

MILITARY COMPARISON AND THE THREE STAGES OF THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

I. Brief Military comparison

A. Factors favoring Britain

1. British government resources are inexhaustible by colonial standards.
2. British government much more stable.
3. British had a veteran army.
4. Veteran officers.
5. US Second Continental Congress young, inexperienced by British standards, not ready to fight a war by any means
6. Continental Army was small and poorly supplied.
7. England had world's greatest navy.
8. Britain had substantial support within colonies.
9. John Adams said that:
 - a. 1/3 of colonists actively support revolution
 - b. 1/3 are neutral or indifferent.
 - c. 1/3 actively Loyalist.

B. Factors favoring the Rebels

1. US had advantage of fighting on home soil.
2. UK troops needed weeks, sometimes months to get troops and supplies to America.
3. US troops more motivated than their counterparts: Fighting for independence from Britain.
4. British Army a mercenary army.
5. British officers were aristocrats; they bought their rank and were adventure seekers.
6. Washington good leader

II. THE NEW ENGLAND PHASE: April 1775-Spring 1776

A. Battles of **Lexington and Concord** (18-19 April 1775).

B. Washington's **Siege of Boston** (April 1775 to 7-17 March 1776).

1. Washington's men forced the British to evacuate Boston by placing captured cannon from Fort Ticonderoga on Dorchester Heights near Boston.

C. Failed **Invasion of Canada** (Fall-Winter 1775)

1. US tries to expand into Canada.
2. Two-pronged invasion force:
3. Gen. Richard Montgomery takes the Lake Champlain route, and captures Montreal (13 Nov. 1775).
4. Gen. Benedict Arnold and his force cut thru the Maine wilderness to join Montgomery, but his joint attack with Montgomery on Quebec failed (31 Dec. 1775).
5. Troops were not supplied for winter campaign.
6. Americans felt Canadians would welcome them as liberators--did not happen. French-Canadians happy under British rule.

III. MIDDLE ATLANTIC PHASE: Summer 1776-Summer 1778:

Remember, King George declared the colonists in open rebellion in August 1775 and sent forces to bring them back under control.

A. July 1776, the British navy comes into New York Harbor

1. 30,000 troops
2. 10,000 sailors
3. 300 supply ships
4. 30 battleships with 1,200 cannon
5. Largest seaborne attack attempted by British until the twentieth century
6. The British forces are led by two brothers:

a. Viscount Richard Howe leads British Navy

b. Sir William Howe heads the Army

7. July 12, 1776 Howes send warships up the Hudson river to show the force of the Navy. Give Washington the chance to surrender; he does not take it. War will happen.

B. 27-29 Aug. 1776: **Battle of Long Island**

1. August 21, 1776, Washington gets word from a spy that the British in New York Harbor will attack lower Long Island, and Washington rushes his reinforcements in.
2. Next day, 15,000 British troops land in Southern Long Island.
3. Americans 3 miles away behind barricades; the Americans are outnumbered 2:1.
4. Close battles, 100 yards too far, need to be very close
5. The British divide the American lines, and come up behind them. The Americans broke and ran. The Americans must flee through a marsh.
6. The entire Continental army is trapped. Facing them is the British army, at their back is the east river. The British wait for Washington to surrender. Must win like a gentlemen.
7. Washington escapes under cover at night across the east river to Manhattan.
8. The British are stunned. The 18th century way would have been for Washington, as a gentlemen, to concede defeat.
9. Washington did not try to hold New York. He retreated.
10. The British take New York City. Most New Yorkers are loyalists. In full, about 1/5 of people are actually loyalists.
12. This is a tragic defeat.
13. As the British take New York, and the Continental Army retreats, Washington realizes that he cannot expect the army of volunteers to be a European style army--he must persuade the soldiers.
14. Citizen soldiers
15. Strategy of retreat, Continental Army must be preserved. With Congress, the Army is the only tie that holds the states together.
16. Enlistments are almost up. In less than 3 weeks Washington will have no troops. He has lost Long Island and New York City. Worse, Congress cannot raise money to pay the army. They cannot meet the basic needs of Washington--he is not sure there is even going to be an army in a few months.

C. Then, Washington loses **Fort Washington** and **Fort Lee** late 1776

1. When winter comes the War is called off until spring by General Howe.
2. People in New Jersey, even one signer of the Declaration of Independence, choose to side with the British for pardon.
3. The Revolution looks as though it might soon be over.

D. Dec. and Jan 1776 - 1777 Battles of **Trenton** and **Princeton**

1. Washington and his army cross the Delaware River and inflict two key losses on British forces, raising morale and possibly saving the revolution. Militarily not a big deal. Lost 1,000 drunk Germans in Trenton. But, psychological victory.

