Drew University
College of Liberal Arts

"Here We Have a Special Way of Waging War"

British Military Adaptions to War in North America, 1775-1783

A Thesis in History

by

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Abstract

The historiography of the American War for Independence (1775-1783) has traditionally laid much of the blame for the British loss of North America on the military. The typical narrative states that British soldiers were trained in a European fashion, emphasizing compact formations and rigid unthinking discipline. When faced with the unique conditions of North American warfare, so the narrative goes, such a manner of fighting was wholly unsuitable. A thorough reexamination of the primary source material reveals this narrative to be a complete misconception. During the Revolution, British commanders, learning hard lessons from the early engagements centered around Boston, actively sought to retrain their troops to be an effective fighting force in the colonies. They emphasized a doctrine of open formations, maneuverability, shock, and the independence of junior officers. Innovations in artillery design likewise added extra mobile firepower to their regularly outnumbered formations. All of these adaptions were in response to the unique North American conditions they found themselves placed in. These included manpower and supply shortages, a lack of cavalry, no clear political center of the rebel regime, political control of the interior by the rebels, and a need to bring out loyalist support. It is clear that the British were able to tactically adapt to, but were at a loss for any overarching strategy outside of attempting to rally loyalist support. By 1780, Britain found itself fighting in a global war for survival in every part of their empire. Threatened with a greater loss than just their thirteen North American colonies, the global nature of the conflict, rather than tactical ineptitude, accounts for the greater reason the British were not able to successfully subdue the Rebel regime.

Contents

I. Introduction: A Flawed Perspective

When visiting a library and browsing the shelves with material related to the American War for Independence, among all of the books expounding great heroes and stunning victories, one will almost always find some title about British soldiers, likely with a title referencing the color of their ubiquitous red coat. The study of the British soldier of the period has not been totally neglected, but it has had myths and generalizations forced upon it that have become unquestionable, and solidified by generation after generation of historians, most often studying other topics of the war, using these previous works in their discussion of British troops. This issue is significant because when discussing the British in the American Revolution, in both popular and scholarly history, the common perception is that the British military lost due to sheer incompetence and an unwillingness to depart from rigid European-style tactics developed during the age of linear warfare. British officers are generally depicted as idiotic aristocrats with no ability, and the individual soldiers who they led as the dregs of society recruited at the point of a sword from taverns or jails. Furthermore, the embarrassment of losing their North American possessions in between two great triumphs, the Seven Years War and the Napoleonic Wars, has led British historians to more or less gloss over this period in history almost entirely in favor of more positive topics. This has resulted in over 200 years of written history about the Revolution falling upon the shoulders of American historians who, until most recently, have almost all towed the line with regards to the myths created during the 19th century about the conflict. Due to a combination of the deaths of the witnesses of the Revolution, the rise of nationalist histories that created a

mythos of American exceptionalism, as well as a lack of understanding of 18th century warfare in general, 19th century historians, for the most part, created the major myths about the Revolution which still get taught to this day. Thorough examinations of the realities of fighting conditions faced by the British army in North America, though, show that, although it is true the fighting conditions in North America were in many ways different than those existing in Europe, the British army, being a flexible fighting force, quickly developed tactical doctrines to deal with such unique circumstances, just as it did in India, the West Indies, and other theaters in which it operated. It was the scope of the tactical situation, along with misconceptions at the core of grand strategy, that proved too overwhelming for it to handle and resulted in the army's inability to achieve a successful defeat of the Rebel regime. By portraying the British military as inept, these myths take away from the absolutely remarkable achievement of Rebel leadership and troops to overcome a skilled military that transformed their tactical ways of thinking wholesale in an effort to overcome them, and, for the most part, was extremely successful in doing so. In essence, one really cannot understand the nuances and complicated nature of the American Revolution without appreciating the real level of British military skill.

Leafing open one of these works, one finds the typical plethora of assumptions. Take for instance A.J. Barker's *Redcoats* published in 1976. Published during the United States' Bicentennial, like many works of that period, it takes the fairly orthodox view of British soldiers. To Barker, there was "next to no target practice", officers "trained in the school of European warfare" were hidebound with no concept of tactics, the soldier's uniforms were "neither comfortable nor suited to field conditions anywhere in the

world", and recruits were the "scum of the earth" recruited by "deplorable means" such as "forced drafting".[1] Around the same time Barker published his orthodox view, Reginald Hargreaves shouldered this mantle as well in his work *The Bloodybacks: The British Serviceman in North America and the Caribbean 1655-1783*. While doing so, he contributed, like many authors have, in his assessment of the German auxiliaries serving alongside the English as "unwilling conscripts" that "were as unreliable in action as they were incompatible in camp and billet".[2] Hargreaves' work is unique in that, although it doesn't challenge assumptions of British tactical ineptitude, it portrays the common soldier as exceedingly brave, doing the best they could within the parameters into which their officers forced them. Both, though, exceedingly rely on anecdotes, and suffer from a lack of citations for many of their claims.

In 1981, J.A. Houlding stepped up to the plate with a much more research-based approach in his study *Fit for Service: the Training of the British Army, 1715-1795*. Going through a plethora of, at the time, new archival material, Houlding successfully challenged the view that officers "were inexperienced and often indifferent amateurs" and the soldiers were "long suffering" victims of their abuse.[3] Although he made headway in this regard, he still concludes that their training was "not good" and even states that generalizations of eighteenth-century warfare are "well established"; following this up by citing two other historians' works that concluded eighteenth-century warfare

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[1] Barker, A. J. *Redcoats*. London, UK: Gordon & Cremonesi, 1976., 11-12, 30-31
[2] Hargreaves, Reginald. *The Bloodybacks: The British Serviceman in North America and the Caribbean 1655-1783*. London, UK: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1968., 85
[3] Houlding, J A. *Fit For Service: the Training of the British Army, 1715-1795*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981., 151-152

"sought to exclude chance in favour of control, rather than attempting to take advantage of uncertainty by encouraging in the men a spirit of initiative and individualism" through stark and unbending drills and tactics. [4] To Houlding, the successes of the British military during the Revolution occurred because "the corps were facing not regular soldiers, but a militarily incompetent adversary innocent of training, buoyed merely by enthusiasm".[5]

An interesting aspect is that this orthodox view not only created assumptions about British troops, it itself worked from standard assumptions of the age of linear warfare in the long eighteenth-century. The typical notion of eighteenth century warfare is fairly familiar to any student of history: long lines of troops bedecked in dazzling uniforms marching in tightly compacted columns up to within point blank range and smashing away at each other with thunderous volleys of musketry until one side broke. Around the same time Houlding was reassessing the British army, Christopher Duffy was breaking new ground in *The Military Experience in the Age of Reason.* He challenged these previous notions of warfare during the period; writing that, to understand eighteenth century warfare, "we must look for something more penetrating and analytical than yet another study of kings and battles, a compendium of eyewitness accounts, or a book with a title like *Daily Life in George Washington's Army".*[6] Duffy asserts that: "The time has long passed since it was fashionable to dismiss the eighteenth century as a decorative interval, suspended between the glooms and dooms of the Wars of Religion and the grinding industrialisation of the nineteenth century".[7] A true watershed work, the author

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[4] Houlding, J A. *Fit For Service: the Training of the British Army, 1715-1795*., 268-269
[5] Ibid., 394-395
[6] Duffy, Christopher. *The Military Experience in the Age of Reason*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 1987. ix
[7] Ibid., 1

drew on an astounding mastery of archival and primary source material, a vast amount from German and French institutions which had never before been published. He illustrated that conflict in the eighteenth-century was anything but stark or rigid; indeed, the sources he utilized illustrated it as a period of vast experimentation with quick movement, maneuver, and other tactical innovations on the battlefield. Duffy effectively showed that officers shared not only a paternalistic relationship, rather than pure animosity (as has been claimed), with their men, but bravely led them into battle, suffering high attrition rates in the process. Unfortunately, his focus is nearly entirely on Continental Europe, and not colonial theaters of warfare. When discussing the Revolution, Duffy hints at European adaption, stating: "there was a convergence in the ways of fighting, for American forces strove to master the conventional linear tactics of Europe, while the British troops adapted themselves to the conditions of campaigning in America".[8] Frustratingly he does not delve into specifics, instead choosing to write on the aspect of adaptions in a broader sense to explain why small European forces tended to defeat much larger colonial ones. He sums this up with a quote from Count Algarotti, in which Algarotti states superiority in colonial theaters stemmed from "the speed and skill in which we [Europeans] can change our ways…and the facility we show in exploiting any good feature we happen to see in anything".[9] His arguments regarding European military adaptions, tactical prowess, and constant experimentation meshed well with those of Geoffery Parker whose *The Military Revolution: Military Innovation and the*

[8] Duffy, Christopher. *The Military Experience in the Age of Reason*., 316
[9] Ibid., 281

Rise of the West, 1500-1800 appeared in the same year. Parker's study immediately became a staple in the military history field regarding the evolution of European approaches to warfare during the early-modern period.

While groundbreaking, Christopher Duffy's works continued to focus on Continental European topics. Many books on the Revolution continued to be published, but no substantially different studies of the British military or further reassessments of the established view came about until the early 2000's. By then several British historians started to tackle European military approaches in the Seven Years War in America. With online digitization projects allowing access to previously unknown or inaccessible material, many archival sources became available for both serious researchers and amateur historians to comb through. Utilizing much of it, Stephen Brumwell's revisionist *Redcoats: The British Soldier and War in the Americas, 1755-1763* argued for a completely new perception of the British soldier serving in America. To Brumwell, this new "evidence presented challenges the enduring view of the British soldier in America, and suggests that such simplistic descriptions fail to reflect on what was in reality a far more complex picture".[10] He goes on to assert that "As contemporaries on both sides ultimately recognized, the challenge of American campaigning created a remarkably flexible force that proved capable of waging both the 'conventional' warfare of the Old World, and operating under the very different 'irregular' conditions of the New".[11] Brumwell proceeds then to state that all of the changes attributed to the British army of

[10] Brumwell, Stephen. *Redcoats: The British Soldier and War in the Americas, 1755-1763*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002., 5
[11] Ibid., 6

the Napoleonic era "had already been displayed some forty years earlier by the men of the 'American Army': indeed, nothing demonstrates the remarkable tactical flexibility of that force better than its development of skills that would come to characterize the renowned British infantry of the following century".[12] His analysis and conclusions of the British army of the Seven Years War period are likewise qualified by David Blackmore's *Destructive and Formidable: British Infantry Firepower 1642-1764*, in which he asserts that North America made it "impossible for the British infantry to apply their traditional combat doctrine" and instead the "Army's response to the difficulties of this sort of warfare was twofold. One measure was to endeavor to train the regular battalions in the rudiments of irregular warfare or bushfighting. The second measure was the introduction of their own light troops to take on the French irregulars on their own terms".[13]

Yet, while building on Duffy's assessment, these revisionist works continued to be overshadowed by those towing the orthodox view. Richard Holmes' *Redcoat: The British Soldier in the Age of Horse and Musket*, claims to be correcting the popular view of the British, writing "Watch *Rob Roy, Last of the Mohicans* or, most recently, *The Patriot*, and you will wonder how this army of thugs and incompetents managed to fight its way across four continents and secure the greatest empire the world has ever seen".[14] Instead though, Holmes continues the perpetuation of myths of how British soldiers

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[12] Brumwell, Stephen. *Redcoats: The British Soldier and War in the Americas, 1755-1763*., 227
[13] Blackmore, David J. *Destructive and Formidable: British Infantry Firepower 1642-1764*. London: Frontline Books, 2014., 149
[14] Holmes, Richard. *Redcoat: The British Soldier in the Age of Horse and Musket*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company, 2002., XV

fought in North America, acceding only that specific light infantry companies fought in a suitable style.[15]

Although Stephen Brumwell had soundly demonstrated that the British forces serving in North America during the Seven Years War were not recruited from "the very bottom of the social pile", crammed into "gaudy and constricting uniforms", or forced to "march into the cannon's mouth…because the consequences of refusal were worse", his methodology was not applied by historians to the army of the Revolution until the later 2000's.[16] Mathew Spring's book *With Zeal and With Bayonets Only: The British Army on Campaign in North America, 1775-1783*, an expanded doctoral thesis, argued nearly identically to Brumwell. To Spring, the British army fought in a looser formation than in Europe, contained highly motivated troops, and experimented with tactical changes.[17] These conclusions, still controversial today, contained a vast amount of primary source information, and became a milestone in the depiction of infantry fighting for the Crown in the Revolution. Spring examined nearly all aspects of the British military in North America in a new light, especially the war aims and policy of the government. But, when it came to tactics, he repeated many of the same assertions of Holmes, arguing that it was only specific light infantry companies that were trained to fighting out of static linear formations. Likewise, Spring also repeats Hargreaves' assessment of the German auxiliaries in North America, portraying them as unable to meet the unique conditions in North America, and constantly contributing to British failure. Overall though, Spring and

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[15] Holmes, Richard. *Redcoat: The British Soldier in the Age of Horse and Musket.,* 41
[16] Brumwell, Stephen. *Redcoats: The British Soldier and War in the Americas, 1755-1763*., 3
[17] Spring, Mathew H. *With Zeal and With Bayonets Only: The British Army on Campaign in North America, 1775-1783.* Norman: U of Oklahoma, 2010., 102, 137, 315

Brumwell transformed representations of the British infantryman in North America to the historically conscious community, being repeated in other revisionist works such as Andrew Jackson O'Shaugnessy's *The Men Who Lost America: British Leadership, the American Revolution, and the Fate of the Empire*.[18] Working in the form of nine mini-autobiographies, O'Shaugnessy illustrates the specific issues of why he thinks Britain lost the war, and unlike previous authors, does not chalk it up to a lack of tactical adaptability.

Concurrently there have been reexaminations of social aspects of Crown forces in North America during the Revolution that have informed the historiography regarding the evolution of British tactical and strategic thinking. Don Hagist's groundbreaking study *British Soldiers, American War: Voices of the American Revolution* not only analyzed, but also compiled and transcribed every known surviving written account from non-commissioned rank British soldiers. He examined a plethora of aspects including motivations, methods of enlistment, treatment of soldiers, training, education, quality of life, and religious views. The image Hagist creates flies right in the face of most popular and academic depictions of soldiers' life in the eighteenth century, illustrating these men as highly driven individuals, most veterans of many years, nearly all volunteers that chose the profession for various reasons, and coming from all walks of life. Other social reexaminations have dealt with the Loyalist element of the conflict, historically one of the most overlooked aspects of the war. The absolutely massive amount of transcriptions and data which Todd Braisted has published, along with the works of Thomas B. Allen, have

[18] O'Shaugnessy, Andrew Jackson. *The Men Who Lost America: British Leadership, the American Revolution, and the Fate of the Empire*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013., 7

illustrated that Crown views of Loyalist support were not ill-founded as has been claimed, and that tens of thousands would serve by the end of the war, with some of the most pivotal engagements of the war fought predominantly between Americans only.

Even though the perceptions of eighteenth-century warfare, as well as the British military of the Revolution, have been reexamined by several key authors since the Bicentennial, the reality is the orthodox view of both continues to persist. If one leafs through the official New Jersey history textbook for junior-high schoolers, one still gets the view of a plodding force of British troops unable to change their European ways and thus bested by plucky American amateurs thinking independently, with one passage stating the "army's style was not well suited to fighting in frontier country. Lined up in columns and rows, the troops made easy targets".[19] Academic and popular history just can't separate from the notion that "an ancien regime army was a slow and unwieldy mass of disgruntled and terrorized soldiers led by untrained and unimaginative officers" and that European armies of the time: "…aimed away from battle and toward elegant, geometric maneuver…to read the account of any 18th century battle…typically found two lines of hostile infantry blasting away at each other at extremely close range…".[20] Recently, in a lecture for the Society of Military History, Geoffrey Parker states "Good history is problem driven".[21] The problem here is, why does what those who participated in the conflict have to say about their experience not mesh with what most authors claim?

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[19] Appelby, Joyce, Alan Brinkley, and James M McPherson. *The American Journey*. New York, NY: Glencoe/McGraw-Hill, 2007., 122

[20] Andrew R. Wilson, "Master's of War: History's Great Strategic Thinkers" (lecture, The Great Courses, Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island). July 8, 2016; Citino, Robert M. *The German Way of War: From the Thirty Years' War to the Third Reich*. Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2005., 35

[21] Parker, Geoffrey. "Is the *Military Revolution* Dead Yet?" *86th Annual Meeting of the Society for Military History*. May 9, 2019.

This seems most easily explained by Eric Schnitzer when he states that "historical narratives are based upon surprisingly scant evidence, or even evidence that is later proven fraudulent…If left untreated, successive generations are doomed to repeat flawed interpretations".[22] So then, the focus becomes: How, why, and what effect did changes to military tactics, strategy, and material culture have on the war? In essence, it is by letting those who experienced the Revolution firsthand speak for themselves that one can truly start to grasp the bigger picture of the conflict and what really happened, rather than relying on the drill books written by theorists, 19th century Romantic histories, or other secondary sources, which show how, to those authors, it should have happened.

[22] Troani, Don, and Eric Schnitzer. *Campaign to Saratoga*. Guilford, CT: Stackpole Books, 2019., vii

II. World War, American Adaptions

In the course of the Seven Years War (1754-1763), British forces in North America learned extremely painful lessons. Whereas many previous European conflicts had spilled over into their overseas possessions, this time the reverse was true. Tense border posturing between British and French colonies, accompanied by the rapid building of forts as a declaration of claimed borders, created a powder keg ready to ignite at any moment. In 1754, Major George Washington's expedition to Fort Duquesne provided the spark that would eventually drag every major European and Indian power into the first truly global war. With North America suddenly now no longer a side-show theater, for the first time Britain and France dispatched battalions of regular troops in strength to their colonies in a scale previously unseen. This created a conflict that was truly a departure from previous confrontations; something contemporary participants took keen notice of, as Captain Louis Antione de Bougainville of the *Troupe de Terre* recorded in his journal: "Now war is established here on the European basis. Projects for the campaign, for armies, for artillery, for sieges, for battles. It no longer is a matter of making a raid, but of conquering or being conquered. What a revolution! What a change!".[23]

Thrust into this new theater were British troops trained for conventional European warfare that had been developing for decades. In the early eighteenth century, Prussian doctrinal developments under Frederick II allowed troops of the relatively small state to dominate its much larger European neighbors in battle during the War of Austrian

[23] de Bougainville, Louis Antione. *Adventure in the Wilderness: The American Journals of Louis Antoine De Bougainville, 1756-1760*. Translated by Edward P Hamilton. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964., 252

Succession (1740-1748).[24] A lively debate thus ensued among military theorists revolving around two main ideas of tactical thought: *l'ordre profound*, columnar tactics, and *l'ordre mince*, linear tactics. *L'ordre profound*, expounded by theorists such as the Spanish Marquis de Santa-Cruz and Frenchmen Chevalier de Folard and Field Marshal Maurice, Comte de Saxe, argued for the use of cold steel and quick shock tactics to overcome an enemy force.[25] To them, firepower (in the form of musketry and artillery) should be utilized in a supporting role, rather than be the means for victory.[26] Conversely, *l'ordre mince* argued that a high volume of fire delivered as quickly as possible could lay down an impenetrable sheet of lead and overcome any obstacle. Firepower tactics arguably found their greatest champion in Frederick the Great, whose overhaul of his father's systems led one Dutch officer to comment that the "Prussians have certainly brought quick-firing to a greater degree than the troops of any other nation".[27]

Such innovations on both sides were watched closely by Britain, who, although entertaining a lively literary debate, in practice eagerly entered the vogue of copying all things Prussian. James Wolfe stated to his battalions in 1755: "As the alternative fire by platoons or divisions, or by companies, is the most simple, plain and easy, and used by the best disciplined troops in Europe, we are at all times to imitate them in that respect".[28]

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[24] Abel, Johnathan. *Guibert: Father of Napoleon's Grande Armée*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016., 13
[25] Blackmore, David. *Destructive and Formidable: British Infantry Firepower 1642-1765*. London, UK: Frontline Books, 2014.. 120
[26] Ibid., 121
[27] Blackmore, David. *Destructive and Formidable: British Infantry Firepower 1642-1765*., 122
[28] Wolfe, James. *General Wolfe's Instructions to Young Officers: Also His Orders for a Battalion and an Army; Together with the Orders and Signals Used in Embarking and Debarking an Army by Flat-bottom'd Boats, &c.; and a Placart to the Canadians; to Which Is Prefixed the Resolution of the House of Commons for His Monument; and His Character, and the Dates of All His Commissions; Also the Duty of an Adjutant and Quarter Master, &c.*London: J. Millan, 1768., 35

These systems of firing by small sections of soldiers, provided, in theory, what contemporaries would describe as a "perpetual fire" in which there were always muskets trained downrange delivering volleys under the cover of which other sections of a formation could withdraw, advance, or reload. To many European theorists, these formations and ideas seemed to be the best answer to the tradeoff between discipline, maneuverability, firepower, and security against cavalry; key aspects infantry formations needed in the age of linear warfare (infantry fighting in some type of line formation). But, deploying to North America, the unique campaign conditions there, hitherto unencountered by sizeable British forces, brought to light distressing insufficiencies in these drill doctrines.

