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# DUNMORE'S WAR AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR WHITE-INDIAN RELATIONS

A Capstone Experience Manuscript

Presented by

Ian A. Russell

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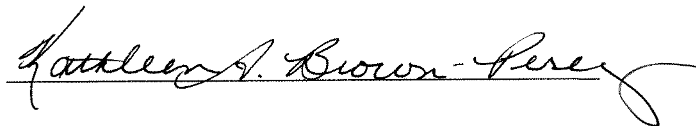

Kathleen A. Brown-Pérez, Commonwealth Honors College

# ABSTRACT

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Author: **Ian Russell, History and Mathematics**

CE Type: **Course Capstone Thesis**

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In this work, I analyze the methods used by the British to conquer Shawnee territory during Dunmore's War in 1774, and explore the connections between those methods and later U.S. government policy. Topics covered include the use of diplomacy, demographics, and direct force, the motivations and goals of Lord Dunmore and other key British officials, and the effects that their methods had on the Shawnee and other involved tribes. After some historical background and a comprehensive overview of the events of Dunmore's War itself, my analysis delves into the immediate causes and immediate implications of the actions taken during the war. The thesis then moves on to discuss the events of the American Revolution and their relation to Dunmore's War as an immediate successor. My analysis then moves on to an overview of later Indian wars, again with a focus on the common techniques pioneered during Dunmore's War and perfected during the 19th century. Finally, my analysis demonstrates that more recent government policies, while differing from those methods used during the war superficially, are in substance applications of the same methodology. This study provides a sense of the deep historical implications of Dunmore's War and its usefulness as a case study in the methods used by British and American imperialists to defeat and acquire territory from American Indians.

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# CHAPTER ONE

# INTRODUCTION

## What Was Dunmore's War?

Though the American Revolution was just a few years away, in the early 1770s it was business as usual in the thirteen British colonies. Tensions were rising in the west, as colonists moved into territories within the Ohio Valley held by several American Indian tribes.[1] These tensions came to a head in the territory that would eventually become West Virginia and part of Kentucky in 1774. Euro-American colonists claimed this territory on the basis of treaties negotiated with the Iroquois and Cherokee in 1768 and 1770, especially the Treaty of Fort Stanwix (Dunn 2007, 15), while the tribes that actually occupied and hunted the region, most notably the Shawnee, were understandably displeased. Tensions escalated during the winter of 1773-1774, until Dunmore's War - named after Lord Dunmore, the British Governor of Virginia[2] - broke out in April.

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1 In this paper, I have chosen to use the term "American Indian" or simply "Indian" to refer to the tribes of native people involved in Dunmore's War and related negotiations and conflicts, including the Shawnee, Mingo, Delaware, Iroquois, Cherokee and others. This is primarily because "Indian" was the contemporary term used to describe indigenous people in colonial North America (or more accurately, it was one of several such terms, the others being more pejorative in nature.) The term "Native American" did not become popular until the twentieth century. Furthermore, since the actual Indian Subcontinent and its people do not factor into this analysis, there is no possibility of ambiguous usage. While the terms "Native American" and "American Indian" are not, strictly speaking, legally interchangeable, within the scope of this paper the terms are effectively equivalent.

2 Some sources refer to this conflict as "Lord Dunmore's War." The names are interchangeable. This document uses the shorter term for the sake of brevity.

After a series of minor skirmishes and intense negotiations over the course of the summer, the brief war ended in October with three events in quick succession. At the Battle of Point Pleasant, about 1,000 colonial militiamen under the command of Andrew Lewis came under fire from about 300 Shawnee warriors. The militia suffered significant casualties but eventually managed to repel the Indians (Mahon 1958, 272) Faced with the destruction of their towns along the Scioto River, the Shawnee were forced to accept the Governor's terms at the peace negotiations at Camp Charlotte. The Shawnee agreed to cede their rights to the lands south of the Ohio to the British (Calloway 1992, 40).

Dunmore's War had the obvious effect of expanding British power in the Ohio Valley, weakening the power of the Shawnee in the process. It was also a personal victory for Lord Dunmore and the colony of Virginia, as during the course of the war he was able to establish control over Fort Pitt, which had been part of Pennsylvania by royal charter (Spero 2007, 110). The war deepened divisions within the Shawnee community, as the tribe was divided between those who wanted to accept the concessions made at Camp Charlotte and those who wanted to continue fighting the British (Calloway 1992, 40). Even more significantly, the war deepened divisions between the major Indian tribes, and between the tribes and the British. This would have major implications in the coming years, much to the consternation of the British authorities: "With the outbreak of the American Revolution when they were ordered to bring in the Indian tribes against the rebellious colonists, the [British] superintendents were never able to fully repair the damage wrought by their diplomacy during Dunmore's War" (Sosin 1966, 50). This lack of Indian support would play a significant role in the Revolutionary War, contributing to

the British defeat at the hands of the rebellious colonists, and was thus at least partly responsible for the existence of the United States.

As significant as Dunmore's War is to white American history, it holds at least as much significance for the Indian tribes of the Ohio Valley. For the Shawnee, the war was part of a story of oppression and isolation. When the Iroquois sold their land out from under them, the Shawnee were left without means to appeal; they attempted to acquire Iroquois aid, but their solicitations were rebuffed (Calloway 1992, 40). They were frequently tossed about in the politics between the British and the colonials – they fought the British authorities during Dunmore's War, but Chief Cornstalk's 1777 murder by the colonial militia drove them back into the arms of the British (Calloway 1992, 41). Indeed, after the war, the flood of white colonists moving into Shawnee territory left those who stayed with no choice but to fight back. Dunmore's War opened the gates for this influx of settlers and speculators.

By 1780, the tribe had physically as well as politically split, with 1200 Shawnee migrating west to Missouri to avoid further conflict with the British and the colonists; those who remained were weak and vulnerable to further exploitation (Calloway 1992, 42-3). The tribe's leadership was in constant flux; those who upheld peace were marginalized, while younger warriors and outsiders acquired a disproportionate level of influence within the tribe (Calloway 1992, 46). Nor was this division confined to the leadership; the tribe as a whole split between those who wanted to fight against the settlers and those who wanted to make peace (Calloway 1992, 44) As such, Dunmore's War represents a critical point in the history of systematic division and conquest of the

Shawnee in particular and the indigenous people of North America in general, first by the British and then by Americans.

Colonial v. Revolutionary

The defining debate in the historical study of Dunmore's War has concerned its place within the history of the colonial and revolutionary periods. Was Dunmore's War the last conflict of the colonial era, or was it, as some historians have claimed, the first clash of the Revolutionary War?[3] The revolutionary theory originated with Livia Nye Simpson Poffenbarger, a newspaper editor and amateur historian in Point Pleasant in 1899. Her thesis, in turn, centered on claims made by Andrew Lewis, commander of the colonial militia during Dunmore's War, who claimed that Dunmore intended to set the militia up for annihilation ("Manufactured History" 1997, 78). From this belief came the idea that Lord Dunmore, anticipating the Revolution, deliberately incited a war in order to weaken the colonial militia, perhaps even working in league with the Shawnee. Though Poffenbarger was able to gain government approval for her thesis in the form of an act of Congress passed in February of 1908 ("Manufactured History" 1997, 78), her argument came under almost immediate fire from other historians, including Virgil A. Lewis, who Poffenbarger had directly quoted in her own writings ("Manufactured History" 1997, 81). From its inception, then, the revolutionary theory has been viewed as a somewhat radical idea in the historiography of Dunmore's War.

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3 For the sake of brevity, the theory that Dunmore's War was part of the Revolutionary War will hereafter be called the "revolutionary theory," while the theory that it was a purely colonial conflict will be called the "colonial theory."

Later historians have examined the revolutionary theory in a critical light, generally claiming that its premises are too farfetched to be believable. Some historians have pointed out that Lord Dunmore was in fact praised by the colonists for his efforts (MacDonald 1974, 48). Others note that, in assuming that Dunmore could have foreseen a rebellion that was two years away, proponents of the colonial theory have gifted Dunmore with a great deal of foresight (Sosin 1966, 34). Furthermore, the actions of the British during the war are inconsistent with this supposed goal of weakening the colonials: if that was their intent, why did the British authorities work to limit the scope of the conflict, preventing it from turning into a general Indian war? (Sosin 1966, 35) Though there are exceptions, more recent historians have generally dismissed the revolutionary theory as a product of excessive patriotic bias.

That does not mean, however, that the revolutionary theory is entirely without merit. While Dunmore's War was likely not, as some historians have claimed, the first battle of the Revolutionary War, it also does not fit comfortably within the colonial era. Its implications for the American Revolution were considerable, and as such it was a transitional conflict, part of what brought about the close of the colonial period and the beginning of the full-scale rebellion.

Relation to Later Policy

During Dunmore's War, many techniques were pioneered for the conquest and oppression of the Shawnee. Dunmore used diplomacy to isolate the Shawnee from the surrounding tribes, ensuring that the British would enter the war with a strategic advantage. He used the Shawnee food supply as a weapon, threatening to destroy crops,

and took away much of their long-term food supply by taking control of their hunting grounds. Finally, an influx of white settlers into the Shawnee lands kept the tribe under constant strain, drained of territory and resources.

While these techniques were first used during Dunmore's War and other Indian wars, they are not limited to the context of the colonial era. Analogous policies would continue to be used by the U.S. government during the American Revolution, throughout the expansionist 19th century, and even through the 20th century. While the precise methods would vary, the underlying ideas of Dunmore's War would continue to shape the oppression of American Indians for generations.

Chapter Summary

Dunmore's War, then, sits at a critical juncture within American history. Even if conservatively placed within the colonial era, it was one of the defining moments of the end of the colonial period and the beginning of the revolution. The war demonstrated the clear ability of a focused British (or American) assault to break the power of any single tribe; the Indians may have had the advantage at Point Pleasant, but they had no way of stopping Dunmore from attacking their towns directly except via surrender. Moreover, it demonstrated the power of diplomacy and manipulation; the isolated Shawnee were in a very unfavorable position even before the war began.

