as habeas corpus. The absence of metropolitan intervention in North America for a half-century before the Seven Years' War had encouraged the colonists to understand their aberrant sense of liberty as somehow normal. The ministers' postwar need to reform the empire decreed an end to that neglectful state of affairs. Colonial practice would be made to harmonize with metropolitan principle, and all differences would be settled in favor of the legitimate authority of the sovereign.

Since 1689 the Anglo-French wars had promoted the growth of a British "fiscal-military" state, powerful to a degree that surpassed even the absolutist dreams of James II.[77] In North America, too, the wars had increased the importance of British culture and British power, making the empire tangible to colonists in the form of scarlet uniforms, iron cannon, and the Union Jack, promoting patriotic feelings in ways that peace never could. The long process of Anglicization in the colonies, therefore, was not merely the product of Anglophilia, the rule of law, and the increasing consumption of British manufactures, but an institutional and cultural transformation driven by the relentless imperatives of imperial war.[78]

Between 1755 and 1763 war became the very lifeblood of empire and the means by which Anglo-Americans defined themselves in both territorial and ideological terms. Britons on both sides of the Atlantic had celebrated each military victory as another step in the advance of liberty and Protestantism over slavery and popery. After the war, however, Britain's efforts to limit the expansion of disorderly white settlement on Indian lands, to regularize trade, religion, and government, and to promote the empire's functioning in an economically rational, fiscally prudent, administratively enlightened fashion elicited howls of protest from colonists who had been delighted to use unlimited force to free Canadians from the grip of France and popery but who adamantly refused to submit themselves to the power of a sovereign king in Parliament. British imperial reformers, who saw the colonists as motivated solely by self-interest, failed to see that an alternative vision of empire lay behind the protests, a vision that made liberty synonymous with the absence of state intervention and defined political allegiance as an act of voluntary association. The greatest imperial victory in British history thus brought about a confrontation over the terms on which the

empire would function. The fundamental issue at stake was what was eventually called citizenship.

British authority in North America disintegrated in three stages as disputes over the limits of imperial authority eroded the bonds of affection that had previously bound the empire together. The first phase, the Stamp Act crisis of 1765–66, was the most bewildering, violent, and disorderly, as tens of thousands of ordinary colonists rioted in protest against a mild tax that Parliament had tried to impose on them without their consent. The announced purpose of the tax was to pay for 10,000 royal troops to be permanently stationed in the colonies. This seemed ominous to colonists who noted that the possessions of the nearest imperial rival, Spain, lay beyond the Mississippi River, while the redcoats' miserable record in Pontiac's War suggested that the ministry did not expect to use the army as a frontier constabulary. The only plausible reason for leaving so many men in America seemed to be that they were intended to enforce laws that Parliament might pass to bring the colonies well and truly into subjection.

The wildness and wide scale of ordinary colonists' response—mobs that everywhere threatened the lives and destroyed the property of royal officials and forced the closing of ports in protest against the payment of the tax—perplexed British officials who had been confident of their ability to prevail over any colonial protests. So much violence and upheaval astonished political and cultural leaders in the colonies, too. They scrambled to reassert some measure of control over the protests and bring order out of what looked like incipient anarchy.

Scholars have attributed the violence of the Stamp Act protests to many factors, including the disordered state of the postwar colonial economies, an ideological consensus among the colonists rooted in the values of English republicanism, and the nearly universal nature of the proposed tax. The last was clearly crucial, for by touching individuals equally, irrespective of residence or occupation, the Stamp Act enabled colonists everywhere to see themselves as equally threatened. We can best appreciate those powerful influences, however, by locating them in an emotional context created by memories of shared patriotic sacrifice. Colonists could only see efforts to reform the empire and to make them pay for its troops in America as attempts to deprive them of the partnership in empire they thought they had earned.

Under pressure from British merchants who were losing vast sums as a result of the closing of American ports, Parliament repealed the counterproductive Stamp Act in March 1766. But the king and Parliament could neither

ignore the unresolved problems of finance and control nor allow the colonists to dictate the shape of the postwar empire; hence the repeal was immediately preceded by a Declaratory Act in which Parliament asserted its unqualified sovereignty over the colonies. A second attempt to raise revenue from the colonies and tighten the bonds of imperial control, the Townshend Acts, followed in 1767, precipitating a second round of colonial resistance that was not resolved until 1770. Unlike the Stamp Act, which had unwarily imposed a direct tax on individuals, the Townshend Acts sought to raise revenue through customs duties charged on paper, glass, tea, and other items that the colonists commonly imported from Britain. The levy was so light and so cleverly disguised that its author, Chancellor of the Exchequer Charles Townshend, believed it would not even be perceived as a tax.

