

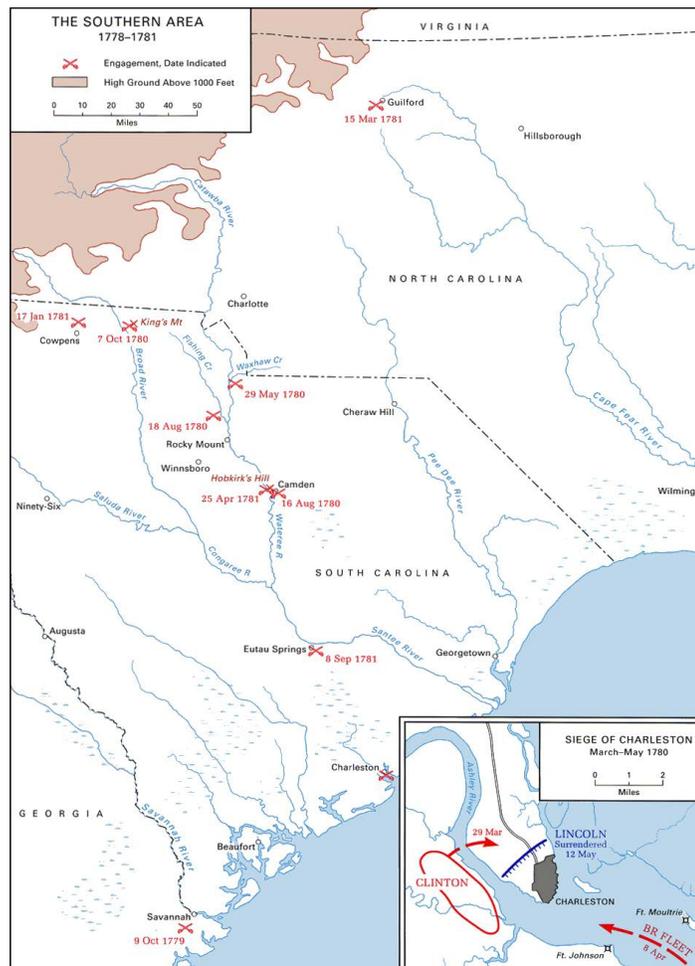
A LEGACY OF PRINCIPLES AND LEADERSHIP: DECISIVE VICTORY AT COWPENS

CPT BRADY DEARDEN

In his renowned treatise *On War*, Carl von Clausewitz identified three specific factors which “produce decisive advantages” at the tactical level: surprise, the benefit of terrain, and concentric attack.¹ Beginning his professional writings just three decades after the American Revolution, it is probable the famous Prussian studied the battle of Cowpens, a decisive American victory which exemplifies all three of his prescribed tactical factors. Whether or not Clausewitz studied Cowpens stands conjectural, but the battle unquestionably represents a lesson in the sound application of warfighting fundamentals. Decisions based upon core tactical principles enabled an outnumbered detachment of American regular and militia forces to route a highly experienced British combined arms unit at a pivotal moment in the American Revolution. The battle’s legacy continues to the present — a powerful reminder of the roles maneuver, firepower, and engaged leadership play in determining war’s victors. Most importantly, as understood through the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of war, American success at the Battle of Cowpens illustrates the effective application of doctrine as seen through characteristics of the defense and the use of mission command.

Background

At the strategic level of war, the American Revolution developed into a stalemate in the northern colonies by the fall of 1778. Retreating to the safety of defensive positions in New York City, the overall British commander



Map 1 — The Southern Area, 1778-1781
(Map from American Military History Volume 1, The United States Army and the Forging of a Nation, 1775-1917)

of the war, Lieutenant General Sir Henry Clinton, decided to shift the war's focus to a new theater in order to take advantage of supposed Loyalist sympathies in the southern colonies.² In pursuit of this new strategy, he ordered Lieutenant Colonel Archibald Campbell to sail and capture the influential city of Savannah. Campbell and his combined arms invasion force routed American forces at Savannah in late December 1778. In a foreshadow of battles to come in the southern colonies, the British Redcoat's professional military experience enabled them to infiltrate and capture the city with only 26 casualties as compared to 550 Americans killed or captured.³

