

The Great Power Competition for North America

Western Expansion and the Conquest of Trans-Appalachia,
1680–1821

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Abstract: Great power competition elevates the American way of war over counterinsurgency practices, violating the need to balance these two modes of warfare. This article calls for a restoration of that balance, and does so by example. A look at the early period of settlement in North America, from East Coast lodgments to the Mississippi River, reveals a nation able to wage two wars at once. An American push to establish a permanent frontier that excluded European rivals coincided with a counterinsurgency war unleashed

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within newly claimed tracts of land. That effort proved effective, if immoral. Today, that balance must again take hold, with a reminder that cultural accommodation inherent in all wars means that a counterinsurgency war avoids the mandate of destruction called for in seeking victory by employing force of arms..

Keywords: counterinsurgency, conventional war, Pontiac, Tecumseh, permanent frontier, American way of war, great power competition, trans-Appalachia

The 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine has validated the U.S. military's call for greater readiness during an era of great power competition. According to this rationale, U.S. adversaries Russia and China continued to enhance their conventional military forces while the United States committed itself to counterinsurgency operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. After more than a decade on a counterinsurgency battlefield, U.S. armed forces needed redirection to better deter China and Russia militarily and thereby contribute to a U.S. response across multiple dimensions of competition. This movement formally arose at the end of 2017 with the release of the *National Security Strategy*.¹ The U.S. military followed suit in 2018 with the *National Defense Strategy*.² Thereafter, the U.S. Marine Corps underwent a holistic reevaluation that built on the roots of past efforts within the Corps.³ The U.S. Army, meanwhile, continued to embrace multidomain operations to meet the great power threat, an initiative started in the 1980s during the advent of the AirLand Battle concept.⁴ To meet the changed security environment, the U.S. military turned away from counterinsurgency and toward a need to retool to

defeat a massed conventional attack, something at which it had excelled in the past.

This focus on conventional war threatened to repeat another staple of U.S. military readiness. Reestablished dominance with this mode of fighting would invite an alternative enemy response; a reoccurrence of insurgency and, hence, the need to reinvigorate counterinsurgency practices.⁵ A military too weighted for conventional war had too often foundered in the past when attempting counterinsurgency.⁶ Hoping not to fall too far out of balance, the U.S. military looked to ensure that some institutional memory of counterinsurgency remained in place.⁷ Nevertheless, it was hard to deny that the current focus on conventional war reflected the military's preferred means of fighting an "American way of war" featuring conventional arms.⁸ Still, the gap between conventional arms and insurgent practices is never that great. The fact remains that combatants do not see just one or the other of these modes of fighting. A conventional war is never entirely conventional, and a conflict requiring counterinsurgency practices never unfolds as that struggle alone. With this insight in mind, this article argues that a military must hold the use of conventional force and a need for counterinsurgency action in balance, even if the balance must ebb and flow to a large degree during a period of conflict. U.S. policy discussion identifying competition in the "gray zone" helped stress the need to better evaluate this fluctuation, but that much-debated and therefore clouded concept forfeits some of its utility for this reason.⁹ Another focus may well prove more advantageous to understanding how best to balance conventional arms and counterinsurgency practices along a continuum of conflict that "depicts a range of different modes of conflict."¹⁰

The best place in which to turn lies in the story of settling the North American continent. France and Great Britain's rivalry here helped foment a war of settlement with Native American populations. These three power centers dictated much of the outcome, best seen in this article with Pontiac's rebellion in 1763 and Tecumseh's resistance in 1811. When European colonials and then Americans overcame this resistance, a rising United States was assured western expansion to the Mississippi River. As this process unfolded, from early contacts into the 1820s, the Americans proved adept at mounting military campaigns that employed conventional arms that devastated the Native American populations that contested the advance west. These successes also allowed for an advantage in shaping the counterinsurgency fight that defined western expansion.¹¹

This article examines an early portion of this clash: the conquest of trans-Appalachia. At the end of the analysis stands a reminder that what unfolded east of the Mississippi River repeated first in the south against Spain and Native American tribes in Florida, then to the southwest against Mexico and other indigenous tribes, and eventually far to the northwest against British and Russian intrusions, as well as destroying resistance among the plains Native Americans. The key point here is that the Americans performed both conventional war and counterinsurgency simultaneously. Achieving this balance stands to best equip the present-day U.S. military going forward, if one can avoid the shame of the result. When considering western expansion in the United States, the outcome betrayed deeply held American sensibilities of freedom extended to all persons. That saga ended with the destruction of opposing cultures and their replacement with a new reality that promised the inclusion of the old but failed to deliver that end given the basest of reasons—

racism, greed, and inequity, all shrouded in a story of settlement as the redeeming quality of the American experience. Avoiding that hypocrisy can only be a worthwhile effort by recasting the current U.S. military's effort to prepare for great power conflict as one that includes more of a readiness to wage a counterinsurgency war.

Expansion

Following initial contacts along the Atlantic seaboard, European settlers in North America increasingly gained the advantage over the Native American populations already living there. By 1680, European settlers identifying as Americans pushed farther inland to the Appalachian Mountains. The next task became getting beyond this barrier. As the move west continued, the next demarcation line of American expansion arose at the Mississippi River. Soon, the settlers looked to that obstacle as a means by which to force Native Americans to live in seclusion from them by establishing a "permanent Indian frontier," a firm boundary between White Americans and Native Americans.¹² This never came to pass because it was never permanent. Moreover, the adage spoke to the reversal of relations among European settlers and indigenous populations. The earliest contacts underscored a European hope of crafting a new world that allowed Native American inclusion in the project. As time passed, colonials and later Americans reneged on this promise of a shared world, leaving Native Americans grasping at any means to maintain coexistence. That struggle to avoid expulsion forced the Native Americans into the role of insurgent.

Labeling Native Americans as *insurgents* characterizes the European impact in North America as resting on a dramatic shift in population with the

rise of settlers in terms of numbers and the creation of a dominant American culture that excluded the indigenous people after welcoming them into a “new” society formed at each stage of expansion. As one group prospered, the other faced physical and cultural devastation. The colonial invaders did not try to protect or induce Native Americans to embrace a European-style homeland, but instead conquered and victimized them to ensure their loss of sovereignty, natural resources, land, and liberty.

Colonials and then Americans never saw a complete break from Native Americans. Rather, interaction was the norm until Americans expelled Native Americans altogether beyond a supposedly firm border, which was then invalidated in the next period of American expansion that again witnessed interaction and coexistence until expulsion. Any permanent “Indian frontier” spoke to an ideal more than a reality, and a “middle ground” defined the mix of Native Americans and European settlers from the Atlantic coast to the Mississippi River.¹³ For a long time, that relationship meant parity, until it did not. Settlers eventually overwhelmed the indigenous population, but only after some hard fighting dictated this result. Counterinsurgency had come to the North American continent, and with it a drastic shift took hold as a result of competition involving European powers meeting the growing American state preying on Native American vitality. A dominant subsystem in North America transformed the international order with this reshuffling of the great power system.¹⁴

Survival in the international competition that was the founding of the United States helped that nation take a crucial step toward the goal of expansion when a series of wars produced a tremendous American military accomplishment. A permanent frontier arose that expelled European nations

from American definitions of the United States, spurning rivals that could blunt or possibly end the forging of an American identity in the “New World.” Indeed, the Americans vanquished a number of powerful states, from stymieing an advanced French program of colonization, to ending Great Britain’s role as the overseer of the continent. To achieve this result, the citizens of what became the United States proved equal to the task of fighting Native Americans and warding off European interests. In consecutive order, the Americans would defeat their European rivals, leaving only Native American power as the final, overmatched opponent and any middle ground an endangered prospect. Here was a key conventional military success of first isolating the enemy from outside reinforcement or aid and then prosecuting the counterinsurgency needed to consolidate control of the newly declared American land.

