“Insurgency and Allegiance in Revolutionary South Carolina”

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❖ Introduction

In 1778, the American Revolution in the north became stalemated. The British seemed unable to catch - much less destroy - George Washington's Continental Army, which in turn, lacked the strength to retake British strongholds. With the French and Spanish entering the war and threatening Great Britain on a global scale, the British Commander Sir Henry Clinton and the American Secretary Lord George Germain decided to adjust the British strategy and turn efforts toward the south. Initially, the British Southern campaign appeared unstoppable. The British recaptured Savannah in late 1778, and in February 1780, Clinton invaded South Carolina. On May 12, Charleston and the largest Continental army in the South capitulated. Within the month, British and Loyalist forces occupied towns and corridors across the interior from Augusta to Ninety-Six, north to Rocky Mount and Camden, and east to Cheraw and Georgetown. Hundreds of Carolinians swore an oath of allegiance to the Crown, including several high-ranking Patriot political and military leaders, such as General Andrew Williamson and Continental Congressman Henry Middleton. Thousands more accepted parole, returned home, and pledged to cease fighting. With many Patriot leaders exiled, imprisoned, paroled, or dead, the insurgent government collapsed. British military success climaxed when Lord Cornwallis routed the last Continental Army in the south at Camden in August.[1]

Despite these British victories, resistance intensified in the South Carolina backcountry. This Patriot insurgency critically undermined the British war effort, and contributed to their

[1] Don Higginbotham, "Defeat and Victory in the South," in *History of the Military Art to 1914*, 3rd ed., (New York: Pearson Custom Publishing, 2008), 121-126; The memoirs of the Continental Commander Henry Lee and British Commander Banastre Tarleton are excellent (although biased) sources that provide accounts of the military operations including relevant correspondence, orders, reports, proclamations, and other primary documents. Henry Lee, *Memoirs of the War in the Southern Department of the United States* (Washington D.C.: Peter Force, 1827). Banastre Tarleton, *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781 in the Southern Provinces of North America* (London: Forgotten Books, 2018).

ultimate defeat. The British were unable to manage the insurgency in the South Carolina backcountry because they became focused on destroying Patriot insurgents. To achieve this, the British enacted policies and conducted operations that inflamed pre-existing social tensions. They allied with the marginalized groups including white outcast, slaves and Indians, they chose not to re-establish civil government, and they incited cycles of violence by removing neutrality as an option. Understanding these social tensions helps clarify the nature of the insurgency and the decisions of people who chose to fight for either side. However, few historians examine revolutionary South Carolina within the context of these social issues.

Historians have argued that the British lost the southern campaign because their policies failed to support Loyalism, reconcile insurgents and isolated neutrals. Furthermore, they argued that that campaign failed because its viability was predicated on the fallacious assumptions of Loyalist numbers and capabilities. Others have been more generous to British assumptions, but argue that the British failed to effectively integrate the Loyalists into the war effort. Lastly, many historians point to British policies that undermined their legitimacy in the eyes of South Carolinians, especially the decision not to restore civil government, the mandate that parolees swear Loyalty to the Crown, and attempts to rally the enslaved and Native Americans to fight the insurgency.[2]

Other historians note the effect of violence on wartime allegiance. The most common argument made regarding violence is that British and Loyalist brutality undermined their

[2] Higginbotham, 121, 127; John Shy, *A People Numerous and Armed,* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990), 183-192; Paul Smith, *Loyalists and Redcoats: A Study in British Revolutionary Policy,* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1964), 58; Robert Calhoon, *The Loyalists in Revolutionary America, 1760-1781,* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1965), x; For an excellent summary of the historiography on Loyalists in the Revolution refer to Jim Piecuch, *Three Peoples, One King: Loyalists, Indians and Slaves in the Revolutionary South, 1775-1782* (Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 2008), 2-6.

legitimacy and created guerillas. This interpretation is largely the product of the popular memory of the American Revolution, the abundance of Patriot memoirs and wartime propaganda, and the dominance of the Whig histories for the century after the war. Within the last twenty years many scholars have complicated our understanding of the nature of the violence in South Carolina. However, a significant amount of the historical works displays overt biases in favor of the Patriots or Loyalists. Furthermore, in discussing violence, many historians have perpetuated stereotypes of Loyalists as either timid or terrorists. Theses biases and stereotypes detract from otherwise compelling narratives. [3]

Much less well understood in the narrative of the Revolution in South Carolina is the effect of the previous decade's social upheaval and sectarian conflict on the allegiance of backcountry inhabitants. Few historians address the period from 1760 through 1774, and fewer still explicitly connect the social changes that occurred to the decisions made during the Revolutionary years.[4] However, by examining British policies and the effects of violence within the context of the social discord of the 1760s and early 1770s, we can better understand why

[3] Higginbotham, 127-130. Stephen Conway, "To Subdue America: British Army Officers and the Conduct of the Revoutionary War," in *History of the Military Art to 1914*, 3rd ed., (New York: Pearson Custom Publishing, 2008), 172-177, 180-181; James Swisher, *The Revolutionary War in the Southern Back Country*, (Gretna: Pelican Publishing Company, 2008); Walter Edgar, *Partisans and Redcoats*, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001); Smith, 58; Calhoon, x; Piecuch, 44-63, 229-258. Higgibotham, Edgar and Swisher are generally biased in favor of Patriots and portray Loyalists as terrorists although Higginbotham and Edgar acknowledge that Patriots often committed similar atrocities. Smith and Calhoon portray Loyalists in the opposite light, as timid and weak. Piecuch challenges all these authors and argues that the Loyalists were both capable and more often the victims of a Patriot initiated terrorism. For a more balanced interpretations of the brutality, highlighting both Patriot and Loyalist depredations see Rebecca Brannon, *From Revolution to Reunion: The Reintegration of South Carolina Loyalists*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2016), 12-34.