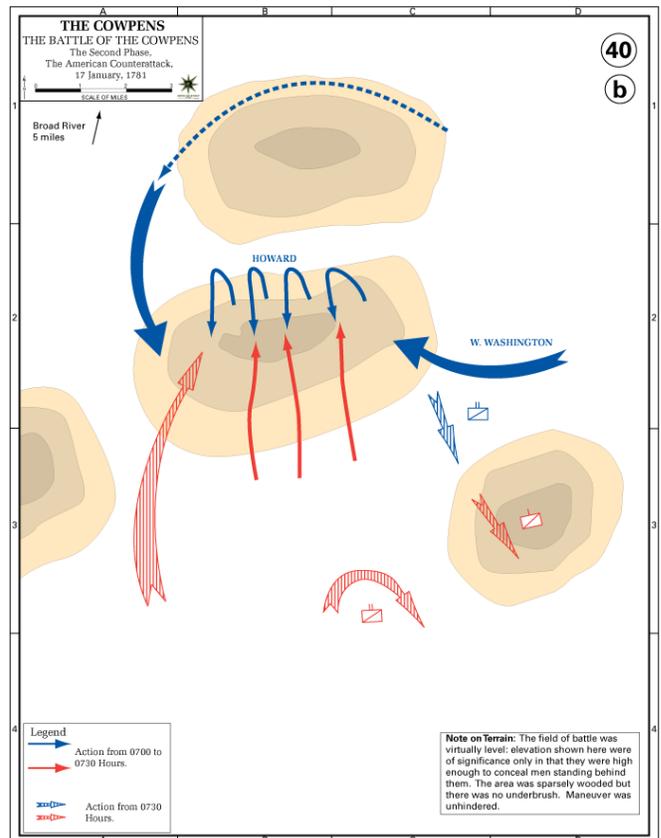
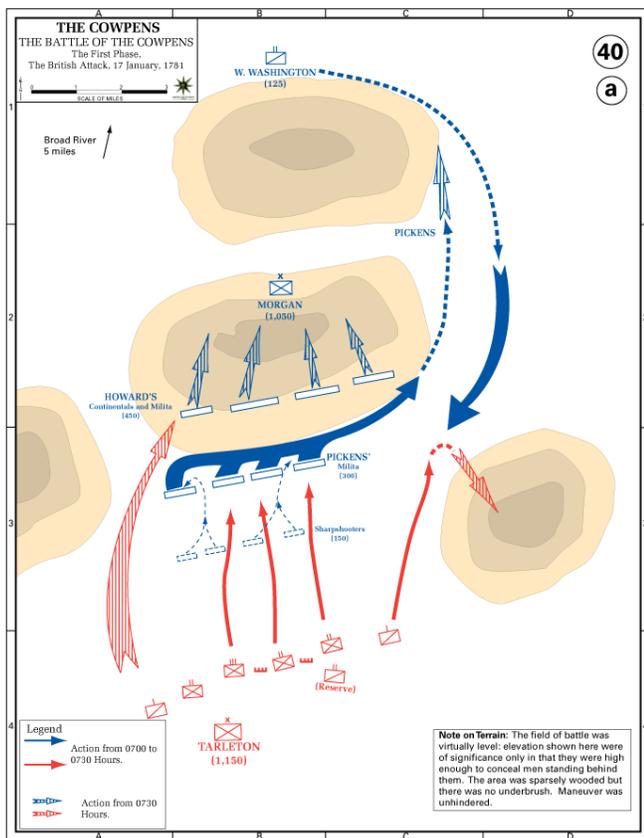
Following Savannah, the British continued to militarily dominate the southern colonies. In October 1779, they successfully defended Savannah against a combined American and French force which outnumbered the British by a ratio of more than two to one. The British inflicted several hundred casualties during the assault, and the Americans and French were not able to penetrate the defensive fortifications hastily erected against the surprise attack.⁴ Six months later, the British led an expedition to occupy the city of Charleston. Although an American garrison of more than 5,000 Soldiers led by Major General Benjamin Lincoln defended the city for over a month, the city was eventually surrendered on account of a lack of supplies for both Soldiers and civilians in the city.⁵ The surrender has been noted as the greatest American defeat of the revolution. American morale, however, fell even further three months later in August 1780 when General Charles Cornwallis thoroughly defeated General Horatio Gates, victor of Saratoga, during the Battle of Camden. Although relatively equal in strength, once more the British outmatched their opponents and routed the Americans, forcing Gates to flee for his life.⁶

