

A Pivotal Alliance

The alliance between France and America during the Revolutionary War was one of the most important partnerships in history. This landmark alliance demonstrated how countries could work together to achieve a common goal. Many of the valuable lessons learned from this partnership are highly relevant to and can benefit our world today. On a personal level, I have incorporated lessons from this alliance into my own life and plan to carry them forward with me into the future.

When the Revolutionary War began, Great Britain boasted a powerful army and navy. The American Continental Army was at a disadvantage as they had fewer soldiers with limited training and supplies.¹ Even though their leader George Washington worked diligently to strengthen American forces, he recognized that his soldiers needed additional support in order to emerge victorious against their powerful adversary.²

Simultaneously, France was seeking an opportunity to undermine Great Britain after losing territory to Britain in the French and Indian wars. Thus, France was inclined to support the American revolutionaries and began covertly sending money, arms, and gunpowder to American troops.³ Following the Continental Army's victory over the British at the Battle of Saratoga in 1777, France became convinced that America had a credible chance of winning the war. As a result, in 1778, France formalized its partnership with America through both the Treaty of Amity and Commerce and the Treaty of Alliance. These agreements led to the France officially recognizing American independence and established fair trade between the two countries.^{4,5} Subsequently, France provided troops, training, weapons, and funding that strengthened the

Continental Army.⁶ It also marked the beginning of an enduring partnership between the two countries that would change the course of history.

France's assistance was a critical factor in America's victory. French officers and soldiers fought with American troops. Marquis de Lafayette, one of the most well-known French fighters, became a trusted leader and advisor to George Washington.² Because control of the seas was a major advantage in the war, France's powerful navy was one of their most important contributions. By blocking the entry of British vessels into American ports, the French navy impeded Britain's ability to transport supplies to its soldiers.⁷

The alliance between France and America reached its pinnacle moment at the Battle of Yorktown in 1781. French and American forces worked collaboratively to defeat the British army led by Charles Cornwallis. While both American and French troops surrounded the British on land, the French navy blocked the British from escaping by sea.⁸ Completely ensnared in this manner, Cornwallis was forced to surrender. This major victory ended the war, leading to America becoming a sovereign nation.

The alliance between France and the United States teaches us several important lessons that are still valuable today. First, it demonstrates the power of collaboration. Because of their alliance with France, Americans won the Revolutionary War and were able to establish a democratic government founded on the ideals of liberty, justice, and freedom. These principles still shape our lives in the present, influencing our rights, laws, and opportunities. Because of the historic partnership, I live in a country where I can express my opinions freely and practice the religion of my choosing. In the future, I will have the right to vote and to pursue career opportunities in an interconnected world. These rights might not exist if the alliance had never occurred.

The alliance also formed the foundation a long-lasting friendship between France and the United States. Currently, the two nations are working together to tackle worldwide challenges including global security, health preparedness, and economic stability. In my own life, I use teamwork when I collaborate with people from diverse backgrounds on school projects such as environmental clean-ups as well on service projects in my community such as toiletry drives for soldiers. Like France and America, I have been able to make lasting contributions and have accomplished much more with the help and input of others than I would have been able to accomplish on my own.

Countries or individuals can achieve exponentially more by working together than they can achieve in isolation. There is so much strife in our world today and if international leaders could put aside their differences and collaborate like France and America did, they could reach peaceful resolutions to end disagreements. They could walk together to make significant strides towards accomplishing impactful goals for their citizens like universal access to clean water and affordable healthcare for all. The historic French-American alliance inspires me to continue to recruit others to join and amplify my own volunteer efforts, from promoting kindness in my school to uplifting residents in local nursing homes.

By focusing on their shared goal, France and America formed a strong partnership that was mutually beneficial. This is a valuable lesson in modern times as we live in a diverse world where people have different backgrounds, beliefs, and opinions. Finding common ground leads to building cooperative relationships that facilitate finding solutions to global problems affecting us all like climate change, food insecurity, and poverty.

Finally, this event teaches us about the value of taking risks. France took a major risk by supporting the American revolutionaries. Taking thoughtful risks at times can lead to great

successes. As I think about my immediate future, I am inspired to take risks of my own like trying out for the all-state orchestra or the swim team. Long term, I want to form a non-profit organization in partnership with other students to expand the community service initiatives I have already founded to fight bullying and to promote inclusion. I know that in addition to believing in myself, cooperation and collaboration with others will be instrumental in multiplying my efforts and creating a ripple effect that propels all of us forward. Partnerships of my own will provide the seeds for me to grow into a confident, capable, and productive citizen who makes meaningful contributions to the country that itself was created through a pivotal partnership.

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