After news of Washington's 1754 skirmish reached Europe, Britain and France deployed sizeable formations to North America even before formal war was declared. While both continued searching for a suitable *casus belli* to kick off hostilities in Europe, in 1755 Crown officials would direct Major General Edward Braddock to undertake an operation to destroy Fort Duquesne. Marching into the wilderness with close to two thousand regular and provincial troops, Braddock's men greatly outnumbered the small amount of French regulars, Canadians, and Native Americans arrayed before them. Counter to common perceptions of the engagement, on July 9th 1755, Braddock's initial marching array did exactly what it was supposed to do. Instead of the whole army being completely surprised and ambushed, the vanguard led by Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Gage, future Commander-in-Chief of North America, bumped into the French forces

arrayed in ambush and stood fast, waiting for the arrival of Braddock's main force.[29] It was here that the unsuitability of current British military systems for North American conditions spelled doom to the expedition. Abandoning their marching columns, Braddock's men rushed through the woods toward the din of battle as "men without any form or order but that of a parcel of school boys coming out of s[c]hool – and in an instant blue, buff and yellow were intermix'd".[30] Under heavy French fire the exhortations of the officers restored a semblance of order, but the reformed firing sections arrayed on the road and forest gave the French "always a large marke to shoute [shoot] at and we having only to shoute [shoot] at them behind trees or laid on their Bellies. We was drawn up in large Bodies together, a ready mark. They need not have taken sight at us for they Always had a large Mark".[31] Under conditions where the French fought "on their Bellies or Behind trees or Running from one tree to another almost by the ground" chaos reigned.[32] There were British soldiers who broke ranks and "fought behind trees" doing the "most Execution of Any", but in the confusion "the greatest part of the Men who were behind trees were either killed or wounded by our own people, even one or two Officers were killed by their own platoon".[33] The total insufficiency of tight firing blocks was summed up by one officer who stated "from their [the French] irregular method of

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[29] Hamilton, Charles, ed. *Braddock's Defeat: The Journal of Captain Robert Cholmley's Batman, The Journal of a British Officer, Halkett's Orderly Book*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1959., xvii
[30] Pargellis, Stanley, ed. Anonymous Letter on Braddock's Campaign, Wills's Creek, 25th July 1755, *Military Affairs in North America, 1748-1765. Selected Documents from the Cumberland Papers in Windsor Castle.* New York & London: D. Appleton-Century Co., Inc., 1936., 115-116
[31] Hamilton, Charles, ed. *Braddock's Defeat., 28-29*
[32] Ibid., 29
[33] Ibid., 29, 50

fighting by running from one place to another obliged us to wheel from right to left, to desert ye Guns and then hastily to return & cover them".[34]

The destruction of Braddock's forces, and the subsequent British disasters of 1756 and 1757 stirred a total overhaul of military systems in North America. The ambitious plans for the 1758 invasion of Canada were accompanied by a retraining of British troops to meet the unique terrain and battle conditions in North America. Virginia Provincial Ensign Thomas Gist provides an example of such changes, describing Henry Bouquets training of light infantry of the British Army in the spring of 1758:

> Every afternoon he exercises his men in the woods and bushes in the manner of his own invention, which will be of great service in an engagement with Indians. First, they always surround their enemy, the Second, that they always fight scattered, and never in a compact body. The third that they never stand their ground when attacked, but immediately give way to the charge. That having no resistance to encounter in the attack and the defense, they are not to be drawn up in close order, which only will expose them without necessity to a greater loss. All their evolutions must be performed with great rapidity; and the men enabled by exercise to pursue the enemy closely; when put to flight, and not giving them time to rally.[35]

In a similar vein, Colonel Thomas Gage, commander of the vanguard under Braddock, was tasked by Lord Loudon with raising an experimental "light arm'd infantry regiment", confirmed on the War Establishment by Royal Warrant as the 80th foot in May 1758.[36] While provincial ranger corps had served with British forces since the start of the conflict, they were hampered by a marked lack of discipline and inability to be pushed

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[34] Hamilton, Charles, ed. *Braddock's Defeat.*, 50
[35] Cubbison, Douglas R. *The British Defeat of the French in Pennsylvania, 1758: A Military History of the Forbes Campaign Against Fort Duquesne*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc, Publishers , 2010., 54
[36] Captain Hugh Arnot to Loudon, Stillwater, 1 August 1758, quoted in Westbrook (ed.),'"Like Roaring Lions Breaking from their Chains": The Highland Regiment at Ticonderoga', *The Bulletin of the Fort Ticonderoga Museum,* vol. XVI, no. 1, 1998., 26

into the line of battle if the situation called for it. The idea under Loudon was a hybrid corps, combining the suitability of ranger tactics to North America with the discipline and drill of a regular regiment.[37] The clothing of these men were described by Robert Napier as "dark brown short coats" with other contemporary reports stating they wore "lather caps" and carried muskets with cut down shortened barrels, and blue leggings.[38] These training and material culture changes, sometimes varying by units and theaters, created a truly unique "American Army" operating in North America.[39]

The result of these changes is remarkably apparent in contemporary descriptions. At the siege of Carillon in 1758, David Perry described fighting as:

> At length our regiment formed among the trees…We got behind trees, logs and stumps, and covered ourselves as we could from the enemy's fire…It happened that I got behind a white-oak stump, which was so small that I had to lay on my side, and stretch myself; the balls striking the ground within a hand's breath of me every moment…I sprang from my perilous situation, and gained a stand which I thought would be more secure, behind a large pine log, where several of my comrades had already taken shelter.[40]

At the same siege Captain Hugh Arnot described the soldiers "keep up a Fire upon the Enemy from behind Loggs and Trees".[41] On the Plains of Abraham in 1759, the British troops, after conducting an amphibious landing, threw out skirmishers from the regiments to deal with French irregulars, while the battalions were "ordered to lie on the grass to avoid the shot".[42] Still, even with these changes, it would be the regular battalions,

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[37] Spadone, Nicholas J. "80th Regiment or Gage's Lightly Armed Foot." *Fort Ticonderoga Association*, June 2019., 1
[38] Ibid., 1-3
[39] Brumwell, Stephen. *Redcoats: The British Soldier and War in the Americas, 1755-1763*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002., 6
[40] Perry, David. Life of David Perry. *Bulletin of the Fort Ticonderoga Museum 14,* no. 1, summer 1981., 5-6
[41] Captian Hugh Arnot to Loudon, Stillwater, 1 August 1758, quoted in Westbrook (ed.),'"Like Roaring Lions Breaking from their Chains"., 40
[42] Parkman, Francis. *Montcalm and Wolfe*. Vol. II. Boston, MA: Little, Brown, and Company, 1909., 306

formed up three ranks deep, and utilizing thunderous volleys, that would smash the French lines and defeat the last grand army of New France.[43] It was this mix, the flexibility of regular troops to adapt and change on the fly to unique situations, or as Stephen Brumwell has soundly demonstrated, the ability to master "the amphibious assault landing; light infantry skirmishing; and the disciplined delivery of firepower from linear formations" that gave the British military a tactical ascendancy in the wilderness.[44]

[43] Parkman, Francis. *Montcalm and Wolfe*., 301, 306
[44] Brumwell, Stephen. *Redcoats: The British Soldier and War in the Americas, 1755-1763*., 227

III. Realities Meet Theory: Preparing for the Next War

It would prove ironic and tragic for the soldiers involved that such lessons bought at a heavy price, and which allowed an ascendency in the Seven Years War, would be forgotten or lost in the twelve-year period between it and the Revolution. The track record of British forces at the start of the Revolution is poor, and it took many grueling engagements in 1775 to motivate a total overhaul in operational methods, with much of the changes mirroring those of the previous war. The reality is that British command during the peace, and the changes they instituted within their forces, were motivated by financial, political, and strategic considerations to create what was thought the most prudent for a possible future conflict. At the conclusion of the Seven Years War, Britain faced a massive debt, and subsequently scaled down their armed forces, reducing the number of companies in a battalion to eight and disbanding war-time regiments, such as Gage's Light Armed foot, raised as an exigency. Concurrently, Britain gained all of New France, Florida, Grenada, Saint Vincent, Minorca, sections of Guatemala, and nearly all French territories in Africa and India.[45] No longer defending against a hostile France to the north of their colonies, and buttressed against the Spanish to the south with the acquisition of Florida, the prospect of campaigning again in North America versus Europe or India seemed relatively low in the early years of the peace. Preparing for a European conflict meant another inward look at the tactics and methods which had succeeded during that period, and again the success of Prussian and British formations

[45] Ferreiro, Larrie D. *Brothers at Arms: American Independence and the Men of France and Spain Who Saved It.* New York, NY : Vintage Books, 2016., 14

utilizing disciplined firepower against overwhelming numbers in European battles influenced a doubling down on these methods. In 1764, a year after the war ended, new regulations were issued that changed the loading and individual firing of the platoon exercise to streamline the process and make it quicker.[46] The actual firings of a battalion formation were changed to alternate fire by subdivisions and grand divisions, with American modifications such as light troops discarded and the flanks taken up by splitting the grenadier company in two.[47] Essentially 1/8 of a three rank deep formation of varying size would fire while others were loading or remained loaded. Such an exercise allowed easier command and control on the field of battle, and accomplished a quick firing compact block that was easily maneuverable. This would be the drill which would accompany most British troops into North America at the start of the Revolution.

Light infantry troops as a whole were discarded on the official establishments after 1763.[48] In 1770, every regiment was again augmented with a company of light infantry, but the vision of what purpose these troops would serve was a matter of fierce debate. On European terms, armies had employed light troops since the early-mid 18th century, imitating French schemes of organization with the *Chasseur*, or, with those falling under German influence, the *Jäger*.[49] In such systems, these troops utilized their lighter equipment and doctrine in such roles as scouting and piquet posts. Their function

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[46] Harvey, Edward, J. Humphreys, and R. Bell. *The Manual Exercise, as Ordered by His Majesty, in the Year 1764 :Together with Plans and Explanations of the Method Generally Practised at Reviews and Field-Days; with Copper-Plates*. Philadelphia: R. Aitken, 1776., 3-5

[47] Blackmore, David. *Destructive and Formidable: British Infantry Firepower 1642-1765*. London, UK: Frontline Books, 2014., 142-143

[48] Adjutant-General to Lieutenant-Colonel Mawhood, 30 November 1770, quoted in Strachan, Hew(ed.). *British Military Uniforms 1768-1796: The Dress of the British Army from Official Sources*. London: Arms and Armour Press, 1975., 186

[49] Duffy, Christopher. *Military Experience in the Age of Reason*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 1987., 272

in combat was most often being thrown out ahead of the main army in a loose formation to skirmish and harass the oncoming enemy, buying time for the regular battalions to maintain their formations and order when entering the field of battle, such as the description given by Ferdinand of Brunswick at the battle of Minden in 1759: "I ordered our Grenadiers and Jägers to amuse the enemy by detached platoons, so that our columns would have time to arrive".[50] In effect, these actions would preserve the energy of the bulk of the fighting force and reduce casualties while a commander maneuvered their troops to the best position possible before bringing on a general action. However, the weaknesses of light skirmishing troops in a European theater were very apparent to most theorists of the day. Enemy cavalry would be trained to exploit the gaps between men, using the openings to slice into the formation and disperse them; while their open dispositions could not muster enough firepower to blunt a charge of massed infantry, who could close the gap extremely quickly. As a result, in Europe these troops rarely operated independent of a stronger supporting force because, if isolated, they could easily be overwhelmed, as British Colonel David Dundas wrote: "skirmishers and dispersed men are loose, detached and numerous, according to circumstances; but a firm reserve always remains to rally upon…they decide not, nor are they chiefly relied upon in battle".[51] While serving an essential purpose, their service was rarely central in delivering the decisive blow in a clash.

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[50] Westphalen, Christian Heinricj Philipp, and Ferdinand Otto Wilhelm Henning von Westphalen. *Geschichte Der Feldzüge Des Herzogs Ferdinand Von Braunschweig- Lüneburg*. Vol. 3. Berlin: Ernst, Siegfried Mittler & Sohn, 1871., 242

[51] Dundas, David. *Principles of Military Movements Chiefly Applied to Infantry. Illustrated by Manoeuvres of the Prussian Troops, and by an Outline of the British Campaigns in German, during the War of 1757. Together with An Appendix, Containing a Practical Abstract of the Whole.* London: T. Cadell, 1788., 13-14

In England, with these precedents in mind, the establishment of the light infantry companies and their drill took different forms varying from commander to commander or theater of operations. In theory, all were uniform in regards to their equipment, which differed from the regular battalion troops, consisting of: "Jackets; black leather caps, with 3 chains round them…small cartouch [cartridge] boxes, powder-horns, and bags for ball; short pieces and hatchets".[52] The inclusion of small cartridge boxes (holding pre-rolled paper-cartridges that contained both shot, powder, and wad) in addition to powder horns and bags for loose shot emphasizes the view of these troops being utilized in a European sense. Instead of being expected to fire quickly, the loose shot and powder allowed the troops to, in theory, carry more ammunition, but at the expense of a considerably lengthened loading time; illustrating the expectation that these troops would engage and harass from afar. The small amount of pre-rolled ammunition would be saved for times of exigency, when speed of loading was of the essence. Even with the Crown regulations, inspection returns from pre-war reviews of different regiments frequently record a deviance from these in accouterments and uniforms, illustrating a diversity of thought with regards to what would be suitable.[53]

Some Light Infantry Companies fell under the purview of more enterprising officers that would establish a drill suitable for broken or densely wooded terrain. In 1772, Lieutenant General George Townshend, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, would issue

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[52] Simes,Thomas, *The Military Guide for Young Officers,* London, 1772, quoted in Strachan, Hew(ed.). *British Military Uniforms 1768-1796: The Dress of the British Army from Official Sources*. London: Arms and Armour Press, 1975., 188

[53] Strachan, Hew(ed.). *British Military Uniforms 1768-1796: The Dress of the British Army from Official Sources*. London: Arms and Armour Press, 1975., 204-205

regulations for the light infantry of the entirety of the Irish Establishment. In these he ordered them to form "two Deep with a space of Two Feet between the files", with those files in battle to conduct an "Irregular Fire" during which "each file has an entire dependence on itself".[54] Likewise, because "Mutual defense and Confidence is one of the most Essential Principles of Light Infantry" the men, when engaged in a wood, were "to be taught to Cover themselves with trees…and to fire alternatively[essentially one man always loaded while the other reloaded]".[55] Similarly, under these regulations signals were to be done by whistle, the men to be given accuracy training, were to take advantage of "large stones, broken Inclosures, old Houses, or any strong feature", and were trained to perform all maneuvers by files (instead of platoons or larger bodies that could be broken up by the terrain).[56] Envisioning these troops operating autonomously, if encountered by cavalry, the soldiers were to "endeavor to retire to a Wood or some Strong Ground…they must disperse by files, at Considerable distances from one another, fix their bayonets, take great Care not to throw away their Fire until they are sure that a shot shall take place".[57] Such a discipline calling for more independence of soldiers, individual initiative in firing, taking cover, and advancing, as well as specific training for specific types of terrain more so resembled operations in North America than Europe.

With the troubles in North America, more officers entered the fray and established doctrines for those light troops under their command. Through the late

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[54] Smythies, R. H. R. *Historical Records of the 40th (20th Somersetshire) Regiment, now 1st Battalion The Prince of Wales Volunteers (South Lancashire Regiment) from it's formation in 1717 to 1893*. Devonport, 1894., 549
[55] Ibid., 549
[56] Ibid., 549-552
[57] Ibid., 552

summer and into the fall of 1774, Major General William Howe (who would take charge in North America a year later) held a training camp on Salisbury plain in England with the combined light companies of the 3rd, 11th, 21st, 29th, 32nd, 36th, and 70th Regiments.[58] In September, he would issue a *Discipline Established…for Light Infantry in Battalion*. In it, Howe outlines a plan for a battalion level troop arrangement to move and shift rapidly on the battlefield. Nearly every movement, such as forming fronts on the march or obliqueing to the right or left and reforming, were done by files, the smallest possible group in a formation. In the beginning of the *Discipline*, Howe outlines a standard order, like Townshend, with two feet between files. But, remarkably, Howe also institutes an "open order" formation with "four feet Interval" between files and an "extended order" with "ten feet Interval" between files of soldiers.[59] In essence, Howe has created a discipline that acts like an accordion. A commanding officer can expand or compress the distance between the troops under his command depending on the terrain obstacles or ground needed to be held in front of them. This *Discipline* seems to have been taught not just to the light infantry. Roger Lamb, a corporal in a battalion company of the 9th Regiment of Foot discussed undergoing Howe's discipline in early 1775:

> Our regiment was ordered for Dublin duty, and Lord Ligonier, the Colonel, arrived from England to inspect and take command of it…I was by him promoted to be a corporal, and sent among several other non-commissioned officers to be instructed in the new exercise which shortly before had been introduced by his majesty to be practised in the different regiments. To make trial of this excellent mode of discipline for light troops, and render it general without delay, seven companies were assembled at Salisbury in the summer of 1774. His Majesty himself went

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[58] Spring, Mathew H. *With Zeal and With Bayonets Only: The British Army on Campaign in North America, 1775-1783.* Norman: U of Oklahoma, 2010., 335

[59] Howe, William. *Discipline Established by Major General Howe for Light Infantry in* Battalion. Sarum, September 1774. National Army Museum Archives, London.

> to Salisbury to see them, and was much pleased with their utility, and the manner of their execution. The manoeuvres were chiefly intended for woody and intricate districts, with which North America abounds, where an army cannot act in line…those of Sir William Howe, which were done from the centre of battalions, grand divisions and sub-divisions, by double Indian files. They were six in number, and well adapted for the service in America. Our regiment was instructed in them by the 33rd, at that time quartered in Dublin, and commanded by Lord Cornwallis.[60]

It appears from Lamb's recollection that non-commissioned officers in regiments intended for North America were to be trained in the exercise, and then bring it to their parent regiments to drill both light and regular infantry alike. The training regimen in the kingdom is further supported by the orders given to Major French in April of 1775:

> Announcing His Majesty's decision of the question whether Major Christopher French, Captain of the 22nd Regiment, should continue in Ireland to complete the disciplining of the light companies in that kingdom, or embark for New York with his corps. He is to embark and proceed to New York.[61]

Concurrently with the training program for troops in England about to be deployed to North America, leaders on the ground in the colonies started to shift their training as what at first appeared to be a localized policing action in New England, was quickly spiraling into full-blown war through every colony. In March of 1775 Robert Honeyman recorded that:

> …finding some regiments at Exercise I was so well entertained that I spent all the forenoon looking at them. Some of the Regiments were extremely expert at their Exercise, & the manouvres & manner of fighting of the light infantry was exceedingly curious…they are trained in the regular manner, & likewise in a peculiar discipline of irregular & Bush fighting; they run out in parties on the wings of the regiment where they keep up a constant & irregular fire; they secure their retreat; & defend their front

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[60] Lamb, Roger. *Memior of His Own Life by R. Lamb; Serjeant in the Royal Welch Fuzileers, and Author of "A Journal of Occurrences during the Late American War."*. Dublin: J. Jones, 1811., 89-90

[61] Roberts, Richard Arthur, ed. *Calendar of the Home Office Papers of the Reign of George III. 1773-1775. Preserved in the Public Record Office.* Her Majesty's Stationery Office, London. 1899., 343

> while they are forming; in one part of their Exercise they l[a]y on their backs & charge their pieces & fire lying on their bellies.[62]

Even closer to the outbreak of formal conflict, Frederick Mackenzie recorded on the 15th of April, 1775: "The Grenadier and Light Infantry Companies were this day Ordered to be off all duty 'till further orders, as they will be ordered out to learn the Grenadier Exercise, and some New Evolutions for the Light Infantry".[63] What these "New Evolutions" were is not recorded, but they would have their reckoning a day later at Lexington and Concord.

Still, like with Townshend's *Rules and Orders for the Discipline of the Light Infantry Companies,* many of these regulations were particular to the troops under a specific officer's command, and variations abounded. In the pre-war papers of John Graves Simcoe, future commander of the Queen's Rangers and one of the most decorated partisan fighters of the war, is a hypothetical order of battle that relegates the light infantry out of the direct line of battle and into a supportive role behind the artillery in the reserve.[64] In essence, there was no definitive establishment-wide standard or doctrine for light troops, and many different visions as to their purpose in an army. But there is definite evidence that the debates among officers and theorists, some in the literature and others on the training ground, contained a push and pull between being informed by a European context or the distinct North American doctrine that developed in the 1750s.

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[62] Honyman, Dr. Robert. *Colonial Panorama 1775. Dr. Robert Honyman's Journal for March and April.* Padelford, Philip, ed. Books for Libraries Press, Freeport, NY, 1971. 43-44

[63] Mackenzie, Frederick. *A British Fusilier in Revolutionary Boston: Being the Diary of Lieutenant Frederick Mackenzie, Adjutant of the Royal Welch Fusiliers, January 5-April 30 1775, With a Letter Describing His Voyage to America*. Edited by Allen French. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926., 48

[64] Simcoe, John Graves. "Orders, Dublin Castle July 14th, 1774". John Graves Simcoe Papers, William L. Clements Library, The University of Michigan.

To those officials seeing the escalating situation in North America, many (some serving there previously as well) started preparing their troops for their prediction of that environment. Townshend's maneuvers focus very much on tactics while Howe emphasized maneuver in rough terrain. But, outside of Roger Lamb's assertion of being trained under Lord Howe in early 1775, there is no substantial indication that battalion-company troops were given a unique training regimen that deviated from that of the 1764 exercise in the lead up to the Revolution. Even though many documents demonstrate the training of light infantry companies, the eruption of war in April 1775 very quickly made clear just how dissimilar this would be from the Seven Years War.

IV. Hearts and Minds: Grand Strategy Dictating Tactics

The mission of the military in this new American war was vastly different than the previous one, presenting strict parameters for the strategic situation that directly impacted tactics. While there were war hawks calling for the immediate use of force to subdue the rebellion, the reality is the vast majority of British high command and politicians were divided over whether or not military force would be effective, or if it should even be sent at all.[65] Many ministers acknowledged that the American Rebels were not entirely unjustified in their feelings, even as the war started to progress into a wider global conflict, as one minister would state:

> If taxation were once given up, and that great minister ... invited again into office, with a lenient disposition to heal those wounds our civil distractions had made on either side the Atlantic, and with talents and spirit equal to so difficult a contest, if irremediably and unhappily necessary to continue it, this nation might yet be saved.[66]

Others were not as indulgent. Thomas Pownall would embody a conventional counterpoint, stating to Parliament:

> When I see that the Americans are actually resisting that government which is derived from the Crown, and by the authority of parliament…when I see them arming and arraying themselves, and carrying this opposition into force by arms; seeing the question brought to an issue not on a point of right but a trial of power; I cannot but say, that it is become necessary that this country should arm also. It is become necessary, that this government should oppose its force to force, when that force is to be employed only in maintaining the laws and constitution of the empire.[67]

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[65] Cobbett, William. *The Parliamentary History of England.* Vol. XVIII. London: T. C. Hansard, 1820., 167-175, 323-358

[66] Brooke, John. "LUTTRELL, Hon. Temple Simon (?1738-1803), of Eaglehurst, Nr. Southampton, Hants." The History of Parliament: British Political, Social, and Local History. Institute of Historical Research, Crown Copyright, n.d. http://www.histparl.ac.uk/volume/1754-1790/member/luttrell-hon-temple-simon-1738-1803.

[67] Cobbett, William. *The Parliamentary History of England.* Vol. XVIII., 323

As a consequence, the fractured leadership consistently failed to foster clearly achievable goals or a coherent and unified strategy to combat Rebel leadership. Indeed, the only unifying concept that justified the use of troops was the idea that the vast majority of Americans were being oppressed or misled by the lies of a minority leadership. It was on this framework, the concept that most Americans were waiting for British support, which much of the North Ministry's war effort hinged on.[68]

Conventional histories of the Revolution usually examine British military movements and strategic forces in the framework of their looking to conquer and subjugate the entirety of the colonies. But, this is an inherently flawed and erroneous view. The idea of effectively using overwhelming power of land troops to bring the entirety of the rebellion to heel was considered unsound even from the first news of Lexington and Concord. Adjutant-General of the Army Edward Harvey stated to Parliament soon after news of that battle reached England: "attempting to conquer America internally by our land force, is as wild an idea, as ever controverted common sense".[69] This was supported by numerous other officials and soldiers. Parliamentary Minister Temple Luttrell stated in a debate that "the military coercion of America will be impracticable…neither shall we be long able to sustain the unhallowed war at so remote a distance", while James Murray, before being deployed to America, wrote to his sister:

> To subdue by force of arms a country of several thousands of miles in extent, almost entirely covered with wood is not an easy operation, if there were no inhabitants at all; but when we consider that there are no less than 3,000,000…enflamed to the highest pitch of enthusiasm; we have too

[68] O'Shaugnessy, Andrew Jackson. *The Men Who Lost America: British Leadership, the American Revolution, and the Fate of the Empire*., 11
[69] Marston, Jerrilyn Greene. *King and Congress: The Transfer of Political Legitimacy, 1774-1776*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987., 151

> many instances of what that enthusiasm has been capable of producing not to be very doubtful of the event.[70]

In a similar manner, banker Thomas Coutts wrote to the Earl of Stair that "the idea of reducing such a continent to obedience (especially after letting them have so much time to unite) appears to me…to be absolutely impossible, and attended with the most ruinous consequences to this country" while the annual Register for 1775 summed up the reality that had become readily apparent, that the outbreak of hostilities "shewed how ill informed those were who had so often asserted at home, that a regiment or two could force their way through any part of the continent, and that the very sight of a grenadier's cap, would be sufficient to put an American army to flight".[71]

The justification for sending troops to North America operated on the idea of freeing and liberating one set of Americans from another. But, it needs to be acknowledged that intertwined with this was a nuanced concept of empire, which shifted as the struggle progressed and the global political situation changed. Years before the outbreak of war, extensive debates raged regarding the sovereign right of Parliament over the Thirteen Colonies, and, with some dissent, concluded the authority of Parliament "be made to extend to every point of legislation whatsoever…and exercise of every power whatsoever".[72] Post-1777, as France, Spain, the Dutch Republic, Mysore, and the Marathas declared war on the British, America simply became a theater in a war of

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[70] Cobbett, William. *The Parliamentary History of England,* 347. Murray, James. *Letters from America 1773 to 1780, Being the Letters of a Scots Officer, Sir James Murray, to His Home during the War of American Independence*. Edited by Eric Robson. Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1951., 17

[71] Coleridge, E. H. *The Life of Thomas Coutts.* 2 vols. London: John Lane Company, 1920., 74-75. *The Annual Register, Or, A View of the History, Politics, And Literature for the* Year *1775.* London: J. Dodsley, 1791., 128

[72] Taylor, William S, and John Henry Pringle, eds. *Correspondence of William Pitt, Earl of Chatham*. Vol. 2. London: John Murray, 1840., 373

survival, as George III would put it: "we are contending for our whole consequence whether we are to rank among the Great Powers of Europe, or to be reduced to one of the least considerable".[73] There was other varied reasoning among those who supported the war effort, but even with these considerations, the whole legitimacy of the King's position of putting boots on the ground in North America, indeed of Lord North's Government as well, was that the Americans were misled by "the intrigues of a few bold and criminal leaders".[74] One Loyalist would put it more plainly: "if we review the List of those Heroes who compose Congresses, Committees, mock Government, & the chief army Departments, we shall find it filled up with Men, desperate in Ambition or in Fortune. As for those who follow their Leaders, they stand upon ye. Compassionate List, for they know not what they do".[75]

Some authors have chided the British Leadership of the Revolution for overstating Loyalist support, but this aspect needs to be re-contextualized with new information recently come to light. The population of the thirteen colonies is the subject of extensive debates, but pouring over tax lists, militia musters, censuses, and other available records, there appears to have been 2,700,000 colonists at the start of the war.[76] Of these, examining refugee reports, resettlement records in areas of the empire, the archives of the Royal Commission on American Loyalists, and other documentation, the

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[73] O'Shaugnessy, Andrew Jackson. *The Men Who Lost America: British Leadership, the American Revolution, and the Fate of the Empire*., 29