The Battle

At the **operational** level of war, key terrain and weather played a critical role in the development of the battle. Dispatched by Major General Nathaniel Greene, the new commander of American forces in the southern colonies following Gates' defeat, General Daniel Morgan led his Army from east to west across the front of the British army led by Cornwallis. The majority of British forces were located in the general vicinity of Winnsborough, S.C., and advancing towards Charlotte, N.C. Morgan moved to position himself on the left flank and rear of the British army, posing a threat to Cornwallis' advance and lines of communications, endangering the British outposts of Ninety Six and Augusta which were crucial to maintaining British Loyalist support, and encouraging western South Carolina militias to aid the American cause.⁷ Cornwallis moved to address these threats by dispatching the British Legion to parry Morgan's maneuvers. Commanded by the young 26-year-old Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton, the British Legion comprised approximately 550 men in a half cavalry, half infantry quick-strike and reconnaissance force.⁸ Heavy rains in the area turned creeks and rivers into dangerous barriers to movement. In particular, the Pacolet River to the south of Morgan's army and the Broad River to the north developed into unfordable boundaries which limited maneuver options for the Americans. The British Legion unexpectedly crossed the Pacolet River during the darkness of night on 15 January. Now within six miles of Morgan's camp, the Americans retrograded northward to a large clearing and pasture known as the Cowpens. At first contemplating the possibility of removing to the north side of Broad River, the American columns stopped at Cowpens, five miles short of the river's crossings. If the British were to attack while the Americans tried to ford the river, a difficult and costly withdrawal would result. However, with sufficient room to maneuver and the ability to select a battle site of their own choosing, the Americans had much to gain from selecting Cowpens as the field of contest. Assessing his options for movement and fighting, Morgan chose the latter on the night of 16 January.⁹

At the **tactical** level of war, the British employed a highly experienced combined arms team. In addition to the regular infantry and cavalry complement of the British Legion, Tarleton also received reinforcements in the strength of three light infantry companies (flagged under the 16th Regiment, the Prince of Wales Loyal American Volunteers, and an impromptu company of local Loyalist guides) and two battalions of regular infantry (flagged under the Royal Fusiliers of 7th Regiment and the Royal Fusiliers of 71st Scottish Highlanders). Additionally, the unit also included a royal artillery battery with two brass cannons and 60 rounds of shot, and a troop of cavalry (flagged under the 17th Light Dragoons).¹⁰ In total, Tarleton commanded approximately 1,100 soldiers.¹¹ Standing in opposition, American strength comprised 300 continental infantry from Maryland and Delaware, approximately 100 continental light dragoons, 250 Virginia militia, 150 militia from North and South Carolina, and 150 militia from Georgia.¹² American strength totaled approximately 800-1,000 continental and militia forces.¹³

In further discussion of the tactical level of war, the micro terrain of Cowpens played a significant role in preparation for and execution of the battle. At the southeastern end of the clearing from which the British entered the



**Maps 2 and 3 — Battle of Cowpens, The First and Second Phases
(Maps courtesy of U.S. Military Academy Department of History)**

battlefield, the wooded terrain opened to a grassy plain in a width of approximately 200 meters. The field widened as it stretched to the northwest, reaching around 250 meters at its widest point in the middle of the field. In terms of elevation, the terrain gently sloped upward towards the middle of the field. A small, almost imperceptible, crest in the middle of the field offered excellent concealment for Morgan’s main line of defense. Approximately 150 yards behind the first crest of the field, a second crest (and the highest point of the battlefield at 990 feet), offered a secondary location of advantageous concealment which Morgan could use to shield his forces. The field gently sloped downwards from this second crest for 700 meters to a ravine running parallel to the American line of battle, northeast to southwest. Beyond the ravine, the swollen Broad River lay five miles to the north, preventing an American withdrawal if the battle turned unfavorable.¹⁴

