The Significance of the Trans-Appalachian Frontier in Atlantic History

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> The true point of view in the history of this nation is not the Atlantic coast, it is the Great West.
>
> Frederick Jackson Turner, 1893

FOUR HUNDRED AND EIGHTY MILLION YEARS AGO, there was no Atlantic Ocean. Africa, Europe, and North America were all connected. North America straddled the equator, and what is now the Atlantic coast lay under water. As the Earth's tectonic plates collided in this period of intense geological activity, the African plate slamming into the North American plate, the ocean floor buckled, and great sheets of bedrock began slowly rising up in the air. Humans would one day call these the Appalachian Mountains. Over the millions of years that followed, slices of rock crumpled and were thrust miles into the sky as the Appalachians reached exalted heights, nearly as tall as the present-day Himalayas. Eventually the continents began to separate. Vast plains and mountain chains were torn asunder, and water poured into the breach: thus, some 220 million years ago, the Atlantic Ocean was formed. The new ocean separated not just the new continents, but the already ancient Appalachian Mountains themselves. They were, one might say, the first Atlantic crossing. Most of the Appalachians drifted west with the American plate, while the remainder stretched across the ever-growing Atlantic, from Norway to the Scottish highlands, across Ireland and Newfoundland, extending to the Atlas Mountains in northern Africa. Although we think of them as a North American phenomenon, the Appalachians are, in truth, a trans-hemispheric chain—older than the Atlantic itself.[1]

By the time humans came to inhabit North America, the Appalachians had been weathered down to their current heights. Less striking than the Alps, smaller than

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[1] I am grateful to Heather Short for tipping me off to these matters, and for kindly mitigating the geological ignorance displayed in the above paragraph. See also the U.S. Geological Survey Appalachian Highlands Province website, http://wrgis.wr.usgs.gov/docs/parks/province/appalach.html (accessed April 14, 2008).

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the Himalayas, not as rugged as the Rockies, they belie not just their age but also their significance. For the Appalachian Mountains may have been the continent's single most important feature. Separating the eastern seaboard from the Mississippi Valley, the Iroquois in the uplands from the Algonquian peoples along the coasts and valleys, the British from the French colonies, the ocean-facing coast from the western-oriented backcountry, the Appalachian Mountains were responsible for the great problem of North American, and perhaps even Atlantic, history from 1754 to 1815: the fate of the trans-Appalachian West.

If this seems like a surprising claim, that may be because the region between the Appalachians and the Mississippi River stands astride—or rather between—several national historiographies. French-language historians mostly abandon the Ohio and Mississippi valleys as sites of interest after the Seven Years' War—*après la Conquête!*—much as colonial French administrators did before them. English-Canadian historians, for whom the Seven Years' War created Canada (and the Revolution, the Loyalists), similarly lose interest in a region that seems neither British nor loyal after 1783. As for the historiography on the early United States, most of it focuses on the East, with the West treated as something of a sideshow, destined to form part of the expanding nation. The newer historiography on the Atlantic world, which aims to transcend the limits imposed by national historiographies, would seem to offer some hope. So far, however, it has tended to remain content sailing aboard ships or landing along coastlines, leaving the more grueling trek into continental interiors to the national historiographies it so haughtily claims to supersede.[2]

[2] On the persistence of teleological accounts of national expansion among historians of the early U.S. republic, see Jack P. Greene, "Colonial History and National History: Reflections on a Continuing Problem," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 54 (April 2007): 235–250. Important exceptions that focus on the West include Andrew R. L. Cayton, *The Frontier Republic: Ideology and Politics in the Ohio Country, 1780–1825* (Kent, Ohio, 1986); D. W. Meinig, *The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years Of History*, 4 vols. (New Haven, Conn., 1986), esp. vols. 1 and 2; Andrew R. L. Cayton, " 'Separate Interests' and the Nation-State: The Washington Administration and the Origins of Regionalism in the Trans-Appalachian West," *Journal of American History* 79 (1992): 39–67; Gregory H. Nobles, *American Frontiers: Cultural Encounters and Continental Conquest* (New York, 1997); Eric Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires: Constructing Colonialism in the Ohio Valley, 1673–1800* (New York, 1997); Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815* (Cambridge, 1991); James E. Lewis, *The American Union and the Problem of Neighborhood: The United States and the Collapse of the Spanish Empire, 1783–1829* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1998); Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge, Mass., 2001); Stephen Aron, *American Confluence: The Missouri Frontier from Borderland to Border State* (Bloomington, Ind., 2006); Patrick Griffin, *American Leviathan: Empire, Nation, and Revolutionary Frontier* (New York, 2007); and Malcolm J. Rohrbough, *Trans-Appalachian Frontier: People, Societies, and Institutions, 1775–1850*, 3rd ed. (Bloomington, Ind., 2008). For a consideration of why the "West" so often gets overlooked in U.S. surveys, see James A. Hijiya, "Why the West Is Lost," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 51 (April 1994): 276–292, along with the comments that follow in "Comments and Response," ibid. 51 (October 1994): 717–754. An exception to the French neglect of the trans-Appalachian West after 1763 is the outstanding study by Gilles Havard and Cécile Vidal, *Histoire de l'Amérique française*, rev. ed. (Paris, 2006), 671–719. A few historians have recently begun to take broader perspectives on the region. See Andrew R. L. Cayton, " 'While We Are in the World, We Must Converse with the World': The Significance of Ohio in World History," in Geoffrey Parker, Richard Sisson, and William Russell Coil, eds., *Ohio and the World, 1753–2053: Essays toward a New History of Ohio* (Columbus, Ohio, 2005), 1–22; Fred Anderson and Andrew Cayton, *The Dominion of War: Empire and Liberty in North America, 1500–2000* (New York, 2005), esp. 104–206; Paul W. Mapp, "French Geographic Conceptions of the Unexplored American West and the Louisiana Cession of 1762," in Bradley G. Bond, ed., *French Colonial Louisiana and the Atlantic World* (Baton Rouge, La., 2005), 134–174; and Mapp, "Atlantic History from Imperial, Continental, and Pacific Perspectives," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 63 (October 2006): 713–724.

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Map 1: The Trans-Appalachian West: the region between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi River. This digital topographic image of North America, created from data collected by NASA's space shuttle *Endeavour*, highlights the Appalachian Mountains as the formidable geographic obstacle they were. Courtesy NASA/JPL-Caltech.

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But what happens if we take a different approach, viewing late-eighteenth-century North America not from the perspective of the East Coast looking out toward the Atlantic, but rather from the multiple perspectives of the Atlantic world looking in toward the trans-Appalachian West and vice versa? By drawing on the arguments and sensibility of an older diplomatic historiography, and connecting that to the methodological and historical insights of a newer ethnological and social history of the frontier and more recent scholarship on empire, we gain new insights on North American history from 1754 to 1815. In particular, certain continuities emerge over more familiar ruptures—including, in the U.S. context, the all-important division between "colonial" and "early national" periods. Taking an Atlantic perspective on the continental interior, it appears that the Seven Years' War, which ostensibly ended in North America in 1760 and in Europe in 1763, in fact continued with only brief interruptions to 1815—in the form of the American Revolution of the 1770s, the Indian Wars of the 1780s and 1790s, and the War of 1812. Call it a Long War for the West. During this Long War, as the action shifted among various "hot spots" across the trans-Appalachian West, the great issue animating Native, imperial, and settler actors alike revolved around the fate of the region: Would it become a permanent Native American country? Would it fall to some distant European power? Or, perhaps the most unlikely scenario of all, would it join with the United States? Only in the wake of the British defeat in the War of 1812 was the region's fate as part of the expanding United States settled once and for all.[3]

Facing east, as it were, from Native America, the years from 1754 to 1815 most clearly emerge as a single, coherent period of extended struggle to maintain Native control of the trans-Appalachian West. As historians now largely accept, where Native military power encountered the distant reaches of European empire, and none could claim supremacy, Euro-American interaction most often resulted from negotiation born of "mutual weakness." European empires in the West existed—as they later would in other forms of non-settler colonialism—not through military or demographic domination, but by fostering various forms of consent or "persuasion" among local allies; European imperialism drew settlers and colonial administrators into Native "diplomatic, economic, judicial, and family ways" as often as it did the reverse. The result was a complex system of shifting alliances continually beset by diverging Native and European interests.[4]

This system began to collapse in the Ohio Valley—the "hot spot" of the trans-Appalachian West in the mid-eighteenth century, where the Long War for the West

[3] Jack P. Greene has recently urged historians to recognize "the profound continuities between the colonial and national segments of the American past." Greene, "Colonial History and National History," 248–249. It is something that Greg Nobles notably accomplished in *American Frontiers*; my thanks to him for suggesting the idea of a "Long Seven Years' War." Thomas Bender, too, has recently suggested that the period from 1754 to 1783 should be seen as "a continuous war." Bender, *A Nation among Nations: America's Place in World History* (New York, 2006), 79–87.

[4] The phrase "facing east" is borrowed from Richter, *Facing East*; "mutual weakness" is from White, *The Middle Ground*, 351; "diplomatic, economic, judicial, and family ways" is from Kathleen DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* (Philadelphia, 2006), 118. For the Native context, see also Colin G. Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities* (Cambridge, 1995).

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began. It was there that Native control over hunting grounds and trade routes was most contested. It was there that the British Empire confronted the French over issues of territorial sovereignty. And thus it was there that George Washington, a young and inexperienced soldier and surveyor, along with Tanaghrisson, an Iroquois leader, ambushed a party of sleeping French soldiers in 1754, unleashing a chain of events that led to worldwide warfare and to the reconfiguration of Europe's global empires.[5]

From the perspective of France's Native American allies, the French imperial collapse in the Seven Years' War was an ambiguous event. On the one hand, the territorial cessions being drawn on maps in Paris bore little connection to realities in the trans-Appalachian West, where Native American nations—unlike their French allies—remained undefeated: "Although you have conquered the French," said an Ojibwa chief to a British trader, summing up the common sentiment, "you have not yet conquered us!" On the other hand, the 1763 Treaty of Paris, which ended the war, radically transformed North America's geopolitical landscape, upending the imperial balance of power and with it longstanding patterns of Native-European interaction. "To preserve the Balance between us & the French," one British official had remarked before the Seven Years' War, "is the great ruling Principle of the Modern Indian Politics." The disintegration of France's North American empire was thus bound to alter relations between Native and European powers.[6]

And so it did: France's defeat marked the beginning of a unipolar North America. The English, a Delaware chief remarked, had "grown too powerfull." British provocations only made matters worse: the arrogance of General Jeffrey Amherst, who referred to Native Americans as "pernicious vermin"; his desire to render Indians into defeated subjects rather than allies ("it is not my intention ever to attempt to gain the friendship of Indians by presents"); the occupation of French forts throughout the Ohio Valley; and especially the continual encroachment of British settlers into the region. Sir William Johnson, the British superintendent for Indian affairs, reported that even Mohawks—the oldest of British allies—felt themselves in "danger of being made slaves, and having their lands taken from them at pleasure." Native Americans throughout the West discerned a sinister British design to seize their land and render them impotent.[7]

[5] On these events, the best account is Fred Anderson, *The Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754–1766* (New York, 2000).

[6] "You have not yet conquered us!" is quoted in Robert S. Allen, *His Majesty's Indian Allies: British Indian Policy in the Defence of Canada, 1774–1815* (Toronto, 1992), 32; British official quoted in Calloway, *American Revolution*, and in Alan Taylor, *The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers and the Northern Borderland of the American Revolution* (New York, 2006), 7. "Neither the capitulation at Montreal nor the Treaty of Paris," historians Gilles Havard and Cécile Vidal rightly observe, "ended their war against the British"; *L'Amérique française*, 678 (my translation). For geopolitics in the Ohio Valley, see Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires*; in the Great Lakes region, see especially White, *The Middle Ground*; in Iroquoia, see Taylor, *The Divided Ground*; in the Southwest, see Daniel H. Usner, *Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley before 1783* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1992), esp. 77–104; in the Missouri area, see Aron, *American Confluence*; and generally in the backcountry, see Richter, *Facing East*, 151–188; Nobles, *American Frontiers*, 57–96; Havard and Vidal, *L'Amérique française*; and Eric Hinderaker and Peter C. Mancall, *At the Edge of Empire: The Backcountry in British North America* (Baltimore, Md., 2003).

