

BATTLE ANALYSIS

THE BATTLE OF COWPENS

SCCC CLASS #05-11, GROUP #1

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1 Introduction

Colonial and British forces fought the Battle of Cowpens, at Hannah's Cowpens, South Carolina, as a late battle in the Southern Campaign of the American Revolution on January 17, 1781. At the end of Lt. Col Banastre Tarleton's pursuit, Brig. Gen Daniel Morgan chose Hannah's Cowpens as the battlefield to halt Tarleton and his streak of victories. Ultimately, this turned the tide of the war.

This paper describes the Battle of Cowpens. First we will discuss our sources, followed by the campaign, the battle itself, and its ultimate significance.

Several sources of information are available for the study of Cowpens. These include historical works, writings and memoirs from primary sources, maps, state and national park service documents and the battlefield terrain itself, still preserved as the Cowpens' National Battlefield near Chesnee, SC. Since some writers will focus on specific aspects of the battle, or on either the British or Colonial forces, the variety of sources we pull from provides balance in our analysis. Below is a listing of each reference used in our battle analysis, with specific analysis towards each author's background, perspective, focus and finally our recommendations towards use of each source.

Annotated Bibliography

American Military History, Volume 1: The United States Army and the Forging of a Nation, 1775-1917. Washington, DC, 2005.

This is a military history textbook used in Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) training courses. The book is an overview of the military history of USA from the beginning of the American Revolutionary War in 1775 to the beginning of the World War I in 1917 with a brief history of the European wars that had influence on America, and colonial wars that are part of American history. It covers the major military appearances in the period. It is a great source of information.

Axelrod, Alan, *The real history of the American Revolution : a new look at the past*. New York: Sterling, 2007.

Flores Axelrod is a historian with a background in business management. **He offered different reasons why the colonies revolted against the British. It has more to do with just the no taxation without representation.**

Area?

Requirement?

Babits, Lawrence Edward, *A Devil of a Whipping: The Battle of Cowpens / Lawrence E. Babits*. 1st edition. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, C1998, 2001.

Alvarado,Nicholson,Flores,Futch,Bieber

The author is a professor of Maritime Archaeology and History at East Carolina University. *Devil of a Whipping* won a Distinguished Book Award in 1998, and Babits is credited for his extremely accurate accounts of Soldiers' combat experiences in the 18th century.

Babits identifies the immense importance of the battle, identifies each force (leadership, equipment, training), and walks through the battle in detail. He

includes an analysis of the Battle of Cowpens focusing on the actions of both commanders and their effect on the troops serving them.

This generally unbiased book is a valuable source for details of the operational situation, each sides tactics, and the physical characteristics of the battlefield. He is highly recommend as a source. The target audience for this read is anyone who is interested in discovering more about the Battle of Cowpens,

Babits says he draws his experience of war soldier life through his re-enactments from participating in groups portraying Revolutionary Continental Soldiers from 1967-84.

Bobrick, Benson, *Fight for Freedom: The American Revolutionary War*. 1st edition. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2004.

Brinkley, William, *Back to the Future: The British Southern Campaign, 1780-1781*. Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1998, Master of Military Art and Science Theses.

Futch The author served as a Major in the US Army Corps of Engineers and wrote the monograph to analyze the British campaign during the War for Independence. This monograph was useful in giving a broad overview of the conflict, as well as insight in the new tactics for militia in battle. **POV/BIAS?? Recommendation??**

Buchanan, John, *The road to Guilford Courthouse : the American revolution in the Carolinas*. New York: Wiley, 1997.

Alvarado The author is a popular historian who was an archivist at Cornell University and The Metropolitan Museum of Art. The target audience for this read is anyone interested in an in-depth read into the tactical descriptions of battle in North and South Carolina. It is an excellent campaign account of the Carolinas from 1780-81.

Bieber John Buchanan is a popular historian who was an archivist at Cornell University and The Metropolitan Museum of Art. This is a traditional historical book which contains a good description of the Battle of Cowpens. It is recommended for anyone seeking a larger understanding of British actions in the Carolinas during the Revolutionary War period.

POV/BIAS??

Cook, Don, *The Long Fuse: How England Lost the American Colonies, 1760-1785*. 1st edition. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1995.

Allen

Curtis, Edward E., *The Organization of the British Army in the American Revolution*. St. Clair Shores, Michigan: Scholarly Press, 1972.

Originally this text was a doctoral dissertation presented to Yale University in 1916. The book is an analysis of additional factors to British defeat, as Curtis contends that inept leaders were by no means the decisive factor. Just as important were the general administrative corruption and logistical problems. **who??**

Recommendation??

Davis, Burke, *The Cowpens-Guilford Courthouse Campaign*. 1st edition. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1962.

Dupuy, Richard Ernest, Hammerman, Gay M. and Hayes, Grace P., *The American Revolution, A Global War*. New York: David McKay Co., 1977.

This book was written by three authors to explore the history of the war of 1775-1783 as a 'World War' and a continuation of the Seven Years' War, or the 'Great War for the Empire.' **who?? POV/BIAS??**

Fleming, Thomas J, *Cowpens: "downright Fighting": The Story of Cowpens / Thomas J. Fleming*. Washington, DC : Division of Publications, national Park Service, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, C1988, 1988.

Futch This book was very helpful in breaking down the battle into manageable chunks, and giving the perspective of the leaders for both sides. **who??**

POV/BIAS?? Recommendation??

Gruber, Dr. Ira D., From Cowpens to Yorktown: The Final Campaign of the War for American Independence. In **Moten, Colonel Matthew, editor:** *War Termination: The Proceedings of the War Termination Conference United States Military Academy West Point*. Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Combat Studies Institute Press, June 2010 (URL: <http://www.cgsc.edu/carl/download/csipubs/WarTermination2010.pdf>).

Higginbotham, Don, *Daniel Morgan, Revolutionary rifleman*. Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture at Williamsburg Va. by the University of North Carolina Press, 1961.

Alvarado The author is Dowd Professor of History and Peace, War, and Defense at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The target audience for this book is an individual seeking to expand a greater understanding of the General Morgan from wagoner to the American Revolutionary leader. Higginbotham addresses Morgan's participation in the French and Indian War and his rise to fame in the American Revolutionary War. **Cvetkovski** The author had Ph.D. from Duke University, and he was professor of history at the University of North Carolina. This book focuses on the military development of the American society in the period from 1763 to 1789. The book covers the American Revolutionary War as well as the period before and after. It can help the readers not just to understand the causes of the Revolution, but also its consequences from a military perspective.

POV/BIAS??

Jacobsen, Kristin E., *Conduct of the Partisan War in the Revolutionary War South*. Master's thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 2003.

Kelly, C., *Best little stories from the American Revolution*. Nashville Tenn.: Cumberland House, 1999.

Flores Brian Kelly is a prize-winning journalist. He is also president for Montpelier Publishing and a columnist and editor emeritus for Military History magazine. POV/BIAS?? areas?? Recommendation??

Knollenberg, Bernhard, *Growth of the American Revolution, 1766-1775*. Free Press, 1975.

Cvetkovski The author had degrees in History and Law from Harvard University, and he was Librarian of Yale University from 1938 to 1944. This book is a great compilation of information from many various sources. It covers the period between the last major war that was fought on the territory of USA when it was a part of British Empire and the American Revolutionary War. Anybody who wants to understand the events that led to the American Revolutionary War can get much information from this book.

Ladenburg, Thomas, *Causes of the American Revolution*. Social Science Education Consortium, May 1989.

Cvetkovski The author wrote this book for the Social Science Education Consortium which is a non-profit educational organization in social science existing from 1963. The book is created for classroom use, and includes instructions for use intended for teachers. It contains very useful information gathered from different sources. It gets deeper into some of the actions that caused the Revolution. Personally, I like the fact that both American and British thinking are presented in the book.

Lumpkin, Henry, *From Savannah to Yorktown: the American Revolution in the South*. 1st edition. Columbia S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1981.

Alvarado The author served as a U.S. Coast Guard officer on destroyer escorts in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans during World War II, taught at the U.S. Naval Academy (1946-54), was awarded the Guggenheim Fellowship (1954-55), renowned NATO historian, and Emeritus Professor at University of South Carolina department of History. The target audience is an individual interested in the battles that took place in the southern colonies. In regards to Cowpens, Lumpkin addresses the leaders' decisions that set the stage for the battle and also briefly addresses the events of the engagement.

Futch The author was a military historian with the US European Command as well as the Naval Academy, and a professor of history at the University of South

Carolina. The book, though lacking in a map of the Cowpens, was good for fleshing out details about the terrain and order of battle for the forces.

Mackesy, Piers G., *British Strategy in the War of American Independence*. Yale Review, 52 1962, 539–57.

C

The author was teaching History at the University of Alabama. I've read just the chapter 3 of this book that contains information about the British and American forces in the Revolutionary War that I found very useful. Although the book is about the Southern Campaign of the Revolutionary War, this chapter provides the reader information about the forces used during the war. It is focused on description of the human forces.

Maihafer, Harry J, *Brave Decisions: Moral Courage from the Revolutionary War to Desert Storm*. Washington: Brassey's, 1995.

Moncure, John, *The Cowpens Staff Ride and Battlefield Tour*. Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1996.

Nicholson The author holds a M.A. and Ph.D. in Modern European History from Cornell University, and is a former professor of history at the U.S. Military Academy. I found this book to be relatively unbiased. This book was useful in determining the operational situation. I highly recommend this source.

Flores Moncure was a professor of military history at Davidson College, and also is a European historian who holds a M.A. and Ph.D. in Modern European History from Cornell University. Moncure's book was good in the sense that it gave different perspective of the battles in forms of letters from different individuals, from privates to great leaders.