After marching since 0300 that morning, the green-jacketed dragoons of the British Legion, the vanguard of the British force, approached the edge of the Cowpens’ clearing around 0700 on 17 January 1781. The morning was clear and slightly cloudy.¹⁵ Four hundred yards into the clearing, an American skirmish line of approximately 100 militia hid behind the coarse, thick wild grass and occasional hardwood tree.¹⁶ Morgan had established this skirmish line so that separate state militias spanned the Green River Road, which ran the longitudinal axis of the field. He placed the Georgians on the left side of the road and the Carolinians on the right.¹⁷ His orders to these mountaineer sharpshooters were twofold. He first instructed them to wait until the enemy was within “killing distance,” approximately 50 yards, and then fire two well-aimed rounds. Second, he directed the skirmish-line militia to shoot “at the men with epaulets,” a tactic he had used to great success at Saratoga.¹⁸ Following two shots, Morgan instructed the skirmishers to fall back to the first main line of defense, 150 yards to the rear at the base of the first crest of the field. On this line, the influential citizen-Soldier Andrew Pickens of South Carolina commanded approximately 200-300 additional Georgian and Carolinian militia. Pickens’ troops received the same orders as the skirmishers, with one alteration. After firing two rounds, the militia were to withdraw to the rear in orderly fashion around the left flank of the American second main line and move to a secure rally point in the rear of the American formation.¹⁹ One hundred fifty yards to the rear of the militia line, Morgan populated the

top of the field's first crest with 200 men of the Virginia militia and 300 continental regulars from Maryland and Delaware. Commanded by Colonel John Howard, a highly regarded officer, the Americans in this main line of defense formed two ranks covering a span of 200 meters, almost the entire width of the clearing.²⁰ Approximately 100 meters to the rear of the American second main battle line and behind the second crest of the field, Morgan placed his reserve — the 100-man strong contingent of continental dragoons under the command of Colonel William Washington. An additional 40 militia on horseback strengthened Washington's numbers to help repel a cavalry assault from the British Legion.²¹

The British eagerly attacked into this array of American forces. As soon as the lead elements of the British Legion reached the edges of Cowpens, Tarleton moved to the front to survey the battle. He observed the first American skirmish line and immediately ordered 50 dragoons forward to disperse the skirmishers. Charging forward, the British dragoons moved forward into the engagement area of the mountaineer sharpshooters, and 15 of the 50 dragoons fell wounded from their horses. In disarray, the dragoon element withdrew to the main British line.²²

As this first action of the battle occurred, two simultaneous events happened which played an important role in shaping the fight. First, as the dragoon's charged forward, Tarleton hastily deployed his line of battle. Without conferring with any of his officers, he set up his forces in a diversified yet tenuous combined arms posture.²³ From his right to left, he emplaced the following forces: 50 dragoons, his three light infantry companies fighting as one battalion, one of two three-pound brass cannons, the infantry contingent of the British legion, the second of two three-pound brass cannons, the Royal Fusiliers of 7th Regiment, and 50 dragoons. In reserve behind his main battle line, he formed the remainder of the British Legion cavalry and the Royal Fusiliers of 71st Scottish Highlanders.²⁴ Second, as the American sharpshooters faithfully discharged two rounds, they displaced to the first main battle line at the base of the field's first crest. Tarleton observed this withdrawal and, in accord with his battlefield history and temperament, saw an opportunity to gain the momentum with Americans in retreat. He ordered a general frontal assault of his infantry forces even though the left of his line had not finished emplacing.²⁵

As the men of the British line moved forward into action, they shouted in strength at the American lines. The Americans shouted back in return, Morgan himself riding among the lines encouraging his Soldiers to return the greeting. He and other American officers also reminded the militia and regulars to hold fire until the British were within approximately 50 meters.²⁶ The militia held fast and when the British line reached the appropriate distance, 300-400 American rifles opened fire at once. A majority of the British officers leading their lines from the front fell dead or wounded. The British line stumbled, but after a moment of recovery, immediately reformed. Preferring to close with the enemy and fight by hand, the British charged forward with bayonets flashing in the sun.²⁷

At this point in the battle, three nearly simultaneous events occurred. First, the American situation turned into half orderly maneuver and half chaotic withdraw. According to the original battle plan, many of the militia dutifully stood and fired two or three shots and followed Pickens in the planned withdrawal around the left flank of the American second battle line. Many militia, however, took to flight from the battlefield after one shot, and multiple American officers feverishly rode to the rear to stem their flight and rally them to action.²⁸

Second, as the American militia withdrew from the first American battle line, Tarleton believed he observed a beaten American force beginning to break apart. To capitalize on the withdrawal occurring on the American left flank, he ordered the 50-man strong dragoon contingent on his far right flank to turn the retreat into a route. As the British dragoons charged forward, Washington under his own initiative ordered the 100-plus reserve of dragoons forward to repel the assault.²⁹

