

Strengths and Weaknesses of Opposing Sides

A. Great Britain

1. Strengths

- a) Population (7.5 million to 2.5 million colonists)
- b) Monetary wealth
- c) Naval forces
- d) Professional army armed with 6' muskets with bayonets attached
 - 1) 50,000 British
 - 2) 30,000 Hessians
 - 3) 30,000 American Loyalists

2. Weaknesses

- a) Unrest in Ireland
- b) British government inept and confused, led by King George III and Lord North
- c) Lack of British desire to crush American cousins. Whigs cheered American victories.
- d) Military difficulties
 - 1) Second-rate generals
 - 2) Brutal treatment of soldiers (one lashed 800 times for striking an officer)
 - 3) Inadequate, poor provisions (old, rancid, wormy). Undernourished
 - 4) Need for clear victory. A draw would be a colonial victory.
 - 5) Armies were 3000 miles from home. Orders took months to reach the front.
 - 6) Vast colonial territory (1000 by 600 miles) to subdue. No urban nerve center to conquer.

B. American

1. Strengths

- a) Outstanding leadership
 - 1) Military--Washington
 - 2) Diplomatic--Franklin
 - 3) European imports--Lafayette, Kosciuzko
- b) Colonists fighting defensively
- c) Self-sustaining agricultural base
- d) Colonists were better marksmen (Americans accurate at 200 yds.)
- e) Moral advantage. Americans were supporting a just cause with a positive goal.

2. Weaknesses

- a) Colonies were badly organized, disunited for war.
- b) Continental Congress debated, but took little action and exercised less leadership
- c) No written constitution (Articles of Confederation) not adopted until 1781.
- d) Colonies were jealous of Congress, each other's region
- e) Economic difficulties
 - 1) Little metallic currency available
 - 2) Fearful of taxation, Congress issued virtually worthless Continental currency
 - 3) Inflation led to increased prices, desertions from army.
- f) Limited military supplies
 - 1) Inadequate firearms and powder
 - 2) Clothing and shoes scarce. At Valley Forge, 2800 men barefooted
- g) American soldiers were numerous but unreliable
- h) Profiteers used greed and speculation to weaken morale and aid the British