

 **Article REVIEW**

**Jon Parmenter and Mark Power Robison.** “The Perils and Possibilities of Wartime Neutrality on the Edges of Empire: Iroquois and Acadians between the French and British in North America, 1744–1760” *Diplomatic History*, 31.2 (April 2007): 167–206.  
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**A**s the great imperial wars of the mid-eighteenth century pass their quarter-millennial anniversaries, a small cohort of talented scholars has endeavored to make them accessible to interested scholars and the reading public. With books such as Fred Anderson’s *Crucible of War* (2000), Daniel Richter’s *Facing East from Indian Country* (2001), and Stephen Brumwell’s *Redcoats* (2002) and *White Devil* (2005), the later French and Indian wars have become a haven for sophisticated, interdisciplinary scholarship, to which the article by Parmenter and Robison is merely the latest addition. Bringing together resources from both sides of the Great Lakes, both sides of the Atlantic, and both sides of the English Channel, it forms a welcome addition to the growing and increasingly complex historiography on these pivotal years.

While the field remains relatively small, almost every new addition receives an enthusiastic welcome, as well it should with the caliber of scholarship involved. As the field grows, however, demands also increase for greater depth, more precision and larger bibliographies.<sup>1</sup> Parmenter and Robison admirably meet the first of these demands with their assessment of Iroquois and Acadian neutrality in the mid-century, drawing on an impressive array of archival and printed primary sources. Using these to good effect, they meet most of the second demand, as well, adding crucially to the work of Anderson and Ian Steele on the reasons for Iroquois “betrayal” of their notional French allies in the pivotal middle years of the Seven Years War. (pp.192-194)<sup>2</sup> Finally, Parmenter and Robison integrate the very latest historiography on the mid-century wars, without looking back on the classic works of Richard Waddington, Julian Corbett and Lawrence

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<sup>1</sup> e.g. Ian K. Steele, Review of Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War* (New York, 2000), *William and Mary Quarterly*, 57:4 (Oct., 2000), pp.864-868; Richard Middleton, Review of Anderson, *Crucible of War*, *Journal of American History*, 87:4 (Mar., 2001), pp. 1468-1469; Don Higginbotham, Review of Stephen Brumwell, *Redcoats* (Cambridge, 2002), *Journal of American History*, 89:3 (Dec., 2002), p.1023; Peter Way, Review of Brumwell, *Redcoats*, *William and Mary Quarterly*, 60:2 (April, 2003), pp. 456-458.

<sup>2</sup> Anderson, *Crucible of War*; Ian K. Steele, *Betrayals: Fort William Henry and the “Massacre”* (Oxford, 1990).

Henry Gipson.<sup>3</sup> After as much as a century of currency, is this the proof that these works have finally, at long last, become obsolete?

Parmenter and Robison perform admirably in their side-by-side comparison of two neutral polities during an era of strategic crisis. The Iroquois, building on long traditions of inter-tribal dialogue and avoidance of direct combat, appear as deft manipulators of the Anglo-French imperial rivalry and of the international order, more generally. The Acadians, meanwhile, lacking both political recognition and native institutions of diplomacy and self-defense, achieved a remarkable feat of their own in maintaining their neutrality from 1713 to 1755. Ultimately, the success enjoyed by both Acadians and Iroquois in absenting themselves from combat came back to haunt them, as the former suffered disarmament and expulsion, and the latter survived just one more generation before the tide of American expansion became too strong for them to resist.

The co-authors merit commendation for their endeavor to illustrate the problems of Iroquois and Acadian neutrality not only in their text but also in maps. They fall short in the latter respect, however, on account of some surprising faults. The ebb and flow of colonial warfare from 1744 to 1760 makes any map a challenging exercise, not least because of the ambitious fort-building projects undertaken by both sides from 1748. That being said, the depictions of the two theaters of interest for this article still leave much to be desired. The map of New York and the upper St. Lawrence (171) illustrates fairly well the relative positions of the Iroquois Confederacy and their Laurentian kin, but it omits the Iroquois of the Ohio region, including the Shawnee, Mingo, and Delaware. Also absent are the French forts built in 1753-1754, such as Presqu'île, Fort Le Boeuf, and Fort Machault (Venango), which helped to sway Ohio Iroquois opinion. The marker for Fort Pitt may also benefit from a reference to its former incarnation, Fort Duquesne. Finally, the British side lacks Oswego and Fort Edward, and the strategic road that connected the latter to Albany from August 1755. The errors and omissions on the Acadian map (179) are equally startling, though fewer in number. The frontiers of the province remained in dispute between the French and British until 1755,<sup>4</sup> and most of the major military sites in the region—Beausejour, Fort Lawrence and Halifax—only appeared within the last seven years before that date. On the French side, the map is also missing Fort St. Jean and Fort Gaspereau (Baye Verte)—both established in 1750—and locations for the local Mi'kmaq and Abenaki natives. Given that there are several articles on this subject with no maps at all,<sup>5</sup> the authors have done well to offer any illustrations at all; it is only to be wished that

