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THE BRITISH SOUTHERN CAMPAIGN IN THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR: IMPLICATIONS FOR CONTEMPORARY COUNTER INSURGENCY

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ABSTRACT

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The British effort in the Southern Campaign (1780-82) of the revolutionary war failed because of flawed national strategy and a failure to focus sufficient elements of national power against a background of competing global threats. In the American colonies, military power in isolation was ineffectively substituted for diplomatic, political and economic effort. The operations in the Carolinas took place because no other strategic options were available given the basic and faulty strategic assumptions.

Although there is not a direct comparison between the eighteenth century British Army and today's US Army there are a number of parallels. The US led coalition counter-insurgency campaign in Iraq has marked similarities to the failed Southern Campaign. Training to fight a symmetrical opponent in a conventional conflict is not the best preparation for fighting an overseas counter insurgency campaign in an alien environment.

THE BRITISH SOUTHERN CAMPAIGN IN THE REVOLUTIONARY: IMPLICATIONS FOR CONTEMPORARY COUNTER INSURGENCY

This paper will examine British grand strategy and outline opponents' objectives, and then consider the operational level and execution of the Southern Campaign before briefly comparing some issues concerning the expeditionary armies of eighteenth-century Britain and the contemporary United States. The main body of the paper contains a brief narrative of the Revolutionary War in order to set the context for the analysis of the campaign and the comparison of the respective armies.

To try and draw absolute parallels between British strategic concerns in 1780 and American strategic concerns in 2006 would be foolish but there are some undoubted similarities. The difficulty of selecting appropriate grand strategic priorities when the homeland is threatened whilst conducting large-scale expeditionary operations is common to both eras. Understanding the nature of particular conflicts and operational environments is also essential to success. This requires appropriate political engagement, direction and subsequent allocation of sufficient national and military resources .

At theatre level, there is a requirement to understand the political and military dimensions together with the need for a sound intelligence base to formulate achievable campaign and operational objectives. The link between the political and military spheres is absolute when operating in the context of insurgency and civil war. In overseas counter-insurgency operations the inclusion and development of capable local forces is a prerequisite for success no matter what the frustrations may be. There has to be a military focus on the essential requirement to provide security to civil authority, friendly and uncommitted civilians in preference to searching for what may seem to be more attractive tactical military "victories". Ultimately in an insurgency the will and loyalties of the population are more important than a contest of arms.

The British failure in the Southern Campaign of the American Revolution provides a useful case study of how poor grand strategy almost inevitably descends into poor campaign strategy and tends towards failure. Their conduct of the Southern Campaign was deficient, and despite some tactical victories by conventionally capable, well-trained regular troops, the effort ended ignominiously in surrender to the rebels and their French allies at Yorktown. This phenomenon has been repeated in other theatres and campaigns and is crucial to understanding why wars are lost, even when battles are won. Examples include Napoleon's and Hitler's respective invasions of Russia; both invading armies achieved high levels of capability at the operational level but were undone by the shortcomings of the underlying strategy. The Germans in particular elevated the practice of the operational art to a very high degree but lost two World

Wars because of defective strategies.[1] American involvement in Vietnam might also be considered another example of this pattern.

The Legacy of the Seven Years War

The causes of the American revolutionary war were partly a legacy of the worldwide Seven Years War[2]. Although Britain ended what was the first “world war” as the apparent victor, in 1763, she found herself diplomatically isolated in Europe. The Convention of Westminster meant that she lost her alliances with Russia and Austria and her abandonment of Prussia ensured that she retained no major continental allies. The French post-war ship-building effort that replaced wartime losses was of most concern to Britain because combined with Spanish and Dutch maritime capabilities it posed multiple threats to her colonies and global trade.

Most significantly for the American colonies, it was the cost of the war and the increased costs of garrisoning substantial new territories that caused Britain financial discomfort. The British government sought a contribution towards the cost of colonial defense but the American colonists’ enthusiasm for the presence of British troops waned rapidly with the end of the French and Indian threat. In their view, the imperial government owed them security, as a duty, and the imperial record of commitment and delivery was patchy at best. Twelve difficult years followed the military victory over the French as the British government pressured American subjects to pay garrison costs. This issue upset the delicate imperial-colonial equilibrium. The particular grievances were a symptom of the real cause that went at least as far back as the 1680s. The British government and colonists had never really agreed upon the division of political power between the mother country and her colonies. The government in London saw the colonial assemblies as the equivalent of only municipal councils but some Virginians at least saw them as a parliament or representative body answerable only to the king.[3]

The British government further alienated its American subjects by barring them from the new lands gained by the Treaty of Paris[4] by the imposition of the so called Proclamation Line. The significant disconnect between the imperial government’s expectation of colonial contributions and the colonists’ expectations of expansion into new territory were missed by Britain’s political elite. Unable to raise direct taxes, the imperial government began to levy import duties. The Stamp Act of 1765 marked the beginning of a decade of increasingly acrimonious imperial-colonial relations.

The fusion of political and financial grievances led to conflict. In 1774, the Quebec Act granted French settlers rights over religion and administration of the Ohio valley. The effect

was to incense the Thirteen Colonies such that by 1775 they were in open rebellion. This act of treason, as it was viewed by some in Lord North's[5] government, colored the imperial response towards the colonists. British politicians viewed the political process as dead and they treated the colonists as a criminal or security problem that was best solved through the use of force. By the time war broke out in 1775, the revolutionaries had convinced themselves of their ability to organize and operate successfully outside colonial institutions. Real power had drifted outside colonial assemblies and into radical political opposition groups such as the Bostonian based "Sons of Liberty"[6] who could not only defy but effectively emasculate colonial officials. In London, politicians had become convinced of the need to impose the Crown's authority but failed to prepare for the integration of assumed widespread Loyalist[7] support.

The British effort was lopsided, at least from a modern conceptual framework to describe the elements of national power such as Diplomacy, Information, Military and Economy (DIME). The political and diplomatic channel was completely abandoned by the British government. In consequence, the battle for the hearts and minds of undecided civilians in the colonies, using ideas and information, went by default. Some economic levers were used such as the disruption of French-American trade but these could not compensate for the fatally disproportionate pre-eminence of the military effort. Military power was expected to repair critical deficiencies in the imperial government's approach by imposing a solution, rather than addressing the wider, underlying issues. However, even in the security sphere, the British effort was incomplete as the British relied predominantly on their regular imperial troops.

The problem of combining provincials[8] and British regulars for effective imperial defense was never addressed before the outbreak of hostilities. As the momentum towards open conflict grew, London enthusiastically received pledges of Loyalist support but did nothing to convert them into concrete proposals or capabilities . The British Army forgot the lessons it had painfully learned in the American colonial theatre against a potent combination of French regular and irregular forces and failed both to snuff out the insurrection and to harness the enthusiasm of the Crown's loyal subjects. Once fighting broke out, the British were unable to prevent rebel seizures of territory and it took at least a year to harness Loyalist support in any tangible form. The British expectation of useful Loyalist support persisted to the end of the conflict and "the plans that were formulated left much room for optimism and accordingly throughout the remainder of the war persistently reappeared in British strategy"[9].

The Major Events of the Revolutionary War

Britain struggled for five years to retain its colonial possessions in North America but only the major events of the Revolutionary War, which provide political and military context for the Southern Campaign, will be briefly noted here. In 1775, the British Army's clumsy attempts to conduct a pre-emptive raid on the colonial militia arsenal at Concord and the skirmish at Lexington moved the ever-widening conflict from the political to military sphere. The battle of Bunker or Breed's Hill, June 17th, 1775, pitched regular British troops against colonial militia and civilians. It demonstrated that neither side was well prepared for the ensuing struggle. Despite a Pyrrhic victory, the British remained confined to Boston for the rest of the year, surrounded by a hostile civilian populace, and devoid of a clear strategy. In December, the colonists attempted to seize and conquer Canada, demonstrating the vulnerability of British colonial holdings to insurrection.

Late in 1775, Lord George Germain[10], the new Secretary of State for the Colonies, gave direction to relieve the siege of Quebec. Subsequent operations were to strike south to the Hudson River from Canada, to attack New York and Long Island, all with the overall aim of separating New England from the other colonies. 1776 saw some British naval raiding that helped push the Thirteen Colonies to the formal declaration of political independence on July 4th, 1776 and recreate themselves as the Thirteen United States of America. The declaration forced the civilian population to choose between remaining loyal to the Crown or supporting American republicans. The ensuing conflict resulted in a civil war with all its attendant unpleasantness.

The British campaign met with mixed results; Canada was cleared but little progress was made further south by early 1777. After an amphibious landing, the British had secured New York and Long Island by the end of 1776 and chased Washington across New Jersey. Washington's bold strike at Trenton and his escape from Princeton wrested the strategic initiative back from the British. By the end of 1776, the British Army was still not within striking distance of Philadelphia, the perceived seat of rebel government in the Thirteen Colonies.

British attempts to mount a Southern Campaign in 1776 were conspicuously ineffective. North Carolina Loyalists were defeated at Moore's Creek Bridge on February 27th, before the arrival of British regulars at Cape Fear on March 12th, and the attempt to seize Charleston, South Carolina was abandoned, after the defenders inflicted heavy damage on Royal Navy ships in June.

