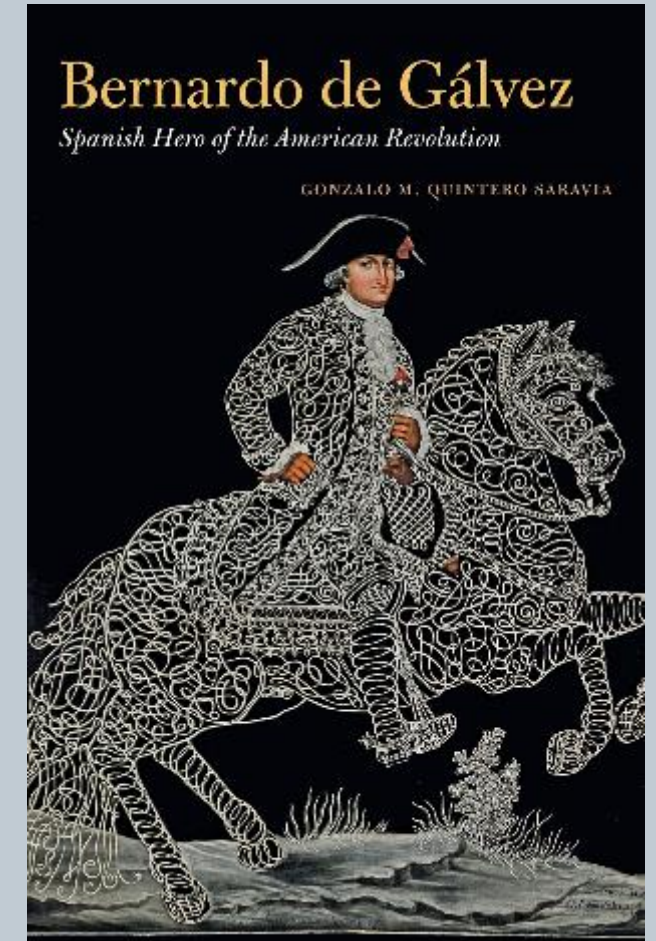
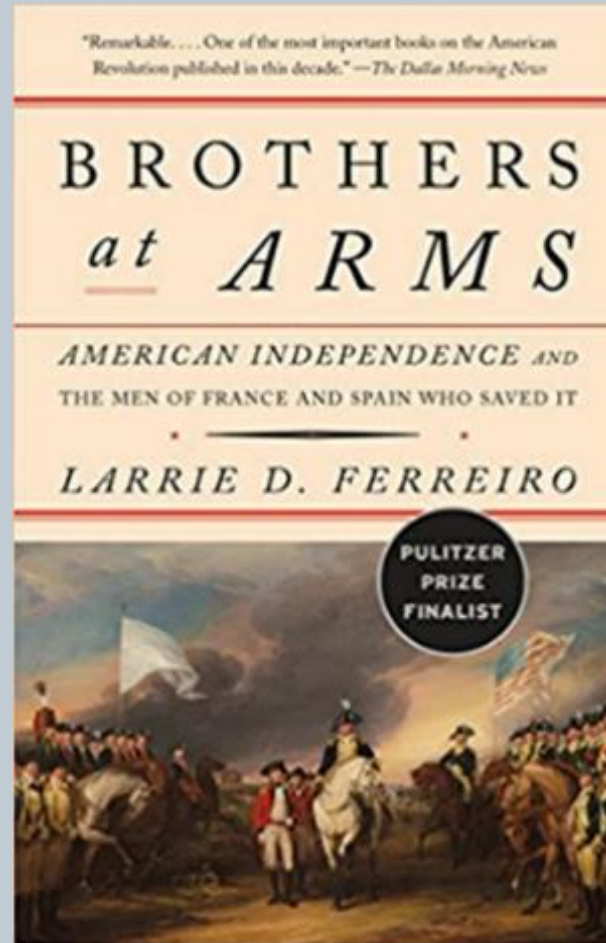
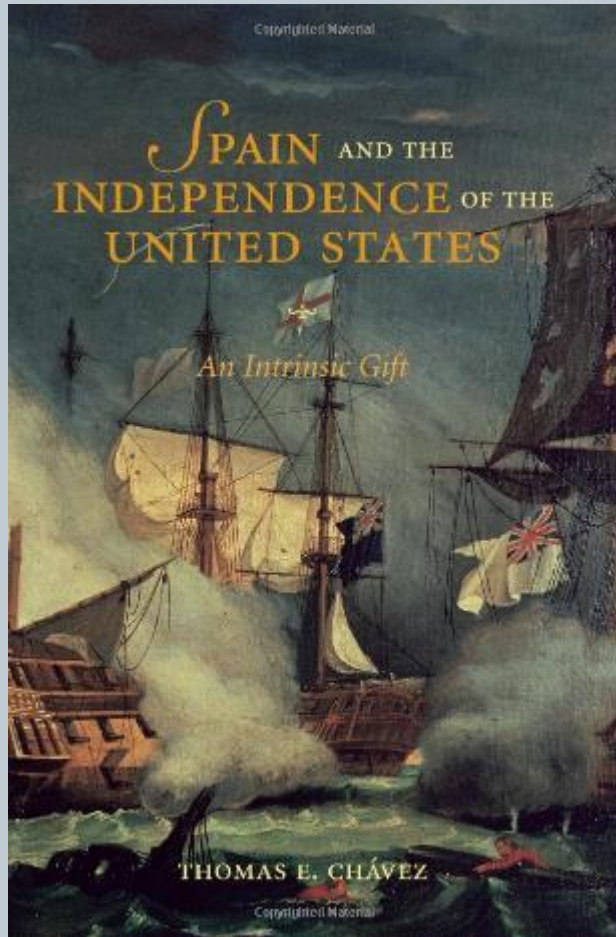


