

ЭКОНОМИКА И ПОЛИТИКА

DOI: 10.31857/S086919080030063-7

SECRET OR PUBLIC: SPAIN'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE AMERICAN
REVOLUTIONARY WAR, 1776-1783

© 2024

NAM Le Thanh ^a, SANG Nguyen Van ^b^a – University of Education, Hue University, Hue, Vietnam

ORCID: 0000-0005-7923-5703; lethanhnam@hueuni.edu.vn

^b – University of Danang - University of Science and Education, Danang, Vietnam

ORCID: 0000-0003-3486-757X; nvsang@ued.udn.vn

Abstract: *The article analyzes Spain's involvement in the war between Britain and its colonies in North America. The methods such as historiography and international relations are used by the author in the research process. Based on original sources and monographs, the article aims to study on Spain's involvement in the American Revolution. Factors, such as hostility towards Britain, the leading role of France, diplomatic mobilization of the young American nation, support activities including financial aid, military resources, coordination of operations on battlefields. The research findings indicate that Spain's participation in the North American war was not driven by a benevolent attitude towards the North American colonists but rather by the pursuit of national interests, especially in relation to Britain in the international context. Moreover, the shifting balance of power in international relations transformed Spain's involvement from secret to public.*

Keywords: Spain, England, France, North America, Carlos III, war, American revolution, secret, public.

For citation: Nam L.T, Sang, N.V. Secret or Public: Spain's Involvement in the American Revolutionary War, 1776-1783. *Vostok (Oriens)*. 2024. No. 3. Pp. 78–96. DOI: 10.31857/S086919080030063-7

INTRODUCTION

The War of Independence of the British colonists in North America was an internal event of the British empire but attracted the attention of many politicians and people of Europe. As a country with interests closely tied to North America, Spain is no exception. For politicians in the Madrid court, the rift and turmoil in the British empire was an opportunity for them to recover what was lost to Britain after the Wars of the Spanish Succession (1701-1713) [Gottschalk, 1951, p. 412-413] and the Seven Years' War (1756-1763) [Corbett P. C. et al., 2017, p. 117]. With that purpose in mind, Spain took steps to secretly help the North American inhabitants in its war against Britain, and then proceeded to openly declare war against this very opponent. Spain's involvement in the North American War helped the Madrid monarchy recover previously lost territories, except for Gibraltar, strengthen its national position in international relations. What was beyond Spain's expectations when intervening within the British empire was the birth of a new country in the Western Hemisphere – the United States. This situation had the opposite effect for the Spanish-controlled American territories in the subsequent years.

REASONS FOR SPAIN'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE NORTH AMERICAN WAR

In the 18th century, the European continent witnessed intense rivalry and competition among ambitious great powers. Among them, there emerged a competition between Britain, aspiring to dominate the continents and oceans, and its rival France, allied with Spain, seeking to exert power in the Old Continent. To determine who would be the true dominant force, the parties engaged in a series of wars. It began with the War of the Spanish Succession in 1701. In this war, leveraging its naval strength, Britain occupied strategic positions of Spain in the Mediterranean, such as Gibraltar, Menorca (1708), etc. On July 31, 1713, the war concluded with the signing of the Utrecht Treaty, in which Spain legally recognized Britain's ownership over the aforementioned locations.

Hoping to regain what was lost in the recent war, and at the same time wanting to restore its national position in the international arena, the Madrid monarchy continued to follow France against Britain in the Seven Years' War (1756-1763). The outcome was no different from last time. The gunfire ceased and Gibraltar and Menorca remained in British hands. The Treaty of Paris signed on February 10, 1763 specified the losses suffered by the country located on the Iberian Peninsula and the compensation Spain had to provide to Britain. Accordingly, Spain ceded to Britain the territory of Floridas, in exchange for the withdrawal of the British from Cuba and the Philippines. Spain also recognized British timber rights in the Bay of Honduras (in Central America) and other Spanish-owned locations in this area. To compensate for the loss of Florida, Spain received the Louisiana territory from its neighboring ally, France.

Haunted by the enormous losses of conflicts with Britain, and at the same time suffering from the injustices of diplomatic behavior created by opponents in the contemporary system of international relations, the feudal court of Madrid was always on the hunt for opportunities for revenge. They wanted to retaliate for what they perceived as humiliations in the Treaty of Paris in 1763 [Hargreaves-Mawdsley, 1979, p. 128]. After 1763, Spain's diplomatic efforts were primarily focused on finding ways to weaken Britain and recover what had been lost more than half a century earlier. Most importantly, the Madrid court wanted to restore order in the Old and New Continents according to its own desires.

At this time, the growing rift between the North American inhabitants and Britain regarding tax policy and central governance, especially after 1763 onwards [Corbett P. C. et al., 2017, p. 129-130]. The situation was evolving according to the wishes of the Madrid court. In April 1775, armed activities by North Americans against the British regular army in 13 colonies occurred in the villages of Lexington and Concord [Cincotta H, 1994, p.70-71]. Due to the harsh policies and the colonial blockade of the home country – Britain, the rebel forces had to fight in a situation of shortage in all aspects. There was a scarcity of weapons, equipment, and gunpowder. On the other hand, the currency issued by the colonies was severely devalued, causing galloping inflation. This situation affected the morale of those who joined the revolutionary army. The phenomenon of desertion took place not only in the army commanded by G. Washington, but even among the local militia. This is considered a common condition in the North American colony. Like any war, revolutionary Americans could not sustain their fight and achieve victory solely through enthusiasm, love of freedom, without weapons or military equipment. One of the solutions the revolutionary Americans had to consider was seeking support and assistance from external sources beyond the British Empire, namely internationalizing the conflict.

The aforementioned plan needed to be more accelerated in the context of rumors in North America that Britain was offering France and Spain to divide the North American continent in exchange for support in suppressing the rebellious forces. This news quickly reached the supreme governing body of the revolution – the Continental Congress. For the revolutionary

leaders in this body, the specter of a North America division treaty initiated by Britain made them deeply concerned and worried, because hesitation and delay would bankrupt the plan. More specifically, the Continental Congress needed to take a more definitive view of the path to independence and separation from the British Empire as well as the necessity to form an alliance with a foreign nation to fight against the British army. In its "Declaration of the causes and necessity of taking up arms" on July 6, 1775, the Continental Congress emphasized the importance of international support for the revolutionary cause: "Our cause is justified, our alliance is perfect. Our resources are immense and if necessary, international support will be securely obtained".

With this in mind, on November 29, 1775, seven months after the Battle of Lexington, the Continental Congress decided to establish "Committee of Secret Correspondence for the sole purpose of forming alliances with individuals sympathetic to the American revolutionary cause in Britain, Ireland and other countries around the world. Initially, representatives in the body were cautious and primarily focused on accessibility within the British empire, as they hoped for a fraternal bond within the empire that would share a common political heritage and stand alongside the cause of the North American inhabitants" [Aruga, 1985, p. 70]. They expected that progressive public opinion in Britain would exert pressure to overthrow the hostile elements within the empire that opposed the aspirations of the people in North America. However, this expectation quickly became illusory and hopeless. In this context, the Continental Congress decided to seek external support from the great powers that were sympathetic to their just cause in order to wage the struggle.