1777 saw the British fail to coordinate the various elements of their strategy. The isolation and defeat of the British force at Saratoga, New York shattered British prestige in the

colonies and worldwide. The rebels had shown themselves to be determined, and capable of synchronizing the actions of both Continentals and militia under the right leadership. This combination was later to prove particularly effective in the Southern Campaign. In August, Washington marched south to counter the British landing at Chesapeake Bay and although he lost the battles of Brandywine Creek and Germantown, he managed to preserve his army. The main significance of 1777 was that despite the occupation of Philadelphia, Britain permanently lost the military initiative as she was forced to divert scarce military resources elsewhere.

The entry of France into the Revolutionary War in February 1778, inadequate British resources, and American military resilience significantly changed the conflict. Although the rebel "capitol" of Philadelphia had been recaptured, the essence of the nascent United States was embodied in Washington's army, and this remained intact. As Britain faced numerous threats, particularly French and Spanish, in Europe, the Caribbean and India, her freedom of action in America became ever more circumscribed.

British strategic effort in the colonies was weakened when troops were sent to the West Indies to fight the French in 1778. Philadelphia was evacuated in June and the battle of Monmouth, New Jersey followed. Although tactically indecisive, it demonstrated that the strategic balance had swung decisively to favor the Americans. Once again, British regulars had been unable to destroy a rebel force and the Americans' military durability was confirmed.

The British strategy now aimed to hold the cities of New York and Newport, Rhode Island and use them together with Canadian bases to raid rebel ports. In the meantime, a Southern Campaign was planned. A French fleet arrived off Newport in July, in order to assist an American besieging force but was forced to withdraw by bad weather. The French withdrawal in turn caused the American troops to lift the siege of Newport. The British resumed raiding the New England coast, and used provincial corps to raid the borders of New York and Virginia. The Southern Campaign opened as the British seized Savannah, Georgia in December 1778 and captured Augusta, Georgia in January 1779.[11]

Late 1778 saw the British under pressure in the West Indies and embroiled in a war with the Maratha Confederacy in India; the conflict continued until 1782. In America, the British were hemmed in at Newport, and New York, and the focus of land operations began to move south as a result of the northern stalemate. From 1779 the civil war in both the northern and southern colonies became inexorably more unpleasant, as Loyalists, rebels and Indians fought fiercely for control of the interior.

The entry of Spain into the war in 1779 further increased the pressures on British national power. The campaigning in the northern colonies was small in scale and consisted mainly of

raiding on land and from the sea. In Georgia, the British abandoned Augusta in March, leaving Loyalists exposed to the mercy of pro independence factions. In May, a British raid at Hampton Roads, Virginia, destroyed ships and goods but provided no lasting strategic effect. Finally, the British successfully defended Savannah against a combined American-French force in October but lost Baton Rouge to a Spanish attack. The Spanish threat swung the strategic maritime balance firmly against the British. The direct results were that a French-Spanish invasion of mainland Britain became a real possibility in August, and Gibraltar was besieged.

By the end of 1779 British focus was drifting south. The successful defense of Savannah was a rare bright spot at a difficult time. Failure to bring Washington's army to a decisive battle in the north, as well as a dearth of imperial reinforcements, resulted in a new emphasis on the apparent possibilities offered in the south. Newport was abandoned, New York's defense was maintained and 7,000 men were assembled for a campaign in South Carolina. Any advantage that the British might have accrued from this reorganization was swiftly cancelled out by the arrival of a French army in 1780 that allowed a combined American-French force to move to Virginia.

The British Southern Campaign opened, under the command of General Sir Henry Clinton[12], with the seizure of Charleston in May 1780, but news of the arrival of French reinforcements resulted in the redirection of precious troops to New York. The prosecution of the Southern Campaign then devolved onto General Cornwallis [13]. The presence of British forces in South Carolina ignited the smoldering civil war that was marked by increasing viciousness and brutality on all sides. The British victory at Camden, in August 1780, resulted in a subsequent move into North Carolina by Cornwallis, but a British-led Loyalist flank protection force, under Major Patrick Ferguson[14] was destroyed at King's Mountain on October 7th, 1780.

In December 1780, Washington appointed General Nathanael Greene[15] as commander of the American Southern Army. A second British attempt to re-enter North Carolina resulted in another decisive victory for American forces at Cowpens, as well as the near total destruction of the Loyalist British Legion. By sheer determination, Cornwallis eventually cornered Greene at Guilford Courthouse, but could only force an expensive tactical victory at a strategically unsustainable cost. Disillusioned by his failure to find viable Loyalist support in the interior of the Carolinas, Cornwallis moved to Wilmington on the coast. Despite other tactical successes such as Lord Rawdon's[16] victory at Hobkirk's Hill, South Carolina, the British were confronted by the reality that they controlled nothing more than coastal enclaves.

Cornwallis made an independent decision to move to Virginia where he was eventually pinned down at Yorktown by a combined American-French land force and denied the support of the Royal Navy by the presence of a powerful French fleet. When the Americans and French were finally able to synchronize their combined land and maritime components, they achieved a pivotal success against inadequate British forces. The Southern Campaign thus became the decisive campaign of the Revolutionary War. Although its scale and genesis were relatively modest compared with other endeavors, its intensity and effect were not. By 1782 both sides may have been close to exhaustion after years of struggle, but it was the British who gave in first. Even had the Americans capitulated it is a matter for speculation whether Britain could have retained the Thirteen Colonies for more than a short time. The campaign has resonance for two reasons; the first is the need to identify viable national and campaign strategies; the second is the flawed execution of a counter insurgency campaign by the British.

Grand Strategy

Britain's inability to achieve decisive military success by 1779 was due to more than just failings in leadership and approach, on the ground, in the colonies. Confronted by a revolutionary and to some extent national, American insurgency, she was simultaneously committed to operations against the French and Spanish, in the lucrative spice and sugar islands of the West Indies[17]. She was also obliged to defend Gibraltar and her possessions in India. France, Spain and other rivals were intent on exploiting British difficulties in the Thirteen colonies to serve their own interest. French involvement was largely driven by a desire to redress the loss of Canada and the accompanying negative economic and political consequences of defeat in the Seven Years War. Aiding and abetting American revolutionaries was another natural avenue of attack on British power.

Spanish attacks in the Caribbean and on the Mexican Gulf coast pulled British attention south and highlighted the need for a secure base on this coast, further stretching Britain's scarce military resources. In December 1780, Britain added to her problems, by declaring war on the Dutch Republic. This self-imposed war mired Britain even further into a morass of over-commitment and added another dimension to her strategic security conundrum.

General George Washington, the American Commander in Chief, selected by the second Continental Congress, had sustained the revolutionary spirit since 1775 and using a combination of the Continental Army and militia troops had sufficiently blunted British counter-revolutionary operations. Given firm British bases in New York, Canada, and the West Indies, together with the presence of a British Fleet, however, rebel victory was still a distant prospect.

Washington's chief advantage was time and space. He also had a number of capable subordinates who had learned their trade the hard way.

The British government failed to identify and select strategic priorities. Although defense of mainland Great Britain was the unstated but collectively understood primary objective of British strategy, there was precious little clarity elsewhere. The relative importance of Caribbean possessions, the American colonies, Canada and India was never stated. Unsurprisingly, appropriate resources could not be allocated according to need. The extent of global threats was clear; the French seized Dominica in September 1778 and in January 1780 the Spanish seized Mobile. The French defeated the British at Pollimore, India in September 1780, and in February 1781 seized St Eustatius in the West Indies. In the American colonies, this strategic confusion appeared as a shortage of resources for the task in hand and constant demands for reinforcement for neighboring theatres such as the Caribbean and Canada. "The British never mobilized their forces to exert maximum effort to achieve a defined end, nor did they define an end aside from preventing American independence."[18]

The principal American achievement had been to maintain the rebellion; the Continental Army survived despite problems with pay, discipline and enlistments. The conflict had broadened into a civil war between Loyalists and rebels and the latter's foremost political achievement had been to secure French support in a treaty signed on February 6th, 1778. The alliance with France proved pivotal in sustaining American revolutionary resolve and military resistance. As the Southern Campaign was being considered, Britain's reputation in the colonies was thoroughly tarnished both politically and militarily with friends as well as enemies. The Cabinet's political unwillingness to compromise was compounded by the British Army's failure to snuff out the rebellion and from its often heavy-handed, indiscriminate approach.

The British government denied the political nature of the problem and the result was that General Thomas Gage[19], the Commander of British forces in the colonies, at the outbreak of war, and his troops were expected to solve the problem by force or threat of force. In the British Cabinet, the American problem became a contest of arms that boiled down to strategy and tactics. The search for military success absorbed the attention and efforts of British officials. Lord North, the British Prime Minister, 1770-82, sought a quick military victory. The Army's failure to deliver it and arguably its often clumsy attempts to do so only aroused more rebel support. These actions subordinated the potential of American Loyalists' support to second place in London's considerations. Only when the search for military success proved so costly and elusive did the Cabinet consider using Loyalist potential.

By 1780, revolutionary American colonists had successfully asserted their political independence for several years. The British military response had been indecisive leading to a stalemate in the northern colonies. General Sir Henry Clinton's evacuation of 3,000 Loyalists from Philadelphia was an indicator of how little security the Crown could provide to its loyal subjects. American revolutionary success was not inevitable but only two years later the British abandoned their attempt to re-impose imperial authority.

