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Ambiguous alliances: Native American efforts to preserve independence in the Ohio Valley, 1768-1795

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Ambiguous Alliances: Native American Efforts to Preserve Independence in the Ohio Valley, 1768-1795

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Doctor of Philosophy

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“Ambiguous Alliances” examines the revolutionary era in the Ohio Valley from a Native American perspective. Rather than simply considering them as British pawns or troublesome mischief-makers, this account describes how Wyandots, Shawnees, Ottawas, Delawares, Miamis, and their native neighbors made decisions about war and peace, established alliances with Europeans, Americans, and distant Indian nations, and charted specific strategies for their political and cultural survival. They also suffered devastating personal and property loss and encountered significant disruption to their societal routines. Yet much about their daily lives remained unchanged, and their communities continued to foster a strong Indian identity.

This dissertation explores native objectives for the period 1768-1795, specifically looking at what the various nations were hoping to accomplish in their relationships with the British and the Americans. While preserving land and sovereignty were the Indians’ clearest aims, this study also emphasizes that the underlying goal of protecting their rights and property was to retain their cultural distinctiveness. Furthermore, these twin objectives were inextricably linked. The Indians’ ability to remain viable diplomatic partners with the Europeans depended on the maintenance of their landed independence.

Along with analyzing native objectives, this dissertation discusses Indian strategies to attain these goals and looks at how the Revolution assisted or hampered their execution. Some tribes actively recruited British or American allies; some attempted to remain neutral; others endeavored to form a united Indian front; and still others alternately extended their allegiance to both parties in an effort to secure both autonomy and protection.

Despite its heavy emphasis on native alliances and military maneuvers, this work also examines the Revolution's challenges to the rhythms of daily life. In addition to physical destruction, wartime agendas altered native economic patterns and sometimes even invaded cultural practices, threatening to constrict gender roles for women or to prevent nations from adopting captives to replace their deceased relatives. Although the era's disruptions brought emotional distress, physical displacement, and political ambiguity, the tribes persisted in sustaining both their daily existence and their national identities.
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As if thanking my graduate student colleagues and esteemed professors is not difficult enough, I am also indebted to countless archivists and librarians who assisted me at critical moments. Since I lived away from Williamsburg while researching and writing this dissertation, I relied on countless Philadelphia-area libraries for necessary materials. Ursinus College, Villanova University, Swarthmore College, Haverford College, Bryn Mawr College, and the University of Pennsylvania graciously shared their resources with me. Librarians, researchers, and archivists at the William L. Clements Library, the Library of Congress, the National Archives of Canada, and the Pennsylvania State Archives all proved to be extremely helpful when I ventured away from my home base.
While working away from an established academic community slowed my progress, the reward for residing in the same state as my husband far surpassed any scholarly hindrances. He has been a constant support throughout a process that undoubtedly took longer than he expected. His wit, wisdom, confidence and love enabled this project to reach a conclusion and deserve more thanks than I can offer.
Abbreviations

American Archives

ASPIA

BHP
*British Headquarters Papers*, microfilm reels M-341 to M-370, National Archives of Canada.

DAR

Frontier Advance

Frontier Defense

Frontier Retreat

Gage Papers

George Rogers Clark Papers
James Alton James, ed., *George Rogers Clark Papers*.
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<td>MVHR</td>
<td><em>Mississippi Valley Historical Review</em></td>
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<td>George Morgan Letterbook, MG-19, Accession File, Folder 1, Pennsylvania State Archives.</td>
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<td>NAC</td>
<td><em>National Archives of Canada</em></td>
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<td>PCC</td>
<td><em>Papers of the Continental Congress</em>,</td>
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Pennsylvania Archives

PRO

Revolution on the Upper Ohio

Revolutionary Virginia

RG 10

SIAP

Simcoe Papers

St. Clair Papers

WPHM

1774-1789, National Archives Microfilm, M-247.


Public Records Office.


*Records Relating to Indian Affairs, Ser. 2: Minutes of Indian Affairs, 1755-1790*, National Archives of Canada, microfilm reels C-10999 and C-1223.

*Superintendent for Indian Affairs Papers*, MG 19-F35, National Archives of Canada, microfilm reels H-2943 and H-2944.


*Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*

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Introduction
The Revolutionary Ohio Valley

At the turn of the eighteenth century, the Ohio Valley housed few permanent residents. A small number of Shawnee villages dotted the landscape in present-day Kentucky, several nations anchored themselves on the Wabash River, and scattered tribes visited the land around Lake Erie. Fifty years later, however, the region had become a bustling district. Delawares and Shawnees had moved in from eastern Pennsylvania, Wyandots had migrated south from Detroit to settle near Sandusky, several Shawnee bands had relocated north of the Ohio River, and disgruntled Senecas had begun to trickle down the Allegheny River and populate the river valleys of western Pennsylvania and eastern Ohio. In their wake, French and English traders arrived on the scene, eager to ply their wares and to link their Indian customers to a particular European empire.¹

With all of these newcomers vying for resources and allegiances, war quickly erupted, pitting French, English, and Indian neighbors against each other in a scramble for Ohio Valley dominance. When the dust cleared and the Seven Years’ War reached its conclusion, the French government had been expelled from the region, even though many

of its traders and agents remained in the field. Meanwhile, most Indian nations opposed
the new British regime, but they disagreed on the appropriate responses to its clumsy
attempts to rule autocratically. Some feared British military and economic weapons and
consequently remained quiet. But numerous other chiefs and warriors from the Ohio,
Illinois, and Great Lakes regions rebelled against British authority in a series of attacks in
1763-1764, loosely referred to as Pontiac’s War. Although British soldiers quelled the
insurrection before the largest forts fell, the Indians’ hostility and distrust lingered.
Officials who endeavored to impose their priorities unilaterally learned that they would
have to adopt subtler policies to avoid continued violent conflict.2

Residual frustration among the Indians, who were freshly aggrieved by the steady
stream of settlers pouring into contested territory in western Pennsylvania and Virginia,
administrative ineptitude among the British, and unpredictable behavior among French
traders and villagers created considerable chaos in the region after Pontiac’s War
subsided. During the next decade, aggrandizing land companies, British agents, and
distant Indian nations sought to advance their own interests at the expense of Ohio Valley
residents. In response, Delawares and Shawnees complained to local agents, threatened
croaching settlers, and advocated collective action among area Indians, but tensions
persisted. By the time irate colonists fired on the king’s troops on the eastern seaboard,
some of the western Indians had already engaged in a large pitched battle against Virginia

2 Fred Anderson, Crucible of War: The Seven Years’ War and the Fate of Empire in British North
America, 1754-1766 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000); Gregory Evans Dowd, War under Heaven:
Pontiac, the Indian Nations, & the British Empire (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002); Jack
M. Sosin, Whitehall and the Wilderness: The Middle West in British Colonial Policy, 1760-1775 (Lincoln:
University of Nebraska Press, 1961); David Curtis Skaggs and Larry L. Nelson, eds., The Sixty Years’ War
for the Great Lakes, 1754-1814 (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2001); McConnell, A
Country Between; J. Martin West, ed., War for Empire in Western Pennsylvania (Ligonier, PA: Fort
Ligonier Association, 1993); Downes, Council Fires on the Upper Ohio; White, Middle Ground.
militia, a skirmish that intensified fears among native groups that the British and
Americans intended to take their land.³

While several recent historians have carefully documented the impact of these
mid-eighteenth-century upheavals on Native American communities, few have extended
their analysis to include the revolutionary era.⁴ This reluctance to cross the Revolution’s
threshold possibly stems from the common refrain surrounding much existing scholarship
on native politics: Indian survival strategies were based upon setting European powers
against each other. Although this theme accurately describes one segment of tribal
diplomacy, focusing on it exclusively forces the story to end with the dissolution of
France’s North American empire in 1763.

Regardless of the reason for its neglect, the effect of minimizing the western
Indians’ revolutionary experience is to turn it into a disconnected event in which the
British and Americans engaged in civil war, and the Indians were inevitably compelled to
choose a side. This formula encourages the notion that the Revolution simplified native
concerns and alliances. For example, Eric Hinderaker argues that the Revolution took the
region’s complex pre-war politics and flattened the “Ohio Valley’s social and political
contours,” by pushing all of the Indians into the British camp. Post-war studies tend to be

³ Thomas P. Abernethy, Western Lands and the American Revolution (New York: Russell &
Russell, 1959); Kenneth P. Bailey, The Ohio Company of Virginia and the Westward Movement, 1748-
1792 (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark, 1939); Dorothy V. Jones, License for Empire: Colonialism by Treaty
in Early America (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); Jack M. Sosin, The Revolutionary
Randolph C. Downes, “Dunmore’s War: An Interpretation,” Mississippi Valley Historical Review, 21, no. 3
(1934), 311-30; John W. Huston, “The British Evacuation of Fort Pitt, 1772,” Western Pennsylvania
Historical Magazine, 48 (1985), 317-29; Robert L. Kerby, “The Other War in 1774: Dunmore’s War,”
⁴ McConnell, A Country Between; Dowd, War Under Heaven; Anderson, Crucible of War.
Notable exceptions include Colin G. Calloway, The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and
Diversity in Native American Communities (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Hurt, Ohio
Frontier; White, Middle Ground; Skaggs and Nelson, eds., Sixty Years War for the Great Lakes, although
both White and Skaggs and Nelson are prevented from detailed analysis of the Revolution by the broader
scope of their projects.
similarly reductionistic when discussing native affairs, often choosing to highlight American political development or British Indian Department maneuvers rather than connections to the preceding struggle. Likewise, general scholarship on the Revolution's western front treats the Indians solely as British auxiliaries and ignores how native actions and initiatives largely determined British and American strategies for that theater of the war.5

Seeking to redress some of these oversights, this dissertation places an Indian perspective at the heart of its examination of the Revolution in the Ohio Valley. In this version of the story, Wyandots, Shawnees, Delawares, Miamis, and their native neighbors made decisions about war and peace, established alliances with Europeans, Americans, and distant Indian nations, and charted specific, often different, strategies for their political and cultural survival. They also suffered devastating personal and property loss and encountered significant disruption to their social routines. Yet much about their daily lives remained unchanged, and their communities continued to foster a strong Indian identity.

This native perspective contributes several new ideas to recent scholarship on the revolutionary Ohio Valley. First, it introduces an expanded periodization, 1768 to 1795, in an effort to connect the Revolution to its broader context and to emphasize that the war

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did not begin in 1775 or end in 1783 for the Indians. It begins in 1768 for two reasons. First, at the Fort Stanwix Treaty in that year, the British adjusted their 1763 Proclamation line that limited settlement beyond the Appalachians and negotiated a boundary between Indian and white territory that would give them a huge swath of land in Pennsylvania and western Virginia, including most of Kentucky. The Ohio Valley tribes vigorously opposed this treaty, directing their anger against both the British and the Six Nations, who had claimed the authority to dispose of this land. Resentment over this issue lasted into the Revolution and continued to shape native ideas about a boundary line into the 1790s.6

The second reason for beginning in 1768 is that the British regime was just establishing itself in the West, and the Indians were counseling together frequently to determine how to respond to it. During Pontiac’s War they tried the quick eradication response, which produced mixed results. They did not succeed in pushing the British out, but they did impress English authorities with their martial creativity and strength. Thus, by the latter half of the 1760s, the Indians did not consider themselves defeated, but knew that they would have to carve out a niche for themselves that seemed likely to include further opposition to the British. Figuring out how to approach the issue was the task at hand in 1768 and the years leading up to the Revolution.

The Treaty of Greenville in 1795 marks the end of this dissertation because that settlement forced the Indians to relinquish the Ohio River boundary that had been in

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existence since the 1768 Treaty of Fort Stanwix. Now white settlers could legally sprawl
up the Muskingum, Scioto, and Great Miami Rivers, wantonly threatening native hunting
and trading patterns. The rapid expansion of these new immigrants prompted the Indians
to redefine their relationship with their white neighbors and to devise new plans for
preserving their sovereignty and autonomy.  

In addition to broadening the revolutionary period, *Ambiguous Alliances*, also
stretches its geographic focus to include the entire Ohio Valley. Many studies restrict
their coverage to smaller regions, but the Indian perspective seemed to demand a more
extensive view. Delawares and Shawnees in eastern Ohio maintained ties to their
relatives who had moved to the Wabash and Illinois countries; Ottawas on the Maumee
River and Wyandots at Sandusky communicated with their kin close to Detroit and Lake
Michigan; and Seneca chiefs from Allegheny frequently checked on their volatile and
vagrant Mingo cousins. Although the Ohio, Wabash, Illinois, and Great Lakes Indians
often differed in their responses to outside threats (just as there was internal dissension in
nearly every Indian town), they frequently called upon each other for military assistance
and kept up with rumors and news that traveled up and down the Ohio River. As
encroaching settlers advanced across the entire length of the river, these shared
grievances further strengthened regional identity.  

A third contribution to Native American and Ohio Valley research is a discussion
of Indian objectives during this period, specifically asking what were the various nations

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7 Walter Lowrie and Matthew St. Clair Clarke, eds., *American State Papers: Documents,
Legislative and Executive, of the Congress of the United States, Class II, Indian Affairs*, 2 vols.

8 Helen Hornbeck Tanner, ed., *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History* (Norman, OK: University of
hoping to accomplish in their relationships with the British and Americans? The obvious answer to this question is that the Indians wanted to preserve their land and sovereignty, but this project complicates that answer in two ways. First, it focuses on one aspect of sovereignty, namely, the ability to remain viable partners on the diplomatic stage. Having been connected to European markets for decades by the 1770s, few Indians advocated complete isolation, which meant that they had to figure out a way to accommodate the newcomers without being completely manipulated. Occasionally, war seemed like the best option to rein in overreaching whites; but more often, nations sought to cultivate alliances where their authority would be recognized, and they would be given the opportunity to express their concerns and opinions. As the revolutionary era grew more heated, however, such alliances became increasingly difficult to maintain. Second, this dissertation builds upon the Indians' twin objectives of land and sovereignty by pointing out that the two were inextricably linked. The Indians' ability to negotiate with Europeans depended on the maintenance of their landed independence.9

Along with analyzing native objectives, the dissertation revolves around two additional central questions: What tactics did the Indians employ to implement these goals, and how did the Revolution and its aftermath assist or hamper their execution? Because historians have generally assumed that the Indians eventually were forced to sign on with one of the belligerents, they obscure the evidence that native leaders were really conducting their own war. If Indian interests dovetailed with British aims, the two

could work together; but if Detroit commanders wanted the Indians to adopt an alternate strategy, they refused. Indeed, Ohio Valley nations were just as active in choosing and recruiting their allies as were the king’s officials. Aligning with a particular side was only one way to use the Revolution’s unpredictability for their own purposes. Some tribes explored neutrality; others endeavored to form a united Indian front; still others alternately extended their allegiance to both parties in an effort to secure both autonomy and protection. This diversity of native opinion on how best to preserve their diplomatic and geographic positions frequently created sizable rifts between local leaders.

Despite its heavy emphasis on native alliances and military maneuvers, this work also examines the Revolution’s challenges to the rhythms of daily life, a final offering to conversations about the Native Americans of the eighteenth-century Ohio Valley. While settlers who lost their lives and property at the hands of the Indians received considerable attention from their contemporaries as well as historians, the destruction in native communities has been largely overlooked. In addition to physical ruin, wartime agendas altered economic patterns and sometimes even invaded cultural practices, threatening to constrict gender roles for women or to prevent nations from adopting captives to replace their deceased relatives. Although these disruptions often brought “Misery” with “no consolation on earth,” the tribes persisted in sustaining both their daily existence and their national identities, albeit in new locations.10

By highlighting the Indians’ varied responses to their rapidly changing world between 1768 and 1795, Ambiguous Alliances casts the entire revolutionary scenario in a different light. While the West rarely “captured the attention or the imagination of rebel

10 “Cherokee women to Arent Schuyler De Peyster, June 15, 1782,” Records Relating to Indian Affairs, Ser. 2: Minutes of Indian Affairs, 1755-90, vol. 13, National Archives of Canada.
leaders," it nevertheless represented one of the fundamental conflicts between the British and the Americans. Colonial leaders charged crown officials with unwarranted restriction on settlers' opportunity to expand westward. The king's representatives, who themselves often disagreed on the appropriate frontier policy, responded that expansion had to be slow to prevent another costly war with the Indians, and furthermore, they expected the colonies to contribute to the cost of peacekeeping measures west of the Appalachians. The Ohio Valley nations exacerbated this dispute by acting just as the cautionary diplomats feared: attacking British outposts, terrorizing travelers, hunters, and outlying settlers, and generally preventing agents from establishing clear British jurisdiction in the West.¹¹

This wrangling over the crisis in the West quickly began to influence other policies in Britain's North American empire. Before anything could be resolved, both eastern leaders and imperial statesmen became embroiled in related political and economic controversies that ultimately fixed both parties' attention on coastal affairs and pushed frontier concerns to the background. By the time the colonists declared their independence, the existence of two sizable armies maneuvering in the heavily populated East made the West's open spaces seem less significant. Often overlooked in this eastern-centered Revolution narrative, however, is the fact that trans-Appalachian chaos acted as a catalyst for many of the British and American positions and ideas that splintered the empire, if nothing else, ensuring that the war would begin in the 1770s rather than at a future point. Also overlooked is the evidence that this chaos was fueled largely by the Ohio Valley's native residents, who refused to allow land speculators or


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imperial agents to dictate the basic parameters of their lives and fostered considerable discord between colonists and the crown in the process.12

As the Revolution progressed, most congressmen and military leaders resolutely maintained that the British were their exclusive enemy. When western officials and settlers complained of Indian depredations, their petitions were often used to denounce the British for unleashing "Assassins, Murderers & Villains" on unsuspecting frontier families, rather than acknowledging that the fledgling nation might have more than one war at its doorstep. The British also tended to view the action in the Ohio Valley as ancillary to the eastern theater, but, in time, both sides developed schemes for this region intended to secure distinct military advantages. Sadly for the English-speaking strategists, native opposition foiled nearly every one of these plans. British officers who attempted to commandeer Indian troops and direct them against specific American targets discovered that their artillery and ammunition were instead used to further native war aims. Likewise, American armies bound for Detroit repeatedly found both their water and land routes blocked by pan-Indian forces.13

In addition to altering the revolutionary drama to include native instigators and Indian resistance that forced both sides to adjust their western strategies, this dissertation emphasizes that the Ohio Valley nations initiated much of the violent conflict in the region during the Revolution's early years. Far from acting as British pawns or reacting

12 Woody Holton makes a similar argument in Forced Founders: Indians, Debtors, Slaves, and the Making of the American Revolution in Virginia (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), suggesting that frustrated land speculators pushed Virginians into the Revolution when the Indians continued to resist their encroachments. Patrick Griffin disagrees, arguing that "neither common settlers nor Indians" charted the British course for its officials; rather leaders like Lord Dunmore co-opted both groups to gain control over the West. American Leviathan, 99.
to strikes against their towns, several tribes and other disgruntled war chiefs undertook their own war without the approval of British or American officials. Taking advantage of the jurisdictional chaos in their region, these leaders sought to disrupt the trespassers’ communities even further in the hope that the outsiders would be expelled and native land and sovereignty protected. Although all of the Ohio Valley nations eventually expressed some support for this war effort and continued to resist illegal settlement for a decade after the Treaty of Paris was signed, they were ultimately subdued because of their inability to agree on the best response to the growing American threat. By identifying and describing the Indians’ diverse strategies for protecting their interests, this project details the rise and fall of their “Twenty Years War.”

The material in this dissertation is arranged in five chapters, with the first three covering the period chronologically and the last two addressing themes for the entire revolutionary era. Chapter One tracks the growing native dissatisfaction with the British between 1768 and 1774, particularly looking at Indian efforts to form confederacies capable of chastising the audacious Europeans as they had in 1763. The succeeding two chapters delve into native strategies for exploiting the Revolution and its equally divisive aftermath in an attempt to secure their land and sovereignty, both of which seemed to be slipping away. Chapter Four changes course and considers British and American intentions for the West. While this topic might seem out of place, it underscores the reality that Indians did not make decisions in a vacuum. Their enemies assumed a variety of roles and sought to impose their own ideals on the region, but in many cases native

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14 Colin G. Calloway uses this term in his article, “We Have Always Been the Frontier: The American Revolution in Shawnee Country,” American Indian Quarterly, 16 (1992), 47.
initiatives thwarted carefully laid plans from Philadelphia or London. The final chapter scrutinizes the experience of war in Indian towns, seeking to uncover the impact of nearly three decades of violent conflict on already struggling communities. Taken together, these chapters offer glimpses of tragedy and triumph, alliances and ambushes, authority and insecurity, and cultural and political loss and persistence, all part of the fraying fabric of native life in the revolutionary Ohio Valley.
Chapter One: Common Grievances

Sir William Johnson waited restlessly at Fort Stanwix in mid-October 1768. It had been nearly a year and a half since the Six Nations had agreed to extend the western boundaries of Pennsylvania and Maryland beyond the Allegheny Mountains. Despite considerable turmoil in Indian affairs during those intervening months, boundary-line plans dividing Indian and white territory remained intact. The Six Nations had reaffirmed their support for the land cession in April, and a month later Johnson informed his superior officer, Gen. Thomas Gage, that he hoped to convene the Shawnees, Delawares, Six Nations of New York, and Senecas living on the Ohio at the end of July to formally conclude this important business. By mid-October, however, Johnson had postponed the conference three times and was forced to concede that his multi-national congress might not materialize, since the principal Shawnee and Delaware chiefs had opted to visit some Mississippi tribes rather than trek to New York. Part optimist, part opportunist, Johnson chose to ignore these ill omens and forged ahead with his boundary-line enterprise.¹

While Johnson tarried at Fort Stanwix and anticipated adding considerable acreage to Britain’s already-sprawling empire, a party of Wabash Indians signaled their displeasure at English trespassing. Encountering a group of hunters from Fort Chartres in the Illinois country, who had clearly surpassed their orders to procure meat for the garrison, the Indians killed most of the invaders, returning to St. Vincent with nine scalps.

and eight horseloads of peltry. The same party attacked some Virginia long hunters on the Green River in Kentucky shortly thereafter. Gage was outraged by these murders and refused to be mollified even after one of his Cherokee interpreters pointed out that the Fort Chartres soldiers had been instructed to hunt buffalo and instead had been gathering bear, beaver, and deer skins. To Gage the fall of 1768 was supposed to be a time of British expansion and a new era of peaceful relations with the western Indians. To the Ohio Valley residents, however, expansion and peace were irreconcilable, and they intended to make their claims evident to all observers.²

The Wabash assault on intruding English hunters was not unexpected in October 1768. Tension between Indians and whites had not subsided when the British officially expelled the French from the region west of the Appalachians after the Seven Years' War. Having fought together with the French, many of the Ohio Indians maintained their alliance, registering their opposition to British rule by participating in Pontiac's Rebellion and successfully capturing every fort beyond the mountains except Detroit, Niagara, and Pitt. In response the British marched two sizable armies into Indian territory, forced the most active belligerents to surrender, and brokered several peace agreements. By the time Cols. Henry Bouquet and John Bradstreet returned eastward with their troops, and Johnson and his deputy George Croghan inked their treaties in 1765 and 1766, the British were confident that they had secured control of the entire Ohio River basin. In their minds they had overawed the Indians with their military might and at the same time

² Gage Papers, 1: 199-200.
altered some of their policies, such as restricting trade to designated posts, that seemed to be the source of Native grievances. Surely a prosperous and peaceful reign lay ahead.\(^3\)

The Indians were not convinced. While the army’s presence did create fear in Delaware, Shawnee, and other native villages, it also produced a new surge of anger. That anger mixed potently with lingering confidence from the fact that they had indeed been cowed but not conquered. Their organization, military strategy, and creativity without the support of a formal European ally had perhaps alarmed the British more than the previous decade’s intercontinental clash. In 1767 Johnson fretted that the Indians seemed more discontent than they had for many years.\(^4\) The question for chiefs from Kaskaskia to Kuskuski was how to channel that discontent into a coherent response to British authority. To answer that question each nation needed to determine what they could expect from these outsiders who claimed to have dominion over their lands.

In the Illinois country both Indians and French habitants had the luxury of knowing that they could escape the British entirely by simply moving across the Mississippi River. Their remote location prevented the British from occupying Fort Chartres until 1765, and even then Indian resistance stymied the development of a strong English trading presence. By June 1768 Gage recommended that Fort Chartres be abandoned, despite the fact that it was his empire’s best-constructed fort in the North American interior. Its purposes, he told Secretary of State Hillsborough, were to exert some semblance of control over the Illinois inhabitants and to act as a supply depot for


\(^4\) *Gage Papers*, 1: 142.
eastern trading companies. Since neither of these goals was being accomplished and the post's maintenance depended on the unlikely prospect of remaining at peace with all the Indian nations flanking the Ohio who possessed the power to disrupt river traffic, Gage advocated withdrawal.5

The Illinois Indians were not privy to Whitehall’s deliberations, but they would have made the same assessment of the empire’s competence in their region. They recognized that bold statements about British dominance failed to match the reality of British instability. Plenty of French traders living in the area could supply them with necessary goods without subjecting them to trade restrictions or galling challenges to their sovereignty. Under these conditions, the British appeared to be unnecessary and vulnerable but still potentially dangerous, all good reasons to seek their expulsion.

Joining the Illinois and Kaskaskia Indians in their opposition to the English newcomers, the Miamis, Piankeshaws, Kickapoos, and Mascoutens on the Wabash River and the Potawatomis at St. Joseph were perhaps even more overt in their objections to British efforts to rule in their territory. As a precursor to the Wabash tribes’ attack on the Fort Chartres soldiers, several Potawatomis killed two English traders in May 1768. Although Gage blamed local French traders for stirring up the Indians against European competitors, the French insisted that the impetus for the attack came from the Potawatomis themselves, citing a recent council where the Indians declared that they would not allow any English traders in their midst.6


In the Illinois and Wabash countries, resistance to British attempts to establish a profitable and authoritative presence added a new layer of unrest to an already volatile region. Outsider native groups generally encountered similar hostility if they threatened any area residents, Indian or French. When a Seneca traveling from Illinois through Miami territory on the Upper Wabash killed his French companion during a quarrel, the local Miami Indians successfully persuaded their French neighbors to avenge the man’s death by executing the Seneca wayfarer. Scattered incidents such as this paled in comparison to the ongoing war with the Cherokees to the south. Shortly before the Fort Stanwix Treaty, a Cherokee party killed nineteen French and Indians in the Illinois country, captured several French prisoners, and also destroyed a group of eight Virginians and two or three Frenchmen near the Ohio River. The British interpreted these violent scenes as evidence that their governance was sorely needed to establish order and a peaceful society. The Miamis, Illinois, Piankeshaws, and other nations, however, viewed the British as new outsiders who threatened to disrupt local relations even further should they choose to throw their weight behind an adversary.\(^7\)

East of the Illinois and Wabash regions where English traders, soldiers, and government officials were planted more thickly and firmly, the Indians lodged slightly different complaints. At Fort Pitt in the summer of 1767, numerous Shawnees, Delawares, Mingos, and Senecas objected to the rapid encroachment of settlers onto land well beyond the 1763 line dividing Indian and white territory. The fertile valleys south of

\(^7\) Ibid., 143, 186. Richard White argues that internecine warfare tended to drive disputing Indians to seek a European mediator, thus continually reaffirming the alliance system and acknowledging the French and later the English to be “Fathers.” This does not seem to be the case in the Wabash-Cherokee conflict, even after the Cherokees strengthened their connection to the British. See Richard White, The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 299-305.
Pittsburgh on tributaries of the Monongahela River had particularly attracted white farmers who not only violated Indian hunting grounds but interfered with the passage of various nations to and from war with southern tribes. As Gage explained in a letter to Secretary of State Shelburne, these Indians contended that “the Country Westward of the Alleghany Mountains was their Property, that they never ceded it to the King, or to any of his Subjects, but that the white People had settled there, contrary to solemn Engagements and in Violation of the Peace.” Furthermore, they suggested that since the British government had laws to control its people, they were convinced that if the leaders were “sincerely inclined” to prevent settlement, they could bring it to a halt.⁸

After scolding various authorities at Fort Pitt, several chiefs accompanied a detachment of soldiers and the commanding officer, Charles Edmonstone, to a meeting with approximately a hundred of these recent invaders. Edmonstone declared them to be trespassing on Indian land, despite previous directions to remove, and ordered them to leave immediately. The chiefs added urgency to the situation, explaining that heretofore they had managed to restrain their young men who were eager to destroy the illegal settlements, but they could not guarantee their success much longer. The people promised to depart, and on the return trip to Fort Pitt, Edmonstone dispatched several parties to help them keep their promise by destroying “as many Hutts as they could find.” By January 1768, however, Gage reported that the “Intruders” had returned along with “some hundreds more.” Undoubtedly, the Indians were aware of their reappearance long before news of it crossed Gage’s desk.⁹

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⁸ Gage Papers, 1: 147.
Already angry that the British failed to remove the offending settlers or provide any redress for the growing number of murders committed by these same individuals, the Shawnees, Delawares, and other upper Ohio Indians began to fear that this inactivity indicated that the English were preparing for war. In early May 1768, Johnson’s deputy, George Croghan, met with a number of “Sulky and very much discontented” Shawnee chiefs and warriors who informed him that they and the Delawares intended to remain peaceful, although they were convinced the English were planning to attack.\textsuperscript{10}

Faced with a British neighbor who appeared to be flexing its military muscles yet had proven unwilling or unable to enforce its own rules regarding settlement, the Indians pondered the best course of action. More cautious leaders opted to employ the established channels for addressing grievances, namely, meeting at recognized council fires and hammering out solutions. Others advocated retaliation for the death of their friends and relatives, most easily accomplished by attacking boats on the Ohio River.\textsuperscript{11}

Between these two extremes was a more calculated response. As early as the fall of 1767, the Shawnees circulated belts inviting all the Ohio Valley tribes from the Great Lakes to the Mississippi to a conference at their towns on the Scioto River the following spring. Upon hearing of this congress scheduled and conducted beyond his control, Johnson sent Croghan from Philadelphia to the Ohio Country to figure out the root of the Indians’ grievances. Although he missed much of the private counseling between disgruntled nations, Croghan managed to bring together the Shawnees, Delawares,

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., 175.
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 157-58.
Mingos, and other Ohio tribes along with some commissioners from Pennsylvania at Pittsburgh in April 1768.12

Here the British learned three things that should have signaled future trouble: first, they discovered that in addition to objecting to encroaching settlers, the Shawnees insisted that the English forts be demolished; second, they were forced to acknowledge that the Indians had noticed their increased navigation on the Ohio and wanted such activity curbed; third, they received confirmation that the Shawnees and nations to the west were likely collaborating. Despite these ominous signs, the conference moderators declared the event successful in avoiding a general Indian war and ameliorating all the Indians' concerns except the problem of illegal settlement, which they fully expected to be resolved at the upcoming boundary treaty at Fort Stanwix.13

Johnson, Croghan, Gage, and other British authorities who dealt with Indian affairs undoubtedly hoped that this optimistic appraisal of the 1768 Fort Pitt conference meant that private counseling in the woods would now be unnecessary. The Indians would be pleased to cultivate relationships with the English rather than seek out fellow native malcontents. Instead of keeping the British in the dark about their proceedings, the Indians would now welcome monitoring from crown officials. As soon as the boundary line separating Indian from white territory could be established, all grievances would be redressed and a flourishing trade would keep all parties satisfied.

Although Johnson waited at Fort Stanwix with these expectations in place, the Shawnees, Delawares, Miamis, Potawatomis, Illinois, and other nations in the greater

13 Ibid., 181-82.
Ohio Valley saw no reason to share his assumptions. The British had consistently failed to enforce the existing boundary line, so the promise of a redrawn map to protect Indian land sounded hollow. In addition to destroying Indian confidence in British reliability, their negligence regarding wandering settlers prompted many tribal leaders to question why they were so unsuccessful in controlling their populace. Perhaps the English were biding their time before attacking native villages and claiming land by force. For those tribes too remote to fear a military threat and still connected to alternative sources of trade goods, the British seemed to be superfluous peddlers at best and disruptive land jobbers at worst.

This skepticism of British motives and trustworthiness prompted most Ohio Valley leaders to skip the trip to Fort Stanwix. Johnson interpreted their reluctance to attend as fear of the Six Nations and dismissed their absence flippantly. When it looked in late August as though the principal Shawnee and Delaware chiefs would not return from their visit to the Mississippi tribes in time to come to New York, he told Gage that he saw no “particular Necessity of their being present, As the Six Nations are the undoubted Owners of the Lands, and considered as Such by the rest.”

While the Shawnees and Delawares were deemed unessential to the treaty proceedings, the Illinois, Piankeshaws, Miamis, and other Wabash tribes were not even invited. In the spring Johnson had specifically hoped to meet with the Six Nations, Shawnees, Delawares, and Mingos because those were all the nations who “have either Claim or Pretensions to the Lands, which are to be ceded at the final Settlement of the Boundary Line, between the Provinces and the Indian hunting Grounds.” At the time he

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had been charged by the Board of Trade to draw the line from the headwaters of the Delaware River in New York, across the West Branch of the Susquehanna River in Pennsylvania, down the Allegheny River to the Ohio River, and from there to the Kanawha River in present-day West Virginia, a boundary that would have hardly affected the Wabash and Illinois tribes. Geography gave Johnson a convenient excuse to exclude the nations on the lower Ohio, but he was also aware that those people were decidedly anti-British and could have made his negotiations much more difficult.  

By the time Johnson finally opened the council in late October, over three thousand Indians had arrived. Affairs proceeded smoothly, largely because the tiny Delaware and Shawnee contingents were generally excluded from the transactions. Johnson focused his attention on the Six Nations representatives who were eager to affirm their claim to all the lands along the Ohio River and interested in keeping the boundary line far from their own territory, goals that Johnson also desired. For him the only incident marring the treaty was the arrival of intelligence regarding disaffection among the Wabash and Mississippi tribes and their potential alliance with France and Spain against the English.  

If Johnson worried about the Indian attack on the Fort Chartres soldiers or the rumors of a combined Indian, French, and Spanish attack, he did not allow his concerns to interfere with his boundary-line plans. In a bold move, he departed from his instructions from the Board of Trade and extended the line past the Kanawha River all

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the way to the Tennessee River, enabling the British to claim the entire region of "Kentucke" for white settlement. Although he insisted that the change resulted from the Six Nations' desire to prove their undisputed right to the lands south of the Ohio River by ceding them to the crown, Johnson believed that the additional land would be necessary to contain the rapidly spreading colonists. Four years later he admitted that he had pushed for the land cession because he thought the British government would lose credibility when settlers persisted in ignoring its injunctions to refrain from crossing the Kanawha River. Regardless of the source of the revised boundary line, it now threatened to alienate the Illinois, Kaskaskias, Piankeshaws, Weas, Kickapoos, and other nations in the Wabash valley in addition to the Shawnees and Delawares.17

Since these tribes were already disgruntled, Johnson knew he would have to take special precautions to prevent the situation from worsening. Toward the end of the treaty proceedings, he addressed the Shawnee and Delaware delegations, warning them not to listen to bad stories or belts, particularly those that spoke of the French returning to power. He assured them that the British would always be able to conquer the French if they should attempt to regain their old territory, and exhorted the Shawnees and Delawares to inform him of the nations responsible for propagating anti-British messages. All they needed to do to preserve their health and happiness, he said, was to remember their "Engagements with the English," avoid frontier conflicts, pay attention to the boundary line and acquaint their people of its course, keep the roads and waters open to white travelers, and live in peace with the Cherokees, the last being a secondary

purpose for the gathering at Fort Stanwix. At a meeting at Johnson Hall two weeks later, he added one more responsibility: they were to confront any of the western nations who actively opposed the king.\textsuperscript{18}

Despite Johnson's admonitions, none of the tribes along the Ohio River responded favorably to the Fort Stanwix treaty. The huge swath of land acquired by the English included valuable Delaware, Mingo, Munsee, and Seneca hunting ground in Pennsylvania and Virginia, Shawnee and Cherokee hunting ground in eastern Kentucky, and Piankeshaw, Wea, Kickapoo, Kaskaskia, and Illinois hunting ground below the falls of the Ohio, totaling far more acres than these nations had been led to believe. Although no active Indian villages lay within the land cession, many had only recently been vacated and re-established nearby, leaving the former territory still in use for hunting, fishing, and traveling for war, diplomacy, or trade.\textsuperscript{19}

In addition to losing more land than they expected, these nations endured the insult of seeing payment for the territory given to the Six Nations. During the next few years, the Shawnees, Delawares, and Wabash Indians protested vigorously, directing their ire against both the British and the Six Nations, who had "shamefully taken all the money and goods to themselves and not shared any part thereof with them though the most part of the country which was sold was their hunting-ground down the Ohio." Many Ohio Indians accused the Six Nations of being slaves to the white people, first the French and


then the English, while at the same time pretending to be overlords of the Ohio Valley and fomenting dissent between the western Indians and the British.\(^{20}\)

Animosity toward the Six Nations and the English combined with frustration over the loss of land created a stronger regional identity among the Ohio, Wabash, and Illinois tribes. While they certainly retained distinct cultural and economic concerns, they shared a sense of betrayal from the Onondaga council, a deepening suspicion of the British who had never appeared entirely trustworthy, and a fear that farmers’ cabins would continue to sprout along fertile waterways. Their commonalities extended beyond grievances and positions of weakness. On the positive side, they were linked by access to the Ohio River, living on lands that enabled them to control the flow of traffic. The British openly admitted that in the event of war with the Shawnees or Delawares, they would be unable to supply Fort Chartres. This power galvanized the tribes and contributed to their recognition of the entire area as integral to their interests.\(^{21}\)

The Fort Stanwix Treaty not only helped to forge a new regional identity but increased the urgency for the Ohio nations to decide how to respond to the British. In addition to creating controversy over conflicting land claims, the treaty’s outcome stirred up other existing issues. Foremost among Indian concerns was the horde of settlers that seemingly paid no regard to jurisdiction and now had received license to move even more brazenly onto land the Indians considered their own. These newcomers threatened native livelihood by building cabins and planting crops on land where game had been abundant and competing for the animals that still remained. Economic hostility paled in


\(^{21}\)Gage Papers, 1: 177.
comparison to the culture of Indian-hating that dominated frontier communities since the brutal wars of the 1750s and 1760s, creating an adversarial tone for most Indian-white relations and increasing the number of murders, thefts, and assaults on both sides.\(^{22}\)

Unlike the Six Nations in the North or the Cherokee, Creek, and Catawba in the South, the western Indians had no resident superintendent to mediate in the event of murder, robbery, or trespassing. Consequently, they felt particularly vulnerable as transient frontiersmen and surveyors seemed to operate outside the bounds of colonial government. At the Fort Stanwix Treaty the Ohio Indians witnessed an additional benefit to having a European advocate. To them it was no coincidence that Johnson, who lived among the Iroquois, chose to support the Six Nations version of land rights.\(^{23}\)

If uninvited settlers generated the most disgust in Indian villages, unscrupulous traders were not far behind. In addition to their usual schemes to swindle dependent customers, many traders in the late 1760s used the colonial non-importation agreements as a convenient excuse to raise their prices far beyond market value. Non-importation never seemed to prevent rum from reaching native towns, however, creating further opportunities for Indians to be cheated out of valuable land and peltry. Delegation after delegation complained to Johnson in New York or his deputies Croghan and Alexander McKee at Fort Pitt about these abuses in the trade, but few alterations seemed to be forthcoming. Although the Fort Stanwix Treaty dealt primarily with boundaries and alliances, it nevertheless revealed that many provincial governors and council members,

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who had been entrusted with regulating the Indian trade, were more interested in acquiring land than in protecting the exchange interests of the land's owners.24

Despite the litany of grievances against the British and the growing urgency to seek reparations, the question of how to respond to these injustices still lacked a definite answer. In the three years since Pontiac's Rebellion had been formally silenced, discontented murmurings often permeated the forests, but trade was on the rise as well. At Detroit in 1767, officers reported that Indians near the Great Lakes had brought in more peltry than they had for many years. Even the Wabash and Illinois tribes who dealt primarily with French traders faced the prospect of large British trading companies subsuming the independent operators living in Indian villages. Although there were benefits to English dominance of the market (like cheap goods), most tribes continued to distrust a partner that ignored their interests and insisted on declaring its sovereignty over peoples it could barely recognize.25

Distrust, however, failed to dictate a particular response. Remembering the aftermath of Pontiac's Rebellion and benefiting from a robust trade, many chiefs were reluctant to engage in violence against the British. Other leaders and prominent warriors believed that since the crown was abdicating its obligation to dispense justice, they had no means of redress for their grievances save retaliatory attacks on remote settlers or river travelers. As the number of frontier murders committed against Indians increased

between 1764 and 1768, native resentment also swelled, only to be fueled even more by the Fort Stanwix Treaty.26

Instead of ushering in a new era of peaceful relations between Indians and whites, the treaty seemed to make disgruntled nations more vocal. Complaints regarding trade and the distribution of presents poured into Detroit, Fort Pitt, and Fort Chartres during the first half of 1769, often including veiled threats to attack white settlements should their pleas be ignored. At first Gage dismissed the news as simply native rhetoric designed to frighten the English into dispensing more gifts. But when word arrived in August that the famous Pontiac had been killed by an Illinois Indian, that four or five Illinois were killed by other nations, and five to six hundred Indians were milling about Fort Chartres waiting to witness the ramifications of Pontiac’s death, he began to be more concerned. Trouble in the Illinois country was compounded by the continuing hostility of the Wabash Indians, who boasted of having hundreds of warriors patrolling the Ohio River, some of whom had recently attacked another English trading vessel and captured its cargo.27

To the east warning signs of Indian unrest also seemed abundant. In September Gage reported to Hillsborough that Indians on the upper Ohio were unhappy. “The Cession Made of their Lands by the Six Nations at the Treaty of Fort-Stanwix, is generaly assigned as the Cause of their Discontent. I understand that the Six Nations took all the Purchase Money to themselves, that their Claim to the Lands of the Ohio Indians is derived from an Antient Right of Conquest; which tho’ acknowledged by the other Nations, they could not see their Lands disposed of to us, without Jealousy and disgust,

27 Ibid., 227, 230, 233.
more particularly as they received little or no Share of the Money paid for them," he explained. Even more ominous was the fact that these angry Shawnees, Mingos, and Delawares were rumored to have formed an alliance with the Wabash nations, although Gage believed that this confederacy might have been created as much to handle disputes among the Indians as to cause mischief for the English. "[T]here is Reason to believe," he hinted, "that there is a Misunderstanding amongst the Nations, and it may be our Interest at present rather to encourage."28

While Gage remained detached and confident about Indian affairs, his subordinates living near the tribes expressed considerably more anxiety. On January 1, 1770, Croghan penned a nervous letter to Gage. The Indians "have been very constant in private councils and very reserved to their most intimate friends amongst the traders," he fretted. Furthermore, they "have been purchasing up powder and lead all fall for their peltry, and likewise offering their horses for ammunition, which is very uncommon, and I think discovers a design of an open rupture in the spring. They purchased no goods from any of the traders but ammunition, of which they are laying up great quantities." He also speculated that the Hurons, Ottawas, Chippewas, and Potawatomis were about to secure a peace agreement with the Cherokees, a move that potentially endangered the carefully cultivated Six Nations-Cherokee peace upon which the British based their hopes for frontier tranquility.29

Croghan’s fears were not unwarranted. Growing frustration and suspicion had prompted the Shawnees, Delawares, and Mingos to summon all those nations

28 Ibid., 235-36.
29DAR, 2: 21-22.
sympathetic to their concerns about the British to a conference at the Shawnee towns on the Scioto River in the fall of 1770. Deputies trekked to the Hurons (Wyandots), Ottawas, Chippewas, and Potawatomis living near Detroit, the Miamis, Piankeshaws, Kickapoos, and Mascoutens on the Wabash River, and the Cherokees and Creeks in the South. At each stop they expounded on the injustice of the Fort Stanwix Treaty and urged their fellow Indians to make peace with each other so they could collectively direct their ire toward the British.30

Particularly vital to the success of their mission was securing a peace between the Wabash tribes and the Cherokees. Given the prolonged animosity between these two groups and the frequent crossings of the Ohio River for the purpose of war with each other, this would have been a daunting task at any time, but recent events made the prospect even more remote. In 1768 the Cherokees had formally aligned themselves with the Six Nations. Calling upon this new alliance, Cherokee deputies traveled to New York in August 1769 and requested that Johnson summon the Six Nations and the Canadian confederacies to join them in attacking their enemies on the Wabash. At the formal council in November, the Iroquois chiefs deferred to Johnson, so the Cherokees presented their case to the superintendent, pointing out that British traders had been victims of Wabash warriors and arguing that the English had as much reason to go to war against these western tribes as they did. As a crown official charged with maintaining peaceful Indian relations, Johnson hesitated to condone war, but the Cherokee fervency in seeking the Wabash tribes' destruction frightened him. If he refused assistance, they might turn their arms against the British. "It is a disagreeable circumstance that we must either

30 Ibid., 22, 24-25, 87, 105, 147, 169.
agree to permit these people to cut each other's throats or risk their discharging their fury on our traders and defenceless frontiers," he complained to Hillsborough. Johnson and the Six Nations managed to stall for nearly six more months before finally ignoring the poignant appeals to the true meaning of alliance and declining the Cherokee request.  

While Johnson wrung his hands in New York, the Shawnees sought to reconcile the two groups with an eye toward challenging British authority. They began by beseeching the Indians near Detroit to make peace with both parties. That embassy yielded some success, despite the fact that the Cherokees' open alliance with the suddenly unpopular Six Nations generated more sympathy for the Wabash cause. This apparent progress toward a united front was checked, however, when the principal Cherokee warriors rebuffed the Delaware and Shawnee mediators who visited their villages in the spring and urged them to make peace with the Wabash nations.

In addition to brokering peace agreements between the southern and western nations, a second priority for the 1770 emissaries was to hide their movements and intentions from the British. On this count they had mixed success. Reports about mysterious Shawnee deputies turning up in various towns circulated rapidly, sparking a flurry of correspondence between British officials about potential threats to the frontier. When Indian agents attempted to uncover the purpose of the proposed congress, they never received a direct answer. Most assumed that the Shawnees and Delawares were leading a movement to create a western confederacy designed to "shake the fidelity of the

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Six Nations” to the English cause. Lest this sound dangerous, Gage assured his superiors that his Indian officers had declared the plan to be quite “impracticable.”

By October the Scioto conference was over and intelligence regarding its proceedings began to trickle into British headquarters. Spies reported that “all the Western tribes over the Lakes and about Lake Michigan as well as the Oubache Indians had unanimously agreed to make peace with the Cherokees and other Southern nations.” Perhaps annoyed that his superintendents had been overly optimistic about the conference’s sure failure, Gage reproved John Stuart, the southern superintendent for Indian affairs. “You see that the Shawnese deputies have not worked in vain,” he said. Indeed, this “scheme of the Shawnese to form a confederacy of all the Western and Southern nations is a notable piece of policy, for nothing less would enable them to withstand the Six Nations and their allies against whom they have been much exasperated on account of the boundary treaty held at Fort Stanwix.”

This news of an apparently viable western confederacy agreeing to make peace with the Cherokees at the same time that the Six Nations had refused Cherokee overtures for assistance against the Wabash tribes alarmed British authorities. Reports from Fort Pitt that Indian visitors were civil but “reserved and sulky,” and persistent rumors that the Ohio Valley Indians were still counseling and sending belts after their conference caused apprehension that frontier diplomacy would be reduced to a struggle between the Six Nations confederacy and the fledgling Shawnee confederacy for Cherokee loyalty.

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33 Ibid., 87, 105, 147, 164-69; Gage Papers, 1: 260.
34 DAR, 2: 204.
35 Ibid., 204, 237, 253-54.
In October and November 1770 the Cherokees seemed to be wavering. Because of their alliance with the Six Nations, they had refrained from raising objections to the Fort Stanwix Treaty, despite the fact that the Kentucky cession included their hunting grounds. Since they were already involved in a boundary dispute with Virginia and had now met opposition from their supposed allies, Gage worried that anger over the sale of their territory might finally push them into the Shawnee camp. His fears seemed to be confirmed in late October when Stuart reported to Virginia’s governor Botetourt about his efforts to redraw the boundary line between that colony and the Cherokees. “I beg leave to observe to your lordship that the bad effects of underhand machinations and private tampering with the Indians appeared throughout the whole course of the transaction. It is the first instance of any nation having shown a reluctancy to treat with me, it is the only one of my having failed in carrying a point with the Cherokees.”

Fearing that the western Indians were “becoming better acquainted with their own strength and united capacity to preserve their importance and check our advance into their country,” Johnson hurried to deliver a counterblow to the belts and embassies sent from the Shawnees to the Cherokees. First, he sent Six Nations messengers to confront the Wabash nations about their hostility toward the Cherokees, a promise he had made in August to placate the Cherokees after refusing to join them in war. He directed another group of Iroquois ambassadors to the Scioto River to compile a comprehensive report on the recent gathering and to present the British in a positive light. Finally, he acknowledged the Six Nations’ own desire to repair the damaged relationship with the

36 Ibid., 204, 237 (quote).
Cherokees and permitted their warriors to march southward, rendezvous in the Cherokee towns, and assault "any people that nation shall desire them to strike."37

The increased traffic to Cherokee villages created considerable consternation for various British administrators. Leaders at Fort Pitt marveled at the sizable Iroquois contingents and worried that they intended to attack the Cherokees or perhaps fall under the influence of the western confederacy. Alexander Cameron, Stuart’s deputy among the Cherokees, struggled to distinguish the “Northerns” from the “Westerns,” claiming that some of these outsiders had encouraged attacks on white settlers. Stuart responded by chiding him to pay more careful attention to exactly which Indians were in council and encouraging him to do all he could to bolster the connection to the northern tribes and alienate the western nations. Back in New York, Johnson continued to emphasize the “serious nature” of a potential native union, arguing that if the individual tribes could cripple the empire a few years before, surely such a “formidable alliance” would forecast doom for the crown, especially given the current weak state of defense.38

In March 1771 Johnson’s deputy Croghan solicited information from a Shawnee chief that drew British attention back to the Ohio Valley. At first the man was reluctant to divulge his secret, but he eventually admitted that “tis true we have all agreed last Fall to strike the English, it has been a long time in agitation, now Nine Years since we first thought of it.” He went on to recount the various grievances of the past decade: missionaries suspected of stealing their land, settlers on their hunting grounds, and the French and the Six Nations concluding treaties without the consent of all the tribes.

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37 Ibid., 166, 254 (second quote); 3: 39-41 (first quote at 40).
38 Ibid., 2: 253-54, 3: 38, 40 (quote), 43. On February 28, 1771 Georgia’s governor James Wright reported that there had been seventy northern and western emissaries visiting the Cherokees. Gage Papers, 1: 293.
Then he added a new wrinkle to the intelligence regarding the 1770 Scioto conference: the impetus for the gathering last fall actually came from the Six Nations, who sent belts to the Shawnees and Delawares urging them to unite all the western and southern nations. If all the parties were united in four years, the Six Nations would join the alliance and "drive the English out of the country over the Great Mountain."  