Dunmore's War had a profound impact on the demographics and politics of the Ohio Valley, increasing white authority and decreasing the power of the Shawnee in the region; moreover, it impacted the relative political power and territory of the British colonies of Pennsylvania and Virginia. The experience gained by the colonial militia

would play a significant role in the Revolutionary War (Nihart 2005, 189). Moreover, the war fragmented the American Indians in that region. Besides the obvious consequences for intra- and inter-tribal politics, this would have a massive impact on the Revolutionary War, as the British found themselves unable to muster Indian assistance in their fight against the rebellious colonists.

Perhaps most significantly of all, these effects were a direct result of government intervention. While skirmishes broke out between white colonists and American Indians without any direct government involvement, those conflicts tended to be short-lived (Harper 2008, 234). Dunmore played on the greed of local land speculators to acquire support for his campaign against the Shawnee. Later, he used his authority as governor to cut off the violence, using the implicit threat that disobeying the governor would mean a loss of land claims (Griffin 2008, 98-9). Many of the militia leaders were dissatisfied with the resolution, but “once Dunmore ordered his forces home, organized attacks on the Indians ceased” (Harper 2008, 236). In Dunmore's War, we can see the origins of the guiding principle of white-Indian relations over the next century: government direction and government control. During Dunmore's War, the British established a system for weakening American Indians and acquiring their territory which shaped U.S. Government policy for the next century, and has implications up to the present day.

# CHAPTER TWO

## REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### Colonial v. Revolutionary

Perhaps unsurprisingly, most of the scholarly literature written to date on Dunmore's War focuses on its relationship to the Revolutionary War; some historians argue that Dunmore's War was the last conflict of the colonial era, while others contend that it was in fact the first skirmish of the American Revolution. Not all of the scholarship falls neatly into one of those categories, of course; some historians incorporate aspects of both sides of the debate into their work, and a few even ignore the distinction altogether. Other scholars have focused on the political and economic aspects of the war, and others on the extension of those politics – the use of state-sponsored violence to neutralize the Indians. Still others focus on the all-important role of the American Indians in the conflict. Still, most writing about the history of Dunmore's War points to 1776 and beyond.

Some historians who examine the conflict between viewing Dunmore's War as a colonial conflict and viewing it as a revolutionary conflict conclude that, indeed, the evidence is inconclusive. Historian Elizabeth Meek Fels takes this approach to the issue in her article "The Battle of Point Pleasant and its Relationship to the American Revolution and to Tennessee." Fels notes that while some past scholars have argued that Lord Dunmore acted specifically to weaken the colonial militia and thus gain an advantage in the upcoming Revolution, (Fels 369) others have dismissed that conclusion

as the work of overzealous local historians (Fels 373). Fels concludes that, while there are persuasive arguments on both sides of the issue, there is really no way to know Lord Dunmore's true intentions in fighting the war (Fels 377); if anything, she regards the arguments in favor of the revolutionary theory as somewhat farfetched and therefore unreliable. Fels' thesis gives insight into the nature of this debate between the two theories, and indeed calls into question the need to debate them at all.

It is perhaps more instructive, however, to examine the historians who clearly fall on one side or the other of the debate. Such is clearly the case in Colonel F. Brooke Nihart's brief article, “The First Battle of the Revolution: Dunmore's War, 1774.” Col. Nihart was a World War II veteran who wrote the U.S. Military Code of Conduct and a noted military historian who oversaw the establishment of two museums in addition to being a widely published author. Nihart's article focuses on the purely military aspects of the conflict, noting that fighting against the Shawnee in 1774 gave members of the Virginia militia valuable military experience which would serve them well in the Revolutionary War (Nihart 189). It is interesting to note that, while Nihart himself was clearly a proponent of the revolutionary theory, his contribution to the research is compatible with either theory. Even if Dunmore's War was itself a colonial conflict, the fighting experience gained by the participants in the war certainly did play a role in the later Revolutionary War.

Other historians agree with, and expand on Nihart's thesis that Dunmore's War influenced the Revolution through the vehicle of military experience. Patrick Spero, a PhD candidate at the University of Pennsylvania, takes this approach in his article “Lord

Dunmore's Victory: Turning Pennsylvania into Virginia." Spero points out that, while colonial militias had existed prior to Dunmore's War, the organizational and fighting experience gained by the Virginia militia during this particular conflict was substantial (Spero 115). Historians William H.B. Thomas and Howard Wilson espoused a similar idea in their 1975 article, "The Battle of Point Pleasant, 1774." Much of the scholarship in support of the revolutionary theory thus comes from a purely military perspective, and indeed that argument is quite compelling even if one believes the colonial theory.

The arguments against the revolutionary theory, meanwhile, tend to focus more on the political implications of Dunmore's War. Historian Kenneth MacDonald argues this viewpoint in his oddly-named article, "The Battle of Point Pleasant: First Battle of the American Revolution." MacDonald's article, in fact, argues that the Battle of Point Pleasant was *not* the first battle of the Revolutionary war, and that the forces used during Dunmore's War in fact ran counter to the revolutionary movement. MacDonald points out that Lord Dunmore did not incite the war (MacDonald 41), that he aided the colonial militia to the best of his ability and certainly did not betray them (MacDonald 45) and that he was, indeed, praised by the colonists for his efforts on their behalf (MacDonald 47). This information clearly runs counter to the idea that Lord Dunmore intentionally used the war as a means to weaken the colonial militia, which MacDonald claims was essentially fabricated by a local amateur historian (MacDonald 49). Though not all historians agree with MacDonald's thesis, his conclusions at least call into question the basis of the revolutionary theory.

The West Virginia Archives and History echoes this viewpoint in its article "Manufactured History: Re-Fighting the Battle of Point Pleasant." Much like MacDonald's article, "Manufactured History" claims that the revolutionary theory was essentially created by a local journalist named Livia Poffenbarger, who based her claims on rumors, centering on Lord Dunmore's attempts to weaken the local militia, which had supposedly circulated among the colonists in the years following the battle ("Manufactured History" 77). The article goes on to call into question this idea by exploring Dunmore's own actions during the war, noting that he gave the militia his full support, and indeed concludes that Dunmore's actions wholly benefited the colonists; if he intended to weaken the militia, the article claims, he did an exceedingly poor job ("Manufactured History" 83). According to the West Virginia Archives and History, the revolutionary theory has no grounding in fact. It was done because "establishing Point Pleasant as the first battle of the American Revolution [meant] the difference between millions of dollars from the federal government or a continued small allotment from the state" ("Manufactured History" 86).

Based on the existing scholarship, it is clear that the evidence for the revolutionary theory is, at best, strained. That does not mean that there is no merit to the idea that Dunmore's War impacted the Revolutionary War; in fact, its influence was quite profound. Yet the historical record seems to indicate that it was a colonial conflict, carried out for colonial purposes, and affected the later Revolution more by virtue of its timing than by intent.

Politics, Policy, and Land

Historian Jack Sosin, a professor at the University of Nebraska, wrote in his article "The British Indian Department and Dunmore's War" that the officials of the British Indian Department played an absolutely vital role in diplomatically isolating the Shawnee, preventing the colonists from having to face a general Indian coalition (Sosin 34-5). According to Sosin, the British officials mastered the technique of bargaining with one tribe to acquire lands that were actually occupied or utilized by another tribe (37); they used this method to "buy" Shawnee lands from the rival Iroquois, thus preventing Iroquois intervention and giving themselves what they considered a legitimate claim to the territory (Sosin 38). The Shawnee took diplomatic steps of their own to counter the British scheme (Sosin 40), but through the efforts of British officials negotiating with and placating key intermediary tribes, the Shawnee's potential allies were effectively neutralized (Sosin 47). Sosin's work describes the skill with which the British Indian Department dealt with the Indians politically; it also points out that the British were never able to undo the damage caused by their actions and call upon the Indians' aid (Sosin 50).

Historian Robert L. Kerby writes along similar lines in his article, "The Other War In 1774: Dunmore's War." Kerby focuses on the politics, or more precisely the lack of politics, at the top level of the local British government, calling attention to Lord Dunmore's refusal to personally mediate the dispute with the Shawnee (Kerby 3). This reveals a central theme in British dealings with the Indians at the time – the British leadership would allow their lesser officials to manipulate the situation to their advantage, while denying the Indians access to their top leadership to work out a general peace.

Kerby also writes about Dunmore's successful attempt to increase his own colony's power, taking the opportunity to seize Fort Pitt from the colony of Pennsylvania (Kerby 7), a point also made by Patrick Spero in his aforementioned article. Ultimately, according to Kerby, Dunmore's War was a simple land grab, intended to expand the British colonies in general and the colony of Virginia in particular, and indeed it succeeded in opening up Kentucky and Tennessee to white colonization (Kerby 15).

In the territorial schemes used by Lord Dunmore, the local American Indians played a significant role as he worked to advance the position of the colony of Virginia. Walter Dunn, an independent researcher and former museum curator, writes in his book *Choosing Sides on the Frontier in the American Revolution* that as Dunmore sought to expand into modern-day West Virginia, he found support from among the Delaware Indians, who believed that the creation of an organized, royal colony would limit the westward expansion of settlements north of the Ohio River (Dunn 15). Dunmore also used the Indians as a means of circumventing objections from his own government, based on the Proclamation of 1763; he assured his superiors in London that the Iroquois held rights to that territory and that they agreed to allow settlement because the land was not currently being used by the tribe (Dunn 15). Though Dunmore was not the first British official to use the Indians as a pawn in his power politics, Dunn's research demonstrates that he was particularly adept at doing so.

