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Loyalism in British North America in the Age of Revolution, c. 1775-1812

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When considering the role of Loyalism in British North America during what is sometimes termed the` age of revolution' it is crucial at the outset to clarify precisely what the central political currents and directions actually were in the wider late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Atlantic world. This task is all the more pressing because of the long shadow that R.R. Palmer's notion of `democratic revolution' has cast over the historiography.[1] While this concept has certainly proven influential over the years, it is now becoming increasingly clear that the label is, especially in its purest form, rather limited, misleading, and simplistic. The basic problem is that it posits a inevitable progression from European empires to nation states following the emergence of supposed democratic forces—nationhood invariably being seen as the appropriate, indeed the only, vehicle through which democracy could attain full realisation. Recently, however, scholars like Jeremy Adelman and Jaime Rodriguez O., writing from the perspective of the Iberian Atlantic, have challenged this underlying premise. They have attempted to liberate the fraught passage from empires to successor states from the straitjacket of these blatantly one-dimensional teleologies of decline and triumph. Instead, Adelman and Rodriquez have suggested that, because their systems were more adaptable and less sclerotic than previously thought, there was little that was inevitable about the demise of early modern empires. Moreover, the upheavals that took place beginning in the late eighteenth century were actually themselves essentially imperial in character in that they had their origins in an Atlantic-wide drive to put the `extended polities' of these empires on a firmer footing in order to confront external pressures and challenges more effectively.[2] Hence, according to Adelman and Rodriguez, it is a mistake to see these Atlantic revolutions as purely secessionist episodes; they were more far complex and less straightforward than that designation implies. Instead new nations emerged almost as accidental by-products of the internal tensions wrought by these wider efforts to revamp the institutional underpinnings of imperial sovereignty and, as a

result, the states that developed were shaped profoundly by the enduring legacies of empire and colonialism.[3]

These authors' important revisionist arguments clearly signal a rather different approach to the transition from Atlantic empires to nation-states from that suggested by Palmer's concept of the `age of democratic revolution'. They raise the interesting prospect of non-linear historical sequences and the possibility of reversals and backslidings. If the nation state is no longer regarded as the automatic successor to empire, then clearly a sense of contingency needs to be restored to the late eighteenth-century narrative. Indeed, for many regions of the Atlantic world, what actually emerged out of the upheavals of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was not the antithesis to empire, but the revitalisation and reconfiguration of the notion of empire itself –a process that is readily apparent in the cases of polities like Mexico, Brazil, Canada, and indeed most of the Caribbean. In the minds of many contemporaries at least, the era's embryonic nations did not automatically define themselves explicitly in opposition to empire. Even the newly-independent United States, for example, retained strong imperial aspirations at least within the confines of its own continent and towards the other peoples who occupied it.[4] Instead, the wider imperial politics of revolution pivoted around their `chain of disequilibria' and this feature outweighed any incipient nationalist drive to bring empire itself to an end.[5] In the age of `imperial revolutions', as Adelman suggestively labels it, events and their meanings were not readily shoehorned into a notion of historical time that yielded to the predictable emergence, if not triumph, of nations.

Historians studying the events surrounding American independence and the creation of the United States cannot afford to ignore this fresh perspective. Instead, actively engaging with the notion of `imperial revolutions' should be an important imperative for them, not least because it brings with it certain obvious advantages and valuable insights. First of all, it encourages, and indeed almost necessitates, a wider international and comparative dimension to our investigation of the American Revolution—one that determinedly attempts to locate this key event in the context of

subsequent upheavals in Latin America and the Caribbean. Second, it should prompt scholars to raise serious, probing questions about the linearity of our conventional narratives that centre around the almost ineluctable progression from imperial reform to colonial resistance to independence and finally to nationhood. Third, it draws attention to the persistence and indeed reinvigoration of the wider British Empire that followed the departure of the thirteen mainland colonies in a way that chimes with recent work by the likes of P.J. Marshall, Maya Jasanoff, Simon Schama, and Cassandra Pybus.[6]

However, especially from the perspective of this essay, the most important implication of taking the concept of `imperial revolution' seriously lies in the way that it encourages a fundamental rethinking of the role of Loyalism in the transition from empire to nation state. If one adopts Adelman's framework, North American Loyalism, like its counterparts elsewhere in the hemisphere, no longer appears simply in the crude guise of a backwards-looking, reactionary aberration destined to be swept aside by a rising nationalist, proto-democratic tide. Instead, viewed through this lens, the movement's underlying durability, adaptability, and complexity come to the fore. In particular, certain distinctive features or characteristics that are otherwise often obscured come firmly into focus. First, as Brendan McConville and others maintain, it becomes clear that Loyalism, and not republicanism, was, in effect, the default position of most American colonists almost right up to the very moment of independence. While this stance drew heavily upon the values of Protestantism, anti-Catholicism, commerce, and empire, at its core lay the public professions of loyalty to the monarch which formed a central aspect of public life throughout the British Atlantic world. This was apparent, for example, in the ritual calendar of royal birthdays and celebrations that the colonists enthusiastically adhered to.[7] As a result, Loyalism became a normative, expansive, and almost unthinking stance amongst the vast majority of the settler population. Second, during the early phases of the revolutionary crisis it represented the clearest expression of the American colonists' efforts to grapple with alternative models of sovereignty within the context of empire bearing in mind that at this point they were seeking to defend their rights within this framework rather than

secede from it. Loyalists' fidelity to the established regime also suggests that the decision over exiting the British Empire was less of a foreordained response to imperial change than one might surmise from the enduring appeal of classic, epic-triumphal Whiggish narratives.[8] Third, an important shift then occurred with the revolutionary crisis of 1774-76. At this point the diffuse, broadly based Loyalism of the mid-eighteenth century became fractured and reconfigured. It now became defined against Protestant revolutionary `others' and in opposition to the twin evils of independence and republicanism. Although a minority position in many regions, Loyalism still retained a potentially broad constituency that now encompassed some free blacks, slaves, and Native Americans as well as a segment of the white settler population.[9]