[7] "Grown too powerfull" is quoted in White, *The Middle Ground*, 278; Colin G. Calloway, *The Scratch of a Pen: 1763 and the Transformation of North America* (Oxford, 2006), 66; and Richter, *Facing East*, 164. "Pernicious vermin" is from Havard and Vidal, *L'Amérique française*, 674 (my translation);

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Eager to restore a balance of power, some western nations urged the French to reconsider their capitulation. "Take courage, Father," said a warrior in the Illinois country to a French officer, drawing on venerable diplomatic traditions. "Don't abandon your children." Pleading for a new offensive, a Shawnee leader presented lingering French soldiers with a wampum belt naming forty-seven villages that remained committed to maintaining the French alliance. Alas, these and other overtures were rebuffed. Exhausted by war, its navy in tatters and its treasury drained, France was not about to renew hostilities. Dreams of a resurrected French Empire in North America after 1763 would thus be kept alive not by diplomats, merchants, or colonial administrators in Paris, Nantes, or Québec, but by Native Americans in the trans-Appalachian West.[8]

And so the western Indians fought on, with even some Iroquois nations abandoning their former allegiance to resist Britain's new imperial power. Their objectives essentially carried forward previous French imperial policy: to contain British settlement between the Appalachians and the Atlantic. The hot spot of the trans-Appalachian West now shifted from the Ohio Valley to the forts and frontier settlements along the Appalachians and the Great Lakes, where Native nations allied under the Ottawa chief Pontiac launched a series of devastating assaults on British settlements. If Pontiac's War of 1763–1764 failed to push the British into the Atlantic, it succeeded in restoring some autonomy to Native Americans in the West. Concerned by the specter of a costly war and its impact on the nation's tottering finances, British policymakers abandoned Amherst's disastrous policies, turning instead to the traditional French approach of alliance through gift-giving and intertribal diplomacy. More importantly, Britain agreed to limit colonial settlement in the trans-Appalachian West, reserving the area as an autonomous Native American territory—an objective that would persist in various forms over the next several decades.

THE BRITISH IMPERIAL CRISIS OF THE 1770S AND 1780s began, like the French crisis before it, on the imperial periphery: at the crest of the Appalachians, where imperial authorities found themselves squeezed between the conflicting demands of the rebellious Native and settler populations. This will come as little surprise to those who have followed recent scholarship on eighteenth-century empires, which has largely turned away from the perspective of older diplomatic historians—imperial conflict as seen from European capitals—to focus instead on imperial edges, emphasizing local forces in what are variously called frontiers, borderlands, or marchlands. Shifting its sights from traditional state actors, this newer historiography focuses on local

"it is not my intention" is from Allen, *His Majesty's Indian Allies*, 32; Johnson quoted in Taylor, *The Divided Ground*, 16. The most complete study of Pontiac's War is Gregory Dowd, *War under Heaven: Pontiac, the Indian Nations, and the British Empire* (Baltimore, Md., 2002). On Native fears of English power, see also Richter, *Facing East*, 193; Hinderaker and Mancall, *At the Edge of Empire*, 121.

[8] "Don't abandon your children" and the forty-seven villages are from Havard and Vidal, *L'Amérique française*, 677–678. On this issue, see also Dowd, *War under Heaven*, 112–113; Allen, *His Majesty's Indian Allies*, 34; White, *The Middle Ground*, 275–279; and, among other sources, François-Alexandre-Frédéric la Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, *Voyage dans les États-Unis d'Amérique, fait en 1795, 1796 et 1797*, 8 vols. (Paris, 1799), 1: 78.

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agents—missionaries, fur traders, petty colonial officers, land speculators, settlers, and of course Native Americans—people who navigate native grounds, middle grounds, or divided grounds. It all added up, as historian Richard White puts it, to "a world system in which minor agents, allies, and even subjects at the periphery often guide[d] the course of empires." Local actors were the driving force. "Most of the agency in the construction of . . . early modern empires," Jack P. Greene has recently insisted, "rested in the hands of the colonizers or settlers themselves." Ultimately, the arrows of influence that emerge from this scholarship reverse those of the older diplomatic history: rather than imperial capitals imposing their will on populations of distant peripheries, the actors on those peripheries impose *their* will on policymakers in the center. The tail in effect wags the dog. With so much emphasis placed on imperial margins, however, the metropole often drops out of such studies, and it might be asked whether the pendulum has swung too far—whether an older imperial perspective can be integrated into this new narrative by setting metropole and periphery in dialogue with each other.[9]

From the perspective of London, the vast territory acquired by Britain in the Seven Years' War created daunting new challenges. The scope of its victory, the territoriality of an empire that had theretofore defined itself as maritime, the multitude of new peoples and ethnicities now under British dominion, all led to a fundamental rethinking of the nature of empire, and ultimately to the greatest crisis the British Empire had yet seen. In seeking to accommodate the objectives of their new

[9] White, *The Middle Ground*, xi; Greene, "Colonial History and National History," 240–241. On frontiers, see John Mack Faragher, "The Frontier Trail: Rethinking Turner and Reimagining the American West," *American Historical Review* 98, no. 1 (February 1993): 106–117, and the works cited therein, along with Nobles, *American Frontiers*; on borderlands, see Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in Between in North American History," *American Historical Review* 104, no. 3 (June 1999): 814–841, along with the responses in "Forum Essay: Responses," *American Historical Review* 104, no. 4 (October 1999): 1221–1239, and the works cited therein; and Aron, *American Confluence*. On marchlands, see Bernard Bailyn, *The Peopling of British North America: An Introduction* (New York, 1986), 112–131; Bailyn and Philip D. Morgan, *Strangers within the Realm: Cultural Margins of the First British Empire* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1991); and Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concept and Contours* (Cambridge, Mass., 2005), 62–64. On native grounds, see DuVal, *The Native Ground*; on middle grounds, see White, *The Middle Ground*; on divided grounds, see Taylor, *The Divided Ground*. The "new imperial history" mostly addresses the British Empire; for an excellent survey of its themes, see Kathleen Wilson, "Introduction," in Wilson, ed., *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity, and Modernity in Britain and the Empire, 1660–1840* (Cambridge, 2004), 1–26, along with the works cited therein. My use of "edges" makes reference to Hinderaker and Mancall, *At the Edge of Empire*; and to Maya Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire: Lives, Culture, and Conquest in the East, 1750–1850* (New York, 2005), one of the finer studies in the new imperial vein. By older diplomatic history perspectives, I have in mind work such as Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Origin of Genet's Projected Attack on Louisiana and the Floridas," *American Historical Review* 3, no. 4 (July 1898): 650–671; Turner, "The Policy of France toward the Mississippi Valley in the Period of Washington and Adams," *American Historical Review* 10, no. 2 (January 1905): 249–279; J. A. James, "Louisiana as a Factor in American Diplomacy, 1795–1800," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 1, no. 1 (June 1914): 44–56; Arthur Preston Whitaker, *The Spanish-American Frontier, 1783–1795: The Westward Movement and the Spanish Retreat in the Mississippi Valley* (Boston, 1927); Lawrence S. Kaplan, *Colonies into Nation: American Diplomacy, 1763–1801* (New York, 1972). A recent debate between peripheries and centers in Atlantic history occurred here in the *AHR*: Eliga H. Gould, "Entangled Histories, Entangled Worlds: The English-Speaking Atlantic as a Spanish Periphery," *American Historical Review* 112, no. 3 (June 2007): 764–786; Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, "Entangled Histories: Borderland Historiographies in New Clothes?" ibid., 787–799; Gould, "Entangled Atlantic Histories: A Response from the Anglo-American Periphery," *American Historical Review* 112, no. 5 (December 2007): 1415–1422; and Cañizares-Esguerra, "The Core and Peripheries of Our National Narratives: A Response from IH-35," ibid., 1423–1431.

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American subjects—Native American and Catholic—imperial policymakers ran headlong into the ambitions of their older subjects.[10]

The first conflict emerged in the wake of Pontiac's War, when the government enacted the Royal Proclamation of 1763, forbidding colonists from "making any Purchases or Settlements whatever, or taking Possession of any of the Lands," and ordering those who had settled there "forthwith to remove themselves." Even as it eased Native tensions, the proclamation infuriated local settler populations, who, seeing their hard-won western land claims denied, began to look suspiciously on the distant imperial authority. Settlers' fears of losing control of the West were reignited a decade later by the Québec Act of 1774, which granted religious and legal rights to the *habitants* in the Saint Laurence Valley. By detaching the Ohio Valley from the seaboard colonies and attaching it to the new province of Québec—restoring, in effect, the configuration of New France as the French had insisted it was in 1754, and as the British had sworn it could never be—the Québec Act further alienated British settlers. To them, it was a stunning reversal. Britain had long maintained, after all, that its seaboard colonies extended beyond the Appalachians; British colonists had sacrificed and suffered in defense of this territorial principle. And now, close on the heels of its greatest triumph, the Crown was enacting precisely the policy it had waged war to prevent: it was making the Ohio Valley part of Canada! "Deeply antithetical to the interests of real estate speculators, war veterans, and other Whites eager to acquire Indian lands," the government's western policy unleashed fierce anger, setting British settlers in opposition to imperial authorities.[11]

The story here becomes too familiar to need retelling. These and other attempts to rationalize imperial governance led the settlers, like Native Americans before them, to discern a sinister design to seize their land and render them impotent. Like the Native Americans before them, they feared being made into "slaves" and having their property taken from them at pleasure. And so they, like the Native Americans before them, rebelled. One notable difference between the two rebellions was France's decision to help the British settlers—precisely what it had refused to do a decade earlier for its longstanding and loyal Native allies, a difference that helps explain the more successful outcome of the second North American revolution in two decades. The relationship between these two parallel rebellions—the 1763 event part of an ongoing indigenous rebellion in the West; the 1776 event a settler rebellion

[10] Eliga H. Gould, *The Persistence of Empire: British Political Culture in the Age of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2000), esp. 106–147; David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 2000), 100–145; Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2006), 155–161, 213–228.

[11] Quotations from the Royal Proclamation are drawn from the Avalon Project at Yale Law School, http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/proc1763.htm (accessed April 14, 2008); "deeply antithetical to the interests" is from Richter, *Facing East*, 215. On the impact of the Royal Proclamation, see Edward Samuel Corwin, *French Policy and the American Alliance of 1778* (1916; repr., Gloucester, Mass., 1969), 225 n. 4; Meinig, *The Shaping of America*, 1: 295–296; Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires*, 164–169. On British policy during this period, see Meinig, *The Shaping of America*, 1: 284–307. Land speculation is a major—and largely underreported—part of this story. On land speculation as it bears on these issues, see especially Charles Royster, *The Fabulous History of the Dismal Swamp Company: A Story of George Washington's Times* (New York, 1999); W. J. Eccles, *The French in North America, 1500–1783*, rev. ed. (Markham, Ont., 1998), 198, 245–246; Richter, *Facing East*, 200, 211, 214; Hinderaker and Mancall, *At the Edge of Empire*, 125–133.

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centered along the coast; each intimately related to the other—would determine the particular configurations of North American history for another forty years.[12]

The end of war in 1783 did not settle the fate of the trans-Appalachian West, however. "If ever a peace failed to pacify," Arthur Preston Whitaker once aptly remarked, "it was the peace of 1783." Once again, the Ohio Valley lay at the center of the geopolitical conflict. Britain ceded the region to the United States hoping to divide the Americans from their French allies. Whatever goodwill was achieved by the gesture, however, was immediately extinguished by British postwar diplomacy, and it thus seems appropriate to wonder about the wisdom of the British cession. Legally, at least according to British law, the Ohio Valley had belonged to Canada since 1774, and negotiators might have insisted it should thus remain. Militarily, Britain's Native American allies, fiercely opposed to U.S. power, remained dominant in the region. Diplomatically, the British government was in an even stronger position to claim the Ohio Valley for its Native allies, for here was an issue on which Britain and its enemies agreed: Britain, Spain, and France all united in hoping to see the region between the Appalachians and the Mississippi dominated by Native American power, a buffer zone to stall U.S. expansion at the Appalachians. Had the British negotiated the peace of 1783 in combination with European and Native powers—granting concession to the indigenous rather than settler populations—U.S. borders might well have remained permanently fixed at the Appalachians.[13]

Clearly, many Britons came to question the wisdom of the 1783 cessions, directed as they were to a coalition of quarrelsome states verging on disintegration. "We might as reasonably dread the effects of combinations among the German as among the American states," declared Lord Sheffield, fitting two spectacularly mistaken predictions into a single quip. "Every circumstance proves, that it will be extreme folly to enter into any engagements, *by which we may not wish to be bound hereafter*." Even as British policymakers began to reconsider their engagements, crown officials in the Northwest, who "shared their Native allies' sense of betrayal by the crown's diplomats," continued to support western nations: holding on to key forts in the region, supplying Native allies with gifts and gunpowder as the French had once done, and resisting U.S. encroachments into the Ohio Valley. This British-Native alliance would long threaten settler interests in the region. "As long as Britain is suffered to retain these posts," bemoaned a U.S. congressman in 1792, "we can never hope to succeed against the Indians"—nor, he might have added, in establishing sovereignty in the West.[14]

[12] On sinister designs and revolution, see Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics, and Other Essays* (New York, 1965), and Gordon S. Wood, "Conspiracy and the Paranoid Style: Causality and Deceit in the Eighteenth Century," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 39 (July 1982): 401–441. On white Americans' fear of being made "slaves," see François Furstenberg, *In the Name of the Father: Washington's Legacy, Slavery, and the Making of a Nation* (New York, 2006), esp. 193–199. On Pontiac's War and the American Revolution as two wars for independence, see Richter, *Facing East*, 190. On indigenous and settler rebellions, see Greene, "Colonial History and National History," 237–238.