Third, similar to Tarleton's deduction of the militia's displacement as a general American withdrawal, the British infantry in the field already in contact understood the development as a victory almost won. They moved forward and quickly faced the American second main battle line of continental Soldiers. Checked in their movement, the British halted and traded rifle and musket fire with the Americans for approximately 10 minutes.³⁰ Sensing trouble with his main advance, Tarleton adjusted his plan of action. He ordered his contingent of 50 dragoons on the British left flank forward as well as the infantry portion of his reserve, the battalion force of the Royal Fusiliers of 71st Scottish Highlanders. He ordered his forces to overwhelm the right flank of the Americans. He retained his approximately 200 dragoons in reserve 400 yards behind the general area of battle.³¹

The battle now spanned the entirety of the American line. American and British dragoons clashed on the American

left flank. The British infantry and American Continentals exchanged violent fire in the center. British infantry and dragoons marched on the American right flank.

With a numerically superior force bearing down on his front and right flank, Colonel Howard observed the Americans fighting a tenuous position. To protect his line from the greatest threat, enfilading fire from the right, he ordered the units on the American right to “refuse the flank.”³² Intending these units to reposition as to form a hinge and create a formation perpendicular to the main American battle line and face directly outwards to the right flank, Howard instead watched in fear as the units misunderstood the order. In the confusion of battle, the Americans received the order as an orderly retreat to the rear. As the right flank of the American line turned about-face and started an orderly withdraw to the rear, the rest of the American line believed it had missed a critical order and followed suit. A cessation in the fighting occurred as the entirety of the American battle line began marching to the rear. Again sensing American strength crumbling, the British lunged forward in an all-out offensive. In opposition to their strength as a disciplined fighting formation, small groups of British infantry rushed forward in mob fashion to deliver a decisive blow to their enemy. Alarmed at the development, Morgan rode forward to confer with Howard. Gaining greater situational awareness of the situation, Morgan rode forward to take personal command of the line.³³

At this point in the battle, another three simultaneous events determined the eventual outcome of the engagement. First, on the American left flank, the shock and number of Washington’s cavalry contingent quickly overwhelmed the British. Disordered and significantly reduced in strength, the British dragoons withdrew in disarray. Washington’s forces again seized the initiative and charged forward to fall upon the now unprotected right flank of the British infantry. Second, in the American center, Morgan positioned himself approximately 100 yards to the rear of his line and as his soldiers reached a line abreast of his location, he ordered them to turn around and immediately fire. With the British approximately 20-30 meters away, the fire decimated their advancing line. An immediate order on the American side to charge with bayonets quickly overwhelmed the disorganized, bleeding, and shocked British infantry. Third, as the 71st Scottish Highlanders and supporting dragoons reached the American right flank, the American militia appeared from behind the gentle crest in the field and on the left flank of the British. The American militia, desperately rallying to return to the fight, completed a full circle from the left flank of the American line and now returned to the right flank to attack their foes in complete surprise.³⁴

As American dragoons encircled the British right flank and the militia encircled the British left flank, Morgan accomplished a rare feat in battle — a double envelopment of his opponent. Observing the situation turn increasingly hopeless, the British in the American center surrendered in large quantities. By the end of the engagement, the Americans captured more than 500 British soldiers.³⁵ Those who did not surrender fled hastily in retreat. Attempting to rally his forces and regain offensive momentum, Tarleton ordered his reserve of 200 British Legion dragoons into action. Citing “an unaccountable panic [which] extended itself along the whole line,” the vast majority of the cavalry “fell likewise into disorder” and refused to obey Tarleton’s order.³⁶ Approximately 50 dragoons heeded Tarleton’s directive, and together this small contingent charged the swarming American forces in an effort to save the British cannons from capture. After an intense but quick engagement, the British force retreated from the field, and Tarleton withdrew from the battle a defeated commander.³⁷

In one hour of combat, American forces decisively defeated a combined arms British force unconquered as of yet in the southern theater of the American Revolution.³⁸ Compared to 12 killed and 61 wounded, the Americans inflicted more than 300 casualties, including 10 officers, and captured more than 600 prisoners.³⁹ Accountable for a defeat in which he lost nine-tenths of his own force, Tarleton also incurred responsibility for decreasing the size of Cornwallis’s field army by more than one quarter.⁴⁰ With such an overwhelming victory and the capture of two British cannons, 800 muskets, more than 100 cavalry horses, a large store of ammunition, and two stands of British regimental colors, the Americans secured an overwhelming and thorough victory.

