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KICKAPOO FOREIGN POLICY, 1650-1830

by

Matthew R. Garrett

A THESIS

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KICKAPOO FOREIGN POLICY, 1650-1830

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University of Nebraska, 2006

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The Kickapoos are an Algonquian tribe that historically resided in the western Great Lakes region. Their early interactions with Europeans required political adaptations to secure their territorial sovereignty and growth. From 1650 to 1763 French explorers, traders and Jesuits entrenched themselves in the Kickapoos homelands south of Lake Michigan. Kickapoo treatment of these intruders progressed from indifferent interaction to opposition, cooperation, and then detachment during the French and Indian War. As Spanish and later British agents likewise penetrated up the Mississippi and west of the Ohio, respectively, Kickapoos exploited the competing European nations that vied for their fidelity. While pledging hollow promises of loyalty to French, Spanish, and British authorities, the tribe violently raided and expelled uninvited agents, military parties, and traders. With the exception of a few disastrous raids that ravished the Kickapoos, the tribe successfully repelled European authorities and profited from their relationships. Kickapoos simultaneously overran smaller Wabash and Illinois River Valley tribes, extending their own territorial sovereignty. Though the Kickapoo diplomatic system benefited during the American Revolution, it declined and failed thereafter as the United

States Army and infringing settlers flooded the Old Northwest. The Louisiana Purchase and then the War of 1812 definitively expelled the Kickapoos' previous European benefactors. Surrounded by Euro-American settlers and subjugated by the U.S. army, in 1819 the Kickapoos submitted to multiple treaties stripping them of their land and relations with other nations. Facing the failure of the diplomatic system that once preserved their territorial dominance, Kickapoos splintered across the present-day American states of Missouri, Oklahoma, Kansas, Texas, and Coahuila in Mexico.

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Preface

Given the many participants, changing identities, and mixed-affiliations involved in North America's history, it becomes necessary to define a few terms. The first of these are geographical. The region surrounding the Great Lakes is most commonly referred to as the Old Northwest. It also carries a temporal connotation of the late colonial era and early years of the United States, the region legally delineated as the Northwest Territory from 1787 until 1803 when the remnants of the region became the state of Ohio and other territories including Indiana, Michigan, and Illinois, followed by statehoods. In this thesis when events occur throughout the Great Lakes region, across territorial boundaries, or before the organization of the United States, the popular vernacular "Old Northwest" is generally employed, though at times regions are identified by their "present-day" designations. After the organization of the United States, the exact territory or state name is used. Additionally, the term "backcountry" is occasionally applied with the intention of depicting the interior frontier west region that is just east of the Mississippi and stretches liberally north and south from the Great Lakes to the present-day states of Alabama and Mississippi.

The second field of potentially enigmatic terminology lies in reference to various peoples. Individuals from or acting on behalf of France or Spain are easily enough referred to as *French* and *Spanish*. To keep things simple, individuals from or acting on behalf of England or the United Kingdom are referred to as *British*, except where quotations dictate otherwise. While the United Kingdom of Great Britain was not technically established until 1707, and thereafter the name changes slightly as different peoples are incorporated, it becomes unnecessarily tedious and distracting to refer to

individuals as English, Scottish, Welch, and yet British at other times. Furthermore, this distinction is not significantly relevant to the question of Kickapoo diplomacy. Upon winning independence, formerly “British” turned United States citizens are uniformly termed *Euro-American* to differentiate them from Native Americans. While the term *Native American* is at times necessary to reference Indians from multiple or unknown tribes, the specific tribal affiliation is preferred and employed whenever possible. That said, the various tribes that constitute the Iroquois nation are generally spoken of by their confederate titled—the Iroquois.¹ Similarly, the Dakotas, Nakotas, and Lakotas are simply termed Sioux. In both these cases, there is no need and often insufficient evidence to specify exactly which band or tribe is involved when examining the Kickapoos.

The final point of clarification is centered in the documents themselves. The bulk of primary sources cited herein are referenced from the *Jesuit Relations* and from miscellaneous collections assembled in the Ohio Valley Great Lakes Ethnohistory Archive in Bloomington, Indiana. In quoting from these documents, all efforts have been made to retain the original grammar and spelling, except for tribe names which have been standardized. In various records many tribes are referred to by different names and with different spellings. Much of this is due to the inclusion of French, Spanish, British and Euro-American documents. Rather than inundate the reader with dozens of spellings and alternate names applied to the Kickapoos, as well as other tribes, all tribal names have

¹ It is worth noting that the title *Iroquois* is the popular vernacular term applied to the tribal alliance of Iroquoian speaking nations who call themselves Haudenosaunee.

been standardized, whether in quotations or not.² Finally, the nature of the documents leaves much to be desired by way of class and gender. Few records reveal class distinctions and gender roles among the Kickapoos who were generally reclusive in nature. This is not to say significant events and adaptations did not occur along class and gender lines, but only that the documents are silent to such. All effort has been made to accurately and respectfully represent the Kickapoos and those with whom they interact.

² Alternate and misprinted spellings of Kickapoos, as listed by Frederick Webb Hodge, *The Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico* (Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 30. GPO: 1910), include: A'-uyaX, Gígabu (plural Gígabuhak), Gikapu, Gokapatagans, Hígabu, Híká'pu, I'-ka-du', Kackapoes, Kecapos, Ke-ga-boge, Kehabous, Kekapos, Kekapou, Kekaupoag, Kicapoos, Kicapous, Kicapoux, Kicapus, Kiccapoos, Kichapacs, Kickapoos, Kickapos, Kickapous, Kickipoo, Kicoagoves, Kicoapous, Kicopoux, Kikabeux, Kikabons, Kikabou, KiKaboua, Kikábu, Kikapaus, Kikapoes, Kikapoos, Kikapous, Kikap8s, Kikapoux, Kikapouz, Kikapu, Kikapus, Kikkapoos, Kikpouz, Kispapous, Qnicapous, Quicapause, Quicapons, Quicapous, Quinaquois, Quincapous, Ricapous, Rickapoos, Shack-a-po, Shake-kah-quah, Shígapo, Shikapu, Sik' -a-pu, Tékapu, Yuⁿtara/ye-ru/nu.

Introduction

Indigenous peoples rallied together and rivaled one another long before Europeans set foot on the American continent. Like other societies, Native American diplomacy consisted of negotiation, trade, appeasement, and conflict. Each tribe developed strategic methods to interrelate with those around them. Ultimately they acted to serve their own interests. In order to understand Native American people, ethnohistorians must inquire how individual nations organized themselves to face the changing world around them. They examine the development of diplomatic institutions; how adaptations in the evolving political climate compare to traditional systems of conflict management; and the success of these mechanisms. The purpose of this thesis is to trace Kickapoo diplomatic behavior, examining how the nation developed dynamic means of self preservation and territorial dominance in the face of encroaching Europeans from the late seventeenth to the early nineteenth centuries.

The arrival of Europeans ushered in new alliances and conflicts. When the Spanish moved from the Caribbean to overrun present-day southern Mexico in 1519 they were led by Indian allies anxious to depose the Aztec overlords. French and Dutch settlements in the Northeast gathered Iroquois and Wyandotte neighbors, respectively, all parties joining in trade, war and cultural exchange. Further south along the Atlantic seaboard, the Powhatan confederacy initially welcomed Jamestown colonists and attempted to incorporate them into the local intertribal federation. Following the death of Chief Powhatan and the succession of his brother, Opechancanough, the encroaching British violently competed with neighboring Indians. Each of these European-Indian relationships was uniquely complex, but nevertheless entailed similar themes of trade,

cooperation, and conflict. Often an initially cooperative atmosphere deteriorated into overtly violent conflicts and even wide-spread war. In general, European rivalries exacerbated and realigned preexisting Indian competitions and hostilities. Motivated by self-interests, Indians and Europeans developed dynamic strategies in the drastically changing geo-political environment. As European explorations pierced farther into the northeastern interior, each interior tribe likewise faced radical transformations introduced by the foreigners' arrivals.

Regardless of their strategies, tribes adjacent to European settlements found it difficult to resist the political, military, and cultural expansion of the newcomers. Many Indians suffered disease, military defeat, and dispossession. Social anomie, a clinical term denoting widespread and excessive anxiety spawned by sudden invalidation of cultural norms, desperately threatened cultural stability. Those tribes located deeper in the interior initially enjoyed greater independence to negotiate with Europeans on their own terms. These Indians were not as susceptible to invasion, less dependent on trade, and their traditional culture less directly challenged. Still the Europeans continued westward and eventually all Native Americans faced the changing realities of the advancing intruders.

Located deep in the Northeastern woodlands region, the Kickapoos did not suffer the immediate and complete impact experienced by the Wyandottes, Iroquois, Powhatans and smaller eastern tribes; however, by the mid-seventeenth century Frenchmen (and later the Spanish and British) infiltrated the Kickapoos' homelands in present-day Wisconsin, Illinois, and Indiana. The tribe's success and survival depended upon their ability to reconcile the rapidly changing political environment. In present-day Illinois

small bands typically functioned as semi-autonomous units, only inconsistently working in cooperation with their larger tribe—a concept better reflected by the unity of neighboring nations such as the Sioux and Iroquois. Kickapoos maneuvered to negotiate a world of transforming diplomatic realities, particularly as French imperial power superseded their own in the Illinois River region. Attempting to manage the intruding French as well as extend their dominance over the small bands and tribes in the region, Kickapoo diplomatic strategies underwent a series of adaptations, culminating in a policy of diplomatic exploitation. As the British and Spanish expanded into the region, Kickapoos continued to extract goods and services from Europeans in exchange for the tribe's self-serving promises of loyalty. Kickapoos influenced European powers, employing force, alliance brokering, trade, appeasement, and deceit. Indeed, the arrival of the Europeans inaugurated an era of Kickapoo empowerment founded upon foreign manipulation. This diplomacy climaxed in the mid to late eighteenth century as British, French, and Spanish traders competed to entreat the tribe.

The Kickapoos' diplomatic strategies remained effective as long as European nations vied for their support and no foreign power could exclusively control the Kickapoos' homelands southwest of Lake Michigan. In fact, until the ascension of the United States and its westward colonization, Kickapoos remained the most powerful force in the region. There the tribe pillaged traders while restraining European authorities through insincerely pledged allegiances. European fears of losing all control of the region and the hope of winning the tribe's fidelity was enough to extract support from France, Spain, and Britain, despite the Kickapoos generally hostile attitude toward uninvited explorers, traders, and adventurers.

The Kickapoos did not fully understand the eventual consequences when the United States won its independence. Immediately after the colonists' victory, settlers poured west into the Kentucky and across the Ohio. The 1803 Louisiana Purchase and War of 1812 removed the last remnants of European competition from the backcountry. Without their former allies to exploit, and unable to resist the United States army, the Kickapoos' diplomacy could no longer function. In 1819 the tribe was forced into dispossessing treaties and formally stripped of relationships with nations other than the U.S.

Under intense territorial, cultural, and political pressures, the tribe irreparably fractured along pre-existing divisions. Some Kickapoos migrated southwest into Spanish and later Mexican Texas, and even as far as Coahuila, Mexico. Hostile Illinois Kickapoos sporadically raided U.S. settlements but eventually bowed to United States pressures, relocating to designated territories in present-day Missouri, and later in Oklahoma. Others peacefully resisted removal, but were likewise forced onto lands near Fort Leavenworth in present day Kansas in 1832. Though beyond the scope of this paper, these divergent and thereafter successive adaptations of the splintering Kickapoo bands is a fascinating subject worthy of additional examination. Representing quintessential types of reactions (flight, fight, and pretended acculturation), the Kickapoos serve as a microcosm of broader Native American responses to U.S. imperial expansion.

While historians have generally overlooked the Kickapoos, anthropologists long studied the splintered Algonquian tribe. In recent decades, the Mexican band of Kickapoos received particular attention from anthropologists, who declared them the best

preserved representation of pre-European-contact Algonquians. During the 1960's two sets of ethnologists visited that band: Dolores and Felipe Latorre, and Robert Ritzenthaler and Frederick Peterson. Meanwhile, historian Arrell Gibson penned *Lords of the Middle Border* (1963), an extensive political history that portrays the bands as fierce border guards. Unfortunately he minimizes tribal agency, and overlooks the tribe's formative social and political motivations. Since then, several anthropology dissertations examined the Mexican and Oklahoma bands, again focused on cultural perspectives. Perhaps the single most influential text dealing broadly with the Kickapoos (among other tribes) is Richard White's watershed work, *The Middle Ground* (1991). Though White hardly mentions the Kickapoos individually, his rendition of the Old Northwest as a place of self-interest seeking compromisers defines the most accepted interpretation of the Indians surrounding and including the Kickapoos. While interdisciplinary materials now specifically examine the Kickapoos, a revision of their history is long overdue. Kickapoo Foreign Policy seeks to revisit socio-political influences and the Kickapoos political strategy during the late colonial era.¹ This new interpretation of the Kickapoos history

¹ Felipe A. Latorre and Dolores L. Latorre, *The Mexican Kickapoo Indians* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976); Robert E. Ritzenthaler and Frederick A. Peterson, *The Mexican Kickapoo Indians* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1970); A.M. Gibson, *The Kickapoos: Lords of the Middle Border* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963); Frances Smith Cain, "The Kickapoo Indians, 1832-1895" (PhD. diss., University of Oklahoma, 1940); Betty Ann Wilder Dillingham, "Oklahoma Kickapoo" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1963); Mary Christopher Nunley, "The Mexican Kickapoo Indians: Avoidance of Acculturation Through a Migratory Adaptation" (Ph.D. diss., Southern Methodist University, 1986); Annette I. Kuhlmann, "Collaborative Research in Biculturalism Among the Kickapoo Tribe of Oklahoma" (Ph.D. diss., University of Kansas, 1982); Ben Wallace, "Oklahoma Kickapoo Culture Change" (Master's thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1963); Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1818* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Special thanks are due to the Ohio Valley Great Lakes Archive who's holdings made possible this endeavor.

varies from previous work in several ways. Perhaps most importantly, it reconciles Gibson and White's somewhat disjointed perspectives. In White's geo-cultural region termed "the middle ground," nations and individuals interacted altruistically, each seeking out their own best interests through some conflict but generally cooperating. White's participants hoped to "understand the world and reasoning of others."² In Gibson's history, the Kickapoos were the hostile border guards who served as mercenaries and roamed the borderlands in the service of France and Spain. Mediating these two interpretations, this paper demonstrates that the Kickapoos certainly sought to satisfy their own interests but not purely through military adventures nor by well intended mutual respect and cooperation. The Kickapoos employed intrigue, deceit and manipulation, hollow promises and open conflict. Each of these tools served one single purpose—the preservation and territorial expansion of the Kickapoos.

Kickapoo Foreign Policy traces the rise and collapse of the Kickapoos' colonial diplomacy. It is organized into three chronologically successive chapters, each focusing on the Kickapoos' relations with relevant foreign nations. From the mid-17th century to mid-18th century, the Kickapoos dealt primarily with France and various Indian nations. During this period the Kickapoos experimented with diplomatic mechanisms and arrived at a policy of shrewd extraction. The French and Indian War (1754-1763), essentially a European conflict hardly involving the Kickapoos, drastically altered the tribe's political environment, and thus signifies the end of the first chapter and beginning of the second. Though residual French influence remained after their loss in that war, additional foreign nations penetrated the Kickapoos' territorial dominion, specifically the Spanish and

² White, 52.

