

THE CONTINENTAL ARMY AT VALLEY FORGE, 1777 TO 1778:  
EXAMINATION OF ITS TRANSFORMATION USING DOTMLPF

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fulfillment of the requirements for the  
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MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE  
Military History

by

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## ABSTRACT

THE CONTINENTAL ARMY AT VALLEY FORGE, 1777 TO 1778: EXAMINATION OF ITS TRANSFORMATION USING DOTMLPF, by Narciso Corral Jr., 81 pages.

This historical assessment of the Continental Army between 1777 to 1778 analyzes the transformation it underwent while encamped at Valley Forge. More specifically, this thesis argues that General George Washington changed the course of the Revolution by spearheading the necessary changes to completely re-train and reform his army after his defeat at the Battles of Brandywine and Germantown in 1777. Six of the seven elements of the Department of Defense DOTMLPF construct: Doctrine, Organization, Training, Material, Leadership, and Policy; are used in order to provide insight into how these areas were changed and how the changes affected the army's performance upon departing Valley Forge. Overall, the research indicates that changes within the DOTMLPF construct directly contributed to the Continental Army's successful performance at the Battle of Monmouth following their Valley Forge stay.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Two qualities are indispensable: first, an intellect that, even in the darkest hour, retains some glimmerings of the inner light which leads truth; and second, the courage to follow this faint light wherever it may lead.

—Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*

#### Introduction

More common than not, is the assumption that the men who fought in the American Revolution were part of a well-organized Continental Army, but they were anything but that. At the onset of the war, General George Washington, the commander-in-chief of the Continental Army, described his Army as an organized mob, lacking any effective control.<sup>1</sup> Their lack of discipline, training, and short-term enlistments were a dominant source of contention for Washington during the first few years of the colonial conflict. As the conflict progressed to total war, matters for the Continental Army worsened. Washington failed to win any early-on decisive battles, the British continued to surge men and resources into the American colonies, and by the winter of 1777 it appeared that the new nation had completely abandoned Washington's cause. Congress refused to support the troops with supplies, laying the burden primarily on the shoulders of Washington and his Generals, and the people became more reluctant to support the troops as the army's resources began to dwindle as the war drew-on. By 1777, the

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<sup>1</sup> Herman O. Benninghoff II, *Valley Forge: A Genesis for Command and Control, Continental Army Style* (Gettysburg, PA: Thomas Publications, 2001), 39.



Continental Army struggled for supplies and equipment to carry them through that year's winter let alone a conclusive victory.<sup>2</sup>

However, these colonial men came together. What started as a relentless series of defeats for Washington throughout the 1776 to 1777 New York and New Jersey Campaigns, ended in a brilliant confrontation against the British at the Battle of Monmouth in 1778. The tables turned for Washington's Army. The Continental Army was a better-drilled, better trained, and a well-organized force by the summer of that year. This force defeated the British Army by 1781, which was one of the world's greatest military superpowers of the 18th century. How did this come to be? This research will show that ultimately, effective doctrine, an organization characterized by standardized, well-disciplined, and well-equipped personnel, and effective and well-structured training played a critical role in the reformation of the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War. This allowed America to gain its independence from the British monarch.

### Background

This research topic is centered on the transformation of the Continental Army during their 1777 to 1778 winter quarter at Valley Forge. It was during this period that the rag-tag fighting force of the mid-1770s transformed into the Continental Army that stood toe-to-toe against the British by the summer's Battle of Monmouth in 1778.

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<sup>2</sup> Robert Middlekauff, *Washington's Revolution: The Making of America's First Leader* (New York: Random House LLC, 2015), 170.

At the onset of the conflict, the British assumed that the colonial uprising was nothing more than a nuisance, pesky protesters who could easily be swatted, like irritating flies.<sup>3</sup> George William Fredrick III, King of Great Britain at the time, figured a demonstration of his vastly superior military force comprised of a few thousand British regular soldiers could swiftly squelch the rebellion. The British were arguably one of the top, if not the, leading fighting force of the world. At sea, the British Navy was second to none. On land, when combined with the British Navy's support from the sea, the British Army was a devastating force to contend with, hardly threatened by the untrained and ill-equipped vexatious militia that fought for the colonies. However, when the British government massed their Army in Boston and later New York, they inadvertently turned the colonial uprising into a full-scale revolution. The revolution evolved into a multi-year conflict that by 1776, completely engulfed the British economy and developed into full on war over control of the American thirteen colonies.

The Continental Army, under its appointed General, George Washington, lost all of its major battles from the onset of the conflict.<sup>4</sup> The militias had moderate success early on, but were regionally aligned to their county and each operated independently. The militias also combined both conventional and nonconventional warfighting tactics of

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<sup>3</sup> James K. Martin and Mark E. Lender, *A Respectable Army: The Military Origins of the Republic, 1763-1789*, 3rd ed. (West Sussex, UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 49.

<sup>4</sup> Allan R. Millet, Peter Maslowski, and William B. Feis, *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States from 1607 – 2012*, 3rd ed. New York: Free Press, 2012), 63.

the time against the British Army, which occasioned moderate results. They, rarely stood toe-to-toe against British regulars on the open battlefield.

Washington struggled to coordinate the fighting effort early on. This was most evident during his New York and New Jersey campaigns of 1776 to 1777 in which the Continental Army came out a bloodied and defeated mess.<sup>5</sup> From 1775 to 1777, the British stayed in relentless pursuit of Washington, hoping to decimate his army and squelch the rebellion. By 1777, British General William Howe had complete control of Philadelphia, the American capital and largest city at the time, and threatened the outcome of the American cause.<sup>6</sup> What followed for the Americans was one of the most significant moments of the war.

General Washington settled down for winter quarters at Valley Forge. From late 1777 to mid-year 1778, the main body of the rag-tag Continental Army, at the brink of collapse, encamped twenty miles from British occupied Philadelphia. Many scholars argue that this was the decisive moment for Washington and the Continental Army,<sup>7</sup> defining this as the turning point of the American Revolutionary War.<sup>8</sup> This research draws a broad analysis of the changes during this period, highlighting the training, leadership, and discipline during the Valley Forge encampment. Washington and his

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<sup>5</sup> Martin and Lender, 55-56.

<sup>6</sup> Middlekauff, 146.

<sup>7</sup> John B. Trussell Jr., *Epic on the Schuylkill: The Valley Forge Encampment, 1777-1778* (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1976), Prologue.

<sup>8</sup> Martin and Lender, 113.

Continental Army came out of Valley Forge a different organization. When they were tested against the British at the Battle of Monmouth in 1778, it was evident that the Continental Army was something anew. In a toe-to-toe encounter against the larger British force, Washington was not defeated. He reclaimed Philadelphia and forced the British to retreat to New York. History records this battle as a draw, but scholars argue that the Americans achieved not only a physiological edge against the British, but gained the momentum that drove their efforts through the remainder of the conflict.<sup>9</sup>

#### Primary Research Question

The primary question of this work is to identify what changes took place at Valley Forge, and highlight what transformed the rebellious common man of the mid-1770s into the fighting man that would stand against a well-equipped and better trained British soldier at Yorktown in 1781. In addition to this question, this work will attempt to highlight if there is any relevancy to those identified factors that can be applied to military organizations today.

#### Research Significance

This topic is significant to the military profession, security professionals, and other scholars because the analysis of the Continental Army, during the American Revolutionary War, provides insight into what key elements are necessary to undergo the transformation of un-organized, ill-prepared militias into a conventionally structured and well-disciplined army. Is it one primary factor, multiple influences, or numerous areas

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<sup>9</sup> Joseph B. Mitchell, *Decisive Battles of American Revolution* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1962), 147.

that eventually contribute to the effective transformation? This research also provides insight to better assist the conduct of theater security cooperation efforts and military advisory operations today. Current methodologies can be streamlined to better assist third world countries and young democracies build their own security and military forces more effectively.

As a military officer experiencing the struggle with reformation within my military organization today, I feel compelled to learn what our history has to offer on the matter. Scholars argue that what General George Washington accomplished at Valley Forge and throughout the American Revolutionary War, to establish, train, and maintain the American Army against harrowing odds and eventually defeat the British, is nothing less than astounding. If this argument is true, our history can provide an approach, or at minimum additional tools, and help partner nations develop more effective military forces.

I can relate to the complexities of restructuring or reforming developing military organizations as I have deployed in support of similar operations and exercises throughout the Indo-Pacific area of responsibility in theater security cooperation and military advisory operations. These operations are designed to strengthen our military partnerships with countries like the Republic of Thailand, the Republic of Philippines, and the island country of the Republic of Indonesia. They are also designed to help in the continual development of our partner forces' training and internal organization to enable them to best combat criminal and terrorist threats and enhance their interoperability and intergovernmental systems.

In support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Inherent Resolve, I deployed to both Afghanistan and Iraq. First, to support stability operations of those two countries, but also to assist in security training and military advisory tasks to help build those countries' own internal security. The common thread throughout my military experience, and that of the Marine Corps, over the last two decades has been assisting the transformation of military organizations, both globally and internally. Ultimately, I have a stake in the Marine Corps' force modernization and reformation efforts, efforts intended to poise our forces for the future threats to our nation's national security, and unravel how our forces and partnered forces must be organized to continue to secure the United States' (U.S.) national interests worldwide.

### Methodology

To draw out the transformations that took place at Valley Forge this research will synthesize similarities and common themes in scholarly research surrounding this area of study. Those similarities will be vetted and revealed through the Doctrine, Organization, Training, Material, Leadership and Education, Personnel, and Facilities (DOTMLPF) construct. The DOTMLPF functional area analysis methodology is exercised in determining the acceptability, feasibility, and suitability of a proposed force design change when the joint services identify functional solutions to joint capability gaps for current or future military requirements.<sup>10</sup> There is no documented proof to demonstrate the DOTMLPF construct has ever been applied to draw out the critical transformations

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<sup>10</sup> Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), CJCS Instruction 3170.01H, *Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System* (Washington, DC: CJCS, 10 January 2012).

that the Continental Army underwent while at Valley Forge, therefore a functional area analysis utilizing this process may help provide clearer insight into the topic of military organizations' transformations.

### Additional Research Questions

Of particular importance, this analysis will draw out several key things. One, what domains stand out as the principle factors of the Continental Army's transformation by 1778? Two, what was the fighting doctrine at the commencement of the war and how did it change, if at all, following the encampment at Valley Forge? Three, what was the Continental Army's organizational structure by the end of 1777 campaign and how did it change by the time Washington confronted the British at the Battle of Monmouth the following year? Four, how were militiamen trained at the commencement of the war, and how did they train at Valley Forge in 1778? Finally, what then were the key domains of the DOTMLPF construct that led the Continental Army to become the well drilled and better disciplined fighting organization of the summer of 1778?

### Scope

The likely counter argument against the assertion of this research is that America's success was tied directly to the French's involvement in the war by 1781. France was fully committed to the American Revolution. The British, at the brink of economic ruin, could no longer sustain the war effort in the American colonies. The French, Dutch, and Spanish also threatened British colonies scattered throughout the

world further straining Britain's over extended resources.<sup>11</sup> However, what is important in this analysis is that no research has attempted to use the functional area analysis of DOTMLPF to draw out the critical elements of the Continental Army's transformation at Valley Forge. The French also played a key role in equipping the Americans and securing the sea-lanes against the British Navy. Nonetheless, it is the transformation of Washington's Army that allowed it to successfully stand toe to toe against the British in ground combat operations in 1781. The Continental Army's transformation and resilience prevented the British Army from continuing its land campaign by the end of the battle at Yorktown. The goal of this research is understanding these reforms and how the Continental Army's transformation directly or incidentally affected the outcome of the Revolution.