Futch The author holds a M.A. and Ph.D. in Modern European History from Cornell University, and is a former professor of history at the U.S. Military Academy. This handbook was a useful resource; breaking the battle down with maps of each phase of combat and providing detailed analysis of the courses of action taken by the commanders.

Bieber The author is a former US Army officer who holds an M.A. and PhD in Modern European History from Cornell University. This publication approaches the Battle of Cowpens from the perspective of using both the text and location as ground for a Staff Ride. The collection of letters and personal histories in the back of the book serve as an invaluable tool in analyzing the participants emotions and recollections of the Battle.

Moss, Bobby Gilmer, *The Patriots at the Cowpens / Bobby Gilmer Moss*. Rev. ed edition. [Blacksburg, SC.] : Scotia Press, C1985, 1991.

Moten, Matthew, *Between War and Peace: How America Ends Its Wars*. 1st edition. New York: Free Press, 2011.

Moultrie, William, *Memoirs of the American Revolution*. New York: New York times, 1968, Eyewitness accounts of the American Revolution.

Pancake, John S., *This Destructive War: The British Campaign in the Carolinas 1780-1782*. U. Alabama Press, 1985.

The author was teaching History at the University of Alabama. I've read just the chapter 3 of this book that contains information about the British and American forces in the Revolutionary War that I found very useful. Although the book is about the Southern Campaign of the Revolutionary War, this chapter provides the reader information about the forces used during the war. It is focused on description of the human forces.

Pearson, Jesse T., *The Failure of British Strategy During the Southern Campaign of the American Revolutionary War, 1780-81*. Master's thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 2005.

Cvet The author was U.S. Army Major at the time he finished this paper. This was his paper for a master degree in Military History. It is approved for public release and unlimited distribution. I have used just the information on page 16 that explicitly shows to the readers the confrontation among the representatives in the upper house of the British Parliament related to the war in America.

Peckham, Howard H., *The Colonial Wars 1689-1762*. U. of Chicago, 1964.

The author was a professor of American History and director of the Clements Library at the University of Michigan. The book is a review of the wars that were fought on the territory of USA before the Revolutionary War. It reviews the four major wars in the period from 1689 to 1762, but I have used it just for the information on page 1 that in the period between 1607 and 1689 the war was limited to fighting against the Indians without involving the Great European powers.

Rauch, Steven and US Army Signal Center, *Battle of Cowpens Staff Ride Reading Book*. 2nd edition. Fort Gordon, GA: US Army Signal Center, 2007.

Bieber The author is a retired US Army Officer and Command Historian for the US Army Signal Center at Fort Gordon, GA. This publication is a collection of materials from various internal and external sources and is recommended as an excellent starting point for initiating research on the Battle of Cowpens.

POV/BIAS??

Roberts, Kenneth and Eastern National Park and Monument Association, *The Battle of Cowpens*. Philadelphia: Eastern Acorn Press, 1981.

Savas, Theodore P. and Dameron, J. David, *A Guide to the Battles of the American Revolution*. 1st edition. New York: Savas Beatie, 2006.

Futch

Savas is the managing director of Savas Beatie LLC and has written several military history books dealing with actions in World War 2, Damerson is a former soldier, teaches American History at Troy University, and as written 2 other books covering the Revolutionary War. This book was good for putting the battle into context and giving different perspectives of the conflict. The weather data in the book conflicts with other sources. **POV/BIAS??**

South Carolina State Climatology Office, *Januray Climatic Data*. 2000 <URL: http://www.dnr.sc.gov/climate/sco/ClimateData/avg_temp_pcpn/jan_data.pdf>.

Futch This site was useful for getting current weather trend data for the area surrounding Cowpens, which can be extrapolated to create an assumption of the climate during the battle.

Southern, Ed, *Voices of the American Revolution in the Carolinas*. Winston-Salem, N.C: John F. Blair, Publisher, 2009.

Stephenson, Michael, *Patriot Battles: How the Revolutionary War was Fought*. Pymble, NY: Harper Collins, 2007.

Nicholson The author is a former editor of the Military Book club as well as editor and contributor to National Geographic's Battlegrounds: Geography and the History of Warfare. I found this book to be relatively unbiased. This book was useful in determining the operational situation. I recommend this source.

Flores Stephenson is a former editor of the Military Book club, the largest of its kind in the world. Stephenson was the editor of and a contributor to National Geographic's Battlegrounds: Geography and the History of Warfare and the coauthor of The Nuclear Casebook. In Patriot Battles he draws upon a lot of archives for his information and thoughts. The book is also very detailed in the different battles of the Revolution.

Futch The author is a former editor of the Military Book club as well as editor and contributor to National Geographic's Battlegrounds: Geography and the History of Warfare. This book gave a good tactical analysis of the battle and was useful in terrain descriptions.

Cvet The author was an editor of the Military Book Club, and editor of National Geographic's Battlegrounds: Geography and the History of Warfare. This book is

excellent source of information. It is a detailed overview of the opposite forces in the war, and the major battles that were fought during the war. There are many details compiled from many sources. I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in getting more knowledge about the American Revolutionary War.

Swisher, James K., *Duel in the Backwoods*. Military Heritage, 12 2002, 50–57.

Alvarado The author holds a master's degree in history from the University of Virginia, Charlottesville and received the Jefferson Davis Medal and the Virginia State Library Book of the Year Award in 2000. The target audience for this read is an individual seeking a brief overview of the Battle of Cowpens. It should probably not be used as a reference for actual analysis on the battle.

Bieber The Author is a retired educator who holds a master's degree in history and an Ed.D. in administration from University of Virginia. This brief article is a quick overview of the participants and a brief outline of the events at Cowpens. It is recommended for use by anyone seeking a base of knowledge before conducting further research into the Battle of Cowpens.

Symonds, Craig L., *A battlefield atlas of the American Revolution*. Baltimore, MD: Nautical & Aviation Pub. Co. of America, June 1986.

Hudak The author holds a Ph.D. from the University of Florida, he taught at the Naval War College on strategy and policy. He also taught the Civil War and the history of the South at the U.S Naval Academy. The book takes several battles from the Civil War and provides a brief explanation into each battle, along with a detailed map of each battle. This book is great as a quick reference into various Civil War battles.

Tarleton, *A history of the campaigns of 1780 and 1781 in the southern provinces of North America*. [New York]: New York times, 1968.

Nicholson The author was an English Army Officer during the Southern Campaign and Battle of Cowpens. The book is biased but offers great insight to the operational situation as viewed from the British perspective. I recommend this source.

US Army Signal Center and Fort Gordon, *British Invasion of South Carolina, Battle of Cowpens, 17 January 1781*. Fort Gordon, GA: US Army Signal Center, 2005.

Weigley, Russell, *The partisan war: the South Carolina campaign of 1780-1782*. [1st ed.] edition. Columbia: Published for the South Carolina Tricentennial Commission by the University of South Carolina Press, 1970.

Futch The author is a professor of history for Temple University in Philadelphia, PA. This book did not have much in the way of weather data, the author briefly touched on the tactics in the battle.

Wilson, David, 2010 <URL: http://www.davidwilsonhome.com/historyblogfiles/Cowpens_Battle_Map-David_Wilson.pdf>.

Futch The creator of this map is a historian and author focusing on the American Revolution. The map was very helpful in establishing the topography of the battle site, as well as the order of battle broken down by phase.

Woodward, Joel Anthony, *A Comparative Evaluation of British and American Strategy In the Southern Campaign of 1780-1781*. Ph. D thesis, School of Advanced Military Studies, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2002.

Nicholson The author served as a Major in the US Army and wrote the thesis to compare strategy during the southern Campaign. I found this paper to be unbiased and found it extremely useful in examining the operational situation. I recommend this source.

2 The Strategic Setting

2.1 Causes of the Conflict

There are many factors of politics, economics and policy that all affected the colonies break away from Britain. One analysis of the American Revolution sees it as a continuation of the Seven Years War. Another focuses on its nature as a revolt against tightening of mercantilism around the colonies, who were slowly gravitating towards ideas of trade codified by Adam Smith's "wealth of Nations," published in 1776. The popular analysis lies in a revolt against laws seen as unjust, levied without representation. This section will address in turn the previous wars, mercantilism, the influence of other foreign powers, and finally the series of political events that drew a line in the sand for the colonies.

2.1.1 Previous Wars and the Influence of Foreign Powers

The American Revolution, from the international standpoint, was one in a series of conflicts between Europe's major powers that also took part in America. Britain and France had already been at war off and on for 74 years before the Revolution, during the Intercolonial Wars (See Table 1).

Table 1: The Intercolonial Wars (1689-1763)

War	Start	End	As known in the Colonies:	in Europe:	Settled by:
1st	1689	1697	King William's War Participants:	War of the Grand Alliance Britain France	Treaty of Ryswick
2nd	1702	1713	Queen Anne's War Participants:	War of the Spanish Succession Britain France	Treaty of Utrecht
3rd	1744	1748	King George's War Participants:	War of Jenkins' Ear/ Austrian Succession Britain France	Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle
4th	1754	1763	French and Indian War Participants:	Seven Years' War Britain France	Treaty of Paris

2.1.2 Mercantilism

2.1.3 Foreign Powers

2.1.4 The Political Path to War

The political and economic origins of the American revolution are tied to King George III's resentment of the Whig parliament that had ruled England during the reign of his father and grandfather. George III came to the throne as a native Brit, rather than a German import, and rather than allowing parliament and the Prime Minister to govern, he was determined to replace the Whigs with Loyalists and restore power to the throne. The political maneuvering of his followers, the leadership of William Pitt, the popular Whig secretary of state and victorious strategist of the Seven Years War, and the 'salutary neglect' policies of his predecessor Sir Robert Walpole, Prime Minister under King George the I. (Cook, Ch 1-4)

Walpole "took the enlightened view that if the colonies were left to run their own local affairs with minimal interference from London, they would produce more wealth and commerce, prosper,

and give less trouble.”(Cook, p. 3)

George Grenville

In 1756, Frederick II, the Great, of Prussia conducted a pre-emptive invasion of Saxony. He had been allied against by Austria, France, Russia, Sweden and Saxony, and a defensive alliance with Britain alone. With this attack Frederick “succeeded only in solidifying the coalition against him,”(Dupuy, Hammerman and Hayes) and drew Britain as an ally into a general conflict between European powers where it would seek and achieve several strategic gains.