[74] *The Annual Register or A View of The History, Politics, And Literature, For the Year 1779.*Pall-Mall: J. Dodsley, 1786., 398

[75] Oliver, Peter. *Peter Oliver's "Origin and Progress of the American Rebellion" A Tory View.* Edited by Douglass Adair and John A. Shultz. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University, 1961., 129

[76] Allen, Thomas B. *Tories: Fighting for the King in America's First Civil War*. New York: Harper, 2011., XX

numbers of Loyalists hovers around 550,000.[77] Out of these, current figures can document 100,000 fleeing by the conflict's close; most to Canada and the West Indies.[78] Some colonies had more local support for Crown authority than others, and even those numbers shifted in the eight years of conflict, as John Adams recollected:

> N. York and Pensilvania were so nearly divided…that if New England on one Side and Virginia on the other had not kept them in Awe, they would have joined the British…the Southern States were nearly equally divided. Look into the Journals of Congress and you will See how Seditious how near rebellion were Several Counties of New York, and how much trouble We had to compose them. The last Contest in the Town of Boston in 1775 between Whig and Tory was decided by five against two…Divided We ever have been and ever must be. Two thirds always had and will have more difficulty to Struggle with the one third, than with all our foreign Enemies.[79]

The inability to pinpoint precise numbers of Loyalists, and the debate that raged as to their numbers even during the war shows just how fluid the situation was. William Smith stated that "No Man knows his nearest Friends' real Sentiments", while Thomas Paine stated that, when the British landed in New York in 1776, "many a disguised Tory has lately shewn his head".[80]

Because of the split between Loyalist and Rebel, the American Revolution was in actuality a brutal civil war. In the decade before the Revolution, policies enacted by Parliament in North America were usually successfully and popularly opposed. The repeated impositions of new policies, and organized resistance against them "gave rise to

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[77]Allen, Thomas B. *Tories: Fighting for the King in America's First Civil War*., XX
[78] Ibid., 333
[79] "From John Adams to Thomas McKean, 31 August 1813," *Founders Online,* National Archives, accessed September 29, 2019, https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/99-02-02-6140
[80] O'Shaugnessy, Andrew Jackson. *The Men Who Lost America: British Leadership, the American Revolution, and the Fate of the Empire*., 191. Paine, Thomas. *THE WRITINGS OF THOMAS PAINE VOLUME I. COLLECTED AND EDITED BY MONCURE DANIEL CONWAY 1774 - 1779*. Edited by Daniel Conway. Salt Lake City, UT: Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, 2010.

radical leaders, organized popular resistance, a heightened political consciousness, intercolonial unions" and generated a debate about the limits of imperial power that allowed colonists to define a "coherent set of political ideas to justify their opposition to Britain".[81] Initially protests against items like the Stamp Act had broad appeal which allowed dissident politicians and leaders to gain positions of power and influence. But, as the antagonisms increased, many colonists who had previously supported these movements became disillusioned with the statements articulated by their colonial spokespersons. Tensions arose from this division, with the disagreements over political views, boycotts, and partisan publications between Loyalists and Patriots eventually boiling over into outright hostility. Disorder reigned as both sides fought with each other, leading Sir Francis Bernard, the Governor of Massachusetts, to write to Lt. General Thomas Gage that "All real power is in the hands of the people of the lowest class; civil authority can do nothing but what they will allow".[82]

By 1773, as the split amongst the North American population grew, those patriots that had gained power and influence quickly organized themselves into Committees of Correspondence which eventually formed Provincial, and then Continental Congresses which acted as pseudo government structures.[83] One of their initial acts was to gain control of royal-sanctioned and appointed militias which existed in every colony, such as the resolution of the Massachusetts Provincial Congress: "It is *Resolved* and hereby

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[81] O'Shaugnessy, Andrew Jackson. *The Men Who Lost America: British Leadership, the American Revolution, and the Fate of the Empire*., 50
[82] Hinderaker, Eric. *Boston's Massacre*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017., 71
[83] Raphael, Ray. "The Massachusetts Provincial Congress." In *Reporting the Revolutionary War,* ed. Todd Andralik (Naperville: Source Books, 2012)., 106.

recommended to the several Companies of Militia in this Province who have not already chosen and appointed Officers, that they meet forthwith and elect Officers to their respective companies".[84] Because of this, with the explosion of hostilities in 1775, the Rebel establishment already had an administrative structure that easily transitioned into the seat of power with the backing of, hypothetically, every militia man in the colonies. Loyalists, attempting to take matters into their own hands, would rise up in many areas. In Virginia, a Loyalist uprising led by Lord Dunmore would assemble in Norfolk where Dunmore issued a proclamation stating:

> I do require every Person capable of bearing Arms to resort to his Majesty's STANDARD, or be looked upon as Traitors to his Majesty's Crown and Government, and thereby become liable to the Penalty the Law inflicts upon such Offences, such as Forfeiture of Life, Confiscation of Lands…And I do hereby further declare all indentured Servants, Negroes, or others, (appertaining to Rebels) free, that are able and willing to bear Arms.[85]

As more than 500 slaves fled captivity and rallied around the British flag, fearing a larger slave uprising throughout the south, Patriot forces quickly amassed close to a thousand men outside the city of Norfolk. The ensuing Battle of Great Bridge, where Dunmore's men attempted to break the siege, resulted in a resounding Loyalist defeat.[86] Similarly, in North Carolina, Loyalist Donald MacDonald was able to raise a unit of about 1,500 men under his command.[87] Setting off towards the coast to rendezvous with hoped for British support, Patriot militia intercepted them and blocked their path with earthworks they set

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[84] *Boston Evening Post,* October 31, 1774.
[85] By His Excellency the Right Honourable John Earl of Dunmore . . . A proclamation. [Declaring martial law and to cause the same to be . . .] Williamsburg, 1775, Printed Ephemera Collection, Portfolio 178, Folder 18, Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
[86]Hall, John W. "The Battle of Great Bridge and Burning of Norfolk." In *Reporting the Revolutionary War,* ed. Todd Andralik (Naperville: Source Books, 2012), 158-159
[87] Allen, Thomas B. Tories: *Fighting for the King in America's First Civil War*. New York: Harper, 2011.,151

up at Moore's Creek Bridge.[88] With little more than half of the Loyalist force carrying firearms, MacDonald chose 80 men to serve as an initial shock force to charge across the bridge and set up a bridgehead on the opposite shore of the creek. The Rebels had removed the bridge planking and greased the two stringers, but, undaunted, on the morning of February 27, 1776, armed only with broadswords, the men gave the cry of "King George and Broadswords!" and attempted to make their way across.[89] Several made it to the other side before they were cut down by the 1,100 militia defenders and their two cannons in place behind their earthworks, as Brigadier General James Moore related in a letter: "…the Tory army…in the most furious manner advanced within thirty paces of our breastwork and artillery, where they met a very proper reception. Capt. McCloud and Captain Campbell fell within a few paces of the breast-work…and in a very few minutes their whole army was put to flight".[90] More were killed on the bridge or drowned in the creek, and in the aftermath more than 850 Loyalists surrendered to Patriot forces.[91] Following on this uprising, Patriots arrested hundreds of Loyalists and confiscated thousands of weapons.[92]

These and many other localized uprisings illustrated that, although there was Loyalist support, with patriots in control of the militia, armories, and governmental structures, they were at a vast disadvantage without British materiel and manpower support. With the British evacuation of Boston on March 17th, 1776 while the Rebel

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[88] Troiani, Don, and James Kochan. *Don Troiani's Soldiers of the American Revolution*. Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole. 2007.,47
[89] Ibid., 47
[90] *New England Chronicle,* April 4, 1776
[91] Troiani, Don, and James Kochan. *Don Troiani's Soldiers of the American Revolution*., 47
[92] William P. Tatum III. "The Battle of Moore's Creek Bridge." In *Reporting the Revolutionary War,* ed. Todd Andralik (Naperville: Source Books, 2012)., 178

invasion of Canada was at the walls of Quebec, no royal-government presence existed in the Thirteen Colonies until Howe's landing at New York in August of that year. This power vacuum allowed Rebel groups to pacify the populace of known Loyalists. As Janet Shaw recorded:

> At present the martial law stands thus: An officer or committeeman enters a plantation with his posse. The Alternative is proposed: Agree to join us, and your persons and properties are safe. You have a shilling sterling a day; your duty is no more than once a month appearing under Arms at Wilmingtown, which will prove only a merry-making, where you will have as much grog as you can drink. But if you refuse, we are directly to cut up your corn, shoot your pigs, burn your houses, seize your Negroes, and perhaps tar and feather yourself". [93]

Similarly, Peter Oliver recorded:

> The Name of the Lord was invoked to sanctifie any Villainy that was committed for the good old Cause. If a Man was buried alive, in Order to make him say their Creed, it was done in the Name of the Lord. Or if a Loyalist was tyed to an Horses Heels, & dragged through the Mire, it was only to convert him to the Faith of these Saints. It was now, that Hypocrisy, Falsehood & Prevarication with Heaven, had their full Swing, & mouthed it uncontrold.[94]

This idea of conversion is supported by Henry Laurens, the president of the Continental Congress, stating "the success of the 28th of June made some Converts and those Gentlemen in particular, advanced so far as to consent to bear Arms take the Test Oath &ca but still under the Air of obedience to avail themselves of the Plea of compulsion and to save property".[95] As a result, upon landing in New York in August of 1776, British

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[93] Shaw, Janet. *Journal of a Lady of Quality; Being the Narrative of a Journey from Scotland to the West Indies, North Carolina, and Portugal, in the Years 1774 to 1776.* New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1921., 198
[94] Oliver, Peter. *Peter Oliver's "Origin and Progress of the American Rebellion" A Tory View.,* 132
[95] *Collections of the New-York Historical Society For the Year 1872*. Vol. II. New York, Ny: New York Historical Society, 1872., 226

officers and soldiers encountered many inhabitants flocking to their camps with stories of cruelty and ill treatment by the Rebel administration.[96]

By the end of the war, over 19,000 Americans would serve in more than 150 Crown-sanctioned provincial military units, with seven of them being placed on the Regular Establishment and continuing as permanent regiments even after the loss of the colonies they were raised to defend.[97] Many more would serve in militias tasked with policing-duties instituted in areas brought back under Crown control.[98] In essence, the North Administration and the King's emphasis on Loyalist support in the colonies was not entirely misguided, some of the most pivotal battles of the Revolution being fought primarily between Americans. Whole areas were brought back under Royal control, such as New Jersey in 1776, and Georgia and South Carolina by 1779, and, when British soldiers were present, Loyalist insurrections coming to British aid were fairly common such as in rural New York in 1777, and every Southern colony after 1779.[99] The major issue with this strategy lay in the fact that when British forces withdrew, such as at Philadelphia in 1778, or were defeated outright, such as at Saratoga in 1777, Loyalists faced fierce reprisals. Ambrose Serle summed up their feelings during the preparation to leave Philadelphia in May of 1778:

> This was soon circulated about the town, & filled all our Friends with melancholy on the Apprehension of being speedily deserted, now a Rope was (as it were) about their necks…No man can be expected to declare for us, when he cannot be assured of a Fortnight's Protection. Every man, on

[96] Robertson, Archibald. *Archibald Robertson, Lieutenant-General Royal Engineers, His Diaries and Sketched in America, 1762-1780*. Edited by Harry Miller Lyndenberg. New York, NY: The New York Public Library, 1930., 87-88
[97] Braisted, Todd W., and Thomas B. Allen. *The Loyalist Corp: Americans in the Service of the King*. Tacoma Park, Maryland: Foxacre Press, 2011., 9, 14-15. O'Shaugnessy, Andrew Jackson. *The Men Who Lost America: British Leadership, the American Revolution, and the Fate of the Empire*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013., 191.
[98] Ibid., 15
[99] Troani, Don, and Eric Schnitzer. *Campaign to Saratoga*. Guilford, CT: Stackpole Books, 2019., 138-139

> the contrary, whatever might have been his primary Inclinations, will find it in his Interest to oppose & drive us out of the Country.[100]

In areas where British and Rebel soldiers were vying for control for a long period, such as between New York and Philadelphia, or in the Southern Colonies after 1779, the result was pure chaos and unending bloodshed, as General Greene would put it when discussing the South: "The division among the people is much greater than I imagined and the Whigs and Tories persecute each other, with little less than savage fury. There is nothing but murders and devastation in every quarter".[101] Both of these situations would create a massive refugee crisis, fleeing to British armies and controlled areas in every quarter, swelling the population of New York from 5,000 civilians in September 1776 to 40,000 by the evacuation in 1783; and further exacerbating food and supply shortages in regions under Crown control.[102] Consequently, there was a drain of Loyalist support from many areas: a mix of refugees, disaffected former-Tories, or those outright imprisoned by the Patriots. This all but solidified Patriot control in areas where Britain set up operations and then withdrew.

Although Loyalist support did exist in numbers, core to the idea of American support for Crown control emphasized the need to win back the hearts and minds of those who had supported the rebellion, or, like the majority, towed the line of passive neutrality. The approach to this had three main themes: the first being the need to prove

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[100] Serle, Ambrose. *The American Journal of Ambrose Serle, Secretary to Lord Howe 1776-1778*. Edited by Edward H Tatum. San Marino, CA: Huntington Library Publications, 1940., 294-295

[101] Harold C. Syrett,ed., *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton.* New York, New York: Columbia University Press, 1961.,529

[102] O'Shaugnessy, Andrew Jackson. *The Men Who Lost America: British Leadership, the American Revolution, and the Fate of the Empire*., 191

superiority over Rebel forces, the second, showing leniency to all but the leadership of the disaffected coupled with a gentle campaign style, and the third being an illustration of the benefits of living under Royal control through the reimposition of civic institutions. Proving superiority over the Rebels was an absolute priority, as General Howe put it: "my opinion has always been, that the defeat of the rebel regular army is the surest road to peace".[103] This was because:

> The inhabitants in general…were forward to return to their allegiance, and even to assist offensively in compelling his Majesty's revolted subjects to their duty. This favorable disposition, however did not appear immediately – an equivocal neutrality was all I at first experienced; our successes and apparent ability to retain our advantages, induced the inhabitants at last to be less reserved.[104]

Such a concept hampered the British army in several key ways. As will be seen, it wholly shifted the strategic initiative in most situations to Rebel forces, allowing them to choose when and where they would fight. In addition, concerns that would imply weakness (and thus disparage Loyalist support) such as a withdrawal, strategic retreat, or throwing up extensive field fortifications were items only to be done as a last resort, as Howe again summarized:

> I did not direct any redoubts to be raised for the security of the camp or out-posts, nor did I ever encourage the construction of them at the head of the line when in force, because works of that kind are apt to induce an opinion of inferiority, and my wish was, to support by every means the acknowledged superiority of the King's troops over the enemy, which I considered more peculiarly essential, where strength was not to be estimated by numbers, since the enemy in that respect, by calling in the force of the country upon any emergence, must have been superior.[105]

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[103] Howe, William. *The Narrative of Lieut. Gen. Sir William Howe in a Committee of the House of Commons, on the 29th of April, 1779, Relative to His Conduct during His Late Command of the King's Troops in North America: To Which Are Added Some Observations upon a Pamphlet Entitled, Letters to a Nobleman*. London: H. Baldwin, 1779., 19
[104] Ibid., 32
[105] Ibid., 27

In essence, both tangible superiority through the defeat of Rebel forces, and psychological through not appearing to face any check by Rebel forces, dictated tactics and approach to campaigning.

The British put great hopes in the idea that showing leniency to current and former Rebels would produce a mutual reconciliation. On the practical level, paroling those captured while on campaign helped armies not get weighed down by prisoners. But, on a larger level, it was hoped that the colonists would, as General Howe put it:

> experience the difference between his majesty's government, and that to which they were subject from the rebel leaders…to conciliate his majesty's rebellious subjects, by taking every means to prevent the destruction of the country, instead of irritating them by a contrary mode of proceeding.[106]

To accomplish this, forcing large percentages of the captured into prisoner of war camps would run counter to bringing about a harmonious conciliation. In many places and points of the war, this approach induced the desirable effect, as George Washington wrote in December 1776:

> A large part of the Jerseys have given every proof of disaffection that a people can do, & this part of Pensylvania are equally inimical; in short your imagination can scarce extend to a situation more distressing than mine…as from disaffection and want of spirit and fortitude, the Inhabitants instead of resistance, are offering Submission, & taking protections from Genl Howe in Jersey.[107]

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[106] Howe, William. *The Narrative of Lieut. Gen. Sir William Howe*., 9

[107] "From George Washington to Lund Washington, 10–17 December 1776," *Founders Online,* National Archives, accessed September 29, 2019, https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-07-02-0228. [Original source: *The Papers of George Washington*, Revolutionary War Series, vol. 7, *21 October 1776–5 January 1777*, ed. Philander D. Chase. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997, pp.289–292.]

Such a situation would be repeated again in Georgia, the Carolinas, New York State, and large areas of Pennsylvania. But, many times it would backfire, as Brigadier General Charles O'Hara would relate: "those very prisoners which Sir H. Clinton released, for Reasons only known to himself, are likewise opposed to us – The Inhabitants of this Country…always construe every act of Humanity, to proceed from our Fears, and not from more generous motives".[108] This failure is supported by numerous other accounts, as frustrated Loyalist Robert Gray recounted: "

> When the rebel militia were made prisoners, they were immediately delivered up to the regular officers, who, being entirely ignorant of the dispositions and manners of the people, treated them with the utmost lenity and sent them home to their plantations upon parole and in short they were treated in every respect as foreign enemies. The general consequences of this was that they no sooner got out of our hands than they broke their paroles, took up arms, and made it a point to murder every militia man of ours who had any concern in making them prisoners. On the other hand whenever a militia man of ours was made a prisoner he was delivered not to the Continentals but to the rebel militia, who looked upon him as a State prisoner, as a man who deserved a halter, and therefore treated him with the greatest cruelty.[109]

Fundamentally, the leniency shown to Rebels not in high leadership positions did, when the situation looked bleak, allow many to go back to their civilian life, biding their time until a favorable opportunity presented itself to again support the rebellion. This strategy, while seemingly flawed, never fell out of favor because of the indispensable need for American popular support to subdue the rebellion. And many times, from the bringing back of a colony into the fold, to the outright mutinies of the Connecticut, Pennsylvania,

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[108] O'Hara, *Letters of Charles O'Hara to the Duke of Grafton*. 3rd ed. Vol. 65. N.p.: South Carolina Historical Magazine, 1964., 171

[109] Gray, Robert. "Colonel Robert Gray's Observations on the War in Carolina." *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 11, no. 3 (July 1910): 139–59., 144

and New Jersey Continental Lines, until the very end of the war, support for either side ebbed and flowed, always leaving the conclusion dubious.

In conclusion, the army's mission was not to conquer and occupy the entirety of the Thirteen Colonies. Its purpose was to act as a rallying point and support structure for Loyalist elements that had gone into hiding after the failures at the start of the war and subsequent evacuation of Boston in March 1776. In addition, the army's success against Rebel field forces, along with a controlled campaigning style and full pardons for former Rebels were to win back the hearts and minds of the disaffected or neutral. This, hopefully, would allow the colonists themselves to throw off the control of what they perceived as "a set of mock patriots, whom they find has left them in the Lurch, to save themselves" and reestablish Royal Government.[110] To accomplish this, Rebel field forces needed to be destroyed, and in response British officers adopted a battle-seeking strategy where, in most cases, they actively fought on the offensive and sought out engagements. This flew completely in the face of conventional 18th century philosophies on warfare, where commanders of the period generally tended to only seek battle when there was absolutely no other option to achieve their campaign goals, with the official Saxon army service regulations of 1753 going so far as to state that "…the greatest generals refrain from giving battle, except for urgent reasons".[111] On top of a battle seeking strategy, the British needed to consistently show superiority over Rebel forces, directly influencing would-be tactically smart decisions such as retreats or throwing up fortifications, that

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[110] Balderston, Marion, and David Syrett. *The Lost War: Letters from British Officers during the American Revolution*. New York: Horizon Press, 1975., 81

[111] Citino, Robert M. *The German Way of War: From the Thirty Years' War to the Third Reich*. Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2005., 34.

may be perceived as weakness or desperation by the general populace. Any of the few complete failures during the war,(such as Saratoga, the withdrawal from Philadelphia, or Yorktown) spelled a death knell for British control in an area. In the end, this broadest of strategies faced severe hindrances in the need to wage a limited war, and, after successive abandonment of Loyalist supporters in multiple theaters, created a refugee crisis and growing disinclination to support British troops. But, it importantly influenced British commanders to operate in an exceptionally offensive manner, unique to this period of warfare. This, in turn, directly influenced the majority of other changes the British army in America would adopt.

V. Unique Challenges

To accomplish its rough framework of goals, the British military in North America faced unique operational challenges that directly curtailed their ability to successfully terminate the conflict. One of the largest, and most immediate of these issues, was a vast manpower shortage. As opposed to what is commonly stated in popular history, the British army in the 18th century was (except in the rarest of cases) an all-volunteer force that offered attractive opportunities to the average male citizen.[112] British soldiers were not conscripted, and the military had strict regulations that soldiers could not be drafted out of the populace. Soldiers could hypothetically be drafted from other standing units, like those on the Scottish or Irish establishment (or even in rare cases Hanoverian regiments), but all of these were already standing regiments of volunteer soldiers. Even as the scale of the war became global and the home islands themselves were threatened with invasion, by the war's end only an estimated 50,000 individuals floated through British infantry regiments.[113] This was dwarfed by their Continental European counterparts, for example even in peacetime France's standing army hovered around 132,000 men.[114] As a result, even at the highest levels of troop deployment, the Empire could only field 35,000 troops on station in North America (and this would subsequently drastically shift lower). [115] As the conflict dragged and became unpopular among the general populace the pools of voluntary enlistments shrank, and a military

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[112] Hagist, Don N. *British Soldiers, American War: Voices of the American Revolution*. 1st ed. Yardley: Westholme, 2014., 3
[113] Ibid., X
[114] Lynn, John A. "The Trace Italienne and the Growth of Armies: The French Case." *The Journal of Military History*, (July 3, 1991): 297-330. JSTOR., 317
[115] Spring, Mathew H. *With Zeal and With Bayonets Only: The British Army on Campaign in North America, 1775-1783.* Norman: U of Oklahoma, 2010., 28

draft would briefly be ordered in 1778 but would meet so much resistance (including riots), and be so ineffective, that it was quickly be repealed.[116] These soldiers would be supplemented by a little over 25,000 men drawn from six small independent German states with ties to the British Crown(Hesse-Cassel, Hesse-Hanau, Brunswick, Anhalt-Zerbst, Waldeck, Ansbach-Bayreuth) that reached North America as various smaller groups over eight years.[117] Compared with the landmass they had to contend with, operating from Canada down to Florida intrinsically made the British army an expeditionary force that put its hopes into popular support and the raising of American units. Whole armies would be constituted around much smaller regular British forces: Barry St. Leger's army in 1777 only contained only 231 British troops out of 766 Europeans and Americans that accompanied him (which itself was dwarfed by over 800 Native Americans attached to it); less than half of Burgoyne's Northern Army of 8,000 troops was British, and in some cases, such as Ferguson's command wiped out at King's Mountain, only the officers were British.[118]

Faced at the outset with such a small pool to work with, the prospect of it shrinking weighed heavily on strategic plans and what courses of action could be taken. Any losses to regular British and German units had to be brought from the mother country an ocean away. Recruits could hypothetically be raised locally where the regiment was operating, but for the most part they were drawn from England where

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[116] Hagist, Don N. *British Soldiers, American War: Voices of the American Revolution*., 154-155
[117] Döhla, Johann Conrad, and W. Waldenfels. *A Diary of the American Revolution*. Norman: U of Oklahoma, 1990. Print., x-xi
[118] Troani, Don, and Eric Schnitzer. *Campaign to Saratoga*. Guilford, CT: Stackpole Books, 2019., 26-27, 92-92. Burgoyne, John. *Burgoyne and the Saratoga Campaign: His Papers*. Edited by Douglas R Cubbison. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012. 48-51, 99-101

recruiting parties drummed up enlistees who were then sent to training depots.[119] This, coupled with the subsequent voyage across the Atlantic meant that there was also a delay of months (if not sometimes over a year) before any losses within a regiment could be replaced. This loomed large in the minds of British war-planners, as Howe would relate: "the most essential duty I had to observe was, not wantonly to commit his majesty's troops, where the object was inadequate. I knew well that any considerable loss sustained by the army could not speedily, nor easily, be repaired".[120] This also further exacerbated problems of a battle-seeking strategy as Howe would again state: "even a victory, attended by a heavy loss of men on our part, would have given a fatal check to the progress of the war, and might have proved irreparable".[121] Thus British war planners were faced with the conundrum of fighting an offensive war with constantly dwindling manpower reserves. Although they often took fewer casualties than their Rebel opponents in the engagements they fought, any losses were sorely felt. In addition, the need to hold land to rally support and protect supply lines further exacerbated these problems, as Charles O'Hara lamented: "the necessity of Augmenting very considerably the Number of our Posts, already too numerous…will unavoidably disperse the Troops all over the Country and make them materially vulnerable in every part".[122] Many times the smallness of forces simply made these posts unfeasible, as one German soldier related: "How could it be possible for the small army of Gen. Burgoyne to cover and protect the

