

The basics:

- 10 to 15 page research paper
- Any American economic history topic you want
- You should be attempting to answer a specific question, not just providing a general overview of a topic
- You need to provide original empirical evidence supporting your arguments
- Today I'll talk about what makes a good topic, basic research advice, and what makes a good paper
- Don't hesitate to get feedback from me throughout the process of writing the paper

Choosing a Topic

- The first step to a good paper is choosing a good question
- You want to come up with a focused question
- Take a look through the journal articles on the syllabus and notice that they tackle fairly narrow, well defined questions
- Your question should be testable, a major point of the paper is providing the empirical evidence to answer your question

Choosing a Topic

Some previous topics that led to good papers:

- Effects of Agricultural Act spending on farm size and mechanization
- Revisiting the social savings of the Panama Canal
- The economic interests of Northern manufacturers and motivations behind the Civil War
- Declining marriage rates and the increasing economic opportunities of women
- The Jefferson Embargo and its effects on the development of industries
- Has the military provided net positive economic benefits to San Diego?
- The Voting Rights Act of 1965 and Southern Education

Original empirical evidence

- Use of original empirical evidence is required
- This can mean using existing data in a way that it hasn't been used before
- This can also mean gathering new data that has never been used before
- Empirical evidence is broadly defined, it can include creating tables, graphs, running regressions, and even comparing and contrasting primary documents
- The key is that you can't simply reproduce analysis that somebody else has already done
- This is the hardest aspect of the paper and what tends to distinguish A papers from other papers

Components of a good paper

A good paper typically has the following components:

- An interesting, well-focused and well-motivated question
- A good review of the existing literature related to the question (including how your paper fits into that literature)
- The presentation and analysis of empirical evidence well suited to answering the question
- Careful interpretation of results (including limitations of results)
- Clear writing

Citations

- Everything has to be properly cited in the paper (nothing new there)
- You can use any standard citation format you are comfortable with (MLA, APA, ...)
- Use either parenthetical, in-text citations or footnotes throughout the paper
- You should have complete bibliographical information for all of your sources at the end of the paper
- What may be new to you is citing databases and data pulled from websites
- Here is a useful website for citation formats:

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/1/>

Deadlines

- **February 23:** class session in Special Collections
- **February 29:** must discuss topic with me by this date
- **April 11:** literature review and data discussion is due
- **May 8:** final version of paper is due at 5pm

Note that no extensions will be given. If a paper is submitted after the deadline but within 24 hours of the deadline, the equivalent of a plus or minus will be deducted (A to A-, A- to B+, and so on). If it is submitted between 24 and 48 hours late, a full letter grade will be deducted (A to B, A- to B-, and so on). Papers more than 48 hours late will not be accepted.

- See the research paper guidelines pdf for some good starting places for economic history research
- Today we'll go over a few different useful tools:
 - EH.net
 - Historical Statistics of the United States
 - Google Scholar
 - Google Books
 - Measuring Worth

Economics and Independence

IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776.

The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America.

1871, and in the course of several months, I have seen and heard of nothing but the political frauds, which have been and are being perpetrated, among the people of this State, and the country at large, and which I believe will result in a total annihilation of the principles of republicanism, and the ruin of the Republic. I have seen and heard of nothing but the political frauds, which have been and are being perpetrated, among the people of this State, and the country at large, and which I believe will result in a total annihilation of the principles of republicanism, and the ruin of the Republic. I have seen and heard of nothing but the political frauds, which have been and are being perpetrated, among the people of this State, and the country at large, and which I believe will result in a total annihilation of the principles of republicanism, and the ruin of the Republic.

[illegible]

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness....”