### Limitations

The primary limitations on this work are academic. The time and resources available limit the breadth and depth of this work. As a result, this research is limited to the short time period leading up to the Battle of Monmouth, while the Continental Army was encamped at Valley Forge. It does not include the arrival of Rochambeau's expeditionary force at Newport on 11 July 1780, which marked the beginning of the Franco-American military alliance against the British in the new world.<sup>12</sup> Again, though scholars argue that the French can be prominently credited with the success of the

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<sup>11</sup> Martin and Lender, 113.

<sup>12</sup> Harry E. Selesky, *Encyclopedia of the American Revolution*, vol. 2, M-Z, 2nd ed. (Detroit, MI: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2006), 995.



Yorktown Campaign of 1781 and ultimately the victory at Yorktown, a counter argument to that assertion is not presented in this thesis.<sup>13</sup> This research also does not focus on the Continental Army's Southern Campaign during the war, as this aspect of the Revolution is outside the scope of this paper.

Finally, the research will only focus on six of the seven functional areas of the DOTMLPF construct. Therefore, moving forward this research only refers to: doctrine, organization, training, material, leadership, and policy; and purposely excludes the facilities domain. Though there were multiple examples of facility changes that Washington and his generals implemented at Valley Forge, an analysis of the Continental Army's facilities is not included in this work. Unfortunately, this research was constrained by the Corona Virus Disease (also referred to as 2019 novel coronavirus) global pandemic of 2020. Most nonessential businesses remained closed while American citizens were ordered to shelter in place for a significant portion of the time allocated for this study. Therefore, limited access to research materials and references hampered the development of the facilities realm.

There is ample evidence that suggests that as early as 29 January 1777, Washington recommended and implemented standardization of his camp's defenses and engineered facilities built by his "corps of artificers" (engineers). Washington also ordered his brigade commanders at Valley Forge to construct a series of what he termed "flying Hospitals" to tend the less seriously ill and reduce overflow and widespread

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<sup>13</sup> Martin and Lender, 118-119.

contamination of more serious diseases at the already brimming rebel army hospitals.<sup>14</sup> These are only a few examples of the ingenuity the patriots demonstrated at Valley Forge surrounding their facilities. Ultimately, ingenuity and change in rebel facilities also contributed to the Continental Army's overall transformation and merit analysis. Further study in this area is recommended for future research.

### Organization

Following this chapter is a broad examination of literary works that helped drive the results of this research. The key theme is the significance of Valley Forge on the Continental Army's transformation. Chapters 3 and 4 provide an examination of Valley Forge through the lens of the DOTMLPF construct. In the fifth chapter, careful analysis of the individual areas of DOTMLPF clarify the evidence for determining whether factors identified in the thesis truly played a critical role in the reformation of the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War. Chapter 5 also seeks to synthesize the research into a coherent proof and conclusion.

The focus of this research was in extrapolating the changes that took place at the lowest echelon of the Continental Army. This is defined as changes in small unit training and military warfighting doctrine, organizational reorganization, new material and resupply, small unit leadership and education changes, and any changes in camp or basing operations, to name a few.

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<sup>14</sup> Bob Drury and Tom Clavin, *The Heart of Everything That is Valley Forge* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, October 2018), 168.

DOTMLPF is acronym used by the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) to examine change within its military organizations. The construct is used as part of a process of identifying gaps in a military institute or conducting a functional area analysis, within the DOTMLPF domains, to draw out change within a military organization. For the purpose of this research, this construct was used to examine change within the Continental Army and how it met several challenges. Of note, this work slightly deviated from the traditional DoD model and specifically referenced the following domains: Doctrine, Organization, Training, Material, Leadership, and Policy. This is different from the DoD model, which includes Doctrine, Organization, Training, Material, Leadership and Education, Personnel, Facilities, and sometimes an eighth domain identified as Policy.<sup>15</sup>

In this work, the domain of Leadership and Education is condensed as just Leadership. Though the Education function was omitted, it is addressed, in general, as part of the discussion surrounding the Training domain in this analysis. The Personnel domain was also omitted, but it too was captured in general in nearly all the other functional areas analyzed throughout this research. Additionally, the Facilities domain was also omitted due to time constraints and limitations cited above. Finally, the eighth domain, Policy, was included in this work as it was seen as a key area of study. For the purpose of this research, it is the P in the DOTMLPF acronym utilized throughout this work. Overall, in the context of this research the domains of DOTMLPF are defined as such:

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<sup>15</sup> CJCS, CJCS Instruction 3170.01H, A-7.

Doctrine. The way “they,” the organization, fights.

Organization. The way “they,” the organization, is organized to fight, this includes the structures, platoons, detachments (or other nonconventional means) etc.

Training. How “they,” the organization, prepares to fight tactically: basic training to advanced individual training, various types of unit training, other forms of combined training, etc.

Material. The “stuff” (weapons and supplies) necessary to equip the force. This includes overall logistics and sustainment support, and accounts for the ability to resupply.

Leadership. How the organization prepares and supports its leaders to lead the fight from the lowest echelon on up. This includes the leader’s effectiveness and will to lead.

Policy. The governmental guiding principles, and implemented procedures or protocols.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The reflection upon my situation, and that of this Army, produces many an uneasy hour when all around me are wrapped in sleep. Few people know the predicament we are in . . . if I shall be able to rise superior to these, and many other difficulties, which might be enumerated, I shall most religiously believe that the finger of providence is in it.

—General George Washington, letter to LTC Joseph Reed, 14 January 1776

#### Introduction

This research suggests that warfighting doctrine, equipment, discipline, and training were critical elements that helped reform the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War. Not only were these elements critical, but their origin traces back to Valley Forge during the winter encampment of 1777 to the summer of 1778. The following four works served as the primary literature sources to help bring this assertion to light.

First, James K. Martin and Mark E. Lender provided in-depth analysis of the American Revolution and insight into the character of the Continental Army in their work, *A Respectable Army: The Military Origins of the Republic, 1763-1789*. Martin and Lender describe the Continental Army's evolution to become a "respectable Army" by the war's end. However, Martin and Lender focus more on the politics that drove the change and less on the organizational or training reforms at the lower echelons that result in its transformation.

Robert Middlekauff also diverges from functional area changes of the Continental Army in his book, *Washington's Revolution: The Making of America's First Leader*.

Middlekauff offers an account of the grooming of America's first leader and provides insight into General Washington's war strategy and leadership challenges in the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War. To Middlekauff, Washington's diplomacy, leadership, and personal character drove the Continental Army's transformation throughout the war. Middlekauff places a stronger emphasis on the leader and his driving of the change rather than the structural or functional areas of the Continental Army's transformation.

The third work analyzed for this research was Herman O. Benninghoff's book, *Valley Forge: A Genesis for Command and Control, Continental Army Style*. Benninghoff delivers insight into the development of command and control (C2) within the Continental Army, and argues that the unique C2 process of the Continental Army is what drove its transformation by the war's end. Benninghoff's focus is more on the leaders and leadership changes that took place throughout the Revolution and less on the organizational reforms at the lower echelons of the army.

Lastly, this research would not have been complete without an in-depth look at the inner workings and the making of the reformed Continental Army through the eyes of one of the most pivotal figures of the 1778 period, the Baron de Steuben. Paul Lockhart, in his book, *The Drillmaster of Valley Forge: The Baron de Steuben and the Making of the American Army*, tells the story of Steuben's immigration to the colonies on a pilgrimage for military notoriety. In Lockhart's mind, Steuben was the key to the Continental Army's transformation at Valley Forge. His drilling and disciplining of the disorganized patriots set in motion the change that led to America's independence.

Of importance to this research is that though all of these works provided differing views (the politics, the internal relations, or the leaders) surrounding the specific factors that transformed the Continental Army into the organization that defeated the British Army in 1781, there is no doubt that a change was vital. Additionally, all these researchers view Valley Forge as one of the key catalysts for that change. Their works see Valley Forge as a pivotal moment for the Continental Army and in doing so raise the question of: what were those driving forces and how did they collectively help reform the organization while encamped there.

### The Rebel Army

A key theme in both the Benninghoff and the Martin and Lender research is that the rag-tag colonial Army became a better-disciplined and trained Continental Army during the 1777 to 1778 winter encampment at Valley Forge. To understand the significance of this change Benninghoff, and Martin and Lender provide insight into the Continental Army's meager beginnings.

The Army started as an uncoordinated militia uprising that formed into a poorly trained rebel force during the first few years of the Revolution. There is an iconic misconception that the militiaman, the local farmer, the colonial common person simply picked up arms and through sheer determination defeated the British Army. *A Genesis for Command and Control* and *A Respectable Army* both demonstrate that this is far from the truth. According to Martin and Lender, the military origins of the American military trace back to the early 1760s when militias were regionally aligned and operated independently

to defend their local interests.<sup>16</sup> When the militias came together to defend against the British Army, they formed a rebel Army comprised of ill-equipped and untrained citizen-soldiers. Rarely did they stand against the British in an open confrontation on the battlefield. As the conflict worsened, fewer men were willing to lengthen their enlistments or willing to stay the course to an uncertain cause. The British Army seemed unbeatable and conditions worsened for the colonials as the conflict progressed. Only a small band of long-term, committed, volunteers stood at Washington's side, while many men returned home in 1775 and 1776 to their farms and families.<sup>17</sup>

Concurrently as men trickled in and out of the Continental Army ranks, Washington struggled with logistics, military training of his men, and equipping his force. However, Washington's greatest challenge was just keeping his men together, as soldiers came and went as they pleased.<sup>18</sup> Benninghoff describes the early rebel Army as an organized mob, lacking any effective control.<sup>19</sup> Many of these early soldiers were middle class property holders with crops that needed harvesting, and families that needed tending to.<sup>20</sup> According to Martin and Lender, this very issue was what solidified the inception of the standing American Army by the war's end versus the volunteer force or early rebel Army that was derived from the early colonial militia system.

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<sup>16</sup> Martin and Lender, 44-45.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 216.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>19</sup> Benninghoff, 38.

<sup>20</sup> Martin and Lender, 71.



With the citizen-soldiers more interested in going home (or staying there, or only performing short-term militia service) the choice was whether to develop a standing military establishment capable of contending with Britain's war machine or to trust the Revolution's fate to ever-fluctuating numbers of short-term citizen-soldiers.<sup>21</sup>

There is no doubt that these researchers understand that the militiaman and early rebel Army helped shape the ultimate victory of the Americans, but the force that eventually stood up to the British Army at Yorktown was far from that in late 1777.

The main idea of the researchers is that the Americans could not solidify their victory until they created not just a standing Continental Army, but a well-trained and disciplined one. Benninghoff takes this further by stating that of most importance was the need for effective command and control. This included an organization of well-trained and committed leaders within Washington's Army ranks, but also effective communication mechanisms both within the organization and upward towards the high echelons of government, congress.

According to Benninghoff, "Command and control, was the process by which a supreme authority directed the military force to achieve objectives, assuming the supreme authority had the assets and developed infrastructure to support the execution of action."<sup>22</sup> Collectively these elements help support what Martin and Lender dub a "respectable army," a capable, competent army with the technical skills to effectively prosecute a war. The militias still played a critical role in destabilizing British forces, but they were not capable of facing the British on the battlefield and winning a decisive

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<sup>21</sup> Martin and Lender, 75.