One fact is that the delegates in the Continental Congress always put their careers in relation to the power of international relations in Europe, i.e. the conflict between the North American colonies and Britain. Under their view, Britain engendered considerable animosity and hostility towards many other nations. As a man who had lived and worked for many years in Britain and the European feudal courts, Benjamin Franklin - a member of the Continental Congress, believed that all European nations (except Britain) were closely watching the struggles of the North American inhabitants and found it intriguing to witness the disintegration of the British Empire [Smyth, 1906, p. 231]. Series of issues related to the attitude of countries in the Old Continent were raised by the delegates: "Where is France, where is Spain? Where is Holland? the natural enemies of Britain - where are they at the moment? Do you think these nations will support us with indifference and futility?... Believe me, The answer is No?" [Wirt, 1852. p. 111-112]. They believed that the European powers would not stand aside from the struggle of the North American inhabitants. Such awareness helped American revolutionaries prepare for a less hesitation in mobilizing support from continental Europe.

Among the European feudal courts capable of aiding the American revolutionary cause, apart from France, Spain was the country that the delegates in the Continental Congress wanted to turn to. Because they perceived Spain to have some degree of enmity towards Britain. With this purpose in mind, in September 1776, two months after the declaration of independence [Cincotta, 1994, p.73], the Continental Congress sent Benjamin Franklin [Finding, 1980. p.178] to France, along with Silas Deane [Finding, 1980. p.178], and Arthur Lee [Finding, 1980. p.278-279] who were then conducting business and living in Britain, to form a diplomatic trio representing the American Revolution in the Old Continent. At the same time, in order to provide a legal basis for American representatives in their diplomatic efforts in Europe, the Continental Congress approved the "Plan of 1776". The plan did not include any political concessions but primarily focused on commercial interests. Notably, it proposed that the United States concentrate on trade activities and disrupt the British monopoly on commerce in North America, while committing to fair treatment of neutral commercial interests (allowing neutral vessels to trade with belligerent parties) [Perkins, 1993, p.24].

Before Franklin's arrival in France, Silas Deane took steps to gauge the attitude of the Madrid court through Spanish representatives working in Paris. As the diplomatic representative of the Continental Congress, Silas Deane promised his counterpart that the United States would guarantee respect for Spanish territories in the New World, share the right to fight in Newfoundland, and expel British merchant ships from American shores [Perkins, 1993, p.24]. Those promises were nothing short of luring Spain into the game that the United States was conducting.

Shortly after arriving in the capital of France (4-12-1776), B. Franklin engaged in secret contacts with representatives of the Versailles court. By leveraging the close relationship within the Bourbon family, B. Franklin wanted the French court to be able to persuade Spain to support the struggle of the North American people. On the other hand, B. Franklin, together with two of his colleagues, conducted a face-to-face meeting with de Aranda, the Spanish ambassador in Paris. During talks held on December 29, 1776 and January 4, 1777, B. Franklin proposed to d' Aranda to form a triangular alliance, consisting of the United States, France and Spain, against Britain. This proposal encountered a hesitant attitude from de Aranda.

In order to dispel the hesitancy of the Spanish officials and create allure for the Madrid court's involvement in supporting the cause of white Americans across the Atlantic, Benjamin Franklin reconvened with Count de Aranda on April 7, 1777, in Paris. B. Franklin renewed his talks with Count de Aranda. In this negotiation, the US diplomatic representative pledged that, in the event that Spain stood alongside the current war effort against Britain, the United States would assist the Madrid monarchy in reconquering the town and port of Pensacola located in Florida, a site that Spain had lost to Britain during the Seven Years' War. At the same time, the United States would wage war with Portugal, Britain's ally [Bemis, 1957, p. 11] in the American territories, citing the refusal of Portugal to accept American-flagged ships within its maritime jurisdiction and in its New World colonies, particularly Brazil. The war would continue until Portugal was subdued, and a portion of its territory would fall within Spain's borders [McCarthy, 1916, p. 54]. The aforementioned moves of the US delegation were still met with indifference by the Madrid court. On February 7, 1777, on the recommendation of Ambassador d' Aranda, the American diplomatic triad unanimously sent Arthur Lee to Spain to negotiate with the local authorities a treaty of amity and trade, as directed by the Continental Congress [Coble, p. 218].

Meanwhile, the news of the military developments in North America quickly reached the Spanish court through diplomatic channels from France as well as from periodic preliminary reports by Spanish governors-general in the New World. Under the perspective of many Spanish officials, the outbreak of the War of Independence of North Americans created a vulnerability that Spain and France could take advantage of, and an enormous opportunity that could not be overlooked to drive Britain out of Latin America [Coble, p. 218]. Therefore, they received this news with eagerness. This reinforced the belief that a possibility of retaliation against Britain would soon become a reality. As a result, members of King Carlos III's cabinet were divided into different opinions in their approach to the goal.

The first faction, headed by Spain's ambassador to Paris, de Aranda, argued that Spain should intervene directly in the conflict as news of the war in North America reached Europe by forming an alliance with France to attack Britain and support the establishment of an alliance with American inhabitants [Cummins, 2006, p. 182]. The second faction took a cautious attitude, arguing that Spain should stand in a neutral position to have time to observe and prepare carefully for the war. In the event of Spain's involvement in the war, this faction also proposed the Spanish court to prioritize military efforts in the European theater, with the goal of reclaiming Gibraltar, restoring control over Menorca, and establishing independent diplomatic relations separate from France. This view was supported by Spanish Foreign Minister Marqués de Grimaldi along with his successor Conde de Floridablanca. The other faction was headed

by the Minister for Regional Affairs of India, José de Gálvez. With the perspective that "the North American War as an opportunity to end British international and territorial influence in the Gulf of Mexico and the northern Caribbean", José de Gálvez suggested that Carlos III should focus on its objectives in the Americas. Accordingly, once Spain entered the war, there would be an opportunity to eliminate British settlements in the Mississippi Valley and the northern coast of the Gulf of Mexico as well as reaffirm Spain's sovereignty over East Florida and dismantle British timber operations on the Central American coast [Cummins, 2006, p. 182]. To do this, the Minister for Indian Regions requested the Madrid court to provide material and equipment to the rebel inhabitants, which were obtained from Spanish military centers in Havana and New Orleans.

While the politicians in the court debated the choice of an optimal solution, the North American news also distracted Carlos III. The head of the Madrid monarchy himself wanted to seize this opportunity to restore the national prestige and regain what had been lost in the past. However, Carlos III's position was not entirely free to act like Louis XVI, the king of France. Under the perspective of Carlos III, openly involving in the ongoing war between Britain and North America would lead to consequences. Unlike France, a country that did not have many colonies in the New World, Spain, on the other hand, if the Madrid court openly supported the colonists in North America, it would "become a disastrous precedent for the Spanish colonies in Americas" [Hargreaves-Mawdsley, 1979, p. 129]. This meant that it would create a dangerous precedent, encouraging the people of Spanish colonies in the New World to rise up and struggle to overthrow the rule of the home country, similar to the case of North America.

In addition, the ongoing hostility between Britain and Spain would be detrimental to the Madrid court. It was that Britain, with its superiority in naval power, would attack Spain's fleet of Treasury carrying precious metals such as gold and silver from Vera Cruz (Mexico) back to the home country [Bemis, 1957. p. 75].

All issues analyzed above put Carlos III in a dilemma. In the monarch's mind, two opposing extremes emerged in solving the problem. On one hand, he wanted to prolong the war in North America to weaken and defeat England. If this happened, the Madrid court "could recover the lost territories from England, such as Gibraltar, Minorca, and Florida; conquer England's Jamaica and Bahamas and eliminate English settlements along the eastern coast of Mexico, Honduras, and Campeche, wiping out unauthorized trading centers and smuggling operations in these areas" [Chávez, 2002, p.8]. But on the other hand, the king's attempts to take action against England in fact also put Spain at a disadvantage from many sides. With the advice of his Foreign Minister, de Grimaldi, the Spanish emperor opted for a neutral solution, i.e. staying out of the war between Britain and the North American inhabitants, waiting for a more convenient opportunity. This enabled the Madrid court to observe the brighter prospects of the American revolution, explore moves of the Versailles court, and reform the economic engine in readiness for an all-out war with Britain when conditions were met.