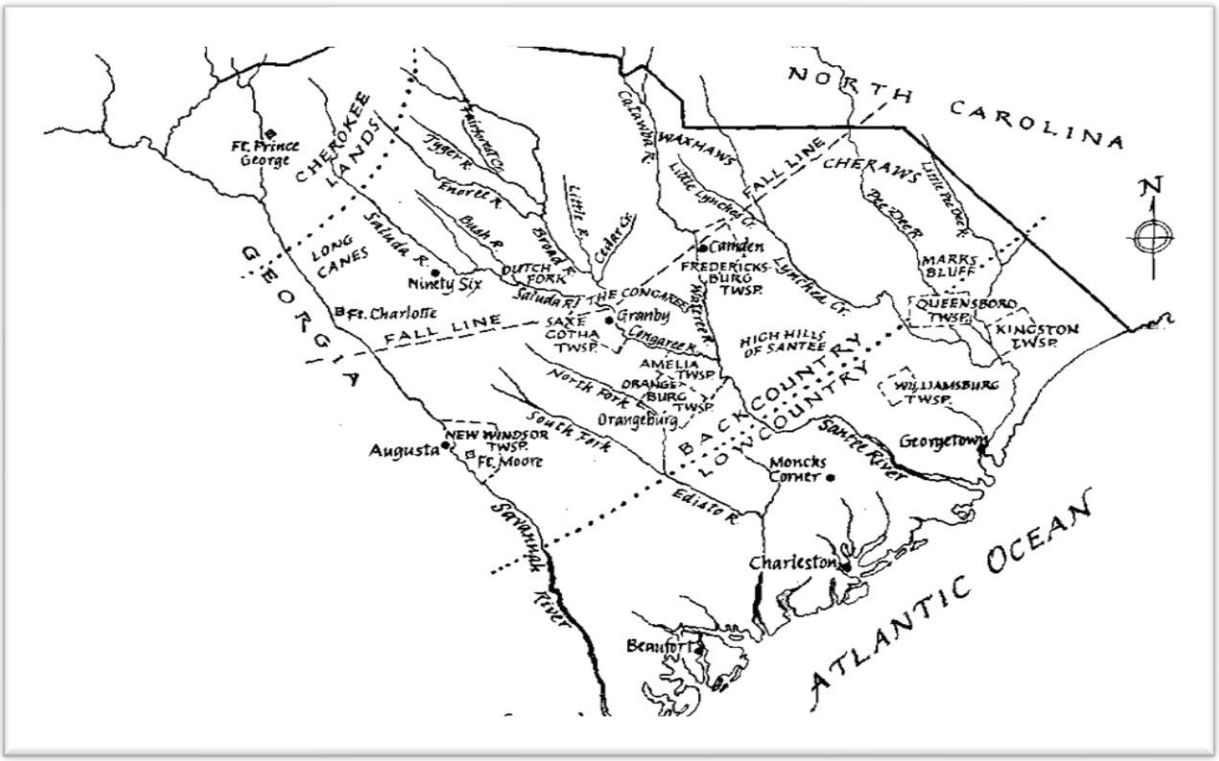
[4] Rachel Klein's first three chapters in *Unification of a Slave State: The Rise of the Planter Class in the South Carolina Backcountry, 1760-1808,* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), is an excellent account of the incipient backcountry society. She effectively and succinctly captures the patterns of settlement, social structuring and the turmoil of the 1760s, while relating those factors to the Revolution. In many ways this paper is intended to build off her work and expand the connections she introduces to other critical aspects of the British war effort. Walter Edgar also provides a useful examination of backcountry society in his first chapter of *Partisans and Redcoats*, but the link between social factors and Revolution are not explicit throughout his work.

backcountry South Carolinians increasingly resisted British attempts to pacify the colony. Overtures to slaves, however vacillatory, alienated the rising planter elite that commanded the allegiance of large numbers of residents. Attempts to coordinate offensives with the Cherokee invoked memories of destruction and fear, and in a rare instance, united Patriots, Loyalists and neutrals in a campaign against the native allies of the British. The decision not to reinstate civil government and its apparatuses in the backcountry, subjected residents to the hardships that inspired the Regulation movement of the late 1760s. Lastly, after five years of relative stability under Patriot control, the British occupation was defined by escalating violence that affected neutral civilians. The British failed to understand the social tensions in the backcountry. Their policies and methods of countering the insurgency alienated supporters and created insurgents of many who would have preferred neutrality.

❖ The Backcountry on the Eve of War: Division, Chaos and Regulation

At the start of the Revolution, the majority of the backcountry had only been settled for a generation. During the 1750s generous offers of land and headrights from the colonial government drew an estimated 55,000 immigrants into this space. The preponderance of these immigrants were Scottish or Scotch-Irish, but large numbers of Germans and nonconformist English arrived as well. Most were colonial transplants, coming from Pennsylvania, Virginia or Maryland, but a large number came from Europe as well. Unlike the largely European Anglican inhabitants of the low country, they were predominantly Baptist and Presbyterian. Communities were formed around ethnic and religious lines in communities such as Waxhaws and Long Canes. Sectarian animosities could be fierce. Settlement was chaotic, and many claimed

whatever open land they could find. No courts or other government institutions existed, and inhabitants seeking legal justice or title to their land had to make the costly trip to Charleston.[5]



Map of South Carolina circa 1770.[6]

The 1760s were marked by intense instability in backcountry and tensions between its residents and the colonial government of Charleston. The intrusion of European immigrants on Cherokee lands resulted in a war that devastated the countryside. During the Cherokee War of 1760, Cherokees were forced to evacuate west, settler homesteads and native villages were

[5] D.W. Meinig, *The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History*, vol. 1, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 291-3; Robert Mitchell, "The Southern Backcountry: A Geographical House Divided," in *The Southern Colonial Backcountry: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Frontier Communities*, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1998), 16-21; Edgar, 2-11.

[6] Klein, 12.

abandoned or destroyed, and refugees crammed into makeshift forts. To make matters worse, bandits took advantage of the chaos to plunder and murder. Requests for assistance to the Commons House of Assembly went unanswered. In late 1767, backcountry residents organized into bands of Regulator led by prominent social or economic leaders. Despite initially condemning the Regulators, the Commons House of Assembly eventually authorized them to organize into companies to check the outlaws and by June 1768 the outlaws were largely contained.[7]

Regulators refused to relinquish their authority and turned their attention to policing "those who failed to measure up to respectable standards of morality and industry." They used the lash to beat those they perceived as undesirable – vagrants, the lazy, and those "suspected or known to be guilty of mal-practices" – into compliance or out of the colony. Although sympathetic to their motives, a growing number of settlers were alienated by their methods and arbitrariness. Regulators increasingly used violence to disrupt court proceeding against their friends, and some began to use their status to settle personal grudges. By early 1769, resentment of the Regulators resulted in the creation of the Moderators who appealed to the governor's council for assistance. After receiving authorization from the council, the Moderators launched a short but violent campaign to arrest known Regulators. In March 1769, the two groups met on the Saluda River prepared for a fight, but two prominent backcountry leaders intervened to prevent bloodshed. These leaders negotiated a truce between the two factions, both sides disbanded, and a measure of stability and peace came to the region.[8]

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[7] Richard M. Brown, *The South Carolina Regulators*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963).

[8] Ibid., 46-49. 83, 89-95.