When this account reached Johnson later in the year, he confronted Iroquois leaders who flatly denied the whole story. By October Gage was relating to Hillsborough that apparently some disgruntled members of the Six Nations had distributed belts in the name of the entire Onondaga council. Upon further inquiry and the return of his deputies from the Ohio, Johnson concluded in April 1772 that the Shawnees and a renegade Seneca chief named Gaustarax had mutually incited trouble on the frontier by denouncing the Fort Stanwix treaty and calling for united action against the British. Since Gaustarax was now dead and most of the rogue belts had been collected, the matter seemed to be resolved. Indeed, after the Shawnees had agreed to hold another conference to acquaint the various tribes of the Six Nations' genuine sentiments, Johnson believed the affair to be closed.

This complicated episode consumed significant British time and attention, masking the fact that it was merely one subplot within the increasingly chaotic state of Indian relations. In their efforts to determine a coherent policy for the new regions supposedly under their authority, English administrators labeled the competition for Cherokee loyalty and the Shawnee attempts to form an alliance as the defining diplomatic

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39 "Unknown Indian to Croghan, March 7, 1771," Ser. 1, lot 668, SIAP.
issues of the early 1770s. Although reports frequently reached their ears of intimate assemblies gathering throughout the Ohio Valley, they focused on the problems they could understand and assumed that Indian grievances fell into those categories rather than entertaining the notion that Indian affairs might be spiraling out of their control entirely. If they were aware that the private counseling in the woods pertained more often to local grievances than the construction of alliances on a grand scale, they were not inclined to admit it.

Thoughts regarding Cherokee fidelity or Shawnee confederacies occupied a central place in native minds as well, but as subordinate points under the overarching question of how to counter British attempts to control their territory. Despite Shawnee ventures to forge a unified response based on common interests, most nations opted to weigh their choices slowly. Even those tribes firmly committed to violent resistance recognized the need for careful planning if they were going to risk a major assault. The bold pronouncements at the 1770 Scioto conference needed time to germinate before the intruders could be driven back over the mountains.

Tired of waiting for the requisite support to launch an attack on white settlements or forts, various nations along the Wabash River continued the hostilities against the English that had been their custom since the 1760s. Their easiest targets were still passing boats and reckless traders, but they increasingly took aim at the fledgling British community around Fort Chartres. In the summer of 1771, a group of Kickapoos killed several people in Illinois and took another man prisoner who somehow managed to inform the commandant at Detroit that the Wabash Indians were “fully bent for war against the English.” Several Potawatomis from St. Joseph followed up these altercations
with an offensive of their own near the fort, and both groups persisted in their ban of English traders and dogged patrol of the Ohio River.\footnote{Ibid., 3: 200-01; Gage Papers, 1: 338.}

By autumn Gage had determined that these nations were the foremost public enemies. “I fear that we shall find it indispensably necessary to fall upon means to reduce the Pouteatamies and Oubache Indians to peace by forcible measures. As long as their disposition is hostile the communication with Fort Chartres will be precarious and many of our traders to be murdered and pillaged in other parts of the country,” he emphasized. Hillsborough responded by ordering the abandonment of Fort Chartres and Fort Pitt, a move that the Indians viewed as a victory regardless of the crown’s complete rationale for the decision and the fact that temporary headquarters still remained in Illinois. In addition to defying the English, the Wabash nations rebuffed several Six Nations emissaries in 1772, citing Iroquois attacks on some of their people the previous year. The Onondaga council never took challenges to its authority lightly and threatened to make war on these western Indians. Johnson condoned their zeal, but no attacks materialized.\footnote{DAR, 3: 201, 244-46, 5: 203, 212, 6: 122-24, 127; “Johnson to Haldimand, June 30, 1773,” reel A-611, Haldimand Papers; Public Record Office, C.O.5, vol. 90, fols. 114-117d.}

While the Kickapoos, Miamis, Piankeshaws, and Potawatomis resolutely opposed any British foothold in their region and rejected invitations to meet with Indians they deemed puppets of the Europeans, they never truly embraced the alliance promoted by the Shawnees. Despite their agreement at the 1770 conference to quell hostilities with the southern Indians, they were reportedly attacking the Cherokees along with the British as early as February 1772. Later that year they refused peace belts from the Cherokees.
delivered by representatives of the Six Nations and several southern nations. According to the unsuccessful emissaries, the Wabash tribes actually "cut their belts of whampum to pieces and burnt them in presence of the messengers whom they ordered instantly to depart."43

Above all the Wabash tribes seemed interested in maintaining their lifestyle exactly as it had been in recent decades, relying on the French for trade goods and dominating the local waterways. Cultural preservation obviously meant overt resistance to the British newcomers and hostility toward native groups who appeared too ensnared by English interests, but it also created suspicion of other innovations. For example, they largely ignored the Shawnee alliance because, though it was intended to protect the Ohio Valley from deleterious English influences, it was nevertheless a product of a changing world that encouraged additional adaptations such as making peace between traditional enemies. Undoubtedly the Wabash Indians distrusted the Cherokees in part because of that nation’s earlier ties to the British, but their destruction of the peace belts also revealed a deep-seated aversion to substantial change of any kind.

The Wabash nations may have suspected that the Cherokees were attached to the British, but in reality the latter were deeply divided about how to respond to the European power. Shawnee ambassadors frequently entered Cherokee and Creek villages in 1771 and 1772, often distributing belts calling for attacks on white settlers and urging local chiefs to spread the word to other southern nations. Leading chiefs like Oconostota and Attakullaculla assured Stuart that they intended to maintain their alliance with the English, but mysterious visitors, unexplained absences, and dubious explanations for the


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meaning of various belts convinced him that dangerous machinations were afoot. Secretly, he hoped that the Cherokees and Creeks would attack each other, thus neutralizing two potential enemies. But in 1773 he learned that they were meeting together, along with deputies from other nations, to “conceal measures for chastising the insolence of [the] western tribes and bringing them to reason.” 44

If the Cherokee response was difficult to discern because of regional intrigue, the Illinois Indians faced an even more complicated situation. The Shawnees definitely counted them as loyal confederates, but their nearer neighbors, the Kickapoos, occasionally targeted them in attacks generally directed toward the English. To make matters even more complex, the British sought to remove the French settlers in the Illinois country, a threat that would have displaced the Illinois’s source of trade goods and forced them to re-evaluate their alliances. When the inhabitants resisted the idea of moving, plans for developing a British government for the Illinois country passed between the interested parties, but none of them made circumstances any clearer for the native population. 45

Like the Cherokees and Illinois, the Shawnees and Delawares also experienced division and uncertainty, although they often concealed it effectively. From 1771 to 1773 they pursued the same strategy that they had inaugurated after the Fort Stanwix Treaty: negotiating politely with British authorities about specific grievances while maneuvering behind the scenes to unite their neighbors in opposition to encroaching settlers and

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45 DAR, 5: 59, 70-71, 97-98, 6: 31; Gage Papers, 1: 353; The situation in the Illinois country was complicated even further by a skirmish between some Chickasaw Indians passing through the region on their way to war and some troops at Fort Chartres in 1772, prompting the commanding officer to abandon the fort even earlier than his instructions dictated. Public Record Office, C.O.5, vol. 90, fos. 57-68d.
English presumptions of rulership. Following up on the success of the 1770 Scioto conference, Shawnee deputies traversed the land west of the Appalachians, even traveling as far as the Arkansas River to meet with Spanish and French representatives, who warned them that the English intended to take all of their territory.\textsuperscript{46}

The chiefs who remained in their towns also played their part well. As word of the potentially hostile intent of the 1770 gathering leaked to British leaders, they entertained several delegations of Six Nations ambassadors, who charged them with fraternizing with enemies and breaking their promises to both the Iroquois and the English. Sorting out the matter of Gaustarax's belts demanded additional time from Shawnee leaders, as did their mediating role in delivering messages from the Six Nations to the Wabash tribes when the latter refused to receive the original messengers. On each of these occasions, the chiefs responded cordially and with apparent deference to the outsiders' authority.\textsuperscript{47}

In June 1773 the chiefs sent six men to ask Alexander McKee and Kayashuta, Johnson's Iroquois vice-regent for the upper Ohio Valley, about a surveyor who had recently visited their towns and spread the word about some anticipated new white settlements on the Ohio sanctioned by the Virginia governor. While this news was troublesome to the Shawnees, they sought an explanation and verification before becoming too agitated. They also seized the opportunity to warn the British that the new settlers might quickly be exposed to the wrath of the "foolish" Wabash people, "which might have an evil tendency to the chain of friendship." By giving this caution, they

\textsuperscript{46} DAR, 6: 224.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 5: 59-61, 203.
hoped to absolve themselves of any blame should relationships turn sour and the country's peace be disrupted. Once again their actions merited approval from the English and their allies. Kayashuta explained that the king intended to establish a new colony on a portion of the land purchased at Fort Stanwix and then hastened to applaud "their Wisdom in coming to inquire at this place, where they cou'd always hear their Father, the King of Great Britain's Intentions towards them from Sir William Johnson...He hoped they wou'd continue to give every Intelligence and Assistance in their power to preserve the Friendship subsisting between their Brethren the White People & them." By September Johnson referred to the Shawnees as the "most attentive" to the Six Nations councils of any nation to the south, even though they were deeply concerned about Virginians pushing into Indian territory.48

While the Shawnee chiefs cultivated the appearance of good relations with the British, their emissaries sought to consolidate native power if not actually turn it against white settlements. Even within the towns on the Scioto, opinions about how to respond to the English seemed divided. When the Rev. David Jones passed through Pickawee, Blue Jacket's Town, and Chillicothe in January 1773, he encountered considerable hostility and suspicion that a group of Europeans meeting together meant that they were conspiring to take the town. Several chiefs welcomed him, but they could not prevent his being drummed out of town by Shawnee warriors who opposed the introduction of English cultural values into their living spaces.49

Although the Shawnees garnered more attention from the British, the Delawares shared many of the same experiences, grievances, and mixed responses. Living near Fort Pitt, they often had the opportunity to address their concerns in a diplomatic forum. In December 1771 they were even granted an audience with the Pennsylvania governor and Council in Philadelphia, where they urgently requested a council fire to be rekindled at Fort Pitt and an English deputy to be stationed there to settle disputes and restrain disorderly young men. They recounted the history of English-Delaware interactions since the British “drove the French away and built forts,” recalling that white settlers had poured into the region shortly thereafter. Despite their objections to the trespassers, the English did not remove them. Wishing to avoid disputes, the Delawares agreed to a boundary line, but even more people arrived who also seemed to ignore the laws that the English claimed to have established. “Therefore, brethren, unless you can fall upon some method of governing your people who live between the Great Mountains and the Ohio River and who are now very numerous, it will be out of the Indians’ power to govern their young men, for we assure you the black clouds begin to gather fast in this country.” They wanted to live in peace and friendship with the English, but they recognized the newcomers’ land hunger and feared that they intended to “come over the River Ohio and drive us from our villages,” they explained to Governor Penn before adding, “nor do we see you brethren take any care to stop them.”

Similar solicitations, admonishments, and assurances of goodwill followed from the Delaware council in the ensuing years, at the same time as Delaware representatives

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accompanied Shawnee ambassadors intent upon forging an anti-British alliance. Clearly competing ideas for how to best deal with the English dominated their councils as they did in Shawnee circles. Rev. David McClure discovered in 1772 that, although some leaders seemed interested in English husbandry, education, and religion, most were too upset by encroaching Europeans to even tolerate ideas that advocated dramatic change in their lives. Fractured public opinion within Delaware towns accompanied by occasional outbursts of violence prompted McClure to depart earlier than expected. David Jones arrived a few months later on his return from the Shawnee towns and also encountered both hostility and curiosity regarding the British. These divided councils did not prove life-threatening for Jones as they had in the Scioto villages, but they did splinter communities. In September 1773 chief Custaloga moved with one hundred of his people beyond the falls of the Ohio to join the Wabash tribes in an effort to be more formidable to the English.51

Divided nations, contradictory messages, secret negotiations, unreliable rumors, competing alliances, and old and new conflicts combined with actual violent encounters to create a bewildering picture of the Ohio Valley. This frontier chaos provoked mixed responses from Whitehall. Secretary of State Hillsborough instructed Johnson in 1771 to avoid “intermingling in any of the confederacies; let the disputes and quarrels fall out as they may.” He suspected that the French were behind the Indians’ discontent, and that they would like nothing better than to entangle the British in another battle for an

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American empire. Furthermore, he argued that the colonies really had nothing to fear from a proposed native confederacy because the “natural aversions” between the different nations would prevent them from forming a powerful or effective union. Even if some alliances were forged, he was confident that the Indians realized they were dependent on the British for trade goods and would be hesitant to cut themselves off entirely.\(^{52}\)

Johnson, Gage, and Stuart agreed with Hillsborough that they needed to be careful about avoiding military action, but they objected to his dismissive attitude regarding native threats. Johnson called an alliance between the northern and southern Indians “a matter of the most serious nature,” since a few years before only half of their number had crippled the British empire severely. The three overseers of Indian affairs bombarded Hillsborough with letters detailing the genuine hostility of the Wabash nations, the persistence of the Shawnee deputies, and the continued existence of aggravating circumstances, like encroaching white settlers, that made resolution of Indian grievances difficult. By July 1772 they had convinced him that the situation was grave indeed.

“Every day discovers more and more the fatal policy of departing from the line prescribed by the proclamation of 1763; and the extension of it on the ground of a cession made by the Six Nations of lands, their right to which is denied by other nations equally powerful and more numerous,” he lamented. Instead of strengthening Britain and its colonies, the additional land had only encouraged far-flung settlements and “will most probably have the effect to produce a general Indian war.”\(^{53}\)


\(^{53}\) DAR, 3: 40-41, 5: 135.
As an alternative to Hillsborough’s non-intervention plan, Johnson opted to involve himself in Ohio Valley affairs through Six Nations mediators. He resolutely maintained that the Shawnees and Delawares were dependents of the Iroquois, a claim that enabled him to exhort the Onondaga council to act as regional policemen. Assuring Gage, Hillsborough, and Dartmouth (Hillsborough’s successor) that the only way to secure peace in the region was through the Six Nations, he sent ambassadors far and wide with instructions to infiltrate secret gatherings, chide rebellious nations, and above all, bring back the Senecas who had moved to the Ohio and generally place all their dependents under closer supervision. In his mind the worst aspect of the proposed alliance was the Shawnee and Delaware attempt to “shake off their dependency on the Six Nations.” Even more terrifying was the possibility that these two nations would endeavor to alienate the Iroquois from the English and draw them into their confederacy as well. Although he admitted that this scheme seemed unlikely, he gladly took any precaution that strengthened his bond with the Six Nations.\

Gage generally yielded to Johnson’s judgment on Indian affairs, but in responding to the particularly turbulent Ohio Valley situation, he had some suggestions of his own. Recognizing that native grievances were not unfounded (settlers had moved onto Indian territory despite vast stretches of unsettled land nearer the coast, trade was often unfair, colonial courts rendered no justice, the Six Nations had been awarded all of the goods at the Fort Stanwix Treaty), he proposed that a deputy Indian agent be placed in the heart of open opposition to the British, the Wabash country. The Delawares had recently

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requested such a representative to establish order in their region, but Gage believed that
English interests would be better served by placing a deputy at the Wabash rather than at
Fort Pitt. "I conceive the main principles of our Indian policy should be to gain the
affections of every nation and tribe and to know how to manage the jealousies and
animosities subsisting between nation and nation so that we may never want allies to
revenge our quarrels if at any time we are attacked. Parties of Indians joined by a few
light troops from neighbouring forts and attacking our enemies in their own way, would
be the readiest means of restoring peace which is all we want of Indians. To carry on a
regular expensive war against savages in the woods with bodies of regular troops I think
should never be attempted but when we are indispensably obliged to do it and through the
want of better means," he related.55

While Gage, Johnson, Hillsborough, and Dartmouth might have advocated
different strategies for managing the Ohio Valley chaos, they all agreed on who was
primarily responsible for its development: the French. Rumors that the French and
Spanish were animating the western Indians against the English had circulated since the
1760s, but they grew more persistent between 1769 and 1774 as more nations expressed
outrage and suspicion about British rule. After the Fort Stanwix debacle, reports
indicated that the French were encouraging war against the British by promising to build
forts for the Indians and telling them that the English were attempting to take their land

A-611, Haldimand Papers; Hazard, ed., Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania, 10: 10-11;

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by using the Six Nations' influence. This account promised to direct native anger toward
the crown and to create a rift between the Six Nations and the British.56

Taking these rumors to heart, Johnson spotted French intrigue behind every
movement of the western Indians. Surely the Shawnees would not have initiated a
campaign to unite all the Ohio Valley nations if French agents had not been bestowing
presents and spreading stories about English perfidy, he reasoned. To support this
contention, he pointed to the presence of a belt from the French that had been collected
along with the rogue wampum distributed by Gaustarax and the Shawnees and the
occasional visits of Shawnee ambassadors to the Mississippi.57

When Dartmouth became Secretary of State, he joined in Johnson's fear of
conspiracy and undoubtedly supported him when he reported to the interim commander-
in-chief, Frederick Haldimand, on Indian affairs in January 1774. "I know it does not
appear probable to the Public that the French have any Agents at present, or Interest
themselves in Indian Affairs," he said, but he had reliable "intelligence of very large
presents, part of which I have [seen] delivered to them by persons who gave them in the
name of the French King, and in such quantities as cannot be supposed to have been given
by individuals to draw a Trade." He was convinced that the French intended the presents
to promote "a good Understanding with them, that in case of a War they might make use
of their services to distress our Frontiers, or perhaps for a more material purpose."58

56 "Guy Carleton to William Johnson, March 27, 1767," Collections of the State Historical Society
58 "Dartmouth to Johnson, Feb. 3, 1773," Ser. 1, lot 670, 2, SIAP; "Johnson to Haldimand, Jan. 26,
1774," reel A-611, Haldimand Papers (quote); DAR, 8: 100-02.
Perhaps Johnson felt the need to paint a grim picture for Haldimand because Gage never seemed to credit the notion that the French were actively seeking to recapture their North American empire. As early as February 1769, he insisted that he heard nothing to make him believe that the French or Spanish governments had encouraged war against the English or the Six Nations, an argument he maintained during his entire tenure as commander-in-chief. After all, he reasoned, it was just as much in their interests to keep the Indians under control as it was for the British. The real culprits “infesting” the country with anti-English propaganda were the “parcel of French vagabonds” settled in Illinois and near post St. Vincent on the Wabash. These traders desperately sought to protect their economic positions by keeping both British traders and the British government at bay. Although he knew it would generate considerable opposition from Indians and Europeans, he acknowledged that the only way to bring peace and British rule to the Illinois and Wabash regions was to evacuate these recalcitrant settlers.59

Association with French traders and representatives across the Mississippi tainted the Shawnees, whose tireless efforts to promote unity among the Indians already made them suspicious. Despite Johnson’s belief in September 1773 that the Shawnees appeared to be heeding the Six Nations’ advice, four months later he declared that they were not to be trusted, accusing them of “altering the purport of Belts & speeches to accommodate them to their own purposes.” Heightened anxiety about the Shawnees probably stemmed from an attack on the supply party of a group of families (Daniel Boone and William Russell the most prominent patriarchs among them) attempting to settle Kentucky in October 1773. Accusations flew around the frontier with the

59 Gage Papers, 1: 217; DAR, 3: 201, 5: 43-45 (quote), 61, 97-98, 6: 133.
Cherokees, Delawares, and Shawnees all being fingered. Having recently returned from a meeting with French and Spanish representatives, the Shawnees looked especially guilty to British eyes.  

At the end of February 1774, a trader reported to Alexander McKee that a party of Shawnee warriors had just returned from the backwoods of Virginia after killing “six white men and two Negroes” and taking many horses, a clear reference to the widely known attack on the Kentucky-bound travelers. McKee immediately dashed off a scathing letter to some Shawnee chiefs at Croghan’s house, charging the nation with the crime, the warriors with foolish mischief, and the chiefs at Scioto with incompetence. He instructed them to hurry home and use their “utmost strength and Influence to put a Stop to such Flagrant Outrages.” A week later they met in council with McKee and expressed sorrow for the deceased but reminded him that the story of their culpability might not be true. They were now returning home and would investigate. Before leaving they promised to do all they could to “preserve the peace and tranquility of this country,” but they exhorted McKee and his “great men” to halt the flood of settlers down the Ohio and into native hunting grounds as the only means to truly quiet all disturbances. Having resided near Fort Pitt for the past few months, they told McKee that their fears regarding the English intention to make war on them and to take their land had only been confirmed.

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The unchecked spread of colonists and the alleged lack of hospitality from Croghan were not the only reasons the Shawnees suspected the British of martial designs. On January 1, 1774 John Connolly waltzed into Pittsburgh and announced that the Virginia governor, Lord Dunmore, had appointed him commander of the militia in the land west of the Laurel Ridge. Fulfilling his duty, he called for a militia muster on January 25. This bold move touched off a bitter jurisdictional conflict between Virginia and Pennsylvania that lingered through the Revolution. Arrests, forced marches, imprisonment, riots, threats, and a general disregard for authority characterized the political climate throughout 1774, complemented by icy exchanges between Governors Penn and Dunmore. In the midst of this feud, the Shawnees visiting Croghan faced real danger. As if the large number of armed men “making a Warlike appearance” was not threatening enough, the raucous crowd that attended Connolly on January 25 fired across the river at the Shawnee camps. Although the Indians escaped unscathed, they were justified in believing that the British sought their destruction. Indeed, two months later Pennsylvania justice of the peace Aeneas McKay told Governor Penn that “the Indians are greatly alarmed at seeing parties of armed men patrolling through our streets Daily, not knowing but there is hostility intended against them and their country.”

With fear and tension simmering during the early months of 1774, even a small spark could have ignited the frontier. Indeed, when the explosion occurred in late April,

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it touched off cycles of violence that resonated throughout the entire Ohio Valley for the next decade, convincing Indians that the Virginians (a name they often generically used for all Americans during the Revolution) were bent on taking their land and completely subduing native peoples. The catalytic sequence of events began in mid-April when a group of Cherokees attacked a canoe heading from Pittsburgh to the Shawnee towns, killing one man, wounding another, and stealing the entire cargo. Two weeks later Richard Butler, the trader living at the Scioto towns whose goods had been plundered, authorized another party consisting of two white men, a Delaware, and a Shawnee to retrieve the stolen property. This group encountered Michael Cresap, an “adventurer” from Maryland who reportedly boasted that “he would put every Indian he mett with on the River to Death.” Cresap and his cronies killed and scalped both Indians and claimed the trade goods for themselves. The following day they continued their assault on Ohio Valley residents, skirmishing with a party of Shawnees near the Big Kanawha River with loss of life on both sides.

The final blow to the region’s tenuous peace came the next day when Daniel Greathouse and other “ill disposed and factious Men” gathered at Joshua Baker’s plantation across the Ohio River from Yellow Creek, the site of a Mingo town. These men lured several Indians to their side of the water and proceeded to murder and scalp them all. When several Mingos arrived to check on their friends, they were treated in the same manner. Finally a larger party started to cross the river, but recognizing the ambush placed for them on the shore, they turned around, only to be fired on with mortal

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63 “Extracts from a Journal of Indian Transactions,” *Chalmers Papers; Pennsylvania Archives*, 4: 512, 569.
accuracy; two lone survivors returned to their town safely. Altogether ten were killed, including several family members of the Mingo chief Logan and the wife of the trader John Gibson. Fearing immediate reprisal for their “dastardly” conduct, Greathouse and his companions fled the scene.64

Word of these atrocities quickly spread up and down the Ohio River. Hearing the news and understanding that the entire region could be engulfed in war unless they acted quickly, McKee, Croghan, and Connolly swung into action. They dispatched Simon Girty, a local trader and interpreter, to the Delaware towns to summon chiefs White Eyes and Captain Pipe. White Eyes, Captain Pipe, and the brother of the Delaware man killed by Cresap arrived at Fort Pitt a few days later and joined Kayashuta, the White Mingo, and several other Six Nations chiefs who were at the fort preparing for an embassy to the Wabash nations. Connolly, McKee, and Croghan consoled with their guests, expressing sorrow at the recent violence and assuring them that these acts were “intirely owing to the Folly and Indiscretion of our Young People” and not sanctioned by the Virginia government. They hoped that a war could be avoided and asked if some of these chiefs would be willing to take this message of goodwill to the Shawnees and other more distant tribes. White Eyes responded for the group, promising to uphold the cause of peace and volunteering to relay the speech himself. In the ensuing days the remaining Delaware and Six Nations chiefs affirmed their desire to maintain the chain of friendship, but they

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did ask that the white people in authority would do all they could to prevent future rash hostilities.65

Believing that Indian affairs were contained for the moment, Connolly turned his attention to the local inhabitants. He knew that many would abandon the frontier because of this new threat, so to inspire their confidence, he ordered out the militia and put them to work repairing the fort and impressing provisions, horses, and tools, ignoring for the moment the fact that his military preparations would look suspicious to the watchful Indians. During the next two weeks, he discovered that many of the local residents who opted to remain on their settlements were preparing to attack the Shawnee towns. Others threatened the Delaware and Six Nations chiefs staying at Croghan’s house, and Greathouse and his henchmen vowed to kill any Indians who crossed the Ohio. Connolly tried to stamp out each of these fires, but his constituents still seemed eager for bloodshed.66

While Connolly, McKee, and Croghan scurried around Fort Pitt, the Delaware leaders at Newcomerstown also scrambled to bring coherence to the delicate situation. Their first priorities were to alert some of their absent hunters about recent events and the possible hostility from the Virginians and to protect the white traders living among them who could have made easy targets for angry Mingos or Shawnees. As for their own response, they determined to continue their normal activities, provided the English were

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65 "Extracts from a Journal of Indian Transactions," (quote) and “Extract from my Journal from the 1st of May 1774 Containing Indian Transactions,” Chalmers Papers.

sincere about their promises to pursue justice. They also joined in efforts to pacify the Shawnees, especially those who lived in the towns near them on the Muskingum River who had many connections with the offended Mingos.67

For both the Delawares and the British leaders at Fort Pitt, everything rested on the Shawnee reaction to the recent atrocities. Unfortunately for those who wanted to settle the matter quickly, Shawnee opinion was deeply divided. One of the Delaware representatives in Pittsburgh reported that en route to the meeting he had encountered the Shawnee chief Cornstalk leaving Yellow Creek with some of the wounded survivors. Cornstalk rejoiced when he heard that the Delawares intended to remain peaceful, believing that enough sorrow had already passed with additional violence only making things worse. He also passed along the information that if he had not been present at Yellow Creek, the Mingos would have immediately crossed the river and commenced hostilities. While this news sounded hopeful, it was tempered when another Shawnee chief, Hardman, declared that “his heart cannot be good, until he has sent one party at least, against the Virginians, to take satisfaction for what has happened.”68

This rift in Shawnee opinion was revealed at Fort Pitt in the last days of May. On May 20 Cornstalk sent word to McKee that although the recent murders of one of their leaders and other close associates irritated them very much, the Shawnee “all determined to be quiet till we knew what you meant.” They had been planning to begin their usual hunting, but these troublesome events stopped them. The traders in their midst “were very much endangered by such doings, from the Persons Injured,” but the Shawnees were

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68 “Extract from my Journal,” and “Extracts from a Journal of Indian Transactions,” (quote), Chalmers Papers.

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committed to protecting them. Cornstalk sent his brother to escort the traders back to their people, hoping that such actions would demonstrate his people's good intentions. As a final word, he asked that McKee forward his peaceful message to Connolly and the governors of Virginia and Pennsylvania, imploring them to prevent future atrocities. "I have with great Trouble and pains prevailed on the foolish People amongst us to sit still and do no harm till we see whether it is the intention of the white people in general to fall on us," he said, promising to continue these efforts in the hopes that everything would be settled.69

Five days later White Eyes returned to Pittsburgh with a different answer from the Shawnees to Connolly's message. "We have received your speeches by White Eyes," they said, and "we look upon it all to be lies...But as it is the first time you have spoke to us we listen to you and expect that what we may hear from you will be more confined to truth than what we usually hear from the white people." They proceeded to enumerate some of their reasons for distrusting Connolly's word, particularly highlighting that his "peaceful" speech came while he was mustering warriors and sending men to build forts along the river. "It is you who are frequently passing up and down the Ohio, and making settlements upon it," they pointed out, shifting the blame for the recent disturbances onto Virginia's shoulders. "[A]s you have requested us to listen to you, we will do it, but in the same manner that you appear to attend to us...You tell us not to take any notice of what your people have done to us. We desire you likewise not to take any notice of what our young men may now be doing." When they receive convincing "peaceable tidings from Virginia," they will advise their warriors to remain at home. On one final point

69 Pennsylvania Archives, 4: 497-98.
their response was the same as Cornstalk’s: the traders would be conducted safely to Pittsburgh.\textsuperscript{70}

Unfortunately for the Shawnees, Connolly received the “insolent” message first, which also happened to arrive at Fort Pitt about the same time as the news that a party of Mingos had launched retaliatory attacks, aided by a small group of Shawnee warriors. In the next few weeks men such as the Moravian missionary David Zeisberger insisted that “the Shawanes are far from being unanimous for War,” with only those at Wakatomica on the Muskingum, whose own people had been killed, promoting hostilities. On June 5 a trader named Conner, who had been living at the Shawnee Snakes Town on the Muskingum, reported that the Shawnees had taken great pains to protect the traders and their goods. Furthermore, word reached Croghan that the Shawnees were now quiet. “Their Chiefs have been strong enough to prevail over their rash and foolish men who wanted to take revenge upon the White People for their Loss,” Delaware messengers informed him. Only thirteen warriors could not be restrained, and the Shawnees hoped that the English would not blame them for any evil these men might commit.\textsuperscript{71}

Despite these entreaties on their behalf, Connolly seemed bent on taking the war to the Shawnees. The same day he received the request for more evidence of his desire for peace, he dispatched a party of soldiers to Wheeling with instructions to treat any Indians on the east side of the Ohio as enemies. When the traders with their Shawnee escort arrived in Pittsburgh, he ordered a party of men to ambush the Indians on their return trip, a plan that was barely thwarted only by the traders’ decisive actions. He even

\textsuperscript{71} \textit{Pennsylvania Archives}, vol. 4, 498-509 (quotes on pp. 499 and 508).
sent a slightly conciliatory letter to Arthur St. Clair, Pennsylvania’s leading government official in the disputed territory, outlining his plan to “overawe” the Indians with new forts that could conveniently act as a base for taking the war into Shawnee country and asking for Pennsylvania’s support.\textsuperscript{72}

While St. Clair responded very cautiously (the Indians seemed to be distinguishing the Virginians from the Pennsylvanians and he did not want to draw his state into a war needlessly), Virginia’s governor Dunmore enthusiastically endorsed all of Connolly’s propositions. He offered a few military suggestions, including the admonition to take as many women and children prisoners as possible. If the Indians pressed for peace, he directed Connolly to “not grant it to them on any Terms till they were effectually chastised for their Insolence, and then on no Terms without bringing in six of their Heads as Hostages...and that they Trade with us only for what they may want.”\textsuperscript{73}

St. Clair interpreted Connolly and Dunmore’s determination to attack the Shawnees as part of the plan to assert Virginia authority in the Ohio Country. Although a premeditated Indian war concocted in Williamsburg seems unlikely, both men were undoubtedly influenced by the growing British suspicion of the Shawnees. No tribe had worked harder to generate regional opposition to the Fort Stanwix treaty and the crown’s unsatisfactory governance of frontier affairs. The Wabash tribes may have been more openly hostile, but the Shawnees threatened to create trouble on a larger scale by stirring up many nations. Having dubbed the Shawnees the more dangerous opponent, the


\textsuperscript{73} \textit{Pennsylvania Archives}, 4: 522-30, (at 523).
Virginians targeted Shawnee towns rather than the Mingos who were behind most of the early attacks.⁷⁴

During June 1774 McKee, St. Clair, and other observers remained hopeful that a war could be averted, especially after White Eyes announced at a large conference that every tribe he met with, including the Cherokees, Wyandots, and Shawnees, wanted to “adhere to their antient Friendship” with the British. A few days later the Pennsylvania trader John Montgomery shared more promising news with Governor Penn. The Mingo chief Logan had returned from war with thirteen scalps and a prisoner and declared himself satisfied for the loss of his relatives. He agreed to “sit still” until he heard from the Long Knife, a reference to the Virginians.⁷⁵

Those who hoped with Montgomery that “the storm will soon blow over” witnessed their dreams destroyed in July and August. Watching the Virginians assemble two sizable armies (at Wheeling and Greenbriar) and fortify existing military structures and hearing only threats from Connolly rather than the “peaceable tidings” they had requested, several parties of Shawnees moved into settler communities, attacking in Greenbriar and the area south of Pittsburgh. Dunmore, who was traveling to Pittsburgh to oversee war affairs himself, ordered the militia to retaliate by striking the Shawnee

⁷⁴ Ibid., 502. St. Clair was not the only who attributed questionable motives to Connolly and Dunmore. Michael Cresap insisted that he acted as he did because Connolly led him to believe that a war with the Shawnee had already begun. Petitions from Westmoreland County (Pennsylvania's jurisdictional authority in the west) complained that Connolly had initiated the Indian war. In July, Croghan accused Connolly and Dunmore of attempting to claim exclusive trading privileges for Virginians by running the Pennsylvanians out of town. Pennsylvania Archives, 4: 512, 527, 545.

⁷⁵ “White Eyes’ speech, June 29, 1774,” Ser. 1, lot 677, SIAP; Pennsylvania Archives, 4: 533-34.
towns on the Muskingum, a mission that flattened Wakatomica, killed several Indians, and decimated cornfields and three- or four-hundred bushels of harvested corn.\textsuperscript{76}

With the war now at hand, the Shawnees sought allies to strengthen their cause. As early as mid-May, word circulated that Shawnee belts could be found in the Wyandot and other Great Lakes villages, but little tangible support seemed to be forthcoming from that direction. Meanwhile the Miamis, Kickapoos, and Mascoutens had all insulted a group of Johnson’s Six Nations emissaries, but anti-British behavior did not always translate into support for other native causes. In August, Captain Pipe, Kayashuta, and the White Mingo reported that the Wyandots, Ottawas, and other Great Lakes Indians were generally disposed toward the English, but lately they had been wavering because their contact with the British had been nonexistent. St. Clair worried that the militia assault on Wakatomica (underway as he heard this latest intelligence) would push them into the Shawnee camp.\textsuperscript{77}

Despite the close association between the Shawnees and Delawares over the years, the council at Newcomerstown continued to espouse its friendship with the Virginians, with White Eyes even volunteering to recruit for Connolly. Such open avowals of support for the enemy even prompted the Shawnees to move away from their towns near the Delawares. Privately, however, many Delawares nursed sympathy for their former neighbors, especially after frontiersmen murdered one of their own and harassed numerous others. Soon Shawnee war parties included a growing number of

\textsuperscript{76} Pennsylvania Archives, 4: 534, 541, 548; Thwaites and Kellogg, Documentary History of Dunmore’s War, 103-06, 149-55, DAR, 8: 160.
\textsuperscript{77} “Extracts from a Journal,” Chalmers Papers; “Conference between Capt. Richard Berringer Lemoult and the emissaries to the Wabash, Sept. 11, 1774,” Ser. 1, lot 677, SIAP; Pennsylvania Archives, 4: 559.
Delawares. By the end of July even the Delaware council informed leaders at Pittsburgh that it was relinquishing the role of mediator, refusing to be a mouthpiece for the British any longer.\textsuperscript{78}

The most powerful ally the Shawnees hoped to recruit was the Iroquois. Although ill will had characterized their relationship in recent years, the Shawnees recognized that the Six Nations had a deeply vested interest in the murders at Yellow Creek. To the Onondaga council, the Mingo were one people with them, being primarily Seneca who had relocated to the Ohio Country. Indeed, the sordid affair did create considerable unrest in the New York communities, resulting in their bargaining with Johnson for the release of two Seneca prisoners as compensation for their loss and to demonstrate the sincerity of British expressions of condolence.\textsuperscript{79}

Johnson was prepared to concede this point because he was more concerned about thwarting any future Shawnee efforts to enlist the Six Nations as allies. Having pronounced the Shawnees “refractory” and bent on “evil designs” months before the April assassinations, he was already engaged in subverting their efforts to unite the Indians west of the Appalachians. He had directed both the Six Nations and the Cherokees to neutralize Shawnee speeches about the perfidy of the British or the need for unification. Consequently, when the question of Six Nations participation in the war arose, they repeatedly informed the Shawnees that they were “unanimous for peace” and discouraged the Shawnees from prolonging offensive actions.\textsuperscript{80}

\textsuperscript{78} \textit{Pennsylvania Archives,} 4: 503-04, 541, 552-53.
\textsuperscript{79} “Johnson to Haldimand, June 9, 1774,” reel A-611, \textit{Haldimand Papers.}
Like the Delawares, however, the Iroquois were hardly united in their refusal to offer assistance. Gage told Dartmouth that although the Six Nations had not joined the Shawnees, it had been difficult for the Indian agents to secure this promise. If the Virginians seemed inclined to “extirpate the Shawnee,” he doubted that it would be “possible to prevent all the Nations from declaring War.” Guy Johnson, the new Indian superintendent following William Johnson’s death in August, told Dartmouth in early October that the Six Nations and many of the Ohio Indians were willing to advance the cause of peace with the Shawnees, but only if the English did nothing further to provoke unrest. He also fretted that by amassing such a large body of troops (reportedly 3,000), the Virginians were creating fear on the entire frontier that the war was not simply a local chastisement of the Shawnees but an assault on Indian territory in general.81

By the time the western division of the Virginia army reached Point Pleasant at the mouth of the Kanawha River in October, the Shawnees had assembled a formidable force of their own. Their unification efforts of the past decade paid dividends, as Delaware, Mingo, Ottawa, Wyandot, and Miami representatives joined their ranks, swelling their numbers to an estimated 800-1,000. The confident Virginians, also numbering between 800 and 1,000 with more reinforcements behind them, certainly did not expect to encounter such a sizable body. Recognizing that surprise was their best ally and that the current numerical situation afforded their best chance of success, the Shawnees took the offensive, crossing the Ohio and attacking Andrew Lewis’s army. Fighting lasted all day on October 10 until, with night falling and the casualties mounting, the Shawnees eventually withdrew. Shortly thereafter they applied to

81 Public Record Office, C.O.5, vol. 92, fos. 20-21d (quote); DAR, 8” 208-09.
Dunmore, making his way overland toward their towns with the other wing of the Virginia army, for a peaceful settlement to the war.\textsuperscript{82}

Dunmore convened the conference at his camp near the Scioto River and proceeded to dictate the terms of peace. In exchange for removing his militia, he demanded that the Indians return all their prisoners, horses, and stolen goods, refrain from hunting on the Kentucky side of the Ohio, ignore all the boats moving down the river, agree to the king’s trade regulations, and deliver some hostages to the Virginians to prove their sincere desire for harmony. He happily informed Dartmouth after his return to Williamsburg that the Shawnees “agreed to everything with the greatest alacrity, and gave the most Solemn assurances of their quiet and peac[e]able deportment for the future.”\textsuperscript{83}

Conveniently absent from his report was the Mingos’ refusal to comply with the treaty’s conditions. Angered by their non-compliance (some chiefs such as Logan had refused to appear at the conference in the first place) and suspecting that they intended to sneak away with their prisoners and stolen horses, Dunmore ordered William Crawford to exact punishment. Taking 240 men, Crawford surrounded the Salt-Lick Town. Most of the Mingos escaped in the dark, but the invaders managed to kill six, take fourteen

\textsuperscript{82}Thwaites and Kellogg, \textit{Documentary History of Dunmore’s War}, 270-75, 295-97, 330-32, 346-47; “Guy Johnson to Kayashuta, Oct. 5, 1774,” \textit{RG 10}, 11: 4. In 1772 David McClure estimated that the Shawnees could raise about 250 fighting men. While this number probably reflects only the Shawnees at the Scioto and not those living on the Muskingum, it nevertheless demonstrates that for the Indian army at Point Pleasant to number 800 warriors, outside allies had to be present. The notion that the Shawnees faced the Virginians alone probably comes from the fact that the Six Nations refused to participate, the Delawares officially backed the colonists, and the British persistently referred to the war as one against the Shawnees. Dexter, \textit{Diary of David McClure}, 93; Gregory Evans Dowd, \textit{A Spirited Resistance: The North American Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815} (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 45; Randolph C. Downes, \textit{Council Fires on the Upper Ohio: A Narrative of Indian Affairs in the Upper Ohio Valley until 1795}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} paperback ed. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977), 157-78.

\textsuperscript{83}Thwaites and Kellogg, \textit{Documentary History of Dunmore’s War}, 386.
prisoners, plunder goods worth four hundred pounds sterling, and finally burn the village. Dunmore retained eleven of these prisoners, promising to return them when the Mingos agreed to abide by his peace terms.\(^8^4\)

Despite resistance from the Mingos, Dunmore believed that the congress had gone well and that "all our differences were Settled." Moreover, he was convinced that the war had served several useful purposes. "It has impressed an Idea of the power of the White People, upon the minds of the Indians, which they did not before entertain; and there is reason to believe, it has extinguished the rancour which raged so violently in our People against the Indians: and I think there is a greater probability that these Scenes of distress will never be renewed, than ever was before," he declared optimistically.\(^8^5\)

Not every British observer shared the same impression. Richard Butler, one of the traders rescued by the Shawnees, maintained that they had been forced into this war through a series of frontier depredations tolerated (and sometimes initiated) by government officials. There are "so little pains taken to restrain the common People whose prejudice leads them to greater lengths than ought to be shown by civilized People...Their Superiors take too little if any pains, and I do really think [are] much to blame themselves in the whole Affair," he complained. The Shawnees had exhibited no hostile intentions at the beginning of the year, but Butler felt that the atrocities they encountered were "sufficient to bring on a war with a Christian instead of a Savage People."\(^8^6\)

\(^8^5\) Thwaites and Kellogg, *Documentary History of Dunmore's War*, 386-87.  
\(^8^6\) *Pennsylvania Archives*, 4: 569-70.
If Dunmore’s War and its conclusion left Butler feeling unsettled, it generated even more unrest within Indian communities. As the primary target of Virginia’s aggression, the Shawnees lamented the loss of people and property and worried about the fate of their hostages. Despite Dunmore’s confident assertion that they had quickly agreed to his terms, they harbored deep-seated anger at his refusal to acknowledge their sovereignty and his insistence on orchestrating the resolution to a war that they believed had been thrust upon them without provocation. Their resentment toward the Six Nations also increased with this latest instance of the Iroquois apparently choosing English interests over native security. The Mingos shared these Shawnee sentiments, particularly after Crawford’s attack while peace was being negotiated. This last incident insured Mingo hostility toward the colonists for the next two decades.

Restlessness was not confined to Shawnee and Mingo towns, however. Most Ohio Valley nations feared that the military might turn on them next. Although the army withdrew from the land above the Ohio River, it left garrisons at several strategic points, all of which appeared threatening to the Indians. Furthermore, the settlers still seemed to operate without governmental restraint, so episodes like those perpetrated by Cresap and Greathouse might very well recur. Even the Six Nations were visibly disturbed by the “unreasonable conduct of the Virginians” after they heard the report of Dunmore’s conference and his treatment of the Mingos while proceedings were underway. They assured Guy Johnson in January 1775 that they were committed to the English, but they admitted that they had considered other options upon first hearing the news. We “looked upon it to be high time for us to shew our power & the strength of our Alliances to these People who have used us so ill on account of our fidelity for had it not been for our
sitting still & following your advice,” they warned, “they would have felt our power long ago.”

Dunmore’s troops marched out of the Ohio Country approximately ten years after Henry Bouquet’s forces followed a similar path. In the intervening decade the Ohio Valley nations had deliberated over their responses to the new British regime. As unwelcome farmers and trade injustices multiplied and the Fort Stanwix Treaty sanctioned diplomatic exploitation, these tribes recognized the urgency to defend their cultural and territorial prerogatives. Many joined the Shawnees in their efforts to unite the entire region in opposition to the English. Others preferred more immediate retribution, while yet another group trusted the crown’s established system of governance to ensure harmony on the frontier.

In the wake of Dunmore’s War, the Indians were forced to determine new responses to the British. Unlike the aftermath of Pontiac’s Rebellion, when Indians and Europeans were both adjusting to their new relationship and taking time to complete their assessment of each other, the conclusion of 1774’s warfare brought little peace or security to the region. The Shawnees, Mingos, Delawares, Wyandots, Miamis, and their neighbors now faced threats to both person and property from soldiers as well as settlers. To survive in this tumultuous environment, they anchored themselves by beginning to focus on their overarching objective of preserving land and sovereignty rather than a series of specific grievances. In the process the regional identity that had begun to take shape after the Fort Stanwix Treaty received another boost. Although many Ohio Valley nations continued to pursue their own agendas, the prospect of fending off foreign

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invaders drew others together. Unification over grievances promised to be transformed into unification over land.
Chapter Two:  
Responses to the Revolution

At the end of July 1775, the Shawnee chief Chenusaw arrived at his towns in the Scioto Valley after a frightening and exhausting two-month journey from Williamsburg. Having been taken hostage by the Virginians at the conclusion of Dunmore’s War along with fellow leaders Wissecapoway, Newa, and Cutemwha, he had been absent for eight months. Although his return was likely heralded by the Shawnee people, he brought alarming news that dampened any celebratory spirits. “The People of Virginia were all determined upon War with the Indians,” he declared, “except the Governor who was for peace but was obliged to fly on board of a ship to save his own life.” All of these war preparations directly endangered the hostages who, he claimed, were threatened with enslavement and deportation. When Cutemwha recognized some of his relatives among the Indian scalps being flaunted in Williamsburg, Chenusaw and his comrades determined to escape. One day into their flight, they were recaptured. Chenusaw managed to wriggle free and headed for the Ohio Country without a gun or other supplies, but he was sure that Cutemwha and Newa had been killed.¹

These ill tidings confirmed what many Shawnees already believed: the Virginians had either forgotten their promise to establish a permanent peace, or they had intended to deceive the Indians and harm their hostages since the November agreement ending hostilities. Fear for their chiefs’ safety combined with anger at Dunmore’s imperious tone the preceding fall to generate considerable unrest in the Shawnee towns during the first half of 1775. Early in the year, the Shawnee chief Cornstalk reported that he was managing to maintain peaceful relations, but his efforts were being undermined by traders from Pennsylvania who endeavored to convince the Indians that “Lord Dunmore’s view in bringing the hostages to Williamsburg, was to deceive them, and that, whenever it was in his power to raise another Army, he would immediately take every advantage in order to cut them off.”

Seeking to acquire allies in the event that this warning was true, the Shawnees implored the Six Nations to join them for a treaty. Given the bad blood between the Shawnees and the Iroquois over the Fort Stanwix land cession and the Six Nations’ refusal to provide military assistance against Dunmore the previous fall, this request reflected a degree of desperation. When the Onondaga council refused the summons, under strict counsel from Indian agent Guy Johnson, the Shawnees warned that they should not feel too comfortable. If the Virginians were as aggrandizing as the reports

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2 *American Archives*, Ser. 4, 1: 1226. The feud between Pennsylvania and Virginia over territory west of the Laurel Ridge had resumed its vitriolic and often violent character after Dunmore’s War. See *Pennsylvania Archives*, 4: 603-47.
indicated, their army would not hesitate to march into New York and attack the Iroquois, just as they had fought at Point Pleasant and the Scioto River the previous year.  

The Shawnees were not alone in their suspicion that peace had not genuinely returned to the Ohio Country. While Chenusaw and his associates had been carted to Williamsburg, twelve Mingo hostages were detained at Fort Pitt, following the attack on their towns during Dunmore’s ceasefire negotiations. This clear violation of treaty proceedings earned the Virginians considerable enmity from both the Mingos and their Six Nations relatives in New York, but it also encouraged Mingo resentment toward their Indian neighbors. In February John Connolly solicited advice from his superiors in the east about how to handle the Mingo prisoners, who had begun to “think their Nation rather more severely dealt with than the Shawanese.” A few months later Cornstalk complained that the Mingos “behave in a very unbecoming manner Frequently upbraiding the Shawanees, in cowardly making the Peace; & call them big knife People.”  

Several Mingos also chose this time to kill three Delawares, perhaps in retaliation for the latter’s neutrality the previous summer and fall. The Shawnees joined in criticizing the Delawares, calling them “Dogs or Servants of the white people.” Despite these attacks, the Delawares had actually come to share many of the Mingo and Shawnee

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4 American Archives, Ser. 4, 1: 1222; Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 15. Morgan describes the Mingos as being 60-70 families “composed of most of the different Tribes of the Six Nations & a few of the Lake Indians but principally of the Senecas.” Colonel George Morgan Letterbooks, 1: 13, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh.
sentiments regarding the Europeans. Some even "repented that they had not joined the
Shawanese in the war, since they found the white people were not to be depended on."\footnote{American Archives, Ser. 4, 1: 1226, 2: 1208; Journal of Richard Butler, 46: 395.}

Sensing that the Indians’ mounting frustration and distrust might easily erupt into
widespread frontier violence, Connolly and Alexander McKee met with several Shawnee,
Mingo, and Delaware chiefs in May. Connolly assured them that Dunmore had not
forgotten them and desired to conduct a formal peace treaty very soon. Knowing that the
volatile political situation in the east would prevent the governor from personally
traveling to Fort Pitt, he presented the idea of a representative acting in his place. McKee
exhorted them to demonstrate their desire for good will and to satisfy “the uneasiness of
your People because of the hostages” by going to Fort Pitt when the treaty date was
established, urging them to disregard any “misrepresentations” of the Virginians’
character that may have reached their ears.\footnote{Revolutionary Virginia, 3: 148-55, (at 153).}

Although McKee and Connolly may have eliminated some concerns, they failed
to realize that the Indians’ “uneasiness” resulted only partially from diplomatic
blundering. Equally troubling to nations along the entire Ohio River corridor were the
surveyors, road builders, and settlers who seemed to be steadily drifting into valleys and
hollows long recognized to be Indian territory. The army predicted to appear with
Dunmore apparently could assume guises other than militiamen when it came to claim
native land.