Following the progress of Spain's involvement in the North American people's struggle for independence, an important historical factor to consider is the role of France. As a country with conflicts of interest with Britain in international relations, as soon as the conflict erupted within the British Empire, Versailles diplomats approached Spanish officials both in Paris and in Madrid. The purpose of France was primarily to gauge the attitude of Spain and then initiate diplomatic efforts with the Iberian Peninsula nation to coordinate their actions in support of the cause of white settlers across the ocean. Under the perspective of the Versailles court, no other European monarchy, apart from Spain, shared such a deep resentment towards England. On the other hand, the Madrid court and the Versailles dynasty, both belonging to the Bourbon family, were bound by the obligations and duties of each member within the alliance. This was reflected in various Family Compacts (1733, 1743, and 1762). There existed a close bond between two

neighboring countries separated by the Pyrenees, especially in the field of foreign affairs.

Grasping the intentions of their relative ally, at the time of the first military confrontation between Britain and the North American inhabitants at the village of Lexington (4-1775), French diplomats, headed by the Foreign Minister – Vergennes contacted the Spanish ambassador in Paris. At the same time, through his ambassador in Madrid - Montmorin, the head of the French diplomatic agency regularly exchanged diplomatic notes with his Spanish counterpart on North American affairs. In a diplomatic note to de Grimaldi, Vergennes outlined a scenario in which Britain, taking advantage of the oppression of its North American colonies, would attack territories of France and Spain in the New World regardless of its victory or defeat. This action by the London authorities was intended to offset funds for the pacification of the British colonies or to seek compensation for the loss of the colonies [Bemis, 1957. p. 42]. In order to reduce that risk, Vergennes proposed that France, along with Spain and Americans, would form a mutual defensive alliance to ensure the territorial integrity of each side in the Americas. The idea of the French Minister of Foreign Affairs encountered hesitation from the Spanish diplomatic officials, as it went against Spain's desired approach to colonial issues in the New World as analyzed above.

While Vergennes awaited a definitive move by the Madrid court, a rumor quickly spread to France, leading Vergennes to believe that Britain was trying to reconcile its conflict with the North American colonies and aiming to seize France's remaining territories in the West Indies. In such a scenario, France would miss the "golden opportunity" to retaliate against England. In the face of such a rumor and the need to avoid direct confrontation with Britain until conditions were favorable, Vergennes urgently sought to persuade the French king, Louis XVI to provide secret support for the struggle of the North American people. This was reflected by Vergennes in a diplomatic note dated March 1, 1776, sent to de Grimaldi to consult with the Spanish officials before making a decision. The diplomatic note clearly states: "Is Spain prepared to join France in providing secret support to the American inhabitants?" [Bemis, 1957. p. 23-24]. It should be noted that the proposed method of supporting the American Revolution by France at this time coincided with the expectations of Spanish diplomats. Two weeks later, on March 14, 1776, in a reply diplomatic note, the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs agreed with the principle of secret support proposed by French diplomats. De Grimaldi clearly stated: "What is undoubtedly attractive to us is that the uprising of [North American] inhabitants continues, and we want Britain and its inhabitants to become exhausted. The king is ready and proposes to participate at any cost" [Bemis, 1957. p. 24].

SECRET FINANCIAL AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE FROM SPAIN TO REBEL FORCES IN NORTH AMERICA, 1776-1779

Persuaded by the views of diplomats, shortly after the French king approved the non-public support plan for the fight of American people on the other side of the ocean, on June 27, 1776 [Perkins, 1911, p. 115], Carlos III issued a decree with the same content. To build trust with the French officials, combat aid to the North American inhabitants, Carlos III contributed 1 million livres to the initial funding set by the court of Versailles. The contribution was concealed by the Madrid court by transferring it to a private French company, Roderique Hortalez and Company, operating under the guise of a commercial enterprise led by Pierre de Beaumarchais [Perkins, 1911, p. 70 - 119]. Alongside the French contribution, this sum of money was used by the company to purchase weapons, uniforms, and transportation for delivery to North America, thereby alleviating immediate difficulties in the struggle of the local population.

It should be noted that Spain's secret aid to the American revolution was not solely facilitated

through the intermediary role of France but also originated from the diplomatic activities of American representatives within the "Committee of Secret Correspondence". On d'Aranda's recommendation, in February 1777, Arthur Lee sought to approach the Madrid court. The news was quickly notified by the Spanish ambassador in Paris to the kingdom. Grasping the information, Spanish diplomats sealed off Lee's access to the capital, because they said once this happened it would be detrimental to them. From the point of view of the Madrid court, at this time, Spain was in a neutral position in the war between Britain and the North American inhabitants, the presence of American diplomatic representatives created many negative suspicions of the London political circles towards the Madrid court, potentially jeopardizing the relatively calm relationship between Spain and Britain when viewed from the outside.

In order to prevent this from happening, the foreign diplomats of the host country secretly sent envoys to meet A. Lee at a location outside the capital. By arrangement of the diplomatic agency, on February 28, 1777, Lee moved from Bilbao to Burgos, a location in the northern part of the kingdom. The secret envoy that the Madrid court sent to Burgos was Diego de Gardoqui [Yaniz, 2009, p. 49], a wealthy Basque merchant. There, on March 4, 1777, Gardoqui met Lee. During the talks, the Spanish representative tried to explain the blocking of A. Lee from going to Madrid because "*Carlos III does not wish to break relations with Britain*" [Hargreaves-Mawdsley, 1979, p.130]. Meanwhile, the American diplomat presented the reasons for the struggle and exerted pressure on the Spanish envoy by indicating that he would disclose this meeting to the outside world and not leave the border without a satisfactory response, at the very least concerning financial support. Under the pressure from the American diplomatic representative and the desire to continue implementing the outlined foreign policy, D. Gardoqui acquiesced and accepted the proposals put forth by his counterpart.

It should be noted that, in order to avoid surveillance by Britain, the Madrid court operated under the guise of a private company run by D. Gardoqui to carry out a mission of covert support for the American revolution. Through the Bilbao-based Gardoqui and Sons company, the Madrid court during the summer of 1777 twice withdrew from the national treasury: 70,000 pesos for the first time, 50,000 pesos for the second time to be sent to North America through the company [Hargreaves-Mawdsley, 1979, p.131]. The head of Gardoqui and Sons himself contributed his own funds of 946,906 reals to buy military equipment [" [Hargreaves-Mawdsley, 1979, p.132]. These include: 215 bronze cannons, 4,000 tents, 12,826 grenades, 30,000 muskets, 30,000 bayonets, 30,000 uniforms, 51,314 round bullets for muskets and 300,000 pounds of gunpowder [Thonhoff, 2006, p.2]. All these items were loaded onto a ship docked in a French seaport and transported across the Atlantic via the Bermuda route to reach Boston. As a reputable merchant in the European market, D. Gardoqui lobbied the business community in the low countries – the Netherlands, to lend money to the American revolutionaries for the purchase of weapons and to provide financial support during their stay and travel within the Old Continent. According to statistics, from 1777 to 1782, D. Gardoqui transferred an amount of 406,000 pesos to support the American Revolution. In addition, thanks to his ingenuity, Lee received from Spain a cheque of 50,000 pesos. The Spanish ambassador in Paris used his personal funds to purchase 12,000 muskets, which were sent to Boston to equip both regular army troops and local militias [Thonhoff, 2006, p.2].