The efforts of English colonists to move farther inland from the Atlantic coast soon identified a European challenger to settler expansion in North America: France. Both sides looked to establish zones of influence on the continent. The opposing power blocks resonated from French explorer Samuel de Champlain’s rifle blast in 1609; his salvo at the head of a Huron war party killed three Iroquois chiefs and left that Native American confederacy seeking English support. The French, in turn, helped rally those tribes in the Great Lakes region who had been dispersed by the expansion of English allies. Of course, neat territorial divisions proved absurd despite the colonial effort to create borders markedly in their favor. The resultant wars—King William’s War (1688–97), Queen Anne’s War (1702–13), and the French and Indian War (1754–63), among others—reflected what amounted to a long

struggle of attrition, although its perpetuation came mainly from the English colonies hosting a growing population pressing for more land.

For a long period of time, the rival powers of Great Britain and France mirrored one another in purpose—accumulating Native American allies to bolster their camp. The French and British competition in North America in many ways became a duel to see which nation could commit less of their forces but still advance their cause at the expense of the other. This made indigenous allies extremely important since a large contingent of Native American warriors as allies to the French could tip the balance of power. As a result, the British colonial task in North America became that of defeating the French to then isolating the main enemy, the Native Americans. Denying Native Americans succor from the French would leave them more vulnerable to subjugation. In this way, a new frontier could in fact come to pass, allowing for a push beyond the Appalachian Mountains to the Mississippi River.

The French held an advantage in this competition because of the purpose of their arrival in North America in the first place. The commercial imperative of trapping and trade meant a willingness on the part of the French to tolerate and often adopt Native American customs, producing a less abrasive interaction with the tribes they contacted than might have been expected. Conversely, the motive of British settlement required land. This, coupled with their all-too-frequent cultural abhorrence of the Native Americans they encountered, ensured a much more grating series of interactions.¹⁵ The contrasting impact meant that the Native Americans appeared to occupy a superior bargaining position, an ability to choose one ally or the other. Of course, one significant downside to their relationship with the British and French was that the European competition for indigenous

allies ultimately exacerbated Native American divisions. However, even while clashing among themselves over trade, Native American power when compared to that of the Europeans remained prominent. Nevertheless, any European success at gaining allies meant a weakening of the collective Native American power that was a factor in curbing colonial expansion. While equilibrium would come to characterize this confrontation at times because of this dynamic, conflict would erupt to arrest that very balance.

The series of wars favored the British colonies that soon hosted a large population that could present a formidable front and do so without Native American allies. This key advantage allowed both Great Britain and its colonies not to arm the Native Americans in too great of numbers, as such an action could prove detrimental to the long-term British ambition—settlement. The contrast to France was profound in as much as an equitable trade blossomed between French trappers and Native Americans, with beaver and deer pelts being exchanged for pans, guns, rum, and even some religious instruction. This exchange meant a French reliance on the Native Americans in great fashion and therefore arming them as much as was possible. Soon, a string of French forts extended from Canada south to the Ohio country and then to New Orleans. In this way, the French tapped into a lucrative economic pursuit that bound many Native Americans to their presence and, in effect, augmented the French military presence in North America. These forts were spread out and often hard to defend, and the ring attempted was never firmly established, but the intent was clear: a projection of French power surrounding the British settlements.

A series of French forts was able to fend off the British threat to France's foothold in the New World for a long time. French success continued

until 1763, when the British triumphed in the Seven Years' War and ended the French commercial enterprise. But the French and Indian War (as the Seven Years' War was called in America) did not resolve anything; it only led to more wars. Native American resistance would continue, and the American Revolution would have its roots here, in 1763, the official end of the war. It was this flow of events, conflict stemming from the vanquishing of French power in North America, and the advancement of American supremacy that shocked all Native Americans. Those supporting the French realized they had lost a patron. Those backing the British now grasped the strategic importance of this last conflict: a great strengthening of Anglo-American power. These results came to the fore in clearest fashion in the measure of a growing isolation from external aid. There was, in the immediate at least, no outside ally to turn to. The French were chastened, the British recalcitrant.

When French defeat came in 1763, this also meant the defeat of their Native American allies, not just in military terms but in economic measures as well. The trapping areas were exhausted. Whatever bargaining power Native Americans enjoyed given the active trade with France, this boon had been fading steadily for some time. Resource depletion was a key factor, but more unclear was the impact of assimilation on the Native Americans. France and Great Britain had used forts as a projection of power, but these outposts soon became a means of resupply leading to indigenous dependence and to an advantage for the Europeans, perhaps. If Native Americans faced fundamental changes due to the disappearing fur trade, this was but a first step. Soon, the adoption of a European lifestyle in North America became a dominant theme as well. Assimilation meant a Native American dependency on European settlers that equated to their vulnerability. So too did the

intent—a sharing of items born of guile. Once Native Americans were dependent on European goods, European settlers could turn this relationship to great advantage simply by cutting off the flow of those goods. Assimilation may have been the result, but it was a question as to what degree and whether that result was more harmful than not.¹⁶

Perhaps not surprising given this increasingly detrimental relationship, two great proponents of Native Americans separating themselves from European culture surfaced in trans-Appalachia and attempted to wean tribes away from what they saw as a harmful dependency on White Americans. These two men urged Native Americans to cling to an indigenous lifestyle and therefore end the assimilation process. The Ottawa leader Pontiac incited the first round of this effort as he found himself at the center of a Native American uprising in the Great Lakes region in 1763. Tecumseh, a Shawnee chief, led another attempt in 1811 in the Ohio country. The parallels are striking in what happened, less so in what each conflict meant. Pontiac's rebellion largely affirmed Native American dependency on European settlers and therefore the practice of trade as assimilation. Tecumseh's resistance began with his demand to chase White Americans from the continent but ended with his defeat, and this meant the passing of the era of trade among White and Native Americans and the acceleration of the termination of the very fluid middle ground, at least that which was found in trans-Appalachia. If Native American interaction with European powers had been the norm in North America before this point, it was increasingly less so after 1815, as defeat left indigenous tribes reeling east of the Mississippi River due to the establishment of a permanent frontier, which allowed White Americans a chance to deny Native Americans aid from first France and then Great Britain.

That success, in turn, allowed a chance for White Americans to extend this border south and separate Spain from the Native Americans as well.

Pontiac

Pontiac found himself in a familiar situation when he launched his war in 1763. The Native American way of war designed to project power and foster coexistence with an enemy was supposed to bring him success in what he proclaimed to his followers was a war of annihilation. Pontiac's method of fighting via raids and ambushes left him at variance with his stated aim of expelling the British from North America, a crucial contradiction. At first, this goal of vanquishing the British presence in the north appeared feasible, and a great outcry of fear by settlers accompanied the onset of war and for good reason. An early flush of success meant that Pontiac seized no less than eight British forts and outposts in the *Pays d'en Haut*, the upper Great Lakes region. This came about mostly by guile. A game of lacrosse proved the ruse needed for Native Americans to take the largest of the forts, Fort Michilimackinac, located far to the north of the main British stronghold at Detroit. British sentries allowed the few Native Americans enjoying this sport in front of the outpost to enter the gate while chasing the ball; the Native Americans then brandished weapons and in conjunction with others emerging from the woods overwhelmed the garrison.¹⁷ A number of small, disbursed outposts fell to Native American assault as well, and British power in the region appeared to wane to an unprecedented degree.

The strategic bankruptcy of the situation doomed Pontiac, however. When he initiated his war in May 1763, he was without European allies. The French and British conflict in North America had ended officially several years

before, with the Articles of Capitulation of Montreal signed on 8 September 1760. Great Britain now controlled French territory in Canada as well as Florida and all land east of the Mississippi River. Pontiac's key charge, in fact, was an attempt to get the French to reenter the conflict. Should the Native Americans succeed in reducing British power in the region, the former patron would be emboldened to do just that, or so Pontiac concluded.¹⁸ His main objective was Fort Detroit, what had been the chief French bastion in the heart of Ottawa territory. Now in the hands of the British, should that position fall, Native Americans believed that the French would join the successful Native American offensive. Much depended on the fate of Detroit.

Pontiac's hope to take Fort Detroit rested on a feigned parley with the fort's commander to gain entrance to the fort and then rush the unsuspecting garrison. He never got his chance. Although invited into the stronghold, he refused to signal the attack because British suspicions remained keen and their guns at the ready, so much so that Pontiac believed an assault would be suicidal. His plan foiled and his hostile intentions clear, during the next few days Pontiac contented himself with harassing the outlying regions of the fort and interdicting its communications and resupply. One could not classify this as a siege since the Native Americans failed to completely isolate the fort; the local inhabitants helped keep its communications open.¹⁹ In short, Pontiac was reduced to using guerrilla tactics, something that could not force the capitulation of this key fort or, as it soon became clear, win the war.

