A Revolutionary Nation

7

1776–1789

When Benjamin Franklin arrived in Paris on December 21, 1776, thousands turned out to catch a glimpse of him. Franklin was visiting to court French military and diplomatic assistance for the American fight against Great Britain, France's traditional enemy. Franklin hoped to convince the French to support the American Revolution because, as he declared, "'Tis a Common observation here that our Cause is the *Cause of all Mankind*; and that we are fighting for their liberty in defending our own." French king Louis XVI was not sure that he wanted to support the Americans in their Revolution; nor was he, as Europe's most absolutist king, convinced that French "liberty" was at stake. But Franklin's personal popularity grew so quickly by the beginning of 1777 that the French government could not ignore American diplomacy.

Franklin was the most famous American in Europe. His scientific publications had endeared him to French aristocrats and intellectuals. The Comte de Chaumont invited Franklin to live at his estate outside Paris, and fashionable aristocrats sought Franklin as a party guest. Franklin dressed simply and often wore a fur hat to project a rugged American image, and the French became obsessed with his appearance. Franklin's face appeared on paintings, engravings, statues, jewelry, candy boxes, dishes, and handkerchiefs. Franklin wrote his daughter that "your father's face [is] as well known as that of the moon." Some fashionable Parisians even had their hair styled in a manner that imitated Franklin's. John Adams later wrote that "There was scarcely a peasant or a citizen, a valet de chambre, coachman or footman, a lady's chambermaid nor a scullion in the kitchen who was not familiar with Franklin's name."

< George Washington, by Charles Willson Peale, c. 1779–1781.

CHAPTER 7 OUTLINE

Continued

CHAPTER OUTLINE CONTINUED

- > Economic Change
- > Women and Revolution
- > Racial Ideology and Questioning Slavery

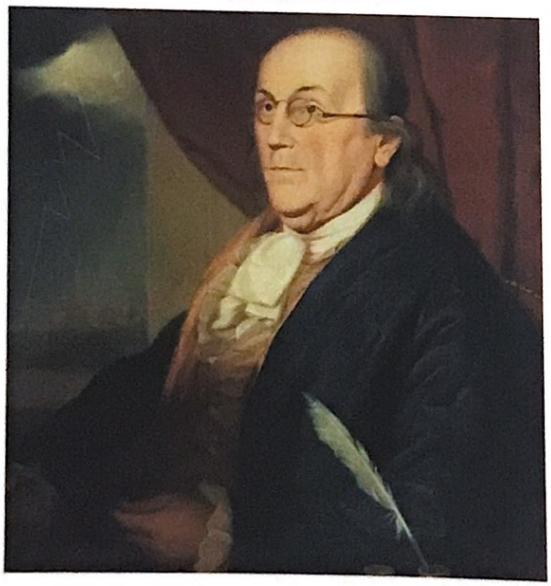
A Federal Nation

- > Debt and Discontent
- > Constitutional Convention
- > Ratification

Franklin left the United States for France just a few months after signing the Declaration of Independence and with the experience of having lived for almost 20 years in Britain, representing colonial interests to the British crown. Franklin hoped to win foreign assistance for the Revolutionary War even as France and other European powers waited to see whether Americans could win. Between 1776 and 1789, the United States relied on foreign help as it secured its independence from Great Britain and struggled to form a government. But Americans, like Franklin, also believed that their Revolution offered a new vision of liberty to the rest of the world.

THE REVOLUTION TAKES ROOT

Following the Declaration of Independence in 1776, the United States became a sovereign nation, and each of the 13 states also established new forms of revolutionary government. The Declaration stated that it had become necessary for "one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another"; but, in reality, many loyalists, Quakers, royal officials, and other American inhabitants did not cut ties to Britain or express allegiance to the new United States. The new nation would have to exert authority over these doubters, but it might never get that chance if it could not win the ongoing war with Great Britain. The United States faced five more years of warfare and the challenge of convincing the world that it was capable of governing itself and worthy of recognition. As the South Carolina legislator David Ramsay wrote, "Our enemies seemed confident of the impossibility of our union; our friends doubted it; and all indifferent persons . . . considered the expectation thereof as romantic." Against all this doubt, the American Revolution took deep root among most Americans.

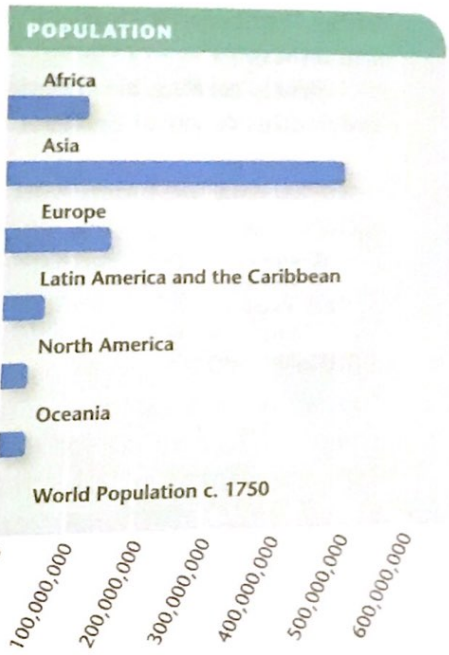


BENJAMIN FRANKLIN This portrait of Benjamin Franklin, commissioned by the American Philosophical Society in 1789, depicts him as a learned man of science. Documents about and pieces of his invention—the lightning rod—lie on the table before him, as a bolt of lightning strikes outside his window. Franklin's scientific knowledge was one of the bases of his great international reputation.

Ideology and Transatlantic Politics

The American revolutionaries expressed a set of political and social values that gave

meaning to their actions. In their writings and in the state and national governments they established, patriots expressed an ideology of republicanism, which mixed classical Roman ideals with values from the European Enlightenment. The Declaration of Independence fused republican values with a Lockean emphasis on the property rights of free individuals when it termed "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" as "unalienable rights."



American Revolutionaries rejected monarchy and established themselves as citizens of a representative republic. Republicanism emphasized liberty and guarded against tyrannical exercise of governmental power—such as the colonists perceived in the conflict with Britain leading up to the Revolutionary War. James Madison wrote after the Revolutionary War that "we may define a republic to be . . . a government which derives all its powers directly or indirectly from the body of the people." But republicanism meant more than just a form of government because it also implied much about how citizens should relate to one another and to the forms of power in society. Revolutionaries believed that for a voluntary republic to flourish, its citizens must show civic virtue, a care for the common good. Ideally, instead of being governed by hereditary aristocracy and patronage, as one revolutionary put it, "all offices lie open to men of merit, of whatever rank or condition."