Credit support was not only provided by the home country but was also implemented in the Spanish territories in the Americas, which were geographically close to the main base of operations for the North American army. Thanks to the persuasion of Oliver Pollock, an American merchant in New Orleans, the Governor of the Louisiana Territory agreed to provide credit assistance. According to statistics, from 1776 to 1779, the colonial authorities of Spanish Louisiana granted to the North American population a credit amount of 7,944,906 reals [Yaniz, 2009, p.4]. This funding became a source for the Continental Congress to procure supplies and equipment for the war effort, including uniforms, shoes, blankets, lead bullets, gunpowder,

ammunition, flint, artillery and other military resources.

It can be said that the war-related financial resources and equipment that Spain helped at the beginning of the revolution for the American people were indeed useful. They contributed to alleviating inflation; initially achieving a balance in revenue and expenditure for the fledgling state apparatus that was still operating the war machine; addressing the shortage of military supplies and equipment as a result of the London government's embargo policy.

The help of the kingdom of Spain came from another aspect. On December 24, 1776, the government of Carlos III issued a royal decree requiring the Governors of Louisiana and Cuba to open all ports in the New World to American-flagged merchant ships for trade. This decree was effective even for military vessels originating from the revolutionary side in the British colonies in North America. These types of merchant ships were allowed to freely enter ports for various purposes such as provisioning, repairs or evading pursuit by the British navy, under the local authorities' protection, etc. Among the Spanish ports in the Americas, Havana was considered an ideal location for these activities [Robertson, 1918, p. 304].

An important historical fact to note is that when the war broke out between American inhabitants and heads of London colonial authorities in order to make the most of trade resources through trade activities between two sides of the Atlantic, the Continental Congress relied on experienced fishermen who disguised themselves as pirates. They attacked British-flagged cargo ships on the high seas to plunder their spoils. Under the protection of the Spanish government, this activity inflicted significant damage on the trade and circulation of British-flagged vessels across the Atlantic, contributing to the weakening of the British naval power. To support these privateers under the guise of piracy, the Spanish monarchy allowed them to take refuge in ports in the mainland, such as Bilbao, Algeciras, El Ferrol, Cádiz, La Coruna, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, etc [Bemis, 1957, p. 54]; while also purchasing their spoils. John Paul Jones, an American pirate, turned the port of La Coruna into a stronghold for his operations for a period of 18 months. The disruptive activities of these American pirate merchant ships caused significant losses to British commerce in the English Channel and other areas. According to statistics in 1777, the rate of cargo insurance payments for damages increased by over 20% compared to the previous year. The British Ambassador in Madrid, Lord Grantham, consistently complained during his meetings with Spanish diplomats about the Spanish government turning a blind eye to the presence of many American colonial privateer vessels seeking refuge and engaging in illegal activities in Spanish ports and territorial waters, especially in locations adjacent to British waters. This goes against the neutral line pursued by the Spanish government. In response to criticism from the British ambassador, the Madrid monarchy said "they did not want war because of the trouble that Portugal is causing Spain in the New World" [Hargreaves-Mawdsley, 1979, p.129].

In addition to opening ports adjacent to the ocean, the Spanish colonial government allowed American ships to freely navigate on the inland waterways of North America, such as the Mississippi, Ohio. These waterways connected both to the ocean and the Gulf of Mexico, and their tributaries led to locations where the revolutionary forces were stationed. They also permitted American revolutionaries to use the port of New Orleans as a receiving point for external assistance, which was then transported via the inland waterways to various destinations. Most of the material support from Spain to the armies commanded by General George Washington and George Rogers Clark was delivered through the inland waterways. It is important to emphasize that, during wartime when the British navy was planning to blockade the Atlantic coast tightly in order to isolate and prevent external supplies to the revolutionary Americans, the Spanish government's decision to allow free navigation on the Mississippi and Ohio river systems became vital lifelines for the armies of G. Washington and G. R. Clark in their fight for liberal independence. And New Orleans is a backdoor, serving the function of receiving equipment and finance from all over the world. Meanwhile, free navigation on the

North American inland waterways for British citizens was prohibited or revoked by the Spanish colonial government.

Spain's support for the American Revolution extended to military operations as well. Since Spanish territory of and British territory in North America were adjacent to each other, it provided convenience for the operation of the Continental Congress troops under the auspices of the colonial government. In early 1778, the newly inaugurated Governor of the Louisiana Territory, Bernardo de Gálvez provided backing for revolutionary military expeditions to attack British settlements in the Illinois Territory and the Mississippi Delta. In March 1778, the expedition was under the command of Colonel James Willing. During this expedition, J. Willing led a squad away from Ft. Pitt, down the Mississippi River, to raid British garrisons and plunder property in British-owned plantations in West Florida. They took away valuables, such as boats and barges and captured enslaved people of African descent. To counter the raids by the revolutionary army, the British colonial government dispatched a force to suppress it. In October 1778, Colonel J. Willing's force quickly retreated to New Orleans. Here, J. Willing's troops received the safe cover of the Governor-General of Louisiana. Not only that, the head of the administrative agency also allowed J. Willing's troops to sell the spoils of war within the area under their control. Later, a British fleet was dispatched to New Orleans to protest Spain's support for Willing's expedition. In response to that move, Governor-General B. Gálvez did not take any hostile actions to escalate the situation. In this context, the British fleet was forced to retreat [Cummins, 2006, p. 188].

With another historical development, during 1778-1779, the Governor of the Louisiana Territory authorized the troops of the Continental Congress to use New Orleans as a supply base for General G. R. Clark's expeditions against the upper Mississippi River and the Ohio Delta. As the head of the Virginia Regular Army, G. Clark in turn pushed the British troops out of strategic locations, such as San Luis (Missouri), San José (Michigan), Vincennes (Indiana), Kaskaskia (Illinois), Cahokia (Illinois). It is noted that during this battle, due to a lack of regular supply lines from the eastern Appalachian region, G. Clark returned to New Orleans for receiving the support of B. Gálvez. The governor of Louisiana not only sought large transportation vehicles to transport supplies and food, but also borrowed funds to support General G. Clark's campaign. Apparently, "the conquest of the rebel force [referring to G. Clark's force] in Ohio plain would have been impossible without Gálvez's assistance in New Orleans" [Cummins, 2006, p. 188].

Taking advantage of the British Empire's preoccupation with the war in North America, in 1777, Spain launched attacks on Portugal's illicit trading posts in Uruguay and Argentina (South America). This action of Spain did not elicit a reaction from Britain, resulting in the fact that Portugal had to fight unilaterally despite being an ally of Britain. Without support from London government, Portugal's fighting capacity quickly diminished. The war between two nations on the Iberian Peninsula came to an end. On October 1, 1777, the Treaty of San Ildefonso was signed. Accordingly, Portugal pledged to demolish trading posts in the above two locations. Crucially, the Lisbon government promised not to help Britain wage war against the North American colonies. With this, Spain succeeded in controlling Portugal, Britain's traditional ally, to prevent this rival from getting involved in the international conflict that the Madrid court was about to enter [Hargreaves-Mawdsley, 1979, p. 127].