<sup>22</sup> Benninghoff, 5.

victory. Militias threatened the British Army's logistics, attacked British foraging parties, and intimidated British scouts and the loyalist population throughout the war, but Washington needed a long-term standing and capable organization to defeat the British.

Washington fought for this standing army, from the inception of the war.

According to Martin and Lender, Washington's reasons were:

1) The British King was hiring Hessian mercenaries to fight them in the colonies, 2) sizable British forces continued to surge into the colonies, 3) the British continued to mass forces around their major cities and key ports, and 4) the failure of the Rebel Army's short-term enlistments and an insignificant military code (the disciplinary standards were lax and punishment for military infractions were non-standardized) by 1775 could not sustain the effective strength that the Continental Army required to win a decisive victory over the British.<sup>23</sup>

Though General Washington had a semblance of an army from the onset of the uprising, he struggled to coordinate operations across his Continental Army. This was due in part to the lack of practical skills of the American fighting forces. They lacked technical skills to conduct proper fortification and siege design, defensive and offensive planning, engineering practices, communications, military leadership experience, training, preparation of operational policies, and quarter-mastering (logistics).<sup>24</sup>

Despite all of the shortfalls, the Americans managed a victory at the Battle of Saratoga in the fall of 1777, when over 5,000 British soldiers surrendered to General Horatio Gates' combined American force.<sup>25</sup> However, Benninghoff, Martin and Lender indicate that by the winter of 1777, despite the British surrender at Saratoga, Washington

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<sup>23</sup> Martin and Lender, 77.

<sup>24</sup> Benninghoff, 41.

<sup>25</sup> Mitchell, 132.

still had not inflicted a decisive victory against the British. The rebels' guerrilla warfare and prolonged hit and run tactics were not enough to achieve an overwhelming victory against the British and release the Empire's grip on their colonies. Washington understood he needed to achieve a pivotal battle against the British. However, Benninghoff's and Martin and Lender's works both argue that Washington continued to struggle with the command and control of his force and the poor training, discipline, and inadequate sustainment of his army, leading up to Valley Forge.<sup>26</sup>

### Valley Forge 1777 to 1778

Ultimately, what changed for Washington was he reorganized the main body of his Continental Army at Valley Forge. Martin and Lender argue that the lack of logistics, desertion rate, short-term enlistment issues, and the mounting anger of the officer corps with the state of affairs by 1777 helped drive the organizational change. Benninghoff deviates slightly from that assertion and argues that Washington did not have an effective mechanism to command and control the changes needed to transform his dwindling force. The ingredients and elements of command and control improved with training, experience, and teamwork.<sup>27</sup> To Benninghoff, there was limited teamwork among Washington and his officers, and in turn a lack of professional discipline throughout the organization. Additionally, the personal relationships required with congress to drive any policy changes from the top down were nonexistent. In any case, Washington was aware of all of these dire issues and opted to change them by the summer of 1778.

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<sup>26</sup> Martin and Lender, Ch. 4.

<sup>27</sup> Benninghoff, 63.

Washington achieved this by restructuring the disorganized early-war Army of 1777 into the reformed capable Continental Army of 1778. First, Benninghoff highlights that a “Committee at Camp” was established in Valley Forge to open the lines of communication between Washington, his officers, and congress.<sup>28</sup> The intent of the committee was to establish a better relationship between congress and the military, to help bolster back and forth open dialogue, and ultimately bring about top-down policy change.<sup>29</sup> Second, Washington leveraged experienced military foreigners like the Baron de Steuben, to completely re-organize and train his Army. The Continental Army learned practical fighting skills and firing discipline. They learned precision drill and European style battle formations. They learned technical skills to conduct proper fortification and proper defensive and offensive planning. They learned basic engineering practices, and communications. The military leadership was re-invigorated and gained training experience. Finally, Washington was able to focus on preparation of operational policies, influence congress to restructure restrictive military policy, and focus on more effective and efficient logistics. Collectively, Benninghoff and Martin and Lender argue that the “spirit of teamwork” among Washington’s leaders and the combination of these actions at Valley Forge were crucial influences on developing the military infrastructure of the new Continental Army.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Benninghoff, 70.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

## The Role of Foreigners

Foreign influence is also a key theme in both *A Genesis for Command and Control* and *A Respectable Army*. Many European volunteers viewed the American military organization as at near collapse. The foreigners flocked to the country expecting to be received as saviors by offering their military experience and providing the Americans their military service.<sup>31</sup> Washington was also building on the experience from his service under the British during the French and Indian War. He was actively trying to Europeanize his Army and sought out foreigners, with European military experience, to meet this goal.<sup>32</sup> No greater role was played by a foreign officer than that of Steuben. He was the figure that helped reform the Continental Army's battle formations, improve their firing discipline, and fine-tune their drill in the Prussian warfighting framework. Steuben also improved facilities management and basing operations, and restructured the army training methodology altogether, during the Valley Forge encampment. All these changes combined with the efforts of Washington and his officers to turn the Continental Army into what Martin and Lender dubbed a respectable army.

John Lockhart's book, *The Drillmaster of Valley Forge: The Baron de Steuben and the Making of the American Army*, arguably makes the strongest case for Steuben's key role in the transformation of the Continental Army. To Lockhart Steuben was not only a key figure, but arguably at the heart of the Revolution's course.<sup>33</sup> Lockhart's

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<sup>31</sup> Benninghoff, 43.

<sup>32</sup> Martin and Lender, 79.

<sup>33</sup> Paul Lockhart, *The Drillmaster of Valley Forge; The Baron de Steuben and the Making of the American Army* (New York, NY: Harper's College Publishers, 2008), 301.

research is a biographical work on the General, highlighting Steuben's early European military service and Steuben's service with the Continental Army, with a particular emphasis on his time at Valley Forge. Lockhart defined this moment as one of the turning points for the Americans as well.<sup>34</sup>

The Continental Army came out of the 1777 to 1778 winter quarters at Valley Forge a well-disciplined, finely drilled organization due in part to Steuben's work. To Lockhart it is the way the Army was fundamentally changed that directly led to the Americans' independence by the end of the Revolutionary War.<sup>35</sup> With a deep understanding of Prussian style of warfare and a seasoned military officer himself, Steuben traveled from Europe to the colonies not just seeking military work, but in pursuit of military notoriety. In America, he accomplished that and more.

His training of Americans at Valley Forge was astonishing. Aside from what Benninghoff and Martin and Lender highlight above, Lockhart provided insight into Steuben's unique training formula. Steuben began by training an elite group of men in small unit formations. He honed their skills so they could then train others and they do the same and so on. This created a train-the-trainer chain that spread throughout the organization rapidly and efficiently. Steuben also forced his officers to receive the same basic training as well; in turn, the officers also become the trainers for their units and larger formations. The officers began to take interest in their men's welfare as well, a temperament that had fallen by the wayside by end of 1777. Steuben ultimately set the

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 301.

groundwork for the American military system and army training doctrine of the early 19th century.

To these researchers, the Continental Army's performance after Valley Forge cemented all of Washington and Steuben's efforts. This gave birth to new training doctrine and new Army organizational policies from there onward. New enlistment and commissioning requirements were also established and the reasons for maintaining a standing American army became an inescapable reality that congress had to contend with within the next three decades of gaining independence.

### General Washington

There is no question that General Washington was pivotal in coordinating all the changes identified above. Robert Middlekauff's book, *Washington's Revolution: The Making of America's First Leader*, not only provides insight into how Washington carried on the conduct of the Revolutionary War, but also draws attention to the challenges of the Valley Forge encampment. Moving the army to Valley Forge after its bloody engagements at Brandywine and Germantown brought an intensified focus to Washington's sense of responsibility.<sup>36</sup> Middlekauff defined it as one of Washington's pivotal moments for the Continental Army.

The biographical telling of Washington's years as a young soldier in America highlighted Washington's journey to becoming the General of the Continental Army by 1775. Middlekauff pulled details from journals, papers, letters, and first-hand accounts to paint a clear picture of the thoughts and emotional roller coasters that Washington

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<sup>36</sup> Middlekauff, 183.

experienced during the Revolutionary War. Of importance to this research was Washington's frustration from the onset of the war, and his personal struggle in leading the poorly trained rebel Army and coordinating the disorganized militias of the colonies. Benninghoff and Martin and Lender also highlight these themes. Short enlistments cut down soldierly experience, as early-on most soldiers served anywhere from six weeks to six months, while the war carried on for years.<sup>37</sup> Middlekauff also argues that Washington's dilemmas were further compounded by the limited support he received from congress throughout the conflict. This included the lack of pay for military service, a responsibility of congress, and poorly coordinated logistical support for the troops.

What is interesting in Middlekauff's work is that the New York and New Jersey Campaigns helped mature Washington as a military commander, but this came at a great cost. He suffered several grave defeats, amassing greater casualties than the British Army and made countless strategic and operational mistakes. However, Washington came out of those campaigns with a more powerful will, and remained firm in his conviction for the American cause. Middlekauff argues that, New Jersey, and the Battles of Trenton and Princeton ... helped him learn how to be a commanding officer. This helped Washington deal repeatedly with his dire circumstance, his poorly trained troops, inadequate pay, and poor supplies, especially while the situation was its gravest during the 1777 encampment at Valley Forge.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Middlekauff, 144.

<sup>38</sup> Middlekauff, 140.



Washington learned he had to deal with the politicians carefully, and as a result, he learned to deal with congress very skillfully.<sup>39</sup> While at Valley Forge, he made it a point to stress that the Continental Army was an instrument of congress. Washington firmly believed the military should remain subordinate to the state. Benninghoff's insight of the Committee at Camp of Valley Forge highlights its value in helping to maintain open dialogue between congress and the Continental Army's General.<sup>40</sup> However, to Middlekauff, it was Washington's diplomatic skills that helped sway congress, which feared the military institution and was opposed to creating a standing army under a powerful general.<sup>41</sup>

In Martin and Lender's work, there are common themes of America's fear of a standing Army as well. Before America's Revolution and following its independence there was a popular belief that stemmed back to England's radical Whig opposition tradition. This belief equated standing armies to harmful power: brutal, ceaselessly active, and heedless.<sup>42</sup> A standing army under a tyrannical general or leader could be exploited to dominate men, through force or compulsion.<sup>43</sup> Militias on the other hand, the tradition of the citizen-soldier, represented and stood for liberty as property holding citizens had a

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 184.

<sup>40</sup> Benninghoff.

<sup>41</sup> Middlekauff, 172.

<sup>42</sup> Martin and Lender, 5.

<sup>43</sup> Martin and Lender, 5-6.

clear economic stake in the preservation of society.<sup>44</sup> Property holding citizens could better confront those who resorted to military force as a means of threatening liberty.<sup>45</sup> Congress in turn refused to have a huge standing Army. At Valley Forge, congressional committees visited Washington's camp regularly and despite his dire predicament, Washington remained professional in their dealings. However, he also made it clear that his Army was in horrible shape and he stressed the dilemmas he faced with short-term enlistments and sustaining and training his troops. Ultimately, Washington used his great diplomatic skills to implement many of his military policies, through congress, and establish his capable Continental Army. What Washington accomplished despite these odds is nothing short of a marvel and Middlekauff brings that to light.