The Critical Role of Spain during the American Revolution

SOCIETY OF CINCINNATI / GUNSTON HALL TEACHERS WORKSHOP 2024



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Bourbon Family Compacts

Spanish and French kings were both descended from French king Louis XIV

French and Spanish thrones linked both by family and by need to defend against a common adversary, Britain

Bourbon Family Compacts (Pactos de Familia) were a series of agreements signed between 1733 and 1792, pledging mutual support and cooperation.

Similar to a NATO before NATO



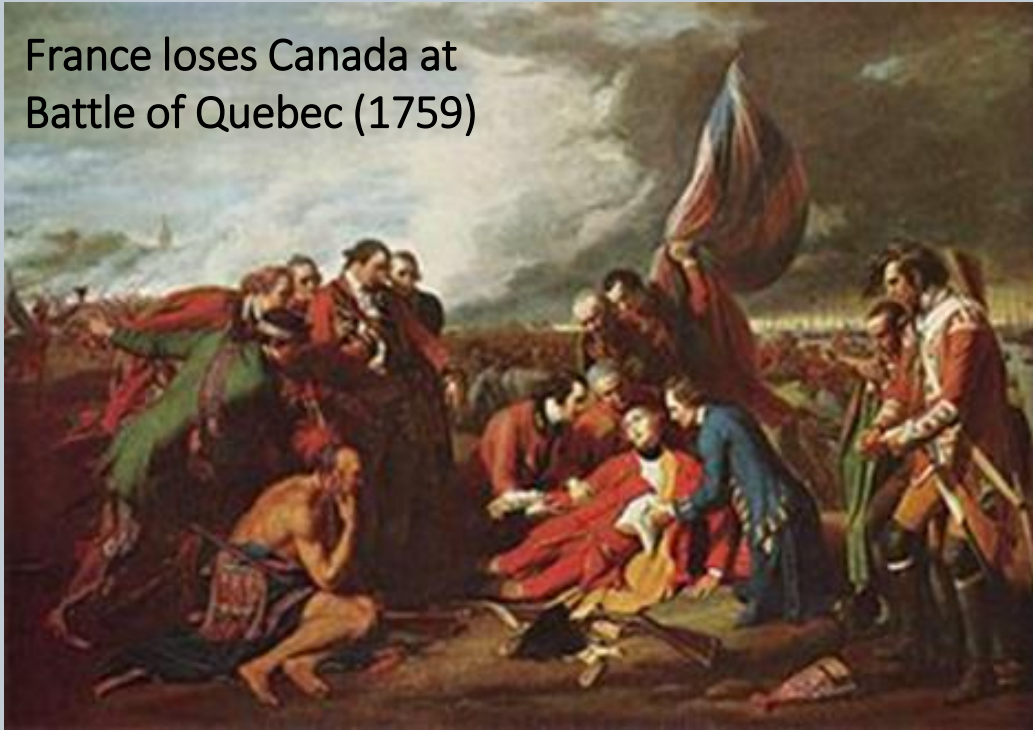
Carlos III, Rey de España



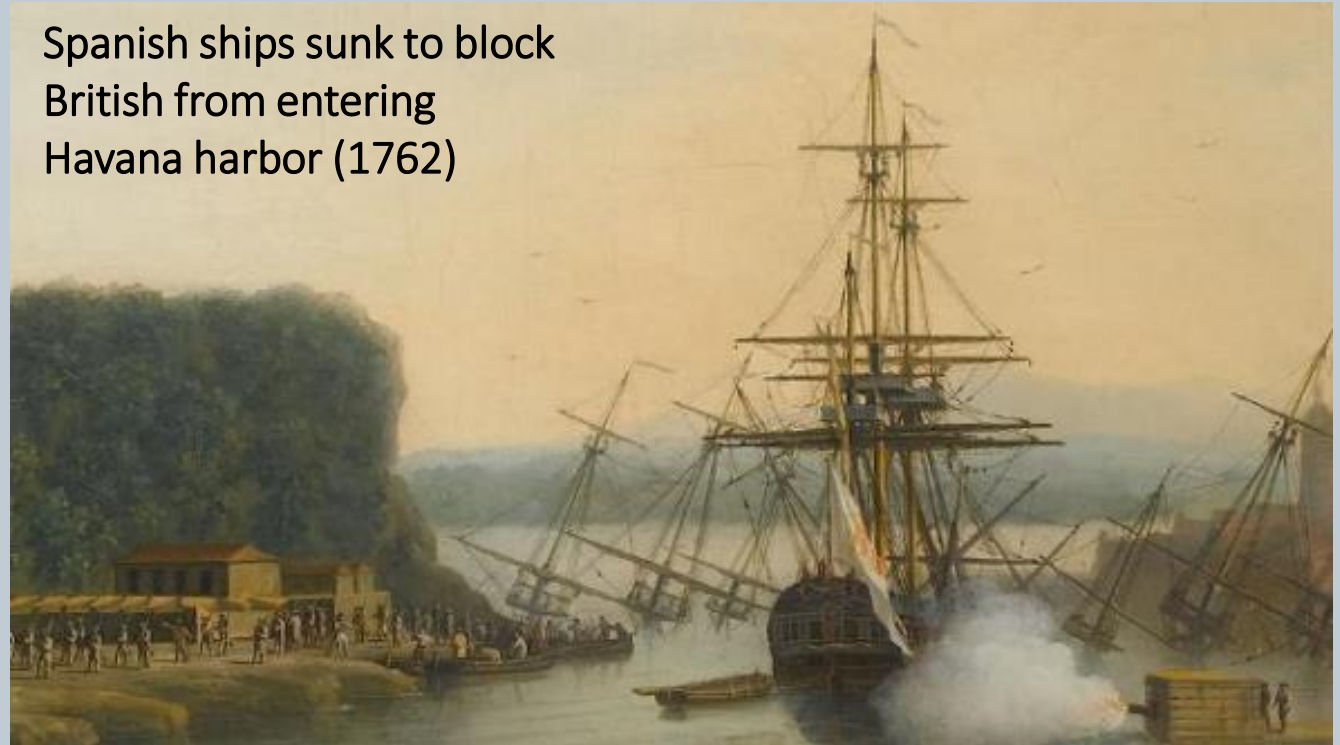
Louis XVI, Roi de France

The Seven Years' War, 1754-1763

France loses Canada at
Battle of Quebec (1759)



Spanish ships sunk to block
British from entering
Havana harbor (1762)



The Seven Years' War resulted in France losing Canada, Spain losing Florida, and the British navy severely weakening the navies of both nations

France and Spain reordered their alliance (Bourbon Family Compact) to a strategy of *revanche* (*venganza*) against Britain

The new strategy called for rebuilding a combined Bourbon navy that, together, could defeat the British navy, and threaten the British empire

Revanche (venganza) and American Independence

France and Spain also counted on a revolution in America as part of their war plans with Britain

“Only the future American Revolution will consign England to a state of weakness”

- Duc de Choiseul, 1767

Americans asked merchants like Diego de Gardoqui to supply arms, uniforms and gunpowder

Continental Congress knew that France and Spain wanted revenge for the Seven Years' War, and wrote Declaration of Independence to ask them to join in the fight