Britain routed the French in Canada, India, several Caribbean islands,¹ Gorée, France’s chief slave-trading center in Western Africa, as well as Gibraltar and Minorca.(Dupuy, Hammerman and Hayes, 7-9) From Spain, Britain seized Havana, Manila and the Philippines. Ultimately the Prussians were saved by the favor of Peter III when he succeeded Empress Elizabeth to the throne of Russia in 1762, rather than by the British, despite their support. As Dupuy et al describe, the European land campaigns of the Seven Years’ War, fought over dynastic aims, had little lasting impact. However, the naval and foreign campaigns fought between Britain and France over empire and mercantilism, reshaped the sea-lanes in Britain’s favor. In the Treaty of Paris France lost Canada and all land East of the Mississippi River.(Dupuy, Hammerman and Hayes, 10)

‘John Adams felt strongly that Americans tended to confuse the American Revolution with the Revolutionary War. The war, he wrote to Thomas Jefferson, “was no part of the Revolution. It was only an effect and consequence of it.” Adams, well aware that he was presenting an unconventional view, went on to state that the Revolution had taken place in the minds of the people from 1760 to 1775, “before a drop of blood was spilled at Lexington.”’(Dupuy, Hammerman and Hayes, 15)

2.1.5 –notes–

The War of Grand Alliance and King Williams War

In the War of Austrian Succession (1740-1748) Britain and Austria allied against France, Spain and others, while in the Americas, Britain’s colonies fought the French and Indians in King George’s War (1744-1748) ²

“George III was twenty-two years old when he began a history-laden reign that would last for sixty years. He was headstrong and obstinate, full of youthful prejudices, lacking in humility, wisdom, or vision, with little interest in the opinions of others. But he was also hardworking, prudish, religious, and moral. He came to the throne determined not merely to reign but to rule. To do so, he would have to bring his own Loyalists to power and open a new political era after a half century of dominance by the Whigs. He judged that England was war-weary and overburdened with debt. He wanted peace, and he took no great pride in Pitt’s faraway victories in the American colonies or other parts of the globe. American trade was booming, there were no signs of trouble, and all seemed well.” (Cook, p. 5)

1 “In the Caribbean, British forces captured two French islands valuable for their sugar, Guadeloupe and Martinique, territories considered by many more crucial to the French Empire than all of vast, vacant Canada. They also took Grenada, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, and Dominica.”Dupuy, Hammerman and Hayes, 8

2 Rickard, J. (22 October 2000), King George’s War (1744-18 October 1748), http://www.historyofwar.org/articles/wars_kinggeorge.html

Table 2: Timeline of events leading to the American Revolution.

Year	Event
1749	Commandant Céloron lays claim to the Ohio Valley for France
Nov. 1749	?? Navigation Acts
1754	French and Indian War begins
1754	?? Seven Years War begins
Jan. 1757	Benjamin Franklin travels to London as a Colonial representative
Oct. 1760	King George III ascends to the throne of England
Nov. 1761	James Otis challenges the Writs of Assistance, allowing searches to prevent smuggling, as violations of the constitutional rights of colonists.
Feb. 1763	Seven Years War ends with the treaty of !!!
Oct. 1763	Proclamation of 1763: King George III forbids colonists settling west of the Appalachian Mountains.
	Currency Act:
	Quartering Act:
	Intolerable Acts:
	End of Sir Robert Walpole's 'Salutary Neglect' policy (Cook, 3)
	Boston Tea Party
1765	Stamp Act
Apr. 1764	Sugar Act: passed prompting cries of "Taxation without Representation"
Jan. 1775	Benjamin Franklin departs London a 'determined revolutionary' (Cook, xii)
1776	Adam Smith publishes the <i>Wealth of Nations</i>
Sep. 1783	The American Revolution ends with the treaty of !!!

"A great Empire and little minds go ill together," Edmund Burke in the House of Commons. March 1775

"Historians generally contend that once the British Army had cleared the French out of North America and the colonies were no longer threatened by this outside power, American independence became inevitable..." although Cook explains that this was not inevitable when George III first began his reign, before the end of 'Salutary Neglect' and the increased direct rule.(Cook, p. 5)

"At the end of the Seven Year's War, her merchant fleet totaled some 500,000 tons of sailing ships."(Cook, p. 15)

3

3 February 6, 1765:

"They, planted by your care? No! Your oppression planted 'Em in America, They fled your tyranny to an uncultivated an dunhospitable country where they exposed themselves to almost all the hardships to which human nature is liable, and among others to the cruelty of a Savage foe. And yet, actuated by the Principles of English Liberty, they met all these hardships with pleasure, compared with those they suffered in their own Country, from

2.2 –notes–

4

Enlightenment political theory:

French and Indian War (1754-63)

Village green in Lexington, MA 19 APR 1775

trade unrestricted prior to 1760s

King sends:

Major General Sir William Howe

Major General Sir Henry Clinton

Major General Sir John Burgoyne

–notes– ⁵ “Shy. John, *A People Numerous and Armed*. pp. 198-199 and 230-232. The British contemplated cutting loose New England and retaining the richer lands of the South in 1778. but never pursued a negotiated settlement with the Continental Congress.”

What do we mean by the Revolution? The war? That was no part of the Revolution; it was only an effect and consequence of it. The Revolution was in the minds of the people, and this was effected, from 1760 to 1775, in the course of fifteen years before a drop of blood was shed at Lexington. The records of thirteen legislatures, the pamphlets, newspapers in all the colonies, ought to be consulted during that period to ascertain the steps by which the public opinion was enlightened and informed concerning the authority of Parliament over the colonies.⁶

2.3 Mercantilism

...

2.4 –notes–: Cook

King George III ascended to the throne in 1760. He succeeded two German speaking kings, and was the first native-born sovereign over England in ??? years. Along with these other differences, he was at odds with the Whig party which has previously driven politics and policy in England for ??? years. His transition was three years prior to the end of the Seven years war, which ran from ??? to

the hands of those who should have been their friends.”

“They, nourished by your Indulgence? They grew up by your neglect of ’Em; as soon as you began to care about ’Em—sent to spy on their Liberty, to misrepresent their Actions, to prey on ’Em.”

“They, protected by your Arms? They have nobly taken up Arms in your defense, have exerted a valour against their consent and Laborious industry for the defense of a Country whose frontiers, while drenched in blood, its interior Parts have yielded all its little Savings to your Emolument. And believe me, and remember I this day told you so, that some spirit of Freedom which actuated the at people at first will accompany them still..

”I claim to know more of America than most of you, having seen and been conversant in that Country. The People I believe are as truly Loyal as any Subjects the King has, but a people Jealous of their Liberties who will vindicate them, if ever they should be violated...”

Colonel Isaac Barré during debates in the House of Commons on the Stamp act on Feb. 6, 1765, in reply to Charles Townshend’s rhetoric describing the Americans as “children planted by our care, nourished by our indulgence...protected by our arms” who were begrudging England their rightful returns for protection and defense of the colonies. Cook, p. 67

4 Moncure, p. 2.

5 .

6 John Adams to Jefferson, 1815

Table 3: Summary of the Location of the British Army in 1775^a

England,	19	Regs.	Infy.	11,396	16	Regs.	Cav.	4,151	Total	15,547
Scotland,	1	Reg.	Infy.	474						474
Isle of Man,	3	Cos.	Infy.	142						142
Ireland,	21	Regs.	Infy.	9,815	12	Regs.	Cav.	2,718		12,533
Minorca,	5	“	Infy.	2,385						2,385
Gibraltar,	7	“	Infy.	3,339						3,339
West Indies,	3	“	Infy.	1,909						1,909
America,	18	“	Infy.	8,580						8,580
Africa,	1	Corps	Infy.	214						214
				38,254					6,869	45,123 ^b

^a (Curtis, 3)^b This does not include 20 independent companies of invalids on garrison duty or the forces in India which were under control of the East India Company and did not become part of the British army until 1858.

1763. And, although crowned following a series of victories, George III's first proclamation as ruler reflected his desire to end the war, rebuild a war-burdened economy and country that had already reached its highest level of debt so far.

2.5 Comparison of the Antagonists

2.5.1 National (Strategic) objectives

British Strategic Objectives: “maintain the thirteen colonies as a British possession”⁷

“British military objectives were fourfold: separate the New England colonies from the others by seizing the Hudson River north to Lake Champlain; isolate the “bread basket” colonies of Pennsylvania and Maryland; control the southern populace by holding Charleston, Georgetown, and the line of the Santee River; and, finally, blockade the entire American coast to prevent an influx of arms from abroad.”⁸

Strategic Strategies: “divide the Colonies by applying economic sanctions to the most rebellious”⁹

Other British National objectives: other colonies, West Indies, trade routes, (discuss mercantilism?),

“... d’Estaing’s presence in the Caribbean together with a Spanish fleet in Havana (after Spain’s entry on the American side in June 1779) forced Clinton to send 8,000 troops to the West Indies. These transfers weakened Clinton so severely that he never seriously challenged Washington’s position at West Point, New York.”¹⁰

Colonies ...