Because of their belief in republicanism, many American revolutionaries also believed that the future worldwide cause of liberty and the happiness of "the great family of mankind" rested on the success of their movement. This belief in their own role in world history put some revolutionaries in an awkward situation because they still had to gain European support for the war against Great Britain. John Adams, the Massachusetts politician who was sent to Europe as a diplomat and to negotiate foreign loans, firmly believed that America faced political danger in dealing with European monarchies. Adams desired good commercial and diplomatic relations with France, the Netherlands, and Spain, but he feared that "America has been the Sport of European Wars and Politicks long enough." Americans were in the paradoxical situation of needing help from European monarchs to win their own antimonarchical war—and thereby to guarantee the existence of their republic, which they believed could transform the world.

Trying Times: War Continues

Both British and American military commanders exercised caution in their approach to the Revolutionary War between 1776 and 1778. As a result, neither side gained a distinct strategic advantage. Each side won important battles, but neither was willing or able to inflict a crushing defeat on the other. As long as the revolutionary spirit and independence movement survived, it would take a monumental British effort to make the United States lose the war. The revolutionaries, although they enjoyed the support of about 70 percent of the white population in America, could not be assured of a victory

either, especially if they could not convince other European nations to aid their cause (Map 7.1).

Briefly turning his attention south, British army commander **Sir William Howe** ordered his forces to evacuate Boston in March 1776. Nine British warships bearing

MAP 7.1 ▲ Major Revolutionary War Battles, 1775–1778 This map shows the locations of major battles in the first four years of the Revolutionary War and depicts areas of particular loyalist and patriot strength.

seven regiments of soldiers, commanded by General **Lord Cornwallis**, arrived off the coast of South Carolina. There they joined Sir Henry Clinton's forces in an attack on Charleston that revolutionaries narrowly rebuffed at the Battle of Sullivan's Island on June 28, 1776. British naval forces commanded by Admiral Sir Peter Parker sailed back north—headed for New York and Halifax.

In September 1776, William Howe and his brother Admiral **Sir Richard Howe** used their 32,000 British and German mercenary troops—dubbed "Hessians" by the Americans—to launch an attack against American commander General George Washington's forces at Long Island. The Howes' forces defeated the American army and militia troops in a series of battles stretching from Brooklyn Heights to White Plains, New York, through the fall. Although missing several chances to destroy the Americans, they managed to occupy New York City for the rest of the war. General Cornwallis's force chased Washington across New Jersey. Then, in the first week of December, Washington fled into Pennsylvania. Cornwallis left Hessian troops to watch the Americans across the Delaware, and returned to New York to go into winter quarters.

Thomas Paine correctly described the American military predicament when he declared in his pamphlet *The Crisis* on December 19, 1776, that "these are the times that try men's souls." Washington decided to cross the Delaware again and launch a surprise attack on the Hessian camp at Trenton, New Jersey, late on Christmas night. The unconventional attack was successful but also seemed to confirm that Washington was most successful when he avoided open European-style battles. Washington's victory at the Battle of Trenton, which he followed with a victory at the Battle of Princeton on January 3, 1777, represented two of his few early successes.

General Washington had trouble taking advantage of the successes at Princeton and Trenton. American forces were plagued by spotty militia performance, expiring enlistments, and conflict with loyalists, who took advantage of William Howe's offer to pardon any man who swore an oath to the crown or joined up with British military forces.

In the fall of 1777, Washington tried to defend the U.S. capital at Philadelphia, but Howe defeated him in a series of battles in and around Brandywine, Pennsylvania. Washington's force survived, but it was not clear whether American troops could beat the British in open battle. The British not only had the greater numbers of troops in most areas of the military conflict, they were also better trained and supplied. Congress fled Philadelphia, which Howe occupied in September. After losing a close contest at Germantown on October 4, Washington retreated and prepared to enter winter quarters at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania.

Further north, the British government sent Major General John Burgoyne in early 1777 to Canada with another plan to invade New England and recapture Fort Ticonderoga. His mixed force of British, Hessian, Canadian militia, Loyalist, and Indian troops made slow progress after capturing Fort Ticonderoga at the beginning of July. American commander Major General **Horatio Gates** dealt Burgoyne's troops a blow at Freeman's Farm on the Hudson River in September. Gates won an even bigger battle at Saratoga, New York, on October 7, forcing Burgoyne to surrender his entire 6,000-man army to Gates, who had proved that American forces could inflict decisive defeat. Although most of his troops were held prisoner for the remainder of the war, "Gentleman Johnny" Burgoyne was released on parole, as befit an officer of the day, and he returned to Britain in disgrace. Victory in the battle of Saratoga was one of the most significant moments in the entire Revolutionary War.

Alliance with France

The Battle of Saratoga was the turning point of the Revolutionary War because it helped to convince France to form an alliance with the United States. On December 4, 1777, Boston merchant Jonathan Loring Austin brought the news of Burgoyne's defeat at Saratoga to American diplomats Benjamin Franklin, Richard Henry Lee, and Silas Deane in France. The French foreign minister, the **Comte de Vergennes**, had authorized secret aid to the American revolutionaries since May 1776. Sympathetic aristocrats and merchants sent money and supplies. The playwright Caron de Beaumarchais, for example, set up the trade company Hortalez & Cie. to secretly funnel aid to the United States. From 1776 onward, the French supplied over 90 percent of the gunpowder used by the American military. Vergennes wanted to ally with the United States, but he had not been able to build political support for the move. Now, the news of the decisive American victory at Saratoga gave Vergennes all he needed to support the United States openly against France's enemy, Great Britain. Spain continued to drag its feet, but the French moved forward with an alliance.

The French government granted the United States diplomatic recognition at the end of 1777. In February 1778, France and the United States signed a Treaty of Amity and Commerce and a Treaty of Alliance in which France promised "not to lay down their arms until the Independence of the United States shall have been formally or tacitly assured." Congress ratified both treaties on May 4, 1778, creating the first diplomatic alliance in American history. Vergennes was preparing for a possible Austro-Prussian war on the Continent, so he hesitated to commit full French naval power to the fight in North America until 1780, but in April 1778, the Comte d'Estaing sailed for America with a fleet of 16 French warships and 4,000 troops. Early in 1778, George Washington despaired that the American military was in a "distressed, ruinous, and deplorable condition," and he feared defeat "if a remedy is not soon applied." Patriots hoped that French aid would bring just such a remedy.