Diego de Gardoqui



The Declaration of Independence, 1776:
A Call to Arms to France and Spain

The Treaty of Aranjuez, 1779



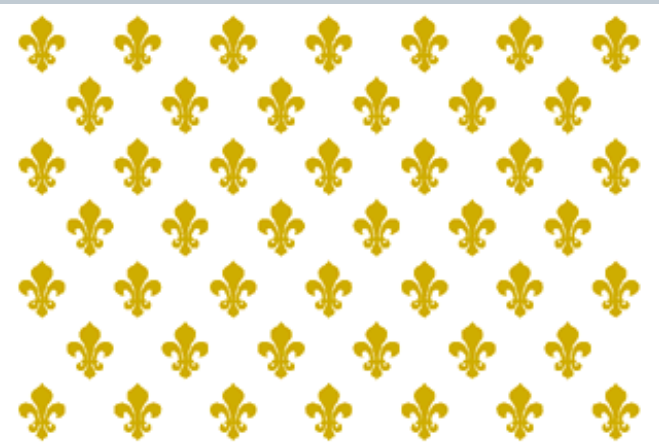
France was also supplying arms to Americans, but by 1777, it was obvious that the United States needed a direct military alliance, and powerful naval forces to counter the British

France allied with United States in 1778, but Spain waited until silver fleets returned, before it joined the war

Treaty of Aranjuez (April 1779) reaffirmed Bourbon Compacts, brought Spain into war alongside France, unleashed lightning attacks on British interests

No direct Spanish alliance with United States, but Spain agreed to fight until Britain recognized its sovereignty

The entry of Spain into the war was the crucial step that caused Britain to lose control of the seas, which led to its defeat



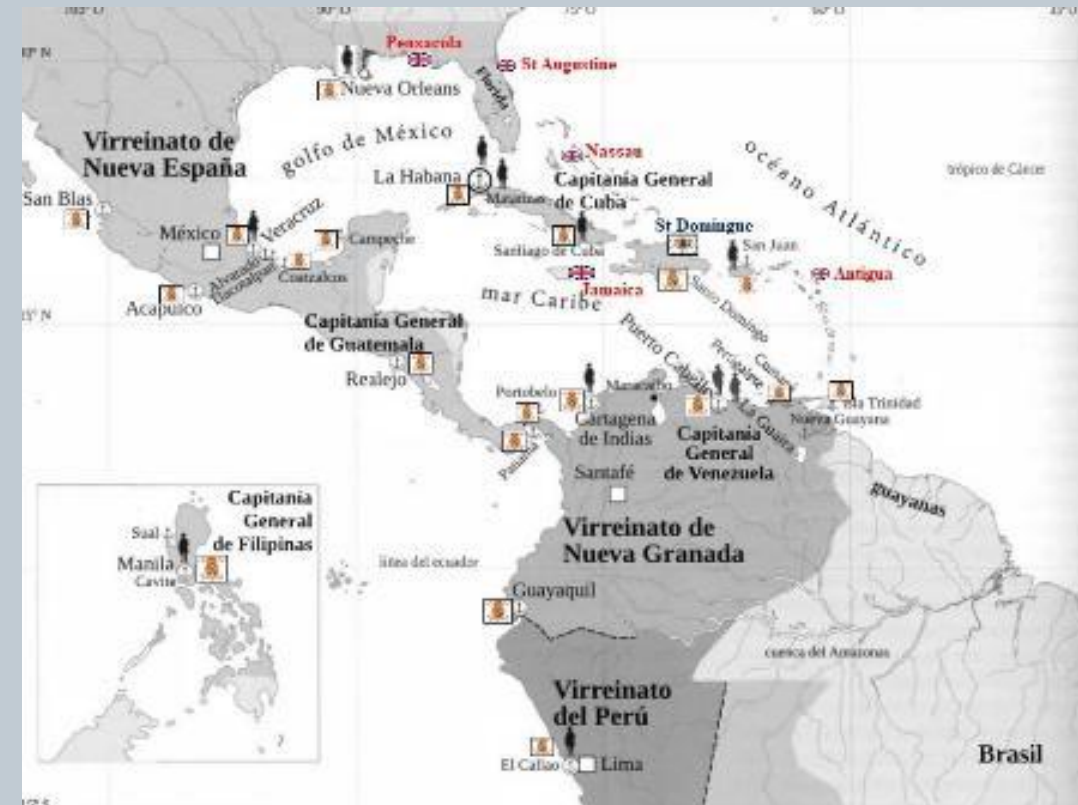
Why did Spain enter the war?