Analysis

This decisive triumph at Cowpens stands attributable to the use of sound warfighting fundamentals, particularly relevant as seen through modern-day doctrine, the lenses of defensive characteristics, and the use of mission command. Regarding characteristics of the defense, Morgan wisely employed all seven doctrinal sub-elements of this principle to his advantage. First, his specific directive to his militia in both the skirmish and main battle line to engage “the epaulet men” resulted in significant disruption to the enemy’s advance. With this tactic, the



The Battle of Cowpens — Painted by William Ranney in 1845

Americans were able to successfully “target... enemy command and control systems” and prevent the British from “focus[ing] combat power.”⁴¹ During the British attempt to storm the second and last American battle line, a lack of English officers precipitated an unsuccessful mob rush as opposed to a disciplined and tight fighting formation that may have broken the American front.

In addition to disruption, the Americans also incorporated significant flexibility into the battle plan. Not only did Morgan establish a highly mobile reserve and strengthen its numbers with additional militia turned cavalry, he also established subsequent battle positions for his skirmish forces and designated a general rally point from which all militia could “prepare to counterattack.”⁴² Aiding flexibility, Morgan also simultaneously emphasized the concepts of both maneuverability and operations in depth. His battle lines spanned the width of Cowpens, taking full advantage of the terrain and enabling his forces to mass laterally at will. He also enabled his forces to move and mass vertically on the field. If one counts the reconnaissance placed prior to the Cowpens, Morgan planned for four lines of vertical defense plus a reserve. Accentuating this plan, the militia’s continued “movement in combination with fire” allowed the Americans “to achieve a position of advantage over the enemy.”⁴³ By the time the British reached the second main American battle line, the reduction in British numbers and formation integrity proved insurmountable.

Related to operations in depth, American forces also illustrated a cogent understanding of mass and concentration. Morgan clearly “surrender[ed] ground... to concentrate the defending force’s efforts.”⁴⁴ More importantly, he “accept[ed] risk in some areas to mass effects elsewhere.”⁴⁵ Morgan did not deploy his cavalry to his flanks when he observed Tarleton had done so. Rather, he retained his cavalry en masse to maximize its combined as opposed to divided strength.⁴⁶

Furthermore, Morgan thoughtfully prepared his battle plan and increased his natural security based on available terrain. His study of the ground allowed him to “select positions that allow[ed] the massing of fires,” specifically the dominance of the only two crests on the battlefield.⁴⁷ This would later prove invaluable to his double envelopment of the enemy. He also portrayed an intelligent eye for security, placing his forces in and behind the natural drifts of terrain which denied British artillery any significant success during the battle.

Arguably of greatest significance, Morgan exercised effective mission command to achieve victory at Cowpens. He issued clear commander's intent to his troops prior to the battle.⁴⁸ To his militia, he explicitly directed them to fire two rounds before withdrawal. He also clearly identified to them how he wanted them to fight: steadfast in contact with the enemy and orderly in withdrawal. By addressing this topic directly, he anticipated and avoided a repetition of the disastrous recent battle at Camden in which militia standing side by side with Continentals broke and ran, thereby disintegrating the American front in the battle. Before and during the battle, he also continually reinforced to his Soldiers that they were to hold fire until assured the enemy was within killing distance, approximately 50 meters. The successful conduct of the militia during the battle and the significant British casualty rate effectively illustrate that Morgan provided clear commander's intent.

Second, Morgan balanced the use of mission orders with the exercise of disciplined initiative to successfully lead his forces. His actions at the climax of the battle clearly illustrate this point. After Howard took initiative to refuse the American right flank, Morgan rode to Howard and questioned why the Continental regulars were withdrawing. Morgan explained the Soldiers' misunderstanding of the order. Morgan did not countermand Howard's order or relieve him of command; he instead rode to the front himself to give a direct order for when the Soldiers should turn and fire. Howard was the officer who immediately thereafter seized the initiative and then ordered and boldly led the final bayonet charge which ultimately collapsed the British line. If Morgan had immediately reversed Howard's orders or removed Howard's ability to exercise initiative, the timing, synchronization, and sheer strength of leadership may not have been present in the American's critical final bayonet charge.