2.5.2 Instruments of National Power

2.5.3 Military Systems

...

7 Moncure, 2.

8 Moncure, 2.

9 Moncure, 2.

10 Moncure, 10.

Insturment	British	American
a	a	a

Table 4: Comparison of British and Colonial insturments of National Power.

2.5.4 Previous performance

...

3 The Operational Situation

This section will review the Operational Situation of the Battle of Cowpens. It will place the battle within the context of the Southern Campaign. For the purposes of this section, the campaign began with the British forces invading South Carolina in February 1780 and this section will conclude January 16, 1781 just prior to the Battle of Cowpens.

The British plan of the Southern Campaign and its objectives was conceived by Lord Germain and embraced by Sir Henry Clinton. First, the British Army was to seize Charleston. Next, it would raise Loyalist militia forces to gain control of South Carolina and then North Carolina. Finally, they were to destroy the Continental Army of the Southern Department and end all forms of rebellion.

In order to achieve its Southern Campaign objectives, the British Army required the raising of Loyalist militias. The idea was for the British Army to move from the coast westward gaining control of new areas. As they gained control of an area, Loyalist militias would be responsible for maintaining security and lines of communication as the British Army progressed. From lessons learned in the North, “the British had discovered that Loyalists would only muster when regular British forces were on hand to protect them” (Woodward, 43).

In February of 1780, General Henry Clinton’s force consisting of 10,000 soldiers, supported by 5,000 sailors landed off Charleston, South Carolina (Weigley, 6). In response, Major General Benjamin Lincoln set up a defense for the city of Charleston. General Lincoln’s force consisted of about 2,650 Continentals and 2,500 South Carolina militia (Weigley, 6). Lincoln’s force was inadequate for the defense, his decision to stay and defend may have been more politically motivated than tactically thought out. On 12 May 1780, General Lincoln surrendered after a prolonged siege. Virtually all the “organized military strength” in South Carolina had been wiped out. The seizing of Charleston allowed the British Army to achieve their first campaign objective almost immediately. Charleston allowed for a “good port and base from which to mount their Southern Campaign”. (Woodward, 22)

British Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton wiped out the remaining American forces in South Carolina at the Waxhaws settlement. Tarleton’s force beat 350 Virginia Continentals under Colonel Abraham Buford’s command and a small cavalry unit of Lieutenant Colonel William Washington (Weigley, 7). Waxhaws is where Tarleton earned the nickname “Bloody Tarleton”. (Moncure, 20)

The British army “established garrisons at Georgetown and Beaufort as well as the capital along the coast, and at Camden, Rocky Mount, and Ninety Six to shield the northern border of the province and watch over the interior” (Weigley, 10). Settlements in the far west put the British in contact with the “friendly, anti-Revolutionary Creek and Cherokee Indians and threatened American settlements beyond the mountains” (Weigley, 10)

In June 1780, General Clinton returned to New York leaving General Earl Cornwallis in Command. General Cornwallis was a proven British field commander with a wealth of experience in the American area of operations. General Cornwallis commanded a force of about 3,000 soldiers (Woodward, 51). With this relatively small force, he was to achieve the Southern Campaign objectives given to him by General Clinton.

General Clinton gave Cornwallis instructions to defend Charleston above all else because of its logistical importance and political value. He was to maintain gains in Georgia and establish control over South Carolina eventually moving into North Carolina. Clinton also expected Cornwallis “to provide some 3,000 troops for operations in the Chesapeake region at some indefinite time in the future” (Woodward, 51).

In order to achieve these objectives Cornwallis would have to raise Loyalist militias. The British Army required the use of Loyalist militias as a means to reach the Southern Campaign Objectives. Even with sizable Loyalist militias it would be nearly impossible to achieve all of the Southern Campaign objectives with a force of 3,000 troops augmented by Loyalist militias. In order to have achieved the campaign objectives listed above, the British needed to win the hearts and minds of the people to even have a chance of being successful. The British consistently alienated the neutral American or pro-British citizenry through failed policies forcing these non players into opponents.

The British exercised poor decision making when dealing with the treatment of the American populations following the fall of Charleston. An example of failed policy when dealing with paroled prisoners from American militias came just prior to General Clinton's handover to General Cornwallis. The following passage describes the change in policy:

"Just before departing Clinton announced abandonment of the system whereby rebels were regarded as under parole and substituted a policy which offered full civil rights to all who showed complete loyalty, but punishment as enemies to any who did not; this compulsion of a clear choice between loyalty and a return to rebellion, when many would have preferred a neutrality which might have served Clinton just as well, perversely helped drive men back into rebellion" (Weigley, 12).

This British policy for dealing with prisoners on parole unnecessarily increased the combat power of the Americans.

Another example of failed British policy was that British leaders allowed their troops to loot and commit crimes against civilians. This drove otherwise neutrals to side with the "Patriot cause" (Weigley, 13). The Scotch-Irish of the "upcountry" were "driven into rebels arms" by a British policy allowing hostility towards the Presbyterian church (Weigley, 13). Presbyterian churches were burned simply because they were thought to harbor rebels leaders.

The upcountry of South Carolina was the frontier and contained a disproportion number of Loyalists. Upcountry folks distrusted "anything the low country did; and because the lowland planters led the Revolutionary movement, the upcountry tended to distrust the Revolution as an event calculated simply to render them still more subservient to the planter's political power. By the time the war began, about half the population of South Carolina resided in the upcountry, though with much less than half the membership of the assembly "(Weigley, 11).

The disproportionate number of Loyalists in the upcountry helped inspire the British concept of the Southern Campaign. Instead of exploiting this wedge and using the inlanders to fill the ranks of Loyalist militias in order to reach British campaign objectives, failed British policy forced these neutral or pro-British populations to rise against the British. Native Americans were also poorly integrated into British strategy to achieve campaign objectives. Before the Southern Campaign, the Cherokee also opposed the Revolution, but they did "not coordinate their actions with either the Loyalists or the British, and in 1776, Williamson led an expedition against them which considerably stunted their ability to make trouble" (Weigley, 12).

After the fall of Charleston many of these failed British policies led to a rising resistance. Many alienated groups as well as those already opposing British rule began taking up arms. However, the resistance was poorly planned and organized with no real campaign objectives in mind except "self preservation and revenge" (Weigley, 14). The pockets of resistance utilized guerilla warfare to fight the British.

Thomas Sumter “the Gamecock” and other rebels moved on horseback moving much too fast for larger British Forces to catch them. They relied on surprise and guerilla warfare like tactics. These terrorist attacks forced the British to “disperse their forces over wider and wider areas and thus made them still more vulnerable” (Weigley, 16).

British failed policy gave way to a strengthened informal resistance further occupying and weakening British Forces. This allowed the Continental Congress to re-establish a more traditional Army in the Southern Department.

In July 1780 Major General Horatio Gates took command of the Southern Department due to Major General Baron Jean De Kalb being passed over, because he was foreign born. The command consisted of about 4,200 Continentals and militia (Moncure, 21). This force was adequate to annoy and harass the British but not destroy them. Instead of utilizing his forces in this manner, he returned to traditional warfare before his force was ready and trained. His first objective was to take Camden, with a direct straight advance to the city.

On August 16, 1780 the Continental Army met the British Army in an open field in Camden. The British had more than 2,000 men and Gates had about 3,000 (Weigley, 19). Quantitatively the Americans were not outmatched, but qualitatively the British had a significant advantage. The British won the battle quite easily with Gates leading the retreat with about 700 Americans surviving the battle (Weigley, 21). De Kalb died with the “Maryland and Delaware Continentals, still leading them in a counterattack after everyone else had fled” (Weigley, 21). After Camden, Cornwallis prepared to move into North Carolina by “sending word to Loyalists in that state to begin assembling and seizing Patriot stores” (Woodward, 27).

Virtually all formal organized Continental forces were destroyed leaving only the informal resistance to survive. Once again, these pockets of resistance utilized guerilla warfare to annoy and harass the enemy quite successfully. A leader of one of these resistance groups was Colonel Francis Marion. Marion “the Swamp Fox” and his force of disreputables rose from the coastal swamps and caused enough trouble to cause Tarleton to pursue him. Tarleton found pursuing Marion so useless that he decided to pursue Sumter instead. Tarleton was supposed to have said, “Let us go back and we will find the gamecock. But as for this damned old fox, the devil himself could not catch him!” (Weigley, 23)

Another example of failed British policy was the treatment of neutral civilian population at Kings Mountain. The negative treatment drove them to become part of the rebellion against British forces when no organized Southern Continental forces existed,. Major Patrick Ferguson of the 71st Highlanders “threatened the settlements beyond the Appalachians that they had better make peace or be punished” (Weigley, 24),(Moncure, 22). His threats motivated 1400-1800 mountain men to rise up in arms against him. The Mountain men “killed Ferguson and 157 of his Loyalists and captured the rest, 163 badly wounded and 698 others” (Weigley, 25).

Tarleton and “the Gamecock” met head to head for a final time at Blackstocks Plantation on 20 November 1780, on the Tyger River. Both sides fought to a stalemate and slipped away at night claiming victory. Sumter was wounded during the encounter, no longer being a significant force in the Southern Campaign.

The informal resistance groups kept the British occupied, allowing the Continentals to once again raise an Army. On December 2, 1780 Greene arrived at Charlotte, North Carolina to assume command (Moncure, 22),(Weigley, 25). His combat experience included “participation in every major battle under Washington between 1776 and 1779”. (Babits, 5). Greene assumed command of a force “2,457 strong, though with only 1,482 present and fit for duty, only 1,099 of the muster roll

strength Continentals” (Weigley, 27). However, Greene described his force as being “wretched” and “distressed” and “starving with cold and hunger, without tents and camp equipage” (Moncure, 23).