[119] Hagist, Don N. *British Soldiers, American War: Voices of the American Revolution*. 1st ed. Yardley: Westholme, 2014., 12-13
[120] Howe. *The Narrative of Lieut. Gen. Sir William Howe,* 5.
[121] Ibid., 19.
[122] O'Hara, *Letters of Charles O'Hara to the Duke of Grafton*., 168

shipments [of supplies] at so great a distance against the assaults of the rebels, who could easily attack them and make a safe retreat through the woods".[123] Howe summed up the challenge most concisely, stating: "is it not self-evident, that the power of an army must diminish in proportion to the decrease of their numbers? And must not their numbers for the field necessarily decrease, in proportion to the towns, posts, or forts which we take, and are obliged to preserve?".[124]

For the same reasons the British faced a manpower shortage they likewise faced severe supply shortages. With the outbreak of the Revolution it was hoped that the Army would be able to subsist itself in the colonies as it had done during the Seven Years War. The reverse situation as true, as Howe put it:

> I must take leave to say, that the two wars [Seven Years War and Revolution], with respect to the state of the country of America, are in no degree similar. In the last war, the difficulties arising from the strength of the country were, for the most part removed by the friendly disposition of the inhabitants, who always exerted themselves to facilitate the operations of the King's army, and to supply them with every necessary and accommodation.[125]

As opposed to the previous war, where Crown forces never had to worry about their supply lines stretching through the colonies being severed, as they were protected and stocked by provincials, here the control of the interior by Patriots terrorized farmers and merchants who traded with the British. A German soldier forlornly noted of the situation: "The hardships of war here are different from those in Europe…Nothing could be had in this forlorn country. So far no settlers had dared to follow the army, nor had there been

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[123] Du Roi, August Wilhelm. *Journal of Du Roi the Elder, Lieutenant and Adjutant, in the Service of the Duke of Brunswick, 1776-1778*. Translated by Charlotte S. J. Epping. Philadelphia , PN: University of Pennsylvania, 1911., 116
[124] Howe, William. *The Narrative of Lieut. Gen. Sir William Howe.,* 14
[125] Ibid., 37

any other convoy of supplies."[126] Commanders would try to provide protection to those attempting to bring in supplies, which nearly always brought on a sharp skirmish, as engineer Archibald Robertson recorded in his diary:

> At Night 5 Companys of Light Infantry went towards Jenkin's Town to prevent the Militia from stoping the People coming to Market. They fell in with a Party [of Rebel militia]...Killed 12 and took one Prisoner Much Wounded. Same night Some Light Dragoons went towards Bristol, fell in with a Party Kill'd 7 and took 10 or 12 Prisoners.[127]

In a similar manner, since the British adopted an offensive mode of warfare, the Rebels were able to conduct a scorched earth policy condoned by their officers, as George Washington stated: "Every motive therefore, irresistibly urges us, nay, commands us to a firm and manly perseverance in our opposition to our cruel oppressors, to slight difficulties, endure hardships, and contemn every danger" so as not to leave "a vast extent of fertile country to be despoiled and ravaged by the enemy, from which they would draw vast supplies".[128] This was followed attentively, one Continental soldier recording in his diary a plethora of instances, such as "Attempting to Burn some Stacks of Grain" and encountering on the march "many Acres of Land…very great Quantitys of which had been Destroy'd by our Troops" which was noted "ordered to be done by Washington, with the object of depriving the British of all food supplies".[129] These methods were exceptionally effective. The weekly allotment of food per soldier as prescribed by the

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[126] Du Roi, August Wilhelm. *Journal of Du Roi the Elder, Lieutenant and Adjutant, in the Service of the Duke of Brunswick, 1776-1778*., 90

[127] Robertson, Archibald. *Archibald Robertson, Lieutenant-General Royal Engineers, His Diaries and Sketched in America, 1762-1780*. Edited by Harry Miller Lyndenberg. New York, NY: The New York Public Library, 1930., 171

[128] Hazard, Samuel, ed. *The Register of Pennsylvania Devoted to the Preservation of Facts and Documents and Every Other Kind of Useful Information Respecting the State of Pennsylvania* . Vol. IV. Philadelphia, PA: EM. P. Geddes, 1829., 14

[129] Fitch, Jabez. *The New York Diary of Lieutenant Jabez Fitch of the 17th (Connecticut) Regiment from August 22, 1776 to December 15, 1777*. Edited by W. H. W. Sabine. New York: Colburn & Tegg, 1954. 28, 30

government was "7 pounds of bread or flour, 7 pounds of beef or 4 pounds of pork, 6 ounces of butter, 3 pints of peas or 1 ½ pints of oatmeal, and one-half pint of rice, to which was added 1 1/3 gill of rum" with an emphasis on supplementing these rations with locally sourced fresh vegetables.[130] Theater-wide, this amounted to some 37 tons of food and 38 tons of oats and hay per day.[131] And that was just for food, there was also clothing, munitions, camp and medical supplies, and thousands of mouths to feed and supply outside of the soldiers themselves: Loyalist refugees, runaway slaves, Native American allies, and prisoners of war; the numbers increasing as the war went on.[132]

With Rebels continually denying local supply and support, hopeful British commanders turned to what appeared to be the only feasible method: shipping in all their supplies. An anonymous German soldier wrote home about the massive logistical effort that went into receiving everything by ship:

> But if you consider that in these regions the army eats bread for which the flour is made in England, and meat that was salted in England, and that both things have to be brought to our kettles and mouths across oceans, great rivers, inland seas, waterfalls, etc., by human labor, since we lack horses and carts; then any one will readily understand that such an object – to provide an army with its necessities in easier fashion – must be one of the most important considerations of a commanding general; especially against a foe who must be driven quickly in any possible way from his advantages, so that he may not have time to devastate his own states to our disadvantage.[133]

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[130] Braisted, Todd W. *Grand Forage 1778: The Battleground Around New York City*. Yardley, PA: Westholme, 2016., 53-54
[131] O'Shaugnessy, Andrew Jackson. *The Men Who Lost America: British Leadership, the American Revolution, and the Fate of the Empire*., 12
[132] Ibid., 12
[133] Pettengill, Ray W., trans. *Letters From America 1776-1779.,* 86

But this was method of supply was especially tenuous. Separated by a distance of 3,000 miles, supplies took around two months to reach North America from Europe.[134] Once in American waters, the overstretched Royal Navy, not fully mobilized until the war turned global, struggled to protect the supply ships, with one Loyalist in Boston lamenting "Many vessels, which were coming from England & Ireland, with Provisions & Stores for the Army & the Inhabitants were captured…It was rather Astonishing, that so many Vessells should be captured".[135] In response, the Admiralty instituted a convoy system, but a shortage of ships further delayed supply shipments, and the difficulty of keeping the vessels together in the weeks-long voyage meant many nevertheless fell prey to privateers. The problem was so widespread that entire sections of the Continental Army were outfitted in captured British equipment. For example, on November 12th, 1776 Captain John Paul Jones' ship *Alfred* captured a British store ship off the coast of Cape Breton containing 10,000 uniforms meant to outfit the entirety of Burgoyne's Northern Army.[136] This would happen repeatedly throughout the war; between 1776 and 1777 alone, privateers took 350 supply ships, with the number increasing as the war continued.[137] When supplies did get to North America, the nature of dry preserved provisions became monotonous, as one soldier wrote home:

> Now the work began again with our beloved salt meat and meal. Dear Friends! Do not despise these kingly dishes, which there on the spot truly cost a kingly price since the transportation from England probably cost not a little. Pork at noon, pork at night, pork cold, pork hot. Friends! Even

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[134] Pettengill, Ray W., trans. *Letters From America 1776-1779.*, 12
[135] Oliver, Peter. *Peter Oliver's "Origin and Progress of the American Rebellion" A Tory View.*, 140
[136] Kochan, James L, and Don Troani. *Insignia of Independence: Military Buttons, Accouterment Plates, and Gorgets of the American Revolution*. Gettysburg, PA: Thomas Publications, 2012., 191
[137] O'Shaugnessy, Andrew Jackson. *The Men Who Lost America: British Leadership, the American Revolution, and the Fate of the Empire*., 332

> though you with your green peas and crabs' tails would have looked upon our pork with disgust, yet pork was to us a splendid food without which we should have starved to death, and had we had pork enough later, the weather might have brought us to Boston.[138]

In essence, leaders on the ground were stuck in a seemingly unwinnable situation. They could not rely on inhabitants bringing them provisions to sell, withdrawing Rebel forces were ceded the initiative of destroying all in their paths, and the shipment of supplies over the oceans caused widespread delays and was likewise not dependable.

After the logistical system faced near-collapse following the New York Campaign of 1776, frustrated commanders on the ground many times resorted to the only other option, that of forcibly stripping the population of local forage. To read any letter, memoir, diary, or other material of the Loyalist, German, or British soldiers (outside of the early campaigns) is to hear constantly of these formations near starving. One soldier recorded a typical example while campaigning in Virginia:

> …no forage, no provisions for our men, though marching day and night. At this time I saw an English guinea offered for a bit of cornbread not larger than my two fingers. Hard times with us indeed – 16 days without a morsel of bread. In this starving condition we made our retreat to Wynnesborough.[139]

Needing to find food, officers would sanction the their men to forage, provided they paid with "forage money".[140] Ideally, officers paid in hard currency, but when campaigning in the interior, as this money ran out, farmers would be issued redeemable receipts for what was taken, and, in the case of known houses of Rebels, many time forage was removed

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[138] Pettengill, Ray W., trans. *Letters From America 1776-1779 Being.*, 98-99
[139] Hagist, Don N. *British Soldiers, American War: Voices of the American Revolution*., 35
[140] Howe, William. *General Sir William Howe's Orderly Book At Charlestown, Boston, And Halifax June 17 1775 To 1776 26 May*. London: B.F. Stevens and Brown, 1890., 99

forcibly. Although hypothetically done under controlled circumstances, the whole system was vulnerable to abuses, one instance recorded by John André:

> Colonel Bird marched with the remainder to the lower part of the Neck (George's Wharf) from whence a good quantity of cattle was taken. From the want of expertness in the drivers, only 350 sheep, fifty-five horned cattle and about twenty-four horses or mules were brought in. Several people assisted in bringing in their cattle and of their own accord drove it to Camp next day. Some Hessians belonging to a baggage-guard demolished a whole flock of sheep which the owners were voluntarily driving to us…Great complaints were made by of the plunder committed by the Troops – chiefly by the Hessians.[141]

As a result, even if paid, the populace, many times amicable to the approach of British troops, quickly came to resent the abuses committed by soldiers and officers in the procurement of food.

Although strictly prohibited with the threat of corporal punishment, hungry soldiers frequently marauded searching for sustenance, as Private John Robert Shaw recorded: "impelled by hunger we took the blessed opportunity of going out in search of something to satisfy our craving appetite…We had not gone above a mile until we came to a house in hopes to get something to eat; but the house was already full of soldiers upon the same business".[142] Private foraging not only undermined the British Command's attempts to win back the hearts and minds of the populace, but single soldiers going away from camp frequently exposed them to capture and further exacerbated their manpower problems. Cornwallis noted in his general orders to the Southern Army:

> It is with great Concern that Lord Cornwallis hears every day reports of Soldier's being taken by the Enemy in consequence of their Straggling out of Camp…Lord Cornwallis trusts that there is so much Honor and Publick

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[141] André, John. *Major André's Journal: Operations of the British Army under Lieutenant Generals Sir William Howe and Sir Henry Clinton June 1777 to November, 1778*. Tarrytown, NY: William Abbatt, 1930., 41-42
[142] Hagist, Don N. *British Soldiers, American War: Voices of the American Revolution.,* 37

> Spirit in the Soldier, that at a time when Britain has so many enemies, and his Country has so much occasion for his Services, He will not run the hazard of rendering himself unserviceable to it during the whole war, and of passing years in a loathsome prison subject to the bitter insults of the Rebels for the chance of momentary gratification of his appetite.[143]

Even with many repeated orders and punishments in every theater, private scavenging and all its ill effects continued throughout the conflict. To stem the tide of individual soldiers searching for food, large expeditions and whole campaigns were undertaken to collect forage, the largest happening in the fall of 1778. The majority of the garrison of New York decamped and drove in one big sweep from New York state down into Northern New Jersey, gathering all of the edibles they could find. Although a success, larger expeditions to find food often motivated the sudden appearance of a swarm of militia resistance, such as that Lieutenant Colonel Friedrich Baum encountered in his thrust into Vermont in 1777. Hauling away "78 barrels of very fine flour, 1,000 bushels of wheat, 20 barrels of salt" and many other items, his diverse command of Germans, Loyalists, and Native Americans ran into short term New Hampshire militia levied to "prevent the Encroachment & ravages of the Enimy thereinto".[144] Out of ammunition and outnumbered over two to one after an entire day of fierce fighting, Baum's entire command was wiped out in a last desperate charge to "hew" its way back to British lines.[145] Such reverses with small amounts of men had outsized repercussions, as J.F. Wasmus, Braunschweig surgeon attached to Baum recorded: "who knows what other unfortunate consequences this calamitous affair may have – The Americans used to

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[143] Charles Cornwallis Orderly Book, William L. Clements Library, The University of Michigan., 9-10
[144] Troani, Don, and Eric Schnitzer. *Campaign to Saratoga*., 116
[145] Ibid., 131

consider us invincible and did not believe they could capture our regular troops, but what will they now say about us! – Will they keep running away from us in the future?".[146]

The unfortunate nature of these foraging parties is that they inherently contributed to one of the key unique characteristics of the Revolution: constant skirmishing. While historians tend to focus on large pitched battles, the norm of the British soldier was a "daily routine of fatigue and foraging, frequently interspersed with *petite guerres*, or 'little wars', or raids and small expeditions. While not finding their place in the annals of the Revolution as Saratoga or Yorktown did, these expeditions, raids, and minor campaigns often involved as many men as the larger battles".[147] Arguably, they had the bigger effect: by the end of 1776, Howe's original army of 32,000 men had been cut to just around half of that, with more troops killed and wounded in minor foraging parties than actual battles.[148] In some cases they stopped Crown forces dead in their tracks. Although American authors have been quick to claim that Burgoyne's severely outnumbered army was defeated on the battlefield in 1777, the reality is it wasn't. After his "reconnaissance in force" was repulsed from Barber's Wheatfield, and the realization the army could no longer push to Albany, Burgoyne spent the next week and a half attempting a retrograde movement back toward Canada.[149] Surrounded and cut off from all supply lines, his men were put on half rations for the next week, as one soldier related:

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[146] Wasmus, J F. *An Eyewitness Account of the American Revolution and New England Life: The Journal of J.F. Wasmus, German Company Surgeon, 1776-1783*. Edited by Mary C Lynn. Translated by Helga Doblin. Vol. 106. New York, NY: Greenwood Press, 1990., 73
[147] Braisted, Todd W. *Grand Forage 1778: The Battleground Around New York City*., VI
[148] O'Shaugnessy. *The Men Who Lost America.,* 103
[149] Burgoyne, John. *Burgoyne and the Saratoga Campaign: His Papers*., 138-139

> Our suffering from hunger and thirst may be judged of by our ration being reduced to four ounces of pork, and eight ounces of bread per day, and afterwards to four of pork and six of bread. Gen. Burgoyne found it impossible to release us [to forage]…as we were perishing by want of food and drink and were daily losing our men by the annoying fire and light parties of the enemy.[150]

Provisions running out, Burgoyne's hand was forced, and he capitulated. In the end, the constant fighting just to find nourishment would weigh heavily in the minds of British commanders, hampering and influencing what decisions and operations they could and would undertake, and in some cases stopping armies in their tracks. Likewise, the constant skirmishing it created, common enough to receive just a sentence or two in contemporary accounts (or none at all), would continually drain British manpower reserves, further hampering their capabilities.

These supply and manpower constraints did not hamper British opponents in the same way. Rebel forces not only operated in their manpower pools, but any time Continental forces started to dwindle they could easily be topped off by drafts from local militia.[151] This provided an almost unlimited source of manpower to draw from, as Hessian Captain Johann Ewald would write: "...in no monarchy in the world is levying done more forcibly than in this country, where it is said without distinction of position 'serve or provide your man, else you lose your goods and chattels'".[152] There is a mistaken belief that the Civil War draft of 1863-1865 was the first of its kind, but the

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[150] Hagist, Don N. *British Soldiers, American War: Voices of the American Revolution*. 1st ed. Yardley: Westholme, 2014., 66
[151] Braisted, Todd W. *Bergen County Voices from the American Revolution: Soldiers and Residents in Their Own Words*. Charleston, SC: History Press, 2012., 28
[152] Ewald, Johann. *Diary of the American War: A Hessian Journal*. Translated by Joseph P. Tustin. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979., 341

reality is that the Eighty-Eight Battalion Resolve of Congress dictating the amount of men in the Continental Army drove states to heavily levy men from local militias.[153] Generally, state militias divided their troops into "classes" of fifteen to twenty men, which, when drafted, called out a certain number of classes from each county for a specific timeframe of service, resulting in various Continental regiments having a flow of fresh men in and out of them.[154] The system was effective, with George Washington stating to Congress in 1780: "There is only one thing, I should have been happy the Committee had thought proper to take up on a larger scale. I mean the supply of Men by Draught… The Mode by Draught is, I am persuaded, the only effacious one to obtain men".[155] Others were not so satisfied, as Ebenezer Fox recorded of his master:

> A draught was made upon the militia of Massachusetts for a quota of men to march to New York, to reinforce the American army then in the vicinity of that city. My master was unfortunately among the number draughted for that service. As he did not possess a great degree of military spirit, he was much distressed at the demand thus suddenly made upon his patriotism…The idea of shouldering a musket, buckling on a knapsack, leaving his quiet family, and marching several hundred miles for the good of his country, never took a place in his mind. Although a firm friend to his country, and willing to do all he could to help along her cause, as far as expressing favorable opinions and good wishes availed, yet there was an essential difference in his mind between the theory and the art of war; between acting the soldier, and triumphing at the soldier's success.[156]

By the end of the war, roughly 250,000 men served in a military capacity for the Rebel cause, floating between Continental, state, and militia units.[157]

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[153] Reese, John U. "'The Pleasure of Their Number' 1778: Crisis, Conscription, and Revolutionary Soldiers' Recollections," n.d., 2
[154] Ibid., 2
[155] Fitzpatrick, John C, ed. *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources 1745-1799*. Vol. 12. Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1934., 417
[156] Fox, Ebenzezer. *The Adventures of Ebenezer Fox in The Revolutionary War*. Boston, MA: Charles Fox, 1847., 45-46
[157] Spring, Mathew H. *With Zeal and With Bayonets Only,* 28.

The result of these methods meant that British troop formations were consistently outnumbered in the engagements they fought, something Frederick Mackenzie would lament, writing: "Having seen on every occasion what wonders are done by British troops, against a very superior number of the rebels, it is to be lamented that of late we have never had it in our power to attack them when there was any kind of equality".[158] The Continental Cause was able to maintain military forces in six departments through the end of the war, and for example, the troops of the Northern Department of 1776 swelled to over 10,000 me. General Horatio Gates noted: "We have strongly fortified here, upwards of ten thousand troops in high spirits, I think fully sufficient to stand all the force the enemy can bring this campaign."[159] If it was a city, it would have been the fifth largest population center in North America, and this was concurrent to George Washington facing off against the British in New York City with roughly the same amount of men. This frequently led to dispositions where Crown commanders had to extend their already thin lines, so as not to be outflanked, but in the face of overwhelming numbers this was frequently insufficient, as a recollection of the engagement at Fort Anne in July, 1777 illustrates:

> At half past ten in the morning, the enemy attacked us in front with a heavy and well directed fire; a large body of them passed the creek on the left, fired from a thick wood across the creek on the left flank of the regiment, they then began to re-cross the creek and attack us in the rear: we then found it necessary to change our ground, to prevent the regiment being surrounded; we took post on the top of a high hill to our right. As soon as we had taken post, the enemy made a vigorous attack, which

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[158] Mackenzie, Frederik. *Diary of Frederick Mackenzie, Giving a Daily Narrative of His Military Service as an Officer of the Regiment of Royal Welch Fusiliers during the Years 1775-1781 in Massachusetts, Rhode Island and New York*. Vol. 1. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1930., 525.
[159] Cubbison, Douglas R. *The American Northern Theater Army in 1776: The Ruin and Reconstruction of the Continental Force*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2010., 179

> continued for upward of two hours; and they certainly would have forced us, had it not been for some Indians that arrived and gave the Indian whoop, which we answered with three cheers; the rebels soon after that gave way.[160]

Likewise, campaigning into the interior and away from the seaboard exposed British troops to the possibility of being surrounded by large numbers of short term militia, because, as one German soldier put it: "when they proclaim a levy, the preacher must step down from the pulpit and his male hearers seize musket and powder horn".[161] In effect, British armies frequently found themselves on the attack against superior numbers in well-chosen ground, and, away from the seaboard, therefore increasing the danger of being surrounded entirely.

In addition to manpower and supply shortages, another unique challenge that would spur adaptions lay in the loose political control and undeveloped interior of North America. The strategic need to prove superiority over Rebel field forces in an effort to rally Loyalist support and win over those who were neutral or hostile called for a new brand of highly offensive warfare that required a complete change of European campaigning methods. There was very little precedent for this style of operations. In Europe, although historians tend to focus on pitched battles, the majority of engagements from the 17th through the late 18th century were sieges. The development of the *Trace Italienne* style of fortification (the bastioned artillery fortress) coupled with state sponsored campaigns to fortify the totality of their lands with them, ushered in a new

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[160] Barber, John W, and Henry Howe. *Historical Collections of the State of New York; Containing A General Collection of the Most Interesting Facts, Traditions, Biographical Sketched, Anecdootes, &c Relating to Its History and Antiquitie, with Geographical Descriptions of Every Township In The State* . New York, NY: S. Tuttle, 1842., 568
[161] Pettengill, Ray W., trans. *Letters From America 1776-1779 Being Letters of Brunswick, Hessian, and Waldeck Officers with the British Armies During the Revolution*. Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press, 1924., 126

style of warfare that had a "…gradualist strategy of conquest through methodical occupation and consolidation of successive base areas"[162]. This heavily influenced the *Kabinettskriege* of the 18th century where "…the main objectives of offensive operations tended to be the siege and capture of key fortresses, either as springboards for further operations or as tangible strategic assets to be retained or bargained away at the peace negotiations that terminated most eighteenth-century conflicts". [163] Armies typically did not need to be extremely mobile (although Frederick II's desperate situation in Silesia in the 1760s illustrated they could be) but this was opposite the situation in North America.

In the American War for Independence, British commanders did not face such clear cut objectives as in the European "war of posts" to target and bring about a decisive result. Each colony operated essentially independent of each other with minimal oversight, some contributing more and others less to the war, while consistently jealous of their sovereignty to the point of disputes that hampered coordination of the war effort.[164] While this may seem to be an inherent and crippling weakness, it was in fact one of the Rebels' greatest strengths, as one newspaper put it after the fall of Philadelphia: "It is true the British are in possession of the first city on the continent; the loss is deeply felt by the unhappy citizens. But America disdains to say she suffers by the event".[165] Another anonymous author summed it up midway through the war:

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[162] Kingra, Mahinder S. "The Trace Italienne and the Military Revolution During the Eighty Years' War, 1567-1648." *The Journal of Military History*, July 3, 1993, 431-46. JSTOR., 431
[163] Spring, Mathew H. *With Zeal and With Bayonets Only: The British Army on Campaign in North America, 1775-1783*. Norman: U of Oklahoma, 2010., 10
[164] Irons, Peter. *The Steps to the Supreme Court: A Guided Tour of the American Legal System*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2012., 2
[165] *Diary of the American Revolution from Newspapers and Original Documents*. Vol. 2. New York, NY: Charles Scribner, 1860., 3

> And there is still a further singularity in this species of war to our [British] disadvantage, in attempts of distant penetration, or any plan proceeding upon views of speedy and general reduction, that whatever our success may be in any one station, the Connections of one part of these Countrys with another, are not so tied together and so mutually dependent upon each other, as that the fate of any one part shall have influence or govern the conduct of the other, to any distance especially after quitting the sea coast.[166]

Essentially, the fall of one area had very little effect on the others. Thus, there were very few targets that forced Continental forces to have to fight, and when the political situation forced a defense of a city, rarely did its fall have a larger effect on the war.