[13] Whitaker, *The Spanish-American Frontier*, 1; Bender, *A Nation among Nations*, 102. On this issue, see Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Policy of France toward the Mississippi Valley"; Corwin, *French Policy*, 228; Kaplan, *Colonies into Nation*, 168–169; Marie-Jeanne Rossignol, *Le ferment nationaliste: Aux origines de la politique extérieure des Etats-Unis, 1789–1812* (Paris, 1994), 47, 50. This book has been translated into English and published as *The Nationalist Ferment: The Origins of U.S. Foreign Policy, 1789–1812*, trans. Lillian A. Parrott (Columbus, Ohio, 2004).

[14] John Holroyd, Earl of Sheffield, *Observations on the Commerce of the American States* (Dublin,

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If British-Native alliances seemed poised to keep American settlers from the Northwest, Spanish-Native alliances were designed to do the same in the South. Although Spain had taken possession of Louisiana after the Seven Years' War, imperial authorities valued Louisiana not per se, but rather as what the Spanish minister Conde de Aranda called a "recognizable barrier" to protect its invaluable Mexican possessions.[15]

Asserting Spanish sovereignty in Louisiana was thus never a priority, and Spanish authorities mostly adapted themselves to the realities of a colony in which French settlers vastly outnumbered Spanish, Africans vastly outnumbered Europeans, and Native Americans remained the dominant military power. Their forts in the Arkansas River Valley staffed by French officers long after 1763, Spanish officials soon adopted French diplomatic *moeurs* and began to play by Native rules. Breaking with the muscular policy still operating in New Spain, Louisiana authorities practiced a diplomacy of extensive (and expensive) gift-giving and trade. The accommodations forced upon Spain by Louisiana's French and Native populations would have repercussions elsewhere in Spanish North America. Influenced by his nephew, Louisiana governor Bernardo de Gálvez, the reform-minded secretary of the Indies, José de Gálvez, was soon promulgating a "French-inspired Indian policy" across Spanish America's northern frontier.[16]

Spanish imperial policy in the trans-Appalachian West had two primary objectives: to protect Mexico from British/American expansion, and to ensure Spanish dominance in the Gulf of Mexico. These aims determined the Spanish response to the American rebellion in the 1770s. Despite their reluctance to support the colonial rebellion—"Spain," a member of the Spanish royal council presciently warned in 1777, "is about to be left alone, face to face with one other power . . . which has assumed a national name . . . and which is accustomed to war even before it has begun it. I think that we should be the last country in all Europe to recognize *any* sovereign and independent state in North America"—Spanish authorities eventually

1784); see also Kaplan, *Colonies into Nation*, 161. "Shared their Native allies' sense of betrayal" is from Richter, *Facing East*, 224; the quote from the U.S. congressman is from *Annals of Congress*, 2nd Cong., 1st sess., 338, quoted in Julius William Pratt, *Expansionists of 1812* (1925; repr., Gloucester, Mass., 1957), 20. On this issue, see also Kaplan, *Colonies into Nation*, 163–167; Rossignol, *Le ferment nationaliste*, 313–321; Allen, *His Majesty's Indian Allies*, 12–86; Colin G. Calloway, *Crown and Calumet: British-Indian Relations, 1783–1815* (Norman, Okla., 1987), esp. 5–13; White, *The Middle Ground*, 413–517; Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires*, 226–267; and from a different perspective, Matthew Rainbow Hale, "Neither Britons nor Frenchmen: The French Revolution and American National Identity" (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 2002), 105–106.

[15] Aranda quoted in David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven, Conn., 1992), 199. See also Corwin, *French Policy*, 228. Spanish imperialism in Louisiana thus perpetuated the French policy of alliance with what a French governor in 1744 had called "the Indian nations that serve as a barrier on this continent." Quoted in Usner, *Indians, Settlers, and Slaves*, 78. See also Peter J. Kastor, *The Nation's Crucible: The Louisiana Purchase and the Creation of America* (New Haven, Conn., 2004), 25–26.

[16] Gálvez quoted in Weber, *The Spanish Frontier*, 230. For social and diplomatic conditions in Louisiana, see Kastor, *The Nation's Crucible*, 25–34; on Louisiana demography, see the essays by James Pritchard and Paul Lachance in Bond, *French Colonial Louisiana and the Atlantic World*; on French officers in the Arkansas Valley, see DuVal, *The Native Ground*, 118–151; on Gálvez and Spanish policy more generally, see Weber, *The Spanish Frontier*, 204–270; DuVal, *The Native Ground*, 158–159; and Bender, *A Nation among Nations*, 68, 75–76. Many thanks to Richard Kagan for telling me about the Gálvez connection.

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bent to French pressure and entered the war, providing the United States with crucial military assistance. In return, they demanded a reacquisition of the Floridas in the immediate term, and the restriction of American settlers from the trans-Appalachian West in the long term. These aims were only partly fulfilled. In 1783, Spain obtained the entire gulf coastline, turning the Gulf of Mexico into a "Spanish lake" protecting Mexico from hostile European powers, and securing the indispensable corridor between Cuba and Florida for its transatlantic shipments of precious metals. It failed, however, to create a Native buffer zone in the Southwest to restrict American expansion.[17]

After 1783, the Southwest in general—and New Orleans in particular—emerged as the hot spot of the trans-Appalachian West. In order to preserve control over the Gulf of Mexico and shore up its Louisiana buffer, Spanish officials pursued a two-pronged strategy to keep Americans from the Southwest: frustrate trade along the Mississippi, and offer logistical and material support to Native allies. Spanish officials refused to grant Americans trading rights through New Orleans, hoping, as a 1782 French government report put it, to close "the Missisipi [*sic*] to the Americans, and to disgust them from making establishments on that river." Thanks to these efforts—and to the feeble U.S. response—the Spanish Empire seemed poised not just to block American expansion, but even to pluck away U.S. territories south of the Ohio River. Meanwhile, Cherokees, Creeks, Choctaws, and Chickasaws turned to Spanish agents as their best hope to hold off American settlers. Shifting their allegiance from the defeated British, Native leaders such as Alexander McGillivray reached out to receptive Spanish officials to forge new alliances opposing U.S. expansion.[18]

From the perspective of Paris, it was unclear that France had been permanently chased from North America in 1763. Only in retrospect does the year emerge as a defining moment, and even then it can appear as one of those turning points at which history failed to turn. In certain respects, "France" remained in North America: French settlers continued to populate the West, French officers continued to conduct Spanish diplomacy in Louisiana, and French diplomatic *moeurs* continued to shape Native relations with both the Spanish and the British. Most important, perhaps, French policymakers continued to harbor ambitions—and sponsor attempts—to reestablish their North American empire. This continuing French presence in the

[17] Spanish official quoted in Corwin, *French Policy*, 109; "Spanish lake" is from Whitaker, *The Spanish-American Frontier*, 3, and Weber, *The Spanish Frontier*, 265. On Spanish diplomacy during the Revolution, see also Corwin, *French Policy*, 105–120, 266–267, 227; and Kaplan, *Colonies into Nation*, 166–174.

[18] Report of Montmorin to Vergennes, quoted in "Papers on Spain Received from Edmond Charles Genet, Enclosed in TJ, Memorandum to George Washington, dated July 11, 1793," in Julian P. Boyd et al., eds., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 33 vols. to date (Princeton, N.J., 1950–), 26: 477. On the Spanish response to the American Revolution, see also Weber, *The Spanish Frontier*, 279–285; James H. O'Donnell, *Southern Indians in the American Revolution* (Knoxville, Tenn., 1973), 95–98, 135, 138–139; and, farther west, DuVal, *The Native Ground*, 158.

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trans-Appalachian West—demographic, diplomatic, cultural, and imperial—decisively influenced the Long War for the West.[19]

French imperial planners retained a keen interest in North America for two reasons: to counter the ambitions of Great Britain, France's principal rival for global hegemony; and to protect its all-important Caribbean colonies, especially Saint Domingue, which now lacked a mainland base for provisions and military operations. Countering British imperial dominance, according to the mercantilist view that prevailed among French imperial thinkers, meant destroying its commerce with its colonies—an ambition realized by the American War for Independence. "In taking the United States away from Great Britain," read a 1786 Navy Department report, "it was above all their commerce that we wanted to take away." And they succeeded spectacularly, bringing an end to the first British Empire. Although French officials failed to achieve two wartime aims—to establish the trans-Appalachian West as neutral Native American territory and to reclaim Louisiana—they did restore a balance of power in North America. Postwar French policy thus aimed to ensure the permanent estrangement of Great Britain and its former colonies, ideally with the United States as a French client state.[20]

Detaching the colonies from Britain furthered French imperial planners' second principal ambition: to safeguard the French sugar islands. Through its new ally, France now had a base to provide lumber, tar, and other resources for its navy, provisions for its slaves, and logistical support for wartime operations. French naval planners recognized that the mainland colonies had proved indispensable to British operations during the Seven Years' War, and they expected great things from their new ally. Over the course of the 1780s, French engineers scoured American forests, sending detailed reports on the best lumber, hoping to make France "less dependent on northern Europe for its naval munitions." Naval strategists, meanwhile, urged French captains to acquaint themselves with mainland ports: "Their utility will be even greater for the French flotillas than they were for the English," read a 1788 navy report, already looking toward a new round of conflict. By this reasoning, the French territorial losses of 1763 were "more than compensated by the revolution of the

[19] The phrase about turning points is borrowed from the great Trevelyan, who was referring to 1848. On 1763 as turning point, see Calloway, *The Scratch of a Pen*.

[20] "Mémoire sur le commerce de France, avec les États-Unis en France" [1786], Marine B/7/460, Archives Nationales, Paris [hereafter AN]. The importance of mercantilist thinking is stressed in Corwin, *French Policy*, 17–21. On French-British rivalry for global hegemony, see Fernand Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th–18th Century*, trans. Sian Reynolds, 3 vols. (London, 1985), 3: 379; Giovanni Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power, and the Origins of Our Times* (London, 1994), 47–58; and Beverly J. Silver and Eric Slater, "The Social Origins of World Hegemonies," in Giovanni Arrighi and Beverly J. Silver, eds., *Chaos and Governance in the World System* (Minneapolis, 1999), esp. 159–176. Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire*, makes this rivalry a central theme. On the hopes to turn the trans-Appalachian West into neutral Native American territory, see Turner, "The Policy of France toward the Mississippi Valley," 250; Eccles, *The French in North America*, 264. On French ambitions for Louisiana, see Henry Adams, *History of the United States of America during the Administrations of James Madison* (repr., New York, 1986), 239; Turner, "The Policy of France toward the Mississippi Valley," 249–279; Corwin, *French Policy*, 9–11, 233, 240–242, 282; Kaplan, *Colonies into Nation*; and Eccles, *The French in North America*, 248–252. See also *Treaty of Alliance between the United States and France, February 6, 1778*, esp. art. 6; and Pichon to Talleyrand, 1er thermidor an 9, Georgetown, C.P. États-Unis, vol. 53, p. 173, Archives du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Quai d'Orsay, Paris [hereafter MAÉ]. "Je lui [Madison] rappellai qu'au contraire le traité de 1778 était conçu de manière à exclure cette colonie [la Louisiane] de la (Re(é)nonciation). Je l'assurai que depuis la Révolution on y avait sérieusement songé plusieurs fois."

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United States . . . The King has acquired a new domain infinitely more useful and less onerous than Canada ever was."[21]

The Franco-American alliance would be more than military, however; it would principally be tied together by an expanded trade network linking France, the United States, and the French Caribbean. The 1778 Treaty of Amity and Commerce between France and the United States in effect offered a mutual grant of most favored nation status, creating a Franco-American trade zone that—so the anti-mercantilist circles in Paris hoped—would permanently tie France to the United States through the power of *doux commerce* and "reciprocal interest." The economic realities, however—French agrarian interests fearful of American competition, powerful tobacco monopolies, and French *commerçants* with a vested interest in mercantilist practices—would ultimately determine otherwise, scuttling hopes for Franco-American comity and pushing the United States back into British Atlantic trade networks.[22]

As for the United States, its primary objective after the Revolution was to become an independent nation-state; and as many at the time recognized, the greatest obstacles to that ambition lay in the trans-Appalachian West. From 1783 through the end of the eighteenth century and beyond, it remained possible that the region would become a neutral Native American territory, or that it would fall to some distant European power. U.S. sovereignty in the trans-Appalachian West would be ensured only by overcoming three challenges: the geography of North America, and of the Appalachian Mountains in particular; Native American resistance; and the ambiguous loyalties of western colonists.[23]

In recent years, scholars of colonial British North America have abandoned an anachronistic view that assumes "an inner propulsion toward modern nationalism," as the literary scholar Michael Warner puts it, emphasizing instead "the localism of early modern colonists, on the one hand, and the transatlantic contexts of empire and trade, on the other." With a few exceptions, however, the same cannot be said of scholars of the early U.S. republic: most still assume an inner propulsion that drives the trans-Appalachian West into the orbit of U.S. sovereignty. If the maps drawn in London in 1783, and by Jefferson and others in the years that followed (see

[21] M. Demoustier, "Considérations sur quelques objets qui intéressent particulièrement la Marine du Roi, par une suite des nouveaux rapports qui dérivent de la Souveraineté des États Unis de l'Amérique," December 12, 1788, Marine B/7/461, AN; on the lumber reports, see "Compte rendu par M. Rolland sous-ingénieur constructeur sur des bois de l'Amérique Septentrionale," December 23, 1785; "Suite des observations déjà adressées par M. Rolland, sous-ingénieur constructeur . . . ," March 31, 1786; and others, all in Marine B/7/460, AN.