All these literary works defined Valley Forge as a pivotal turning point for Washington and the Continental Army. Washington used his diplomatic skills to help bring in money, foreign military leaders, and resources to help restructure the organization. General Steuben helped spearhead the major re-organization of the Army at Valley Forge, and ultimately drove Washington's military vision of a European-like military force, trained and disciplined to stand toe-to-toe against the British Army in decisive battle. How Washington and his officers marshaled these resources to transform the army is where we next turn our attention.

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE TRANSFORMATION: DOCTRINE, ORGANIZATION, AND TRAINING

Discipline is the soul of an army. It makes small numbers formidable; procures success to the weak, and esteem to all.

—George Washington, letter to Capt's, VA. Regts, 29 July 1759

#### Introduction

In the fall of 1777, the British occupied Philadelphia after handing Washington a series of humiliating defeats. The Pennsylvania campaign for the British was so easy that they nearly annihilated the rebel Americans at the Battle of Brandywine Creek in September 1777.<sup>46</sup> The situation was grim for the rebel cause. Congress had abandoned Philadelphia, the nation's capital, and the Continental Army was near collapse. The sustainment and resupply of Washington's army was inadequate and poorly supported by the American congressional delegates. Washington was not only forced to order his men to scavenge for whatever supplies they could rummage around Philadelphia, but he still had to plan his next move against the British.

The British camped at Germantown just sixteen miles from the capital to await more reinforcements and resupply of their own. On 4 October 1777, the two armies clashed again, in the Battle of Germantown. Both armies marched about 9,000 men each to the battlefield, but Washington's army eventually retreated. They could not afford another major defeat. Many of Washington's leaders feared complete annihilation at the hands of the British and provided little resistance against the British troops. The British

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<sup>46</sup> Thomas J. McGuire, *The Philadelphia Campaign*, vol. 1, *Brandywine and the Fall of Philadelphia* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2006).

took about 500 casualties, but Washington's army was inflicted with double the count at 1,000 men wounded or killed.<sup>47</sup> The enemy also captured over 400 patriots as it maneuvered around Washington's weaker formation. It was another devastating blow for Continental Army.

In Europe, the French were impressed by the news coming from America. Despite Washington's losses, his resistance at Germantown was noteworthy. The French were captivated by the rebels' ability to regroup under their general and engage the British so soon after near destruction at Brandywine. This promise payed off later in the war. As is well known, the French would eventually fully commit themselves to the patriot cause, recognizing that Washington had the potential to defeat or seriously damage the British, one of France's longtime rivals.

Following the Battle of Germantown the food scarcity, sickness and disease, and the dire shape of the Continental Army was exacerbated. Washington was forced to encamp to survive the winter. Middlekauff highlights in his work, *Washington's Revolution*, that the decision to go into winter quarters was a contentious one. "A few [congressional] delegates, apparently immune to facts when thinking of war, urged that an attempt be made to destroy General William Howe [and the British Army] and retake Philadelphia."<sup>48</sup> On 19 December 1777, the Continental Army was in no state to fight let alone retake their capitol. The rebels moved into Valley Forge, on the outskirts of Philadelphia, for the winter.

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<sup>47</sup> Mitchell, 122.

<sup>48</sup> Middlekauff, 177.

Valley Forge was surrounded by rich farmland and was a semi-industrial community by 1777. It contained some homes and an iron works, mostly forges used for heating metals. Washington chose Valley Forge as an encampment site for the Continental Army because it was on relatively high ground, which meant an attack against the army, would be difficult. Valley Forge also provided large open land, which was perfect for the concentration of Washington's troops, but also key for the training and maneuvering in large drill formations.

Arguably, the lowest point for the Continental Army, Washington viewed the Valley Forge encampment as his last opportunity to plot a comeback against the British. A well-known debate is that perhaps the British could have ended the war and defeated the rebels while they camped at Valley Forge. However, General Howe was so overconfident with the Philadelphia campaign that he left Washington to his own devices for that winter. In their work, *The Heart of Everything That is Valley Forge*, Drury and Clavin stress that, "Washington's troops were immobilized because of the lack of supplies."<sup>49</sup> General Howe's actions suggest that he expected Washington to capitulate over that winter.

Instead, Washington's 1777 winter encampment altered the course of the Revolution. The British, having failed to defeat Washington decisively, forced him to spearhead the necessary changes to alter the dire prospects of his army. The Continental Army accomplished the impossible. It not only survived the Valley Forge winter but also

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<sup>49</sup> Drury and Clavin, Ch. 2.

underwent significant changes in three key areas. This chapter discusses the three DOTMLPF elements of doctrine, organization, and training.

### Change in Doctrine

The British were an effective and disciplined fighting force. Not only were they capable of overwhelming the Continental Army with larger numbers in linear formations, but they seamlessly executed large scale battlefield maneuvers against Washington which his army was not prepared to contend with early in the war. European linear warfare dates back centuries to the early age of massed infantry in the great empires of the Greeks and later the Romans. Armies formed in great formations and attempted to mass or outmaneuver one another. These movements were to breach weak points on the opposing formation and then penetrate in mass in an attempt to destroy the opponent. With the advent of various innovations in weaponry from the arrow and sword to the cannon and musket the technology changed, but the vast European open terrain still provided the medium by which to pit large armies against each other in large formations; ultimately, with the same end, to mass, outflank, overwhelm and then destroy the other formation.

The U.S. did not have: one, the large open expanses of land to pit large formations against one another, or two, large regular armies by which this form of warfare was a common practice. The Continentals simply had not trained, nor had ever been required, to stomach the demands of linear warfare. The limited colonial exposure to linear warfare created a disadvantage for the rebels. European warfare placed intense physical and mental burdens on the soldier, who was required to overcome the horrors of linear tactics on the battlefield:

The noise and smoke of the battlefield were sufficient to panic raw troops. Soft lead muskets balls, traveling at subsonic speeds, [caused] ghastly wounds ... especially [at closed in] ranges; artillery casualties were worse yet, ordinary cast-iron cannonballs [caused unimaginable damage to] flesh and bone. Men [were forced to] witness their comrade or filemate mangled by solid shot or torn to pieces by grapeshot or canister, . . . or saw the entire rank in front of [them] practically melted into the ground after a point-blank volley of musketry.<sup>50</sup>

During the earlier stages of the Revolution, the rebel soldiers fought valiantly but failed to hold their lines as the British ranks closed in during large-scale battles. When rebel troops came under heavy pressure, they did not have the discipline to return more than one or two volleys of fire and frequently broke ranks, resorting to guerilla warfare and fighting retreats.

Guerilla fighting meant more hit and run techniques, consisting of small raids and ambushes along heavily vegetated terrain. These tactics simply prolonged the conflict. The rebels rarely gained a decisive edge over their enemy. They were commonly forced to disband, withdrawal or retreat in order to regroup and consolidate losses. These losses resulted in repeated victories for the British, who seemed to maintain the initiative and overwhelming strength to continue to threaten the patriots.<sup>51</sup>

The British capitalized on this advantage. In particular, the British fine-tuned their flanking maneuver against the Continental Army. During large battles, it pitted a large force -on line- against the rebel front, and simultaneously maneuvered a large force along the rebel flank to annihilate it when it inevitably broke formation. This maneuver decimated Washington's force at the Battles of Brooklyn Heights and Long Island during

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<sup>50</sup> Lockhart, 91.

<sup>51</sup> Drury and Clavin, Ch. 2.

the New York Campaign in 1775, and the same maneuver nearly crushed the Continental Army at the Battle of Brandywine Creek in 1777. The Continental Army was not competent in the European style of warfare. According to Martin & Lender, by 1777, “[Washington] was whole heartedly seeking to Europeanize the Continental military establishment.”<sup>52</sup>

Rebel soldiers were better suited to fighting guerilla warfare or an irregular war of raids and ambushes, avoiding outright confrontations with superior numbers. The rebel Americans had only really experienced guerilla warfare in America. They trained to this experience and put in place what they read from more readily available literature on guerilla warfare in the colonies. In particular, most Americans learned guerilla tactics and irregular warfare in detail during the French and Indian War, which was fought from 1754 to 1763. In that time, most colonial militia developed their guerilla tactics fighting against or alongside the American Indians who were masters of guerilla warfare.

According to Lockhart in his book, *The Drillmaster of Valley Forge; The Baron de Steuben and the Making of the American Army*, American militiamen learned to never allow themselves to be led “dumbly, to [the] slaughter of European warfare.”<sup>53</sup> They practiced what they had experienced from the American Indians. Yet by the winter of 1777, the rebels had little to show for their unexceptional fighting on the battlefield and irregular warfare efforts. According to Lockhart, if the patriots wanted to defeat the British and, “earn the respect of the great powers of Europe, they [had] to fight [in the

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<sup>52</sup> Martin and Lender, 78.

<sup>53</sup> Lockhart, 89.



European style] . . . the Continental Army [had] to learn the intricacies of linear warfare.”<sup>54</sup>

Realizing this, Washington transformed Continental Army fighting doctrine while encamped at Valley Forge. Washington had been trying to fight the British conventionally all along, but his army lacked common understanding of this form of war. The doctrine also had to be formalized and indoctrinated amongst all his soldiers. Washington started by appointing the Prussian General, Baron de Steuben, as his Army’s Inspector General and army Drill Master. Washington indoctrinated the European style of warfare within the Continental Army by whole-heartedly enforcing Steuben’s Prussian training and drilling procedures to transform the Continental Army warfighting dogma completely. Steuben began by emphasizing drill and teaching the Continental Army to march and move in large formations in March 1778. The training was aggressive and the army drilled relentlessly from early morning to late at night, emphasizing the need to move in unison and follow orders instantly in the battlefield. “The men complained about the intensity of the training program . . . it was continual drill, recalled Private Joseph Plump Martin of the 8th Connecticut Regiment.”<sup>55</sup> Steuben’s pace of training was ambitious, but he followed his syllabus rigorously and pushed the Continental Army officers to train their men and enforce his teaching unremittingly.

The teachings started by enforcing drill at the platoon and company levels and building on that foundation to form and maneuver into regimental-level formations.

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<sup>54</sup> Lockhart, 90.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 111.

Within a month, the Continental Army of Valley Forge was executing large battle formations seamlessly and responding to commands instantly. Washington noted that, “only three weeks into [Steuben’s] program, entire regiments were drilling together, executing such maneuvers as forming column of platoons by wheeling and deploying a column of platoons into the line of battle.”<sup>56</sup> This had been a rare sight for the Continental Army. Even General Gates, who strongly opposed many of Washington’s leadership decisions, approved wholeheartedly of the progress and praised the discipline and precision the soldiers were executing.<sup>57</sup>

The constant drilling and hard work of the spring of 1778 was put to the test during a Grand Review ceremony of the Continental Army to Washington, and French dignitaries visiting Valley Forge to assess the rebels’ combat readiness. The marching and drill maneuvers “went off without a hitch.”<sup>58</sup> Not only did the men show excellent discipline in the execution of regimental battle maneuvers, but their firing discipline and artillery training had also been tested, and proven true:

[Soldiers] formed two parallel lines of battle, each two ranks deep, and after three salvos of thirteen cannon each rang out from artillery park, the infantry gave its salute to France and the alliance in a coordinate rolling fire . . . this process was repeated three times. Not a man fired out of turn.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Lockhart, 110.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

The Continental Army's firing discipline was highlighted by a French observer as "a spectacle rarely seen even in the best-trained European armies."<sup>60</sup> By summer 1778, Washington's staff officially began preparing a uniform drill manual, derived from the training syllabus put into practice by Steuben for the Continental Army at Valley Forge. The drill manual was in the European style of warfare. This manual not only became the basis for all American fighting doctrine from there on but also remained the basis for training American troops until the War of 1812.<sup>61</sup>

### Continental Army Organization

The process of training the rebel Americans in the European style of warfare was not without its challenges. In particular, the Continental Army did not have standardized unit sizes and fought in makeshift regimental formations. These varied in size and organization based on the region and the state of the unit's origin. Right from the start, Steuben realized that the Continental Army's organization did not fit Prussian tactics or facilitate the European style of linear war, which relied heavily on standard unit sizes. Therefore, as Steuben began to transform the rebels' warfighting doctrine he also helped restructure the Continental Army's warfighting organizational structure. The change helped facilitate the new form of warfare for the troops.