This persistence of Loyalist sentiment and support, in turn, had a profound effect on the nature of the American Revolution. Like the upheavals taking place elsewhere in the hemisphere, it assumed some of the characteristics of a civil war. While historians often acknowledge this fact, they routinely fail to grasp its full implications. However, as contemporaries on both sides of the Atlantic were well aware, the conflict didn't just divide Britons and Americans. It also pitted colonist against colonist in an often bitter and protracted struggle.[10] Intense violence and intimidation were inflicted on opponents by people who were often neighbours and even former friends. Nor was this simply a one-sided affair as both Patriots and Loyalists participated in serious and often brutal attacks upon each other's property and person. Some of these encounters were explicitly military in nature as the two parties clashed on the battlefield. But such armed engagements were significantly fewer and arguably less significant than the day-to-day, almost routine attritional clashes between Loyalist and Patriot civilians that took place in several localities from New England to the Lower South.

Among other sources the Loyalist narratives gathered by the Claims Commission provide ample evidence of this grim reality. For example, Peter Frye, an American-born Justice of the Peace in Salem, Massachusetts, was only privately threatened in the early years of the conflict whilst British troops were present in the region. However, once they were withdrawn the revolutionaries

became more open in their harassment of the local magistrate. In October 1774 Frye woke one night to find his house burning down around him. He managed to escape `with great difficulty but not without being much hurt.' In the wake of this incident Frye then moved to Ipswich `in hopes of being quiet there.' However, his hopes of peace and security were dashed for, as he put it, he `was obliged to confine himself a good deal in his own House.' Eventually after the local minister had urged his parishioners to assassinate Frye and his fellow Loyalists, the embattled former official fled en route for England.[11] Further south George Walker of Charleston, South Carolina, was another target for the revolutionaries. Whilst on board a brig in the harbour, `a very treasonable Toast was proposed to him which he resolutely refused & went on Shore.' That wasn't the end of it for the unfortunate Walker, however. Later the same day he was seized by a crowd that he estimated at over five hundred people. They proceeded to stage a mock trial charging that he was a `Tory & Enemy to that Country'. Walker was then sentenced to be `stripp'd naked tarred feather'd carted thro' the Town & pelted with Stones for 5 hours together.' The crowd then `pumped upon him for an Hour & [he was] thrown into the River off the Wharf.' Walker himself received `many violent wounds' and had two ribs broken during the course of this attack. Meanwhile one of the men who tried to protect him `was so near kill'd that he has heard that the Man never recover'd.'[12]

Others, however, weren't as resolute as either Frye or Walker and were successfully compelled to renounce (albeit temporarily) their allegiance to the Crown. John Chandler, a merchant and official in Worcester, Massachusetts, was brave enough to be the first person in the town to sign an open protest against `the popular proceedings' and consistently expressed his opposition in town meetings doing `everything in his power for the Kings Govt.' In response, however, a crowd seized Chandler and several other prominent Loyalists and, while they `carried [them] about the Streets,' they forced him at various points `to declare himself attached to their cause.'[13] Fearing his life was in peril, he complied. Similarly John Watson of Rhode Island when in late 1774 a crowd `forced him out of his House & threaten'd to pull him to pieces if he did not damn the King & Lord North' eventually acceded. However, that wasn't the end of his travails. In July 1776, when Watson refused the test

oath three times, `...a Cart was brought to the Door to tar and feather him. Faced with this level of intimidation, he perhaps wisely `sign'd an Engagement not to take any part against the Americans nor give any Intelligence to the King's Troops or any Enemies of the State'. Eventually he left Rhode Island when the British evacuated the colony.[14]

`The conflict didn't just fracture communities. Like other civil wars, it reached down to the level of individual families. For example, Archibald McKay of North Carolina eventually sided with the British joining Lord Cornwallis at Cross Creek, while his brother `took part with the rebels.'[15] More dramatically, in the case of Hugh Ferguson, a native of Scotland who migrated to Pennsylvania in the late 1760s and subsequently became a Loyalist, the war destroyed his marriage to his American-born wife. One witness confirmed that, whilst Ferguson was `uniformly loyal', his spouse was, on the contrary, `a violent Rebel.' Their political views ultimately proved so incompatible that he conjectured that it was doubtful whether `they could now ever live together.'[16] Such destructive and explosive political divisions were not confined to the white settler community either. African-American families on occasions also experienced similar tensions. While Benjamin Whitcuff's father, a free black, joined the revolutionaries and became a regimental sergeant, Benjamin himself joined the British troops at Staten Island in 1776 or 1777 and was employed by Sir Henry Clinton as a spy. In that capacity, he was later taken prisoner by American forces and hanged only to be cut down and rescued by a British raiding party.[17]

What emerges strongly from these graphic eyewitness accounts (in a way that echoes developments elsewhere in the Americas) is the insight they provide into how the disequilibrium and disorder within the British Empire generated by these high levels of internal conflict toppled the established regime and ushered in independence long before any legitimate or convincing successor authority could fill the resulting void. As was the case with other Atlantic revolutions, there was not really a genuine deep-seated exit option waiting to come to fruition in Britain's North American colonies in the 1760s and early 1770s--certainly not one associated with a completely different

model of sovereignty which seamlessly came into effect once the oppressions of empire grew too onerous or the opportunities to secede became too tempting for the revolutionaries to ignore. Instead, the reverse was almost the case. The transition from loyalty to opposition and eventually to exit in itself inaugurated a quest for new models of sovereignty that in the North American case was arguably not finally fulfilled until the writing and ratification of the new U.S. Constitution in 1787-8. However, as Adelman is at pains to stress, none of this unfolded as a natural sequence with one stage flowing naturally into the next. Rather it was a disjointed, uncertain, and fraught process.[18]