Thus, with the advocacy of the French side, the Madrid court gradually intervened deeply in the struggle of the American people. To cover up its actions, during the early stages of the war, Spain provided covert assistance. In the form of financial aid, allowing the use of bases its own territories and through military cooperation with the American revolutionary army, Spain not only served its own purposes but also internationalized the conflict in North America, turning it into more than just an internal affair of the British Empire.

WAR WITH BRITAIN AND SPAIN'S REMOTE SUPPORT FOR THE FIGHT TO DEFEND
THE INDEPENDENCE OF YOUNG AMERICA, 1779-1783

The timely aid of resources from Spain made the struggle of the North American people positive. The war against the British army thus brought a new development with the military balance tilted in favor of the American population. On October 17, 1777, American troops won a clash with the British at Saratoga. The news quickly reached Europe, prompting the political circles to change their attitude and actions, first of all in France. Accordingly, on February 6, 1778, in Paris, the diplomatic representative of the court of Versailles and the diplomatic representative of the revolutionary America signed two treaties, in which France recognized the independence of the United States; both pledged to stand on the same front line against Britain until the time when American independence was secured [Commager, 1963, p.105-107].

France's diplomatic move made Anglo-French relations strained, because in the eyes of the London authority, this was evidence that France interfered in the internal affairs of the British empire. Military conflict inevitably broke out with warships of both sides colliding with each other. In June 1778, the war between Britain and France officially broke out. In order to confront the enemy and at the same time strengthen the Franco-American alliance, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs – Vergennes, instructed his ambassador in Madrid to send a proposal to Spain to join the war against Britain alongside France. Both France and the United States needed Spain to achieve victory and secure American independence. French officials believed that the rapid involvement of the Spanish navy would help France balance its inferiority in number of warships compared to Britain [Dull, 1985, p. 110]. However, this proposal came in the context of a change in the head of the diplomatic agency of the Madrid court.

Succeeding de Grimaldi as Foreign Minister from February 1777 onwards, Count Floridabalanca adjusted his foreign policy to suit the national interest, especially to free Spain from the shadow of French diplomacy. Floridabalanca, on the other hand, envisaged the possibility that in the future, "the young America would replace Britain as a competitor in trade and territory with Spain in North America" [Cummins, 2006, p. 189]. This scenario posed a risk that Spain had to reckon.

Although harboring intentions of seeking revenge against Britain, Floridabalanca showed little concern for Vergennes' proposal. In his understanding at that time, if Spain were to follow France into a war with Britain over American independence, Spain would suffer the greatest losses. The war would expose the vulnerabilities related to the fate of an empire. These included the situation of Spanish colonies in the West Indies that was always in front of "gun" of Britain, the imminent danger faced by General Cevallos as he returned home after pushing back the Portuguese in Rio Plata and the safety of the treasure fleet underway from Vera Cruz (Mexico) to the Iberian Peninsula. This view was expressed in a diplomatic note dated January 13, 1778 sent by Floridabalanca to his subordinates in Paris, Ambassador de Aranda, who was earnestly appealing to his superiors for urgent action in accordance with wishes of Vergennes. In his personal diary, Floridabalanca argued that wisdom and prudence were essential for Spain to avoid being deceived or forced into a difficult situation in a hasty war with Britain, which could prove fatal for Spain at the present time. With this being said, the head of Madrid's imperial diplomatic agency avoided any futile war with Britain in both benefiting France and securing American independence [Bemis, 1957. p. 75].

The objective pursued by Charles III and the Spanish government was not the firm independence of America on the other side of the Atlantic. The most practical thing for the Madrid court was to seek to reclaim the lands lost to Britain in previous wars, the most important of which is Gibraltar. The solution to this problem did not necessarily require waging war against Britain at all costs [Paterson, 1995, p. 17]. On the contrary, they sought to achieve the desired result by peaceful diplomatic negotiations between the parties. With this awareness, the Spanish diplomats, led by Floridabalanca, conducted separate diplomatic surveys with Britain. During

their contacts with Britain, Spanish diplomats used Gibraltar as a bargaining chip. Accordingly, Spain was ready to plunge into war with Britain to fulfill its commitment to France. Once this happened, Spanish officials thought Britain would find it difficult to deal with multiple adversaries on different battlefields at the same time. In other words, Spain sought to push Britain into a precarious position of their own making. In this context, Spain easily came up with a solution by persuading Britain to accept the return of Gibraltar. In the event that Britain complied, Spain would take a neutral position in the war between Britain and France, furthermore the war between France-America and Britain. Thus, Gibraltar became the target of all diplomatic moves of Spain.

In pursuit of the project mentioned above, on May 9, 1778, through Escarano, the Spanish ambassador in London, Florida, sent a diplomatic note to the British authorities, clearly stating that "the cession of Gibraltar may be considered worthwhile while a disastrous war is avoided" [Bemis, 1957. p. 78]. In response, British Prime Minister Lord North said, Gibraltar was one of the most important places in Britain that was hard to relinquish. A few weeks later, around the beginning of June 1778, the French navy attacked the warships of the British fleet on the oceans, the hostile relations between two countries were open, and Spanish diplomats stepped up pressure on Britain. To maximize effectiveness, Spain sent special envoy Almodóvar as ambassador to London, replacing Escarano. As a skilled negotiator and a cool-headed diplomat, the new ambassador hinted that Britain must be willing and even pay handsomely for Spain's neutrality and must listen to "clear proactive offers and the means to secure them". The means Almodóvar brought to the bargaining table was Spain's neutrality in the war between Britain and France, in return for Britain meeting their demand, returning Gibraltar.

Then, on December 29, 1778, during a secret contact with Weymouth, the British Royal Foreign Secretary, Almodóvar, asked the London authorities to return not only Gibraltar but also Menorca, in turn Spain mediated between America and France on the one hand and Britain on the other hand. Reacting to Almodóvar's comments, Weymouth said: "Spain is working too greedily, wanting to take Gibraltar and Menorca as collateral for peace talks". In simpler terms, Britain was adamant not to trade Gibraltar or anything else for Spain's neutrality.

While Spain and Britain were negotiating, Vergennes became impatient with the lukewarm attitude of their allied kin. To entice Spain into the war, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs was even more willing to make a special offer, according to which the price for Spain's involvement would be France's commitment to recover Menorca, Floridas, share fishing rights in Newfoundland, push Britain out of Honduras and even reconquered Jamaica. Nevertheless, Floridablanca remained calm in deciding the price of Spain's involvement in France's ranks against Britain. More broadly, is the fate of American independence tied to Spain's possession of Gibraltar.

Through intelligence networks in Madrid and London, the head of the French diplomatic agency captured the Spanish sentiment of wanting to restore sovereignty over the "southernmost European promontory". Vergennes instructed Ambassador Montmorin to appeal to Floridablanca and the Spanish leadership by committing that if Spain joined the war against Britain, France would only agree to establish peace when Spain regained Gibraltar.

With the proposal of Vergennes and the neutral project at a dead end, Floridablanca had to consider an option: a return to the alliance with France. However, before reaching this solution, with the last bit of hope, Spain clung to peace with Britain. On April 3, 1779, Floridablanca sent a diplomatic note to the British ambassador in Madrid, Grantham, in the form of an ultimatum. The diplomatic note clearly stated the conditions of peace between two countries in the current context, or otherwise. Nearly 10 days later, on April 12, 1779, without waiting for a response from the London authorities, Floridablanca secretly met Vergennes by signing the Treaty of Aranjuez. Accordingly, France agreed to help Spain regain Gibraltar, Menorca and Floridas; on the contrary, Spain would become an ally with France in the war with Britain. Both nations

agreed that French forces would engage in combat on the American battlefield and the waters bordering it; meanwhile, Spanish forces would only attack territories outside the American continent that belonged to Britain. With the Treaty of Aranjuez, although the young America did not have any new allies, its opponents gained a new enemy, igniting the enthusiasm of white fighters pursuing liberty. For Spain, by signing the treaty with France, the Madrid court staked its interests in a risky gamble in North America. On June 21, 1779, Spain officially declared war on Britain.