American strategy during the Southern Campaign was “disjointed” (Woodward, 60). This was caused by a “series of leadership turnovers that produced frequent changes to the strategic direction” (Woodward, 61).

“lack of continuity was exacerbated by a severe shortage of resources to conduct the campaign with. The Southern department received little external assistance. Each successive American commander had to figure out for himself how to mount an effort that would support the national military effort” (Woodward, 61)

Washington’s primary Strategic goal for the Southern Campaign was to break the British will to fight. Lincoln and Gates both pursued strategies that were destined to fail to reach their campaign objectives, thus failing to accomplish Washington’s strategic goal. Both Lincoln and Gates pursued a conventional campaign by seeking to engage the British in decisive battle. Lincoln’s goal was to prevent the British a “foothold in the South” and Gates’ goal was to push the British “back to the sea” (Woodward, 64).

Nathanael Greene’s time in command covered more time in the Southern campaign than any other Commander of the Southern Department. For this reason and his overall success, his strategy and campaign objectives are the clearest during the Southern Campaign. General Washington’s only guidance to Nathanael Greene came by way of this statement, “Uninformed as I am of the enemy’s force in that quarter, of our own, or of the resources, I can give you no particular instructions, but must leave you to govern yourself entirely according to your own prudence and judgement, and the circumstances in which you find yourself” (Woodward, 63).

Greene’s campaign objectives were to avoid destruction of his force, raise militia forces, and wear down Cornwallis. However, he had to address logistical concerns before he could begin to hope to reach his operational objectives. General Greene knew that if his army was destroyed it would leave the Carolinas without a formal Southern Department of the Continental Army for a third time. This possible destruction may have also resulted in another force being unable to be raised. His primary responsibility as he saw it, was to be conservative and maintain his Army at all costs without taking great risks. Nathanael Greene would not repeat the mistakes of his predecessors by fighting the British on their terms. Greene knew that the “strategic value of his army was in its existence more than its ability to defeat its British counterpart”. (Woodward, 66)

Greene divided his army by moving his main force to Hick’s Creek (Cheraws), South Carolina, sending General Morgan west and Lieutenant Colonel Henry east to join Marion with his operations on the coast. The combined forces of Lee and Marion attacked Georgetown, South Carolina, on 25 January 1781. This division of forces was due mainly for logistical reasons. Colonel Tadeusz Kosciuszko had been sent in search of supplies and found “adequate supplies” in Cheraws for the main body (Moncure, 23)(Weigley, 27). By dividing his forces it lessened the number of soldiers in one place thus requiring less supplies needed from each location.

Brigadier General Daniel Morgan led the smaller force of 600 west towards Ninety Six (Weigley, 27). Greene’s orders to Morgan were to conduct operations, “either offensively or defensively, as your own prudence and discretion may direct-acting with caution and avoiding surprises by every possible precaution” (Weigley, 27). On December 16, 1780, Morgan received further guidance from Greene to conduct a “prudent campaign designed to call attention to itself” (Moncure, 24).

The guidance to Morgan was to raise a militia, protect patriot settlements, improve moral of the people and “annoy the enemy in that quarter (Moncure, 24). Finally, if Cornwallis were to pursue Morgan he was to rejoin the main army.

Morgan left Charlotte on December 21, marching about 55 miles and encamped at Grindal Shoals on Christmas Day on the Pacolet River. Following Greene’s guidance, Morgan raised militia forces augmenting his detachment to about 1,040 men (Weigley, 28). The force included “320 of the stout Maryland and Delaware Continentals and 60 to 100 Continental light dragoons, who could fight either mounted or on foot, under William Washington” (Weigley, 28). On December 28, Washington’s Continental dragoons and militia numbering about 300 destroyed a Tory force of 150 at Hammond’s Store then moved south and burned Fort William a short distance from Ninety Six (Babits, 8)(Moncure, 24).

Cornwallis could not direct his army toward either smaller Continental force without exposing Charleston to attack or leaving the Western region vulnerable. In response to Greene’s division of forces, Cornwallis was forced to divide his own force, sending Tarleton with about 1,100 men, mixed cavalry and infantry to deal with Morgan (Weigley, 28). Tarleton moved westward and placed his force between Morgan and Ninety Six. Tarleton then moved his forces northward toward Morgan’s encampment at Grindal Shoals. This move forced Morgan to move his force North with Tarleton in pursuit.

Tarleton aggressively pursued Morgan to an area known as Cowpens. This area is where these two forces would soon meet on the field of battle. The Battle of Cowpens itself will be discussed further in the following sections of this paper. The battle proved to be a turning point in the Southern Campaign of the Carolinas in favor of the Americans.

The British Army from the beginning of the Southern Campaign, planned and prepared to conduct major combat operations rather than irregular warfare. According to Army Field Manual 3-0 Operations 2-12, an “operational theme describes the character of the dominant major operations being conducted at any time within a land force commander’s area of operations.” The two dominant operational themes throughout the Southern Campaign for both sides were major combat operations and irregular warfare.

In the beginning of the Southern Campaign at Charleston and later at Camden, both sides followed the operational theme of conducting major combat operations. Major combat operations can be simply described as army versus army. The Army Field Manual 3-0, 2-69, describes successful major combat operations as being able to:

“...defeat or destroy the enemy’s armed forces and seize terrain. Commanders assess them in terms of numbers of military units destroyed or rendered combat ineffective, the level of enemy resolve, and the terrain objectives seized or secured. Major combat operations are the operational theme for which doctrine, including the principles of war, was originally developed.”

This operational theme describes why at the onset of the Southern Campaign and later after Camden the Americans seemed destined to lose the campaign and eventually the War for Independence. The British had a marked advantage both in quality and quantity for major combat operations.

The periods following the fall of Charleston and later Camden and to a lesser degree throughout the entire Southern Campaign, the operational theme shifted from major combat operations to irregular warfare for the Americans. According to FM 3-0, 2-45, irregular warfare “is a violent

struggle among state and non state actors for legitimacy and influence over a population”. The Field Manual further describes irregular warfare as being amongst the people and lacking the goal of military supremacy. The FM 3-0, 2-46 also describes irregular warfare as avoiding,

“... a direct military confrontation. Instead, it combines irregular forces and indirect, unconventional methods (such as terrorism) to subvert and exhaust the opponent. It is often the only practical means for a weaker opponent to engage a powerful military force. Irregular warfare seeks to defeat the opponent’s will through steady attrition and constant low-level pressure.”

After General Greene assumed command of the Continental Army the operational themes combined elements of both major combat operations as well as irregular warfare, with an emphasis being on irregular warfare. Irregular warfare was conducted by pockets of resistance still conducting terrorist and insurgent activities while Greene’s use of Morgan raising and training militias fell more closely under unconventional warfare. In addition, Green still used Morgan’s force in more conventional means that would be classified as major combat operations, such as Hammond’s Store and later at Cowpens.

For the most part, the British conducted operations that combined elements of both major combat operations as well as irregular warfare, but focused primarily on major combat operations while irregular warfare fell to the wayside. The British did conduct counter insurgency and counter terrorism activities but usually with horrible consequences due to a lack of British policy towards the American people, ultimately losing the battle for their hearts and minds. The focus by Cornwallis was major combat operations illustrated by his movement of forces in pursuit of the next decisive battle.

Ultimately, Nathanael Greene’s use of the combined operational themes of major combat operations and irregular warfare, allowed him to achieve his Southern Campaign operational objectives. While the British Army mainly employed major combat operations with an inadequate force that was “overburdened by fighting a conventional war and an unconventional war simultaneously” (Woodward, 55). This failed strategy by Cornwallis, resulted in his Southern Campaign operational objectives not being met.

3.1 The Context Within the Campaign

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3.2 Operational Themes (FM 3-0)

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3.3 Campaign Objectives

...

3.4 Operational Events Leading to the Battle

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Table 5: Operational events leading to the Battle of Cowpens.

Year	Event

4 The Tactical Situation

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4.1 The Area of Operations

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4.1.1 Climate and Weather

Due to the nature of the battle reports and personal anecdotes of the participants, there is not a great deal of information regarding the climatology and weather conditions of the Battle of Cowpens; however, a historical analysis by the South Carolina State Climatology Office indicates a January average minimum temperature of 25° Fahrenheit and average maximum of 50° Fahrenheit from 1971 to 2000 for the area surrounding the battle (SCSCO). For the purposes of this paper it will be assumed that this trend also applies for the month of January 1781.

“It was a bitter cold morning, and the soldiers slapped their hands to keep warm as they waited in the dark for the British troops to arrive. No evidence remains of the time the engagement began; not even the sun would signal the onslaught on this overcast day” (Moncure, 51). This statement, along with others, indicate that it was a very cold, overcast day; this low temperature and high humidity would have affected the combatants by stiffening their fingers and joints, slowing marching speeds, and hindering fine muscle movements, such as reloading their weapons and fixing bayonets. Soldiers were not alone in being impacted by the cold and damp, their equipment also suffered. “Dampness made it difficult for flintlocks to fire or to ignite rapidly, affecting accuracy” (Babits, 79). It would also have had a negative outcome upon morale. Visibility on both sides was limited: “Low clouds or mist affected any assessment of troop dispositions, even after full daylight. Combined with ground cover and elevation, mist may have blocked Tarleton’s ability to see the Continentals waiting on the main line” (Babits, 80).