Two major consequences for our understanding of American Loyalism flow from the messy, fractured nature of this civil war. First, the nature of the conflict guaranteed that, despite the high levels of harassment and intimidation they suffered during the early phases of the struggle, there always remained a significant and enduring former Loyalist presence in the new nation, especially in those areas where they had been strongest during the revolutionary crisis such as the mid-Atlantic region and the Lower South. The very existence of this potentially disaffected population, in turn, exerted a strong influence over the debates that arose in the embryonic United States over the nature of allegiance and nationhood. Indeed it helped to guarantee that the notion of `volitional allegiance'—the idea that an individual could voluntarily choose their national identity-- became central to understanding citizenship in the early republic.[19] This underscores a gaping hole in the historiography of the American Revolution that is only now being gradually filled. Conventionally the emphasis in the literature tends to be firmly on Loyalist exiles i.e. those who left the United States during or after the war. That, however, certainly doesn't reflect the weight of numbers. For every Loyalist who departed the colonies, at least seven sought to return to their homes and restart their lives, and the number is more likely closer to ten or eleven. According to Maya Jasanoff's recent re-evaluation about 60,000 Loyalists emigrated in the 1770s and 1780s, but by most estimates there were between 500, 000 and 750,000 Loyalists at the time of the revolution. U.S. Census Bureau records suggest that the population of the United States in 1780 was about 2.8 million, and the general view among scholars is that in 1775 2.5 million people resided in the colonies. Using the

1775 figure as a baseline, if thirty per cent of Americans were Loyalists, there should have been a total of around 750,000 individuals. Even if the more conservative estimate of twenty per cent is employed, the total number of Loyalists would amount to 500,000.[20]

By any count, then, the vast majority of Loyalists actually remained in the United States after the war. Because of their often-difficult circumstances and possibly their perceived need to bury or at least disguise their past, they tended to refrain from publishing narratives of their experiences of the conflict in the years that followed and choose not to advertise their feelings about the struggle and its effect on their families. Hence it is very difficult for scholars to evaluate their responses and reactions to the new republican world they found themselves inhabiting. That said, glimpses of their distinctive perspective are revealed in literary works like the fiction of James Fenimore Cooper, who married the Loyalist Susan Delancy, and in the writings of Charles Brockden Brown, whose Loyalist father was banished from Pennsylvania when the author was a child. There is also the evidence available in the form of the personal trajectories of figures like Tench Coxe who eventually became one of Alexander Hamilton's most important confidants and advisors. However, what this disguises is the fact that Coxe was initially a Loyalist during the American Revolution. He left the Pennsylvania militia in 1776 and joined the British army under General Howe in 1777. Only after being subsequently arrested and paroled, did Coxe eventually came to play a key role in the new United States. Another case in point was William Samuel Johnson of Connecticut. He was initially unable to support independence and was even jailed briefly in 1779 when patriot officials took umbrage at his attempt to mediate with a British raiding party. However, later he became an influential delegate at the Philadelphia Convention of 1787 where he helped broker some of the compromises that underpinned the U.S. Constitution. One suspects that, with the longstanding emphasis on the Revolution as a narrative of triumphant nationalism, scholars have not looked terribly hard to uncover the stories of Loyalists who stayed like Coxe and Johnson. However, their careers demonstrate how important it is to recover their experiences, their voices, and perhaps most importantly their role in the creation of the new American state.[21]

The challenge for the revolutionary authorities was how best to reintegrate this potentially troublesome Loyalist population into the new nation and what is striking is the degree to which this task was successfully accomplished. As Robert Calhoon has argued, however, as the means varied, the process went through several distinct phases including the initial use of the local committee structure in 1774-1775, the work of what he terms the moral arbiters of republicanism in 1776-1777, the legal and political evolution of the notion of volitional allegiance during 1778-1779, the increasing military triangularity of the conflict in 1780-1781, and the final dispute over the treatment of the Loyalists in 1782-1785 which, Calhoon suggests, had distinct cosmopolitan-localist overtones. These successive bouts of activity acted to reinforce and protect an initially fragile republican polity constructed not just out of violence and partisanship but also from grassroots politics, moralistic revolutionary norms, and philosophical and legal traditions.[22] It also helped that there was an underlying shift during the revolutionary era from exclusivity to inclusivity i.e. from a republican ideological belief in the necessity of virtue to a growing awareness, tolerance, and respect for individual rights. The latter attitude naturally proved more hospitable to former Loyalists than the former.

It was also important that, after the early years when war fever induced citizens to define and isolate each side's partisans and punish them, the conflict eventually wore most people out. They could not sustain genuine political fervour when the logistics of their everyday lives presented them with such overwhelming difficulties. This is not to say that the war made the civilian population indifferent to the conflict's outcome, as much as it encouraged people to distinguish between the private and public demands of the war. In their effort to achieve as much security and stability as possible in time of conflict, civilians resorted to the conventional networks that had worked so well in the past. Politically fractured communities, particularly after 1776, often put family concerns over the demands of congresses, committees, and generals. They leaned on family members and old friends of long standing, it mattering little that armies now divided them. The most dramatic manifestation of this phenomenon was the movement that took place between the rival military

lines. In a more private, discreet fashion, families also continued to correspond via letter. They also engaged in riskier, more public displays of support by aiding incarcerated relatives under the gaze of the authorities or by crossing lines to assist kin, often circumventing their line of vision altogether.[23]