The Regulation highlighted the sectional tensions between the low-country elites and backcountry inhabitants. Throughout the chaotic settlement of the 1750s and early 1760s the low-country colonial elites paid little attention to the troubles of the backcountry, even during the destruction of the Cherokee War. As the colonial assembly became more embroiled in the colonial challenge to British authority in the middle of the decade, the needs of the backcountry inhabitants remained unaddressed. Only a few elites - such as Henry Laurens - who had substantial landholding in the backcountry, as well as economic and social connections with members of the rising planter class, attempted to assuage the troubles. In one instance, Laurens criticized a particularly bellicose representative, Christopher Gadsen, for declaring in the assembly that "he would rather submit to the destruction of one half of the Country than to give up the point in dispute with the Governor." However, these sympathies produced no actual reforms. In 1767 the Regulators sent a petition to the colonial assembly demanding reforms in the court systems, taxation, land acquisition, and political representation, but were ignored. The violence of the Regulation forced the lowland officials to acknowledge backcountry grievances. In 1768 the Privy Council created the first two backcountry parishes, and six Regulators were elected to the colonial assembly. In 1769, two more Regulators were elected, and the Assembly passed the Circuit Court Act of 1769 which established four backcountry judicial districts with courts, jails and sheriffs. During the early years of the Revolution, these concessions proved crucial to winning over the preponderance of the Regulators, who aspired to political, economic, and social equality with the Lowcountry elites.[9]

[9] Andrew Johnson, "The Regulation Reconsidered: Shared Grievances in the Colonial Carolinas," in *The South Carolina Historical* Magazine, vol. 114, no. 2 (April 2013), 132-154; Klein, 38-42, 47-77; quote from Henry Laurens to Christopher Rowe, Feb 8, 1764 found in Klein, 38.

The Regulation also revealed the internal divisions within the nascent backcountry society. Bandits were not the only targets of Regulator vigilantism. Another class of colonists, often described as hunters, vagrants, "white Indians" or men who "live like Indians," were also targeted and included in Regulator definitions of banditti. While many of these individuals were indeed criminals a great number were simply landless refugees, hunters who made their living off of the deerskin trade, farmers whose yields could not support their families, or those who otherwise lacked the means to engage in a farm-based economy. Regardless, they became regarded by the Regulators as "Vagrants-Idlers-Gamblers, and the Outcasts of Virginia and North Carolina." Regulators also targeted individuals of similar backgrounds to their own including planters, magistrates, and merchants. In some instances, Regulators believed these persons aided criminals or abused their status for personal gain at the expense of the Regulators or their friends. In other instances, Regulators were simply settling personal vendettas or engaging in their own acts of robbery. The Moderators who rose to challenge the Regulators found allies among other targeted groups such as the hunters and banditti. One prominent Moderator, Joseph Coffel, deputized known criminals, and used his warrant as an opportunity to attack his enemies and pillage. Moderator excesses soon soured much of the population and government officials. Although a battle between Moderators and Regulators was prevented by negotiations, factional lines within the backcountry were being entrenched.[10]

As the constitutional crisis came to a boiling point through 1774 and 1775 most backcountry residents were uninterested in the ideological contests of the low-country. Securing their lands against the Cherokee, providing for their families and improving their economic

[10] Richard Hooker, *The Carolina Backcountry on the Eve of Revolution: The Journal and Other Writings of Charles Woodmason, Anglican Itinerant,* (University of North Carolina Press, 1953), 180-187; Klein, 47-64, quote likening colonists to Indians found on 51, quote describing people as vagrants, idlers, etc. found on 54.

standing remained the top priorities. Many resented the ambivalence and condescension of the assembly during the crises of the past decade. However, throughout the war, the Patriots proved more adept at understanding and managing these social tensions. They leveraged social, economic and political ties with key backcountry leaders, conducted a deliberate campaign of persuasion and propaganda, and quickly neutralized influential Loyalists. On the other hand, British policies often exacerbated these tensions. The British allied with groups many settlers saw as pariahs, property or enemies (bandits, Cherokee, and slaves), they chose not to re-establish government institutions, and their Southern campaign seemed to perpetuate- rather than mitigate- violence and destruction.

❖ The Patriot Insurgency Seizes Power

In 1771, disputes between the royal governor, Lord Charles Montagu and the colonial assembly effectively shut down governance. The assembly refused to pass any legislation and Patriots began to establish an alternative government. Patriots in Charleston leveraged resentment against the Tea Act and Intolerable Acts to call for a general meeting in Charleston in June 1774. Within the year, delegates from this meeting had created a Provincial Congress, taken control of the Charleston militia and appointed a Council of Safety to replace British authority. Patriot leaders incited mobs to intimidate Loyalists to sign their "Continental Association" which declared their opposition to Great Britain. The most fortunate who refused were disarmed and placed under house arrest. Others were tarred, feathered, humiliated or tortured. Having lost all semblance of control, the royal governor, Lord William Campbell, was forced to flee the city and take refuge aboard his ship in the harbor. By the end of 1775, the Patriot insurgency in

Charleston employed intimidation and violence to successfully suppress opposition from Loyalists and seize control of the government.[11]

However, even as governor Campbell was relegated to his ship, he took heart that in the situation in the backcountry. Four days after he fled, he wrote, "The loyalty of those poor, honest, industrious people in the back part of this and neighboring provinces discontent [the low country Patriots] greatly."[12] Although he may have overestimated the amount of Loyalist support that actually existed, he recognized that the Patriots were rightfully concerned about the allegiance of the backcountry residents. To win their support, Patriot leaders appealed directly to local elites. The allegiance of these elites, who enjoyed significant social and economic influence, was key to the allegiance of entire communities. Lowcountry Patriots recognized the importance of these local leaders and leveraged the backcountry elites' economic and political ambitions to win their support.[13]

Patriot efforts to build alliances with local leaders paid dividends. The Patriots were especially successful winning over former Regulators. Of the sixty-one Regulators whose allegiance is definitely known, eighty-two per cent were Patriots. Many of the Regulators were enticed to support the Patriot cause by offers of political and military leadership in the new government. Sixty percent of those Regulators who served in the Patriot military were officers, and twelve served as representatives in the Provincial Congresses of 1775-1776. [14] Among non-

[11] Piecuch, 15-17, 44-47; Edgar 26-29

[12] William Campbell to Lords of Trade, Sept. 19, 1775, found in Klein, 78-79.

[13] Brannon, 16. Peter Moore, "The Local Origins of Allegiance in Revolutionary South Carolina: The Waxhaws as a Case Study," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, Vol. 107, No. 1, (Jan 2006), p. 27.

[14] Richard Brown, 124.

