

Chapter 6: Making War and Republican Governments, 1776–1789

I. The Trials of War, 1776–1778

A. War in the North

1. Few observers thought that the rebels stood a chance of defeating the British; Great Britain had more people and more money with which to fight.
2. Few Indians supported the rebels; they were opposed to the expansion of white settlement.
3. The British were seasoned troops, and the Americans were militarily weak.
4. Prime Minister North assembled a large invasion force and selected General William Howe to lead it; North ordered Howe to capture New York City and seize control of the Hudson River in order to isolate the radical Patriots in New England from the other colonies.
5. General William Howe and his 32,000 British troops landed outside New York City in July 1776, just as the Continental Congress was declaring independence in Philadelphia.
6. Outgunned and outmaneuvered, the Continental army retreated across the Hudson to New Jersey, then across the Delaware River to Philadelphia.
7. The British halted their campaign for the winter months, which allowed the Continental army a few minor triumphs that still could not mask British military superiority.

B. Armies and Strategies

1. General Howe's military strategy was one of winning the surrender of opposing forces, rather than destroying them; this tactic failed to nip the rebellion in the bud.
2. General Washington's strategy was to draw the British away from the seacoast, extending their supply lines and draining their morale in a war of attrition.
3. The Continental army drew most of its recruits from the lower ranks of society, the majority of whom fought for a bonus of cash and land rather than out of patriotism.
4. The Continental army was also poorly provisioned and armed.
5. Given all these handicaps, Washington was fortunate to escape an overwhelming defeat in the first year of the war.

C. Victory at Saratoga

1. To finance the war, the British ministry increased the land tax and prepared to mount a major campaign in 1777.
2. The primary British goal, the isolation of New England, was to be achieved with the help of General John Burgoyne, a small force of Iroquois, and General Howe.
3. Howe had a scheme of his own; he wanted to attack Philadelphia – home of the Continental Congress – and end the rebellion with a single victory.
4. Washington and his troops withdrew from Philadelphia, and the Continental Congress fled to the interior, determined to continue the fight.
5. General Burgoyne's troops were forced to surrender to General Horatio Gates and his men at Saratoga, New York.
6. The American victory at Saratoga was the turning point of the war and virtually ensured the success of a military alliance with France.

D. Social and Financial Perils

1. Wartime difficulties after the victory at Saratoga included a British naval blockade that cut supplies of European manufactures, the occupation of Boston and other major cities, and rising unemployment for urban and rural workers.
2. Faced with a shortage of goods and rising prices, government officials began requisitioning goods directly from the people; women's wartime efforts increased farm household productivity and also boosted their self-esteem (and prompted some women to expect greater rights in the new republican society).
3. The fighting exposed tens of thousands of civilians to displacement and death. Soldiers from both armies looted, raped, and burned farms. Civilians on both sides punished those they deemed disloyal by imposing taxes, fines, and beatings.
4. On the brink of bankruptcy, the new state governments printed paper money that was worth very little.
5. Lacking the authority to impose taxes, the Continental Congress borrowed gold from France. When those

- funds were exhausted, Congress also printed currency and bills of credit, which quickly declined in value.
6. Farmers refused to sell their crops for worthless currency, even to the Continental army. Either out of pacifism or the hopes of higher prices, farmers hoarded their grains or accepted gold or silver for their crops that only the British could pay.
 7. Military morale crumbled, causing some Patriot leaders to doubt that the rebellion could succeed.
 8. The Continental army suffered from lack of necessities; the winter of 1777–1778 at Valley Forge took as many lives as two years of fighting.
 9. To counter falling morale, Baron von Steuben instituted a system of drill and maneuver that shaped the smaller Continental army into a much tougher and better-disciplined force.

II. The Path to Victory, 1778–1783

A. The French Alliance

1. Although France and America were unlikely partners, the French were intent on avenging their loss of Canada to Britain in the French and Indian War.
2. Upon learning of the American victory at Saratoga, French foreign minister Comte de Vergennes sought a formal alliance with the Continental Congress.
3. The Treaty of Alliance of 1778 specified that neither France nor America would sign a separate peace agreement before America's independence was ensured.
4. In return, American diplomats pledged that their government would recognize any French conquests in the West Indies.
5. Alliance with the French gave the American army access to supplies and money, strengthening the army and giving it new hope.
6. Upon the urging of Washington, Congress reluctantly agreed to grant officers half pay after the war for a period of seven years.
7. The war became increasingly unpopular in Britain as its people grew tired of being taxed, while some actually agreed with Americans' demands for greater rights.
8. In 1778, Parliament repealed the Tea and Prohibitory Acts and renounced its power to tax the colonies.
9. Britain's offer to return to the constitutional condition that existed before the Sugar and Stamp Acts were rejected by the Continental Congress due in part to America's alliance with France.