With this failure, the Native American cause was lost. Worse, many in Pontiac's party believed that Native Americans had tipped off the British as to Pontiac's intent when entering Fort Detroit, revealing divisions within his camp. This was not a united uprising, and the Ottawa chief hardly stood at

the head of a unified cause answering to one man, Chief Pontiac.²⁰ Nevertheless, the reach of the war was impressive, ranging over an extended area, and it spoke to the strength of the confederacy that Pontiac symbolized, if not led. Ottawa, Huron, and Chippewa in the north and tribes such as the Delaware and Shawnee to the south all found common purpose opposing Great Britain. The dissension and accord reveal that these Native Americans found themselves at a crossroads in 1763, and they equivocated too long over what path to take. Pontiac preached separation from White Americans in the tradition of the prophet Neolin, the Delaware mystic who announced this intention prior to the start of the revolt. Drinking alcohol was forbidden, and hunting should be done with bow and arrow, not guns. The aim was a complete break from White Americans, which would continue even into the afterlife. It was a radical assessment of the current state of affairs between Native and White Americans, essentially rejecting the British presence in North America in an effort to divorce themselves from White Americans by ending indigenous dependency on presents and trade. But many in the confederation thought otherwise. Some Native Americans wanted continued ties with Great Britain to enjoy the exchange of goods, much as they had secured when the French directed trade in the region. The war was to force reconciliation not separation. The two views advanced side by side, and Pontiac found his name attached to a ground swell of Native American resistance that broke into open conflict for these conflicting reasons. Even Neolin allowed the use of guns until the “expulsion” of the White Americans was complete. A closer look at the confusion suggested a return to interaction with White Americans as the French had conducted things.²¹ Whatever the

case, Pontiac ended up straddling both visions for a time, and this position made him a powerful figure indeed.

For Great Britain, its recent success over France could be undone by Native American discontent sparking violence, and this danger is exactly what had come to pass. To this point, a French presence in the *Pays d'en Haut* had bolstered Native American existence. Each needed the other as trading partners, so economic avarice had remained muted for the most part on both sides. The British victory over the French in 1763 meant the loss of that equilibrium. British Army major general Jeffery Amherst, in charge of enforcement of British rule post-conflict and flush with success, showed little concern for his new subjects, French colonists and Native Americans alike. He ignored the former and revoked the privileged trade status of the latter by ending gifts and restricting the trade of gunpowder and rum. This brand of sovereignty discouraged Native American supplication with English settlers. With little attraction to the new overseer, and now that French power had left them, the growing calls demanding that Native Americans rediscover their purely indigenous lifestyle gained momentum.

The Native American appeal to a venerable nostalgia was a hollow purpose. The true aim was a rediscovery of equal status seen in concomitant trade. Native Americans voiced outrage in the summer of 1763, shocked at the French desertion and the one-sided British claim of sovereignty over them. Pontiac found himself immersed in an amorphous rebellion that represented a spontaneous rejection of the British policy of halting presents and manipulating trade to ensure their domination over the indigenous population. This turn of events, many Native Americans feared, could end with their enslavement.²² In seeking to capitalize on this discontent, Pontiac

had proven himself more astute than the architect of English policy, Amherst. No matter the eruption of tribal violence, Amherst stood firm, declaring harshly that the Native Americans should be exterminated.²³ Yet, neither he nor anyone else could stop this war in the name of assimilation, from either the Native American or British point of view. Pontiac's war soon recalibrated British policy in this direction. To end this outbreak of violence, the British government recalled Amherst and restored Native American trading rights to regain Native American allegiance to the Crown, effectively hoping to return affairs to pre-1763 status. That, in effect, endorsed the French policy of trade so recently rejected in the just concluded war. This step meant that Great Britain assumed the role of "father" to the Native Americans. Once the overlords extended respect and protection to their new subjects, the violence started to dissipate.

Pontiac struggled to prolong the war in hopes of some change of personal fortune, an increase in stature resting on something more than an amicable peace. But his efforts gained him no advantages. He continued skirmishing with British forces around Detroit, even defeating a detachment foolish enough to sally out of the stockade and test his strength. The Battle of Bloody Run changed little; deadlock remained in place at Detroit. It was the same elsewhere. The British avoided ambush at Bushy Run in August 1763, as a column came west under British Army colonel Henry Bouquet and reached Fort Pitt at the juncture of the Monongahela and Allegheny Rivers (modern-day Pittsburgh). Bouquet feigned retreat and then struck the advancing Native Americans on the flank. Here was a Native American defeat, but a month later, some tribes managed to destroy a British supply column near Fort Niagara, situated on the southern bank of Lake Ontario at the

mouth of the Niagara River. Stalemate descended across nearly the entire theater of war.²⁴

However, Native American resolve was faltering. Pontiac's allies slowly faded away or threatened to do so, and the initiative passed to Great Britain by early 1764. Soon British and, ironically, Native American power boxed in the Ottawa chief. The British worked with the Six Nations of the Iroquois, advancing west and intimidating the Delaware and Shawnee. British columns ranged west as well, heading to Detroit and beyond to the Illinois country. An army under British Army colonel John Bradstreet traversed the south shore of Lake Erie and reached Detroit on 26 August. Bouquet advanced from Fort Pitt with a second column. These incursions underscored the limits of British power, however. Very little combat ensued, and even striking at Native American villages failed to inflict much damage. For the most part, the Native Americans simply retreated, drawing the British forces into an interior where no tangible results could be achieved due to the elusive enemy and the threat of approaching winter. The British refused the bait. They understood that they risked defeat by becoming overextended, and that any setback would probably embolden Native American resistance. Instead, the British were content making clear that they remained a force in the area, that peace was the wisest course of action for all parties, and that such accords included reestablishing presents, trade, and meeting Native American needs and demands. In this uncertainty, the war petered out in 1765.²⁵

For the British, Pontiac's rebellion ended with a stalemate at best, an admission of weakness, if not defeat at worst. In this sense, the Native Americans won the war—but Pontiac did not. He survived the struggle only to fall victim to lingering Native American discontent, as a companion clubbed

him in the back and left him dying in a village in the Illinois country in 1769.²⁶ His fate—perishing at the hands of his own people and not the British—symbolized the war that bore his name. Pontiac’s rebellion remains an ambiguous conflict from start to finish, and the chief had managed to ride this dynamic during the war. In a real sense, this feat justifies naming the conflict after him. He was both the hope and failure of Native American resistance: defiance in the immediate and uncertainty in the long run. For even with stymied British ambitions, what was the future of Native American power in the Old Northwest? The British may have made concessions to cut the costs of managing their new North American empire, but the colonial population remained an obvious and looming threat to this peace. More settlement would mean Native American expulsion at the hands of aggressive White Americans, and for this reason, sovereignty under Great Britain, no matter how disrespectful, was a far better option than the futile rebellion that had ensued. Instead, Pontiac’s efforts left the Native Americans and British exhausted, and ensured that White Americans were in the ascendancy and could dictate peace terms in the near future, terms certainly unfavorable to Native Americans.

Assessing the fallout of the war underscores how Pontiac’s rebellion stands out as a key example of the shared cultural dynamic among White Americans and Native Americans, one so at variance with the frontier paradigm of conquest and resistance.²⁷ Native Americans understood the primary reason to maintain contact with White Americans, and this was survival via trade. As Daniel J. Herman writes, “Only by trading with Europeans—and thereby establishing diplomatic relations with powerful outsiders—could tribes retain sovereignty in a world upset by epidemics,

forced migrations, and an ever-changing balance of power. To refuse trade with Europeans was to render one's tribe powerless to control, or at least to retard, the forces of change." Herman stresses that violence was the reality in the *Pays d'en Haut* since trade had made Native Americans dependent, and that they fought to maintain that dependency on something of their own terms.²⁸ A compelling, if confused, motive, it would both empower Pontiac and defeat him. Pontiac may well have helped the Native Americans regain an element of the middle ground, but given the ambiguity that plagued indigenous resistance at this time, this success was largely unintentional and increasingly insignificant. His overt effort to ensure that Native Americans again enjoyed a position as a power between France and Great Britain, one in which France was an ally and served as a counter to British advances, had failed.