[22] "Reciprocal interest" is from Demoustier, "Considérations sur quelques objets." For a fine analysis of commerce and the Franco-American relationship, see Marcel Dorigny, "La *Libre Amérique* selon Brissot et Clavière: Modèle politique, utopie libérale et réalisme economique," in Dorigny, ed., *De la France et des États-Unis: Étienne Clavière et J.-P. Brissot de Warville* (Paris, 1996), 7–29. On failed French hopes to capture the U.S. market, see Eccles, *The French in North America*, 265; Kaplan, *Colonies into Nation*, 175. On the pro-American, anti-mercantilist circles in Paris, see Durand Echeverria, *Mirage in the West: A History of the French Image of American Society to 1815* (New York, 1966), esp. 24–31, 41–42, 130–132.

[23] The outstanding discussion on this subject is to be found in Rossignol, *Le ferment nationalist*, 31–65. See also the excellent analysis in Cayton, *The Frontier Republic*. Hinderaker rightly observes: "The Revolution may have begun on the seaboard, but it would be really tested in the west." Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires*, 227.

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Map 2)—maps still used in history surveys today—extended U.S. sovereignty to the Mississippi River, such cartographic imagining was hardly in accord with the realities on the ground, where vexing geographic obstacles could not be so easily erased, Native Americans remained dominant, and settlers remained little swayed by feelings of national loyalty.[24]

In seeking to control both sides of the Appalachians, U.S. policymakers were attempting something that no political entity, Native or European, had ever accomplished without rapidly disintegrating. Unlike the Atlantic Ocean, which served as both barrier and bridge between Europe and America, the Appalachian Mountains were an unambiguous obstacle dividing the East from the West. "Nowhere," Henry Adams once observed, "did the eastern settlements touch the western. At least one hundred miles of mountainous country held the two regions everywhere apart." Also unlike the Atlantic, the Appalachians could be crossed at only a few points. The two most important passages lay along the Mohawk River in New York—dominated by the Iroquois, which helps explains their strategic importance—and, some seven hundred miles of rugged terrain to the southwest, through the Cumberland Gap, the old Indian trail that had been converted into a wagon road. (See Map 3.) By the last third of the eighteenth century, only two other roads crossed the Appalachians: Forbes Road, connecting the Susquehanna to the Ohio Valley, and Braddock's Road, connecting the Potomac to the Monongahela Valley. Travel along these routes was grueling and expensive, however, and eastern and western settlements were accessible to each other only with great difficulty.[25]

The separation was not simply one of distance; it was more fundamentally one of orientation, founded in the diverging paths of North American waterways. In the original thirteen states, where most settlement lay within fifty miles of the tidewater, the economy and society naturally faced out toward the Atlantic. "The inhabitants of the Atlantic coast give [to the West] the name *Back-Country*," a French traveler once observed, "indicating by this term their moral attitude, constantly turned towards Europe." Not so in the western settlements: "Scarcely had I crossed the Alleghanys [*sic*], before I heard [the residents] . . . call the Atlantic coast the *Back-Country*; which proved that their geographic situation has given their views and their interests a new direction, in conformity with that of the waters that serve as roads and doors toward the Gulf of Mexico." Waterways were indeed the key. Through them, nature had decreed that the trans-Appalachian West would be more connected to New Orleans, and even to the Caribbean, than to Philadelphia, New York, or Boston. For it was not from any eastern port, but down the Mississippi, via New Orleans and through the Caribbean, that all commerce from the vast region must

[24] Michael Warner, "What's Colonial about Colonial America," in Robert Blair St. George, ed., *Possible Pasts: Becoming Colonial in Early America* (Ithaca, N.Y., 2000), 49–70, quotation at 50. See also Greene, "Colonial History and National History," 235. On mapping and the West, see also Albert Furtwangler, *Acts of Discovery: Visions of America in the Lewis and Clark Journals* (Urbana, Ill., 1993), 84–86; Gregory H. Nobles, "Straight Lines and Stability: Mapping the Political Order of the Anglo-American Frontier," *Journal of American History* 80 (June 1993): 9–35, 25; Nobles, *American Frontiers*, 60–62; and Martin Brückner, *The Geographic Revolution in Early America: Maps, Literacy, and National Identity* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2006), 211.

[25] Adams, *History of the United States*, 6. On the two roads, see especially Anderson, *The Crucible of War*; also Albert Perry Brigham, "The Great Roads across the Appalachians," *Bulletin of the American Geographical Society* 37 (1905): 321–339. By roads, I mean something on which one could drive a wagon.

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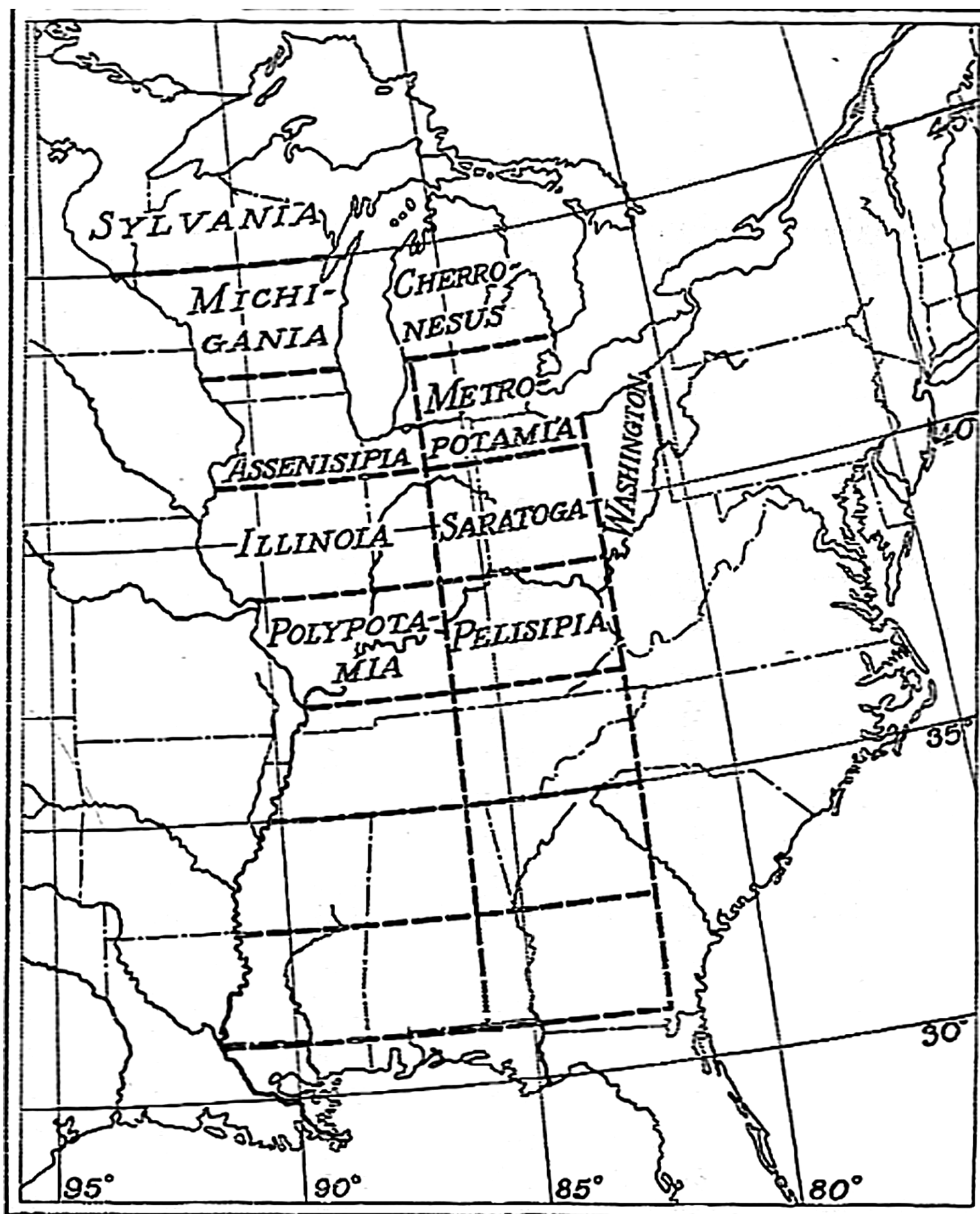

MAP 2: This map, based on Thomas Jefferson's plan for the West, blithely erases the geography on display in Map 1, obscuring the rivers, streams, and mountains that had such geopolitical importance with straight lines and classically inspired names. Reprinted from the Jefferson Papers, courtesy Princeton University Press.

eventually pass. "In the style of road building in the Roman Empire," historian Malcolm J. Rohrbough has observed, "the watercourses of the West all led to New Orleans."[26]

[26] Constantin-François Volney, *Tableau du climat et du sol des États-Unis d'Amérique* (Paris, 1825), 19; for settlement near the tidewater, see Adams, *History of the United States*, 5; Malcolm J. Rohrbough, *The Trans-Appalachian Frontier: People, Societies, and Institutions, 1775–1850* (New York, 1978), 113.

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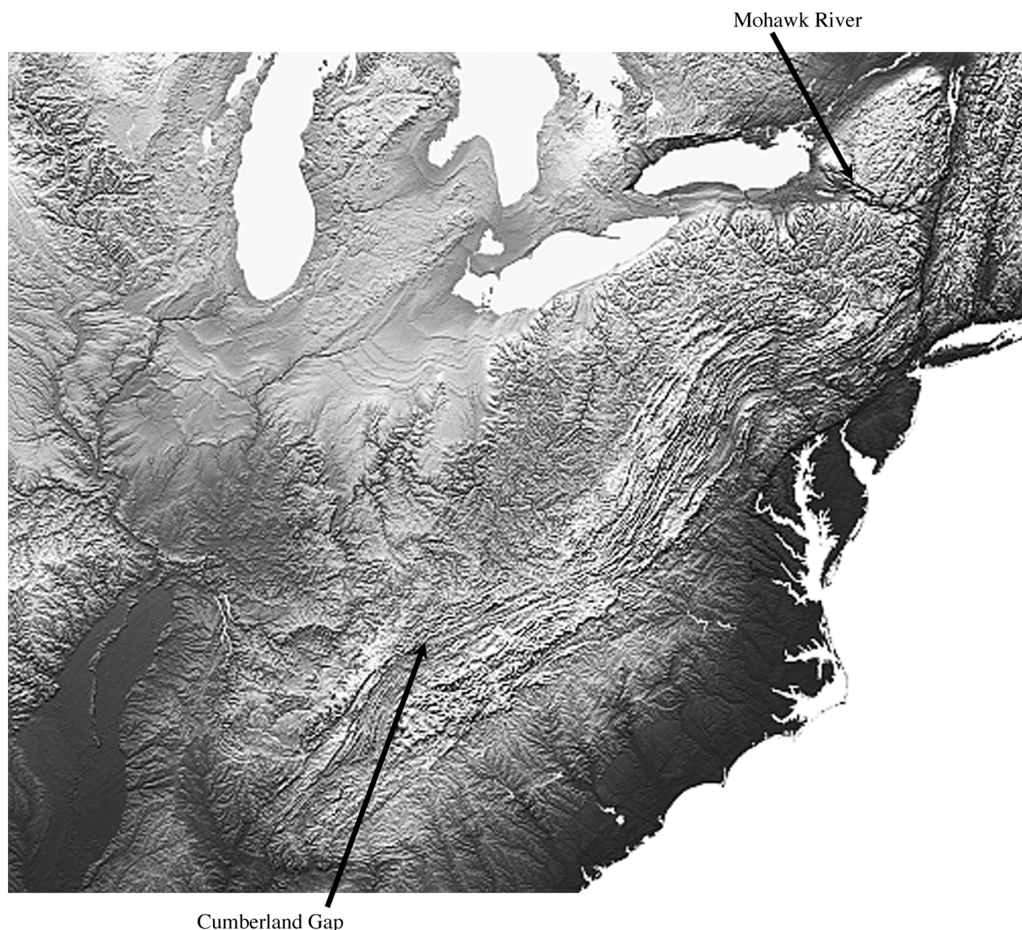

MAP 3: The Appalachian Mountains. The routes along the Mohawk River and the Cumberland Gap, indicated here, were the two most important passages across the Appalachian Mountains. The difficulty of moving people and goods across the mountain range—and the fact that all waterways to the west of the mountains fed into the Gulf of Mexico, rather than the Atlantic—created significant challenges to U.S. sovereignty in the trans-Appalachian West. Courtesy NASA/JPL-Caltech.