STUDY QUESTIONS FOR THE REVOLUTION TAKES ROOT

1. In what ways did the Battle of Saratoga represent a turning point in the Revolutionary War?
2. Why did the American Revolutionaries seek and accept aid from European monarchies?

THE STRUCTURE OF AUTHORITY

One cause of George Washington's despair over future prospects was the unstable organization of the American government and military—which French aid could only partially address. While winning a war, the United States had to build an effective governmental structure. The Second Continental Congress had directed the early operations of the war and had declared independence from Great Britain, but by the time it ratified the treaty with France, it still operated under no formal constitutional authority.

It took the Congress more than 16 months to draft the **Articles of Confederation** and several more years for all the states to ratify it. In the meantime, Congress governed and states drafted constitutions. But questions of legitimacy remained. Although the Continental Army expressed clear allegiance to civilian Congressional authority, it had its own internal difficulties—especially regarding supply and the coordination of army and militia forces and enlistments. How could the United States build a government strong enough to reassure foreign powers of its legitimacy? If government failed, even foreign aid might not be sufficient to win the war or to solidify the American Revolution.

State Governments

In May 1776, even before the Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence, it instructed individual colonies to begin drafting state constitutions. Whigs, who had been governing in practice without constitutional authority in many colonies, and who had been directing war operations, decided to focus their energies on written constitutions that would define state power. In many cases, state constitutions as written documents (different from the unwritten British constitution) grew out of royal charters and other colonial decrees. Everywhere they defined power counter to the colonial organization of government. By the end of 1776, 11 of 13 states had drafted state constitutions, and Georgia and New York completed theirs the following year. Each state pursued economic policies, contracted debts, and pursued land claims with minimum of coordination between them.

Every state established itself as a representative republic that derived sovereignty from the people, who would demonstrate their consent through voting. Each state established a balance between executive, legislative, and judicial powers, in keeping with the political idea of **separation of powers** articulated by the French Enlightenment philosopher the Baron de Montesquieu. Most states kept a judicial system similar to their colonial structures. Having cast off colonial governors who represented royal authority, however, most states limited the power of governors and established governor's councils appointed by the elected legislatures. Many states also implemented term limits for their governors. Almost every state established a two-house legislature, with a Roman-style senate that could brake any "excessively" democratic actions taken by the lower house. Some states enlarged their legislatures, to grant more representation to western areas that were filling up with settlers, and five states directly tied representation to population size, a very new concept. All but Massachusetts and Connecticut abolished established state religion, although most still required government officeholders to be Christian.

Despite similarities, some states were more democratic than others, varying the degrees of direct representation and restraint of government power in their constitutions. Pennsylvania had no governor at all and established a unicameral legislature with strict term limits that proportionally represented the population and was elected by all free men over 21 who paid taxes. By contrast, Maryland's revolutionary planter elites defined a government in which only the lower house of the legislature was popularly elected, with a powerful governor, and which had high property-holding qualifications for officeholders who served long terms. In all the states, even the least democratic, new ranks of men such as artisans began to assume offices and responsibilities that would never have fallen to them in the hierarchical days of colonial government.

Articles of Confederation

Soon after declaring independence, Congress realized the need to form a legitimate national government. A committee charged with the task of creating a national constitution drafted the Articles of Confederation in 1777, although deep disagreements among the states delayed full ratification. The Articles proposed a weak national government for "The United States of America." Most Americans closely identified with their separate states, and they were not ready for much in the way of national power, which they feared.

As North Carolina Congressman Thomas Burke wrote, "the United States ought to be as One Sovereign with respect to foreign Powers, in all things that relate to War or where the States have one Common Interest." The Articles limited centralized power and reserved decision making in most other areas to the states. Congress had no power to tax citizens of the states, which contributed to national financial problems. Congress controlled the military and the war-making power, but the Articles directly forbade sustaining a military force after the war. Each state exercised one vote under the Articles, and to change most national policies required 9 votes out of 13. Only a unanimous vote could change any provision of the actual Articles. Arguments over rival state claims to Western lands held up the ratification of the Articles of Confederation until 1781. By then, Congress was almost bankrupt.

Military Organization

In republican theories of government, it was important to restrain military power and subordinate it to civilian authority. When the first Continental Congress created the Continental Army in June of 1775, it built in several weaknesses to prevent the military from assuming too much power in society. Americans distrusted standing armies and viewed militias, in the words of the Virginia constitution, as "the proper, natural, and safe defense of a free state." But militias could never be effective enough to win a war against the British military, so the United States had to create an army and a navy and fill their ranks.

Congress initially restricted enlistments in the Continental Army to one year, but after severe problems recruiting new men became apparent by 1777, Congress authorized

VALLEY FORGE Twelve thousand men were stationed at Valley Forge, where they faced near starvation, disease, and terribly cold weather. Thousands died of pneumonia and typhoid fever, and thousands more were listed as "unfit for service."

three-year terms, began to pay cash enlistment bounties, and promised land grants. By 1779, Congress allowed men to enlist for the duration of the war and paid bounties as high as $200. Continental officers at first recruited their own men, but after 1777, Congress imposed recruiting quotas on each state. Historians estimate the number of American men in arms during the Revolution at between 250,000 and 350,000, at least 10 percent of the total American population.

Volunteer state militias provided men to the Continental Army, but they also continued to fight in their own right throughout the war, partially as a republican restraint on excess military authority. Major General Charles Lee expressed a widespread republican belief when he declared that "a militia, animated by determination to preserve liberty, could become a formidable infantry." Although militia units were often less disciplined and organized in battle, they did contribute to troop strength and success, especially when the war turned South after 1778. Many men who enlisted in the revolutionary military, especially at the beginning of the war, expressed a strong allegiance to the revolutionary cause, but economic incentives also influenced the decision to join the Continental Army. The average soldier was in his late 20s. European officers serving with the Continental Army marveled at the success of common men, like shoemakers, who became American officers. But as a member of Congress, John Adams felt "wearied to Death with the Wrangles between military officers high and low. They Quarrell like Cats and Dogs."