Tecumseh

It would be quickly proven that Pontiac's failure offset any success of a restoration of a cultural middle ground, save for the impact of the war on Anglo-American relations. In time, a new ally of the Native Americans would surface given the support of the former enemy, Great Britain. This shift in allegiances came about because, fortunately for the Native Americans, the apparent harmony between Great Britain and its North American colonies leading to the defeat of France in 1763 fell into disarray in a short period of time and resulted in open conflict in some 12 years. One main cause of the American Revolutionary War (1775–83) was Great Britain's attempt to stem the tide of settlers moving west of the Appalachian Mountains. The Proclamation Line of 1763 created a border that the British government

considered appropriate and manageable. With such a restriction in place, the chance of conflict between White and Native Americans would be reduced, and so too would the costs of maintaining the defense of the colonies. The colonial experience had come to fruition by 1763, at least from Great Britain's point of view. This was a rational view of the world that failed to account for the irrationality of the colonists—a willingness to go to war with the mother country, a preeminent world power.

Great Britain's inability to enforce the Proclamation Line and curb frontier violence would prove a main source of tension with its colonies. This failing underscored that in many ways, the French had served as a convenient enemy for colonial and Crown authorities. That conflict had distracted both parties from diverging interests predicated on the exaggerated view that the colonists held of their tenuous security in the interior. Clearly, their survival was not at issue, nor had it ever been when measuring strength against France. A French victory in North America would have meant confinement, not vanquishment, of British subjects. With the French defeated, the fiction of mortal peril at the hands of France could not be sustained, and not too surprisingly, after 1763, British authorities endorsed French war aims of keeping the colonists confined to the eastern seaboard. Crown rationale made more sense than did colonial aspirations. The land was vast enough to house the colonial population and that of the Native Americans. An accord could be reached, much as France had pursued in the Great Lakes region prior to its defeat in the Seven Years' War. After 1763, once Pontiac's rebellion reminded Great Britain of the utility of the French position, the Crown needed only to curb colonial ambitions to secure a lasting peace. However, the colonists enjoyed too many advantages, ensuring that their rejection of the

Proclamation Line determined the future of relations between White Americans and Native Americans. Their population superiority was pronounced, as was a mentality of entitlement. This reality and sentiment led the colonists to brook no delay in their goal of establishing a new frontier beyond the Appalachian Mountains, beyond the Proclamation Line. In a short period of time, the colonists would go to war against Great Britain to achieve this end.

As would become a familiar pattern, the colonists' response was impressive in their ability to fight two wars at once, one against the declared antagonist, Great Britain, and the other against their longstanding opponent, Native Americans. This was the greatest achievement of the colonists during the American Revolution, forcing Great Britain to acknowledge the independence of the colonies while also dealing a blow to Native American populations. Native Americans in the Ohio country declared their neutrality and stayed out of the fighting. Many tribes to the south could say the same. But in the northeast, the Iroquois did enter the war. A few of these tribes sided with the colonists, others with Great Britain. Consequently, that famed Native American confederacy was engulfed by a civil war, and the alliance could not survive the harm stemming from this division or the ascendancy that greeted the American triumph after 1781. That fate testified to the lack of Native American attention to the parameters of this struggle. Neutrality for some Native Americans cost all Native Americans a key power block. Still, it is hard to see a better option. Was it the figment of a great Native American confederacy reaching west and south standing with Great Britain to finally stop colonial expansion? There was no reason to believe that this scenario could come to pass given the unlikely unity of Native American tribes. Nor

was a replay of the wars prior to the American Revolution likely to work in favor of the Native Americans, as the history of those campaigns had been their increasing marginalization, not empowerment. Only in retrospect was it clear that all Native Americans needed to unite to gain a chance to check colonial—now American—expansion and that the American Revolution may have been the best opportunity to do so. But no such effort came to pass.

Consequently, by 1783, once an official peace ended the war between Great Britain and the colonies, a new strategic reality came starkly into focus, one revealing the extent of the danger facing Native Americans east of the Mississippi River. The United States may have appeared a fledgling nation to the European states that had done so much to give it birth, but to the Native Americans, the Americans were an established force no longer suffering from internal divisions that might impede their solidarity and growth. For this reason, acute Native American trepidation greeted the new world shaped in the wake of the separation of the colonies from Great Britain. Another engagement was clearly imminent with a sharp increase in the stakes of the fighting since the Native Americans faced a war for their very survival as the Americans looked to push the permanent frontier to the Mississippi River and lay claim to the Old Northwest.

The American ambition to finish this process meant a new series of wars in the Ohio country and in the south. The root cause of this hostility is what had been lost in 1763—the equilibrium between the European powers, the colonies, and the Native Americans. Until this point, the colonists had placated Native Americans when it was to their benefit. Once power had swung in their favor, however, the Americans excluded Native Americans more than they accepted them as equals. What now became settlement was

marked by exclusion rather than assimilation.²⁹ It was this unfortunate development that signaled the inevitable defeat of the Native American cause. Events would soon make this inimical relationship not only clear but also decisive as a new crisis loomed and spilled over into violence in 1811.

A rare visionary appealed to Native Americans across the trans-Appalachian area to join together and mount a military challenge to thwart American expansion. Tecumseh, a Shawnee chief, soon increased his fears to encompass—and represent—the perils threatening all Native Americans. Some fortitude of judgment could not compensate for the task at hand, however. It would take a great feat of arms to reverse the tide so readily in favor of the Americans, a need at variance with any Native American military ability. Tecumseh understood that even solidarity among Native Americans, north and south, could not deny the Americans a martial superiority. This advantage had to be countered with an alliance with Great Britain, and this is exactly what Tecumseh set out to do. He met this challenge with some success. Great Britain, having retained control of many forts in the Old Northwest, could still mount a military threat capable of thwarting American ambitions along the frontier, and Tecumseh acted to capitalize on this possibility.³⁰

Ironically, Tecumseh would have greater success tying his lot to Great Britain than to Native Americans, as his efforts to rally southern tribes to make a common cause with northern tribes achieved marginal results. In truth, his rallying call was only a bit more effective in unifying Native American resistance in 1810–11 than what had transpired at any time before. An unwillingness among Native Americans to fight together continued to plague them. This was the case no matter Tecumseh's efforts to help foment such an

alliance by using his brother, Tenskwatawa. Nicknamed "The Prophet" for his visions of Native American purity requiring them to live independent of White Americans, a view much like that of Neolin, Tenskwatawa's influence peaked after he vowed to block out the sun. When an eclipse of the sun occurred in June 1806, his prestige rose, and so too did Tecumseh's appeal for Native American unity.³¹

No matter some progress in rallying Native American support, Tecumseh wanted more allies, and he headed south looking to add Red Stick warriors of the Creeks to his coalition. Consequently, he was not present when war erupted in early November 1811 at Prophetstown on the Tippecanoe River in the Indiana Territory. William Henry Harrison, governor of the territory, advanced with an army on this concentration of Native American forces in the north. After a sharp fight, the Native Americans fled the area. When Tecumseh returned north in late December, he chastised his brother for sparking this war prematurely by being foolish enough to accept an American challenge of arms. But Tecumseh's real frustration stemmed from his own failure to create a more formidable alliance among Native Americans. He again had had some success, buoyed up by an earthquake that shook the region in December 1811. The Shawnee chief warned Native Americans that this omen made it clear that the decision-making hour had arrived. A number of braves agreed that a crisis was at hand and it was time to act, and they joined the forces of the Shawnee. But Tecumseh understood that he commanded little beyond what his personal magnetism could assemble and keep in the field. He prepared to fight with a fading expectation of success.³²

Only the larger American struggle could alter his doomed position. The United States and Great Britain allowed tensions to peak to a point that by mid-1812, just a short period of time into the war Tecumseh was now waging, these two nations also went to war (the War of 1812, 1812–15). Tecumseh at last could look to a powerful ally, one that greatly impacted the situation and prophesied success if not victory. There was a distinction between these two ends. The Shawnee chief sought the formation of a Native American nation, and he preached a race war against White Americans. They were to be exterminated from the continent, he told his followers.³³ Tecumseh's rhetoric of race war when beseeching the aid of Native Americans contrasted sharply with the military reality he accepted: an alliance with Great Britain to achieve the limited success of stopping American expansion into the Old Northwest and possibly forcing their retrenchment to the Appalachian Mountains. Here was a more realistic end to Tecumseh's war. The conflating of a vague goal of Native American liberation—really relief—with the means of having to ally with a White power and former enemy spoke both to the desperate straits of Native Americans at the time and to the apt vision of one man. Tecumseh's war would be a referendum on his siren call of presenting a final line of defense to American expansion. By teaming with Great Britain, good fortune could shift in favor of the indigenous population and against the Americans, a long overdue development from Tecumseh's point of view. In sum, he sought a recalibration of the historical norms that had too much harmed Native American interests and allowed an American seed to sprout and grow into a plant threatening to choke off Native American existence. The fighting would settle much.