Regulators, some influential local leaders such as Richard Richardson, William Thomson and Joseph Kershaw readily committed to the Revolutionary cause. Many of these men were ideologically motivated. Many also believed that supporting the Patriot cause was the surest way to secure their social and political status in the colony. Some had prosperous economic relations between their communities and the low country. Joseph Kershaw, for example, was perhaps the most economically prosperous and socially influential individual in the Camden region. His trading partnership was headquartered in Charleston and among his many business partners was the prominent Whig, Henry Laurens. Others such as Richard Richardson and William Thomson were offered and accepted prominent commissions in the militia.[15]

Despite their successes many prominent figures such as Joseph Robinson, Philip Mulkey and Thomas Fletchall rejected the Patriot overtures. In a letter to Henry Laurens, president of the Council of Safety, Fletchall declared, "I am resolved and do utterly refuse to take up arms against my king, until I find it my duty to do otherwise and [am] fully convinced thereof." Robinson, Mulkey and Fletchall's influence ensured that many militia and New Light Baptists remained Loyalists. Among the Regulators, some continued to identify the Charlestonian Whigs as the more egregious violators of social and political justice. Six of them, most notably Moses Kirkland, Robert Cunningham and Charles Woodmason remained ardent Loyalists. Furthermore, the social divisions that defined the Regulator-Moderator conflict reignited, and the vast majority of the Moderators, including John Musgrove and Joseph Coffell, were quick to oppose the Patriots. It is believed that as the Revolution began, Loyalists strongholds existed between the Broad and Saluda River, Fairforest area and the Saxe Gotha District while the population of the

[15] Joseph Ernst and H. Roy Merrens, "Camden's turrets pierce the skies!": The Urban Process in the Southern Colonies during the Eighteenth Century," *The William and Mary Quarterly,* vol. 30, no. 4 (Oct. 1973), 562-563; Edgar, 30-31.

Ninety-Six District, was evenly split. In 1781 General Nathanael Greene would include the Pee-Dee and Camden areas as regions where Loyalism evenly matched Patriotism.[16]

To assuage the Loyalists in the backcountry, the Patriots first conducted a campaign of persuasion from April through August 1775. They dispatched the Baptist Reverend Oliver Hart, the Presbyterian Reverend William Tennent, and the Council of Safety member William Henry Drayton to appeal to religious bonds and inflame ideological opposition to Britain. Their appeals did not result in the desired conversions. Hart found that fellow Baptists of Fairforest led by the Reverend Philip Mulkey were "so fixd on the Side of the Ministry, that no Argument on the contrary Side, seemed to have any Weight with them." Drayton and Tennent met similar resistance at Congaree Store and other gatherings along the Saluda River. After Fletchall allowed Drayton to address his regiment, only 70 of the 1,500 militiamen signed the Continental Association. Tennent's journal and their reports to the council of safety throughout August suggest that of the hundreds of people they spoke to, the vast majority opposed their efforts. Furthermore, many who signed the Association, did so in the face of threats and shows of force. Patriots attributed this resistance to the influence of local leaders, especially Kirkland, Cunningham, and Fletchall.[17]

The Patriots turned to force when persuasion and coercion failed to attract backcountry residents to their cause. In September, Drayton and Colonel William Thomson informed Laurens and the Council of Safety that they planned to gather the Patriot militia to subdue the Loyalists.

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[16] Fletchall to the Council of Safety, July 24, 1775, in Robert Gibbes, *Documentary History of the American Revolution*, (New York: D. Appleton & CO., 1855), 123-24; Edgar, 30.; Klein, 78.

[17] Christopher Gould, "The South Carolina and Continental Associations: Prelude to Revolution," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine,* vol. 87, no. 1 (Jan, 1986), 43-45; Oliver Hart, "Diary," August 9, 1775; Piecuch, 49-52.; Klein, 84-89.

They believed that if they moved quickly enough, they could arrest Kirkland, Cunningham and Thomas Brown while intimidating Fletchall into submission. By the end of December, the Patriots achieved their objectives. Fletchall signed the Treaty of Ninety-Six, promising neutrality for peace. Robert Cunningham was arrested and imprisoned in Charleston along with 136 other Loyalists. The other leaders, Patrick Cunningham, Moses Kirkland, Joseph Robinson and Thomas Brown, were forced to flee to Governor Campbell or East Florida. Those imprisoned were only released after pledging neutrality, but many returned home to find their property destroyed or confiscated. With their victory, the Patriots had "obliged many hundreds of the Insurgents to Surrender their Arms, took about 150 prisoners of their most troublesome ringleaders & drove out of the Country Such as would not Surrender."[18]

The Patriot victory in 1775 significantly undermined the capacity of Loyalists to challenge them militarily later in the war. They seized control of the militia, and intimidated remaining Loyalists into neutrality. Most of the Loyalists' most experienced leaders such as the Cunningham brothers and Joseph Robinson, had been arrested, or fled. For nearly five years, the Patriots completely controlled the militia, and when the British invaded in 1780, they benefited from the authority, organization and equipment that provided. Even as emboldened Loyalists rose to resist Patriot influences, their lack of rifles, horses, and leadership meant that without direct British support, they were fighting from a position of weakness. However, their victory did not result in widespread Patriot fervor. The majority of the population desired to remain out of the conflict altogether. In Waxhaws, for example, there had been little overt Loyalism and no apparent Loyalist leadership. Despite this lack of Loyalism, less than one-sixth of the men who

[18] Gould, 46; Piecuch, 52-57; Thomson to Henry Laurens, September 6, 1775; "Agreement for a Cessation of Arms" between Robinson and Williamson, November 22, 1775; Henry Laurens to Robert Deans, January 8, 1776.

fought for the Patriots throughout the war, joined prior to the start of the British southern campaign in 1779.[19]

Significantly, the Patriot victory was accomplished with limited destruction and ushered in a period of relative stability. Casualties were few and many of the captured Loyalists were paroled. Throughout the colony, Patriots demanded oaths of loyalty and abjuration. Those who refused the oaths, such as the Loyalists Colonels Zacharias Gibbes and John Philips, were subjected to arrests and harassments, but were allowed to remain on their farms as long as they remained neutral. Most chose neutrality until the British seized Savannah or Charleston. Other such as Alexander Chesney, were incorporated into the Patriot army (albeit begrudgingly) and even served in combat against the Cherokee and British.[20] The Patriots secured South Carolina by allying with backcountry elite, and forcibly removing those who challenged them. Their campaign of 1775 was extremely effective, and they expelled all elements of British authority. They intimidated Loyalists into neutrality and confiscated property. Most importantly, they generally allowed those who wanted no part in the conflict to remain on the sidelines, as long as they did not challenge Patriot authority.

❖ British Alliances with Indians, Slaves and Outcasts

In order to understand the British military campaign in the south, it is necessary to understand the "southern strategy" as it was conceptualized by British leadership. Sir Clinton,

[19] Moore, 31-33.

[20] Petition of Zacharias Gibbes, 4 December, 1783; Petition of Colonel John Philips, 10 December 1783; Petition of Captain Alexander Chesney, 11 December 1783. Petitions found in Ruma Chopra, *Choosing Sides: Loyalists in Revolutionary America*, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 131-139.