Patrick Griffin, a professor at Ohio University, writes in his book *American Leviathan: Empire, Nation, and Revolultionary Frontier* that Lord Dunmore succeeded in his land grab via a combination of "violence, manipulation, bluff, bluster, and shrewd

management" (Griffin 98). Playing upon the greed of young, upper-class land speculators (who likewise encouraged lower-class squatters and settlers), Dunmore coaxed the people of Virginia into supporting and inciting his war even as the British Indian Department worked to isolate the Shawnee (Griffin 98-9). In pursuing the war his way, writes Griffin, Dunmore created a plan of action that would serve as a template for future British-Indian (and then US-Indian) relations – play upon the greed of commoners, divide one's enemies, and manipulate one's supporters so that the ordinary people would be left with no leverage (Griffin 99). Although the exact status quo created by Dunmore's actions would blow apart in the wake of the Revolutionary War, this method of "civilizing" the Indian lands "would define the West in the wake of British abandonment" (Griffin 99).

State- Sponsored Violence

Rob Harper, a professor at the University of Wisconsin, studies the effects of violence (indeed, genocide) on the Native Americans in his article, "State Intervention and Extreme Violence in the Revolutionary Ohio Valley." Harper rejects the idea that the violence of the war was caused primarily by the animosity between individual white settlers and Indians; instead, he claims, this violence was incited and encouraged by the colonial government. Certainly the underlying animosity played a role, but Harper points out that, in instances when the colonial states did not support violence, the violence remained on a small scale (Harper 1). In the instance of Dunmore's War, Harper draws attention to a contradiction in British official policy – the Shawnee had assurances that the Crown supported their right to occupy their land, but white land speculators had the royal governor's promise to issue patents for the same land (Harper 3). Conflict between

natives and settlers led to the outbreak of Dunmore's War; after Dunmore ordered his militia to return home, the violence more or less ceased (Harper 5). While the British government did not create the animosity between white settlers and Indians, Harper argues that they manipulated that animosity, using it to pursue their own goals, and then putting it back under control when those goals were achieved.

The importance of government-sponsored organization in Indian warfare is further highlighted by historian John K. Mahon in his article, "Anglo-American Methods of Indian Warfare, 1676-1794." According to Mahon, the first settlers fought as poorly organized individuals, and were rather ineffective when fighting against the Indian war bands (Mahon 254). Organized military units had the distinct advantages presented by bayonets and often artillery, weapons which the Indians could not match (Mahon 257). Disorganized militia, however, were at a distinct disadvantage; indeed, though the Battle of Point Pleasant was a strategic victory for the white colonists, the militia suffered heavy losses while the Indians retreated into the woods almost unscathed (Mahon 272), which may well have contributed to the colonists' willingness to make peace after the one battle. In the British colonies, the state had a monopoly on the effective use of force; Dunmore exploited that monopoly and controlled the progression and the outcome of the war.

The American Indian Perspective

Of course, no discussion of Dunmore's War would be complete without an examination of the other participants in the conflict, the American Indians. Professor Colin G. Calloway of Dartmouth College examines this perspective in his article, "We Have Always Been the Frontier: The American Revolution in Shawnee Country."

According to Calloway, the outbreak of violence severely damaged the tribe's leadership structure; in 1774, some elders remarked that the tribe had no chiefs, only warriors (Calloway 45). Whether the British actually intended to create this effect is unknown; nevertheless, this research illuminates the fact that the strategic use of violence can ruin a community's leadership. Professor Woody Holton of the University of Richmond explains similar ideas in his article, "The Ohio Indians and the Coming of the American Revolution in Virginia." In the Ohio Valley in the late eighteenth century, there were enough Indians to potentially create the strongest indigenous foe Britain had ever faced (Holton 463), and indeed the Shawnee and Delaware were quite hopeful that such a coalition could be created. The thrust of Dunmore's War, and the associated actions of the British Indian Department, destroyed that possibility (Holton 470). Just as the war destroyed the Indians' leadership at the intra-tribal level, so too did it eliminate the possibility of unity at the inter-tribal level.

Ian Steele, a professor at the University of Western Ontario, sheds some light on the origins of the Shawnee's animosity for their white and nonwhite neighbors in his article, "Shawnee Origins of Their Seven Years' War." Steele points out that the Shawnee had long mistrusted the Six Nations of Iroquois (with whom they had fought in the 1670s), but prior to 1754 were inclined to diplomatically cooperate with the British (Steele 658-9). The Six Nations, for their part, sold the British claims to Shawnee land in the mid-eighteenth century (Steele 659). It was a 1754 incident involving the imprisonment of six Shawnee raiders, and the eventual execution of one of those men, that caused the Shawnee to declare war on the white men, whom they called "Long

Knives" (Steele 671). After that incident, the Shawnee were enemies of the English, and their longstanding animosity with the Iroquois would rapidly make them a target.

Chapter Summary

The existing scholarship on Dunmore's War approaches the topic from many different perspectives, including military, political, economic, and in terms of ethnic and cultural history. Nevertheless, every article and every mention in a book points forward, to the Revolutionary War and sometimes to events thereafter. The central debate in the study of Dunmore's War has been between the aforementioned colonial and revolutionary theories, but that distinction is all but meaningless. Clearly, the war influenced the Revolution and points thereafter; just as clearly, there was no conspiracy by British officials to weaken the colonial militia for the coming war. The true significance of Dunmore's War, then, is not its precise categorization in history, but rather the influence of the methods pioneered during the war on later government policy and its effects on the American Indians in the Ohio Valley and elsewhere.

# CHAPTER THREE

# EXPLANATION OF CURRENT METHODOLOGY AND GOALS

## Research Methods

The primary concern of this research is not, strictly speaking, the events of Dunmore's War itself. Certainly the events of the war are important, but only insofar as they fit within a certain framework. This research examines the historical significance of Dunmore's War, something that has two key components: the motivations behind the actions taken during the war, and the actual repercussions that the war held for its participants and for those who were affected by the conflict. Assessing the motivations for the actions of the British government and the Indians is important because it helps to determine the intent of those actions. That is, what were the British officials trying to accomplish, and how did they choose to move towards that achievement? Likewise, an analysis of the war's repercussions is critical to determine how effective those actions were, and thus how likely it was that those actions would be repeated later.

This research particularly emphasizes the role of the American Indians within this war. While it is crucial to examine the effects of the war on the British and on the colonists, and on their subsequent Revolutionary War, it is equally important to assess the effects of the war on the Shawnee, Mingo, Delaware and other involved tribes. That information is not only helpful in understanding the war, but also may hold implications for white-Indian relations later in history.

A secondary concern of the research is the ongoing debate among historians regarding the colonial and revolutionary theories of categorizing Dunmore's War. To a

certain extent, this distinction is pedantic, but the underlying question concerns Lord Dunmore's motivations: was he trying to expand his territory, or was he seeking to weaken the colonial militia by inciting a war? This question is so crucial to the underlying topic of the research that it merits mention as a separate concern.

The approached used in this research is a careful and comprehensive review of the existing scholarly literature on the topic of Dunmore's War. The sources used in said research are primary documents from the 1770s, as well as academic peer-reviewed articles and published books containing recent historical scholarship on the topic. Whenever possible data from very recent sources is used, but owing to the sheer volume of scholarship on the Revolutionary War from around the 1970s some of the sources are several years older than those typically used in an undergraduate capstone manuscript.

Purpose and Scope of the Paper

Dunmore's War has long been viewed as a critical point in the history of the American Revolution, and rightly so. As such, one focus of this paper will be to qualify the importance of Dunmore's War within the scope of the American Revolution, from a military and political perspective. More importantly, however, this paper will examine the implications of Dunmore's War for the American Indians of the Ohio Valley and beyond, a topic that in much of the scholarship on this subject has been mentioned only insofar as it directly affected the white participants in the American Revolution. This thesis will go on to draw important parallels between Dunmore's War and the Indian wars of the 19th century, and will conclude with implications for current U.S.-Indian policy.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

## Previous Indian Wars

Armed clashes between settlers and American Indians existed almost from the time of the earliest British colonies in North America in the early 17th century. Consequently, Dunmore's War came after more than 150 years of sporadic warfare between the British and the Indian tribes. Most important for this research, however, are the Indian wars of the century before Dunmore's War, beginning with King Philip's War in the mid-1670s. While there were certainly wars before that time, those wars were almost exclusively local affairs. King Philip's war represented a shift in the scope of Indian warfare, from strictly local conflicts to pieces in the grand struggle for control of North America (Mahon 1958, 254).

Perhaps the most significant previous conflict for the study of Dunmore's War was the Seven Years' War. While this conflict was part of the European Seven Years' War, known in the Americas as the French and Indian War (1754-1763), the Shawnee's participation in said conflict came about neither as a result of Shawnee cooperation with the French, nor because of general resentment at the British encroachment on Shawnee territory, nor as an act of opportunism (Steele 2006, 679). Instead, the Shawnee declared "perpetual war" on the English as a result of the imprisonment of several warriors in Charles Town, South Carolina (Steele 2006, 657). Despite the location of the initial incident, the Shawnee came to focus their attention on Virginia, in part because the British forces under George Washington and later Edward Braddock intruded upon

Shawnee hunting territory in Virginia (Steele 2006, 672), and in part because the Shawnee did not want to come into conflict with their Delaware allies operating in Pennsylvania and their Cherokee co-belligerents in South Carolina (Steele 2006, 673).

Though the Shawnee were nominally allied with the French in this war, it is clear that they pursued their own agenda, cooperating with the French only when it was convenient for both sides. When the French targets were Virginian, the French enjoyed Shawnee assistance; conversely, the Shawnee limited their participation in the larger-scale extended campaigns (Steele 2006, 673). The Shawnee saw the war as an opportunity to acquire captives, particularly women and children, and adopt them into their own society; this tendency remained intact despite years of conflict with the English, who rarely took captives at all and treated them very poorly when they were taken (Steele 2006, 674). As such, the exchange of captives between parties became extremely difficult and caused the Shawnee to continue to war with the English after the French were defeated (Steele 2006, 674).