Another dimension to the problem of Loyalist reintegration consisted of those exiles or their relations who then chose to return after the war. The border with British North America was particularly porous and settlers freely moved backwards and forwards across it depending on how they viewed their economic and social prospects under rival monarchical and republican governments. The incentives that the imperial authorities offered in terms of cheap land, low taxes, and religious toleration were not always sufficiently alluring to keep Loyalist settlers in places like Upper Canada especially as U.S. western expansion began to accelerate. [24] As well as this continental aspect, however, post-war migration also had a strong Atlantic dimension as Loyalists or members of their families attempted to make their way back to the United States from Britain and other parts of the empire. A case in point is the Scottish-born Virginian Loyalist, James Parker's son Patrick. After initially contemplating serving as an army cadet in India and then working as a clerk in a Glasgow counting house, his burning ambition became to return to Virginia. Disobeying his father, he travelled to the Chesapeake in 1785, where he set up as a dry goods merchant. Although most of Parker senior's business associates had either returned to Scotland or fled to the Caribbean and Canada, some native Virginian acquaintances did remain in the vicinity. These maternal family ties were strong enough to secure the prospect of trade, but they ultimately proved insufficient to underpin Patrick's fragile business. By 1794 his commercial ventures had run into trouble and he died bankrupt in 1795 en route for England. Interestingly Patrick's career represented a major blow to the exiled James Parker's ambitions for his family, which he anticipated being fulfilled exclusively within the British Empire. A hardened Loyalist with a deep detestation of the Americans and a bitter resentment of their independence, James certainly had no desire to see his elder son become a citizen of the republic. He was simply angry that Patrick had ignored his advice and, in effect, rebelled. There was a rather crude equation in his mind between the American colonists' and his

own son's disobedience. `If heaven had granted my warmest wish it was that my sons might be independent[,] have fortitude, industry, stubborn integrity,' he declared, `but you have abandoned me[,] become an Alien & made choice of a society whose principles every honest man abhors.'[25] Hence in some cases the decision to return to the United States could divide Loyalist families and reawaken bleak memories of the American Revolution.

However, despite the undoubted importance and numerical weight of those Loyalists who remained in the new United States or who voluntarily chose to return, it remains the case that a civil war of the nature and magnitude of the American Revolution inevitably generated thousands of migrants and exiles among the `losers'. This generally took place in the form of chain migrations as individuals and families threatened by rebel assaults left their households to resettle under the protection offered by British military forces. Thus, for example, many loyal residents of Falmouth (modern-day Portland, Maine) left the town after its bombardment by the British and plundering by rebel militia in October 1775. A handful went to Britain, others to Halifax, Nova Scotia, and those who went to Boston, thinking it a safe haven, would depart once more by March 1776—strikingly all well before the Declaration of Independence that supposedly initiated the Revolution. Similar local, regional, and Atlantic refugee trajectories occurred repeatedly throughout the rebellious colonies.[26] George Barry, for example, had moved to the Georgia Sea Islands in 1771having been brought up in Barbados. As the crisis unfolded, he publically maintained his loyalty and refused to take any revolutionary oaths. For this reason and because he had supplied the British with provisions, Barry's house and stores were burnt down in March 1776. This proved a decisive turning point. Shortly afterwards he fled to St. Augustine taking his slaves with him. After staying there for two years he then moved on to the Bahamas before migrating to England.[27]

Lewis Johnston was another active Georgia Loyalist who `never took the Oaths or made any Sacrifice of his principles to induce them [the revolutionaries] to permit him to remain quiet.' Like many Southern supporters of the Crown, he went to settle in St. Augustine as well. Having bought

some property, Johnston had fully intended to remain in East Florida `if the Peace had not obliged him to quit...because he must have taken the Oaths to the King of Spain & changed his religion.' In his case the hazards of migration and exile were fully apparent.[28] Thomas Stringer also left from Savannah. However, his trajectory was different. He initially headed north to Halifax, then to the Caribbean, before quitting the Americas altogether for the metropolis.[29] Arguably Josiah Tatnell was even more mobile. A native of Charlestown, he had settled in Georgia at the beginning of the revolutionary crisis when he was imprisoned by the revolutionaries before being released on parole. Having refused to take both the Association and the oaths, Tatnell was eventually ordered to leave the state in December 1777. He first went to the Bahamas from where he embarked for England in June 1778. However, the ship Tatnell was on was captured by the French fleet. He was returned to Philadelphia where he then spent seven weeks before moving to New York en route to England once again. This time Tatnell arrived safely in the metropolis where he stayed eleven months. He then moved back to Georgia in November 1779. Tatnall remained there until the British evacuation when he then fled to the Bahamas where he served as Surveyor General. As a result, following his multiple migrations he eventually had an opportunity to restore his battered fortune.[30]

These individual narratives together with thousands of stories like them characterised the Loyalist diaspora. Its overall scale and significance was first highlighted by R.R. Palmer who famously observed that, whereas the French Revolution only displaced five subjects of that country for every thousand residents, the ratio for North America was a staggering twenty-four per thousand.[31] While this general statistic is often repeated and while there are many case studies of Loyalist settlement in various post-war locales, the Loyalist out-migration in its global context has only recently received systematic attention with the publication of Maya Jasanoff's *Liberty's Exiles*. Her careful assessment of the imperial diaspora of Loyalists up until 1785 has substantially reduced previous estimates of the out-migration from the thirteen colonies from a high of as many as one hundred thousand to just over sixty thousand. While this lower figure is perhaps overly conservative, especially given the fact that mobility continued after her chosen cut-off date, her work does nevertheless successfully

demonstrate both the diaspora's reach and its uneven geographic impact on the British Empire. Of the sixty-two thousand Loyalists Jasanoff documents, some thirty-eight thousand went to colonies in British North America like Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, and Upper Canada, with the other principal destinations lagging considerably behind: thirteen thousand departed for Britain itself (among them five thousand free blacks), five thousand fled to Florida (most of whom moved again to the British Caribbean after the evacuation of 1785), three thousand migrated to Jamaica, and two thousand five hundred left for the Bahamas.[32]