He was wrong. This time the trajectory of protest ran opposite to the seemingly anarchic opposition to the Stamp Act, largely because colonial political leaders had been so thoroughly frightened by the riots that they moved quickly to propose a nonviolent means of expressing dissent, the creation of nonimportation associations. These were agreements on the part of merchants not to import British goods until Parliament, seeing the damage that was being done to the British economy, would repeal the Townshend Acts. Crowds now were more orderly and intent more on enforcing conformity to the boycotts than on intimidating royal officials. Most of the gentlemen who organized the resistance and justified it ideologically in the public prints thought of themselves as patriotic Britons and remained fundamentally committed to the empire. Resistance began slowly, growing gradually stronger as pamphlets and newspapers explained the perils of submitting to even a mild indirect tax to which the colonists had not consented.

Nonimportation associations began to spread in 1768 after the ministry sent troops to occupy and impose order on that most fractious of colonial cities, Boston. By 1769 a remarkably effective boycott was in place in all the major ports, and imports from Britain fell by one-third from the previous year's levels. A new, more pacific administration under the leadership of Frederick, Lord North, took note. North was already in the process of settling the conflict by proposing legislation to repeal all but a single symbolic measure from the Townshend Acts—the tax on tea—in the late winter of 1770, at almost exactly the time that violence convulsed Boston in the so-called Boston Massacre.

The killing of five members of a disorderly crowd by British soldiers could easily have been used to justify an armed revolt, had Boston's patriot

leaders wished to do so. Instead General Thomas Gage wisely withdrew the redcoats from Boston and the leaders of the patriot resistance cooperated with royal authorities to bring the crisis to a peaceful end in the courts. Meanwhile, the repeal of all the offensive duties but the tax on tea reassured the colonists of Parliament's fundamental reasonableness, and the non-importation associations began to fall apart. Gradually business as usual resumed within the empire. By autumn the boycotts were mostly a memory, as merchants—understandably reluctant to bankrupt themselves in defense of the right to be taxed only by consent—clutched the fig leaf of principle by abjuring the importation of tea while resuming the importation of everything else. Until late 1773, when the Tea Act precipitated a third crisis of imperial authority, tensions declined to the point that many British Americans believed a new modus vivendi might actually be emerging and with it a renewal of harmony within the empire.

An Imperialist's Progress

Like many another colonist, George Washington welcomed normalization, for during the first two phases of the imperial crisis he had been far less concerned with protesting British infringements on colonial liberties than finding his way to prosperity as a planter. The path had not been an easy one; he suffered financially in the postwar depression and went heavily into debt to his London creditors. Though he shared this fate with other Virginia planters, he found it particularly troublesome, for two reasons. In the first place, he hated depending on credit to maintain his family's style of life because he believed that independence of action was above all what defined a gentleman. In the second, he discovered that he had no knack for growing high-quality tobacco and therefore had no prospect of climbing out of debt unless he found some other way of making his plantations pay.[79] After nearly a decade of losing money, therefore, he abandoned tobacco planting for wheat farming, which seemed to promise lower labor costs and higher returns. He lost a certain amount of status by making this change, for Virginia's greatest men were "crop masters" whose tobacco commanded premium prices on the London market. But wheat farming allowed Washington to market his produce through colonial merchants and to reduce his debts to the London firms he had come to see as greedy and underhanded. He also diversified his plantation enterprises, pursuing (among other schemes) brandy-distilling, flour-milling, shad-fishing, and textile manufacture, in

the double hope of achieving self-sufficiency and of producing "merchantable" commodities to sell. Most of all, he sought to salvage his fortunes by land speculation.

Close to home, he used Martha's fortune to expand his Tidewater holdings from about 5,000 acres to something like 12,000. Further afield, he became a partner in a scheme to drain the Great Dismal Swamp on the border between Virginia and North Carolina, the last large unoccupied tract below the Fall line; he invested in a second partnership, the Mississippi Company, which sought to use influence in London to acquire rights to 2.5 million acres between the Mississippi and the Wabash, in what is now southern Illinois; and he participated in efforts to revive the claims of the Ohio Company, which had fallen dormant during the Seven Years' War.[80] Most of all, he tried to capitalize on his claim to the western lands that he had the most realistic chance to acquire, the ones that were promised as a bounty in 1754 to the soldiers and officers of the Virginia Regiment.

As colonel of the regiment, Washington was entitled to claim 20,000 acres of land on the south bank of the Ohio, or 10 percent of the 200,000 acres the House of Burgesses had reserved for the veterans. He supplemented this handsome reward by buying up the land warrants of scores of his fellow veterans, eventually realizing the rights to an additional 25,000 acres.[81] From September 1767 he employed an old subordinate from the Virginia Regiment, Captain William Crawford, to identify tracts on the Ohio that he might acquire when the land grants were finally made.[82] Despite the crown's seemingly absolute prohibition in the Proclamation of 1763 on expanding white settlement beyond the Appalachians, he felt fully justified in doing so. As he explained to Crawford, "I can never look upon that Proclamation in any other light (but this I say between ourselves) than as a temporary expedient to quiet the Minds of the Indians & [therefore one that] must fall of course in a few years. . . ."[83]