Peace came only in 1765, when the British tacitly accepted that the Shawnee would never return all of their captives. The long war left many of the Shawnee bitter towards the white settlers (by the next year, some Shawnee were already planning another war against the English) and this bitterness would incite a generation's worth of additional conflicts, including Dunmore's War.

During Pontiac's War (1763-1765), the British saw the power of a broad-based Indian coalition; indeed, it represented a paradigm shift comparable to the one which happened during King Philip's War. Pontiac's war was "the first major multitribal war

against Europeans in North America to create a balance of power between the Indians and the British" (Parmenter 1997, 617). Even before the war ended, it provided the part of the impetus for the Proclamation of 1763, a document designed to prevent such a conflict from ever breaking out again by codifying this balance of power (Calloway 2006, 92). In addition to the war's political implications, the British saw firsthand the damage that a general Indian war could inflict. According to one official estimate, two thousand frontier folk were killed or captured and thousands more economically ruined (Mahon 1958, 262).

It is important to note that over the course of a century, the techniques used by the British forces to subdue the Indians were refined substantially. Constantly frustrated by the hit-and-run tactics used by the native warriors, the British found that the best way to overcome an Indian fighting force was by threatening its foundations - that is, the homes, fields and families of the warriors (Mahon 1958, 264). Close to their homes, the Indians could not use their standard tactics of ambush and encirclement, and they could not simply flee for fear of leaving their families and supply lines unguarded. Forced to stand their ground and thus fight in a fundamentally European style - and often outnumbered - the Indian forces were usually defeated.

Dunmore's War presents an excellent example of the usefulness of this tactic. The Battle of Point Pleasant, while a tactical victory for the colonial militia was a strategic draw - the colonists sustained heavy casualties, while the Shawnee forces simply fled into the wilderness. It was Lord Dunmore's strike at Shawnee towns in the Scioto Valley that ultimately forced the Shawnee to accept the governor's terms (Harper 2008, 236). The

British forces, when faced with Indian tactical superiority in the field, chose to undermine the native forces by striking at their homes and families, a technique that would remain in use for decades to come.

An equally important implication from the previous Indian wars comes from the role of broad Indian coalitions in said wars. Pontiac's rebellion in 1763 demonstrated that, while no one tribe could hope to harm the British, "a broad-based Indian coalition could inflict heavy losses and decisively influence British policy" (Holton 1994, 462). As such, when it came time to assess and deal with potential Indian threats to British interests, the British would always be wary to keep their conflicts limited. Against a single tribe, they could take what they wanted; against a general Indian coalition, their colonies would be devastated.

Tribal Politics and Rivalries

The British victory in Dunmore's War came about in large part because the British were able to exploit existing rivalries between the Indian tribes.[4] The Shawnee were vulnerable during the war because they could not call upon support from other powerful tribes, most notably the Iroquois and Cherokee. To understand the nature of those divisions it is necessary to look at the history of inter-tribal politics.

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4 It is interesting to note that the arrival of Europeans greatly changed the nature of warfare between the Indian tribes. Prior to the establishment of the colonies, inter-tribal wars were quite common. The arrival of European diseases, however, resulted in a great loss of life; meanwhile, the arrival of European firearms made wars much deadlier than they had been in the past. As such, tribes generally refrained from fighting each other when possible; the population simply couldn't handle the loss of life. When wars did break out, most tribes focused on taking captives to bolster their population; this was also true of wars with the colonists (Dunn 2007, 63).

In 1673, the Shawnee were numerous and prosperous in the Ohio Valley, as described by the French explorer Marquette (Calloway 1992, 40). However, intense pressure from the Five (and then Six) Nations of the Iroquois drove the Shawnee out of their territory, where they were faced with war, migrations, political fragmentation, economic disruption, and disease (Calloway 1992, 40). This rivalry with the Iroquois left the Shawnee severely weakened as a people by the mid-1700s, when they settled in southeastern Ohio - the territory that would be disputed during Dunmore's War. Just as importantly, it meant that they were unlikely to receive Iroquois assistance in the event of British interference in their territory.

The Shawnee enmity with the Iroquois had specific political implications as well as a general sense of diplomatic distrust. As a result of this migration and resettlement, the Iroquois viewed the Shawnee as a tributary people, who lived on their land only by the sufferance of the Six Nations (Wellenreuther 2001, 144). As such, at least as far as the Iroquois and their English allies were concerned, the Shawnee lands belonged to the Iroquois, and could be sold off by the latter without the consent of the former. Furthermore, the Six Nations would be within their rights to intervene if the Shawnee chose to resist such a sale, as they would during Dunmore's War (Wellenreuther 2001, 144).

Much like the Iroquois in the north, the Cherokee in the south had disputed claims on Shawnee hunting grounds in Kentucky. The Cherokee, in turn, were embroiled in rivalries with their own neighbors, the Creeks. In the early 1770s, the Cherokee sought to pay off debts they owed to white Indian traders by ceding lands used by the Lower

Creeks as hunting grounds; at a settlement between the British and the Cherokee and Upper Creeks in June 1773, over two million acres of Lower Creek hunting grounds were ceded to the colony of Georgia. The disgruntled Lower Creeks soon retaliated (Sosin 1966, 37). This combination of Cherokee claims on Shawnee land and the Cherokee's history of selling off other tribes' land left the Shawnee in a precarious position.

Among the Shawnee's closest friends among the other tribes were the Delaware, with whom they were nearly allied by a combination of kinship, treaty, and a shared history (Wellenreuther 2001, 143). Both tribes had fought on the French side during the French and Indian War, and both had been gradually losing their eastern settlements since the 1730s; the 1768 Treaty of Fort Stanwix made their positions even more precarious as both tribes lost land to white settlers (Wellenreuther 2001, 142). There were, however, complications in their relationship. The Delaware, like the Shawnee, were considered a vassal tribe by the Iroquois, and only held their own land by the grace of the Six Nations (Wellenreuther 2001, 144). They had neither the strength nor the legal authority to oppose the Iroquois, but they also could not risk losing the diplomatic goodwill that they had spent decades cultivating with the Shawnee. The precariousness of this position led the Delawares to pursue a difficult middling path as tensions rose in the early 1770s.

Another tribe closely associated with the Shawnee was the Mingo, an offshoot of the Seneca (Sosin 1966, 35). Much like the Shawnee themselves, the Mingo resented the role of the Iroquois in inter-tribal politics, denouncing their "shameful" sale of lands to the British without consulting or compensating the occupants (Sosin 1966, 38). Unlike the conciliatory Delaware, however, the Mingo proved to be much more vengeful in their

dealings with the British. This was perhaps justified, as the Mingo chief Logan lost his entire family to a band of colonial ruffians in the early stages of Dunmore's War (Sosin 1966, 44).

## Chapter Summary

Dunmore's War was more than the simple unfolding of a territorial and military conflict. Decades of previous wars contributed to the methods and ideas that were part of the war, and decades of inter-tribal politics placed the Shawnee in the position they were in at the war's outset. Existing rivalries with their most powerful neighbors, the Iroquois and the Cherokee, further weakened the Shawnee's position; the British had the opportunity to negotiate with these other tribes to obtain legitimate title to the Shawnee lands. The conflicting provisions of the Proclamation of 1763 and the Treaty of Fort Stanwix allowed both parties to the conflict to claim legal legitimacy. Of course, the side with military superiority obtained control of the territory in dispute.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# VIOLENCE

## Tools and Tactics

As previously mentioned, the weapons and tactics utilized during Dunmore's War were in large part developed in prior Indian wars. Bayonets were first introduced in the Americas in the 17th century but did not become a decisive weapon in Indian warfare until the middle of the 18th. Bayonets gave a substantial advantage to organized, disciplined soldiers; the Indians never adopted the weapon, relying instead on traditional knives and tomahawks (Mahon 1958, 256-7). Artillery gave the whites an even more substantial advantage; the Indians never even utilized captured pieces, often disposing of them by sinking them in swamps or rivers. Furthermore, nothing in the Indian code of warrior ethics required warriors to fight under fire that they could not match. As such, they would generally withdraw and regroup when under artillery fire (Mahon 1958, 257).

Conversely, the use of horses actually favored the Indians in battle, especially in forested regions such as the Ohio Valley. The Indians in this region made substantial use of horses, but they did not factor into their battle tactics. On the other hand, white soldiers typically refused to walk if there was any chance to ride, which often resulted in slowing down rather than speeding up movement. Citizen soldiers would mercilessly overload their mounts, and often selected their oldest, weakest animals for use on the campaign to save their good horses from injury. In the case of Dunmore's War, the horses effectively broke down, leaving the three columns of Dunmore's army isolated from each other. The

Shawnee took advantage of this opportunity to attack Lewis' unsupported column at Point Pleasant, inflicting significant casualties. By Lord Dunmore's own account, the militia lost forty-six killed and another eight wounded, while the Indians sustained only thirty casualties (Thwaites and Kellogg 1905, 385). Limited mobility brought about the indecisive outcome of the battle, rather than the utter defeat that would have resulted if the Shawnee faced the entire army at once (Mahon 1958, 258).

By 1774, there was some history of success for the colonists and the British in battles against the Indians. Such tactics generally depended on a combination of cohesion and mobility; units would be arranged in such a manner that they could quickly deploy into defensive rectangles and each column would have an advance guard, a rear guard, and several supporting scouts. Finally, each column would remain within supporting distance of the others, to counteract the Indian tactic of encirclement (Mahon 1958, 266-7). Unfortunately for the colonial militia, none of these tactics were in use at the Battle of Point Pleasant. Lewis' forces were isolated from the other columns, and his own column stretched out over a mile and a quarter - much too much territory to properly control. Furthermore, the men in the unit were untrained militiamen, who preferred to rely on marksmanship rather than cohesiveness as a unit (Mahon 1958, 272).