A mass migration on even this reduced scale inevitably had profound social and cultural implications. Jasanoff views Revolutionary War Loyalist refugees as a fascinating vanguard for some central features of the reconfigured nineteenth-century British Empire that they assisted in founding. In particular she suggests that their treatment reflected the tension between its growing liberalism and increasing hierarchy (alternatively its inclusive and exclusive impulses). Jasanoff sees these qualities as reflecting the two faces of the post-war `spirit of 1783'. On the one hand, Loyalist migrants illuminate a renewed commitment to liberty and humanitarian ideals. Although the American Revolution had conclusively demonstrated that British subjects abroad would not be treated exactly as British subjects were at home, particularly with regards to political representation, it also had the effect of deepening an imperial guarantee to include all subjects, no matter what their ethnicity or faith, under the umbrella of British rights. As a result, Loyalist refugees became conspicuous objects of quasi-paternalistic attention. Most notably Black Loyalists gained their freedom from authorities increasingly inclined toward abolition partly to highlight the contrast with the slaveowning United States. Meanwhile needy Loyalists of all kinds received land and supplies in an empire-wide program for refugee relief that anticipated the work of modern international aid organizations. Loyalists even received financial compensation for their losses through the Claims Commission established by the British government—a precursor to state welfare schemes.[33]

Yet liberal values had their limits, as Loyalists discovered at first hand. British officials after the revolution by and large concluded that the thirteen colonies had been granted too much liberty, not too little, and tightened the reins of administration accordingly. This enhanced taste for centralized, hierarchical government marked another side of the `spirit of 1783'—and one that Loyalist refugees consistently found themselves brought up against. Confronted with top-down rule, they repeatedly demanded more representation than the imperial authorities proved willing to grant them, a discrepancy that had of course animated the American Revolution in the first place. And for all that Loyalists profited from humanitarian initiatives, they also ran up against numerous seeming contradictions in British policy. After all this was an empire that gave freedom to a few thousand Black Loyalists, but facilitated the export of many more loyalist-owned slaves. It gave land to Mohawk Native American allies in the north, but largely abandoned the Creeks and other allies in the south. It promised to compensate Loyalists for their losses but in practice often fell short. Because of this conjunction of liberal principles with hierarchical rule the refugee Loyalist experience across the diaspora would be marked by a jarring mismatch between promises and expectations, between what subjects wanted and what rulers provided. Such discontents proved a lasting feature of the post-revolutionary British Empire—and a line of continuity from the `first' into the `second' empire.[34]

To complicate the situation further the Loyalist migrants themselves presented two faces to imperial officialdom as they carried values that were both `British' and `American' with them into exile. On the one hand, Loyalists—black as well as white—defined themselves, in the last resort, as British subjects or (in the case of Native Americans) as allies. Because of its perceived protective role, this was manifested principally through a steadfast, although sometimes strategic, commitment to the monarchy. For a variety of political, ideological, and cultural reasons, they became the `King's friends.' Yet Loyalists were also often rightly seen in the guise of `His Majesty's *Americans*'. This designation is at least partially apt because, although most rejected the republican connotations that became irrevocably associated with that identity, they nevertheless did remain `American' in terms

of their culture and inheritance. This dual identification meant that Loyalist refugees carried a mixed legacy with them, infusing their new British settlements with political, religious, social, and cultural values derived from their former American colonial homes. Indeed, as Liam Riordan has pointed out, the term `American' in this context might be too loaded with preconceptions and unwieldy connotations to be of any significant analytical value. It is perhaps more profitable and historically accurate to think about this pre-war inheritance as a colonial one, generally, and a British colonial one, more particularly. Regardless, however, it was a process that was almost bound to provoke misunderstandings with fellow Britons, rival settlers, and most explicitly with the British authorities.[35]

The resulting, and arguably inevitable, clashes were also complicated both by the organization of the Loyalist migration and the nature of the communities that the exiles established. In some areas, such as New Brunswick, Upper Canada, and the Bahamas, Loyalists arguably became the dominant element within settler society. In others, notably Nova Scotia, Grenada, Jamaica, and Sierra Leone, they constituted enclaves amid a pre-existing colonial or indigenous population. Meanwhile in yet another pattern, Loyalists arriving in provincial Britain dispersed and were eventually largely absorbed into the wider metropolitan society. This resulting variety in local experience naturally had profound implications for how the refugees perceived themselves and acted. In corners of the British world where they were clearly in the majority, for example, they were perhaps more prone to division and rivalry than where they remained an embattled defensive minority.

The kinds of bitter disputes that could arise are clearly evident in the cases of the Bahamas, New Brunswick, and Sierra Leone. The Bahamas were one destination particularly favoured by southern planters migrating with their slaves and determined to renew their commitment to plantation agriculture. Not surprisingly, then, refugee `Gentleman Loyalists' started harassing the royal governor, John Maxwell, with demands for better land allocation, more provisions, and a

greater political voice almost immediately after arriving from East Florida. Ironically emulating revolutionary precedents they proceeded to form a committee `to preserve and maintain those Rights and liberties, for which they left their homes and their Possessions.' The Loyalists also circulated satirical handbills, engaged in crowd action in the streets of the capital Nassau, and objected vehemently when challenged in court. Their efforts met with some success. Driven to distraction by these `most tormenting, dissatisfied People on Earth,' Maxwell was recalled to London in the spring of 1785.[36] However, he left his successor, James Powell, with a major headache. In late 1784 Maxwell had dissolved the colonial assembly and called an election for a reconstituted house. When it met, however, Governor Powell was confronted by a series of petitions from Loyalists claiming that their legitimate election had been overridden. Once again they took their protest out on to the streets and also convened an emergency meeting in Nassau that gave expression to `the intolerable grievances under which they and their constituents groan.' They concluded by calling on Powell to dissolve the new assembly. The governor, himself a Loyalist, regarded the protestors as being `seditiously mad' as the revolutionary American colonists had been. His views were shared by Lord Sydney who maintained: `It is not a little extraordinary that Men who profess to have suffered for their Loyalty to the Crown, and adherence to the British Constitution , should so forget themselves , and the Duty they owe to His Majesty, as to be guilty of the most daring attempts against His Royal authority, and that Constitution.' Only under a third administrator, the former governor of Virginia and staunch Loyalist protector Lord Dunmore, did the spirit of party in the islands begin to subside, and the Loyalists gain seats in the assembly. By the early 1790s they had used their influence there to introduce racial laws on a par with those in the old southern American colonies; and in 1807 Bahamian Loyalists vehemently opposed the ending of the British slave trade.[37]