In 1768 the treaties of Hard Labor (under which the Cherokees ceded their claims to certain lands south of the Ohio and west of the Appalachian ridge) and Fort Stanwix (under which the Iroquois League surrendered its claims to the whole region south of the river) seemed to bear out Washington's prophecy. In fact the Proclamation of 1763 was not revoked, only widely ignored, even by government officials; thus in late 1769 Washington persuaded Virginia's governor and Council to permit representatives of the 1754 Regiment to identify tracts in the Ohio country for future survey. Early the following August a meeting of his former officers delegated him to travel to the Ohio as a first step toward realizing their claim.[84]

Washington was delighted to oblige. In the fall he and a small party scouted lands along the river, canoeing more than 200 miles from Pittsburgh down to the confluence of the Great Kanawha, carefully examining everything along the way, and particularly looking for large contiguous stretches of fine territory.[85] By the time he returned to Mount Vernon on December 1, he had a superb notion of the value of what he had seen, and of what was at stake.

As Washington knew only too well at the time he made the trip, other speculators and syndicates also had an eye on the lands along the Ohio. A powerful and well-connected group of Pennsylvanian and London speculators called the Walpole Company seemed a particular threat: they were petitioning the Privy Council for a gargantuan grant of 20 million acres on the south bank of the Ohio with the goal of organizing an inland colony, Vandalia. The men associated with this scheme included Thomas Walpole, brother of one of the most influential politicians in England; Benjamin Franklin; the Philadelphia merchant Samuel Wharton; and the incomparable, ubiquitous George Croghan.

When Washington passed through Pittsburgh on his way home, he talked extensively with Croghan about the Vandalia project. At the time the Irishman was doing a brisk business selling tracts in the vicinity of Pittsburgh, land he had acquired in 1749 in an exceptionally dubious grant from the Iroquois League. As long as the Proclamation of 1763 remained in effect, these sales were utterly outside the law. Washington nonetheless offered to purchase 15,000 acres from him at a shilling per acre, "to be paid so soon as there can be a legal title made to the Land." He also inquired, with the utmost delicacy, about whether Croghan would consider selling his interest in the Walpole Company.[86]

Washington, prudent as ever, was trying to position himself to take advantage of what he assumed would be the inevitable migration of white farmers into a vast trans-Appalachian realm. Even before he made the trip west he had begun to talk about a scheme to canalize the Potomac and open it to navigation as high as Fort Cumberland, "whence," he wrote, "the Portage to the Waters of Ohio must commence." Such a project would make the Potomac "the Channel of conveyance of the extensive & valuable Trade of a rising Empire" that would benefit many forward-looking gentlemen.[87] Those who built the canal and collected tolls for its use would obviously profit. So would those who owned waterfront property in Alexandria, the port on the Potomac's lower reaches where goods would be transshipped to and from canal boats. Those who held lands in the upper Ohio

Valley and along the Youghiogheny-Monongahela drainage that fed it from the high ground northwest of Fort Cumberland were bound to benefit as well. The master of Mount Vernon intended to belong to all three groups.

Washington had stopped on his journey to the Ohio at Great Meadows and viewed the charred remains of Fort Necessity. Whatever emotions stirred as he did so, it was not sentimentality that prompted him to lay out thirty pistoles (£25 sterling) to buy the place in December 1770 after his return. As he had seen as early as 1754, the spot offered the best available way station between the upper Potomac and the Youghiogheny. Its 300 acres of rich hay-meadow would yield crop after crop of fodder for the draft animals that would plod past on Braddock's Road, carrying Ohio produce to the Potomac, British manufactures to Pittsburgh, and Virginia settlers to the rich farmlands Washington planned to offer for lease at the mouth of the Kanawha.

The rising empire that Washington foresaw was of course British. He understood and readily accepted that British authorities would ultimately dispose of those lands to great men like himself who had the capital needed to survey them, publicize their availability, and convey them to the new settlers. All that seemingly remained at issue was the direction that imperial authorities might take on policies to govern the inevitable expansion, once the prohibition on white settlement west of the Appalachian crest was lifted. The crown, as Washington knew, had only two alternatives. Either it could organize new interior settlements by extending the jurisdiction of existing colonies westward or it could choose to create new colonies beyond the Appalachians, on the model of the proposed Vandalia. In the former case, his claims to the bounty lands from 1754 would hold up within an enlarged Virginia; in the latter, he could best protect his interests by buying into the Walpole Company, even if that meant dealing with the likes of George Croghan. Either way, produce, goods, and settlers—an endless stream of gold—would pass through Great Meadows in transit to their destinations.