The need to destroy Rebel field forces that kept the rebellion functioning meant that the strategic initiative to choose when and where to fight was shifted into their hands. If Rebel commanders had their way, this meant that they almost always engaged in advantageous conditions. Hoping to avoid this, and desperate for a general action, British commanders would change their formations to move lighter in a hope to catch Rebel forces on equal terms. Thus a major obstacle to get around was the terrain itself. As one anonymous officer would put it: "our march went through *Tyringham,* through woods and real wilderness. We were wrong in cursing the abominable roads, for we found them worse later. At first we wandered in the edge of a great, wild, hilly district called greenwood, to which you may send naughty children if you want to frighten them". [167] James Murray found the country to be "by no means agreeable. We had marched at least 28 or 30 miles over fences woods and ditches every step up to the ankles in mud or snow,

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[166] *Thoughts on the War between Great Britain & America*, William L. Clements Library, The University of Michigan., 20

[167] Pettengill, Ray W., trans. *Letters From America 1776-1779 Being Letters of Brunswick, Hessian, and Waldeck Officers with the British Armies During the Revolution*. Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press, 1924., 121.

and some part of it at run".[168] While warfare in Europe mostly took part in the open plains of the Northwest and Central areas of the Continent along a developed road structure (some areas dating back to the Romans) and almost always near large population centers, when one moved away from the eastern seaboard the colonies lacked nearly all of these things. While there were some large population centers near bodies of water, for the most part the colonies were dotted by smaller towns, dirt roadways, and farms. The prevalence of undisturbed nature in the mostly undeveloped interior of the colonies made staying in a linear formation practically impossible as Brunswick Lieutenant August Wilhelm Du Roi attested:

> The woods here are immense, and a European can hardly get an idea of their extent without having seen them. They are marshy, full of underbrush and almost impassable, large trees having fallen down, barring the way...Each soldier must do his best to seek cover behind a tree and advance without command, keeping an eye only on the movements of the whole body of soldiers.[169]

The topography frequently made it so that British commanders could not form a single unbroken line of troops when deploying, making command and control of formations hectic, disorganized, and unmanageable. General William Alexander's report of British dispositions at the battle of Long Island illustrates just how scattered troops were: "one Howitz advanced to within three Hundred yards of the front of our Right and alike detachment of Artillery to the front of our left on a riseing Ground, at About 600 yards distance, one of their Brigades, formed in two lines…and the other Extended in one line

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[168] Murray, James. *Letters from America 1773 to 1780, Being the Letters of a Scots Officer, Sir James Murray, to His Home during the War of American Independence*. Edited by Eric Robson. Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1951., 41

[169] August Wilhelm Du Roi. *Journal of Du Roi* the Elder. Providence: Providence College, 1911., 7-8

to top of the Hills in the front of our left".[170] Likewise, the lack of open topography tended to dictate how the flow of battle went, not only making European style command systems ineffective but also making battles more akin to small unit engagements that many times were quite isolated. For example, at the battle of Guilford Courthouse, Regiment Von Bose and the 1st Guards Battalion became surrounded and embroiled in a fight far removed from the main body of British troops, as Colonel Tarleton would relate: "the right wing, from the thickness of the woods and a jealousy for its right flank, had imperceptibly inclined to the right, by which movement it had a kind of separate action…above a mile distant from the center of the British army".[171] In essence, the thickness of woods, composed of old-growth forests that are almost unimaginable to the modern person, presented severe obstacles in more ways than one.

[170] "To George Washington from Lord Stirling, 29 August 1776," *Founders Online,* National Archives.
[171] Tarleton, Banastre, *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781: In the Southern Provinces of North America,* (London: Colles, Exshaw, White, H. Whitestone, Burton, Byrne, Moore, Jones, and Dornin 1787)., 275

VI. Looser Formations and Cavalry in Context

From the first major engagements of the war these unique challenges, and the tough lessons of 1775, spurred a complete change and shift from major British doctrine. Even with experiments in formations discussed previously, on the eve of war in the colonies those troops already garrisoned in North America were ordered by General Gage that "There should be no superfluous motions in the platoon exercise, but [it is] to be performed with the greatest quickness possible".[172] At Lexington and Concord in April of 1775, this entire concept came crashing down. Volume of fire tactics needed tightly compressed formations, essentially the most amount of men in the smallest space possible, to deliver the highest amount of bullets down range. In the engagement the main column received fire from all sides and attempted to form, but as Lieutenant Frederick Mackenzie of the Royal Welch Fusiliers recorded: "we were ordered to form the line, which was immediately done by extending on each side of the road, but by reason of the Stone walls and other obstructions, it was not formed in so regular a manner as it should have been".[173] The terrain obstructing their formations' dispositions, and the Rebels firing "concealed behind the Stone walls and fences…and in a wood in the front" the Royal Welch Fusiliers were ordered to form a rear guard as Brigadier General Earl Percy attempted to withdraw his men in an orderly fashion.[174] Following on this order, the Fusiliers attempted to face the Rebels in their own way, as Mackenzie recorded: "we immediately lined the Walls and other Cover in our front with some marksmen, and

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[172] Gage's Orders, 21 November, 1774, War Office Papers 36/1, fos.19, 32
[173] M, Frederick. *A British Fusilier in Revolutionary Boston*., 54
[174] Ibid., 54-55

retired from the right of Companies by files to the high ground a Small distance in our rear".[175] Taking cover, breaking formations to advance marksmen, and maneuvering by files (groups of 3 men) is a drastic change from the regular platoon exercise and suggests that Howe and Townshend's drills had permeated the training for regiments not under their jurisdiction.

The stop gap measure of utilizing the terrain was not uniform among the other regiments, and even with it, was not effective because of a core fault at the center of British tactical thought. Frederick Mackenzie again relates in his journal:

> The Troops returned their fire, but with too much eagerness, so that at first most of it was thrown away…their opinion that they would be sufficiently intimidated by a brisk fire, occasioned this improper conduct; which the Officers did not prevent as they should have done. A good deal of this unsteady conduct may be attributed to the sudden and unexpected commencement of hostilities, and the too great eagerness of the Soldiers in the first Action of a War. Most of them were young Soldiers who had never been in Action, and had been taught that every thing was to be effected by quick firing…This ineffectual fire gave the Rebels more confidence, as they soon found that notwithstanding there was so much, they suffered but little from it.[176]

In essence, the terrain barred the British forces from forming the tactical dispositions they had trained for, and, even when some regiments attempted to adapt to the specific challenge they faced, their volume of fire doctrine was ineffective. In the ensuring siege of Boston, this situation repeated itself multiple times, the most disastrous being at Bunker Hill. After a risky amphibious landing while under fire, the main British assault repeatedly paused while advancing up the hill to fire on the Rebel earthworks. The

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[175] M, Frederick. *A British Fusilier in Revolutionary Boston.,* 55
[176] Ibid., 65-66

assault was ineffective and resulted in tremendous casualties. On the final advance, frustrated officers implored a different approach, as one British Marine recorded in a letter:

> Major Pitcairne was killed close by me, with a captain and a subaltern, also a sergeant, and many of the privates; and had we stopped there much longer, the enemy would have picked us all off. I saw this, and begged Colonel Nesbitt, of the 47th, to form on our left, in order that we might advance with our bayonets to the parapet. I ran from right to left, and stopped our men from firing; while this was doing, and when we had got in tolerable order, we rushed on, leaped the ditch, and climbed the parapet, under a most sore and heavy fire. [177]

The shift away from firepower had an immediate effect, as Adjutant Waller observed:

> You will not be displeased when I tell you that I was with those two companies who drove their bayonets into all that opposed them. Nothing could be more shocking than the carnage that followed the storming this work. We tumbled over the dead to get at the living, who were crowding out of the gorge of the redoubt, in order to form under the defences which they had prepared to cover their retreat.[178]

The effectiveness of the bayonet, and the repeated failures of massed firepower did not go unnoticed by the participants.

The ditching of mass formations came quickly. Upon taking over as commander in chief, Howe immediately shifted the troops under his command. On the 29th of February 1776 he would order "Reg^{ts} when formed by Company's in Battn, or when on the General Parade, are always to have their Files 18 Inches distant from each other, which they will take care to practice for the future, being the Order in w^{ch} they are to

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[177] Drake, Samuel Adams, ed. *Bunker Hill: The Story Told in Letters from the Battle Field by British Officers Engaged*. Boston, Ma: Nichols and Hall, 1875., 29-30
[178] Ibid., 28

Engage the Enemy".[179] Previously, files had been shortened in June of 1775 by Gage to two men, but Howe would shift it back to 3 after the withdrawal from Boston and the retraining of his men in Halifax. This would still retain an open-order dispostion, stating in general orders: "The Grenadiers & Batt^{ns} of the Line are to form in future in three Ranks with the Files as formerly- ordered at 18 Inches intervals".[180] Finally, in the midst of the New York Campaign, finding two-men files more feasible in the terrain, he issued the final order on the matter, which would be retained for the rest of the war: "The Infantry of the Army without exception is ordered upon all occasions to form two Deep with their File at 18 inches interval until further Orders".[181] This formation effected several key changes necessary for fighting in North America. It gave the commanding officer what was essentially an accordion, the "open order" of 18 inches (essentially a file's distance between each file) could be compressed or further opened up to an "extended order" if the topographical situation required it. This allowed British formations to evolve rapidly on the battlefield to whatever obstacles lay in front. Men could easily step around rocks, trees, and other features without breaking up discipline. It also gave them the perfect disposition to take cover from the march without crowding. The standing orders for the 71st Regiment sum up this situation, stating:

> If the Battn is commanded to engage in a wood, thicket, or country, one or more Sections will be detach'd in front of each company with an Off. At the head of each who are immediately to occupy every tree, Stump, Log, Bush, hedge, wall, or in short any kind of covering which can afford them tolerable shelter from the enemy…respective divisions shall not only be

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[179] Howe, William. *General Sir William Howe's Orderly Book At Charlestown, Boston, And Halifax June 17 1775 To 1776 26 May*. London: B.F. Stevens and Brown, 1890., 222
[180] Ibid., 294
[181] "Headquarters Staten Island 30th August, 1776" William Howe Orderly Book, William L. Clements Library, The University of Michigan

> judiciously dispersed but that every Soldier hug their coverts [cover] in the most compleat manner possible for Giving annoyance to the enemy & perfect security to themselves.[182]

Besides being suited to the terrain and taking cover, it also had the added benefit of being able to extend the line to meet superior numbers that Rebel formations were able to field, thus protecting their flanks, and bringing more muskets to bear, as Rebel Thomas Rodney recorded at Princeton: "the enemy [British]…took post behind a fence and a ditch in front of the buildings before mentioned, and so extended themselves that every man could load and fire incessantly…the fire of the enemy was so hot, that, at the sight of the regular troops running to the rear, the militia gave way and the whole brigade broke".[183] As a result, this created a thin line that typically had no reserve. While a failing, especially towards the end of the war, it was hoped it would be overcome by other tactical changes which will be discussed. This ability to open to the left and right was recorded by Private John Robert Shaw at Camden when they "opened to the right and left and let Tarleton's light horse pass through".[184] As well, instead of maneuvering by large battalion-sized divisions, maneuvering by files allowed much more flexibility on a field with broken terrain, and would be recorded by contemporaries on both sides, such as Rebel James McHenry who noticed at Monmouth Courthouse "The enemy advanced two regiments by files into the woods near the court house".[185] Participants and witnesses would record this formation being used throughout the war. After repulsing the siege of Quebec in

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[182] Bailey, DeWitt. *Small Arms of the British Forces in America: 1664-1815*. Woonsocket, RI: Andrew Mowbray Publishers, Inc., 2009., 344-345
[183] Rodney, Thomas. *Diary of Captian Thomas Rodney, 1776-1777*. Edited by Caesar A Rodney. Wilmington, DE: Historical Society of Delaware, 1888., 34
[184] Hagist, Don N. *British Soldiers, American War: Voices of the American Revolution*., 32
[185] John, Rhodehamel, ed. *The American Revolution: Writings from the War of Independence 1775-1783*. New York, NY: The Library of America, 2001., 403

Spring of 1776, Governor General of Canada Guy Carleton would order at Chambly on June 29th: "the order for forming is to be two deep and the files eighteen inches asunder".[186] A year later an anonymous German soldier wrote home that:

> Here we have a special way of waging war which departs utterly from our system. Our infantry can only operate two deep, and a man must have eighteen inches space on either side to be able to march in line through woods and brush. We cannot use cavalry at all, so our dragoons have to rely on their own legs. Our standards bother us a lot, and no English regiment brought any along.[187]

Similarly, Rebel Ebenezer Denny noted in a skirmish in the South that the British were "marching at this time by companies in open order…the main body were discovered filing off to the right and left".[188] Perhaps another German soldier put it best when he wrote home they "live, walk, dwell and march in the woods".[189]

In Europe, these looser formations would normally be inviting a slaughter from the opposing side's cavalry, but in North America such fears rarely existed. The unsuitability of the terrain, as well as difficulty and expense of transporting horse regiments to North America and finding suitable mounts in the field resulted in the British only shipping over two regiments of light dragoons (the 16th and 17th) and no heavy cavalry. The 16th Light Dragoons and 17th Light Dragoons would subsequently serve in every theater, nearly every major engagement of the war, and countless skirmishes.[190] The resulting attrition would

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[186] Hadden, James M. *A Journal Kept in Canada and Upon Burgoyne's Campaign in 1776 and 1777, By Lieut. James Hadden, Roy. Art. Also Orders Kept by Him and Issues by Sir Guy Carleton, Lieut. General John Burgoyne, and Major General William Phillips, in 1776, 1777, and 1778.*Albany, NY: Joel Munsell's Sons, 1884., 197-198
[187] Pettengill, Ray W., trans. *Letters From America 1776-1779.,* 71
[188] Denny, Ebenezer. *Military Journal of Major Ebenezer Denny: An Officer in the Revolutionary and Indian Wars*. Philadelphia , PA: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1859., 37
[189] Pettengill, Ray W., trans. *Letters From America 1776-1779.,* 80
[190] Troiani, Don, and James L Kochan. *Don Troiani's Soldiers of the American Revolution*., 34-35

have the surviving men of the 16th drafted into the 17th in 1778.[191] These men would be augmented early in the war by a company of mounted German *Jaeger* from Hesse-Cassel, but the majority of German cavalry dispatched to North America would be retrained in the field to fight as infantry, the official treaty between Great Britain and the Herzog of Braunshweig and Lüneburg stating he would provide "a body of Light Cavalry…but as his *Britannick* Majesty will not have occasion for the horses of this corps, the said corps shall serve as a corps of Infantry".[192] The emphasis on cavalry for the British was the raising of Provincial horse suitable for their expectations in North America, which were primarily reconnaissance and scouting, skirmishing, foraging, military escort, and communications.

At raising these units and accomplishing their duties, the British were especially successful. Many of these smaller units were recruited quickly and for short durations as the situation required, eventually being disbanded or merged into larger corps.[193] Others would go on to leave an extraordinary track record serving under some of the boldest and most innovative officers of the war. Loyalist units such as the British Legion and Queen's Rangers were commanded by regular British officers who resigned their regular commissions to take leadership roles in the provincial establishment; putting their entire career on the line for victory in America.[194] These cavalry units in themselves were an adaption. Many successful provincial corps of cavalry would be equipped and augmented to act independently in the field, with one contemporary describing The British Legion thus:

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[191] Troiani, Don, and James L Kochan. *Don Troiani's Soldiers of the American Revolution*., 18
[192] *Ibid*., 66-67. Troani, Don, and Eric Schnitzer. *Campaign to Saratoga*., 26
[193] Braisted, Todd W., and Thomas B. Allen. *The Loyalist Corps: Americans in the Service of the King*., 11
[194] Troiani, Don, and James L Kochan. *Don Troiani's Soldiers of the American Revolution*., 57-58

> The cavalry that Coll. Tarleton commands is a provincial corps, and makes a rather singular figure; for as service has been consulted more than show, their horses are all manner of colours and sizes. Their uniforms are a light green waistcoat, without skirts, with black cuffs and caps, and nothing more. Their arms consist of a sabre and one pistol. The spare holster contains their bread and cheese. Thus lightly accoutered, and mounted on the swiftest horses the country produces, it is impossible for the enemy to have any notice of their approach till they actually receive the shock of their charge.[195]

These light provincial corps would put into practice the British concept of creating a disciplined native force, and would be utilized in the role of miniature armies. For example, the Queen's Rangers contained within it grenadier, light infantry, rifle, and battalion companies (all trained to operate in the woods) along with hussars, dragoons, and an artillery section; Emmerick's Chasseurs had two troops of light dragoons, chasseur, light infantry, and rifle companies; while the British Legion was comprised of six cavalry troops and four light infantry companies.[196]

In practice these troops were invaluable in anti-partisan operations, using combined arms tactics of their compositions to travel lightly, catch up with rebel forces and hit hard. Banastre Tarleton related a typical operation:

> Earl Cornwallis thought proper to detach a corps, consisting of forty of the 17th dragoons, and one hundred and thirty of the legion, with one hundred mounted infantry of the same regiment, and a three pounder, to pursue the Americans, who were now so much advanced, as to render any approach of the main body impracticable. Lieutenant-colonel Tarleton, on this occasion, was desired to consult his own judgment, as to the distance of the pursuit, or the mode of attack: To defeat Colonel Buford, and to take his cannon, would undoubtedly, in the present state of the Carolinas, have considerable effect; but the practicability of the design appeared so doubtful, and the distance of the enemy so great, that the attempt could only be guided by discretional powers, and not by any antecedent

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[195] Troiani, Don, and James L Kochan. *Don Troiani's Soldiers of the American Revolution*., 60
[196] Braisted, Todd W., and Thomas B. Allen. *The Loyalist Corps: Americans in the Service of the King*., 36. Troiani, Don, and James L Kochan. *Don Troiani's Soldiers of the American Revolution*., 57-59

> commands. The detachment left the army on the 27th, and followed the Americans without any thing material happening on the route, except the loss of a number of horses, in consequence of the rapidity of the march, and the heat of the climate… he determined as soon as possible to attack, there being no other expedient to stop their progress, and prevent their being reinforced the next morning [197]

Tarleton's fatigued troops subsequently caught Buford's men by surprise and after a sharp skirmish destroyed his whole command. Other examples of anti-partisan combined arms operations occurred constantly in the lines around the British garrison of New York City. On August 31, of 1778 three separate Loyalist corps ambushed the majority of Washington's Native American contingent at Kingsbridge, dozens being "cut down with the sabre". Commanding officer General Charles Scott grimly reported back to Washington:

> I am sorry To inform Your Excellency that they retalliated on us…they war led Into an ambucade Serounded by a large body of Horse and foot, as was also the Majrs partie there are not more than fourteen Indians Yet com in among the missing is Capt. Nimham his father and the whole of the officers of that Corps, Majr Steward tells me that he misses a Capt. Sub. & About twenty men from his partie, I am in Hopes it is not so bad as it at Preasant appears But I cant promise my self that it will be much Short of it.[198]

In essence these anti-partisan operations conducted by combined arms units of mostly Americans got at, as Todd Braisted puts it: "one of the oddities of the war in America: the Crown forces consisted of men locally raised and familiar with the terrain, and their Continental foes were in effect foreigners, men recruited in the middle Atlantic and

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[197] Tarleton, Banastre, *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781: In the Southern Provinces of North America.,* 27-29

[198] "To George Washington from Brigadier General Charles Scott, 31 August 1778," *Founders Online,* National Archives, accessed September 29, 2019, https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-16-02-0491. [Original source: *The Papers of George Washington*, Revolutionary War Series, vol. 16, *1 July–14 September 1778*, ed. David R. Hoth. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006, pp. 447–449.] Braisted, Todd W. *Grand Forage 1778: The Battleground Around New York City*., 24

unfamiliar with the Hudson Valley".[199] Their success, especially in the "Neutral Ground" between Philadelphia and New York led one patriot militia officer to write: "I keep out large patrolling parties every night in that neighborhood for the protection of the inhabitants, but the enemy have so good intelligence of our thoughts and every motion that it is beyond my power to give protection" while Washington admonished General Scott "to remind the Officers under your command, that our losses upon the lines have chiefly arisen from being surprised or inadvertently led into ambuscades, and he [Washington] hopes that the damage which they have sustained will be a warning in the future".[200] The success of these independent corps would be emulated in Continental ranks, such as with Henry Lee's "Partisan Legion" which saw extensive service in the south between 1778-1781.[201]

Although the British made strong headway in raising provincial horse regiments and utilizing them in combined arms corps that excelled in anti-partisan roles, there were few instances where they could be utilized effectively on the battlefield in a traditional European sense. Many times the numbers simply weren't there to face the mass of infantry arrayed against them, as John André recorded an instance of at Monmouth: "two or three Troops of the 16th Dragoons charged into the fields after them [Rebels], but found a large body of Infantry ambuscaded, who gave them a heavy fire and obliged them to retreat".[202] When there were substantial numbers of mounted troops, often times

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[199] Braisted, Todd W. *Grand Forage 1778: The Battleground Around New York City*., 42
[200] Tompkins, Arthur S, ed. *Historical Record to the Close of the Nineteenth Century of Rockland County, New York*. Nyack, NY: Van Deusen & Joyce, 1902., 488. Fitzpatrick, John C, ed. *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources 1745-1799*. Vol. 12. Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1934., 475
[201] Troiani, Don, and James Kochan. *Don Troiani's Soldiers of the American Revolution*., 156-158.
[202] Andre John. *Major André's Journal.,* 12

the terrain and thickness of woods broke up any momentum or gave loosely arrayed troops excellent cover, as Otho Williams recorded at Eutaw Springs:

> Therefore orders were dispatched…charge the enemy's right. The order was promptly obeyed, and galloping through the woods…Washington attempted a charge, but it was impossible for his cavalry to penetrate the thicket…he ordered his troop to wheel by sections to the left, and thus, brought nearly all his officers next to the enemy, while he attempted to pass their front. A deadly, and well directed fire, delivered at that instant, wounded or brought to the ground many of his men and horses, and every officer except two…the enemy [British] with poised bayonet, issued from the thicket, upon the wounded or unhorsed rider.[203]

Williams later recorded another instance where: "Coffin [British] was obliged to retire, and in the ardour of the pursuit, the American Cavalry approached so near Majorbanks [British], and the picketed garden, as to receive from them a fatally destructive fire. Col. Polk…describes it by declaring 'that he thought every man killed but himself'".[204] Even when a charge successfully hit its target, the small numbers rarely broke an infantry formation completely. For example, William Washington's cavalry at Guilford Courthouse in 1781 charged through the Brigade of Guards successively three times, followed by the infantry of the First Maryland regiment, yet the Guards still reformed in time to form a firing line and meet the Marylanders' charge. A subsequent re-charge on the Guards was repulsed with loss by a shower of artillery grape and case shot.[205]

A significant downside of the scarcity of major cavalry formations lay in the inability to pursue a defeated foe and turn a rout into a devastating (possibly war-ending)

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[203] *Sketches of the Life and Correspondence of Nathanael Greene, Major General of the Armies of the United States, in the War of the Revolution. Compiled Chiefly from Original Materials.* Vol. 2. Charleston, SC: A.E. Miller, 1922., 228
[204] *Ibid.,* 231
[205] Babits, Lawrence E., and Joshua B. Howard. *Long, Obstinate, and Bloody: the Battle of Guilford Courthouse*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013., 154-161

defeat. The concept of running down a vanquished foe was imbedded into European strategic and tactical thought; indeed, in the upbringing of the 18th century officer class, many would be assigned Vegetius' 5th century text *De re Militari*, stating: "The maxim of Scipio, that a golden bridge should be made for a flying enemy, has much been commended. For when they have free room to escape they think of nothing but how to save themselves by flight, and the confusion becoming general, great numbers are cut to pieces".[206] It was at this moment, the breaking and flying of the enemy, that "a vigorous pursuit was recognized as the necessary consummation of victory, and for this purpose the authorities recommended that the commander should send his reserves or his light cavalry pounding after the enemy".[207] One Prussian officer recalled a standard example at Hohenfriedberg, that:

> during this short pause [as the enemy line's started disengaging] I heard some commotion and loud chatter among the hussars standing behind me. This was an infraction of our strict standards of discipline, and I asked an NCO what was happening. 'The lads are besides themselves with joy,' he answered. 'They have been ordered to give no quarter to the Saxons.'…at that moment the trumpets sounded the charge. The dragoons were formed up beside and behind us, and the whole mass crashed into the enemy like a thunder cloud driven by a storm. I cannot recall having seen another battle in which we displayed more enthusiasm or burning anger.[208]

In North America though, such textbook tactics were rare due the lack of large cavalry formations. This severely frustrated British officers, as Goerge Hanger wrote: "...they...give their fire, and retreat, which renders it useless to attack them without cavalry: for though you repulse them, and drive them from the field, you can never

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[206] Duffy, Christopher. *Military Experience in the Age of Reason.,* 258
[207] Ibid., 258
[208] Ibid., 257

improve the advantage."[209] Many times the infantry present at an engagement were exhausted from just fighting a battle, as John André recalled at one engagement: "The Rebels were driven back by the superior fire of the Troops, but these were too much exhausted to be able to charge or pursue….Night and the fatigue the Soldiers had undergone prevented any pursuit".[210] Even if fresh reserves were available, the pursuit of infantry that scattered into the countryside and forest was something infantry in a formation were typically incapable of doing effectively, as a frustrated Loftus Cliffe observed after one engagement: "We were five hours as busy as men could be before we made an impression and upon my word I never felt so disagreeable in my life as I did at one time this day, however at last we drove them and pursued 8 or 9 miles, but could not come up with them".[211] Likewise, without cavalry, the pursuit of infantry with infantry through wooded and broken terrain broke up unit cohesion and formations, not only leading to a loss of control but also leaving pursuers in a vulnerable position, as one German soldier recalled:

> Whenever the attack proves too serious, they retreat, and to follow them is of little value. It is impossible on account of the thick woods, to get around them, cutting them off from a pass, or to force them to fight. Never are they so much to be feared as when retreating. Covered by the woods, the number of enemies with which we have to deal, can never be defined. A hundred men approaching may be taken for a corps. The same are attacked, they retreat fighting. We think ourselves victors and follow them; they flee to an ambush, surround and attack us with a superior number of men and we are the defeated. These are drawbacks which the royal army cannot avoid under the circumstances.[212]

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[209] Hanger, George. *An Address to the Army in reply to Strictures of Roderick M'Kenzie (late Lieutenant in the 71st Regiment) on Tarleton's History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781* (London, 1789), 82
[210] Andre, John. *Major André's Journal*., 46-47
[211] Loftus Cliffe to Jack Cliffe, Philadelphia, 24 October, 1777. Loftus Cliffe Papers, William L. Clements Library, The University of Michigan.
[212] Du Roi, August Wilhelm. *Journal of Du Roi the Elder, Lieutenant and Adjutant*., 108

In essence, the lack of strong cavalry formations many times relegated the role of a pursuit to the infantry; a role in which they were usually woefully inadequate. The rough terrain, exhaustion of the men, and lack of order allowed broken and fleeing Rebel formations to, in most cases, successfully escape and reform to fight again.