The Continental Congress oversaw military affairs, but Congress also granted George Washington "full, ample, and complete" powers to direct the army as he saw fit. Both enlisted men and officers suffered from Congress' inability to guarantee adequate military supplies. Before Nathaniel Greene reorganized it in 1780, the Quartermaster General's office was overwhelmed trying to provide supplies and coordinate transportation. Congress lacked funds, struggled to provide food and shoes to troops, and did not provide consistent uniforms until 1781. During the brutal winter of 1777–1778, one-quarter of the 12,000 American soldiers who wintered at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, died, partly because of poor food and shelter. Some judged the winter encampment of 1780 at Morristown, New Jersey, to be even worse. Hard conditions made it even more remarkable that the mutiny of the Pennsylvania line in January 1780 marked one of the only large-scale troop revolts of the war. Army surgeon James Thacher wrote during that winter that "both the resources and the credit of our Congress appear to be almost exhausted." Congress printed large quantities of paper money, which quickly lost much of its value.

Diplomacy and International Finance

Aside from paper currency, foreign credit was the main engine of war finance. The United States sent a series of envoys to European countries, particularly Britain's rivals, seeking recognition and funding. France, Spain, and the Netherlands extended aid with varying levels of enthusiasm. Prior to finalizing the treaties of Alliance and Amity and Commerce with the United States, French citizens were already supplying financial and material aid to the war effort. Their support increased markedly after the 1778 agreements. The United States could not have continued the war without French assistance. The French lent the United States approximately $7 million and gave more than $2 million in outright gifts.

GLOBAL PASSAGES

International Officers in the American Revolutionary Military

Many European military men volunteered to join the American military as officers in the Revolutionary War. These international volunteers brought with them connections to politicians and military establishments in Europe, personal financial resources, and military knowledge. Officers from Continental Europe enhanced the cachet of the American military forces and increased international approval for the American Revolution. As American diplomats in France, Benjamin Franklin and Silas Deane actively recruited aristocratic Europeans to join the Continental Army.

Tadeusz Kosciuszko, a graduate of the Polish Royal School and the French school of engineering and artillery, was commissioned as a colonel in the Continental Army in 1776 and played a key role in designing the fortifications at West Point and entrenchments at Saratoga. Kosciuszko ended the war as a brigadier general. The Chevalier Louis Duportail, sent to the United States even before the French joined the cause, served most of the war as a brigadier general and chief of army engineers. Benjamin Franklin recruited **Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben**, an impoverished former Prussian staff officer who became inspector general of the Continental Army and an effective drill master during the winter at Valley Forge. He was one of Washington's most effective aides. Less effective was Casimir Pulaski, a Pole who commanded American cavalry and later his own elite corps (the Pulaski Legion) as a brigadier general in the Continental Army.

Other European countries also took an interest in the war, which German poet Christoph Wieland called "the greatest political event of the 1770s, and perhaps . . . of the entire century." The Spanish had sent some help but had largely held the United States at arm's length—in part because they did not wish to see colonial independence movements spread into Spanish America. Because of tensions in Europe, however, Spain declared war on Britain in April 1779. The Spanish governor of Louisiana and East Florida, Bernardo de Gálvez, captured several British forts along the Mississippi River and at Mobile and Pensacola, indirectly helping the American war effort. In January 1780, **John Jay** arrived in Madrid seeking diplomatic recognition, but the prediction by the French foreign minister that "Spain . . . will interest herself very little in the Americans" proved true. Despite promises to return West Florida to Spain after independence was secured, Spain never formally recognized American independence during the war—although the Spanish government did agree to open trade between the United States and Cuba and to loan the United States $170,000. The trade with Cuba was significant, given that it replaced much of the prohibited U.S. trade with the British West Indies and provided the United States access to hard currency. Cuba, whose large-scale sugar production was expanding under the Bourbon Reforms, also benefitted from the U.S. trade goods—especially food to feed the growing number of slaves on the island.

The most famous French volunteer, **Major General Marie-Joseph-Paul-Yves-Roch-Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette,** joined the American cause in 1777 when he was only 19 years old along with his friend, the highly capable Johan de Kalb (who was also a French spy). Lafayette fought ably and played a major role in the defeat of Cornwallis at Yorktown in 1781.

Many of the foreign officers in the Continental Army who were not killed during the war (as de Kalb and Pulaski were) participated in revolutionary and independence movements in Europe in subsequent decades. Lafayette, Duportail, and other pro-American aristocrats joined the French Revolution when it began in 1789. Kosciuszko led several campaigns in the Polish independence movement against Russia during the 1790s. Lafayette and von Steuben were given American citizenship and land grants in thanks for their American service (Kosciuszko also received land). Several European officers, including von Steuben, retired in the United States. Both Kosciuszko and Lafayette returned to the United States after the War, and Lafayette's extended tour in 1824–1825 was one of the largest events commemorating the American Revolution during the first 50 years after the war.

- How might the willingness of these officers to serve in the American military have influenced opinion in Europe in favor of the United States?
- Does the service of men such as Lafayette and Kosciuszko in European revolutionary movements indicate that the American Revolution influenced Europe?

When the British captured neutral ships from several countries trading with the United States in 1780, Russian empress **Catherine the Great** responded by forming the League of Armed Neutrality to protect neutral shipping, although Russia never formally recognized the United States during the Revolution. Sweden, Denmark, Portugal, the Netherlands, and Sicily all joined the League—tying up British naval resources and attempting to open further U.S. trade. Of these countries, the Dutch were the friendliest to the American cause, allowing a smuggled arms trade to the Revolutionaries even before 1777. A few months after all of the Dutch provinces and Prince William V formally recognized the United States, American envoy John Adams convinced Dutch bankers to loan the United States $2 million in July 1782.

STUDY QUESTIONS FOR THE STRUCTURE OF AUTHORITY

1. What difference did foreign aid make to the American Revolution?
2. How did the ideology of republicanism affect U.S. government and military authority during the American Revolution?

SECURING INDEPENDENCE

With the French as allies, American revolutionaries had high expectations of winning the war, but the road ahead was not easy. The focus of the military conflict shifted to the seas and into the Southern states. Bitter social divisions there helped to intensify the fighting. Loyalists held onto their British identities, even as they were forced to fight their neighbors or leave their homes. African Americans assessed how to maximize their own potential for freedom in the midst of wartime chaos. Indian nations tried to decide whether their future interests lay with the British or the United States. Nothing seemed easy during the last years of the Revolutionary War, but one thing was certain—the United States would cease to exist if it did not win the war.