Lord Germain and others believed that by conquering the southern colonies from Georgia to Virginia, they could cut off the Patriots' primary financial channels of overseas trade and foreign aid. Without economic and military support flowing north, British forces would be able to defeat the weakened and demoralized insurgents in the middle colonies and New England. Underpinning this strategy were three assumptions. First, they believed that the majority of the inhabitants of Georgia and the Carolinas were Loyalists who would readily support the British once they arrived with sufficient force. Second, they presumed that the diverse social geography was a weakness of the southern colonies that could be exploited. Specifically, they believed they could incorporate native tribes and the large population of African slaves into their campaign. Third, they believed that the sparsely populated and loosely organized countryside would facilitate policing conquered territory. Based on these assumptions the British believed they could accomplish their strategy with an "economy of force." They would rely on a small regular army and local allies to defeat the insurgents, conquered territory would be turned over to Loyalist forces to police and defend, and civil government would be re-established to provide law and order to the civilian population. [21]

After the Patriots seized control of the colony in late 1775, many of the Loyalists continued to raid the frontier from bases in East Florida or Cherokee country. One of the most active and prominent leaders of these raiders was the Moderator, Joseph Coffel. Coffel returned to the tactics he employed during the Regulator-Moderator conflict. He received a commission from the British, gathered a force of accused criminals, hunters, and other social outcasts, and turned to pillaging. He became so hated by the Patriots and backcountry inhabitants, that the

[21] Shy, *A People Numerous and Armed,* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990), 198-201; Smith, *Loyalists and Redcoats.*

term “scoffelite” entered common usage to describe a class of Loyalist perceived as bandits. Even the former Regulator, Charles Woodmason, who became a vocal and ideological Loyalist, disparaged these raiders as nothing more than rogues that “called themselves Friends of Government.” Other Loyalists such as Richard Pearis and Daniel McGirt became labeled as bandits and scoffelites because of their association with Indians and Slaves. Pearis, a wealthy trader, had married an Indian woman and established ties with hunters and the Cherokee. He was accused of inciting the Cherokee against the Patriots and fled to East Florida, finding refuge among friendly Indians along the way. McGirt, became a Loyalist and was forced to flee after a Patriot officer put him on trial based on false charges. McGirt received a Colonel’s commission from the British and led an interracial band of whites, Indians and blacks (including many escaped slaves). McGirt’s band became infamous for plundering property and slaves (some of whom they sold), and after the war, they continued pillaging the estates of wealthy Loyalists in Florida. British support of irregular groups led by social outcasts such as Coffel, Pearis and McGirt alienated many backcountry residents who saw these forces as more akin to the banditti of the 1960s than legitimate military forces.[22]

The outcries against McGirt’s incorporation of slaves into his band spoke to another widespread fear in the backcountry. The British had threatened to destroy the slave system by offering freedom to runaways. Although the number of slaves in the backcountry was a fraction of that in the Lowcountry, it had been steadily rising throughout the 1760s and had reached roughly six thousand by 1770. Most of these slaves were owned by the elite, but many backcountry settlers hoped to acquire their own. For the Regulators, slave ownership was an

[22] Klein, 95-100; Walter, 72.

important factor in their status as leading men. In fact, one of the grievances listed in the Regulators' remonstrance of 1767 was that thieves often stole money that was saved to buy slaves. Charles Woodmason recognized the growing demand for slaves in the 1760s, and attempted to invoke fears of slave rebellion to dissuade inhabitants from acquiring more. His attempts bore little – if any - results. As the war escalated, slaves were frequently offered as bounties to Loyalist and Patriot fighters alike, and became a preferred target for pillagers. The British challenge to the slave system, alienated many residents, including Loyalists. In reality British attempts to leverage slaves against the Patriots were half-hearted at best. Prominent Loyalists such as William Bull, strongly opposed the British policy, and British commanders demurred. Although approximately twenty to twenty-five thousand slaves escaped to British lines, few slaves were employed under arm to fight the Patriots, most were employed in manual labor, and many were returned to their owners. British vacillation may have lessened the anger of slave owners and aspirants, but it remained a powerful motivator.[23]

British plans to mobilize Indians against the insurgency were especially unwelcome in South Carolina during the early years of the Revolution. As early as July 1775, word spread that the British Indian Superintendent was urging Cherokee and Creek Indians to attack along the frontier of South Carolina. The Continental Congress disparaged these actions proclaiming "the wild and barbarous savages of the wilderness have been solicited, by gifts, to take up the hatchet against us: and instigated to deluge our settlements with the blood of innocent and defenceless women and children." Patriot newspapers across the colonies, including South Carolina published these and similar condemnations, and the message spread throughout the

[23] Piecuch, 18; Brannon, 19-21.

backcountry.[24] In May 1776, British officials confirmed this fear when they disseminated a propaganda letter across the frontier calling on the settlers to openly declare their loyalty. The letter stated, "whoever of you are willing to join his Majesty's forces as they arrive at the Cherokee nation, by repairing to the King's standard, shall find protection, and their families and estates be secured from all danger whatever."[25] Two months later, Cherokee raiders began attacking across the frontier from Georgia to Virginia. The South Carolinian response was overwhelming. Under the leadership of a patriot Commander, Major Williamson, backcountry colonists, many with Loyalist sympathies, formed a militia and devastated the Cherokee along the frontier. They defeated their warriors and razed their villages.[26]

Overtures to the Cherokee and other Indians were particularly egregious to the South Carolinians. The destructive Cherokee War of 1760 had been one of the principle factors in creating the chaos that prompted the Regulation in the 1760s, and the colonial Assembly's disregard of the settlers' concerns had been an enduring point of friction between the regions. The British plan and the decisive Patriot-led response effectively erased that tension and replaced the Lowcountry elite with the British as the object of backcountry disdain. The Cherokee threat briefly united Loyalists and Patriots under arms in a cause they would all support. Loyalist Captain, Alexander Chesney- who was usually very equivocal about his service with the Patriots- noted nonchalantly that he "did not mind" going to war with the Indians, and that he "helped to

[24] Robert Parkinson, "From Indian Killer to Worthy Citizen: The Revolutionary Transformation of Michael Cresap," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, vol. 63, no. 1, (Jan 2006), p. 107-109.

[25] Carl Berger, *Broadsides and Bayonets: The Propaganda War of the American Revolution*, (Papamoa Press, 2017), p. 38.

[26] Edgar, 36-37.

destroy 32 of their towns."[27] According to a report from Charleston, "A number of the heads of the Tories in this province, when they heard of the breaking of the Indians, wrote to our governor and told him they never dreamt the King would descend to such lawless and diabolical designs; that they were now willing to do everything in their power to assist their brethren in America. These are men of influence on the frontiers, and will be very useful against the Indians."[28] Although the tangible impacts are now impossible to determine, the British attempts to leverage the social and demographic diversity in the Southern theatre, undoubtedly caused more harm then good. Overtures to slaves, Indians and social outcasts alienated many residents who saw such alliances as a threat to the social order that many- especially the Regulators and other elites- envisioned for their communities.

❖ Martial Law and Forced Allegiance

Following the British seizure of Charleston in May 1780, Patriot cause seemed lost. The shadow government was dispersed; presses printing Patriot propaganda were shut down; roughly 5,100 Continental soldiers and militiamen were imprisoned or paroled. For the British, "the situation appeared to call for restraint, wise rule, and rapid restoration of civil government." At first it appeared as if civil authority would return swiftly. Clinton had brought the former governor of North Carolina, Josiah Martin, to South Carolina with the intent to establish him as the new governor.[29] Additionally, in his proclamation of May 22, 1780, he declared, "for the

[27] Alexander Chesney, *The Journal of Alexander Chesney, a South Carolina Loyalist in the Revolution and After*, Ed. Alfred E. Jones, *Ohio State University Bulletin* 26 (October 30, 1921), 7.