The climate on the morning of the battle appears to have benefited the Continentals in that, even though both forces had to face the hardships of it, the Americans had been able to rest, unlike Tarleton’s forces who had to march all night to meet them at Cowpens and were likely feeling the cold more. It also mitigated another concern for Morgan: his men would have been looking directly into the sun during the battle, had the day not been overcast: “Clouds benefited the Americans, who would otherwise have had the early morning sun in their eyes” (Moncure, 67).

4.1.2 Terrain

The landscape at Cowpens, given current advances in tactics and technology, would be considered a “killing ground” or optimal ambush point. Considering the equipment and combat tactics of the time, it was a perfectly suited battleground for the forces involved. Tarleton considered it “An open meadow (for cattle grazing) about 500 yards deep and the same wide, gently undulating, not much in the way of trees and undergrowth; good terrain to maneuver infantry; good space to use cavalry

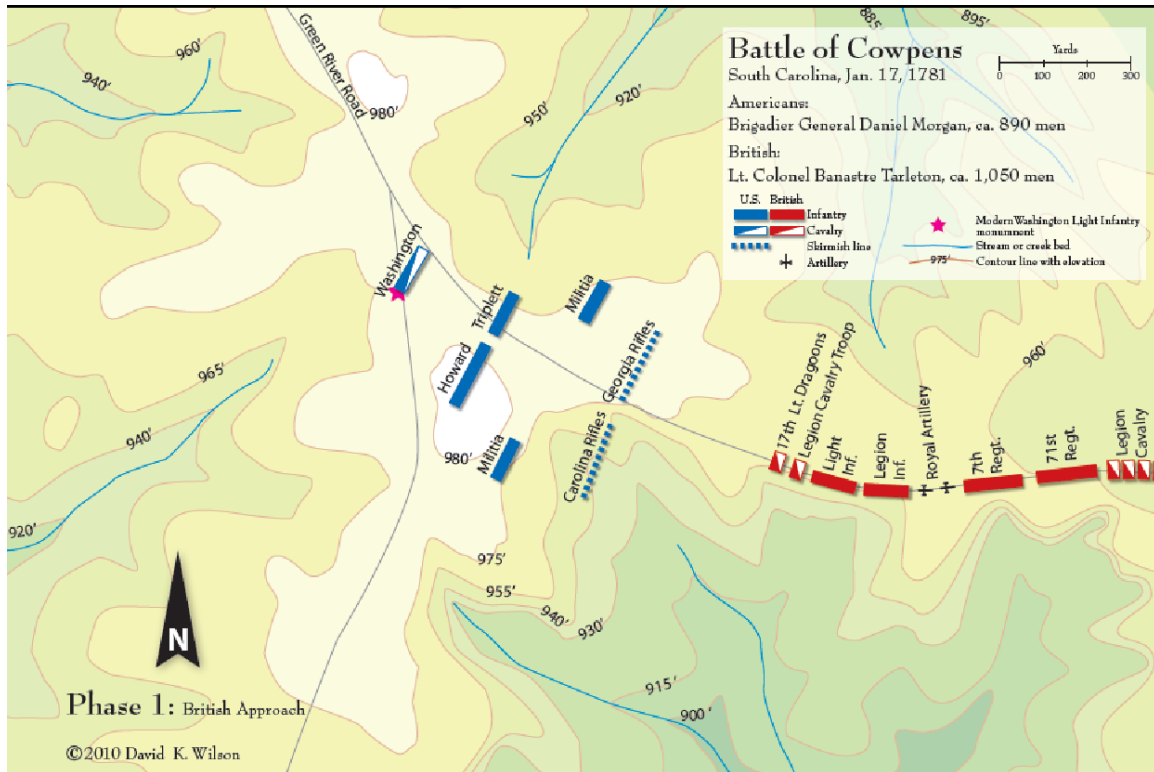


Figure 1: Terrain overview of the Battle of Cowpens. (Wilson)

once the enemy was broken. The Mill Gap road bisected the field North to South” (Stephenson, 326). From Morgan’s perspective the landscape was “relatively flat open ground sparsely scattered with red oak and pine, the site was ideal for grazing cows or fighting European style battles. From the direction the British must come (Northwest along Mill Gap Road), a single trail opened into a narrow plain that sloped gently but unevenly uphill to the center of the pens” (Moncure, 45). The only avenue of approach for the British was the Mill Gap Road, a trail that had become extremely muddy due to recent rains in the region. “The advance of the British in the dark across a country cut by ravines and swollen, muddy creeks was slow” (Lumpkin, 126). The topographic map below (Wilson) shows the terrain surrounding the battle site.

Morgan, in seizing what limited high ground there was, had the advantage of Tarleton in regards to observation during the British infiltration, but any benefit was negated during the battle due to the gently sloping terrain once Tarleton’s forces had entered the meadow. The British’s indirect fire weapons were not influenced by the terrain at all.

For a relatively small battlefield, there was a great deal of important or key terrain to be had. One of the primary ones was a series of crests near the center of the field: “They found a slope lightly forested in hardwoods and pine, possibly 150 yards long. This rose to a low ridge, dipped down to a shallow swale, and rose again to a higher ridge. Just behind the crown of the second ridge was a deeper gully in which cavalry might be concealed. The depth of the second draw was such that horsemen could rise and their stirrups and see all the way down the slope to the forest from which the British must come” (Lumpkin, 126). This saddle in between two crests was the perfect

depth to both shield cavalry from attacking forces and to allow them visibility of the battle with little effort. Another piece of key terrain was the marshland that braced both sides (east and west) of the Continental line. “The flanks were close to the marshy ground of two creeks that bracketed the Cowpens” (Stephenson, 327). The marsh on both sides of the battlefield created a canalization effect for the attacking British, limiting their ability to flank the Continental forces.

Operationally, the terrain had a different impact for each side; Morgan used the gully to obscure his cavalry and the marshes on either side of his forces to limit the possibility of an enemy flank. But Tarleton appears to have disregarded those factors and did not account for their impact during the battle. “Morgan noted the way the land fell off to the left and right toward several creeks. The Cowpens was bordered by marshy ground that would make it difficult for Tarleton to execute any sweeping flank movements with his cavalry” (Fleming, 45).

The aforementioned marshes were a key obstacle in the fight, hemming and canalizing the British into fighting straight on and limiting any flanking movements. That being said, the area in which the majority of the fighting took place in was “an open rolling woodland of first-growth pines and hardwoods, excellent country for cavalrymen but with very little cover for riflemen” (Lumpkin, 124). The terrain definitely influenced the battle, it allowed Morgan to anchor his forces to the low hill in the center and tie them into the edge of a marsh on the eastern side of the battleground, and it led Tarleton to make an assumption that this fight was going to be fought the way he was accustomed to: “the ground was optimal for Tarleton’s cavalry, as the British commander noted, although it sloped gently upward toward the American forces” (Moncure, 46).

Given the nature of the terrain and the style of warfare at the time, there was not much in the way of cover or concealment to be had. In fact, “all sources agree the battlefield was partially open with ‘not one single bush on the field of battle to entangle the troops.’” (Babits, 66). That being said, Morgan made excellent use of the dip in elevation behind his troops: “Behind the main line, in a shallow gully, Morgan parked William Washington’s 3rd Continental Light Dragoons (82 men) together with 45 volunteer horsemen drawn from the militia” (Stephenson, 327). The lack of cover or concealment clearly led Tarleton to believe that this fight would be on his terms and fought in a manner in which he was familiar.

Observation and Fields of Fire ...

Avenues of Approach ...

Key Terrain ...

Obstacles ...

Cover and Concealment ...

4.2 Comparison of Opposing Forces

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4.2.1 Strength and Composition

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4.2.2 Weapons Technology

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4.2.3 Sustainment and Logistics

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4.2.4 Health Service Support

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4.2.5 Command, Control, and Communications

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4.2.6 Intelligence

...

4.2.7 Information Operations

...

4.2.8 Tactical Doctrine and Training

...

4.2.9 Condition and morale

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4.2.10 Civil Affairs

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4.2.11 Law of War / Enemy Prisoners of War

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4.2.12 Leadership

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4.3 Feasible Courses of Action

The tactical courses of action for both the Continentals and British were in many ways dictated by customs and knowledge of tactics of the era. Morgan, performing a tactical retrograde away from Tarleton toward the broad river, was limited in his options. He could fight a battle against the British, continue moving toward the river and hope to stay ahead of them, or use his forces to harass the enemy without becoming decisively engaged. Morgan chose the first option, “with the broad river behind and to the east of his force, he chose to face Tarleton. Morgan chose his ground wisely. He anchored his defense on a low hill and arrayed his infantry to the south” (Brinkley, 32).

Once that choice was made, Morgan ran into a completely different problem: how was he to array his forces to face the British? He had the option of sticking to tradition, but he had noticed that “repeatedly in earlier battles, inexperienced militia had ruined everything for the Revolutionaries by fleeing the field” (Weigley, 30). That being the case, he chose instead to “deploy progressively stronger infantry to shoot up the British as they advanced” (Babits, 71). Utilizing different types of assets in a combined arms fight was nothing new, but Morgan added a twist: he integrated the militia’s tendency to run away into his plan, and used it to his benefit.

Tarleton’s choices were similarly dictated by current techniques of battle, as well as by the necessity to react to Morgan’s activities. The broad choices he had were to hound the Revolutionaries and

force a confrontation, or to forego the chase and lay an ambush in a place of his choosing. Tarleton chose to “hang upon General Morgan’s rear to cut off any militia reinforcements that might show up” (Fleming, 46). He hoped to catch Morgan as his forces were crossing the Broad River and claim a complete victory against the American forces. On the smaller, tactical scale, the British commander chose to form up as custom and tradition demanded upon the battlefield: “as Tarleton had done in the past, he sent the legion cavalry to disperse the militia and gain information of Morgan’s dispositions” (Brinkley, 33).