Serious clashes between Loyalist settlers and government also took place in New Brunswick, a new province that was created out of Nova Scotia in 1784.[38] If the American Revolution did inspire an authoritarian turn among imperial administrators, it was personified by New Brunswick's first governor, Thomas Carleton, who believed `that the American spirit of innovation should not be

nursed among the Loyal Refugees.' Authorized by Whitehall to rule without an elected assembly for as long as necessary, the governor and his aristocratic council set about fashioning what was tantamount to a neo-feudal oligarchy in the colony. However, in October 1785 Carleton decided to issue the writs for New Brunswick's first election. Strikingly, because many colonists were recent arrivals and many land claims had not yet been settled, he took the unusual step of extending the franchise to all white males regardless of the property they possessed. The governor may have hoped that this extremely unusual measure would dampen the social tensions that had been building in the colony. If so, he was to be disappointed for, once underway, the election unleashed resentments that had been mounting since the early weeks of settlement. This was particularly the case in the town of St. John where there was a sharp divide between the Upper Cove, home to the elite, and the Lower Cove occupied by shopkeepers, carpenters, labourers, and seamen. Under these circumstances it was not surprising that polling was accompanied by riots and brawls between the rival factions. Whereas the rowdy Loyalists from the Bahamas were primarily well-off slave owners from the American South, Carleton's opponents were chiefly, in his words, `motley' ex-soldiers, `habituated' to `disorderly conduct...during a long Civil war.' However, unfortunately for the governor, the opposition actually won the election. Rather than admit the successful candidates to the assembly, Carleton insisted on a recount that eventually resulted in a government victory. The new legislature promptly passed a bill suppressing mass petitions and, by extension, public dissent. Ultimately this was how Britain's newest colonial province dealt with a confrontation between political ideals that were at once emphatically American and familiarly British. This blend is evident in a well-supported Loyalist dissidents' petition that claimed vociferously: `We most positively affirm these Proceedings to be unjust, Injurious to the Freedom of Election, manifest Violations of the Rights of the People & Subversive of the first Privileges of the British Constitution.'[39]

Loyalists also struggled with British authority in another theatre, West Africa. The Black Loyalists who travelled from Nova Scotia to Sierra Leone in 1792 inevitably confronted grave challenges. Their provisions quickly ran short and accommodation proved inadequate. Compounding

these problems, fever swept through the newly-arrived settler population. By September only about one thousand out of the original party of twelve hundred survived. Political grievances paralleling those that had characterised their earlier sojourn in Nova Scotia then resurfaced. White domination was as pronounced in Sierra Leone as it had been in the Maritimes. They found themselves landed in a utopian mock-Saxon polity concocted by abolitionist Granville Sharp where they were supposedly represented by community-chosen `hundredors' and `tithingmen.' In practice, however, they were governed by the London-based Sierra Leone Company and its agents, which repeatedly failed to make good on its promises. From their first months on African soil, settlers plagued the colony's superintendent, John Clarkson, with demands to honour their `civil rights' and the promise that `all should be equal.' To a degree Clarkson was sympathetic , but his all-white council was not. Their opposition and jealousies helped erode the trust that the superintendant had earlier cultivated among the black migrants.[40] Extended delays about land allocation sparked a riot in 1794 that was suppressed by Governor Zachary Macaulay, who set up cannon outside his house and offered free passage back to Nova Scotia—on a former slave ship—for anybody who wished to go. (None did). Later in 1796 a further controversy arose over the introduction of quitrents—a step that broke earlier promises that they would be deferred for ten years. At this point Thomas Peters, who had earlier played a prominent role in organizing the black migration from Nova Scotia, became the disaffected settlers' leader. Complaining of racism and incompetence, he asserted that such practices infuriated those `who had just emerged from Slavery and who were therefore jealous of every action, nay of every look that came from White Men, who were put in authority over them.' A number of the Nova Scotians even urged Peters to seize power. Clarkson regained control of the situation by calling a meeting of the settlers and asking them to choose between himself and Peters. At this point the majority chose to remain loyal rather than join the rebels and the British company soon prevailed. A month later, a formal charter strengthened the imperial grip on the colony.[41] Interestingly among the rebel leaders subsequently banished was one Harry Washington, who had run away from George Washington's Mount Vernon twenty years earlier.[42]

The abolitionist William Wilberforce drew a parallel between the Black Loyalists in Sierra Leone and the Jacobins of revolutionary Paris, which perhaps reveals the extent to which the all-consuming contest with France had overtaken the American Revolution in British consciousness by 1800.[43] Nevertheless this African rebellion, echoing the earlier disturbances in New Brunswick and the Bahamas, reflected more an important and enduring colonial legacy among British subjects than it did any influence of the French Revolution. These Black Loyalists may have chosen to remain British and were essentially content as long as they were allowed the passive benefits of British subjects: cheap land and low taxes. But as these incidents showed, when thwarted they continued actively to demand or assert what they saw as the fundamental rights their status supposedly granted them.