“For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world”

“For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent”

Economics and Independence



The Costs and Benefits of Empire Membership

- Being of part of the British Empire had its advantages and disadvantages
- Many of the economic benefits and costs of membership arose from British mercantilist policies
- Most of these policies were contained in the Acts of Trade and Navigation
- The passage of these acts began in 1651 and continued to be modified and expanded until the 1840s
- The acts severely restricted the ways in which the colonies could trade with Britain and other countries

The Costs and Benefits of Empire Membership

The main provisions of the Navigation Acts:

- All trade of the colonies was to be carried in vessels built, owned and commanded by English or colonialists
- All foreign trade with the colonies had to be conducted through England
- Specific enumerated goods could be exported only to England (these included tobacco, sugar, cotton and other goods)

The Costs and Benefits of Empire Membership

First, the benefits of being part of the British Empire:

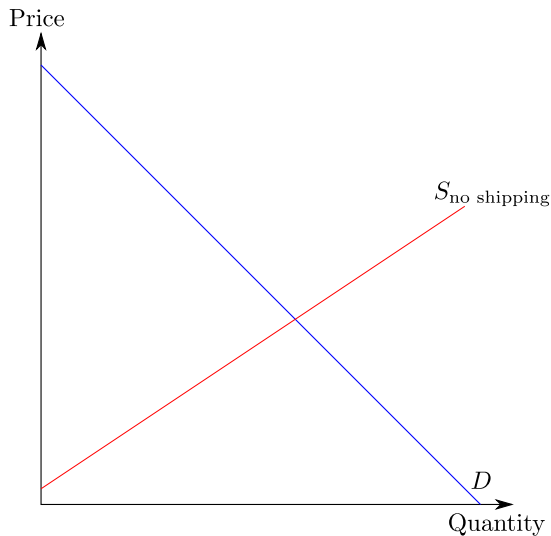
- Military protection (important to protect naval trade and important because of the threat of the French in North America)
- Protection of growing industries from foreign competition
- Subsidies for particular colonial products (indigo, lumber)
- Protection in the British domestic market

The Costs and Benefits of Empire Membership

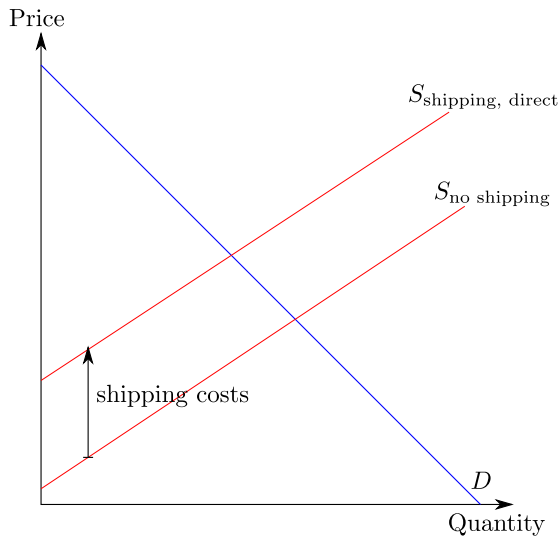
Now for the costs of being part of the British Empire:

- Having to transport enumerated goods through England before selling them to the rest of Europe increased shipping costs, leading to lower prices received for exports and lower quantities of exports
- Imports having to pass through England before reaching the colonies increased the price of imports and decreased the quantities of imports
- The need for Britain to generate revenue to pay off public debt led to additional tax burdens on the colonies

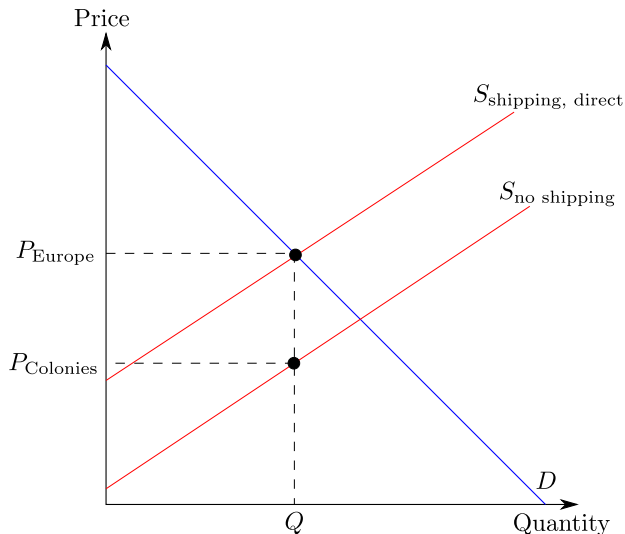
The Burden of the Navigation Acts on Exports