In 1775 the most recent threat was a group of North Carolina land speculators led
by Richard Henderson, who had illegally purchased land between the Kentucky and
Cumberland Rivers from the Cherokees and commissioned a road to be cut through the
Cumberland Gap to the Kentucky River. Henderson’s action angered hundreds of people
from Dunmore to the settlers who had already claimed acres in the disputed region, but it
intrigued others, creating “a Buzzel...amongst People about Kentucke.” “To hear people
speak of it,” wrote the backcountry parson John Brown, “one Would think it was a new
found Paradise.” Families who found Kentucky too remote opted for the growing
settlements along the Ohio River’s tributaries in present-day West Virginia.7

These transients hardly encountered a warm welcome from their new neighbors.
Some Indians registered their grievances through colonial channels, complaining to
provincial officials that not only were “Great Numbers” of Virginians planting
themselves on native hunting grounds in Kentucky, but some had even crossed the Ohio,
killing and driving away the game nearer their towns. Other parties took matters into
their own hands. A group of Shawnees from the Piqua division attacked Daniel Boone
and his workmen who were employed in cutting Henderson’s wilderness road and
followed up this victory by killing two men from another westward-bound group. Two
months later Cornstalk informed Captain William Russell at Fort Blair on the Great
Kanawha River that the Piquas intended to be “troublesome to the new settlements
whenever they can.” Meanwhile, several Delaware warriors plundered the residents of

7 Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 1-6, 10. The controversy surrounding the Henderson purchase
can be followed in the documentary record from many sources. Dunmore certainly had speculative plans
for the lands in question himself, so he complained loudly to British officials. Backcountry leaders who
likely would have attempted a similar scheme if it had been legal for individuals to purchase land from the
Indians joined the chorus denouncing Henderson, as did actual settlers in Kentucky who found their titles to
land questioned by Henderson’s group. Perhaps the best source for all of these varied complaints is
William P. Palmer, ed., Calendar of Virginia State Papers and Other Manuscripts, 11 vols. (Richmond:
Virginia State Library, 1875), vol. 1.
the Kanawha Valley, a small band of Cherokees stole horses and killed some newcomers
to the Kentucky River, and the Wabash nations created enough doubt for Henderson to
contemplate holding a treaty with them, complete with sizable presents, in exchange for
permission to develop the grant he had supposedly purchased from the Cherokees.8

Such actions did not stem the tide of settlement entirely, but they did instill
considerable fear in the minds of frontier travelers. The British adventurer and land
speculator Nicholas Cresswell hoped to acquire a fortune by investing in Illinois lands,
but journeying the length of the Ohio River proved to be an impossible task. Upon
reaching the fledgling Harrodsburg settlement in early June, his party heard the news that
the Indians had killed four men near the town. “This has struck such a panic that I cannot
get anyone to go down the Ohio with me on any account,” he lamented. On the return
trip upriver the group lived in constant fear of ambush. Settlers in less exposed regions,
like the area around Fort Pitt, also fretted that another Indian war was imminent,
appealing to Pennsylvania or Virginia authorities for aid.9

As native anxiety regarding encroaching colonists and duplicitous officials
swelled along with white fears of reprisal, word of battles between British troops and
Bostonians reached Indian towns at the end of May. This news seemed to surprise the
Indians, given the insistence from white traders, magistrates, and Indian agents that all
the people living in the area were subjects of the king. Nevertheless, they generally

8 *Revolution on the Upper Ohio*, 3, 9, 14-15, 61. The editors point out that while Henderson’s
company may have considered treating with the Wabash nations, there is no record of actual
communication. See p. 3, note 8.
9 *Journal of Nicholas Cresswell*, 82, 89-93; *American Archives*, Ser. 4, 2: 1208-09; *Pennsylvania
Archives*, 4: 609-10, 647.
perceived it as one more example of how affairs seemed to be amiss rather than a revolutionary question worthy of attention for its own sake. The pressing issues were still Virginia’s failure to adequately resolve the previous year’s conflict, the detention of Indian chiefs, and the frequent incursions onto their land by roaming Europeans.¹⁰

When peace overtures finally arrived in the summer, they came separately from Dunmore and the Virginia House of Burgesses, suggesting that the reported rift in the east might have implications for the frontier as well. Acting as Dunmore’s agent, Connolly called the aggrieved tribes together in mid-June, promising to establish a formal peace and to free the Mingo prisoners. The Six Nations arrived punctually and consoled with Connolly and Indian trader and former agent George Croghan on June 21. To the Indians’ astonishment, however, they discovered the following day that Connolly had been arrested by Pennsylvania magistrates for his assumption of authority under Virginia auspices. While Connolly attempted to scrounge together bail, the “principal men of the area,” including most of the West Augusta Committee of Safety, stepped into the diplomatic void.¹¹

Fortunately for Connolly, the other Indian nations had not yet reached Fort Pitt, giving him time to secure his release before the treaty proceedings began. A week later the Shawnees and most of the Mingos were still conspicuously absent, so Connolly delayed three more days before launching talks with the Six Nations and Delawares.

¹⁰Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 15; Although the Indians clearly distinguished between the Pennsylvanians and the Virginians, leaders like Connolly and Pennsylvania Governor John Penn both emphasized the authority of the king over all the English and Indian people, particularly during Dunmore’s War. See American Archives, Ser. 4, 1: 674-76.
¹¹Revolutionary Virginia, 3: 213-15. In retaliation for Connolly’s detention, Virginia sheriffs arrested three Pennsylvania magistrates and took them to Wheeling until Connolly was released. See Pennsylvania Archives, 4: 637.
Without the previous year's primary combatants, however, the entire exchange turned into a denunciation of the Mingos, who were instructed to remove to New York and "settle themselves under the Eyes of their Chiefs." The remaining nations received general affirmation for their neutrality.\textsuperscript{12}

In the end Connolly released the Mingo hostages, praised the Delawares for their part in brightening the chain of friendship, and warned both groups to avoid crossing the Ohio River to hunt. The Senecas and Delawares, in turn, aired their complaints regarding trade, requested blacksmiths and interpreters to serve their people, agreed to carry the news of peace to westerly nations like the Shawnees and Wyandots, and asked that the other end of the friendship chain be placed in King George’s hand. Connolly promised to forward the messages and belts to London, seizing the opportunity to reiterate that the king "as you rightly judge governs us all as one People," has a "sincere love for all his White as well as his Indian Friends," and seeks the happiness of them all.\textsuperscript{13}

Although Connolly dominated Virginia's end of the negotiations, the West Augusta Committee attended the entire conference, suggesting that in 1775 the dispute between Virginia and Pennsylvania remained a greater factor in regional identity than the growing schism between crown and colonists. In a final speech to the Indians, the committee expressed support for Connolly's behavior on the occasion, even though he was connected to the vilified Dunmore, apparently indicating that the lines separating loyalists and patriots had not yet hardened given the external threat of both native and

\textsuperscript{12} *Revolutionary Virginia*, 3: 238-66.
Pennsylvania resistance. Nevertheless, committee members concluded the meetings with a speech that resembled many future American messages to the Indians:

“We consider you in the same Circumstances with ourselves; the great Creator of all things made us both a free People and we are determined with all the Powers he hath given us to preserve our Lives our Liberties and our Property against every one who shall attempt to deprive us of them. Be assured Bretheren that we will also exert ourselves to maintain you in undisturbed Possession of your natural rights and we expect the same brotherly friendship from you by your not interfering in any of our disputes.”

White Eyes, the principal orator for the Delawares, and Kayashuta, the Onondaga Council’s designated representative for the Mingos, joined Connolly and the West Augusta Committee in viewing the gathering as a success and looked forward to a general treaty involving more nations now that they had been charged with extending the chain of friendship through the Ohio Country and beyond. The Mingos, however, left Fort Pitt quite convinced that the Virginians did not intend to leave their lives, liberties, and properties in “undisturbed Possession.” Three weeks after they returned home, James Wood arrived in one of their towns with the message that the Virginia House of Burgesses was inviting them to a treaty. Wood barely managed to deliver his speech before he realized that many of the warriors, including some of the prisoners recently released from Connolly’s custody, were painted black and intended to kill him. The

\[14\]"Ibid., 3: 266."
Mingo chief Logan and some of the women effected his escape by hiding him in the woods, but the experience scared him enough that he skipped his next scheduled Mingo visit, choosing to simply drop off a string of wampum and the speech rather than risk an encounter with the “drunk and very troublesome” chief Pluggy.15

A month later Richard Butler and Kayashuta, following a similar route and bearing a similar message to Wood’s but acting on behalf of Congress and Pennsylvania, uncovered more explanations for the Mingos’ anger. In response to the invitation to treat at Fort Pitt, Connessaway replied, “it was hard to Expect them to go to A Council Fire with the Tomhock Sticking in their heads.” They had met with Connolly two months before but “Came home Again in the Same State,” to their great disappointment. Pluggy added that he had tried hard to establish peace with the Virginians, meeting with Dunmore twice and even thinking that the conference on the plains of Scioto the previous fall had resolved matters. Upon his return home, however, he was “Distressed to the heart to See his blood relations lieing dead that he then Saw he Could not depend On the faith of A treaty As All that had been Said had Sliped out of his hands Although he Meant to hold it fast; therefore he would have No More to Say to Councils.” Before Butler and Kayashuta moved on, the Mingos declared that their speeches were good and promised to attend the treaty. When pressed about the actual number of attendees, though, they hesitated to make a commitment.16

15 Revolutionary Virginia, 3: 263-65; Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 48-50, 56. White Eyes serves as a good example of how both sides attempted to gain Indian loyalty by focusing on individual leaders. See Pennsylvania Archives, 4: 637, Revolutionary Virginia, 3: 382-83, 4: 40-42, and Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 39-41. For more discussion of the British and American competition for allies, see chapter four, 18-24.

Like the Mingos, the Shawnees continued to nurse resentment toward the Virginians even after they met belatedly with Connolly at Fort Pitt. By the time the Shawnees arrived, the Six Nations and Mingos had dispersed, but the Delawares and Connolly were still in the vicinity. On the surface the speeches seemed to project good will from both sides, but the Shawnees inserted a few subtle barbs that suggested lingering frustration. Nimwha accused the Delawares of being “silly,” and having a “thick fog before their eyes,” that prevented them from acting in the Shawnees’ best interest. All of the chiefs signed a letter addressed to the “Virginians and all the English” that reminded the newcomers that they had “derived great Advantages from the Lands which you obtained from our Forefathers,” and they trusted that the Virginians would use this wealth for good and not evil.17

The Shawnee delegation to Connolly’s conference reached home about the same time that Chenusaw burst onto the scene with his troubling report, and James Wood arrived with a different version of events in the east. Wood believed that he successfully disabused the Shawnees of Chenusaw’s misrepresentations and explained to them the true nature of the colonists’ dispute with Dunmore, assuring them that Cutemwha and Newa were fine and eager for them to attend the proposed treaty. Despite formal pledges to Wood and later Butler to “think of Nothing but what is good” and to assemble at Fort Pitt, the Shawnee towns were in turmoil. When he was not asking Wood probing questions about the number of men from Virginia engaged in fighting the British, principal chief Kishanosity was complaining about white expansion onto Shawnee

17 Revolutionary Virginia, 7: 767, 771.
hunting grounds and threatening to go to Kentucky himself to resolve the matter. Butler learned from a Maquachake headwoman that her division of the Shawnees was the only one committed to peace; the Piquas and Chillicothes seemed ready to take up the hatchet, perhaps even directing some of their ire against their fellow Shawnees. This secret information corroborated the report from the trader James Bavard who told Wood that the Shawnees were “Constantly Counseling and that the Women all seemed very uneasy in Expectations that there would be War.”

Wood and Butler attributed this unrest to the fact that they were not alone on the campaign trail to forge strong alliances with Ohio’s Indians. Rumors circulated in Pittsburgh that the Shawnees had been late to Connolly’s treaty because they were meeting with two Frenchmen. A few days into Wood’s embassy he learned from the Delawares (first from some women and then officially from the Delaware council) that an English officer and the French trader Duperon Baby from Detroit had convened a general meeting among the Wyandots. They warned the Indians that the Virginians were plotting to take their land by a two-pronged invasion, via the Great Lakes and the Ohio River, and that under no circumstances should they attend any treaties initiated by those untrustworthy people. Furthermore, they shared that “the French [who] were thrown down the last War by the English...were now got up again and much Stronger than ever and would Assist their Children as they formerly did.” Wood encountered this report in the Wyandot and Shawnee towns as well, although these Indians denied hearing the promise of French aid. Despite these efforts from Detroit to prevent any association

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18 Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 57-63; Journal of Richard Butler, 47: 144-49.
between Indians and colonists, Wood boasted on his return to Fort Pitt that "his superior eloquence prevailed and all the different nations he has been at will certainly attend the Treaty." 19

Other observers failed to share Wood's optimism. Congressional Indian commissioner James Wilson arrived in Pittsburgh a week after Wood and reported that "alarm had spread over the Frontiers of this Province [Pennsylvania] and Virginia." Although he believed the settlers' panic to be unwarranted, he did concede that "some of the Wyandots and Mingoes have not 'such friendly Dispositions as are to be wished for,' and the Shawnees appear to be disregarding an invitation to meet with the Virginians." Consequently, he dispatched Butler and Kayashuta to secure the wavering nations. Like Wood, they immediately encountered the intelligence that the Detroit commandant (and allegedly Guy Johnson) had instructed the tribes to avoid treaties with anyone but themselves. The Wyandots attempted to clarify that he had not given them a "blody belt and tomhock to Strike the Virginians" but rather a belt to "Open their Eyes to See the Virginians" in case the Big Knives came to attack them. This distinction was lost on Butler, however, who continued to blame British authorities for encouraging the Indians to do "Injury to the Publick in general." 20

19 Revolutionary Virginia, 3: 247; Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 36, 44, 47-48, 54, 62 (at 44); Journal of Nicholas Cresswell, 100. Although Wood's hosts largely denied receiving an offer of French aid, another Virginia ambassador, a Mohawk named the Doctor, and his interpreter, Simon Girty, reported considerable French enthusiasm among the Six Nations in the Allegheny region. They testified that Guy Johnson had invited the Senecas to Niagara where he warned them of the devious Bigknife who, despite promises to the contrary, would take Indian land and fail to deliver trade goods. Johnson also supposedly reminded them of their French father who had been watching for his chance to protect his children from just such impositions and was now prepared to send his ships to fight. Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 67-70.

While Butler and Wood searched for signs of British and French tampering, the Indians sought to piece together the strands of information that had reached their villages from a variety of sources. Detroit’s representatives had instructed them to ignore any friendly overtures from the colonists who spoke from the lips and not the heart. Their French father was rumored to be awake and prepared to give them assistance. Guy Johnson had sent word that they should “sit still” until he came to Detroit to meet with them. Meanwhile, the Virginians and the “Counsellors round the [new] Great Council fire at Philadelphia” had invited them to a treaty, but at the same time, a former Shawnee prisoner had warned Cornstalk that he “Expected Verry soon A great Body of the big knife people” to cross the Ohio at the Great Kanawha and advance into their country. Perhaps, the Indians reasoned, “the white People intended to Call them To A Treaty, [only to have] the Army...go in their Absence and Cut off[1] their Town[s] Women and Children and Cut up the Corn.”

To determine an appropriate response to this conglomeration of information, the various Ohio nations spent considerable time counseling together, soliciting advice from more distant tribes, and entertaining native visitors who could potentially contribute to the conversation. Although the Wyandots, Mingos, Ottawas, and the Piqua and Chillicothe divisions of the Shawnees tended to be more suspicious of colonial motives than other groups, all of the Ohio Indians believed they needed a better understanding of the cause of the dispute between the English before they could plot their course of action. Seizing the opportunity afforded by Wood’s and Butler’s appearances, they quizzed both

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men about the fighting in Boston, the reason for the civil war, and the expectations either side might have for Indian assistance. Most of these conversations also included follow-up questions about the settlements, forts, and garrisons being planted in Kentucky. Perhaps Butler’s “evasive” answers or Wood’s dogged insistence of Virginia’s rights failed to satisfy the Indians’ anxious curiosity. More likely, the Indians wanted to thoroughly explore every diplomatic option that could potentially affect their world. In any case, chiefs from the Wyandots, Mingos, Ottawas, Shawnees, Delawares, and Six Nations made their way to Pittsburgh in the fall of 1775. Their attendance did not necessarily signify trust, however: the Ottawas, Mingos, and Wyandots each sent two men toward the Ohio River to watch for any signs of an American army.22

If the 1775 conference was intended to eliminate native uneasiness, it failed miserably. Despite the assurances that unruly settlers would be brought to justice and that no armed contingent was preparing to invade Indian country, the White Mingo complained that he had been fired on by “two Men Cloathed in White hunting Shirts” on his way to Fort Pitt. Treaty commissioners scrambled to resolve that situation and diligently performed appropriate introductory and condolence ceremonies with all the tribes, but their firm reiteration that Kentucky belonged exclusively to Virginia and their insistence that the Shawnees had failed to comply with Dunmore’s conditions of peace, rankled Cornstalk and his fellow chiefs.23

22 Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 51-53; Journal of Richard Butler, 47: 32, 36-37. Although most Ohio nations were eventually represented at the 1775 conference, the Shawnees, Mingos, Wyandots, and Ottawas each had at least one false start, where the delegation hesitated and sometimes even turned back before sending men on to Pittsburgh. See Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 70-71; Journal of Richard Butler, 47: 149-51.

23 Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 30-33, 81-84, 99.
Twice Cornstalk proclaimed that his people had painstakingly returned all their white captives from years past (except children with one Indian parent and those too feeble to leave the village) and all stolen property and hinted that the Shawnees were not the “only Nation who had stolen their Horses.” He even invited any interested colonists to come to the Shawnee towns and search for people or possessions alleged to be missing, but the commissioners continued to maintain that the Shawnees were in violation of the terms of peace and would have to leave their hostages with the Virginians. Tensions rose higher when Kayashuta offered to mediate, emphasizing that since “the Six Nations are the head of all the other Tribes here present,” he had the authority to intervene in Shawnee affairs. Given the smoldering resentment that many Shawnees harbored toward the Iroquois, Kayashuta’s arrogant declaration probably seemed as great a threat to Shawnee autonomy as did Virginia’s hostage-takers. Feeling pressure from all sides, the Shawnee chief Nimwha promised to comply with every demand, hoping that the peace treaty could thereby be concluded and international observers like Kayashuta and White Eyes could be held at bay.24

This wrangling over the terms of peace for Dunmore’s War overshadowed Congress’s message of friendship and did nothing to calm the “bad Wind” that Cornstalk believed was blowing through the Ohio towns. “I know not from whence it has Arisen,” he declared during the conference’s first week, “but I desire the White People will search into it.” By the time he returned home, he likely still entertained questions about the contentious spirit’s origins, but he suspected its connection to the dispute between the

24 Ibid., 103-05, 113-25 (at 104, 123).
colonists and their "Fathers evil Counsellors beyond the Great Water." The congressional and Virginia representatives offered few explanations for the causes of the quarrel, choosing instead to repeatedly stress that the thirteen colonies had become "so firmly United and Inseparably bound together by one lasting Chain of Freindship, that we are no more to be Considered as Distinct Nations, but as one great and Strong Man, who if Molested in any one of his Members, will not fail to Exert the Combined force of his whole Body to Punish the Offender."25

The treaty negotiators hoped that this veiled threat would do three things: prevent a repetition of Dunmore's War where the Indians singled out the Virginians as their enemy, convince the assembled nations that the Americans were formidable, and consequently, persuade the Indians that they should remain neutral. Ironically, this declaration of American strength and unity coincided with the message crafted by British commander Richard Lernoult at Detroit. He also emphasized colonial union, claiming that it had turned all colonists into violent, land-grabbing Virginians. Rather than counseling the nations to "Stay at home," he urged them to keep watch because the collective "Virginians" would soon be making an attempt to steal Indian land.26

Cornstalk and other leaders undoubtedly recognized that to chart a course among these bitter antagonists would be difficult, especially since "the bad Wind" had already induced some of their warriors to burn the abandoned Fort Blair at the Great Kanawha River and to threaten the new Kentucky settlements. Most conference attendees left Fort Pitt mulling over their options with both hope and trepidation. The rift between king and

25 Ibid., 92, 95-96.
26 Journal of Richard Butler, 47: 38; Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 95.
colonist promised to establish competing sources of trade goods, political clout, and military muscle, all of which could benefit Ohio Valley customers and tribal leaders eager to strengthen their own and their nations' diplomatic positions. At the same time, however, warring Europeans always seemed to make their way into Indian territory, a fact that resulted not only in destruction of villages, crops, and lives, but somehow in the loss of native land as well.27

While the impending revolution promised to affect Indian societies for good, ill, or both, the scattered Shawnees, Wyandots, and Mingos who torched the property of foreign invaders demonstrated that they did not intend to be passive observers whose behavior would be determined by either the British or the Americans. Other Ohio Valley Indians responded differently to the war's developments, but they all shared a fundamental objective that guided their actions, speeches, and alliances. An obvious part of this common goal was to preserve their land from intruding settlers. But perhaps even more vital to their sensibilities was the need to maintain their position at the negotiating table with their powerful English and colonial neighbors.

Although native groups prized landed independence, few voices among them advocated complete dissociation from Europeans at this stage in Indian-white relations. Trade goods had become nearly indispensable to most villages, and certain cultural practices had been transformed by the influx of new technology.28 Nevertheless, the

27 Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 93, 111, 117-18; Letters of Delegates to Congress, 2: 447-48; Revolutionary Virginia, 3: 250.
Ohio Valley nations desperately sought to protect their political and cultural autonomy, recognizing that as long as they retained leverage in important matters, they could genuinely engage in inter-cultural negotiations. With populations dwindling while the number of settlers exploded, their greatest hope for influencing diplomatic relations lay in the huge swath of land under their control. Thus, the two objectives were linked: preservation of land meant preservation of their status as viable political brokers.

Dunmore’s War offered an example of how both goals could easily be threatened. Not only had the Virginia governor unilaterally decreed the terms of the peace treaty (eliminating native negotiating power), those very stipulations further alienated the Shawnees from a significant tract of land. Consequently, the renewed possibility of war in their region a year later prompted the Ohio Valley tribes to consider carefully the strategy that would enable them to swing the balance of power back to their side.

Throughout the Revolution, most groups contrived several plans to accomplish their designs, but rarely did they opt for the same course of action at the same time for the same reasons.

**Unification**

As the conflict between the British and the Americans intensified throughout 1775 and 1776, many Indian nations concluded that their best chance to correct abuses from encroaching settlers and devious traders had arrived. While the Europeans were engaged in their own battles, the Indians could unite to drive the multiplying whites far

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from their hunting grounds. If unification could transcend regional boundaries, success seemed well within their grasp.

To achieve this aim, a delegation of Shawnees, accompanied by several Mingos, Mohawks, Ottawas, Delawares, and other Six Nations representatives visited the Cherokees in the summer of 1776 and argued the case for combined action. Speaking on an enormous war belt, the Shawnee leader reminded his hosts “that in a very few years their nation, from being a great people, [had been] reduced to a handful.” Previously they had “possessed lands almost to the seashore [but now] the red people who were once masters of the whole country hardly possessed ground enough to stand on.” Seemingly minor forts quickly swarmed with armed men, closely followed by towns and settlements. “It was plain,” he insisted, that the colonists intended “to extirpate them, and that he thought it better to die like men than to dwindle away by inches.” Death could perhaps be avoided entirely if all the aggrieved parties worked together. An Ottawa spokesman lamented that in the past, Indians “were constantly at war, one nation against another, and reduced by degrees while their common enemies were taking the advantage of their situation.” He and the rest of the delegation “were willing, and they hoped every nation would be the same, to drop all their former quarrels and to join in one common cause.”

Conveniently, the Revolution offered a prime opportunity to pursue this attack. Pressing matters in the east distracted the Americans, and although they had proven capable of unified action against their mother country, they rarely managed to agree on

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29 DAR, 12: 198-207 (at 202).
frontier affairs. Procuring supplies had become more difficult since the war began, but the multi-tribal delegation was confident that their former fathers, the French, could provide them with arms, ammunition, and provisions. If the French failed, surely the British would join them in this effort to conquer a common enemy. In fact, after speaking to the assembled chiefs and warriors, several deputies urged Henry Stuart and Alexander Cameron, British Indian agents among the Cherokees, to also take up the hatchet. Even if the British only provided staple resources, the strength of a true pan-Indian attack promised to accomplish both native objectives: they would retain their land, perhaps even reclaiming some that had been lost, and their united power would ensure that their voice would carry weight during future negotiations.\(^{30}\)

The militant segment of the Cherokees, led by the young but influential chief Dragging Canoe, already advocated violent retaliation against avaricious settlers and land speculators on the Watauga and Nolachucky Rivers near the Cherokee towns. Many of the older chiefs, such as Dragging Canoe’s father Attakullaculla, worked with Cameron and Stuart to prevent hostilities, even sending letters to the offending trespassers asking them to return eastward. These peace efforts were stymied, however, when the Wataugans seized the first messenger and incarcerated him for two weeks. Although Cameron hastened to send out a second representative, the damage had been done. When the northern Indians arrived in the midst of these volatile circumstances with their own tales of white perfidy, they fueled Dragging Canoe’s eagerness to attack. Many older

\(^{30}\text{Ibid., 202-04.}\)
chiefs were still reluctant to engage in battle, but eventually Stuart concluded that “it was in vain to talk any more of peace.”

Despite Dragging Canoe’s enthusiasm and the delegation’s promise to take their compelling message to all the southern tribes and the nations on the Wabash River, the Shawnee mission failed in 1776. Lacking unity within their own nation, the Cherokees attacked prematurely (only a few weeks after accepting the Shawnee war belt) and faced the wrath of Virginia, Georgia, and both Carolinas, who proceeded to flatten several sizable Cherokee towns. Dissenting Shawnees also opposed the deputation’s efforts. Cornstalk reportedly warned settlers in Kentucky that the famous Mingo, Logan, with fourteen others would be passing through their region en route to the Cherokees, hinting that they would do well to destroy the entire party. Together, these setbacks darkened the northern Indians’ grand vision of a unified native force pushing the Americans back over the mountains.

Yet the idea of unification as a strategic response to the Revolution remained very much alive in the minds of Indians and frontier whites. Jarret Williams, an American trader among the Cherokees, reported the news of a Cherokee-Shawnee alliance as he warned the backcountry settlements of the Cherokees’ impending attack. This intelligence circulated rapidly throughout the entire Ohio Valley from July to October,

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32 Dowd, A Spirited Resistance, 52-54; Calloway, American Revolution in Indian Country, 196-99; DAR, 12: 199, 205.
prompting a flurry of nervous correspondence between fort commanders and county lieutenants, who envisioned a "general confederacy" of all the Ohio and Great Lakes Indians launching attacks along with the Cherokees. The Shawnees who delivered the war belt in the southern towns contributed to these fears by killing two men and capturing three daughters of Kentucky colonels Daniel Boone and Richard Callaway on their way home. Indeed, the Shawnees became so connected with the idea of Indian unification in the minds of most whites that the non-militant Shawnee leaders devoted considerable time to refuting the notion. Before the October 1776 treaty at Fort Pitt (attended by Mohawks, Senecas, Delawares, and Shawnees), several Shawnee chiefs pulled American Indian agent George Morgan aside to tell him that it was the Six Nations who brought the tomahawk to their towns before proceeding to the Cherokees, "in order to induce us and them to strike the Virginians."33

As the war proceeded and the Americans' failure to stem the tide of immigrants into contested territory encouraged more frequent raids into western Pennsylvania, western Virginia, and Kentucky, frontier fears of pan-Indian confederacies only grew stronger. But few observers credited the Indians with generating unity on their own, choosing instead to emphasize that the British directed their affairs from Detroit. Traders, emissaries, or prisoners who spent time in Indian villages witnessed a different story. Escaped prisoner William Hancock announced that while he was held captive at the Shawnee town of Chillicothe in July 1778, "there was a Grand-Council held with the

33 American Archives, Ser. 5, 1:111-12; Morgan Letterbooks, 2: 21; Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 174, 179-83, 186-90, 199; George Morgan Letterbook, MG-19, Accession File, Folder 1, 74, Pennsylvania State Archives; For more information on the Shawnees' capture of the Boone and Callaway girls, see Faragher, Daniel Boone, 131-40.
principal Indians from different Nations" to plot an attack on the expanding settlement at Boonesborough, Kentucky. Although the native army that laid siege to Boonesborough in September utilized artillery and explosives from the British and even included a small contingent of Detroit militia, the entire offensive was initiated and masterminded by the Shawnees and their allies.\(^3\)\(^4\)

The Shawnees were certainly not alone in their efforts to promote Indian unity. In September 1778, after the Virginian George Rogers Clark and his militia had overrun Kaskaskia and Cahokia in the Illinois country and Vincennes along the Wabash River, many local Indians wavered between making peace with Clark (who promised ample trade and seemed to be a formidable military figure) and joining together to check his advance through their territory. At this juncture, speeches arrived from the Chickasaws for all the Indians along the Wabash River, exhorting them to tell the Virginians “to withdraw from your lands.” After citing themselves as an example of people who lost their lands to white invaders, they promised to assist any native people eager to defend their property. “You know that for a long time we have worked, that all the brown skins

\(^3\) For fears regarding confederacies among the Indians and the general attribution of those confederacies to the work of Governor Hamilton at Detroit, see Reuben Gold Thwaites and Louise P. Kellogg, eds., *Frontier Defense on the Upper Ohio, 1777-1778* (Madison: Wisconsin State Historical Society, 1912), 25, 38, 42. For Hancock’s deposition, see Louise P. Kellogg, ed., *Frontier Advance on the Upper Ohio, 1778-1779* (Madison: Wisconsin State Historical Society, 1916), 114. The Shawnees launched this attack on Boonesborough partly because the settlement continued to grow rapidly and partly as a retaliatory gesture for the murder of their chief Cornstalk in November 1777 at Fort Randolph near the conjunction of the Great Kanawha and Ohio Rivers. Cornstalk was a leading advocate of neutrality, but his death at the hands of frontier soldiers solidified the majority of the Shawnees in staunch opposition to the Americans. The September 1778 siege of Boonesborough lasted a week, after which the army broke up and harassed surrounding stations, “inflicting more loss of life and property with these traditional tactics than they had done during the whole of the siege.” Faragher, *Daniel Boone*, 182-98 for more on the siege as well as George W. Ranck, “Boonesborough: Its Founding, Pioneer Struggles, Indian Experiences, Transylvania Days, and Revolutionary Annals,” *Filson Club Publications, no. 16* (Louisville: John P. Morton & Co., 1901), 75-102.
should act as a single man to preserve our lands. We have made peace with all the nations; you are the only ones who will be deaf...we hope my brothers that you will listen to us."

Appeals to racial solidarity increased among the Indians as continental forces and state militias smashed their way across the Ohio River with greater frequency in the war's later years. After Clark's advance into Illinois in 1778, his capture of Detroit's lieutenant governor, Henry Hamilton, at Vincennes in 1779, and the 1778-1779 American campaign from Fort Pitt that planted Forts McIntosh and Laurens in Delaware territory, the Indians suspected an invading army every spring. In April 1780 and 1781 the Mingos, Wyandots, Delawares, and Shawnees clustered around Sandusky entreated the Ottawas, Potawatomies, Chippewas, and Hurons living nearer Detroit and the Great Lakes to join them in repulsing the "great body of Rebels" expected to be on the march soon. Calling themselves representatives of the "Confederacy on the Ohio," they reminded their "ancient...Allies" that "we are all of one blood and ought to be of one mind as we are all of the same colour." Eight months later in December 1781 the Delaware chief Buckonghelas informed Detroit's commanding officer Major Arent Schuyler De Peyster that the British war belt he had just accepted from the Wyandots was "not only for war but serves amongst us brown skins as a token of alliance and amity." Clearly, native alliances were visible before both Indian and white audiences.

The impetus for native unification gained more momentum in 1782 and 1783 as tribes realized that the British and Americans were engaging in peace negotiations

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35 MPHC, 10: 297-98.
36 "Council at Detroit, April 26, 1780," RG 10, 13: 3; MPHC, 10: 473, 544.
without their input. In a repeat of their 1776 embassy, several Delawares, Shawnees, Mingos, and Mohawks headed south to “establish a firm league and confederacy amongst the different tribes of indians in an alliance for their mutual safety and defence.” Representatives from the Cherokees had already united with the Sandusky nations in 1780, so twelve hundred Cherokee warriors joined the delegation in seeking to recruit the Creeks, Choctaws, and Chickasaws. News of this mission frightened Americans because of its military threat and the British because of the enormous challenge of supplying such a large assembly of Indians when funds were growing scarce. Although the January 1783 convention in St. Augustine yielded no dramatic assaults on the American backcountry, it did encourage Indian unity. In September, Creek and Cherokee delegates could be found at Sandusky with the Ohio and Great Lakes nations, pledging “that there may be never hereafter a separation between us, let there be Peace or War, it shall never disunite us, for our Interests are alike, nor should anything ever be done but by the voice of the whole.”

Despite the limited success of the 1782-1783 pan-Indian efforts, no diplomatic maneuvers during the Revolution matched the elaborate offensive vision of 1776. For the next decade the idea of unification survived in native minds and surfaced occasionally in response to specific threats. But it generally focused on defensive goals and failed to create a sustained resistance to European attempts to strip the Ohio Valley Indians of their land and sovereignty.

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Several factors conspired against unification as a principal strategic response to the Revolution. Geographic positions frequently altered native perceptions of the European threat. Those villages in direct competition with white settlers pressed for immediate redress of grievances, while those farther from daily contact felt less inclined to enact drastic measures. Internecine strife, as evidenced by Cornstalk’s betrayal of his fellow Shawnees on the 1776 delegation to the Cherokees, proved to be another obstacle to genuine unity among the nations. Struggles between local leaders seemed particularly acute in the many multi-tribal towns that dotted the Ohio Valley by the 1770s and 1780s. Almost every Indian group had a faction that advocated a response to the Revolution radically different from the main body’s chosen course of action.38

Conflict within nations only exacerbated the tensions between various tribes. Traditional enmities ran deep, but sometimes, recent disagreements could incite equally virulent hostilities and distrust. For instance, in the summer of 1780 while two large armies of confederated Indians were attacking St. Louis in the west and Kentucky in the south, the Miamis were targeting the Potawatomies along the Wabash River. A year later the Wabash nations were more interested in punishing the Piankeshaws for selling a piece of land than they were in preparing for the widely- rumored invasion of George Rogers Clark. The Sioux and the Chippewas feuded intermittently during the Revolution years, destabilizing potential harmony among the Wisconsin Indians. Many Ohio tribes still resented that the Six Nations claimed sovereignty over them and their lands, prompting

White Eyes to vehemently denounce the Iroquois representatives at the 1776 treaty council at Fort Pitt and other Ohio leaders to be skeptical of Kayashuta’s efforts to form an “alliance” at Detroit in 1780. In short, few nations or individuals were willing to commit to a confederation whose benefits to a rival might far outstrip the benefits to themselves. Such a move would certainly weaken their national or personal positions at the political and economic bargaining table.39

Neutralità

If unification against colonial expansion carried great risk, neutrality initially promised to yield safe returns during the Revolution. For the first two years of the conflict, agents at Detroit and Fort Pitt encouraged Indians “to Stay at home, to take Care of your Women and children, and follow other Usual Occupations.” This advice appeared to ensure that troops would refrain from trespassing on native land, thus protecting persons and property and offering no insidious foothold to a military presence that would inevitably attract farms and settlements. In theory, neutrality also prevented the Indians’ fate from being determined by outsiders. Being on good terms with both sides should guarantee that they would be friendly with the winner. Control over tribal land and negotiating status might not be stronger, but at least it would be unscathed.40


Since Congress’s first admonition to “sit still” came during the official treaty to resolve Dunmore’s War, many Indians present at Fort Pitt in October 1775 equated neutrality in the Revolution and compliance with the previous war’s peace terms. Having been expressly rebuked for their resistance to the return of all white prisoners, the Shawnee faction led by Cornstalk spent the winter of 1775-1776 rounding up all the prisoners they could find among their own people and even some among the Mingos. When they sent the prisoners to Fort Pitt in the spring, they were careful to note their conformity to the peace agreement in the same breath they mentioned their determination to not “meddle in your Quarrel.” They also made it very clear, however, that their neutrality was conditional. “We will be glad if you send no Army to Detroit, nor suffer any to cross the Ohio,” they emphasized, pointedly mentioning that the Americans had promised that none of their people would “cross the Ohio or settle on any of our Lands.” Just in case the Americans believed that they were choosing to “sit still” because Congress had prodded them in that direction, they were also quick to call attention to the fact that the commandants at Detroit had said the same thing.  

Throughout 1776 and 1777 Cornstalk and the Maquachake division of the Shawnees continued to seek peace and avoid becoming embroiled in war of any kind. George Morgan visited several Shawnee towns as one of his first official acts as Indian agent in June 1776 and renewed the chain of friendship, even noting that the Shawnee

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41 Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 152, 175; 1776 Morgan Letterbook, 5-7; At the 1776 treaty at Fort Pitt, Kayashuta echoed the Shawnee sentiment that he and his fellow Senecas would remain neutral as long as the Americans “mind fighting your Enemies along the sea side, but not come into our Country to fight.” He also reiterated the Americans’ statement that they “did not at all desire our Lands.” Calloway, Revolution and Confederation, 135-36.
chiefs seemed to be having a favorable impact on the Mingos. In time, however, the Chillicothe, Piqua, and Kisposki Shawnees increasingly opted for hostility toward the encroaching Americans, leading Cornstalk and Nimwha to consider moving nearer the Delaware towns where the leaders also embraced neutrality.42

Before this move took place, general suspicions of the Shawnees induced Capt. Matthew Arbuckle, commander at Fort Randolph, to detain two friendly Shawnee messengers in September 1777 and to announce that he intended to confine “as many as fall into my hands” until he received instructions to act differently. A week later Cornstalk sent his son, Elinipsico, to inquire about the prisoners; a while later Cornstalk himself arrived to remedy the situation. Arbuckle imprisoned him and his fellow ambassadors Red Hawk and Petalla. On November 9, Elinipsico returned to Fort Randolph, this time to investigate his father’s condition. The day after his arrival, a party of Indians hiding near the fort killed one of the militiamen stationed on the Kanhawa. In revenge, the man’s company pounced upon the four Shawnees, shooting Cornstalk, Elinipsico, and Red Hawk and “shamefully mangling” Petalla. Although several Maquachake leaders continued to pursue neutrality, these cold-blooded murders galvanized the majority of the Shawnees as well as other Ohio tribes to increase their attacks on the American frontier. Gen. Edward Hand, in charge of continental military affairs in the west, George Morgan, Virginia governor Patrick Henry, and Virginia militia

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42 1776 Morgan Letterbook, 23-36; Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 204; Frontier Defense, 166. For more information on the divisions among the Shawnees and the difficulty of maintaining a neutral stance, see Calloway, American Revolution in Indian Country, 158-81.
lieutenants William Preston and William Fleming all attempted to conciliate the Shawnees but to little avail.\(^{43}\)

If participation in Dunmore’s War cast a lingering shadow over Shawnee declarations of neutrality during the Revolution, the Delawares frequently drew upon their cooperation with the Americans in 1774 to bolster their credibility during the next contest. “We will mind our Business and not join either side, though the people of Niagara and Detroit persuade us ever so much,” they announced at the 1776 Fort Pitt conference. Almost immediately, however, they discovered that neutrality to the Americans meant complete dissociation from the British and any British sympathizers. The Delawares were not to supply British garrisons with necessary provisions nor were they to offer hospitality to passing bands that might have hostile intentions toward the American settlements. As friends of the colonies, they were to report any suspicious activity or intelligence, recruit tribes with British leanings, and eventually, allow free passage through their territory for a colonial army to attack Detroit. Moravian missionaries living near the principal Delaware town of Coshocton supported this agenda, encouraging the Delaware council to share inside information and even presuming to speak on behalf of the Delawares regarding important matters such as bringing an American army to Coshocton for defense. “Captain White Eyes in his speech hath not spoken quite so plain, for which he hath reason enough,” David Zeisberger confided to

\(^{43}\) *Frontier Defense*, 126-27, 149-50, 157-63, 172-73, 188-89, 207-09, 234-37, 240, 258-61. Arbuckle’s suspicions of Cornstalk and the Shawnees were in place at least a year before Cornstalk was murdered on his watch. *Revolution on the Upper Ohio*, 186-87.
George Morgan during an exchange about Delaware defense, “but I can tell you that he wisheth an army might come out now—the sooner the better.”

Zeisberger’s request for an army mirrored plans that various American constituencies already wanted to set in motion. As the Wyandots and Mingos increased the frequency and destructiveness of their attacks in 1777, General Hand wrestled with how to maintain good relations with the Delawares while sending troops against the offending towns. He hoped to deploy several scouting parties to roam around Indian territory, but he feared the consequences of encounters with friendly Delawares, a likely occurrence given that they resided on the lands nearest most major American forts. Indeed, White Eyes had stressed that “if an Army should march in the Indian Country it should take its march above & below our Towns that our Women & Children might remain quiet & not be too much frightened.”

Despite Hand’s reported desire to protect the neutral Delawares, their lives and lands were constantly threatened. Angry settlers sought to kill Delaware travelers to Fort Pitt in retaliation for attacks perpetrated by other Indians. Even Hand led an expedition in February 1778 that ambushed two parties of Delaware women, killing four women, an old man, and a boy. The confused Delaware council complained to Morgan and the Indian commissioners that “you told me that all the Nations should see what a lasting Friendship we have with one another, but instead of proving this you struck the

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Tomhawk in my Head, of which others will be glad & mock at me.” It took all of Morgan’s diplomatic skill to restore peaceful relations, but several months later the commissioners and the new western military commander, Gen. Lachlan McIntosh, attempted to trick the Delawares into moving from a neutral policy to outright alliance with the Americans. The nation protested and many leaders abandoned the American interest entirely, especially after several frontiersmen murdered White Eyes, the Americans’ staunchest supporter. The remnant abandoned the pretense of neutrality.46

Withstanding the colonists’ breaches of neutrality might have been easier for the Delawares if their Indian neighbors had also respected their position. On several occasions the Wyandots berated them for adhering too closely to the Americans. In July 1778 White Eyes sent a frantic letter to Morgan describing a recent conference at Detroit where “the Nations have agreed to fall upon the Delawares, & the Wiandots are to make the beginning.” Undoubtedly, this belligerent assembly recognized that Delaware leaders often aided the commander at Fort Pitt and hindered their assaults on American settlements, thus making the Delawares a legitimate military target. Nevertheless, such threats to Delaware security pushed them away from their preferred neutral stance.47

As neutrality was being abandoned in the upper Ohio Valley, George Rogers Clark was introducing it in the Illinois country. Although Clark spent most of his first few months in Kaskaskia and Cahokia threatening the Indians, ridiculing the British, and explaining the causes of the Revolution, he managed to secure at least a temporary peace

47 Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 203, 218-19, 244; Frontier Defense, 27, 29, 164-65; Frontier Advance, 84, 94-95, 117-20 (at 117-18); MPHC, 9: 448-50.
with many nations from the Illinois, Wabash, and St. Joseph River regions. When several influential chiefs and warriors offered to take up the hatchet on behalf of the Big Knife, though, he responded that “we never wished the Indians to fight for us all we wished them to do was for them to set still and look on.” In April 1779, after the Virginians’ hold on the Illinois country was strengthened by the defeat of Hamilton at Vincennes, Joseph Bowman, manager of Indian affairs at Cahokia, counseled the Potawatomis from Chicago to “stay quietly at home, to hunt, to support their wives and children, to treat well the French and traders who honestly come to them for their welfare,” and to ignore bad messages that “incite you to war.” Americans never asked Indians to go to war for them, he assured the Potawatomis, seeking to distance himself from the English who relied upon Indian auxiliaries.48

Although Bowman and Clark advised the Indians to remain neutral, they soon imitated their eastern counterparts by placing additional expectations on those who had made peace with them. For example, Clark made it clear that while he did not need native soldiers, he would value any intelligence or prisoners that his new friends might bring him. This strategy played directly into British hands. Despite some concerns that the Indians’ allegiance to Britain had noticeably “cooled” after Hamilton’s defeat in 1779, leaders such as De Peyster believed that the Indians were incapable of observing neutrality and sought to demonstrate to them that the Americans were not asking them to

48 George Rogers Clark Papers, 8: 123-29, 146-49, 172, 239, 241, 243-61, 311-13 (at 257, 312). While both George Morgan and George Rogers Clark advocated neutrality, Morgan and the Indian commissioners for the Middle Department did so because they knew the British had a better developed network of Indian agents, a more reliable source of trade goods and presents, and a greater likelihood of securing Indian allies if the Indians were encouraged to choose a side. Clark seems to have counseled neutrality more from a desire to prevent his soldiers and his quest to capture Detroit from being sullied by Indian assistance.
sit still but rather to aid them in opposing the British and other Indians. Consequently, when the Potawatomis near St. Joseph insisted that they would not entertain “men who would destroy the peace” from either side, British agent Thomas Bennet brought them back into the fold by arguing that the Americans were simply waiting for the opportunity to involve them in war and thus repay the “evils” committed against settlements in Kentucky.49

As American influence waned in the Illinois country, the weaknesses of neutrality as a viable response to the Revolution again were on display. Both the British and the Americans insisted that they be the sole provider of trade goods and supplies. The Americans’ inability to stock necessary articles often drove the Indians into the arms of the British, while the British used their economic advantage to coerce recalcitrant Indians into assisting them. Tribes in the west seeking to take a neutral stance often found themselves threatened by other native groups, just as the Wyandots had harassed the Delawares. Finally, the notion of neutrality that had become warped and eventually abandoned by the Americans at Fort Pitt was also transformed in the Illinois and Wabash regions. By January 1780, Thomas Jefferson urged Clark to encourage the Indians friendly toward the Americans to take up the hatchet against “enemy Indians” such as the Shawnees. Toward the end of the war, it was no secret that neither the British nor the Americans accepted the idea of Indians living peacefully with both sides. When the Chickasaws came to make peace with the Americans in Kentucky, they were careful to specify that “Youl Observe at the Same time Our making A Peace with you doth Not

49 George Rogers Clark Papers, 8: 257; MPHC, 9: 382-83, 10: 348-53 (at 350).
Intitle Us to Fall out With Our Fathers the Inglish.” Without this qualification, they knew the Kentuckians would expect them to turn the tomahawk against the British.\textsuperscript{50}

\textit{Choosing an Ally}

As neutrality ceased to be a sustainable option for most nations after the war’s early years, many leaders reasoned that choosing an ally might be the safest way to survive the conflict with their lands and sovereignty intact. Faced with the uncertain prospect of heavily armed belligerents in their backyard, some Indian groups determined that gaining access to similar weapons might be their only effective means of defense, a task most easily accomplished through a reliable ally. Others correctly surmised that war could devastate food supplies, a predicament that a partner with access to trade goods could ameliorate. In exchange for this steady source of arms, provisions, and general life necessities, an ally might demand military service, but the goods themselves offered the opportunity to make autonomous decisions. Even if many native groups viewed themselves as independent operators, siding with the winner promised a share of the plunder and ensured that one outside threat would be neutralized at least for a time. Since both the British and the Americans actively sought to enlist allies for their cause, many Indians also found that they could secure anything they wanted. De Peyster complained in 1780 that “the Indians...make their own demands...the refusal of a trifle, if not done with caution, may turn a whole war party.”\textsuperscript{51}

\textsuperscript{50} George Rogers Clark Papers, 8: 390-91, 394 (and 382-84 for Potawatomis and Sioux threatening Sauks and Foxes for refusing to attack the Americans), 553, 606, 19: 74 (quote); MPHC, 10: 424. Although the British and Americans both demanded to be the Indians’ sole supplier, many nations resisted this monopoly as much as they could. For example, in July 1778 the Ouittanons, Kickapoos, and Mascoutens told Hamilton that just because they acquired rum from the Spanish, they did not consider the Spanish to “have their hearts.” MPHC, 9: 457.

\textsuperscript{51} MPHC, 10: 400.
Deciding which combatant to select as a trustworthy ally depended on which one seemed most capable of furthering the Indians’ main objectives. Many native leaders throughout the entire Ohio River valley fondly remembered the French and remained deeply distrustful of both the British and the Americans. During a century of close interaction with French fur traders and government agents, the Indians rarely felt that their lands were threatened or their political voices silenced. In less than half that time, the British had gobbled up vast tracts of land beyond the Appalachian range and dictated peace terms in every major conflict. Despite British efforts to distance themselves from the treasonous Americans, the Indians were not fooled into thinking that the people who were protected by the king in 1774 were somehow intrinsically different from the people who rebelled against the king in 1775.52

Knowing that many nations held residual loyalty for the French, both the colonists and the British sought to emphasize their connections to Onontio, the Indian name for the French governor. Having been Onontio’s enemy for most of the past century, the British could not credibly identify a close association with France, but they did have an extensive network of Indian agents living among the various tribes, most of whom were of French descent. When these men, accompanied by English officers, announced early in the war that the French king was rising up to assist his children against the encroaching white settlers, the British cause appeared more favorable to the Indians. The Americans worried about this relationship until Congress’s official alliance with France in 1778 gave

them their own French card to play. Clark informed all the Indians in the Illinois and Wabash regions that “their old Father the King of France was come to Life again and had Joined the Big Knife.” The king was “Mad at them for Fighting for the English” and advised them to make peace with the Americans as soon as possible. From 1779 to 1781, the French officer Daniel Maurice Godefroy de Linctot traversed the Ohio Valley between Fort Pitt and Cahokia, drumming up support for the Americans and creating considerable alarm for the British.\(^5\)

Eventually the French inhabitants living around Kaskaskia, Vincennes, and Detroit trumped British and American efforts to recruit the Indians based on a tenuous connection to France. Many of these residents regarded the British as inveterate enemies, so they initially welcomed colonial troops to their communities. After two years of American occupancy, however, they complained to Luzerne, the French minister, that the Virginians were domineering, forcing them into hostile relations with local Indians and reducing them to poverty. Before lodging this official complaint, French officers at Vincennes began to spread the word among the Wabash and Ohio Indians that the French king was returning to power and intended to retake all of Canada. Both the “English and the Virginians would be subject to him,” and he would single-handedly prevent the Virginians from “extirpating” all the Indians as they had threatened. By February 1781 the Piankeshaws living near Vincennes had embraced this position and actively joined the

\(^5\) White, *The Middle Ground*, xi; *Revolution on the Upper Ohio*, 44; *George Rogers Clark Papers*, 8: 130, 234, 239; *Frontier Retreat*, 176; *Pennsylvania Archives*, 12: 231.
French inhabitants in attempting to pry various tribes from their alliances with the British and orchestrating an assault on Detroit.\textsuperscript{54}

The Piankeshaws and Vincennes residents soon discovered that the British had their own means of persuasion. After listening to the Piankeshaw and Ouittanon speeches, the Miamis simply responded, “if you continue to listen to them [the French] you will be miserable. You see that your wives & your children are in want, you are forced to cover yourselves with animals skins, we, on the contrary, we are glorious to see...covered with jewelry. You have neither powder nor shot nor arms, what will you do?” De Peyster must have been pleased to learn of this exchange because it mimicked the point that he had been highlighting since Clark took control of the Illinois country. The “Rebels may perhaps be able to make a shew of presents at first,” he stressed, but they would be incapable of supplying the Indians’ needs for an extended period. At both Michilimackinac and Detroit he threatened to withhold trade goods from nations that “misbehaved” by either refusing to cooperate with the British or openly associating with the Americans. Richard Lernoult, commandant at Detroit between Governor Hamilton and De Peyster, also issued warnings to secure wavering tribes, although his were more martial. “I have fought before now with you & have conquered, & am able to fight you again, and even both you and the Americans together,” he declared.\textsuperscript{55}

While the British expended “immense sums...to secure [the Indians’] affections” and tossed out some military threats, they recognized that encroaching American settlers were their best allies in acquiring native allegiance. Capitalizing on existing Indian

\textsuperscript{54} George Rogers Clark Papers, 8: 444-45; RG 10, 12: 133-34; MPHC, 19: 594.
\textsuperscript{55} MPHC, 19: 595, 9: 371-72; Frontier Advance, 363.
suspicions, the British fostered the image of “haughty Violent and bloody” frontiersmen who “plundered, burnt and murdered without mercy” in their attempts to seize Indian lands. “The rebels not contented to act against their sovereign have also acted against the Indian nations and want to dispossess them of their Lands,” Hamilton informed a group of 683 Indians in 1778, also reminding them that “the King never tried to take any of your Lands.” A year later Lemoult assured the Wyandots that the Americans only intended to deceive them with their promises of friendship. They actually planned to take as much Indian land as possible, since they needed it to “defray part of the Expenses of their War.”