American Loyalists did not just sometimes clash with the British authorities. There was also no necessary meeting of minds with representatives of other forms of Loyalism both in the metropolis and in the wider empire. In particular it was sometimes difficult to find common ground with the Irish and Canadian Loyalist traditions and with the emerging force of Orangeism.[44] Certainly knowledgeable British officials were aware of these tensions and invariably drew both parallels and distinctions between different varieties of Loyalism. For example, the Lord lieutenant of Ireland, Charles Cornwalllis, also of course the vanquished commander in the American conflict observed in 1798 that `the Irish (loyalist yeomanry are in the style of the loyalists of America, only more numerous and powerful, and a thousand times more ferocious.'[45]

Overall, then, it is very instructive to view North American Loyalism through the prism of Adelman's framework of imperial revolutions. Doing so reveals that it was no means a reactionary aberration. Instead Loyalism should be seen as a natural and indeed inevitable response to imperial reconfiguration and crisis as British colonists were forced to engage with fundamental questions of allegiance and sovereignty in the midst of revolutionary turmoil. It also rightly turns the spotlight on the deep political divisions that invariably opened up within North American communities--fissures

gave the Revolution a readily-discernible and notable civil war dimension in a way that parallels other contemporary struggles in the Caribbean and Latin America. Another similarity, of course, lies in the uncertainty surrounding the contest's outcome: Under these circumstances independence was by no means the only possible result. Neither side could presume that their cause was bound to triumph and a British victory with Loyalist support was a distinct possibility. Looking beyond the armed struggle, the concept of imperial revolutions continues to illuminate. It predicts the importance of the continuing, numerically-strong, former Loyalist presence in the new nation, the United States, and the problems that this population posed to the revolutionary authorities with regards to their treatment and their potential for reintegration into a fledgling American society. At the same time it also draws attention to the scale and significance of Loyalist migration and the role that this diaspora played in the revitalisation, reorientation, and settlement of the British Empire following defeat in the War of Independence. Finally, it points to some of the broader parallels and differences between the American Revolution and its imperial counterparts in Latin America and the Caribbean in a way that might prompt further fruitful comparative investigation.

[1] R.R. Palmer, *The Age of Democratic Revolution: A Political History of Europe and America, 1760-1800* 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959-1964).
[2] The suggestive term `extended polities' comes from Jack P. Greene. See his *Peripheries and Centre: Constitutional Development in the Extended Polities of the British Empire and the United States, 1607-1789* (Athens: Georgia U.P., 1986).
[3] Jeremy Adelman, `An Age of Imperial Revolutions,' *American Historical Review*, 113 (2008), pp. 318-40; and, Jaime E. Rodriquez O., `The Emancipation of America,' *American Historical Review*, 105 (2000), pp. 131-52. Also see Adelman's earlier book, *Sovereignty and Revolution in the Iberian Atlantic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).
[4] This argument receives its clearest expression in Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *This Violent Empire:The Birth of an American National Identity* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina University Press, 2010).
[5] The phrase `chain of disequilibra' comes from Adelman, `An Age of Imperial Revolutions,' p. 320.
[6] See P.J. Marshall, *Remaking the British Atlantic: The United States and the British Empire after American Independence* (Oxford: O.U.P., 2012); Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles: The Loss of America and the Remaking of the British Empire* (London: Harper*Press*, 2011); Simon Schama, *Rough Crossings: Britain, the Slaves, and the American Revolution* (London: BBC Books, 2005): and, Cassandra Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom: Runaway Slaves of the American Revolution and their Global Quest for Liberty* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006).
[7] Brendan McConville, *The King's Three Faces: The Rise and Fall of Royal America, 1688-1776* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina University Press, 2006).
[8] For the illuminating parallel with Spanish America, see Rodriquez O., ¬The Emancipation of America,' p. 142.
[9] This shift in the nature of American Loyalism is discussed in Keith Mason, `The American Loyalist Problem of Identity in the Revolutionary Atlantic World,' in Jerry Bannister and Liam Riordan (eds.), *The Loyal Atlantic: Remaking the British Atlantic in the Revolutionary Era* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2012), pp. 39-74.
[10] Edward Larkin, `What is a Loyalist? The American Revolution as Civil War,' *Common-Place*, 8, (2007), p.1. For some of the ramifications that flow from this notion of the American Revolution as civil war, see Dror Wahrman,, `The English Problem of Identity in the American Revolution,' *American Historical Review*, 106, (2001), pp. 1236-62; and, Mason, `The American Loyalist Problem of Identity in the Revolutionary Atlantic World,' pp. 39-74.
[11] Memorial of Peter Frye, October 8, 1784 in Daniel Parker Coke, *The Royal Commission on the Losses and Services of American Loyalists, 1783-1785...*(Oxford, 1915), p. 224.
[12] Memorial of George Walker, October 29, 1783 in *Ibid.*, p. 20.
[13] Memorial of John Chandler, March 31, 1785 in *Ibid.*, p. 335.
[14] Memorial of John Watson, February 14 1785 in *Ibid.*, p. 307.
[15] Memorial of Archibald McKay, April 28, 1785 in *Ibid.*, p. 355
[16] Memorial of Hugh Ferguson, February 2, 1785 in *Ibid.*, pp. 297-98.
[17] Memorial of Benjamin Whitcuff, June 8, 1784 in *Ibid.*, p. 132.
[18] Adelman, `An Age of Imperial Revolutions,' p. 336.
[19] James H. Kettner, *The Development of American Citizenship, 1608-1870* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina University Press, 1978), esp. ch. 7. For a slightly different perspective, however, see Douglas Bradburn, *The Citizenship Revolution: Politics and the Creation of the American Union, 1774-1804* (Charlottesville: Virginia University Press, 2009).
[20] Jasanoff's calculations are found in the appendix to her *Liberty's Exiles* entitled Measuring the Exodus, pp. 351-58. The twenty per cent figure comes from Paul H. Smith, `The American Loyalists: Notes on their Organizational and Numerical Strength,' *William and Mary Quarterly*, 25, (1968), pp. 259-77.
[21] Larkin, `What is a Loyalist?,' p. 1. Donald G. Darnell, `"Visions of Hereditary Rank": The Loyalist in the Fiction of Hawthorne, Cooper, and Frederic,' *South Atlantic* Bulletin, 42, (1977), pp. 45-54; and, Michael Kammen, *A Season of Youth: The American Revolution and the Historical* Imagination (New York, 1978), pp. 24-6, 52, 154-56. For the example of Tench Coxe, see Jacob E. Cooke, *Tench Cooke and the Early Republic* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina University Press, 1978), esp. chs. 2 and 3; for William Samuel Johnson, see Robert Calhoon, `The Reintegration of the Loyalists and the Disaffected,' in Jack P. Greene (ed.), *The American Revolution: Its Character and Limits* (New York: New York University Press, 1987), esp. pp.66-7.
[22] Calhoon, `The Reintegration of the Loyalists and the Disaffected,' pp. 51-74. Also, see Aaron N. Coleman, `Loyalists in War, Americans in Peace: The Reintegration of the Loyalists, 1775-1800,' (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Kentucky, 2008) and Davis Mass, `The Return of the Massachusetts Loyalists,' (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1972).