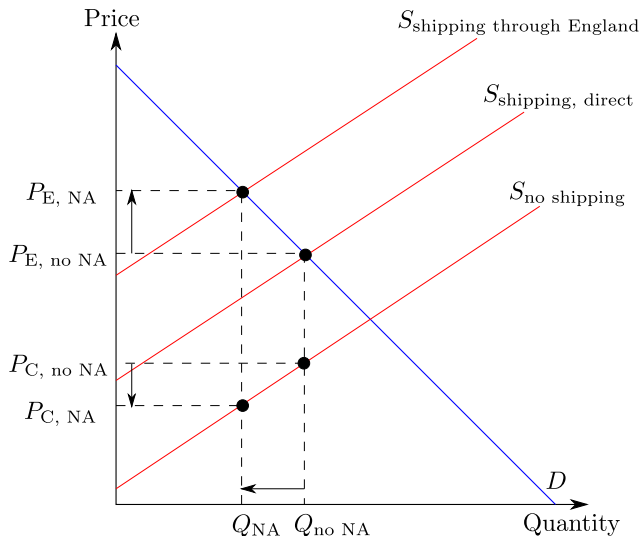
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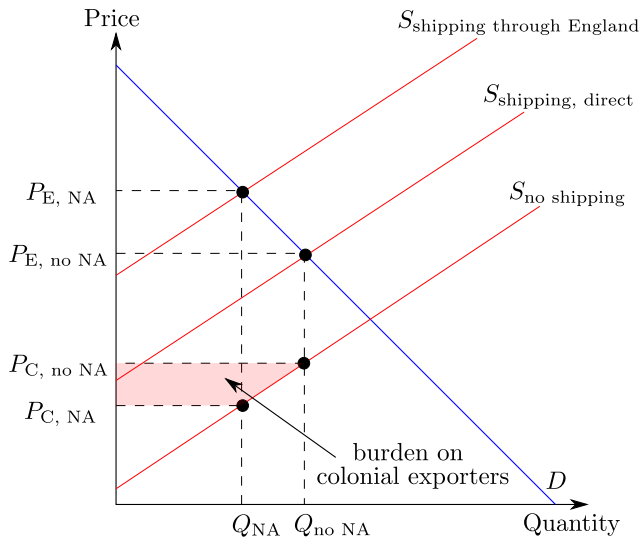
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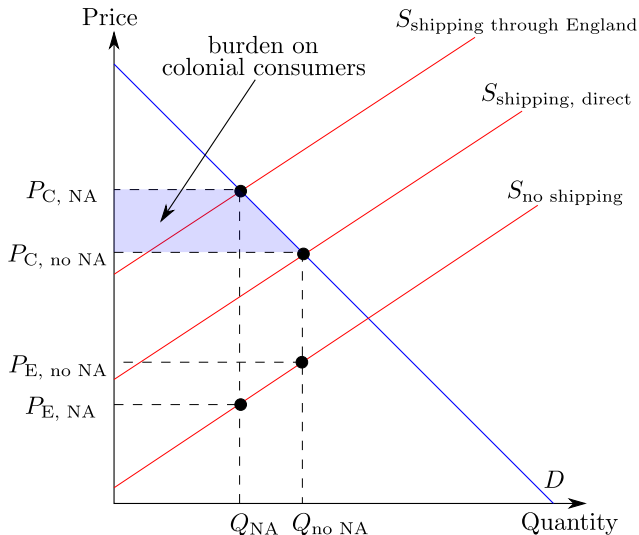
The Burden of the Navigation Acts on Exports