British. As rival nations vied for the tribe's loyalty, the Kickapoos secured European gifts and trade and extended their control over present-day Illinois. This period was the apex of the Kickapoos' diplomatic exploitation. The final major shift in the Kickapoos political environment occurred more gradually as the United States secured sovereignty over the Old Northwest, beginning in the American Revolutionary War, and then increasingly so after the United States' invasion of the region (1790-1791), Jay's Treaty (1794), the Louisiana Purchase (1803), and the War of 1812. As Europeans withdrew and the U.S. seized control of Kickapoo homelands, the tribe's traditional diplomatic measures failed. This gradual decline represents the third and final chapter.

The exploration of the Kickapoos' international diplomatic strategies provides four key contributions to the tribe and the academic community. First, this work presents new arguments and interpretations of early tribal history. This early period is the least understood by historians and modern Kickapoos, and is regularly glossed over with only superficial comments in tertiary texts addressing Native Americans or even those addressing Great Lakes tribes in particular. There are few historical works that specifically examine the Kickapoos themselves.

The second contribution of this work lies in its usefulness as a unique case study of alternative Algonquian responses to European encroachment. Too often the Old Northwest Indians are all generalized in the experiences of the Iroquois and Wyandottes. The Old Northwest was home to dozens of tribes who managed the changing world through varied diplomatic maneuvers. As the Kickapoos demonstrate, not all tribes were intimately involved in the European alliances and wars that frequently dictate renditions of North American history.

Third, an examination of the Kickapoos early history sets a necessary foundation to better understand fractures that remain major divisions in the tribe today. When the Kickapoos' system for interacting with foreign powers collapsed, the splintering bands adapted divergent strategies that placed each on deviating cultural courses. Though beyond the scope of this paper, the greatest problems facing each Kickapoo band today are drastically different. Kickapoos today are very diverse, geographically and culturally, and their variations originate in the under-examined collapse of colonial policy.

Finally, the fourth significant contribution of this work is to empower the Kickapoos as historical playmakers. For too long North American history has centered on Europeans and marginalized the indigenous peoples, relegating them to passive actors responding to European and Euro-American figures. As acclaimed historian Gary Nash observed,

Africans were not merely enslaved. Indians were not merely driven from the land. . . . To include Africans and Indians in our history in this way, simply as victims of the more powerful Europeans, is hardly better than excluding them altogether. It is to render voiceless, nameless, and faceless people who powerfully affected the course of our historical development as a nation.³

Inspired in part by the preceding passage, this paper hopes to restore the Kickapoos as the central actors of their history. Navigating a rapidly changing political environment, the Kickapoos employed stratagem and violence to shape their own future—they were not merely respondents to European centered wars and policy. No less than Europeans, Native Americans equally forged their history and independently contributed to the history of North America.

³ Nash, Gary B. *Red, White, and Black: The Peoples of Early America* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1982), 2-3.

Developing Political Stratagem: Kickapoo Foreign Policy in the Early Colonial Era, 1650-1763

The arrival of European nations introduced new diplomatic complexities to the American continent. While the Spanish forced their way through South America, Central America, and the Southwest, the French explored and traded along the northern Atlantic seaboard. British settlements populated the mid and lower Atlantic coast. The era is often viewed as one of European competition carried out through hostile, rival trading companies. Sadly, Native American responses are often minimized, interpreted primarily through the historical context of European policy and examined only to the extent that they served European purposes of trade and war. Regardless of such historiographical oversights, Indian nations independently forged diplomatic policy to suit their own complex motivations, manipulating European powers to achieve their own goals. The Kickapoos, an Algonkian speaking tribe emerging from the Old Northwest, are one such example. Initially, the Kickapoos passively interacted with Europeans (primarily French), gradually developing a strategy of neutrality. Indeed, from the mid 17th century to the mid 18th century, Kickapoos relations with the French evolved through four progressive stages: indifferent interaction, violent opposition to expansion, shrewd compliance, and finally detachment. Though seemingly innocuous, these diplomatic developments set the foundation for a cunning policy of extraction in the late Colonial Era. This early evolution was the origin of Kickapoo diplomatic policy.

Before European explorers ever penetrated the northern Mississippi River and Ohio River valleys, the region was in dispute and long suffered continual conflict. Small bands constituted the fundamental block of society, and each engaged others in sporadic

conflict. This decentralized culture was vulnerable to invading tribes from the north, specifically the Sioux and Iroquois. Mounted on horses traded from the across the continent, the Sioux raided southeastward into present-day Michigan and Wisconsin, the traditional home of the Sauks, Foxes, Mascoutins and Kickapoos. From the east, the hegemonic Iroquois encroached southwestward, sweeping through and below the Great Lakes. Organized as a single confederate entity around 1570, and soon after armed with Dutch firearms, the Iroquois constituted a formidable threat.¹ Consequently, the Sauks, Foxes, Mascoutins and Kickapoos were wedged between two powerful Indian nations. During the late 17th century these small tribes migrated southward, likewise overrunning the less centralized Ohio and Illinois River Valley bands residing south of Lake Michigan. When French explorers finally penetrated into present-day Illinois, they found a hornet's nest of warring factions: Kickapoos, Mascoutins, Sauk, Foxes, Illinois, Peorias, Cahokias, Weas, Menominees, Pottawattamies, Miami, Kaskaskias, Winnebagoes, and more. The first European explorers to observe the Kickapoos and their neighbors, Jacques Marquette and Louis Jolliet, noted that first and foremost, "the male role in Illinois society emphasized war and the hunt..."² Conflict was a major characteristic of the region.

¹ Also known as the Six Nations, the Iroquois nation was constituted of the Cayugas, Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Senecas, and later the Tuscarawas, who joined the nation in 1722.

² Davis, James E. *Frontier Illinois* (Bloomington: Indiana Press, 1998), p. 28; Raymond E. Hauser, "Warfare and the Illinois Indian Tribe during the Seventeenth Century: An Exercise in Ethnohistory," *The Old Northwest* 10 (Winter, 1985): p. 368.

INDIFFERENT INTERACTION

Jesuit Father Claude Allouez was the first European known to have interacted with the Kickapoos.³ In 1669 Allouez organized the mission of Saint-François-Xavier on the Fox River south of present-day Green Bay. This mission served as a launch point for Jesuits missionaries to penetrate the deep backcountry regions. That same year Father Allouez met several Kickapoo visitors at that mission, and noted that they welcomed missionaries to their villages. Upon visiting in 1670 he found the Kickapoos' village slightly separated from the Mascoutin, Miami and Wea lodges, but otherwise recorded little about the tribe.⁴ Allouez anticipated that there was more than enough missionary work to keep him busy just in that region, and resolved to return to the villages yet again, which he did in 1672 with the assistance of Father André.⁵ Unable to attend fully to all the western Great Lakes Indians, Allouez prepared materials for yet another Jesuit, Jacques Marquette.

Jacques Marquette and Louis Jolliet began their lives as theologians but the lure of the frontier transformed them into explorers and ethnographers. Born in Quebec,

³ It is possible that the famous French explorer Samuel de Champlain spotted the Kickapoos along Lake Michigan during his expeditions into Algonquian regions from 1608 to 1612, but his failure to identify several of the "Algonkian savages" he met render his record incomplete. The Jesuit Gabriel Druillettes may have seen them in 1658, but again the names he recorded are inconsistent with later terminology. Druillettes speaks of the "Outitchakouk," a thus far unrecognized tribe suspected to be the Kickapoos.

⁴ "Mascoutins Indians," in Kevin Knight, *New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia* (Denver: New Advent, 1995); Reuben Gold Thwaites, *Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and explorations of the French Jesuit Missionaries among the Indians of Canada and northern and north-western states of the United States, 1610-1791: with numerous historical, geographical, ethnological, and bibliographical notes, and an analytical index 1672-74*, vol. 58 (Cleveland: Burrows Brothers Company), p. 22-25, 223.

⁵ *Jesuit Relations*, Vol. 54, p. 227-239.

Jolliet attended Jesuit seminary but left the order in 1667. He enjoyed life on the frontier, and sought opportunities as a miner and trader among Indians. Marquette also had an itch for the frontier. Trained as a Jesuit priest in France, he requested a transfer to Quebec where he opened Indian missions, first at Chequamegon Bay on the west side of Lake Superior (with Allouez), then on the Straits of Mackinac between Lake Michigan and Lake Huron, and finally on the south-western shore of Lake Superior at the direction of Allouez. While there a passing party of Illinois Indians presented him with information of a great river that ran to a distant ocean—potentially the long sought Northwest Passage. Marquette planned to find that river, and he asked some Wyandot Indians to assist in the construction of a reliable canoe.⁶

Speculation that the mysterious river was the elusive Northwest Passage quickly reached Quebec. Intendant Jean Talon advised Governor Frontenac to dispatch Louis Jolliet to search for the rumored river; Marquette would accompany Jolliet as the expedition's chaplain. They disembarked from Mackinac in the spring of 1673, accompanied by five other Frenchmen in two canoes. Following the northern shore of Lake Michigan they entered Green Bay, and then onto Fox River. Traveling the Fox they met some Illinois Indians who were anxious to make European allies, the tribe suffering raids from the aforementioned northern invaders. The Illinois offered a peace pipe, but at the Frenchmen's insistence the Indians directed the party onward towards the as yet unrecognized Mississippi River, inviting the party to return. Continuing along the Fox, the expedition came upon a Miami, Mascoutin and Kickapoo village on June 7, 1673. Marquette recorded that the Miami were "more civil" than the Mascoutins and

⁶ "Jacques Marquette," *New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia*.

Kickapoos, whom he described as “ruder and more like peasants.”⁷ The party departed the village on June 10th with two Miami guides and no additional notations.

The meaning of Marquette’s simple passage regarding the Kickapoos is open to speculation. It may thinly veil a confrontation, or simply an uncomfortable feeling. Apparently these Europeans found the Kickapoos less cordial than the Miamis and Illinois. The root of the Kickapoos disposition is equally enigmatic. However, the tribe did allow the foreigners peaceful passage. Perhaps the Kickapoos were still undecided about the newcomers. Not only had Kickapoos visited Saint-François-Xavier after its completion in 1669, but they were likely aware of other explorers and proliferating Jesuit missions along the southern shores of the Great Lakes. As early as 1660, Jesuits established a mission on the shore of Keweenaw Bay, just north of present-day L’Anse, Michigan. In 1665 Allouez organized a mission among the Chippewa named Saint Esprit, located on the south shore of Lake Superior. Next, the French mission of Sault Saint Marie appeared at the junction of the three westernmost Great Lakes, and then Mackinaw at present-day St. Ignace, Michigan. In 1688 Allouez founded St. Joseph to minister among the Pottawatomies living near present-day Niles, Michigan. Historians must conclude that the Kickapoos were conscious of the newcomers and, for whatever reason, chose to remain indifferent to the French, neither welcoming nor repulsing their first visitors.⁸

⁷ “The Voyages and Discoveries of Father James Marquette in the Valley of the Mississippi,” John Gilmary Shea, *Discovery and Exploration of the Mississippi Valley, with the Original Narratives of Marquette, Allouez, Membre, Hennepin, and Anastase* (Douay, Albany: J. McDonough, 1903), p. 15-16.

⁸ “Catholic Indian Missions of the United States,” “Claude Allouez,” *New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia*.

After a short portage, Marquette and Jolliet reached the Wisconsin which local Indians claimed fed into a mighty river. They reached the Mississippi on June 17, 1673, but were soon turned back by rumors of hostile Indians and the fear of Spanish agents. On a return voyage, the expedition circumvented the Mississippi's powerful down currents by traveling up the Illinois to Green Bay. The following year Marquette attempted to return to the Illinois, but he was delayed and did not arrive until the spring of 1675. He established the Mission of the Immaculate Conception on the Illinois River and preached to the Indians, though he rapidly fell sick and died of dysentery while returning home.⁹ Despite limited contact with the Kickapoos, the expedition's charts of the Fox, Illinois, and Mississippi rivers provided France with a map of major river ways through the tribe's new homelands.

A third definitive interaction between Kickapoos and the French surfaces in the expeditions of René Robert Cavalier, Sieur de La Salle. Like Jolliet, this churchman abandoned his religious career for a life of exploration. His indigenous contacts are convoluted in the erroneous documentation of his travels, but in January of 1680 he did descend the Illinois River and spent the night with a band of Peoria Indians. Fearing marauding Iroquois, Peorias asked La Salle to help defend them. La Salle ordered his men to construct Fort Crevecoeur for the Indians' defense. In April, La Salle left a contingency of men at Crevecoeur and traveled to another post. In his absence, the remaining seven Europeans stripped the fort of supplies, burned it the ground, and abandoned the fort. The men also abandoned their chaplain, Jesuit Father Gabriel de la Ribourde.

⁹ "Catholic Indian Missions in the United States," *New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia; Jesuit Relations*, vol. 54, p. 86, 164.

Not long after, Kickapoo warriors fell upon Friar Gabriel. La Salle later reported that a band of Kickapoos, en route to raid against the Iroquois, murdered the Jesuit. The young warriors “pierced him with arrows, without our being aware of it.”¹⁰ Another Jesuit later recorded,

The Kickapoos, a little nation you may observe on the west, quite near the Winnebagos, had sent some of their youth in war parties against the Iroquois, but learning that the latter were attacking the Illinois, the war-party came after them. Three braves who formed a kind of advanced guard having met the good father alone, although they knew that he was not an Iroquois, killed him for all that, cast his body into a hole, and carried off even his breviary, and diurnal, which soon after came to the hands of a Jesuit father. They carried off the scalp of this holy man, and vaunted of it in their village as an Iroquois scalp.¹¹

The assumption that the Kickapoos knew the Jesuit was not an Iroquois does not imply the attack was directed at the French. On the contrary, the Kickapoos were indifferent toward foreigners. When it was convenient, the French were tolerated; but when a Frenchman wandered into the path of an advancing war party, neither nationality nor ecclesiastic status guaranteed any protection. The event was probably insignificant to the Kickapoos, who simply saw one more casualty in the region’s violent culture of conflict.

Initially the Kickapoos were too preoccupied with neighboring tribes to give considerable thought to the French newcomers. The Iroquois continued to raid the Kickapoos, pushing the tribe further south into present-day Illinois. Advancing in all

¹⁰ “Letter from Cavelier de La Salle,” Account of the Journey of Cavelier de La Salle, from he 22nd of August 1680 to the autumn of 1681, Bibliotheque Nationale. Fonds Clairambault 1016. fol. 157, Kickapoo file, Ohio Valley Great Lakes Ethnohistory Archive, Bloomington Indiana (hereafter noted as OVGLE Archive; all OVGLE resources cited herein are located in the Kickapoo file unless otherwise noted).

¹¹ “Narrative of the Adventures of La Salle’s Party at Fort Crevecoeur, in Illinois, from February, 1680, to June, 1681, by Father Zenobius Membre, Recollect,” John Gilmary Shea, *Discovery and Exploration of the Mississippi Valley, with the Original Narratives of Marquette, Allouez, Membre, Hennepin, and Anastase* (Douay, Albany: J. McDonough, 1903), p. 153-154.

directions, the well-armed and unified Iroquois may have seemed an unstoppable force.