These geographical forces made the Southwest in general, and New Orleans in particular, the hot spot of the trans-Appalachian West after 1783. Without control of New Orleans, no part of the region was safely American. Barges and boats from distant reaches of the Ohio Valley floated goods to New Orleans, and thence into international markets. By the nineteenth century, settlers in the Ohio Valley were building ships large enough to sail straight into the Caribbean; landlocked Marietta, Ohio, at the foot of the Appalachians, was a shipbuilding center! As a strategic site without parallel, New Orleans thus secured control of the entire Mississippi River Valley; it was, as a 1787 French government report put it, "the key to the West." The challenge for the United States was clear. It would have to overcome what nature had made so difficult: the unification of the East with the trans-Appalachian West.[27]

[27] For ships sailing into the Caribbean, see Pichon to Talleyrand, 14 prairial an 9, C.P. États-Unis, vol. 53, p. 140, MAÉ; for shipbuilding in Marietta, see Cayton, *The Frontier Republic*, 30; "the key to the West" is from "Extrait d'un mémoire sur les rapports commerciaux de l'Amérique septentrionale

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The second great challenge to U.S. sovereignty in the West was Native American power. If the American War of Independence was what scholars call a settler rebellion, it had the particularity of occurring amid an indigenous rebellion that began with the Seven Years' War and extended into the nineteenth century. In many respects, the ultimate success of the settler rebellion—long-term national sovereignty—would hinge on the outcome of the indigenous one; one had to fail for the other to succeed. The Long War for the West thus continued through the 1780s and into the 1790s, as the United States sought to establish its military supremacy in the Mississippi Valley, where Native Americans, as historian Eric Hinderaker remarks, refused to "accept the principle that the lands abandoned during the war had been forfeited by the Indians or won by the United States." With British and Spanish support, Native nations dealt the United States a series of devastating defeats, remaining "the dominant military power in the valley."[28]

If Native Americans posed an immediate military threat to U.S. sovereignty in the West, the tenuous loyalties of the region's settlers posed a longer-term existential threat. Ever since Bacon's Rebellion in the seventeenth century, backcountry politics had been marked by strong traditions of localism and distrust of centralized authority. While these traditions had drawn many settlers to support the American rebellion, they could just as easily foment resistance to the new authority rising up on the eastern seaboard, confronting the United States with a "crisis of integration" of precisely the kind the British Empire had just experienced. Given past and present connections between westerners and the British Empire, the bonds tying western settlers to Britain "were potentially much stronger" than those tying them to the eastern states. There were many good reasons to suspect that western settlers might break away from the United States to make a separate peace with Spain or Great Britain.[29]

Settlers in the trans-Appalachian West were the key players here; the establishment of U.S. sovereignty in the region depended on them. Early U.S. attempts to retain settlers' loyalty were far from auspicious, however. Throughout the 1780s, Native attacks on settler communities went unchallenged—the U.S. military mustered a mere 350 troops to man its forts in the Ohio Valley in 1788—while federal

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avec l'Europe," AF IV 1211, doc. 58, AN. Thus, a Pittsburgh newspaper in 1787 complained vociferously about Spanish imperial policy, which left its residents "destitute of any market for the produce of our soil." Quoted in Griffin, *American Leviathan*, 218.

[28] Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires*, 232, 243; Rossignol, *Le ferment nationaliste*, 47. On the American Revolution continuing in the West into the 1790s, see Griffin, *American Leviathan*.

[29] "Crisis of integration" is from John M. Murrin, "1776: The Countercyclical Revolution," in Michael A. Morrison and Melinda S. Zook, eds., *Revolutionary Currents: Nation Building in the Transatlantic World* (Lanham, Md., 2004), 65–90; "were potentially much stronger" is from Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires*, 202. On the tenuous national loyalties of settlers, see especially ibid., 236–260; Cayton, "Separate Interests"; Nobles, "Straight Lines and Stability," 28, 34–35; Rossignol, *Le ferment nationaliste*, 58–65; Griffin, *American Leviathan*, 212–239. On politics in the backcountry and settlers' distrust of elite authority, see also Thomas P. Slaughter, *The Whiskey Rebellion: Frontier Epilogue to the American Revolution* (New York, 1986); Cayton, *The Frontier Republic*; Alan Taylor, *Liberty Men and Great Proprietors: The Revolutionary Settlement on the Maine Frontier, 1760–1820* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1990); Michael A. Bellesiles, *Revolutionary Outlaws: Ethan Allen and the Struggle for Independence on the Early American Frontier* (Charlottesville, Va., 1993); and Nobles, *American Frontiers*. The support of backcountry settlers during the Revolution, according to Eric Hinderaker, was based as much on "calculations of mutual interest and convenience" as on long-term national loyalty. Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires*, 199.

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power, when it did intervene, chased squatters off public land as often as it protected them from Indian attack. Worse still, from a settler perspective, was U.S. diplomacy. In 1786, John Jay, then secretary for foreign affairs, agreed to relinquish U.S. rights to Mississippi River trade to Spain in exchange for commercial benefits favoring the eastern states. Although the Confederation Congress blocked the agreement, long-standing suspicions that the U.S. government cared only for eastern interests had been raised. "Choose lands for a settlement that are near those of the navigable waters that *run towards* the Atlantick ocean," read one piece of advice for prospective settlers published in various newspapers in 1789, adding ominously, "and which are within the jurisdiction of the U. States." Certainly western settlers had good reason to distrust eastern elites, particularly Federalists, who in unguarded moments could be caught referring to westerners as "a parcel of banditti, who will bid defiance to all authority," as George Washington once put it—"our *own* white Indians," in the words of a Connecticut man. For such men, there was little doubt that "the Western Country," as John Jay warned in 1787, "will one Day give us Trouble."[30]

It was precisely this fault line between eastern elites and western settlers that the international situation exacerbated. Nothing inflamed the resentment of settlers more than the Spanish policy of harassing commerce along the Mississippi River, and many feared that their welfare would be sacrificed on the altar of eastern interests. "The right to unrestricted access of the Mississippi was the *sine qua non* of western loyalty," observes Andrew Cayton. "And many frontiersmen, particularly residents of Kentucky, were convinced that the United States was not interested in obtaining it." As American settlers poured into western lands, provoking Native reprisals, it was becoming imperative for the U.S. government to assert its sovereignty—or risk losing the region entirely. Nor was Spanish policy the only threat. Great Britain, still controlling key forts in the Great Lakes, was poised to sail down the Mississippi and take control of Spanish posts, including New Orleans, thus controlling access to the Gulf of Mexico. British officials, meanwhile, pursued overtures to alienated western settlers, who, ever more disenchanted with their government's policies, began to wonder if Great Britain might prove more solicitous. In this regard, the phenomenon of "late loyalists"—Americans lured en masse to Upper Canada by the promise of cheap land and low taxes—served as an ominous warning about tenuous settler loyalties. A national "separation," Thomas Jefferson warned in 1787, "was possible at every moment."[31]

[30] The figure of 350 troops is from Cayton, *The Frontier Republic*, 38; "choose lands for a settlement" is from the *Salem Mercury*, May 19, 1789, and Griffin, *American Leviathan*, 224 (who quotes this same text from the *Pennsylvania Gazette*); "a parcel of banditti," "our *own* white Indians," and "will one Day give us trouble" are all quoted in Cayton, *The Frontier Republic*, 7, 8, 23. On settler conflict with the U.S. army, see also Andrew R. L. Cayton, "The Significance of Ohio in the Early American Republic," in Cayton and Stuart D. Hobbs, eds., *The Center of a Great Empire: The Ohio Country in the Early American Republic* (Athens, Ohio, 2005), 1–10; Patrick Griffin, "Reconsidering the Ideological Origins of Indian Removal," ibid., 11–35, esp. 19; and Griffin, *American Leviathan*, 212–213. On Jay's 1780s diplomacy, see Kaplan, *Colonies into Nation*, 171–174; on the response, see Cayton, *The Frontier Republic*, 23. On Federalist contempt for settlers, see also Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires*, 239, 246; Hinderaker and Mancall, *At the Edge of Empire*, 133–140; and especially Lewis, *The American Union and the Problem of Neighborhood*.

[31] Cayton, "Separate Interests," 44; Jefferson to James Madison, June 10, 1787, quoted in Cayton, *The Frontier Republic*, 23. On threats of western secession, see also Kaplan, *Colonies into Nation*, 167. On British military opportunities in the Great Lakes and the Mississippi, see George W. Kyte, "A Spy

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The danger of a western separation marked U.S. politics of the 1790s to an extent overlooked by most historians of the period. Not so George Washington, who took the threat very seriously. His concern about sectional division always focused more on East vs. West than on North vs. South. His influential farewell address in 1796 pleaded with western settlers to remain loyal to the United States:

> The West derives from the East supplies requisite to its growth and comfort . . . it must of necessity owe the secure enjoyment of indispensable outlets for its own productions to the weight, influence, and the future maritime strength of the Atlantic side of the Union, directed by an indissoluble community of interest as one nation. Any other tenure by which the West can hold this essential advantage, whether derived from its own separate strength, or from an apostate and unnatural connection with any foreign power, must be intrinsically precarious.

Securing the loyalties of trans-Appalachian settlers—keeping them from "an apostate and unnatural connection with any foreign power"—was, in short, a matter of existential importance to the young nation. No one really knew whether the semi-United States could survive as a little strip of settlements huddled along the Atlantic coast and hemmed in by the Appalachian Mountains. At the very least, they would have become what both French and British policymakers were trying to make them: the client states of a great power.[32]

THE YEAR 1789 STANDS AS AN IMPORTANT DATE in this story of the trans-Appalachian West. It saw the inauguration of a new U.S. government, which moved quickly to secure the West—with military force against the Ohio Valley Indians, and with diplomatic overtures to open the Southwest. Despite the more robust military commitment, however, the new government would have, in its first years, no more success than the previous one in defeating Native Americans, who, as long as the British and Spanish maintained a western presence, found ready support to resist U.S. expansion.[33]

But 1789 marks a turning point for a second reason: that year, some ten weeks after Washington's inauguration, revolution exploded in France. Its reverberations

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on the Western Waters: The Military Intelligence Mission of General Collot in 1796," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 34 (December 1947): 427–442, esp. 438. On late loyalists, see Alan Taylor, "The Late Loyalists: Northern Reflections of the Early American Republic," *Journal of the Early Republic* 27 (Spring 2007): 1–24.

[32] John Clement Fitzpatrick, ed., *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745–1799*, 39 vols. (Washington, 1931), 35: 214–238. On these geopolitical issues, see also Meinig, *The Shaping of America*, 2: 4–14; Gregory H. Nobles, "Breaking into the Backcountry: New Approaches to the Early American Frontier, 1750–1800," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 46 (October 1989): 641–679, esp. 668; Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires*, 252. Washington, it bears noting, began his career surveying western territories, was an early stockholder in the Virginia Company of Ohio, was granted vast tracts of land in the Ohio Valley for his military service, and died holding 9,744 acres of choice land along the Ohio River, and more than 31,000 acres in other parts of the Ohio Valley. See http://gwpapers.virginia.edu/documents/will/property.html (accessed April 14, 2008). For more on Washington and land, see especially Royster, *The Fabulous History of the Dismal Swamp Company*.

[33] On efforts by the federal government to assert itself in the West, see Cayton, "Separate Interests," and Cayton, *The Frontier Republic*, 1–80. On the role of the federal state in promoting western expansion in the Southwest, see Adam Rothman, *Slave Country: American Expansion and the Origins of the Deep South* (Cambridge, Mass., 2005).