The result was a battle that, though it has often been called a victory for the militia, was at best a qualified success. When the natives opened fire, the militia formed an unwieldy line while the Shawnee took cover, and then took cover themselves. Many of Lewis' militia crouched behind logs, refusing to enter the action. Lines on both sides exchanged fire, but neither attempted an assault. At the end of the day, although Lewis'

forces were able to hold their position, they sustained substantial casualties. Meanwhile the Indians, despite being outnumbered at about one thousand to three hundred, escaped across the river at the end of the day with few losses (Mahon 1958, 273).

Finding their methods on the battlefield ineffective, however, the British resorted to direct violence against the Indian civilians. A militia strike on Shawnee towns and cornfields in August 1774, intended to weaken the Indians' resistance, was what actually provoked the tribe to take part in a full-scale war. After the Battle of Point Pleasant, Dunmore's own column marched on the Shawnee villages in the Scioto Valley, and the Shawnee accepted the governor's terms to avoid the destruction of their homes and families. When outmaneuvered on the battlefield, the British were able to force an end to the war on their own terms by using their superior numbers and firepower to threaten the Indians' homes and villages directly.

Effects on the Indian Community

Though white settlers were victims of violence in Dunmore's War and the surrounding events, the war's outcome clearly inflicted more harm upon the Shawnee than the Shawnee had inflicted on the colonists. The Shawnee were left isolated from the neighboring tribes to a greater extent than they had been before; their closest allies, the Delaware, had for the most part remained neutral during the war. Further, the Shawnee were fractured internally, with some advocating further violence against the British and the colonists, and others wishing to simply accept the loss of their territory. The Shawnee leadership was in large part decapitated and radicalized; some tribal elders remarked that they had no chiefs left, only warriors (Calloway 1992, 45). Despite the limited casualties

suffered during the war, the Shawnee as a people and as a political entity were left substantially weaker (Calloway 1992, 40).

Dunmore's War was the beginning of a series of events that would leave the Shawnee physically as well as politically fractured. In 1774, one band of Shawnee traveled south to stay in Creek lands. At the same time, 170 families packed up and moved west to Missouri, choosing not to be surrounded by the white settlers pouring in on all sides.[5] As the American Revolution proceeded, this migration became faster and faster. The Shawnee had been a migratory people for generations, but no previous migration had split the nation as thoroughly as the movement initiated by Dunmore's War (Calloway 1992, 42).

Chapter Summary

Despite superior training, numbers, and armament, British forces often found themselves at a disadvantage when fighting the Indians. Bayonets were advantageous and artillery was overpowering, but the use of horses often limited an army's mobility rather than enhancing it. Some exceptional British forces could counteract the Indians' tactics of ambush and encirclement, but most untrained militia could not. In the Battle of Point Pleasant, the Virginia militiamen were tactically outmatched by the Shawnee forces. Only numerical superiority allowed Lewis' men to hold their ground.

Unfortunately for the Shawnee, the British had one tactic which nearly always worked to force the Indians' surrender. They would take to attacking the Indians' villages,

5 It is important to note that the Shawnee were not completely split by this migration. The migrants settled in southeastern Missouri and had frequent communication with those who remained in Ohio (Lankford 1999, 395-7).

threatening their homes and families, and making ambush and encirclement impossible. Such was the case as Lord Dunmore's forces attacked the Shawnee towns on the Scioto River. This direct violence against the tribe, not just its war band, would have far-reaching and debilitating consequences for the Shawnee as a nation.

# CHAPTER SIX

# THE BRITISH COLONIAL GOVERNMENT

## British Diplomacy

As was discussed in Chapter Four, existing relations between the Indian tribes made it possible for the British to isolate the Shawnee in preparation for Dunmore's War. Yet it was also possible for the Shawnee to combat this isolation through their own diplomatic efforts. The nations who had fought together in Pontiac's rebellion continued to exchange war belts, and the Treaty of Fort Stanwix intensified their anti-British sentiment. In 1769, a delegation of Mingo, Shawnee, and Delaware traveled west to form a coalition with the tribes who lived along the Miami and Wabash Rivers (Holton 1994, 462). This entity, known as the Scioto Coalition, then made a serious effort to include the populous southern tribes in its anti-British focus (Holton 1994, 463-4). How was it, then, that when the Shawnee and Mingo faced the British in 1774 they did so essentially alone? The answer lies in the competing diplomatic efforts of the British authorities.

Many British statesmen reacted to this potential coalition by seeking to address its primary complaint: the provisions of the Treaty of Fort Stanwix. In 1769, Lord Dunmore's predecessor as governor of Virginia, a nobleman named Norborne Berkeley, voided existing trans-Appalachian surveys and ordered that further surveying cease; meanwhile, his Executive Council rejected hundreds of land grant requests made by Virginia gentlemen seeking to acquire land in the west (Holton 1994, 468). As the Scioto Coalition gained momentum, British officials engaged in a systematic campaign against the Stanwix deed. The Privy Council reaffirmed the provisions of the Proclamation of

1763, which forbade settlement west of the Appalachians (Holton 1994, 468). The viscount Hillsborough, secretary of state for the colonies, sent promises to the Cherokee that Kentucky would remain in the tribe's territory (Holton 1994, 467). By assuring the tribes that the post-Stanwix speculation and settlement would be halted, the British hoped to address the tribes' grievances and thus eliminate the very foundation of the Scioto Coalition, or at least prevent it from expanding to include the populous and powerful southern tribes.

At the local level, the superintendents, agents, and commissaries of the royal British Indian Department sought to prevent an expanded Indian war through negotiation (Sosin 1966, 34-5). It was the Indian Department that negotiated the Treaty of Fort Stanwix itself, clearing Iroquois title to the land that would be disputed in Dunmore's War, and the Treaty of Hard Labor and Treaty of Lochaber, which cleared Cherokee title to the same region (Sosin 1966, 35). In so doing, the Indian Department isolated the Shawnee, making it so that they alone would have an interest in the disputed territory.. The Indian Department did its most significant work, however, at the beginning of the conflict. The Shawnee and Delaware attempted to negotiate with the Chickasaw in the southwest, through whom they hoped to reach the Cherokee, Choctaw, and Creeks to present a unified Indian front in the south (Sosin 1966, 47). The Delaware sent emissaries to the Great Lakes region in the summer of 1774 to attempt to secure aid from the Huron and Ottawa. That fall, three Shawnee chiefs traveled to the Onondaga council to petition the Iroquois for assistance (Sosin 1966, 47). Faced with the very real threat of a general Indian war, the Indian Department succeeded in playing the tribes against one another.

In the south, John Stuart, the Indian Department official who had negotiated the treaties of Hard Labor and Lochaber, eliminated the possibility of a general coalition in the region by keeping the southern tribes at war with each other. Early in 1774, the Cherokee and Shawnee had urged the Chickasaw to mediate a peace between the Choctaw and the Creeks; through those negotiations, the Shawnee hoped to maneuver all four southern tribes into their coalition (Sosin 1966, 49). Despite existing animosity between the Georgians and the Lower Creeks, several key Indian Department officials managed to keep the tribes at war. Charles Stuart was dispatched to provide arms and ammunition to the Choctaw, preventing them from being forced to make peace with the Creeks; John MacIntosh, commissary to the Chickasaw, was instructed to hinder their negotiations between the warring Creek and Choctaw (Sosin 1966, 49). Finally, an official named Alexander Cameron convinced the Cherokee to provide remunerations for an attack carried out in 1773, leaving them short on ammunition and supplies (Sosin 1966, 49-50). With the successful completion of all three missions, the southern tribes were left too occupied with each other to provide aid to the Shawnee.

In the north, Guy Johnson, a superintendent of the British Indian Department, called upon the Iroquois to counteract the Shawnee and Delaware diplomacy. Johnson appealed to the Six Nations' sense of self-importance, saying that they, not the Shawnee, should lead any Indian negotiations. Iroquois emissaries then traveled west to meet with the Great Lakes tribes, rendering the Shawnee efforts to obtain aid from the Huron and Ottawa unsuccessful (Sosin 1966, 48). In September 1774, as the three Shawnee chiefs traveled to Onondaga to ask the Iroquois for aid directly, Johnson sent his own emissaries

to the Six Nations advising them to "shut their ears" against those who might ask them to take violent action. Thus, when the Shawnee chiefs arrived, they found the Iroquois speaking of a general peace conference to be held between the whites and Indians of the region, several weeks hence (Sosin 1966, 48-9). Given that the Virginia forces were at that very moment preparing for a full-scale invasion of Shawnee territory, such a conference would be of little benefit to the tribe.

Thanks to the efforts of the British Indian Department, the Shawnee, Mingo, and a few Delaware found themselves without support on the eve of the Battle of Point Pleasant. British diplomacy and manipulation created a state of affairs in which the Shawnee, weakened and cut off from support, had no choice but to fight the numerically superior British directly. The war's outcome owed at least as much to the efforts of British diplomats as it did to soldiers and militia.

State-Sponsored Violence

As mentioned at the beginning of Chapter Four, King Philip's War in 1676 represented a paradigm shift in the nature of war in North America. Prior to that date, colonial wars were generally small skirmishes between colonial militia and Indian war parties. Beginning with King Philip's War, armed conflicts took on a broader meaning as pieces of the grand struggle for control over all of North America (Mahon 1958, 254). This apparent dichotomy is not completely accurate, however: some violent conflicts in the Ohio Valley remained small and localized, perhaps deadly, but without large-scale bloodshed. Other, seemingly similar incidents led to huge cycles of retaliation, causing widespread death and destruction (Harper 2008, 233). What brought about this difference

between smaller and larger conflicts? The answer lies in the direct participation or indirect support of the British colonial government in some cases, and a lack of the same in others.