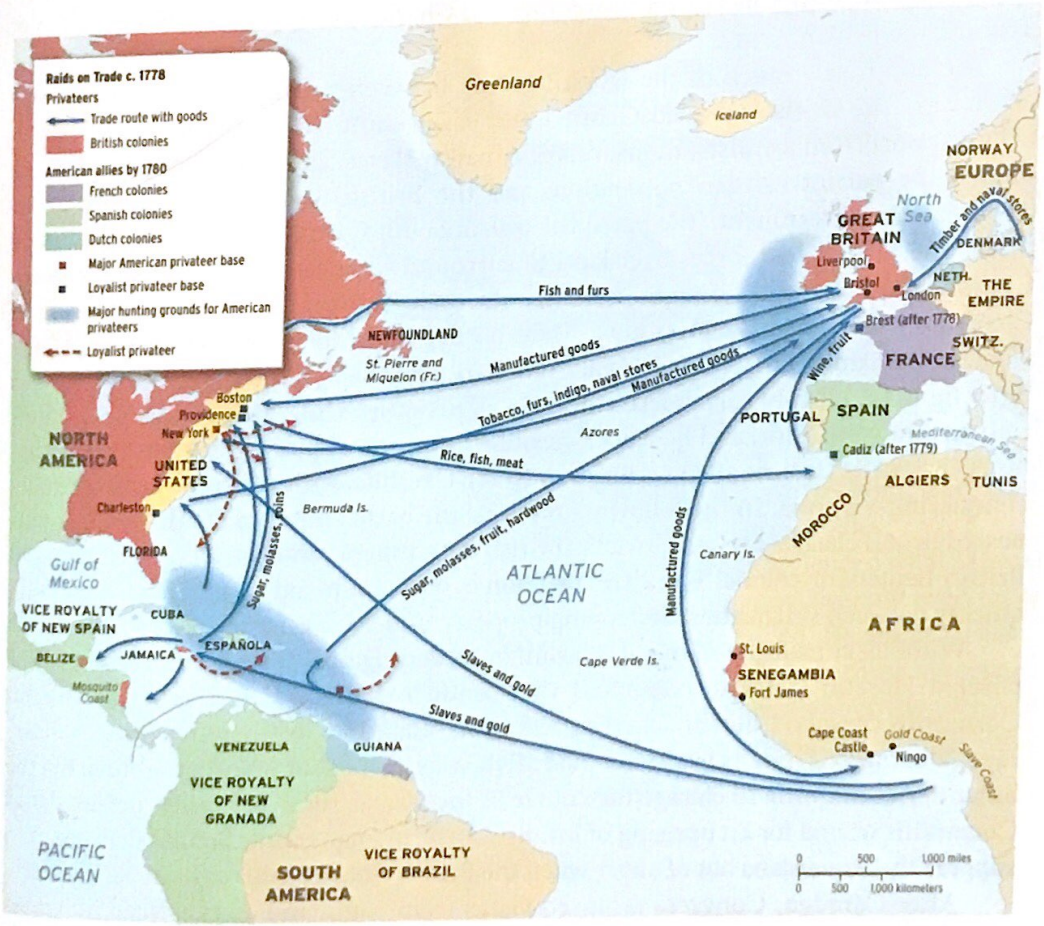
War at Sea

The most immediate impact of French assistance came in the naval war. As early as the first year of the war, the United States established a navy and an ambitious shipbuilding program, with several states also fielding their own naval forces. Although the U.S. Navy succeeded in several small attacks, such as when Commander Esek Hopkins captured the British fort at Nassau, Bahamas, in November 1776, Americans could not hope to defeat the British Navy—the strongest and best-equipped sea force in the world—that

USS *BON HOMME RICHARD* John Paul Jones commanded the USS *Bon Homme Richard*, a warship loaned to the United States by France and named in honor of Benjamin Franklin's *Poor Richard's Almanac*. Jones battled the British ship HMS *Serapis* off the coast of Yorkshire, England, in September 1779, and his capture of the British navy vessel helped to convince the French to increase their support for the naval war against Britain.

was blockading the northern U.S. coastline. Instead, the American navy and over 2,000 privateers harassed British war and commercial ships. Captain Nicholas Biddle, a former member of the Royal Navy, successfully raided British ships in the West Indies in 1777. Basing his U.S. naval operations in France, Captain John Paul Jones successfully raided the Scottish coastline and captured British prizes in the Irish Sea. Jones cemented his reputation in September 1779 when he defeated the British frigate *Serapis* in a thrilling battle, taking the ship as a prize after declaring "I have not yet begun to fight!"

French entry into the war diverted British attention away from the fight in America and forced them to commit ships to the English Channel, the Mediterranean, the Caribbean, and off the coast of India to defend their empire. Sir William Clinton partly abandoned Philadelphia and the blockade of the U.S. coast in 1778, diverting 5,000 men to the sugar-rich West Indies where he expected to engage the French. The French concentrated most of their force on the Caribbean islands that they had lost to the British in the Seven Years' War. The French admiral **Comte d'Estaing** arrived with his fleet in the summer of 1778; and, after botching an attack on British-controlled Newport, Rhode Island, he sailed for the West Indies. The British captured St. Lucia in December 1778, but the French captured and held the island of Grenada.



MAP 7.2 ▲ The Caribbean during the Revolutionary War Much of the hottest naval warfare in the Revolutionary War took place around the Caribbean where countries battled to control trade and tried to wrest control of islands away from one another.

D'Estaing failed to oust the British from Savannah in September 1779—in part because he followed a French pattern of failing to coordinate well with U.S. ground forces. In 1780 and 1781, French naval assistance proved more effective. Commodore Ternay carried 5,500 French army troops under the Comte de Rochambeau to reinforce the Continental Army in July 1780, and in October 1781, the French admiral **Comte de Grasse** added his fleet to the fight at Yorktown.

War in the South

Britain's cabinet war ministers, led by **Lord George Germain**, shifted the focus of their ground efforts to the South in 1778. On March 8, 1778, British officials replaced Commander Sir William Howe with **Sir Henry Clinton**, whom they ordered to abandon Philadelphia to attack the Carolinas and Georgia. As Clinton tried to evacuate his army from Philadelphia back to New York, he ran up against George Washington's army. In winter quarters at Valley Forge, Washington's troops had suffered, but they had also been strengthened by the training and drill offered by the new inspector general of the army, the Baron von Steuben. U.S. and British forces clashed at Monmouth, New Jersey, on June 28, 1778; and, although Clinton's army escaped, only a poor performance from Washington's second-in-command Charles Lee kept the Americans from crushing the British Army.