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would be felt throughout Europe, across the Caribbean, and deep into the North American interior. Although the impact of the French Revolution on the United States has generated much scholarship, historians usually attend to its partisan and ideological implications along the East Coast, obscuring its other legacy: the sectional tensions it fomented between eastern elites and western settlers. As frontier regions across the United States seethed with unrest during the 1790s, local political conflicts repeatedly merged with transatlantic geopolitics.[34]

From this western perspective, the Democratic-Republican clubs of the 1790s take on an entirely new dimension. Consider, for instance, a 1793 address by a Kentucky Republican society that complained about the federal government's "neglect bordering on contempt." "Our brethren, on the Eastern Waters," it charged—in a most suggestive formulation—"possess every advantage." Similar complaints proliferated across the West. "Patriotism, like every other thing, has its bounds," warned a Republican club in western Pennsylvania. "If the general government will not procure [unrestricted Mississippi navigation] for us, we shall hold ourselves not answerable for any consequences that may result from our own procurement of it." Just what those consequences might be was suggested by William Blount, territorial governor, a senator from Tennessee, and a major investor in western lands. Concerned by French ambitions in the West, Blount planned to seize parts of Louisiana with an army of frontiersmen and form a separate peace with Great Britain—a plot that became infamous as the "Blount Conspiracy."[35]

But nowhere did sectional tensions merge with partisan conflict more dramatically than in the Whiskey Rebellion of 1794, which saw insurgents in western Pennsylvania call on other westerners to join the insurrection as "citizen[s] of the western country." Settlers across the Ohio Valley responded, and for a time the events seemed to portend a settler rebellion like that of 1776. "We are too distant from the grand seat of information," charged one angry Kentuckian. As the frontier disturbances spread from Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia across the Ohio Valley to

[34] In the 1790s, "the frontier of every state south of New York experienced unrest." Slaughter, *Whiskey Rebellion*, 117; see also 46–60. On frontier unrest in this period, see especially Nobles, *American Frontiers*, 99–132. On the impact of the French Revolution in the United States, see especially Simon P. Newman, *Parades and Politics of the Street: Festive Culture in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia, 1997). See also David Brion Davis, *Revolutions: Reflections on American Equality and Foreign Liberations* (Cambridge, Mass., 1990); Stanley M. Elkins and Eric L. McKitrick, *The Age of Federalism* (New York, 1993); David Brion Davis, "The Impact of the French and Haitian Revolutions," in David P. Geggus, ed., *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World* (Columbia, S.C., 2001), 3–9; David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776–1820* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1997); Seth Aaron Cotlar, "In Paine's Absence: The Trans-Atlantic Dynamics of American Popular Political Thought, 1789–1804" (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 2000); Hale, "Neither Britons nor Frenchmen." No work that I know of has examined the sectional impact of the French Revolution on the United States.

[35] "Neglect bordering on contempt" is quoted in Griffin, "Reconsidering the Ideological Origins of Indian Removal," 28; "patriotism, like every other thing," is quoted in Jon Kukla, *A Wilderness So Immense: The Louisiana Purchase and the Destiny of America* (New York, 2003), 169. On Blount, see Arthur Preston Whitaker, *The Mississippi Question, 1795–1803* (Gloucester, Mass., 1962), 105–107; Frederick Jackson Turner, "Documents on the Blount Conspiracy, 1795–1797," *American Historical Review* 10, no. 3 (April 1905): 574–606; and John Arthur Garraty and Mark C. Carnes, *American National Biography*, 24 vols. (New York, 1999), s.v. "William Blount."

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Kentucky and Ohio, some Kentuckians proclaimed their willingness to "renounc[e] the allegiance to the United States and annex themselves to the British."[36]

French officials were well aware of these sectional tensions, of the open talk of disunion among westerners, and of western Republicans' sympathy for France—sometimes at the expense of their loyalty to the United States. During his travels through the United States, the journalist, speculator, and aspiring *philosophe* Jacques-Pierre Brissot de Warville had observed the "defiance that the residents of the West showed" toward Congress, which "leads many people to believe . . . there will be a scission." He saw how easily westerners, desperate for Mississippi River navigation, could seize New Orleans. "If ever Americans march towards New Orleans, it will fall under their power." By the mid-1790s, Brissot was back in France shaping Franco-American policy, where he would prove instrumental in appointing the infamous "Citizen" Edmond Charles Genet as minister plenipotentiary to the United States.[37]

Although Genet is best remembered for his antics along the East Coast, his tentacles—like those of France—extended deep into the continental interior. Soon after arriving in Philadelphia in 1793, Genet sent a French agent to Kentucky to enlist former Revolutionary general George Rogers Clark in a plot to seize Spanish New Orleans. Identifying himself in a published proposal for volunteers as "Major General in the armies of France, and Commander in Chief of the French Revolutionary Legions on the Mississippi River," Clark planned to sail down the Mississippi with an army of frontiersmen and join the French navy in an attack on the city. The plan nearly succeeded. In 1794, Clark reported that "upwards of two thousand men have been waiting With impatiance to penetrate into that Country Declare them selves Citizens of France and Give freedom to their neibours on the Mississipi." Emphasizing "the universal Applause of the people throughout those back Countrys in Favour of the Enterprise," Clark claimed that his soldiers had abandoned their allegiance to the United States in favor of France, a power they believed would look with greater solicitude on their commercial interests.[38]

This mission posed monumental risks to U.S. interests. Many believed that an

[36] All these quotations are from Griffin, *American Leviathan*, 233–234. See also Nobles, *American Frontiers*, 99–103.

[37] J. P. Brissot de Warville, *Nouveau voyage dans les États-Unis de l'Amérique Septentrionale: Fait en 1788*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1791), 2: 435, 434. On Brissot and Genet, see Turner, "The Origin of Genet's Projected Attack," 661; Marcel Dorigny, "Sonthanax et Brissot: Le cheminement d'une filiation politique assumée," *Revue française de l'histoire d'outre-mer* 84 (1997): 36; and Tamara Corriveau, "Jacques-Pierre Brissot, Étienne Clavière et la libre Amérique: Du gallo-américanisme à la mission Genet" (M.A. thesis, Université de Montréal, 2008).

[38] "Major General in the armies of France" is from Kukla, *A Wilderness So Immense*, 176; George Rogers Clark, "George Rogers Clark to Genet, 1794," *American Historical Review* 18, no. 4 (July 1913): 780–783. For Genet's plan, see Frederick Jackson Turner, ed., *Correspondence of the French Ministers to the United States, 1791–1797* (Washington, D.C., 1904), 204–205; on Clark, see Turner, "The Origin of Genet's Projected Attack"; Editorial Note, "Jefferson and André Michaux's Proposed Western Expedition," in Boyd et al., *Papers*, 25: 75–81; Kukla, *A Wilderness So Immense*, 156–178; and Havard and Vidal, *L'Amérique française*, 701–703. On Genet's western antics, see also François Barbé-Marbois, *Histoire de la Louisiane et de la cession de cette colonie par la France aux États-Unis de l'Amérique Septentrionale: Précédée d'un discours sur la constitution et le gouvernement des États-Unis* (Paris, 1829), 168–173. Clark had fought the British during the American Revolution with a band of Kentuckians in close alliance with French *habitants* in the country—so close, in fact, that he claimed at the time to be fighting in the name of the king of France. On Clark's revolutionary activities, see Havard and Vidal, *L'Amérique française*, 688.

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attack on Spanish territory would unleash a wider war in the region. Spain would ally with Great Britain—still in the Great Lakes, still poised to sail down the Mississippi—in an imperial war for all the western territories. "It must be remembered that Spain is in a strict alliance with Great Britain," the *Boston Gazette* warned in January 1794, "and that if we raise troops, or suffer them to be raised from among ourselves with a view to carry war into the dominions of Spain, we may rest assured the arms of both kingdoms will be turned against us"—along with, the author might have added, Native American power.[39]

In light of all this—the tenuous loyalties of American settlers across the trans-Appalachian West, the imperial adventures taking place throughout the region—Jay's Treaty of 1794 emerges as a diplomatic triumph. Today the treaty is best remembered for the partisan war it unleashed—a perspective, however, that ignores the more important sectional peace it ensured. Jay's Treaty secured Britain's evacuation of the long-disputed western posts, isolating the Ohio Valley Indians, crippling their resistance to U.S. expansion, and setting the stage for the Treaty of Grenville, which saw Native leaders abandon their longstanding demand for an Ohio River boundary between Native American country and the United States. By defusing a crisis with Britain, it strengthened the United States' negotiating position with Spain so much that Spanish officials soon acceded to longstanding settler demands to open Mississippi River trade in the 1795 Treaty of San Lorenzo. Even as Jay's Treaty reduced Spanish, British, and Native American threats in the trans-Appalachian West, however, it created a new and even more ominous French menace.[40]

It is ironic that France's defeat in the Seven Years' War, by forcing it to retrench in the Caribbean, inaugurated what might be called the golden age of the French Atlantic. The development had major implications for the trans-Appalachian West, whose waterways fed into the Gulf of Mexico and thence to the Caribbean; and it explains why, from 1794 to 1803, Saint Domingue emerged as the hot spot with the greatest impact on the trans-Appalachian West.

It is hard to exaggerate the importance of Saint Domingue in this period. Over the course of the eighteenth century, the French colony—one-half of a single Caribbean island, with an area one-sixth the size of Virginia—had experienced an economic boom without precedent, and by 1789 it was the richest, most productive colony not just of the French Empire, but of any empire. Feeding this economic dynamo with labor, the French slave trade grew so dramatically in the 1780s that it briefly surpassed the British trade for the only time in history, transporting some 37,000 Africans—nearly equivalent to the population of Philadelphia, greater than that of New York City—every single year from 1783 to 1792. In all, more than 791,000 Africans would be taken to Saint Domingue from 1700 to 1789, by which time some 465,000 slaves worked the island's rich plantations, producing over half the

[39] *Boston Gazette* quoted in Hale, "Neither Britons nor Frenchmen," 107.

[40] Richter, *Facing East*, 235; Rossignol, *Le ferment nationaliste*, 56–57. In this respect, contra the work of James Lewis and Peter Onuf, it could be argued that Federalists, far more than Republicans, were most responsive to the demands of western settlers.

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world's coffee, and more sugar than all the other British colonies put together. The sum of its trade was staggering. The port of Cap Français—a city larger than Boston—was plied by more ships than Marseille, creating vast fortunes for French merchants and bankers, and showering wealth on port cities such as Bordeaux and Nantes—indeed, on French society at large. By 1789, some 218 million *livres* worth of goods arrived in France from Saint Domingue, two-thirds of which was re-exported to European markets; an estimated 1 million of France's 25 million inhabitants depended directly on the colonial trade for their livelihoods. And in 1791 it all came crashing down, in a revolution that quickly fused with the bitter imperial conflict between revolutionary France and Great Britain in the Caribbean.[41]

The United States would soon be drawn into these Caribbean events. Fleeing the turmoil after the burning of Cap Français in 1793, thousands of desperate refugees—white, colored, and enslaved—poured into port cities across the United States. As the crisis deepened, the abolition of slavery in Saint Domingue was ratified in the name of the French republic, and a force never before seen in the modern era—of slaves become citizens—was mobilized to crush France's enemies. With the British navy crippling French shipping, France was forced to open its colonies to unrestricted trade with the United States in 1793. American exports to the besieged island surged: from $3.2 million in 1790 to $5 million in 1793, reaching $8 million by 1796. Even as it helped preserve French control of Saint Domingue, however, this trade made France ever more reliant on the United States. "The force of events hands the French colonies over to us," a smug Thomas Jefferson told French minister Fauchet in 1795. "France enjoys sovereignty and we, profits." Rather than make the United States into its client state, as France had hoped after American independence, France was now becoming dependent on the upstart nation.[42]

None of this should have been particularly troubling; since the 1770s, French officials had counted on the benefits of U.S. assistance in future Caribbean warfare. As late as 1789, the French consul in New York was predicting "great advantages": "French fleets . . . will repair there, provision themselves at good prices, reestablish their crew, find arms, naval munitions, masts and lumber of all kinds. The cooperation of the United States will keep England checked in Canada . . . and put the English Antilles in the greatest danger." Such advantages explained why France had sacrificed "blood and treasure," as one ministerial report put it, to achieve U.S. independence. Indeed, the Franco-American Treaty of Amity and Commerce, still

[41] Carolyn E. Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below* (Knoxville, Tenn., 1990), 22–23; Bernard Gainot and Marcel Dorigny, *Atlas des esclavages* (Paris, 2006), 22–23; Davis, "The Impact of the French and Haitian Revolutions," 4; Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 2004), 21, 22, 30. If the township of Northern Liberties is included in the Philadelphia population figures, the total is 38,435.

[42] American export figures from Ashli White, " 'A Flood of Impure Lava': Saint Dominguan Refugees in the United States, 1791–1820" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2003), 53–55; Jefferson quoted in Fauchet to the Commissioner of Foreign Relations, in Turner, *Correspondence of the French Ministers*, 564; also quoted in White, "A Flood of Impure Lava," 54. See also Pichon to Talleyrand, 1er thermidor an 9, Georgetown, C.P. États-Unis, vol. 53, p. 171, MAÉ. On migration from Saint Domingue to the United States, see especially White, "A Flood of Impure Lava"; on transatlantic French refugee networks, see especially Darrell R. Meadows, "Engineering Exile: Social Networks and the French Atlantic Community, 1789–1809," *French Historical Studies* 23 (Winter 2000): 67–102. On Franco-British warfare in the Caribbean and the transformation of slaves into citizens, see especially Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787–1804* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2004).