One French explorer observed,

Although there are only about 2,500 warriors amongst them, as they are the best armed and most accustomed to war in all North America they have carried their arms in all directions, 800 leagues round, that is, toward the Gulf of St. Lawrence, to the northern sea, into Florida, and even beyond the Mississippi. They have destroyed more than thirty tribes, and in the last eighty years have put to death more than 600,000 souls, and have left the greater part of the countries round the great lakes uninhabited.¹²

Though these estimates may be unreliable, the passage captures the popular perception and awe of the Iroquois' enemies. The Kickapoos were under pressure from a powerful expanding force, and they regularly sent war parties of their own to challenge the Iroquois.

Among other advantages, European technology made the Iroquois formidable as traders and warriors. The Six Nations enjoyed close proximity to Dutch and French trade posts, which they visited regularly. The Kickapoos' access was limited, generally cut off by the confrontational Iroquois who profited by maintaining a buffer between Europeans in the east and the otherwise inaccessible western tribes. This technological disparity is well illustrated by a Jesuit priest who optimistically assessed missionary opportunities stemming from some recently converted Iroquois. He noted,

For our Iroquois have discovered, beyond the Cat Nation, other and numerous Nations who speak the Algonquin language. There are more than thirty villages whose inhabitants have never had any knowledge of Europeans; they still use only stone hatchets and knives, and the other things that these Savages used before they began to trade with the French.¹³

¹² De la Salle or Faher member, Magry, *Account of the Discoveries and Journies of Sieur de la Salle, 1679-80-81*, vol. 1, p. 543-544, OVGLE Archive.

¹³ *Jesuit Relations*, vol. 44, p. 49.

Indeed, the Iroquois presented an impressive empire isolating the Illinois and Ohio region tribes from French, Dutch, and British goods.

FRENCH EXPANSION

As French missions and posts trickled down through the three western Great Lakes circumventing the Iroquois, the Kickapoos too found irregular access to European technology. Marquette and Jolliet noted villages on the southern shores of Lake Michigan, and in 1696 Father Francois Pinet established the Mission of Guardian Angel at present-day Chicago. The mission was abandoned in 1700, but remained a popular region for daring traders and a source of French influence in present-day Illinois. As early as 1685, the French built Prairie du Chien on the Wisconsin. Seven years later France penetrated deeper, erecting Fort Pimitoui on the Illinois River in 1692. And in 1703, Jesuits repeatedly caught between warring tribes relocated the Kaskaskia Indian's mission south of Pimitoui near present-day St. Louis. Another permanent source of European influence emanated from the French trading post of Detroit. In 1698, entrepreneur Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac convinced the court of Louis XIV that a French post in the west was necessary to check growing British colonies in the east. Descending from Lake Huron to the St. Clair River and its namesake lake, the French erected the post only partially down the contiguous Detroit River. Established in 1701, Detroit ensured regular French influence in the region.

In addition to Kickapoo conflicts with the Iroquois, the Sioux also engaged the Kickapoos quite regularly. Usually joining with the Foxes and Mascoutins, the Kickapoos defended and counter raided against the powerful Sioux nations and its allies,

including the Iowas and Osages.¹⁴ The arrival of the French complicated the crisis, as traders sought to attract competing tribes to central trading posts.

One such post was erected across from the Des Moines River, southeast of the Kickapoos then residing along the Illinois River. French traders demanded Sioux, Omahas, Kickapoos, Foxes and Mascoutins all trade at that post. Hesitant to make a long trek southward, the French enticed the Sioux by limiting trade at northern posts. Likewise, the Kickapoos, Foxes and Mascoutins were prohibited from trading at Detroit, and France temporarily forbade all traders there from servicing those tribes. Intending to create a major trade hub near the Des Moines, the French fully expected to draw the Kickapoos into locations convenient to French trade, assigning them locations to live and hunt as European lords might manage peasants. Noting the withdrawing Illinois Indians and expecting the Kickapoos to migrate into those lands, one French official explained,

When the Illinois have left their country, we shall easily get the Mascoutins and the Kickapoos to occupy it. That would give us 450 good men, who are now on the streams falling into the Illinois River and the Mississippi. Their only occupation is hunting for beaver skins, which they go and sell at the Green Bay and in the Illinois country.... By taking these Miamis, Mascoutins and Kickapoos, formerly on the Mississippi, from their present stations and placing them on the Illinois River or lower down, the beaver-trade of Canada will be relieved of fifteen thousand skins a year.¹⁵

The French truly believed they could manipulate and move the various tribes to hunt and trap in assigned regions. The complex concerns and issues facing the tribes were not even considered—it was as though the Indians existed only to profit the crown.

¹⁴ Blair, *Nicoles Perrot* vol. 1, p. 171, OVGLE Archive; “Le Sueur’s Voyage up the Mississippi,” Shea, *Early Voyages up and Down the Mississippi*, p. 92-93.

¹⁵ “Memorandum by d’Iberville, June 20, 1702,” Magry, vol. 4, p. 661-662, OVGLE Archive.

Aspirations of incorporating the Kickapoos into a European trade empire met two major obstacles: reliably circumventing the Iroquois barrier and pacifying the tumultuous Illinois and Ohio Country. At the turn of the century the Iroquois began an era termed by one historian as “the Iroquois restoration.”¹⁶ During this time the nation made peace with neighboring Europeans and Indians, ideally facilitating France’s desire to access the region southwest of the Great Lakes. That left only one obstacle to French expansion and trade profits. In 1701 a large coalition of Sauks, Winnebagos, Menominees, Foxes, Potawatomis and Kickapoos assembled at Green Bay, preparing to launch a major assault on the Dakota Sioux. However, a French emissary at the settlement dissuaded the Indians from their nefarious designs.¹⁷ But such acquiescence was no pledge of peace, simply a temporary adjournment of war—and the French knew it. To ensure lasting peace, the crown was willing to apply pressure wherever it could. In one report a French official explained,

Send definite orders to the commandant at Detroit on no account to permit any Frenchman to go to trade with the Fox or Mascoutins or Kickapoos, nor to Green Bay, nor even to Chicago; and forbid them to make war against any of the Indians on the Missouri. If no one goes to those tribes, they will be obliged to come straight to Detroit or to the posts on the Mississippi; if they do not, we need not trouble, for these Indians cannot go to any other Europeans. By this means we shall have control of them.¹⁸

This obscene French audacity was unmatched by anything the Kickapoos previously experienced. Surely the Kickapoos were appalled at France’s attempts to manipulate and seize “control of them.” Dictating where the tribe could hunt, trade, and reside was

¹⁶ Richard Aquila, *The Iroquois Restoration: Iroquois Diplomacy on the Colonial Frontier, 1701-1754* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), title.

¹⁷ “Keeting: Long’s Second Expedition: 1824: vol. 1, p. 425-426, OVGLE Archive.

¹⁸ “Memorandum on the Settlement of Mobile and the Mississippi,” *English Translation of Margry*, vol. 4, p. 650-657, OVGLE Archive.

audacious enough; mandating these demands through aggressive economic and diplomatic restrictions was certain to go over poorly in the Kickapoos tribal councils.

At one time the Kickapoos and French co-existed too distant to interact much, but with each year French influences expanded, making it all that much harder to ignore Europeans. The French erected settlements at Cahokia (1699), Detroit (1701) and Kaskaskia (1703), and more traders surfaced every spring. Then in 1717 France annexed the Illinois Valley and Scottish financier John Law purchased the Mississippi Company with intents to promote Mississippi River settlement along with his pocketbook. By the 1720's, backcountry silver and lead mining also to attract Europeans. France became territorially, economically, and politically intrusive.

More than simply infringing on indigenous lands, the Europeans sought to undermine Native cultures. French traders hoped to transform Indians into fur harvesting employees. Though traders capitalized on customary Indian skills such as hunting and trapping, the introduction of European goods and ideas displaced traditional responsibilities to tribe, band and family units. Even more disruptive, Jesuit Priests continued to pour forth into Indian lands, each one seeking to supplant the autochthonous culture with Christian principles. Speaking of Indians in general, one Jesuit observed that many are "averse to embracing Christianity," but acquiesced to pressures demanding they send their children to the local mission chapels. Additionally,

You will be surprised to learn that several of these jugglers, when they fall ill, willingly have recourse to the missionary; and there are but few who do not listen to him, and who do not admit that there is a Great Spirit, the maker of all things, who alone must be adored. Recently one of the chief men asked to be instructed, after having 10% resisted. Afterward, when he

fell ill, and was near his end, he had no rest until he at last received holy baptism, while exhorting all his children to embrace our religion.¹⁹

Though Indian conversion may not genuinely reflect an exclusive acceptance of Christianity, the Jesuits were making an impact. They hoped to “save” Indians from their “pagan” ways. One by one if necessary, the Jesuits existed solely to transform Indian ideas and culture.

French political intentions also influenced backcountry tribes. By 1708 the Sauks and Pottawattamies were particularly concerned, as they heard that the French bribed the Kickapoos, Weas and Miamis to suspend Sioux raids and refocus attacks on their own neighbors. Speaking to a Wea chief, a joint delegation of one Sauk and one Pottawattamie asked about the recent politicking. They noted the French “made presents to the Miamis, the Wea and Kickapoos, to induce them to tomahawk us all, instead of exhorting them to go with us against the Sioux.”²⁰ Whether or not the French had made such gestures is questionable, but it seems likely given the Kickapoo diplomacy that evolved. No evidence remains to corroborate the Indians concerns, but such behavior would later become a central tenet of Kickapoo foreign policy.

VIOLENT OPPOSITION TO FRENCH EXPANSION

With their land, political sovereignty, and cultural independence all under siege, the Kickapoos were in no condition to challenge the French and their Indian allies. Generations of war had taken its toll on the Kickapoos, and by the eighteenth century the

¹⁹ “Letter of Father Julien Binneteau, of the Society of Jesus, to a Father of the Same Society, From the Illinois country, [January,] 1699,” *Jesuit Relations* 65, p. 65-66.

²⁰ “Letter,” Cadillac Papers, Michigan Historical Collections 33, p. 433, OVGLE Archive.

tribe clearly demonstrated signs of prolonged warfare. One explorer described the Kickapoos as “almost all crippled with wounds and covered with scars, being always at war.” Even combined with their Mascoutin allies, by 1710 the two tribes could only marshal one hundred and fifty warriors.²¹ Regardless of such obvious weaknesses, the tribe grew tired of French meddling and imperialism, and in 1712 the Kickapoos’ policy of indifference to France came to a screeching halt.

In the winter of 1711/12, Kickapoos and other neighboring nations continued to engage in typical small skirmishes. In one incident, a Kickapoo chief “seized” some Wyandots, a tribe historically allied to the French. During the following spring the Wyandots returned the favor, raiding some Kickapoos. A boat full of Kickapoos traveled to Detroit where they hoped to rally other tribes to their cause. While en route, the Wyandots fell upon the Kickapoo boat where they found the same chief whom they sought to punish. He was decapitated and his head delivered to the French. Demanding vengeance, band of Kickapoos then intercepted the first Frenchmen they saw, a man surnamed Langlois who was carrying official documents back to Canadian Governor Philippe de Rigaud, Marquis de Vaudreuil. The letters were destroyed, and Langlois was sent back to Canada with an unspoken message—the French were no longer welcome.²² The Kickapoos rallied their long time allies, the Mascoutins and Foxes, and raided Europeans whenever the opportunity arose. Vaudreuil soon observed, “This tribe of the

²¹ “Letter 54: Of the Puants, the Outagamis, the Mascoutins and the Kicapous, at Quebec, 1710,” Antoine Dennis Raudot, *Memoir Concerning the Different Indian Nations of North America: Translation of Letters 45 to 72 inclusive*, OVGLE Archive; “Memoir on the Savages of Canada as Far as the Mississippi River, Describing their Customs and Trade,” *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, vol. 16, p. 372, OVGLE Archive.

²² “Dubuisson to Vaudreuil, June 15, 1712,” *Michigan Historical Collections*, 33, 550-551, OVGLE Archive.

Foxes, Kickapoos, and Mascoutins is found everywhere when they are least expected, and they are people who will listen to no reason, and have no pity.”²³

Realizing that alone they were no match for France and its allied tribes, the Kickapoos experimented with a new political option—peace with the Iroquois. Aware that the French and allied Wyandots and Ottawas experienced a long tradition of war with the Iroquois, the Kickapoos invited the Iroquois to council in 1714.²⁴ Supported by the Iroquois, the Kickapoos hoped to seal off the French once more. Unfortunately for the Kickapoos, the weakened Iroquois had likewise turned to a new policy of peaceful diplomacy, but with the French. A few years earlier the Iroquois negotiated an unprecedented treaty with the French, inadvertently undermining emerging Kickapoo intentions. Having hunted out their own lands, the Iroquois were desperate to gain access to western territories. France offered to support that desire if the Iroquois would join the French trade empire. That policy began in 1701 with the Grand Settlement Treaty at Montreal, which guaranteed Iroquois neutrality in all French conflicts. The Iroquois then made peace with western tribes allied to France so that they could peacefully hunt in their homelands. The Iroquois also maintained friendly relations with Britain, who facilitated a 1710 treaty between the Iroquois and the Ottawas.²⁵ The Iroquois hoped to rejuvenate

²³ “Letter to Vaudreuil,” *Michigan Historical Collections* vol. 11, OVGLE Archive.

²⁴ “Letter to the Minister, October 23, 1714,” *Wisconsin Historical Collections* vol. 16, p. 310, OVGLE Archive.

²⁵ Richard Aquila. *The Iroquois Restoration: Iroquois Diplomacy on the Colonial Frontier*, p. 131-133.

their nation through mutual friendship with all Indians and Europeans. If the Kickapoos intended to oppose the French, they would have only their Mascoutin and Fox allies.²⁶

Petty Kickapoo raids proved effective, stirring the wrath of the French. From 1712 to 1715, Kickapoos and their allies continued to threaten French traders, and the tribe restricted the aggressive French diplomatic overtures. Meanwhile, French intrigues to limit the Kickapoos' trade failed to constrain the tribe. Equally futile were French attempts to manipulate the tribe's foreign relations, as French-allied tribes fruitlessly admonished peace. Still France hoped to absorb the tribe into their trade empire; if the Kickapoos allegiance could not be won in diplomacy, it would be earned through military subjugation.

On November 20, 1715, France orchestrated a massive three-pronged attack against the Kickapoos and Mascoutins. Receiving intelligence that the Kickapoos' warriors were hunting away from their villages, France mobilized "a detachment of savages from St. Louis sent by Monsieur de Ramezay, the Wyandots of Detroit, and a detachment of Potowatomies" to raid the defenseless elders, women and children at the village. The French allies fell upon a large Kickapoo-Mascoutin village and destroyed their cattail-weaved cabins, leaving little more than ashes. They then tracked down the warriors that were away hunting, and after trapping them against a steep rock, killed over a hundred men and took forty-seven prisoners. Coming to the aid of their friends, the

²⁶ "Ramezay, Claude de, letter to the Minister, September 18, 1714," *Wisconsin Historical Collections* vol. 16, p. 300-303, OVGLE Archive.