[28] Report found in Berger, 39.

[29] Smith, 128-130; Piecuch, 183.

encouragement of the King's faithful and peaceable subjects, I do again assure them, that they shall meet with effectual countenance, protection, and support; and whenever the situation of the country will permit the restoration of civil government and peace, they will, by the commissioners appointed by his Majesty for that purpose, be restored to the full possession of that liberty." Those commissioners included himself and Admiral Marriot Arbuthnot.[30]

Admiral Arbuthnot, American Secretary George Germain, and many others believed the rapid establishment of civil government was critical to consolidating control of conquered territory. The Loyalist Lt. Governor William Bull asserted that doing so would "establish the public Tranquility on a lasting foundation." Others like James Simpson believed that it would go so far as to win over Patriots. Even Alexander Hamilton conceded that the establishment of civil government would reconcile many inhabitants and "prepare the minds of their neighbors to yield to an early submission." However, Clinton worried that civilian officials would hinder military policy and actions. Despite urgings by Germain, he reneged on restoring civil government throughout the colony. Instead he divided authority between Charleston's military commandant, Brigadier General James Paterson, and the head of the "board of police," James Simpson. By choosing to maintain martial law, Clinton bolstered Patriot arguments that they, not the British, provided a legitimate government, a critical issue for the residents of the backcountry.[31]

Prior to the Regulation one of the primary grievances by the backcountry residents was the lack of governmental institutions, especially courts. All matters of justice were adjudicated in Charleston, and the cost of travelling to the city for many settlers was prohibitive. In the

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[30] Henry Clinton, "Proclamation," May 22, 1780, in Tarleton, *A History of the Campaigns,* 74.

[31] Piecuch, 183. Alan Taylor, *American Revolutions: A Continental History, 1750-1804,* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2016), 234.

Regulator Remonstrance, Woodmason had highlighted that in many cases, "The Time and Charge consequent on a Prosecution of the Offenders, is equal too, or Greater than his Loss… And in Civil Cases, the Recovery of Twenty Pounds, will frequently be attended with Seventy Pounds Costs."[32] The Regulation succeeded in convincing the Assembly to establish government institutions in the backcountry, and these institutions persisted under Patriot rule. Now, residents were once again compelled to seek justice or other services in Charleston, or at best, from a British officer posted to the backcountry. The increased violence made the trip more hazardous, and justice was not guaranteed from British military authorities or the overwhelmed board of police. In fact, many Loyalists derided the equity of the board's policies. They decried the fact that the British stripped the right of trial by jury and that the British demanded more from Loyalists, precisely because Patriots could not be held to account.[33]

Not only did Clinton fail to re-establish civil authority, he issued a series of proclamations that removed the prospect of neutrality from paroled Patriots. According to the terms of surrender, "the militia now in garrison shall be permitted to return to their suspected homes as prisoners on parole; which parole, as long as they observe, shall secure them from being molested in their property by the British Troops." It continues, "All civil officers, and the citizens who have borne arms during the siege must be prisoners on parole; and with respect to their property in the city, shall have the same terms as are granted to the militia." Clinton promised peace. The defeated could return to a sense of normalcy at home in exchange for promising to not take up arms again. Ten days later, he once again displayed his desire for

[32] Johnson, 147.

[33] George McCowen Jr., *The British Occupation of Charleston, 1780-82*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1972), 38.

reconciliation by promising "a full and free pardon will be granted for the treasonable offences which they have heretofore committed." Only those who had murdered Loyalists would be excluded from this pardon. [34] Combined with British military victory, these proclamations had the real possibility of extinguishing resistance. According to the Whig James Collins, "vast numbers flocked in and submitted; some through fear, some through willingness, and others, perhaps, through a hope that all things would settle down and war cease." [35] But on June 3, Clinton issued a final proclamation, which removed neutrality as an option and forced parolees to choose a side. He declared, "It is become unnecessary that such paroles should be any longer observed; and proper that all persons should take an active part in settling and securing His Majesty's government." Anyone who did not swear an oath of allegiance and report to their local Loyalist militia by June 20 (17 days), "will be considered as enemies and rebels."

Clinton intended to force Patriots into compliance by exposing them to Loyalist reprisals. He wrote, "by thus obliging every man to declare and evince his principles I gave the Loyalists an opportunity of detecting and chasing from among them such dangerous neighbors, which they could not with any propriety have attempted as long as the paroles continued in force." Furthermore, Clinton had demanded that everyone capable join their local militia. "Those who have families will form a militia to remain at home, and occasionally to assemble in their own districts, when required, under officers of their own [choosing], for the maintenance of peace and good order." Those men without families would "serve with the King's troops for any six months

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[34] Henry Clinton and Admiral Arbuthnot, "Articles of Capitulation," in Tarleton, *A History of the Campaigns,* 64-65; Henry Clinton and Admiral Arbuthnot, "Proclamation," June 01, 1780, in Tarleton, 76-8.

[35] James Collins, *Autobiography of a Revolutionary Soldier,* (Clinton, LA: Feliciana Democrat Print, 1859), *24.*

of the ensuing twelve that may be found requisite, under proper regulations."[36] The militia would assume responsibility for security in South Carolina, mostly in their local areas. Instead of peace in neutrality, South Carolinians were obligated to swear allegiance, join the British militia, and conduct operations against the non-compliant. In the backcountry this meant the very real possibility of fighting former comrades and members of their local community.[37]

❖ Mobilizing the Loyalists and Increasing Violence

After their victory at Charleston, the British swiftly moved to extinguish remaining pockets of resistance in the colony. They relied on local Loyalists to assist them in arresting recalcitrant Patriots and destroy or confiscate their property. As noted in the introduction, however, the historical conversation about the contributions and character of Loyalists is extremely contentious. The biases prevalent in much of this historiography fails to convey the complex role that Loyalist forces played in the outcome of the campaign. Loyalist support was the keystone assumption that made the southern strategy viable. Loyalists conducted reconnaissance, provided provisions, established a measure of security in a savagely contested rear area, disrupted Patriot operations, and inspired thousands more Loyalists to declare their support. However, after nearly five years of suppression, coercion and theft under Patriot rule, many Loyalists were eager to exact revenge. The British placed themselves in the midst of social conflicts they didn't understand (often believing that they did). By choosing sides they

[36] Henry Clinton, "Handbill circulated after the surrender of Charles town," in Tarleton, *A History of the Campaigns*, 71-72.

[37] Smith, 141. Clinton's statement, "by thus obliging every man…" found in McCowen, 54-55.

aggravated these conflicts, enabled violent reprisals against perceived enemies, and inadvertently set off cycles of violence that turned South Carolina into the deadliest theatre of the Revolution.