George Morgan and the Indian commissioners at Fort Pitt countered these accusations with boasts of strength and clumsy endeavors to set themselves up as protectors against raging British tyranny. If “those People with whom we are Contending shou’d Subdue us, your Lands your Trade your Liberty and all that is dear to you must fall with us, for if they wou’d Destroy our flesh and Spill our Blood which is the same with theirs; what can you who are no way related to or Connected with them Expect?” they asked. “We live upon the same Ground with you, & the same Island is our common Mother,” Morgan stressed to the Senecas in 1776. Unlike the lying and cheating British who “want to involve you in war” without concern “if [the Indians] should all be killed or drove from their Country,” “we desire to sit down under the same Tree of Peace with

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56 Frontier Retreat, 122; Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 129; MPHC, 9: 455, 10: 340.
you," he added. The British must be weak if they needed the Indians to fight their battles for them.\textsuperscript{57}

Clark was not interested in sitting blissfully under the tree of peace with any Indians, but he did emphasize some of the same points that Morgan and the commissioners did in his efforts to draw nations away from the British. He recited several accounts of the current conflict between the king and colonies, blaming the monarch for oppressing the settlers either by exacting poverty-inducing tribute or by refusing to allow them to manufacture cloth and ammunition. In both versions he included the warning that the British intended to subject the Indians to the same injustices as soon as the Americans were under control. He also took great pains to discredit the British charges that the Virginians planned to take all the Indian lands, promising that he had no designs on their lands, that he would defend the lands from anyone who tried to take them by force, and that he would leave the country as soon as the English were driven out.\textsuperscript{58}

Unconvinced by these rhetorical devices, most chiefs and warriors deemed the British the more stable ally, largely because they seemed to have an abundance of resources. Next to the well-developed British Indian department, the colonists appeared to bungle everything, and most nations found Congress’s inability to provide supplies or to give generous gifts at treaties very unimpressive and generally unbecoming of a

\textsuperscript{57} Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 95; Calloway, Revolution and Confederation, 128; Morgan Letterbooks, 2: 35-36, 1: 80-81; Frontier Advance, 236-37.

\textsuperscript{58} George Rogers Clark Papers, 8: 124-25, 146-47, 244-45. Clark preferred intimidation to “soft speeches,” believing that the latter made the Indians exaggerate their own importance, 124-28, 243. This approach prompted De Peyster to counter with the accusation that the Americans used intimidation because they had no presents, MPHC, 9: 389.
trustworthy ally. Both Daniel Brodhead, continental commander at Fort Pitt from 1779 to 1781, and Clark insisted that if they could only procure a few more goods, they could secure the allegiance of many more tribes.\(^{59}\)

Despite the British edge in supply, the Americans attracted some allies because of their scattered demonstrations of military might. Before the Revolution began, the Delawares, Shawnees, and Mingos had encountered colonial armies in their territories and were not eager to repeat the experience. After Clark’s invasion of Illinois, fear of a large American army sweeping through their lands haunted every Indian nation along the Ohio. In July 1779 a frustrated Alexander McKee informed his superiors that many Shawnees, Delawares, and Wyandots were listening to the Americans and worrying about their growing power. “All means are taken to...encourage them to fight,” he said, but “they believe not further than they can see and fear acts stronger on them than all the arguments that can be made use of to convince them of the Enemy’s ill designs against their Lands.” The news of Congress’s alliance with France and Clark’s dramatic capture of Governor Hamilton at Vincennes both made the Americans look more attractive as well. By the last few years of the war, however, the threat of American military domination was nullified by the pressing demands of subsistence, and most nations who had wavered returned to the British fold.\(^{60}\)

\(^{59}\) *Frontier Advance*, 38-40, 54, 57, 162-65; *Frontier Retreat*, 76, 104.

\(^{60}\) *MPHC*, 9: 417 (quote), 19: 497. Most British and American diplomats believed that the Indians chose an ally based solely on which side was “winning.” Consequently, both sides frequently recounted the battles in the East, always portraying their side as the dominant force about to conclude the war at any moment. Such assumptions presupposed that the Indians had no agenda of their own to use as a standard for evaluating potential allies. While military success was certainly a factor in their decision, most Indians weighed ability to supply much more heavily. *LDC*, 2: 229; *Morgan Letterbooks*, 3: 68-70, 73, 82-83; *Frontier Defense*, 137, 282; *MPHC*, 9: 455.
Although establishing a reliable source for their staple goods and military firepower enabled the Indians to protect their land, many tribes discovered that alliance also generated considerable problems. Despite the tendency of colonial government and military leaders to blame the British for stirring up the Indians, they targeted nearby native villages, which proved to be much more accessible than Detroit. Virginia, Kentucky, and Pennsylvania militia (often accompanied by continental forces) crossed the Ohio at least ten times on official expeditions against Indian towns during the war. At least four additional invasions, supposedly aimed at British forts, ended up as skirmishes with local Indians, and countless other occasions witnessed unauthorized scouting parties engaging in hostilities with warriors determined to rid the northwest side of the Ohio of all trespassers. Those battles that resulted in complete destruction of Indian crops, food stores, and homes taxed even the British ability to re-supply.61

In addition to the destruction of property, choosing an ally often resulted in the disintegration of nations. For example, the Delaware council declared its neutrality at the beginning of the war, but immediately several bands split off and eventually joined hands with the British. By 1778, when the Americans dubiously persuaded the Delawares to become outright allies, even more warriors had drifted away. This trickle became a steady stream until 1781 when Brodhead, always suspicious of Delaware loyalty, destroyed their principal town, Coshocton, and forced the council to turn to Detroit for its necessities. Even after this attack, a remnant of Delawares led by Killbuck still cast their lot with the Americans.62

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A final problem resulting from alliance appeared during the peace settlement as representatives of the king and Congress met to conclude their hostilities. Most western land remained in Indian hands, but affiliation with the English had actually worked against the native objective to maintain an independent voice in diplomatic affairs. American negotiators viewed the Indians as British pawns whose fate would be decided along with that of the Mother Country. For the British, admitting the Indians to the negotiating table would have been a concession that the land did not belong to them and that the Indians had been operating freely throughout the war. Consequently, no tribes participated in the revolutionary settlement; instead, they found that the Americans planned to dictate peace terms just like they had after Dunmore’s War.

Military Strategy

While most Ohio Valley nations were deliberating over their responses to the Revolution and often finding themselves with internal divisions to match the chaotic world around them, the Mingos purposefully and conjointly took the offensive. In 1775 they had grudgingly attended the conference at Fort Pitt where the Americans urged them to “stay at home” and atone for their misdeeds in 1774. By the spring of 1776, however, they were creating fear on the frontier. Their military strategy involved small, decisive strokes designed to reinforce the Indians’ strength in the minds of western settlers and government authorities in Philadelphia and London. Threatening farms, blockhouses, towns, and even forts, they sought to clearly define the barrier between white and Indian territories and to emphasize their sovereignty over their homelands.\(^{63}\)

\(^{63}\) *Revolution on the Upper Ohio*, 15, 49-50, 95-96.
Although the Mingos were particularly focused on taking the war to encroaching settlers, they were not alone in this pursuit. As early as May 1776, the Wyandots had teamed up with the Mingos to maintain a perpetual watch on Fort Pitt. The Shawnee delegates returning from their mission to the Cherokees killed a man near Licking River and kidnapped three young women less than two months later; another group of Indians fired on some surveyors near the falls of the Ohio. Yet the Mingos, and especially their leader Pluggy, acquired the reputation of singlehandedly disrupting the frontier. After several fall raids near Wheeling, Greenbrier, Fort Randolph, and Hockhocking River, George Morgan pronounced that the Mingos were the “Perpetrators of all the mischief & Murder committed on the Frontier of Virginia” in the past year, despite the fact that Wyandot war parties had been spotted heading for Hockhocking less than two weeks before the attack there.64

Morgan was perhaps influenced by his June embassy to several Ohio tribes, all of whom were cooperative except the Mingos, who continued to insist that they had been ill-treated in the past. His opinion undoubtedly worsened a week after his visit when he learned that Pluggy had kidnapped two boys from Kentucky. Even though he secured the boys’ release, he likely deemed the Mingos unique troublemakers. As the recently appointed Indian agent responsible for harmonious relations in the west, he probably found it quite convenient to blame the increasingly troubled situation on one band of miscreants rather than a complex set of Indian grievances. Delaware and Shawnee

64 “Jehu Hay’s Journal of Indian Affairs, May 15, 1776,” Ser. 1, lot 687, 39, SIAP; Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 177, 186-87, 189, 205-06, 209-10, 212-14; Revolutionary Virginia, 7: 153-54; Morgan Letterbooks, 1: 13 (quote), 15, 2: 57; 1776 Morgan Letterbook, 66.
leaders, eager to deflect attention from renegade warriors within their own nations, also found the Mingos to be easy scapegoats for all of the region’s conflict.\textsuperscript{65}

Morgan was also quick to fault local settlers for fomenting Indian unrest. During the fall of 1776, rumors had escalated wildly that the Indians planned to follow up their attacks near Wheeling with a larger assault on Fort Pitt, and that a general Indian war was at hand. Morgan tried to quell these reports by pointing to the treaty conducted in late October and early November with the Delawares, Shawnees, and Six Nations in which the White Mingo promised to reprimand the Mingos on behalf of the Onondaga council. But he found the “idle and ridiculous tales” difficult to suppress. He worried that the alarm would be self-fulfilling because “parties have even been assembled to massacre our known Friends at their hunting Camps as well as messengers on Business to me,” exactly the kind of actions that ignited wars in the past. Furthermore, he complained to Congress, “it is not uncommon to hear even those who ought to know better, express an ardent desire for an Indian War, on account of the fine Lands those poor people possess.”

When he received instructions from Virginia in the spring of 1777 to facilitate an attack on Pluggy’s Town, he politely explained that such a move would undoubtedly unite all the Ohio Indians in opposition to the Americans, even those who occasionally denounced the Mingos themselves.\textsuperscript{66}

Despite Morgan’s optimism that an Indian war could still be prevented if the colonists avoided certain pitfalls, the Mingos, Wyandots, and numerous Shawnee and

\textsuperscript{65} 1776 Morgan Letterbook, 42, 59-61; Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 188; Morgan Letterbooks, 1: 19, 21-22, 48-49, 57-59.
\textsuperscript{66} Morgan Letterbooks, 1: 13, 61 (quotes), 72-75.
Delaware representatives proved that the spark had already been struck. Beginning in March 1777, warriors from these nations spread out across the region, hitting Kittanning on the Allegheny River, communities along Dunkard and Raccoon Creeks, Wheeling, and the three stations in Kentucky. From the summer of 1777 to the summer of 1778, they targeted Redstone, Greenbrier, Logtown, Ligonier, Hannastown, and Fort Randolph in addition to frequent return visits to Wheeling, Kentucky, and Dunkard Creek. Such a wide geographic scope became possible as tribes such as the Senecas from Allegheny, Ottawas, Chippewas, Potawatomis, Kickapoos, Mascoutens, Ouittanons, and Menominees also declared against encroaching Americans.67

Most of these parties consisted of 20-30 Indians who typically took several prisoners, killed a few people, burned houses and barns, and destroyed as much livestock as possible. Occasionally, they would unite to tackle a particularly formidable object, such as the 210 men who descended on Fort Henry near Wheeling in September 1777 or the 400 who besieged Boonesborough for nearly two weeks a year later. But even on these larger missions, their success came from breaking up into smaller units and terrorizing families or ambushing unsuspecting militiamen rather than actually breaching a fort’s walls. Although no single battle inflicted crippling damage on the frontier, the

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cumulative effect of such widespread attacks produced the desired results: settlers fled eastward or abandoned their property to form fortified blockhouses for community protection. In Kentucky, a Virginia militia detachment arrived in August 1777, just in time to prevent the three stations from being deserted. Nevertheless, the residents of Kentucky spent the year crammed into three forts and faced a winter with very little food or clothing and scarcely any horses to use in procuring more of these necessities. By August 1778, 800 to 1,000 Indians were rumored to be “murdering the people on the back of Pennsylvania and Virginia.” Between May and September, the nations near Detroit delivered 17 out of 34 prisoners and 81 scalps to Hamilton.68

Despite this obvious success during the war’s early years, the Indians’ military strategy was about to encounter two significant obstacles that threatened to erase much of its progress. In response to Clark’s summer 1778 capture of Kaskaskia, Cahokia, and Vincennes, Governor Hamilton decided to liberate these forts using an army comprised partially of Indians. He left Detroit on October 6 with about 40 British troops and 70 Indians, mostly Ottawas, Chippewas, and Potawatomis. En route to Vincennes he traveled through several Ottawa and Miami villages and entertained representatives and messages from the Shawnees, the Chickasaws, and several tribes from the Wabash and Illinois regions. Many of these Indians joined his army or provided vital intelligence, thus enabling him to retake Vincennes with ease in December. Although Clark surprised

and captured Hamilton in February 1779, the expedition itself served as a unifying force for many Ohio Valley Indians. Hamilton’s army became a moving hub, coordinating the movements of Indians from Wisconsin to the Allegheny River. In the process, many nations grew excited by the prospect of a powerful army and some turned their attention to grand strategies for sweeping the Americans across the Appalachians, but native autonomy in devising military operations also came under attack. Indeed, during the remaining years of the Revolution, the British became more insistent about dictating martial moves.69

While Hamilton was responding to American initiatives on the Ohio Valley’s western front, the Delawares, Shawnees, Wyandots, and Mingos grew concerned about activity on the eastern front. In late October 1778, Gen. Lachlan McIntosh advanced across the Ohio River, first building a fort (named after himself) at the mouth of Beaver Creek and then pushing into Delaware territory to plant Fort Laurens on the west bank of the Tuscarawas River. The Indians reacted to this bold move in two ways. After spending considerable time counseling together, they unleashed a barrage of attacks on Fort Laurens, employing their pattern of small, decisive strikes with great effectiveness. They ambushed relief parties, killed messengers traveling between Fort Pitt and Fort Laurens, harassed soldiers who ventured onto the road near the fort, and actually laid siege to the fort numerous times, despite the efforts of the Delaware council, still technically supporting the Americans, to bring peace to the immediate vicinity. In late

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May 1779, nearly 200 Indians, mostly Shawnees, had gathered at the Mingo town to attempt another Laurens assault, only to be dispersed by the news that the Shawnee towns were being attacked by militia from Kentucky. Before another army could be gathered, the Americans abandoned Fort Laurens in August. The immediate threat had been eliminated, but the ability of McIntosh and his men to easily establish a foothold in Indian territory was disconcerting to local chiefs and warriors.70

In addition to responding to the colonists’ thrust into their homelands with quick military strikes, the Ohio Indians also asked the British for assistance. After their unsuccessful attempts to demolish strongholds like Forts Henry, Boonesborough, and Donnally, most war chiefs recognized that they needed artillery to topple fortified structures. They also felt comfortable calling upon the English to fulfill their alliance responsibilities. Hamilton had repeatedly promised that if an enemy army invaded their territory, he would protect them. That time was at hand, they reminded Capt. Richard Lernoult, commanding at Detroit in Hamilton’s absence. In fact, they were rather “displeased of the Governors attending to so distant a part when so large body of the enemy threatened their Lands so near hand.” Lernoult tried to appease them by telling them to await reinforcement from Niagara, but eventually he relented and sent Capt. Henry Bird with some volunteers, cannon, and ammunition to bolster the planned assault on Fort Laurens. When the mission was aborted because of the attack on the Shawnee towns, Lernoult scolded the Wyandots and Shawnees for leaving their father alone.71

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Requesting military aid introduced a new element to British-Indian relations. Crown officials had always believed themselves to be in charge of Indian affairs, which included directing or curtailing native offensive maneuvers. If English resources were going to be used, they insisted on controlling the operation. Having the Indians actually ask for assistance only encouraged this conviction. From the British-allied Indians’ perspective, however, seeking support from the powerful newcomers did not entail relinquishing their authority over expeditions. They consulted with leaders at Detroit, Niagara, and Michilimackinac just as they did with their Indian neighbors, but they never blindly followed British directions, especially if they conflicted with decisions that had already been made in Indian councils. For example, in November 1776 several Mingo, Shawnee, and Wyandot leaders asked permission to take up the hatchet against the “Virginians,” even though they had been attacking the frontiers for most of the year. When Hamilton advised them to stay at home, they ignored him, persisted in their strikes against settlers and travelers, and sent back a message saying that they thought he “was joking with them” when he told them to remain quiet.72

This struggle for military leadership was perhaps best on display in 1780 when an army of approximately 1,000 Indians and 150 whites marched into Kentucky. The Shawnees, Mingos, and others had again requested British aid in the winter of 1779-1780, and De Peyster, now commanding at Detroit, was eager to comply in an effort to reverse the gains the Americans had made the previous year. He sent Captain Bird and Alexander McKee to command the troops, along with several other Indian Department

72 “Jehu Hay’s Journal,” Ser. 1, lot 687, 78-79, SLAP.
employees and the requisite artillery and ammunition. Before the small contingent left
Detroit, De Peyster instructed McKee to keep the Indians under control. “They must
know that taking a few scalps is not the object of the present enterprise,” he said. When
the combined Indian and British army reached the Ohio River, Bird devised a plan to
attack the fort at the falls of the Ohio, hoping to destroy that base before Clark could
return to it with reinforcements. The Indians argued, however, that Martin’s and
Ruddle’s stations on the Licking River were more appropriate targets because “it could
not be prudent to leave their villages naked & defenceless in the neighbourhood of those
Forts.” Bird and McKee acquiesced only to find that more arguments were forthcoming.
They clashed with the Indians over battle tactics at the two forts, the treatment of
prisoners, the salvaging of livestock, and further military operations, ultimately heading
back to Detroit with 470 prisoners and victories over two forts but traveling with the
knowledge that all of their proceedings had been dictated by the Indians.73

Although 1779-1783 contained many more large-scale expeditions than the early
years of the war, the Indians had certainly not jettisoned their “small strike” approach to
the fighting. Even while combined assaults on Fort Laurens or the Licking River forts
were being planned, raiding parties continued to attack the entire expanse of the Ohio
frontier: Bedford County, Ligonier, Hannastown, Pittsburgh, Brush Creek, Redstone,
Greenbrier, Wheeling, southwest Virginia, all of Kentucky, and the lower Wabash River
near Vincennes. The Potawatomis and Miamis occasionally patrolled the Wabash and

73 MPHIC, 9: 582, 10: 377-79, 394-95 (first quote at 394), 419, 19: 528-34, 538-47 (second quote
at 541), 553; Maude Ward Lafferty, The Destruction of Ruddle’s and Martin’s Forts in the Revolutionary
War (Frankfort, KY: Kentucky Historical Society, 1957).
Illinois regions, dispatching heedless American soldiers or vulnerable river travelers. In 1780, Westmoreland County magistrates reported that forty-three people had been killed or captured by the end of April, and De Peyster revealed a month later that the “Delawares and Shawnees are...daily bringing in Scalps & Prisoners.” After enduring substantial pressure in 1780, Kentuckians complained that 1781 was even worse, recording forty-seven killed or captured between January and April. “The Savages are constantly pecking at us,” John Floyd lamented to Clark, adding that the only reason the settlers remained in Kentucky was that they lacked the means to return eastward. Despite De Peyster’s admonition that “the Little war is by no means the thing,” the Indians proved that their raids could be as devastating as a large invasion.74

In addition to “constantly pecking” at the communities along the Ohio and its tributaries, the Shawnees, Wyandots, Delawares, Mingos, Kickapoos, Mascoutens, Miamis, and even the Lakes Indians aimed to disrupt commerce, supply, and communication along the river. After the Americans extended their territory to Kaskaskia and Cahokia in 1778, they quickly learned what the British had discovered in the 1760s when they claimed the region from the French: it was difficult to support Illinois from Fort Pitt if the Indians in the intervening territory were hostile. Many parties sent to scout river traffic were on reconnaissance missions, seeking to get advance

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notice of approaching colonial armies, but many were specifically prepared to ambush the slow-moving boats carrying the large influx of families into Kentucky. In the spring of 1780, there were approximately 2,000 warriors watching the Ohio and Wabash Rivers, and many river travelers were killed or captured.  

Sometimes river attacks could have the same impact on the war as decisive land victories. For example, in October 1779, 135 Wyandots, Shawnees, Mingos, and Delawares lured a supply convoy conducted by Col. David Rogers toward land and proceeded to rout the entire party, killing Rogers and 45 other men and taking 14 prisoners. After a year in which the Americans seemed to be establishing firmer footing in native territory, this check to their invasion benefited both Indians and the British at a particularly opportune time. Another critical river battle occurred in August 1781, when Joseph Brant and his army of 100 whites and Indians ambushed a comparable party of militiamen led by Col. Archibald Lochry of Westmoreland Country. Lochry and his men were moving downriver to connect with Clark, who was planning a major offensive across the Ohio and toward Detroit. By killing and capturing Lochry's entire party as well as engaging in smaller attacks in the ensuing days, the combined British and Indian forces thwarted Clark's expedition. In both of these instances, the impetus to control the Ohio River served to unite Indians with disparate interests.

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75 Frontier Advance, 120; Frontier Retreat, 160-64; MPHC, 9: 477, 10: 398, 526, 583; George Rogers Clark Papers, 8: 581, 19: 176.

76 For the attack on Rogers see Frontier Retreat, 79-94, 105-06; MPHC, 10: 368, Pennsylvania Archives, 12: 189; "De Peyster to Lt. Col. Brown, April 5, 1780," reel M-350, BHP. For Lochry's defeat, see MPHC, 10: 509-18, 530, 19: 655, 658; Pennsylvania Archives, 9: 458. Alexander McKee estimated that between the Ohio River attacks and the Indian army's activity before encountering Clark, nearly 200 Americans were killed or captured, including 30 officers, MPHC, 10: 518.
Guarding the Ohio and fending off a common enemy were not always enough to unite Indians separated by longstanding grievances. When American hostilities became particularly egregious, however, nations formerly indifferent to the plight of their neighbors rallied in response to these atrocities. Cornstalk's murder in November 1777 galvanized the Wyandots, Mingos, some Delawares, and Lake Indians as well as the Shawnees into renewed assaults on the Kentucky and Greenbrier frontiers. Similarly, when a party of militia slaughtered ninety Moravian Delawares "in cool blood" and killed several American-allied Indians who actually held commissions in the colonial army during the spring of 1782, Chippewas and Ottawas from as far as Michilimackinac joined the Delawares, Shawnees, Wyandots, Mingos, Potawatomis, Miamis, and other Wabash Indians gathered at Upper Sandusky to oppose additional enemy advances. Some of this assembly decisively defeated a 600-man army commanded by Col. William Crawford that eagerly hoped to silence all of the western Indians by thrashing this large group. Instead, the Indians did the overpowering, killing and capturing 250 soldiers including Crawford, who was tortured and burned at the stake in revenge for the Moravian massacre.77

In October 1782 Haldimand and De Peyster began to urge the Indians to refrain from further attacks because peace talks between the British and Americans had begun. Most nations complied with this directive but were shocked a month later when Clark led

a late season campaign against the Shawnee towns, burning and ransacking several
villages and killing ten Indians. Throughout the winter of 1782-1783, the Six Nations,
Delawares, Shawnees, Wyandots and others registered their outrage with British officials
at Detroit and Niagara. They had put down the hatchet in good faith, they argued, only to
have Clark seize the opportunity to lay waste to their lands. Despite De Peyster’s
admonition against returning to war, the Indians descended upon colonial settlements in
the spring, killing and capturing forty in the Fort Pitt region by the end of April, including
17 in one particularly bloody week. The backcountry residents should have been
prepared: the Indians had struck the frontier with similar vengeance in the spring of 1780
after John Bowman and his party of Kentuckians had burned several Shawnee towns in
1779.78

Collective responses to atrocities and perceived injustices combined with
individual assaults on farms and outlying settlers to reinforce the Indians’ power
throughout the course of the Revolution. During the war’s early years, frontier leaders
worried that they would be overrun entirely as many families abandoned their
homesteads and returned to the east. Increased immigration beginning in 1779
strengthened the colonists’ hold on the territory, but the Indians countered with multiple
coordinated attacks that created an alternate kind of threat to the persistent raiding. In
addition to notable victories at Martin’s and Ruddle’s stations in 1780, against Lochry’s
force in 1781, and against Crawford at Sandusky in 1782, large native armies also scored

17, 1783,” reel M-360, BHP; Pennsylvania Archives, 10: 22, 45, 168; George Rogers Clark Papers, 8: 220, 231.
major successes at Hannastown, which they burned in July 1782, killing and capturing about twenty people in the process, and the Blue Licks in Kentucky, where the Indians completely routed the Kentucky militia, taking out a high percentage of the region’s militia captains and county magistrates. Each of these triumphs was another bid for the Indians to become a recognized negotiating partner.  

Unfortunately for the Indians, however, military success was accompanied by military reprisals that were also crippling. The Americans pillaged the Shawnee towns three times, destroyed the Delaware capital of Coshocton, and burned several Seneca and Muncy villages on the Allegheny River. Even large Indian armies occasionally met defeat, such as the May 1780 expedition against St. Louis and Cahokia that was repulsed after the Spanish officers at St. Louis received advance notice of the approaching army. These losses and Clark’s boastful posturing often produced morale failure within tribal councils, sometimes preventing the various nations from attacking seemingly vulnerable positions. Devastating losses also made the Indians more dependent upon the British. Consequently, Detroit increasingly became the center of united native activity, threatening to supersede common regional identities or to overshadow Indian objectives for maintaining land and sovereignty.  

Dissemblance  

Because military strikes carried great risk in addition to great reward, several tribes opted to disguise their movements by avoiding formal commitments to any specific

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79 For the attack on Hannastown, see George Rogers Clark Papers, 19: 110; MPHC, 10: 628; For the battle at Blue Licks, see George Rogers Clark Papers, 19: 89-109, 112-13; DAR, 21: 114-16; MPHC, 10: 634.  
80 For the attack on St. Louis, see MPHC, 9: 558-59, 19: 529-31; DAR, 18: 209.
policy or group of people. Some nations unintentionally disassembled as a result of internal divisions. Both the Shawnees and the Delawares had several leaders who formed their own factions, moved to different locations, and adopted contrasting responses to the war when they found themselves in conflict with other chiefs. These divisions made it difficult for British and American observers to determine native loyalties, but they clarified seemingly disconnected behavior. Other tribes chose a subtler path, remaining unified but allowing both crown officials and colonists to think that their allegiance could be won or lost at any moment. By creating confusion and anxiety for the warring whites, the Indians carved out more autonomy for themselves.

The Wyandots best embodied this dissimulation strategy. In 1776 they were one of the first nations to join the Mingos in attacking the frontiers, but they managed to avoid the “banditti” label, perhaps because they held considerable regional influence. When George Morgan made his first trip to the Ohio tribes after being appointed Indian agent in hopes of scheduling a treaty date, both the Shawnees and Delawares directed him to the Wyandots, saying that they were “in strict Friendship with fourteen different Western Nations” and consequently carried more weight than other Indians. By the fall, the general consensus on the Wyandots’ political inclinations was mixed but dubious at Fort Pitt and in Philadelphia. Their refusal to attend the 1776 Fort Pitt treaty, their mysterious councils at Detroit, and their accusations that the Americans had “two Mouths,” sometimes speaking peace and sometimes breathing threats, convinced many colonial officials that the Wyandots intended to be hostile. Balancing the scale was the chief Half King’s pledge of neutrality, given to American ambassador and trader William
Wilson at the end of the summer, and the Wyandot council’s insistence that it wanted peace regardless of the actions of some of its young men.\textsuperscript{81}

Although Moravian missionary David Zeisberger hoped that the Wyandots were “almost inclin’d to lay down the Hatchet & to live in friendship with the Americans,” during the winter of 1777, their extensive raiding, culminating with their participation in the siege of Fort Wheeling in September, revealed that they did not intend to permit settlers to push farther and farther west. Nevertheless, they continued to hold open the door of peace, agreeing to visit General Hand at Fort Pitt, only to change their minds and insist that Hand meet them with the Delawares at Coshocton. The following year, they sent more mixed messages. In May they attacked Forts Randolph and Donnally and harassed the Greenbrier region. Shortly thereafter they chastised the Delawares for acting in the American interest, threatening to “fall upon” Coshocton if the Delawares failed to desist from thwarting their adventures. “All thoughts of peace with the Nations, especially the Wiandots is in vain,” Zeisberger declared in July 1778. Two weeks later they “sued for Peace,” asking if the colonists intended to march on Detroit. If there were no plans to invade Detroit and, by extension, Indian country, the Wyandot captain promised to “immediately drop my Tomhawk & the back Nations shall do the same.”

\textsuperscript{81} 1776 Morgan Letterbook, 34; Morgan Letterbooks, 2: 59, 62-64 (“two Mouths” at 62); LDC, 5: 554; Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 203. The question of how the Wyandots were going to relate to the warring parties divided the Delawares in addition to the Americans. White Eyes and Killbuck were convinced that the Wyandots were hiding the tomahawk in their bosom to deliver to other nations and collectively strike the Virginians. Captain Pipe, another Delaware leader, denied such activity or motives. Morgan Letterbooks, 1: 18-22.
Despite this pronouncement, no Wyandots made the trip to Fort Pitt for the September treaty.\textsuperscript{82}

The Wyandots’ ability to navigate between the British and the Americans acquired greater urgency in November and December 1778 when General McIntosh erected Fort Laurens on the Tuscarawas River in the heart of the Ohio Country. In response to McIntosh’s ultimatum that “any nation or people who would not...Join us heartily by taking up the Hatchet with us,” the Half King announced that he was “Rejoiced” to hear the message asking him to treat for peace. He would consult with his fellow chiefs “over the Lakes” and act in accordance with their counsel. Meanwhile, he asked that the Americans “keep at some distance from my Towns,” so he could “prevent my foolish young men from doing any harm.”\textsuperscript{83}

Having bought some time with the “Virginians,” a Wyandot delegation hastened to Detroit where they called upon Lernoult for assistance. “Father, you formerly told me to keep a look out, and when I saw the Virginians coming to acquaint you of it. You then told me you would come to my assistance, and drive them before you like a Flock of sheep. I now tell you Father, they are nearer to me than to you. I once more remind you of your engagement of coming yourself, or sending some of your chiefs to see your Children fight...If you do neither one or the Other, I shall begin to think you are as smooth Tongued as the Virginians.” This veiled warning prompted a flustered Lernoult to write to Hamilton (soon to be ousted from Vincennes by Clark) with the news that “the

\textsuperscript{82} Morgan Letterbooks, 1: 30, 46-49 (at 30); Frontier Defense, 5-6, 19, 54-68; Pennsylvania Archives, 5: 446-47; Frontier Advance, 67-73, 82, 117-19, 129, 132-33 (at 119, 132, 129).

\textsuperscript{83} Frontier Advance, 180, 187.
wiandots are much displeased at you and me & have declared if we do not perform our Promisses in assisting them with Men and all their wants They will no longer listen to us.” Back at their home in Sandusky and in the Tuscarawas region, the Wyandots demonstrated great “displeasure” toward the Americans as well, assailing travelers near Fort Laurens, harassing soldiers from the garrison, hosting a growing body of Indians determined to launch a massive siege on the fort, and threatening the Delawares with death if they refused to sever all communication with the “Virginians.”

Then, in April 1779, the Half King abruptly solicited an alliance with the Delawares, hoping that they could work together to strengthen themselves and bring peace to the region. He pronounced the English “good for nothing” and vowed to “not listen any more to [their] speeches.” Col. Daniel Brodhead, commanding at Fort Pitt in place of the deposed McIntosh, was delighted and asked the Wyandots to come to Pittsburgh to formalize the relationship, assuring them that the French king would be pleased with their choice to support the Americans and fight “the English & their Allies.” Secretly, he hoped to capitalize on the Wyandots’ influence with the western nations and eventually pit them against the Mingos.85

While Brodhead was strategizing to take advantage of his new weapon and the Wyandots were declaring that “nothing at all shall hinder [us] no more in going Straighteway to [our] Brothers the Virginians,” the British were seething at the apparent infidelity of the Indians. Henry Bird had arrived at Sandusky in early May with four

84 Frontier Advance, 192, 220, 223-25 (first quote at 220); George Rogers Clark Papers, 8: 109; MPHC, 9: 428.
85 Frontier Advance, 265-66, 278-79, 311 (at 266, 278); Pennsylvania Archives, 12: 128.
artillery pieces, only to find that the Wyandots were in the process of making peace with the Americans and were determined to "sit still." "Nothing can be done with these wretches," he complained. Matters grew even bleaker for Bird when the Shawnees were drawn away at the end of the month by attacks on their towns. The Wyandots chose this opportunity to disperse as well, attracting Lernoult's ire. He scolded them for pursuing their hunting at the expense of their father's interests and for flirting with the Americans who were only interested in taking their land.86

The principal Wyandot chiefs, Half King, Bawbee, and Dawascheht, tolerated these insults because they were following a particular strategy. By mid-June Brodhead became "Weary of Waiting for the Wyandots." Four days later the Delawares reported on their behalf that they were "on the Road" and that nothing would hinder them any longer. After another week, however, Brodhead's suspicions were confirmed. The trader Alexander McCormick, who lived near the Wyandot towns, sent a secret message to Fort Pitt, saying that the Wyandots "are not inclined to make a proper Peace with the Americans at present, they only mean to decieve You a while untill such times as their Corn gets hard...after which their Tomhawk will be as Sharp against You as ever." By feigning friendship, they sought to protect their towns from a colonial invasion that seemed imminent after McIntosh built Fort Laurens.87

86 Frontier Advance, 308-10, 346 (at 309-10); MPHC, 19: 412, 10: 340-41. Relations between Bird and the Wyandots soured instantly when Bird tried to intervene in their handling of a prisoner shortly after arriving at Upper Sandusky. After the Indians put the prisoner to death, Bird declared, "Nothing would satisfy me more than to see such Devils as you are all killed." Given the fact that the Wyandots had already sought an alliance with the Americans, little could be done to salvage the relationship after this rift. It was perhaps this ill will that prompted the Wyandots to undertake their own expedition toward Fort Pitt when Bird commanded the combined Indian army to Kentucky in 1780. Pennsylvania Archives, 7: 525; MPHC, 9: 404, 584, 19: 524, 529.
87 Frontier Advance, 324, 366, 379-83 (at 366, 380, 382); Pennsylvania Archives, 12: 123.
After John Heckewelder confirmed McCormick’s report and another month passed with no Wyandot visitors, Brodhead relinquished hope for a peace settlement. In August 1779, however, the Americans abandoned Fort Laurens, and Brodhead led an expedition against the Seneca and Muncy towns on the upper Allegheny River. When he returned, the Wyandots were waiting for him at Fort Pitt. The fiery and impetuous Brodhead laid down the gauntlet: peace could only be negotiated if they promised to join in destroying the English and the Mingos and if they left hostages at Fort Pitt until they complied with these terms. The Wyandots countered with a promise to “throw off...the English,” but they claimed to “love all the nations” and refused to do battle with them. Furthermore, they asked that the Americans desist from attacking the Shawnees and specified that if the colonists marched on Detroit, they should travel via the Allegheny or Wabash Rivers rather than passing through Wyandot territory. If these conditions were met, they would agree to peace. Brodhead was enraged at their audacity in placing stipulations on him and proceeded to remind them that he was “a warrior as well as a Councillor” and to threaten that any nations who dared to oppose the Americans would not be able “to enjoy peace or property” “after the English are driven from this Island.” After this blustering speech, the Wyandots chose the path of outright hostility for the remainder of the war.88

Despite their avowedly anti-American position in the Revolution’s later years, the Wyandots pointedly refused to completely play by British rules. As early as April 1778, they told Gen. Guy Carleton, British commander in Canada, that they expected to claim

88 Pennsylvania Archives, 7: 525-26, 542; Frontier Retreat, 40, 43, 66-72, 109, 193, 248, 217-20 (at 69, 72).
the “Lands they should drive the Rebels from...by right of conquest,” a clear challenge to the crown’s contention that it controlled all the land. Likewise, they balked at the British insistence that all prisoners be turned over to the commanding officer at Detroit, choosing to keep many in their towns. By dissembling and resisting British efforts to secure total compliance, they retained autonomy and made themselves indispensable even as they relied on outsiders for ammunition and other supplies. Dangling their allegiance before British and American forces, they lured both sides into viewing Wyandot support as vital to their cause and almost within their grasp. Meanwhile, they protected their lives and property, exercised their sovereign political authority, and struck many blows against those who encroached on Indian territory.89

Although the Wyandots were the most successful at concealing their motives from British and American eyes, other nations also proved enigmatic, particularly after Clark’s capture of the Illinois forts and Vincennes gave the colonists a foothold in the region. For example, the Potawatomis living near the small British fort and trading post at St. Joseph seemed initially inclined to listen to Clark’s message in 1778, but Louis Chevallier, their principal British trader (although he was of French descent), and Lt. Thomas Bennett convinced them that “that step would be fatal to them.” Despite the diligent efforts of Cahokia’s Joseph Bowman and the French emissary Daniel Maurice Godefroy de Linctot to turn the tribes toward the Americans, Chevallier reported in March 1780 that the Potawatomis had “suddenly come out from a Sloth or rather a

lethargy, that three years of want have not been able to cure" and appeared to be fully supporting the British.90

Several months later, however, Canadian officials removed Chevallier from St. Joseph, accusing him of privately supporting the French and Americans and corrupting the Potawatomis. His Potawatomi friends and customers were incensed. Recognizing that they could not afford to sever their British supply line, they responded to this affront by subtly undermining English interests whenever possible. They permitted Linctot to pass through their territory unscathed, contrary to De Peyster’s orders. They executed their military maneuvers half-heartedly, rarely even engaging the Americans on the Ohio or at Vincennes. Their boldest act of defiance came in February 1781, when they allowed a mixed party of Spanish militiamen and Indians led by Chevallier’s son to capture Fort St. Joseph without a fight. While they never openly embraced the Americans, they worked hard to keep the British at a distance and to foster an air of mystery about their allegiance.91

Like the Wyandots, the St. Joseph Potawatomis discovered that keeping both the British and the Americans off balance enabled them to more effectively pursue their own agenda. By dancing in the zone between outright loyalty to the crown and having

90 MPHC, 9: 378, 390, 392-93, 395-96 466, 479, 482-83, 10: 286, 348-53, 380-81 (at 286, 380); George Rogers Clark Papers, 8:172, 311-15, 394-95. Like the Potawatomies, many other nations flirted with the Americans after Clark’s Illinois conquest. At one time Clark estimated that 1,000 Wabash and Illinois Indians supported him, but by 1782, he lamented that all the tribes who had once treated with him had fallen away except the Piankeshaws and a few Mississippi Indians. George Rogers Clark Papers, 8: 553, 606, 19: 136.
their supplies terminated, they could protect their national existence without sacrificing the ability to direct their political affairs. Occasionally, however, such dissembling also fooled other Indians and threatened to damage intertribal relationships. For example, a visiting delegation of Cherokees entered into an elaborate treaty with Brodhead in the summer of 1779. When they moved on from Fort Pitt and Coshocton, however, they encountered a group of Indians at the Shawnee town Wakatomica who chastised them severely for dealing with the Americans. The Cherokee spokesman dropped the hatchet at their council fire and insisted that he “did not receive [the tomahawk] from my Heart” nor did he intend to use it against any Indians or Englishmen. The council continued with a resolution to turn the hatchet against the Americans, but the trust between Indians was probably not repaired as quickly.92

*Effectiveness of Indian Responses*

Unfortunately for the Ohio Indians, coherent schemes for using the Revolution to achieve particular ends often served cross-purposes. Casting their lot with a definite ally seemed to shield their land, but it severely hampered the Indians’ ability to bargain with both sides. At the same time, pan-Indian efforts strengthened native demands but left the tribes vulnerable to two warring parties and the threat of inadequate supplies. Collective neutrality might have preserved both objectives, but the British and the Americans actively sought to undermine genuine attempts of Indians to interact with both sides. The greatest blow to native sovereignty came at the end of the war when the Indians were

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excluded from the peace treaty, despite their increased power and influence during the Revolution’s final years.

Although these setbacks discouraged some Indian leaders, their position relative to the British and Americans had been strengthened by the war in important ways as well. Contrary to the common notion that the Revolution began with fighting between the British and the Americans with the Indians eventually being forced to choose a side, the Indians actually precipitated the conflict in the western theater. When the Mingos grew tired of war in 1777, the Wyandots chiefs reminded them that “they had begun the war, & had always encouraged others to go to war; they had now brought it to pass what they always had wished for...therefore [they] could give them no other advice than to be strong & fight as men.” By threatening settlements, forts, and towns in raiding parties and joining together to accomplish large-scale victories such as the battles at Martin’s and Ruddle’s stations, Sandusky, and the Blue Licks, the Indians established themselves as an increasingly fearsome presence, forcing both sides to alter their battle plans and to rethink their notions of how the war could develop in the west.93

In addition to their military success, the Indians along the Ohio Valley corridor gained leverage in their dealings with outsiders by presenting multiple images of themselves to those intruding on their internal and external affairs. Some tribes staunchly protected Detroit, others passed information to Fort Pitt, still others ignored both sides, and many pretended to support one side while acting in the interests of the other. Because of these varied responses, unified action could be nearly impossible to generate,

93 Frontier Defense, 167.
but Clark’s post-truce attack on the Shawnee towns in November 1782 galvanized the Indians to resist the forthcoming peace treaty.

In the war’s aftermath, as American envoys endeavored to dominate peace negotiations with assorted Ohio Valley tribes, the Indians’ gains during the Revolution seemed to be at risk. Despite the United States’ claims, however, Indians recognized that their land had not been conquered. They had been snubbed during the political wrangling that ended the war, but all admission to future bargaining tables could not be bloodlessly blocked while they retained so many powerful weapons, not least of which was the ability to keep the blustering colonies off balance. Strategies such as unification and forging alliances that had been stymied by the Revolution’s particular circumstances could be tweaked to effectively face a different enemy. While the war for American independence might have ended in the minds of Europeans and colonists, the war for the Indians’ landed independence was just getting underway.
Chapter Three: Revised alliances

Although the winter of 1782-1783 was more “pleasant and mild” in Detroit than it had been for several years, the 2,500 Indians living in the fort’s vicinity were not celebrating nature’s beneficence. Despite enjoying a banner year for military success in the West, including decisive victories over sizable American forces at Blue Licks and Sandusky, the nations residing between the Ohio River and the Great Lakes ushered in 1783 with considerable apprehension. In the fall of 1782, their British allies had urged them to put down the hatchet while American and English diplomats attempted to hammer out a peace agreement. They had complied, only to fall prey to a band of Kentuckians led by George Rogers Clark, who destroyed seven unprotected Shawnee villages in November, killing or capturing seventeen residents and burning 10,000 bushels of corn. This underhanded move ignited a storm of protest from both the western Indians and the Six Nations, but it also caused them to distrust the distant negotiations from which they had been excluded. Major Arent Schuyler de Peyster, the commander at Detroit, noticed the Indians’ “drooping spirits” and reported in January 1783 that they had begun to “fear they are to be the dupes of the war.”

Rising anger toward the Americans and growing suspicion of the British, who kept advocating a cease fire while the colonists were launching attacks on their homes, were not confined to the Indians near Detroit. Representatives from four prominent...

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western tribes journeyed to the Cherokee villages to “establish a firm league and confederacy amongst the different tribes of Indians” intended to ward off the “cloud gathering in the north.” This delegation along with 1,200 Cherokee and Creek warriors traveled to St. Augustine, where they laid their grievances before British officials. In response to the Cherokees’ litany of depredations and concern that the English planned to “abandon their friends to the resentment of their enemies,” Indian agent Thomas Brown assured them that the king would be faithful to his allies, but he repeated the party line that they should attend to their hunting and planting and simply remain on the defensive.²

Observing the march of this large disgruntled force from the Holston River to Florida, North Carolina governor Joseph Martin alerted other southern leaders that this group intended to combine with British forces and reduce Fort Pitt before proceeding down the Ohio River, capturing Kentucky and Illinois in its wake. While this threat never materialized, other angry nations, particularly the Onondagas, Senecas, and Mohawks, determined to sharpen their axe again. They likened Clark’s attack on the Shawnee villages to the “unparalleled cruelties” exercised against the peaceful Moravian Indians in the spring of 1782 and the assault on the “Onandago Town” during General Sullivan’s 1779 campaign in which the Americans “put to death all the Women and Children, excepting some of the young Women that they carried away for the use of their Soldiers and were put to death in a more shameful and scandalous manner.” “We have been so often and so repeatedly deceived by the Rebels,” they declared, “that we can no

² “Thomas Brown to Carleton, Jan. 12, 1783,” reel M-359, BHP.
longer trust their Words.” This mistrust cast the already shady peace negotiations in an even dimmer light.³

As the Cherokees and Six Nations added their voices to the western Indians’ complaints, frustration spread rapidly in Indian country during the first half of 1783. Their fear that Clark would return in the spring with a larger army was not unwarranted. He spent much of the spring writing long letters to Virginia governor Benjamin Harrison insisting that the only way to establish a genuine peace with the Indians was to completely subjugate them. The Americans needed to disabuse their native enemies of the idea that they were timid and willing to negotiate peace at any cost, he said. The Indians “should be obligated to treat with us on our own terms...convinced that they [are] Inferiour to us,” and forced to acknowledge that “they are under obligations to us for the Very lands they live on,” he declared, adding that an army of 1,500 would be necessary to accomplish this goal.⁴

While Harrison tactfully avoided Clark’s call to arms, frontier settlers took matters into their own hands. In Washington County, Pennsylvania, residents were still receiving scalp bounties during the spring. A few months later, a group of 400 floated down the Ohio River and brazenly planted a settlement on the Muskingum River. When the Indians’ ire flared up at these outrages, the British Indian Department devoted its considerable influence to heading off violent retaliation. Although these agents did nothing to encourage goodwill toward the Americans, they were careful to avoid jeopardizing the peace process. This stance from an ally, who less than a year before had

championed all attacks on the frontier, contributed to the Indians' growing sense of uneasiness and isolation.5

If the threat of Clark's return and the increasingly frequent appearance of whites on the northwestern side of the Ohio were not enough to create Indian anxiety, rumors regarding the outcome of the far-off peace negotiations kept many villages in a state of alarm during the first half of 1783. Most nations seized every opportunity to remind British officials not to forget them in the treaty, perhaps causing them to react even more angrily when scattered reports about their land reached their ears. "We are informed that instead of prosecuting the War, we are to give up our lands to the Enemy," the Weas and Kickapoos reproached De Peyster in June. "[T]n endeavouring to assist you it seems we have wrought our own ruin." Several Six Nations chiefs demanded to know if it was true that the "English had basely betrayed them by pretending to give up their Country to the Americans without their consent or consulting them." If so, they thought it was "an act of cruelty and injustice that Christians only were capable of doing." Even a group of Ottawas living near Michilimackinac and far from any American colonists feared the consequences of the fact that the "Tree was fallen on the wrong side" with nothing having been "laid before them."6

Although this uncertain climate characterized almost all native communities west of the Appalachians, few Indian groups, even those living together in the Ohio Valley, responded in the same way. Having been the immediate victims of the Americans' most


recent attack, the Shawnees sought reassurance that they would avoid the same fate in the coming year. In January they expressed their concerns to British and Seneca representatives, both of whom counseled them to remain united with the Delawares and Wyandots for security. De Peyster casually mentioned the deployment of the 34th British Regiment to Detroit, giving the impression that he was offering those troops as reinforcement without explicitly making such a promise. Several months later, Shawnee ambassadors met with Maj. George Walls at the Falls of the Ohio regarding the exchange of prisoners. Despite the fact that Clark had coached Walls to stage the entire event as a means of determining the Shawnees' disposition, their interaction was amicable, at least on the surface.\footnote{MPHC, 11: 337-38, 20: 96; “George Walls speech to the Shawnee, May 3, 1783,” Ser. 1, lot 705, SIAP; “Walls speech to the Shawnee, July 7, 1783,” reel A-686, Haldimand Papers; George Rogers Clark Papers, 19: 218-19.}

These friendly exchanges masked the seething resentment harbored by many Shawnees who actively sought revenge. British agent Alexander McKee made repeated trips to Wakatomica to halt war parties, but most of his efforts were fruitless. As early as March, bands of Shawnees, Wyandots, Mingos, Cherokees, and Wabash tribes began to harass the entire Ohio River corridor, venturing as far inland as the Clinch River. By the beginning of May, forty people had been killed or captured in the Pittsburgh region alone. In mid-July a highly-publicized skirmish between Kentuckians, who crossed the river to steal horses from a Shawnee hunting party, and the Shawnee defenders of their property resulted in the death of three whites and one Indian. Shawnee chiefs tried to smooth over
this incident by telling Major Walls that their “young men is foolish as well as yours,” but the affair raised new tensions, complicating the fledgling relationship.\(^8\)

When the western Indians were not attacking frontier settlements or negotiating with American military personnel, they spent considerable time counseling together about the unpredictable state of their lives. Some of these gatherings took place in the privacy of their towns, but in many cases entire villages flocked to Detroit where they could consult with each other as well as demand answers from their British allies. From the middle of June to the middle of July, De Peyster entertained the Sauks, Wyandots, Ouiettanons, Kickapoos, Piankeshaws, Senecas, Hurons, Chippewas, Ottawas, Potawatomies, Shawnees, Delawares, and Miamis, all of whom wanted to know “what was to become of them and their lands.” A considerable number of Cherokee and Creek representatives, bringing requests from their women not to be forgotten, joined the throngs as well, adding to the swelling population of Cherokees who had settled among the Shawnees the year before. Many of these Indians responded impatiently to De Peyster’s admonition to refrain from mischief, recognizing that matters were undoubtedly more complicated than the British were letting on. Others like the Delawares actively restrained their warriors and also urged their neighbors to put down the hatchet. Both sides appealed to De Peyster for ammunition and other necessities, saying that if the British wanted them to focus on hunting, they would need to replace the ammunition expended during the past few years of war.\(^9\)


While De Peyster attempted to parry the Indians’ pointed questions, American ambassador Ephraim Douglass hastened through Sandusky en route to Detroit, where he hoped to share word of the official treaty proceedings. Captain Pipe welcomed him graciously on behalf of the Delawares (taking care to mention that his nation had not “voluntarily engaged in the War”), but the Wyandots, Shawnees, and Miamis seemed less interested in meeting with him than in taking their grievances to Detroit. Eventually Douglass reached Detroit, but De Peyster prevented him from speaking to the assembled nations, moving him on to Niagara where he was also barred from addressing the native crowds. Although they thwarted Congress’s plans in this instance, British agents realized that they would soon need to present some definitive account of the peace settlement if they were to retain the Indians’ interest, especially since influential Americans like George Morgan were actively encouraging various nations to reconcile themselves to the “Great Council of the United States.”