Build up to Southern Campaign

King George III enthusiastically embraced the concept of a Southern Campaign and outlined the purpose as early as October 1775:

> to call forth those who may have a sense of duty to their mother country; to restore British Government… and leave a battalion of provincials formed from the back settlers under the command of the governor to collect such men as may be willing to serve in the British troops in America… Provincial Corps may be left for the protection of the civil magistrates…[20]

The king's intent may have been ambitious but he had correctly identified the requirement for any action to provide enduring security for civilian royal officials as a pre-requisite for the restoration of imperial rule. He also saw the need to turn colonial Loyalist support into useable military capability.

Lord William Dartmouth[21], the Colonial Secretary, gave specific direction to General Howe[22] and emphasized the need to mobilize Loyalist support: "the whole success of the measure his Majesty has adopted depends so much upon a considerable number of the inhabitants taking up arms in support of government, that nothing that can have a tendency to promote it ought to be omitted;"[23] He outlined his fears that, if the level of Loyalist support did not match up with expectations little substantive would be achieved. The expectations of Loyalist capabilities in London were considerable, as they would have to assist in the military defeat of rebel forces, maintain local security and also contribute forces to expeditions outside their home states. No allowance seems to have been made for the possibility of rebel intimidation of Loyalists and no warrants were issued to royal governors to raise regular provincial units. The ways and means authorized did not seem adequate to deliver the ambitious ends that were envisaged.

The failure of the 1776 expedition to Charleston, South Carolina was conveniently brushed aside in London as if it had never been part of the original plan. The Cabinet seized on tales of Loyalist defeats as proof of both the numbers of loyal subjects in the colonies and the moral requirement to support them. Both the revolutionaries and the British Cabinet viewed

the Loyalist rout at Moore's Creek Bridge, North Carolina as a victory. The former correctly identified the result, as a clear-cut military and public relations victory, but in London Governor Martin[24] remained confident in the continued potential of Loyalist support.

The British Commander in Chief, General Sir William Howe lacked the means to achieve his desired ends. He had made ambitious offensive plans for 1777, but these evaporated as his requests to Lord Germain, for 15,000 regular reinforcements resulted in the arrival of fewer than 8,000. Lord Germain was quick to suggest that the gaps be filled with provincials. This superficially attractive solution was driven chiefly by financial and political considerations in London. The qualitative difference between regulars and provincials and the practicalities of training, equipping and integrating Loyalist recruits were all ignored. Insulated from harsh reality by physical separation, Germain's complacency and grandiose plans alienated those who did have responsibility for concrete delivery. His actions suggest that he "did not form a thoughtful, objective opinion of the revolutionists or of the Loyalists"[25]

The optimistic assessments of Loyalist support from 1775 and 1776 were never revised. If anything, they were reinforced when the Governors of Georgia and South Carolina submitted a written "memorial" to the King and Cabinet in 1777. Based on the testimony of royal officials and exiled Loyalists, the information was at best partial and certainly outdated. The Cabinet remained half a world away both physically and in understanding of the actual situation. The absence of any current intelligence assessments from the southern colonies was ignored.

By 1780, Lord North's government was being pulled in three directions; the international struggle with France, domestic political concerns and attempts to maintain goodwill amongst friendly and uncommitted American subjects. The Cabinet could see only several years of sunk costs in terms of blood and money with precious little result. A Southern Campaign using loyal Americans seemed to be a clear demonstration of the imperial government's commitment and came with the attractive advantage that it would be cheap. Political self interest was combined with genuine concern for Loyalist friends in America. Rumors of mutinies and desertions from the Continental Army together with depreciation of the new American currency reinforced the tenuous logic that a strategic opportunity existed. The Cabinet in London unwisely combined domestic, political and military considerations to justify its policy. Smith succinctly sums up the shaky intellectual foundation of the Southern Campaign; "the administration tethered its strategy to the chimera of loyalist support"[26].

The influence of King George in coloring optimistic thinking about the level of Loyalist feeling and the moral obligation to support it was considerable. The campaign of 1780 was based on hopeful assumptions, not facts. It was chiefly a "strategy by default" because the loss

of General Burgoyne's Army at Saratoga, French intervention and global commitments precluded many other possibilities. Germain's written direction in February 1778 to Sir Henry Clinton to initiate the Southern Campaign is notable for the inappropriate language it uses. "it is the King's intention that an attack should be made upon the Southern colonies, with a view to the conquest and possession of Georgia and South Carolina"[27]. Attacking and conquering provinces supposedly brimming with loyal subjects seem strange tasks for the forces of an avowedly benevolent Crown restoring its protection to loyal subjects

Lord Germain, was not the original architect of a Southern Campaign, but he threw himself wholeheartedly behind it. As an unbending exponent of absolute colonial submission the possibility of "offensive" operations was particularly attractive. The practical difficulties of implementing policy and integrating imperial and Loyalist efforts did not trouble Germain. To reinforce this difficulty in approach, Germain's credibility as a national leader amongst regular British Army officers was damaged by his vilification as the "Coward of Minden". He had earned this unfortunate sobriquet as a cavalry commander in 1759 when he had allegedly failed to press the battle of Minden to a decisive conclusion.

General Sir Henry Clinton, General Howe's successor as Commander in Chief of British forces in America, foresaw the practical difficulties of translating ambitious aspirations into actions. He highlighted the difficulties of asking loyal subjects to declare themselves without the benefit of a credible security guarantee and functioning governance: "an attempt to assemble the friends of government in any province without giving it a fair and full tryal, so far from producing any salutary purposes, serves only to inflame men's minds and to sacrifice those friends you abandon to the rage and fury of an incensed multitude"[28]. This seeming conundrum, of how to provide security, lies at the heart of any counter insurgency campaign.

The British expectations of Loyalist support continued to outstrip reality for the remainder of the Revolutionary War. Clinton's remarks also contain the important notion that the numbers of Loyalists and revolutionaries was not as favorably balanced as was so readily assumed in London. Lord Germain played up the potential benefits of "Americanization". What he failed to grasp was that "Loyalists' virtues were military weaknesses".[29] Uncertain of their positions, the King's loyal subjects were understandably reluctant to commit themselves openly, for fear of reprisals. In a sense the reputation of the British Army, the victors in the Seven Years War, also discouraged active Loyalist participation. At least initially, it must have seemed a realistic prospect that loyal colonists could stand aside as professionally trained redcoats stamped out the rebellion.

Loyalist forces were never coherently developed, despite the British assumption that they could provide security whilst regulars conducted offensive operations. Before the war the British had neglected to develop a satisfactory mechanism for integrating regulars and provincials. All the attempted solutions had been rather ineffective and relatively expensive. Most importantly, these failures had awakened mistrust between the army and the provincial volunteers. This had the potential to develop into animosity and undermine genuine understanding in times of need. Changes to terms and conditions of service, in 1778 and afterwards, came too late. The British only reacted to the external stimulus of French intervention and by this stage several years of opportunity and goodwill had slid past.

In May 1775, Governor Martin of North Carolina had unequivocally briefed Lord Dartmouth, the Colonial Secretary, that the population had steadfastly withstood every effort of the factions to seduce them from their duty. The Governor seems to have planted the seeds of what proved to be hardy perennials at the heart of the British southern strategy; first that considerable Loyalist support could be quickly and easily mobilized and secondly that the southern colonies were essentially loyal. Additionally, it appeared that a credible case for a Southern Campaign could be made from an economic standpoint. The colonists' dependence on British exports could be used as a lever to pressure the rebels and a reason for the civilian population to look favorably towards the mother country. Five years later, the shift of military effort to the south may be termed a "strategy by default" because it occurred only when the campaigns in the North failed and in the absence of any serious attempts to wield other elements of national power. After several years of war and the absence of any effective royal authority in the south, the certain British assumption of Loyalist support was the most questionable aspect of the new strategy.

Environment of the Southern Colonies

The difficult nature of the southern theatre was underestimated in London and probably by British commanders in New York as well. There was minimal infrastructure to sustain an eighteenth-century, European Army that depended on long, transatlantic supply routes rather than local sources. Virtually every consumable used by the British had to be transported across the Atlantic and this may partly explain the propensity of their troops to indulge in pillage with all its attendant negative consequences. Although the British Army enjoyed maritime strategic mobility their very advantage also confined them to a coastal, rather than a continental strategy. The lack of any developed transport infrastructure in the interior further limited Cornwallis' reach at the operational level. Cornwallis' task in trying to maintain order in so large

a territory has been accurately and succinctly described as one of "immense difficulty" [30]. His posts were widely separated and subject to local partisan attack that severely degraded his abilities to meet any regular opponents on favorable terms. Cornwallis himself wrote

> the immense extent of this country, cut with numberless rivers and creeks, and the total want of internal navigation, which makes it impossible for our army to remain long in the heart of the country, will make it very difficult to reduce this province to obedience by a direct attack upon it [31]

