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From the point of view of some Europeans, the American Revolution pitted the ideals of the Enlightenment, republicanism, and democracy against Europe's established order, as exemplified by Britain. Some countries found that watching wasn't enough—they joined the fight.

One of these countries was France. Without France, a very important ally of America in the Revolutionary War, the Americans might not have defeated the British army. The French supported the Americans for a number of reasons. A weakened England could only heighten France's status and influence—both in Western Europe and around the world as various countries competed to establish colonies. Some French might have been seeking payback. Only twelve years before the American Revolution, France was at war with Britain in the Seven Years’ War, and they lost. This resulted in France being forced to give North American territories to Britain.

Five months after the Declaration of Independence was signed, Benjamin Franklin traveled to Paris. He hoped to explain the revolutionary cause to the French and enlist their support. Franklin was already popular in France for his writings and scientific discoveries, and he was able to secure French support. At first, France supported the Americans only in secret. Gunpowder, ammunition, weapons, and money were smuggled into the country, hidden in commercial ships. Military strategists crossed the Atlantic to advise Continental Army military commanders.

In February 1778, France officially recognized the United States (following the Battle of Saratoga, in which the Continental Army decisively defeated the British army and gave a resurgence of hope to the Americans’ fight for independence), and the countries signed an alliance. French soldiers fought alongside Americans; French and British fleets clashed from Rhode Island down to Georgia. In addition to manpower, France contributed money and weapons. For helping the American cause, France spent the equivalent of what would be about 13 billion dollars in the U.S. today.

Spain also supported the Americans. First, like France, the Spanish contribution consisted of money and weapons. But in 1779, Spain joined France with military support. Also like France, the Spanish navy played an important role in combatting the formidable British fleet. Land and sea battles were sometimes fought far from the North American continent—in the Mediterranean and West Africa.

But French, Spanish, American, and British armies were not the only armies fighting in the American Revolution. A quarter of all soldiers under the British flag were actually from the area known as Germany today—30,000 hired men in all. These soldiers were known as Hessians, because many of them were from the independent principality of Hesse-Cassel.

Native Americans also fought in the American Revolution. Most considered the United States to be a threat to their territory, so they fought on the British side. In total, approximately 13,000 Native Americans fought for the British. But other Native Americans fought against them. The Revolution was, for some Native Americans, a controversial and divisive matter. For instance, the Iroquois Confederacy, also known as the Six Nations, was a powerful organization of tribes that tried to stay neutral. But pressed to choose a side, the Confederacy could reach no agreement; it split up, with two tribes pledging their allegiance to the Americans, and four to the British.

Not only did foreign nations and groups join the Revolution, but foreign individuals did, too. Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben, a Prussian, served as inspector general and major general of the Continental Army. He went on to serve as George Washington's chief of staff. He wrote The Revolutionary War Drill Manual, which was the official American drill manual for the next forty years.

Other notable figures were two men from Poland: Tadeusz Kościuszko and Casimir Pulaski. Tadeusz Kościuszko was born in Poland, moved to France, sailed to America, and rose to the rank of brigadier general. His countryman, Casimir Pulaski, has been called the “father of the American cavalry.” Pulaski organized and trained the Continental Army's horsemen, which had been used mostly for scouting. Pulaski was also promoted to general but was killed in the war. Pulaski and Kościuszko joined the Americans out of idealism. They believed in the struggle for freedom and self-governance. As Pulaski wrote to George Washington after his arrival in Massachusetts, “I came here, where freedom is being defended, to serve it, and to live or die for it.”

**Why did the French support the Americans? Answer in RACE format, HIGHLIGHT two pieces of textual evidence to support your response.**

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