Because the British empire and imperialism structured Washington's world so completely, the logic of his political activities in the early 1770s was anything but radical. His participation in protests against the Townshend Acts—he helped draft the agreement that constituted the Virginia Non-Importation Association in May 1769, took part in relaxing it to permit more imports in June 1770, and abandoned it with relief, along with the rest of the associators, in July 1771—reflected no disposition to protest against the fact of British imperialism. His problem was not with the empire but with the current ministers of the crown. His goal was to influence, not

overthrow, the political and commercial structures upon which he predicated all his plans and in which he fixed his hopes for the future.[88]

That future looked hopeful to Washington in the years of business as usual that followed Parliament's repeal of all but one of the Townshend duties. The new governor who arrived in Virginia in the fall of 1771, John Murray, fourth Earl of Dunmore, proved equally enamored of land speculation and unconcerned about those details of the Proclamation of 1763 that forbade western settlement. Washington did his best to build ties of friendship and common interest with the governor, dining or spending social evenings with him five times between late 1771 and the spring of 1773 and providing information on the Ohio country, an area in which Dunmore took an uncommonly keen interest.[89] By the spring of 1773 the two were on sufficiently good terms that Washington offered to act as his lordship's personal guide on an expedition to explore the valley during the coming summer, a proposal that Dunmore accepted.[90] In the end a family emergency prevented Washington from going: his wife's seventeen-year-old daughter, Patsy, died suddenly on June 19, and he did not wish to leave the inconsolable Martha alone for an extended time.[91]

Although Washington missed the chance to cultivate the kinds of personal bonds with the governor that might have grown out of a couple of months spent camping and canoeing along the Ohio, Dunmore proved well-disposed toward Washington's speculative schemes—so long as they did not impinge on his own. In late 1773, therefore, Washington finally secured the approval of Governor Dunmore and the Council for patenting the land grants made to the soldiers of the Virginia Regiment in 1754.[92] Even a guaranteed title to 45,000 acres of Ohio land did not put Washington's mind at ease about the future, however, for it was becoming clear to him that plans were afoot to open the valley for immediate settlement.

In early September 1773, Washington learned that Governor Dunmore, then at Pittsburgh, had promised a land grant on the Ohio below the mouth of the Scioto River to Dr. John Connolly, formerly a surgeon's mate in a Pennsylvania regiment. Washington had met Connolly on the Forbes campaign and knew him now as one of the most active speculators in Pittsburgh. By itself, Dunmore's promise was only an interesting fact, but at almost exactly the same time Washington learned that one of his former subordinates, Captain Thomas Bullitt, was surveying large tracts near the Scioto, apparently at Dunmore's direction.[93] Because the Scioto had been mentioned as the western boundary of the Vandalia colony, Washington suspected that the governor had received orders from London to distribute

lands there to former provincial officers, as the Proclamation of 1763 implied might be done. If that were true, it would have an immense effect on his own plans. As he told his agent, William Crawford: "depend upon it, if it be once known that the Governor will grant Patents for these Lands, the Officers of Pennsylvania, Maryland, Carolina &c. &c., will flock there in Shoals, & every valuable spot will be taken up, contiguous to the river, on which, the Lands . . . will always be most valuable."[94]

Dunmore did indeed have plans, but not the ones Washington guessed. What the governor had seen at Pittsburgh in the summer of 1773 looked disorderly but strongly suggested opportunities for self-aggrandizement. Thanks to the crown's heroic expenditures on road-building during the war, the valleys around Pittsburgh were accessible as never before to migrants from Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. According to one eyewitness, Braddock's and Forbes's roads seemed "alive with Men, Women, Children, and Cattle" from all these colonies; estimates held that as many as five thousand families a year were moving to the region.[95] Dunmore believed that at Pittsburgh "and in the neighbourhood . . . I found upwards of ten thousand people settled." This was of course in flagrant violation of the proclamation, but then there was no longer a garrison at Fort Pitt to enforce imperial policy. The Indians, who maintained a "settlement immediately opposite to the town of Pittsburg on the other side of the river," were, understandably, uneasy. Pennsylvania had done little to impose control: it had appointed no magistrates, organized no militia, and made no attempt to repair or man the fort. "Upon my arrival," Dunmore reported, "the people flocked about me and beseeched me . . . to appoint magistrates and officers of militia to remove these grievous inconveniences under which they laboured."[96] Because the Penn family had never surveyed their province's western boundary, it remained unclear whether Pittsburgh lay in Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania, or Augusta County, Virginia.

These factors, in combination with Dunmore's habitual preference for action over thought, were enough to move the governor to intervene. Early in 1774 he asserted Virginia's claim to the whole of the Ohio country by commissioning Dr. Connolly and a half dozen other prominent local men as justices of the peace and ordering surveys in the area—to be carried out, as it happened, by Captain William Crawford—in preparation for issuing Virginia patents to the landholders. George Croghan, who saw more prospect for profit under Virginia's jurisdiction than under Pennsylvania's (and who indeed may have suggested the takeover to Dunmore in the first place), cast his lot with the new regime and accepted a commission as

justice of the peace. Previously indolent Pennsylvania now countered by appointing its own magistrates, who promptly ordered the arrest of officials from Virginia. Virginia's magistrates responded in kind. By spring, the adherents of Pennsylvania were arming themselves to counter the force of the Virginia militia, and both were preparing for what looked like an impending civil war.[97]