The first task became correcting the strategic problems created by Tenskwatawa. This Tecumseh rapidly and impressively accomplished. Harrison, now a general of militia, remained Tecumseh's main antagonist in this struggle. With Harrison's army still camped near Prophetstown, Tecumseh headed north, looking to lure the Americans into the recesses of the forest. The Americans gave chase but soon lost sight of their foe, a blunder that cost them the initiative since Tecumseh chose the location of the next major engagement, Fort Detroit. Here the Native Americans captured an American garrison through ruse more than force of arms. Tecumseh marched his men around the fort twice to impress on the American commander, U.S. Army brigadier general William Hull, governor of the Michigan territory, the hopelessness of weathering a siege. More telling was Hull's fear of Native American mistreatment of his garrison—including his daughter and grandchildren—should the British army storm the fort and capture it.³⁴ Hull soon surrendered his garrison of just more than 2,000 men, a significant loss, to a combined British and Native American army with hardly a shot fired on 16 August 1812.

This success did not portend of ultimate victory more than it underscored the limited role played by Tecumseh's British allies. Tecumseh had organized the attack, and having to play out a ruse even with the backing of Great Britain strongly hinted at the tenuous support of his ally. This was the case despite the high qualities of the leader of the British Army acting in support of Tecumseh, Major General Isaac Brock. Brock, a formidable soldier in his own right, readily allied his forces with Tecumseh and supported the strike at Fort Detroit.³⁵ This development was all the more surprising since Brock was an unwilling participant in the war, objecting to the British

government about his posting to the American frontier. However, Brock took an immediate liking to Tecumseh, as did Tecumseh to Brock, and after the surrender of Detroit, harmony between the British and Native Americans was at an all-time high. But coordination of forces was exactly the point, and the personalities depended on to make this happen could not overcome fate. Brock was killed in action a short time after the success at Detroit, a crucial loss and one inimical in the extreme to the Native American cause given that Tecumseh had been away again trying to rally southern Native Americans but realizing very little success. Tecumseh needed British support more than ever. But the favorable circumstances of receiving even limited backing from a powerful ally would prove fleeting, with any gains rendered negligible in the larger picture and in just a matter of months.

Once teamed with a less effective British commander, Major General Henry Procter, Tecumseh recognized the reality he faced. Procter did not share Brock's high opinion of Tecumseh, and this was returned in kind for good reason.³⁶ To begin with, Tecumseh had to intervene and prevent the slaughter of defenseless Americans at the hands of his Native American forces after a clash outside of Fort Meigs, an American defensive position far to the north in Ohio along the Maumee River near present-day Toledo. The Native Americans had intercepted a column of Americans looking to reinforce the fort and had taken many prisoners. Tecumseh berated Procter for failing to control the situation. Procter's refusal to better understand his Native American allies explained his laxness in this respect. He also lacked the determination to attack the Americans. It was a point of high contrast to Brock, a man who had accepted battle at Detroit with little reason to believe he would be successful and had risked much in support of Tecumseh. Under

Procter, British activity soon waned, revealing that they were content to leave Tecumseh to his fate.³⁷

That fate was not an envious one. Rebuffed at Fort Meigs, by 1813 it became clear that Native American and British unity was too late and too feeble to stop American expansion. While circumstance made the heaviest inroads, the Americans also were quick to identify the potential danger of British support of Native Americans in the Old Northwest. The Americans looked to curb this strategic advantage by winning control of Lake Erie. Their naval victory on the lake in September ensured success in this vital aspect of the war. At that time, Native American and British forces were again laying siege to Fort Meigs. Tecumseh had pushed for this attack, shunning the familiar guerrilla engagements that were sure to drag out the war but also allow superior American resources to efface Native American resistance. Instead, he looked to win a major battle. Taking Fort Meigs may have been that battle, helping retain Native American unity and blunting the American advance. But with American naval power dominant on Lake Erie and British supply lines exposed because of this fact, Procter decided that he had to retreat north above Lake Erie and position his forces near the Thames River.³⁸ A stand here could stop the Americans. But such a move north also meant that the British abandon the attack on Fort Meigs and possibly their Native American allies as well as by essentially allowing much Native American land to come under the control of the Americans without a fight. Worse, even a successful defense would require an offensive later on to regain this lost territory, and such an action was dubious since Procter appeared only interested in retreat.

Once Procter explained his need to retreat to protect his supply lines, Tecumseh supported the move, even leading the rear guard that slowed the American pursuit. Procter's combined forces soon made it to the lower Thames, but a stand there turned to folly in a short period of time. British confusion was rife, compounded by Procter's indecision regarding where to make his defense. As a consequence, there were no prepared positions to defend and no artillery support, a bad state of affairs given Harrison was at the head of a 3,500-person army, almost three times the men that Tecumseh and Procter could muster. Still, a defense was made, and Tecumseh served as the central figure of it, the Shawnee chief moving among the British soldiers to encourage them to stand fast, an unprecedented need and an unprecedented honor for any Native American. But Tecumseh also recognized the exhaustion, despair, and exposed deployment of the British troops. They were bunched together and standing in the open, vulnerable to American fire and cavalry. Tecumseh warned Procter of these shortcomings, but little was done to correct these problems. For his part, Tecumseh dispersed his 500 warriors skillfully, using good cover and soggy ground to thwart the expected American cavalry charge. Despite his efforts, he realized that his position was desperate and that he and his warriors would have to face the brunt of the American attack. The British were unreliable. It had been a long trajectory that brought Native American resistance to this point, and it was not a favorable situation.³⁹

When Harrison launched his attack, the predictable occurred. The British broke in minutes, leaving the Native Americans to mount a desperate resistance that did hold the Americans for a time. But the numbers were telling, and Tecumseh soon recognized his fate. As the fighting progressed,

he sought death on the field of battle. Some say he fell while mounted on a horse, others say while running toward the American lines. Either way, Tecumseh died at the Battle of the Thames on 5 October 1813. Now, decisive battle came to the Americans, the only combatant capable of earning this distinction given the circumstances.⁴⁰

This was Tecumseh's war. It was the last great resistance of those Native Americans east of the Mississippi River, but when it was over the plight of Native Americans had worsened. Even British success later in the war—including taking and burning the American capital of Washington, DC, in August 1814—could not swing the strategic balance of power in favor of Great Britain and its Native American allies. Instead, Great Britain settled with the United States at the end of the year, accepting its inability to penetrate the permanent frontier separating the two countries, spelling an end to British power in terms of impacting American affairs. But this peace represented a sanguine result given that Great Britain did not face defeat so much as confinement to Canada. The Native Americans in the north confronted a much more negative result. The war's outcome affirmed their isolation. Divorced of a powerful ally, these Native Americans faced the American threat alone. Soon it would become clear that in the aftermath of this war, Native Americans faced vanquishment throughout the trans-Appalachian region.