Spain's territorial objectives in war:

- Recover Gibraltar and Menorca
- Recover Florida and reclaim Gulf of Mexico as a Spanish lake

Gulf of Mexico was critical to Spain's economy – trade from Asia flowed through there.



Bernardo de Gálvez and the Gulf of Mexico

Bernardo de Gálvez (born 1746) from powerful Gálvez family: uncle José de Gálvez was Minister of Indies, father Matías de Gálvez governor of Guatemala

Bernardo soared through ranks: soldier age 16, commander age 24, governor of Louisiana age 31

July 1779: News of Treaty of Aranjuez arrives in New Orleans; Gálvez organizes 667 troops including Americans and First Nation Indians

Sept. 1779: Capture of Fort Bute, Baton Rouge and Natchez

March 1780: Capture of Mobile



“Yo solo”, pero no solamente yo

March 1781: After delays by hurricanes, Spanish fleet launched from Cuba arrives at Pensacola, capital of British West Florida

Battle of Pensacola begins when Gálvez leads Spanish force in his sloop *Galveztown* (“yo solo”)

Two-month siege supported by Spanish and French troops under José de Solano y Bote and Chevalier de Monteil (no solamente yo)

Victory in May 1781, British driven out from West Florida



Saavedra and De Grasse, 1781

French fleet under De Grasse arrives in Caribbean while Battle of Pensacola is being fought

July 1781 – De Grasse tells Spanish envoy Saavedra that he must leave Caribbean to assist Washington and Rochambeau at Yorktown

Saavedra agrees to have Spanish navy guard the French colonies

De Grasse brings entire fleet to Chesapeake Bay, to assure Allied victory over British general Cornwallis



Francisco de Saavedra



François-Joseph Paul,
Comte de Grasse

Battles of the Chesapeake and Yorktown, 1781

De Grasse defeated British fleet off the Chesapeake in September 1781. This was only possible because he had his entire fleet in strength. And that was only because of Spanish victory at Pensacola

Without British naval support, Cornwallis was trapped by Washington and Rochambeau. He surrendered on 19 October 1781, but the war was not yet over.