To avert that conflict, Connolly and Dunmore fomented another. Disorganized localized violence between natives and newcomers had been common in the area since the late 1760s; now Connolly encouraged rumors among the nervous settlers that it was all a sign of an intended Indian uprising. When in April a party of Cherokee warriors attacked three traders on their way to the Scioto with goods intended for the Shawnees, Connolly—now a captain of the Virginia militia as well as a justice of the peace—blamed the Shawnees and other Ohio Indians. Militiamen took their revenge on Shawnee and Mingo villages, massacring at least nine, and perhaps as many as forty, Indians. Anger mounted and anxieties spread on both sides of the cultural divide as white settlers began to withdraw from exposed farmsteads or to "fort up" in anticipation of raids. Moderate civil chiefs, especially Cornstalk of the Shawnees, tried unavailingly to restrain their young men and restore peace. Lord Dunmore, however, was as uninterested in negotiation as the warriors. In June he ordered militia units in Virginia's western counties to prepare for an offensive on the Ohio.[98]

Dunmore wanted an Indian war for reasons that were both self-interested and driven by what he regarded as wise policy. The proposed colony of Vandalia, which Dunmore (like most Virginia speculators) believed was a scheme to steal Virginia's lands, had been in a state of suspended animation for two years because questions shrouding its boundaries and the collection of quitrents had not yet been answered to the satisfaction of the solicitor general back in England. Moreover, the Vandalia project rested on the assumption that cessions to the crown made by the Cherokees in the Treaty of Hard Labor and by the Iroquois League in the Treaty of Fort Stanwix had fully cleared the Indian title to the region. But one major Indian group in the West, the Shawnees, had continued to exercise hunting rights on the south side of the Ohio Valley, and they vehemently denied that the Cherokee and Iroquois cessions were in any way binding on them. If Dunmore could provoke a war and defeat the Shawnees, he could force them to surrender to Virginia all their claims to territory in what is now Kentucky. This would effectively turn the Ohio into the boundary between Indian Country to the north and a vast Virginia-controlled region to the south, open to white settlement. The province could legitimate the settlements that squatters had already established there, encourage orderly migration, and erect county governments. If Vandalia ever emerged from its embroilments with the law officers of the crown, its de jure claims could scarcely compete with Virginia's de facto control over the southern half of the Valley from Pittsburgh to the Falls of the Ohio.

A successful Indian war therefore offered inestimable benefits to the governor and his province. Lord Dunmore could claim he had prevented further violence between Indians and white settlers, make himself a hero to the land-speculating gentry of his colony, and gain a huge popular following among its ordinary colonists. That his initiative was at odds with the policy of the crown evidently did not concern him. At least it did not bother him enough to keep him from raising an army and leading them against the Shawnees in September and October of 1774.

It is clear enough that Dunmore was a gambler, willing to risk reputation and career alike on the faith that fortune favors the bold. Yet the violent expansion of Virginia's territorial control was ultimately less a bid for personal riches (though Dunmore would not have spurned them) than a means of shoring up British imperial control in the province. He needed both popular and gentry support more desperately in the summer and fall of 1774 than any Virginia governor had needed them in a century. That was because, in the spring of the previous year, Lord North's ministry had decided to save the foundering East India Company from bankruptcy by giving it a monopoly on the sale of tea in the American colonies, thus triggering the third great crisis of empire in the postwar period.

This climactic confrontation between metropolitan authorities and Anglo-American colonists arose from yet another attempt to deal with unanticipated consequences of the Seven Years' War. As we have seen, the success of the clerk-turned-conqueror Robert Clive in campaigns against the French and their Indian allies had allowed the East India Company to sweep the Compagnie des Indes from the east coast of the subcontinent by early 1761. By the end of the war, the East India Company controlled Bengal through a puppet ruler; in 1765 the Mogul emperor Shah Alam II granted the company the *diwani*, or the control of tax revenues, in Bengal, Bihar, and part of Orissa. The company expected this to produce approximately £1.5 million annually and intended to use the revenues collected to purchase tea in China, which could in turn be exported at great profit to Europe. No one fully anticipated, however, the extent to which extracting revenues from Indian peasants through the local elites would enmesh the company in the

problems of governmental administration; nor did anyone fully appreciate how expensive it would be to maintain a large army to keep order and enforce the company's authority. What had looked like a bonanza turned out to be a colossal drain on the company's finances, a drain that could not be reversed by the company's assumption in 1771 of direct control over the collection of revenue. By 1773, the East India Company was bankrupt in all but name, with no asset left to sell but the 17 million pounds of tea that lay amoldering in its British warehouses.[99]

His Majesty's government could not let the East India Company fail, for to do so would have imperiled the whole commercial economy of the empire. Nor could it afford to take over direct rule of India. The solution that Britain's prime minister, Lord Frederick North, devised in 1773 was in theory an elegant one. Despite their supposed boycott of tea as a taxed commodity, American colonists drank smuggled Dutch tea in great quantities. The grant of a monopoly on the sale of tea in North America to the company seemed certain to secure a steady revenue for it at no significant cost to the Exchequer; the colonists would buy it because the company, with its vast warehoused stock, could offer tea at a price well below the level consumers were used to paying, even with the tax of three pennies a pound reckoned in. Since many merchants had quietly broken their vow to continue boycotting English tea anyway, it seemed likely to North and the cabinet that the colonists' self-interest would prevail over whatever remained of their political principles.

