

Military Aspects of the War

Colonial America and the Continental Army

Military Leader- General George Washington (Commander in Chief, 1775-1783)

Allies- Primarily the French, many individual Foreign volunteers (officers)

Advantages

- Outstanding leadership (civil and military)
- Strong motivation- fighting for ability to think freely, make own laws, and govern themselves
- Fighting on home soil- know the territory, especially the frontier
- Experienced officers (French and Indian War)

Disadvantages

- Inexperienced and undisciplined army and militia
- Short enlistments- often only 3 to 12 months
- New navy- few ships to defend coastline
- Constant shortages- money, arms, food, clothing, medicine
- Near bankrupt treasury- printed continental money not backed by gold/silver (inflation)
- Loyalist vs. Patriots (neighbor vs. neighbor)

Great Britain and the British Army/Navy

Military leader- General William Howe (Commander in Chief, 1775-78)
General Henry Clinton (Commander in Chief, 1778-83)

Allies- hired German soldiers (Hessians), and Loyalists in the colonies (20 to 30% of the Americans)

Advantages

- Military power- strongest army and navy in the world
- Superior numbers- outnumber Americans in most battles
- Indian Support- Native Americans fearful of losing more land to the colonists
- Loyalist cooperation- almost serve as spies

Disadvantages

- Motivation- not fighting for a cause
- Non-aggressive officers- failed to press advantages when existed
- Distance- 3,000 miles from British home base
- Vast land and coastline (may conquer areas but difficult to hold)
- Easy targets (red uniforms, classic military tactics, closed ranks)
- European aid to Americans, specifically the French