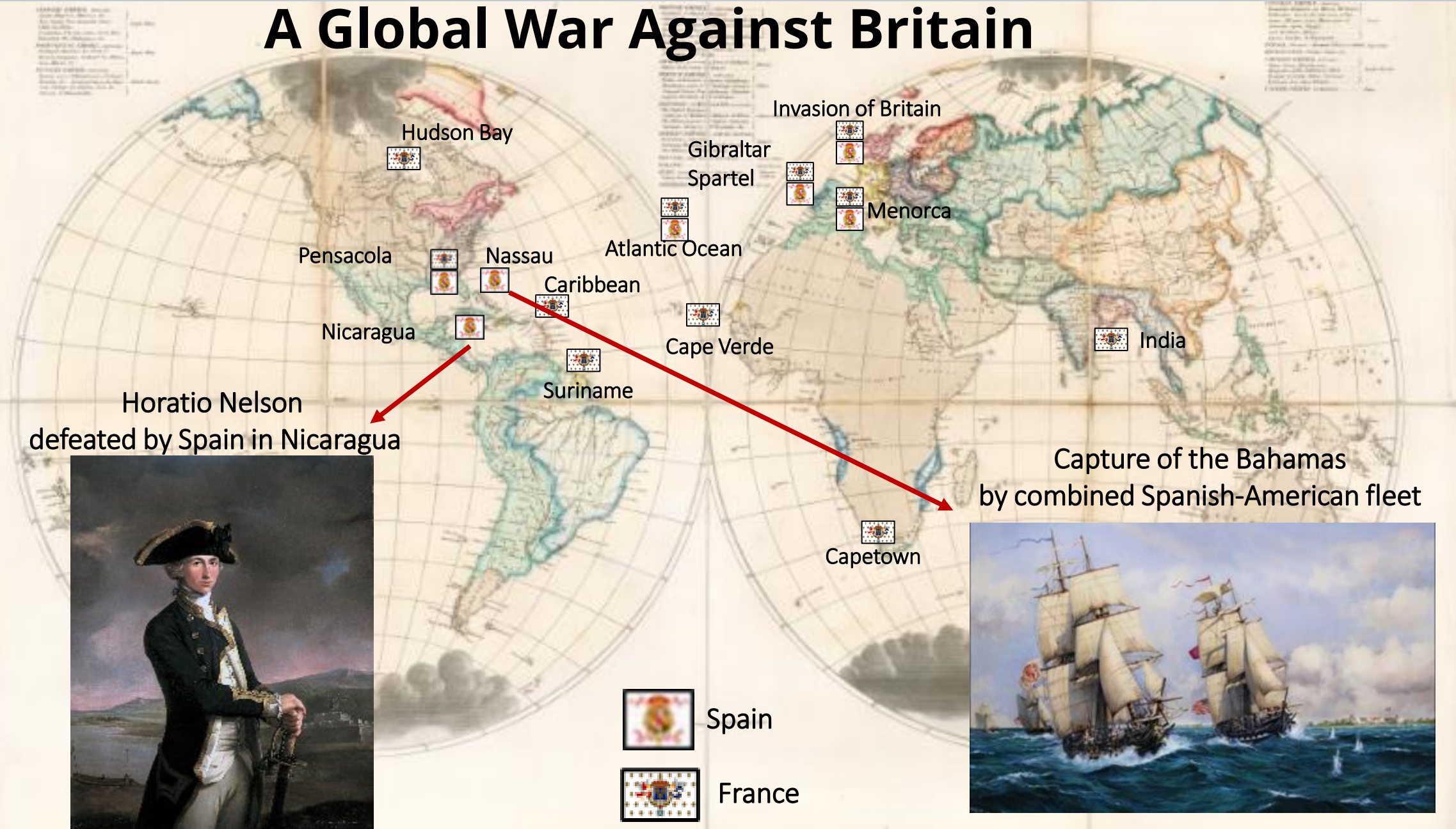


Battle of the Chesapeake,
September 1781



Surrender of British at Yorktown,
October 1781

A Global War Against Britain



Battle for Gibraltar, 1779-1782

Siege of Gibraltar began in 1779

June 1782: Duc de Crillon given command of joint Spanish-French force to assault British fortifications by land and sea, including French-designed floating batteries

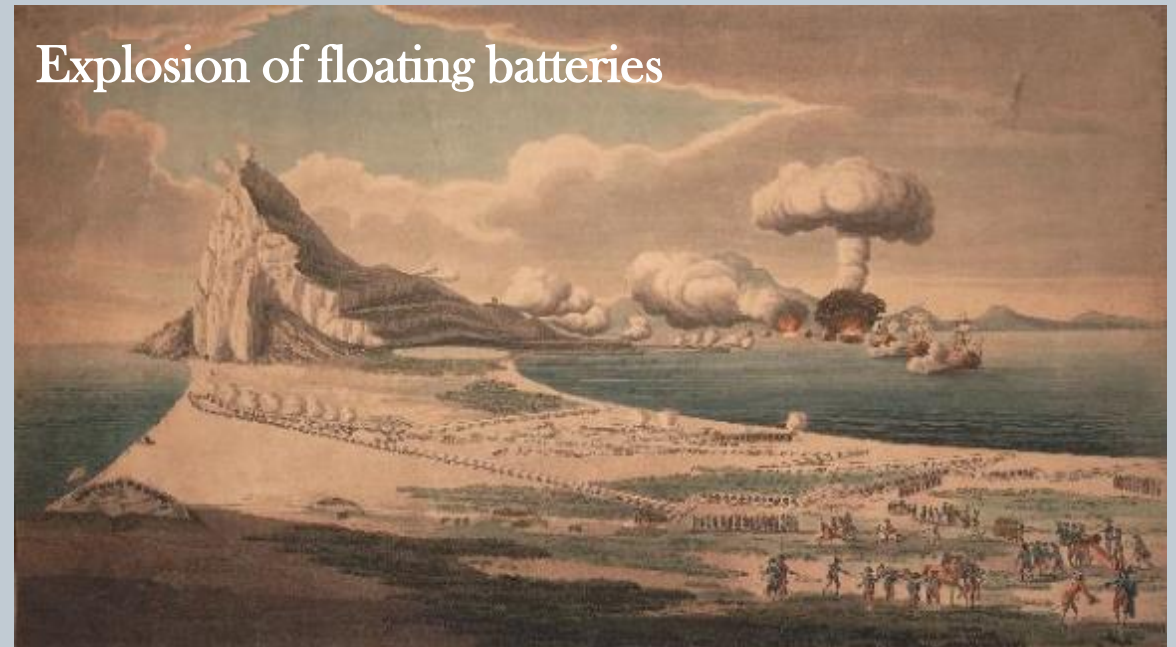
September 13, 1782: Assault lobs 40,000 artillery rounds, fails to dislodge British