Furthermore, Morgan illustrated a strong understanding of his risk and how to prudently accept and manage this risk. For example, in preparation for the battle he left his flanks largely unprotected, usually a highly undesirable defensive posture. Morgan, however, understood battles are "contest of wills characterized by continuous and mutual adaptation by all participants."⁴⁹ Morgan thoroughly understood his opponent, clearly shown by the many discussions he had with his officers and men the night prior to the battle. In the past, Morgan knew Tarleton continuously illustrated a will to quickly close with and destroy his enemy through audacity, tempo, and often reckless fighting. Therefore, Morgan created a reserve he could use to adapt to any differentiation in Tarleton's tactics. As the battle illustrated, however, Morgan effectively "outgeneraled" Tarleton with his planning before the battle began.⁵⁰

Following the battle at Cowpens, the American Revolution continued for an additional 10 months with both successes and failures for the young U.S. Army. The British, however, were unable to regain dominance in the southern theater following Morgan's decisive victory. His effective use of warfighting fundamentals, particularly as seen through the characteristics of the defense and the use of mission command, significantly influenced not only the tactical situation in South Carolina but also the operational and strategic level of the war. Eventually the American Army — building upon the same principles of fire, maneuver, and leadership — forced the surrender of General Cornwallis at Yorktown. The implications of the war, indeed shaped by the battle of Cowpens, irreversibly changed the future of the United States, Britain, and the world.

Notes

¹ Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 360.

² Thomas Fleming, *Cowpens: "Downright Fighting,"* (Washington, D.C.: Division of Publications National Park Service, 1988), 18.

³ Henry Lumpkin, *From Savannah to Yorktown: The American Revolution in the South* (Lincoln, NE: toExcel Pres, 1987), 29.

⁴ Franklin Benjamin Hough, *The Siege of Savannah* (Boston: Applewood Books, 1866), 38.

⁵ Carl P. Borick, *A Gallant Defense: The Siege of Charleston, 1780* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 200.

⁶ Jim Piecuch, *The Battle of Camden: A Documentary History* (Charleston: The History Press, 2006), 24.

⁷ Fleming, *Cowpens*, 22.

⁸ *Ibid*, 26.

⁹ John Moncure, *The Cowpens Staff Ride and Battlefield Tour* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 1949), 46.

¹⁰ Fleming, *Cowpens*, 47.

- ¹¹ Theodorus Bailey Myers, *Cowpens Papers, Being Correspondence of General Morgan and the Prominent Actors* (Charleston: The News and Courier, 1881), 37.
- ¹² Edwin C. Bearss, *The Battle of Cowpens: A Documented Narrative and Troop Movement Maps* (Washington, D.C.: Office of Archeology and Historical Preservation, 1967), 2.
- ¹³ Burke Davis, *The Cowpens-Guilford Courthouse Campaign*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1962), 44. See also Hugh F. Rankin, "Cowpens: Prelude to Yorktown," *The North Carolina Historical Review*, Volume 31, Number 3 (July 1954): 358; and Myers, *Cowpens Papers*, 26. Several different accounts of American troop strength exist, mainly because of multiple militia units streaming into support Morgan right up until the hour of battle.
- ¹⁴ Moncure, *Cowpens Staff Ride*, 46. On this page an insightful quote from Morgan further explains his decision for selecting the Cowpens for the field of battle. Aside from the obvious terrain features governing his choice, one of his primary selection factors was the fact that an inability to retreat would force the militia to stand and fight. Otherwise, Morgan predicted he one half of his militia force (approximately 500 men) would have deserted his army.
- ¹⁵ Bearss, *Battle of Cowpens*, 18. Of note, five miles before Cowpens, the British caught two Americans working a picket line under the command of Captain Inman. When questioned, the Americans revealed Morgan had deployed his forces to fight at Cowpens. Excited at the now inevitability of open battle, Tarleton marched his force with increased speed to the clearing. The strenuous forced march in the middle of the night over difficult roads and swollen creeks is credited in part to the exhaustion experienced by British troops on the day of battle. The remainder of the American picket retreated to Cowpens and successfully fulfilled their mission of alerting the Americans to the approach of the British and avoided being caught by surprise.
- ¹⁶ Kenneth Roberts, *The Battle of Cowpens: The Great Morale-Builder* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1958), 84.
- ¹⁷ Bearss, *Battle of Cowpens*, 11. To enhance the effectiveness of his skirmish line, Morgan separated the Georgia and Carolinian militia and appealed to their rivalry. He commented, "Let me see which are most entitled to the credit of brave men, the boys of Carolina or those of Georgia."
- ¹⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁹ Ibid, 12. Of important note, Morgan illustrated he grasped the use of the varying forces within his command. General Gates had attempted to use militia forces beside regular continental units at the battle of Camden. The militia units quickly crumbled in the face of the British bayonet. Morgan understood the militia's mindset and lack of training, and by his planning showed he understood how to most effectively use these forces while still maintaining a solid defensive posture with his Continental regulars on the second ridge. See also Moncure, *Cowpens Staff Ride*, 48; and Fleming, *Cowpens*, 56.
- ²⁰ Moncure, *Cowpens Staff Ride*, 48. Also see Fleming, *Cowpens*, 53, for discussion of Nathaniel Greene's and Light-Horse Harry Lee's praise of Howard.
- ²¹ Bearss, *Battle of Cowpens*, 11.
- ²² Fleming, *Cowpens*, 62.
- ²³ Ibid, 64. Multiple sources discuss Tarleton's military success in America and his meteoric rise in rank as due to his talent in quick decisive action and hard fighting. He is described as eager to fight, greatly self-confident, and to a point reckless.
- ²⁴ Bearss, *Battle of Cowpens*, 21. See also Fleming, *Cowpens*, 64. Tarleton's alignment proved to be tenuous because his deployment of cavalry did not match his estimates of American cavalry. He claimed after the battle to have seen the American cavalry before attacking. If so, 50 dragoons on either side would not match the hundred plus dragoon force of the Americans. Although he had 200 British dragoons kept in reserve, the battle would prove it impossible for these forces to affect the battle at the time and place needed.
- ²⁵ Bearss, *Battle of Cowpens*, 17. This source also states that the infantry and cavalry of the British reserve were still working their way forward and untangling themselves from the thick underbrush leading up to the Cowpens clearing. While still moving forward to the battle ground and caught up in thick terrain, it is highly likely the units of the reserve and their officers lacked clear situational understanding of the battle that began to play out.
- ²⁶ Fleming, *Cowpens*, 66.
- ²⁷ Bearss, *Battle of Cowpens*, 18.
- ²⁸ Fleming, *Cowpens*, 66.