B. War in the South

1. American allies had ulterior motives for joining the war: France concentrated its forces in the West Indies because it wanted to capture a rich sugar island; Spain loaned naval assistance because it wanted to regain Florida and Gibraltar.
2. The British strategy was to capture the rich tobacco and rice-growing colonies and to take advantage of racial divisions in the South.
3. By the end of 1779, Sir Henry Clinton and his men had reconquered Georgia, and in 1780, Lord Cornwallis and his men took control of South Carolina.
4. The tide of the battle turned when the Marquis de Lafayette convinced Louis XVI to send French troops to America.
5. General Nathanael Greene devised a new military strategy: divide the militiamen into small groups with strong leaders so that they could harass the less mobile British.
6. His troops weakened by the **war of attrition**, abandoned by the British navy, and surrounded by the French navy and Washington's Continental army, Cornwallis surrendered at Yorktown in October 1781.
7. Isolated diplomatically in Europe, stymied militarily in America, and lacking public support at home, Britain gave up prosecution of the war.

C. The Patriot Advantage

1. Angry members of Parliament demanded an explanation for how a mighty country such as Britain could be defeated by a motley colonial army; the ministry blamed the military leadership, pointing with some justification to a series of military blunders.
2. The Patriots had experienced politicians who commanded public support and, in George Washington, an inspired leader who recruited outstanding officers to shape the new Continental army.
3. The Continental army was fighting on its own territory with the assistance of militiamen who could be mobilized at crucial moments and also had support from France.
4. Americans themselves preferred Patriot rule and refused to support Loyalist forces or accept occupation by the

British army.

D. Diplomatic Triumph

1. In the Treaty of Paris, signed September 1783, Great Britain recognized independence of its seaboard colonies and relinquished claims to lands south of the Great Lakes.
2. This land, between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi River, was the domain of undefeated, pro-British Indian peoples.
3. Leaving the Native Americans to their fate, British negotiators did not insist on a separate Indian territory and promised to withdraw their garrisons quickly.
4. Other treaty provisions granted Americans North Atlantic fishing rights, forbade the British from "carrying away any negroes or other property," and guaranteed freedom of navigation on the Mississippi.
5. The American government promised to allow British merchants to recover prewar debts and to encourage the state legislatures to return confiscated property to Loyalists and grant them citizenship.
6. The British made peace with France and Spain through the Treaty of Versailles.
7. Only Americans profited greatly from the treaties; they gained independence from Britain and opened up the interior of the North American continent for settlement.

III. Creating Republican Institutions, 1776–1787

A. The State Constitutions: How Much Democracy?

1. In 1776 Congress urged Americans to suppress royal authority and establish new governing institutions by writing state constitutions to achieve **republicanism**.
2. The Declaration of Independence stated that governments derive "their just powers from the consent of the governed."
3. Pennsylvania's constitution abolished property owning as a test of citizenship, allowed all male taxpayers to vote and hold office, and created a unicameral legislature with complete power.
4. John Adams denounced the Pennsylvania unicameral legislature as "so democratical that it must produce confusion and every evil work."
5. In his *Thoughts on Government* (1776), Adams devised a system of government that dispersed authority by assigning law-making, administering, and judging to separate branches; called for a bicameral legislature in which the upper house, filled with property-owning men, would check the power of the popular majorities in the lower house; and proposed an elected governor with the power to veto laws and an appointed – not elected – judiciary to review them.
6. Patriots endorsed Adams's system because it preserved representative government while restricting popular power, but were wary of a veto power for the governor and most states did retain property qualifications for voting.
7. The Adams bicameral legislature emerged as the dominant branch of government, and state constitutions apportioned seats on the basis of population.
8. Most of the state legislatures were filled by new sorts of political leaders; ordinary citizens increasingly chose to elect men of "middling circumstances" rather than electing their social "betters."
9. Only in Vermont and Pennsylvania were radical Patriots able to take power and create democratic institutions, yet everywhere representative legislatures had more power and the day-to-day politics became much more responsive to the demands of average citizens.

B. Women Seek a Public Voice

1. Upper-class women entered into the debate but remained second-class citizens unable to participate directly in politics.
2. Most politicians ignored women's requests, as did most men, who insisted on traditional gender roles that empowered themselves.
3. The republican quest for educated citizenry provided the avenue for the most important advances made by American women.

C. The Loyalist Exodus

1. As the war turned in favor of the Patriots, thousands of Loyalists emigrated to the West Indies, Britain, and Canada.
2. While some Loyalist lands were either sold or given to Patriot tenants, in general the revolutionary upheaval did not alter the structure of rural communities.
3. Social turmoil was greatest in the cities as Patriot merchants replaced Tories at the top of the economic ladder.

4. The war replaced a tradition-oriented economic elite – one that invested its profits from trade in real estate and became landlords – with a group of entrepreneurial-minded republican merchants who promoted new trading ventures and domestic manufacturing.