Contrary to most depictions of British forces in, General Howe, having faced rough terrain that hampered traditional deployments, and which led to heavy losses and difficulties in early engagements, General Howe quickly retrained the regiments under his command to use formations typically reserved for the light infantry. These changes included opening up gaps in formations, allowing them to extend further or compress in depending on what the tactical toolkit called for. In addition, the number of men in each file was changed from three to two, further allowing a looser line suitable for engagements in rough geography, as well as lopping off a precious third man to extend the lines and meet the often much-larger numbers they faced. Likewise, this allowed the men to take suitable cover and maneuver by their individual files. Howe's changes stayed with British forces through the end of the war, and were adopted in every theater from the Canada to the South. While effective especially in the start of the war, as will be seen, the shock value they relied upon became less effective as the war progressed and the British encountered experienced Continental and French regulars. While loose open formations would have been an inviting and vulnerable target to enemy cavalry in Europe, in North America, the lack of cavalry negated this aspect. The conditions of the voyage over only allowed the British to deploy two regiments of horse, and they would instead rely on locally raised cavalry units, which they would accomplish to a notable degree. These

provincial and British horsemen were mostly relegated to scouting, communication, skirmishing, and ant-partisan activities. Their success in anti-partisan warfare would result in the development of independently operating provincial Legions officered by British soldiers that took on much of that fighting; and were in themselves a unique aspect of the war in America. Conversely, the effectiveness of Continental and militia cavalry varied from theater to theater, with them being relegated to much the same roles, but when utilized in a traditional manner on the battlefield frequently were checked by effective infantry response. This lack of cavalry relegated most pursuits of fleeing Rebels to infantry, who were inadequate for the task, and thus allowed Rebels to often successfully regroup and live to fight another day. In essence, the British actively adapted their formations to the landscape around them, with the environment of the fighting in North America allowing encouraging them to make adjustements that would be inadvisable on European battlefields.

VII. Lighter and Swifter: Artillery Overhauls

Often overlooked in examinations of the British military of the Revolution, the changes to the British artillery system deployed to North America comprised a profound and distinct conversion to North American conditions. Before the Revolution, the Seven Years War constituted the first large-scale deployment of cannon for field use in North America. Previously, trading companies and imperial governments had provided cannon for defense of settlements and forts, but large trains of artillery for use in the field or to siege specific areas were not suited to the raiding style of combat that prevailed in the colonies before the mid-eighteenth century. As France and England both invested considerable resources into the fight in North America, both sides realized that copious amounts of artillery would be needed to demolish the plethora of fortifications well into the interior of the countryside established by both sides. Since European warfare of the period tended to center around sieges, the majority of the artillery utilized packed an enormous amount of firepower and range at the expense of being tremendously heavy.[213] The weight of even lighter artillery pieces (a standard small-caliber French Vallière pattern 4-pounder gun was 1,240 lbs) affected the progress of every campaign, as Louise Antione de Bouganville related in his journal:

> One has no idea of the difficulty involved in moving a considerable amount of artillery…without horses or oxen, by men's arms alone. Also, they cannot appreciate in Europe the merit of the operations carried out in America. The hardships cannot be imagined, and it is impossible to give a fair idea of it.[214]

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[213] Selig, Robert A. "The Politics of Arming America." In *New Perspectives on "The Last Argument of Kings": 18th-Century Artillery. Proceedings of the Ticonderoga Seminar on 18th-Century Artillery Held at Fort Ticonderoga August, 2017*, 30–51. Ticonderoga, NY: Ticonderoga Press, 2018., 37

[214] de Bougainville, Louis Antione. *Adventure in the Wilderness: The American Journals of Louis Antoine De Bougainville, 1756-1760.,* 155

For example, it took detachments of 500 Frenchmen, working in shifts day and night, three days to move just fourteen cannon over the 3-mile La Chute River portage.[215] The unsuitability of these systems would not be forgotten in the interwar period.

Artillery of the period was made up of two main types of cannon: those of iron, and those of bronze. As the eighteenth century progressed, advances in metallurgy and machinery, as well as powder production, allowed artillery pieces to be lighter while firing a larger weight of ball with less powder. Even with these advances, field armies tended to prefer bronze guns for several reasons. Compared to iron, they were less brittle (drooping when overheated instead of bursting like iron guns), and because of this they could be cast thinner, making them lighter.[216] Although much cheaper and vastly easier to produce, iron guns were exponentially heavier for weight of shot being fired, and thus considered ideal for fixed positions such as forts and ships.[217] Even with bronze being preferred by field armies, a lively debate ensued among European theorists as to its role on the battlefield. Some argued that artillery should be massed on good ground at specific points of the battlefield to provide concentrated and overlapping fields of fire meant to break opposing formations, as Nockhern de Shorn related:

> Strong batteries which lay down a cross fire…make a potentially decisive contribution to the offensive by overthrowing lengths of the enemy line and making gaps therein. On the defensive they sweep extensive areas of ground, and beat and defend the approaches and avenues along which the enemy must advance.[218]

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[215] de Bougainville, Louis Antione. *Adventure in the Wilderness*., 152-155
[216] Cubbison, Douglas R. *"The Artillery Never Gained More Honour" The British Artillery in the 1776 Valcour Island and 1777 Saratoga Campaigns*. Fleishmanns, NY: Purple Mountian Press, 2007., 23
[217] Ibid., 23
[218] Duffy, Christopher. *Military Experience in the Age of Reason*., 233-234

Others argued that guns should accompany infantry as they marched into the action (so called "battalion guns"), providing direct support capable of keeping up with fluidly changing dispositions. Through the Seven Years War different nations tested these concepts, but the downsides of both kept the lively debate active through the Revolution.[219] While both types of metal would extensively be used throughout the war as the context and exigencies called for it in specific theaters, it was in bronze that British engineers and artillerymen focused their efforts at producing artillery specifically suited for North American use.

One of the key downsides of battalion guns lay in the fact that they slowed down any infantry formation they were attached to. Typically maneuvered over distances with a limber and horses, every time these guns were set up, the process of unlimbering and moving the support equipment and animals to the rear took time.[220] What potentially was an asset on the field many times became bogged down as faster infantry formations changed positions, and thus a focal point of charge and counter charge, or left behind entirely. [221] The Establishment of 1764 issued by the Board of Ordinance made the weight of the smallest cannon in the British system, the light bronze three pounder, a cumbersome 312 pounds with large carriages not suitable for being quickly maneuvered by gun crews.[222] Attempting to fix this situation, in 1773 James Pattison developed a "light piece of artillery, which, on emergencies, might be carried on mens shoulders; its

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[219] Selig, Robert A. "The Politics of Arming America."., 42-43
[220] Duffy, Christopher. *Military Experience in the Age of Reason*., 233
[221] Ibid., 235-236
[222] McConnell, David. *BRITISH SMOOTH-BORE ARTILLERY: A TECHNOLOGICAL STUDY TO SUPPORT IDENTIFICATION, ACQUISITION, RESTORATION, REPRODUCTION, AND INTERPRETATION OF ARTILLERY AT NATIONAL HISTORIC PARKS IN CANADA*. Ottowa: National Historic Parks and Sites Environment Canada, 1988., 412

use and effects were tried by several charges of grape-shot, to the great amazement of his Majesty. This ingenious piece is the contrivance of Gen. Pattison, who explained it to his Majesty".[223] Pattison's innovation, of which only one survives today, rested on the removal of a lug attaching the barrel to the carriage, allowing it to be quickly disassembled, and on reducing the weight of the tube down to 188 pounds.[224] Even with these changes, Pattison's 3-pound gun was meant to be loaded onto and moved by two or three packhorses, with the disassembly and maneuver by manpower only for emergencies, which displeasing many British commanders, as Sir Jeffery Amherst related:

> Pattison's by being carried on Horses might have the advantage of going in Paths where no Wheel Carriage can go, but the length of the Carriage on the Horses back, the Width of the boxes with Ammunition, and the Weight both on the Horse that carry's the Gun and the one that carry's the Carriage &c., are, I fear, with that of putting on and taking off great obstacles to the advantages that are hoped may arise from the Service of these light guns.[225]

While innovative in its ability to be quickly disassembled and reassembled, the ditching of the limber did not garner widespread support.

As conflict started to erupt in North America, two other innovators came to the forefront with different designs meant to fill the same purpose: a light cannon easily maneuvered by men alone through rough terrain that could accompany fast moving infantry. In Ireland, Lord Lieutenant Townshend, took notice of Surveyor General of Ordinance Ralph Wade's attempts to improve the artillery being used by his Royal Irish

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[223] Urban, Sylvanus. *The Gentleman's Magazine and Historic Chronicle For the YEAR M.DCCLXXIII*. Vol. XLIII. London: D. Henry and F. Newberry, 1773., 347
[224] Schnitzer, Eric H. "A Study in Metamorphosis "., 105
[225] Ibid., 106

rRegiment of Artillery. The subsequent 3-pounder design they created together, dubbed the Townshend Gun and Travelling Carriage, had four pairs of brackets that allowed eight men to insert four wooden handspikes (used in battle to aim the piece) and haul the entire 600-pound package onto their shoulders to move around the battlefield.[226] Like any other piece of artillery, when not being carried on the shoulders of the artillery men, it could be hitched to a limber and horse. Concurrently to Wade and Townshend, Captain Lieutenant William Congreve of the Royal Regiment of Artillery developed a light 3-pounder cannon tube weighing only a little more than 200 pounds.[227] Most importantly though, Congreve developed a new carriage that could be moved either by a traditional horse and limber, completely disassembled onto the backs of the soldiers, and with a detachable device that could be attached to the trail of a gun and hooked up to a horse without a limber.[228] Even before the first shots were fired in April of 1775, seeing the writing on the wall, the Board of Ordinance placed an order on February 8th of 1775 for six Pattison Guns and carriages. On the 21st added an additional four Townshend Guns and carriages to the order, and on March 21st, six of these would be shipped to Boston, followed by four to Quebec on July 11th.[229] With the official outbreak of war, and requests for more light artillery, in January of 1776 an order would be placed for Congreve's light 3-poundr pattern (probably due to preference of carriage design), with 73 produced by August and sent in waves to Howe's and Carleton's armies.[230]

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[226] Schnitzer, Eric H. "A Study in Metamorphosis., 107
[227] Cubbison, Douglas R. *"The Artillery Never Gained More Honour".,* 27
[228] Schnitzer, Eric H. "A Study in Metamorphosis "., 107
[229] Ibid., 109
[230] Ibid., 110

Upon receipt of these guns, the gun crews were immediately tasked with training how to use them in the field. For example, the Royal Artillery Orderly Book for August 13, 1776 states "Capt. Walker will exercise his Company every day with the three three pounders that have Shafts with mounting Dismountng & Carrying of them and in every Other particular for which they are Intended".[231] The Orderly Book goes on to repeat this nearly every day through the end of August. Likewise, German artillery crews sent to North America were issued shorter lighter English cannon and "conducted firing exercises…together with the English cannoneers, according to English commands and with English procedures".[232] Hess-Hanau artillery Captain Pausch wrote in a letter to his Prince: "Already for more than three weeks I drill constantly every morning…with them [English] during the afternoon at four o'clock, according to their commands and drum [beaten non-verbal commands]".[233] Even with German and English artillery crews deployed to North America, the specialized training of the service, and the high attrition rates in North America meant the recruiting pool from Europe was slow, something Major General James Pattison, commander of the Royal Artillery in North America, would bitterly complain about:

> I did indeed receive some Months ago at different Times Description Lists of 144 Men raised & enlisted for my Battalion, but what is become of these Recruits or how they have been disposed of, I cannot even conjecture, since only 33 Names out of those 144 are to be found, as the Adjutant informs me… but I presume the Agents have been prevented by

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[231] Cubbison, Douglas R. *"The Artillery Never Gained More Honour".,* 29
[232] Burgoyne, Bruce E, trans. *George Pausch's Journal and Reports of the Campaign in America*. Westminster, MD: Heritage Books, 2007., 37
[233] Ibid., 59

> more important Affairs, from bringing to any Settlement the Concerns of those, who are at 3,000 Miles Distance.[234]

To make up for these shortages, regular soldiers from battalion companies would be temporarily assigned to the artillery for the duration of a campaign. These soldiers would be drilled like all the rest, one example order noting:

> The following Regts (Viz') 22d, 35th, 40th, 44th, 45th, 49th, and 63rd to Send each One Non-Commissioned and 10 privates tomorrow Morning to the Royal Artillery, who are to remain and do duty with the Artillery as the Additionals from other Corps have done. Col° Cleaveland will take care to have them Instructed in the Use of the Great Guns as soon as possible If there are men in those Corps, who know any thing of the Artillery Service, they will be Sent in preference to others.[235]

In essence, the soldiers assigned to specific guns would be drilled continually in their use, preparing for the specific conditions which would be found in North America.

While dozens of lighter three-pound cannons would be sent to the colonies, a plethora of heavier cannon, mortars, and howitzers would be utilized as well. The suitability of lighter three-pound and six-pound cannon relegated them to being utilized as battalion guns attached to the infantry. The artillery attached to specific regiments tended to live alongside them in camp, as recorded in Howe's Orderly Book: "The Detachments of Artillery will Draw provisions with the Brigades or Corps they do duty with".[236] As a result, after the first year of the war, combined arms operations between infantry and artillery became commonplace. Larger pieces were considered inadequate

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[234] *Collections of the New-York Historical Society for the Year 1875.* New York: New York Historical Society, 1876., 123

[235] Howe, William. *General Sir William Howe's Orderly Book.,* 74

[236] William Howe Orderly Book, William L. Clements Library, The University of Michigan

for use in the woods, and often met with disastrous results as William Digby recorded at Bemis Heights:

> Major Williams (artillery) objected much to the removal of the heavy guns [from the park of Artillery]; saying once a 12 pounder is removed from the Park of artillery in America (meaning in the woods) it was gone...About 3 o'clock, our heavy guns began to play, but the wood being thick…our cannon were surrounded and taken – the men and horses being all killed.[237]

These larger pieces were still considered a necessity, with Burgoyne proclaiming: "The Artillery after the Light Troops, is the important arm in this American War".[238] The reason for this was, as Burgoyne again related:

> I formed my opinion conformably to the sentiments of those respectable officers [Sir Guy Carleton and General Philips] upon the following reasons, viz., that artillery was extremely formidable to raw troops; that in a country of posts it was essentially necessary against the best troops; that it was yet more applicable to the enemy we were to combat, because the mode of defence they invariably adopted, and at which they were beyond all other nations expert, was that of entrenchment covered with strong abbatis against which cannon of the nature of the heaviest…might often be effectual, when to dislodge them by any other means might be attended with continued and important losses.[239]

For many of the same reasons for the shift to shock tactics, such as rebel formations engaging behind vast entrenchments on strong ground, British commanders tended to emphasize the need of strong artillery firepower to accompany their forces. For example, the British Northern Army of 1777 would bring the largest train of artillery seen in North America up to that date: 138 guns, eighteen of which were massive 24-pounder

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[237] Digby, William. *The British Invasion from the North. The Campaigns of Generals Carleton and Burgoyne from Canada, 1776-1777, with the Journal of Lieut. William Digby, of the 53d, or Shropshire Regiment of Foot*. Albany, NY: Joel Munsell's Sons, 1887., 286
[238] Burgoyne, John. *Burgoyne and the Saratoga Campaign: His Papers*., 171
[239] Burgoyne, John. *State of the Expedition from Canada, as Laid Before the House of Commons, By Lieutenant-General Burgoyne, And Verified By Evidence; with a Collection of Authentic Documents.* London: J. Almon, 1780., 10

cannon.[240] Pinned in place, static fortifications would hypothetically become death traps in the face of bombardment.

The light 3-pound guns on special carriages, as well as light 6-pound cannon attached to battalion formations would see extensive action in every theater and play a decisive role in nearly every battle. The effect of fear of artillery on inexperienced enemy troops such as militia was noticed from the first engagement of the war. At Lexington and Concord, Frederick Mackenzie recorded that:

> As the troops drew nearer to Cambridge, the number and fire of the Rebels increased, and altho they did not shew themselves openly in a body in any part, except on the road in our rear, our men threw their fire very inconsiderately, and without being certain of its effect: this emboldened them, and induced them to draw nearer, but whenever a Cannon shot was fired at any considerable number they instantly dispersed.[241]

John André similarly states in a skirmish that militia "were dispersed again by a shot or two from their [the Jäger] 3-pounders" and in another that the Rebels were "very speedily dislodged by a gun of the Light Infantry".[242] André records not just light guns being utilized by the most light corps of the army, but also how effective even these small pieces were. The terror caused by artillery on even disciplined troops was well recorded in the period, a participant at Dettingen in 1743 recorded the Austrians under artillery bombardment "dip their heads and look about them for they dodge the balls as a cock does the stick, they were so used to them", thus sowing disorder in formations.[243] It

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[240] Burgoyne, John. *State of the Expedition from Canada*., 9
[241] M, Frederick. *A British Fusilier in Revolutionary Boston.,* 56
[242] Andre John. *Major André's Journal: Operations of the British Army Under Lieutenant Generals Sir William Howe and Sir Henry Clinton June 1777 to November, 1778 Recorded by Major John André, Adjutant General*. New York, NY: New York Times & Arno Press, 1968., 9
[243] Duffy, Christopher. *Military Experience in the Age of Reason*., 218

makes sense that inexperienced troops that made up the majority of forces opposing the British until later in the conflict would break under such an ordeal. Cannons firing round shot from a distance cut down entire sections of a line while canister and grapeshot fired at pointblank range plowed into formations with the effect of a shotgun blast of birdshot. Lieutenant Hülsen recorded the experience of being exposed to a volley of canister at Zorndorf in 1758:

> My flank man's head was blown off, and his brains flew in my face. My spontoon was snatched out of my hand, and I received a canister ball on my gorget, smashing the enamelled medallion. I drew my sword and the tassel of my sword knot was shot away. A ball went through the skirts of my coat, and another knocked my hat aside, stripping the knot from the band in the process.[244]

This impersonal nature of the killing from an unreachable distance depressed morale, and it was this exact aspect that British officers depended on to quickly disperse and break the opposition arrayed in front of them.

The adaption of cannon and carriages into a package easier maneuvered by a small team of men in broken and dense terrain, as well as placing them directly alongside specific battalions, made them integral to the British strategy of defeating numerically superior Rebel troops that maintained the strategic initiate to choose when and where to fight. Knowing the shock factor, and real impact they could have, these cannon directly accompanied their infantry counterparts directly into the woods, advancing and firing at a speed unprecedented in previous conflicts. Unlike the open fields of Europe that allowed artillery to pick away at targets at range, the undeveloped and broken terrain among the

[244] Ibid., 218

trees occurred at unpredictably close distances incurring an outstanding amount of confusion, as Johann Döhla, an Ansbach-Bayreuth private, recorded : "when two corps are separated from one another…the intervening area is never secure".[245] Rebel Solomon Parsons recorded an example of just how close these engagements tended to be when fighting in the Point of Woods at Monmouth:

> I beheld the red-coats within eight rods. I was loaded with a ball and six buck-shot. I took aim about waistband-high. I loaded the second time, and made attempt to fire; but my gun did not go. I jumped into the rear where I saw Major Porter. I told him my gun would not go off. He said "Take care of yourself: the enemy are just upon us!" I stepped into the front rank, and discharged my piece, the enemy within six rods. I loaded the third time. As I returned my ramrod, I found our men four rods distant, and the enemy the same…the next platoon on the left fired on me and broke my thigh.[246]

Because of this closeness of engagements, the artillery typically deviated from standard practice of well-aimed deliberate fire from behind the infantry, and tended to employ quick firing at point blank range in often desperate circumstances. George Pausch recorded in the woods at Freeman's Farm in 1777:

> I arrived at the height, under a heavy small arms fire, just as the 21st and 9th regiments were being repositioned and were about to abandon the height which I and my cannons were still striving to climb… English captains, officers, and men, also Brunswick chasseurs who were assigned there, grasped and pulled on the lines to maneuver the guns. The entire line of these regiments once again formed a front. My cannons by means of their faithful assistance were suddenly on the height. The cartridges were carried up in the men's arms and placed besides the guns, and as soon as I had mounted the terrain, I quickly fired twelve or fourteen shots, one after the other, at the enemy standing under a full fire at about a good pistol shot distance from me. The small arms fire of our line increased noticeably again…The enemy fire, as strong as it had been previously, faded in the distance as if cut off. I moved forward about another sixty

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[245]Döhla, Johann Conrad, and W. Waldenfels. *A Diary of the American Revolution*., 43

[246] Washburn, Emory. *Historical Sketches of the Town of Leicester, Massachusetts, During the First Century From Its Settlement* . Boston, MA: John Wilson and Son, 1860., 260-261

> yards, pursued the now scattered and fleeing enemy with a few more rounds, and chased them into the woods with a another twelve or fifteen cannonballs.[247]

Pausch's account provides an excellent case study into the unique role into which these guns were placed. His writing belies the desperation of the day, as withdrawing soldiers and officers, the disparate groups of different regiments, all worked together to haul Pausch's cannon directly into the line of battle while under heavy small-arms fire. The necessity, and effectiveness of these small and portable artillery pieces is seen in how quickly the rapid firing of the rounds at point-blank range dispersed the would-be victorious enemy. Similarly, as the Rebel troops before them started to withdraw, chasing after them with the cannon is unprecedented in most European engagements, and speaks volumes about the portability of these weapons, especially in wooded terrain.