The problem with the Continental Army was not only that it did not have standard unit sizes, but in the rebel service, the regiment was the basic tactical unit. It usually

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<sup>60</sup> Lockhart, 115.

<sup>61</sup> Martin and Lender, 116.

consisted of a half dozen to a dozen companies.<sup>62</sup> This disparity meant companies were of varying sizes and few regiments ever had even number of companies or men. This did not fit well with the European style of warfare, which relied heavily on standard sized base units from which larger formations could be effortlessly built. In battle, this was key for the commander as he could better command and control his formations and shift units and formations with ease. Understanding the organization's standard construct required a lot of coordination and communication among the rebels' regiments. In the heat of battle, the time required to gain that understanding was a rare luxury. Standardization under the European system helped the commander control the battlefield knowing well his organizations generally provided a set capability or combat strength at any given time on the battlefield.

In the American construct, when a commander made the decision to shift a regiment from one flank to a gap somewhere else on his battle formation, it was a gamble as to what strength that unit would bring to bear. It could be a regiment consisting of four companies with 200 muskets or more, or a regiment of one to two companies with no more than 50 muskets. Standardized base units also provided set distances along an organization's frontage.

In the European system, a base unit meant a set number of men, which therefore equated to a set number of muskets or capability along a frontage. This also represented an approximate or standard distance of coverage on the battlefield. This construct made planning for battle and arraying forces on the battlefield much easier to coordinate and

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<sup>62</sup> Lockhart, 126.

strategize. For the rebel Americans, this was an entirely different matter. Arraying forces on the battlefield was more complex. Task organizing a hodgepodge of units to create desired frontages or coverage along a formation's front required a lot of time, effort, and coordination among multiple and vastly different regiments. When a decision was made to shift units or move formations along the battlefield, the Continental Army commanders did not always fully grasp what combat power the outcome of that decision was going to bring to bear against the enemy. Steuben changed this immediately. According to Martin and Lender the, "American military units ... reconfigured the regiments in the Prussian manner."<sup>63</sup> The basic tactical unit of the Continental Army, the regiment, was changed to the battalion.

Steuben had served in the Prussian infantry. As in most European militaries, in the Prussian service, the battalion was the basic unit of infantry.<sup>64</sup> The Prussian battalion construct provided a standardized formation with a set number of men. Two or more Prussian battalions made up a regiment. Steuben divided each Continental Army regiment into the battalion construct with four standard companies, and each company with two platoons. However, these changes came with additional complications. The rebel commanders struggled with the adjustment and were not accustomed to the new terminology. However, to Steuben this organizational shift was key . . . "it didn't matter what terminology was used, [it was important for] units of the same type [to be] close to

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<sup>63</sup> Lockhart, 126.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

one another in size.”<sup>65</sup> General George Weedon, a Virginian who fought with Washington at Brandywine and Germantown, captured his thoughts on the matter, in his orderly book from Valley Forge. He stated that, “The commanding officers of regiments [were] desired to discontinue exercising maneuvers by way of [their own] instruction, until the new regulations [were] dispersed – such exercises [were] indispensably necessary.”<sup>66</sup> He went on to state that the Continental Army needed a system of easy maneuvers that established uniformity.<sup>67</sup> Steuben helped bring that uniformity into the Continental Army.

The organizational change and training officially commenced in early spring of 1778. The training was continuous and unrelenting. By May, the Continental Army was conducting division-sized maneuvers under the new Prussian construct. Steuben trained the men to line up prior to training and reapportion themselves into battalion-sized elements.<sup>68</sup> The battalions consisted of about four to five hundred men and were subdivided into elements of eight platoons, each platoon consisting of about fifty men.<sup>69</sup> The Continental Army officers became proficient at maneuvering under these formations and the men grew comfortable with the change. There was also a distinct advantage to

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<sup>65</sup> Lockhart, 127.

<sup>66</sup> George Weedon, *Valley Forge Orderly Book* (New York: The New York Times & Arno Press, 1902), 266.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> Lockhart., 127.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

this system. The men learned to work with different officers and different units, a process of homogenization that made for a more efficient army.<sup>70</sup>

The rebel Americans were showing significant progress by the summer of 1778, changing the Continental Army's warfighting doctrine and organization in just a few months from March, but the rapid change was a difficult task for Steuben and Washington's leadership. There were several thousand men at the camp and few men well versed in the European style of warfare, and just a handful in the Prussian system. To train Washington's army in the few months left of winter and then spring, before commencing the next campaign of the war in the summer of 1778, was a near impossible feat. However, intense and relentless training helped pave the way for embracing the new doctrine and making the organizational changes a reality.

#### Continental Army Training

Baron de Steuben arrived in Valley Forge on 25 February 1778.<sup>71</sup> When he was greeted by Washington and offered his services to the rebels, he knew he had a daunting task ahead of him. After he assessed the Continental Army for several weeks, he quickly determined there was no standard system for training the men and that very few regiments actually practiced drill regularly. "Drill was an essential ingredient in linear warfare."<sup>72</sup> It honed the men to efficiently maneuver in combat and learn discipline and

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<sup>70</sup> Lockhart, 127.

<sup>71</sup> John Buchanan, *The Road to Valley Forge: How Washington Built the Army that won the Revolution* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2004), 303.

<sup>72</sup> Lockhart, 90.

tactical patience surrounding the effective employment of firepower. According to Lockhart, “Soldiers trained to load and fire at the same rapid rate which made them more efficient than those who were not trained as a group.”<sup>73</sup> Drill also taught the men instant obedience to orders and engrained in them those series of actions required to execute complex movements in the chaos of the battle. Drill did not inoculate soldiers against the horrors of the battlefield.<sup>74</sup> However, it helped make them proficient in the heat of the moment and responsive to commands.

When it came to drill, Lockhart assessed that, “The [Continental Army] in 1777 was not unfamiliar with drill . . . the problem was that there was no uniform system, no standard to which all the Army could be held.”<sup>75</sup> Each militia unit relied on different manuals, some British manuals, or others from France. This created diverging norms and confusion within the army. Each colonel also exercised his regiment according to his own ideas, or those of any military author that might have fallen into his hands.<sup>76</sup> To make matters worse, some commanders were sticklers for drill, while others were completely indifferent to it.<sup>77</sup> Lockhart argues that, “Troops who had been exercised on the parade ground, day in and day out [for months]... were likely to respond to their

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<sup>73</sup> Lockhart, 91.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 93.



officer's commands in the heat of battle without thinking."<sup>78</sup> This was a key element of European linear warfare.

Steuben not only standardized drill in the Prussian form, but when he commenced the Continental Army's training regimen he made it relentless so that the men were responding instantly and willingly to orders in just weeks. From dusk until dawn, Steuben and his select staff drilled the men incessantly. Witnessing the effectiveness of Steuben's training routine, in the months that followed Washington came to depend on Steuben heavily to reform his army.<sup>79</sup>

Washington ordered the retraining of the Continental Army to start on 24 March 1778. Steuben implemented three key ingredients that not only streamlined how he would train the entire army but, were novel concepts to the rebels. First, Steuben focused on training a single company of one hundred men. This became the "model company," formed by Washington on 17 March 1778.<sup>80</sup> This company served as the template by which all other companies would be trained and the baseline for comparison. Second, Steuben created drill instructors to help train the other units. Likely the first American drill instructors in the history of the American military, the drill instructors turned out to be very effective and served as a shortcut by which to rapidly propagate lessons and implement the training across the camp. According to Lockhart, "[Steuben trained] a single company of handpicked veterans, who [learned] the basics of drill and maneuver

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<sup>78</sup> Lockhart, 91.

<sup>79</sup> Martin and Lender, 117.

<sup>80</sup> Lockhart, 97.

directly under his tutelage. Once he felt satisfied with their progress, he [turned] them loose on the rest of the army.”<sup>81</sup>

Steuben placed the burden of training the men on the officers. Commissioned officers rarely participated in training their men but, following the British practice, left the task to their sergeants.<sup>82</sup> Steuben found this unacceptable and turned the practice on its head. He believed the noncommissioned officers were already overworked. The responsibility for the men’s readiness fell on the officers. Therefore, Steuben insisted that officers lead training.<sup>83</sup> Therefore, officers learned the basics of drill and maneuver directly from him. Once Steuben was satisfied, he turned them back to their respective regiments, where they functioned as army drill instructors.<sup>84</sup> Washington was so impressed with the product of Steuben’s efforts that he decreed no one else train his army unless they were handpicked and trained by Steuben. In a few months, Steuben helped spearhead the impossible and completely retrain Washington’s army. The intense and relentless training not only helped pave the way for embracing the new doctrine and making the organizational changes a reality, but Steuben’s training positively positioned Washington’s forces for their next campaign of the war in the summer of 1778. It is safe to assume that Washington looked forward to testing the new Continental Army’s mettle.

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<sup>81</sup> Lockhart, 97.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>83</sup> Martin and Lender, 116.

<sup>84</sup> Lockhart, 97.

## Conclusion

By May 1778, as Washington observed his army execute division-sized maneuvers, it was clear to him that Steuben's efforts and the hard work of his men were bearing favorable results. His army was at the cusp of a comprehensive transformation. Their precision and execution of drill had significantly improved from where it had been just a year ago. The men followed commands without hesitation. They fired their weapons with greater accuracy. Washington's gamble to change his warfighting doctrine, restructure his organization, and retrain his men was paying off.

Aside from the doctrinal and organizational changes that signaled this change in the Continental Army, other functions also demanded Washington's attention at Valley Forge. Washington's army had been ill equipped and poorly supplied. By the time the rebels encamped at Valley Forge, the lack of food and clothing caused Washington's commissary and quartermaster departments to break down completely.<sup>85</sup> Washington also had leadership challenges to tackle within his officer corps. Steuben observed on several occasions, upon arriving to Valley Forge, that the officers did not take responsibility for their men. They did not take responsibility in their training nor responsibility for their general well-being.

Arguably, the greatest challenge Washington faced was congress' military policy surrounding entitlements and the enlistment periods of the men. Not only were the men not receiving pensions, adequate pay, or entitlements for their service, but the men's enlistment periods were too short to sustain the patriots' cause. The men were owed their

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<sup>85</sup> Lockhart, 102.

military wages for their time served, but also Washington needed congress to extend enlistment periods to man an army to last the war's duration. Without an army the rebel cause was for not.