Foxes massed several hundred warriors to intercept the French allied tribes. After a long battle lasting from dawn until mid-afternoon, the Foxes too were defeated.²⁷

Unable to secure a treaty with the defiant Kickapoos, on October 12, 1716, Sieur de Louvigny came to Quebec with a treaty he had forced upon the Foxes. It stipulated first that the Foxes would make peace with France and all French-allied tribes. Second, “that they shall by forcible or friendly means bring the Kickapoos and Mascoutins, their allies and our enemies, to make peace as they do, with all the nations in general.” Third, the Foxes were to release any French-allied Indian prisoners; fourth, the tribe was to attack non-French-allied tribes, capturing slaves “to replace all the dead who had been slain during the course of the war.” Fifth, the Fox were to hunt for the French, surrendering their spoils to pay the costs of the war. Finally, the tribe was to deliver up children from six chiefs as collateral against any treachery.²⁸

This French statement of authority was received not only by the Foxes, but by the Kickapoos as well. The battle was likely the single greatest loss in the tribe’s living memory—nearly wiping out an entire band. Surviving Kickapoos surely spent that winter in discussion, deciding how to respond to the French display of strength. Weighing their options, the Kickapoos chose a revolutionary policy, perhaps inspired by their recent Iroquois dealings. The tribe would ask for peace. Luring the French into a false sense of security, the Kickapoos decided to feign submission for the time. During the following summer, a Kickapoo chief sent a message to the French. A French official explained,

²⁷ “Vaudreuil, Letter of Marine, Oct. 14, 1716,” *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, vol. 16, p. 341-344, OVGLE Archive;

²⁸ “Vaudreuil, Letter of Marine, Oct. 14, 1716,” *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, vol. 16, 341-344, OVGLE Archive.

The chief of the Kickapoos came to declare to the first Frenchmen whom he encountered that both his nation and that of the Mascoutins threw themselves into the arms of Monsieur de Vaudreuil, their Father, declaring themselves his slaves, to be dispersed among whatever action he judged proper; and that moreover, if the Fox refused to share in these sentiments, they would deliver them up to the kettle.²⁹

The new policy was clear only to the Kickapoos. On the surface they pledged allegiance to France, but it was only a temporary solution. By employing a fluid loyalty the tribe could survive and hopefully strengthen until the Kickapoos could reassert themselves as one of the dominant western tribes. Offering to turn against long time allies was a dangerously treacherous step, but the Kickapoos knew the Foxes had made peace with France, and that the latter had little need to attack the former. Nevertheless, the offer represented a startlingly new undercurrent in Kickapoo-Fox relations that would surface in the near future. In the meantime, the maneuver succeeded in endearing the Kickapoos to the French, enabling the tribe to endure in a new political environment of quickly changing loyalties.

SHREWD COMPLIANCE

Empowered by guarantees of support, or at least neutrality, from France and the many French-allied tribes, in 1718 the Kickapoos reinstated an aggressive policy of territorial domination that continued for over forty years. Virtually united with the Mascoutin tribe after generations of cohabitation, the Kickapoo-Mascoutin nation turned its fury on the Illinois Indians much as before the arrival of the French.

²⁹ “Vaudreuil, Letter of Marine, Oct. 14, 1716,” *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, vol. 16, 441, OVGLE Archive.

Beginning in 1718 French reports arrived at Governor Vaudreuil's desk elucidating the sudden Kickapoo resurgence. The reports also explained the Foxes, traditional allies of the Kickapoos and Mascoutins, chose not to participate.³⁰ Instead, they strictly adhered to a peaceful policy of neutrality in accordance with the French treaty of 1715. But that policy did not last long. By 1721, the Foxes joined the Kickapoos and Mascoutins, decimating the Illinois Indians. The Foxes were not the only tribe to join forces with the reinvigorated Kickapoos. According to one French report, the Kickapoo's alliance included Mascoutins, Foxes, Sauks, Winnebagoes, and even Sioux. The cooperation of the Sioux was a particularly valuable development for the Kickapoos, as this new allegiance of a long-time enemy further strengthened the Kickapoo drive for territorial supremacy in the Illinois Country.³¹

As Kickapoos reasserted their might, their French "allies" also continued to expand. In 1720 the French erected Fort Chartres along the Mississippi River, eighteen miles north of Kaskaskia. European workers gathering at Kaskaskia swelled the French village's size. Once Chartres was completed, it became the administrative hub of the region. Two years later, in 1722, the French erected Fort Prairie du Rocher four miles east of Chartres, further spreading French influence and authority.

Again unhappy with increasing French intrusions, and emotionally inflated by victories over the Illinois, the Kickapoos, Mascoutins and Foxes took an aggressive stance against the French once more. In 1723 the Foxes raided French settlements. The

³⁰ "Vaudreuil to the Council, Oct. 30, 1718," *Wisconsin Historical Collections* vol. 16, p. 377, OVGLE Archive.

³¹ "Vandruil to the Minister, Oct. 2, 1723," *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, vol. 16, p. 429-431, 434, OVGLE Archive; "Vaudreuil to the Council of the Marine, Oct. 22, 1720," *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, vol. 16, p. 393, OVGLE Archive.

French were surprised at the resumption of hostilities, especially after the Indians' decimating defeat only eight years earlier. One official questioned whether the chiefs had control over their young warriors. But the Foxes were not the only marauders. The Kickapoos too began raiding French traders, killing five men along the Wabash River in 1725.³² In the spring of that year, two other Frenchmen were also killed by a mixed party of Kickapoos and young Fox warriors.³³ Additionally, Kickapoos and Foxes attempted to block French access to their new friends, the Sioux. That maneuver failed though, most obviously in 1727 when the Jesuits established two missions among the Sioux.³⁴

The French response to Kickapoo and Fox aggressions was more peaceful than before. The French began by negotiating with Ouachala, a Fox chief. Ouachala told the French that his young men were out of control, and that he had no desire to disrupt the peace. His solution was French benevolence to win over the youth. The French were not initially convinced of this strategy, and they debated the merits of generosity versus the alternative—a major military campaign into the distant Illinois Valley. After some debate, French officials opted to wait out the Fox, treating them peaceably in hopes that the elders could again restrain their youth. This solution, the French hoped, would again create a mediator between the crown and the Kickapoos. Of this plan, one official wrote,

Then, after the treaty of peace made with the Foxes and their allies has been renewed, we could, the following summer, have Ouachala, Principal chief of the Foxes, come down to Montreal with the war chiefs of the Sauks, Winnebagoes, Kickapoos, Mascoutins, and Sioux—one of each of

³² “Du Tisé to Vaudreuil, January 14, 1725,” *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, vol. 16, p. 450-451, OVGLE Archive.

³³ “Longueil, Charles Lemoine, Baron de Begon, Claude Michel to the Minister for the Navy, 31 October, 1725, Quebec,” *Ministere des Colonies*. Canada, *Corres. Generale*, vol. 47, p. 548, OVGLE Archive.

³⁴ “Beauharnoiw, Charles de la Boische, Marquis de, Agreement with the Compagnie des Sioux, June 6, 1727,” OVGLE Archive.

these nations allied with the Foxes, in order to interrogate them regarding the situation of affairs where they are, and at the same time to declare to them the intentions of the King.³⁵

The French plan to placate the Fox and then employ them to pacify other tribes was underway, and Governor Vandrui expected it to take several years. In the meantime, increasingly belligerent Kickapoos raided, kidnapped and killed any Europeans in their homelands.

In November of 1728 Kickapoos fell upon an elite party returning from St. Michael, one of the two missions recently established among the Sioux. Among other officers and seigniors, the party included St. Michael's founder, Jesuit Father Guignas. The events that followed radically redefined Kickapoo foreign policy.

On the 16th of November, at eight o'clock in the morning, the French expedition came across a band of Kickapoos and Mascoutins who were out hunting. Fearing the Indians, the twelve well-armed Frenchmen prepared their powder and lead. To their surprise, the Kickapoos called out, "What fear ye, my brothers? The Foxes are far from here. We are Kickapoos and Mascoutins and have no evil designs." The professed friendship was suspicious, but still preferable to open conflict.

Kickapoos and Mascoutins descended from the banks, surrounded the boats, and proceeded to force themselves between the Frenchmen, insisting the visitors join them at their village. Overwhelmed and afraid, the French acquiesced. Together they walked to a nearby village, where the twelve men were escorted to a lodge set aside for their private use. There they were peacefully imprisoned as "guests" for the next five months. Despite failed attempts at flight, bribery and reason, the French found no escape.

³⁵ "Resume of affaire in 1726 relating to the Fox-Illinois War," Paris Archives, *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, vol. 16, p. 467, OVGLE Archive.

During the five-month captivity, the Kickapoos' antagonistic attitude towards the Frenchmen gradually changed, until finally a completely new posture blossomed. As early as the second day of their captivity, the French were subjected to verbal harassments and accusations. Ironically, Kickapoo chiefs accused the French of violence and duplicity, and voiced anger for France's intentions to force Kickapoos to migrate to French-chosen locations. When Father Guignos attempted to defend himself, explaining that the Jesuits had no part in military and political maneuvers, he was censured. "Be silent, you old babbler," one warrior insisted. The Frenchmen were not brought to the village for discussion, but rather for the tribe's protection. French allied Indians had recently threatened the Kickapoos. Some even pledged to attack during the winter—a universally perceived peacetime during any conflict. To ensure the tribe's safety, the Frenchmen were taken hostage. That motivation came clear one week into their captivity when a Kickapoo explained to Father Guignos that the imprisonment was "for the purpose of saving our children's lives that we stop you; you will be our safeguard." And so despite a hostile disposition, the Kickapoos intended to preserve their captives' lives—their fates were inseparably bound for the winter season. One Frenchman later recounted that the Kickapoos "fear French retaliation should a Frenchman die while in their custody." The hostages had to be kept alive.³⁶

The Foxes, old allies of the Kickapoos who recently resumed raids against the French, had a different plan for the hostages. When they heard of the Kickapoos' captives, several Foxes visited the village. They voiced anger at France's intrusion into

³⁶ "Narrative of De Boucherville; Captivity among the Kickapoo; Hostility to the Foxes," OVGLE Archive; "Boucherville, Sieur, Pierre Boucher Narrative, 1728-1729," *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, vol. 17, p. 38-50, OVGLE Archive.

the Foxes' homelands, and they demanded the Kickapoos yield up a hostage to be punished. The Kickapoos refused and expelled the contentious visitors. On their way home, those angered Foxes came across a party of Kickapoos and Mascoutins, whom they attacked. Two Indians died: one Kickapoo and one Mascoutin. Fearful of an imming rift between the tribes, a Fox chief later donated the lives of five Fox men as payment for the two dead. Frustrated by the situation, a Kickapoo chief griped to his captives, "You are the cause of our being massacred.... And we are paying very dearly for the pleasure of having you."³⁷

Obviously upset by the conflict, the Kickapoos turned to their French captives, inviting them to negotiate with the Foxes and neighboring tribes. Playing the victim, the Kickapoos explained that they had suffered death because they protected the French, and now the French owed them this service. A keen Frenchman responded,

If the Foxes have killed you as you assert, you see that they no longer look upon you as their kin. I exhort you to avenge yourselves. You may rest assured that the wicked nation can live no longer. The King wishes their death.³⁸

With those words the French not only encouraged the Kickapoos to turn on their long-time allies, but also extended a provocative opportunity. The French reassured the Kickapoos that they could once again be the masters of their region if they only accepted the French as their liege.

During the following spring, French allied tribes rallied against the belligerent Foxes yet again. Kickapoos were well aware of the political climate. They could choose any of three actions: defend the Fox against the odds; assume neutrality without gain or

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

loss; or they could turn on their long-time friends and ally with French, winning the spoils of war, trade, and French neutrality in their own attempts to dominate the region. The Kickapoos chose the later, and by autumn of 1729 the Foxes were begging the French to call off the attacks.³⁹

Determined to punish the treacherous Foxes, France organized a series of allied raids against the tribe. These plains culminated in a major campaign during August of 1730. A large contingent of Kickapoos and Mascoutins complimented an army of 100 Frenchmen and 400 Indians. Together they attacked the Foxes early in the month. Another mass of French allied tribes attacked the Foxes again later in August. The Commandant of Fort Detroit observed, “When the Winnebagoes, Mascoutins, and Kickapoos learned this, they marched thither.” Soon after, a band of Foxes was discovered engaging some Illinois Indians, and so the Kickapoos fell upon the Foxes’ rear. “Consequently the Foxes found themselves by this attack hemmed in by the Illinois on the side and on the other by the Winnebagoes, Kickapoos, and Mascoutins.”⁴⁰ Again in August the French-allies attacked another Fox band, trapping them in a fort for three weeks. One officer recorded that the Foxes tried to escape under cover of night. The French allies chased them down the following morning when France’s Indian confederacy “routed them” and killed over 200 Foxes.⁴¹ As in their former domination of the Illinois and Peorias, Kickapoos again demonstrated their militant might, fiercely

³⁹ “Beauharnois to the Minister, July 21, 1729,” *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, vol. 17, OVGLE Archive; “Letter of Beauharnois to the French Minister,” Aug. 17, 1729,” *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, vol. 17, OVGLE Archive.

⁴⁰ “Letter of Commandant at Detroit (Deschaillons) to Beauharnois, August 22, 1730,” MS. In archives of Ministere des Colonies, Paris; pres-mark, Canada, Corresp. Gen., vol. 53, c. 11, fol., p. 207-214, OVGLE Archive.

⁴¹ “Letter of De Villiers,” *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, vol. 17, OVGLE Archive.

pursuing the Foxes. One French officer observed, “Our Kickapoos and Mascoutins did wonders on this expedition, and all did equally well, vying with one another.”⁴²

The new Kickapoo alliance with France was not without its weaknesses. On occasion, the Kickapoos demonstrated stubborn independence. At other times, the French suspected the tribe of secret alliances with the Fox. One Frenchman questioned the loyalty of the Kickapoos. They, he explained,

only formed an apparent league with us against the Fox Indians—rather with the object of protecting them than to destroy them. All these tribes together, united by their relationship to one another are simply held back by fear; and if they abase themselves now, it is in order to draw down supplies which they share with the Fox Indians.... Let us rather say that, although they went [to war against the Fox] it was only in order to save them.⁴³

Despite such concerns, the immerging Franco-Kickapoo relationship generally blossomed over the succeeding fifteen years. In exchange for tolerating French expansion, the Kickapoos received trade goods and re-emerged as a regional power. But with each year the French entrenched themselves deeper in the Illinois and Ohio Country.

French intrusion southwest of the Great Lakes increased significantly from 1732 onward. In that year Post Vincennes was established on the east end of the Wabash. Its French population continued to grow, so much that in 1749 the village erected an imposing Catholic cathedral to meet the needs of French populations and converted Indians. From that village, French traders flooded the region with European goods and influence. From 1740 to 1748, France constructed a string of forts in the Ohio Country

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ “Memoir on the present State of Canada, 1730,” *Michigan Historical Collections*, vol. 34, p. 73-74, OVGLE Archive.

designed to obstruct British expansion and monopolize the region's fur trapping. French gifts, trade, and services again enticed tribes to relocate near the posts.