The Burden of the Navigation Acts on Exports



The Burden of the Navigation Acts on Imports



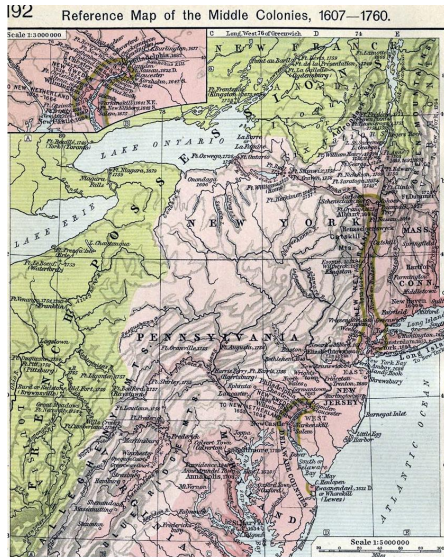
Quantifying the Benefits and Costs of Empire Membership

- It's clear that the Navigation Acts affected the colonial economy, but how big was the impact?
- If the burdens of empire membership were small, economics probably had little to do with revolution
- However, if the burdens were large they may have driven revolution
- Robert Paul Thomas set out to quantify just how much being under British rule cost the colonies

Quantifying the Costs of the Navigation Acts

- Thomas focuses on the effects of the Navigation Acts for 1763-1772
- He argues that in earlier periods, the benefits greatly outweighed the costs because of the need for protection
- He also argues that the Navigation Acts imposed a much larger economic burden than other restrictions (the Revenue Acts, land regulations, interference with colonial issues of paper money, regulations discouraging manufactures)

The Threat of the French



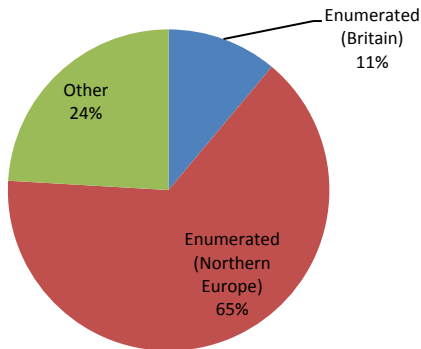
Quantifying the Costs of the Navigation Acts

Thomas splits up the problem into several pieces:

- ① the effects of regulations on exports of colonial products
- ② the effects of regulations on imports into the colonies
- ③ colonial foreign commerce
- ④ colonial shipping earnings
- ⑤ the compensating benefits of being in the British Empire

The Effects on Exports of Colonial Products

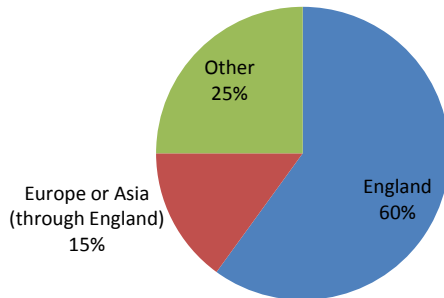
Colonial Exports, 1770



The Effects on Exports of Colonial Products

- The added transportation costs on enumerated goods lowered the price received by the colonies and the quantities sold
- How large these effects were depended on the supply and demand elasticities
- Tobacco as an example:
 - Thomas estimates that the colonial price would have been 34 percent higher under independence
 - He assumes that supply would have increased by one percent for every percent increase in price
 - These estimates put the lost surplus of tobacco growers around 64,000 pounds for 1770
- Thomas also calculates the benefits from bounties and preferential duties

Sources of Colonial Goods



The Effects on Imports

- Same approach as exports, you need to estimate supply and demand elasticities
- Tea and pepper were the two main imports in determining the size of the burden
- Thomas finds that the prices for these goods would have been 16 percent lower under independence

Estimating the Value of Military Protection

- One of the biggest benefits of the British Empire was military protection
- Thomas figured that the colonies would have needed to maintain a standing army of 5,000 men
- To estimate the value of naval protection, Thomas looks at the rise in shipping insurance rates
- Insurance rates were around 3.5 to 7 percent when protected by the British navy and rose as high as 28 percent without those protections

The Costs and Benefits of Empire Membership

Summary of Costs and Burdens (Thomas, 1965)

	1763-1772	1770
Burden on foreign commerce	\$2,255,000	\$2,660,000
Burden per capita	\$1.20	\$1.24
Benefit of British protection	\$1,775,000	\$1,755,000
Benefit per capita	\$0.94	\$0.82
Balance	(\$0.26)	(\$0.42)

Colonial per capita income at the time was roughly \$100.