The climate too was unfavorable and sickness was ever present; this drain on forces was exacerbated by the paucity of imperial reinforcements available. Such conditions did not bode well for the imperial forces. The further inland they moved from the coast the greater their difficulties, as their advantage of maritime, strategic mobility became less relevant. The practicalities of maintaining well supplied forces in a harsh and unhealthy environment to defeat partisan and regular forces were consistently ignored in London and to some extent by General Clinton in New York. The physical environment of the Carolinas remains challenging today, especially in the summer months. Despite the availability of modern medical prophylaxis the potential for sickness to debilitate an expeditionary army should not be ignored in any estimate process. Neither should the potential for extremes of weather to degrade soldiers' performance, despite technological advances.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the environment in the Carolinas that was least understood by the British was the prolonged absence of royal authority. Although some revolutionaries felt they had been abandoned by the northern colonies, they had to a large extent been masters of their own destinies, free from both congressional and imperial interference. The effect of their extended absence was to hamper all subsequent British efforts and may have been at least as important as any operational and tactical initiatives taken by Cornwallis. The Loyalists' defeat at Moore's Creek Bridge on February 27th, 1776 and Clinton's failure to take Charleston in 1776 contributed to this long-term lack of British authority. British coastal raiding had some limited effects on revolutionary forces but the military effects were merely transitory. Loyalists had little incentive to declare their allegiance to the Crown, whereas their revolutionary opponents had a free hand to intimidate and pressurize them . Finally, "Prewar patriot control of the militia infrastructure… robbed the Loyalists of any central organization to rally around."[32]

The two political objectives of a Southern Campaign were restoration of royal authority through the colonial governors and the provision of security for loyal American subjects. British influence both positive and negative was strongest in the coastal zone; royal officials were increasingly irrelevant further inland amongst the backwoods. The Carolinas' population was

divided into three groups; those for the King, revolutionaries and the uncommitted. The exact proportions will never be known but Britain made no concerted attempts to safeguard the security of her friends and uncommitted civilians .

The expedition to Georgia in 1778 was a pilot test of the validity of the British southern strategic concept that was based on the presumption of a loyal population that would rally in support of royal forces to crush the rebels. It would test the reaction of southern Loyalists and rebels. Colonels Campbell[33] and Prevost[34], the British commanders, had no clear orders and their actions set the pattern for the future. With insufficient troops they carried out intermittent offensive operations that incited opposition, but neither awed the enemy, nor restored peace to loyal subjects. Campbell's capture of Augusta allowed him to recruit fourteen hundred militia but his forays into the backcountry produced few recruits. When revolutionary forces caused Campbell to evacuate Augusta, the local militia melted away, leaving upper Georgia to the mercies of the rebels. This dismal episode was followed by Loyalist militia Colonel Boyd's defeat at Kettle Creek, Georgia. In the aftermath, the rebel leader Andrew Pickens [35] hanged several captured Loyalists and predictably militia recruits disappeared.

The seizure of Savannah, in December 1778, probably had greater impact in London than in the southern colonies. This minor success was misinterpreted by an imperial government hungry for success. After eight months campaigning, Prevost controlled little beyond Savannah and most of the colony was subject to rebel raids. The patent failure in Georgia undermined attempts to restore royal authority, but the British government saw the capture of Savannah and brief seizure of Augusta as vindication of the strategy to campaign in the south. Germain directed the return of royal officials but they spent more time busying themselves with British commercial interests than addressing the political and security situation in Georgia. Later, the British Cabinet used the same rose-tinted spectacles to read the dispatches of tactical victories such as the battles of Camden and Waxhaws.

Execution of the Southern Campaign

The causes and reasons for British failures in execution merit attention. British command and control arrangements, military campaign objectives and a comparison of General Cornwallis' and General Greene's campaigning are all of interest.

Lord Germain's desire to suppress the American revolt caused him to give detailed direction to his commanders in theatre including when, where and how to employ their forces. This enforced sharing of responsibility for operational planning between London and America did not result in success. Germain's practice not only frustrated military officers in theatre but

eventually drew criticism from Members of Parliament. Lord Germain exacerbated his strategic errors by moving between the levels of command and interfering in operational matters.

Communications across the Atlantic required between six weeks to six months by ship and safe arrival was by no means guaranteed. The communication challenges across the Thirteen Colonies then further complicated British coordination. The time delay and vulnerability of hand carried, written messages plagued British attempts to synchronize their efforts between New York and the Carolinas. The British enjoyed strategic mobility thanks to the Royal Navy's presence, but this advantage was to some extent degraded by personality issues between General Clinton and his naval counterparts. Admiral Arbuthnot[36], the British naval commander, has been assessed as a set of "incapable hands'[37], who largely nullified the strategic potential of British military-naval cooperation.

Similarly, the relationship between Generals Clinton and Cornwallis was by no means perfect and Cornwallis made no secret of his readiness to supplant Clinton. Germain's practice of writing directly to Cornwallis can only have undermined Clinton's confidence and given the impression that he was likely to be replaced. As the theatre commander, Clinton should have issued Cornwallis with clear direction and specific campaign objectives but he did not do so. The reasons may be surmised chiefly as a result of flawed strategic direction from London and an unclear chain of command that were both reinforced by a personality clash between the senior British commanders.

At the operational level, British officials and commanders had little awareness of colonial society and its supporting economy. Although much of the population of southern coastal areas was seen as sympathetic to the Crown, British military expectations were unrealistic. Schemes to use indentured servants and negro slaves in the war effort betrayed a fundamental misunderstanding of the local, social and economic conditions. When British forces arrived in the southern colonies the expected surge of Loyalist recruits never took place. There was no large manpower reserve of potential Loyalist soldiers because it did not exist. Indeed, an enduring difficulty in all Loyalist militia and provincial units was the relatively high proportion of officers to soldiers. Making use of often only part-trained, or wholly unsuitable, Loyalist officers who were unable to deliver sufficient militia recruits remained a difficult and largely unresolved issue throughout the conflict. British willingness to use Indians as scouts and auxiliaries also proved inflammatory. In what was essentially a white Europeans' conflict, this practice gained little advantage for the British but aroused fear amongst colonists and handed the revolutionaries an easy target for propaganda.

The opening phase of the 1780 campaign repeated previous mistakes and foreshadowed further repetitions. General Clinton followed his seizure of Charleston with a short lived move to Augusta. When he recalled these troops the local Loyalists were left exposed and unprotected, but success was dependent on the imperial forces' ability to guarantee the safety of loyal subjects. Clinton's opening moves demonstrated a worrying casualness about their safety. Clinton followed this initial dent to Loyalist confidence with a flurry of blows. His infamous proclamation issued at Charleston that accorded Loyalists no better treatment than rebels and his attempt to force loyal subjects to declare themselves, simultaneously aroused potential rebels and depressed Loyalists. In his analysis of the revolution in the southern colonies, John McCrady states that "this proclamation was the point upon which the continuance of the revolution in South Carolina turned."[38] The impact was felt and reported almost immediately by his subordinate, Lord Rawdon, as recruits in the back country dried up whilst rebel ranks quickly swelled. Clinton's proclamation forced neutrals to take sides against their will. Having undermined the King's loyal subjects and inflamed the revolutionaries, he returned to New York, seeing Cornwallis's task as something of a formality. It was clear that he anticipated no serious resistance in the Carolinas.

In the aftermath of the British victory at Charleston, in June 1780, the lack of any coherent plans to harness Loyalist support were exposed. Loyalists were left to their own devices and thirteen hundred were defeated at Ramsour's Mill. This victory by North Carolina rebel militia crushed any possibility of further resistance in that area. The defection of an entire battalion of North Carolina Loyalist militia further signaled the British failure to secure local support. Cornwallis' tactical success at Camden in August 1780 was followed by a six-week pause before he reached Charlotte. The possible fruits of victory were lost as he struggled with logistic difficulties. Delay encouraged rebels and showed uncommitted civilians that British forces did not have the capacity to enforce their will. The zeal and determination of officers like Tarleton[39] and Ferguson could not compensate for crippling organizational and logistic failings. Cornwallis lacked the necessary operational mobility to hunt down rebel forces as he wished and the undeveloped hinterland of the Carolinas was an unsuitable environment to sustain an eighteenth-century European army.

British victories at Charleston and Waxhaws encouraged frustrated Loyalists to seek revenge. In the confusion of an attempted surrender at Waxhaws, Tarleton and his British Legion were subsequently accused by the rebels of committing a massacre. Whatever the truth, the myth of the massacre rapidly became more important than the military significance of the event itself. Tarleton and the British Legion's image as brutal offenders against the rules of

war was a ready made propaganda victory for the revolutionaries. The Legion appeared to combine the worst characteristics of repressive imperial government and vengeful reprisal taking by Loyalists on their countrymen. In the south, this sort of behavior was instrumental in turning some quiescent civilians and former revolutionaries into active opponents. Cornwallis' failure to guarantee security but apparent granting of license to take revenge on revolutionaries stoked the fire of civil strife. The result was the savagery of civil war and lawlessness; "malevolent Whigs were often as vindictive as revengeful Tories, while the 'outliers' who attacked and plundered both, with utter indifference to their respective loyalties, were worse than either."[40]

Following the precedent of Prevost and Campbell in Georgia, Cornwallis continued to repeat their mistakes in the Carolinas. His invasion of North Carolina failed to inspire many Loyalists. "Inured to years of patriot opposition and British neglect, and with vivid memories of their defeats at Moore's Creek and Ramsour's Mill the Loyalists this time were taking no chances on false promises."[41] At Hillsboro, Cornwallis' appeals to Loyalists were exposed as empty rhetoric. His second Pyrrhic victory at Guilford Courthouse demonstrated an extravagant campaigning style. He simply could not afford to sustain twenty five percent casualties when replacements for the American theatre were virtually non-existent. He did not seem to realize the negative image created by his tired and badly supplied troops even after their victory in March 1781. He wrote only a few weeks later "Many of the inhabitants rode into camp, shook me by the hand, said they were glad to see us, and to hear that we had beat Greene, and then rode home again;" [42]

Further exhortations to Loyalists had a particularly hollow ring as he then withdrew to Wilmington. The campaign was a dismal litany of recurring requests to the King's loyal American subjects to endanger themselves for no substantive gain. Cornwallis' search for decisive encounters, with his limited regular force, was particularly inappropriate in the harsh environment and political situation of the southern colonies. Operating at the end of a tenuous, transatlantic supply chain he seems to have been surprised that his intended move to North Carolina was delayed by the need to organize logistic support. Despite months of unproductive campaigning it seems that events did not cause him to rethink. Instead, he resolved to gamble further and set off to try and force a decision in Virginia.