Increasingly valuing European goods, the Kickapoos grew to accept French expansion. So enamored with the products, by 1742 the Kickapoos requested a French blacksmith and regular traders, which were offered in exchange for Kickapoo service as mercenaries against Chickasaws, a southern tribe that stubbornly refused French hegemony.⁴⁴ When the French constructed a new fort on the Wabash the Kickapoos were quickly convinced to move nearby in order to gain access to French services. Two months later French negotiations led to the migration of another Kickapoo band, likewise seeking European goods. One official recorded,

The Shawnee, Kickapoos & Mascoutins, will on this measures' Succeeding, settle so as to Cover the Mississippi. – but they indispensably expect to be furnished with Indian Goods. – if we cannot do this; - they will fall off to the English, more than ever alienated from the French.⁴⁵

Though French expansion was the source of previous conflicts between the French and Kickapoos, after a hundred years of exposure to European products the tribe developed an affinity for foreign goods. Just as French traders and Jesuits had hoped, Indian culture grew more dependent on European products, so much so that expansion could be tolerated for the guarantee of trade goods and French neutrality in Kickapoo territorial conquests.

By November 1742, Kickapoos and Mascoutins had spread across present-day Illinois from the Wabash to the Mississippi, asserting territorial dominance over other

⁴⁴ “1742: Other Western Indians at Montréal,” *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, vol. 17, p. 380-387, OVGLE Archive.

⁴⁵ “Vaudreuil, Cavagnal, Pierre Francois M. de Rigaud, Marquis de, Extracts in English taken from the letter books of the Marquis de Vaudreuil (In the handwriting of John Appy), July 18, 1743,” folio 3, p. 26, 35, OVGLE Archive.

tribes and securing French trade. During the succeeding five years, Kickapoo bands settled as far east as Detroit, dispelling any tribes that resisted French authority in present day Indiana.⁴⁶ As Kickapoos gained access to French gifts, trade and services, their formerly hostile relations transformed into a pleasant co-existence. In 1748 one French report listed the Kickapoos among “Nations that had long been attached to the French.”⁴⁷ Working together the Kickapoos resurfaced as one of the dominant tribes while the French secured their supremacy over other would-be European intruders and non-compliant tribes.

In the years building up to and through the French and Indian War, France continued to erect backcountry forts. In 1749 France rebuilt a post among the Miami on the Ohio River. By 1750 Sainte Genevieve was a growing French town located sixty-five miles south of St. Louis along the Mississippi River. Within a few years a small chain of French forts descended south from Lake Erie through present-day Pennsylvania. In 1754 the French upgraded an old trading post at the junction of the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers, creating Fort Duquesne at what is today downtown Pittsburgh.

DETACHMENT

Regardless of what appeared to be a booming Indian trade industry, France lacked the funds and naval strength to continue shipping gifts to North America’s Indians.

Backcountry Indians accustomed to French gifts and trade surely noticed France’s

⁴⁶ “Maurepas to La Galissoniers, Versailles, February 23, 1748,” (Archives Nationales, Minister des Colonies, 887:31), *Illinois Historical Collections, French Series*, vol. 3, p. 51, OVGLE Archive.

⁴⁷ “Letters from the French minister to La Galissoniere, Feb. 23, 1748,” Reuben Gold Thwaites, (ed.), *The French Regime in Wisconsin. The Shawnee. Collections of the State History Society of Wisconsin*, vol. 18, p.11, OVGLE Archive.

declining generosity. The War of Austrian Succession (1740-1748) drained her coffers and endangered dwindling shipments to America. Canadian merchants were receiving few and fewer goods each year. Meanwhile, British merchants received and produced Indian trade goods delivered by eager entrepreneurs. With each year more and more tribes formerly limited to the French began trading with the British where they found better quality goods for lower prices.⁴⁸

Initially the Kickapoos rejected the British representatives and remained loyal to their French partners in regional dominance. One French official observed that the Kickapoos rejected several British officials on multiple occasions. He suggested the tribe receive rewards for its loyalty.⁴⁹ A Wea chief confirmed, “My father, the Kickapoos and the Mascoutins would not listen to La Tortue and have not been at the council at Great Miami River.”⁵⁰ A year later, in 1751, a French official recorded, “Only the Kickapoo and Mascoutins have been unwilling to receive the English [Wampum] belts.”⁵¹ In fact, by April 1752 the British had successfully co-opted all the tribes surround the Kickapoos and Mascoutins, and yet the two unified tribes remained loyal to the French, even protecting a French blacksmith from some raiding Indians. Of course, that very act may

⁴⁸ “Reports to Raymond. March-April, 1750,” *Illinois Historical Collections, French Series*, vol. 3, p. 166, OVGLE Archive; “Reports to Raymond, May 1750,” *Illinois Historical Collections, French Series*, vol. 3, p. 194-196, OVGLE Archive.

⁴⁹ “Reports to Raymond, May 1750,” *Illinois Historical Collections, French Series*, vol. 3, p. 196, OVGLE Archive.

⁵⁰ “Raymond to La Jonquiere, May 22, 1750.” *Illinois Historical Collections, French Series*, vol. 3, p. 206, 209-210, OVGLE Archive.

⁵¹ “La Jonquiere to Rouille, Sept. 27, 1751,” *Illinois Historical Collections, French Series*, vol. 3, p. 376, OVGLE Archive.

just illustrate the tribe's loyalties to their access of European goods and services more than any specific nation.⁵²

While the Kickapoos refused British agents, by 1752 they also turned down French requests for support. A volley of letters penned in April 1752 illustrates the changing disposition of the tribe. One French agent wrote that a "great reliance is not to be placed on the Mascoutins, and that their remaining neutral is all that is to be expected from them and the Kickapoos."⁵³ Four days later another official penned, "Nothing should be neglected to maintain the Kickapoos and Mascoutins in our interest..."⁵⁴ By the end of the month, Governor Vaudreuil voiced his opinion on the matter, explaining that the Kickapoos and Mascoutins were not "ill-intended" toward the French. His instructions were much as the others, to "try to conciliate them or at least to keep them neutral in all these events."⁵⁵ A few months later, in a letter to the governor, one official lamented that the Kickapoos "will not take arms against our enemies, at least [not] unless they see us in enough force to do without them. Then their help will be quite useless to us."⁵⁶ The Kickapoos saw the tide turning from French to British providers, but were slow to choose a side. Instead the tribe opted to wait out the changing political environment to be sure they were not caught on the wrong side.

⁵² "Raymond to La Jonquiere, May 22, 1750." *Illinois Historical Collections, French Series*, vol. 3, p. 206, 209-210; "Vaudreuil to Rouille, April 8, 1752," Pease and Jenison, French Series 3, p. 572-574, OVGLE Archive.

⁵³ "Longueueil to Maurepas, April 21, 1752." *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, vol. 16, p. 108, OVGLE Archive.

⁵⁴ "Vaudreuil to Macarty, April 25, 1752," Pease and Jenison, French Series 3, p. 591-92, OVGLE Archive.

⁵⁵ "Vaudreuil to St. Ange, April 28, 1752," Pease and Jenison, French Series 3, p. 612, Huntington Library, Loudoun Collection 362, OVGLE Archive.

⁵⁶ "De Ligneria to Vaudreuil, Oct. 3, 1752," Pease and Jenison, French Series 3, p. 731-732, OVGLE Archive.

Kickapoos withdrew from entangling commitments with France as British interests in the backcountry magnified. Trade to the backcountry had long interested British merchants, but until France was sufficiently weakened such access was tenuous at best. Indians residing as far west as the Kickapoos, then clustered along the Wabash and Illinois Rivers, were certainly out of reach. Traders were not the only interested British. As early as 1745 the Ohio Company organized, intent on surveying, selling, and profiting from the backcountry. In 1745 these Virginia businessmen won a royal charter granting them 200,000 acres of trans-Appalachian territory reaching along the Ohio River.

Once the French and Indian War began to rage, many Indian Nations were pulled into conflict. Most were located relatively farther east, and those seated deep in the backcountry were less apt to be drawn into the conflict. Many tribes remote to the war action took the opportunity to reassert their territorial dominance. A 1753 report observed that the Kickapoos continued their campaigns against their long-time enemies, the Chickasaws.⁵⁷ Two years later, 1754, the Kickapoos officially united with the Mascoutins, Pottawattamies and some Sioux to nearly annihilate the Peoria nation.⁵⁸ During the following two years, Kickapoos joined with Miamis to engage the Illinois, definitively conquering most of present-day Illinois.⁵⁹ With France's growing British preoccupation (before and during the French and Indian War) smaller tribes of the deep backcountry fell victim to Kickapoo expansion once again. After the 1759 fall of

⁵⁷ "Macarty to Rouille, May 20, 1753," Pease and Jenison, French Series, 3, p. 815, OVGLE Archive.

⁵⁸ "Letter from Du Quesne to the French Minister, Oct. 13, 1754." *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, vol. 18, p. 141 (Reprint from N.Y. Colonial Manuscripts, vol. 10, p. 262-263), OVGLE Archive.

⁵⁹ "Journal of Occurrence in Canada from October, 1755 to June, 1756," New York Colonial Manuscripts, vol 10, Paris Documents 39, p. 401, OVGLE Archive.

Quebec, and France's retreat from North America, British soldiers trickled into the region's formerly French posts to find demanding tribes that were well accustomed to dealing with Europeans.

Despite the formal defeat of France professed by the 1763 Treaty of Paris, many French traders remained lodged deep in the backcountry. Some still worked covertly for France, often operating out of St. Louis; others were employed by Spain, who claimed everything west of the Mississippi River; still others found employment with Britain. Consequently, a variety of diplomatic options re-opened for the Kickapoos and the neighboring tribes southwest of the Great Lakes. Kickapoos were happy to attend councils hosted by any nation, and with each conference came ribbons, metals, and other gifts. As Europeans competed for supremacy, Kickapoos would find themselves in a unique position to bargain.

In 1762 Sir William Johnson dispatched a topographer to council with the tribes near Vincennes and to survey the physical and human barriers to settlement. Hoping the Indians would be open to negotiations, he inquired about the "state of the Indians." A spokesman for the Kickapoos eloquently responded with a speech that set the foundation for a new policy towards Europeans. Kickapoo diplomacy for the next thirty years found its roots in this clever address. The Indian spokesman explained,

We are very thankful to Sir William Johnson for sending you to enquire into the State of the Indians. We assure you we are rendered very miserable at present on Account of a Severe Sickness that has seized almost all our people many of which have died lately and many more are likely to die...but we think the hardest of, is that the English have never so much as given us the least present or even allowed a Smith to be at this point to mend our guns, We know very well that other Indian Nations have had presents given them at two or three different times and a Smith allowed to mend their guns; what those Indians have done to get themselves in so great favour with the English we have never heard. But

this we are sure of that we are ready on all occasions to serve our brethren the English, and we will advise our young people to behave well—
 If we were to go to the French at the Illinois they would give us some ammunition at least, but our brother here has desired us to have as little dealings with them as possible, you see we mind what he says as none of our people has offered to go near the French since the English came here—
 We desire you will acquaint Sir William Johnson with all we have said to you, and we hope he will allow a smith at this post and also send some presents for our women and children.⁶⁰

Well-educated by their experiences with the French, the Indians were ready to welcome the Europeans back on new terms centered on exploitive demands. If the Europeans were to return, they would serve Indian desires, providing gifts, trade goods and services at competitive rates. And to ensure the flow of gifts, the Kickapoos were happy to remind their benefactors of their other Europeans options.

From the mid 17th century until the close of the French and Indian War, the Kickapoos increasingly grew exposed to Europeans and sought to navigate a changing world of international diplomacy. First ignoring the French, the Kickapoo later felt threatened by their expansion and maneuvered to repel the intruders. Violent opposition gave way to cooperation and shrewd compliance as the French demonstrated their might and the benefits of friendship. Adjusting alliances as necessary to survive, the Kickapoos fell into neutrality when the war with Britain distracted France and provided alternate sources for European goods. As the two European powers competed for North America, the Kickapoos abstained from the conflict and awaited a victor.

⁶⁰ “Hutchins Journal” *The Papers of Sire William Johnson*, vol. 10 (Albany: University of the State of New York, 1921-1962): p. 526-28, 545, OVGLE Archive.

When the French and Indian War ended, Kickapoos enjoyed multiple options for European trade. British traders gradually pressed west along the Ohio River, while French traders lingered in the Great Lakes area and on the West side of the Mississippi, a region legally transferred to Spain. Spanish posts would later spring up along that river, providing yet a third European power for Kickapoos to trade. In the pursuit of good relations and alliances, all three groups of Europeans competed for Kickapoo friendship through gift-giving and generous trade rates. For the next thirty years, it would be the Kickapoos who negotiated from a position of strength as each European power sought to win over their loyalty.

Malleable Loyalty: Kickapoo Foreign Policy, 1763-1790

Residing in present-day Wisconsin when the French first arrived, the Kickapoos faced pressures from the expanding Iroquois and Sioux nations, newly armed with European firearms. Migrating south into present-day Illinois and Indiana, the Kickapoos re-asserted their martial strength and extended their territory, obtaining French support and dominating neighboring tribes. Despite an uneasy beginning, Kickapoo-French relations strengthened after joint campaigns and the near annihilation of the Fox tribe in 1730. Soon after, British merchants penetrated deep into the Old Northwest, likewise entreating Natives with their goods and services. By then, Kickapoos were residing in the eastern edges of the Ohio Valley, and they rarely interacted with the European newcomers. British and French competition erupted into the commonly labeled French and Indian War, and the French eventually withdrew from the Old Northwest. Britain then erroneously assumed proprietorship over Great Lakes Indian tribes.

In a short thirty-year period, from the early stages of the French and Indian War through the American Revolution, many Indian nations found themselves torn between foreign powers and struggling to cope with a rapidly changing world. The French withdrew and the British hoped to dominate the entire backcountry from the Appalachian Mountains to the Mississippi River. While some tribes pledged loyalty to their new British “father,” others resisted. But the oft overlooked Kickapoos found their own way to navigate international diplomacy. They took advantage of changing competitive political environments and seized opportunities to strengthen their nation. Resistant to any encroachment, but always willing to pledge promises of loyalty, Kickapoos maintained profitable relations with the British, French and Spanish. During this era

typically defined by European competition, Kickapoos consciously pursued their own national interests with the imperial would-be “father” nations. From 1750 to 1780, Kickapoo diplomacy took advantage of international politics and constructed malleable allegiances with a variety of competing Europeans for the purpose of endearing themselves to peace brokers and securing gifts and trade.

As settlers, traders, and various Indian tribes came into increasingly close contact, each had two choices: they could openly conflict with one another, or they could reconcile their differences and interact peacefully. In large part, this is the very thesis of Richard White’s watershed monograph, *The Middle Ground*. He argues, “The middle ground grew according to the need of people to find a means, other than force, to gain the cooperation or consent of foreigners.” He continues, “Those operating in the middle ground acted for interests derived from their own culture, but they had to convince people of another culture that some mutual action was fair and legitimate.”¹ In White’s well accepted interpretation, the middle ground was a geo-cultural region stretching from the Appalachian Mountains to the Mississippi River, a region defined by compromise and cooperation.

To Kickapoos, the middle ground was merely a logistical factor. They tolerated intrusions of Europeans with the furtive intent of manipulating those foreign nations to serve their own needs. Having suffered the afflictions of expanding Sioux and Iroquois nations, the Kickapoos migrated southward and sought to dominate present-day Illinois and Indiana. To this end, European allies provided a convenient resource. Adjusting to a new international situation, Kickapoos ensured their territorial dominance in part by

¹ Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1818* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 52.

securing European support. Unaware of the relentless advance that would follow, Kickapoos allowed Europeans limited access to their lands, tolerating government agents, traders, and posts. The competitive nature of Europeans further empowered the Kickapoos, as the tribe played one European nation off against another, switching loyalties as necessary to fulfill their purpose of territorial domination—an attribute they developed while politicking with the French, Iroquois and Foxes in generations past.