Instrumental to battlefield success against overwhelming numbers, and acting alongside infantry directly in the line of battle, artillery pieces frequently became the focal point of the engagements in which they were present. For example, at the Battle of Cowpens in 1781, advancing Continentals noticed, as one participant recalled: "Their artillery *was not thrown in the rear*, but was advanced a little at the head of the line".[248] Deviating straight towards the guns, and "when within a few yards, he [Captain Anderson] saw the man at one of them about to put the match to it, levelled at them. At this critical moment he ran up, and, with the assistance of his spontoon, made a spring, and lit immediately upon the gun, and spontooned the man with the match".[249] The

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[247] Burgoyne, Bruce E, trans. *George Pausch's Journal and Reports of the Campaign in America*., 76
[248] Babits, Lawrence E. *A Devil of a Whipping: The Battle of Cowpens*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998., 120
[249] Ibid., 120

gunners and accompanying infantry fought "till the whole of the artillery-men attached to them [the cannon] were either killed or wounded".[250] Subsequently Lieutenant-Colonel Tarleton ordered his dragoons forward to recapture the guns but they were too few to push the Continentals away.[251] Another example occurred at the First Battle of Saratoga in 1777 where Lieutenant James Hadden's guns became the focus of the American attacks.[252] Captain Benjamin Warren of the 7th Massachusetts Regiment recorded that: "The engagement began again…with great spirit on both sides, we beat them back three times and they reinforced and recovered their ground again. We took a field piece twice and they retook it again".[253] Similarly Nathaniel Bacheller of the New Hampshire Militia recorded: "We hear the Ground was disputed Inch by Inch & that there was a Set of Field pieces taken & Retaken Five Times by the partyes on Each Side".[254] Hadden himself recalled the horrifying ordeal:

> I was advanced with two guns [6-pounders] to the left of the 62nd Regt…In this situation we sustained a heavy tho intermitting fire for near three hours…and having lost in killed or wounded Nineteen out Twenty two Artillery attached to my two Guns in the Angle, I applied to Brig'r Hamilton for a supply of infantry, and while speaking to him my cap was shot thro the front…The Enemy being reinforced and advancing closer…Capt Jones immediately began firing, but being himself very soon wounded as were also the whole of the men we brought up, I was desired to endeavor to effect the Retreat of my Guns, but…were forced to abandon the Hill & on it my Guns.[255]

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[250] Babits, Lawrence E. *A Devil of a Whipping: The Battle of Cowpens*., 120
[251] Ibid., 128-129
[252] Cubbison, Douglas R. *"The Artillery Never Gained More Honour"*., 108
[253] Ibid., 109
[254] Ibid., 109
[255] Hadden, James M. *A Journal Kept in Canada and Upon Burgoyne's Campaign in 1776 and 1777.,* 164-165

A counterattack by General Philipps with four pieces of cannon and several German Regiments eventually recaptured the lost guns and forced the Rebels off the field. Of the forty-eight Royal Artillery officers with Captain Jones, thirty-six of them were killed or wounded, leaving Lieutenant Digby to state: “The victory must inevitably have been on the side of the Americans without our artillery”.[256]

Elements of the Royal Artillery, Royal Irish Artillery, and various German and American contingents served under grueling conditions in every campaign of the war. A focal point of British tactical strategy to overcome the unique conditions they faced, officers hoped they could rely on their fear factor to overcome overwhelming numbers, as well as their efficiency at destroying the extensive fortifications behind which Rebel formations fought. The artillerymen in North America actively changed their fighting style from the orthodox systems in Europe to meet the unique and ever changing conditions in the colonies. They would develop lighter guns and carriages easily maneuvered by a small amount of men and not relying on draft animals. The closeness of engagements in the North American woods and broken terrain led to the necessity of drills that allowed a high rate of fire at point blank range, along with quick movement and rapid advances. These developments allowed the guns to directly accompany the infantry into the woods and the frontline of battle, where they frequently played a decisive role. They also were however, commonly targeted as Rebel officers recognized their importance as well. Subsequently, the actions around cannons often became pivotal points of a battle, and the battalion guns suffered high attrition rates accordingly. The

[256] Cubbison, Douglas R. *"The Artillery Never Gained More Honour"*., 112

perilous nature of their service, and steadfastness in duty led Cornwallis to sum up their experience after one Southern engagement: “In justice to the Royal Artillery, I must here observe that no terror could induce them to quit their guns, and they were all killed or wounded in defense of them”.[257] Essential to British strategy, the arm of the heavy guns was in itself an embodiment of the departures and changes the British military was willing to undertake to meet the conditions they found in North America.

[257] Troiani, Don, and James Kochan. *Don Troiani's Soldiers of the American Revolution*., 21-22

VIII. Shock and Cover: Tactical Overhauls

With the ditching of massed formations in favor of looser ones came a complete transition from established British doctrine of massed firepower tactics over to those of shock. This was for several key reasons. The looser formations adopted by British troops to deal with broken and wooded terrain effectively negated any concept of a massed fire system as they put wide spaces between the files of soldiers. Likewise, especially earlier in the war, Rebel troops commonly declined to engage without some sort of earthwork or cover that made massed firepower virtually useless. Going hand in hand with this is a reality that remained true even until the modern era: seemingly inexperienced troops can very quickly gain expertise in the operations of their firearms, while hand to hand combat skill takes a discipline typically fostered through professional training. Simply put, the fear factor of engaging at the point of bayonet and sword had a devastating effect on Rebel forces. Together these aspects motivated a departure from firepower tactics, a doctrine which had developed for decades in the British Isles, to something wholly unique to the American theater.

As was noted at Lexington and Concord, Bunker Hill, and the other engagements centered around Boston in the opening stages of the war, Rebel armies typically did not engage British troops unless behind fortifications. This was entirely rational: in most every campaign, the British were the ones on the attack and thus the strategic initiative shifted over to their Rebel counterparts. In a period where the road infrastructure in North America was woefully inadequate, and where waterways such as rivers were the easiest means of transport, Patriot strategists typically were very adept at predicting what routes

British planners had to choose in their campaigns and swiftly threw up fortifications to block therm. In a similar manner, when on the move and chased by British formations, Rebel troops were thus offered the ability to choose on what ground they would fight (a circumstance which forced British officers to work tirelessly to overcome by making their formations lighter and thus faster). With the relatively inexperienced troops under their command, the morale factor of having some sort of cover was considered invaluable in having their men actually stand and fight, as Frenchman Chevalier de Pontgibaud put it after serving in North America: "Amongst the causes which brought about the liberty and independence of the United States, perhaps these impregnable fortifications should count for something more than has before been indicated".[258] The swiftness with which they threw up fortifications was continually remarked upon with astonishment by European commentators. Loftus Cliffe related during the New York Campaigns of 1776:

> We had been scarce two Days at work at our approaches to their Lines of Brookland (which were amazing strong and constructed with great Labour) than they quit them…If a spirited resistance had been made at those works they would have cost us a good deal of time and men…They had now taken refuge in York Island and town. This Island which extends in length about 14 Miles, but narrows, is by nature extremely tenable and every advantage nature gave has been improved to the best advantage by those scoundrels, who if they could fight as they work might defy any power in the world…but their soldiers would rather work than fight, ours on the contrary would rather fight than work, we shall not shew ourselves so perfect moles as they have done…Gen. Howe is determined to make regular approaches and not run our heads against their works which is what they have all along hoped for, they will find themselves confoundedly disappointed both in their numbers and their strongholds. I was [th]ere yesterday to see them [the Rebels Works], they were

[258] Rankin, Hugh F. *Narratives of the American Revolution: As Told by a Young Sailor, a Home-Sick Surgeon, a French Volunteer, and a German General's Wife*. Chicago, IL: The Lakeside Press, 1976., 245-246

> thousands at work in their shirts I could see by a glass upon a Hill about 700 Yards from our out Picketts.[259]

In s similar manner another officer related in a letter: "Your Lordship would be astonished to see the tract of country they have entrenched and fortified; their number is great, so many hands have been employed."[260] A frustrated James Murray related that the Rebels utilized "Redoubts upon redoubts and entrenchments as strong as they had at their leisure chose to make them, (and they are not in general, nor had they been upon this occasion very sparing of their trouble in that way)" which "might be defended by whatever numbers they chose to employ" while an anonymous British writer related that

> The misfortune is, that, for some time at least, the Rebels being sensible of the superiority of our Troops, will carefully avoid all occasions, of exposing themselves to trials of that kind, so that we must either seek them under the Cover of their Intrenchments, or in their retrails [retreats] in the the Forest. And if in the first case, and we succeed in forcing their lines, they retire with ease to the woods. [261]

Perhaps most succinctly, Francis Lord Rawdon stated in a letter to the Earl of Huntingdon: "As to fighting us on open ground, I believe no advantage of numbers will ever tempt them to do that, but while they have a wall to lie behind be assured they will fight".[262]

British officers quickly realized that small-arms fire was not adequate to overcome these static positions, and instead shifted in favor of utilizing an immediate rush with the bayonet to take fortified positions. In nearly every campaign fortified

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[259] Loftus Cliffe to Jack Cliffe, Septmeber 21, 1776. Loftus Cliffe Papers, William L. Clements Library, The University of Michigan

[260] Peckham, Howard H, ed. *Sources of American Independence: Selected Manuscripts from the Collections of the William L. Clements Library*. Vol. 1. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1978., 135

[261] Murray, James. *Letters from America 1773 to 1780, Being the Letters of a Scots Officer*., 35, *Thoughts on the War between Great Britain & America*, William L. Clements Library, The University of Michigan., 20

[262] John, Rhodehamel, ed. *The American Revolution: Writings from the War of Independence 1775-1783*., 68

positions were encountered: some formal and laid out by actual engineers (such as Bemis heights, Fort Clinton, Fort Washington, Fort Montgomery, the lines at New York) and others simply hastily erected abbati and gabions made out of local materials on imposing ground. While many officers emphasized the utility of artillery fire to overcome large obstacles, the prevalence of entrenchments, from small to large, did not always allow the utilization of artillery to gradually whittle them down. Relying on the seemingly superior discipline and training of their troops (and the reverse of their Rebel counterparts) British officers oftentimes turned formidable positions filled with shaky inexperienced troops into death traps. Robert Auchmuty recorded the taking of Fort Washington, which held thousands of Rebel troops and over 140 cannon:

> The Hessians with great firmness marched through this way until they came to the north end of the steep mountain…which they began to clamber up, notwithstanding the heavy fire from the rebels on top of the hills, and after very great difficulties and labours gained the summit; which as soon as the rebels saw ran away towards the fort…North Britons landed, and with incredible labour scrambled up by means of small bushes growing out through the cracks of the rocks on the side of the mountain; all the while sustaining a heavy fire from the rebels at the top; which as soon as they had reached, they began a very spirited attack upon the rebels, who were in the bushes on top of the mountains, driving them from behind trees and rocks…at the same instant that the Hessians and Highlanders began their attack, his Lordship with the brigades under his command attacked the lines with singular bravery, rushing into them with the greatest fury, and driving the rebels from line to line, and work to work.[263]

The result of this seemingly mad attack up the cliffs of the Hudson Highlands forced George Washington into his long retreat through New Jersey, but it was not a unique

[263] John, Rhodehamel, ed. *The American Revolution: Writings from the War of Independence 1775-1783*., 230-231

instance. Private Johann Conrad Döhla of the Ansbach-Bayreuth contingent of German troops related the storming of Fort Montgomery in 1777 in his journal:

> The fort lies on a nearly insurmountable cliff and was provided with 120 cannon…Although the cannon fire from the fort was terrible and the grapeshot flew thick and at times, when it ricocheted on the rocks, made a startling sound, still the brave Scots and Englanders, as well as Captain von Erckert, with his company and the Hessian Grenadier Battalion, pressed through with fixed bayonets…When he was already at the third battery, Captain von Erckert received a discharge of grape that shattered his right arm. This caused him to fall, but he raised himself up, took his sword in his left hand, exhorting and calling his grenadiers…he steadfastly urged his troops on…This strong fort was then overrun and taken by storm with fixed bayonets…No one who has seen it can grasp the size, splendor, and strength of the fort.[264]

Likewise, Johann Christoph Doehlmann, an Ansbach grenadier, wrote a vivid account of the storming of Fort Clinton:

> We saw nothing of the bastion until we were out of the woods. Here with some hundred paces to go when we came out of the woods, the cannonballs came flying so thick that the tree-limbs were falling on us. Then bullets came like hail…This didn't stop us and we pushed forward. When the woods ended the abatis began…We chased the Rebels behind a large stone wall which was the first works and back into the fort…Then the fort began firing Canister so heavily we thought Heaven was falling. We stopped and took cover behind the rocks and let the enemy fire over us…man after man had to crawl through the abatis so that when Group One was in position, orders were given to storm the fort…Here the bloodbath began, those still in the fort were not pardoned, but dispatched with the bayonet. Fortunately, most of the Rebels were so scared by the sight of the bayonets they panicked and discarding their arms, fled.[265]

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[264] Döhla, Johann Conrad, and W. Waldenfels. *A Diary of the American Revolution*., 52-53

[265] Walther, Karl, transcribed and translated by Henry J. Retzer. "Diary of Johann Christoph Doehlemann, Grenadier Company, Ansbach Regiment March 1777 to September 1778." Hessians: Journal of the Johannes Schwalm Historical Association 11 (2008): 11–17.

Another German, Johann Carl Buettner, who deserted from the Rebels to the British, left an account not of the storming of a formal fort, but the typically encountered fieldwork which he faced at Brandywine Creek:

> I was with the third division, that marched the greater part of the way through forests and had to listen to the far away roar of the cannon. It lacked half an hour of sunset when we made a halt, threw our knapsacks into a pile and put on our grenadier caps. This meant an immediate attack. An adjutant approached our general from the right wing, and we were ordered to march in double file. And now we advanced with fife and drum, charging with bayonets through the shallow Brandywine, storming the earth works of the enemy with a rush and causing them to abandon everything and take to their heels.[266]

Doehlmann's note that the Rebels fled at the sight of the bayonet gets at the key of why the British shifted over to shock tactics. Simply put, the fear factor of getting into hand to hand combat destroyed morale. Even when behind imposing walls and fortifications, keeping discipline among less experienced troops was tough, as Rebel Brigade Major James Wilkinson recorded at Fort Ticonderoga:

> General St. Clair directed the troops to sit down on the banquet with their backs to the parapet, as well to cover them from the shot of the enemy, as to prevent their throwing away their own fire…I at length observed a light infantry man who had crept within forty paces of the ditch, and was loading and firing from a stump, behind which he had knelt. I stepped to a salient angle of the line, and ordered a sergeant to rise and shoot him; the order was obeyed, and at the discharge of the musket, every man arose, mounted the banquet, and without command fired a volley; the artillery followed the example, as did many of the officers from colonels down to subalterns, and not withstanding the exertions of the General, his aids and several other officers, three rounds were discharged before they could stop the firing…Five hundred of the enemy were scattered along our front, the most distant not exceeding one hundred yards, when a thousand infantry

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[266] Buettner, Johann Carl. *Narrative of Johann Carl Buettner in the American Revolution*. New York City, NY: Chas, Fred, Heartman, 1915., 49

> and 8 pieces of artillery opened their fire upon them; and yet we could never learn that we killed a single man or wounded more than a lieutenant! This was from the effect of hurry, for I observed the infantry to fire at an elevation…and the artillery without direction. From those causes, if the enemy had assaulted us at the time, he would have succeeded with trifling loss.[267]

Wilkinson's admittance that, if a storm was attempted it would have been successful, illustrates just how effective a reliance on shock tactics, even when the attacker was outnumbered, was considered a successful policy for the British.

The shift from firepower to dependence on charging and hand to hand combat became formal policy after the early campaigns of the war. Howe noted in general orders to his army during the New York campaign: "They now place their security in slight breastworks of the weakest construction which are to be carried with little loss by the same high-spirited mode of attack. He therefore recommends to the troops an entire dependence upon their bayonets" [268] Burgoyne likewise followed suit in general orders a year later when his army began to embark from Canada, stating to his men:

> The Officers will take all proper opportunities to inculcate in the Men's minds a reliance on the Bayonet…a Coward may be their match in Firing but the Bayonet in the hands of the Valiant is irresistible. The Enemy…will place their whole dependence in Intrenchments…it will be our glory, and our preservation to Storm when possible.[269]

Similarly Patrick Ferguson stated in a letter that his experience in North America illustrated that "it is only by vigorous & persevering charges with that weapon that an

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[267] Wilkinson, James. *Memoirs of My Own Times*. Vol. 1. Philadelphia, PA: Abraham Small, 1816., 306
[268] Johnston, Henry P. *The Battle of Harlem Heights, September 16, 1776. With A Review Of The Events Of The Campaign*. New York, NY: Colombia University Press, 1897., 35
[269] Hadden, James M. *A Journal Kept in Canada and Upon Burgoyne's Campaign in 1776 and 1777, By Lieut. James Hadden, Roy. Art. Also Orders Kept by Him and Issues by Sir Guy Carleton, Lieut. General John Burgoyne, and Major General William Phillips, in 1776, 1777, and 1778.*Albany, NY: Joel Munsell's Sons, 1884., 74

enemy can be dislodged from a strong ground, whither strong by nature or intrenchments".[270] But, as the war dragged on and the soldiers that floated through Continental ranks gained more experience, and thus became more comfortable with fighting in the open and not behind entrenchments, the question shifts to whether or not the British likewise changed back to their tried and true firepower tactics. Surprisingly, a plethora of evidence points to a utilization of shock as being standard practice even in the field.

As the war progressed, Rebel tactics began to shift dramatically to similarly meet British changes. Early campaigns revealed flaws in static defenses, and Rebel officers began to shift over to defense in depth deployments that made better use of their manpower and quality of troops. While static fortifications could protect key areas, they could not maneuver, and as Rebel troops began to gain more experience, commanding officers increasingly felt more comfortable in engaging in pitched battles. Although for the most part on the defensive throughout the war, there were times where dire political situations called for bold offensives, such as at Trenton, Princeton, and Monmouth, or the strategic opportunity looked promising for a victory, such as at King's Mountain, Stony Point, or Germantown. Likewise, key objectives that needed to be defended meant sortieing out to counter British movements rather than waiting to be outmaneuvered, such as at Brandywine or Bemis Heights. Like the reasoning behind placing men behind fortifications, Rebel leaders looked to deploy their troops in tight blocky formations

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[270] Peckham, Howard H, ed. *Sources of American Indpendence: Selected Manuscripts from the Collections of the William L. Clements Library*. Vol. II. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1978.. 306

(copies of the kind used Europe) because such formations allowed officers to exercise the maximum amount of command over their comparatively inexperienced troops. Having men stand shoulder to shoulder likewise aids in morale as combat drags on, as it keeps them in place (whereas loose formations allow undisciplined soldiers to flee) and formations disorganized in the heat of battle tend to cause panic, as North Carolina Militiaman Garret Watts relayed his reasons for fleeing the field at Camden: "The cause of that I cannot tell, except that everyone I saw was about to do the same. It was instantaneous. There was no effort to rally, no encouragement to fight. Officers and men joined in the flight".[271] These blocky Rebel formations were faced with the exact same issues as the British, indeed many officers would complain repeatedly about them, but they were still used until the end of the war, such as at the battle of Green Springs in 1781 where Virginia militiaman John Mercer related:

> We had just begun to assume the stiff German tactics, as the British acquir'd the good sense, from experience in our woody country, to lay it aside. General Wayne's Brigade were drawn up in such close order as to render it utterly impracticable to advance in line and preserve their order - the line was necessarily broke by trees as they passed [through] the wood.[272]

The inability to smoothly pass through the woods effectively stalled the American counterattack.

One would think it is safe to assume that when faced with Rebel formations fighting in a linear European style manner, that British troops would revert back to their

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[271] Dann, John C., ed. The Revolution Remembered: Eyewitness Accounts of the American War for Independence. Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1980., 195

[272] Hunt, Gailliard, ed. *Fragments of Revolutionary History: Being Hitherto Unpublished Writings of the Men of the American Revolution, Collected and Edited, under Authority of the District of Columbia Society, Sons of the Revolution.* Brooklyn, NY: The Historical Printing Club, 1892., 50

tried and true firepower tactics. But, remarkably, the participants record the opposite. Relying on shock and the bayonet charge seems to have held true even when facing Rebel soldiers out in the open, because, as Major Patrick Ferguson related: "the rebel troops certainly have not as yet attained confidence enough to use bayonets, the favorite arm of our soldiers".[273] Again, as with the ability to change formations and still maintain discipline, the professional training of British soldiers resulted in them being tactically superior with regard to certain aspects. Whereas, like today, any person could quickly be taught how to use a firearm with little training, the discipline of learning how to use a bayonet is a skill that takes months, if not years of daily training. British soldiers being deployed to North America at the start of hostilities were career soldiers who had been in the army for several years, and the new recruits raised during the war on average spent one to two years at training depots in England before joining their parent regiments.[274] This precious time training not only gave an advantage to British troops in terms of discipline, but also in terms of skill in hand to hand combat, as Thomas Sullivan related: "The enemy could never endure to stand for any time to the bayonet, but if the King's troops kept at a distance, they stood firing with musketry long enough".[275]

On a European battlefield, shock attacks with the bayonet usually came after clear signs of weakness started to show, such as holes in a line, or a wavering in the rows of muskets, which trained officers would look to exploit.[276] In Europe, charging headlong

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[273] Peckham, Howard H, ed. *Sources of American Indpendence: Selected Manuscripts from the Collections of the William L. Clements Library*.. 306
[274] Hagist, Don N. *British Soldiers, American War: Voices of the American Revolution*., 12-13
[275] Sullivan, Thomas. *From Redcoat to Rebel: The Thomas Sullivan Journal*. Compiled by Joseph Lee. Boyle. Westminster: Heritage Books, 2006., 103
[276] Duffy, Christopher. *Military Experience in the Age of Reason*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 1987., 256

into fresh formations formed into firing blocks was tantamount to a slaughter, but in North America it appears to be the tactic of choice. British officers seemed to rely on the natural inclination for a body of inexperienced troops to recoil away or bunch as another barreled towards it.[277] It was not so much the effectiveness of hand to hand combat, but the thought of being part of hand to hand combat that resulted in the constant breaking of Rebel troops in the face of such an onslaught, as Rebel Colonel Otho Williams described at Camden: "The impetuosity with which they [the British] advanced, *firing* and *huzzaing* , threw the whole body of the militia into such a panic that they generally threw down their *loaded* arms and fled in the utmost consternation."[278] In fact, this concept was core to why British strategists tended to avoid shock tactics in favor of firepower, as Lieutenant Colonel William Dalrymple wrote in his 1782 treatise *Tacticks*:

> There is probably not an instance of modern troops being engaged in close combat...the bayonet can be of little utility by way of impulsion in the field... these defects in modern infantry prove the impracticability of two battalions, opposed to each other, being brought in the open field to close encounter: one body must give way before they get into action.[279]

As Mathew Spring has definitively shown, British troops, especially as the war dragged on, tended have a high disdain for Rebel soldiers that was not only a prime motivator, but also imbued a feeling of clear superiority into their corps; as one British soldier in New York wrote: "…the contempt every soldier has for an American is not the smallest. They cannot possibly believe that any good quality can exist among them".[280] Similarly,

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[277] Ibid., 215
[278] Williams, Otho Holland. "A Narrative of the Campaign of 1780." *Sketches of the Life and Correspondence of Nathanael Greene, Volume I*, pp 485- 510. A. E. Miller, Charleston, South Carolina. 1822., 495
[279] Dalrymple, William. *TACTICKS*. Dublin: George Bonham, 1782., 113
[280] Spring, Mathew H. *With Zeal and With Bayonets Only.*, 128

Lieutenant Colonel John Simcoe wrote: "The British soldier who thought himself superior, actually became so; and the ascendancy which he claimed was in many instances importantly admitted by his antagonists".[281] Thus, British officers took advantage of not only the inexperience of Rebel troops with the bayonet, but also capitalized (and encouraged) the thought that British troops were inherently superior to their Rebel counterparts to overcome the natural inclination to shy away from hand to hand combat.