2. These are surprise battles, the war is supposed to be off for winter. Last chance to get something going. Only 6,000 soldiers--they have no tents, little food if any, and little hope.

3. Tom Paine writes *The American Crisis*:

"These are the times that try mens' souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will in this crisis shrink from the service of their country. But they that stand it now deserve the love and thanks of men and women. Tyranny like hell is not easily conquered, but the harder the conflict the more glorious the triumph. Heaven knows how to put a proper price on its goods, it would be strange indeed if so celestial an article as freedom should not be highly rated. I fear not; I see no cause of fear. In the end we will be the victors. For though the flame of liberty may sometimes cease to shine, the ember will never expire."

E. 1777 **Saratoga Campaign**

Burgoyne's master plan is for two British armies to capture the Hudson river, one attacking down from Canada, the other up from New York City. By this strategy the British could cut the New Englanders off from the rest of the colonies. They would then be master of North East America.

1. Burgoyne sets sail from Canada for Albany early summer 1777.

2. In New York City, General Howe is ready to depart. But for where?

3. Burgoyne's army travels down Lake Champlain, 3 week sail, July 1, they reach Fort Ticonderoga. Dominates the narrow turn in the river. **Battle of Fort Ticonderoga** (July 1777).

4. Mount Defiance overlooks Fort Ticonderoga. Defiance was not supposed to be a position that could be held--you can't get up it. But, Burgoyne's forces take it and look down on the fort.

5. Burgoyne's army of 8,000, after Ticonderoga, must go 23 miles from the end of Lake Champlain to the top of the Hudson Bay. This is a mile long train of carts pulled by track animals through dense forest that must be cut through.

6. Burgoyne's army of 8,000 after Fort Ticonderoga

- a. 4,000 British
- b. 4,000 Hessians
- c. 2,000 women
- d. large number of children
- e. Iriquois Indians are British guides

7. The New Enlanders block Burgoyne's path by cutting down trees, making marshes. Slow and expensive for British. The supplies of the British army are eaten up.

8. Took one month to go 23 miles, supplies hard to get through, still coming behind the soldier groups.

9. Burgoyne reaches Fort Edward on the Hudson, 1 August 1777

10. Burgoyne sends 800 Hessians to Bennington 12 miles away to get horses.

11. Burgoyne does not believe there will be any conflict

12. The leader of the Hessians who is supposed to get the help of the colonial loyalists is a strange choice he does not speak any English

13. **Battle of Bennington** (16 Aug. 1777)

- a. Hessian detachment wiped out by rebels, who the Hessians thought were coming to help them.
- b. Burgoyne still at Fort Edward
- c. One month to get from Fort Edward to Saratoga
- d. Indians leave, things getting bad, Indians may sense things not going well.

14. Battle of **Freeman's Farm, also called 1st Battle of Saratoga** (19 Sept. 1777)

- a. Colonials have army of 7,000 men some from defeated Ticonderoga. Turkey gobblers come from trees around Freeman's Farm. Secret sign. The rebels fire at the officers in violation of 18th century warfare. British defeated by Colonial detachment led by Daniel Morgan and militia Col. Henry Dearborn.

- b. The American army now outnumbered Burgoyne's
- c. Burgoyne is isolated, he thinks Howe is still in NYC.
- d. Not clear what the two generals were thinking

15. **Second Battle of Saratoga** (7 Oct. 1777).

- a. Burgoyne tries a direct attack again on the rebels. He wants to get to Albany.
- b. British begin attack
- c. General Benedict Arnold leads the troops to victory

16. Surrender of Gen. Burgoyne's forces at Saratoga, NY (17 Oct. 1777)

- a. Possibly most important campaign of the war.
- b. Convinces French to openly support the colonial cause.
- c. Saves New England from isolation.
- d. 1st major American victory.
- e. Eliminates a large British army.
- f. Morale booster.

F. At the same time as Saratoga however, General Howe moves from New York City to Philadelphia

1. Howe loads his 18,000 troops in July 1777 and disappears.
2. Washington will try and follow Howe with his army
3. Washington writes to the New England militia leaders asking them to stop Burgoyne.
4. Late August, Howe is in Delaware Bay off Philadelphia. He wants to take Philadelphia, then meet up with General Burgoyne.
5. Howe's advancement toward Philadelphia meets opposition: **Battle of Brandywine Creek** (9-11 Sept. 1777).
 - a. Howe wins fierce battle, but both sides suffer heavy losses.
 - b. Washington forced to retreat away from Philadelphia.
6. Howe's British forces occupy Philadelphia (26 Sept. 1777)
7. Empty victory, Congress gone. This is not a war of posts.
8. Washington counters Howe: Continental Army at **Valley Forge** (winter 1777-1778).
9. Washington at lowest point, men suffer greatly to elements, but become a much more professional force thanks to training of Baron von Steuben.
10. British evacuate Philadelphia, head to New York City for winter