The Fall of Trans-Appalachia

A disharmonious end to the War of 1812 reminded Great Britain of American resolve in defining the frontier as the United States saw fit. Foremost in this regard was future U.S. president Andrew Jackson, who earned fame by defeating the British at the Battle of New Orleans in early January 1815. The

irony was that this engagement occurred after the war ended since news of the declaration of peace in Paris agreed to on 24 December 1814 had yet to reach American shores. Before this ultimately anticlimactic battle, Jackson did much to win the War of 1812 in the south. A ghastly scene greeted his effort at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend (in present-day Alabama) in March 1814, where Jackson's volunteer army collided with Creek warriors. After a stout resistance, some 3,000 Creeks died, pinned against the river and a remorseless American advance. It was an unparalleled victory even if the human carnage was horrifying to behold. But that was precisely the point, with Jackson having gone far in fulfilling his promise to "carry a campaign into the heart of the Creek nation and exterminate them."⁴¹

Settling a score with Native Americans was the dominant American mission in the Creek War of 1813–14, as was advocating an end of British interference in American affairs, the larger parameter of the War of 1812. Therefore, Jackson's effort to capitalize on his success at Horseshoe Bend by taking the war into the Florida Territory coincided with the mandate of the War of 1812: striking at Great Britain.⁴² He earned an immediate dividend in both respects. Jackson's pursuit of Creek fighters into Florida further scattered them and blocked a British thrust inland at Pensacola and forced their subsequent strike at New Orleans. When the Americans repulsed this attack, Jackson forming a rapid defense force and leading this army as well, his active role in the war to the south appeared vindicated. Settlers rushed in to cement the victory. Soon, Native American resistance would crumble in the south as it had in the north. U.S. armed forces launched campaigns followed by a civilian tide determined to expunge the now vulnerable Native American populations.

Trans-Appalachia would fall to the Americans by halves—first the northern portion, then the southern lands. Of course, this disaster for Native Americans occurred only after a ferocious counterinsurgency unleashed by the Americans targeting the now isolated Native Americans. Until 1815, the path had been steady and clear: colonists and then Americans capitalizing on Native American miscues of trying to balance allies, of assuming neutrality, and of allying with a former enemy. To reach this point, clashes initiated by the Americans that engulfed and defeated a series of great Native American chieftains in the north were typical in the results. Greater American security had served the two ends of a push to expand in North America and of a rejection of European interference in achieving that end. For Native Americans, the path forward from here was hard to see in any favorable light. Much as Tecumseh had predicted, a failure of the tribes to stand together and accept the American challenge realized a greater danger as the Americans prepared to even out their expansion west by claiming a rich reward in a southerly direction. After 1821, the isolation of the south was acute, and that region was now vulnerable to American consolidation. More fighting lay ahead, but the outcome could hardly be in doubt given the lack of outside assistance. The Native Americans could find no European powers of consequence to ally with in the south, and no longer in the north for that matter. Continued resistance was a bleak option, as the Native American prospect of enjoying a middle ground in trans-Appalachia faded due to the reality of a permanent frontier.

Saluting that American success points to the parallel effort of conducting conventional warfare and counterinsurgency practices. During this period of western expansion, American supplication with Native

Americans met the demand to obliterate the adversary. This combination must do something more today. As U.S. interests range across the globe, the American public's expectation remains one of eradicating resistance, a pointless end when the entire world is the battlespace. Today, any combination of conventional arms and counterinsurgency practices must point to coexisting with difference, to finding accord among bitter foes. War always nets this result, but not always on favorable terms. The United States' Global War on Terrorism presents a clear example as a religious demagoguery takes hold within U.S. borders offering justification to citizens using violence to threaten institutions they deem illegitimate. One can argue that such a purpose and means animates al-Qaeda, the Islamic State, and the Taliban. To shed such unwanted parallels, a counterinsurgency offensive must find other points of similarity with adversaries that better appeal to U.S. sensibilities. The U.S. military can lead the way in this regard by casting the American way of war aside in favor of a pursuit in supremacy of conventional arms balanced with a counterinsurgency effort that seeks cultural accommodation, not the destruction that transpired during settlement in trans-Appalachia and repeated thereafter across the continent. Here, another parallel can be avoided: engaging in the wanton destruction of the declared enemy to better win a counterinsurgency war.⁴³ That hunger for victory animates U.S. enemies and justifies their excesses and crimes. The demand now driving U.S. military preparedness threatens to go in this direction. Instead, an American-led accommodation forces its adversaries to adopt priorities adhering to international norms that rebuke extremism. Regaining that focus means being able to choose a battlefield rather than making the world a foe, an outlook that generates obvious national security benefits, as

a great power can be more selective when committing itself to conflicts that risk international realignment.

¹ Donald J. Trump, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America, December 2017* (Washington, DC: White House, 2017), 27. See also the most current statement, Joseph R. Biden Jr., *Interim National Security Strategic Guidance, March 2021* (Washington, DC: White House, 2021), 6, 9.

² James N. Mattis, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America: Shaping the American Military's Competitive Edge* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2018), 5.

³ Gen David H. Berger, *Commandant's Planning Guidance: 38th Commandant of the Marine Corps* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Marine Corps, 2019), 23. See also Gen Robert B. Neller, *Marine Corps' Operating Concept: How an Expeditionary Force Operates in the 21st Century* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Marine Corps, 2016), 8; and Gen Charles C. Krulak, "Commandant's Planning Guidance (CPG)," *Marine Corps Gazette* 79, no. 8 (August 1995): A-2.

⁴ *The U.S. Army in Multi-Domain Operations 2028*, Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Pamphlet 525-3-1 (Fort Eustis, VA: U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, 6 December 2018), iii. For the AirLand Battle concept, see Richard M. Swain, "Filling the Void: The Operational Art and the U.S. Army," in *The Operational Art: Developments in the Theories of War*, ed. B. J. C. McKercher and Michael A. Hennessy (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996), 163.

⁵ David H. Ucko and Thomas A. Marks, *Crafting Strategy for Irregular Warfare: A Framework for Analysis and Action*, 2d ed. (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2022), 5.

⁶ Matthew J. Flynn, *Contesting History: The Bush Counterinsurgency Legacy in Iraq* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2010), ix. See also Douglas Porch, *Counterinsurgency: Exposing Myths of the New Way of War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), xi-xii, 2, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139226301>, in which the author critiques the reliance on conventional military force by arguing that counterinsurgency operations in the modern era have generated too much destruction in the name of stability.

⁷ The U.S. Army will "drive rapid, non-linear solutions." See *The U.S. Army in Multi-Domain Operations 2028*, iii. The U.S. Marine Corps will meet any challenge as a "naval expeditionary force-in-readiness" able to conduct operations demanding "crisis prevention and crisis response." See Berger, *Commandant's Planning Guidance*, 1. As Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen James T. Conway addressed combinations of different modes of conflict in *Marine Corps Vision and Strategy, 2025* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Marine Corps, 2008), 12. This balance in both Services responds to policy directives. President Joseph R. Biden Jr.'s interim *National Security Strategy* requires better capabilities to "compete and deter gray zone actions." See Biden, *Interim National Security Strategic Guidance*, 14. Its predecessor stresses the use of all tools of national power to protect U.S. national interests. See Trump, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, 4. The 2018 *National Defense Strategy* seeks "seamless integration of multiple elements of national power." See Mattis, *Summary of the National Defense Strategy of the United States*, 4.

⁸ Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), xxii, 17. Some question this characterization as too rigid given numerous instances of the U.S. military waging protracted war as something well short of decisive battle gained from conventional arms. See Brian

McAllister Linn, *The Echo of Battle: The Army's War of War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 5, 18. Still, the ideal matters most here: a Western way of war pursued by more actors than the United States alone and always as one of seeking a quick victory by killing the enemy to account for battlefield supremacy and thereby garnering a political windfall. See Victor Davis Hanson, *Carnage and Culture: Landmark Battles in the Rise of Western Power* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 7. In 2019, in response to the 2018 *National Defense Strategy* advancing great power competition as the primary focus of the U.S. military, a *Small Wars & Insurgencies* journal special issue challenged this push for the American way of war as neglecting the impact of insurgency on warfare. See Thomas A. Marks and Kirklin J. Bateman, "Perspectives on the American Way of War: The U.S. Experience in Irregular Conflict," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 30, no. 1 (2019): 5, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2018.1552438>. The issue omitted the American war of settlement against the Native American populations of North America despite a look at guerrilla warfare as a manifestation of insurgency during the nineteenth century. See Mark Lawrence, "Why a Nineteenth-Century Study?," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 30, no. 1 (2019): 719, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2019.1638563>.