This chapter focused on the transformation of the rebel army's doctrine, organization, and training while at Valley Forge. The following chapter continues the DOTMLPF analysis of the Valley Forge encampment and depicts how material, leadership, and policy changes also contributed to the Continental Army's transformation.

## CHAPTER 4

### REFORMS IN: MATERIAL, LEADERSHIP, AND POLICY

I am convinced beyond a doubt that unless some great and capital change suddenly takes place . . . this Army must inevitably be reduced to one or other of these three things: starve, dissolve, or disperse.

—General George Washington, Letter to Henry Laurens, 23 December 1777

#### Introduction

In December 1777, Washington's Continental Army was near collapse. The rapid depletion of the congressional treasury had combined with inept management of the army's supply chain to make shipments of food, clothing, blankets, and ammunition (for the army) sputtering at best.<sup>86</sup> Those charged by congress to forage and move food and supplies from depots, storage areas, or other sources lacked organization, or the desire to do so. The system was not only riddled with inefficiency but also mired by corruption, as supplies were in extremely poor quality, frequently overpriced, or exchanged through extortion. Washington's men were poorly clothed and starving. Washington pushed congress to correct the problem so he could devote his efforts to fighting the war. However, according to Martin and Lender in their work, *A Respectable Army*, "Congress failed to correct the commissary problems, and finally ordered Washington to confiscate local food stocks to ward of starvation."<sup>87</sup> While Washington ordered his men to

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<sup>86</sup> Drury and Clavin, 86.

<sup>87</sup> Martin and Lender, 104.

scavenge for supplies around Philadelphia, he still had to plan his next move against the British.

The food scarcity, sickness and disease, and the dire shape of the Continental Army grew following the Battle of Germantown in 1777, and so did the wavering of the men. Valley Forge was not a battle for the Continental Army, but the rebels suffered dearly there. From late 1777 to the spring of 1778, they weathered a harsh winter with little food and nearly non-existent supplies. The men began to lose faith as they struggled to stay alive. To compound matters, congress struggled to pay the army for its service and refused to provide any pensions or benefits to the men either during or following the war. The enlisted men deserted by the droves, as they could not bear the suffering that Valley Forge conditions brought on them. The officers also protested conditions, and opted to resign, as they were unwilling to serve for a congress that refused to look out for their interests.

According to Martin and Lender, approximately 11,000 soldiers marched into Valley Forge with Washington.<sup>88</sup> Between December 1777 and June 1778, over 2,500 men perished. Hundreds deserted, while dozens chose to either resign or not re-enlist. By February, orderly reports show that there were around 8,000 men at Valley Forge. Despite the sickness, the starvation, and overall disenchantment, the Continental Army experienced a turn around by June 1778. From December 1777 to the summer of 1778, Washington continued to guide changes in several areas. Tackling material and resupply became key to the army's survival, but so was a refocusing of the army's leadership and

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<sup>88</sup> Martin and Lender, 103.

revamping its military pay and benefits. The following continues the DOTMLPF analysis into the changes surrounding material support, leadership, and the Franco-American policy that collectively signaled a turn in the American Revolution.

### Continental Army Materials

All research highlights that the rebel soldiers were in miserable shape for the most part of the Valley Forge encampment. Their lack of food and materials were exacerbated by several factors, but of note were: One, poor communication between the army at Valley Forge and congress; two, poor resupply oversight and fractured distribution management; and three, the limited availability of resources.

For starters, many soldiers were shoeless, cold, and wet, with little clothing to provide at least some defense from the elements. According to Drury and Clavin in their work, *The Heart of Everything That is Valley Forge*, Washington watched his men with dread as they marched into the camp in December of 1777. In his journal, Washington wrote, “I beheld so many of my men without clothes to cover their nakedness -without blankets to lay on- without shoes.”<sup>89</sup> The troops were unfit for duty, lacking proper footwear, clothing, blankets, soap, and basic medicine.

About 400 women and children taking up the rear of the formation also followed what remained of the Continental Army. These women, who followed the army, mothers, wives, and sisters, were commonly referred to as the “camp women” of the army.<sup>90</sup> Many had nowhere else to go. Most followed husbands, sons, and loved ones, and many had no

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<sup>89</sup> Martin and Lender, 109.

<sup>90</sup> Drury and Clavin, 109.

choice but to care for the sick, the wounded and dire ill. The impacts of supply shortages were disastrous. Many rebels succumbed to exposure from the winter's bitter cold, but the death toll was made worse by malnutrition and the lack of medication. According to Drury and Clavin, "Over 2,000 rebel soldiers perished at Valley Forge . . . no battle, no campaign of the war [had] taken a higher toll on the Continental Army."<sup>91</sup>

To worsen matters, most of the local goods had already been depleted by earlier foraging. The locals salvaged what remained to supply their relocation from the area. Though Washington was ordered to confiscate local goods to ward off starvation and supply the men, he was hesitant to do so. He grasped the central principle of modern warfare: "the necessity of maintaining a positive relationship between the army and the people."<sup>92</sup> Taking what little the citizenry already had was not winning the rebels any favor.

The little the civilians did trade or sell was in poor quality. According to scholars, "[civilians] were peddling rancid meat, and profiting from selling moth-infested clothing to the army."<sup>93</sup> A common argument as to why the rebels received very little or no support from the citizenry was a matter of social status. By the late 1770s, mostly the lower class civilians of the states filled the Continental Army ranks. This included many foreigners, the poor, outcasts and slaves, and even black and Native American soldiers. This made the conditions at Valley Forge extra gruesome, as the impression was that the

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<sup>91</sup> Drury and Clavin, 329.

<sup>92</sup> Martin and Lender, 104.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.



patriot civilians were indifferent toward these soldiers and therefore the army's plight. Furthermore, Martin and Lender believe, "such suffering would not have occurred had middle-class Americans filled the Continental ranks."<sup>94</sup> Washington wrote continuously to congress regarding the dire conditions of the Continental Army, but congress simply refused to accept his reports. The situation did not begin to improve until early 1778.

First, congress finally grasped the severity of the army's plight, when communications between Washington and the congressional delegates improved.<sup>95</sup> Martin and Lender believe that it was only when congress began to see first-hand the severity of Washington's reports that they fully understood what Washington was contending with. They state that, "in January, the delegates appointed a "Committee at Camp" to work directly with Washington to expedite the movement of emergency food and provisions."<sup>96</sup> Assigning a five-man congressional delegation to Valley Forge to assess and directly assist Washington with the coordination of the army's resupply began to improve the army's resupply.

Up to that point, the lack of oversight made logistics distribution vulnerable. The logistics organization was complex and overall mobility was poor. Congress had too many decision makers tied to the process. There was also very little management amongst multiple state governing officials which resulted in poor control within

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<sup>94</sup> Martin and Lender, 105.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

Congress' Supply Department. Also, there was poor coordination of supplies procured from the various locations.

Washington made recommendations to the Committee at Camp who helped establish reforms in these areas. In 1778, Washington began to see slow improvement surrounding the resourcing of critical food and materials to his army as tighter coordination was being made between his army and how civilians were bringing supplies. However, only by assigning the right personnel to manage this colossal task for the Continental Army did matters vastly improve for Washington.

To manage the sustainment and logistics of the army at Valley Forge, Washington made two key appointments. Supply matters were assigned to a wealthy Connecticut merchant, Jeremiah Wadsworth, who took charge of the commissary department.<sup>97</sup> Additionally, Nathanael Greene reluctantly agreed to the quartermaster generalship.<sup>98</sup> Scholars argue that thanks to the dedication and competence of Wadsworth and Greene, the new commissary and quartermasters generals, respectively, steady supplies of clothing and food were finally making their way to Valley Forge (May – June 1778).<sup>99</sup>

For starters, Wadsworth and Greene coordinated and provided oversight of the foraging detachments, who began to increase the procurement of bread, milk, beer, peas, beans, and butter from the countryside. They also expanded resupply areas and reduced

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<sup>97</sup> Martin and Lender, 105.

<sup>98</sup> Richard K. Showman, Robert E. McCarthy, and Margret Cobb, eds. *The Papers of General Nathanael Greene*, vol. 2, *1 Jan 1776 -16 Oct 1778* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, 1980).

<sup>99</sup> Lockhart, 118.

expending materials from regularly sourced areas. Wadsworth closely coordinated transport convoys from the main supply depot at Reading, Pennsylvania, to Valley Forge.

Both men took on their assigned roles whole heartedly, thinking creatively to solve problems to sustain the men. For example, meat was a critical problem from December 1777 to February 1778. The troops needed the protein, but local stock was in dire shortage. When meat finally became available, the farmers and butchers extorted money from the soldiers or provided rancid or poor quality product. Greene helped prove his worth as the new quartermaster. To fix the meat problem, Greene personally coordinated its official procurement. With very little money at his disposal, he collected money from the officers to secure the meat thus providing temporary relief for the army in early February of 1778 and again in April.<sup>100</sup>

The acquisition of clothing was also a critical problem for the Continental Army at Valley Forge. When Steuben arrived to the encampment he wrote that, “The men were literally naked . . . The officers who had coats, had them of every color or make; I saw officers at a grand parade at Valley Forge mounting guard in a sort of dressing gown made of an old blanket or woolen bed cover.”<sup>101</sup> One way the men acquired clothing was to barter with the locals for shoes and the hides of cattle slaughtered for food. Wadsworth played a key role in this coordination. He also had the men broken into parties to seize clothing from civilians. This caused great alarm throughout the populace, and really dismayed Washington who saw this as damaging the relationship between the civilians

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<sup>100</sup> Trussell, 8.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 11.

and its army. However, according to Washington, “the alternative was to dissolve the army.”

Washington was intensely aware that congress was the boss. According to Revolutionary War historian, John Buchanan, Washington, “had almost daily contact with congress, either by correspondence or face-to-face when congressmen visited his headquarters.”<sup>102</sup> However, Washington found that he also had to deal regularly with state governors and legislators. While at Valley Forge, Washington pleaded with the state governments on several occasions for emergency provisions.<sup>103</sup> He wrote Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and New York, but this effort only resulted in a meager quantity of goods during the worst periods at Valley Forge.<sup>104</sup> When regional donations did arrive, it was due to the small effort of local churches rather than official state support for the troops. The moderate influx of these materials provided some relief to the army, but a real stroke of luck for the men occurred in early 1778.

On 1 January 1778, General William Smallwood, commanding at Wilmington, Delaware, reported the capture of the British brig vessel, the *Symmetry*.<sup>105</sup> Having established better lines of communication between Valley Forge, congress, and the outlying commands, Washington reallocated the bounty to his location, where it was most needed. Its cargo provided sufficient clothing for all the officers of the army at

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<sup>102</sup> Buchanan, 319.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Drury and Clavin, 242.

<sup>105</sup> Trussell, 10.

Valley Forge: hats, shirts, stockings, shoes, boots, and more to complete some enlisted uniforms. However, conditions remained appalling for the rest of the men.

Ultimate relief for the Continental Army at Valley Forge finally came in early March 1778 when supplies began to arrive from France. The French government had already been covertly assisting the American rebels with materials from the onset of the conflict. From the spring of 1776 and all through the rebels' early encampment at Valley Forge, French logistics was a key factor in sustaining the Continental Army with arms. Charles Gravier, Comte de Vergennes, the French foreign minister and a skillful diplomat, helped contact Americans still conducting business in England to resupply the Continental Army throughout this period. One of Gravier's highest policy goals was reducing Britain's imperial might.<sup>106</sup> Using a private mercantile firm and handsome loans and financial grants from the French government, Gravier helped increase war materials destined for America up until late 1777.