H. Saratoga leads to French Alliance (Feb 1778)

1. Friendship and Commerce: recognizes United States and trade
2. Military alliance: no separate peace, neither can withdraw until US independence

I. 1779 World War

1. British must keep troops all over the globe and at home to counter French if they invade
2. Spain enters the war on the side of the French

IV. SOUTHERN PHASE (29 Dec. 1778-19 Oct. 1781)

A. After Saratoga, General Howe, although he had not commanded at Saratoga, turned in his resignation and was replaced by General Henry Clinton as Commander-in-Chief of British forces in US (8 May 1778). Clinton decides to move the war south to get support of slaves and loyalists.

B. British capture Savannah, GA (29 Dec. 1778).

1. British move South.
2. Constantly harassed by colonial militia.

C. British capture Charleston, SC (12 May 1780).

1. Commercial center of the southern colonies.
2. The Americans defend Charleston for six weeks, but in May the British capture the city.
3. The entire southern Army - 5400-man garrison - is captured. South Carolina is controlled.
4. Worst colonial defeat of the war.

D. Clinton returns to New York, leaving the South under the control of Cornwallis.

E. 1780 Benedict Arnold goes to the British side-he is convinced that the Americans are going to lose.

F. Marquis de Lafayette joins the Americans and gets a regiment of French troops from Louis XVI

G. By Dec 1780, British occupation of the South has lasted six months. They control the cities, but the country is a place of general warfare.

H. Nathaniel Greene sent by Washington to the South. British follow Greene's army for six months

I. Greene goes from South Carolina, through North Carolina, to Virginia, then back to North Carolina. Greene is running from the British.

J. Greene loses every battle he fought, but he won the South by getting the population to his side, and by keeping his army alive.

K. The British won battles, but could not win because they could not:

1. hold territory
2. cement loyalty
3. create functioning administrations
4. restore the authority of the crown

L. Cornwallis takes his force to the coast so they can be resupplied, reinforced, or evacuated

M. August 1781 arrives with 10,000 soldiers at Yorktown, Virginia

N. Yorktown Campaign (14 Aug-17 Oct. 1781)

1. Washington in Rhode Island with the Comte de Rochambeau and his 5000 French soldiers preparing for attack upon NYC.
2. When Comte de Grasse's fleet becomes available, Washington decides upon daring maneuver to trap Cornwallis in Yorktown.
 - a. Slips away from positions around NYC.
 - b. Moved down Chesapeake Bay
3. Franco-American Army needs naval help, and de Grasse provides it with victory over British Admiral Thomas Graves in Battle of the Capes (5-8 Sept. 1781).
 - a. Also brings 3000 French reinforcements.
 - b. Cornwallis cut off from aid.
4. Siege of Yorktown begins (28 Sept. 1781).
 - a. Cornwallis surrenders 8000 men on 17 Oct. 1781.

b. Washington had: 9000 Americans; 7000 Frenchmen.

5. For all intents and purposes ends the war.

V. The Peace Process

A. Yorktown a major victory, but did not militarily cripple the British, still held NYC.

B. However, after 6 years of war, British realize they are no closer now than they had been in 1775.

C. Lord Rockingham forms new government and will negotiate to end the war.

D. Three main American negotiators: John Jay (NY); John Adams (Mass.); Ben Franklin (PA).

E. Treaty of Paris (3 Sept. 1783)

1. Treaty a diplomatic triumph for the US.

2. Jay, Adams and Franklin violated their instructions and signed separate peace with British.

3. Britain ceded everything East of the Mississippi River - south of Canada - to the US.

4. British gave Florida to Spain.

5. Britain also promises to withdraw its troops from US territory.

6. British concede the right of free navigation of Miss. River to its source.

7. British promise to compensate masters who lost slaves during war.

8. US promises two things: Will compensate the Loyalists for property confiscated during the war; US promises not to put up obstacles to British merchants from recovering money owed them.

F. French reaction to treaty.

1. French Foreign Minister professed hurt, surprise, but French not really displeased with treaty.

2. Why aren't French disappointed?

a. France had promised to remain in war until Spain retained Gibraltar.

b. Franco-Spanish expedition to take Gibraltar failed.

c. French gov't nearly bankrupt.

d. Aid to US placed a huge financial burden on the monarchy of Louis XVI.

e. So now, with British cession of Florida, Spain happy and France gets out of the War.

f. French debt led to French Revolution.