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The Revolutionary War (War of American Independence): United States Army and the Forging of a Nation, from Colonial Militia to the Continental Army in the American Revolution, Valley Forge, Yorktown

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This significant historical work produced by the U.S. Army Center of Military History about the overall history of the American Revolution. Excerpted from the Army Historical Series - American Military History, Volume 1, Second Edition, it provides a great overview of the Revolutionary War from the beginnings to the surrender of Cornwallis and Yorktown.

The United States as a nation was in its origins a product of English expansion in the New World in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a part of the general outward thrust of West European peoples in this epoch. British people and institutions, transplanted to a new continent and mixed with people of different origins, underwent changes that eventually produced a distinctive American culture. In no area was the interaction of the two influences—European heredity and American environment—more apparent than in the shaping of the military institutions of the new nation.

The American Revolution came about fundamentally because by 1763 the English-speaking communities on the far side of the Atlantic had matured to the extent that their interests and goals were distinct from those of the ruling classes in the mother country. British statesmen failed to understand or adjust to the situation. Ironically enough, British victory in the Seven Years' War set the stage for the revolt, for it freed the colonists from the need for British protection against a French threat on their frontiers and gave free play to the forces working for separation.

In 1763 the British government, reasonably from its own point of view, moved to tighten the system of imperial control and to force the colonists to contribute to imperial defense. As part of an effort to make the costs of empire be borne by all British subjects, his majesty's government sought to create an "American Establishment," a force of 10,000 British regular soldiers in North America. The cost of this military force would be paid for by taxes the British Parliament levied on Americans. This imperial defense plan touched off the long controversy about Parliament's right to tax that started with the Stamp and Sugar Acts and led to a final provocative deed in December 1773 at the "Boston Tea Party." This party resulted in the destruction of a cargo of East India Company tea by a patriot mob in a protest against "taxation without representation."

Contents: The Beginnings * The European Heritage * The Military Revolution * Eighteenth Century European Warfare * The Colonial Scene * Colonial Militia * The Colonies in the World Conflict, 1689-1783 * The American Rifle * The Colonial Heritage * The American Revolution, First Phase * The Outbreak * Formation of the Continental Army * The Invasion of Canada and the Fall of Boston * The New Nation * Evolution of the Continental Army * The British Problem * Of Strategy * The British Offensive in 1776 * Trenton and Princeton * The Winning of Independence, 1777 - 1783 * The Campaign of 1777 * Valley Forge * First Fruits of the French Alliance * The New Conditions of the War * British Successes in the South * Nadir of the American Cause * Greene's Southern Campaign * Yorktown: The Final Act *

Surrender of Cornwallis * The Summing Up: Reasons, Lessons, and Meaning

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Eduardo Fernandez:

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