⁹ The term *gray zone* germinated from Japanese thinking. See Sugio Takahashi, "Development of Gray-Zone Deterrence: Concept Building and Lessons from Japan's Experience," *Pacific Review* 31, no. 6 (2018): 788, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09512748.2018.1513551>. A Rand study also called attention to Japan's interest in deterring China's gray zone coercion. See Scott W. Harold et al., *The U.S.-Japan Alliance and Deterring Gray Zone Coercion in the Maritime, Cyber, and Space Domains* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2017), 2, <https://doi.org/10.7249/CF379>. Another Rand study captures this evolution in U.S. military and national security circles. See Lyle J. Morris et al., *Gaining Competitive Advantage in the Gray Zone: Response Options for Coercive Aggression below the Threshold of Major War* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2019), 7–12, <https://doi.org/10.7249/RR2942>.

¹⁰ Frank G. Hoffman, "Examining Complex Forms of Conflict: Gray Zone and Hybrid Challenges," *Prism* 7, no. 4 (2018): 32. Joint doctrine references traditional and irregular forms of warfare in *Joint Operations*, Joint Publication 3-0 (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2018), I-1. So too does David H. Ucko and Rober Egnell, *Counterinsurgency in Crisis: Britain and the Challenges of Modern Warfare* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 7.

¹¹ The principal scholarly works making this point are Matthew J. Flynn, *Settle and Conquer: Militarism on the American Frontier, 1607–1890* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2016); and Matthew J. Flynn, "Settle and Conquer: The Ultimate Counterinsurgency Success," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 32, no. 3 (2021): 509–10, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2020.1829871>. The article is based on the book; so too is this article. A few scholars adopt this emphasis. See Durwood Ball, *Army Regulars on the Western Frontier, 1848–1861* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 205, in which the author labels the U.S. Army's experience on the American frontier in 1848–61 a counterinsurgency. See also John M. Gates, "Indians and Insurrectos: The U.S. Army's Experience with Insurgency," *Parameters* 13, no. 1 (1983): 67–68, <https://doi.org/10.55540/0031-1723.1317>. Other experts stress that the U.S. Army, in order to be effective on the plains, had to employ means beyond their own capabilities, usually by enlisting the support of scouts and indigenous allies. The military effort to learn to co-opt resistance and turn it against the Native Americans deemphasizes the demographic impact of settlement in favor of this preferred counterinsurgency tactic. See Andrew J. Birtle, *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine, 1860–1941* (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1998), 12–13, 83–85; and Robert N. Watt, "Raiders of a Lost Art?: Apache War and Society," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 13, no. 3 (2002): 21, *Expeditions with MCUP*

<https://doi.org/10.1080/09592310208559195>. See also Wayne E. Lee, "Using the Natives against the Natives: Indigenes as 'Counterinsurgents' in the British Atlantic, 1500–1800," *Defense Studies* 10, no. 1 (2010): 88, in which the author broadens the chronology of this approach by looking at "host nation" forces.

¹² See Robert Wooster, *The Military and the United States Indian Policy, 1865–1903* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), 6. Wooster uses this label to define the British hope of using the Proclamation Line of 1763 as a division between White Americans and Native Americans, and then of American aspirations of using the Mississippi River and later a series of forts far to the west of the river as a border between White Americans and Native Americans.

¹³ Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 273, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511976957>. See also "Forum: The Middle Ground Revisited," *William and Mary Quarterly* 63, no. 1 (January 2006): 3–4, 9, 13, 16. In this forum, a number of scholars, Richard White among them, discuss and review White's concept and, in so doing, reinforce the ties of the middle ground to counterinsurgency, albeit unintentionally. This connection is made by describing the middle ground as an "event and cultural process," in which negotiation displaced confrontation as new cultural forms came into existence. This trend toward negotiation was due to adaptation and compromise among those attempting to gain a desired end via conflict but failing to do so. See also Michael N. McConnell, *A Country Between: The Upper Ohio and Its Peoples, 1724–1774* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 2–4, in which the author argues that Native Americans and settlers created a middle ground in the Ohio Valley region until 1774. And Mary E. Young, "The Dark and Bloody but Endlessly Inventive Middle Ground of Indian Frontier Historiography," *Journal of the Early Republic* 13, no. 2 (Summer 1993): 196, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3124086>, in which the author reviews the multitude of middle grounds along the "Indian frontier." See also R. Brian Ferguson, "The Violent Edge of Empire," in *War in the Tribal Zone: Expanding States and Indigenous Warfare*, eds. Brian R. Ferguson and Neil L. Whitehead (Santa Fe, NM: School for American Research Press, 1992), 3, in which the author defines successful warfare in a tribal zone as something similar, as "the radical transformation of extant sociopolitical formations, often resulting in 'tribalization,' the genesis of new tribes." See also Jacob Jurss, "Relations across the Lands: Ojibwe and Dakota Interactions in the Indigenous Borderlands of the Western Great Lakes," *American Indian Quarterly* 45, no. 4 (Fall 2021): 309, 325, <https://doi.org/10.1353/aiq.2021.0024>, in which the author identifies an "Indigenous borderland framework" creating strife and coexistence among Native American communities in the western Great Lakes region, a dynamic rebuffing the Euro-American impact of settlement.

¹⁴ Jack S. Levy, *War in the Modern Great Power System, 1495–1975* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2015), 10. See also recent histories placing Native Americans at the center of U.S. history, such as Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous People's History of the United States* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2014), 2–3; and Ned Blackhawk, *The Rediscovery of America: Native Peoples and the Unmaking of U.S. History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2023), 3–4.

¹⁵ Alan R. Millett and Peter Maslowski, *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States of America* (New York: Free Press, 1984), 23–25; and Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754–1766* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), 545.

¹⁶ See White, *The Middle Ground*, 33, 140–41, 309, in which the author argues that Native Americans were not dependent on France in the Great Lakes region. See also Daniel K. Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 86–87, in which the author concludes the opposite for the Iroquois living just south of the Pays d'en Haut.

¹⁷ David Dixon, *Never Come to Peace Again: Pontiac's Uprising and the Fate of the British Empire in North America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005), 122; and Gregory Evans Dowd, *War under Heaven: Pontiac, the Indian Nations, and the British Empire* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University, 2002), 126.

¹⁸ Francis Parkman, *The Conspiracy of Pontiac and the Indian War after the Conquest of Canada*, vol. 1, *From the Spring of 1763 to the Death of Pontiac* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 186; Howard H. Peckham, *Pontiac and the Indian Uprising* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1947), 105–6; and Dowd, *War under Heaven*, 123. Dowd, in an earlier study, argued at variance with Parkman by suggesting that the Native Americans propagated rumors of French return to the region as a means of influencing France to do just that. See Gregory Evans Dowd, "The French King Wakes Up in Detroit: 'Pontiac's War' in Rumor and History," *Ethnohistory* 37, no. 3 (Summer 1990): 255, <https://doi.org/10.2307/482446>.

¹⁹ Dixon, *Never Come to Peace Again*, 131; and Dowd, *War under Heaven*, 60.

²⁰ See Dowd, *War under Heaven*, 9, in which the author seeks to place Pontiac in his own "middle ground," not as an all-powerful chief but as a key leader. Dowd follows Richard White's lead in White, *The Middle Ground*, 288, 295, 297. See also Dixon, *Never Come to Peace Again*, 131–32, in which the author counters this view, acknowledging those scholars deemphasizing Pontiac's role but placing him at the center of the rebellion because he possessed the "respect necessary to maintain a fragile coalition." Dixon follows Peckham, *Pontiac and the Indian Uprising*, 321–322; and Parkman, *The Conspiracy of Pontiac*, 187. Peckham, however, disparages Parkman's placing of Pontiac as the focal point, as seen in Peckham, *Pontiac and the Indian Uprising*, 108–11.

²¹ See Dowd, *War under Heaven*, 96, 104. Dowd again follows Richard White's lead in White, *The Middle Ground*, 288.

²² Dixon, *Never Come to Peace Again*, 104; and Dowd, *War under Heaven*, 70, 75, 82–83.