In early September, McKee convened most of the Ohio Indians and a large contingent of Lake Indians near Sandusky and delivered a speech from Sir John Johnson, superintendent of Indian affairs. Johnson announced that the king had thought best to end the “long, bloody, expensive and unnatural war,” agreeing to a boundary line between British and United States territory. Contrary to rumors, he stated that the Indians still held “right of Soil” and were “Sole Proprietors” of their lands, and he doubted that the Americans would try to take their country under the pretext of having conquered it. He urged them to refrain from further hostilities, return any prisoners among them, and to be united with each other so they could maintain their “consequence.” After McKee

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finished, Joseph Brant, representing a Six Nations deputation who had heard Johnson’s speech at Niagara, declared to the large audience that his people had resolved to lay their hatchets aside and to maintain a close watch over the 1768 boundary line to make sure that no Indians were deprived of their lands. He concluded with a ringing pronouncement that “there may be never hereafter a separation between us, let there be Peace or War, it shall never disunite us, for our interests are alike, nor should any thing ever be done but by the voice of the whole.”

When the conference had concluded, McKee claimed that all had gone well: the Indians had agreed to desist from hostilities and their doubts had been assuaged. In reality, the assembled nations had seized the opportunity to assert their own opinions on the appropriate ways to relate to their expansionist neighbors, opinions that McKee hoped to suppress. Midway through the proceedings, a Huron chief declared that he would not participate in returning white prisoners. “Whatever was taken from the Enemy should remain with us in order to strengthen our Nation,” he said. McKee promptly challenged this remark, and T’Sindatton responded with some conciliatory statements, but he never rescinded his previous declaration. Likewise, multiple speakers talked of putting down the hatchet, but they emphasized that they were keeping it near their sides rather than burying it completely, suggesting that Indian fears had not been entirely put to rest.

On the issue of native unity for the protection of Indian land, everyone agreed with Brant’s proposal, but the western Indians seemed eager to phrase it in their own

11 The Indians in attendance were the Wyandots, Delawares, Shawnees, Mingos, Ottawas, Chippewas, Potawatomies, Creeks, Cherokees, and Six Nations. No Wabash tribes made the trip. MPHC, 20: 174-83 (at 179-80); “Minutes of Transactions with Indians at Sandusky,” reel A-686, Haldimand Papers.

12 MPHC, 20: 180-83.
terms. "We hope no Nation will tamely give it [their land] up! It is the Gift of the Great God who made all things to us, and we have already spilt the best of our Blood in defending it," they announced, adding that they hoped the Six Nations would not lose sight of the genuine interests of the whole group. They wryly acknowledged that the Iroquois were indeed well prepared to guard the boundary line "since [they] were the people who fixed it."\textsuperscript{13}

These veiled references to discontent with the Six Nations did not prevent the western Indians from additional meetings with them, especially when the Americans and the English both seemed more threatening. A month after McKee's supposedly successful conference, a group of Six Nations, Delawares, Shawnees, and Cherokees called British generals McLean and Butler to their council fire near Niagara. They were greatly alarmed by American claims to have conquered them, which seemed to have resulted in increasing encroachment on Indian lands, both things that Johnson had assured them would not happen. But their complaints were reserved not only for the United States. "You have also repeatedly told us that you wou'd remain with and share the same fate with ourselves," they reminded the generals, "but on our serious Consideration we have reason to fear that we shall be left alone to defend our Women & Children and a Country that has so long supported them, against a people who seem determined to over run." Since the Indians were not even consulted in the peace settlement, they had serious doubts about British sincerity in protecting Indian interests, they added.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 176, 182.
\textsuperscript{14} 'Six Nations, Delawares, Shawnees and Cherokees to McLean and Butler, Oct. 2, 1783," reel A-686, Haldimand Papers. The Indians were also suspicious of the British because of fraudulent land claims by British officers, see MPHC, 11: 409-10, 435-36.
After using these fall conferences to announce their intent to remain unified and to defend their lands, most Ohio Valley Indians settled into watchful waiting, warily keeping both the British and the Americans within view as 1783 gave way to 1784. Watchfulness did not mean idleness, however. Convinced that the steady stream of emigrants to Kentucky (where the population now exceeded 8,000) could only indicate disaster for the nations north of the Ohio River, scattered parties launched raids into western Pennsylvania and Kentucky, some beginning long before the snow was gone. Several Shawnee chiefs blamed the Cherokees living among them for these winter attacks, promising to curb them in the future, but random strokes against American settlements continued throughout the year. These same leaders exchanged pleasantries with Gen. James Wilkinson, focusing on their mutual desire for peace and avoiding any discussion of land settlements. Rather than engaging in violence or talking with the objects of suspicion, most Indians spent the first half of 1784 “counciling amongst themselves.” In June, McKee spotted a delegation of Shawnees visiting the Potawatomies, ostensibly to renew their friendship, but he believed their “real business” to have a more sinister object, namely a revitalized confederacy extending from “one extremity of North America to the other.”

While the Indians kept watch over their land, delegates to Congress debated the best method to pry it from their grip. States such as New York and Pennsylvania were eager to purchase land within their borders from the Indians, but other representatives

insisted that "the Savages should without Compensation abandon Part of their Country to
the United States who claim it by Conquest & as a Retribution for the Expence &
Damages incurred by the hostile & cruel Conduct of the Savages." Ultimately, Congress
adopted the policy of emphasizing that the land had been legally transferred to the United
States from Britain as reimbursement for the destruction wrought by the Indians during
the Revolution. Since the Americans were so generous, however, they would draw a
boundary line between Indian and white territory, thus giving back some of the land to
the Indians, and even deign to offer token gifts at the proposed peace treaties. "[W]e
persuade ourselves that their eyes are open to their error and that they have found by fatal
experience that their true interest and safety must depend upon our friendship," the
committee on Indian Affairs concluded. 16

After fixing upon this strategy, Congress urged that peace, a boundary line, and
United States' possession of the western territory needed to be established as quickly as
possible because "lawless banditti and adventurers" were already poised to snatch up the
land. In the winter and spring of 1784, the federal and selected state governments bustled
about, appointing commissioners to meet with the Indians and instructing them to deal
firmly yet without provocation. As word of attacks on the frontier began to trickle
eastward, suggesting that the Indians were not keen to surrender their lands without a
struggle, treaty plans became bogged down with the necessity of raising troops to protect
the men heading westward to impertinently seize native land. Cries blaming the British
and Johnson's inflammatory speech at Sandusky for turning the Indians against the
Americans immediately arose and prompted a further accumulation of soldiers. Initially,

Congress had called for a single treaty with all the Indians of the northern and middle
departments. But in the interest of time, safety, and keeping the Indians as disunited as
possible, they charged the commissioners to meet with the nations separately.

Consequently, in October, New York and American delegates met with the Six Nations at
Fort Stanwix and inked a contract ceding vast tracts of land to the United States.17

The western Indians were outraged that the Six Nations had ventured to make a
treaty with the Americans without consulting them. Already suspicious that the Iroquois
regarded their lands with too much of a proprietary air, this “breach of faith” in the
Sandusky confederacy reignited old animosities. Commissioner Arthur Lee
acknowledged that the Six Nations chiefs had desired to postpone any resolution until
they could counsel with their western comrades, but “the decided language we held
obliged them to an immediate determination, which bids fair to prostrate their
confederation and its diabolical objects,” he wrote triumphantly. Predictions of an easy
follow-up treaty with the Shawnees, Wyandots, and Delawares circulated in Philadelphia,
although some savvier congressmen realized that the Indians had an “Aversion...to
treating seperately,” and could refuse the commissioners’ overtures.18

Having heard the disturbing news from Fort Stanwix, most western nations were
indeed skeptical about meeting with Lee and his colleagues, George Rogers Clark and
Richard Butler. To make matters even more uncertain, the commissioners decided in
early December 1784 to move the treaty from Cuyahoga to Fort McIntosh, citing difficult

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17 LDC, 21: 139, 406, 450-51, 494-95, 497, 525-26, 551, 571, 739-40, 763, 789-90, 815; JCC, 25:
681-92, 26: 124, 135, 153-54, 238, 460, 552; Pennsylvania Archives, 10: 119-25, 553-55; Hazard, ed.,
18 Consul Willshire Butterfield, ed., Journal of Capt. Jonathan Heart...to which is added the
Dickinson-Harmar Correspondence of 1784-5 (Albany: Joel Munsell’s Sons, 1885), 49; LDC, 22: 25;
LMCC, 7: 614.

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travel conditions during the winter for the change. Military commander Josiah Harmar, recently deployed to repair McIntosh's crumbling barracks, hastily sent 6,000 rations to Cuyahoga to prevent the Indians already assembled there from dispersing. A few weeks later, Lee authorized gifts of rum and gunpowder to be sent to other wavering nations waiting at Kuskuskies. Despite these incentives, only the Wyandots, Delawares, and several Ottawa and Chippewa chiefs were present when the proceedings began in January 1785.¹⁹

The treaty did not go well for the Indians. On January 14 they delivered a speech expressing their firm belief that the lands in question were their own. The commissioners answered in "a high tone," saying that since the Indians had "adhered during the war to the king of Great Britain, they were considered...a conquered people and had therefore nothing to expect from the United States, but must depend altogether upon their lenity and generosity." Harmar reported that this threat had "the desired effect," and Butler, Lee, and Clark proudly sent a copy of their handiwork to Philadelphia two weeks later.

In addition to the new boundary line adorning United States maps that severed most of present-day Ohio from its Indian owners, the Fort McIntosh treaty also required the nations to leave hostages until all white prisoners had been returned, to swear allegiance to the Americans, and to surrender any of their number who committed crimes in the states. The commissioners were particularly pleased that they had also reserved land within the Wyandot and Delaware tracts that the United States could use to build forts

and to access waterways. With these strokes of the pen, they announced that they had eradicated all Indian claims to land as far west as the Great Miami River.  

Even before rumors reached Fort McIntosh that some Kentucky inhabitants near Lexington were planning to ambush the Indians on their way home, the treaty proved to be completely unsatisfactory for the western nations and ensured that the war begun during the Revolution would resume. This time around, the enemy was not simply encroaching settlers and fort-building soldiers, but government officials wielding maps and compasses. While their land was in greater jeopardy than ever before, many chiefs objected even more strongly to the tone of the commissioners at both Fort McIntosh and Fort Stanwix (and later treaties as well), believing their identity as sovereign nations to have been trampled upon by swaggering Americans intent on declaring them a subjugated people. In order to defend both their land and sovereignty, various Indian nations sought to revise strategies they had employed during the previous decade of fighting to fit the new political context and to guarantee peace and safety for their communities.

Before they could formulate any long-term plans for responding to their aggressive neighbors, the western Indians had to process all the implications of the recent exchanges at Forts Stanwix and McIntosh. Having participated in the most recent proceedings, the Wyandots and Delawares were forced to leave hostages with General

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Harmar. Several weeks after the treaty had concluded, one of the Delaware captives escaped, causing Captain Pipe to soothe the diplomatic stir by handing over his son and nephew. By the beginning of June, both nations had brought in a total of fifteen white prisoners, demonstrating enough compliance to release their hostages and to guard the veneer of good will existing between them and the Americans, despite their dissatisfaction with the January conference.22

Meanwhile the Shawnees and Mingos denounced the treaty participants, hoping that none of the surrounding nations would “listen to anything the [Wyandots] or Dellowares may say on Behalf of the Americans as they have sold their Lands & themselves with it to them.” To ensure that even distant tribes learned of the American ill-treatment, they forwarded the messages to the Cherokees and Creeks and asked their British associates to spread the word among the Lake Indians. “You now see Trouble is coming upon us fast, we think it nigh at Hand. The Virginians are settling our Country & building Cabbins in every Place,” they fretted.23

Two months later, they returned the “high tone” of the commissioners in kind. Using the person of John Crawford, captured by the Mingo chief Captain Wolf for trespassing on Indian land, as bait, various Shawnee, Mingo, Cherokee, and Delaware chiefs called together a small group of American negotiators and rebuked them for saying nothing good at either Fort Stanwix or Fort McIntosh. Not only had they claimed to own all the country, they had “seized and detained” prisoners on both occasions, all the while neglecting to kindle the council fire at the accustomed place, Detroit. Speaking for his

23 "Shawnee and Mingo speech, March 20, 1785," Ser. 1, lot 713, SIAP.
fellow chiefs and all the nations from Iroquoia to the Wabash River, the Shawnee Captain Johnny reminded the men that the Ohio River was the boundary established by their forefathers. The Indians did not object to receiving traders provided they made no attempts to settle, he clarified, but “it is now clear to us your Design is to take our Country from us. We remind you that you will find all the People of our Colour in this Island strong, unanimous & determined to act as one Man in Defence of it. Therefore be strong & keep your People within Bounds, or we will take up a Rod & whip them back to your Side of the Ohio.” Furthermore, he added, failure to comply with this ultimatum would mean that the Americans would never see their “Flesh & Blood” residing among the Indians ever again.24

Although the Indians dismissed Crawford and sent the Americans back across the Ohio safely, they followed up these threats with assaults on other adventurers who dared to set foot in their territory. The Shawnees, Mingos, and Cherokees patrolled the Muskingum region, while the Kickapoos and other Wabash tribes canvassed the land farther down the Ohio. In the villages throughout the entire area, the Indians were in “great ferment,” universally counseling about how to prepare for the enemy’s next move. That move turned out to be an invitation to another treaty. At the conclusion of the Fort McIntosh treaty, the commissioners had recommended that it would be wise to secure peace agreements from the Wabash and Illinois Indians in addition to making another effort to pacify the Shawnees and Miamis. Congress agreed and eventually settled on the mouth of the Great Miami River as a suitable location. Suspecting that this summons

24 Ibid., “Council at Wakitomike, May 18, 1785,” Ser. 1 lot 714. The Delaware chiefs at this council were likely Buckonghelas and his followers. They lived near the Shawnee towns and had not attended the Fort McIntosh treaty, unlike their Delaware counterparts led by Captain Pipe. See Tanner, Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History, 84-86, for divisions among the Delawares.
would be received with considerable skepticism, Richard Butler enlisted the Wyandots and Delawares to promote the treaty before heading westward himself to oversee its satisfactory completion.25

The Wyandots took their job seriously. In late August, they welcomed four United States ambassadors, who had also been given the task of inviting tribes to the Great Miami, and offered to assume responsibility for the Potawatomies and the nations residing around Detroit. By the time Butler arrived at the treaty site in late October, however, few of his scouts had encouraging news. The Ottawas, Chippewas, and Potawatomies politely but firmly said that they were too engaged with other negotiations to heed the call at the moment, expressing surprise that the Americans had ignored the ancient council fire when making their plans. They also chided the Wyandots for hastily supporting the proposal without fully considering its implications. William Clark reported that the Wabash Indians had avoided his request by saying that they needed to consult other chiefs, but based on their generally indifferent attitude, the onset of their hunting season, and their persistent attacks on the frontier, he doubted that they would make the trip. Samuel Montgomery and his company received the same answer from the Miamis and then suffered the indignity of having their horses stolen, preventing their departure from the Miami town and halting the progress of their invitation.26

With the arrival of Butler and the continued efforts of ambassadors Daniel Elliot and James Rinker, the Wyandots found themselves in an increasingly conflicted position.

They hovered around Butler’s camp, demanding rum and other tokens of favor for their diplomatic services, but began to complain that they “had don a great deall...and they were now tired.” Their faltering spirits received another blow from the Shawnees and Mingos at Wakatomica who scolded them for attending the Beaver Creek (Fort McIntosh) conference in blatant disregard for the agreement all the nations had made to be unified. After chastising the Wyandots and Delawares for their past and present support of the United States, the Shawnee and Mingo chiefs admonished the Americans as well. “[Y]ou know very well Brothers, its not the way to make a good Peace to keep people prisoners or have soldiers at their Backs, it cannot be for the good of the Nations.” If you light the council fire at Detroit, we will come in the spring, they promised.27

Delaware and Wyandot leaders like Captain Pipe and Half King understood that the United States’ poor treaty etiquette was not the only reason for these angry responses from most of the Ohio Valley nations. Just as the congressional representatives began to deliver their latest invitation, geographer Thomas Hutchins arrived at Fort McIntosh ready to survey the land supposedly acquired at the January 1785 conference. He expected to be joined by some Delaware and Wyandot chiefs to ensure protection for his team, but they quickly informed him that given the efforts to “kindle a Council fire at the Mouth of the big Miami River,” they were unable to do “two pieces of Work at the same time” and advised him to return home until after the treaty. While Hutchins’ presence added more fuel to the incessant counseling that unified disgruntled villages, the Indians’

27 Richard Butler, “Journal of General Richard Butler,” in The Olden Time 2, nos. 10-12 (1847): 454-57, 484-531; PCC, reel 69, item 56, 251-54, 275-77 (at 253, 275). The mention of “soldiers at their Backs,” might refer to the small number of military personnel at Fort McIntosh, but more likely refers to the larger number of troops that arrived with Butler and proceeded to build Fort Finney at the mouth of the Great Miami River to house the treaty.
refusal to guard him provoked various American officials to question their peaceful intent. Capt. John Doughty blamed the Delaware chiefs for failing to stop the killing of a man named Chambers at Tuscarawas and opting instead to only protect their trader friend and his goods. He also fingered seven Wyandots as the perpetrators of this incident and charged them with murders earlier in the summer as well. Clearly, the Wyandots and Delawares were under suspicion from both Indians and whites.28

As the appointed treaty date drew nearer, the prospects for a genuine peace grew increasingly dim. Butler, Harmar, and other American officials attributed this failure to English agents who assured the Indians that only jurisdiction and not ownership of their lands had been transmitted by Great Britain to the United States in 1783. These same agents allegedly tampered with Congress’s invitations and actively instructed chiefs not to meet with the Americans. While men like Simon Girty, Robert Surphlet, and Alexander McKee certainly promoted British economic interests, their influence was only a small factor in turning native leaders away from the Great Miami. Primarily, the Indians were disturbed by the American effort to break their confederacy, the complete disregard for native sovereignty during previous negotiations, and the blatant designs on their land, most clearly viewed by Hutchins’ surveying attempts. The presence of George Rogers Clark with two militia companies encamped on the opposite side of the Ohio River certainly did not encourage treaty attendance either.29

28 LDC, 23: 17, 43-44; PCC, reel 74, item 60, 189-91, 193-97, 205-07, 209-10 (quotes), reel 164, item 150, vol. 1, 107-09.
Notwithstanding these obstacles, 150 Shawnee men and 80 women joined the Wyandots and Delawares at the hastily constructed Fort Finney in January 1786. Most of the proceedings involved the renewal of friendship between the Wyandot and Delaware chiefs who had attended the Fort McIntosh treaty and the Americans, but the commissioners also spent considerable time denouncing the British and informing the Shawnees that they had been misguided in trusting speeches from Detroit. Head chiefs Kekewepellete and Moluntha did not contradict these jabs at the English, but they objected when the treaty’s articles addressed the division of land and hostages. Complaining that the Americans had left them only “ponds” to live on, Kekewepellette stated, “God gave us this country, we do not understand measuring out the lands, it is all ours.” Furthermore, he refused to deliver hostages because he and his people were true to their word. If this was how the United States conducted business, he declared, “you may keep your goods, and give them to the other nations, we will have none of them.” In response to this impassioned speech, Butler threatened to wage war on the Shawnees, even destroying their women and children, unless they complied with Congress’s “liberal and just” terms. The same afternoon Kekewepellette retracted his comments, and the treaty concluded two days later.\(^{30}\)

Butler and the other commissioners exulted in their success, announcing to Congress that “from the local situation of the Shawanoes and the ascendancy they have over the other Indian nations we are of opinion their friendship is of more importance to the weal of the citizens of the United States than that of any other tribe of Indians in the western Territory.” In addition to leaving hostages at Fort Finney, the Shawnees seemed

determined to work for peace and to provide protection for the surveyors later in the year. What Butler overlooked in this triumphant report was that although six chiefs had placed their marks on the treaty, the remaining Shawnees had left the gathering with the tomahawk clutched firmly in their hands. Considering that the Piankeshaws, Weas, Miamis, Kickapoos, Cherokees, Mingoes, and Lake Indians had all refused even to attend the treaty, the prospects for peace were even more remote than they had been after the Fort McIntosh treaty. This time, however, the Indians were prepared to meet the American threat immediately. The incessant counseling of the previous year had yielded results.31

During the next three years, war parties from many Ohio Valley nations targeted the burgeoning settlements in Kentucky, the established enclaves near Wheeling and Fort Pitt, and especially the surveyors, hunters, soldiers, and farmers who dared to pursue their trades on the Indian side of the river. For nations such as the Mingos and the scattered Cherokees who had migrated into the region in the early 1780s, raiding had never really ceased in 1783 because the United States had never made peace with them and continued the practices that had roused native ire for the past decade. As the war escalated in 1786, the Mingos were rejoined by many others, but once again they frequently assumed the role of scapegoat for all violence against Americans. Shortly after the Fort Finney treaty, Shawnee leaders led by Moluntha named the Mingos and Cherokees as the primary disturbers of the peace, perhaps in an effort to deflect suspicion from their escaped

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31 PCC, reel 69, item 56, 377-82 (at 378); “Minutes of Debates in Council on the...Ottawa River...November, 1791,” Early American Imprints, Ser. 1, nos. 24-25 (American Antiquarian Society and NewsBank, Inc., 2002), 10-11; “McKee to John Johnson, Feb. 25, 1786,” Ser. 1, lot 716, SIAP; Although members of Congress shrugged off the absence of the Shawnees at the Fort McIntosh treaty, saying that the Six Nations would keep them in line, they were quick to accept the commissioners’ pronouncement a year later that peace with the Shawnees was of most importance. LDC, 22: 197, 23: 211.
hostages. After a spring full of "scalping work" by many nations, Delaware and Wyandot chiefs also sought to divert attention from their own people's participation by blaming the Mingos living near the Shawnee towns. Eventually, the Shawnees themselves were accused of sending out war belts, a fact that Moluntha acknowledged, before admitting that the perpetrators were beyond his control.\textsuperscript{32}

In the next few years, most Ohio Valley nations, including the Potawatomies, Chippewas, and Ottawas, participated at least occasionally in the war. None engaged more vigorously than the Wabash tribes, however, most notably the Miamis, Weas, Pinakeshaws, and Kickapoos. Distance from the western fringe of British settlement had limited their involvement in the Revolution's early years, but Clark's arrival in 1779 connected them to the broader conflict. His influence and that of the French at Vincennes preserved their neutrality for a few years; but as American promises failed to meet their needs and Kentucky settlement began to threaten their hunting grounds, they took the offensive.

Despite multiple recommendations from Indian commissioners, no peace treaty had been conducted with these nations by 1786, and encroachment on their lands had occurred with greater frequency. Consequently, after a grand council at the Wea towns, they launched successive waves of attacks against Kentucky and the Vincennes region, "constantly bringing in horses and scalps" for the next few years. Like the Shawnees farther up the Ohio, they were perfectly positioned to dominate river traffic. While the Shawnees, Mingos, and Cherokees terrorized the hourly progression of flatboats heading


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for Kentucky, Wabash warriors harassed convoys of soldiers and supplies intended to reinforce Fort Knox at Vincennes. Not content with these small strokes, they even dared to take on the American garrison, retiring only when the French distributed presents and threatened to take up arms against them.³³

Although the Wabash and Shawnee-led attacks on citizens, soldiers, and property on the rivers and in Kentucky and western Pennsylvania halted the surveyors' progress and created considerable fear on the frontier, they failed to staunch the overwhelming tide of settlers pouring into the area. During the final six months of 1787, Harmar counted 146 passing boats bearing 3,196 people and scores of horses and livestock and estimated that Kentucky could muster 5,000 fighting men. A year later, John Heckewelder claimed that vessels bound for Kentucky hourly passed his lodging at Marietta, Ohio, when river conditions were favorable.³⁴

Not only did Indian raids fail to prevent rapid development, they also provoked retaliatory expeditions that proved even more devastating to native communities. As early as May 1786, Virginia governor Patrick Henry complained about the state of affairs in Kentucky, urging Congress in June to send a "respectable force" of continental troops into Indian country to either treat or make war. When the federal government hesitated, the Kentucky militia took matters into their own hands in October. Clark led 1,200 men


up the Wabash River, while Col. Benjamin Logan headed for the cluster of Shawnee towns on the Mad River with approximately 900 volunteers. Most Shawnee warriors were either hunting or responding to the reports of Clark's advance on the Wabash, but those remaining offered stout resistance until they yielded out of fear of injuring their own people taken captive. Altogether Logan burned seven towns, destroyed all the corn and produce, killed eleven, and imprisoned an estimated thirty women and children.

Meanwhile 400 of Clark's men deserted (perhaps remembering the July plundering raid by two militia companies that resulted in death for their captain at the hands of a formerly friendly band of Piankeshaws), thereby thwarting his plans. Clark stayed at Vincennes, endeavoring to treat with the Indians, but he was soundly rebuffed by several chiefs and succeeded only in angering the other local leaders.  

Although the Shawnees and the Kentuckians managed to stage several cordial exchanges of prisoners in 1787, both sides continued to wreak havoc. Col. Levi Todd raised 170 men in May to attack the Mingo, Cherokee, and Shawnee haven on Paint Creek, returning several months later to complete the job. The following year Patrick Brown and his cronies assaulted several hitherto peaceful Wabash bands, prompting a stern rebuke from Major Hamtranck at Vincennes but nothing in the way of actual punishment. None of these expeditions killed or captured large numbers, and they often...

galvanized the Indians into renewing their own raids. Nevertheless, they checked the
effectiveness of a military response to the Americans' western advance.36

The most common alternative to violent reprisals was simply to continue

counseling together, usually with an eye toward native unification. In addition to the
regular exchange of messages throughout the year, the majority of Ohio Valley tribes
gathered in large numbers at least once a year between 1786 and 1788. Some chiefs
undoubtedly viewed these occasions as opportunities to recruit new war parties and to

strengthen the combined attack on the United States, but others exhorted their fellow
leaders to refrain from depredations and seek diplomatic solutions. Four themes tended
to dominate these conferences: enumerating mutual grievances; preserving land and
sovereignty by insisting that the Americans discuss land transactions with the entire
confederacy; figuring out how to relate to the Americans whose political and cultural
framework frequently clashed with their own; and redefining their relationship to the

British.

Most of these themes were prominently on the table during the November-
December 1786 meeting at the Huron villages on the Detroit River. Initially, the nations
had begun to gather at the Shawnee towns in September, but Logan's expedition forced
them to disperse and destroyed the seat of their council fire. When they reconvened,
tensions were even higher than before. McKee believed the party favoring hostilities and
revenge was stronger than the peace party, but both sides resolved to cease raiding until
after the conference and the Shawnees had had the opportunity to negotiate for the release

36 Faragher, Daniel Boone, 256-57; Carmony, ed., Spencer Records' Memoir, 347-48; Tanner, ed.,
of their women and children. The Wyandots and Delawares also sent a message to Butler, telling him to “keep back all your people from coming this way for...any sort of Business, likewise you will inform the Surveyors to halt and not to Survey any more at present as we are going to have a great Council.”

Perhaps because the eleven nations represented at the conference disagreed about how to respond to the Americans, they focused on the grievances they had in common. In a letter to Congress, they described how they had been disappointed about being ignored during the peace settlement between Britain and the United States, especially since the “quarrel was not of our own making.” Despite this neglect, they had remained largely peaceful, but in the past few years much confusion and mischief had arisen. “We think it is owing to you that the tranquillity...has not lasted...[because you] managed every thing respecting us your own way,” they chided, proceeding to list the specific offenses. The Americans had called nations together at places convenient to themselves without regard to established council fires and Indian preferences. Then, at those meetings, they had made peace and completed land transactions with separate groups, “entirely neglect[ing] our plan of having a general conference with the different nations of the confederacy.” Although most tribes repudiated these treaties, surveyors, settlers, and soldiers had all crossed the river, even killing some chiefs working for peace. Notwithstanding all of these issues, the Indians concluded their letter by suggesting that they meet with the Americans in the spring at a mutually convenient place to restore friendship and “speak to each other without either haughtiness or menaces.” To make

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sure that Congress took them seriously, they also added that measures should be taken to prevent “surveyors and other people from coming upon our side [of] the Ohio river,” threatening to defend their ancient rights and privileges with blood if necessary. “It shall not be our faults,” they warned, “if the plans which we have suggested to you should not be carried into execution.”

This invitation to a treaty couched in thinly veiled threats exhibited a fitting compromise to the question of how to respond to the Americans who had now added a surprise military attack to their expanding list of sins. Some of the Shawnees and all of the Cherokees, Miamis, and Wabash Indians recommended open war, but the Wyandots and several Delaware chiefs feared the consequences of alienating their powerful neighbor. Despite these general opinions, every council participant recognized that the situation was exceedingly complex. The Delaware chief Buckonghelas, who frequently opposed the more pacific Captain Pipe, acknowledged that any diplomatic maneuvers could be undone by warriors who refused to pass up an opportunity to kill or plunder the enemy. Joseph Brant, representing a divided Six Nations delegation, himself seemed to vacillate between war and peace, at times vehemently denouncing the Americans and at others instructing the Wabash Indians to be more reserved lest they meet the same fate as the Shawnees. Faced with a complicated problem involving an unpredictable opponent, the Indians clung to the idea of a confederacy as their only means of agreeing among themselves and fending off the United States’ illicit advances.

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If the Americans’ past misdeeds such as seizing land without purchase, bringing soldiers to peace treaties, using an imperious tone to bolster their claims to superiority, and demanding hostages garnered them an untrustworthy reputation, the long silence that met the Indians’ invitation did little to assure the Ohio Valley nations that the future would be any different. Congress’s failure to respond quickly rested in part with the confederation. The Shawnees had been designated to deliver the carefully crafted speech, but by July 1787 they still had not completed the task, so the Delawares and Wyandots assumed responsibility for bringing word to Butler who forwarded the message to Philadelphia. Secretary of War Henry Knox laid out the situation in great detail, ultimately arguing that a treaty was preferable to war because of the beleaguered state of American finances and the fact that the Indians could potentially muster a formidable force. He opposed overturning any of the previous treaties or “returning” land to the Indians, but he did suggest that “instead of a language of Superiority and command, may it not be politic and Just to treat with the Indians more on a footing of equality, convince them of the Justice and humanity as well as power of the United States and of this disposition to promote the happiness of the Indians.”

By the time Congress reached a decision to conduct another treaty, almost a year had passed, Hutchins had surveyed a sizable tract of Ohio land, and the Indians had resumed their hostilities with particular vengeance. In the spring of 1788, American messengers circulated the invitation, enlisting the aid of Wyandot chiefs to entice the warring tribes to attend. Although many observers doubted that the treaty would ever

40 “Butler to Johnson, April 27, 1787, Ser. 2, lot 657, SIAP; PCC, reel 34, item 27, 341-44 (quote at 343), reel 164, item 150, vol. 2, 369-71.

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materialize, newly-appointed governor of the Northwest Territory, Arthur St. Clair, arrived at Fort Harmar in June eager to implement his instructions. The skeptics received more fuel for their position a month later when a party of Ottawas and Chippewas attacked the advance guard watching over provisions at the Falls of the Muskingum, the site chosen for the conference. St. Clair, already annoyed that the Indians had postponed the treaty so their confederacy could confer beforehand, reacted angrily, withdrawing the supplies to Fort Harmar and refusing to conduct business at the appointed place. “After such an insult, to meet the Indians at that place, should they be inclined to come, I thought inconsistent with the dignity of the United States,” he told Knox. A week later he announced that his men had arrested six Chippewas who had come to the Falls a few days after the incident, believing at least one of them to be a perpetrator.41

American credibility dropped even lower after St. Clair’s hasty response. By changing the treaty location, the United States was again guilty of staging a treaty at an unknown council fire. Likewise, St. Clair insisted on imprisoning the Chippewas, even though the Delawares vouched for them and cited the Ottawas who escaped as the real culprits. He also sent a message to the Indians beginning to gather at the Miami River, demanding satisfaction for the Muskingum killings, a move that seemed to “stagger the Indians much.” The governor’s incendiary action compounded the already fractured unity binding the nations together. By the time Brant arrived at the new Miami River council fire, accompanied by over 200 of the Six Nations, the western Indians, who had

been waiting for him for several months, were annoyed at the delay and even more unsettled about how to respond to the Americans than they had been in the past.\(^{42}\)

Noticeably absent from previous native councils was much discussion about boundary lines. To the Ohio Valley Indians, the Americans had erred by illogically concluding that they had conquered the people and land north of the Ohio River, which prompted them to conduct threatening, one-sided treaties that failed to establish peace. Since most of the Indians rejected these treaties and the boundary lines inscribed in them, their goal was to subvert the entire United States agenda of illegally claiming lands rather than focusing on markings on a map. In their minds, the 1768 Fort Stanwix agreement had guaranteed them the land in question, and nothing in the past few years had changed that fact. Even the Wyandots, who had attended and signed each of the contested treaties, seemed puzzled about how the Americans justified their claim to land above the Ohio.\(^{43}\)

The September-October 1788 conference introduced the idea among the Indians that the boundary itself might warrant some discussion. Although the information from this meeting is meager and clouded by factional rivalries, it appears as though Brant surprised everyone by suggesting a compromise boundary line, one that would require several nations to yield “a small part of their country” but did not relinquish the vast acreage prescribed by the Americans. If the United States rejected this effort, then he recommended taking up the hatchet. Some of the Wyandots, Delawares, and Lake Indians supported this concession but hesitated about pursuing open war. Other groups advocated war but wanted nothing to do with losing any land. St. Clair’s informants

\(^{42}\) *St Clair Papers*, 2: 81-83, 87-88; *PCC*, reel 165, item 150, vol. 3, 294, 297 (at 294).

\(^{43}\) *PCC*, reel 164, item 150, vol. 2, 272-73.
reported that the Kickapoos and Miamis “particularly would agree to nothing that was proposed, and would propose nothing themselves.” To complicate matters further, rumors spread through Indian country that if they trekked to Fort Harmar, the Americans planned “to kill them all, either by putting poison in the spirits...or communicating the small-pox with blankets.”

Just as St. Clair was becoming convinced that the treaty would not take place and his calls to raise the militia for protection were growing more urgent, he received word that a large group of Indians was ready to embark for his fort on the Muskingum River. Before they had traveled very far, however, they sent a message to St. Clair, asking that the United States shelve the previous treaties and consider Brant’s new proposal. Clearly affronted, the governor shot back an answer, detailing the “futility” of the Indians’ idea that they could be “discharged from the obligation of former treaties.” Upon hearing this response, so indicative of every American attitude and position that had created the current hostility, Brant “immediately” returned to Detroit with many of the Six Nations, Delawares, Shawnees, and Miamis. Some of the Wyandots, Delawares, Senecas, and Lake Indians continued to Fort Harmar where they attempted to negotiate with St. Clair. First, they argued for the Ohio River boundary, but when that was rejected, they tried a different approach. “We don’t understand...how you came to get this land from our Father, as none of us Know any thing about it, We cannot find out when it was that we should have given our Lands to our Father,” they challenged, before extending Brant’s offer of the land east of the Muskingum. St. Clair squashed this proposition as well and

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44 St. Clair Papers, 2: 93-96 (at 95, 93).

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quickly brought the proceedings to a conclusion, adding another virtually identical and equally ineffective treaty to the United States annals.\(^4\)

In the midst of wrangling with the Americans and squabbling with each other, the Indians were also seeking to redefine their relationship with the British. By the last few years of the Revolution, most Ohio Valley nations had chosen to align themselves with their "Father" at Detroit, but they grew increasingly wary at the war's conclusion, since following British advice tended to leave them vulnerable to marauding Americans. They resented that they had been excluded from peace negotiations, especially since their lands seemed to be a major topic of debate, and they questioned how the British believed themselves qualified to barter with their territory at all. Casting further suspicion over British activities were the reduction in supplies for the Indian Department and the rise in shady land purchases by British traders and government officials.\(^4\)

As a result of this skepticism regarding the British, some Indians chose to distance themselves from the council fire at Detroit. In 1785 Captain Johnny warned a group of Americans to stay on their side of the Ohio River or face violent measures. He concluded by saying that "what we have said we are determin'd to do without the council or Advice of our Father, who formerly assisted us when requisite." Despite this bold expression of

\(^{45}\) *Ibid.*, 98-100, 102, 106 (at 99, 100); Calloway, *Revolution and Confederation*, 481-94 (at 482). Richard White suggests that the Indians who attended the Fort Harmar treaty split with Brant in a bid to gain control of the confederacy's leadership. This view seems to overestimate Brant's influence in the confederacy and ignores the fact that the Wyandots had been working to broker a peace between the Americans and the belligerent Indians nations for the past three years. Those who attended the Fort Harmar treaty were simply the nations who had been in contact with U.S. ambassadors, some, like the Wyandots and Senecas, even passing details of their Miami River conference to St. Clair while it was still unfolding. See White, *Middle Ground*, 445-47.

\(^{46}\) *MPHC*, 11: 408-10, 435-36, 444.
independence, most Indians realized that they needed the trade goods that the British offered, particularly after Logan's expedition destroyed considerable food supplies. The winter of 1787-1788 was especially harsh. Running low on ammunition and expecting an American army to barge into their territory in the spring (they had still not heard of Congress's decision to pursue another treaty), the nations at Lower Sandusky also lost sixty people to a smallpox epidemic. Consequently, they begged for powder, lead, a storehouse, and British troops to assist them in defending their land and protecting their property.47

Partly in response to these requests and partly to maintain British ties to the native communities, McKee occasionally distributed gifts and food between 1784 and 1788. American observers always viewed such actions, as well as the presence of British traders in the region, as evidence of Whitehall's tampering with the Indians and disrupting the peace process. From an Indian perspective, however, the question was not how the British were influencing them but how they could use the British to achieve their own ends. During the Revolution they had benefited from Detroit's ammunition, artillery, and foodstuffs as they waged war against encroaching Americans. Now the task was to exploit British fears of losing their business in the hope that generous expressions of friendship would result. To do this, they reprimanded British leaders for thrusting the current strife with the United States upon them by neglecting them in the peace treaty. They also continually emphasized their unified strength and reported their embassies to

47 "Council at Wakitomike, May 18, 1785," Ser. 1, lot 714, SIAP; PCC, reel 165, item 150, vol. 3, 141-42.
southern and western nations to make the confederacy seem even larger and more formidable.\(^4^8\)

These plans for manipulating the British and revising their old alliance were only partially successful. While McKee’s aid facilitated their large gatherings, the Indians still struggled with a basic question: what exactly could they expect from their former allies? Canadian governor Lord Dorchester insisted that he had “no power…to begin a war,” but other officials hinted that the British supported native defense of their land rights. These mixed messages forced the Indians to persist in asking for a clear reply to their requests for assistance and to develop a new strategy for figuring out how to deal with the British when no clarity was forthcoming.\(^4^9\)

Unfortunately for the Indians, managing the British, like countering the Americans, required a stalwart unity that the western confederacy was not able to muster during the second half of the 1780s. Although they shared the same grievances, they differed markedly on how to seek redress. The wrangling before the Fort Harmar treaty also revealed the deep distrust that many Ohio Valley Indians harbored toward Brant, a fissure that only exacerbated the rivalry between Brant and Cornplanter for influence within the Six Nations. When the Americans exulted in January 1789 that the Indian “confederacy is broken,” they were correct in highlighting native disunity, but they underestimated how quickly the solidarity of 1783 could be reconstituted if conditions continued to deteriorate. Neither genuine unification nor its promised defense against


\(^4^9\) *MPHC*, 24: 39 (quote); 20: 179.
American advances had materialized yet, but the Indians had not abandoned hope for improvement in the future.  

In the immediate aftermath of the Fort Harmar conference, however, the western nations focused their attention on warfare rather than unity. The Wyandots and other Indians congregated near Sandusky complained that they had been forced to sign the treaty, both because of American threats and their “poor, naked, & hungry” condition. They had spent the previous fall counseling about how to respond to the Americans and then traveling to Fort Harmar and consequently, neglected their hunting, leaving them without adequate provisions for the winter and spring. In return they were “for the most part cheated,” receiving such a small compensation that “it was not even worth while to put out their hands for it.” By the time they reached home, they had decided to disregard the agreement. In April they sent a message to St. Clair, instructing him to refrain from building forts in the disputed territory and warning that they intended to kill any surveyors who ventured onto their land. They also intended to attack the most recent settlement on the Muskingum because they “resolved to fight for their land, and then if they lost it they would lose it like men.”

These were not idle words. As the Wyandot ambassador delivered this message at Fort Pitt, other western Indians were raiding near Wheeling, on Dunker’s Creek, and at the new establishment across from the Little Kanawha River. The Wabash Indians seized the opportunity to renew strikes on Kentucky, even though many of them had remained aloof from the previous year’s councils. At the end of July, Maj. John Hardin led 220

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men on a two-week retaliatory expedition that killed twelve Weas, but rather than curbing hostilities, this invasion prompted another round of killings, kidnappings, arsons, and horse thefts. One distressed Kentucky leader reported to both the federal and Virginia governments that the Indians attacked so frequently he could not possibly recount all the incidents.52

Hoping to escape more destruction, St. Clair dispatched peace emissaries in the spring of 1790, but their reception was lukewarm at best. The Shawnee chief Blue Jacket told Antoine Gamelin, “from all quarters, we receive speeches from the Americans, and not one is alike. We suppose that they intend to deceive us.” Meanwhile, assaults on Kentucky continued unabated, and the Ohio River became increasingly treacherous to navigate, as the Indians devised new schemes to capture passing boats. At the request of the Kentuckians, Harmar attempted to dislodge the “vagabond” Indians at the Scioto River who seemed to be most responsible for disrupting river traffic. But he merely wandered around for a few days, taking a few scalps before his men threatened to desert. By June he joined St. Clair in concluding that the necessity of chastising the warring tribes outweighed the threat of alienating the nations still formally aligned with the United States.53

Harmar’s military strategy involved a two-pronged attack. While he marched toward the Miami towns, Col. John Francis Hamtranck was to create a diversion among

the Kickapoos, Weas, and Piankeshaws to keep them from reinforcing the international assemblage at Kekionga. Harmar set out on September 30 with 320 federal troops and 1,133 militia. Learning of his advance, the Indians quickly abandoned their towns and crops, a move that perhaps lulled the Americans into a false sense of security. After burning the houses and fields, Harmar ordered a detachment of 150 to scout to the west. Despite being outnumbered, the Indians, led by the Shawnees and Potawatomies, soundly trounced this group, repeating the feat three days later against a unit twice as large.

Harmar hastened back to Fort Washington before his army could sustain any more losses and proceeded to pronounce the expedition a success, even after learning that Hamtranck had completely failed to accomplish his end of the mission. Although he acknowledged that he had lost many valuable men (initially he estimated 180, though other accounts say 300), he proudly highlighted the demolished villages and insisted that the Indians had suffered as many casualties as the Americans. "The Savages never received such a stroke before in any battle that they have had," he declared.54

Despite Harmar’s confident words, it quickly became apparent that the Indians also claimed victory. Rather than being awed by United States power and authority, they were emboldened to continue their efforts to arrest illegal expansion. Nations previously unsure about resisting an American army flocked to Kekionga, where several groups were rebuilding their towns, and the Glaize, where Indians gathered briefly before scattering to harass their constant enemy. The frequency and ferocity of these attacks prompted Knox and St. Clair to devise a new military strategy. Penetrating the Indian

country and establishing a post in the heart of the Miami, Delaware, and Shawnee
territory remained the ultimate goal, but they also authorized Brig. Gen. Charles Scott
and Lt. Col. James Wilkinson to command expeditions against several influential Wabash
towns. Before unleashing these forces, Knox prepared peace messages for the western
Indians and sent them with Col. Thomas Proctor, who was also instructed to recruit
support for his cause from Six Nations representatives on his way to Sandusky and the
Miami towns. Considering that Scott’s troops were being raised as Proctor was
embarking on his journey, the peace attempt was feeble from the beginning, but it
received a death blow when St. Clair requested that the Six Nations join him in fighting
the western Indians at the same time that Proctor was asking them to assist him in making
peace. These mixed messages ended Proctor’s errand before he even reached the Ohio
Country.55

In early June Scott terrorized the Kickapoos and Weas, burning two of their
principal towns along with adjacent villages, killing 32, and taking 58 prisoners.
Wilkinson followed this expedition in August with the destruction of L’Anguille, another
significant town, attacking while most of the warriors were at the Miami villages
purchasing ammunition. Altogether he destroyed 2 towns and 430 acres of corn, killing 8
and capturing 34 in the process. Angered by these raids to the west and the murder of
several “friendly” Indians in the east, the nations assembling near the Miami towns
prepared to exact revenge. As St. Clair led his army of 1,400 northward from Fort
Washington in early October, the Indians advanced to meet them with 1,040 warriors.

55 ASPIA, 112-13, 121-22, 129-130; St. Clair Papers, 2: 199-204; MPHC, 24: 180-97, 220-23,
233-41; Thombrough, ed., Outpost on the Wabash, 272, 282-84; Executive Journal of the Northwest
Territory, vol. 1, 136-37, Ohio Historical Society; Pennsylvania Archives, Ser. 2, 4: 473-524, 538-40, 545-
51, 555, 562-65.
Simon Girty informed McKee of their departure and reported that they “were never in greater Heart to meet their Enemy, nor more sure of success, they are determined to drive them to the Ohio and starve their little Posts by taking all their Horses and Cattle.” Girty’s assessment proved to be partially correct. The Indians overwhelmed St. Clair’s forces, killing approximately 600, including many officers, and sending the remainder scurrying back to Fort Washington, but they never managed to uproot the Americans from their establishments. Nevertheless, this decisive native victory swelled the fledgling confederacy’s confidence and forced Congress and Knox to rethink their entire Indian policy.56

Defeating two American armies in successive years indicated that the Ohio Valley Indians possessed a different mindset than they had in the previous decade. During the 1780s they had been stunned by their British allies’ complete neglect during the peace process. Shortly thereafter they were surprised again by the United States’ conduct at various treaties. Thinking they were gathering simply to make peace (a move not necessarily guaranteed since their war on the Americans was not defined simply by the Revolution’s aims), they were taken aback when Congress’s commissioners addressed them as a conquered people, demanded hostages, and announced that the land now belonged to them. While many nations responded violently to these blatant breaches of etiquette, they remained slightly befuddled by the Americans’ goals and the speed at which new settlers streamed into the region. By the 1790s, however, they had recovered from their shock and even began to regain some of the initiative in dealing with their

unwelcome neighbor, as their 1790 and 1791 victories proved. Perhaps more important, they had reached a common understanding of American designs on their land, but unanimity on an appropriate response still seemed to elude them.

In the wake of St. Clair’s defeat, the time appeared ripe for a renewed commitment to unification. Military success had lured Indians to the Miami and Maumee Rivers from Michilimackinac, Illinois, Canada, and the South, and ambassadors dispatched after the November 1791 action hoped to bring in more. Although some of these nations had returned home before St. Clair’s sizable army marched against them, they undoubtedly recognized the power of their combined strength and the value of identifying shared goals. In addition to martial triumph, geography aided those who advocated a stronger confederation. Since the attack at Gnadenhütten in 1782 and Clark’s and Logan’s forays against the Shawnee towns in 1782 and 1786, most of the area Indians congregated either at Sandusky or the Miami River. These migrations were primarily motivated by the need for distance between their towns and American raiding parties and hunters, but they also conveniently placed the various nations in a good position for cooperative ventures.57

Perhaps even more significant to forging unity than geography or battlefield victories was the further crystallization of grievances brought on by the attacks of the past two years. Harmar, Scott, Wilkinson, and St. Clair with their substantial armies had all penetrated farther into Indian territory than any enemy larger than a raiding party. While the Ohio Valley Indians rejoiced at their rout of the Americans, this new concern

magnified the problems of the past two decades. Encroaching settlers had not disappeared when raids made their existence precarious in Kentucky and western Pennsylvania. If armies continued to press onto native land regardless of the drubbings they received in 1790 and 1791, the Indians would face even more immediate threats.

Just as they had after Logan decimated the Shawnee towns in 1786, the Indians gathered in late 1791 to discuss these recent developments and to decide whether to extend peace to the United States or to wait for Congress to humbly approach them. The aged Ottawa Egusheway announced that his heart inclined toward peace, but he could see no way of achieving that goal “on honourable terms” without war. Consequently, he instructed the assembly, “You ought not to give peace to your enemy until they ask it, or until they first retire out of your country.” Speaking on behalf of the warriors, he recited a litany of American crimes: pushing the Indians away from the seaboard over the past two centuries, misrepresenting the 1768 Fort Stanwix treaty to allow illegal settlement on their hunting grounds, deceiving them during the Revolution by counseling neutrality and then sending armies into their country and murdering Cornstalk and the Moravian Indians at Gnadenhütten, luring them to treaties under pretense of peace only to fraudulently seize land by “pen and ink witch-craft,” committing severe breaches of treaty protocol, attempting to divide the Indians’ loyalty, and claiming that “by virtue of conquering our fathers, they have conquered us,” thereby becoming the “sole and absolute sovereigns” of the land north of the Ohio River. He reminded his hearers that they had solemnly agreed to make decisions together, a unity that was necessary to convince the United States that Indian opposition was composed of more than a “separate banditti.”

58 “Minutes of Debates in Council...1791,” 5-20 (at 6, 18, 11, 8, 14-15).
When Egusheway finished, he conceded the floor to his cousin, who spoke for the peace chiefs. He agreed with his relative’s version of recent history and believed Indian resentment to be justified, but he still advocated offering peace to Congress because the Americans were too powerful. “Compared to them, your numbers are so few,” he said, “that were you to lose one warrior for each hundred you might destroy of theirs, they would in time extirpate you from your country....it is true, that whenever you attack double, or treble, the number of your enemy, you can beat them; but what avails it to destroy an hundred of them, when you see ten hundred immediately arise like locusts from the earth!” He suspected that the white men were dominated by an evil spirit that prompted them to defraud the Indians and enabled them to flood onto native lands with astonishing speed. The only way the Indians could gain an advantage over this innumerable adversary was to engage the military aid of the British, but thus far, all of their requests at been ignored. Despite these arguments for avoiding war, he advised that peace be offered only if the United States “will retire from our lands, and make a fair agreement to be honest in future.”