An important event occurred when, nearly 3 months after Spain entered the war, in September 1779, the Continental Congress sent John Jay, a New York lawyer, to the Madrid court. His aim was to seek an alliance treaty with the government of Carlos III. Between January 1780 and May 1782, negotiations took place but they did not yield promising results. The Spanish government refused to establish formal diplomatic relations on the grounds that Britain had not yet recognized the republic's independence. However, J. Jay's presence in Madrid enabled him to persuade Spanish political circles, primarily Floridabalanca, to understand the progressive cause of the American people. Thanks to his eloquence and ingenuity, J. Jay enlisted the sympathy of the head of the diplomatic agency of the Madrid court. Specifically, Floridabalanca with its own prestige borrowed hundreds of thousands of dollars for the American Revolution. On the other hand, it should be added that Spanish political circles took advantage of the presence of representatives of the rebellious colonies in Madrid in order to force Britain to settle the final peace clause under which Gibraltar was transferred to them.

For the Spanish, France's involvement in the war against Britain was not motivated by support for the American revolution. The war with the British was only a lifeline solution to a failed attempt at peace talks. The Spanish government hoped that the synergy with France, once victorious on the battlefield, would return to pressuring the British at the negotiating table, yielding results in their favor. Therefore, in the course of the war, Spain always proactively selected suitable battlefields and locations that were closely associated with their interests. It was to avoid the battlefields in which French and American troops cooperated against Britain that could lead to victory for the American revolution and its allies. This was predicted by the French ambassador, Montmorin in a diplomatic note to Vergennes as Spain prepared to enter.

In an effort to mobilize all resources into the war, on August 17, 1780, King Carlos III issued a royal decree, requiring male citizens over the age of 18 in the empire to contribute funds voluntarily. Accordingly, each Indian and half-blood contributed 1 peso; 2 pesos for each Spanish in the home country or in the colonies. In addition, the monarch's subjects living in regions that would later be known as California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas and other parts of Spanish America were also required to donate money or rare and precious goods. The king also called upon the Spanish Catholic Church to mobilize sacrificial animals or borrow money among the fellow-believers. Cathedrals of Toledo, Malaga and other places contributed money to the king to wage war. Father Juníspero Serra of Alta California collected donations from mission congregations, using church funds to pay for believers who could not afford to contribute.

As a country with many overseas territories, the Spanish High Command advocated for forcing Britain to stretch its forces across the battlefields with many battles taking place at the same time. This strategy aimed to exhaust the opponent's strength and distract its attention. As a result, Britain found itself in a passive and inflexible position, lacking clarity in devising effective combat plans. The main fronts that Spain proactively opened were the battlefields in North America, Central America and Europe, particularly in Western Europe.

In North America, anticipating an inevitable war with Britain, before the outbreak of war, Louisiana Governor - Bernardo de Gálvez hastily prepared his forces. With the objectives of completely controlling Mississippi River and preventing the risk of British troops advancing into Louisiana from the east bank of the river, B. Gálvez embarked an operation, launching a

surprise attack against British garrisons along the lower plain. In September 1779, with a force consisting of regular troops, local militia and Indians, B. Gálvez successively captured Bute fort at Manchac. On September 21, 1779, after 3 hours of continuous artillery fire, B. Gálvez's army took control of Baton Rouge stronghold. Not long after, Panmure Fort in Natchez fell under the control of Spanish soldiers. In less than a month, the British troops lost all their posts adjacent to Mississippi River. At the end of the operation, 1,000 British soldiers were eliminated from combat, 8 of their warships on the Mississippi River were confiscated. The Louisiana Territory was expanded by 520 square miles. Assessing the success of the operation, José de Gálvez, Minister for Indian Regions, said: "The units deployed to drive the British away from the Mississippi River should be seen as a wall on the outskirts of the vast empire of New Spain".

The following year, in 1780, B. Gálvez set out to capture Mobile, a British base in West Florida. In January 1780, with approximately 2,000 troops and 14 ships, B. Gálvez's forces departed from the port of New Orleans. This march encountered a landfalling hurricane, and it was not until late February 1780 that the troops arrived at Mobile. By besieging the stronghold and separating it from British reinforcements from the sea, B. Gálvez attacked Mobile. After nearly a month and a half of fighting, on March 12, 1780, British troops in Mobile had to lay down their arms. The success of Mobile campaign bolstered B. Gálvez's determination to conquer Pensacola, the largest British base in West Florida.

Pensacola is the location of the civilian office and headquarters of all British troops in the territory of Florida. The British's control of the area since after the Seven Years' War in 1763 created a corridor, isolating the Gulf of Mexico on the one hand; on the other hand separated the island of Cuba from Spanish-controlled territories in North America (Louisiana, Texas, etc.). This made trade within Spain's empire become difficult due to competition from British merchants. In order to break the defensive line in the Gulf of Mexico established by the British, after the Battle of Mobile, B. Gálvez attempted to do so but could not do so due to a devastating storm that sank many of his ships. Recognizing the pivotal importance of the Pensacola battle on the North American front, King Carlos III dispatched Francisco de Saavedra to Cuba to consult with B. Gálvez and devise a military strategy. Prior to the assault, Spanish troops disguised themselves as Indians to infiltrate Pensacola and gather intelligence on the enemy's defenses, armories, and ammunition storage. In addition, a large number of livestock were mobilized to ensure the supply of food and provisions for the soldiers during the campaign. Accordingly, 9,000 cattle belonging to private farms and congregations located in the San Antonio River Delta were led to stationed farms. Hundreds of horseheads were put into battle for the purpose of artillery and cavalry [Granville, 2000, p. 17-18].

In March 1781, B. Gálvez's army consisting of 7,000 troops including infantry and naval forces, launched an attack on Pensacola from the sea. By arranging the battle to attract the attention of the British, B. Gálvez secretly used Indian soldiers to throw artillery at the enemy's gunpowder depots located inland. This action reduced the strength of the British forces at Pensacola. Meanwhile, Spanish troops laid siege to British garrisons facing the Gulf of Mexico. The siege tightened on British troops for several weeks. On May 10, 1781, General John Campbell, commander of the British army in Pensacola and 900 remaining entrenched soldiers surrendered. With the Battle of Pensacola, Spain officially reclaimed Florida, which had been lost during the Seven Years' War. It was a significant victory for Spain. Britain mobilized 3,000 regular troops to take part in the battle, but their losses were twice as high as those of the Spanish forces. The British suffered 105 fatalities and 382 wounded, while the Spanish casualties amounted to only 74 killed and 198 wounded. The Siege of Pensacola and Gálvez's victory marked one of the final military triumphs of the Spanish army in the long history of their colonial empire in the Americas. The disastrous defeat at Pensacola weakened the British military operation and deprived General Cornwallis of the opportunity to reinforce General Cornwallis in the battle of the British against the forces commanded by G. Washington at Yorktown

(October 19, 1781).