²³ See William R. Nester, *"Haughty Conquerors": Amherst and the Great Indian Uprising of 1763* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2000), 114–15, in which the author relays the familiar effort of the British trying to spread smallpox among the Native Americans, a design primarily between Amherst and Col Henry Bouquet. See also Dowd, *War under Heaven*, 189–90, in which the author emphasizes that more than Amherst favored Native American extermination. See also Dixon, *Never Come to Peace Again*, 153, in which the author writes that "it was deliberate British policy to infect the [Native Americans] with smallpox." See also Elizabeth A. Fenn, "Biological Warfare in Eighteenth-Century North America: Beyond Jeffery Amherst," *Journal of American History* 86, no. 4 (March 2000): 1553, 1558, 1565, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2567577>, in which the author traces the use of this "biological warfare" by some Native Americans and colonials in North America far beyond the French and Indian War.

²⁴ Dixon, *Never Come to Peace Again*, 206; and White, *The Middle Ground*, 289.

²⁵ Dixon, *Never Come to Peace Again*, 242–43; and Dowd, *War under Heaven*, 162, 167.

²⁶ Dixon, *Never Come to Peace Again*, 269; and Dowd, *War Under Heaven*, 261. See also White, *The Middle Ground*, 313, in which the author writes that Pontiac gained the animosity of Native Americans because he allied himself too much to the British as mediating chief on behalf of

the Native Americans, a perversion of the middle ground requiring the British to placate multiple tribes, less one so-called chief.

²⁷ See Parkman, *The Conspiracy of Pontiac*, vol. 1, Preface to the 1st ed., viii, xxi, in which conquest and resistance are arguably the author's view of the struggle.

²⁸ Daniel J. Herman, "Romance on the Middle Ground," *Journal of the Early Republic* 19, no. 2 (Summer 1999): 283, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3124955>.

²⁹ See Colin G. Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 273, 291, 293, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511816437>, in which the author stresses that while the Native Americans were badly hurt by the American Revolution, they emerged intact. The biggest problem was the outcome of the war, which left the Native Americans with no allies after having sided with Great Britain, and the fact that the Americans now sought removal of Native Americans, not assimilation. See also Alan Taylor, *The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers, and the Northern Borderland of the American Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 405–6, in which the author announces, as a result of this dynamic, the end of any middle ground and its replacement with a divided ground producing Native American subjugation at the hands of growing U.S. power. See also Reginald Horsman, *Expansion and American Indian Policy, 1783–1812* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967), 173, in which the author tracks the delusion of U.S. leaders to seek peaceful expansion after the American Revolution, a goal that persisted until the outbreak of fighting with Tecumseh.

³⁰ Peter Cozzens, *Tecumseh and the Prophet: The Shawnee Brothers Who Defied a Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2020), 212, 216, 316; and John Sugden, *Tecumseh: A Life* (New York: Henry Holt, 1998), 187.

³¹ The literature almost uniformly praises Tecumseh for his efforts at Native American diplomacy. For a complication of this view, see R. David Edmunds, "Tecumseh, the Shawnee Prophet, and American History: A Reassessment," *Western Historical Quarterly* 14, no. 3 (July 1983): 275, <https://doi.org/10.2307/969620>, in which the author argues that Tenskwatawa had more success in rallying Native American support given his appeal to mysticism, a far stronger pull than Tecumseh's appeal to power politics. He repeats this view in R. David Edmunds, *The Shawnee Prophet* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 190. See also Cozzens, *Tecumseh and the Prophet*, 298, in which the author writes the same thing, that Tecumseh needed and welcomed his brother's influence over other Native American tribes. See also Alfred A. Cave, "The Shawnee Prophet, Tecumseh, and Tippecanoe: A Case Study of Historical Myth-Making," *Journal of the Early Republic* 22, no. 4 (Winter 2002): 640, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3124761>, in which the author goes further by arguing that Tenskwatawa remained a key figure even after defeat at the Battle of Tippecanoe.

³² Cozzens, *Tecumseh and the Prophet*, 295, 297; Sugden, *Tecumseh*, 283; and Edmunds, *The Shawnee Prophet*, 119.

³³ Preaching a race war is in Glenn Tucker, *Tecumseh: Vision of Glory* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1956), 209. Recent scholarship offers more nuance, arguing that race is a poor measure for explaining the cause of the fighting. More compelling is that Native American tribes such as the Miami, in league with the French, who rejected the call of unity among Native Americans, saw such a goal as a threat to their local interests. The Americans believed that the interfering French or British functioned as one and the same in driving a supposed Native American unity, something that did not exist. Multiethnic alliances between Native Americans and Europeans trumped racial divides. See Patrick Bottiger, "Prophetstown for Their Own Purposes: The French, Miamis, and Cultural Identities in the Wabash-Maumee Valley," *Journal Expeditions with MCUP*

of the *Early Republic* 33, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 30–31, 52, 59. See also Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745–1815* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), xiii, xv, in which the author argues that Native Americans did act beyond “locality” as part of a militant nativist movement expressing a larger continental commonality.

³⁴ Cozzens, *Tecumseh and the Prophet*, 339; and Sugden, *Tecumseh*, 300, 304–5.

³⁵ Sugden, *Tecumseh*, 300. A less flattering view, although not intended as such, is to see Brock’s support of Tecumseh as more evidence of Brock’s rashness born of his inflated sense of honor. See Jonathon Riley, *A Matter of Honour: The Life, Campaigns and Generalship of Isaac Brock* (Montreal: Robin Brass Studio, 2011), 243, 304.

³⁶ See Sugden, *Tecumseh*, 322, 342; and Tucker, *Tecumseh*, 285, 295, in which both authors try to offer a more balanced view of the relationship between Tecumseh and Procter, one that is not all bad but clearly ineffective. See also Cozzens, *Tecumseh and the Prophet*, 374, 379–80, in which the author stresses the practical difficulty of supply as undoing Procter’s best efforts of support.

³⁷ Cozzens, *Tecumseh and the Prophet*, 372, 387; and Sugden, *Tecumseh*, 365.

³⁸ Arguably the long-attempted American naval control of Lake Erie, when accomplished, doomed Native American resistance. See David Curtis Skaggs and Gerard T. Altoff, *A Signal Victory: The Lake Erie Campaign, 1812–1813* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1997), 176; and George C. Daughan, *1812: The Navy’s War* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 217.

³⁹ Cozzens, *Tecumseh and the Prophet*, 400; and Sandy Antal, *A Wampum Denied: Procter’s War of 1812* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1997), 364. See also John Sugden, *Tecumseh’s Last Stand* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), 114, 121, in which the author writes that Tecumseh held some optimism at the start of the battle.

⁴⁰ See Sugden, *Tecumseh* 379, in which the author argues that effective Native American resistance ended with Tecumseh’s death. See also Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance*, 185, in which the author concurs, writing that Native American unity waned after Tecumseh’s death. See also Cozzens, *Tecumseh and the Prophet*, 423, in which the author notes the Prophet’s continued efforts to maintain Native American unity after Tecumseh’s death, but with very modest success. See also Edmonds, *The Shawnee Prophet*, 164, in which the author relays British efforts to rebuild the Native American alliance without the Prophet, an approach successfully isolating Tenskwatawa.

⁴¹ Gregory A. Waselkov, *A Conquering Spirit: Fort Mims and the Redstick War of 1813–1814* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006), 3.

⁴² See William S. Belko, ed., *America’s Hundred Years’ War: U.S. Expansion to the Gulf Coast and the Fate of the Seminole, 1763–1858* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011), 53, 67, 96, in which the author describes Jackson’s punitive strike south into Florida against the Seminole as merely an “epilogue” to the War of 1812; ending British interference remained his primary objective. See also Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance*, 119, in which the author argues that Jackson saw only British intrigues behind Native American disturbances in the south. See also Karl Davis, “Remember Fort Mims’: Reinterpreting the Origins of the Creek War,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 22, no. 4 (Winter 2002): 613, 635, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3124760>, in which the author argues that the Creek saw more local concerns, striking Fort Mims to send a message to factions within their polity in order to shore up their front when opposing American land encroachment.

⁴³ Jacqueline L. Hazelton, *Bullets Not Ballots: Success in Counterinsurgency Warfare* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2021), 1–7. For an earlier work making much of the same point, see *Expeditions with MCUP*

Gil Merom, *How Democracies Lose Small Wars: State, Society, and the Failures of France in Algeria, Israel in Lebanon, and the United States in Vietnam* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 15, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511808227>.