The competing ideas at this conference produced mixed results throughout 1792. Indian war parties attacked river traffic and expanding settlements with particular ferocity during the first half of the year, spurred on by reinforcements from distant nations and reports of American fort construction at the site of the previous autumn’s battle. They also killed two of Knox’s emissaries who carried invitations to meet with President Washington in Philadelphia. By July, however, plans for another grand council began to take shape, and in October the large, multi-national gathering extended an invitation to

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59 Ibid., 20-21.
meet for peace at Lower Sandusky, provided the United States destroyed its forts on their lands and agreed to make the Ohio River the boundary between them.60

Although the outcome of this council seemed to indicate like-mindedness, there were many factors that conspired against unification as well. In 1790 Congress and Knox had renewed overtures to Cornplanter and his group of Senecas, asking them to use their influence to bring the western Indians to peace. During the next few years, he made multiple trips to Philadelphia, using these opportunities to protest his people’s ill-treatment and to contest the legitimacy of several treaties specific to the Six Nations. While he and other Seneca leaders did not hesitate to confront the Americans on particular issues, they agreed to represent the United States in a positive light. At the October 1792 conference, the Seneca chief Farmer’s Brother told the assembled nations, “We have been two years in Council with Washington and during that time, we have heard nothing fall from him, but what breathed the strongest desire of cultivating peace & friendship, with all nations of our Colour on this Island.”61

The Shawnee chief Messquakinie sternly reprimanded the Six Nations on behalf of the confederacy. “You have told us you have been listening these last two years to the United States and that during that time, you heard nothing, but what tended to the welfare of the people of our Colour. How can this be? For whilst you were considering for the

good of your Western Brethren, two powerful armies were sent by the Americans to
destroy us. Has their sweet speeches so much intoxicated you and blinded you, that your
sight could not reach so far, as where we are now sitting?” He went on to say that the
Americans were simply attempting to separate the Six Nations from the western Indians,
just as they had tried to do with the Delawares and Wyandots at the Forts McIntosh and
Harmar treaties. These latter nations had since “put [Congress’s] speeches behind them,”
and he hoped the Six Nations would act similarly. “We know very well what the
Americans are about, and what are their designs,” he said. Consequently, he ordered the
Senecas to inform the United States that all the assembled Indians were insisting on the
Ohio River line. To Washington in particular they should convey that “we do not want
compensation; we want a restitution of our Lands which he holds under false pretenses.”
Messquakinoe’s words seemed to neutralize the potential disharmony between the
Senecas and the western Indians. The Six Nations representatives dutifully
communicated the confederacy’s message and invitation to the Americans and were
careful to retain a mediating position, doing nothing to anger either side or to disrupt the
Indian council’s plans. 62

Unfortunately for the vast assembly at the Glaize, another threat to unification
could not be erased so easily. Several days before their proceedings began, Gen. Rufus
Putnam conducted a peace treaty with the Wabash and Illinois Indians at Vincennes,
using the prisoners captured by Scott and Wilkinson in 1791 as leverage. Although
Putnam suspected that the Eel River Weas and Ouitanons were more interested in
recovering their relatives than in genuinely establishing peace, he offered reasonable

62 MPHC, 24: 493-95, 509-16; ASPIA, 323-24, 337.
terms: "all the lands belonging to these tribes would remain in their possession unless purchased fairly," all depredations should stop and no violent retaliation was allowed, and the Indians were required to return prisoners but not forced to leave hostages. After the Indians finished celebrating, Putnam asked them to send messages to the Miamis, Delawares, Shawnees, and others "who have hitherto stopped their ears, and refused to speak with the United States about peace." He and his sidekick John Heckwelder also sent letters to the disgruntled Indians and invited several Wabash chiefs to Philadelphia to further solidify their relationship. Putnam's efforts did little to dissuade the hostile nations, but they did succeed in keeping most of the Wabash Indians away from the confederacy, even though Congress never ratified the treaty.63

Ultimately, however, unification's severest blows came from the Indians themselves. During the first half of 1793, it appeared as though the 1792 council's ultimatum would strengthen the Ohio Indians' ability to defend their lands. Knox quickly accepted their invitation to negotiate for peace (although his mistake on the treaty's location elicited a storm of protest and accusations that the United States was once again maneuvering to dictate the meeting's outcome), and both sides refrained from sending war parties against each other. As May and June arrived, tensions began to arise. Despite Complanter's March admonition to military commander Anthony Wayne that American troops should remain stationary at Pittsburgh until after the treaty, Wayne began to send supplies and troops down the Ohio to Fort Washington at the beginning of May, believing Complanter's advice to be an "artful" attempt to keep his army from

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moving until the waters were too low for transport. Meanwhile, Brant suggested to McKee that the western Indians convene a private pre-conference, which would postpone the June 1 meeting date with the Americans. This schedule change left Knox’s treaty commissioners stranded at Niagara until they received notification that the Indians were ready to proceed.64

While the commissioners waited with Upper Canada’s lieutenant governor, John Graves Simcoe, the Indians began to squabble at the Miami (Maumee) Rapids. Brant preached the importance of unanimity, but his plan to concede some territory north of the Ohio angered the Shawnees, Delawares, and Miamis and drew them into private councils. Wayne’s war-like movements around Fort Washington added to the confusion and prompted the Indians to send a fifty-chief delegation to Niagara to inquire about this unorthodox act during peace negotiations. The commissioners downplayed the existence of “warlike appearances,” attributing any that might have occurred to “a few disorderly people” rather than the United States army. They also addressed the Indians’ second concern about their authority to draw a new boundary line, assuring them that they held such power and looked forward to establishing a line based on mutual concessions that would create a “just & permanent peace.”65

Brant was encouraged by this response, but those who favored the “old” Ohio River boundary wanted no part of new “pen and ink work” that would deprive them of land. The arrival of a Cherokee and Creek deputation with word of military success against the United States in the South agitated the Indians even more. Finally, Delaware,

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Shawnee, and Wyandot representatives sent another message to the commissioners, now waiting at Detroit. "If you seriously design to make a firm and lasting peace you will immediately remove all your people from our side of [the Ohio]," they declared, this time specifically asking if the commissioners were authorized to fix the Ohio River as the boundary. In response, the Americans launched into the familiar tale of how legitimate treaties with the Wyandots, Delawares, Ottawas and Chippewas had given them the land north of the Ohio. Too many settlers were now planted in this country to be uprooted, so it was impossible for the Ohio to be the boundary, but the United States was willing to "give such a large sum in money or goods as was never given at one time for any quantity of Indian Lands" and also deliver an annual supply of goods. Furthermore, the commissioners were willing to concede that contrary to Congress's first claim that they were given the land in the 1783 Treaty of Paris, they now acknowledged that the Indians possessed the right of soil and that they merely claimed the tracts they had already acquired and the exclusive right to make more purchases in the future.66

This "concession" failed to impress the Indians, who certainly believed they had never relinquished their right of soil. The delegation also reminded the commissioners that all the treaties they cited for validation of their expansion were "not complete" because they involved only a few chiefs. When the Shawnee, Delaware, and Wyandot ambassadors returned to the Rapids with the commissioners' speech, the inter-Indian wrangling continued. The Shawnee Captain Johnny accused Brant and the Six Nations of breaking the confederacy by turning from the 1792 decision to insist upon the Ohio River

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boundary. He thought even a partial Indian force would be enough to repel the Americans. Brant countered by saying that his revised line would benefit the entire group because it would be preferable to war.\textsuperscript{67}

Eventually, those nations favoring “the 1768 line” triumphed and proceeded to send a pointed letter to the commissioners. They argued that Congress had acted irresponsibly in selling their lands to settlers because they had made it very clear that “the consent of a General Council was absolutely necessary to convey any part of these Lands.” Indeed, irresponsibility looked suspiciously like purposeful deception, considering that St. Clair had persisted in conducting the Fort Harmar treaty, despite the absence of many nations. This dishonorable move lent further credence to the Wyandot and Delaware complaints after the earlier treaties, namely that they had gone to make peace and instead been forced to sign “deeds of concession.” After discounting the American claim to land because of 1780s treaties, they addressed the other excuse for the United States’ inability to withdraw from their territory. If Congress re-designated the large sum of money and the annual gifts promised to the Indians and used them to relocate the settlers, everyone would be satisfied. “If you add also the great sums you must expend in raising & paying armies, with a view to force us to yield you our Country you will certainly have more than sufficient for the purposes of repaying these settlers for all their labour and their improvements,” they added. To conclude their letter, they rejected the “concession” that the United States would only claim pre-emption rights to

\textsuperscript{67} ASPIA, 354; “Brant’s Journal,” RG 10, 8: 8447-475.
their land, saying that since they had never given Britain that privilege, it could not be transferred to the Americans.68

When the commissioners received this message with its resolve to protect the Ohio boundary, they declared the negotiations at an end. The Indians began to gradually disperse at the beginning of September, although many hastily returned a month later when Wayne set his army in motion. These warriors attacked a convoy in mid-October, reportedly killing 20-30, stealing 60-70 horses, and capturing 40 loads of supplies and 10 prisoners, but most importantly, halting the American advance for the season and giving them time to place their women and children in “some secret recess.” Meanwhile Brant, his Six Nations followers, and his Lakes Indian sympathizers gathered at Buffalo Creek and appealed to Congress to accept a revised boundary line. These nearly simultaneous actions illustrated the deep rift among those Indians concerned with American expansion to the Northwest. Although they reached different conclusions about an appropriate boundary, their common fixation on the line itself narrowed their objective regarding the Americans to one issue and weakened their unity in the process.69

The wildcard in all of the inter-Indian and Indian-American disputes was the British. Acting on orders from London, regional leaders officially continued the policy of neutrality initiated in the 1780s. As American armies grew more threatening, however, Simcoe privately worried that their real target was to capture the British posts, reasoning that neither Harmar nor St. Clair would have needed such large forces if their

69 MPHC, 12: 75, 79-81, 105-08, 24: 592-96, 605, 614-16, 625; ASPIA, 478; Simcoe Papers, 2: 96; Knopf, Anthony Wayne, 279-82 (at 280).
only goal was to chastise the Indians. He also feared that the Indians would join the invaders, thus making Detroit even more vulnerable and ensuring that the king’s fur trading interests would be eliminated in the Ohio Country. Faced with these potential problems, Simcoe and Dorchester adopted a three-pronged strategy. First, they instructed the British ambassador in Philadelphia, George Hammond, to propose British mediation between the Americans and the Indians following St. Clair’s defeat, a move that would also help to create an Indian buffer state “extending the whole length of the lines of [the British and American] frontiers.” The third segment of the plan directed McKee and Elliott to deliver more supplies and presents, which would hopefully ingratiate the Indians and make them susceptible to British suggestions.70

The first two of these ideas affected the Indians very little. The United States government was not interested in either a buffer zone or British mediation, and the debacle in 1793 ensured that no real meeting transpired between the confederacy and the Americans, making the Indians’ request for their “Father’s” presence in councils irrelevant. But the third part of Simcoe’s plan affected the Indians considerably. As the American threat became more tangible, native requests for aid increased and, under the lieutenant governor’s orders, were fulfilled in the form of war accoutrements and provisions for the Indians’ frequent and extended conferences. Once again, the Indians capitalized on the current political climate to wrest necessary goods from the British. Although supplies were important, the various nations ultimately hoped to persuade their Detroit neighbors to join them in battle. Brant and others accused McKee of


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disseminating the false notion that the British were prepared to offer actual military support. Shawnee emissaries recruiting among the Cherokees and Creeks apparently repeated this story in 1792-1793. Whether they genuinely believed this report or were simply trying to coerce the British into open assistance by inciting a large number of people to demand the "promised" service, they prevented the British from directing their diplomatic affairs.\footnote{1}

If British intentions were difficult for the Indians to discern in the early 1790s, they became even more complicated during the winter of 1793-1794 as Wayne's massive army camped threateningly within easy striking distance of the Glaize and Detroit. Simcoe, Dorchester, and others continued to speculate that "other objects [must be] in view besides the Indian War," given the size of the American force. They also worried that the longer Wayne remained in the area, the greater the chance of the Indians making peace with him and joining the United States in driving the British entirely out of the region. Their fears gained new strength in January when some Delaware, Shawnee, and Miami warriors sent two messengers to Wayne asking for peace. Although Wayne was skeptical of their sincerity from the beginning and told them they would have to return all prisoners within thirty days to provide "convincing & unequivocal proofs of [their]...desire for peace," he spent more than two months in negotiations with them before deciding that their real goal was "to reconnoiter our position, & to gain time."\footnote{2}

\footnote{1 RG 10, 8: 8242-243; "Shawnee, Delaware, and Miami speech to McKee, May 16, 1792" Ser. 1, lot 738, SIAP; MPHC, 12: 43-44, 24: 401-02, 417-18, 573, 605.}  
\footnote{2 Simcoe Papers, 2: 213 (quote); MPHC, 24: 629-33 (at 630), 646-48; Knopf, Anthony Wayne, 299-302, 306, 308-13 (at 311). The Indians had moved en masse to the Glaize during 1792 after the second substantial American army targeted them at the Miami towns.}
Despite assurances from the Shawnees and Miamis that they had merely intended to inquire about a prisoner exchange rather than ask for peace, the fact that the Indians had initiated any communication with the Americans while McKee was absent heightened British fears of an attack. McKee believed that the opposition to Wayne was decreasing daily, and Simcoe fretted that peace overtures from the western Indians might encourage the Six Nations, who had recently become quite angry with the United States, to pursue the same course. To quell some of these concerns, Dorchester ordered soldiers to the Maumee River, instructing them to reconstruct and inhabit an abandoned post near the rapids. He also carelessly expressed to the Seven Nations of Canada, reporting at Quebec on the failed negotiations of the previous summer, that “from the manner in which the People of the States push on, and act, and talk on this side, and from what I learn of their conduct towards the Sea, I shall not be surprised if we are at war with them in the course of the present year.”

Dorchester’s words quickly spread to the Ohio Country, fanned into flame by Brant and John Butler, commanding at Niagara. When combined with the new British fort in their backyard, this speech caused the Indians to rejoice, hoping that their “Father” was finally delivering the assistance they expected. After hearing this message, Cornplanter’s people grew even more insistent upon blocking American expansion into disputed territory at Presque Isle, and Brant abandoned his idea of meeting with the United States to draw a new boundary line. Despite the apparent promise of British aid, many Indians remained unconvinced that the Europeans intended to rouse themselves on

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their behalf. They were “always setting the Indians on like dogs after game, pressing
them to go to war, and kill the Americans, but did not help them,” several Shawnees
complained. Other leaders remained cautiously optimistic and opted to send frequent
requests for “necessaries” and complaints when the supplies were substandard.\footnote{MPHC, 12: 111, 20: 336-37, 342-43, 360-61, 24: 656, 662-67, 671-73 (see Complanter’s threat
to defend lands if the Americans would not comply with his demand, 673); Simcoe Papers, 2: 245-47, 252,
255, 285, 301; ASPIA, 489-90, 507-23 (at 490). Brant did not abandon his scheme simply because of
Dorchester’s speech. In response to Brant’s fall 1793 boundary proposal, Knox offered to meet with the
Six Nations in council, a move that Brant had not anticipated. He declined the offer, saying that the
problems with past treaties were always inadequate representation and the American inclination to dictate
terms, both of which he believed would be repeated. See MPHC, 12: 112-14, 24: 633-42.}

Regardless of their faith in the British, the Ohio Valley nations grew increasingly
resolved to “advance against the Big Knives, and endeavour to stop their progress.”
Much of their confidence came from the large influx of Indians gathering at the Glaize
and the Maumee rapids. From these bases, scouts spied on Wayne’s movements and war
parties harassed American convoys, while individuals continued to venture into Kentucky
to steal horses. By June, warriors were arriving daily, including some like the Kickapoos,
Weas, Chippewas, and Ottawas who had been determined for peace less than a year
before. With numbers now approximating 2,000, the Indians decided to preemptively
strike a convoy heading for Fort Recovery, Wayne’s new establishment on the site of St.
Clair’s defeat. Over a two day period, they successfully killed or captured more than 300
horses and 60-70 men. But when they turned their attention to storming the fort, they
were repulsed and suffered a number of casualties of their own. This incident could
almost be considered a victory for the Indians were it not for the fact that many of the
distant participants returned home afterwards (either to enjoy their plunder or to mourn their losses), leaving the native force greatly depleted.\textsuperscript{75}

By the end of July, McKee was encouraged by the return of some of these Indians, particularly the Ottawas, Chippewas, and Potawatomies who joined the Wyandots, Delawares, and Shawnees in hovering around the string of American forts stretching from the Ohio River to Fort Recovery. The Wabash Indians formally “expressed their sorrow for having listened to the big Knives” in 1792, and begged “the Confederacy to take Pity on them and receive them again among them as Brothers.”

Despite this solidarity, the Indians were still considerably outmanned by Wayne’s forces, and Britain had still given no formal promise of military support beyond supplying guns, powder, flints, and knives. Consequently, the Miami chief Little Turtle visited Detroit and asked for twenty soldiers and two pieces of artillery to attack Fort Recovery, saying that without British support, the Indians could not resist the American army. Two weeks later, after word reached the Glaize that Wayne was moving in that direction, causing a mass exodus to the Rapids, several Wyandot chiefs added their voices to the request for aid, reminding Lt. Col. England that “you told us...that if ever any Enemy should begin to threaten us we should let you know it and you would support us.” In a final, desperate appeal, they even questioned British honor, accusing them of tolerating American abuse.\textsuperscript{76}

None of these ploys worked, and the 700-1,000 Indians could simply watch from the Rapids as Wayne built Fort Defiance on the site of their abandoned homes. Still


\textsuperscript{76}MPHC, 24: 696-98 (at 697); Simcoe Papers, 2: 334, 357, 366 (at 357).
determined to defend their lands, they exchanged messages with the Americans, hoping to stall for reinforcements. But after a week Wayne advanced and defeated the Indian resistance, pushing them six miles beyond the British Fort Miamis, which not only failed to defend the Indians during battle, but refused to shelter them during their retreat as well. Casualty figures for both sides varied widely, but McKee reported that the Indians were more demoralized than the numbers would suggest, probably because they lost at least ten principal chiefs. They also endured the army’s destruction of their “very extensive and highly cultivated fields and gardens,” so large that Wayne called them the most “immense fields of corn” he had seen in “any part of America, from Canada to Florida.” A week after the battle, he told Knox that he had burned “the Villages & Corn fields for about Fifty miles on each side of the Miamis” and had more to torch beyond the Glaize in the next few days.77

Although the battle later dubbed Fallen Timbers was devastating to the western Indians, it did not signal an immediate end to their conflict with the United States. Several Indian war parties continued to attack American stragglers, and Wayne expected a larger assault throughout September and October. Once again the Indians were divided on the best course of action. Wayne informed them that if they brought in all their prisoners, he would be ready to exchange and then proceed to a peace agreement. Brant,

who had once again been conspicuously absent when an American army invaded Indian
territory, tried to revive the confederacy in preparation for a spring meeting with the
United States (presumably where he would again advocate his boundary idea). Simcoe
responded to another Wyandot request for clarification regarding the British willingness
to assist them by defending his past record and promising to “uniformly fulfill all his
engagements” and keep “his Arms... at all times... ready to receive you and his territory
open to protect and defend you from all Enemies.”

To many of the 3,500 refugees at Swan Creek, none of these options was appealing. Peace with the Americans would result in a loss of territory, and Brant and
Simcoe had both proven unreliable when it came to truly acting in the western Indians’
best interests. Accustomed to British promises that sounded sincere but were actually
quite vague, the Wyandots restated Simcoe’s words in more specific terms: “you told
us... if ever the Virginians came again you would order your Warriors to fire on them.”
Unfortunately, paraphrasing British assurances did not increase their trustworthiness,
leaving the Indians still uncertain about how to proceed. Some simply busied themselves
with hunting or building temporary houses for the winter; others tentatively planned to
move west of the Mississippi River.

In early November, several Sandusky Wyandots traveled to Fort Greenville,
where Wayne had established headquarters for the winter, and asked for peace. Although
Wayne suspected them of playing an “artful game” because they had recently met with
Simcoe, McKee, and Brant and seemed to be acting independently of the other Indians,


\[79\] MPHC, 12: 148-49, 20: 379-80, 25: 45 (quote); Simcoe Papers, 3: 128, 131, 5: 119-20; ASPIA,
529.
he repeated his September message about prisoners and added that he intended to make peace based on the terms of the Fort Harmar treaty. He also threatened that if the Swan Creek Indians continued to resist, they would be ruined along with their British benefactors. Given the fractured opinion regarding peace among the western Indians, many in the war camp scolded the Wyandots for their action, accusing them of bringing trouble upon themselves and ignoring the other nations. In a short time, however, the Miamis, Chippewas, Ottawas, Potawatomies, and Sauks began to trickle in, and by February Wayne declared that “the whole of the late Hostile tribes have now come forward with overtures for peace.”

Although disgruntled factions continued to exist, most Indians adopted a shared attitude toward the Americans. They desired peace and had agreed to curb hostilities, but they remained skeptical about treating with people who had so frequently trampled upon their sovereignty in the past. This fledgling unity was bolstered by their common anger toward Brant and the British. Representatives like McKee and the Vicar General Edmund Burke worked tirelessly to lure the wavering nations back into the British fold, but the Indians insisted that they had “lost all confidence in the British since the 20th of August, Because they remained idle spectators & saw their best & bravest Chiefs & Warriors slaughtered before their faces, & under the Muzzles of their great Guns without attempting to assist them—hence they consider the British not only liars—but also Cowards.” Rather than treating Brant with outright contempt, many Indians preferred to simply disregard him. This message sounded particularly loudly in June 1795 when

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Brant attempted to convene another pre-conference before meeting with Wayne. By the time he arrived in Detroit, most nations had already assembled at Greenville.81

The Greenville treaty also served to unify the Indians, albeit not in the manner the Americans had hoped. From mid-June through early August, various chiefs with numerous followers streamed to the fort and regularly engaged in talks with Wayne. Prominent speakers such as Little Turtle objected to the United States' determination to abide by the Fort Harmar treaty, arguing that he was unacquainted with it because it had been conducted by the Six Nations "who seduced some of our young men to attend it." When he realized that the treaty's provisions had allotted Miami land to the Americans without his permission, he protested. Later he questioned American claims to reservations within his territory and proposed a new boundary line that preserved more native hunting ground. Wayne countered by saying that the Miamis had been allowing French and British occupation of portions of their land for many years, so he had precedent for seizing a patch for the United States. As for Little Turtle's boundary, it was too "crooked, as well as a very difficult line to follow." Before any more challenges could be raised, Wayne halted the proceedings and called the Indians to sign the treaty.82

Most attendees placed their names on the treaty, but their unity arose from a general dissatisfaction with the results. Egusheway complained that he had "never before heard several of the Articles" after Burke read them. Little Turtle intended to refrain from signing altogether, but when Wayne pressured him, he bitterly complied, saying that "as he was forced to do it he would, but that there was little use in putting his hand to a

82 ASPIA, 564-83 (especially 567, 569-71, 573, 576-78); Simcoe Papers, 4: 68-71.
Treaty, which his heart could not approve of.” By January 1796, the Indians were still upset, and rumors had even begun to swirl that many great chiefs, who had mysteriously died after attending the meeting, had been poisoned at Fort Greenville. Six months later it was no surprise to find a new militant faction developing.83

In slightly more than a decade, many Ohio Valley Indians had gone from staunchly defending their land at the end of the Revolution (complete with convincing military victories) to canvassing for a new home outside of the region after the Greenville treaty. Although this path was far from linear and tended to be influenced more heavily by “pen and ink work” than military exploits, it contained a subtle shift in the balance between the Indians’ twin objectives of preserving land and sovereignty. During the 1780s, native complaints focused more on the Americans’ condescending tone and their insistence that they had conquered the Indians and their land. By the 1790s, exclusive attention rested on the boundary-line dispute, stifling other means of resolving conflict and other grievances. In the end, those who opted to move traded land for sovereignty by distancing themselves from the Americans who sought to deprive them of their legitimate exercise of power.

As native objectives evolved between 1783 and 1795, so did their strategies. By the end of the Revolution, most Ohio Valley Indians had chosen to affiliate themselves with the British, but their “Father” repeatedly disappointed them in the ensuing years. Despite frequent pleas for Canada’s leaders to fulfill their duties as an ally and not simply a trade partner, Simcoe, Dorchester, McKee, and their superiors in London refused to

83 MPHIC, 12: 176-78, 195 (at 178), 34: 739; Simcoe Papers, 4: 71-74, 93 (at 72).
provide the tangible assistance the Indians expected. Consequently, unification became a more serious pursuit in the mid-1780s and 1790s. In an effort to revise the alliances that had affected the previous decade, the Indians sought to create a confederacy that would protect their land and ensure that their voices would be heard. This plan effectively created fear among United States leaders, but it was hampered by dominating outsiders like Brant and a general failure to agree on the best way to repel the trespassing Americans.

Now that the political climate no longer pitted the British and the colonies against each other, stratagems like neutrality and dissembling seemed less applicable. The Wyandots, ever the masters at concealing their true allegiance, transformed their dissimulation during the Revolution into a mediating role in the post-war years. As one of the few nations to sign the Fort McIntosh treaty, they received American approbation and a small degree of protection from marauding militia bands. St. Clair even sent them a letter after Harmar’s expedition, assuring them that the army intended to chastise only the Shawnees and Miamis. In turn, Congress expected the Wyandots to pass along treaty invitations and to work for peace among the more hostile nations. While the Wyandots faithfully executed this task, they also used their position to act in the Indians’ interest by twice warning off the surveyors and continuing to insist that although they had made peace with the Americans, they believed the United States’ claim to their lands unjustifiable. Eventually, their frustration with American audacity in sending large forces into Indian country and building forts on land not granted in any treaty moved
them into the belligerent camp. Yet after the battle at Fallen Timbers, they were the first to re-establish contact with Wayne and to investigate the prospects of peace.84

These altered tactics promised to serve the Wyandots well in the years following the Greenville treaty. Unification had failed because the Indians could not agree on the best response to the American threat. Mediation, however, assumed that different ideas existed and sought to forge a new path. On the surface, new strategies for relating to non-Indian neighbors seemed necessary because the political and cultural landscape had changed dramatically. The United States now dominated diplomatic affairs and the British played a smaller role, particularly after control of the forts had been transferred to the Americans in 1796. Meanwhile, the Indians were forced to designate new tribal boundaries within a greatly reduced amount of land. But for all this upheaval, much remained the same. Indian complaints about inadequate presents, double-talking allies, and scheming land dealers continued, as did European and American reliance upon native trade to fuel part of the Atlantic economy. Most important, however, Indian objectives remained immutable. While the acres they defended might have changed, their desire and ability to sustain viable, sovereign communities persisted.

84 ASPIA, 147-48; PCC, reel 74, item 60, 209; MPHC, 11: 466-67; “Wyandots to US, 1786” Ser. 1, lot 718, SLAP.
In February 1778, Chief Blackfish and 120 of his Shawnee warriors patrolled the forests of Kentucky, looking to retaliate for the murder of their leader Cornstalk the previous November. He had intended to besiege the struggling settlement named Boonesborough, but when he encountered Daniel Boone and twenty-six other local residents making salt at the Lower Blue Licks, he abandoned his original plan and settled for capturing a core group of able-bodied men, who would bring a handsome price as trade bait or serve as useful adoptees into Shawnee villages. Blackfish also knew that taking captives, particularly fully grown, armed men, would create almost as much unrest among frontier settlers as pillaging and burning a stockade. For four months the Shawnees seemed content with this form of conquest; but after several men escaped and returned to raid their adoptive homes, they determined to destroy Boonesborough. Unfortunately for their preparations, Boone slipped away in time to warn his Kentucky neighbors, who mounted a resilient defense when Blackfish’s army of four hundred arrived in September.1

A decade later, the Shawnee chief Nenessica, with a band of ninety Shawnees, Potawatomies, Ottawas, and Cherokees, seized another group of outsiders, among them a trader, creditor, and speculator named Thomas Ridout. Ridout and his company were bound for the falls of the Ohio on one of the slow, flat-bottomed boats that traversed the

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Ohio River in great numbers. Between Limestone and the Great Miami River, the Indians easily waylaid the vessel, capturing both prisoners and goods worth more than £1,500 sterling. For some in this multi-ethnic party, plunder was paramount, but the Shawnees also sought revenge for the burning of their villages by Kentucky militia in 1786. Initially, they had joined with other nations in sending peace overtures to Congress, but after a year with no response, they had taken up the hatchet. Although the fate of most of the prisoners is unknown, some were killed, probably as a gesture of vengeance. Ridout remained with the Indians for about two months before being released, perhaps because he identified himself as English rather than American.²

Four years later, a Shawnee and a Mingo warrior captured ten-year-old Oliver Spencer near Fort Washington. Having traveled to the fort to celebrate the Fourth of July, Spencer secretly abandoned his companions after a few days and was overtaken while returning home. His two captors seemed primarily interested in adding a few prisoners to their peltry collection, but they were also part of the large Indian community at the Auglaize that had formed the bulk of the opposition to St. Clair’s army the previous autumn. Many residents here believed that “their late victories over the whites, particularly their signal defeat of St. Clair, were evidences of the returning favour of the Great Spirit.” Bolstered by this religious assurance, they were determined to drive the “pale faces” south of the Ohio River. Taking a small boy might seem like a feeble gesture in the grand effort to push the Americans back, but it served the purpose of creating fear on the frontier. After eight months and an elaborate bargaining system

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between the British, Americans, and Indians, Spencer was redeemed and returned to relatives in New Jersey.³

Although Boone, Ridout, and Spencer were abducted by different Indians in diverse locales and eras, they represented the constantly changing face of the enemy for the Ohio Valley nations. To his contemporaries as well as successive generations, Boone modeled the life of pioneering hunters and settlers: men whose forays into uncharted territory blazed the trail for thousands of land-hungry individuals intent on developing new communities in the American “wilderness.” To the Indians he exemplified the first wave of trespassers, whose existence was tenuous and therefore subjected to recurring raids designed to erase the outsiders’ imprint on native land.

As Kentucky and western Pennsylvania and Virginia settlements became more deeply rooted with the great influx of immigrants during and after the Revolution, businessmen such as Ridout appeared with increased frequency. Whether they aimed to survey land illegally, hunt or trap on the Indian side of the Ohio, or engage in trade with various nations, they sought to exploit the general lawlessness of the region at Indian expense. Even Ridout, who seemed generally sympathetic to the Indians’ position relative to the Americans and was designated simply to collect debts, embarked for Kentucky prepared to engage in trade. Unlike Ridout and Boone, the ten-year-old Spencer did not represent a specific face of the enemy, but his presence indicated that the Americans were becoming even more entrenched on land north of the Ohio.⁴

While settlers and unscrupulous traders might have been the most common foes, many other antagonists popped up for the Ohio Valley Indians as well. Government officials assured them that they could control unruly westerners and were determined to bring justice to the frontier, but they contented themselves with hand-wringing and threatening proclamations rather than genuine law enforcement. Congressional agents brought tidings of peace, while simultaneously ushering in surveyors, building forts, and flourishing fraudulent land deeds. Soldiers competed with Indians for game, in addition to destroying their homes, crops, and relatives. Indian agents and religious leaders seemed to labor for their clients' benefit, but were ultimately loyal to their home governments. British officials constantly proclaimed their friendship and promised protection against the Americans, but never responded when the Indians directly appealed for aid. Even outside Indians could don the adversarial cloak, either by attempting to dominate Ohio Valley affairs, as the Six Nations did during the entire period, or by strengthening another threat, as the Chickasaws and Choctaws did when they guided Wayne's army in 1794.

Faced with such a multifaceted enemy, it is no surprise that the region's tribes rarely agreed on the best way to preserve their land and sovereignty. Few villages were privy to all of this opposition at the same time, and most based their strategy on the clearest threat, which usually varied by town, season, or year. A static foe would have been easier to understand and repulse, but the ever-shifting character of those who sought to dispossess the Indians of their Ohio Valley homeland created discord even before their real weapons could be launched.
In addition to bearing a variety of countenances, the Indians’ enemy had different goals over time. For the young Continental Congress just beginning to exercise its authority in 1775, the first item of business regarding the western theater was to figure out what to do about the Indians, particularly those who had been battling Lord Dunmore and the Virginians less than a year before. Reports had already reached Philadelphia that Canada’s governor Carleton was “instigating the Indian Nations to take up the Hatchet against them,” so Congress devoted many sessions to considering whether it should respond in kind. At first the delegates could only agree to encourage the nations to remain friendly toward the colonies. This resolution enabled them to vilify the British as the sort of people who would “let loose these blood Hounds to scalp Men, and to butcher women & Children,” while they “stood forth like Men and fought [their] own Battles; and advised [the Indians] to sit quietly under the Shade of their Trees and reap the Fruits of our Toils & Dangers; the Freedom purchased by our Blood.” In time Congress authorized the military to recruit Indians, but in the Ohio Valley this move served to alienate nations rather than strengthen their relationship to the Americans.5

While representatives debated the pros and cons of soliciting native auxiliaries, others began to plan for an attack on Detroit. As early as September 1775, Congress rejected a proposed expedition because “the Season [was] so far advanced,” and the intelligence regarding the fort’s defenses was incomplete. During the next three years, the war in the West soured for the colonies, as most Ohio Valley nations turned the tomahawk against threatening American settlers. Consequently, Congress revisited the

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idea of marching against Detroit in 1778. Indian agent George Morgan strongly advocated this measure rather than sending troops against native villages, arguing that the road was passable, the post defenseless, and the neutral Indians more amenable to an assault on the British than an attack on their neighbors. Despite Morgan’s persuasive efforts, Congress abandoned the drive to Detroit, but permitted a combination of militia and continental soldiers to advance into Indian country and chastise any hostile tribes. The Moravian missionary John Heckewelder lamented this decision, claiming that “no firm peace can be settled as long as Detroit is not taken, the place from which all evil springs.”

For the remainder of the war, Col. Daniel Brodhead, commander at Fort Pitt from 1779 to 1781, begged General Washington to approve his schemes to take Detroit. Washington rejected each plea, citing insufficient supplies, intelligence, or men, but caved in December 1780, when Virginia governor Thomas Jefferson suggested a joint expedition of Brodhead at Fort Pitt and George Rogers Clark at the falls of the Ohio. All of the carefully laid plans quickly became irrelevant as recruiting for both armies stagnated, supplies failed to materialize, and bickering between the two commanders injured morale. The final blow to the campaign’s prospects came when 90-100 Indians ambushed Col. Archibald Lochry as he traveled down the Ohio to join Clark, killing about a third of the party and taking the rest prisoner.

If the merits of attempting to capture Detroit were disputed throughout the entire conflict, support for “carrying the War into the Nation...as the only way to secure [the]

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6 LDC, 2: 15-16 (at 15); Frontier Advance, 88-89, 112-13, 121, 245 (at 245).
7 Frontier Retreat, 40, 94, 100-02, 123, 133, 311, 350; George Rogers Clark Papers, 8: 485-90; MPHC, 10: 509-18, 19: 655-56, 658; Pennsylvania Archives, 12: 185.

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Frontiers” and win respect for the colonies was largely universal. By 1777, when Indian raids across the Ohio became more frequent, calls for retaliation increased, most notably from the Virginia council and Governor Patrick Henry. At first, Morgan balked at the suggestion to flatten Pluggy’s town, fearing that it would ignite a general Indian war and encourage random attacks on friendly nations. “Should it please God to bless us with Victory to overcome our British Enemies on the Sea Coast,” he cajoled, then “we shall have it in our power to take ample satisfaction of our Indian Enemy.” Five months and countless attacks later he had shifted his position, although he still believed Detroit to be the better target than native villages.8

Despite Morgan’s objections, few federal or state officials opposed the idea of taking the offensive, at least in principle. Gen. Edward Hand, the first continental commander at Fort Pitt, believed that “destroying the settlements of these perfidious miscreants” was the only way to protect the frontiers, even after he led an ill-fated excursion up the Allegheny River, killing several women and a boy and antagonizing a large band of Delawares in the process. His successor, Gen. Lachlan McIntosh, followed Congress’s orders to “chastise and terrify the savages” in 1778 by building Fort McIntosh at the mouth of Big Beaver Creek and then marching inland to Tuscarawas and planting Fort Laurens near Delaware and Wyandot communities. The Americans turned out to be the ones terrified, however, as large Indian forces harassed supply lines and Fort Laurens itself, ultimately forcing the company to withdraw in August 1779. Following McIntosh, the fiery Brodhead penetrated Indian country several times: first in an attack on Seneca

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8 Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 176; George Morgan Collections, MSS 17, Library of Congress, 13-14; Morgan Letterbooks, 1: 71-77 (at 76); LDC, 7: 495.
villages along the Allegheny River as part of Sullivan's campaign into Iroquoia and later in devastating the Delaware capital of Coshocton.\textsuperscript{9}

Of all these aggressors, no name inspired more fear at Ohio Valley council fires than George Rogers Clark. In December 1777 he persuaded the Virginia government to approve his plan to capture the British forts at Kaskaskia and Cahokia in the Illinois country and Vincennes on the Wabash. After executing this mission, he threatened the local Indians into making a tentative peace and soon declared that he was ready to proceed toward Detroit. To check his progress and win back the territory, Gov. Henry Hamilton left Detroit in October 1778 and by mid-December had reclaimed Vincennes. Two months later, Clark secured his fearsome reputation by secretly converging on Fort Sackville and forcing Hamilton and his handful of British regulars to capitulate.

Previously, Hamilton had symbolized British might, largesse, and courage, so the Indians concluded that his conqueror must be very powerful indeed. But fear did not produce loyalty. As Clark and his administrators failed to provide adequate supplies, most of the Wabash and Illinois Indians drifted back to Detroit for necessities and political allies. Clark followed up these westerly campaigns by attacking Shawnee towns in 1780 and 1782, moves that solidified native animosity toward the Kentuckians rather than chastening the committed warriors.\textsuperscript{10}

While most American strategists hoped that taking the war across the Ohio would produce submissive Indians, they viewed this possibility as a means to achieving the

\textsuperscript{9} \textit{Pennsylvania Archives}, 5: 443; \textit{Frontier Advance}, 121, 154-68, 170-78, 183 (at 121); \textit{Frontier Retreat}, 40, 43, 55-66, 343, 348, 373, 376-82, 399.

larger goal of keeping the British at bay. To them, the Shawnees, Wyandots, Mingos, and other belligerent nations were simply acting at the behest of Hamilton and his superiors rather than out of objectives and designs of their own. Consequently, forestalling the Indians would mean silencing the British in the western theater. In addition to repeated, sudden attacks “on such nations...as were the most troublesome,” colonial officials devised other means to check native aggressions. “If you find any Indians on the south side of the Ohio, which have crossed...with Hostile Intentions you will Treat them as open & avow’d Enemys,” West Augusta County’s Lt. Dorsey Pentecost advised his militia captains in 1776. George Washington proposed a more insidious scheme in 1781. Since the Americans had largely resigned themselves to having very little chance of procuring Indian allies at this juncture in the war, he instructed Brodhead to “foment differences” among various groups in an effort to neutralize their opposition to his advances.11

Despite their efforts to curb Indian raids and implement schemes to capture Detroit, Congress, military personnel, and most colonial governments still viewed the war in the Ohio Valley as ancillary to the real struggle being waged in the East. Supplies and men were designated to reinforce Washington’s troops with very little to spare for the distressed inhabitants of frontier counties or military expeditions undertaken in the West. In the spring of 1781, while preparing for his Washington and Jefferson-approved strike

into Indian territory en route to Detroit, Clark requested that Congress provide him with necessary stores not available at Fort Pitt. General Sullivan vehemently objected, arguing that "they were going on some wild goose Chase against the Indians or Detroit...when they aught to have turned all their force against the Enemy now destroying the most Cultivated part of their Country." All available "fources and supplies [were] necessary against the Enemy who were invading sundry parts of the country," he insisted.  

Opinions such as these disturbed settlers and local authorities, who believed their region to be an equally important part of the country and the war effort. They shared the material sufferings of their seaboard counterparts and lived under the same fear that the enemy could easily overrun them given the right circumstances. Similar experiences did not translate into similar goals, however. While federal representatives dreamed of reducing Detroit, leaders of Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Kentucky thought primarily of defense. They advocated the construction of new forts as tangible deterrents to the Indians and symbols of protection for the settlers. Embracing the "best defense is a good offense" philosophy, many also called for expeditions across the Ohio, but they always favored attacking native towns rather than targeting British forts or supply centers. Even Clark, who had become a hero to many Kentuckians, faced severe criticism during the Revolution's final years when he seemed to be applying resources to schemes not immediately related to Kentucky's safety.  

Since forts were expensive and could protect only a small portion of land, most counties raised ranging parties to scout on both sides of the Ohio and to repulse

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12 Pennsylvania Archives, 9: 115-16; LMCC, 6:60 (quote).
13 Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 192-99; Frontier Advance, 46; Pennsylvania Archives, 9: 307, 325; George Rogers Clark Papers, 8: 530-31, 544, 552, 596-600, 605-07, 19: 5, 43, 126-29, 135.
marauding Indians. This additional security measure was specifically implemented to keep terrified settlers from fleeing eastward, but it also highlighted many of the tensions between local and federal ideas about how the West should be viewed during the war. County and state officials contended that the rangers were guarding American soil and should be paid from the common treasury. Congressmen and governors from states without western lands countered that Pennsylvania and Virginia had “wantonly settled part of the back Country,” and it should not be the responsibility of all the colonies to support such selfish and foolhardy actions.14

As the Revolution proceeded, the easterners’ resentment toward all western settlement increased, because they believed negligent adventurers incited the Indians and enabled the British to conduct the war on another front. Brodhead railed against the “folly and villainy” of the trespassers, who had dared to settle between Fort McIntosh and the Muskingum River, not acknowledging that the presence of a continental fort on the Indian side of the Ohio undoubtedly encouraged Virginians to cross the river. Clark disagreed with this “publick Clamour against the Settlement” of the West, arguing that Kentucky in particular had “proved of great importance by engaging the attention of the Enemy that otherwise would have spread Slaughter & Devastation through out the more Interior Frontier, deprived them of giving any assistance to our Eastern Armies, and more than probable, the Allegany would have been our Boundary at this time.” Rather than seeing the West as a distraction, critics should award it “the most favourable point of View as a place of the greatest consequence and ought to meet with every

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incouragement," he insisted. Furthermore, the posts at Vincennes, Kaskaskia, and Cahokia had "in a great measure baffled the designs of the Enemy at Detroit."^{15}

Besides fending off enemy attacks, another way to frustrate English plans was to prevent disaffected people from joining ranks with the Indians or the British. This goal occupied the attention of every commander at Fort Pitt, particularly at the beginning of the war. In the summer of 1777, Governor Hamilton at Detroit circulated a proclamation in the Pennsylvania and Virginia backcountry, inviting residents to "withdraw themselves from the Tyranny and oppression of the rebel Committees, & take refuge in this Settlement." To counteract this measure, General Hand and other officials attempted to link common defense against the Indians with common support for the colonies, but a large number of "tories" resisted his efforts. The local militia cracked down on this "conspiracy" and even implicated Hand and George Morgan for suspicious activity (both were acquitted), but they never succeeded in stamping out dissent altogether. When Alexander McKee, Simon Girty, and Matthew Elliott, three traders and Indian department operatives before the war, declared their open support for the British by fleeing their loose confinement at Fort Pitt in March 1778, the accusations and intrigue began again.^{16}

While the Americans feuded among themselves about the consequences of exhibiting disloyalty, attacking Detroit, invading Indian country, and encouraging

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^{15} Frontier Retreat, 96-97, 106-07; Pennsylvania Archives, 12: 176-77; George Rogers Clark Papers, 8: 217-18, 553, 597.
settlement, the British maintained fewer goals for the western theater, though they also struggled with internal disagreements. Shortly after Hamilton arrived in Detroit in late 1776, Gen. Guy Carleton reminded him that “keeping the Indians firm to the King’s interest ought to be your first and great object.” Carleton’s successor, Frederick Haldimand, continued that policy, particularly exhorting the commanders at distant posts, such as Major Arent Schuyler De Peyster at Michilimackinac, to preserve the Indians’ friendship, since “our existence almost entirely depends upon [their] disposition.” Fortunately for Hamilton, De Peyster, and others, the British Indian department was well-equipped to foster good will with the Ohio Valley nations. Unlike the colonists, they had an extensive network of agents already operating in most major Indian centers. Most of these men also conducted trade and housed sizable stockpiles of goods. If supplies ran low at these outposts, they could be replenished at Detroit far more easily and cheaply than the Americans could ship inventory to Fort Pitt.

It soon became apparent that what the British really wanted was native dependence rather than friendship. Recognizing that without Indian support their entire enterprise in the Ohio Valley and Great Lakes regions would be obsolete, they sought to tread carefully between offending their clients and completely controlling their access to necessary food and ammunition. This plan worked well during the first half of the war, partially because the crown’s naval blockade made it even more difficult for the Americans to import trade goods. By 1780, however, the scheme had backfired. Nations that had been victimized by colonial troops or had neglected their hunting in favor of

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expeditions now flocked to British posts, expecting to be given much-needed presents as a reward for their allegiance. Haldimand lamented the soaring expenses and the "long habit of Indulgence" that had encouraged a taste for "Luxuries" among the various tribes. Even more galling than the rapidly accruing debt was the fact that he still could not make the Indians truly "Subservient...to the King's Service," despite his best efforts to make them economically dependent on the king's stores.\textsuperscript{18}

Establishing positive (if not exploitative) relations with local Indians was also paramount for the British because they had military strategies for the West that depended upon native personnel. Secretary of State Lord George Germain instructed Hamilton to make "a Diversion on the Frontiers of Virginia and Pennsylvania" with the various nations who had already exhibited interest in fighting the Americans. He hoped that eventually Loyalists would gather at Detroit to supplement these Ohio Valley warriors, enabling Hamilton "to extend his operations so as to divide the attention of the Rebels, and oblige them to collect considerable Force to oppose him, which cannot fail of weakening their main army...and thus bring the War to a more Speedy Issue." To execute this scheme, Hamilton planned to send out numerous small parties, keeping the "most reputable of the chiefs and Warriors in the neighbourhood" in the event that Carleton or Haldimand needed them for a special assignment.\textsuperscript{19}

Hamilton dreamed of using the West for more than a simple diversion, however.

After the colonists captured the Illinois and Wabash posts in the summer of 1778, he

\textsuperscript{19} MPHC, 9: 346-47, 440. Sometimes the diversion was to protect other western operations. For example, in 1780, a British and Indian expedition planned to leave Michilimackinac to attack Spanish St. Louis. De Peyster, now commanding at Detroit, promised to send a separate army to harass the Kentucky frontier and draw attention away from the battles near the Mississippi. See MPHC, 9: 580, 10: 379.
concluded that not only did the British need to liberate Vincennes, Kaskaskia, and Cahokia, they needed to plant themselves more firmly in the region so they could coordinate offensive operations more effectively. From this centralized location, he hoped to attract Indians from Michilimackinac and the South in addition to his Ohio Valley allies, who would join together, sweep through Kentucky, and even subdue Fort Pitt. As he traveled to Vincennes in late 1778, he sent messengers to the Cherokees and Chickasaws to set this plan in motion. They responded positively, saying they would arrive in three months to drive the Virginians from Illinois; but before any unified action could take place, Clark had locked Hamilton in irons and dragged him to Williamsburg.\(^20\)

This aborted attempt to unite the southern and western Indians and to overwhelm the colonists from the west was not solely Hamilton’s idea. Before the lieutenant governor had even arrived at Detroit, Virginia’s Lord Dunmore and his agent John Connolly had concocted an elaborate plan to combine the Ohio Indians with local militia, seize Fort Pitt, and then penetrate into Virginia, where they would link up with Dunmore’s army in the East and effectively divide the southern and northern colonies. Connolly was arrested by a vigilant committee of safety in the fall of 1775 as he tried to make his way to Detroit, but his tactical musings did not languish during his several years in prison. By 1781, he had apparently resurrected his proposal for “a Diversion from Canada to cooperate by way of Fort Pitt with an Expedition from the Southern Army up the Rivers Potomack & Susquehanah.” Haldimand belittled this scheme and its originator, arguing that the route was too difficult to travel and Fort Pitt too impregnable

to be taken by a small coup. Furthermore, he declared that while the Indians’ friendship had enabled the British to retain possession of most of the Ohio Country, their refusal to follow his military orders would render such an intricate mission impossible.\(^{21}\)

Haldimand’s hesitation about adopting this aggressive strategy for the West and his uncertainty about the use of native auxiliaries was matched by other British observers as well. In February 1778, Edward Abbott, lieutenant governor at Vincennes, abandoned his post because he believed it impossible to govern the area “without incurring any great expence,” as he had been instructed. These restrictions prevented him from distributing the requisite Indian presents and, consequently, made it difficult for him to keep the Indians “in the crown’s interest.” When he reached Detroit, he criticized the British policy of “employing Indians on the Rebel frontiers.” If the “poor unhappy people” had not been “forced to take up arms against their sovereign” rather than “be pillaged & left to starve,” he said, “many hundreds would have put themselves under His Majesty’s protection.” He acknowledged that some people believed it “necessary to employ Indians to prevent their serving our enemies,” but he maintained that encouraging the nations toward neutrality would be just as “serviceable to us, as their going to war.”\(^{22}\)

Abbot’s disapproval of Indian depredations was especially poignant because it indirectly addressed a third British goal for the western front. In addition to solidifying friendships with local Indians and creating a genuine military threat to divert resources from the East, Carleton, Haldimand, and their superiors aimed to smother the disaffected population in their midst, who threatened to undermine all of their other designs for the


\(^{22}\) MPHC, 9: 488-89.
region. Abbot believed that far from quelling the “Rebellious disposition” of many residents at Detroit, Vincennes, and Illinois, the British were actually alienating even more people by sending the Indians against the frontiers. De Peyster worried that a strong pro-American faction might actually turn the Indians away from the British, especially if they were able to secure supplies through the French and Spanish on the Mississippi.23

These concerns reached a peak shortly after Clark’s victory over Hamilton. Receiving “certain intelligence” that Detroit was teeming with “disaffected” people and judging them to possibly be “dangerous Enemies,” Haldimand ordered Capt. Richard Lernoult (governing in Hamilton’s absence) to “apprehend any Person or Persons whom you may have cause to believe is in any manner directly or indirectly aiding or abetting the Rebels or their allies, either with Provisions, Intelligence or otherwise.” While this hard-line approach may have worked among ordinary town residents, it was less effective in controlling distant British agents and traders whose loyalty might be in question. Most of these men had established themselves in native communities during the French regime, but had shifted their allegiance to the British rather than abandon their homes and livelihood after the French defeat in the Seven Years’ War. When France formally aligned itself with the colonies during the Revolution, however, Hamilton, Haldimand, and other English leaders suspected men such as Louis Chevallier and Duperon Baby of treachery, fearing that large numbers of Indians would be drawn away from British influence in their wake. This uneasiness eventually prompted Michilimackinac commander Patrick Sinclair to deport Chevallier in 1780, a move that created more

23 Ibid., 10: 482, 488-89 (at 482).
animosity toward the British among the local Potawatomies than any rhetoric from their resident trader.24

While nervousness about potential traitors plagued both the British and American camps, it still occupied less time than fretting about native alliances. Not only did both sides have different ideas about how to incorporate Indians into their war aims, they also held contrasting opinions on how to cultivate their friendship. Of course, the Ohio Valley nations possessed their own notions of how to resolve conflict and maintain peaceful relations. Given these disparate perspectives on the nature of alliances as well as the demographic, military, and ideological upheaval of the Revolution, the chances of mistrust, miscommunication, and even outright hostility increased rapidly as the war progressed and settlers continued to aggravate native warriors and hunters.

Although the Americans wished to establish ties with the western nations, they generally approached Indian diplomacy with considerable skepticism, frequently reminding their guests that in the past, treaties were “no sooner concluded, but the Indians or some of them Began to Break the peace by Stealing from and Robbing our people. Killing our Women and Children and Committing other Outrageous Acts against the faith of the said Stipulations.” Questions about native reliability tended to fuel the already adversarial assumptions that most colonists made about alliances. In their minds, treaties were to be conducted when problems arose or when it was necessary to achieve particular goals, such as making peace, acquiring land, or securing allies during wartime.