On May 22, 1780 Major Patrick Ferguson was appointed by Clinton as Inspector General of Militia. Ferguson's ability, performance, and results are the subjects of significant debate amongst historians.[38] What is indisputable however, is his effectiveness in building the militia despite significant constraints. Patriot control of the militia for the previous five years, and the purge of Loyalist leaders made it difficult to access enough weapons and appoint effective officers. The British continually struggled to provide the militia with muskets, and many companies were forced to rely on older, often unserviceable weapons.[39] Despite these limitations, the Loyalist militias demonstrated remarkable progress over the next months. In Charleston, eleven companies of over 400 men were raised and assumed responsibility for policing the city. In Orangeburg district and the little Pee-Dee area, the Loyalist militias similarly assumed a security role. They maintained control until Cornwallis's army left the Carolinas for Virginia in 1781. In Ninety-Six, Ferguson managed to assemble eight battalions of 1,500 militiamen. In total, by late August between four or five thousand men were serving in the backcountry militias.[40] Despite progress, Cornwallis was still skeptical of their abilities. In mid-

[38] It is interesting to note however, that among Loyalists, Ferguson was widely praised. According to Franklin and Mary Wickwire he "cultivated a familiarity with loyalists unusual among British officers, who tended to treat American civilians of whatever political persuasion with contempt." Lyman Draper, who Piecuch refers to as a "hero-worshipper and a patriot" noted "He would sit down for hours and converse with the country people on the status of affairs…. He was as indefatigable in training [the militia] to his ways of thinking, as he was in instructing them in military exercises." Although these claims are impossible to substantiate, the success he had drawing Loyalists to him, and the discipline of his Corps, even in defeat on King's Mountain, indicate a measure of truth. Wickwire and Wickwire, *Cornwallis and the War of Independence*, (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1971), 203-204.

[39] This shortage was by no means due to lack of trying by the British. Thousands of weapons intended for Loyalists were actually lost in a storm enroute from England, and thousands more were destroyed in an explosion of the Charleston magazine in May. Smith, 140.

[40] Smith, 141. Piecuch, 187-194.

July he reported to Clinton "that the Numbers & Disposition of our Militia equal my most Sanguine expectations. But still I must confess, that their want of Subordination & Confidence in themselves, will make a considerable regular Force always necessary for the defence of the Province, until North Carolina is perfectly reduced." [41] Although often subject to the criticisms of Lord Cornwallis and some of his staunchest supporters, such as General Charles O'Hara, by the late summer, the foundation of a viable militia was established and the quality of their contributions and character did not go unnoticed.

After the war, Lord Rawdon, who commanded British forces in South Carolina after Cornwallis invaded North Carolina and Virginia, would vehemently defend Loyalists from "most unjust" criticisms. Even some Patriots, including the Continental Cavalry Commander Henry Lee, provided favorable characterizations of the Loyalists. According to Lee, "great and effective were the services drawn from them; not only in the field, where they fought with acknowledged valour, but in procuring intelligence and providing provision. Mr. Stedman, a British officer, and in the commissariat under Lord Cornwallis, tells us, that the army would have been often destitute of provisions, but for the capacity and the activity of the inhabitants who repaired to the royal standard." [42] Their greatest operational contributions proved to be in providing reconnaissance and security to Regular British forces. Prior to the battle of Camden for example, their service as scouts enabled Cornwallis's subordinates to avoid guerillas, and gather intelligence on Gates's army. Other Loyalists fighting as guerillas disrupted the Continental

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[41] Cornwallis to Clinton, July 14, 1780, *Clinton-Cornwallis Controversy* by Sir Henry Clinton, (London: 1888), 233.

[42] Lee, 110.

logistics and prevented Patriot reinforcements from reaching the main army.[43] Most importantly, they're presence in a region served to inspire Loyalists living under Patriot control to resist the insurgency as was seen at Gilbert Town North Carolina. One of Ferguson's Lieutenants, Anthony Allaire noted that as Ferguson's Corps moved into Gilbert Town, 500 inhabitants from the area took the oath of allegiance. Patriot James Collins confirmed this when he noted, "Tories were flocking to his standard from every quarter." [44] Loyalist forces were, in many respects, effective contributors to Britain's strategy of pacification in South Carolina, not the weak link that doomed the occupation to failure.

However, despite the progress made in recruitment, and the positive contributions made, many Loyalists and their British allies did great harm to the overall efforts of the British. After conducting an investigation into the level of Loyalism in the backcountry, the Royal Attorney General James Simpson warned Clinton of the resentment and hostility that many Loyalists harbored. In his report, Simpson classified the population of the colony into four categories: those Loyal by principle; the disaffected, ready to embrace royal authority; those who supported the Patriot cause but who would now reluctantly accept royal authority; and the ardent Patriots who would never submit. Simpson found fewer Loyalists by principle than expected, but he concluded that those Loyalists and the disaffected outnumbered the ardent Patriots. In closing, however, he warned Clinton of a fifth group. A significant number of Loyalists had suffered at Patriot hands prior to the arrival of the British, and Simpson believed they had no intention of letting peace return until they had exacted revenge.[45] Clinton understood these sentiments well.

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[43] Piecuch, 192-193, 328-329.

[44] Anthony Allaire, September, 24, 1780, "Diary of Lieut. Anthony Allaire, of Ferguson's Corps"; Collins, 50.

[45] Simpson to Clinton, May 15, 1780, enclosed in Clinton to Germain, May 16, 1780, CO 5/59.

In a letter written to Germain, Clinton claimed "[loyalist] spirits are not such as will permit them to submit totally to military control. Stung with resentment at the ignominious treatment they have received, and urged by indigence to venture their lives for the supply of their wants, their wish was to gratify their double impulse, and to ravish from their oppressors the property which had often in fact been their own."[46] However, as noted previously, Clinton believed that the British could use Loyalist anger to coerce Patriots into submission.