In respect to understanding the complete situation, Morgan had a much greater feel for the terrain, friendly forces, and enemy forces than Tarleton did. He adjusted his tactics to compensate for the propensity of the Militia to cut and run when pressed: “therefore, Morgan in an act of sheer (sic) genius, arrayed his militia in the first rank with a line of forward skirmishers. His Continentals constituted the third rank. Morgan’s orders to the militia were simple and clear: fire two or three well aimed shots then move to the rear and flanks as a reserve” (Brinkley, 32). Tarleton, though he did have a good understanding of the terrain, did not see any need to adjust his tactics as they had always served him well, and proceeded to face his opponent with standard battle lines. This attitude was enforced by Morgan: “Morgan’s trap depended on breaking down the British, and, if Tarleton could not see the American lines, the later appearance of new, stronger lines would come as something of a surprise” (Babits, 82). The limited visibility of the morning and inability for a full reconnaissance kept the fact that Morgan interspersed his militia with skirmishers from the British, and did not allow Tarleton a full understanding of the battle that was about to commence.

4.4 Tactical Missions of the Antagonists

Morgan had been given a great deal of leeway in his mission from higher, he was given “orders to conduct himself either offensively or defensively, as your own prudence and discretion may direct – acting with caution and avoiding surprises by every possible precaution” (Weigley, 27). Tarleton’s orders were to “pursue Morgan and either destroy him or force him to retreat over the Broad River again” (Fleming, 30). Based upon his chosen course of action, Morgan’s likely tactical missions were to occupy the key terrain in the area, secure his troops, then canalize and destroy the British forces. Tarleton’s mission set would have included attacking by fire to defeat enemy forces and neutralize their capability for a counterattack or to conduct follow on operations. Both the Continental and British Commanders’ tactical missions were consistent with the orders they received from their superiors.

5 The Action

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5.1 Disposition of Forces

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5.2 Opening moves

5.2.1 Americans:

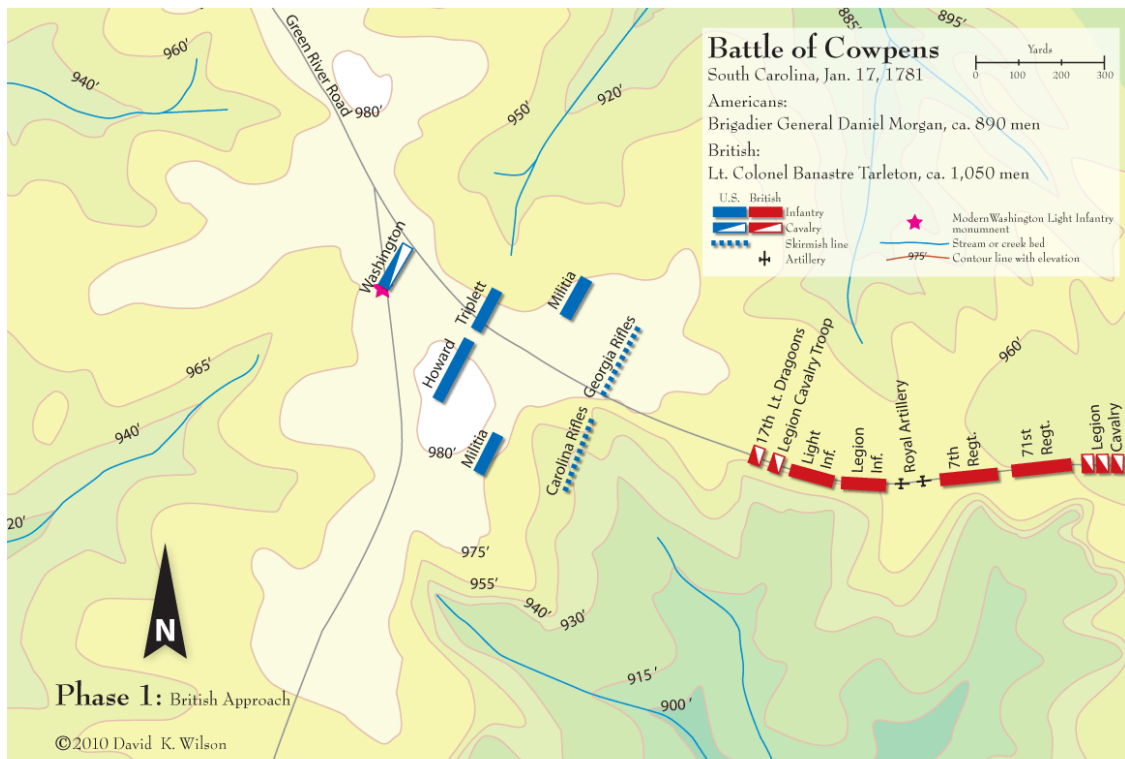


Figure 2: Initial disposition of the Armies.(Wilson)

Brigadier General Daniel Morgan, knowing that Tarleton was in full pursuit, selected Cowpens as the field of battle. He describes his decision to fight at there in later correspondence with Nathanael Greene, “I would not have had a swamp in the view of my militia on any consideration; they would have made for it, and nothing could have detained them from it. As to covering my wings, I knew my adversary and was perfectly sure I should have nothing but downright fighting. As to retreat, it was the very thing I wished to cut off all hope of.” (Moncure, 46) Morgan had chosen the location for battle and anticipated Tarleton’s forces the following day. He had deployed reconnaissance forces who would alert him when Tarleton approached and, knowing his men, used the hours awaiting word of Tarleton’s advance to align his forces.

Morgan had selected the time and place for battle. As a result, he took full use of this advantage over Tarleton in the night prior to the British advance,

“The night gave Morgan time to prepare his men for combat the next day, and the skilled leader made the most of his opportunity. Allowing his troops to prepare physically – cleaning their weapons, eating and so forth – he walked among them to prepare them emotionally for the horrors of eighteenth-century battle. Major Thomas Young of South Carolina wrote that Morgan showed a keen sense of how to command militia: ‘He went among the volunteers, helped them fix their swords, joked with them about their sweet-hearts, told them to keep in good spirits, and the hour would be ours’ ” (Moncure, 47)

After spending the evening resting, rallying, and prepping the troops, Morgan spent the early morning hours to brief his plan. There is some discrepancy in reports as to whether Morgan briefed his entire force or just key leadership, but the fact remains that Morgan completed the task of briefing his plan to subordinates in sufficient time and fashion to disseminate this information to his entire force. The task of occupying the defensive line was completed in the early morning hours before light. Few specific recollections exist regarding the formal occupation of the American defensive lines, but this action most likely occurred after the troops had been fully briefed. Once the defense was established, Morgan and his subordinate leaders spent their time continually speaking with and rallying the troops.

Morgan was well aware of Tarleton’s history, personality, and reputation as an aggressive combatant. His developed understanding of Tarleton’s rash personality and fierceness in combat led him to make assumptions regarding Tarleton’s actions. Morgan used this knowledge of the British leader and coupled it with his significant understanding of the troops under his own command. The result of this analysis was Morgan’s choice of defense in order to attempt to force Tarleton to act impulsively on the battlefield. Morgan also had an understanding of his own troops and that the Militia were relatively untrained for combat and nervous facing such impressive formal force. He took advantage of this knowledge and created a defense which would empower his inexperienced troops and coerce Tarleton into deploying his forces in a non-advantageous sequence. By the time Tarleton arrived on the field of battle, Morgan and his troops were ready and waiting. Morgan’s leadership and strong command and control of the situation had resulted in a force which was ready for the fight and who possessed great confidence in their leadership.

5.2.2 British:

On the morning of 17 January, at approximately three o’clock, Tarleton gave his troops the order to advance. Having pinpointed the American’s location, and under the belief that they were in full retreat, it was Tarleton’s intent to make the roughly six mile movement and attack the Americans at first light. Tarleton’s troops had arrived at this location only five hours earlier. The troops had very little to eat and were given a small amount of rest prior to the movement. This ground patrol took Tarleton’s troops from their location at Morgan’s previous camp through freezing streams and dense thick brush in the cold weather. During this movement, the British troops would march up a reverse slope, out of the thicket, and onto the field of battle. Tarleton describes the movement in a narrative:

“Three companies of light infantry, supported by the legion infantry, formed the advance; the 7th regiment, the guns, and the 1st battalion of the 71st, composed the center’ and the cavalry and mounted infantry brought up the rear. The ground which the Americans had passed being broken, and much intersected by creeks and ravines,

the march of the British troops during the darkness was exceedingly slow, on account of the time employed in examining the front and flanks as they proceeded.” (Rauch and US Army Signal Center, TAB Q, 14)

Following the crossing of Thicketty creek, Tarleton released an advanced reconnaissance party of Cavalry with the express intent of locating Morgan’s defense. The troops rode forward and reported back Morgan’s location as well as an estimate on the size of the American force. Tarleton received this information and drove forward. There are many accounts by soldiers and leadership alike which suggests this was not an easy movement. The temperatures were bitterly cold and, although Morgan’s troops had passed through this same path only a day earlier, there are reports of the British troops attempting to set fire to the brush in order to blaze a path. Tarleton’s troops were on the hunt, and although they were comprised mainly of seasoned warfighters, it is likely that the long period of pursuit combined with freezing temperatures, a short period of rest and preparation, and a difficult movement were having their effect on the morale and physical readiness of his troops. Babits describes this movement, “By all accounts, the British had a difficult time swimming horses and felling trees for bridges on this exhausting march to contact. Lieutenant Roderick MacKenzie, traveling with his light infantry company, may have exaggerated, but crossing knee-deep streams in January is hard on mind and body.” (Babits, 57)

After approximately four hours of movement, on the frozen morning of January 17, 1781, British Lieutenant Colonel Banistre Tarleton’s disciplined group of British soldiers broke through the woodline at Cowpens to face Brigadier General Daniel Morgan and his group of Continental army regulars and militia.

