Name: James J. Warrington

Starting in the mid-1600s into the mid-1700s, the American Colonies developed an identity and society distinctly their own. The colonies transitioned from a source of raw materials for the British Empire to greater independence. This independence was created economically by manufacturing their goods. Then politically by each colony developing some form of self-elected government.

This gradual shift towards independence did not create a movement to break from Britain. Three major events generate the movement for independence. First, the colonists take up armed resistance against the British Army. Without the direction of a unified colonial body or a formal declaration of war, colonists attack the British Army in Canada, New York, and Virginia. Second, Britain showed no willingness to compromise with the colonies. The Continental Congress declared loyalty to the king with the “Olive Branch Petition” of 1775. King George II responded by disregarding the petition. Thirdly, more colonists saw the need for independence as Britain began to increase control over colonial commerce and freedom of movement.

The American War for Independence happened in three general phases. The first phase, 1774-1777, is concentrated in New England and involves sporadic armed resistance in Lexington-Concord, Bunker Hill Massachusetts, and the surrounding area. In 1776, the Middle phase of the war witnesses fighting in the Middle Colonies following the principles of 18th-century European warfare. Fighting battles in this manner required formations of troops employing frontal assaults. These tactics supported the strategic goal of controlling land, for example, the colonial capital of Philadelphia. The third phase of the war is in the Southern Colonies. Here, the colonists employ guerrilla warfare tactics and strategies against the British Army. The tactic of no direct mass of force contact with the enemy serves the tactic of harassment and attrition. The strategic goal is not controlling land, but breaking the will to fight of the British Army.

In the beginning, the War for Independence is an excellent example of asymmetric warfare. With Gen. George Washington and others, such as Gen. Daniel Morgan, the battles took place inline with Sun Tze’s teachings on warfare. This style of warfare requires accepting defeat to save the army and attacking only with greater force or advantage of the terrain. However, following the defeat of the British at Saratoga, France enters the war on the side of the colonists. The virtual end to the war is accomplished with traditional military tactics. In a combined Franco-American joint land and sea operation, the British Army is forced to surrender at Yorktown Virginia.

Following victory over Great Britain, the colonists start the process of converting colonies into states and identity as British subjects to American citizens. Each subgroup of this new country of America had their own experiences and challenges. For African slaves, it was a matter of geography. In the North, the economy was mercantile and not dependent on the manual labor of slaves. This places the economic interest of the North in direct opposition to the South. The Southern economy is agriculturally based and dependent on the manual labor of slaves. Therefore, the move to end slavery begins in the North. In the South, the use of African slaves grows to be an institution. As for First Nations people, they no longer able to play one European side against the other and their power diminishes. Though women played various roles in the revolution, they continued in roles supportive of men.