This was a miscalculation of the highest order. Colonists long since sensitized to the dangers of taxation without consent could only too easily perceive a devilish plot in dutied tea being offered at bargain-basement prices. The very fact of its reasonable price, indeed, seemed to many clear evidence of a conspiracy to destroy their rights as Britons. Resistance sprang up overnight in all the ports where consignees for East India tea had been designated. When the first tea ships arrived in the fall and early winter of 1773, mobs everywhere forced the consignees to resign. Everywhere, shiploads of tea were either sent back to England or impounded.

Everywhere, that is, except in radical Boston, where the singularly bad relations between patriot leaders and the royal governor were further inflamed by the East India Company's choice of consignees—the governor's sons—and the governor's refusal to bow to intimidation. The dumping of tea worth £11,000 into the harbor on the night of December 16, 1773, could not be ignored. But the measures that Parliament adopted to punish Boston—a set of Coercive Acts that among other things closed the port of

Boston and rewrote the Massachusetts charter, naming the commander in chief, General Thomas Gage, as governor of the province, and imposing a garrison that exceeded 4,000 on the town—were so draconian as to alarm colonists everywhere. Simultaneously without considering how it would be perceived in the context of the Coercive Acts, Parliament also opted to solve the long-standing problem of the West by passing the Quebec Act, creating a civil government in the new province of Quebec, granting Roman Catholic Canadians religious toleration and a full slate of legal rights, and extending Quebec's boundaries to include everything from the Great Lakes to the Ohio, as far west as the Mississippi River.

Taken together, these measures seemed so threatening that even moderates like George Washington concluded that united resistance alone could protect colonial rights and preserve a tolerable place within the empire for Americans.[100] It was the Coercive Acts that finally moved the Virginia House of Burgesses to pass a resolution on May 24, 1774, calling for a day of fasting and prayer in response to the punishment of Boston. As an act of protest, that gesture was modest enough. Washington's assumption that his own vote in favor would not offend the governor was clearly implicit in the fact that he dined with Dunmore on the twenty-fifth, breakfasted with him on the twenty-sixth, and attended a ball in honor of the arrival of Lady Dunmore on the evening of the twenty-seventh.[101]

Had Dunmore found it in himself to ignore the resolution, as Washington evidently hoped he would, it would probably have come to little. Instead he brooded on it, concluded that it was offensive to the king's majesty and Parliament's authority, and dissolved the Assembly. Incensed, the Burgesses (including Washington) adjourned to a nearby tavern and reconstituted themselves as a Convention. On May 30 they resolved "That Letters be wrote to all our Sister Colonies" recommending that an intercolonial Congress meet to coordinate "such Measures as shall be judged most effectual for the Common Rights and Liberty of British America."[102]

This call for what came to be known as the First Continental Congress was the context in which Lord Dunmore in June ordered the frontier militia to prepare to take the field; the meeting of the Congress in Philadelphia that autumn coincided exactly with active operations against the Shawnees in Dunmore's War. Intemperate as he was, the governor nonetheless had considerable insight into the priorities and psyches of both the great planters and the common folk of Virginia. He knew they were moved not only by concern at the ministry's treatment of Boston but by frustration with the ministry's unwillingness to open the interior of the continent to

colonization. He believed he could count on the lure of western lands, and the visceral appeal of a war against Indians to a white population inclined to hate them anyway, to distract attention from the policies of the ministry. He evidently trusted that once the rebellious Bostonians had been taught the necessary lessons and duly subjected to British sovereignty he would be able to translate his popularity as a war leader into renewed support for the empire. He also undoubtedly hoped that the ministry would be so grateful for his having defused political resistance in Virginia that it would overlook the fact that he had launched an unauthorized campaign of conquest to do so.

Dunmore's wager that the Virginians' self-interested commitment to expanding the empire would overrule their concerns about the arbitrary exercise of power very nearly paid off. He had no trouble recruiting 2,400 provincials for his expedition even though neither the Assembly nor the crown authorized him to raise—and hence pay—a force larger than any Virginia had fielded during the Seven Years' War.[103] When 1,200 of those Virginians clashed with an outnumbered band of Shawnee and Mingo warriors at a bend in the Ohio River called Point Pleasant on October 10, 1774, the outcome was not quite the decisive victory that Dunmore later claimed. The battle in fact ended inconclusively when the Shawnees broke off contact and withdrew to their towns in the Scioto Valley, north of the Ohio; Dunmore was then able to build blockhouses to protect his supplies and concentrate his forces in the vicinity and threaten to destroy their settlements and families wholesale.