²⁹ Bearss, *Battle of Cowpens*, 26.

³⁰ Roberts, *Great Morale-Builder*. 91.

³¹ Fleming, *Cowpens*, 69.

³² Moncure, *Cowpens Staff Ride*, 58.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Fleming, *Cowpens*, 71.

³⁵ Myers, *Cowpens Papers*, 26.

³⁶ Roberts, *Great Morale-Builder*, 94.

³⁷ Moncure, *Cowpens Staff Ride*, 62. Morgan displayed significant foresight even at the close of the battle. He ordered Washington to pursue Tarleton, who did so for 22 miles. Although Washington did not capture Tarleton, the American cavalry commander did destroy his entire baggage train and captured an additional 100 British prisoners who straggled rearward from the battlefield.

³⁸ This statement considers the Battle of King's Mountain, fought before Cowpens, as an engagement mainly between American forces and British Loyalists, not a regular British unit. As seen in the introduction of this article, the British previously overwhelmed American forces twice at Savannah and once at Charleston prior to Cowpens.

³⁹ Bearss, *Battle of Cowpens*, 22. The complete breakdown of officer casualties: one major, 13 captains, 14 lieutenants, and nine ensigns.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Army Doctrine Reference Publication 3-90, *Offense and Defense*, February 2012, 4-1.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid, 4-2.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 4-1.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Army Doctrine Publication 6-0, *Mission Command*, May 2012, iv.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Bearss, *Battle of Cowpens*, 23. Multiple discussions in this source as well as others illustrate that Morgan largely formed his battle plan from anticipating how Tarleton would fight occurring to his rash and quick attacks in the past. Morgan's defense in depth, use of his forces, and strong reserve contingent all played to the American's strengths and exploited Tarleton's weaknesses.

At the time this article was written, **CPT Brady Dearden** was attending the Maneuver Captains Career Course at Fort Benning, Ga. He currently commands Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 2nd Aviation Regiment, Republic of Korea. CPT Dearden, an Aviation officer, is a 2009 graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y. Following Flight School XXI, he was assigned to the 4th Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment, 159th Combat Aviation Brigade at Fort Campbell, Ky., where he served as a maintenance platoon leader, flight platoon leader, and battalion adjutant. He deployed with 4-101 (Task Force Wings) to FOB Shank, RC-East, Afghanistan from January to September 2014. CPT Dearden earned a bachelor of science degree in law and a master of philosophy in international relations from the University of Cambridge.