D. The Articles of Confederation

1. The Articles of Confederation were passed by Congress in November 1777 and ratified in 1781.
2. The Articles provided for a loose confederation in which each state retained its independence as well as the powers and rights not “expressly delegated” to the United States.
3. The confederation government was given the authority to declare war and peace, make treaties, and adjudicate disputes between states, print money, and requisition funds from the states.
4. A major weakness under the Articles was that Congress lacked the authority to impose taxes.
5. Robert Morris persuaded Congress to charter the Bank of North America in the hope that its notes could stabilize the inflated Continental currency.
6. The Confederation refused Morris’s proposal for an import duty to raise revenues for the national government.
7. Instead, Congress asserted the Confederation’s title to the trans-Appalachian West in order to sell it and raise additional revenue for the government.
8. In 1783, Congress negotiated with Native American tribes to obtain new western lands. It created the Southwest Territory, the future states of Alabama and Mississippi, on lands ceded by North Carolina and Georgia. Slavery was allowed.
9. The Northwest Territory was established, and three ordinances in the 1780s provided for its orderly settlement while reducing the prospect of secessionist movements and dependent “colonies” of the states.

E. Shays’s Rebellion

1. In the East, peace brought recession: the British Navigation Acts barred Americans from trading with the British West Indies, and low-priced British goods flooded American markets.
2. State governments were saddled with large war debts in the form of bonds, which speculators demanded state governments redeem quickly, and at full value, a policy that required high taxes; yet yeomen farmers and artisans, hard hit by the postwar recession, demanded and were given tax relief.
3. To assist indebted yeomen, many states printed more paper currency and passed laws allowing debtors to pay their creditors in installments.
4. The lack of such debtor-relief legislation in Massachusetts provoked an armed uprising led by Captain Daniel Shays, known as Shays’s Rebellion – as a struggle against taxes imposed by a distant government.
5. To preserve its authority, Massachusetts passed a Riot Act outlawing illegal assemblies.
6. Shays’s army dwindled during the winter of 1786–1787 and was dispersed by Governor James Bowdoin’s military force.
7. Many families who had suffered while supporting the war felt that they had traded one kind of tyranny for another; others feared the fate of the republican experiment.

IV. The Constitution of 1787

A. The Rise of a Nationalist Faction

1. Money questions dominated the postwar agenda, and officials looked at them from a national rather than a state perspective and became advocates of a stronger central government.
2. Without tariff revenues, Congress could not pay the interest on foreign debt, but key commercial states in the North and most planters in the South opposed national tariffs.
3. In 1786, the Virginia legislature met to discuss tariff and taxation policies and called for a convention in Philadelphia and a revision of the Articles of Confederation.

B. The Philadelphia Convention

1. In May 1787, delegates from every state except Rhode Island arrived in Philadelphia; most were “monied men” who supported creditors’ property rights and a central government.
2. George Washington was elected as presiding officer, and, to forestall popular opposition, decided to deliberate in secret.
3. The delegates exceeded their mandate to revise the Articles of Confederation and considered James Madison’s Virginia Plan for national government.
4. Madison’s plan favored national authority, called for a national republic that drew its authority from all the people and had direct power over them, and created a three-tiered national government in which the people would elect only the lower house of the legislature.

5. The plan had two flaws: citizens would oppose the national government's vetoing of state laws, and small states would object because they would have less influence than larger states.
6. Delegates from the small states preferred the New Jersey Plan, which strengthened the Confederation by giving it the power to raise revenue, control commerce, and make binding requisitions on the states, but preserved the states' control over their laws and guaranteed their equality.
7. The Virginia Plan was passed by a bare majority, but the final plan had to be acceptable to existing political interests and social groups.
8. A "Great Compromise" was accepted wherein the Senate would seat two members from each state, while seats in the House would be appointed on the basis of population.
9. The convention vested the judicial powers of the United States "in one supreme Court" and left the national legislature to decide whether to establish lower courts.
10. The convention placed the selection of the president in an electoral college chosen on a state-by-state basis.
11. Congress was denied the power to regulate slavery for twenty years.
12. To protect the property of southern slave owners and the notion of **free markets**, delegates agreed to a "fugitive" clause that allowed masters to reclaim enslaved blacks – or white indentured servants – who took refuge in other states; to mollify antislavery sentiment in the northern states, the delegates did not give slavery national legal recognition by explicitly mentioning it in the Constitution (which spoke instead of citizens and "all other Persons").
13. The Constitution was to be the supreme law of the land, and the national government was given power over taxation, military defense, external commerce, and the making of laws.
14. The Constitution, signed on September 17, 1787, mandated that the United States honor the national debt and restricted the ability of state governments to assist debtors.

C. The People Debate Ratification

1. The Constitution would go into effect upon ratification by special conventions in at least nine of the thirteen states.
2. Nationalists began calling themselves **Federalists** and launched a political campaign supporting the proposed Constitution through pamphlets and newspaper articles.
3. Antifederalists opposed the Constitution, feared losing their power at the state level, and pointed out that the document lacked a declaration of individual rights.
4. Well-educated Americans with a traditional republican outlook wanted the nation to remain a collection of small sovereign republics tied together only for trade and defense.
5. The Federalists pointed out that national authority would be divided among a president, a bicameral legislature, and a judiciary and that each branch would check and balance the other.
6. The Federalists promised to amend the Constitution with a national bill of rights in order to satisfy the Antifederalists.