Moderate chiefs led by Cornstalk accepted an armistice and promised to attend a formal peace conference the following spring. In the interim, they agreed to withdraw from the Kentucky country in return for the Virginians' promise that they would refrain from settling on the north side of the river. The Shawnees (many of whom refused to acknowledge Cornstalk's negotiations in the first place) seem to have viewed this as at most a temporary, strategic withdrawal. Dunmore by contrast interpreted it as a permanent cession of land and the basis for a full-fledged assertion of Virginia's authority over the lands south of the Ohio.[104] Among the great planters of the province, his lordship suddenly became "as popular as a Scotsman can be."[105] When a new Virginia Convention met in Richmond in March 1775 to choose delegates to attend the Second Continental Congress (scheduled to convene in May), its members unanimously commended Dunmore "for his truly noble, wise and spirited Conduct on the late Expedition against our Indian Enemy."[106]

For these reasons it should not surprise us that Washington remained in

contact with the governor through the spring of 1775, even after he had served as a delegate to the First Continental Congress and even as he was preparing to depart for Philadelphia as a delegate to the Second. His fellow delegates in the two Virginia conventions chose him for these assignments precisely because he was *not* a firebrand like Patrick Henry or an impassioned writer like Thomas Jefferson but rather a moderate man, known more for the sobriety of his views than for his readiness to make a public issue of them. From late summer 1774 through the spring of 1775, Washington continued to look for accommodation. On one hand, he believed that Parliament's measures were "not only repugnant to natural right, but subversive of the law and constitution of Great Britain itself"; on the other, he supported the campaign against the Shawnees, kept up friendly relations with the royal governor who promoted it, and nursed the hope that the king and Parliament would back down from their position in Massachusetts and restore a sensible balance in imperial governance.[107] Only in retrospect did it appear that those beliefs and actions were self-contradictory.

It took a series of events in the spring of 1775 to destroy Washington's hope that harmony could be restored without the loss of colonial rights. The first development was the rumor that Dunmore had disallowed the surveys that William Crawford had made on Washington's behalf in the Ohio country on the grounds that Crawford was not properly licensed as a Virginia surveyor. Astonished, Washington wrote to the governor on April 3 to ask if this "altogether incredible" information could possibly be accurate.[108] His Lordship's curt reply, dated April 18, did nothing to dispel his fears; on the contrary, Dunmore essentially confirmed the rumor.[109]

That the governor would casually invalidate years of effort and expense mystified Washington as much as it offended him. Was this a reprisal for his participation in the two Virginia conventions and the Continental Congress? An attempt to bully him into taking sides against his fellow planters? Or was it an effort to snatch away lands that he had already surveyed and on which he had begun to seat settlers, in order to bestow them on the governor's supporters? Washington had no way to know, but when word of a second incident arrived shortly after, he found it impossible to believe that the mercurial Scot was up to anything but mischief. Before dawn on April 21, Dunmore ordered a detachment of Royal Marines from an armed schooner, the *Magdalen,* to remove the entire stock of gunpowder, fifteen half-barrels, from the magazine at Williamsburg and carry it on board the province's station ship, HMS *Fowey.*[110]

The removal of the gunpowder would have alarmed Williamsburg's

white residents at any time. Now it raised the gravest possible anxieties, because it came at the end of a week during which rumors had flown up and down the James River Valley that enslaved African Americans were planning an insurrection. Indeed, three slaves had already been arrested, tried, and convicted of conspiracy. A crowd of Williamsburg whites gathered to demand that Dunmore return the powder. Fearful that a riot might follow, the town council tried to defuse the situation by meeting privately with the governor and attempting to negotiate a settlement.

When the councilmen emerged, they urged the crowd to go home. The governor, they said, had offered reassurances. He had removed the powder only for safekeeping and would return it immediately if needed. The crowd dispersed, the councilmen heaved sighs of relief, and quiet reigned once more. Temporarily.

For the governor had in fact offered the councilmen more than reassurances; he had also made a threat so terrible that they had not dared to mention it in the hearing of the crowd. The next day, however, one of the councilmen informed the Speaker of the House of Burgesses that Dunmore had said that if the Virginians were to harm any officer of the crown in the performance of his duty, he "would declare freedom to the slaves and reduce the City of Wmsburg to ashes."[111] The timing of the gunpowder's removal now seemed truly sinister. The thought that the governor would not only deprive whites of the means of defending themselves but contemplate mobilizing their slaves as a means of keeping himself in control was a monstrosity beyond the worst nightmares of Virginia's gentry. In little more time than it took for the news to spread from Williamsburg to the rest of the province, Dunmore went from being the most popular governor Virginia had ever seen to the most reviled and most feared.

Virginia's leaders—Washington among them—were still trying to fathom precisely what this incident might mean and to decide upon a course of action in response when news arrived that a column of British soldiers from Boston had fired on patriot militia at Lexington and Concord on April 19. In the daylong battle that followed, seventy-three regulars and forty-nine militiamen were killed; hundreds were wounded. News arriving daily thereafter made it clear that thousands of militiamen from elsewhere in New England had flooded into eastern Massachusetts on the days following the battle, trapping General Gage and his redcoats in the city.[112] Boston was a city under siege.