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in force, guaranteed safe harbor to French ships, "whether publick and of War or private and of Merchants." It was on the basis of such strategic thinking that Genet came to the United States and began outfitting French corsairs in 1794. His actions were the fulfillment of the military advantages that French officials had long hoped would redound from the U.S. alliance.[43]

Instead of these many expected benefits, however, including those mandated by the Treaty of Amity and Commerce, French diplomats met with a cold neutrality from the United States. Even worse, far from remaining strictly neutral, the Federalist-dominated administration began tilting toward a British alliance. For it was at precisely this time of total warfare between France and Britain—at the moment, one might say, of France's greatest need—that the Washington administration reneged on its commitments to France and negotiated the Jay Treaty, signaling a *rapprochement* with the ex–mother country. From the perspective of Paris, Jay's Treaty was the last straw, confirming the sense that French intervention during the Revolution had failed to secure any real strategic benefits.

By the mid-1790s, then, French policymakers came to realize that they could no longer depend on their fickle ally; they would need a more secure continental foothold. And so they turned their sights to Louisiana. "By the acquisition," read a 1796 memoir submitted to the French minister of foreign affairs, "we should have in abundance wood for construction, pasture for animals, rice, indigo, cotton, peltries, and a thousand other valuable products which would be at the ports of our colonies." New Orleans was the key. Not only would it ensure French dominance in Louisiana and supplies for the Caribbean colonies, it would ensure U.S. obedience to French interests: "retain it in the line of duty by the fear of dismemberment which we can bring about." It was a prospect that many Americans feared above all others. A French Louisiana, warned a New York newspaper in 1802, could "hold forth every allurement to the inhabitants of the Trans-Alleghany settlements . . . and inveigle them by degrees into the idea of forming a separate empire." Equally ominous was the impact that a French Louisiana might have on American slavery; the specter of France's transracial Caribbean armies loomed large. "A few French Troops with . . . arms put into the hands of the Negroes," Mississippi's territorial governor warned in 1798, "would be to us formidable indeed."[44]

[43] "Great advantages" is from [Antoine René Charles Mathurin] de la Forest, "Mémoire sur la situation actuelle des États Unis relativement [*sic*] à l'industrie américaine et au commerce étranger," New York, February 18, 1789, Marine B/7/461, AN; "Treaty of Amity and Commerce between the United States and France; February 6, 1778," the Avalon Project at Yale Law School, http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/diplomacy/france/fr1788-1.htm (accessed April 14, 2008). Article 21 of the French Treaty, from which the above quotation is drawn, was one that Genet's instructions specifically highlighted, directing that it be "religiously observed." See Genet's instructions, reprinted in Turner, *Correspondence of the French Ministers*, 208.

[44] "By the acquisition" is from J. A. James, "Louisiana as a Factor in American Diplomacy, 1795–1800," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 1 (June 1914): 45; "retain it in the line of duty" is quoted in Turner, "The Policy of France toward the Mississippi Valley," 269; "hold forth every allurement" is from the *New York Daily Advertiser*, February 12, 1802; excerpts quoted in French in Pichon to Talleyrand, 2 ventose an 10, C.P. États-Unis, vol. 54, MAÉ; "a few French troops" is quoted in Rothman, *Slave Country*, 16. See also "Mémoire abrégé de la Louisiane présenté au Général Bonaparte, premier consul de la République françoise par le général de division, *Victor*," le Quinze Thermidor de l'An 10è, AF IV 1211, doc. 53, AN. On biracial French crews in the Caribbean, see especially Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens*. The prospect of French control of the Mississippi River was, according to Peter Kastor, "nothing less than a fundamental threat to the preservation of the union." Kastor, *The Nation's Crucible*, 38.

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"Before Bonaparte could reach Louisiana," Henry Adams once remarked, "he was obliged to crush the power of Toussaint . . . If he and his blacks should succumb easily to their fate, the wave of French empire would roll on to Louisiana and sweep far up the Mississippi; if St. Domingo should resist, and succeed in resistance . . . America would be left to pursue her democratic [*sic*] destiny in peace."[45]

The road to Louisiana, in other words, ran through Saint Domingue—not just metaphorically but also geographically. By giving France control of the Windward Passage between Cuba and Saint Domingue, which separates the Atlantic Ocean from the Caribbean Sea, the island secured French access into the Caribbean and to the Gulf of Mexico. (See Map 4.) With navigation dependent on winds and currents, ships headed for the Caribbean or the Gulf of Mexico passed almost of necessity through the Windward Passage. Without that access, the Caribbean archipelago was not a beachhead but a thousand-mile barrier keeping France from the vast North American interior (now that its former door through the Saint Laurence River was closed). Even today, the Windward Passage remains of such importance that the CIA considers it one of the Atlantic Ocean's five "strategic straits," which the United States secures from its nearby naval base in a Cuban bay that once served as a pirate stronghold.[46]

And so in 1802 Napoleon sent his brother-in-law, General Charles Victor Emmanuel Leclerc, along with a force that would eventually total more than 80,000, to conquer Saint Domingue. If a commitment to preserving the plantation order explains why the British navy let Leclerc's force cross the Atlantic, American support for the French mission is harder to fathom. Certainly Jefferson, now president, had no wish to see France installed in Louisiana. "There is on the globe one single spot, the possessor of which is our natural and habitual enemy," said Jefferson in 1801. "It is New Orleans." No amount of lingering attachment to France could alter this view. "France, placing herself in that door, assumes to us the attitude of defiance." To be sure, the alternative to a French recapture of the island was profoundly troubling to Jefferson, whose terror—not to say hysteria—at the prospect of a republic of former slaves in the Caribbean is well known. The thought of an independent Saint Domingue inspired nightmares of "the Cannibals of the terrible republic" pulling into American ports, sending "black crews, supercargoes & missionaries thence into the Southern states," and fomenting insurrection throughout the nation.[47]

Napoleon, on the other hand, ought to have been more sanguine at the prospect.

[45] Adams, *History of the United States*, 256, 264. See also Rossignol, *Le ferment nationaliste*, 246.

[46] CIA World Factbook, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/zh.html (accessed April 14, 2008). On the pirate stronghold, see Marion Emerson Murphy, *The History of Guantanamo Bay*, 2nd ed. (Guantánamo Bay, 1953).

[47] The figure of 80,000 is from Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, 251; "There is on the globe" is quoted in Kyte, "A Spy on the Western Waters," 433, and in Meinig, *The Shaping of America*, 2: 10; "the Cannibals of the terrible republic" is from Jefferson to Aaron Burr, February 11, 1799, in Boyd et al., *Papers*, 31: 22; "black crews, supercargoes & missionaries" is from Jefferson to Madison, February 12, 1799, ibid., 29–30. On Jefferson and Haiti, see Michael Zuckerman, "The Power of Blackness: Thomas Jefferson and the Revolution in Saint-Domingue," in Zuckerman, *Almost Chosen People: Oblique Biographies in the American Grain* (Berkeley, Calif., 1993), 175–218; Winthrop D. Jordan, *White over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550–1812* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1968), 375–386; Tim Matthewson, "Jefferson and Haiti," *Journal of Southern History* 61 (1995): 209–248; Peter S. Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire: The Language of American Nationhood* (Charlottesville, Va., 2000); and Garry Wills, *"Negro President": Jefferson and the Slave Power* (Boston, 2003).

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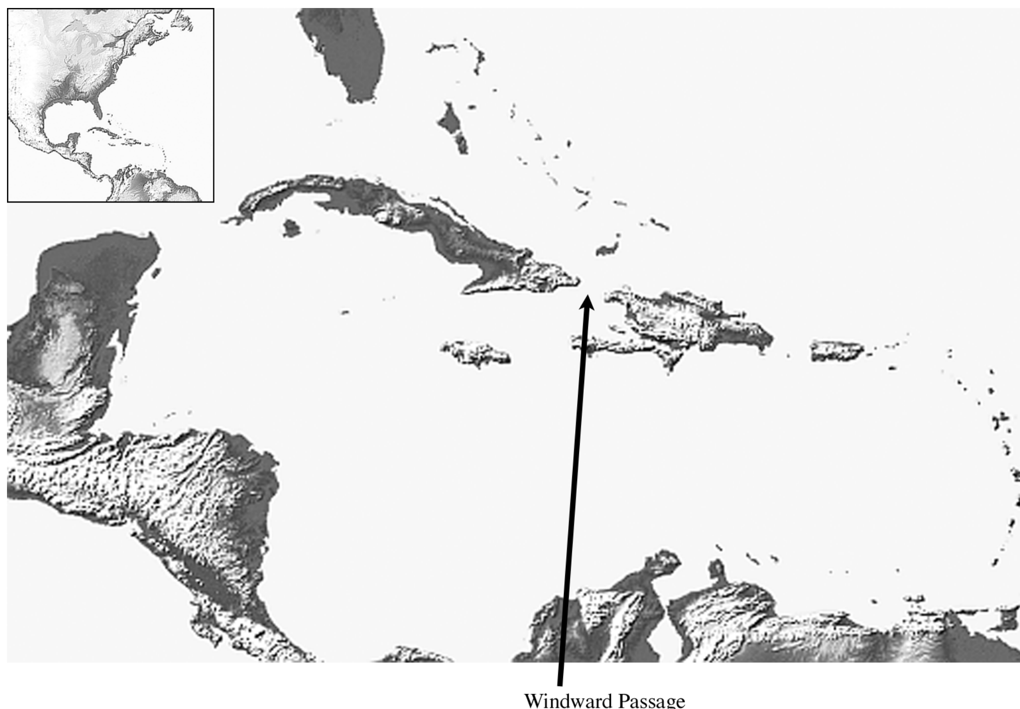

Map 4: The Caribbean. The Windward Passage, indicated above, served as France's doorway into the Caribbean Sea, the Gulf of Mexico, and the North American continent. In the eighteenth century, when winds and currents played such a determinant role in maritime travel, the Windward Passage was a strategically essential point—as it remains today. Courtesy NASA/JPL-Caltech.

Indeed, some evidence suggests that in late 1801, Napoleon considered simply "recogniz[ing] Toussaint," and granting Saint Domingue autonomy within the French Empire. "The government of the blacks recognized in Saint-Domingue and legitimized by France," French minister Talleyrand warned the British in 1801, would be a "formidable base for the [French] Republic in the New World." This vision of American colonies attached to the metropole by bonds of mutual interest and commercial exchange was one that French imperial planners had once reserved for the United States, and which Talleyrand—who lived in the United States for several years and toured the backcountry extensively—had outlined shortly after his return to France in a speech "on the advantages to be had from new colonies in the present circumstances." Had it been pursued, it would have provided France not just with a strategic military base, but also with a highly motivated army of black soldiers—much like the one that French general Victor Hugues had used to crush British shipping in the Caribbean—to rebuild its colonial system in North America. Allied to France, Talleyrand warned, Saint Domingue would become "the scepter of the New World." Here were the outlines of a different French Empire: committed to the preservation of emancipation, rather than the reestablishment of slavery, and manned by battalions of freed slaves who would be so formidable that neither the Americans nor the British nor even an alliance of the two would easily have dislodged them from the mainland.[48]

[48] Talleyrand's threats quoted in Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, 260; Charles Maurice de Tal-

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It is possible, even likely, that Talleyrand's warnings were just diplomatic bluster to persuade the British to open the Atlantic to the French fleet. But it is tantalizing to ponder the implications of this road not taken. With a base of operations in the Caribbean, 50,000 French soldiers not killed in the vicious attempt to reconquer Haiti, and a biracial army sent to hold Louisiana in alliance with Native Americans—still loyal to and nostalgic for their former ally—France might have permanently stalled U.S. expansion at the Mississippi River, perhaps even pushed it back to the Appalachians, finally establishing the region as the long-desired Native American buffer. France would have regained some of the territory it had lost forty years earlier, and fulfilled the promise its diplomats were continually making to Spanish officials: that it would serve as a barrier against U.S. expansion. In which case not just the trans-Appalachian West, not just Louisiana, but all of the Spanish land left exposed by the Louisiana Purchase—Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, California—might have resisted the voracious Americans. As for the inner configuration of the American republic, one can only imagine the consequences that a biracial French army would have had on the slave regime just then beginning its furious expansion through the cotton belts of Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi.[49]

If this venture far down the road of fantasy has a purpose other than self-indulgence, it is to highlight the still-contingent U.S. hold on the trans-Appalachian West. In the end, of course, Napoleon's fatal insistence on fighting Toussaint led to the collapse of his American ambitions. Jefferson played the diplomatic game perfectly, luring the French into Saint Domingue with promises of assistance before abandoning them in the quagmire. The game was up. France had lost its last doorway into the North American interior, and it was obvious that Louisiana could not be held. Nor was it worth holding. "Louisiana had been destined to supply this other colony," recalled François Barbé-Marbois, Napoleon's finance minister, "and since Saint Domingue was lost to France, Louisiana also lost a part of its importance." Napoleon had no choice but to stem the hemorrhaging. "I already consider this colony entirely lost," he said, as he began shifting his attention to North Africa.[50]

But Napoleon had one last matter to clear up as he withdrew from America. "It was left to him," wrote Barbé-Marbois, "only to prevent France's loss from becoming

leyrand-Périgord, *Essai sur les avantages à retirer de colonies nouvelles dans les circonstances présentes, par le citoyen Talleyrand: Lu à la séance publique le 15 messidor an 5* (Paris, 1798), esp. 12–13. Dubois, it should be noted, does not believe that these diplomatic threats made to Britain were serious.