Floating batteries set afire and explode

Gibraltar resupplied and remains in British hands

Final battle between Britain and Bourbon

Armada fought in October 1782 off Cape Spartel, within sight of Cape Trafalgar



War of American Independence by the numbers

Number of military personnel engaged in the war

	Estimated Total	Comments
USA	250,000	Mostly Army in USA
Spain	100,000	Army and Navy in Europe and Americas
France	100,000	Mostly Navy, around the world
Britain	230,000	100,000 Navy 50,000 Army in USA 80,000 Army elsewhere

Number of ships of the line*

	Britain	France	Spain	Combined
1776	117	59	64	---
1781	117	70	59	129
1783	137	62	61	123

*US Continental Navy had none

For a brief but crucial period, the British Navy was outnumbered, outgunned and outclassed

Treaties of Versailles and Paris, 1783



Benjamin West, *American Commissioners of the Preliminary Peace Agreement with Great Britain*

By 1781, Britain was fighting five separate nation-states (Spain, France, United States, Netherlands, Mysore) but without any allies of its own

Combined Spanish and French navies had overwhelmed the British navy

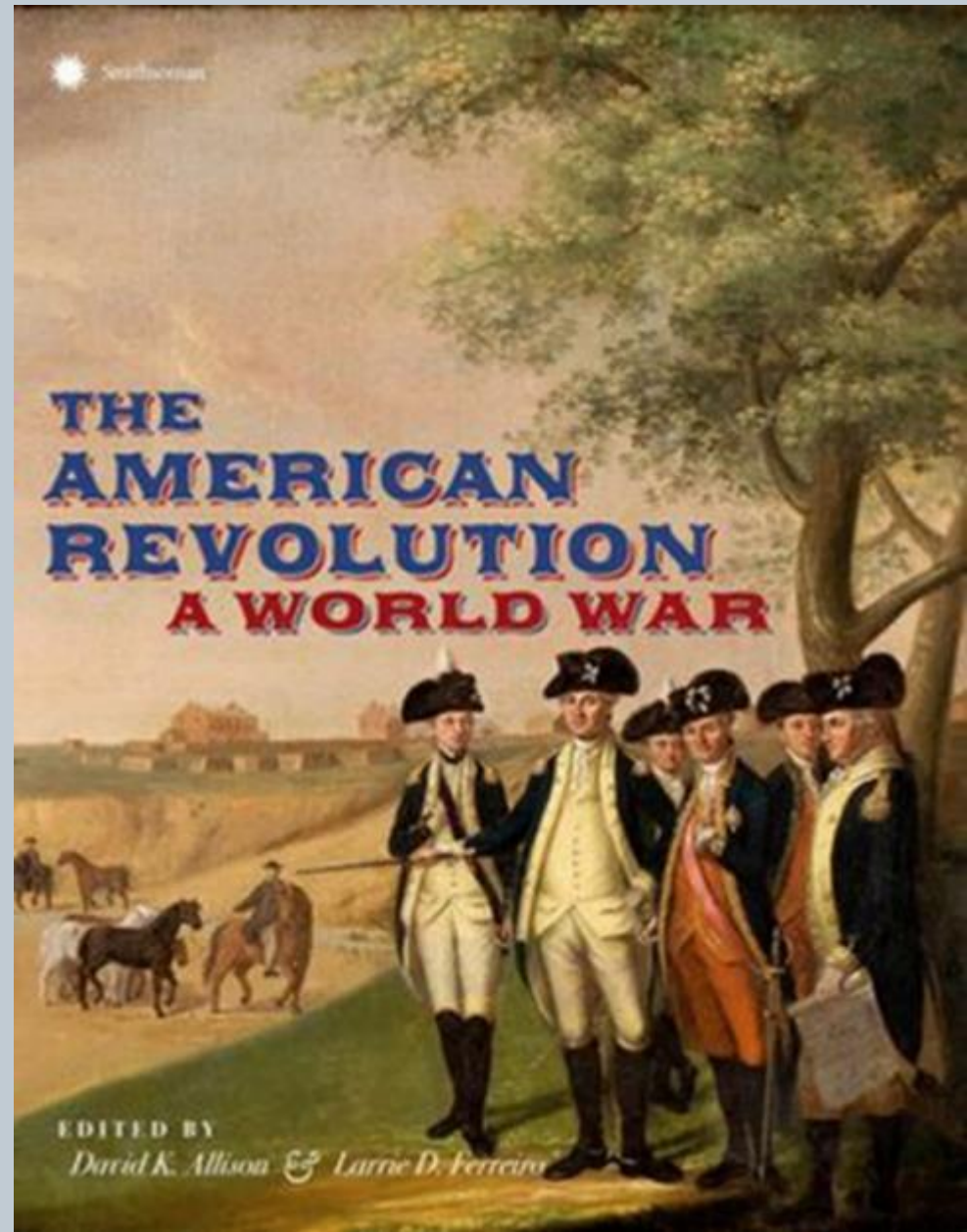
Peace treaties signed at Versailles and Paris, September 1783

