

George W.'s War

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No one likes war. War is a horrific affair, bloody and expensive. Sending our men and women into battle to perhaps die or be maimed is an unconscionable thought.

Yet some wars need to be waged, and someone needs to lead. The citizenry and Congress are often ambivalent or largely opposed to any given war. It's up to our leader to convince them. That's why we call the leader "Commander in Chief."

George W.'s war was no different. There was lots of resistance to it. Many in Congress were vehemently against the idea. The Commander in Chief had to lobby for legislative approval.

Along with supporters, George W. used the force of his convictions, the power of his title and every ounce of moral suasion he could muster to rally support. He had to assure Congress and the public that the war was morally justified, winnable and affordable. Congress eventually came around and voted overwhelmingly to wage war.

George W. then lobbied foreign governments for support. But in the end, only one European nation helped us. The rest of the world sat on its hands and watched.

After a few quick victories, things started to go bad. There were many dark days when all the news was discouraging. Casualties began to mount. It became obvious that our forces were too small. Congress began to drag its feet about funding the effort.

Many who had voted to support the war just a few years earlier were beginning to speak against it and accuse the Commander in Chief of misleading them. Many critics began to call him incompetent, an idiot and even a liar. Journalists joined the negative chorus with a vengeance.

As the war entered its fourth year, the public began to grow weary of the conflict and the casualties. George W.'s popularity plummeted. Yet through it all, he stood firm, supporting the troops and endorsing the struggle.

Without his unwavering support, the war would have surely ended, then and there, in overwhelming and total defeat.

At this darkest of times, he began to make some changes. More troops were added and trained. Some advisers were shuffled, and new generals installed.

Then, unexpectedly and gradually, things began to improve. Now it was the enemy that appeared to be growing weary of the lengthy conflict and losing support. Victories began to come, and hope returned.

Many critics in Congress and the press said the improvements were just George W.'s good luck. The progress, they said, would be temporary. He knew, however, that in warfare good fortune counts.

Then, in the unlikeliest of circumstances and perhaps the most historic example of military luck, the enemy blundered and was resoundingly defeated. After six long years of war, the Commander

in Chief basked in a most hard-fought victory.

So on that historic day, Oct. 19, 1781, in a place called Yorktown, a satisfied George Washington sat upon his beautiful white horse and accepted the surrender of Lord Cornwallis, effectively ending the Revolutionary War.