> I assure you that I am quite tired of marching about the country in quest of adventure. If we mean an offensive war in America, we must abandon New York and bring our whole force into Virginia; we then have a stake to fight for, and a successful battle may give us America. If our plan is defensive…let us quit the Carolinas…and stick to our salt pork and New York, sending now and then a detachment to steal tobacco, etc[43]

Cornwallis sought offensive victories and obviously yearned to fight a conventional campaign composed of a series of decisive battles. When he did manage to confront rebel forces face to face, he achieved only tactical victories that weakened his forces and did not inspire Loyalists. He and his subordinates such as Tarleton demonstrated commitment and determination as they pushed both regular and provincial troops hard in search of battle. They were often driven to extraordinary measures to catch their rebel opponents on a battlefield but never obtained a decisive outcome. Double-mounting troops could only be undertaken for short times and quickly ruined horses in the heat of the Carolina summer. Burning an eighteenth-century European army's baggage train was a desperate measure that might have been justified by campaign success, but at Guilford Courthouse Cornwallis imposed hardship on his men for an inconclusive result.

Between the major engagements his soldiers alienated uncommitted civilians by plunder. British soldiers' reputation for indiscriminate foraging in the northern colonies continued in the south and cancelled out their unquestionable bravery on the battlefield. "Plundering of the supposed minority faction by British and Tory units was convincing proof to many that the protection of the Crown meant nothing."[44] In September 1780, Ferguson eagerly seized the opportunity to operate with existing Loyalist militia on the flanks of Cornwallis' regular column. Seen as a tactical adjunct to Cornwallis' column he was also simultaneously expected to recruit ready made Loyalist forces. Ferguson's inflammatory and intemperate pronouncements in the Upper Broad area did nothing but arouse local opposition and the actions of his men intensified the problem. His defeat at King's Mountain, North Carolina in October 1780 was catastrophic for prospects of mobilizing back country Loyalists; "the totality of the defeat of his Loyalist army was a blow from which the Loyalist movement never recovered"[45]

Ferguson's organizational as much as tactical failings led to his defeat at King's Mountain. Although appointed Inspector General of Militia he did not review a single militia unit in Georgia, or North Carolina, and made only token efforts in South Carolina. Ferguson never addressed the need for mounted troops who were essential for operational mobility or the need for qualified officers who were essential to restore law and order. He had no long term notions of systematically training militia forces to take over static duties in order to release regulars. His lapses here are in marked contrast to successful combined British-Loyalist efforts in Florida.

The British failure to understand the nature of the conflict was patent. Imperial governance was demonstrably weak and the Southern Campaign did nothing to change this. The return of British civil officials to Charleston was irrelevant as their authority was never effective beyond the city. The use of Loyalist forces outside their own areas also showed a

lack of understanding about the very provincial nature of eighteenth-century American society. The presence of political or military "foreigners" was certain to be contentious even if troops were well behaved. The use of Provincial or Loyalist forces outside their own areas encouraged excesses and aroused local sensitivities. In the Carolinas, the British variously used Florida Rangers, Tarleton's Legion and New York provincials. The conflict between rebels and Loyalists erupted into a ghastly civil war that obliterated all social and legal conventions. The war was waged without compassion, and the bitterness and savagery shocked outsiders. Nathanael Greene is quoted by Frasche "The whole country is in danger of being laid waste by the Whigs and Tories who pursue each other with as much relentless fury as beasts of prey."[46]

Comparison of Cornwallis and Greene

In contrast to Cornwallis, Nathanael Greene, the American commander in the southern theatre, adapted to local conditions and fought a carefully considered campaign rather than a series of battles. Aware that he was at the bottom of the list of revolutionary priorities, he sensibly concluded that he could only win by not losing. This key strategic lesson was not learned by the Confederacy, less than one hundred years later, as they sought independence from the Union. Greene was fortunate to have space and time in abundance; keeping opposition alive and demonstrating the ineffectiveness of British authority would be sufficient. Most importantly of all, Greene implicitly understood Washington's strategic intent and delivered it. "I see little prospect of getting a force to contend with the enemy upon equal grounds, and therefore must make a kind of partisan war until we can levy and equip a larger force."[47]

Having identified a viable strategy he then pursued it; "A coordinated guerilla, regular army campaign or mobile war, greatly increased Greene's ability to take the war to his enemy while having the illusory effect of making his weak force appear larger."[48] Exerting remarkable powers of leadership as a northerner in the south, he succeeded in inspiring poorly paid Continentals and local militia leaders. He was able to persuade sufficient action in concert to pressure the British across the theatre of operations. He identified and harnessed capable irregular subordinates such as Francis Marion[49] the "Swamp Fox". Although partisans could never exclude British regulars from a region, they could demonstrate very convincingly that the Crown could, neither govern an area, nor protect its inhabitants. He used his few regular troops to great effect. This synergy between regulars and Spanish guerillas was also successfully used by Wellington in the Iberian Peninsula, some twenty-five years later, suggesting perhaps that at least some officers in the British Army did absorb key lessons from

the strategic failures of the Revolutionary War.[50] Greene defied conventional wisdom by dividing his pitifully weak army. He sent Daniel Morgan[51] and some 600 regulars and militia into western South Carolina thus confusing and robbing the initiative from Cornwallis. If the British chased Morgan, Greene would fall on Charleston; conversely if Greene was pursued, Morgan would attack the western posts and Savannah.

Greene and his conduct of the campaign have been compared to Mao and his concept of mobile war with a powerful symbiosis of regular and guerilla elements. He used irregular forces effectively in conjunction with his precious Continentals. The flexibility of the Rebel militia and their mass proved decisive in the struggle with Loyalist forces. Greene seems to have accepted and successfully managed the weaknesses of his command. Morgan's victory at Cowpens in Jan 1781 infused the rebel cause and Cornwallis was driven to extreme measures. Burning his baggage train and destroying British soldiers' rum rations were undoubtedly the actions of a desperate man who could only list his woes to General Clinton "the exhausted state of the country, the numerous militia, the almost universal spirit of revolt which prevails in South Carolina, and the strength of Greene's army….Events alone can decide future steps."[52]

Parallels with Contemporary Issues

The expeditionary nature of both the current US led campaign in Iraq and the British effort in the Carolinas is a noteworthy similarity. Persuading domestic politicians and their constituents that a fight overseas is worth the cost in blood and treasure is almost always problematic, more so when there is a demonstrable threat to the homeland. Financial and political costs of war also militate against prolonged engagements overseas. In eighteenth-century London political concern was probably based more on financial considerations than sympathy for dead and injured redcoats, whereas in the contemporary United States the acceptability of casualties is a more significant domestic political factor.

Military forces are only one instrument of national power. Throughout the Revolutionary War the British government chose to combat the rebellion with military force alone. Their lack of success in crushing rebel forces and removing the legitimacy of the rebels speaks volumes for the need for a multi-facetted approach. Current British doctrine reflects the lessons learned in America and other more recent campaigns. The first two principles of this endorsed COIN doctrine are: to ensure political primacy and a clear political aim, followed by the need to build coordinated government machinery.[53] The British failure to use the other available instruments of national power in the Revolutionary War was made even more damaging by the urgent need to focus and prioritize scarce military and naval resources elsewhere against imperial rivals.

Contemporary US doctrine has also recognized the primacy of political objectives stating that they "drive MOOTW (military operations other than war) at every level"[54]. Extant US counter-insurgency doctrine also appears clear on the need to establish or re-establish a legitimate host nation government and also recognizes the need for "perseverance" as an operating imperative.[55] Courage under fire, however, is not the same as perseverance to see out a frustrating COIN campaign over the long term. Whether understanding of these key principles has been largely confined to only a small group of practitioners within the US SOF community is a moot point. US COIN doctrine is currently under review and reflects the contemporary importance attached to the subject by senior US military leaders. Much effort at the operational and tactical levels in Iraq has gone into neutralizing insurgents by killing and capturing them rather than trying to separate them from their base of support. This is not an academic distinction but a fundamentally important difference to recognize between two distinct lines of operations. The second activity may appear less rewarding than the first but it is almost certainly the more decisive over the long term. In Iraq, coalition forces are struggling to apply other elements of national power effectively. In this modern case it appears to be as much bureaucratic and institutional difficulties rather than a lack of political will to use other elements of national capability.