In Central America, there were illegal settlements established by the British along the Caribbean coast, which were set up after the War of the Spanish Succession with the purpose of exploiting timber and engaging in illicit trade. News of the military conflict between the home country and Britain in Europe quickly spread to the Spanish colonies in Central America. The commander-in-chief of the Spanish Army in Central America based in Guatemala, Matías de Gálvez, launched an attack on the British in the area. In October 1779, military conflict between Spanish and British soldiers took place. The war situation here attracted forces from both sides. The Spanish deployed troops from Cuba and Peru, while the British transferred some of their forces from islands in the Antilles, such as Barbados, St. Lucia, and Antigua. The battle was fiercely contested for a period of time. Thanks to timely resources from the colonies, in April 1780, Spain in turn demolished settlements and seized British garrisons in Central America, such as Omoa, Inmaculada, Roatan, etc.

In Europe, fulfilling the objective as committed in the Treaty of Aranjuez, in July 1779, France and Spain began to blockade Gibraltar and Menorca – islands located in the Mediterranean. The coalition's blockade of these two sites lasted until the end of the war (1783). The coalition's ambition was to push British troops out of those two strategic positions to maintain their dominance of the Mediterranean, establishing military checkpoints at the southernmost tip of the Iberian Peninsula to monitor British naval's movements to other locations. From this objective, the Franco-Spanish coalition mobilized a large force of up to 40,000 troops, moving first to Gibraltar, then Menorca. In order to cut off communication between two British military sites in the Mediterranean Sea, and to block external resupply efforts, the coalition increasingly tightened the siege at each of them.

In response to this action of the enemy, the commander of the British navy in Gibraltar, General George Augustus Eliott, although inferior in numbers (7,000 troops), persisted in clinging to the terrain, fighting in deprived conditions, while waiting for reinforcements from the home country. To relieve the siege of Gibraltar, in December 1779, the British Royal Council of Generals dispatched a fleet led by Admiral George Brydges Rodney, which set sail from the port of Plymouth. With the aim of cutting off the British's supply lines, the Spanish navy, under the command of Admiral Juan de Lángara, formed a battle formation at Cape Santa Maria off the coast of Portugal. On January 16, 1780, military clashes between two sides took place. Compared to Britain, the Spanish navy was inferior in both combat skills and numbers, so it quickly broke down. However, before surrendering, Admiral J. Lángara's fleet fought courageously until the final moments, inflicting damage to one-third of Admiral G.B. Rodney's fleet. As a result, the British fleet could not reach Gibraltar. After this time, the British continuously sent more reinforcements to the southernmost "cliff" of Europe to defend this strategic stronghold. This diversion of resources occurred at a time when the London government needed to augment forces for the battles in North America, resulting in a significant drain on their military capabilities. Additionally, it contributed to tying down British forces in various locations.

With the aim of breaking the military position of the Spanish-French coalition in the European battlefield and replenishing forces for the fighting that the enemy was waging in the West Indies, in August 1780, Britain dispatched a fleet of 63 warships along with troops and weapons. During the transatlantic journey, the British fleet was unexpectedly ambushed by the Spanish-French coalition navy led by General Luis de Córdoba. More than half of the British fleet was scuttled, and the rest were taken to the port of Cadiz. The losses incurred by Britain in this expedition amounted to £1.5 million.

While Gibraltar was likened to a magnet drawing British forces for rescue and relief from the siege, their defensive lines at Menorca were weakened. Taking advantage of this situation, in 1782, the Spanish-French coalition launched a swift attack on Menorca. As a result, Britain

lost control of Menorca. It can be said that the naval conflicts between Spain-France and Britain on the European front played a crucial role in dispersing the British naval resources in North America and the West Indies [Ward, 1995, p. 188.].

In the Caribbean, from August to November 1781, the Spanish fleet in the New World defended French territories in the Antilles, such as Haiti, Dominica, etc. Especially when the Yorktown campaign was about to unfold, according to the plan, a French expeditionary force commanded by Admiral de Grasse, moved to Yorktown to join forces with Washington's army. On their way, the French army's forces ran out of funds and had to halt in Havana. In order to provide timely reinforcements to the French army on the remaining journey to Yorktown, Francisco Miranda, a Spanish who lived here for 6 hours, borrowed 500,000 pesos from Havana merchants. Thanks to this funding, General de Grass's army reached the Chesapeake Bay in time. As a result, the French expeditionary force defeated the British fleet commanded by General Thomas Graves in order to relieve the siege on General Cornwallis' army from retreating by sea. In October 1781, Cornwallis had to lay down his arms. Also during the Battle of Yorktown in 1781, with the help of the Spanish Minister of Finance, Francisco de Saavedra (1746-1819), 5,000,000 livres were donated in Cuba (a Spanish colony) within 24 hours. The money was used to purchase essential supplies for the battle and support the troops in the Continental Army in North America [Dull, 1975, p. 245].

In 1782, the commander of the Spanish army in Cuba, General Juan Manuel de Cagigal led a fleet of 64 ships to capture New Providence in the Bahamas. On May 7, 1782, Spanish troops took control of the island. In addition, General J. M. Cagigal coordinated with the French forces to capture British-controlled positions to gain the initiative in the Caribbean battlefield, thereby establishing key positions in the West Indies, proceeding to dominate British trade with the North American market and weakening the British military's capabilities. At the same time, these positions served as a barrier to prevent the British from retreating from the North American battlefield and to intercept any reinforcements coming from the home country.

In addition to the main fronts, Spain attacked the British in other areas, such as Honduras, Jamaica, the Philippine Islands, the Galápagos, Juan Fernández, ...

It could be said that their range of operations only had the effect of dispersing British forces in other battlefields, preventing the British troops from concentrating all their strength in North America, and causing difficulties for the American revolutionary army. On the other hand, the operation across the battlefields made British commanders become passive in response and limited to their flexibility in deploying troops. This indirectly aided the American revolutionary forces in their pursuit of their just cause. Meanwhile, Spain achieved its objective of pushing the British out of Florida, Minorca and Central America.

CONCLUSION

The war of independence of the North American inhabitants against Britain created an opportunity for Spain to address many objectives in its relationship with Britain. However, choosing the method of support, the time of involvement in the confrontation with Britain in the American context was not easy. The steps taken by the Madrid authorities, if not carefully calculated, could have had unforeseen consequences. Under the watchful eye of King Carlos III of Spain, hastily and openly intervening in the internal war within the British Empire, siding with the North American colonies, would have set a bad precedent for Spain's own colonies in the New World. It could have also provided a justification for Britain to declare war when Spain was not thoroughly prepared. Furthermore, complications in resolving relations with Portugal also caused Carlos to hesitate and waver. In such a situation, King Carlos III chose a safe solution for both the nation and the empire by remaining neutral in the current war. The neutral stance was only a facade, as in reality, it quietly and secretly aided the American revolution while causing cracks and fractures in the British Empire. Covert support took place in the form of

credit mobilization, procurement of weapons transported to North America. On the other hand, the colonial officials of the empire always shared aid resources and coordinated military operations both on land and at sea. The movement of each thing or phenomenon always changes its state when a new factor appears. The war between Britain and the North American inhabitants was internationalized with the participation of France. As a neighboring relative, Spain could not stand aside. In other words, Spain's involvement in the current war needed to take place in a different way, in a different state. However, the path to Spain's openly waging war with Britain and indirectly aiding the American revolution was not as straightforward as initially calculated. For the leadership in the government apparatus, every step of Spain's deeper involvement in international relations, particularly with France supporting the struggle of white Americans, must be balanced in terms of interests for the involved players. The price for Spain to abandon neutrality is the default in their subconscious for a long time. It was Gibraltar. In the face of their neighbour's calculations, the French had to satisfy their demands to drag them into the war. It is worth noting that Spain's alignment with France does not mean that the Madrid court was generously supporting the American people's struggle. However, the military actions against Britain on various battlefields indirectly facilitated the progress of the American people's fight. Spain's contribution here is recognized from the perspective of military support.