24 Ibid., 9: 545, 553, 569, 10: 338 (at 338).
If suspicion was eliminated in the process, it was a happy byproduct, not an end in itself.25

By contrast, most Indian nations viewed treaty conferences as the lifeblood of any healthy relationship between sovereign powers, rather than a last resort when the friendship appeared to be in jeopardy. Since distrust precluded both personal and public negotiations, frequent meetings were necessary to mourn the dead, strengthen communication, and reaffirm peaceful intentions. This constant cultivation of their solemn covenants was the solution to dissolving any doubts about their allies’ honesty, thus enabling productive dialogue to begin. Only after mutual respect had been established could the various speakers turn to business matters, and even then proper protocol needed to be maintained to ensure that nothing was compromising the foundational relationship.26

The problems that could arise from such divergent ideas about alliances were prominently displayed at Congress’s 1778 conference with the Delawares. Since the beginning of the Revolution, most of the Delaware nation had adhered to the colonists’ admonition that “this is a Family quarrel betwixt us and Old England; you Indians are not concerned in it; we don’t wish you to take up the Hatchet against the King’s Troops.” Despite being surrounded by belligerent neighbors, the Delawares around Coshocton had


26 For another view of the nature of Indian and European alliances, see Nancy Shoemaker, A Strange Likeness: Becoming Red and White in Eighteenth-Century North America (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 83-103. Although she argues that in forming international alliances “Indians and Europeans were more alike than they were different,” she acknowledges that the two did not “play by the same rules.” I would add that parallel experiences with diplomacy did not translate into parallel assumptions about how the alliance should be negotiated and carried out.
remained neutral. By September 1778, however, their relations with the Americans had become strained. Having followed Congress’s counsel for three years, they expected reciprocal assistance in the form of trade goods, especially since Fort Pitt officials tended to interpret any fraternization with British traders as a violation of neutrality. Morgan and past treaty commissioners had promised a reliable supply, but it still had not materialized.²⁷

Even more troubling than the colonies’ failure to provide adequate wares was the fact that several Delawares had fallen victim to settler violence and had also been the target of a military expedition conducted under General Hand in February 1778. “You told me that all the Nations should see what a lasting Friendship we have with one another,” White Eyes reproached Morgan in April, “but instead of proving this you struck the Tomhawk in my Head.” This threat was doubly harmful because the Delawares had heard reports that the Wyandots and other western Indians were preparing to attack them because of their refusal to take up arms. Faced with danger from all sides and frustration that the Americans had not fulfilled their trade obligations, the Delawares hoped that a good conference would repair the damaged relationship with Congress and perhaps secure some military protection from other menacing nations.²⁸

Meanwhile, the colonists were developing their own plans for the upcoming meeting. Rumors had swirled around Fort Pitt that some Delawares were abetting raiding parties that passed through their towns, causing some friction in the supposedly friendly

²⁷ Calloway, Revolution and Confederation, 127-30, 134-36; Morgan Letterbooks, 1: 52, 89, 2: 5-6.
relationship. Despite this tension, the commissioners who headed westward in late summer 1778 focused on other issues. They hoped to receive consent for marching an army through Delaware territory either to attack Detroit or to chastise the nations who had terrorized the frontiers for the past two years. If this attempt succeeded, they aimed to jettison their earlier call for neutrality and to ask some Delawares to join them on their expedition.\textsuperscript{29}

Considering the Delawares' and Americans' disparate goals, it is no surprise that the treaty was fraught with miscommunication. At first, everything seemed to go smoothly: commissioners Andrew and Thomas Lewis condoled with the Delawares for their recent losses and promised to conduct a "well-regulated trade," while White Eyes assured them that his people would "Rejoice" to have the army march through their country and would provide "as many...Warriors as can possibly be spared." In the ensuing months, however, it became clear that the Delawares were not satisfied with what had transpired in September.\textsuperscript{30}

When Morgan returned to Fort Pitt in late December after an extended time in the East, Killbuck, the leading Delaware spokesman after White Eyes' death in November, complained that upon further consultation, he discovered that the articles of the treaty were "wrote down false, & as I did not understand the Interpreter what he spoke I could not contradict his Interpretation." His primary point of contention was that instead of being viewed as a neutral party, he was now "looked upon as a Warrior." "The Tomhawk was handed to me at Fort Pitt," he conceded, "but not in a Warlike manner, we

\textsuperscript{29} Frontier Defense, 95-96; Moravian Mission Diaries, 389, 416-17, 436, 438. \\
\textsuperscript{30} Calloway, Revolution and Confederation, 164-65, 168; Moravian Mission Diaries, 469-70.
all standing, & at no Council Fire, neither did I understand the meaning of it.” The people were very confused by the abandonment of neutrality, especially since the American army had constructed Fort Laurens near their towns, which seemed to be drawing the ire of most western nations and threatened to cast them in a negative light as well. “I neither desired any Implements of War,” Killbuck clarified, “all what I agreed to was to pilot the Army ‘till beyond our bounds, & my great Capt. White Eyes with several others to go before the Army & convey them to the Enemy in order to be of use to both Parties, in case they should desire to speak or treat with one another.”

Morgan could do little more than invite the Delawares to visit Congress (where they returned the hatchet in May 1779) and grumble that “there never was a Conference with the Indians so improperly or so villainously conducted as the late one at Pittsburgh.” Although his charge of deliberate deception is difficult to prove, it seems clear that the two sides left Fort Pitt with different ideas about how the latest treaty had redefined their relationship, probably because they approached the event with entirely dissimilar agendas. The commissioners had accomplished their specific military and strategic goals, not realizing or not caring that they had further undermined the Delawares’ trust in American promises. Rather than mending their fragile friendship as leaders such as White Eyes had hoped, the treaty resulted in a steady drifting away of Delaware loyalties until the nation declared outright war three years later.

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31 Morgan Letterbooks, 3: 148, 150-51 (at 150-51). Both David Zeisberger and John Heckewelder record the official report that White Eyes died of smallpox. According to a 1784 letter of Morgan’s, however, he was “treacherously put to death.” “Morgan to unknown, May 12, 1784,” George Morgan Collections.

32 Morgan Letterbooks, 3: 156, 162-64 (at 156).
While Andrew and Thomas Lewis, Lachlan McIntosh, Daniel Brodhead, and other military personnel contrived to attain their momentary objectives at Fort Pitt in September 1778, Hamilton pursued a different means of building alliances at Detroit. With the admonition to “keep the Indians in the King’s interest” echoing in his head and the urgency of western affairs now that Clark had captured Kaskaskia, Cahokia, and Vincennes pressing upon him, he set out to strengthen his connection to the Lake Indians and other nations near Detroit and to use them against his enemies. He met individually with the Ottawas, Chippewas, and Potawatomies as an initial recruiting drive, entertained Wyandots and distant Chippewas who arrived later, and sent presents and speeches to the Shawnees and Miamis. Despite the ultimate failure of his expedition, the trip reinforced the already strong bonds he had been forging for several years. Hamilton’s successor, De Peyster, practiced a similar strategy for the remainder of the war, doling out presents to most parties who came to Detroit and listening to a variety of native grievances, all with an eye toward winning the Indians’ favor and demonstrating British superiority to the Americans.33

This formula for securing native alliances resonated more clearly with most Ohio Valley Indians than the colonists’ efforts to accomplish pre-determined goals, but it did not ensure that British-Indian relations would be harmonious. Unlike the Americans, the British and the Indians shared the same ideas about the purpose of a treaty (solidifying a relationship), but they held different expectations for what their renewed friendship would require of them. Leaders such as Haldimand and Hamilton assumed that they

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33 MPHC, 9: 345, 479, 482; Barnhart, ed., Journal of Henry Hamilton, 104-05. For De Peyster’s almost constant meetings with the Indians during the last few years of the war, see RG 10, vols. 12-13.
could compel their allies to do whatever best served British interests. Most Indians resented such presumptuousness, frequently disregarding British instructions as a reminder that though they relied on Detroit for supplies, they were equally indispensable to an empire dependent on the fur trade. In turn, many chiefs and warriors believed they would receive military assistance and protection from their sworn associates, only to discover that British loyalty extended no further than its own political and economic considerations.34

After the colonists and their former sovereign signed a peace treaty in 1783, both the British and the Americans adopted new perspectives on Indian alliances. Watching their allies disregard advice about making peace and actively resist the rapid American expansion forced English officials to acknowledge their inability to dictate or control native policies. Maintaining Indian friendships assumed even greater urgency, however, because the crown’s position in North America had suddenly become much more tenuous. For the struggling Continental Congress, who had never had much success in aligning with the Ohio Valley Indians, the postwar years were dominated by a need to settle a peace agreement rather than to procure allies in the struggle against a European foe.

As the conflict between the federal government and the Indians escalated during the 1780s and early 1790s and peace grew increasingly elusive, the Americans returned to their pursuit of alliances in a desperate bid to rein in the western nations. Having signed an early (and coercive) treaty with the Six Nations, Congress frequently sought to

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use the Seneca chief Complanter to convince the Shawnees, Miamis, and other belligerent nations that they should acquiesce to the United States’ demands. Complanter capitalized on this arrangement, using his visits to Philadelphia to complain about the fraudulent 1784 treaty, contending that the commissioners had forcibly taken “a great country...as if our want of strength had destroyed our rights.” To address this problem, he asked for a tract of land to be returned, thinking this a reasonable expectation for a political partner. In turn, he promised to “persuade the Wyandots and other Western nations to open their eyes, and look toward the bed which you have made for us.”

Before Complanter or his people could act on this agreement, their confidence in American sincerity had begun to erode. Several Senecas were killed while trading at Pittsburgh, vast armies invaded the Ohio Country with seeming disregard for friendly Indians, United States officers tried to recruit them for military service against the western tribes, and settlers, army bases, and farms continued to creep onto native land. As the relationship deteriorated, Congress eventually had to worry more about the Senecas joining the hostile nations than how to encourage them to direct those warriors toward peace. Throughout this entire process, the Americans also attempted to lure Joseph Brant into their camp. But aside from one trip to Philadelphia and several vague assurances of friendship, he avoided any alliances with the government he had so staunchly opposed during the Revolution.

Quelling Indian violence either on its own or through allies was important to Congress because it had grand plans for the West, which it now considered its rightful

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35 LDC, 23: 257-58, 271-72; Pennsylvania Archives, Ser. 2, 4: 527-37 (at 529, 537); ASPIA, 139-44.

domain, according to the terms of the 1783 Treaty of Paris. The first goal was to ease unrest among veterans by fulfilling the United States' pledge to reward “their courage and fidelity” with “uncultivated lands” along the Ohio. When these bounties had been delivered, the next step was to encourage the general expansion that had blossomed during the final years of the war. “The increase of domestic population and emigrations from abroad” meant that the East was becoming crowded, thus necessitating settlement in the newly acquired territories. Furthermore, Congress had assured the public creditors that the West would be “speedily improved into a fund towards the security and payment of the national debt.”

To accomplish these objectives, several criteria needed to be in place and operating effectively. Speed claimed highest priority. Neither destitute veterans nor greedy creditors were willing to wait long for their problems to be corrected, so the sooner surveyors could be dispatched to the Ohio Country to mark out land, the better. Haste also facilitated the second component for meeting American goals, preventing illegal settlement. Despite active Indian resistance to all United States forts and homesteads in the region, settlers continued to flood downriver from Pittsburgh. Most of these newcomers found land in Kentucky, but an increasing number squatted on tracts across the Ohio, usually near other Pennsylvanians and Virginians, who sought to capitalize on the lax law enforcement outside of state boundaries. Not only did these trespassers infuriate the Indians who hunted on those lands, they also angered the local military establishment and the federal government. Commander Josiah Harmar justifiably worried that these interlopers would make peace with the Indians an even

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more remote possibility, prompting him on several occasions to order his men “to make
diligent search for them and destroy their dwellings.” Members of Congress feared that
their presence would make it harder for potential buyers to gain clear title to the land, but
removing them would cost more than the profits from the sale. Since Harmar seemed to
be losing ground in his displacement efforts, government officials concluded that the best
thing to do was simply sell the land as quickly as possible.38

Even if every illegal settler had been uprooted, American designs for the West
still depended upon peace with the Indians. With an empty treasury in the 1780s,
Secretary of War Henry Knox and many legislators believed that war was too expensive
and adequate compensation for the Indians impossible. So he advocated a series of peace
treaties, each one succeeding only in further provoking the Ohio Valley nations.
Incensed Shawnees and Wabash tribes pounced upon Kentucky communities, which
produced loud demands for federal assistance and authorization for expeditions intended
to extirpate any potentially hostile Indians. Knox responded with the assertion that both
whites and Indians were equally responsible for depredations on the frontier, arguing that
“deep rooted prejudices, and malignity of heart...will ever prevent their being good
neighbors. The one side anxiously defend their lands which the other avariciously
claim...Either one or the other party must remove to a greater distance, or Government
must keep them both in awe by a strong hand, and compel them to be moderate and just.”
This opinion perpetuated the East-West conflict that had begun during the Revolution,

38 St. Clair Papers, 2:3-5, 12, 14 (at 14); LDC, 22: 389-90, 435, 480-82, 24: 342; “Josiah Harmar
Book A, Harmar Papers.
eventually spilling into the 1790s and complicating American maneuvers even when the
two sides agreed on an appropriate military response to the native threat.\textsuperscript{39}

Having a backcountry population that directly opposed its agenda annoyed many
members of Congress. In their quest to prove to the world that they could govern
effectively, they resented confrontational settlers and Indians who refused to
acknowledge their superiority. But they also contended with some in their own ranks
who had begun to view the West as a liability. Pennsylvania representative Samuel
Meredith believed that far from erasing the national debt, selling the new territory would
actually incur additional governmental expense. "It would prove a happiness to all the
settled parts of the Country if the Ohio was to be the boundary for a Number of Years, as
well as be a means of quieting the Indians and Spaniard[s]," he stated in November 1786.
Less than two years later, New Hampshire delegate Paine Wingate expressed similar
sentiments, pointing out that the expenses of conducting treaties, surveying, and selling
land had increased the national debt. He also feared that the new land would attract too
many good men from the East and thus retard the country's manufacturing potential.
"Upon the whole I doubt whether, in our day, that country will not be a damage to us
rather than advantage. We seem to be overstocked with lands and I believe it had been as
well for the Indians to have kept their own territory," he concluded. The Ohio Valley
nations could not have agreed more.\textsuperscript{40}

While the Americans bickered about the merits of expansion and the means of
pacifying the Indians, the British focused their attention on maintaining the status quo. In

\textsuperscript{39} JCC, 25: 681-92; PCC, reel 69, item 56, 279-82; LDC, 24: 341-42 (at 342).
\textsuperscript{40} LMCC, 8: 513, 745-46.
the postwar United States many easterners were eager to explore the implications of their altered relationship to the West; but in Canada, English officials labored hard to create the impression that the Revolution had changed nothing. Their first concern was to retain “possession of the Upper Country and the Fur Trade.” Refusing to evacuate Niagara, Detroit, and Michilimackinac significantly aided this endeavor, but Haldimand and others recognized that ultimately the fate of the trade and the western posts depended on native friendship. “You will assure the Chiefs upon every Occasion of the King’s Parental Care and regard,” Superintendent John Johnson instructed the Indian department as the war neared its conclusion, “and you will likewise recommend to their Warriors, and Young Men, Fidelity & a firm attachment to their Father, the Great King.” Assiduous attention to Indian affairs, he hoped, would make the Americans irrelevant even if they sent traders into the Ohio Country.41

As fighting between the western nations and the United States intensified throughout the 1780s and 1790s, British designs upon the region became increasingly complicated. On one hand, the traders clamored for a cessation of hostilities because war caused the Indians to “totally neglect their hunt…and be thrown into a general consternation.” Since the warriors were also “the best & in fact the only hunters among their respective Tribes,” trade threatened to grind to a halt if combat persisted. Many of these merchants operated vulnerable posts deep in native territory, so they also feared that they would be easy targets for American armies. On the other hand, leaders such as Gov. John Graves Simcoe worried that if the Indians made peace with the Americans, Britain’s

fur trade would be lost and the two previously inveterate enemies might combine to attack Canada. The Indians would be motivated to such an action out of anger that the British, fearing to be viewed as open allies with their native neighbors, had been lax in supplying and supporting them. The United States would be eager to punish the British for holding the western posts in violation of the peace agreement.42

In addition to stewing about the pros and cons of encouraging the Indians toward peace, the British prepared themselves for the attack on their posts that many believed the Americans intended to launch at any moment. Observers of Harmar’s, Arthur St. Clair’s, and finally Anthony Wayne’s armies concluded that each of those forces was too large to simply chastise Indians; surely they planned to assault British strongholds as well. The best defense against this projected offensive was to equip their native allies, who had proven themselves capable of warding off entire armies with only minimal British support. This plan would also have pleased the Indians, who frequently requested increased assistance; but it was firmly rejected by London authorities because it would have thrust the British into visible alliance with the United States’ enemies, thereby likely renewing war between the king and his former colonists. “In this case it will be extremely difficult so to manage as not to lose the affections of the Indians and yet not to give that pretext to the Government of the United States for the commencement of hostilities in this Country, which I am persuaded is in the contemplation of their Leaders (when circumstances shall be ripe),” Simcoe confided to Secretary of State Henry Dundas.43

42 MPHC, 24: 144-45, 160-61, 169, 324, 599-605 (at 144, 161); Simcoe Papers, 1: 19, 30, 132, 141-42, 2: 55.
Faced with these pressing dilemmas, British officials decided that their best hope for a satisfactory resolution rested upon inserting themselves as mediators. If they could broker a peace between the Indians and the Americans, both sides would be dependent on them and less likely to join together to threaten Canadian settlements. The Indians would return to their hunting with greater appreciation for their “Father,” who had turned away the United States’ troops. The Americans would be thankful for the opportunity to carry out their agenda without violent interruption. Despite timing this proposal so that it circulated in Philadelphia shortly after the western nations had obliterated St. Clair’s army, Foreign Affairs Secretary William Grenville and Simcoe watched their improbable scenario disintegrate instantly. Alexander Hamilton, on behalf of Washington’s administration, rejected the idea immediately, claiming that submitting to British interposition would compromise “the honour and interest of the United States” and “disgrace this country in the eyes of the Indians,” while granting Great Britain “a decided ascendancy over their gratitude, affections, and services.” Consequently, Ambassador George Hammond discontinued his persuasive efforts, suggesting that the only circumstances capable of bringing the issue back to the table were another American defeat or the “desire of the Indians to obtain our mediation.” Simcoe and McKee scrambled to induce their native allies to make such a request, but nothing decisive ever occurred.44

Although scheming and worrying about diplomatic affairs consumed considerable British energy, several domestic issues and initiatives demanded attention as well. The

first was the financial health of the posts, especially regarding the continuation of Indian presents. During the war Haldimand had griped incessantly about the excessive expenditures at Detroit, Michilimackinac, and Niagara. He complained about the "indolent" nations, who gathered around the posts in great numbers and expected the British to supply their needs, and railed against the fort commanders and Indian agents who catered to every native whim. As the Revolution's end forced the crown to rethink its western policies, Haldimand and other distant authorities recommended curbing Indian presents and restricting distribution to the Indian Department. Both of these measures elicited protests. Michilimackinac commander Daniel Robertson reported in May 1784 that several Ottawas threatened to "cut off" his fort after their visit to Detroit yielded paltry gifts. A few months later, Detroit's Lt. Gov. Jehu Hay squawked about being held accountable for abuses in the distribution system without having the authority to monitor dispersal himself.45

Feuding over Indian presents persisted during the 1780s and 1790s, but it was often overshadowed by the necessity of maintaining good relations with the surrounding Ohio Valley and Great Lakes nations. If quality gift-giving virtually ensured friendship with these neighbors, disputing over land went a long way toward erasing any previous harmony. In the turbulent postwar years, encroachment on native lands came from a variety of sources. The usual suspects were traders and Indian Department personnel, who hoped to make a fortune by investing heavily in the region, but government officials charged with resettling loyalists were culprits as well. Despite Haldimand's strict

injunction that "claims of individuals...are invalid" and that every purchase had to be made "at some general meeting at which the Principal Chiefs of each Tribe claiming a proportion in such lands are present," speculators circumvented these rules and used any means to pry territory from the Indians. Before the Greenville Treaty in 1795, Joseph Brant lamented that "a swarm of Land Jobbers at Detroit," principally composed of that area's "first people," were providing the Lake Indians with a steady supply of rum and then buying land from the intoxicated consumers. "The poor Indians must lose their Country at all Events," he mourned.

A final concern for the British during the last two decades of the eighteenth century mirrored one of their Revolutionary preoccupations: the loyalty of their French associates. For most of the postwar years, this issue lay dormant because the Indians were largely on good terms with the English. After the Battle of Fallen Timbers, however, nations began to trickle into Fort Wayne, seeking peace with the United States and inciting rumors about French attempts to discredit the British. In November 1794, word spread that French traders were announcing that the king of France was preparing to rise again to support and protect his Indian children. The English and "the Americans were as one man and neither of them friends to the Indians," they allegedly proclaimed. When Collin and Antoine Lasselle escorted several formerly belligerent nations to General Wayne in 1795, the priest Edmund Burke accused them of not only supporting the Americans now, but of sabotaging the Indian army at Fallen Timbers by preventing "the great majority of the Indians from coming into action." Although these charges were overstated, the Americans also acknowledged that "the French traders, who were so

46 MPHIC, 11: 409-10, 435-36 (at 409-10), 12: 173; Simcoe Papers, 4: 50 (quote).
many machines to the British agents, can be bought.” Ultimately, though, the British could do little more than complain about this perceived treachery and rue the vulnerabilities of their Indian Department.  

As weak as this department might have been on occasion, London authorities, Canadian officials, and local residents relied on it to implement British plans for the region during and after the Revolution. Maintaining alliances, protecting the fur trade, and negotiating land deals for the government often devolved upon Indian agents, whose schedules also typically included many hours of discussing current affairs around numerous council fires and reporting on the Indians’ disposition to their waiting superiors at Niagara, Detroit, or Quebec. In short, if the primary English goals were to unite the western nations against the Americans during the war and to preserve the status quo afterwards, the Indian department was essential to their fulfillment.

For the British, John Butler among the Six Nations and Alexander McKee in the Ohio Valley served as the best examples of Indian agents who made themselves completely indispensable to their sovereign’s cause. Having worked for the Indian Department before the Revolution, McKee was an especially valuable addition to the British retinue when he defected from Fort Pitt in 1778. Hamilton proclaimed him to be a “man of good character,” who “has great influence with the Shawanese is well


acquainted with the country & can probably give some useful intelligence.” Indeed, McKee was on the job even before he reached Detroit, consulting with several nations and sending information about a rumored American militia attack ahead of him. During the war he led native troops into battle, recruited more to oppose Clark’s advances, attended countless Indian conferences, urged entire nations to remain loyal to the king, distributed provisions and ammunition, passed intelligence to British commanders, and generally smoothed over Indian grievances. Following the Revolution he jettisoned his military contribution, but continued to provide goods and acquired considerable responsibility for achieving the delicate balance of keeping the Indians tied to the British without provoking the Americans to attack. Simcoe attested to his success in this area in 1792 when he said, “our Connexion & Command [of the Indians] rest upon the personal tenure of the frail lives of Butler or McKee.”

Part of McKee’s success stemmed from the fact that there were many interpreters, traders, and other agents who also operated in the region, a luxury the fledgling American Indian Department did not share. Although no colonial counterpart matched McKee’s influence, Richard Butler and George Morgan most closely approximated his level of service for the United States in the Ohio Valley. As a trader among the Shawnees before the Revolution, Butler had gained enough favor to be protected during Dunmore’s War when angry Mingos sought to kill him in retaliation for the loss of their relatives. For the next two years he served as de facto Indian agent until Congress appointed Morgan as its official representative in the West. After the war he again assumed a leading role in

negotiations with the Indians, acting as a commissioner and principal spokesman at the Fort McIntosh and Fort Finney treaties in 1785 and 1786. But in October 1787, Congress passed him by again when they assigned most of his Indian affairs duties to newly-installed governor of the Northwest Territory, Arthur St. Clair. Despite this disappointment, he stayed involved in frontier dealings until 1791, when he was killed in the Indians’ victory over the United States.  

Like Butler, Morgan made his living through trade before the Revolution. Upon accepting Congress’s position, he moved to Fort Pitt and immediately traveled to the Ohio Country, meeting with the Shawnees, Mingos, Delawares, and Wyandots and encouraging them to remain neutral in the war. Ironically, McKee accompanied Morgan on this journey, but apparently he failed to impress upon his new boss that Indian friendship required face-to-face cultivation because Morgan never set foot in a native village during the remaining three years of his tenure. Despite spending more time in the East than at Pittsburgh, he did manage to build a solid relationship with the Delawares and conducted a regular correspondence with their leaders at Coshocton. He certainly considered himself their advocate and regretted his absence at the troublesome 1778 treaty; but he invested more time in his commissary job and land speculation than he did in ensuring that American goals for the West would be accomplished.  


51 For Morgan’s trip into the Ohio Country, see the 1776 Morgan Letterbook. For his relations with the Delawares, see Morgan Letterbooks, vols. 1-3. For more on his life, see Max Savelle, George Morgan, Colony Builder (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932) and Randolph C. Downes, “George Morgan, Indian Agent Extraordinary, 1776-1779,” Pennsylvania History, 1, no. 4 (Oct. 1934), 202-16.
Although McKee earned greater recognition from his government than Richard Butler or Morgan did from Congress, both countries expected their agents to execute their varying schemes for the Ohio Country. Compared to McKee’s success, the Americans’ efforts seemed paltry, but the three shared many experiences as well. Each of them forged close ties with at least one native group, each attempted to frame his message in a palatable way, and each recognized that the Indians expected visible tokens of good will before alliances could be struck. Despite these marks of friendship, they just as frequently acted as enemies to the western nations. For all of McKee’s fretting that “the distressed situation of the poor Indians” would be neglected in the 1783 Peace of Paris and the 1795 Jay Treaty, he cared more about the state of the British economy and fur trade than whether his allies would “be left to shift for themselves.” Likewise, Morgan’s apparently protective suggestion that Virginia refrain from attacking Pluggy’s Town in 1777 was nullified a year later when he advocated that the “Senecas...be exterminated & the Wiandots, etc...made Slaves of.”

When trusted counselors such as McKee and Morgan betrayed them, the Ohio Valley Indians recognized even more acutely that their enemies assumed a variety of forms. Settlers and hunters directly impeded native lifestyles by frightening away game, taking land, and restricting access to waterways. Traders cheated them of valuable peltry and precious territory, often by controlling the stream of rum during negotiations. Soldiers, militiamen, and rogue scouting parties killed their relatives and decimated their villages. Indian agents and other representatives of both the British and American governments threatened their sovereignty by treating them as pawns to be controlled at

52 MPH C, 12: 166; Morgan Letterbooks, 3: 79.
will, drawing maps to legalize their dispossession, and at least tacitly sanctioning the manipulative activities of trespassers and dishonest merchants.

Pressed by this growing list of enemies in many guises, Indians often disagreed with each other about how to respond. When the Delawares chose neutrality during the Revolution, believing it to be the best means of protection from the nearby Americans, the Wyandots accused them of becoming “to[o] great with the Virginians.” In 1778 Clark captured Illinois and seemed poised to overrun Indian country from the west, while McIntosh penetrated from the east, prompting the Shawnees to complain that the threat on their front (Fort Laurens) should have commanded the same attention as the invasion on the Wabash, which attracted Hamilton, artillery, and an army of British regulars and native auxiliaries. At other times the Indians differed over whether the king or the colonists menaced their land and sovereignty more powerfully. Three parties of Potawatomies from St. Joseph, convinced that the British were a more reliable ally, set out to “kill the Rebels” at Illinois and Vincennes in June 1780, only to be repulsed by the Miamis, who operated under Clark’s intimidating influence.53

During the 1780s and 1790s the disputes continued. After the Six Nations signed the 1784 Treaty of Fort Stanwix and the Wyandots agreed to the Fort McIntosh treaty in 1785, both groups felt the displeasure of their neighbors, who felt that they had violated the confederacy and caved to the wiles of the enemy. A similar fissure developed in 1793, when the vast assembly of nations at the Maumee Rapids disagreed about whether or not to insist on the Ohio River as the boundary between Indian and American territory. Feeling direct pressure on their villages and hunting grounds, the Shawnees, Wyandots,

53 Frontier Retreat, 219-20 (at 219); MPHC, 9: 427-29, 10: 406, 444 (at 406).
Miamis, and Delawares argued for a firm stance against encroaching settlers. Joseph Brant and his Iroquois, along with the Ottawas, Chippewas, and Potawatomies, believed that native political sovereignty could actually be better sustained by sacrificing some land and drawing a compromise boundary line. While many reasons contributed to these dissimilar perspectives, certainly one factor was that the two sides perceived the enemy’s strengths and designs differently.54

Although unification was difficult when multiple and complex threats lurked at every turn, the Ohio Valley nations found ways to thwart many American and British objectives. The easiest one to nullify was the United States’ desire for a secure frontier. Scouting parties and temporary forts were no match for warriors, who could slip unnoticed into settlements and quickly dispatch or kidnap heedless residents. Larger forts such as McIntosh, Harmar, or Jefferson failed to protect more than their immediate vicinities, and smaller ones like Martin’s and Ruddell’s stations in Kentucky capitulated before a sizable native force in 1780. Retaliatory expeditions meant to “Cover the Settlements” and chastise the tribes often inflicted considerable damage on Indian property, but they rarely acted as a deterrent to future raids, generally provoking increased attacks instead. Travel to distant places such as Kentucky proved even more dangerous than living there because the Indians patrolled the Ohio River and became adept at ambushing the slow and vulnerable flat-bottomed boats.55

The Ohio Valley nations were also successful at preventing the Americans from launching a genuine attack on Detroit. At the beginning of the Revolution, when the idea

55 MPHC, 19: 528-34, 538-46; Frontier Retreat, 270 (quote).
arose and most tribes were on friendlier terms with the colonial government, the Seneca chief Kayashuta declared unequivocally that he and the Six Nations “would not suffer either a British or American army to be marched through their lands, and desired that no expedition against Detroit be undertaken.” Defying this declaration promised to ignite a general Indian war, something the upstart colonists desperately wanted to avoid at the moment. As the fighting continued and the Americans found themselves with virtually no allies between Fort Pitt and Detroit, they realized that instead of one battle, they would have to engage numerous nations along the way. With supply tenuous and geography murky, the Indian threat provided the final convincing argument for Washington to abandon a Detroit campaign.56

Despite protecting British strongholds by controlling the Ohio Country, the various nations rejected English efforts to command them, which was the crown’s primary objective for the region. As much as Hamilton and De Peyster liked to think that they were dictating strategy, the Indians consistently chose their own path. For example, McKee and Capt. Henry Bird believed they were leading native troops against the Kentucky settlement at the falls in 1780, but the Shawnees redirected the mission to successfully attack the forts on the Licking River. Other nations refused to join this army altogether, preferring to conduct their own private raids. British instructions also specified that the Indians were to deliver all prisoners to Detroit, an injunction that many war parties ignored. Beyond the military realm, several villages protested when British

56 Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 172; Frontier Retreat, 101, 123.
authorities removed their traders and hinted that perhaps their allegiance could also be uprooted.57

Although the Ohio Indians frequently forced the British and Americans to abandon, rearrange, or reprioritize their goals for the West, they were never able to halt the most ominous aim of all: expansion. Long before the Revolution or the 1768 Treaty at Fort Stanwix, Great Britain had established an expansionary culture that prized western development. Even the politicians who tried to regulate the flow of emigration and settlement beyond the Appalachians assumed that in time all of the land would be brought under their control. For many potential migrants, the Revolution offered new opportunities and less resistance to their resettlement. Despite the persistent Indian attacks throughout the entire Ohio Valley, movement to the Pennsylvania and Kentucky frontiers increased dramatically during the second half of the war and continued in even greater numbers during the 1780s and 1790s. If local authorities wanted to emphasize their distressed conditions and impress their need for supplies and reinforcement upon their eastern governments, the most effective tool at their disposal was to give evidence of people fleeing the frontiers and warn that the area would soon be a wasteland.58

The Indians protested this unchecked growth militarily and diplomatically, repeatedly emphasizing that they resented settlers’ indiscriminate trespassing as well as the government’s failure to uphold past treaties guaranteeing them their land. Most Americans ignored these grievances entirely, but even those who paid attention were

57 MPHC, 9: 400, 437, 584, 10: 299, 11: 385, 19: 528-34, 538-46; Frontier Retreat, 296-97. 58 Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 255; Frontier Advance, 284-85; Frontier Retreat, 170-71, 184-88; George Rogers Clark Papers, 8: 215, 584; Pennsylvania Archives, 4: 344, 741-42, 6: 3, 68-69, 506, 8: 282-84. See Hinderaker, Elusive Empires, for more on the unwavering British commitment to western expansion in this region.
either unable or unwilling to acknowledge that the entire expansionary agenda lay at the heart of the problem. Because they “believed themselves superior to Indians” and entitled to the territory in question, they could not recognize native sovereignty and sacrifice their own interests without compromising their foundational principles. The result was a costly war and a continued legacy of distrust and miscommunication.59

59 Shoemaker, A Strange Likeness, 85.
Braving the "excessive rainy weather" that drenched the Ohio Valley in the early summer of 1782, a band of Cherokees traveled to Detroit from their principal town of Chote. Commander De Peyster was already overwhelmed with large delegations from the Wabash and Illinois countries and the fear that the American army advancing toward Sandusky would easily defeat his Indian allies, but he squeezed in a council with these new visitors on June 15. They quickly stated their concerns: they worried what would happen to their lands if the rebels succeeded in the war, and they asked for supplies in keeping with those received by local Indians who were willing to fight for the British, even though they had come from afar.¹

After delivering these early speeches, they presented a message on behalf of their women "from whom all Warriors spring forth from the beginning of things." The women reminded De Peyster that "Tho' we do not go to war yet it subjects us Women to many Misfortunes, such as loosing our Relations and friends, notwithstanding our Misery and the darken'd Clouds which Warriors bring on us our hopes is in the giver of Life and whenever he bids war to cease we shall be thankful, till then we join our father in encouraging the young men to arms against the Enemy. Father! If we women put our hopes in Heaven it is because we have no consolation on earth, all we experience here is care and trouble," they said. These words apparently failed to prompt De Peyster to open his storehouses because the Cherokees left Detroit much displeased by the inadequate supply. Three weeks later they returned, accompanied by some Shawnee and Six Nations

¹ MPHC, 10: 591-92 (at 592); RG 10, 13: 99-137.
representatives, who presented their case to the commander and succeeded in securing more goods for the southern immigrants.\(^2\)

Although De Peyster was unmoved by the Cherokee women’s plaint, it offered a poignant glimpse of the Revolution’s impact on native communities. Families grieved for missing fathers, sons, and brothers just as they did in British and American households. War jeopardized every aspect of life, leaving women and children longing for its end so they could return to their routines. At the same time, however, they encouraged active resistance against the “Enemy,” and endorsed the participation of their young men in hostilities aimed at protecting their society from encroaching Europeans and Americans. In the midst of this upheaval, they managed to sustain their independent existence and preserve their nations’ customs, even if their lives included much “care and trouble.”\(^3\)

Focusing on the Indians’ home front rather than diplomatic maneuvering or military raiding highlights two significant themes for the entire 1768-1795 period. The first recalls their twin objectives of retaining land and sovereignty. While holding their place at the negotiating table fell largely under diplomacy and protecting their land seemed to be the warriors’ responsibility, both goals existed to ensure that community life would remain vibrant and continue to give meaning and identity to future generations. The second emphasizes that despite changing political circumstances during these three decades, the dominant threats to local affairs remained basically the same.

Dunmore’s War, the Revolution, and the battles during the late 1780s and 1790s all

\(^3\) Ibid., 136-37.
produced similar hardships and fears in Ohio Valley villages, undoubtedly causing many Indians to view these years as one continuous struggle.⁴

By far the most devastating “Misfortune” to cloud native towns as a result of the Indians’ conflict with intruding settlers and governments was the demise of “Relations and friends.” Although warriors usually avoided battlefield scenarios that produced many casualties, the accumulated deaths over twenty years weighed heavily upon nations already declining in population and occasionally hard-pressed for experienced leaders. Communities mourned each loss and noted particularly when their mortality exceeded that of their British allies. “We Indians are the only sufferers [in] this War, as we dayly loose our people while you are quietly in your fort,” the Mahican Silver Heels reproached De Peyster in May 1782. Two weeks later, in response to De Peyster’s urging them to join the Indian defenses at Sandusky, the Wyandots, Ottawas, Chippewas, and Potawatomies reluctantly agreed to go to war, but one Wyandot chief reminded the commander that “one half of my people are already killed by the Enemy.”⁵

If George Rogers Clark had persuaded his superiors to pursue his military strategy for the West, the death toll might have been much higher. In January 1780, he complained to his brother that “Carrying out armies and destroying their Town is little or no use when they Can get four fold for what they loose from the English.” Consequently, he reasoned that killing Indians and reducing British garrisons were the only ways for the Americans to gain an advantage in the region. The warriors he spared would have to

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⁴ Other authors have also made the case for viewing the second half of the eighteenth century as one complete struggle for land comprised of several smaller conflicts, most notably David Curtis Skaggs in his edited volume, *The Sixty Years’ War for the Great Lakes, 1754-1814* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2001).

make peace on his terms, one of which would be a complete ban on arms and ammunition in native territory.\(^6\)

Fortunately for the Indians, Clark's bold proposition was not embraced by federal or state governments, but their hesitancy to adopt his grand agenda did not hinder them from endorsing several of his militia expeditions across the Ohio River. Eight months after he downplayed the destruction of Indian towns, he marched a thousand men to the cluster of Shawnee villages on the Little Miami and Mad Rivers and burned Chillicothe and Piqua. The Shawnees were prepared for this assault, abandoning Chillicothe, hiding their women and children, and summoning distant warriors before the Kentuckians arrived; but their spirited defense against Clark's artillery could not save two of their towns or prevent an estimated forty-two native fatalities. In November 1782, Clark targeted the Shawnees again, despite American and British calls for a ceasefire, this time killing ten and taking seven prisoners. Four years later, Benjamin Logan continued the Kentucky militia's war on the Shawnees. Unlike Clark, he managed to surprise his foes, but the majority of the men were hunting at the time, thus reducing the number of casualties. Although the eleven deaths might seem numerically insignificant, the veteran trader Simon Girty reported that there were several chiefs and leading men among that number.\(^7\)

\(^6\) George Rogers Clark Papers, 8: 382-83.
\(^7\) George Rogers Clark Papers, 8: 451-53, 476-84, 19: 150-53; MPHC, 10: 418-20, 659-60, 11: 323-24, 336-38, 342, 350-51, 360, 24: 34-38; “Meeting of the Six Nations with British officers, Dec. 11, 1782,” reel A-686, Haldimand Papers; “Haldimand to Carleton, Feb. 17, 1783,” reel M-360, BHP; “Harmar to Hutchins, Dec. 5, 1786,” Letter Book B, Harmar Papers; William Lytle, “Personal Narrative of William Lytle,” Quarterly Publication of the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio, 1, no. 1 (1906): 12-21. As with every sizable Indian battle, the number of native casualties from the August 1780 clash is difficult to determine. Participant Henry Wilson claimed that he and his men brought home seventy-three scalps. Clark thought the Kentuckians had killed at least three times as many Indians as his army had lost. The Indians never cite any figures, although in describing the event to the British, they suggest that the number was small.
The Shawnees were not the only nation to suffer at the hands of American armies. Blundering soldiers commanded by General Hand slew several Delaware women along with an elderly man and a boy in the winter of 1778. Several years later, when Colonel Brodhead was convinced that the Delawares had abandoned neutrality, he flattened their capital, intentionally exacting a heavy toll on human lives. Senecas, Munsees, Weas, Kickapoos, and Miamis also encountered campaigns specifically conducted to eliminate their homes, friends, and relatives. In addition to these focused operations, the Americans engaged in several large-scale battles with multi-national Indian forces between 1774 and 1794. The battle at Point Pleasant in 1774, the defeats of Josiah Harmar and Arthur St. Clair in 1790 and 1791, and the fight with Anthony Wayne at Fallen Timbers in 1794 all caused many funerals in native villages. While estimates of the actual number of victims in these clashes varied widely, even conservative figures suggest considerable impact on nations whose populations ranged in the hundreds rather than the thousands.  

Although official expeditions claimed many lives, probably an equal number of Indians died in smaller skirmishes. Nearly every time a party of warriors raided frontier settlements, the local residents mounted some kind of resistance, especially after Pennsylvania began offering a scalp bounty “as an Inducement to the young Fellows...to turn out against the Indians” in 1780. Sometimes the Indians anticipated this pursuit and

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8 Frontier Defense, 215-223; Frontier Retreat, 55-66, 376-82; ASPIA, 129-35. For a general idea of Indian population in the Ohio Valley between 1768 and 1795, see the following enumerations: Tanner, Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History, 66 (1768); William Wilson, “An Account of the Indian Towns & Nations in the Western Department,” Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, 23 (1915): 345-46 (1778); McKee, “Enumeration of Indians living near Detroit, 1782,” Ser. 1, lot 704, SIAP; Thornbrough, Outpost on the Wabash, 80 (1788); MPHC, 20: 305-07 (1789); Wallace, Thirty Thousand Miles, 331-33. Unfortunately, these data are difficult to compare because some compilers counted only warriors, and they all varied in the specific communities under consideration.
successfully ambushed their enemies, as they did at Grave Creek in September 1777, where they scattered a scouting party captained by William Foreman, or, on a bigger scale, at Blue Licks in August 1782, where they decimated the Kentucky militia, killing an estimated seventy-seven men, including many officers. But on other occasions, they were the ones who succumbed to their pursuers. Pennsylvania Capt. Lt. Samuel Brady made a name for himself in the Pittsburgh area by hunting down small groups of Indians. The crafty scouts near Yellow Creek in August 1780 watched some Wyandots “Crossing the River on Rafts” and proceeded to slaughter ten of them when they landed.9

While warriors risked their lives when they took the war across the Ohio, women and children faced more danger from marauding bands of militia. Larger troop movements usually generated enough commotion to give war chiefs time to protect their families, but smaller, stealthier parties, such as the group of Kentuckians led by Patrick Brown in August 1788, proved to be more destructive. Brown’s party killed nine peaceful Piankeshaw and Miami villagers living near Vincennes, a move slightly reminiscent of the more famous Gnadenhütten massacre in the spring of 1782. This tragic episode occurred when 160 Pennsylvanians and Virginians ventured up the Muskingum River and slaughtered approximately 95 men, women, and children at three Moravian towns. Like Brown’s victims, these Christian Indians generally sympathized with the Americans, a position that prompted the Wyandots, Lake Indians, and British to

9 Pennsylvania Archives, 7: 505-06, 8: 218, 250, 283, 378-79 (at 218); Frontier Defense, 106-12; George Rogers Clark Papers, 19: 89-99; Frontier Retreat, 245 (quote). County lieutenants in western Pennsylvania began agitating for scalp bounties as early as 1777. Archibald Lochry of Westmoreland County even sent five scalps to Pennsylvania’s president in December 1777, hoping they would be subsidized and thereby encourage frontier settlers to join the militia. President Joseph Reed eventually passed the request to Congress, but when the federal government was reluctant to authorize it, Pennsylvania acted on its own. Pennsylvania Archives, 6: 69, 7: 268, 362, 466, 506, 569, 8: 218, 250, 283, 301.
cart them to Sandusky in September 1781 to prevent their ability to pass intelligence to officers at Fort Pitt. To avoid starvation during the winter and spring of 1782, the Moravians had been granted permission to return to their homes on the Muskingum and to gather any remnant food supplies. Instead, they encountered backcountry rage, despite having “furnished Col. Brodhead & his party with a large quantity of provisions when they were starving” during the expedition against Coshocton the previous year.10

Indeed, settler vindictiveness often contained little logic. In the immediate aftermath of Brodhead’s campaign into Delaware territory, Col. John Gibson at Fort Pitt lamented that three hundred men from Monongahela and Ohio Counties were preparing “to cut off the Moravian Indian towns,” even though “the Moravians have always given us the most convincing proofs of their attachment to the cause of America, by always giving us intelligence of every party that came against the frontiers.” These men were apparently diverted to join Clark’s 1781 attempt on Detroit, but a year later they accomplished their objective in horrific fashion, launching waves of fury and fear across the Ohio Country.11

Just as the deaths of friends and family rocked the Indians’ world, many communities witnessed the dissolution of village life because of the capture of a significant segment of their population. Brodhead’s 1781 attack on Coshocton yielded “upwards of twenty odd men, women, and children prisoners.” Clark seized several Shawnees in his duplicitous 1782 raid. Logan’s forces carried off thirty-two residents from the towns he burned in 1786, and Scott and Wilkinson brought home a combined

10 Thornbrough, Outpost on the Wabash, 114-17; Pennsylvania Archives, 9: 523-25; RG 10, 13: 70, 76-89; Darlington, Fort Pitt and Letters from the Frontier, 238-41; MPHC, 10: 523, 538-41, 545-46; Frontier Retreat, 399-401 (at 400).

11 Frontier Retreat, 399-401 (at 400).
ninety-two prisoners from their 1791 campaigns against the Kickapoos, Piankeshaws, and Miamis at Ouitanon and L’Anguille on the Wabash River. The numbers would have been even higher had Scott and Wilkinson not elected to leave some of the feeble women and children behind.\footnote{Frontier Retreat, 399; MPHC, 11: 336, 24: 34-38; George Rogers Clark Papers, 19: 152; “Intelligence, Nov. 14, 1786,” “Harmar to Hutchins, Dec. 5, 1786,” Letter Book B, Harmar Papers; ASPIA, 131-36.}

Logan, Scott, and Wilkinson attempted to use their captives to coax compliant behavior from their enemies. In his ransom note, Scott informed the Wabash nations where they could recover their people if they came “with true hearts, to bury the hatchet, and smoke the pipe of peace.” If they persisted in resisting American expansion, however, they could expect that “the sons of war will be let loose against you, and the hatchet will never be buried until your country is desolated, and your people humbled to the dust.” Logan and Wilkinson both hoped to arrange a prisoner exchange in addition to convincing the Indians that the reasonable course of action was to “submit to the protection of the United States.” Despite these threats and the various nations’ deep concern for the welfare of their imprisoned people, many leaders refused to bend to the interests of their attackers. Captain Johnny, Shawnee leader after Logan’s company commander, Hugh McGary, dispatched Moluntha, the previous chief, in 1786, secured the release of most of his compatriots without returning all of the American captives. Likewise, the Wabash chiefs managed to get their people moved from Fort Washington to Vincennes and subsequently freed by agreeing to an uncharacteristically lenient (and
consequently unratified) treaty, even though Colonel Hamtranck and his associates at Vincennes believed them to be insincere.  

While the detention of sizable groups of their inhabitants certainly disrupted native life, many nations found that the Revolution altered their patterns of taking prisoners as well. Most Ohio Valley Indians were accustomed to adopting captives into their nations as a means of replacing those who had died, thereby augmenting their population and symbolically assuaging their grief. Often, this need to acquire individuals to strengthen their numbers proved to be their primary motivation for going to war. During the Revolution, however, the British insisted that warriors who relied on them for supplies must turn over all colonial detainees to crown officers at Detroit.

The Hurons at Detroit and their Wyandot relatives at Sandusky protested this injunction the loudest. After losing a chief at the falls of the Ohio in 1781, they asked De Peyster if they could keep some of their prisoners as a substitute, arguing that their sorrow resulted from “espousing your quarrel.” Furthermore, they contended, the former governor, Hamilton, had permitted them to retain their captives in addition to his promise of protection against American armies. De Peyster agreed to check with Indian Superintendent Guy Johnson, but he doubted that Johnson would budge because of his opinion that the English should not be asked to conform to native customs. Two years later, when the British tried to persuade the confederated nations to embrace the Peace of Paris (from which they had been excluded), T’sindatton again objected on behalf of the

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13 ASPIA, 132-35, 238 (at 133, 135); Faragher, Daniel Boone, 253-59; Wallace, Thirty Thousand Miles, 282-84.
Hurons, “asserting that when the Hatchet was put into his hands he was told that all the Prisoners they took during the War Should be kept to strengthen their nation,” a practice that had been “confirmed by his Father at Detroit.”

Although the British formally forbade the retention of American settlers, T’sindatton and his fellow Indian leaders undoubtedly recognized that they were ill-equipped to enforce their own rule. Consequently, most nations defied the law by simply turning over some of their captives and keeping the remainder hidden in their villages. Some bolder groups openly flaunted their refusal to deliver prisoners. A group of Ottawas from the Mackinac region traveled to Sandusky in the spring of 1782 to assist in the defense against William Crawford and his army, returning home shortly thereafter without surrendering their prizes of war. In July they followed the call to arms again, passing through Detroit en route and asking for a range of supplies. De Peyster believed their demands to be unreasonable since they lived so near Michilimackinac and refused to grant them more than a few necessities. Angered by this snub, the 147 Ottawas purposely paraded their captives at Detroit on their return trip in September. They announced that because “their father’s door was shut,” their young men had ventured out on their own and seized a number of “blacks which we mean to deliver to our wives for to fetch them water.” They agreed to leave half of their prisoners at Detroit, but the rest they marched back to their homes.

If adopted captives could mitigate the personal sting and collective hardship of population loss, they could do little to prevent the destruction of property that plagued...

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15 RG 10, 13: 64-67 (at 64); MPHC, 11: 385 (quote).
many Ohio Valley communities between 1768 and 1795. Despite Clark's belief that burning Indian towns was useless for the American war effort, it quickly became the most popular method of striking their enemies. The Shawnees watched their homes go up in flames five times between 1779 and 1787, in part because their towns, situated on the Scioto River and the upper tributaries of the Great Miami River, were the closest to angry Kentuckians. Colonial armies also forced the Delawares and several Wabash nations to abandon their residences, and almost every Ohio tribe suffered when Anthony Wayne torched the Glaize and the Maumee River region in 1794.17

In addition to finding new shelter, the Indians also faced the urgency of replenishing their food sources, another favorite target of American pillagers. During Brodhead's 1779 expedition against the Seneca, Delaware, and Munsee towns on the upper Allegheny River, his men devoted three days to "destroying standing corn and burning houses," altogether cutting down nearly six hundred acres and either throwing it in the river or tossing it in "heaps to heat & destroy." Being warned of this devastation, the Seneca towns to the northward "Buried their corn and venisons under the ground" in case the army should continue its march. Nevertheless, these precautions were not enough to support the displaced residents of ten towns, including a group of seven villages containing 130 houses.18

Following this example, Clark boasted that his army had ruined eight hundred acres of corn and a great quantity of vegetables as part of his 1780 attack on the Shawnees. Logan reported the same kind of devastation in 1786, and Harmar frequently

cited the two thousand bushels of corn he destroyed near the Miami towns in 1790 as some consolation in an otherwise decisive victory for the Indians. No military commander caused more desolation than Wayne in 1794. When he reached the juncture of the Auglaize and Maumee Rivers, the center of native life in the region since 1792, he pronounced it a “grand emporium,” pointing out the “very extensive and highly cultivated fields and gardens” as evidence of “the work of many hands.” “The margins of those beautiful rivers...appear like one continued village for a number of miles, both above and below this place; nor have I ever before beheld such immense fields of corn, in any part of America, from Canada to Florida,” he wrote to Knox. Two weeks later he had destroyed it all, along with villages and corn fields for fifty miles on both sides of the Maumee River between the Glaize and the Maumee rapids. The destitute refugees huddled on Swan Creek, relying on food and supplies from Detroit to survive the coming winter.  