Another striking parallel between the campaigns is the issue of adequate force levels available to operational commanders. The pressure on military commanders to deliver quick results is exacerbated if they are given inadequate resources. Commanders in a theatre can only play the hand that they have been dealt by their political and military superiors. Whatever his personal or professional shortcomings may have been, Cornwallis was expected to subdue the two Carolinas, Georgia and subsequently Virginia with approximately three or four thousand regular troops. Even the initial plans that promised more men were inadequate. Counter-insurgency campaigns are manpower intensive by their very nature. A successful counter insurgency effort "requires an infusion of large numbers of troops for use as a veritable police force. Without them, the partisans will never be separated from the people and thus their base of support. Without order or at least safety for the neutral majority, the rebels were either tolerated or actively supported by an ever increasing proportion of the non belligerent populace."[56] Providing a perception of security is almost as important as the provision of security itself. The contemporary media's ability to shape domestic and international perceptions in a matter of hours and days is a very significant difficulty that was not faced by the British in their American campaign.

Coalition forces in Iraq were sufficient to decisively defeat a decrepit, dysfunctional and poorly motivated army but were inadequate to deal with the security vacuum their victory had created. Whether coalition force levels in Iraq are sufficient to achieve success remains to be seen. The US led coalition's capacity to provide all aspects of policing and security and simultaneously raise and train local forces has not been decisive so far. Too close a comparison of the eighteenth-century British Army with today's American Army would be inappropriate, but there are at least some parallels. Both forces were/are professional and both were/are optimized for battlefield success. The famed British infantry's ability to deliver superior firepower by volleys amid the chaos of the battlefield is not dissimilar to the contemporary ability of United States forces to use overwhelming firepower to subdue conventional opponents. Both forces comprised volunteer professionals who were/are schooled in defeating their enemies by force on force encounters. Both armies struggled to adapt to the political nature of counter-insurgency warfare in an alien environment. Both armies would have preferred to achieve a definitive military victory.

Preparing soldiers to deal with the blurred, grey dimensions of insurgency and civil war remains a timeless challenge. Soldiers trained to apply focused but overwhelming force to defeat battlefield opponents may find it difficult to adapt to the demands of counter-insurgency, nation building and peace keeping. These MOOTW require restraint in a number of ways. Soldiers' behavior towards civilians whether friendly, uncommitted, or hostile must be unfailingly correct. The British Army failed to grasp this essential anywhere in the Thirteen Colonies and consequently eroded popular support. Restraint in the use of military force both in and immediately after contact is also essential to success. The British Legion's "massacre" of rebels at Waxhaws undid the fruits of Tarleton's military victory. Humane treatment of insurgent prisoners whatever their officially declared legal status is also essential to demonstrating legitimacy. The British establishment's characterization of colonists as "rebels" and "traitors" gave their troops and colonial allies license to act inappropriately and so further erode popular support. In Iraq, The US has used the labels of "terrorists" and "insurgents" to justify the suspension of normal legal procedures with unfortunate results.

The importance of raising and training capable local forces to support the legitimate political authority is also a crucial factor for success. Ensuring that local allies also understand the need for restraint despite the worst kind of provocation is pivotal to this success. "The British scorned their provincial allies, and the Loyalists, left in the lurch by broken British promises more than once, were more interested in revenge after suffering for years from patriot guerillas and militia who made life hell for them in Georgia and the Carolinas."[57] The British

failed to restrain their Loyalist contingents while current coalition efforts in Iraq seek to avoid a repetition of this mistake. The consistent British failure to address this issue helped to undermine their already unbalanced, predominantly military effort. Current United States and coalition efforts to bridge this gap continue in Iraq with varying degrees of success.

Weapons systems may have changed but the timeless elements of military capability remain valid. Developing local forces that are balanced across the moral, physical and conceptual components is vital. Cornwallis and his subordinates failed to identify a clear concept for the use of militia forces and compounded this by failing to train and prepare militia forces. The provision of arms and ammunition were not sufficient to create viable local security forces. Coalition efforts to develop local forces in Iraq were initially over focused on the physical component of men and equipment. As a result of hard operational experience there is now a welcome effort to address the conceptual and moral elements of Iraqi security forces capability.

Conclusions

If Britain had sustained the war in the American colonies for several more years it might have been enough to force a negotiated settlement, despite French intervention. In that sense the Carolinas campaign appears an unnecessary gamble. One possible explanation was the imperial desire to retain the southern colonies even if the northern colonies achieved independence; another is impatience and a “strategy by default”.

At no stage, and particularly by 1780, was the American theatre accorded priorities over homeland defense, the West Indies, Canada or India. The proper alternative would have been to modify the strategic direction from London. The British government sought a decisive result but provided inadequate resources, particularly in manpower. That said, the lopsided application of only military power lessened the British prospects of success immeasurably in any case. The twin failures to address underlying political grievances and the security failure to protect friends and uncommitted civilians ensured a British defeat at the strategic and operational level.

The imbalance in ends, ways and means at the national strategic level was exacerbated as the campaign was imperfectly fought at the operational level. Tactical battlefield victories meant little in the context of a politically motivated insurgency. Cornwallis’ inability to deliver security and governance condemned British efforts to restore royal authority. “Cornwallis’ failure to secure and pacify a region before attempting to move resulted from a fundamental

misunderstanding of the environment in which he fought. He would continue to seek a conventional military solution to a complex political, social and psychological problem"[58] In contrast, "Greene returned south, losing every battle he fought, but his strategy of mobile war so wore down the enemy that he still achieved his desired results."[59] In conjunction with guerillas and revolutionary civil leaders Greene liberated the Carolinas and Georgia, penning the British into coastal enclaves.

The British government's strategic assessment remained unfailingly optimistic until 1782. As a consequence, it failed to absorb the issues that concerned Loyalists and consequently botched attempts to motivate and mobilize them; "assumptions about Loyalist strength proved to be invalid and [they] failed to take the flexible approach required."[60] A lack of reliable information and hard-headed assessment were terminal weaknesses at the heart of British policy. The pivotal issue was the inability of politicians in London and some senior officers to recognize the difference between mere friendship and a resolution to act in support of the Crown. With respect to the Loyalists, the two major British errors were first that they turned to them too late and secondly that their plans were overly dependent upon them. There may be a danger of this mistake being repeated in Iraq. The causes of these two critical mistakes were ignorance of colonial conditions, an absence of current intelligence and a failure to adapt in the theatre of operations. These shortcomings were then overlaid with the pressures of French intervention and domestic political considerations. Britain's Loyalist policy was the least well managed aspect of her war effort when it should have been accorded the priorities and support of the central pillar.

The provision of security and governance are vital to a successful counter-insurgency campaign. It is contemporary echoes of Britain's failures over two hundred years ago that are most worrying about the US led counter-insurgency campaign in Iraq. Cornwallis never succeeded in mobilizing significant Loyalist support and also failed to neutralize revolutionary forces whether Continental or militia troops. Most significantly of all, he never provided security, nor a convincing picture of imperial authority to persuade the loyal and undecided elements of the colonial population that the British crown could control the territory it purported to rule. Repeated US operations around Fallujah and Tal Afar, Iraq seem uncomfortably reminiscent of British operations in the Carolinas and Georgia. Terrorist attacks in Baghdad since the end of major combat operations reinforce the perception of a lack of security and are magnified through the lens of the media.

The British Army attempted to move and fight as a European Army over difficult, undeveloped terrain looking for elusive conventional battles of decision. The US Army's search

for battlefield victories in Iraq initially shifted effort away from key tasks such as providing security, promoting civil governance and building the capacity and capability of Iraqi security forces. In the Carolinas there was no significant technological gap between the colonists and imperial forces so the methods used became the difference between success and failure. It is also worth remembering that there was little to choose between the quality of man in the Continental Army, partisan forces or the British Army during the Revolutionary War. Perhaps the decisive factor was that rebel soldiers were fighting for their homes and were thus better motivated than their regular opponents. Despite a clear technological edge over its opponents in Iraq, the US Army has struggled to cope with the resilience and adaptability of its irregular foe.

The British military failure is unsurprising, given that the Southern Campaign was based on flawed assumptions and was initiated only because of the absence of any viable alternatives. The inability to recognize the political nature of the insurgency and the failure to provide adequate means to fight an insurgency by the deployment of sufficient troops were political shortcomings. British commanders in theatre could not or would not point out the incompatibility of their tasks and allocated resources. They were also reluctant to modify their objectives in keeping with their resources, in order to reduce risk. In this sense they let down their subordinates by the remorseless pursuit of unachievable ends. American independence occurred at least as much from British ineptitude as it did from patriotic resolve and good planning. Cornwallis' conduct of the Southern Campaign showed that the British Army consistently failed to adapt to the demands of overseas counter-insurgency operations despite the benefit of several years experience.

The Southern Campaign has relevance for today's strategists at the national and operational level and for practitioners of counter-insurgency at the tactical level. It is a truism that politicians and armies must fight the wars they have to, rather than the wars they would like to. Politicians are responsible for focusing and integrating the elements of national power in pursuit of their chosen objectives and identifying political risks at home and abroad. Senior military leaders must ensure that means are appropriate for the ends and ways chosen and that military risks are clearly articulated. At theatre level, senior commanders must prepare their troops for the peculiarities of a particular theatre or campaign. At the tactical level professional soldiers must be prepared to adapt swiftly to local conditions. In the short term, this may mean covering for the short-term deficiencies or absence of other elements of national power. But, the courage and commitment of soldiers could not compensate indefinitely for a flawed British

strategy that yielded a questionable campaign plan and defective execution in the Southern Campaign.