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<sup>3</sup> Richard Waddington, *La Guerre de Sept Ans* (Paris, 1896-1914), 5 vols.; Julian Corbett, *England in the Seven Years War* (London, 1907), 2 vols.; Lawrence Henry Gipson, *The British Empire before the American Revolution* (London, 1936-1970), 15 vols.

<sup>4</sup> See esp. William L. Clements Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan (WCLC), William Mildmay MSS, vols.1-2 (1748-1754); map of Acadia by French royal cartographer Robert de Vaugondy (1755).

<sup>5</sup> T.R. Clayton, "The Duke of Newcastle, the Earl of Halifax, and the American Origins of the Seven Years War," *Historical Journal*, 24:3 (Sept., 1981), pp.571-603; Matt Schumann, "Mercantilism,

future scholarship on this subject will pay as much attention to detail in pictures as it does in writing.

The writing, however, is not immune from its own bedevilment in details. In both sections on the Acadians, curious readers may be led to ask, “which ones?” Some of the conflicts, as well, both in boardrooms and on battlefields, could use clarification as well as more detailed references. This might be an area in which the old tomes retain their value, alongside works as recent as 1990!<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the authors contribute lucid and important details on Governors Clinton, Philipps, Mascarene, Lawrence, Beauharnois and Vaudreuil, but if they can offer this much material on British and French officials, then why not on the Acadians and Iroquois whose neutrality they are studying?

In the Acadian sections, one finds some 14-18,000 people (169, note 4) in theory represented by twenty-four elected deputies (181), but not one of the latter is mentioned by name, nor is it clear whether Acadian neutrality was an expedient or settled policy. The authors give no indication of the extent to which Acadians conferred among themselves regarding their neutrality, nor whether there are sources yet to be explored on this important issue, for example in the Nova Scotia Archives in Halifax.

Ambiguities also appear in the narratives of the French and Indian War, including Tanaghrisson’s reasons for refusing to join Washington at the poorly-sited and ineptly-constructed Fort Necessity on July 3, 1754 (189); the timing of operations at Beausejour and Gaspereau from June 2-18, 1755 (198), the nature of the running fight at Lake George after the Bloody Morning Scout on September 8, 1755 (188); and the troops that Abercromby failed to employ at Fort Carillon on July 7-8, 1758 (192).<sup>7</sup>

Finally, one remains unclear as to which Iroquois leaders made which decisions, and when. The article continuously refers to “Iroquois headmen” (176, 187-191, 194, 196), though who these people are often remains unclear. The Mohawk Theyanoguin clearly serves as a counterexample of Iroquois neutrality, countered by Hotsinonhyahta and Tanaghrisson. These three are the only headmen mentioned by name, with no hint of their status in Iroquois politics, and only minimal indications of the degree to which neutrality was an individual rather than a communal decision. Like the Acadians, then, it appears that there is still some work to be done on the internal politics of Iroquoia.

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communications and the Early Prehistory of the Seven Year’s War, 1749-1754,” *Nuova Rivista Storica*, 89:1 (May, 2005), pp.83-104.

<sup>6</sup> Steele, *Betrayals*, offers excellent summaries of the events at Lake George in 1755, and again in 1757.

<sup>7</sup> For the lattermost, cf. WCLC, Samuel Morris Journal, pp.7v-8v, which suggests that Dalrymple’s regiment of Anglo-American regulars arrived late, suffered lightly, and withdrew prematurely.

Ultimately, however, these oversights detract little from the overall value of the article, which illustrates clearly the problems of neutrality on the edge of empire. It is abundantly clear that international contexts shaped Acadian and Iroquois responses at the level of the individual and the household as well as local and regional institutions of government. Likewise, the authors make clear that no neutrality could long withstand the growing preponderance of Anglo-American military power after 1754. Even in their shortcomings, the authors make an important contribution, highlighting still more of the research that has yet to be done, not only on the French and British but also among the neutrals, in the wars for empire of the mid-eighteenth century.

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