[23] On the ongoing importance of these contacts, see Judith L. Van Buskirk, *Generous Enemies: Patriots and Loyalists in Revolutionary New York* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania University Press, 2002), esp. ch. 2..
[24] Marshall, *Remaking the British Atlantic*, ch. 8; Alan Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels, & Indian Allies* (New York: Knopf, 2010), esp. chs. 1 & 2; Alan Taylor, `The Late Loyalists: Northern Reflections of the Early American Republic,' *Journal of the Early Republic*, 27, (2007), pp. 1-34.
[25] James Parker to Patrick Parker, Port Glasgow, Oct. 20, 1787, 920 Parker Papers, Liverpool Record Office (PAR), I 41
[26] For the Falmouth example and its implications, see Jerry Bannister and Liam Riordan, `Loyalism and the British Atlantic, 1660-1840,' in their *The Loyal Atlantic*, p. 19.
[27] Memorial of George Barry, September 22, 1784 in Coke, *The Royal Commission on the Losses and Services of American Loyalists*, p. 208.
[28] Memorial of Lewis Johnston, October 29, 1784 in *Ibid.*, p.246.
[29] Memorial of Thomas Stringer, November 11, 1784 in *Ibid.*, p. 258.
[30] Memorial of Josiah Tatnall, February 28, 1785 in *Ibid.*, p. 318.
[31] Palmer, *Age of the Democratic Revolution*, vol. 1, p. 188. Jasanoff explores the comparison between American and French revolutionary exiles in greater depth in her `Revolutionary Exiles: The American Loyalist and French Emigre Diasporas,' in David Armitage & Sanjay Subrahmanyam (eds.), *The Age of Revolution in Global Context, c.1760-1840* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
[32] These figures, their sources, and Jasanoff's interpretive decisions are insightfully discussed in an appendix to *Liberty's Exiles*, pp. 351-58 (see fn. 18).Also see Keith Mason, `The American Loyalist Diaspora and the Reconfiguration of the British Atlantic World,' in Eliga H. Gould and Peter S. Onuf (eds.), *Empire and nation; The American Revolution in the Atlantic World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), pp. 239-59.
[33] Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles*, esp. introduction and conclusion.
[34] *Ibid.*, pp. 12-3.
[35] Mason, `The American Loyalist Problem of Identity,' p.41: Maya Jasanoff, ``The Other Side of Revolution: Loyalists in the British Empire,' *William and Mary Quarterly*, 65 (2008), pp.205-33, esp pp. 222-24; Liam Riordan, `Loyalism and Comparative British Colonization: Revisiting the Case of Mary Brant (Unpublished paper, 2012), p. 6.
[36] Jasanoff, `The Other Side of Revolution,' pp. 224-25.
[37] Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles*, 222-27. The quote from Sydney is on p. 226.
[38] For events in New Brunswick, see Ann Gorman Condon, *The Envy of the American States: The Loyalist Dream for New Brunswick* (Fredericton, NB: New Ireland Press, 1984); and David G. Bell, *Early Loyalist Saint John: The Origins of New Brunswick Politics, 1783-1786* (Fredericton, NB: New Ireland Press, 1983), pp. 104-15.
[39] Quoted in Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles*, p. 187.
[40] Gary B. Nash, `Thomas Peters: Millwright and Deliverer,' in David G. Sweet and Gary B. Nash (eds.), *Struggle and Survival in Colonial America* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1981), pp. 79-83.
[41] James W. St. G. Walker, *The Black Loyalists: The Search for a Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone, 1783-1870* (London, 1976), pp. 145-47.
[42] For Harry Washington's career, see Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom*, esp. pp. xiii-xvi.
[43] Quoted in Jasanoff, `The Other Side of Revolution,' p. 226.
[44] For an interesting study that looks at Orangeism from an Atlantic perspective, see Jessica Harland-Jacobs, `Maintaining the Connection: Orangeism in the British North Atlantic World, 1795-1844,' *Atlantic Studies*, 5, (2008), pp. 27-49.
[45] Quoted in Eugene A. Coyle and John J. Duffy, `Loyalty and its Rewards in Eighteenth-Century New England and County Down: The Cousins Cane Brush,' *Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, 16, (2001), p. 119. On Cornwallis, see Dermot Dix, `"A Settled Question? Charles, Lord Cornwallis, the Loss of America, and the Mind of Empire,' in Fiona Bateman & Lionel Pikington (eds.), *Studies in Settler Colonialism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 63-74.