By the fall of 1777, French trading operations had collected an estimated 30,000 muskets, 100,000 rounds of shot, 200 cannons with full train, 300,000 rounds of powder, 13,000 hand bombs, 3,000 tents, and clothing for 30,000 the rebel troops.<sup>107</sup> However, with the signing of the official French/American Pact of the spring of 1778, France officially redoubled its efforts to the American states. For example, new firearms arrived irregularly to Valley Forge. Some came from France and others were captured. By 25 May 1778, over 2,500 of Washington's nearly 12,000 soldiers were still awaiting their

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<sup>106</sup> Martin and Lender, 117.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 118.

muskets to return from their repair shops while another twenty-five percent were without arms.<sup>108</sup> However, by June 1778, Washington finally started reporting that nearly all of his men had been equipped with firearms once the French had fully committed themselves to the American Revolution.

Though it had appeared at first that the Continental Army could not survive the 1777 winter, Washington's logistics and sustainment efforts at Valley Forge helped turn around matters for his army. Unfortunately, the poor support from congress and lack of support from the civilians during the early months of the Valley Forge encampment really damaged his leadership's outlook of the war. Washington was still convinced that his army was far too weak to achieve a decisive victory, but of greater concern was that the spirit demonstrated by his leadership was disintegrating from within his ranks.<sup>109</sup>

#### Continental Army Leadership

The indifference of the civilian patriots towards the rebel army by 1777 really took its toll on the Continental soldier. Washington needed experienced men to train his army, but also to continue to fight. The conditions leading into and while at Valley Forge placed the survival of his army at jeopardy. Many men resorted to various forms of protest against the dire conditions they were being asked to endure. Among enlisted men, individual protests were common where they resorted to halting either shelter construction or camp fortification to show disdain against the deplorable living conditions. Desertion also grew from December 1777 to February 1778. It got so bad

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<sup>108</sup> Trussell, 19.

<sup>109</sup> Drury and Clavin, 101.

Washington had his officers conduct daily roll call to catch runaways before they got too far.<sup>110</sup> Worst was the mounting anger and breakdown in the officer ranks. Washington recognized that he needed his leaders to hold the army together for the rest of the war, but they were in jeopardy. Some of the officers were worse off than the men.

In his work, *Epic on the Schuylkill: The Valley Forge Encampment, 1777-1778*, John B.B. Trussell argues that, “whereas a soldier was at least theoretically entitled to rations, clothing, and equipment, officers had to follow the European custom of providing their own needs.”<sup>111</sup> There was very little to provide for the men, let alone themselves. This really fractured Washington’s officer corps.

To worsen matters, many officers were not awarded what they believed to be their entitled rank or pay for their service or military stature. This was in part due to congress’ back and forth meddling with the officer promotion system. The meddling originated from congressional hard-liners that were skeptical about even the hint of a postwar standing army.<sup>112</sup> These hard-liners made up the majority of delegates who refused to budge on policymaking that gave any illusion that the army, particularly the military officers, had greater sway over congress. Unfortunately, congress’s reluctance on this matter saw it succumbing to politics, frequently using poor judgement towards the officers. Ultimately congress’s view of the officers became one of general disdain. In the words of John Adams, officers were seen as “Mastiffs, scrambling for rank and pay like

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<sup>110</sup> Drury and Clavin, 164.

<sup>111</sup> Trussell, 34.

<sup>112</sup> Drury and Clavin, 223.

apes to nuts.”<sup>113</sup> According to Martin and Lender, “to officers, the needless tampering with [their] rank became an assault on [their] personal honor.”<sup>114</sup>

Aside from rank, congress also treated officer pay in the same careless manner. Congressional tampering took its toll and Washington’s officers grew restless. This was a major reason the officers grew to hate congress. Scholars argue that the officers despised congress for its weakness and its arrogance.<sup>115</sup> Washington’s men wanted the respect they believed was due to them, but instead they were treated like mercenaries. Martin and Lender elaborate on this point stressing that, “Congress, treated them as if they were professional soldiers, and a possible threat to civil society.”<sup>116</sup>

However, most officers were largely established local and provincial community leaders, economically successful in their own right, and up and coming merchant-traders.<sup>117</sup> Therefore, the officers had a well-developed concern about their personal honor that was a reflection of their generally high community status. To be treated by congress as little more than grasping mercenaries instead of dedicated, virtuous citizens of the aspiring republic, was particularly irksome, especially when they “demonstrated their fervor through military service.”<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Martin and Lender, 109.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Richard H. Kohn, *American Generals of the Revolution* (Westport, CT: Praeger’s Sons, 1978), 109.

<sup>116</sup> Martin and Lender, 109.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.



To add to the frustration, many officers, by the end of 1777 if not before, were getting in serious financial trouble. Full time military participation detracted from their income and diverted them from their agricultural or commercial investments. The officers were restless. The civilians were supplying the army with rancid food and shoddy merchandise, and they were not receiving the compensation that was due to them for their service. Something had to give.

As a solution, the officers borrowed from the British practice that struck upon a solution to their own financial difficulties. Washington's officers wanted half-pay pensions, for life, to begin at the war's end as a just recognition and appropriate compensation for their sacrifices and lost income.<sup>119</sup> Unfortunately, in early 1778 as Washington began negotiating these terms with congress, the congressional delegates' reaction was largely negative. Half pay would involve the idea of a standing army in the peacetime, which many congressional delegates strongly opposed.

Washington was confronted with mounting resignations and the complete dissolution of his experienced officer corps. He needed something to raise the officer morale and encourage further service. By late spring in 1778, Martin and Lender state that, "the alternatives were clear: adhere to ideological purity and lose a substantial portion of the officer corps, or maintain the officers in the hope that the republic polity would still be viable, even with the corrupting influence of postwar pensions."<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Martin and Lender, 110.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 111.

Washington's army was all that stood between the cause and collapse. Congress had to succumb to this reality.

After much deliberation on the matter, Washington made some major strides in May 1778. The congressional delegates approved Washington's pensions but restricted them to seven years. Washington's officers accepted the restriction on their pensions realizing something was better than nothing. This helped stabilize Washington's crumbling officer corps at Valley Forge. Also concerned with keeping soldiers in the service, Washington had been fighting for better pay for his soldiers. If not increased pay at minimum an incentive to keep his army together. In May 1778, congress also voted on a modest bonus of \$80 for all ranks who would extend in their enlistment time for the war's duration. This helped spur recruitment and sustain the force that Washington fought dearly to maintain while at Valley Forge.

Washington's actions at Valley Forge helped keep his leadership intact and keep the Continental Army together. Yet, the poor support from the apparent French alliance leading up to the Valley Forge encampment really damaged the rebels' outlook of the war. Were the French committed to the rebels' cause or not was the question on most patriots' minds. Washington was convinced that his army could achieve a decisive victory against the British, but only if the French fully committed themselves to the Americans.

#### American/French Policy

The French and American alliance became a key factor to America's ultimate success in the war. Washington needed the French to enter the war unreservedly. France provided the Americans with a navy to battle the British at sea and disrupt their seaborne

lines of communication, as the rebels had only the smallest of navies. The French not only bolstered the rebels' supplies and firearms, but also helped bolster the American numbers and morale. This gave the Continental Army the confidence and numerical edge it needed to finally defeat the British Army.

In December 1776, Benjamin Franklin was dispatched to France as commissioner for the American nation. From 1776 to late 1777, he continued to lobby the French in Europe to support the American Revolution. However, for the French, they needed to know the American cause was worth the political and financial risk of committing themselves. In October 1777, the patriots proved their worth at the Battle of Saratoga. British General John Burgoyne led a large invasion army southward from Canada towards New York. In Saratoga, he was met by a much larger rebel force under General Gates. Burgoyne engaged in two large battles, but to no avail. Surrounded and outnumbered, he surrendered to Gates on 17 October 1777.

Along with the rebels' victory at Saratoga, Washington's steadfast performances at Brandywine and shortly after at Germantown in the fall of 1777 helped solidify the patriots' resolve in the eyes of the French. Men like Marquis de Lafayette also played a pivotal role in inevitably achieving the French/American alliance. Washington and Lafayette bonded immediately from their introduction in August of 1777.

Lafayette was a French aristocrat and military officer who chose to fight in the American Revolution. He was commissioned a major general in the Continental Army by congress in July 1777 and served at Washington's side the entire conflict. From the onset, Lafayette was in awe of Washington. He revered the general for his commitment, courage, and honorable character. However, his favorable view of the general was further

spurred while they camped together at Valley Forge. There Lafayette witnessed the unrelenting personal commitment of Washington to both his men and the cause despite the harrowing challenges of that 1777 winter. Lafayette communicated this to France in his correspondence, which helped reinforce what Franklin was already conveying to his French counterparts.

In 1778, Franklin helped secure the critical French/American military alliance that resulted in France's formal commitment to the American cause. The alliance, embodied in two treaties in February 1778, put trade between the two nations on a most favored nation basis and declared French recognition of American independence.<sup>121</sup>

In June 1778, a French/British naval battle erupted in the English Channel and France formally declared war on Britain soon after. The formal Franco-American alliance sealed the fate of the British. The alliance not only provided recognition of American independence by a prominent European power, but also increased the surge of military materials for the rebels to wage a more effective war against the British.<sup>122</sup>

### Conclusion

In February 1778, orderly reports show that the Continental Army was down to 8,000 men at Valley Forge. Yet, the *Encyclopedia of Continental Army Units* lists that by May the buildup at Valley Forge reached an estimated 18,000 men. Despite the sickness, the starvation, and overall disenchantment it is nothing less than astounding that the

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<sup>121</sup> Martin and Lender, 119.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 104.

Continental Army experienced this significant turnaround. Washington tackled material and resupply challenges and ensured the survival of his army.

The British, having failed to defeat Washington decisively, provided him with an opportunity to make the necessary changes to alter the dire outcome of the rebels. By May 1778, activity continued to increase for the Continental Army at Valley Forge. To increase the size of his force, Washington not only changed his army's training, but also expanded his logistics, and brought about military reforms to increase his men's military benefits. As a result, the word spread of what was taking place at Valley Forge and new recruits started trickling into the camp.

By the summer of 1778, the Continental Army had not only survived the winter at Valley Forge, but were better trained and more organized than ever before. The officers had expectations of postwar pensions, and congress' relations with Washington had significantly improved. New military service policy also had recruiting well underway to continue to bolster the ranks for the rebels.

France's commitment to the Americans and its declaration of war against Britain also meant thousands of French troops were making their way to the states. This bolstered the rebels' hearts and further emboldened the patriot cause. The civil rebellion within the British Empire had turned into a world war. Formal declarations of war between France and Britain were also followed by Spanish and the Dutch Netherlands declarations by 1780.

In the summer of 1778, the British were relocating their forces to New York from Philadelphia. Washington predicted Howe's trek through New Jersey, in route to New York, and opted to confront the British. It was in Monmouth, New Jersey, that

Washington pitted what he felt was his freshly transformed Continental Army against Howe's force. The British had grown soft. The relatively easy living and city comforts of Philadelphia over that winter reduced the edge they had seemingly gained throughout the 1777 campaign. That cost them dearly. The performance of the Continental Army at the Battle of Monmouth Court House completely astonished Howe.