British regular units further exacerbated the violence. They attached themselves to Loyalist groups and aggressively pursued those they believed to be Patriots. Among the foremost targets were former Patriot military officers. Thomas Sumter and Andrew Pickens, for example, both accepted parole, and appeared willing to respect their neutrality. However, British and Loyalist raids on their estates, prompted both to return to arms against the British. Sumter and Pickens would become two of the most successful guerilla leaders in the entire war. Many of the other backcountry elites who had supported the Patriots, such as Joseph Kershaw, were imprisoned and had their property confiscated. The British did try to win over some of the prominent Patriot leaders such as General Richard Richardson. Lord Cornwallis is said to have met personally with the venerated General and offered him "any office or title he might wish." Richardson refused, and he was arrested. British failures to convince quality officers from the backcountry elite, meant they continued to rely on socially divisive individuals. In the Pee Dee region, the British Major James Wemyss commissioned the Harrison brothers, John, Robert, and Samuel to lead a Loyalist regiment in the region. The Harrisons, however, bent on plundering, were unable to enlist more than one hundred into the Regiment (less than one-fifth of the

[46] Clinton to Germain, Dec. 15, 1779, CO 5/99

anticipated numbers). Even Wemyss, a man known for his own heavy handedness, called the recruits, "banditti." The Harrisons drew the ire of the locals and within the year all three would be dead. John and Samuel were murdered while bedridden with smallpox. [47]

In addition to the elites, the British also deliberately targeted the Scotch-Irish Presbyterians. According to Colonel Banastre Tarleton, "the Irish were the most averse if all other settlers to the British government."[48] Their methods were particularly aggressive in dealing with this population. In one instance, Captain Christian Huck, an officer of Tarleton's British Legion, led a detachment of Legionaries and Loyalists to Fishing Creek Church, to detain a minister who had preached rebellion. Finding the clergyman gone, they satisfied themselves by killing a boy, looting the church and burning it. Huck continued to plunder and disparage the Presbyterian community of the New Acquisition District until local leaders and clergy rallied a force to surround and destroy his company. Huck was not alone in his targeting the Scotch-Irish. Major Wemyss became particularly notorious for deliberately burning their churches which he labeled "sedition shops." The consequences of these operations are exemplified in the dramatic increase in enlistments in the predominantly Scotch-Irish Waxhaws' community. Two out of every three soldiers from the Waxhaws who served during the war, only enlisted after the British began operations in the region. Prior to that point, the community had appeared to prefer neutrality.[49]

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[47] Higginbotham, 128; Edgar, 60-62, 128-129.

[48] Tarleton, 88.

[49] Brannon, 16; Edgar, 58-59, 73-83; Moore, 32-34.

❖ Conclusion

By February of 1781, the British had lost the momentum needed to win in the South. The Loyalists crushing defeat at Battle of King's Mountain sapped many Loyalists' willingness to take up arms. Three months later, Lieutenant Colonel Tarleton and his British Legion were decisively defeated at Hannah's Cowpens, and the Legion - Cornwallis' most victorious unit - never recovered. The perception of British invincibility was shattered. The belief that Great Britain could provide security and end the war continued its downward spiral. Most importantly, Nathaniel Greene had reformed the remnants of the southern Continental Army and through his skillful application of Fabian tactics, he ensured Cornwallis never again enjoyed the freedom of maneuver he had in 1780. With Greene capable of retaking British strongholds in South Carolina and Georgia, Cornwallis had no choice but to focus on defeating this threat. Greene was appalled at the brutality he saw when he arrived in the southern theatre, and he recognized that his own patriot militias were as much to blame as the Loyalists. In December 1780, he accused the militia of having "laid waste the country and so corrupted the Principles of the People that they think of nothing but plundering one another." Along with the newly returned Patriot governor, John Rutledge, Greene endeavored to restrain the violence and quickly establish civil government. [50]

The cycle of violence that engulfed South Carolina ravaged the colony. In 1780, sixty-six percent of all Patriots killed in action and ninety percent of all wounded in action, occurred in South Carolina. The conflict raged for two more years and on the whole, roughly one in five Patriots died and one in three were wounded in South Carolina. None of these figures include the numbers of white Loyalists, slaves, or Indians who were also killed and wounded. Nineteenth-

[50] Klein, 102-104; Brannon, 27; Terry Golway, *Washington's General: Nathanael Greene and the Triumph of the American Revolution,* (New York: Henry Holt Publishing, 2006), 272-273.

century historian, George Bancroft described the situation as “the bitterest afflictions of civil war…. Families were divided; patriots outlawed and savagely assassinated; houses burned, and women and children driven into the forests; districts so desolated that they seemed the abode only of orphans and widows.” Of course, Patriots were not the only victims. Loyalists and neutrals suffered just as – if not more – severely.

This paper is not intended to disparage the abilities of British commanders like Clinton for their shortsightedness. Clinton and Cornwallis were confronted by a situation which their military profession did not prepare them for. They dealt with a complicated insurgency whose nature perplexes modern professional militaries. The British were never in a position to direct all their resources into combatting the irregular aspects of the American insurgency. From its inception the insurgency was able to field large armies with capabilities almost on par with the British. What the Continental Army lacked in experience it compensated for in its ability to incorporate irregular forces into the conventional army, and its ability to replenish losses at a rate the British could not. The natural geography of the north American colonies also ensured that the British could never firmly control the interior of the country with the limited manpower available to them. In the face of these challenges British commanders fell back on their experiences. For Cornwallis, his distrust of Loyalist militias was grounded in experiences of their shortcomings in both the northern and southern theatres. It may appear obvious to modern readers that reinstating civil government would have done much to attract neutral parties to the British cause. However, it is doubtful that governmental functions could have been provided to colonists outside of British controlled areas given the presence of Continental armies and guerilla columns. This

reasoning helps illustrate why Cornwallis was determined to continue his offensive despite rapidly deteriorating security in South Carolina.[51]

Rather, this paper has attempted to highlight that the British failure to recognize important social factors and tensions that resulted in policies and military operations that alienated a large number of South Carolina's backcountry residents. As the constitutional crisis escalated during the first half of the 1770s, the backcountry was more averse to the Charlestonian Patriots than an imperial rule that had little impact upon their lives. However, the Patriots assuaged the sectional tensions on the eve of war and persuaded the majority of the backcountry elite, including most of the Regulators, to join their cause. Without British support, the large Loyalist populations were overwhelmed by Patriot forces, and their leaders were arrested or exiled. For the next five years, the Patriots completely controlled the colony, and they intimidated, coerced and robbed Loyalists. However, during their uncontested reign, widespread violence was minimal and neutral populations were left relatively unmolested. The British made their first mistakes by allying with groups many inhabitants despised, and the Patriots successfully painted the British as the instigators of banditry, Indian invasion, and slave insurrection. The British seizure of Charleston in 1780 nearly defeated the insurgency in South Carolina and Georgia, but the British made several more critical errors. They failed to re-establish civil authority, which had been a hard-won concession of the Regulation era in the backcountry. They removed neutrality as an option and demanded that Loyalists, neutrals and Patriots alike serve in the militia. They failed to reconcile with the elites, and drove many back to the Patriot cause. They enabled some Loyalists to pursue campaigns of revenge, and actively

[51] For an excellent essay on the shortcomings of contemporary military education and doctrine see Charles Heaton, "The Failure of Enlightenment Military Doctrine in Revolutionary America: The Piedmont Campaign and the Fate of the British Army in the Lower South," *The North Carolina Historical Review,* vol. 87, No. 2 (April 2010) 127-157.

participated in aggressive campaigns against those they believed were Patriots, especially the large population of Scotch-Irish Presbyterians. The southern strategy, as conceived by its proponents, had identified the diverse social and demographic geography as a weakness that the British could leverage. Instead, they helped usher in a period of violence on a scale that no other colony experienced throughout the Revolution.

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