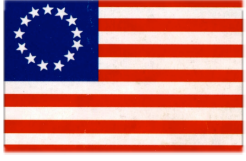


American Strengths and Weaknesses



When the Revolution began the Americans were already in a weak position. They had scrambled to put together an army (albeit not well-trained) and a tiny, ineffective navy. While strengths were hard to find, their weaknesses were obvious.

Weaknesses

A major weakness for the Continental Army was manpower; they were always short of qualified and capable men. General George Washington routinely had no more than 20,000 troops at one time and place. It seemed each time the soldiers made progress as a military unit, they would pick up their muskets and go home to tend to their farms. Despite learning to bond as a group and handle their muskets better, these frequent interruptions made it difficult to develop any consistency.

Very few Americans were trained well enough to survive in battle. Many could shoot well enough behind protection, such as a tree, wall, or brush. However, when faced with a wall of well-disciplined (and well-prepared) British soldiers, most colonists would likely turn and run.

Aside from a shortage of men, the army also experienced a shortage of supplies. Guns were scarce and gunpowder was even more so. In fact, Benjamin Franklin suggested that it would be wise to arm the soldiers with bows, arrows, hatchets, and knives. Food shortages forced many to simply leave the force altogether. Like food, uniforms and adequate clothing were just as rare. In winter months, one could easily track the Continental Army by the bloody footprints left in the snow.

These shortages **infuriated** Washington, and complaining to the Continental Congress to properly feed, clothe, and arm the soldiers proved to be useless. But, it was not all Congress' fault. The Articles of Confederation, the government created during the Revolution, lacked the power to raise money since the federal government could not tax the new states!

Strengths

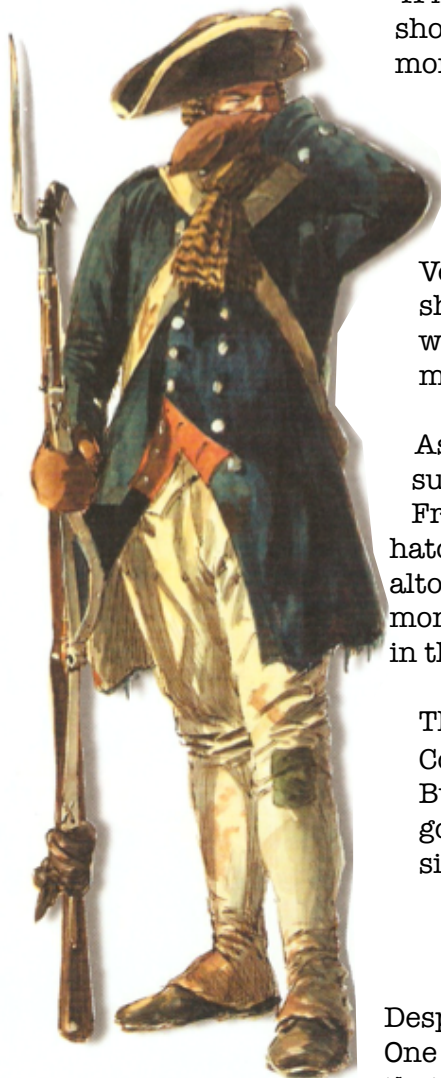
Despite their weaknesses, there were still strengths the Americans could rely on. One strength was the **patriotism** of their people. Many colonists willingly gave their lives to defend their liberty, homes, children, families, and friends. Without this strong support, the American war effort would have crumbled in just a few months.

Countries such as France, and to a lesser extent Spain, aided the Americans from abroad. France, motivated by a hatred of the English, provided roughly 85-90 percent of the Americans' gunpowder in the wars' first two years.

The Americans final great strength was in their commander. George Washington was a very experienced and talented leader. As a British general during the French and Indian War, Washington not only understood how to command his army but he had knowledge of how the British would command theirs. Washington inspired courage, hope, and confidence in his men. It was his determination that would lead the Continental Army to victory.

infuriate - to make someone extremely angry

patriotism - a strong commitment to one's country



Soldiers such as this one constantly faced food shortages, a poor supply of guns and ammunition, and an uncertainty about their paycheck!

British Strengths and Weaknesses



When the Revolution began the British held many advantages. However, the old **adage** “don’t judge a book by its cover” can directly explain the British experience during the war. Even though they held the upper hand, the British encountered many problems throughout the Revolution.

Strengths

The British army totaled an amazing 50,000 troops, all of whom were well-trained and well-armed. This force greatly outnumbered the Continental Army. When comparing the quality of weapons, the British force made the colonists seem like “little children.” In addition, King George supplemented his army with an additional 30,000 **mercenaries**. These hired soldiers became

known as Hessians because they came from a part of Germany called Hesse-Cassel. To further weaken the colonists, British governors in the colonies were able to lure away many African Americans by offering them freedom and even their own land in exchange for service in the British army.

Since Britain’s army had been around for hundreds of years its troops were well-trained, they excelled in large battles, and they had far more experience than their American counterparts. The British also had plenty of resources. Compared to the Washington’s miserable army, British soldiers rarely lacked food, weapons, uniforms, or gunpowder.

Weaknesses

Even with their great advantages, war in colonies presented Britain with many problems. First, the distance between Britain and America presented a problem for timely shipments. Sending troops and supplies was very slow, since it had to travel by boat across the Atlantic. Too, this travel was very expensive. Important messages that needed immediate delivery faced the same difficulties - news of battles arrived in England long after they occurred, making planning very difficult.



British soldiers such as these were well-prepared, had top-notch weapons, and a ready supply of gunpowder and food.

Second, King George was never able to convince the British public to support the war. Many British citizens questioned the need to fight the Americans. They asked, “was it worth the money?” and “should we really be risking our lives?”. Unlike the American patriotism that saw thousands of troops enlisting to serve their country, few British soldiers openly volunteered to fight the Americans. The longer the war dragged on, the more tiresome the British public became with the war. Personally, it was exhausting to have loved ones so far away. Financially, the British became angry about the wars heavy costs.

Third, being in a far-away, foreign land presented a problem to the British. Generals were unsure of strategic locations. Soldiers who hadn’t spent time in the colonies were unaware of town layouts. Simple things like hills, valleys, and coves in the American landscape seemed like foreign obstacles to the British. Most soldiers who fought had never set foot in the colonies before the war began. They were fighting in their enemies backyard - and their enemy would take advantage of that!

adage - a proverb or short statement expressing something that is true

mercenary - a professional, hired soldier