Like a cymbal crash at the end of a symphonic crescendo, the news that the king's troops had shed the blood of His Majesty's subjects in Massachusetts climaxed the almost intolerable tensions that had been building in Virginia. Ever since the First Continental Congress, patriot gentlemen in several counties had been creating independent militia companies, pledging, in the articles of association they signed, to defend their liberties with their lives. A half-dozen or so companies had formed by the spring of 1775, and most turned to Washington for advice on matters like training, arms, and uniforms.[113] The formation of these companies had been largely theatrical gestures, and Washington's participation, while real, was mainly ceremonial. With the gunpowder episode, however, independent companies formed in at least seven more counties. In the last days of April, several of the companies resolved to ride to Williamsburg and force the governor to return to the province's powder, still stowed aboard the *Fowey*. Dunmore replied that if any armed men approached the capital he would make a proclamation to free the slaves of the province. To make sure there was no mistaking his seriousness, he distributed weapons both to his household slaves and to several Shawnee chiefs who had been staying in Williamsburg as hostages until the peace treaty with the Ohio Indians could be concluded. It was a crisis grave enough to make many believe Virginia was on the brink of civil war. In the end, however, the Speaker of the House of Burgesses negotiated a settlement in which Dunmore gave his word that the powder would be returned. The volunteer companies that had begun to march on Williamsburg paused, reconsidered, and dispersed to their homes.[114]

With the passing of Virginia's crisis, Washington thought himself free to go to Philadelphia to help search for a solution to the much larger crisis in New England. Before he left Mount Vernon on May 4, he made sure that his trunk contained, among other clothes, the blue-and-buff uniform, cut to the specifications of the Fairfax Independent Company, that he had ordered when he agreed to lead it and the volunteer companies of Fauquier, Richmond, Spotsylvania, and Prince William counties, should they ever be required to take the field together. When he wore it to the sessions of the Continental Congress, he probably intended only to signify his solidarity with the patriot volunteers of Virginia. His fellow delegate John Adams, however, saw a larger opportunity in Washington's evident willingness to defend colonial rights by force of arms. Apart from their still-shared loyalty to the British crown and the growing conviction that a malignant faction in Parliament was bent on depriving them of their property and liberty, the colonists had little to unite them. Adams believed that appointing Virginia's most notable soldier to command the exclusively New England troops then in the field would build durable ties between colonies and regions that had

never shown much in the way of mutual regard. Thus for Adams, who nominated him, and for the delegates who unanimously approved on June 15, 1775, appointing Washington commander in chief of the Continental Army (as the troops besieging Boston were henceforth known) was an essential step toward forging an effective military and political union. Without that cooperation, which would have to be sustained for God knew how long, the colonists had no hope of defending their rights against what the delegates called, as a sign of their continued loyalty to the king, the Ministerial Army. Washington understood as much; and even though, as he said, "I do not think my self equal to the Command I am honoured with," he accepted.[115]

The general, like the colonies he now served, had come a long way since 1754. Neither he nor the vast majority of his fellow colonists, however, were yet prepared to abandon the hope of reconciliation with the crown and hence the restoration of the empire. War had broken out in New England not because anyone had intended it but because both sides had concluded that the very soul of the British empire was at risk and that it was worth fighting to preserve. The colonists' willingness to take up arms to defend their vision of an empire bound together by voluntary allegiance and to protect what they understood to be Englishmen's rights was not, in that sense, radically different from the Indians' willingness in 1763 to use violence to teach the British a lesson about the proper relations between peoples who were supposed to be bound by ties of mutual respect, alliance, and trade, not by the threat of force and the expectation of submission.

This time, however, the king and his ministers could see no way to make concessions; to give any ground at all, they believed, would amount to renouncing sovereignty over the colonies. Through the previous episodes of crisis, the leaders of the resistance had mobilized ordinary colonists by publishing pamphlets and newspaper articles on the ideological issues at stake. Now it was not just lawyers and merchants and gentlemen but large numbers of artisans, farmers, shopkeepers, and laborers who had come to believe that to submit unconditionally to Parliament's sovereign power would be to exchange their liberties for enslavement. Because neither side would give ground once blood had been spilled, the result was not a mere rebellion but a full-blown British civil war.

No one in 1775 knew that revolutionary consequences would follow from the outbreak of war, any more than an observer in 1754 could have guessed that a skirmish in the woods of western Pennsylvania would precipitate a war fought around the world—much less the victory, reforms, and resistance that followed. Washington clearly did not anticipate a glorious

end when, for the second time in his life, he accepted a military command for which he had not been trained and for which he was in no real sense qualified. To lead provincial troops and militiamen against the military might of the British empire was a task so daunting that his openly expressed belief that he was not equal to the command must be understood not as modesty but a plain statement of fact. It is therefore a measure of the man that George Washington accepted the challenge. His honor was at stake; and if the power he called Providence had preserved his life through campaigns and battles that had left hundreds dead and wounded in order to prepare him for some destiny still hidden from his view, he could not well decline.