From being a dominant power in the 16th and 17th centuries, Spain quickly fell to a secondary position in the 18th century. Spain was aware that it was England that had pushed them into this tragedy. Therefore, subconsciously Madrid politicians always seize an opportunity to retaliate against the enemy. The war of independence of the North American inhabitants became an opportunity for them. Taking advantage of England's preoccupation with the rebellion, under the direction of King Carlos III, the Spanish government gradually reclaimed territories such as Florida and Menorca; pushed Britain out of Central America and gaining control over some archipelagos in the Caribbean. These were just locations located outside the territory of the kingdom. Meanwhile, Gibraltar, a strategic location in the south of the country still remained under the ownership of British.

Monitoring Spain's involvement in the American war of independence, an undeniable fact is the contribution of the entire empire, including a significant part of the population living in the Western Hemisphere. This included various groups of people such as: Indians, black people, criollo people, etc. They provided manpower and resources to the war effort in order to satisfy the ambitions and interests of the motherland. The burden of war intensified the conflicts between the American territories under Spanish rule and the monarchy in the metropolis. Along with that, inhabitants of the Americas participated in the military forces of the motherland on battlefields bordering the America, such as Louisiana, Mexico and the Caribbean. In the process, they were attracted by the ideals of freedom and progressive human values pursued by the American soldiers and people. On the other hand, America's victory has become a model followed by the people of the Western Hemisphere. All of this created a powerful impetus and a great source of inspiration for them to rise up and struggle to overthrow the colonial rule of the Western and Central European powers at the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century.

REFERENCES

- Aruga T. *Revolution diplomacy and the Franco-American treaties of 1778*. The Japanese Journal of American Studies, 1985, No 2, p. 59-100.
- Bailey T. *A diplomatic history of the American people*. New York, Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1964.
- Beau M. *Lịch sử chủ nghĩa tư bản 1500 đến 2000 [History of capitalism from 1500 to 2000]*. Hanoi, Thegioi Publ., 2002 (in Vietnamese).
- Bemis S. F. *The diplomacy of the American revolution*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1957.
- Brinkley A. *American history: A survey*. New York, Mc Graw-Hill Higher Education, 2003.
- Chavez. T. E. *Spain and the independence of the United States: An intrinsic gift*. Albuquerque, University of New Mexico press, 2002.
- Cincotta H. *An outline of American History*. United States Department of State, 1994.
- Coble A. *If the Spanish would but join" The forgotten implication of Spanish involvement in the American revolution*. The Osprey Journal of Ideas and Inquiry, 2003. All Volumes (2001-2008).
- Commager H.S. *Documents of American History*. New York, Appleton-Century-Crofts, Division of Meredith Corporation, 1963.
- Corbett P. C. et al. *U.S. History*. OpenStax, Rice University. 2017.
- Cummins L.T. *The Gálvez family and Spanish participation in the independence of the United States*. Revista Complutense de Historia de América, 2006. Vol. 32, p. 179-196.
- Davies N. *Lịch sử châu Âu [History of Europe]*, Hanoi, Tu dien Bach khoa Publ. (in Vietnamese).
- DeConde A. *A History of American Foreign Policy*, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1979, Vol 1: Growth to world power.
- Dull J. R. *A Diplomatic History of the American Revolution*. New Haven and London, Yale University press, 1985
- Ferrell R. *American Diplomacy: A History*, New York, W.W. Norton & Company. Inc, 1975.
- Finding J.E. *Dicionary of American Diplomatic History*. Westport, Conn, Greenwood Press, 1980.
- Gottschalk L, Lach D. *Europe and the Modern World*. Chicago, Scott, Foresman and Company, 1951.
- Granville W. Hough N.C. *Spain's Texas patriots in its 1779 – 1783 war with England during the American revolution, Part 5: of Spanish borderlands studies*. Shhar press, 2000.
- Hargreaves-Madwsley W.N. *Spain under the Bourbon, 1700 – 1833: A Collection of Documents*. Macmillan & Co Ltd, 1968.
- Hargreaves-Mawdsley W.N. *Eighteenth-century Spain 1700-1789: A Political, Diplomatic and Institutional History*. The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1979.
- Hutson J.H. *The partition treaty and the Declaration of American Independence*. Journal of American History. March 1972, vol. 58 (4), p. 877-896.
- James J.A. *Spanish influence in the west during the American Revolution*. The Mississippi Valley Historical Review, 1917, Vol. 4, No.2, p. 193-208.
- Kisingger H. *Word order: Reflections on the characters of nations and the course of history*. USA, Penguin press, 2014.
- Mahan A.T. *The influence of sea power upon history 1660-1783*, Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1918.
- McCarthy C. *The attitude of Spain during the American Revolution*. The Catholic Historical Review. 1916. Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 47-65.
- Morison S. E. *The Oxford history of the American people*. New York, Oxford University Press, 1965, Vol. 1: prehistory to 1789.
- Paterson T., Clifford J. G., & Hagan K. J. *American foreign relations: A history to 1920*. Lexington, D.C Heath and Company, 1995.
- Perkins J. B. *France in the American Revolution*, Boston and New York, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1911.
- Perkins B. *The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, Vol. 1: The creation of a republican empire, 1776-1865.

- Renouf S. *Spain in the American Revolution*. Trustee, SAR Spain society.
- Reparaz C. *I alone: Bernardo de Galvez and taking of Pensacola in 1781: A Spanish contribution to the independence of the United States*. Madrid, Ediciones de Culture Hispánica, 1993.
- Robertson J. A. *Spanish correspondence concerning the American Revolution*. The Hispanish American Historical review, 1918, Vol. 1, p. 299-315.
- James J.A. *Spanish influence in the West during the American Revolution*. The Mississippi Valley Historical Review, 1917, Vol. 4, No.2, p. 193-208.
- Smyth A.H. *The Writings of Benjamin Franklin: Collected and edited with a life and introduction*. London, Macmillan & Co., Ltd, 1906, Vol. 5: 1767-1772.
- Stavridis J.G. *Quyền lực trên biển [Sea power]*. Hanoi, Chinh tri quoc gia su that Publ., 2020 (in Vietnamese).
- Thonhoff R. H. *The vital contribution of Spain in the winning of the American Revolution*. 2006.
- Yaniz J. I. *The role of Spain in the American revolution: An unavoidable strategic mistake*. Master of military studies, United States Marines Corps, Marine Corps University, 2009.
- Ward. H. M. *The American Revolution nationhood achieved, 1763-1788*. New York, St. Martin's Press, Inc, 1995.
- Wirt W. *Sketches of the life and character of Patrick Henry*, Hartford, Silas Andrus & Son, 1852.
- Wright, JR J. L. *Florida in the American Revolution*, Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 1975.

Received: August 11, 2023

Accepted: November 6, 2023

Published: June 23, 2024

INFORMATION ABOUT THE AUTHORS / ИНФОРМАЦИЯ ОБ АВТОРАХ

NAM Le Thanh, Assoc.Prof. (History),
Lecturer, Head of Division of World History,
Faculty of History, University of Education,
Hue University, Hue, Vietnam.

SANG Nguyen Van, PhD (History), Lecturer,
Vice Head of Department, University of Science
and Education, The University of Danang,
Danang, Vietnam.