During the transition from French to British influence in the backcountry, British policy underwent significant changes, beginning with the imitation of French gift-giving policies. During the French and Indian War, Britain was shocked by the persistence of the French, who were strengthened by their Indian allies. British superintendent of northern Indian Affairs, Sir William Johnson, recalled that the French “spared no labor, or expense to gain their [Indian] friendship and esteem, which alone enabled them to support the War in these parts so long.”² To help neutralize French influences among the Natives, Britain adopted a similar policy, sending traders, craftsmen, and gifts to the tribes of the Old Northwest. Johnson, and his southern equivalent, Edward Atkin, eagerly agreed to the new Indian relations system. From November 1758 to December 1759, Johnson alone spent £17,072 on Indian gifts.³

The new policy was well received by Indians. Delawares and Iroquois were among the first to benefit from the policy, and Ohio Indians did soon after. Indians

² “Croghan to Bouquet, March 27, 1762,” *The Papers of Col. Henry Bouquet* (Harrisburg: Department of Public Instruction, 1940), vol. 15, p. 183, in Richard White, *The Middle Ground*, 258; “Johnson to Earl of Egremont, May 1762,” *The Papers of Sir William Johnson* (Albany: University of the State of New York, 1921-1965), vol. 10, p. 461, in White, *Middle Ground*, p. 258.

³ White, *Middle Ground*, p. 248, 258.

readily accepted British endowments, and many Natives looked forward to a new prosperous relationship. Attending a British council, one Delaware chief explained,

Brethren, we let you know, that the French have used our people kindly, in every respect; they have used them like gentlemen....So they have treated the chiefs. Now we desire you to be strong; we with you would take the same method, and use our people well.⁴

Kickapoos also prospered from this generous policy, which came at an ideal time. Beginning with General Edward Braddock's 1754 victories in the backcountry, French armies (and their gifts) gradually withdrew from the Ohio River Valley. By 1760 the official French forces abandoned the region entirely, consolidating farther north. Though Kickapoos previously fought along side the French as allies, jointly conquering the Cahokia, Peoria and Illinois Indians and repeatedly expelling British intruders, the tribe was happy to attend British councils and receive free gifts. Eager to supplant the French, Johnson organized repeated gift-giving councils to develop friendly relations with distant tribes. Kickapoos attended four such councils at Fort Pitt between November 1759 and August 1760.⁵ And though they missed a fifth opportunity in September 1760, the tribe

⁴ "Post Journal," Reuben G. Thwaites (ed.), *Early Western Travels, 1748-1846: a series of annotated reprints of some of the best and rarest contemporary volumes of travel: descriptive of the aborigines and social and economic conditions in the middle and far West, during the period of early American settlement* (Cleveland: A.H. Clark Co., 1904-1907), OVGLE Archive.

⁵ "List of Nations at Pittsburgh Council, November 5, 1769," British Museum Manuscripts, OVGLE Archive; "Minutes of Pittsburgh Conference, August 12, 1760," Pennsylvania Archives, 1st series, 3, p. 744-752, OVGLE Archive; Mary Christopher Nunley, "The Mexican Kickapoo Indians: Avoidance of Acculturation Through a Migratory Adaptation," (Ph.D. dissertation, Southern Methodist University, 1986), p. 16; Arrell M. Gibson, *Kickapoos: lords of the middle border* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1975), p. 24.

sent a message indicating that they approved of the conference.⁶ Nevertheless, when later confronted by France's Illinois administrator Saint-Ange, Kickapoos expressed equal fidelity and support to France. Saint-Ange noted that "they all preferred dying to making peace with the British."⁷

Respect for the boundaries of Indian lands remained the primary interest of most tribes gathered at British councils, particularly the Iroquois and Delawares. For Kickapoos, this issue was not yet as pressing, but in time they too would center all council discussion on the topic of territorial boundaries. Sir William Johnson tried to placate Native concerns. His correspondences demonstrate he fully understood the need to delineate the increasingly blurred borders of purlieus Indian territories during the post-war period. Johnson advocated "clear and fixed boundaries between our settlements and their hunting grounds," though just where these boundaries would be he never told the indigenous residents.⁸ But in the interim, his guarantees comforted Indians attending the British councils.

Near the close of the French and Indian War, Jeffrey Amherst ascended the ranks to become Commander-in-Chief over all British forces in North America. Overseeing the war's final victories and the defeat of the French, Amherst believed Britain was sufficiently entrenched to begin administering North America with an imperial hand. He felt that the Indians were of "little consequence," and he deplored the policy of frequent

⁶ "Council of Proceedings, September 15, 1760," *Pennsylvania Colonial Records*, vol. 8, 497-500, OVGLE Archive; Elbert Walker, "Forts of the American Frontier," *Reports of the Illinois State Historical Society* (1928), 204, OVGLE Archive.

⁷ "Saint-Ange to Deboddi, July 15, 1764," *Illinois Historical Society Collections*, vol. 10, 289, OVGLE Archive.

⁸ "Johnson to Denny, July 21, 1758," *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 2, p. 879, *White, Middle Ground*, p. 248.

gift-giving. Beginning in 1761, Amherst dispatched a volley of letters to Johnson, Atkin and others, formally abolishing the practice of Indian “indulgence.” Indians would not receive gifts to encourage allegiance, but were simply expected to accept Britain as their liege. The only European items Indians should receive, Amherst felt, were those earned through Native trade and industrious labor. Any resistors to British imperialism would be coerced by military repercussions. Amherst explained, “purchasing the good behavior, either of Indians or any others is what I do not understand; when men of what race soever behave ill, they must be punished but not bribed.”⁹

Sir Johnson immediately lamented Amherst’s iron fist policy. The superintendent questioned the effects of retracting Britain’s once generous assistance. Most poignantly, he feared that residual Frenchmen in the distant frontier would find renewed Indian support without competitive British gift-giving. Sir Johnson wrote,

We, as either not thinking of them of sufficient consequence, or that we had not so much occasion for their assistance not only fell infinitely short of the Enemy in our presents &ca to the Indians, but have of late I am apprehensive been rather premature in our sudden retrenchment of some necessary expenses, to which they have been always accustomed.¹⁰

Johnson anticipated that Indians would befriend those who addressed them with generosity; he felt Amherst’s plan was more likely to disparage Indians from British fidelity than incorporate them into an imagined British model of free trade and peace.

⁹ White, *Middle Ground*, p. 256-258.

¹⁰ “Johnson to Earl of Egremont, May 1762,” *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 10, p. 461, OVGLE Archive.

INDIAN RELATIONS

At the close of the French and Indian War, the Great Lakes region underwent a tumultuous crisis. Many tribes allied to the French suffered under the advance of British military forces. French and British goods undermined traditional labor and production; under Amherst's policy, those products suddenly became less accessible. Even so, Indians found access to one European item—alcohol. The fire water swept the backcountry, disrupting daily village life. Further destabilizing Indian nations, British agents seized opportunities to press treaties with fractured tribal alliances. Unity forged by respected chiefs collapsed along with their influence and authority, undermined by forced British conciliation. Anomic responses usurped tribal leadership and many young warriors lost faith in long-standing social norms as they turned to alternative coping measures—often alcohol. Many tribes, particularly in the Ohio Valley, fell into disarray.¹¹

Revitalization movements rapidly swept the region, as Indians gathered at Detroit, the upper Ohio Valley, the western Ohio Valley, and the Seneca town of Chnussio. Perhaps the largest and most influential of these movements was led by Pontiac. The charismatic Ottawa leader grew up among powerful Delaware shamans and prophets, many of whom deplored European influences. In addition to his spiritual background, Pontiac understood the value of Indian unity. Delawares long enjoyed cooperation with the Ottawas, Pottawattamies, Huron-Petuns, Chippewas, Ojibwas, and Wyandots. As French forces withdrew, Pontiac combined religious and military ideas to organize an anti-British coalition. His alliance, joined by some Kickapoos, rejected British

¹¹ White, *Middle Ground*, p. 493-501.

dominance and resisted the new, heavy-handed policy. Indians thrashed the backcountry in 1763, attacking a dozen British posts.

The chaos of the backcountry, and particularly in the Ohio River Valley, did not have equally disruptive impacts for Kickapoos. Far from isolated, the Kickapoos were well aware of the French withdrawal, changing British policies, tumultuous Indian communities and revitalization movements. Designed to reinvigorate traditional values with new political and religious infusions, revitalization movements are a hallmark of European dominated Native history. They represent both cultural despair and hope through the realignment of tradition. During the French and Indian War the Kickapoos rarely participated in the European conflict, only occasionally cooperating with Pontiac. They generally seemed a safe distance from British cultural assault, residing along the Wabash and down to St. Louis at the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri.

Originally founded by French traders, St. Louis was legally transferred to Spanish control at the close of the French and Indian War. Nevertheless, it remained a village populated by Frenchmen and traders who continued the old ways of Indian gift-giving and maintenance of cooperative relations with the Kickapoos. Furthermore, as their part of that relationship, Kickapoo warriors often obstructed and even raided competing British representatives and merchants. In this way Kickapoos both appeased gift-giving French agents and traders and profited by raiding British merchants. On one such occasion in 1764, Kickapoo warriors repulsed British Captain Thomas Morris en route to Niagara where he intended to host a grand Indian conference.¹² Furious with the obstruction, Sir William Johnson blamed French agents and traders, whom he believed

¹² “Captain Thomas Morris, Morris Journals,” Thwaites, *Early Western Travels*, vol. 1, 314, OVGLE Archive.

enticed the Kickapoos to erect “so many artifices to obstruct our interests in the Country, that it is likely to become a very expensive and troublesome affair.” Kickapoos had learned from their relations with the French only a generation earlier that stubborn resistance could lead to European capitulation and consequent gift-giving. If not, the spoils of regular raids would suffice. Either way, for the British, Kickapoo relations promised to become an “expensive affair.”¹³

During this era of tribal political realignments and Indian social upheaval, Kickapoos remained lodged deep in the backcountry, seemingly immune to most of the French and Indian War’s consequences. The tribe busily managed foreign relations with multiple Indian nations. They continued affable relations with the Pottawattamies, Piankashaws, Miamis and other tribes. Their long time friends, the Mascoutins, disappeared from the historical record, probably absorbed into the growing Kickapoo nation. Expanding south and east, Kickapoos overran the tribes of the Illinois region. Kickapoos also organized frequent raids to the south and west against the Chickasaws, Choctaws, and Osages, while simultaneously defending against the nearly conquered Peorias and other remnant tribes. Even still, residual Iroquois attacks threatened Kickapoo domination even as far southwest as the Wabash and Illinois River valleys.¹⁴

Despite their removal from the backcountry turmoil spawned by the French defeat, the Kickapoos’ culture underwent a significant change at the close of the French

¹³ “Review of Trade and Affairs in the Northern District,” *Illinois Historical Society Collections*, vol. 16, p. 46, OVGLE Archive; Gibson, p. 26.

¹⁴ “Hennepins Thwaites,” Hennepin London, *A New Discovery of a Vast Country in America, from 1698*, 166-167, OVGLE Archive; “John Wilkins, Journal of Transactions and presents given the Indians, 23 Dec. 1768 to March 12, 1772,” OVGLE Archive; “George Turnbull to Thomas Gage, Detroit, August 3, 1767,” Gage Papers, American Series, OVGLE Archive; Gibson, p. 21-23; Nunley, p. 17.

and Indian War. Predisposed to decentralization on a macro-scale of raiding and warfare (the tribe was notorious for dividing its forces in battle), the Kickapoos fractured into three distinct bands in the mid 1760's. In earlier generations, the semi-unified Kickapoo bands resided throughout the Wabash River Valley and Peoria Lake region, and at times as far south as St. Louis. But in 1765, seventy-five Kickapoo warriors and their families followed Chief Serena, migrating further southwest in a definitive division that continues today. Just as Sir William Johnson feared, Spanish influences had attracted the band. They established a new village thirty-six miles below St. Louis, geographically distancing themselves from the social turbulence occurring in the Great Lakes and Ohio Valley regions. Meanwhile, two other Kickapoo bands coalesced on the lower Illinois prairies and Wabash Rivers respectively, each consisting of about three hundred warriors and their families. From this time forward, the latter two bands were spoken of separately as the Prairie and Wabash bands.¹⁵ This division, innocuous at first, generated far reaching effects, eventually resulting in drastically different bands. However, in 1765, each only embarked on this divergent course of cultural adaptation. And for the remainder of the 18th century, all three bands enjoyed regular communication, frequent exchanges, cultural and even occasional political unity.

BRITISH RELATIONS

The British were shocked by the costs of the Indian uprisings of 1763, having suffered attacks at Detroit, St. Joseph, Miami, Ouiatanon, Michelimakinak, Green Bay,

¹⁵ "Recopilacion de las naciones," *Houck Transcripts*, Wisconsin Historical Society, OVGLE Archive; Louis Houck (ed.), *The Spanish Regime in Missouri* (Chicago: R.R. Donnelly & Sons, 1909), vol. 1, p. 141-148, OVGLE Archive; Gibson, p. 32.

Sandusky, Le Boeuf, Venango, Presque Isle, and Pitt, as well as along Forbes' highway into the Ohio Valley. Garrisoning soldiers sufficient to control the region would be expensive. The crown estimated the annual cost of maintaining the two dozen recently captured French inland posts from £300,000 to £400,000; a fearful expense when added to the already daunting costs of the French and Indian War.¹⁶ Interpreting Far West settlement as an unnecessary and risky enterprise, Britain ordered the evacuation of the trans-Appalachian backcountry, declaring the Proclamation Line of 1763. In so doing, the crown effectively withdrew all British authority from the region as well, leaving no system for governing or protecting those Europeans who recklessly crossed the imaginary line.

Viewing the backcountry with a radically different lens than officials, British settlers and merchants perceived the West as an opportunity for profit. One such trader was George Croghan, whose experiences well-illustrate the motivations of encroaching settlers and merchants, as well as the typical response of Kickapoos. Croghan was a member of the Ohio Company, a corporation established by King George in 1749. The company's purpose was to settle the West, and elite Virginian founding members expected to profit nicely from trade and land acquisitions leading to settlements in the region. Beginning in the 1740's, Croghan organized frequent backcountry excursions, regularly consisting of over a hundred pack animals and two dozen men.¹⁷ Beginning in 1756, he functioned as both an independent entrepreneur and as Deputy Indian Superintendent under Sir William Johnson.

¹⁶ Eric Hinderaker, *At the Edge of Empire: the backcountry in British North America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), p. 125.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 93.