[49] The cited figure of 50,000 is from Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, 298.

[50] Barbé-Marbois, *Histoire de la Louisiane*, 219; Napoleon quoted ibid., 287 (my translation). On Jefferson's diplomacy vis-à-vis Haiti, see Robin Blackburn, "Haiti, Slavery, and the Age of Democratic Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd. ser., 65 (October 2006): 643–674; Guillaume Simard, "Les relations diplomatiques franco-américaines lors de l'expédition du général Leclerc: Le commerce, le territoire, la race et l'opinion, 1800–1804" (M.A. thesis, Université de Montréal, 2007). On French worries about losing access to the Gulf of Mexico, see Mémoire Secret, doss: "Iles d'Amérique," AF IV 1211, doc. 32, AN. On the strategic issues more generally, see Yves Bénot, *La démence coloniale sous Napoléon: Essai* (Paris, 1992), 102. On the reorientation of Napoleon's foreign policy after Haiti, see Yves Bénot and Marcel Dorigny, *Rétablissement de l'esclavage dans les colonies françaises, 1802: Ruptures et continuités de la politique coloniale française, 1800–1830: Aux origines d'Haiti: Actes du colloque international tenu à l'Université de Paris VIII les 20, 21 et 22 juin 2002* (Paris, 2003), especially the contribution by Alyssa Sepinwell. On the importance of the Haitian Revolution to this reorientation, see Robert L. Paquette, "Revolutionary Saint Domingue in the Making of Territorial Louisiana," in David Barry Gaspar and David Patrick Geggus, eds., *A Turbulent Time: The French Revolution and the Greater Caribbean* (Bloomington, Ind., 1997), 204–225.

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Britain's advantage." American diplomats, aware of these fears, played up the danger: Robert Livingston warned that if France did not act, Louisiana would soon "fall into the power of the English." And so Napoleon hastened to turn the colony over to the Americans and grab whatever cash he could. Although the purchase was financed in the London capital markets—raising money for France to wage war against Great Britain—the British government did not object because it believed that an American Louisiana was less threatening than a French Louisiana. "It would have been wise for this country to pay a million sterling for the transfer of Louisiana from France to America," wrote British prime minister Henry Addington at the time. Britain's Native American allies, alas, were not consulted, and would not have agreed.[51]

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THE LONG WAR FOR THE WEST did not end with this second French loss of Louisiana. The dynamic that had shaped events in the trans-Appalachian West since 1754 continued, European imperial competition joining with enduring Native/settler conflict to keep the region's fate uncertain. A simmering warfare persisted in the years after 1803, as American settlers pushed west and up the Mississippi River into Native lands. In 1805, a confederation of nations led by the Sioux began appealing to British officials for support, but to no avail. Only after the increasing tensions between the United States and Britain in the wake of the 1807 *Chesapeake* affair—and after persistent rumors in the West that Napoleon planned to reestablish a French empire in America—did Francis Gore, the lieutenant governor of Upper Canada, begin organizing Britain's Indian allies in earnest. This British-Native military mobilization, building on years of village politics in Indian country, stirred up the embers of western settler unrest, which burst into flame in 1812, a war that in retrospect emerges as the last battle of the Long War for the West.[52]

If the United States and Great Britain fought a war in the East and on the Atlantic over questions of maritime rights and impressment, American settlers and Native Americans in the Mississippi Valley fought a far more consequential war whose objectives were, on the one side, continued U.S. expansion into Native and British land, and, on the other, the preservation of the West as an Indian country forever protected from American settlement. If this seems familiar, that is because these objectives echoed those for which France had gone to war in 1754, for which Pontiac had fought in 1763, and which the British had pursued since 1783: the restriction of American settlement from the trans-Appalachian West, and the creation of a buffer between the United States and British and Spanish territory. Like previous wars, the War of 1812 saw the emergence of pan-Indian unity and ideology: where in the past

[51] Barbé-Marbois, *Histoire de la Louisiane*, 287, 284–285 (my translation); Livingston quoted in Ministre de la Marine et des Colonies aux Premier Consul, 29 Frimaire, an 11, AF IV 1190, doc. 39, AN; Addington quote from "Memorandum, Account of Week's Events by Sir F. Baring," N. D. Northbrook Papers, 1 A4.13, Baring Archives, London. See also Mémoires et Nottes [*sic*] sur la Louisiane et les Florides, AF IV 1211, doc. 55, AN; and Pichon to Talleyrand, 14 prairial, an 9, C.P. États-Unis, vol. 56, p. 140, MAÉ; Kastor, *The Nation's Crucible*, 40.

[52] White, *The Middle Ground*, 53, 54, 512–513; Reginald Horsman, "British Indian Policy in the Northwest, 1807–1812," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 45, no. 1 (June 1958): 51–66; Richter, *Facing East*, 228. The account of the War of 1812 as a war driven by western settler interests was first put forth by a follower of Frederick Jackson Turner's; see Pratt, *Expansionists of 1812*.

it had been led by Neolin and Pontiac, now it was led by the Shawnee leader Tecumseh and his brother Tenskwatawa. As previous wars had seen Native leaders urging a return of the French to counterbalance British power, this war saw Native leaders in the North and Southwest reach out to the British and Spanish to balance U.S. power.[53]

This western war began with the Battle of Tippecanoe in 1811, in which Tenskwatawa's force of Shawnees, Kickapoos, Winnebagos, Potawatomis, and others attacked Benjamin Henry Harrison's U.S. troops, and it ended with the Treaty of Ghent in 1815, which once again left Native Americans empty-handed. British diplomats began the negotiations in Ghent insisting as "a *sine qua non* for peace" that the Native nations be included in the treaty negotiations, and that a 250,000-square-mile area in the Northwest between the United States and Canada—equivalent to roughly 15 percent of the U.S.—be set aside for Native Americans, which the United States would be forever barred from purchasing. It was a prospect that the British almost certainly could have accomplished in 1783, with the help of Spanish and French diplomats, who would have proven supportive. By 1815, however, it was too late: American negotiators contemptuously dismissed the cession of what they considered to be their territory as "injurious and degrading." Too many American settlers had poured into the Mississippi Valley, their American loyalties now cemented by the searing experience of war and the increased political power they exerted in Washington, where Kentuckian Henry Clay served as speaker of the House of Representatives, and where the presidency would soon pass to Andrew Jackson of Tennessee. The French, defeated once and for all at Waterloo, no longer threatened Britain's global hegemony. The Spanish, now isolated in the West and under pressure from settler independence movements across the Americas—many of them modeled on the United States—were no longer in a position to challenge U.S. territorial claims, which they finally ceded in the Adams-Onis Treaty of 1820. Most important of all, Native nations across the trans-Appalachian West were now bereft of international military support. The Long War for the West was finally over. It was a decisive victory for the United States and a final defeat for Native nations of the trans-Appalachian West, who could never again hope to make their lands into an autonomous Indian country.[54]

"No nation has a history disconnected from that of the rest of the world": so reads the first of Harvard professor Albert Bushnell Hart's fundamental principles of history, composed in 1883. Meant to promote the study of U.S. history in relation to Europe, Hart's formulation guided the "imperial school" of historiography that integrated American colonial history into European imperial history. Exactly a decade after Hart proposed his formulation, Frederick Jackson Turner broke from an approach to American history that looked out to the Atlantic. "The true point of view in the history of this nation is not the Atlantic coast," he insisted in his seminal essay,

[53] Richter, *Facing East*, 228–235; White, *The Middle Ground*, 502–503, 514.

[54] Quotations from Henry Clay, *The Life and Speeches of Henry Clay*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1859), 1: 81–82, 85. See also Donald R. Hickey, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict* (Urbana, Ill., 1989), 289–294.

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"it is the Great West." Turner's move has long been cast as the founding turn toward American exceptionalism in U.S. historiography. Locating the source of Americanness somewhere to the west of the Appalachians in the Mississippi Valley, Turner's frontier was, according to Daniel Rodgers, "the site of Europe's negation." Where Hart's formulation is disconcerting, undermining, as it does, contemporary claims for the innovativeness of an internationalized American history, Turner's frontier is reassuring. It reminds us of the exceptionalist past we heroically overcome.[55]

The problem is that Turner was not as parochial as later detractors would claim. Look beyond his 1893 essay, and one finds a flood of publications that he edited and wrote—volumes of French ministerial correspondence; articles on Genet, Louisiana, and George Rogers Clark; work both in English and in French, based in archives in Paris, London, and Madrid.[56] All this work and more—by Turner, Henry Adams, and a generation of students and followers—set the action of the Mississippi Valley amid vast forces of European empires clashing against land-hungry American settlers and nascent nation-builders in a grand panorama of what we today might call *histoires croisées*: in which Europe, far from negated, remained ever-present. Even as we rightly condemn Turner for founding a pernicious form of western history, it would appear that we remain trapped in a framework that he himself did not advance: of a Mississippi Valley segregated into a purely national field, disconnected from the larger forces of international history. By continually denouncing exceptionalism, we may, ironically, reinscribe it.

To whom does the trans-Appalachian West belong? That was the great question animating imperial, Native, and settler actors alike during the Long War for the West, as each group battled alone and in shifting alliances to retain a hold on the region. But on a different, historiographical, register, the question remains as pressing today as it did in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: Does the region belong to U.S. history, imperial history, Native American history, frontier history, Atlantic history, or some combination of them all in a confused, even entangled, form?[57] That Turner and his generation first raised the question—flawed though their answers may have been—should be humbling to currently triumphant Atlanticists, who have so largely neglected the ancient mountains in favor of far younger oceans. In so doing, they have failed to recognize what historians of the past keenly sensed: how the history of the trans-Appalachian West shaped the destinies not just of Native America, nor of Mexico, Canada, and the United States, nor even of the most pow-

[55] Hart quoted in John Higham, *History: Professional Scholarship in America*, updated pbk. ed. (Baltimore, Md., 1989), 161; Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," in *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1893* (Washington, D.C., 1894), 200; "the site of Europe's negation" is from Daniel Rodgers, "Exceptionalism," in Anthony Molho and Gordon S. Wood, eds., *Imagined Histories: American Historians Interpret the Past* (Princeton, N.J., 1988), 25. On the imperial school, see especially Jack P. Greene, "The Flight from Determinism: A Review of Recent Literature on the Coming of the American Revolution," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (1962): 235–259. The literature on Turner and exceptionalism is vast; see, however, in addition to Rodgers and Higham, Dorothy Ross, *The Origins of American Social Science* (Cambridge, 1991), 266–267.

[56] Much of it cited in this article.

[57] On entangled history or *histoire croisée*, see Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia," *Modern Asian Studies* 31, no. 3 (1997): 735–762; Subrahmanyam, *From the Tagus to the Ganges* (New Delhi, 2005); Subrahmanyam, "Holding the World in Balance: The Connected Histories of the Iberian Overseas Empires, 1500–1640," *American Historical Review* 112, no. 5 (December 2007): 1359–1385; Gould, "Entangled Histories, Entangled Worlds"; Gould, "Entangled Atlantic Histories."

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erful global empires of the nineteenth century, but by extension of modern world history itself.

With the trans-Appalachian West thus set in its fullest context, we are ultimately poised to return to U.S. history, and there to better recognize the sweeping forces of imperialism and global warfare that buffeted a young and fragile United States, decisively shaping its history as well as its geography. Of course, few at the time could have seen the irony of the U.S. victory in the Long War for the West, which, by opening the Mississippi Valley to a contested U.S. expansion, half slave and half free, would eventually generate sectional conflicts so severe that the country would be confronted with the greatest existential crisis of its history. To the victor went the spoils. In the near term, however, the U.S. victory resolved the fate of the trans-Appalachian West. Never more would tenuous western loyalties, Native American resistance, or European imperialism threaten U.S. sovereignty east of the Mississippi. And with that victory, it became possible to imagine that the trans-Appalachian West had in a sense slipped out of Atlantic history to land in American history, looming no more as a national *frontière*, but merely becoming significant as the frontier *in* American history.

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