When the British government involved itself directly in conflicts, violence quickly escalated from skirmishes to pitched battles. When the British government cut off its support for a given struggle, that conflict quickly reverted back to the skirmish level. Dunmore's War is an example of both of these trends, escalating to extreme levels when Lord Dunmore himself took an interest, and subsequently ending when the governor had what he desired (Harper 2008, 234). The direct origins in the war lay in 1773, when Lord Dunmore authorized surveying and granted titles for lands in Kentucky. That summer and fall, a few Indians responded by killing surveyors and settlers. In April 1774, a group of land speculators sent more surveyors into the region, both legally and illegally; the Shawnee responded by confronting and threatening the surveyors. A large group of so-called "land jobbers" then banded together and began indiscriminately attacking Indians; as one might expect, these attacks brought about calls for vengeance from Indian leaders, including some who had previously favored peace. All of this violence was preceded by the actions of the colonial governor of Virginia (Harper 2008, 235).

Besides directly encouraging this violence through the governor's actions, the British government helped to legitimize both sides in the violent dispute. Because of Dunmore's promise to issue patents for lands in Kentucky, surveyors and squatters alike moved into the territory. Meanwhile, the Shawnee hunters resisted this influx of settlers in part because they had assurances from royal officials that the Crown opposed such

settlement. Both sides had reason to believe that their actions upheld imperial policy, and consequently both sides believed themselves to be justified in continuing and escalating violence against the other (Harper 2008, 235).

Dunmore's Ambitions in Pennsylvania

Lord Dunmore's goal was, of course, to expand the power of the colony of Virginia. His plan for doing so included three separate initiatives. Two of these, acquiring territory held by the Shawnee and Mingo in Kentucky and limiting the scope of the war, have already been discussed. The governor's third initiative involved territory that belonged, by charter, to the colony of Pennsylvania. In 1773, the British Army evacuated Fort Pitt for economic reasons. Through an adventurer named John Connolly, Dunmore seized the opportunity and the fort, and by January 1774 had set up a Virginia county government in Pittsburgh with his own followers as the legal militia (Kerby 1974, 7). As one might expect, this action drew harsh criticism from the local Pennsylvanians; indeed, they took up arms against the Virginians in the name of Westmoreland County (Sosin 1966, 43).

In order to maintain his hold on the area around Fort Pitt, Lord Dunmore needed to make sure that the Shawnee and Delaware acquiesced to his control of the region. To that end, in January 1774 Connolly and his militia fired upon a group of Indians across the nearby river (Sosin 1966, 44). In April, Connolly used a small Cherokee attack as a false pretext to warn the frontiersmen that the Shawnee were on the warpath. Over the course of the month, violence ensued, culminating in a particularly brutal incident on April 30th. A group of frontiersmen lured a small band of Mingo across the river at

Yellow Creek and murdered every one of them: men, women, and children, including the entire family of the Mingo chief, Logan. These actions, taken by Connolly and other men under his orders and suggestions, seemed calculated to force the Indians to take some hostile, retaliatory action (Sosin 1966, 44). Indeed, the skirmishes of April 1774 in large part initiated Dunmore's War and played a crucial role in provoking the Indians to take up arms against Virginia. The outcome of the war secured Lord Dunmore's hold on Fort Pitt.

Government Orchestration: Escalating and Deescalating Violence

The escalating violence continued into August, when Virginia militia burned a cluster of Shawnee towns and cornfields. As a result, nearly all of the Shawnee elders came to favor direct violence against the Virginia forces, which resulted in the strike against Lewis' army at Point Pleasant and the killing or wounding of dozens of militiamen. The war then came to an abrupt halt as Dunmore marched on the Shawnee towns of the Scioto valley, forcing the tribe to accept his terms at the peace negotiations. As soon as the governor withdrew his support, the violence dropped off (Harper 2008, 236).

For the most part, the settlers had no interest in ending the conflict then and there: many wished to plunder the Shawnee's homes and villages, while others wanted revenge for those killed at Point Pleasant. Dunmore's order to leave the Shawnee towns alone may have brought resentment towards the governor, but it nevertheless meant the end of the large-scale killing. Militia leaders understood the importance of state support in their conquests, and while they may have wished to take their own actions against the Indians, only the most violently inclined took part in localized, small-scale attacks after the end of

the war.[6] Most of the officers were themselves land speculators who wanted the governor to grant them title to rich Kentucky estates, and many of the rank and file also wanted to be rewarded with some of the newly-conquered land. They may have grumbled, but these men needed to stay in the governor's good graces, and so they obeyed (Harper 2008, 237).

The actions of the British Indian Department have already been discussed at length earlier in this chapter, and so there is no need to repeat that information here. It does bear repeating, however, that the British Indian Department worked to contain the scope of the conflict, making sure that the Shawnee would be isolated while keeping the other tribes neutral. While Lord Dunmore's actions represented government control over the war with the Shawnee, the Indian Department's actions represented government control over potential conflicts outside the war with the Shawnee. These two branches of the British colonial government worked towards a single goal.

Chapter Summary

It is said that the state has a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence, and that was more or less the case in the Ohio Valley during Dunmore's War. To be sure, small-scale skirmishes were a fact of life on the frontier, and there were casualties – both Indian and white – on a regular basis. But without government intervention, these skirmishes

6 It bears repeating that this only meant the end of large-scale attacks. As white settlers poured into the territory, bands of Shawnee warriors continued to attack them, and groups of settlers continued to retaliate. However, these Indian warriors were few in number (perhaps eighty total) and operated on the fringes of Indian politics. Likewise the settlers who took part in retaliatory strikes were few. Because there was no state support for this violence from either the British officials or the tribal elders, the violence remained very limited in scope (Harper 2008, 237).

never expanded to a significant level. Indeed, it was generally in the interests of both the British authorities and the tribal leadership to keep violence down to a limited level.

In the year before Dunmore's War, however, this situation changed. Dunmore saw an opportunity to acquire territory in the west and secure Fort Pitt in the north without involving his colony in a general Indian war. He used agents to incite the Shawnee and Mingo to war while relying on the British Indian Department to keep the Cherokee and Iroquois out of the conflict. With his authority as governor, Dunmore was then able to bring the full power of the Virginia militia to bear on the Shawnee, and he was able to curtail the violence once it was no longer needed. Lord Dunmore's actions represented a usable model to acquire territory from the Indians: he applied force decisively but judiciously, while using diplomacy to prevent the conflict from leaving his control.

# CHAPTER SEVEN

# AFTERMATH: THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

## The Revolutionary Theory

The revolutionary theory of Dunmore's War maintains that the Battle of Point Pleasant was essentially a British trap. Lord Dunmore intentionally incited the conflict in order to weaken the colonial militia, who he knew would enter open revolt during the next few years, and thus strengthen his hand when it came time to fight against the rebellious colonists (Sosin 1966, 34). This argument owes its inception to Andrew Lewis, commander at the Battle of Point Pleasant, who during the Revolutionary War expressed doubts that Dunmore ever intended to reinforce his column. Lewis believed that Dunmore had quite intentionally set his men up for annihilation at the hands of the Indians ("Manufactured History" 1997, 81).

Though this theory was advanced by some nineteenth-century historians, it was the argument of Livia Nye Simpson Poffenbarger, a Point Pleasant newspaper editor and amateur historian, that lent it the most credence. She began her crusade in the *State Gazette* in 1899, and, in 1901, founded a chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution that would lobby the state to acquire the battlefield site. A year later, the site was dedicated as Tu-Endie-Wei Park, and in 1908, Congress passed an act officially referencing the Battle of Point Pleasant as a "Battle of the Revolution." Tens of thousands of dollars in funding were appropriated for a monument at the park, and in 1909 an eighty-four-foot granite obelisk was dedicated at the site. The park became Point Pleasant Battle Monument State Park in 1956 ("Manufactured History" 1997, 79-80).

Challenges to the Revolutionary Theory

As noted above, the acceptance of the revolutionary theory allowed the town of Point Pleasant to acquire tens of thousands of dollars in federal funding for its historic site. Some historians have thus dismissed the revolutionary theory as little more than an excuse for the town to acquire such funding ("Manufactured History" 1997, 87). Setting aside those concerns, however, there are obvious historical objections to the theory.

Even before Fels' time, there were objections to the idea that Dunmore intentionally started a war with the express intent of weakening the colonial militia. Future President Theodore Roosevelt regarded this idea as "much too futile a theory to need serious discussion" (1889, 202). Indeed, the governor's actions greatly benefited the Virginia colonists, and for a time he received his well-deserved gratitude for expanding the colony's borders and providing security against the Indians (Roosevelt 1889, 202).

Dunmore's War began in 1774, and Lord Dunmore began taking steps that would lead to the outbreak of the war a year earlier, in 1773. It would have taken rather remarkable prescience on the governor's part to predict a revolt that was two years away from even beginning, and three years away from becoming a general rebellion, with enough certainty to want to intentionally sabotage his own militia (Fels 1974, 378). Furthermore, viewed in a broader context, Dunmore seemed to value the preservation of the Virginia militia. While they did suffer some casualties at Point Pleasant, Dunmore halted the war immediately thereafter, much to the consternation of the colonial officers and soldiers (Harper 2008, 236). Far from intentionally putting the militia in harm's way,

Dunmore's actions actually stopped the militia from continuing to escalate the conflict. In so doing, he likely prevented hundreds of casualties.

The revolutionary theory also ignores the actions of the British Indian Department in their negotiations and manipulations surrounding Dunmore's War. As previously stated, the British officials worked to reduce the scope of the war, keeping the Cherokee and Iroquois from intervening. Again, if the intent truly was to inflict as many casualties as possible on the militia, these actions were counterproductive.

The Colonial Militia

Regardless of whether Dunmore truly intended to weaken the Virginia militia by inciting a war with the Shawnee, the war's actual effects on the militia were for the most part beneficial. Notwithstanding the dozens of casualties suffered at Point Pleasant, those who survived the battle became a much more effective fighting force (Nihart 2005, 189). Of course, colonial militias had existed prior to Dunmore's War, but the specific organizational and fighting experience gained by fighting the Shawnee was invaluable (Thomas and Wilson 1975, 105). As mentioned in Chapter Five, only well-trained and well-disciplined units were able to counteract the Indians' tactics of encirclement and ambush. After Point Pleasant, the Virginia militia was much better equipped to handle such tactics (Spero 2007, 115).