As he had many times before, Croghan organized an expedition into the trans-Appalachian backcountry in 1765. Led by Shawnee, Delaware and Iroquois guides, Croghan penetrated deeper than on previous journeys, and in early June he found himself well beyond the protection of British posts. Croghan's journal entry for the 8th of June explained,

At Day Break we were attacked by a Party of Indians consisting of Eighty warriors of the Kickapoos and Mascoutins who killed two of my men & three Indians wounded myself and all the rest of my party except two White Men and one Indian then made myself and all the White men prisoners plundering us of everything we had.¹⁸

Pillaging and murdering his party, the Kickapoos terrified Croghan. Perhaps they once seemed little more than mythical marauders hidden deep in the interior; but now he was face-to-face with a serious opponent. To save his life, one of the Shawnees interceded, threatening the Kickapoos with Shawnee retribution should Croghan die. Whether or not the threat was genuine, the young Kickapoo warriors dared not press the issue, most especially because this particular raid was not approved by tribal elders, although French agents regularly encouraged hostility towards the British. Even more importantly, the loyalty of Croghan's Indian guides testified to his value as an alliance broker. The British-allied Iroquois' raids particularly threatened the Kickapoos Wabash Valley dominance. Treading on dangerous waters, the Kickapoos resolved to march the captive merchants through "thick woody country" and on to Vincennes.¹⁹

¹⁸ "Croghan's journal, May 15, 1765 – Oct. 8, 1765," Alvord & Carter, *British Series*, vol. 2, p. 23-38, in *Pennsylvania Historical Society, Hutchins Papers, NYCD*, vol. 7, p. 774-788, OVGLE Archive.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

On June 15, 1765, the caravan arrived in Vincennes. The village had technically passed into British control under the 1763 Treaty of Paris; however, in all reality it remained a mixed French and intertribal enclave, enjoying regular trade and political relations with the French and Spanish at St. Louis, just across the Mississippi River. Vincennes epitomized White's middle ground—it was a place of mediation and cooperation. While passing through, a Piankashaw man addressed the Kickapoos, scolding the young warriors for their overzealous attack. Sure that Croghan (and his interpreters) could overhear, the Piankashaw leader reminded Kickapoo warriors of their efforts to maintain good relations with the British. He also insisted that the captives' wounds should receive prompt treatment. Kickapoos and other Indians gathered, and after discretely discussing the preceding events, concluded that Croghan was a valuable tool. Not only could he serve to mitigate Iroquois raids and guarantee against future Shawnee attacks, the indebted appreciation of an influential trader could additionally develop into material wealth.²⁰ To this end, the Indians feigned regret and pleaded for forgiveness.

Equally interested in maintaining peaceful relations in the backcountry, Croghan accepted the apology. A keen businessman, he took the opportunity to hold a council with the Vincennes and neighboring tribes (Mascoutins, Kickapoos, Wea, Ottawas, Piankashaws and Twightwees) as well as Shawnees, Delawares and Iroquois. At the council, a Kickapoo chief named Wolf began discussions by formally apologizing,

We the Mascoutins, Kickapoos, and Ouatonons [Wea], had a pipe of Peace, which we all used to smoke out of, with our Brethren of all Nations. This pipe we have now broke, by the Action we have committed.... In breaking

²⁰ “William Johnson to Leake, August 16, 1765,” Alvord & Carter, *British Series*, vol. 2, p. 75, NYCD, vol. 2, p. 820, OVGLE Archive .

our pipe of Peace, we hurt our own heads very much, and we now send you this pipe in [its] place, to smoke out of it, and we desire you will have pity on us, and make up this difference, that our Women & Children may live in Peace. We assure you, that when we struck you, the Hatchet turned in our hand, and since we have repented very much, what we have done. Brethren, In Striking you, we have struck our selves.²¹

The chief went on to rationalize his failure to establish peace earlier. He claimed it was always their intent, but that they believed French representatives were taking that message to the British. He explained, “the reason we don’t go to beg forgiveness of you directly is that our Fathers the French ... promises to help us to settle this unhappy difference with you.”²² Perceiving that Croghan accepted the apology, the Indians introduced the true purpose for the pretended peace. After all, Indians were not without their own motivations. Often suffering raids from British-allied nations, a Wea chief pleaded,

Brother, we now beg you will pity our folly, & likewise use your influence with the Shawnees, Delawares, and Six Nations, to settle this unhappy difference between us, we know you have it in your power, if you please.²³

Croghan was happy to mediate between the tribes. Unaware of deep running rivalries, Croghan ignorantly imagined his little council would establish lasting peace between Indians and Europeans, and pave the way for British-welcomed expansion into the backcountry. Kickapoos and other Vincennes Indians, on the other hand, simply hoped the European could taper Iroquois raids and deliver trade goods.

Anxious to seal the deal, Croghan paid little attention to the Vincennes Indians concerns over land—an issue he knew would raise difficult questions. He gave no

²¹ “Minutes of a council with the Ouatons, Kecapoes, Mascoutens and Ottawas, July 13, 1765, Ouatonon,” Gage Papers, American Series, vol. 39, Reel #10, OVGLE Archive.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

indication of his corporate incentives or the Virginian elites' designs on the Ohio Valley. Croghan simply secured peaceful pledges from the tribes represented. Quite pleased with himself, he returned to Virginia, boasting that he had reconciled Vincennes Indians to the crown.²⁴ While the British believed they had obtained Indians allegiances, the Kickapoos were likewise happy, sure that they had secured once again an ally possibly to exploit for processed goods and political influence.

In the East, Ohio Company executives, Virginian elites, land speculators and settlers all looked west. Under such pressures, New Hampshire Governor Benning Wentworth ordered his colony's western tracts surveyed, divided, and opened to sale and settlement. In 1763 the Massachusetts General Court similarly opened lands in present-day Maine.²⁵ Europeans unsociable hunger for land turned their eyes ever westward. In that same year King George issued the Proclamation Line in an attempt to restrain western expansion, retain control over colonists, and limit administrative expenses in the Indian dominated backcountry.

In 1768, Wills Hill, the Viscount of Hillsborough and secretary to the crown, called for the Proclamation Line of 1763 to be redrawn. His intention was to adjust the line east and west where appropriate to reflect realistic physical barriers and markers. William Johnson hosted this treaty conference at Fort Stanwix; some 2,200 Indians attended, primarily Iroquois, Shawnees, and Delawares. At Stanwix, Johnson overstepped his authority, and instead of neatly adjusting the line, he pushed it out to the Ohio River. This was made possible by Johnson's liberal delineation of Iroquois

²⁴ Andrew R. L. Cayton, *Frontier Indiana* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), p. 29-32.

²⁵ Hinderaker, *At the Edge of Empire*, p. 151.

boundaries well beyond their actual dominion, particularly along the Ohio River. Immediately after the treaty, land speculation companies promptly claimed the territory. The largest and most successful of these was the Walpole Company, which had recently absorbed the Ohio Company and its interests. Settlers quickly responded to the new opportunities. By 1772, 30,000 colonists lived in the Ohio region and were joined by a constant migration of 5,000 British families each year for the next decade.²⁶

Unaware that the flood gates of British settlement were irreversibly swinging open, Kickapoos continued to cultivate positive relations with the British, fully intending to exploit representatives as they had prior European agents. In 1765 the tribe not only promised peace to Croghan, but Kickapoo Chief Majawabia and nine warriors attended an British conference in Detroit where they again pledged their loyalty in exchange for gifts.²⁷ In the fall of 1767, Kickapoos met with the British, represented once more by Deputy Indian Superintendent Croghan. Not simply now a government official, Croghan sought to advance the interests of the Walpole Company: burgeoning Indian trade and eventual land cessations. In a letter to a potential Walpole investor, Benjamin Franklin, Croghan explained that with proper handling the Kickapoos and other Wabash tribes could be pacified. He informed Franklin that such nations primarily sought two goals: British guarantee against encroaching settlers and the ready presence of traders and goods in the backcountry.²⁸ Seeking these conditions, the tribe pledged their fidelity yet again at Croghan's 1767 peace council. Ignorantly, Croghan believed he had successfully

²⁶ Ibid, p. 144-150.

²⁷ "George Croghan, List of Indians at the Detroit Conference, August 1765," *British Series*, Vol. 2, p. 56-57, OVGLE Archive.

²⁸ "George Croghan to Benjamin Franklin, Lancaster, Oct. 2, 1767," *Croghan's Journal*, 1769, p. 22-25, OVGLE Archive.

attracted a “western confederacy” to the crown.²⁹ In reality, Kickapoos never interpreted their agreements with Britain as a monogamous relationship, and they certainly would not permit encroaching settlers just across the Ohio.

Kickapoo pretension to British loyalty was spurious. Kickapoos eagerly attended British councils and accepted trinkets permitted by Amherst, but they were quick to complain about the decreasing quality of British gifts, and when opportunities to loot British traders and soldiers arose, Kickapoo warriors acted much as before. When fifteen British men traveled up the Shawnee River, a group of Indians raided the ship and murdered the men, save one who was out hunting. That survivor made his way to Fort Chartres, the British-occupied former French fort located on the Mississippi eighteen miles north of Kaskaskia. There he related the event to commanding officer Captain Gordon Forbes. Suspecting Kickapoos, Forbes passed a report along to Captain George Turnbull at Fort Detroit. Summarizing Forbes’s report, Turnbull forwarded the news along to General Thomas Gage, adding that he likewise suspected Kickapoos for several reasons. Turnbull lamented, “What a pity it is we can get no proof against such villains. They will not be quieted until they are chastised.”³⁰ The British were equally suspicious of their truce partners.

While sometimes halting trade, seizing goods, and murdering intruders, Kickapoos appeased British authorities with apologies and promises of allegiance. Addressing British agent John Wilkins, “They acknowledge that their young men had struck the British through bad advice but were now heartily sorry.” Further, the

²⁹ “George Croghan to Thomas Gage, New York, January 16, 1767,” *Gage Papers, American Series*, vol. 61, OVGLE Archive.

³⁰ “George Turnbull to Thomas Gage, Detroit, September 11, 1768.” *Gage Papers, American Series*, OVGLE Archive.

Kickapoos told Wilkins that they feared to approach British posts, as they had heard Captain Forbes was anxious to lock them up in irons.³¹ Little did Wilkins know that the Kickapoos were manipulating him just as they had other Europeans. Anxious to resolve the apparent rift, Wilkins offered up three gallon-kegs of rum, ten pounds of powder, twenty pounds of lead, a pound of vermilion, four carrots of tobacco, and other supplies. Three weeks later Wilkins distributed another gallon keg of rum, three pounds of powder, six pounds of lead, three more carrots of tobacco and additional supplies.³² Once again, the Kickapoos profited.

Three months later Kickapoos visited Wilkins in yet another scene that illustrates the success of Kickapoo diplomacy. Among other tribes, Chickasaws continued to resist the British. Hoping to turn neutral tribes against the resisters, the crown began purchasing Chickasaw scalps from neighboring tribes. Returning from a raid in March of 1769, a party of Kickapoos approached Wilkins, offered him two scalps which they claimed were Chickasaws. Optimistically believing that his previous mediation facilitated a blossoming Kickapoo alliance, the agent enthusiastically purchased the scalps. To Wilkins, the exchange surely validated his earlier gifts and diplomatic efforts to smooth over Kickapoo relations. Now it seemed the tribe was falling in line, performing the mercenary duties desired by the Crown.

But the Kickapoos were hardly enamored with the British. Their inspiration for anti-Chickasaw raids ran far deeper than any Europeans' designs. In fact, Kickapoos had long been at war with Chickasaws and were happy to receive payment for deeds

³¹ "John Wilkins, Journal of Transactions and presents given the Indians, 23 Dec. 1768 to March 12, 1772," OVGLE Archive.

³² "John Wilkins to Thomas Gage, June 1, 1772," OVGLE Archive.

performed independently of British purposes, assuming the scalps were even from Chickasaws. Before leaving, Kickapoos applied one other manipulative tactic, complaining that their rum had been stolen by hostile Indians. It was worth a try; Wilkins had gullibly given in to their pleas several times before. But this time the agent did not supply any additional gifts.³³

SPANISH RELATIONS

The British were not the only nation with whom the Kickapoos interacted. Spain enjoyed a long history in the New World, and it extended Spanish influence up the Mississippi River as France withdrew. Realizing the eminence of defeat, France maneuvered to limit Britain's spoils of war. Just before the 1763 Treaty of Paris formally ended the French and Indian War, France surrendered New Orleans and any trans-Mississippi holdings to Spain in the 1762 Treaty of Fontainebleau. Spanish Governor Antonio de Ulloa was speedily dispatched to the little village of New Orleans, from whence he managed Spanish Louisiana. But Spain was slow to invest in the region, essentially viewing it as little more than a buffer for the valued colonies in the American Southwest. After some time, Spain did attempt to establish a presence in the Northwest, and even envisioned a glorious string of posts stretching from the Gulf of Mexico to St. Louis and along the Missouri to the Pacific Ocean. But with the failures of the Missouri Company expeditions in the mid 1790's, Spain grudgingly abandoned those short-lived ambitions.

³³ "John Wilkins, Journal of Transactions and presents given the Indians, 23 Dec. 1768 to March 12, 1772," OVGLE Archive.

New Orleans hosted the governing seat of authority for all of Spanish Louisiana, and Spanish representatives slowly filled other former French posts along the west side of the Mississippi River. By 1788, St. Louis administrator Don Manuel Perez sought to strengthen relations with local Indians. He wrote to his superior in New Orleans, Count Bernardo de Galvez, requesting funds to establish new trading posts and increased Indian gift-giving. The proposal was rejected, as Spain had only haphazardly acquired the region and now had no interests in it beyond its use as a buffer.³⁴ But Perez's aspirations were not forgotten entirely. In 1791, Francisco Luis Hector Carondelet succeeded Galvez, and quickly swept Spanish Louisiana with reforms. Among them, Carondelet encouraged trade with Indians, organizing the Missouri Company and sent traders up that river. It was Carondelet who envisioned a grand network of Spanish posts bridging New Orleans, St. Louis, and the Pacific Coast. As with the French and British, gift-giving and Indian supplication became an essential part of Spanish policy along the Mississippi.³⁵

Kickapoos living near St. Louis immediately profited from Spanish intentions. As early as March 1769 an early Spanish report listed the tribe among seventeen neighboring nations receiving Spanish gifts.³⁶ Again in May, the Kickapoo nation was listed among twenty-three tribes on the Spanish payroll.³⁷ In October, a Spanish agent

³⁴ Jacob Van Der Zee, "Fur Trade Operations in the Eastern Iowa Country Under the Spanish Regime," *The Iowa Journal of History and Politics* (1914): p. 361.

³⁵ A. P. Nasatir, *Before Lewis and Clark: Documents Illustrating the History of the Missouri, 1785-1804* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), p. 80.

³⁶ "Rui (Rios) y Morales, Francisco, Reports of the Indian Tribes, March 9, 1769." *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, vol. 18, p. 299-301. General Archives of the Indies, Seville, "Papelos procedientes de la Isla de Cuba," OVGLE Archive.