During the Revolutionary War the British Army was forced to conduct counter-insurgency operations without the benefit of strategic lessons learned from the experiences of others. This constraint does not apply to the US led counter-insurgency campaign in Iraq as the pertinent lessons of the Revolutionary War are readily available for study.

Endnotes

[1] Russel F. Weigly, *New Dimensions in Military History: an Anthology* (San Rafael, California: Presidio Press, 1975), 1.

[2] The Seven Years War encapsulated the regional French and Indian War in a global conflict. The differing names for the conflict clearly show the different perspectives of Britain and her American subjects. The Seven Years War has been described as the first “World War” whereas American colonists and their descendants largely viewed the French Indian War as a question of their own security in relative isolation.

[3] David Hackett Fischer, *Albion’s Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 407.

[4] The Treaty of Paris, often called the Peace of Paris, or the Treaty of 1763, was signed on February 10, 1763, by Great Britain, France and Spain with Portugal in agreement. Together with the Treaty of Hubertusburg it ended the French and Indian War and the Seven Years War. The treaties marked the beginning of an extensive period of British dominance outside Europe.While the bulk of conquered territories were restored to their pre-war owners, the British made some substantial overseas gains at the expense of France and, to a lesser extent, Spain. Preferring to keep Guadeloupe, France gave up her American territories in “New France” and all of her claims to the territory east of the Mississippi to Britain. Spain ceded Florida to the British, but later received New Orleans and French Louisiana from France; Manila and Cuba were restored to Spain. France retained Saint Pierre and Miquelon and recovered Guadeloupe and Martinique in exchange for Grenada and the Grenadines going to the British. In India, the French lost out to British interests. Wikipedia, “The Treaty of Paris (1763), available from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Paris_(1763); Internet; accessed 09 March 2006.

[5] Sir Frederick North lived between1732-92; he was best known by his courtesy title of Lord North. He entered Parliament at the age of 22. He held office as a Lord of the Treasury from 1759-65. Thanks to his ability and good nature he rose steadily in government reaching the Privy Council in 1766, as well as being appointed Paymaster General. In 1767 he was appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer. In March 1770 he was appointed Prime Minister by George III. He ordered the retention of tea duty and introduced the Boston Port Bill in 1774. When war broke out he counseled peace but his personal loyalty to the king induced him to defend a war he knew to be hopeless, especially from 1779. He insisted on resigning when news of Cornwallis’ surrender at Yorktown reached Britain in 1782.

NB:The majority of the biographical end notes for this paper have been extracted from Mark M. Boatner III, *Encyclopedia of the American Revolution* (New York: David McKay Co., Inc,1966).

[6] The Sons of Liberty were secret organizations formed in the American colonies in protest against the Stamp Act (1765). They took their name from a phrase used by Isaac Barré in a speech against the Stamp Act in Parliament, and were organized by merchants, businessmen, lawyers, journalists, and others who would be most affected by the Stamp Act. The societies kept in touch with each other through committees of correspondence, supported the non-importation agreement, forced the resignation of stamp distributors, and incited destruction of stamped paper and violence against British officials. They participated in calling the Continental Congress of 1774.

[7] Loyalist. This refers to American colonists who remained loyal to the Crown. They tended to be of the professional classes or connected to the colonial regime. They were mostly conservatives but showed a peculiar inability to organize in the build up to the Revolution, and during the war, possibly because they were handicapped by their loyalty to traditional institutions which became increasingly irrelevant. They never succeeded in providing the level of support hoped for by the government in London. They seem to have been strongest in frontier regions at least at the start of the conflict. It was this apparent potential that they offered that drove so much of British decision-making and the actions of commanders on the ground. They did contribute thousands of men to the British Army; New York alone providing 15,000 men and 8,000 loyalist militia. It is estimated that 100,000 Loyalists left America during or just after the Revolution.

[8] Provincials or Provincial Military Organizations. Loyalist units formed in America by the British during the Colonial Wars and the revolution were officially designated "provincials" to distinguish them legally from the units of the Regular British Establishment. Sixty-nine Loyalist Regiments went so far as to seek volunteers but only twenty-one of these actually took the field. The best Loyalist units could stand and fight in battle but others were suited only for ambushes, bushwacking and raiding.

[9] Paul H. Smith, *Loyalists and Redcoats* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1964), 11.

[10] George Sackville, usually known as Lord Germain lived 1716-85. He was the British Secretary of State for the Colonies 1775-82. He was publicly vilified as the "coward of Minden" for his refusal to clinch a decisive victory as the cavalry commander in that battle, 1 st August, 1759. He was found unfit to serve in the Army by a court martial. He returned to public life through politics and was a supporter of Lord North. He succeeded Lord Dartmouth as Secretary of State for the Colonies. He is remembered principally as the minister who presided over the loss of Britain's American colonies.

[11] Daniel Marston, *The American Revolution 1774-1783* (Oxford: Osprey, 2002), 34-77.

[12] General Sir Henry Clinton lived 1738-95. He was the British Commander in Chief in America 1778-82. He fought at Bunker Hill and was second in command to General Howe from September 1775. He commanded the unsuccessful 1776 Charleston expedition where he was unable to cooperate with the naval commander Admiral Sir Peter Parker. He distinguished himself at the battle of Long Island both in planning and execution and captured Newport,

Rhode Island. Clinton disagreed with General Howe's conduct of the war. He was the longest serving British Commander in Chief during the war. He had fewer troops than were available to Howe but was expected to do more. His accurate insights into the real capabilities of the loyalists suggest that he had a good grasp of the problems facing him but he never imposed himself on his subordinates or the situation.

[13] Charles Earl Cornwallis, a career British Officer who lived 1738-1805, he commanded the southern campaign when General Clinton returned to New York. He arrived in America in 1776 and took part in operations to clear New York. General Clinton was less than impressed by his performance in the New Jersey campaign. Appointed Clinton's second in command in 1778 he returned to England on the death of his wife. On his return his "dormant commission" to succeed General Clinton may have soured relations with his superior. A controversial figure who had undoubted abilities but whose independent decisions at the operational level in the southern campaign had strategic effect and arguably cost Britain her American colonies.

[14] Major Patrick Ferguson, 1744-80. A professional British officer he had served in both infantry and cavalry and had operational experience in the West Indies. He fought at Brandywine, where he was wounded leading a company of riflemen who used his patented breech-loading rifle. He conducted a successful raid at Little Egg Harbor, NJ in 1778. He commanded a company of Rangers at the beginning of the Charleston expedition and conducted largely independent anti-partisan operations in South Carolina. It is worthy of note that he did not approve of Tarleton's methods. He was made Inspector General of Militia in the Carolinas but was keen to return to operations. He was killed at King's Mountain leading an all militia loyalist force.

[15] Continental General, Nathanael Greene came from Rhode Island and lived between 1742 and 1786. He emerged from the Revolutionary War as the American whose military reputation was second only to Washington's. He enlisted as a private in the Rhode Island militia in 1773. In May 1775 he became a Brigadier General of Militia. He displayed great organizational skills at the siege of Boston. He distinguished himself at Trenton and was then sent as Washington's personal liaison officer to Congress. He fought as a divisional commander at Brandywine and Germantown. He became Quarter Master General at Valley Forge but still fought at Monmouth and Newport. Greene's organizational abilities resulted in significant improvements to the logistic support of Washington's Army by 1780. He was a natural choice for Washington to nominate as a commander for the Southern Army. Highly successful at the operational level he was much less successful as a tactical commander.

[16] Francis Rawdon-Hastings, lived 1754-1826, of an Irish noble family he was commonly known as Lord Rawdon. He fought at Bunker Hill with 5th Foot and then served as an Aide de Camp to Clinton. He was a staff officer during the New York, New Jersey, and Philadelphia campaigns. Promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and Adjutant General in June 1778 he was tasked to raise a provincial regiment The Volunteers of Ireland. He fought at Monmouth and joined Clinton as did The Volunteers of Ireland for the southern campaign in Spring 1780. He did not enjoy the post of Adjutant General nor did he enjoy serving under Clinton. After Cornwallis' unsuccessful forays into North Carolina, Lord Rawdon distinguished himself by his audacity, skill and energy winning victory over Greene at Hobkirk's Hill although he was not the senior officer in South Carolina.

[17] Sir John Fortescue, *The War of Independence, The British Army in North America 1775-1783*, (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2001), 112-6.

[18] Richard S. Dukes Jr, "*Anatomy of a Failure: British Military Policy in the Southern Campaign of the American Revolution, 1775-1781"* (ph.D.diss., University of South Carolina, 1993), 301.

[19] General Sir Thomas Gage,1719?-1787. The British Commander in Chief in America 1763-75. He saw action at Fontenoy and Culloden. He took part in Braddock's unsuccessful 1755 expedition and showed courage amidst confusion and failure. He was wounded in the unsuccessful attempt to recapture Ticonderoga in 1758 and married an American, Margaret Kemble. He proved to be a cautious commander in the 1759 advance into Canada. He was military governor of Montreal for three years. Promoted Major General in 1761 he became Commander in Chief in 1763. When the Stamp Act crisis of 1765 began Gage had only about 5,000 troops at his disposal. He concentrated them on the eastern seaboard and principally New York City. He also bolstered the garrison of Boston as unrest spread. After the Boston "massacre" of March 1770 three years of relative calm followed. In June 1773 he returned to England for the first time in 17 years but was sent back to America as both Governor of Massachusetts and Commander in Chief. After Lexington, Concord and Bunker Hill Germain lost confidence in Gage and prepared to relieve him. Gage left America in October 1763. He probably exhibited greater talents in the political rather than the military sphere.