The South saw much of the worst fighting between patriots and loyalists of the entire war. The British invaded Georgia and easily captured Savannah in December 1778. Support from loyalists, thousands of runaway slaves, and some Cherokees helped subdue the patriot civilian population, and the British were able to recapture the Georgia state government. The patriot defeat in South Carolina was even more disastrous. The British sent forces over land to surround Charleston, and British Generals Clinton and Cornwallis fought "storm, rain, hail, snow, and ... waves" to sail to Charleston with additional troops. They bottled up American commander Major General Benjamin Lincoln in the City of Charleston, and after six weeks of siege and bitter fighting, Lincoln surrendered the city and his entire army on May 12, 1780. Clinton returned to New York, and he left Cornwallis in charge of putting down further resistance in South Carolina and pushing into North Carolina, with an eye toward eventually conquering Virginia. In the following months, the backcountry of South Carolina witnessed brutal clashes between loyalist/British detachments and patriot militias. In 1780 British lieutenant colonel **Banastre Tarleton** acquired a bloody reputation by moving quickly between skirmishes, destroying property, and killing prisoners.

Without consulting General Washington, and against his wishes, Congress appointed Horatio Gates to command the Continental Army's Southern Department. Cornwallis crushed Gates at Camden, South Carolina, and his troops retreated in disarray. Gates himself rode as fast as he could all the way to Hillsboro, North Carolina. But the bitter defeat did little to change the course of the war, as rural skirmishes persisted and Cornwallis waited for an uprising of loyalists. Instead, many white Southerners began to support the Americans out of anger when the British shielded runaway slaves.

After Camden, Congress removed Gates from command and replaced him with Nathanael Greene, who was probably the finest strategist in the American military. Although his army was in poor shape, Greene took heart from the victory of American militia forces at Kings Mountain, South Carolina, on October 7. Greene recognized that

he was unlikely to defeat Cornwallis in open battle, so he divided his army into four parts and kept British and loyalist forces on the run through the Carolina backcountry. Greene, and his able subcommander **Daniel Morgan**, who bested Tarleton at Cowpens in January 1781, engaged Cornwallis in three open battles that year at Guilford Courthouse, Hobkirk's Hill, and Eutaw Springs. The Americans lost all three battles, but they inflicted terrible damage on Cornwallis's combined forces. Greene wrote of the campaign, "We fight, get beat, rise and fight again." Greene's strategy inflicted some of the heaviest casualties of the war on Cornwallis, who moved into Virginia and marched toward Yorktown.

Loyalists: Resistance and Migration

The loyalist population played a large role in the British war effort. Loyalists, dubbed "Tories" by the revolutionaries, made up almost 20 percent of the total population of the United States. Loyalists expressed different notions of "liberty" than those put forth by the revolutionaries, and they held onto British identity and obedience in the midst of conflict. Not all loyalists agreed with one another beyond opposing independence. Several ethnic or religious minority groups who relied on crown protection remained loyal, although they did not constitute a majority in any state: Germans in the Mid-Atlantic, Anglicans in New England, landholders in the Hudson Valley, Scotch-Irish immigrants in the southern backcountry, and Dutch settlers in New Jersey. Although they aided the British military by providing supplies and even taking up arms against their neighbors, loyalist opposition to the Revolution was not enough to enable the British to win the war.

Estimates of the number of loyalists who fled the United States for England, Canada, and the West Indies during and immediately after the war reach as high as 80,000, or 1 out of every 40 people in the United States. Many who emigrated were wealthy before the war, and Congress seized millions of dollars in loyalists' property. An estimated additional 20,000 African American slaves ran away from their masters and sought British protection during the war, including some who emigrated to Canada, Nova Scotia, and Sierra Leone after the war. White and black loyalists who resettled elsewhere in the British Empire sometimes helped to shore up imperial control, but some faced discrimination. Black emigrants to Canada achieved freedom, but many runaway slaves who joined the British were re-enslaved in the West Indies.

Loyalists who resettled in England found they sometimes experienced what Samuel Curwen called an "uneasy abode in this country of aliens," but most found it even more difficult to return to their former homes—even after the war ended. **Benedict Arnold**, the Continental general who defected to the British side in 1780, became a scorned British military officer. Even groups who were merely ambivalent about the war and tried to remain neutral, such as the Pennsylvania Quakers whose religion forbade fighting, found it difficult to reintegrate into American society.

Indian Warfare

Indian populations in North America were also torn apart by the Revolutionary War. Many groups had barely finished navigating the tension-filled terrain created by the French loss in the Seven Years' War when the Declaration of Independence again placed

them between rival powers. The United States might be even less generous toward Indians than Great Britain had been, but not all Indian peoples aligned themselves with the British. Religion, trade, political calculations, and personal relationships influenced Indian decisions, and divisions existed, even within tight-knit kinship groups. Some native peoples also used the Revolution as an opportunity to try and advance their own regional interests, such as when **Joseph Brant** led Mohawk and other Iroquois troops against Pennsylvania and New York frontier settlers in the "Border War" of 1777–1779. Iroquois attacks, particularly in the Wyoming Valley, Pennsylvania, were long remembered for their brutal force.

Even Brant, who was a respected commander, could not unite the powerful Six Nations entirely in favor of the British. Some Oneida and Tuscarora peoples in New England joined the American army at Valley Forge. Oneida fighters played a decisive role in the American victory at the Battle of Oriskany in 1777, which destroyed their own village but set up the American victory at Saratoga. By the end of the war, most other Iroquois groups had joined Brant in his support for the British, especially after American Major General John Sullivan pursued a scorched-earth campaign against them in New York in the summer of 1779. After the war, the British resettled Brant and his Iroquois allies in Canada.