Deepening Inter-Tribal Rivalries

In the aftermath of Dunmore's War, the Shawnee were left almost entirely without allies. Their plans to acquire aid from the Cherokee, the Iroquois, and the Great Lakes tribes had all fallen through. Their longtime Delaware allies had sent little support in the

previous war; their Mingo co-belligerents, meanwhile, proved to be too inclined towards violence to be helpful allies. In 1777, the influential Chief Cornstalk, an advocate of peace, denounced the Mingo for corrupting the young warriors of his tribe and planned to move closer to the Delaware, where the Shawnee would be safe from the Mingo threat. But that same year, some Shawnee warriors joined the Mingo in raiding along the American frontier. Dunmore's War thus caused the Shawnee to become divided between alignment with the conciliatory, pro-American Delaware and alignment with the belligerent, anti-American Mingo (Calloway 1992, 41).

Later that same year, Cornstalk was murdered by the American militia, driving many Shawnee into the arms of the British (Calloway 1992, 41). As the revolution progressed, Thomas Jefferson expressed his desire to see the Shawnee exterminated or driven out; much like the British five years before, he advocated turning the other tribes against the Shawnee (Calloway 1992, 42). Fighting between the isolated Shawnee and the Americans continued for years, in a two-decade continuation of the conflict that had started in 1774.

### The Shawnee in the Revolution

Though it is inaccurate from an Anglo-American perspective to say that the American Revolution began at Point Pleasant, it is substantially more accurate to make that claim from the perspective of the Indian side. In fact, for the Shawnee, the American Revolution lasted at least twenty years, until (and possibly after) the Treaty of Greenville in 1795. Dunmore's War was the first stage in two decades of violence, burning villages and political fragmentation for the Shawnee (Calloway 1992, 39).

In 1775, several Shawnee representatives attended the signing of the Treaty of Fort Pitt, which confirmed the Ohio River as the boundary line between Indian and white lands. The Shawnee would fight to protect that line for another twenty years (Calloway 1992, 40). Caught between the Virginians on one side and British-allied tribes on the other, the Shawnee were forced to make decisions quickly. Chief Cornstalk advocated neutrality, but his 1777 murder at the hands of the American militia pushed many Shawnee into the arms of the British (Calloway 1992, 41). As the Americans continued to flood into Shawnee territory, more and more of the tribe's leaders began to advocate fighting on the side of the British[7] (Calloway 1992, 42). Ironically, the influx of white settlers started by the British victory in Dunmore's War pushed the Shawnee to fight alongside the British as one war blended into the next.

As the war escalated, American invasions of Shawnee territory became an almost annual event. Using the same tactics that the British had employed during Dunmore's War, the Continental Army burned crops and villages with every incursion; its forts along the frontier forced the tribe to remain on a war footing (Calloway 1992, 42-3). Though a 1779 attack on the principal town of Chillicothe was repelled, the Shawnee were so badly weakened that the next year they burned the town themselves rather than let it fall into the Americans' hands. They fought the Americans to a standstill at the village of Piqua, until the latter used their artillery against a village council house where many of the

7 A few Shawnee, including Cornstalk's sister Nonhelma, supported the American side throughout the Revolution. More, including most of the Maquachake division, remained neutral and promoted peace throughout the war. Still, most Shawnee who remained in the Ohio Valley eventually fought against the Americans (Calloway 1992, 42).

people had taken refuge. The Continental Army spent the next two days burning crops and looting graves. Though the Shawnee's hit and run tactics meant that they suffered few battlefield losses, the destruction of their homes and cornfields left the tribe destitute and physically weak (Calloway 1992, 43). Once again, when they could not defeat the Indians militarily, the colonists turned to the destruction of homes and crops as a means of socially and economically crippling their enemies.[8]

Just as the Shawnee's Revolutionary War began well before the whites', so too did it continue well after Cornwallis surrendered at Yorktown. After the war ended, the Maquachaka division renewed their pledge to remain peaceful, but the Kentucky militia continued to make brutal strikes into Maquachaka territory, killing women, children and old men (Calloway 1992, 43-44). The rebuilt Chillicothe was destroyed three more times, but the Shawnee rebuilt it under the same name in a new location each time (Calloway 1992, 44). For twelve years after 1783 the Shawnee continued their struggle against the Americans, finally reaching a peace agreement in 1795.

Chapter Summary

From an Anglo-American perspective, it is probably inaccurate to describe the Battle of Point Pleasant as the first battle of the American Revolution. If Lord Dunmore did, as some historians have claimed, intend to weaken the colonial militia, his actions

8 This is one of many examples of the direct violence of warfare feeding into the structural violence of peacetime, especially for the losing side. For the Shawnee, even though the fighting ended in 1795, the long-term effects of the destruction inflicted by the war continued to be felt for generations. As such, this burning of homes and crops helped to accomplish not just the immediate goal of military victory, but also the long-term goal of American dominance in the Shawnee-occupied territory.

were wholly inconsistent with that goal. Dunmore and the British Indian Department carefully limited the scope of the conflict, a course of action that certainly saved the lives of hundreds of militiamen. One can dismiss most of the allegations made against Dunmore's intentions, including the words of Andrew Lewis during the Revolution and the words of Livia Nye Simpson Poffenbarger a century later, as tainted by excessive patriotic bias.

For the Shawnee, however, Dunmore's War was absolutely part of the American Revolution, or at the very least was a direct predecessor. The agreement at Camp Charlotte brought about a temporary cease-fire between the Shawnee and the Virginia militia, but as soon as Virginia entered open revolt the conflict began anew. Likewise, the influx of white settlers that began at the conclusion of Dunmore's War would continue to be a source of frustration and violence throughout the Revolution and thereafter. Moreover, in the aftermath of the war, the Shawnee were left diplomatically isolated. Only the belligerent Mingo and conciliatory Delaware remained friendly with the Shawnee, and those tribes were at odds with one another.

Regardless of precisely where Dunmore's War fits in the story of the colonial and revolutionary eras, it is clear that its events impacted the course of the Revolution in significant ways. The Virginia militia, who were unable to really defeat the Indians at Point Pleasant, gained valuable fighting experience that would assist them greatly in the Revolutionary War. More importantly, the tactics used by Dunmore against the Shawnee, including destruction of crops and outright attacks on homes and villages, were used more and more brutally as the Revolution went on; as might be expected, these tactics

had a debilitating effect on the Shawnee as a tribe. Likewise, the harm inflicted on the Shawnee during the war started a seemingly endless narrative of destruction, oppression, internal chaos, and loss of territory and resources.

# CHAPTER NINE

# CONCLUSION: A NARRATIVE OF IMPERIAL OPPRESSION

## Logic of Empire

It can be seen, then, that the British and then American conquest of the Shawnee lands consisted of three primary stages. First, the British Indian Department and other government statesmen used negotiation and manipulation to ensure that the Shawnee and Mingo were without support from the other major tribes. Next, Lord Dunmore exercised his monopoly on the legitimate use of force, using direct violence to force the Shawnee to surrender their lands to Virginia. Finally, the gates opened for a flood of white settlers to move into Shawnee territory – some eighty thousand of them between 1775 and 1790 (Calloway 1992, 47) – keeping the Indians constantly beleaguered. Each of these methods deserves examination in more depth.

The negotiations of the British Indian Department favored the method of playing one tribe off against another. In some cases, they would use certain tribes, most notably the Iroquois, against the Shawnee directly. The British purchase of the Shawnee lands from the Iroquois assured them of Iroquois neutrality in the war, and their use of Iroquois influence also kept the Great Lakes tribes out of the war. In other cases, the British simply kept other tribes too busy with local affairs to come to the aid of the Shawnee. They did so in the south, arming the Choctaw to help perpetuate their war against the Creeks and sabotaging the peace negotiations that could have freed up the populous southern tribes to assist the Shawnee in a grand coalition. Through a combination of negotiation, manipulation, and bribery, the British kept the Shawnee politically isolated.

While a broad-based Indian coalition could do serious damage to British property and policy, a few tribes stood no chance of holding off the British Empire.

When it came time to directly utilize violence against the Shawnee, Lord Dunmore used the lessons of previous wars to come up with a simple, but brutally effective strategy. Unable to conclusively defeat the Shawnee warriors at Point Pleasant, Dunmore's army simply marched on the Indians' villages, forcing surrender by threatening their homes, families, and sources of food. Once Dunmore had what he wanted, he used his influence as governor to immediately curtail the violence, ordering his militia to leave the Shawnee alone. This, again, played into the strategy of isolation. If the Virginians had pressed the attack against the Shawnee, it is possible that the Shawnee could have acquired aid from other tribes in a general Indian war. By keeping the conflict limited, Dunmore kept his conquests beneath the notice of the powerful Iroquois and Cherokee.

Finally, it was the influx of settlers that ruined the Shawnee. With the coming of the Revolution, they were forced to choose between fighting the Americans and thus supporting the British who had defeated them in 1774, supporting the Americans who were taking their lands, trying to somehow remain peaceful in the middle of a full-scale war, or leaving. Disagreement between these four options, none of which were ideal, caused the tribe to splinter politically and physically. The Shawnee were left in a constant state of flux, with migrations, changes in leadership, and internal struggles. It is no wonder that the Shawnee were left poor, weak, and unable to hold off the white settlers who seized their lands.

Continuing Oppression

The same methods used by the British to defeat the Shawnee during Dunmore's War were picked up by the Americans as the Revolution continued. They continued to play on the divisions between the Shawnee and other tribes, as Thomas Jefferson advocated (Calloway 1992, 42). They continued to be frustrated in pitched battles, and so weakened the Shawnee by attacking and destroying their villages and cornfields; when necessary, they would force victories by using artillery. This systematic oppression continued even after the Treaty of Paris, as many Shawnee refused to accept the Americans' claim to their territory as part of the treaty (Harper 2008, 242).