[20] A draft in the hand of King George III, dated Oct 16-17, 1775, Correspondence of King George III, No. 1728, quoted in Smith, 22.

[21] William Legge, 2d Earl of Dartmouth, 1731-1801. A step brother of Lord North he was President of the Board of Trade and Plantations in 1765, 1766 and 1772. He was Secretary for the Colonies 1772-75. He was considered a friend of the colonists despite his conviction of parliamentary supremacy.

[22] General William Howe lived 1729-1814. He was British Commander in Chief, between 1775 and 1778. His brother Richard was the naval commander from 1776. Any explanation of British failures over these years centers about the Howe brothers. He held his appointment when Britain had the best chance of winning the conflict. Some historians such as Steele have been damning in their verdicts "his inactivity, his sloth, his apparent timidity, his lack of persistence make one marvel for an explanation." However, he demonstrated valor and determination at Bunker Hill. Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga led to mounting criticism of his leadership. He wrote repeatedly to London asking the government for reinforcements and to be relieved of his post. His love life also earned him notoriety and was seen by some as interfering with his professional responsibilities. Sir Henry Clinton judged him harshly "had he gone to the Devil, before he was sent to America, it had been a saving of infamy to himself and indelible dishonor to this Country".

[23] Lord Dartmouth to Lord Howe, Oct, 22, 1775 CO 5/92, quoted in Paul H. Smith, *Loyalists and Redcoats* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1964), 22.

[24] Josiah Martin lived 1737-1786 and had been Royal Governor of North Carolina for four years when the American rebellion broke out. He struggled to reconcile the demands of the colonies assembly with the instructions of the Crown. In March 1775 he urged General Gage to send him arms ands ammunition. He evacuated his own family and fled to fort Johnston on Cape Fear in May 1775. His inaccurate analysis of the political situation led directly to the abortive 1776 Charleston expedition and helped bring about the abortive Loyalist rising at Moore's Creek Bridge. He returned to Charleston as a volunteer in 1779 and left due to bad

health in April 1781. His direct influence was on political decision-making in London but the effects were played out in the colonies where his grasp of the situation was exposed as weak.

[25] Paul H. Smith, *Loyalists and Redcoats* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1964), 47.

[26] Ibid., 98.

[27] Ibid., 83.

[28] Sir Henry Clinton to Lord Germain, May 03, 1776, Clinton Papers, quoted in Smith, 27.

[29] Smith, 47-58.

[30] Christopher Hibbert, *Redcoats and Rebels*, (New York: Norton and Co., 1990), 275.

[31] Earl Cornwallis, *During the Campaign of 1781,* (London: J. Debrett, 1783), 49.

[32] John Morgan Dederer, "Campaigns and Mao Tse Tung's Mobile War,*" Military Affairs*, (October 1983): 118.

[33] Colonel Archibald Campbell lived 1739-1791. A Scottish infantry officer he served as a Lieutenant Colonel in the Black Watch and 71st or Fraser's Highlanders. He spent two years in rebel captivity from 1776-78. Despite this experience he was noted for his humanity in the southern theatre. He was promoted to Colonel for his victory at Savannah. He was appointed Governor of Jamaica in 1782 from where he continued to provide intelligence and support to the British war effort.

[34] General Augustine Prevost lived 1723-1786. A career British officer he was wounded serving in 60th Foot under Wolfe at Quebec. He was promoted Colonel in September 1775. Highlights of his career were victories at Briar Creek and his defense of Savannah, Georgia in October 1779. He served for 22 years in America.

[35] Andrew Pickens; 1739-1817 was a General of Militia in South Carolina. He took part in Grant's 1761 Cherokee Expedition. On the outbreak of war he was a farmer and Justice of the Peace. He gave his parole to the British after surrendering a fort at Ninety-Six, South Carolina but gave notice that it was no longer valid after British troops plundered his plantation. Alongside Marion and Sumter he was one of the most prominent partisan leaders. He fought at Cowpens and Eutaw Springs and raised a regiment of "state regulars".

[36] Admiral Marriott Arbuthnot lived 1711-94. From 1775 to 1778 he was naval commissioner at Halifax, Canada. Recalled to England he was promoted to flag rank and appointed Commander in Chief of the American station. Clinton considered the appointment of this elderly, undistinguished naval officer as a personal affront. Arbuthnot's performance turned out to be worse than his reputation. Army-Navy cooperation at Charleston in 1780 took place in spite of Arbuthnot, not because of him; the credit goes to Captain Elphinstone. Arbuthnot resigned on health grounds after he had been superseded de facto by Admiral Rodney in autumn 1780. Although he was declared clinically dead in 1794, Boatner's accurate assessment is that he had been professionally dead for many years.

[37] Hibbert, 262.

[38] Edward McCrady, *The History of South Carolina in the Revolution, 1775-1780*, (New York: McMillan Co., 1902), 554.

[39] Banastre Tarleton,1754-1833, a British cavalry officer, was probably the most infamous character of the southern campaign. Born in Liverpool to wealthy parents he served in the King's Dragoon Guards and reached America in time for the abortive Charleston expedition of 1776. He took part in the New York campaign but did not distinguish himself. In 1778 he was promoted Captain in 79th Foot and at the end of the year was appointed Lieutenant Colonel, commandant of the British Legion. It was in the south that Tarleton earned his reputation both as a hard charging light cavalry officer and as a ruthless anti-partisan leader. He was undoubtedly the motivating force and talent at the head of the British Legion as it always performed badly in his absence. Christopher Ward described him as follows; "As a leader of cavalry he was unmatched on either side for alertness and rapidity of movement, dash, daring and vigor of attack. As a man he was cold-hearted, vindictive and utterly ruthless." It is this duality that makes a balanced assessment of Tarleton's actions difficult.

[40] Hibbert, 272.

[41] D.F. Frasche, "Problems of Command: Cornwallis, Partisans and Militia, 1780," *Military Review* 57 (April 1977): 67.

[42] Despatch Earl Cornwallis to Sir Henry Clinton April, 10, 1781 in camp at Wilmington, see *Cornwallis,* 10.

[43] Hibbert, *Redcoats and Rebels*, 307.

[44] Frasche, 63.

[45] Ibid., 67.

[46] Ibid., 66.

[47] General Nathaniel Greene to General George Washington 31 Oct 1780, in Fitzpatrick, *Writings*, XX, 321; quoted in, John Morgan Dederer, "Campaigns and Mao Tse Tung's Mobile War", *Military Affairs*, October 1983): 118.

[48] Dederer, 118.

[49] Francis Marion was known as the "Swamp Fox". He lived between c1732-1795. A famous southern partisan leader he was the grandson of Hugenots, and a militia officer in South Carolina. He took part in Grant's 1761 Cherokee expedition where he distinguished himself for leadership under fire. He took part in the defense of Charleston in 1776 and in the failed assault on Savannah in October 1779. With all organized resistance in the south temporarily broken it was then that he began his career as a guerilla leader. He fought a series of largely successful actions for the next two years and successfully avoided capture. He commanded the militias of both Carolinas at Eutaw Springs in 1781. His most notable feature was that unlike Thomas Sumter he could subordinate himself to higher military authority and it was this quality that made him so valuable to Greene.

[50] Anthony J. Joes, *Guerilla Conflict Before the Cold War,* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing group, Inc, 1996), 113.

[51] Daniel Morgan led a colorful life between 1736 and1802. He began life as a frontiersman and ended as a Continental General and Congressman. Grandson of a Welsh immigrant to Pennsylvania he moved to the Shenandoah and then served as a teamster on Braddock's expedition, where he met Washington. Flogged by the British for striking an officer he continued to serve as an officer in campaigns against the Indians. In 1775, commissioned as a captain of a Virginia rifle company he rode 600 miles to Boston in 21 days without losing a man to desertion or straggling. He took part in the failed expedition to Quebec and was captured. Commissioned a Colonel in April 1777 he joined Washington's main army and raised a body of 500 sharpshooters for the New Jersey and Philadelphia campaigns. He and his men played a decisive role at Saratoga. He resigned in July 1779, ostensibly because of ill health, but really because he felt he had been passed over for command. He refused an order from Congress to go south in June 1780 but when news of the defeat at Camden reached him he put aside his personal grievances. Promoted to Brigadier General he defeated Tarleton at Cowpens and then wisely exploited his victory by continuing his withdrawal. He later served in the Whiskey Insurrection of 1794 and was elected to Congress in 1797.

[52] Earl Cornwallis to Sir Henry Clinton April, 24, 1781 in camp at Wilmington, see *Cornwallis,* 56.

[53] UK Army, *Army Doctrine Publication: Land Operations* (Directorate General Development and Doctrine, May 2005), 18.

[54] U.S. Department of the Army, *Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War*, Joint Publication FM 3-07, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Army, 16 June 1995), I-2.

[55] U.S. Department of the Army, *Counter-Insurgency Operations*, Joint Publication FMI 3-07.22, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Army, October 2004), 2-1.

[56] Dukes, 301.

[57] Dederer, 118.

[58] Frasche, 66.

[59] Dederer, 120.

[60] Frasche, 62.