Indian property that escaped incineration usually made its way back across the Ohio with the plundering troops. Despite being chased off by Shawnee defenders, John Bowman’s militia captured £31,666.14 of goods at Chillicothe in 1779. Brodhead claimed to have taken booty worth $30,000 during his Allegheny campaign, loot that included approximately thirty horses, thirty brass kettles, and a number of beef cattle. Horses were by far the most valuable acquisition, and the promise of returning with these prizes actually lured many men to volunteer. Other frontier settlers refused to wait for a sanctioned expedition into Indian country in favor of illegally venturing out with a few

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neighbors and stealing horses on their own. Colonial authorities denounced such clandestine activities, but the tense climate of war shrouded the perpetrators from effectual punishment.  

Of course, the Indians engaged in horse stealing as well, exacerbating the back-and-forth theft that became a means of waging war on both sides. In June 1794, Wayne’s men captured two Shawnees returning from hunting along the Wabash River just across the Ohio River from Kentucky. They had become separated from their party of twenty, but together, the group had pilfered fifty horses from the American settlements. The two captives held five of those horses, heavily laden with deer and bearksins, the fruit of their spring labors. Perhaps hoping to retain some of their goods, they divulged plenty of intelligence about native war preparations and even mentioned that they had just encountered a group of three Delawares and one Potawatomi heading for Big Bone Lick to steal horses.

While stealing horses and peltry (another favorite for thieves) affected the populace on both sides of the Ohio, it was especially galling for the Indians because it represented yet another attempt by invaders to wrest their property from their grasp. Little by little, colonists had advanced onto their land: first “making a number of beds in [their] hunting country...south of the Ohio; as if to sleep there,” followed by hunting extensively and importing livestock, both of which greatly reduced the amount of game in Kentucky, animals that the Indians believed had been “given to [them] by God, to feed

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20 George Rogers Clark Papers, 8: 332, 19: 83-84; Frontier Retreat, 55, 59; Palmer, Calendar of Virginia State Papers, 3: 529.

our women and children upon." Next came forts and soldiers and finally settlements north of the Ohio. After this series of American perfidies, most Indians directed their ire against the colonies and later the United States, but many also criticized the British for encouraging a defensive posture, which resulted in most major battles being fought on native soil and consequently greater disruption in native communities. On numerous occasions war chiefs begged for artillery to take the fight to the encroachers, but the British rarely agreed to these proposals.22

Living in a state of war also taxed Indian property even when it was not being directly threatened by the enemy. In January 1792, Alexander McKee reported that the Shawnees, Miamis, and Delawares were particularly short of corn to last them through the winter. The previous fall these three nations had hosted more than a thousand Indians from the Ohio Valley and upper Great Lakes regions, who were gathering to oppose Arthur St. Clair and his sizable American army. Having successfully routed these invaders, most warriors returned home, leaving the Shawnees, Miamis, and Delawares with empty pantries. When combined with "the loss of great part of their crop by the over flowing of the River," they were in desperate straits. Even in victory, the war had found a way to haunt them.23

An easy solution to this food shortage problem might simply have been to hunt for their sustenance, but the exigencies of war made that increasingly difficult. While some warriors certainly did trek to their hunting grounds "for the support of their

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23 MPHC, 24: 366.
Families," others felt that defense demanded their utmost attention and energy. In the wake of their trouncing of St. Clair, many Shawnees, Miamis, and Delawares believed "their services were wanted by the other nations to reduce the forts which were built by their enemies as they advanced." Only a strong contingent comprised of as many available bodies as possible would be able to accomplish this task.24

When the Indians were able to devote time to the hunt, they tended to range farther afield than they had in the past because settlers and soldiers had driven away the game in areas nearer to their homes. This expanded distance made it even more difficult for warriors to balance hunting and fighting, since worthwhile hunting would leave their families and villages unattended for many months. During the first half of the Revolution, when the Ohio Valley nations were primarily on the offensive, war chiefs could plan their attacks around hunting season, but in the war's latter years and again in the 1790s, they struggled with the almost constant threat of American armies and encroaching settlers invading their territory. Although they frequently managed to repel these intruders, they often did so at the expense of their hunting.25

With the decline in hunting came the concomitant reduction in peltry for the international market. For the British, whose existence in the West was dependent largely on the fur trade, this potential hit to their economy caused considerable upheaval. Traders begged to be allowed to establish operations in Indian country rather than at established posts, reasoning that Indians might be disinclined to travel to Detroit or Michilimackinac if such a trip would take them away from the war effort for long


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periods. These trading stations benefited local warriors, often outfitting them for war even though they contributed fewer furs, but they were also subject to the destructive power of American forces. Clark “laid in ashes” the store of influential trader Louis Lorimier during his 1782 strike against the Shawnees. Harmar ruined large amounts of the Miami traders’ corn in 1790, and McKee’s outpost met the same fate as Lorimier’s in 1794.26

Reduced hunting and trading, coupled with the devastation of native property and neighborhood storehouses, forced most Ohio Valley Indians to depend upon the British for survival. By 1780, after fraternizing with Clark at his Wabash or Illinois encampments only to discover that the Americans were ill-equipped to supply their needs, nations began to turn up at Detroit in droves, declaring their allegiance as well as their hunger. Frustrated by rising costs, British officers complained about lazy Indians, but they also knew that without native warriors, their western agenda would be pointless, so they usually offered some food and ammunition. In return they expected the Indians to fight for them and not simply use them as a free warehouse. When a number of Kickapoos, Mascoutens, Ouittanons, Piankeshaws, Miamis, and Peorias arrived in June 1781 bearing furs as a sign of good will, De Peyster scolded them, calling their beaver skins “marks from the women and not from warriors.” Marks of true loyalty could only be acquired if they fought the Americans at Sandusky.27

Despite British efforts to exploit the war’s circumstances to make the Indians “as Subservient as possible to the Kings Service,” most nations became adept at getting what

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26 Simcoe Papers, 1: 141; George Rogers Clark Papers, 19: 153 (quote); Pennsylvania Archives, Ser. 2, 4: 540; Knopf, Anthony Wayne, 354. For more on Louis Lorimier, see Stevens, Louis Lorimier in the American Revolution, 1777-1782.
27 RG 10, 13: 14, 133 (at 133); MPHC, 9: 383.
they wanted, even though their lack of resources generally placed them in a vulnerable position. Recognizing that the crown needed their military services, Indians did not hesitate to demand ample compensation for their labor. Haldimand complained in September 1781 that they expected “a Succession of Presents...upon even the most trifling Excursion—the Petit Guerre ["little war," a reference to Indian raids] is now become a Lucrative Profession, their ease and Luxury is gratified by it.” A few months later De Peyster also lamented that he could not control the Indians. “I assemble them, get fair promises, and send them out, but when once out of sight the turning of a Straw may divert them from the original plan,” he said. “The Indians in this Country must be looked upon as a large body of Irregulars, Fed and clad to prevent the inroads of the Virginians into this Country, and, who must be delicately managed, to prevent their favoring those rebels,” he continued. Although De Peyster prided himself on his “delicate management” of native allies, in many instances they were managing him: protesting inadequate supplies, pursuing their own military agenda, ignoring commands that interfered with their cultural practices, garnering provisions for their communities, and masking their allegiance enough to induce the British to actively court their favor.28

For all of these manipulations, however, many Indian communities still struggled to survive during two decades of almost continuous warfare. As if population and property loss and the disruption of regular patterns of hunting and trade failed to create enough turbulence in native lives, most nations transplanted their villages multiple times between 1768 and 1795, usually in pursuit of a means to protect or restore community

28 “Haldimand to Guy Johnson, Sept. 5, 1781,” reel A-683, Haldimand Papers (Haldimand quote); MPHC, 10: 547-48 (De Peyster quote at 548).
vitality. In some instances these migrations reflected a desire to avoid anticipated conflict. A group of 170 Shawnees left the Scioto River in 1773 rather than “be Hemmed in on all Sides by the White People, and then be at their mercy.” Similarly, the Turkey division of the Delawares abandoned eastern Ohio for new homes on the White River in 1776, undoubtedly hoping to remain aloof from the rising tensions that accompanied the onset of the Revolution.29

This foresight probably spared them even more upheaval. Fighting between the British and Americans had barely gotten underway before nations such as the Shawnees and Delawares divided over how to respond. In October 1776, White Eyes and Killbuck, the Delaware leaders most committed to neutrality, met privately with George Morgan and confided that they feared their countryman Captain Pipe was “not doing what is good.” They had heard rumors of a possible British attack on Pittsburgh while the current treaty was being conducted, and they suspected that Captain Pipe was privy to information that he was keeping a secret. When Morgan questioned him, he admitted that he had received a belt from the Wyandots, but it was “merely to clear the Road agreeable to our Custom as it appeared lately to have been fill’d with Brush.” White Eyes and Killbuck remained unconvinced of his veracity, arguing that if the messages were good, “why keep them secret from us? Why did they hide their Wampum under their Cloathes when one of us approach’d their Camp,” they wondered. During the next year, Captain Pipe and his Wolf clan appeared even guiltier to his Turtle brethren when he refused to move closer to the Delaware capital at Coschocton, opting instead to relocate

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29 Calloway, American Revolution in Indian Country, 161; Tanner, Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History, 81.

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toward Cuyahoga. A year later he settled among the Wyandots at Upper Sandusky, perhaps in response to that nation’s call for the Delawares to remove themselves from the influence of the Americans.\textsuperscript{30}

As the war proceeded and colonial commanders pressured the Delawares to join their side, quarreling at Coshocton grew sharper. Moravian missionary David Zeisberger noted in March 1779 that “murmuring” about the disputed September 1778 conference was “a primary cause of the split” among them and a likely reason for some residents to be contemplating a southwestward move to Assinink, an old Delaware town on the Hocking River. This internal strife was magnified by zealously militant Wyandots and Shawnees who came to the area to attack the recently erected Fort Laurens. All of this unrest spilled over into the nearby Moravian Delaware communities, inciting death threats against the outside missionaries and ultimately prompting the Moravians to leave their Lichtenau village adjacent to Coshocton and resettle on their former site of Schönbrunn on the Tuscarawas River.\textsuperscript{31}

Before their relocation was complete, Brodhead “insistently” requested that they move closer to Pittsburgh. Along with arguments about safety and isolation from “unpleasant” raiding parties, he told Zeisberger that as long as the Moravians lived among the other Indians, he had to spare his enemies for their sake. In response, Zeisberger called such a move “impossible” because his flock would be forced to “leave


\textsuperscript{31} Moravian Mission Diaries, 491-512, 524-25 (at 499).
behind all what they have.” “They are not like the rest of the Indians who can take their whole estate on their backs & go where they please,” he explained. “Our people have been travelling & moving from one place to another till we at last came to this place where we hoped to remain in possession of our settlements & enjoy the fruit of our labour at least for a good many years. I dare not think about moving nor even propose it to our people for it would quite discourage them unless there was great necessity.” During the next decade, the Moravians were uprooted six times.32

Internal divisions also plagued the Shawnees and forced a series of peregrinations. Since the 1768 Treaty at Fort Stanwix, a sizable contingent of Shawnees violently opposed the expansion of British American subjects into their hunting territory. Dunmore’s War exacerbated those tensions, so when the Revolution began, they were prepared to seize the opportunity to push back western settlement. A number of Shawnees, particularly of the Maquachake division, hesitated to engage in open hostilities after the defeat they suffered in 1774, creating some turmoil in the towns along the Scioto River. Cornstalk’s murder in late 1777 attracted more supporters for the warlike faction and encouraged the promoters of neutrality to emigrate to Coshocton in early 1778. Even this group could not be unified, however. After a year, a large segment returned to their relatives at Wakatomica. The remainder stayed with the Delawares until February 1780, when they also responded to a summons from their principal chief to return home. Meanwhile, approximately twelve hundred Shawnees abandoned the Ohio Valley entirely, eventually moving across the Mississippi River after the Revolution.33

32 Ibid., 522-23; Frontier Retreat, 162 (Zeisberger quote); Tanner, Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History, 84, 88-90.
33 Moravian Mission Diaries, 433, 437, 443, 493, 500-01; Frontier Retreat, 139; Calloway, American Revolution in Indian Country, 169-71.

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While the war’s circumstances influenced the Shawnees and Delawares to make several voluntary moves, both nations were forced to undertake involuntary journeys as well. Fear that their proximity to Kentucky would tempt reprisals encouraged most of the Shawnees to leave the Scioto River for new abodes on the Great and Little Miami Rivers and their headwaters during the late 1770s. Clark’s and Logan’s ravaging militias in 1780, 1782, and 1786 initiated more community relocations until in 1790 the Shawnees joined the cluster of villages around Kekionga, the principal Miami town where the St. Mary’s and St. Joseph Rivers met to form the Maumee. Many of the Delawares also ended up at Kekionga after Brodhead burned their capital in 1781. At first, they scattered to the Wyandots at Upper Sandusky or to their compatriot Buckonghelas on the upper Mad River, but by 1785 they were settling near the Miamis. After Harmar and St. Clair marched American armies uncomfortably close to Kekionga, most of the nations gathered there moved downstream to the Glaize in 1792. Following their defeat at Fallen Timbers, many Shawnees and their neighbors talked of completely forsaking the Ohio Country and crossing the Mississippi into Spanish territory.

Despite Zeisberger’s implication that moving was easy for all Indians except his Moravian Delawares, it posed multiple problems, especially when repeated so frequently in a short, war-filled period. For native women, the challenge was to replant and cultivate new fields of corn and vegetables, an increasingly important task as hunting became less reliable. For the men, the difficulty was gaining permission to settle on land that often belonged to another nation. Most tribes were usually hospitable, but if the

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newcomers adopted a divergent military strategy or became overly vocal about controversial subjects, they could expect to be confronted. In March 1784, several Shawnee leaders apologized to the Virginians for the “hurtfull” behavior of some refugee Cherokees living among them. “Wee Discarged them from our Land last fall But the[y] Obayd us not, therefore you may Depend wee will put a stop to them this Spring,” they announced. When the Delawares at Kekionga exasperated their hosts, the Miamis reminded them that “the Ground they occupied now is not theirs.”

Notwithstanding these acrimonious episodes, growing multi-tribalism often positively affected native communities during the last two war-torn decades of the century. Perhaps its primary benefit lay in enabling groups with shared interests to strengthen and protect each other. Facing the ire of their belligerent neighbors and relatives, the Maquachake Shawnees clung to their neutral stance much longer because of their move to Coshocton than they likely would have among their kindred. Since most Americans viewed the Shawnees as Zeisberger did (“the worst people of all the Nations, who are truly ruled by the power of darkness”), having the Delawares vouch for them before Brodhead also shielded them, albeit for a short time, from officially sanctioned colonial attacks. Similar clusters of affinity groups formed along the Wabash. The Piankeshaws who supported Clark gathered near Vincennes, joined in the postwar years by the Miami chief Pacanne and others who favored making peace with the United States. In contrast, the Weas, Kickapoos, Piankeshaws, and Miamis who peppered

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Kentucky with raids tended to encourage one another in towns along the upper Wabash, just as the Wyandots, Shawnees and Mingos did for each other in northwest Ohio.\textsuperscript{36}

Congregating in the same area also aided diplomacy, particularly the ability to accommodate large numbers of Indians at “Grande Councils.” Since hashing out ideas and weighing the input from all chiefs in an effort to reach consensus characterized native politics, frequent meetings were necessary during wartime, especially when unification seemed to be the most effective and appropriate response to the advances of their enemies. Indeed, attempts to form a western confederacy to protect their land and sovereignty flourished in the 1790s, when most of the principal nations lived near each other and shared immediate concerns; in the 1780s, adherence to unification agreements faded quickly, partly because distance prevented the scattered tribes from experiencing the same threats and from keeping each other accountable.\textsuperscript{37}

Although large international settlements could act as a magnet for invading armies, they also attracted indispensable traders and Indian agents. From his post at the Maumee Rapids, McKee could easily visit the nations assembled at the Glaize and supply them with necessary provisions. During the Revolution, Lorimier’s station served a similar function for the Shawnees, Mingos, Wyandots, and Delawares living on the Mad River. Kekionga, located next to Fort Miami, lured traders from the entire Great Lakes region in its heyday. Easy access to these merchants allowed some semblance of the


nations' customary hunting and trading to persist, even though war demands suppressed much of their output.\textsuperscript{38}

In addition to providing ordinary subsistence, these posts also outfitted the many multi-tribal expeditions launched between 1774 and 1794. These missions brought together Indians from the entire region, who sometimes educated each other about their particular religious and cultural practices and sought to understand the strange behavior of their European allies as well. When Hamilton traveled to liberate Vincennes in 1778, he was accompanied by Ottawas, Chippewas, Potawatomies, and Wyandots and joined en route by Miamis, Shawnees, and other Wabash nations. One freezing November night, the Miami chief Waspikingua addressed his comrades, instructing them that “should any dispute arise among you, or hasty words pass, recollect that your busyness is War and let it pass unnoticed.” “We are here mixed with the English, the French and several different tribes of the brown skins,” he continued, so “let us not take offence at any thing which may be said, since we are unacquainted as well with their language as their customs.” For example, he reminded them that the English believed “only in one sovereign being presiding over all,” rather than in “the Deities of the woods and rivers, as well as in the supreme lord.” Furthermore, instead of “making war...by surprize,” the British pursued another method, so Waspikingua encouraged the Indians to be prepared for “shot to fall as thick as drops of rain.” After exhorting them to not be afraid of death, he wanted to conclude with prayer, but since “the various nations have different customs,” he opted

not to "implore all their Deities," choosing to "pray for the protection of those of our own Nation and ask of them victory for my followers."39

Waspikingua's motivational speech might have fostered good will on the banks of the Wabash in 1778, but on other occasions, international associations reflected inter-tribal rivalries and bitter struggles for leadership. As encroaching settlers and war's destructive effects increasingly touched village life, these tensions became even more pronounced. In the Ohio Country, the Wyandots and Shawnees subtly vied with each other for the most influence among their neighbors. Just after assuming the position of Indian agent in May 1776, Morgan circled through the Delaware, Shawnee, and Mingo towns, listening to grievances and encouraging attendance at a fall treaty. Both the Delaware council and the Shawnee chief Cornstalk recommended that he take the message to their "Elder Brothers" the Wyandots because they "are in strict Friendship with fourteen different Western Nations, [and] have more influence than we have."

Consequently, they would be better suited to set a reasonable time for the treaty and "whatever time they fix will be agreable to us," the leaders insisted.40

For the Delawares, much of this deference resulted from their acknowledgement that the Wyandots had graciously allowed them to settle on territory south of Lake Erie. Other nations also benefited from this largesse, elevating the Wyandots to a position of leadership because of their generosity and likely because of their wealth as well. British Indian agent Jehu Hay commented in 1776 that they "lived much better than the other Nations many of them having from 30 to 50 pounds worth of silver works & wampum."

40 1776 Morgan Letterbook, 21, 34.
In his estimation they were also better armed than the Detroit militia and generally quite well-dressed, all qualities that would command respect from other Indians.41

After a few years of living in a war zone, however, the Shawnees and Delawares began to challenge Wyandot supremacy. The Shawnees did so militarily, having considerably more warriors than their Sandusky neighbors. By 1780, Wyandot chiefs “spoke strong” to their people, telling them that “it was true they formerly were the greatest Warriors of all Nations, but that now the Shawnese were eager to gain that Name, that they were become the greatest Warriors of all Nations.” Because of this new arrangement, the Wyandots grudgingly resolved to “leave all over unto them” and let them do their best with the situation, but they certainly did not intend to provide any assistance. When the Shawnees convened an international force for their attack on Martin’s and Ruddell’s stations in the summer of 1780, the Wyandots were conspicuously absent. Meanwhile, the Delawares at Coshocton and their Moravian relatives were openly rejecting Wyandot overtures to embrace the British as allies.42

The Wyandots also encountered opposition from an unlikely source: their relatives living near Detroit. Governor Hamilton reported that “the Hurons & those at Sandooske are Rivals and jealous, except when a common Indian interest engages them to unanimity.” In this instance, the war actually promoted reconciliation because it provided ample opportunities for the two groups to unite in common cause. Together

42 Frontier Retreat, 190-91; “Enumeration of Indians living near Detroit, 1782,” Ser. 1, lot 704, SLAP; Moravian Mission Diaries, 310, 333, 368; Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 219, 244; Frontier Advance, 94-95, 117-18. The Wyandots were not the only nation to recognize Shawnee military prowess. While Hamilton settled in at Vincennes during January 1779, he sent a group of Indians out to monitor the falls of the Ohio. Although the Miamis were generally closer to Hamilton, they “yielded the command to the Shawnese,” Barnhart, ed., Journal of Henry Hamilton, 164-65.
they informed Hamilton that “they expected what Lands they should drive the Rebels from should be vested in them as by right of conquest.” Later they lobbied for official permission to retain their prisoners. Both issues curbed their rivalry, which probably strengthened the Wyandots’ international standing and perhaps even contributed to their becoming “head” of the 1780s western confederacy, responsible for keeping the wampum belts and having the power to send speeches on behalf of the entire group.43

Elsewhere in the Ohio Valley other inter-tribal friction developed under the war’s divisive influence. After the Sauks and Foxes (Mesquakies) embraced Clark’s rhetoric at Illinois in 1778-79, both the Potawatomies of Detroit and Wabasha, chief among the Sioux, offered to chastise them. The Potawatomies even went so far as to send “two collars and two Bostonian scalps” to the Illinois nations, threatening that if they refused to attack Clark, “war [would] be declared upon them by all the other nations and by the troops of the king.” Although the Sauks never attacked Kaskaskia or Cahokia, they seemed to have returned to the British fold a year later when they enlisted the Potawatomies to present a case before De Peyster. They hoped that he would be able to extricate himself from the business of war for a brief moment to mediate a dispute among the Wabash tribes involving a land sale by the Piankeshaws. De Peyster passed up this chance to unite the Wabash nations, perhaps fostering the Piankeshaws’ continued support for the Americans and thereby sealing the other tribes’ hatred of expansionary Kentuckians.44

44 George Rogers Clark Papers, 8: 394 (quote); MPHC, 9: 384; RG 10, 13: 25-27.
Meanwhile, the Chippewas continued their bitter feud with the Sioux, breeding consternation and trepidation in Michilimackinac commanders, who worried that necessary warriors would be unavailable for British missions in Illinois, or worse, that the Americans would exploit the conflict to draw one of those numerous nations to their side. To prevent this disaffection, De Peyster, who directed affairs at Michilimackinac before being transferred to Detroit in 1780, employed his only weapon: withholding supplies. In August 1779, he told Haldimand that he hoped to reestablish British authority in the region by setting the Winnebagoes and Menominees on the Illinois country. Not only were they “naturally more brave than the Ottawas,” they knew that “they are not to have goods sent amongst them unless they strike the enemy.”

The inter-tribal rivalry that heated up the most under the Revolution’s crucible was the one between the Delawares and the Six Nations. During the seventeenth century, the Onondaga council had “made Women” of the Delawares and “appointed them as Head Counsellors in all Treaties.” Over time the appellation came to be particularly galling for the Delawares because rather than emphasizing the peacemaking aspect of their “womanhood,” many Six Nations chiefs chose to highlight Delaware dependence, eventually even questioning their right to dispose of land and to attend treaties. White Eyes seemed to be especially discontented with this arrangement and sought alternative allies to legally secure his people’s land from both the Six Nations and encroaching Europeans. Before the Revolution, he planned to travel to England to “straighten out the

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45 MPHC, 9: 361, 392 (quote).
matter of the Delaware’s land with the King,” but his schemes were interrupted by the war.\textsuperscript{46}

With his benefactor, Lord Dunmore, ousted from Virginia, he turned to the Americans for promises of security. At the 1775 Fort Pitt conference with Congress’s representatives, White Eyes carefully tried to mediate between the crown and colonists, urging them to “think good untill we hear from him (the King),” but also assuring them that he was “very Much rejoiced [that] you offer me your hand to take hold of. I Gladly Accept it and shall not let it fall to the Ground.” Perhaps feeling emboldened by this support from the Americans, he also took a jab at the Six Nations. In a detailed description of the extent of Delaware land, he declared distinctly that the land had been given to them by the Wyandots, not the Six Nations, as the Onondaga council claimed.\textsuperscript{47}

The following year White Eyes became even more outspoken. When your ancestors “made women of us,” they “desired us to mind nothing but Peace and Friendship,” he reminded Kayashuta, Flying Crow, and other Six Nations ambassadors. “When you now talk of us you call us Women, and say you have cut off our Legs so that we can do nothing without your leave, you said we belonged to you and that you commanded all the Nations in the Woods,” he continued, pointing out that if the Delawares were truly dependent, they would not have been able to unilaterally grasp the chain of friendship as they had just done. In response for the Six Nations, Round Warrior

\textsuperscript{46} Calloway, Revolution and Confederation, 141 (quote); Moravian Mission Diaries, 24 n. 66, 250 (at 250); Revolutionary Virginia, 4: 40; Heckewelder, “History, Manners, and Customs of the Indian Nations,” 51; Jay Miller, “The Delaware as Women: A Symbolic Solution,” American Ethnologist, 1 (1974), 507-14. The Six Nations were not the only Indians to assign derogatory meaning to the word “woman.” Hamilton noted in 1778 that among the Lakes and Wabash nations, “to call a Man Woman is highly injurious, which they express by saying, You are only fit to wear a Machicotte or pettycoat,” Barnhart, ed., Journal of Henry Hamilton, 110.

\textsuperscript{47} Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 85-89 (at 86, 88).
called upon the despised Fort Stanwix treaty to verify his people's sovereign claim over
the Ohio Country and its residents. The next day an incensed White Eyes called the Six
Nations “Liars” and repeated his contention that their only valid land claims were in New
York, punctuating his speech with the declaration: “I am no Woman, neither are my Legs
cut off.”

For the next year the Delawares feared an attack from the Six Nations or the
Mingos because of these “severe” words, but the frequent rumors never resulted in a
genuine assault. White Eyes continued to pursue revolutionary alliances that would
secure his nation's land and sovereignty. Just before his death in 1778, he had signed a
treaty with the Americans that included the possibility of statehood for the Delawares in
the future, although the article contained the large loophole of needing to be “conducive
for the mutual interest of both parties.” The Six Nations seemed to simply ignore White
Eyes' outbursts, refraining from punishment but refusing to acknowledge his assertion of
independence. When the Delawares severed their ties with the Americans and turned to
the British for support, a delegation from the Six Nations traveled to Detroit “to take the
Petticoats from off our Grandfathers the Delawares,” so they could participate in war.

After the Revolution, tensions persisted between Ohio Valley nations,
exacerbated by the clustering of their villages in several distinct locales. Usually these
conflicts involved disputation over faithfulness to the western confederacy. By the
1790s, however, most divisions occurred because of one issue: whether or not to insist on
the Ohio River as the definitive barrier between Indian and United States land. Joseph

48 Calloway, Revolution and Confederation, 139-41 (at 139, 141).
49 Moravian Mission Diaries, 356, 364-65, 368, 426; Calloway, Revolution and Confederation,
169 (quote); RG 10, 13: 117-18 (at 118).
Brant and the Lakes Indians blamed the Miamis, Shawnees, and Delawares for eliminating the possibility of negotiations with the Americans because of their determination to protect the Ohio line. In turn, those three nations viewed Brant as an outside agitator and traitor, who was too ready to dispense with their possessions. The Six Nations had tried to give away their land in 1768 and seemed to be up to their old tricks. Wayne’s devastating attack brought the two sides closer together, but their quarrels stretched beyond the Greenville Treaty in 1795.50

While the desire to protect land and sovereignty fueled both native opposition to colonial encroachment and inter-tribal rivalries, chiefs often expressed these objectives in terms of protecting their women and children. British and American diplomats adopted this language as well, assuring dubious Indians that following their suggestions would enable them to appropriately care for their families. In addition to being a useful metaphor, familial security actually dictated the revolutionary responses of most nations. Whenever a community had enough notice of an approaching army, the leaders always removed the women and children to a place of safety. Such actions demonstrated more than mere sentiment. As Silver Heels explained to De Peyster in 1782, women were “the support of us Warriors as they mend...shoes, plant corn and without their assistance we would not continue the war.”51

Although these behind-the-scenes tasks sustained village life, women also exercised their voices in political forums. As the Cherokee women reminded De Peyster in June 1782, the misfortunes of war, such as losing loved ones, homes, food supplies,

50 MPHC, 24: 592-98, 605-08, 614; RG 10, 8: 8442-478.
51 MPHC, 24: 106; Simcoe Papers, 2: 365; RG 10, 13: 103 (quote).
and possessions, affected them as much as it did the men. Rather than passively bearing these hardships, many women chose to respond to the war’s vicissitudes by sending belts to British or American personnel, protesting their current conditions or suggesting the political alternative they deemed most fitting under the circumstances. They also frequently addressed the women of other nations, encouraging them to be unified in their response to war’s devastation.

Some of the most common messages that Indian women sent to British or American authorities were pleas for assistance. In late April 1781, the Wyandot women dispatched a runner with “four Strings of Black Wampum and a piece of Tobacco tied thereon” to De Peyster, urgently appealing for “immediate relief.” Having sheltered “half naked” Delaware refugees fleeing from Brodhead’s attack on Coshocton, they were convinced that the Americans intended to target them next. While their warriors investigated these rumors, the women took it upon themselves to procure allies. Other requests for aid focused on the Indians’ destitute conditions. A 1781 delegation of Miami Indians told De Peyster that they were “deputized by the women of our villages” to seek provisions. The Mahican women represented by Silver Heels in 1782 asked for goods to support them as they moved from Niagara to live among the Shawnees. De Peyster tentatively promised to help them, but he said he needed to first check to make sure that he was not dispensing more goods than there were people. He delivered a similar empty answer to the fourteen strings from Creek and Cherokee women in July 1783, who petitioned not to be forgotten or neglected during the peace process. His assurance that
he would not forget them came long after the Paris negotiations had concluded, and the British Indian Department had been instructed to curtail expenses.52

Women also lent their support to the military activities of their warriors. The same Cherokee women who lamented the “Misery and darken’d Clouds” brought on by the war, vowed to encourage “the young men to arms against the Enemy.” During Hamilton’s expedition to Vincennes, a Chippewa chief delivered a belt from the women of his nation and other Lakes Indians to the women of the “River Indians, exhorting them to work hard with their hoes, to raise com for the Warriors who should take up the Axe for their Father the King of England.” They likely reasoned that for an international campaign to be successful, a unified response from the women would be required.53

While Hamilton and his auxiliaries camped at Vincennes, another multi-tribal contingent formed at Detroit, where they prepared to advance against Fort Laurens. After condling with their young men for their nations’ “Misfortune,” the women of the Six Nations, Shawnees, Delawares, and Wyandots announced to the assembly that they were untlying the warriors’ feet, preparing them for war, and sweeping out their council house. “To preserve you from all difficulties, we make your Mockasons of strong Buffaloe Leather, & Your Leggins of Wolf Skin, and we clothe you out in the best War dress. We have put new Strings to your bows, and straiten’d your Arrors. That when you see your Enemies at a great distance you may be able to shoot thro’ them,” they declared. They also appointed the “old men” to travel behind the younger, so they could follow in their footsteps. Finally, they addressed the Ottawas, Chippewas, and Potawatomies present,

52 MPHC, 10: 476 (Wyandot quotes); RG 10, 13: 63, 102-04, 224-28 (at 63).
agreeing to cut their legs loose too and outfit them for war, assuming that their “head
Women will assist us in doing of it.”

Despite rallying behind their soldiers in multiple instances, many native women
consistently worked for peace throughout the Revolution and its militant aftermath. At
the 1775 Fort Pitt treaty, the Delaware women instructed White Eyes to convey to the
commissioners that they were “very Much rejoiced to hear you and our Children
renewing the freindship between you and them.” White Eyes dutifully obeyed, adding
that “our paying Attention to them is the reason why we did not go to War with any
Nation whatsoever as God Almighty did not Create us to War with one Another.” On
behalf of the Delaware women, he also pressed the Americans to “Acquaint your Mothers
our Elder sisters the White Women what we have said and when any of our Children
shall be born in future we will point to heaven and tell them these our sentiments.” By
appealing to their fellow women, they hoped to secure peace in the present and the
future.

In September 1787, the leading or “Beloved” Cherokee woman made a similar
entreaty to her American counterparts in a letter to the governor of Pennsylvania. Unlike
the 1782 promise of support for the warriors, she hoped to “keep my Children in piece,”
and “Keep the path clear & straight” between her towns and the United States.
Conscious of the fact that she was a woman, she urged the governor and Congress not to
disregard her words, reminding them that “woman is the mother of All.” “Woman Does
not pull Children out of Trees or Stumps nor out of old Logs, but out of their Bodies,” she

54 Frontier Advance, 218-19 (at 219).
55 Revolution on the Upper Ohio, 88-89.
stated; consequently, the men should “mind what a woman says, and look upon her as a mother...I have Taken the privelage to Speak to you as my own Children, & the same as if you had sucked my Breast—and I am in hopes you have a beloved woman amongst you who will help to put her children Right if they do wrong, as I shall do the same,” she continued. By claiming political power by virtue of her recognized maternal authority, she connected her nation’s diplomatic maneuvers to its routine community life in an effort to strengthen its internal cohesion and protect against outside aggression.56

Although the war provided numerous opportunities for women to participate in the political arena, it also occasionally encouraged male leaders to subvert the established order and deny a voice to their women. While Wayne and his army advanced through the Ohio Country in 1794, John Adlum journeyed to the upper Allegheny River, where he hoped to survey disputed Pennsylvania territory. He also carried a message from Secretary of War Knox to Complanter and his disgruntled Senecas, inviting them to a treaty with Timothy Pickering at Canandaigua. Complanter and many of the other chiefs vigorously opposed the idea of meeting Pickering anywhere but their council fire at Buffalo Creek, and declared that if they were unable to recover the small tract of land they sought, they would go to war. In contrast, Adlum found “the woemen invariably for peace and most of the old men,” a situation that he attempted to exploit whenever possible.57

Unfortunately for Complanter, going to war was not an option unless he received the support of the “great woemen” from all the Seneca towns. For a while he spoke

confidently that “when we are all assembled chiefs, warriors, and the great Woemen, at Buffaloe the woemen may change their minds, and join us in our wishes, as it is the only chance we shall ever have of getting back a part of our Country.” Perhaps he could even provide assistance to the western confederacy, which he had long opposed. Despite this optimism, when the time came to determine the Senecas’ course of action, the women were “obstinate and refused their consent to go to war,” even at the Buffalo council fire.58

An infuriated Complanter finally railed against the “superstition” that the “Great Spirit [would] not prosper them in War,” if the warriors marched without the women’s consent. He declared that he was “surprised that men of understanding, had so long submitted to this ancient custom handed down to them by their ancestors, and now was the time, for men to decide for themselves and take this power from the woemen.” The great women immediately admonished him, saying “the Great Spirit had given that power to their ancestors, and it was handed down to them from time immemorial, and they would not relinquish their right.” Furthermore, the authority had been given to them “to prevent madmen and fools from doing mischief.” If Complanter disregarded their advice, “the Great Spirit would punish them for it.” This confrontation ended abruptly when news of Wayne’s victory over the western Indians reached their council house while the head woman was still speaking. In a short span of time, the war had twice threatened to overturn the Senecas’ political system: first by encouraging Complanter to challenge women’s participation in the process, and second by silencing all intra-tribal

58 Ibid., 456, 465-66.
proceedings when the magnitude of the Indians' defeat and the British betrayal became apparent.\footnote{Ibid., 465-68 (at 465-66).}

While Complanter's bold subversion of ancient political and gender orders and the defeat of their western friends and relatives simultaneously rocked their community, the Senecas soon rallied and developed new strategies for relating to the Americans. The same process of devastation and renewal occurred within other Ohio Valley nations between 1768 and 1795. Although losing beloved family members and associates, watching a season's labor burn to the ground, erecting yet another home, or panicking at the rumor of an approaching army generated considerable grief, deprivation, and frustration in Indian towns, none of these acts or repercussions of war successfully decimated native cultures. Instead, many of the routine tasks, communications, and observances that gave meaning to their lives continued, even though they were occasionally altered by war's inescapable effects.

An example of this persistence occurred in October 1776. Throughout the month George Morgan was immersed in discussions with various Delaware, Shawnee, and Seneca representatives, who had traveled to Fort Pitt for another conference to promote harmony. The Mingos and some Wyandots were already engaged in hostilities, and rumors abounded that some of the Shawnees and Delawares were inclined to join them. During the treaty's official proceedings at the end of the month, Morgan received a wampum string from the head Shawnee queen, Coitcheleh. She informed him that her headmen were en route to Pittsburgh, where she had "exhorted them...to keep fast of your Friendship." She also requested that Morgan inform her if "the white people
entertain designs to strike us," so she could "remove out of danger with my Children." In turn, she promised to provide him with intelligence of any "bad intentions" on the part of the Indians, fulfilling that pledge immediately by naming the Mingos as frequent perpetrators of frontier attacks. After reiterating the Shawnee determination to "preserve Friendship with our white Brethren inviolable," she apologized for not coming to Fort Pitt in person. "I would come up myself but have been lately deliver'd of a Son," she explained, adding that she hoped not to be forgotten in the "distribution of your Goods."

In the midst of wartime negotiations and fears, the rhythms of life still took precedence over politics for Coitcheleh and many of her Indian neighbors.60

Although prioritizing childbirth and economic exchange did not diminish the attention given to alliances and war, it proved that diplomacy was not the only means of preserving native cultures. Since threats to their land and sovereignty often affected their daily existence, many Ohio Valley Indians focused on neutralizing these external pressures by driving settlers away or manipulating foreign governments. Such actions certainly contributed to the maintenance of family networks and retention of native property, but it would be erroneous to conclude that their failure inevitably produced cultural disintegration. New leaders arose to replace battle-weary chiefs, villages instilled familiar religious and social values in their youth, and individuals continued to hunt, trade, and farm to supply their nation's economic needs. Despite the changes and devastation wrought by two decades of continuous warfare, the Indians' home front retained its familiar patterns.

60 1776 Morgan Letterbook, 75-76.
Conclusion: Ambiguous Outcomes

Six weeks after the Ohio Valley nations agreed to the Treaty of Greenville in August 1795, Secretary of War Timothy Pickering reported to President Washington that “the chiefs who signed the treaty are not numerous, but I observe among them the names of Blue Jacket, the great warrior of the Shawanoes,...Buckongelas, the great warrior of the Delawares, and of Augooshaway, the Ottawa.” Despite Egusheway’s recent criticism of the treaty and a similar denunciation from the Miami chief Little Turtle (not mentioned in the letter but sharing equal stature with the others), Pickering viewed their signatures as evidence of general good will among the Indians and as surety that the agreement’s provisions would be upheld. If these leaders were prepared to cooperate with the United States, he reasoned, their relatives and neighbors would follow their example.¹

Pickering’s conclusions mirrored the diplomatic perceptions of most American dignitaries during the second half of the eighteenth century. Despite repeated explanations from native representatives that their authority structures did not include coercive measures, making it very difficult for them to control warriors who defied tribal councils, American ambassadors and politicians continued to view Indian affairs through the consenting signatures of recognized leaders at treaty conferences. Easterners were particularly interested in simplifying native diplomacy in 1795 because they had spent most of the past twenty years denying that the Ohio Valley Indians had been independent participants in the region’s warfare. Only in the past five years, when their armies had suffered resounding defeats at the hands of the Indian confederacy, had they reluctantly

¹ John Sugden, Blue Jacket: Warrior of the Shawnees (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 208.
acknowledged that the belligerent nations collected on the Auglaize and Maumee Rivers warranted extensive foreign policy attention; now they were ready to heed other national matters. Westerners were less convinced that the Treaty of Greenville marked the end of their conflict with the Indians, regardless of how many influential chiefs attached their names to the document. They had witnessed too many destructive war parties during the past two decades to be firmly persuaded that the fighting was over. Even transplanted easterner Anthony Wayne recognized that discontent was still rampant among Ohio Valley Indians and feared that "a second Pontiac business" could be on the horizon if the army neglected appropriate military measures.²

While Pickering's observations about western affairs reflected his eastern sensibilities, frontier settlers and native people alike would have agreed with his assessment of the influence that Blue Jacket, Buckonghelas, and Egusheway held among the Ohio Valley Indians. Although these men occasionally squabbled with each other, they commanded respect from Indians, Americans, and Europeans for their oratory, diplomacy, and military prowess. Not only were they skilled war chiefs, they had weathered more than two decades of violent conflict, something that few revolutionary era chiefs could claim. Because of this experience, their lives serve as a useful review of many of this dissertation's themes.

Blue Jacket was probably in his late twenties when the Fort Stanwix Treaty unleashed fresh grievances for the Shawnees. He likely participated in discussions about

² Knopf, ed., Anthony Wayne, 523. Patrick Griffin explores the divisions between East and West in his recent book, American Leviathan. He argues that perceived neglect from eastern governments forced western settlers to become increasingly politicized and to develop a "self-sovereignty" that came to define what the American Revolution meant to colonists west of the Appalachians. Westerners particularly complained about eastern governments who downplayed the severity or importance of the Indian war, an issue that encouraged western brutality toward the Indians and suspicion of eastern intent. Griffin, American Leviathan, 125-26, 133-34, 147, 150, 173-75.
pan-Indian unification and the importance of checking settlers’ advances during the ensuing years, issues that surfaced many times throughout his life. Nineteenth-century historians placed him at Point Pleasant along with Cornstalk in 1774, a battle that convinced both sides of each other’s strength. In the following years, Blue Jacket was a member of the Shawnee faction that worked for peace at the beginning of the Revolution, only to split from his elders, establish his own town, and launch attacks against the Kentucky frontier. When the Americans retaliated, he lost his home and was forced to relocate several times. By the 1790s, he became known for trying to sustain the western confederacy, but he also devoted considerable time to courting British favor, a strategy he duplicated with the Americans after the Greenville Treaty.3

Egusheway, Buckonghelas, and Little Turtle also became closely associated with the 1790s unification movement and the Indians’ successive victories over American armies. Egusheway was particularly outspoken about fraudulent behavior by Congress, using two centuries of European affronts to recruit warriors for his resistance movement. At the same time, however, he recognized the importance of cultivating alliances with these newcomers, pledging his support to Hamilton during the 1778 march to Vincennes as an indication of his commitment to their friendship. Buckonghelas defied Joseph Brant by urging the Ohio Valley nations to insist on the Ohio River as the only acceptable boundary line, perhaps enjoying the approbation of many of his fellow Delawares who had chastised him during the Revolution for rejecting the Americans’ plea for neutrality. Little Turtle pressured the British to fulfill their duties as allies and to provide assistance to the nations in Wayne’s path. Throughout the 1780s and 1790s, he also assumed

3 Ibid., 38-45, 52, 188-217.
responsibility for airing his nation’s grievances in public and private council and led the
combined Indian forces in the successful routs of Harmar and St. Clair.4

Despite their personal influence and the political and military efforts of their
people, life had completely changed for each of these men during the revolutionary era.
For Blue Jacket and Buckonghelas the most visible alteration was that they now resided
far from their river valleys of the 1770s. Both men and their respective nations had
repeatedly relocated during the period, but with the Greenville Treaty line severing native
ownership of more than half of Ohio, the possibility of returning to their homes on the
Scioto and Muskingum Rivers was erased. Living as refugees on crowded Wyandot,
Miami, and Ottawa land prompted many Shawnees and Delawares to move westward.
Those who remained struggled to survive on the slim returns they could secure from
hunting and trading, livelihoods that became increasingly tenuous as competition and the
diminution of British power in the region dampened the market.5

In addition to new homes, new neighbors, and new economic pressures, native
leaders were required to reorient their political strategy in the wake of their negotiations
with Wayne in 1795. Their bitter struggle to protect the Ohio River boundary, the single-
minded goal propelling up the 1790s western confederacy, had ended in defeat, forcing
them to devise a new plan for dealing with outsiders. The tenuous unity that Egusheway,
Blue Jacket, and Buckonghelas had managed to forge among Indians with disparate
interests began to evaporate as soon as Wayne’s army withdrew from the Maumee River.
Furthermore, the alliance with Britain that had seemed so secure during the second half

4 "Minutes of Debates in Council on the...Ottawa River...November, 1791," Early American
Imprints; Barnhart, ed., Journal of Henry Hamilton; RG 10, 8: 8447-449; Simcoe Papers, 2: 334; ASPIA,
564-83.
5 Tanner, Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History, 80, 85, 88, 156-57.
of the Revolution had begun to unravel after 1783, as British officials consistently refused to provide the support the confederacy expected from worthy allies, making their extravagant promises seem deceptive. Now the British Indian Department was relinquishing its base at Detroit, further eroding the disintegrating relationship and leaving the Americans to be the dominant political force in the region. Unlike the British, who had valued native cultures for the profits to be gained through the fur trade, the Americans seemed to welcome Indians only if they could be transformed into frontier settlers, a change that western residents found unacceptable.6

The loss of the Ohio River boundary not only compelled the western nations to adjust their political objectives, it completed the collapse of the regional identity that had bound many tribes together for the past three decades. Linked by their common dependence upon the Ohio River and their common enemies to the south, nations from the Illinois country to the Allegheny River and Lake Erie possessed similar interests for much of the eighteenth century. In the 1760s and 1770s, Shawnee, Delaware, and Ottawa agents actively sought to foster formal unification in opposition to British and Six Nations’ efforts to control the area. At the same time, the region, particularly along the Upper Ohio, was becoming one of the most heterogeneous communities west of the Appalachians. Shawnees, Mingos, Delawares, Wyandots, and Ottawas often shared the same territory, sometimes helping, sometimes hurting the drive for unity. Even though unification attempts and international villages did not always produce harmony, they did encourage the nations to consider the concerns of the region, rather than simply their local issues. As access to the Ohio River grew increasingly restricted and tribes began to look westward, however, the basis of this regional identity quickly dissolved.

6 White, Middle Ground, 434, 468, 474; Griffin, American Leviathan, 254-56.
If physical loss and deprivation, political upheaval, and a compromised sense of community were not enough changes for the Ohio Valley Indians, there was another lingering effect of the revolutionary era that plagued nations for years. When the nineteenth-century historian C.C. Trowbridge attempted to piece together the Miamis’ history, they complained of gaps in their memory because several boxes of wampum belts and pipes were destroyed in Harmar’s 1790 attack on several of their villages. Although Little Turtle and the combined Indian forces routed Harmar shortly after his attack, the damage to the Miamis’ historical and cultural record was irreparable. Having endured the destruction of their villages three times in the 1780s alone, the Shawnees also informed Trowbridge that they had no belts to commemorate their history.7

Despite this relentless sweep of change, some nations experienced less upheaval than others. While the Shawnees and Delawares were forced to rethink nearly every category of their lives, most of the Potawatomies, Chippewas, and Ottawas returned to their lands behind the Greenville Treaty line, where they resumed hunting, planting, and trading. The Miamis shared in the personal devastation of having their principal villages destroyed, but because their territory lay just west of the new boundary, they were able to rebuild their homes and return to a subsistence economy. During the next twenty years, their population actually increased. This stability probably contributed to the Miamis’ retention of traditional religious ideas far longer than many other nations.8

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Regardless of a given nation's degree of cultural change, every village council faced the question of how to respond to the Americans. Just as the sudden removal of the French regime created the need to formulate a strategy for dealing with the British in the 1760s, the abrupt disappearance of the British and the swaggering entrance of the Americans in the 1790s demanded some kind of reaction. The year between the Indians' defeat at Fallen Timbers and the Greenville Treaty closely resembled their deliberations three decades before. Emissaries scurried from private council to private council, consulting with other nations, forming factions, and, generally seeking to make informed decisions. Although they eventually signed Wayne's treaty, few representatives seemed to regard the occasion as the definitive benchmark it would become in later years.9

It did not take long for the Indians to be disabused of the notion that the United States might simply be interested in making peace and drawing a permanent boundary line. Almost immediately American agents began negotiating for more land, causing the need for a calculated strategy for dealing with these newcomers to grow more pronounced. By 1796 a new militant faction of restless young men was already on the rise, eager to challenge injustice with open hostility. With the sight of Wayne's Legion still fresh in their minds, however, most tribal councils rejected violence. On the other end of the spectrum stood men like Little Turtle and Blue Jacket, who abandoned their adversarial approaches in favor of becoming American ambassadors. Perhaps they hoped that recognition from the United States would enable them to retain their tribal

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leadership, but, in the case of Little Turtle, his accommodation of the Americans led to his rejection among the Miamis.\textsuperscript{10}

Caught between the extreme responses of violence and outright alliance, yet repeatedly faced with decisions about the appropriate responses to aggrandizing Americans, most nations wrestled with the ambiguity of their position. The integral connection between land and sovereignty, so critical to their ability to bargain effectively with the British, now betrayed them, as the loss of sizable amounts of territory enabled the Americans to disregard their diplomatic viability. In time, however, the Indians' inability to determine a specific response to the emerging United States proved to be the means of ensuring that resistance would continue and that native culture change would proceed along Indian trajectories rather than be dictated by outsiders. Instead of following a predetermined plan, village chiefs responded to each new political or cultural threat as they always had, weighing all sides of the issue and attempting to act in their people's best interests. While dwelling in the zone between open hostility and subservient compliance irked native extremists, angered Americans, and taxed tribal councils, it ensured that Indians could defend their rights and property for many years to come.

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Education


Major Fields: Colonial and Revolutionary America, Native American history
Minor Fields: Comparative colonization, Women’s history, Early modern England


B.A., magna cum laude, with Honors, History and English, Bucknell University, May, 1996.

Teaching Experience


Pre-Graduate School Summer Program in American History, The College of William and Mary and Norfolk State University, Summer 1999 and 2000 (teaching assistant).

Survey of European History to 1700, The College of William and Mary, Fall 1998 (teaching assistant).

Historians and Computers, The College of William and Mary, Spring 1999 (teaching assistant).
Related Professional Experience


Awards and Grants

John E. Selby Graduate Teaching Award, The College of William and Mary, December 2002.

Summer Research Grant, The College of William and Mary, 2002.

Phi Beta Kappa, Bucknell University, Spring 1996.

Conference Papers


Publications


Service

Graduate student representative on the History Department Appointments Committee, 2001-2002.

Vice-President, History Graduate Student Association, 1998-2000.

Graduate student representative on the William and Mary Committee for Excellence in Teaching, Spring 1999 (three faculty teaching awards granted).

**Public History**

Tour guide, Sir Christopher Wren Building, The College of William and Mary 1998-2001. In addition to routine tours of the building, this position has also involved lectures to graduate students from George Washington University and undergraduate students from Randolph Macon and William and Mary.

May Day Oration, 1999, Williamsburg's Tercentenary Celebration. Student Reflections on Three Hundred Years: "Transition."

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