The shift to shock tactics coupled with the battle seeking strategy radically changed how British troops went about deploying onto the North American field of battle. In Europe, the mutual joining of battle between two opposing forces was preempted by maneuvers into dispositions decided by commanding officers before marching on the enemy. During these maneuvers officers needed to keep the troops as fresh as possible while also maintaining discipline in their formations so that each section would have a sufficient amount of space as they made their way into line. As a result, it was necessary to move extremely slowly, as Humphrey Bland would write: "…[i]n marching up to attack an enemy, the line should move very slow, [so] that the battalions may be in order, and the men not out of breath when they come to engage".[282] Likewise, the Maurice de Saxe would write in 1732:

> To see just a single battalion setting off is quite a performance. It is like some ramshackle machine which is on the verge of disintegrating at any moment, and which moves with infinite difficulty. What happens when you wish to get the head off to a brisk start? The tail is left unaware that

[281] Simcoe, John Graves. *A Journal of the Operations of the Queen's Rangers: From the end of the year 1777 to the conclusion of the late American War*. England: Exeter, 1789., 15
[282] Bland, Humphrey. *A Treatise of Military Discipline: In Which Is Laid Down and Explained the Duty of the Officer and Soldier, Thro' the Several Branches of the Service*. London: D. Midwinter, J. and P. Knapton, 1743., 133

> the troops have marched off at speed. Gaps inevitably result, and in order to make them up the troops at the rear have to run as fast as they can. The head of following battalion must do the same, and soon the whole sinks into disorder.[283]

For the British military, the need to bring a pitched battle resulted in the complete abandonment of these ideas. When Rebel field forces were caught in the open, instead of forming up slowly, British forces opted to form while advancing and break into an "English Gallop", which according to Captain Pausch of the Hesse Hanau Artillery: "required them to run like hunting dogs".[284] Tarleton's description of the Battle of Guilford Courthouse shows the speed at which British troops sought to bring an engagement, advancing under fire as soon as forming: "The troops were no sooner formed than they marched forwards with steadiness and composure. The order and coolness of that part of Webster's which advanced across the open ground, exposed to the enemy's fire, cannot be sufficiently extolled".[285] Rebel militiaman Thomas Young at the Battle of Cowpens states that: "the British line advanced at a sort of trot with a loud halloo. It was the most beautiful line I ever saw", while Roger Lamb likewise recalled advancing in a different engagement: "in excellent order, at a smart run, with arms charged".[286] Perhaps most revealingly Johann Christian du Buy reported that at the Battle of Guilford Courthouse:

> After quickly laying aside our tornisters and everything that could impede a soldier, the 71st and von Bose received orders to move forward and

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[283] Duffy, Christopher. *Military Experience in the Age of Reason*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 1987., 159
[284] Pausch, Georg. *Georg Pausch's Journal and Reports of the Campaign in America*. Translated by Bruce E. Burgoyne. Westminster, MD: Heritage Books, 2007., 52
[285] Tarleton, Banastre, *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781*., 273
[286] Gordon, John W. *South Carolina and the American Revolution: A Battlefield History*. Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 2007., 112; Lamb, Roger. *An Original And Authentic Journal of Occurrences During The Late American War To The Year 1783*. Dublin: Wilkinson & Courtney, 1809., 361

> attack the enemy... We had not advanced more than 300 yards when we found a deep ditch in front of us, with tall banks and full of water. After crossing it with difficulty, we then came to a fenced wheat field; on the other side of this field 1500 continentals and militia were deployed in line... I formed the battalion into line with the greatest of speed and we ran to meet the enemy in tolerable order.[287]

Du Buy's detail of stripping off their packs so they could move quicker is supported by numerous other descriptions, such as Tarleton's order at the Battle of Cowpens for his men to "…disencumber themselves of everything except their arms and ammunition".[288] These instances are repeated time and time again in both Patriot and British accounts, and, in the end, although the speed of joining battle had an impact on order, it was necessary for successful shock attacks upon a Rebel force.

Once battle had actually been joined, it appears that, unless thickness of woods prevented it, the British officers tended to order an initial volley followed by a bayonet charge at first contact. Private John Shaw relates at the Battle of Camden: "the Americans gave the first fire, which killed and wounded nearly one half of our number. We returned the fire and immediately charged on them with the bayonet".[289] In a similar manner Martin Hunter states: "They allowed us to advance till within one hundred and fifty yards of their line, when they gave us a volley, which we returned, and then we immediately charged. They stood the charge till we came to the last paling. Their line then began to break, and a general retreat took place soon after" while Tarleton likewise states: "The King's troops threw in their fire, and charged rapidly with their bayonets: The shock was

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[287]Du Buy, Raports vom Oberst Lieut. du Buy Regts v. Bose zu der General Lieutenant v. Knyphausen, Staatsarchiv Marburg, Best. 4h Nr. 3101.
[288] Tarleton, Banastre, *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781.,* 216
[289] Hagist, Don N. *British Soldiers, American War: Voices of the American Revolution*. 1st ed. Yardley: Westholme, 2014., 32

not waited for by the militia who retreated behind their second line".[290] Perhaps most succinctly, Charles Nöel Romand de Lisle, a French officer serving as a major in the Continental artillery, writes: "Hence in all engagements the British soldiers rush on with the bayonet after one fire, and seldom fail of throwing the Americans into confusion".[291] Having the men fire their muskets before a bayonet charge did two things to contribute to its chance of success. First, it possibly softened up the enemy, but, most importantly, it mitigated the possibility of momentum being broken by soldiers stopping to fire, as at Bunker Hill and other engagements around Boston.

The shift over to rapid movement, dispersed formations, and frequent use of a bayonet charge after an immediate volley was effective through most engagements of the war, but did have clear downsides. Sometimes unclear intelligence left those formations leading a charge straight into an isolated and outnumbered situation. For example, at Princeton in 1777, Colonel Charles Mawhood's British force of just 224 men closed to point blank range with the Rebel advance guard, loosed a volley, and immediately charged. Dispersing those before them, Mawhood's men burst through an orchard and onto Washington's main column, suddenly becoming outnumbered 20:1. Overlapped on both flanks, the survivors cut their way through the Patriot lines and back to General Cornwallis's main body at Trenton.[292] Similarly, at Monmouth in 1778, Charles Lee's hectic withdrawal and attempt to disengage with the British brought on an onslaught of

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[290] Hunter, Martin. *The Journal of General Martin Hunter and Some Letters of His Wife.*Edinburgh: Edinburgh Press, 1894. University of New Brunswick St. John., 27; Tarleton, Banastre, *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781.,* 273

[291] Romand De Lisle, Charles Nöel. "A Frenchman's Comments On The Discipline Of The American And British Armies in 1777." *The New Jersey Gazzette*, November 28, 1777.

[292] Hargreaves, Reginald. *The Bloodybacks: The British Serviceman in North America and the Caribbean 1655-1783*. London, UK: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1968., 282

the Guards and Grenadier battalions with Henry Clinton, British Commander and Chief in North America, striding alongside them on his horse exclaiming "Charge, Grenadiers, never heed forming".[293] As Rebel forces withdrew, the British charge ran straight into point blank range of Continental artillery and was pushed back with severe loss, as Chevalier de Pontgibuard related: "The English had a deep ravine to cross before they could reach us; their brave infantry did not hesitate an instant, but charged us with the bayonet, and was crushed by our artillery. The fine regiment of the guards lost half its men, and its colonel [Monckton] was fatally wounded".[294] In other instances, Rebel commanders utilized their overwhelming numbers to create a defense in depth strategy with several lines of troops that was extremely successful. At the battle of Cowpens, British Colonel Tarleton's men, fatigued after marching the whole previous day and night to catch up with Rebel Colonel Daniel Morgan's troops. After breaking through two Rebel lines, their disordered charge came upon the third line and received a point blank volley in which "the ground was instantly covered with the bodies of the killed and wounded, and a total route ensued".[295] Although successful for most of the war, there were key points where Rebel commanders were able to effectively turn the British emphasis on shock into a disaster.

Open or lightly wooded terrain made up a good amount of the combat conditions of the major engagements of the war, and here shock doctrine worked well. But, it needs

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[293] Lender, Mark Edward, and Gary Wheeler Stone. *Fatal Sunday: George Washington, the Monmouth Campaign, and the Politics of Battle*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016., 308
[294] Rankin, Hugh F. *Narratives of the American Revolution*., 243
[295] Babits, Lawrence E. *A Devil of a Whipping: The Battle of Cowpens*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998., 117

to be acknowledged that a vast amount of the combat which regular soldiers encountered occurred among small bodies and oftentimes in heavily wooded or broken terrain. The constant skirmishing, brought on while foraging, scouting, among piquet lines, and other regular duties was essentially the nerve-wracking daily existence of soldiers on both sides. The occurrence was so often that Johann Conrad Döhla recorded the creation of a "reserve force" that was at all times to "remain dressed and prepared to move out at the first alarm shots" in support of the piquets posted around the camp.[296] As noted previously, bayonet charges into woods were frequently ineffective, and the nature of old growth forests many times broke up any dispositions or semblance of formations. This called for a further adaption that created a truly American vernacular of fighting in the woods. Edward Winslow related in a letter that: "the enemy placed themselves behind trees and walls, etc., and it was apparently necessary to take them in their own way. In consequence a new word was adopted and the...corps were on subsequent occasions ordered 'to tree'- a word of command as well known to them now as any other."[297] Similarly, the Standing Orders for the 71st Regiment illustrate changes to American realities:

> Officers commanding Sections to observe the [illegible] attention with regard to their particular [illegible] of their Sections in front of each Company and that their respective divisions shall not only be judiciously dispersed but that every Soldier hug their coverts in the most compleat [sic] manner possible for Giving annoyance to the enemy & perfect Security to themselves. If the troops are ordered to move in any direction they are to Spring from tree to tree, Stump, log &c, &c with the utmost

[296] Döhla, Johann Conrad, and W. Waldenfels. *A Diary of the American Revolution*., 39
[297] Winslow, Edward. *Winslow Papers A.D. 1776-1826*. Edited by W. O. Raymond, Rev. St. John, N.B.: New Brunswick Historical Society, The Sun Printing Company, 1901., 68

> agility and continue to fire load & Spring as they advance up or from the enemy.[298]

Taking cover, breaking ranks, and advancing on personal initiative are rarely attributed to British troops in the conventional narrative of the American Revolution, and even more so to the German contingent, yet there were repeat orders from German officers to adapt as well. For example, Major-General Friedrich Riedesel instructed his troops to:

> Seek trees or other cover behind which they can hide, and run from behind one tree to another. Then each soldier has his owns defense. This is the only means which puts us in a position to be able to attack and dislodge the enemy in a wood without great loss. It is to be noted that no soldier must shoot except when he is behind a tree or another cover so that he can take a sure aim at the enemy…I believe it my duty to issue an order which will perhaps save the lives of many men, at a time, when, at any moment, we can be put in a position where one battalion or another can engage the enemy in the woods and cannot act against it in any other manner than described above.[299]

The utilization of improvised orders and drill appears to have been very effective. James Murray records at one skirmish that:

> The situation of the country was entirely after their own heart covered with woods and hedges, from which they gave us several very heavy fires. No soldiers ever behaved with greater spirit than ours did upon this occasion. An universal ardor was diffused throughout every rank of the army. The Light Infantry who were first engaged dashed in as fast as foot could carry. The scoundrels were driven into the wood and out of the wood, where they had supposed that we should never venture to engage them.[300]

Similarly, in another instance Murray recorded that:

> Our attention was awakened with a rattling of small arms upon our right, which we soon discovered to be our other Division driving the enemy before them. This was the signal for us to advance, which we did with all

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[298] Bailey, DeWitt. *Small Arms of the British Forces in America: 1664-1815*. Woonsocket, RI: Andrew Mowbray Publishers, Inc., 2009., 345
[299] Troani, Don, and Eric Schnitzer. *Campaign to Saratoga*., 190
[300] Murray, James. *Letters from America 1773 to 1780.,* 33

> expedition inclining to the left in order to cut off their retreat. The Grenadiers and soon after my Company pushed into a wood which they occupied in great numbers…The fire was prodigiously heavy at one time but [by] favour of some pretty large trees, which by a good deal of practise we have learnt to make a proper use of, my Company suffered very little…The 52nd coming up soon after, we advanced again into the wood upon which, after two [or] three pretty smart fires, the enemy thought proper to decamp.[301]

Perhaps most succinctly, one soldier recorded the 24th Regiment of Foot at Freeman's Farm in 1777 "took the wood, before them firing after their own manner from behind Trees, and twice repuls'd" American attacks "without any assistance".[302]

Shock tactics utilizing an open-order formation over broken ground accompanied or skirmishing in a dispersed formation using cover in densely forested terrain effectively dissolved the command structures which British formations in Europe used for their firing blocks. According to the 1764 *Regulations*, firing divisions within a battalion sized unit were overseen by regimental officers (specifically ensigns, lieutenants, and captains depending on the size of the unit) whose job was to make sure the men maintained their discipline and firing intervals. Overall maneuvers and direction of the battalion itself was typically carried out by field officers, the highest ranking being the Colonel (or Lieutenant Colonel) posted in the center, aided by the Major and Adjutant in their respective wings opposite the Colonel. Frequently, in North America, as battles progressed, the terrain, as well as the piecemeal combat which resulted from the nature of deployments, meant that individual subsets of a battalion became separated from each other. In both pitched battles and skirmishing in heavily forested terrain, it appears to be

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[301] Ibid., 39-40
[302] Troani, Don, and Eric Schnitzer. *Campaign to Saratoga*., 181

common for these individual subsets (many times company strength units) to act as their own semiautonomous tactical entities, as private Roger Lamb related

> The reader may perhaps be surprised at the bravery of the troops, thus with calm intrepidity attacking superior numbers, when formed into separate bodies, and all acting together; but I can assure him this instance was not peculiar: it frequently occurred in the British army during the American War.[303]

The British response to the need for companies to act independently was to simply ditch the battalion command structure in the 1764 *Regulations* and give regulation over to officers at the regimental level, a degree of tactical independence normally considered a modern concept. An explicit example comes from General William Phillip's orders to his officers at the outset of the 1777 Northern Campaign:

> It is well understood, that all regiments exercise by companies; but it is usually done with a view of joining in battalion. It is here meant, that each company should be led to consider itself as a small, distinct body, and exercised in various evolutions independent of the battalion with every possible view for single companies being taught to depend upon themselves. As from the nature of the present war, the abilities and military skill of officers may be required to be shown in detached parties, and as it may frequently happen, that single companies will have to act, when an entire battalion cannot always manoeuvre; by pursuing this idea, which the commander in chief has expressed a strong desire of, it will leave the officers and soldiers a dependence and attention on each other, and give confidence to both.[304]

Indeed, the need for tactical flexibility in small groups resulted in even non-commissioned officers being trained to direct squads under their command.[305]

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[303] Lamb, Roger. *An Original And Authentic Journal of Occurrences During The Late American War*., 362

[304] *A Supplement To The State Of The Expedition From Canada, Containing General Burgoyne's Orders, Respecting The Principal Movements, And Operations Of The Army To The Raising Of The Siege Of Ticonderoga.* London: J. Robson, T. Becket, R. Baldwin, 1780. University of Oxford Text Archive.

[305] Eyre Coote Papers, William Clements Library, Regimental Orderly Book December 14 1781- May 17 1782.

To read almost any source from a low-grade officer is to hear how their command of small and separated groups of soldiers played out. One example, Captain William Dansey, recorded that:

> I was engaged...with a 150 or 200 Riflemen…they were better cover'd than we were having a house a Mill and a Wall we had only Trees, they got the first fire at us before I saw them, I bid my Men cover themselves with the Trees and Rocks and turn out Volunteers among the Soldiers to go to the nearest Trees to the Riflemen and keep up the Fire….I continued the popping fire at them and they at us...we had the Satisfaction of knocking several of them down and had not a Man hurt…[306]

In a similar fashion, Captain Johann Ewald related in his diary:

> The companies were divided into four platoons...fell out at once in a skirmishing formation...the area was heavily intersected by woods, hills, and fields enclosed by walls; hence it was impossible to see far around...when several shots rang out...I maneuvered as well I could to cover both my flanks, which had formed into a circle lying an acre's length apart under heavy fire.[307]

Indeed, the command of small groups of soldiers by Junior officers was so prevalent that the American War was the first time that the *croix de l' ordre de la vertu militaire* was given to any soldier of the rank of captain (Captians Ewald and von Wreden) since its inception.[308] These changes in command structure and expectations of officers diverge significantly from how 18th century European armies typically fought. What is most interesting about them, however, is that they resemble more so the command and control

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[306] Dansey, William. *Letters of Colonel William Dansey 1771-1785*., W. Dansey to his mother, 3 Sept. 1776, Historical Society of Delaware.
[307] Ewald, Johan. *Diary of the American War: A Hessian Journal*., 7-8
[308] Uhlendorf, Bernhard Alexander, trans. *The Siege of Charleston: With an Account of the Province of South Carolina: Diaries and Letters of Hessian Officers From the Von Jungkenn Papers in the William L. Clements Library*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1938., 6-7

methods typically attributed as a Prussian development of the late 19th century, rather than anything remotely 18th century, as Robert Citino writes:

> The German way of War required brisk maneuver, high levels of aggression, and a flexible system of command that left initiative in the hands of the man in the field…German analysts of the time described their command system as the "independence of the lower commander" (*Selbständigkeit der Unterführer*), although the term *Auftragstaktik* (mission tactics) has become more common today…In other words, the higher commander devised a general mission (*Auftrag*), then left the means of achieving it to the officer on the spot. Independence of the lower commander was a useful force multiplier for an army that needed it, allowing the Prussians to decide, react, and move more rapidly than their enemies.[309]

Remarkably, the British emphasis on independence of command, shock, and maneuver appears to have predated Moltke the Elder's concepts by nearly a century, illustrating just how radical a departure they were from orthodox 18th century tactical ideas.

In essence, the fighting in North America, the looser formations utilized by the British to meet terrain obstacles and manpower shortages also warranted a complete shift in tactics. The closed formations that emphasized the destructive nature of volley-fire as the means of victory were negated by the inclusion of spaces between men. Likewise, the nature of Rebel entrenchments, fortifications, and ability to, many times, choose when and where they would fight resulted in volume of fire largely not being suitable to the tactical situations the British faced. As a result, when operating in North America, Crown officers created a truly different set of tactics then they were used to in Europe. Commanders on the ground frequently relied on shock (fast maneuvering along with a

[309] Citino, Robert. *The Wehrmacht's Last Stand: The German Campaigns of 1944-1945*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2017., 5

bayonet charge after an initial volley) to overcome what enemy force lay in their front. When faced with extremely dense terrain, troops were trained to ditch any structure and fight among cover, advancing and firing on their own initiative. Likewise, the adoption of looser formations required an overhaul of command structure that thrust junior and non-commissioned officers into command positions over small parties of men. These tactical changes are all attributed to much later periods, and run counter to the conventional understanding of British military methods during the American Revolution. While typically outnumbered and utilizing a looser line then their Rebel counterparts (which would have been asking for a slaughter in Europe), Crown officers relied on the superior discipline and training of their troops, as well as the reverse situation of their Rebel counterparts, along with the fear factor of hand to hand combat to bring about success. While this bold strategy had the potential for disaster, overall it was extremely successful, and resulted in the majority of documented engagements being victories for Crown forces.

IX. Conclusion: Simply Overwhelmed

When discussing the campaigns of the Revolution, many choose to look at them in a bubble as an isolated struggle between an empire and rebellious colonists. The reality is quite the opposite: it was a world war between every major hegemon of the period. This neglected global perspective severely influences a view of the war into the black and white realm of a total British defeat and surprising American victory. To truly understand this rebellion, one must acknowledge that, in many ways, it functioned as an epilogue to the much larger conflict of the Seven Years War. At the conclusion of that war, Britain gained all of New France, Florida, Grenada, Saint Vincent, Minorca, sections of Guatemala, and nearly all French territories in Africa and India.[310] Although they lost nearly every ally they had in Europe, the balance of power had shifted dramatically over to the side of the British Empire. They controlled nearly all of North America, and its world-wide colonies could now trade safe from any incursion, as, for the first time in it's history, Britain's navy truly controlled the oceans.[311] But, in the twelve years between the end of the Seven Years War and the outbreak of the American one, the adversaries of the British empire would undertake a strategy of *Revanche*, looking for any opportunity to restore the former balance of power and regain any lost dignity.[312] They would conclude that opportunity had come as localized rebellions came to consume thirteen of Britain's North American colonies.

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[310] Ferreiro, Larrie D. *Brothers at Arms: American Independence and the Men of France and Spain Who Saved It.* New York, NY : Vintage Books, 2016., 14
[311] Ibid., 14
[312] Ibid., 15

Although the Revolution broke out in 1775, France, Spain, and others would wait on the sidelines to see if the Rebels were serious about maintaining the fight against the mother country while simultaneously setting their armies and navies on a war-footing. By 1778, France felt their armed forces were ready, and entered the war on February 6. Illustrating a European view of the conflict not being for the cause of liberty but instead on settling old scores, the Spanish would refuse to ally with the Rebels, and instead entered the war in 1779 as an ally of France.[313] Fearing British blockades on their trade with France, Spain, and the Americans, in response Russia would form the League of Armed Neutrality with Denmark, Austria, Sweden, and Prussia, threatening war if their shipping was interfered with.[314] Although formally allied with Britain since 1678, Dutch trade was essential to French ship building programs and American supply of war-material; as well as their own economic well-being. Caught between a rock and a hard place, the Dutch Republic would seek an out by applying to join the League, resulting in Britain preemptively declaring war in December of 1780 in an effort to terminate this trade.[315] The kingdom of Mysore, seeing an opportunity to push the British out of India would declare war in the summer of 1780.[316] What had started as a localized rebellion in North America had now led to a new global conflict based out of the antecedents of the Seven Years War, with Britain fighting on five continents; and outnumbered in terms of

[313] Taylor, Alan. "Global Revolutions." In *The American Revolution: A World War*, edited by David K. Allison and Larrie D Ferrerio. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books, 2018., 26-27
[314] Lemmers, Alan. "Revolution in America and the Dutch Republic." In *The American Revolution: A World War*, edited by David K. Allison and Larrie D Ferrerio. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books, 2018., 114
[315] Ibid., 118
[316] Sambasivam, Richard. "British Global Ambitions and Indian Identity." In *The American Revolution: A World War*, edited by David K. Allison and Larrie D Ferrerio. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books, 2018., 98

men, ships, and other war material.[317] Whereas earlier Britain could focus it's entire energy on subduing the North American insurgency, it now found itself more isolated than at any other time in its history, and fighting for survival.[318]

From 1778 through 1780, the primary objective of the British Empire was the defense of the home islands, with the threat of invasion greater than at any time since 1588.[319] With the focus of their resources at home, garrisons abroad were left isolated, resulting in a scale down and shift of troops from North America in favor of the more strategic West Indies theater.[320] Although initially on the defensive, by 1782, with the possibility of a Channel Invasion thwarted, Britain staged a dramatic turnaround. They would defeat the combined Franco-Spanish fleet of the American theater at the Battle of the Saintes, thwart the Franco-Spanish blockade of Gibraltar at Cape Spartel, force the Dutch Navy out of the war at the Battle of Dogger Bank, and defeat the combined forces of Mysore and the French in Southeastern India.[321] They thus came to the peace table with the balance of power again in their favor, as William Cowper would write:

> France, and of course, Spain, have acted a treacherous, a thievish part…Holland appears to me in a meaner light than any of them. They quarreled with a friend for an enemy's sake. The French led them by the nose, and the English have thrashed them for suffering it. My views of the contest being, and having been always, such, I have consequently brighter hopes for England than her situation some time since seemed to justify.[322]

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[317] Davies, K G. *Documents of the American Revolution 1770-1783: Transcripts 1781*. Vol. XX. Dublin: Irish University Press, 1979., 16
[318] O'Shaugnessy, Andrew Jackson. *The Men Who Lost America: British Leadership, the American Revolution, and the Fate of the Empire*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013., 13
[319] O'Shaugnessy, Andrew Jackson. *The Men Who Lost America*., 14
[320] Ibid., 14
[321] Ibid., 10
[322] Johnson, John, ed. *Private Correspondence of William Cowper*. Vol. I. London: H. Colburn, 1824,, 238

At the end of the conflict in 1783, next to the Americans, Britain would fare the best, saving not only the rest of their empire, but adding to it in India, as well as quickly reestablishing economic relations with their former colonies; the primary benefit of their North American relationship before the war.[323] On the other hand, Spain had not achieved their war goals in the Caribbean and Gibraltar, and France was left with a fiscal crisis that would reverberate through the downfall of the French Monarchy.[324]

In essence, once one looks at the bigger picture, one can truly understand the main reasons the British lost the American War. The global nature of the war sapped precious supplies of men, material, and ships which hampered operations in North America. As the war dragged on the British public grew increasingly frustrated, and there were simply not enough resources to undertake major operations in North America while more valuable colonies and the home islands were threatened. Facing severe manpower and supply constraints, as well as operating in a theater that was entirely unique, the British forces in America successfully adapted their formations, equipment, tactics, strategy, and command structure from usual European methods, but time was not on their side. As the war dragged over eight years, Rebel troops gained more experience, Rebel governments gained legitimacy, and thousands of foreign troops were shipped to North America to aid the Rebel cause. Thus, the British army in North America consistently had to do more with less, and subduing an entire continent eventually became entirely unfeasible. Acknowledging British willingness to adapt and change not only further illustrates how

[323] Taylor, Alan. "Global Revolutions." In *The American Revolution: A World War*., 31
[324] Ibid., 30

Rebel victory in the Revolution owes much to other global events, but also gives greater credit to Rebel ability to maintain the conflict until a successful conclusion.

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