The United States was not as generous to its Indian allies, notably pushing Delaware people into the arms of the British after failing to follow the terms of an alliance signed at Pittsburgh in 1778. Other Delaware were forced to abandon their lands in Ohio. Delaware

BATTLE OF YORKTOWN This painting depicts the British surrender at the Battle of Yorktown in 1781, the last major campaign of the Revolutionary War. In the image, American General Benjamin Lincoln accepts the sword of surrender from British General Cornwallis's subordinate officer. Artist John Trumbull painted a larger version of this image inside the rotunda of the U.S. Capitol building.

warrior Buckongahelas lamented in 1781 that his people had been drawn into the Revolutionary War, "a family quarrel, in which I was not interested." Many Shawnee tried to remain neutral, but many Shawnee warriors ended up fighting for the British in an attempt to hold onto Ohio lands. American troops attacked Cherokee in 1776, 1780, and 1781, and many Cherokee aligned themselves with loyalist militias in the brutal fighting in the Carolinas and Georgia. Overall, it is difficult to generalize about how the American Revolution affected the native peoples, but one fact stands out: the lives of most Indians did not improve as a result of the Revolutionary War or its outcome.

African Americans at War

Like Indians, not all African Americans adopted the same stance toward the Revolutionary War. But those who were able to fight—either on the American or the British side—often managed to change their social status as a result. African Americans constituted a small but significant percentage of Revolutionary fighters on land and water, and in some battles—such as the 1778 battle at Monmouth, New Jersey—black men fought on both sides.

African American men served in the British infantry and navy, and many runaway slaves worked as spies and laborers for British forces. Some African Americans who were re-enslaved in the West Indies continued their military service by becoming part of the British West Indian Regiments that fought in the Napoleonic Wars in the 1790s. Harry, a slave who was transported to the Dutch Island of St. Eustasius during the war, made a public reputation for himself as a Methodist preacher, although he continued to be enslaved.

Service in the American military presented a path to personal freedom, and many black men and women supported the patriot cause. Although George Washington initially banned blacks from the Continental Army, the need for troops forced him to abandon this policy within months; and in some areas, black men made up as much as 25 percent of American fighting forces. Many northern slaves enlisted, and their state governments sometimes purchased their freedom from their masters, whom they replaced in service. Some, such as the Concord, Massachusetts, slave Richard Hobby, joined the American military when their masters were absent. Even in Southern states, some slaves and many free black men enlisted in the American army and militias. Both Massachusetts and Rhode Island set up separate, black militia units, but for the most part, black and white men served together in integrated companies. Black men enhanced their personal freedom by joining the war effort, and their status as Revolutionary War veterans would also help the antislavery cause after the war.

Peace and Shifting Empires

The final phase of the Revolutionary War began when British general Cornwallis entrenched his troops in Yorktown, Virginia, in August 1781. General Washington learned of Cornwallis's move and realized that Yorktown's position on the Chesapeake Bay made it vulnerable. He also learned that de Grasse's French squadron would soon arrive. So Washington boldly marched almost his whole army, accompanied by French forces under the Comte de Rochambeau, from New York to Virginia to link up with Greene. By the end of September, the American forces surrounded Yorktown and laid siege to

Cornwallis's force. For almost two weeks, the American and French forces pounded Cornwallis's men with artillery fire and pushed them back toward the Chesapeake coast with carefully executed skirmishes. Under increasing pressure, Cornwallis realized he had no escape, and on October 19, 1781, he had a subordinate, General Charles O'Hara, surrender his entire army (Map 7.3).

MAP 7.3 ▲ Major Revolutionary War Battles, 1779–1783 Although the Revolutionary War was mostly concluded after Cornwallis's surrender at Yorktown in 1781, skirmishing continued until the Treaty of Paris in 1783 ended the conflict.

When British prime minister Lord North heard the news of Yorktown, he reportedly exclaimed, "Oh God! It is all over!" The British government decided to pursue peace. The new British prime minister Lord Shelburne sent merchant Richard Oswald to Paris at the beginning of 1782 to negotiate with Benjamin Franklin. They concluded a preliminary peace agreement in November 1782 without any input from French officials. French foreign minister Vergennes was impressed with the Americans' diplomacy, and he negotiated a separate peace with Britain and convinced the Spanish to do the same. The Netherlands also concluded a separate treaty. American negotiators Franklin, John Jay, John Adams, and **Henry Laurens** successfully played French and British interests against one another when they concluded negotiations with Britain and signed the final Treaty of Paris on September 3, 1783.

The terms of the Treaty of Paris favored the United States, largely because the British had decided to cut their losses. The treaty recognized American independence and established borders stretching from the Great Lakes down the Mississippi River to the 31st parallel. Britain granted American fishing rights off Nova Scotia, and Congress agreed to honor war debts, to restore confiscated loyalist property, and to disallow retribution against British supporters. Britain's Native American allies were incensed that Britain had negotiated away land rights without consulting or involving them. The British and Americans agreed to free passage on the Mississippi, but the Spanish objected and blocked free trade on the river in 1784. In their separate negotiations, France, Spain, and Britain swapped possession of several Caribbean islands, and Britain traded control of East and West Florida to Spain in return for Gibraltar. Although the British dragged their feet enforcing parts of the Treaty of Paris, the agreement nonetheless concluded the first-ever successful colonial war of independence and guaranteed the existence of the United States of America.

STUDY QUESTIONS FOR SECURING INDEPENDENCE

1. How did divisions inside the United States shape the course of the Revolutionary War?
2. What were the immediate consequences of the Treaty of Paris?

RESTRUCTURING POLITICAL AND SOCIAL AUTHORITY

By winning the Revolutionary War, patriots gained the chance to make permanent their experiment with republican government. Now the national and state governments would have to solidify their efforts to govern for "the cause of all mankind." But Americans faced obstacles to the peaceful refashioning of society, and not everyone agreed on how to proceed. How could loyalists be reintegrated into society? What consequences did republican liberty hold for subordinate people in society? Could the states govern harmoniously and share power with Congress? How would Americans pay the crushing debts incurred during the war? Would economic changes brought on by the war continue as the United States struggled to become successful in trade? Social and economic changes accompanied the shift in politics in the new nation, but nothing went smoothly.

Power in the States

During demobilization from the Revolutionary War, Congress and the states were still negotiating their power relationships. Under the Articles of Confederation, Congress coordinated national policy, but states exercised great power directly over their citizens. Several states, including Massachusetts, ratified less democratic constitutions in the 1780s. States gradually repealed laws against loyalists, although many loyalists, especially in northern states, never regained all the property they had lost in the war.