Spain recovered Florida and Menorca, but not Gibraltar

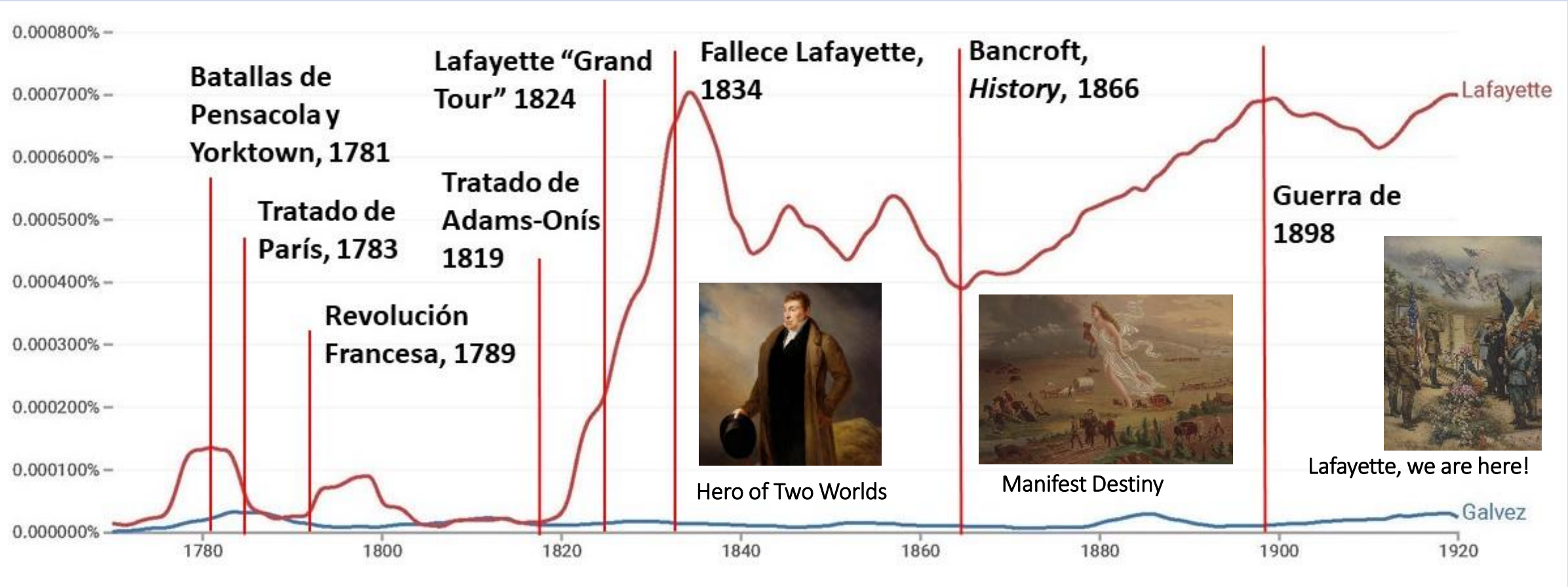
From 1776 to 1783, over 200,000 French and Spanish fought in the war that saved American independence

America could never have won the war without France and Spain

Questions?



When was the Spanish-American partnership left out of American history books?



When did it begin to return?