The constant fighting left the Shawnee drained of resources and leadership, and greatly weakened them as a people. By 1782, the Revolution had become a total war for the Shawnee; when the Americans entered their territory, "boys, old men, and women marched out to fight, together with every man who was able to crawl" (Calloway 1992, 46). This total war mentality affected the Shawnee leadership as well; as early as 1777 the elders remarked that their tribe had no chiefs, only warriors (Calloway 1992, 45). Rather than being oppressed on all sides by the white men, many of the Shawnee chose to leave. The systematic conquest of their lands and destruction of their homes, coupled with the sense of being used as a pawn in the political struggles of the British and Americans, left the Shawnee a greatly weakened and deeply divided people. With the power of the Shawnee greatly reduced, the new United States was in a fine position to add their lands to its growing empire.

In the case of the Shawnee, we can see the close relationship between direct violence (e.g. warfare) and structural violence. Indeed, the fighting on the frontier became so ingrained into Shawnee society that even as the direct violence of battle took place, the very state of being at war was a form of structural violence, warping and damaging the tribe as a whole. The colonists did not just inflict immediate damage with their killing of Indians and burning of homes and crops. They inflicted long-term suffering upon the Shawnee by destroying the tribe's very livelihood, leaving them destitute, divided, and desperate for revenge.

Modern Echoes

While it is both relatively easy and instructive to draw parallels between Dunmore's War and the Indian wars of the 19th century, it is perhaps even more instructive, if also more difficult, to find parallels between Dunmore's War and later government policy. Certainly the policies of the U.S. government in the late 19th century and the whole of the 20th century included less overt violence than the direct conquest of Shawnee territory in Dunmore's War. Violence, however, has many forms, and the structural violence used in modern-day policies is in many ways disturbingly similar to the direct violence used during the late 18th century.

In the months leading up to Dunmore's War, the British government pursued a policy of diplomatic division and isolation, cutting the Shawnee off from virtually all of their potential allies. In the war's aftermath, this division became even more pronounced as individual Shawnee were cut off not only from other tribes, but also from other elements within their own tribe. This policy has a modern-day analog in the U.S.

Government's assignment and distribution of reservation land. The vast majority of reservations are located in the western states, isolated from major population centers and from other reservations; furthermore, as of the 1990 census the majority of reservations were small communities with fewer than 1,000 residents (Shumway and Jackson 1995, 189). This non-urban status has been positively correlated with "high instances of poverty, shortened life span, high infant mortality rates, and other socioeconomic factors" (Shumway and Jackson 1995, 193). Much as government intervention in Dunmore's War forced the Shawnee to migrate westward, the later federal efforts in relocating Indians to the west had a massive impact on the distribution of Indian population that "continues to reverberate through the lives of present-day Native Americans" (Shumway and Jackson 1995, 199). Thus, the U.S. Government has used forced isolation and forced migration to keep Indians economically and politically weak for the past two centuries.

Among the most brutally effective tactics used by the British during Dunmore's war was the destruction of Shawnee crops. With the destruction of their cornfields, the Shawnee were forced to live on game meat alone; to avoid such a fate, they often capitulated, as was the case after Dunmore's march on the Scioto villages. Today, many reservation-dwelling American Indians are forced by government policy to live in "food deserts," where the people are fed on government-surplus commodity foods rather than fresh produce. In Arizona, for example, the Pima Indians have been forced by the diversion of water from the Gila River to survive on low-quality Western staples (e.g. wheat flour, lard, sugar, coffee, canned foods and processed cereal) since the 1930s. The substitution of these foods for their traditional crops has led to a massive surge in diabetes

rates, with as many as 35% of Pima adults suffering from the disease and its complications (Brand, Snow, Nabham and Truswell 1990, 1). Certainly, this sort of systemic violence is subtle: on the surface, the government is actually providing food to the Pima. Nevertheless, in both cases the destruction of crops has led to significant suffering for the Indian people, while enabling non-Indians to acquire what they want: Shawnee territory in the case of Dunmore's War, and rights to use precious water in the case of modern Arizona.

Similarly, government policies have resulted in white settlers occupying significant portions of the remaining Indian lands, much as the British victory in Dunmore's War allowed white settlers to pour into lands that had been Shawnee hunting grounds. Among the most egregious examples of such a policy was the General Allotment Act of 1887, which divided reservation land into individual homesteads on which Indians were expected to become farmers.[9] As a consequence of the Allotment Act, huge amounts of "surplus" lands were sold off, virtually all of them to non-Indian buyers; through tax sales and sharp dealing, even more land was lost to non-Indians. In total, as a direct or indirect result of the General Allotment Act Indians nationwide lost almost two thirds of their territory (Wilkinson and Biggs 1977, 142). This represented an influx of white settlers onto Indian land on par with the 80,000 settlers who moved into Shawnee territory after Dunmore's War, projected on a nationwide scale.

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9 The primary purpose of the Allotment Act was to "assimilate" American Indians into white agrarian society. That discussion is outside the scope of this paper. It bears mentioning, however, that attempts to assimilate have usually resulted in more oppression, rather than the peaceful integration of Indians into white society.

The termination era of the 1950s and 1960s also represented a push to move non-Indian settlers onto Indian land. While the termination era is most known for the revocation of government recognition of certain tribes, it also included a comprehensive program to 'assimilate' American Indians into white society. Part of that program was the authorization for sale and lease of restricted Indian lands to non-Indians (Wilkinson and Biggs 1977, 149). The program also emphasized continued Indian relocation off the reservations to urban areas (Wilkinson and Biggs 1977, 150). In this relocation policy, wecan see shades of the great Shawnee migration that followed Dunmore's war. Faced with an influx of white settlers on all sides, many Shawnee chose to leave their territory and travel west into Missouri. Likewise, faced with shrinking (or in many cases, disappearing) reservations and a fresh wave of non-Indians seeking their land, many Indians in the 20th century were pressured to move to the cities.

As such, many of the techniques used during Dunmore's War have strong echoes for the modern U.S. government and the modern American Indian. Just as food was used as a weapon against the Shawnee in 1774, so it continues to be used to oppress the Pima and other tribes today. Just as the British used diplomacy to isolate and manipulate the Indian tribes in the Ohio Valley in the years leading up to Dunmore's War, so has the U.S. government attempted to "assimilate" the Indians via such programs as the General Allotment Act. Just as the colonists used settlement on Indian land as a demographic weapon in the late 18th century, so has the government encouraged structural violence through settlement via the General Allotment Act and the termination of government recognition. Every method used by the United States to oppress the indigenous

population can be traced back to colonial conflicts such as Dunmore's War, and every method used during the war has echoes in later policy.

In the months leading up to Dunmore's War, the British government pursued a policy of diplomatic division and isolation, cutting the Shawnee off from virtually all of their potential allies. In the war's aftermath, this division became even more pronounced as individual Shawnee were cut off not only from other tribes, but also from other elements within their own tribe. This policy has a modern-day analog in the U.S. government's assignment and distribution of reservation land. The vast majority of reservations are located in the western states, isolated from major population centers and from other reservations; furthermore, as of the 1990 census the majority of reservations were small communities with fewer than 1,000 residents (Shumway and Jackson 1995, 189). This non-urban status has been positively correlated with "high instances of poverty, shortened life span, high infant mortality rates, and other socioeconomic factors" (Shumway and Jackson 1995, 193). Much as government intervention in Dunmore's War forced the Shawnee to migrate westward, the later federal efforts in relocating Indians to the west had a massive impact on the distribution of Indian population that "continues to reverberate through the lives of present-day Native Americans" (Shumway and Jackson 1995, 199). Thus, the U.S. government has used forced isolation and forced migration to keep Indians economically and politically weak for the past two centuries.

Final Remarks

Dunmore's War was not, as some historians have claimed, a glorious military victory for the British Empire over the savage Indians. It was the culmination of a series

of political maneuvers, followed by the direct application of a near-genocidal military threat. Nor was it a simple conquest of land. The tactics used by the British during Dunmore's War represented an attempt, largely successful, to utterly destroy the Shawnee's livelihood. The Shawnee were cut off from outside aid, deprived of their hunting grounds, and forced to contend with a sea of non-Indian competitors for their already-scare resources.

For the Shawnee, of course, the war did not end at Point Pleasant. Dunmore's War for them was the opening engagement of a Revolutionary War that lasted two full decades. During the war and thereafter, the Americans adopted much the same tactics that the British had used to oppress the Shawnee in 1774. The Shawnee were politically and physically split, left impoverished and malnourished, and of course were the victims of direct violence. That the Shawnee managed to survive these years of annual destructive incursions is a testament to their strength and resilience as a people.

It is tempting to argue that this story of oppression and destruction is something confined to the past, something that the imperial British and even the expansionist early Americans did, but not something that the benevolent, democratic U.S. government engages in today. Of course, this is in part due to changes in moral standards over the last two hundred years.[10] While Dunmore's use of military violence against the "savages"

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10 Of course, I do not mean to argue that the actions of the British Empire were morally acceptable because they were justifiable using the commonly accepted standards of that time. Absolute standards of what is and is not moral behavior do exist. It is a truism in history, however, that past actions which seem completely reprehensible to our modern eyes were less objectionable (if at all) when viewed within the context of their contemporary society.

would be seen as genocidal today, in 1774 his actions were actually applauded by the citizens of Virginia. Conversely, if Dunmore had tried to distribute commodity foods to the Shawnee as a means of oppression, by the social standards of 1774 he would have been a laughingstock.

Regardless of their moral context, these same basic tactics continued long after the last shot was fired in the last Indian war. Destruction of crops continued throughout the twentieth century, albeit using the more subtle method of water redirection rather than the overt method of burning cornfields. Likewise non-Indian settlers continue to pose a significant threat to Indian country. Though their applications have become more refined (by modern standards), these same techniques continue to haunt white-Indian relations to the present day. The logic of empire established during Dunmore's War is still in use.

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