The Continental Army initially broke contact and began to retreat after they were prematurely ordered to do so by General Charles Lee. Washington rode forward to reprimand and curse the rash general for his lack of nerve. He then proceeded to regroup and rally his forces back into their combat formations. The result was a decisive turning point for the war. With the line of attack strengthened, Washington rode up and down the Continental Army line spurring his men forward in the midst of battle. The Continental Army remained steadfast for their commander. With bayonets fixed, they fired multiple musket volleys and refused to forfeit any more ground to the British. They demonstrated that they were better disciplined, better trained, and they ultimately held their ground against the enemy.<sup>123</sup>

Most scholars argue that this signaled the end for the British. Lockhart claims that, "It was nothing less than astounding, the resilience shown by the Continental Army coming into Valley Forge . . . and culminating in the stout performance at the Battle of Monmouth Court House."<sup>124</sup> In his book, *The Road to Valley Forge*, John Buchanan summarizes his belief that, "the training received from and the discipline inculcated at

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<sup>123</sup> Martin and Lender, 324.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 329.

Valley Forge by Baron von Steuben, passed on to recruits by officers and sergeants and privates who had been there, lay at the root of the achievement of [the Continental Army].”<sup>125</sup>

Both armies pitted over 9,000 men against each other, and both sides suffered about the same number of casualties and deaths. However, this outcome was unexpected for the British who had grown accustomed to inflicting higher casualties on Washington’s forces and dominating him in European linear warfare. Though both sides claimed a victory, the battle was indecisive. The British not only lost the same number of casualties as the rebels, about 300 casualties, but about 600 British troops deserted. The British had to slip away to New York at night, leaving the field to the Americans. Martin and Lender found that Washington claimed a victory based on his men’s performance and holding the terrain by daybreak.<sup>126</sup> Ultimately, the significance of the Battle of Monmouth Court House was that Washington gained a psychological edge over the British. The Continental Army would not be defeated and the new British General, Sir Henry Clinton, had to withdraw his force to New York overnight.

The 1778 Battle of Monmouth House not only signaled a turning point for the patriots, but also forced Britain to show its hand. The British forfeiture of Philadelphia in June 1778 signaled the end for the empire’s control over the states. Britain could no longer sustain the war effort across the world or afford a world war with its European neighbors.

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<sup>125</sup> Buchanan, 308.

<sup>126</sup> Martin and Lender, 123.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE CONCLUSION

In tactics, the means are fighting forces . . . the end is victory.

—Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*

#### Why this Matters

The Valley Forge encampment of 1777 to 1778 is a fascinating point in the American Revolution. It led to the transformation of the Continental Army in Philadelphia, the heart of Washington's force that would ultimately defeat the British at Yorktown in 1781. As a result, nearly all the scholarly works compiled for this research have latched onto the claim that this marked a turning point in the Revolution. This research sought to provide some insight into what the transformation was and how it was significant. In order to discern the change, this work analyzed the Continental Army's encampment at Valley Forge by using the Department of Defense's DOTMLPF construct as a roadmap: doctrine, organization, training, material, leadership, and policy.

In this research, every scholar who wrote on this period of American military history echoed the same glaring concern that Washington had with his Army during his early campaigning. In order to tip the scales in America's favor, his army needed a decisive victory over the British. Unfortunately, that decisive victory eluded Washington because the rag-tag militias and rebel force that made up the Continental Army simply were not organized into an effective military organization by which to attain his goal.

First, disorganized militia made up the bulk of Washington's army. Second, the Continental regulars were green and not highly trained. Additionally, the rebels were not well versed in eighteenth-century western army, European-style of linear warfare.



Finally, the patriots were ill equipped and poorly compensated for their military service.<sup>127</sup>

The complexities of restructuring or reforming developing military organizations are not uncommon today. In the U.S. Marine Corps, Marines continue to deploy in support of operations and exercises. Aside from Iraq and Afghanistan, regions like the Indo-Pacific area of responsibility conduct operations that provide theater security cooperation and foreign military advice. These operations are designed to strengthen our military partnerships with countries throughout the Indo-Pacific theater, but also create opportunities to help strengthen our ally's regular-forces.

In studying what Steuben did for American troops over 200 years ago, today we can take key lessons from Valley Forge to help train the developing military forces of our allies and help transform them into better organizations. The lessons from Valley Forge teach that the continual development of our partner forces' training and internal military systems hones troops who are proficient in skills of their trade, responsive to their leaders, and competently and responsively led. In the Indo-Pacific theater, these help in combatting criminal and terrorist threats and enhancing multinational interoperability and intergovernmental systems. Efficiency in the six functional areas of the DoD DOTMLPF construct hold no less truth today than they did for the Continental Army over two centuries ago.

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<sup>127</sup> Buchanan, 34-35.

### Summary: Analysis of Doctrine, Organization, and Training

First, it is hard to imagine that the Continental Army would execute European-style division-sized maneuvers by May 1778 after their humiliating performances throughout the Philadelphia Campaign of 1777. This required new fighting doctrine for the rebels, and a completely new unit organization combined with a complete revamp in their training. Yet, that is exactly what Washington achieved by the Battle of Monmouth, New Jersey, when he pitted his freshly transformed Continental Army faced Clinton's British force. By the battle's end, there were upsetting outliers on the British side. The British lost an unprecedented number of casualties equivalent to the rebels. They forfeited the terrain to the Americans, and they also experienced major desertions throughout the ranks with over 600 British troops abandoning the army.

The significance of the Battle of Monmouth Court House for the Continental Army was that Washington's soldiers were a far cry from the ragged, freezing, ungainly, and half-starved collection of men who began the Valley Forge encampment in 1777. This was a direct result of Steuben's efforts and the hard work Washington and his men put in to the comprehensive transformation of the patriots' doctrine, organization, and training. The U.S. DoD Joint Publication 1 (JP1), *Doctrine of the Armed Forces of the United States*, describes doctrine as those fundamental principles that guide the employment of military forces in coordinated action toward a common objective.<sup>128</sup> JP1 goes on to emphasize the symbiotic relationship between doctrine, good organizational

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<sup>128</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), Joint Publication 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States* (Washington, DC: JCS, 12 July 2017), XXV.

structure, and effective training. Ultimately, the coordinated action through well thought out doctrine and a well-organized, trained, and equipped force ensures success.

The Continental Army fought the Battle of Monmouth with their new unifying doctrine (in the European-style of linear warfare), combined with their new battalion-size organizational structure, and supported by countless hours of unrelenting training.

Trussell puts it best. The Continental army demonstrated that it, “had become an army-proficient in the skills of their trade, responsive to their leaders, and the first time competently and responsively led.”<sup>129</sup> The Battle of Monmouth was an achievement for Washington because the patriots saw it as a victory. The British, having slipped away to New York at night, conceded not only the field to the Continental Army, but a victory to Washington.

An army’s doctrine, common organization, and effective training provide it with a common warfighting philosophy. General George H. Decker, U.S. Army Chief of Staff from 1960-1962, believed these three elements are the common language and common purpose that provides the organization a unity of effort.<sup>130</sup> In this analysis, unity of effort is the integrated approach of harmonizing everything the American troops had learned at Valley Forge into the better-drilled and organized Continental Army. This allowed the patriot army to retain their foothold at Monmouth and drive the British to New York. This set a new tone for the war. Following the Battle of Monmouth, the Americans

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<sup>129</sup> Trussell, 46.

<sup>130</sup> JCS, JP 1, I-1.

continued to hone their skills with raids and probes, ultimately forcing the British to capitulate in 1781.

#### Summary: Analysis of Material, Leadership, and Policy

Aside from the doctrinal and organizational reforms of the Continental Army, Washington also directed his attention towards other changes of his military organization at Valley Forge. Again, it is hard to fathom, that anyone could have improved the dire sustainment strategy that the Continental Army was forced to endure, let alone tackle the army's poor but contentious service benefits, or change the pre-1777 Franco-American dogma towards the conflict. Yet, that is exactly what Washington embarked on and successfully helped resolve while at Valley Forge.

The analysis in this work referred to the term "material" of the DOTMLPF construct, to dissect the Americans' ability to resupply and sustain the Continental Army. However, the idea of material support was better analyzed through the broad lens of logistics and sustainment support of the American troops by the summer of 1778.

Washington's army had been ill equipped and poorly supplied. By the time the rebels encamped at Valley Forge, the lack of food, clothing, and material were significantly jeopardizing the army's survival. For the Continental Army to endure, Washington was forced to rethink his sustainment strategy.

The U.S. DoD Joint Publication 4 (JP4), *Joint Logistics*, describes sustainment as the provision of logistics and personnel services that maintain operations until the

mission is accomplished.<sup>131</sup> JP4 goes on to emphasize the importance of the force's sustainment support. Sustainment determines the depth to which the force can conduct decisive operations, allowing it to seize, retain, and exploit the initiative.<sup>132</sup> Ultimately, the force's ability to effectively sustain itself means the difference between its endurance and continual freedom of action or its culmination and consequent defeat.

The Congressional Committee at Camp, appointments of key logisticians (like Wadsworth and Greene), and open dialogue and detailed coordination between the army and the Congress Supply Department helped Washington keep his army resupplied and together. However, this achievement was significantly strengthened by additional sustainment support from the Franco-American alliance.

There is no doubt that Washington was a great leader. He demonstrated superb leadership through his actions to change his army's training and expanded his army's logistics, but his actions to bring about military reforms to increase his men's military benefits conveyed motivation and spurred his men's fighting spirit. As a result, the word spread of the changes taking place within the army and new recruits started trickling into the camp.

By the summer of 1778, the Continental Army officers had expectations of postwar pensions, and congress had approved new military re-enlistment bonuses. Combined with effective training, improved sustainment support, and a new warfighting

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<sup>131</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), Joint Publication 4, *Joint Logistics* (Washington, DC: JCS, 8 May 2019), I-1.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

doctrine, Washington experienced increased recruiting and his Continental Army ranks grew.

France's commitment to the Americans and its declaration of war against Britain not only meant more material resupply (clothing, firearms, and ammunition) for the Continental Army, but also thousands of French troops were making their way to fight the British alongside the patriots within the states. The new French-American Policy toward America's War for Independence bolstered the rebels' hearts and further emboldened the patriot cause. The civil rebellion within the British Empire had turned into a world war. Spanish and the Dutch Netherlands declarations also followed formal declarations of war between France and Britain. As a result, Britain could no longer sustain the war effort across the Atlantic or afford a world war with its European neighbors. Certainly, this policy change ultimately served to bolster the American hearts and help spur army recruitment.

#### Final Deduction

One of history's most renowned military theorists, Carl von Clausewitz, stated in his famous work, *On War*, that, "history had no lessons or rules to offer the student; it could only broaden his understanding and strengthen his critical judgment."<sup>133</sup> The analysis of this work was compiled to gain a broader understanding of what it takes to make an effective military organization. The lessons from Valley Forge demonstrate that, effective doctrine, an organization characterized by standardized, well-disciplined, and

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<sup>133</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, eds. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976).

well-equipped personnel, and effective and well-structured training played a critical role in the transformation of the Continental Army during the American Revolutionary War. The road ahead of the Valley Forge encampment was still long and full of adversity, but all the efforts during that period led to what historian, John Trussell, highlights as “the giant step toward achievement of the new nation’s ultimate goal of firmly established independence.”<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Trussell, 46.

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