The states had to deal with political tensions unleashed by what John Jay called the "rage for emigrating to the western country," which sometimes worsened clashes between states. Western inhabitants, many of whom were veterans lured by land bounties or by land investment companies, demanded increased representation of western areas in state legislatures, which tended to overrepresent eastern elites. South Carolina, North Carolina, Georgia, and Virginia all moved their state capitals to towns that lay further west, partly because of the shift in population. Hard-fought campaigns to separate Vermont, Kentucky, and Franklin (in modern-day Tennessee) into new states created political tensions, but none succeeded until after 1787. States also clashed with one another over rival land claims. Virginia peacefully ceded western territory to Congress in 1784, but border conflicts raged between Pennsylvania and Connecticut and between Pennsylvania and Virginia. New York and New Jersey engaged in an all-out trade war between 1783 and 1787.

The states' individual war debts and their shared national war debt made conflicts over land and representation even more difficult. Congress could not agree on how to finance these debts, but legislation in 1785 promised the states future repayment. Robert Morris, who directed national finances until 1785, and his political allies, wanted the states to grant Congress the power to tax, which would keep debt in national hands and enhance centralized power. But on a national level, the states could not even agree to grant Congress the power to impose a small impost tax. Southern states, especially Virginia, owed particularly large debts, which they might never be able to pay. By 1786, New York was the first of several states that began to assume national debts directly, which threatened to further weaken the national government.

Economic Change

A dizzying mix of economic opportunities and crises emerged in the postwar years. Devalued paper currency that Congress had printed during the war created inflation and conflicts between Congress and state governments who were required to pay war bills in hard currency after 1781. Congress had printed hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of bills of credit by 1778, but by 1781 they had lost 99 percent of their value. States also printed their own paper currency throughout the 1780s, causing further inflation. Prices declined after the war, but they did not return to their prewar level until 1789. State governments assessed property taxes and rival duties on trade goods. Congress defaulted on foreign and domestic loan payments after the war because it simply lacked funds.

The United States expanded foreign trade after the Revolution, but European powers still tried to restrict some international commerce. The war had opened new Caribbean and European trade routes. Now Britain closed its Caribbean island colonies to American trade, and both France and Spain left high duties in place on

PAPER CURRENCY These are just a few examples of the paper currency printed by various states during and after the Revolution. Widespread trade of state paper notes, and even paper certificates printed by banks or land companies, helped contribute to inflation and economic uncertainty during the period.

American-Caribbean trade. As a result, port cities such as Boston, Philadelphia, Newport, and Charleston faced slow recovery from the war, and their economies were depressed throughout the 1780s. The West Indies had become America's largest market for foodstuffs, and the crippling of that trade decreased farm income. Some U.S. exports to Europe and Latin America increased during these years, as the war settlement allowed Americans to trade directly with those areas legally for the first time. A few merchants who gained special Spanish permission enriched themselves by trading flour and other products to Cuba. Tobacco, lumber, iron, and shipbuilding supplies remained popular, and corn and wheat also became highly prized American goods in Europe. Although the Treaty of Paris had guaranteed American fishing rights, Britain embargoed American fish, and France imposed high taxes. Americans continued to import far more than they exported, a fact that further exacerbated the shortage of hard currency.

Women and Revolution

Many women had participated in the Revolutionary War. As many as 20,000 accompanied the Continental Army as camp followers. These women, many of whom were related to soldiers, played vital roles cooking, doing laundry, and giving medical care to the troops. Other camp followers probably served direct military roles: bringing water to cool artillery pieces or even occasionally themselves firing weapons. The most notable example of a fighting woman was **Deborah Sampson Gannett**, who disguised herself as a man and twice enlisted in the Continental Army. After the war, Gannett went on a speaking tour and published a memoir about her experience and her husband later received a federal widow's pension. Wealthier women organized by **Esther DeBerdt Reed** and **Sarah Franklin Bache** formed the Ladies' Association of Philadelphia, which raised funds and distributed clothing to needy soldiers in 1781.

Although American women had contributed mightily to the war effort, they had little direct political influence and no political power in the new republic. The Revolution did cause some shifts in white women's roles and gave them an important part

to play in spreading republican values. Historians use the term "republican motherhood" to describe the social expectation that women would contribute to the republic by raising their children—especially their sons—to be good citizens. In a society that was struggling to define itself according to the civic virtue demanded of a liberated citizenship, women could also exert broader influence over society and culture in a way that had political consequences. As Delaware politician James Tilton put it, "The men possess the more ostensible powers of making and executing the laws, but the women, in every free country, have an absolute control of manners, and . . . in a republic, manners are of equal importance with laws." As the patriot women who had participated in the boycott movements before the Revolution had learned, women could also exert some degree of influence through their consumer choices.

Women's support for the patriot cause and their special role in spreading republican ideology did not translate into their inclusion in American politics. New Jersey allowed a small number of independent, property-holding women to vote for a time, but formal political participation was largely a male privilege. Many states liberalized divorce laws following the Revolution to allow women to separate from abusive or runaway husbands, although **coverture** laws still meant that married women could not own property. Patriot women lost confiscated property if their husbands were loyalists because state laws did not recognize that they could possess separate political identities. The impact of republicanism and women's actions in the Revolutionary War opened up the possibility of women's actions being seen as politically significant, but decades elapsed before their direct political participation widened significantly.

Racial Ideology and Questioning Slavery

The Revolutionary notion that "all men are created equal" pushed antislavery efforts forward in many northern states. But slavery thrived elsewhere, and African Americans still faced constant racism and resistance to their full participation in American society.

Some black veterans, such as New Hampshire's Prince Whipple, used their Revolutionary military experience to argue on behalf of African American freedom. Whipple and other African American men petitioned the state legislature in 1779 to end slavery "for the sake of justice, liberty, and the rights of mankind." In 1783, New Hampshire adopted a state constitution that ended slavery in the state.

Before the Revolution, some Quakers and Mennonites had argued against the institution of slavery. After the war, Revolutionary ideology, black military heroism, and continued petitions by African Americans helped to expand the antislavery cause. Blacks generally lacked equal rights, but slavery was on the defensive. Vermont's state constitution became the first to outlaw slavery in 1777, and slaves who sued for their freedom under the Massachusetts 1780 constitution ended slavery there a few years later. Pennsylvania, and several other northern states, passed laws that gradually outlawed slavery by granting freedom to slaves once they reached a certain age. This gradual approach allowed the institution to linger into the 1820s in New York and New Jersey. In the states stretching south from Maryland, the institution of slavery survived and even intensified after the Revolution. Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia legislatures allowed individual slave owners to free their slaves for a time in the 1780s, but by the turn of the century, fear of slave rebellion ended that practice.