Upon breaking through the brush at Cowpens, Tarleton began to organize his troops. Tarleton’s recollection of this instance differs from that of his troops, “According to Tarleton, he then directed his line to remove their packs and to file to the right until the flank force faced its counterpart directly. Lieutenant Roderick Mackenzie portrays a far more hurried onrush.” (Moncure, 51)

Regardless of the time which elapsed while Tarleton prepared his troops for battle, they were observed by and faced with Morgan’s waiting troops. When the American troops were in sight, Tarleton ordered the British to drop their excess equipment in order to be lighter for battle. Morgan’s troops witnessed this movement and act of British formal military procedure as the British line organized and filed itself to the full length of the American Front. The British troops looked disciplined and impressing as they occupied their assault positions and the American troops recalled this as an intimidating display.

The movement and rapid occupation of the line were an exercise in British military protocol. Tarleton’s forceful personality had already created disruption amongst his troops and subordinate leadership. He had maintained a commanding presence on the battlefield, but lacked either the understanding or insight necessary to prepare his troops mentally or physically. Instead of taking the precautions necessary during a deliberate attack, Tarleton’s actions were impulsive. This impulsiveness and rush to battle without taking the adequate precautions necessary was exactly what Morgan was expecting.

The British had established their line. Tarleton had pressed them forward into position for battle. The men stood ready to fight, but were likely suffering from physical exhaustion from little sleep or food. They would meet an organized force in Morgan’s men, who had rested and were prepared for their attack. Tarleton’s forcing of these troops quickly into position to face an awaiting enemy without staging, attending to priorities of work, or developing a plan would show from the onset of

battle. Tarleton's demanding and forceful leadership got his troops to the fight and time would tell if it would be enough to will them to victory. The small psychological advantage Tarleton gained through the drill and ceremony of his force would soon diminish in the American's favor with the firing of the battle's first shots.

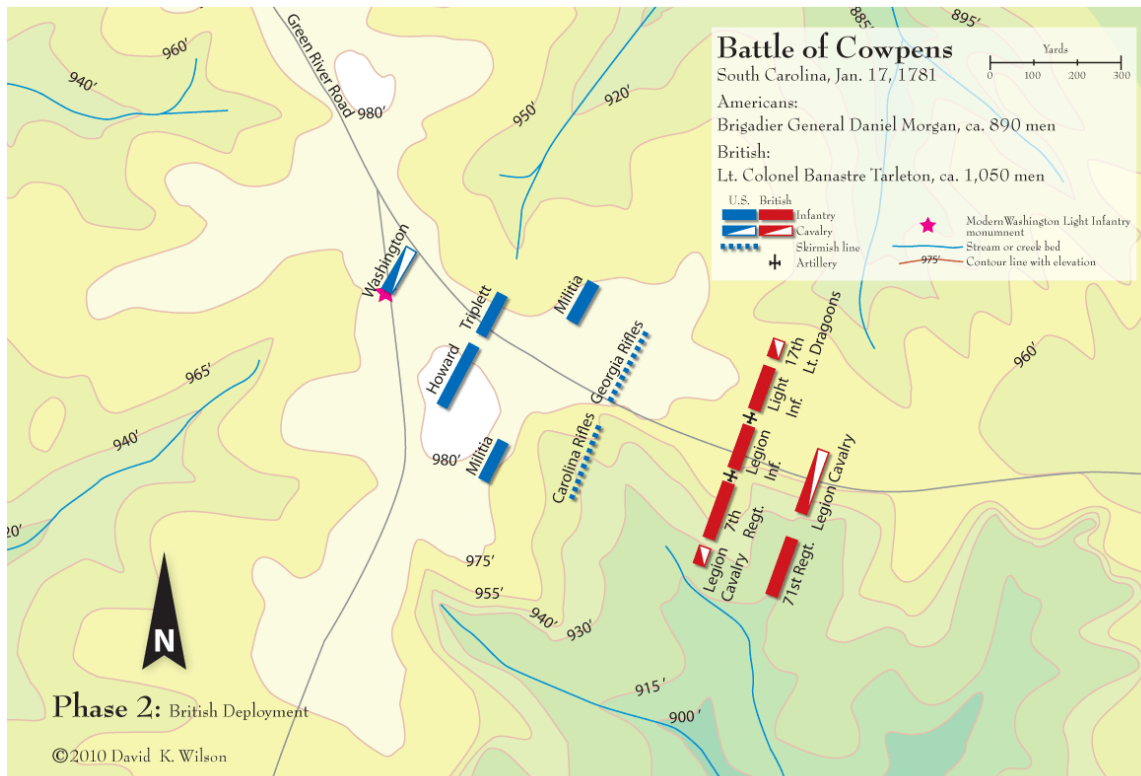


Figure 3: British Deployment at the battle of Cowpens (Wilson).

5.2.3 Morgan's Troops Aligned for the Defense

Brigadier General Morgan had established a three line defense. Morgan's troops were rested, well briefed, and roused for battle. He had taken full "home field" advantage to use his developed knowledge of the backwoods and understanding of his troops' abilities to emplace each unit in a role which suited their strengths. The North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia sharpshooters were out in front, establishing a line of skirmishers intent upon causing disruption at earliest opportunity. Colonel Andrew Pickens Four battalions of Virginia militia were next. The third and main line of defense was the continental Army along with Washington's cavalry held in reserve.

The Sharpshooters from the Southern States were placed approximately 300 meters in front of the continental line (Moncure, 48) and only a few hundred meters in advance of the Virginians. They would be emplaced on an IV line which would leave Tarleton with little ability to see what lay behind them. The skirmishers would take cover at this point and begin to engage the British at earliest opportunity. These men would be tasked to harassment fires with an intent to disrupt British command and control therefore rushing the British into a rapid decision making process. These men were by no means meant to stand and fight. As soon as the British began an advance or released

their Cavalry in an expected fashion, the skirmishers would fall back and reinforce the main line of the militia. This would serve another purpose which was the cornerstone of Morgan's plan: deceive the British into believing the American lines of defense were breaking down into Retreat.

The Virginia Militia, led by Colonel Andrew Pickens was emplaced at roughly 150m in front of the continental troops' line. These four battalions of men from the Virginia militia knew their task well and it was with them that the true battle would begin. Reeling from their assault on the skirmishers, Morgan assumed the British would organize and attack this line as if it were the main body. As a result, Morgan emplaced these men behind the skirmishers on level ground. The militia was tasked with holding their fire until the British came within less than 100 meters. At that time, they would fire three volleys into the British line and fall back behind the continental troops led by Lieutenant Colonel

Howard. This was meant to further exploit the British offensive with aimed shots at the Officer and Non-Commissioned Officer leadership.

The Delaware and Maryland continental soldiers were led by Lieutenant Colonel John Eager Howard. Morgan emplaced these troops on slightly elevated terrain. It was these troops who were tasked with facing and destroying the British regulars. These troops had seen combat and were prepared for battle. Morgan's knowledge of the British and of Tarleton specifically led him to this course of action. It was his intent to cause the British to pursue to the fleeing militia men so that they met the continental army in an unorganized state with an overwhelming mass of firepower.

Finally, Morgan placed the 3d Continental Dragoons, led by Lieutenant Colonel William Washington as a reserve further behind the Continental Troops. This unit was emplaced out of sight for the British soldiers. Their task was to reinforce the line and deny the British freedom of maneuver in the event of an attempted flanking maneuver.

5.2.4 Tarleton Organizes for Attack

Tarleton deployed a portion of the Legion Dragoons, on the southeastern flank of his line. These men were on horseback, and were deployed on the flanks for maneuverability. These troops were tasked at their location in order to quickly flank to exploit a weakness or move to deny the Americans freedom of maneuver on the battlefield. Since these troops were on horseback, they (along with the 17th Dragoons) were the most rested troops in Tarleton's force.

To the right flank of the Dragoons was the 7th Regiment. This unit was deployed from Britain to the Americas and had seen combat. Their primary task was to engage and destroy the Americans through firepower and bayonet combat. Since this was one of the least battle-hardened forces present at Cowpens, Tarleton likely emplaced these troops in the middle of the line in order to surround them with security and encourage them to fight.

To the right flank of the 7th Regiment and interspersed in the line were the men of the Royal Artillery Regiment. Their task was clear, provide direct fire support and move along with the infantry for security and support.

Next, Tarleton emplaced the Legion Infantry, followed by the light infantry troops. This further expanding his long line of ground fighters and together they posed an impressive view of an 18th century force.

Tarleton emplaced the 71st Highlanders in reserve located behind the Legion Dragoons and 7th Regiment. The intent of this emplacement was likely based upon necessity rather than preference, "Tarleton initially desired the 71st to take position beyond the 7th, but without adequate space to form, the 71st disrupted the 7th and was then detailed as a reserve." (Babits, 84). These men were

battle seasoned and created in Britain strictly for combat in the Americas. These troops had seen a great deal of combat and were highly regarded in the Americas as a formidable force.

Finally, the remaining Legion Dragoons, along with Tarleton, took their place in the rear of the formation for command and control as well as to provide a reserve force at the immediate control of Tarleton.

5.3 Action by Phase, and Key Events

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5.4 The Outcome

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6 Significance of the Action

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6.1 Immediate Effects on the Campaign

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6.2 Long-term effect on the WAR

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6.3 Enduring Military Lessons Learned

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6.4 Insights for Contemporary Military Professionals

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