³⁷ "Report of the Various Indian Tribes Receiving Presents in the District of Ylinoa or Illinois, 1769," Louis Houck, *The Spanish Regime in Missouri*, vol. 1, p. 44, OVGLE Archive.

commented on the already “established customs” of Indian relations. Don Pedro Piernas, stationed at Fort Don Carlos (near St. Louis), explained:

In that short time of my residence in that post there came to hold discussions [with] the tribes of Osages, Iowas, Kickapoos, Mascoutins, Pou, Potawatomi, Ottawas, Piankashaws, Foxes, and the others of the vicinity attracted both by novelty of the arrival of a new commandant in order to receive their present which is necessary by established customs...³⁸

This system of Spanish gift-giving and trading with Kickapoos, as well as other tribes, served to maintain good relations in politics and a growing trade. In addition to receiving gifts, Kickapoos and other Indians enjoyed favorable trade relations with the fur hungry Spanish. Those traders were instructed to offer gifts and trade rates so generous that the Indians would be “assured that they are indispensable.”³⁹

However, positive Indian relations were not without economic costs. The Spanish treasury absorbed the expenses of the gift-giving and trade policy, and the costs of gifts and generous trade margins were not the only expense. Indian visitors often stayed at Spanish posts, and according to Piernas, “It is the King who bears the expenses of the Indians maintenance during their stay in the village, and he makes no profit from it.” To make such visits more affordable, Governor Ulloa ordered Piernas to concentrate small envoys into a single multi-tribe gathering at Fort of San Carlos, as it “was distant from the settlements their stay should be but in passing, and, consequently, there would

³⁸ “Report of Don Pedro Piernas to Gov. O’Reilly, Describing the Spanish Illinois Country, October 31, 1769,” General Archives of the Indians, Seville, among Papers from the island of Cuba, in Houk, *The Spanish Regime in Missouri*, 1909, vol. 1, p. 66-75, OVGLE Archive.

³⁹ Ibid.

be a great saving of food, whose consumption has hitherto been considerable, and therefore costly.⁴⁰

Governor Ulloa planned to create a Spanish-led hegemony of tribes, providing Spain the luxuries of the fur trade and protecting Spanish borders against European and Indian trans-Mississippi encroachment. As part of Ulloa's campaign to attract Indian allies, Kickapoos were encouraged to relocate south of St. Louis into Spanish domain. Many Kickapoos were dissatisfied with Britain's recent preeminence in the Northwest and the anomic crisis it caused, as well as the declining supply of gifts. Kickapoo Chief Serena accepted Spain's invitation. In 1765, Ulloa secured a land grant from Spanish Emperor Carlos III, promising the Kickapoos tracts between the Sabine River and San Antonio. Within two years, those lands were exchanged for territories further southeast, as Spain consolidated control over Coahuila (then encompassing present-day Texas as well as the state's borders within Mexico). In exchange for these lands, Kickapoos pledged to defend the Spanish territories against hostile Indians, particularly Osages and Chickasaws, both historic rivals of the Kickapoos. The tribe was happy to receive Spanish support to engage their long hated enemies.

The transition proved complicated. While some Kickapoos journeyed further southwest, raiding Indians hostile to Spain, others remained in the Illinois prairie and along the Wabash. These Kickapoos also interacted with Spanish agents, though living in a territory theoretically "owned" by Britain. In 1770, the Spanish lieutenant-governor at St. Louis received instructions to provide New Orleans with a complete list of Indian-desired gifts. These items were then shipped up the Mississippi to the Illinois region in

⁴⁰ Ibid.

large annual convoys. From St. Louis the gifts and trade items were distributed throughout the region and up the Ohio River. Through these measures, Spain hoped to strengthen ties and meet all tribal needs, eliminating any Indian motivations for friendly British relations.⁴¹ Kickapoos along the lower Illinois and Wabash Rivers benefited from Spanish gift-giving and trade while sporadically attending British councils as well. In exchange for Spanish gifts, the Wabash and/or Prairie Kickapoos also intensified their raids against their long-time enemies, the Chickasaws. These Kickapoo bands were so effective that in 1772, Chickasaw chief Panimataja arrived at St. Louis to plead with Lieutenant-Governor Francisco Cruzat, specifically requesting he call off the Kickapoo marauders. Enjoying the spoils of war, however, the Kickapoos were not easily tempered.⁴²

Meanwhile, additional Kickapoos continued to migrate farther southwest, likewise overrunning Indian tribes hostile to Spanish authority. By 1784, Kickapoo mercenaries successfully expelled Chickasaws and other tribes from the lands surrounding Galvez. On February 15, 1784, in New Orleans, Governor Count de Galvez endowed Kickapoo Chief Pemwetamwa of the Southwest band with a silver medal four times the size typically distributed by the British and French. Inscribed were the words, “Al Mérito” or “To the Merit,” certifying their role as border patrollers and more importantly—their special status as prized mercenaries. From 1767 to 1824, these Southwest Kickapoos traversed much of the Gulf coast, engaging “savage hordes” that

⁴¹ “General Instructions of O’Reilly to the Lieutenant-Governor of the Village of St. Louis, San Genevieve, etc., February 17, 1770,” General Archives of the Indies, Seville, Among papers from the Island of Cuba, in Houck, *The Spanish Regime in Missouri*, vol. 1, p. 79, OVGLE Archive.

⁴² Gibson, p. 48-49.

opposed the Spanish crown. These Southwest Kickapoos inherited massive tracts of land, special status, and Spanish support, all in exchange for maintaining their traditional ways of life in a new area.⁴³

KICKAPOOS INDEPENDENCE REVEALED

If the British truly participated in the Kickapoos' system of exploitation while unaware of the tribe's mixed allegiances, that blissful ignorance came to a screeching halt in the early 1770's. British agent Alexander McKee met with some Shawnees in the summer of 1771. According to McKee's Shawnee informants, the Wabash tribes (including the Kickapoos) secretly resented the British, and they accused the crown of neglect. More disturbing, the Shawnees told McKee that Kickapoos had invited the French to return and build forts in their territory, "round all their villages." The Shawnees even reported that the Wabash Kickapoos participated in raids against British posts.⁴⁴ The report made its way up the chain of command, from McKee to Sir William Johnson, and eventually to General Johnson Hall Gage, the commander of British forces in North America during the American war for Independence. The report on Gage's desk, penned by Johnson, shared the opinion that "most of the tribes about the Wabash as well as some on the Ohio &c[ompany], are inclinable to commit hostilities and that the young warriors of the nations may join them is extremely probable."⁴⁵

⁴³ Alfonso Fabila, *La Tribu Kikapoo de Coahuila*, Biblioteca Popular, no. 50, Secretaria de Education Popular Mexico, 1945, p. 25.

⁴⁴ "Speech of the Sawanese & c. Transmitted by Mr. Alexander McKee to Sir William Johnson Bart. With Mr. McKee's Remarks, and Observations, Scioto Plains, July, 1771," *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 12, p. 917, OVGLE Archive.

⁴⁵ "Sir William Johnson to Gage, Johnson Hall, December 2, 1771," *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 3, p. 348, OVGLE Archive.

Within a few months, Gage received another report confirming the Kickapoos' disregard for the British. In July of 1771, eight Wabash Kickapoos captured a British man from the Bayton and Company plantation, located near Fort Chartres. The man was taken into captivity; his horse stolen. They marched the Brit to their town along the Wabash River, then stripped him, painted him black, and convinced him he would be burned alive. The captive later recounted,

The next day they lighted a fire, bound & laid me before it, and were proceeding to exercise the most cruel torture on me, when some French traders from Detroit, touched with compassion, interceded for my life, which after two days consultation, the savages agreed to allow, on the payment of a very great ransom; which with my expenses in return here & will cost about three hundred pounds.⁴⁶

The French traders interceded, but not without offering the Kickapoos payment for their prize. In the minds of the Kickapoos, they once again demonstrated reasonable cooperation and compassion while turning a significant profit at the expense of Europeans. The liberated captive explained that the Kickapoos had raided the same plantation two months earlier, killing two men. Additionally, he reported that these Indians were “fully bent on war against the English,” and that a group of forty warriors were in route to intercept a British boat carrying military supplies along the Ohio.⁴⁷

Perhaps more disturbing to Gage than the Kickapoo belligerence was the presence and influence of French traders in the backcountry. William Johnson shared those concerns. He increasingly distrusted the Kickapoos and their Wabash confederacy of conquered and allied tribes. The Kickapoos struck at the British from the safety of their

⁴⁶ “A writer from Kaskaskia, Ill, January 17, 1772,” *Pennsylvania Gazette*, April 9, 1772, Draper Manuscripts vol. 20S 20S 177-179, OVGLE Archive.

⁴⁷ “Thomas Gage to Johnson, New York, September 24, 1771,” *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 8, p. 278, OVGLE Archive.

deep backcountry homelands. Lamenting the frequent attacks, Sir Johnson ascribed “their murders and robberies,” to the “jealousy of French traders, and to that nation on the Wabash who are daily increasing in numbers.” Sir Johnson continued, “The injuries which our own traders sustain to the South West-ward thro’ the superior influence and artifices of the French . . . is likewise worthy [of] serious attention.” Just as before, the Kickapoos attempted to smooth over the conflict with “complaints made daily . . . of the abuses & irregularities of trade.” But Sir Johnson now interpreted the Kickapoos’ policy as duplicitous exploitation, and he refused to cooperate. But without British generosity towards the Wabash tribes, Sir Johnson predicted another rebellion in the backcountry, much like that of 1763. He expected the Kickapoos complaints would “be made use of by them in case of a defection in any quarter.” Sir Johnson had finally realized that the Kickapoos felt no genuine loyalty to Britain.⁴⁸

From Britain’s perspective, managing the Kickapoos and the Wabash Valley seemed to be spiraling out of control. In reality, the British never had control. Once again, in 1772 eleven Wabash Kickapoos captured two British men, and demanded 120 pounds as payment for their lives.⁴⁹ In that same year Sir William Johnson called for an Indian council, but the Kickapoos and Piankashaws chose not to attend, perhaps aware that the game was up.⁵⁰ Thomas Gage, frustrated with the Kickapoos pugnacious attitude, finally unleashed the Iroquois on them, encouraging the Iroquois to chastise the Kickapoos and Pottawattamies. As ordered, in 1773 the Iroquois raided the Wabash,

⁴⁸ “Sir William Johnson to the Earl of Hillsborough, April 4, 1772,” NYCD vol. 8, London Documents 63, p. 292, OVGLE Archive.

⁴⁹ “Sir William Johnson to Gage, April 23, 1772,” *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 8, p. 453, OVGLE Archive.

⁵⁰ “Sir William Johnson to the Earl of Darmouth, November 4, 1772, Johnson Hall,” New York Colonial Manuscripts, OVGLE Archive.

killing half a dozen Indians. Such tactics, combined with the threat of full scale war, reassured Gage that the Kickapoos would learn to respect British authority.⁵¹ To further entice the menacing tribe, Britain dispatched agents to distribute wampum belts among Kickapoos, Delawares, and all tribes of the Wabash confederacy. The belts carried a recommendation “to remain in peace,” and served “to inform them that though their great friend [the French] is dead, the council-fire kindled by the English and them continues to burn as bright as ever.”⁵²

But General Gage, Johnson, and all the British agents knew French influence was not dead, nor was that of the Spanish. French traders and Spanish diplomatic agents continued to navigate the backcountry, attempting to monopolize the Kickapoos’ (and other tribes) friendship, and turning them away from British competitors. In a letter to Quebec Governor Fredrick Haldimand, General Gage observed,

It has very often been reported that the French and Spaniards have excited the nations against the English, and been the authors of many mischiefs, tho’ it has not been discovered that the Spanish Government has had any concern therein. But it is probable that ... Spanish subjects have been guilty of such iniquitous practices to keep the trade to themselves.⁵³

Still, no foreign nation could reasonably expect the Kickapoo unmitigated support.

While the tribe did hold a warmer affinity towards the French than British, they were not above trading and attending councils with the latter. In 1777, Kickapoos who maintained frequent relations with French merchants gave notice of their intentions to rekindle trade

⁵¹ “Thomas Gage to Frederick Haldimand, June 3, 1773,” Library of Congress, British Museum, additional MS. 212665, OVGLE Archive.

⁵² “Arthur St. Clair to Gov. Penn, Ligonier, August 8, 1774.” William Henry Smith, *St. Clair Papers* (Cincinnati: R. Clarke, 1882), vol. 1, p. 338-339, OVGLE Archive.

⁵³ “Gage to Haldimand, June 3, 1773,” Library of Congress, British Museum, additional MS. 212665, OVGLE Archive.

with British merchants. This simple interchange signaled declining French influence among the tribe; with the French unable to meet their needs, the Kickapoos had to look elsewhere for trade goods and gifts. Secondly, it also represents one of the tribe's final attempts to exploit goods from the French, whom they hoped would compete for the Kickapoos allegiance once more.⁵⁴ Though French influence was waning, the Spanish still provided an alternative to the British, allowing the Kickapoos' system of diplomacy to continue to function sporadically despite declining French trade. But Spain too was withdrawing from the Louisiana territory, and encouraging the Kickapoos to join them southwest of the Mississippi. Additionally, Spanish authorities advised the Kickapoos "not to mix themselves with the troubles of the Bostonians [nor] with the English."⁵⁵ The Kickapoos soon found themselves devoid of their former European benefactors but faced with a new unsuspecting "ally" to exploit.

EURO-AMERICAN COLONIST RELATIONS

Along the Atlantic seaboard, British colonists were undergoing their own social upheaval. In 1765 Britain passed the Stamp Act; the Boston Tea Party occurred in 1773; and by 1775 colonial minutemen engaged British soldiers at Lexington and Concord. Initially, France and Spain stood aloof and encouraged Indians to do the same. Eventually though, European powers and Indian nations alike were drawn into the conflict.

⁵⁴ "Rochblave, Philippe de Rastel, Chevalier de, Court of Enquiry, September 11, 1777," Alvord, *Virginia Series*, vol. II, 1909, p. 24, Kaskaskia Mss., Court record, f.100, OVGLE Archive.

⁵⁵ "Declaration of General Cerré, April 29, 1777," Edward G. Mason, *Early Chicago and Illinois* (Chicago, Fergus, 1890), p. 390, OVGLE Archive.

The immerging European-American nation understood the potential impact of Indian allegiances. As early as 1776, patriot settlers south of the Ohio proclaimed the need to appease and even enlist Indians to the revolutionary cause. In a petition to Virginia, they explained that the British were already rallying Natives against the colonists. It explained,

And as at this time of general danger, we cannot take too much precaution to prevent the inroads of the savages, & prevent the effusion of innocent blood, we, the Committee, after receiving a message from the chiefs of the Delawares who are now settled near the mouth of the Wabash, informing us that a treaty was to be held at O'Post [Vincennes] by the English and Kickapoo Indians, and that they would attend to know the purport of the same, and if their brothers, the Long Knives would send a man they could rely on, they would, on their return, inform him of the same, as they were apprehensive the Kickapoos would strike their brothers, the Long Knives. Therefore, we thought it most prudent, and shall send immediately a certain James Harrod and Garret Pendergrass to converse with them on the same.⁵⁶

In an attempt to counter British inroads among the Kickapoos and Wabash tribes, Euro-American colonists organized an Indian council at Fort Pitt only months later, in July 1776. The colonists hoped to win over Indian support, or at least persuade them to neutrality. Kickapoos, among other nations, attended the conference.⁵⁷ In exchange for gifts, the Kickapoos were happy to pledge an “alliance” of friendship as they had so often before with the French, Spanish, and British.

Just as they misguided other Europeans, Kickapoos initially opted for a policy of pretended Euro-American allegiance during the Revolutionary War. The competition between Britain and her colonists again provided the Kickapoos with desired gifts and

⁵⁶ “Petition from the Inhabitants of Kentucky to Convention of Virginia, June 15, 1776,” *Illinois Historical Collection G.R. C. Virginia Series*, vol. 3, p. 15, OVGLE Archive.

⁵⁷ John Sugden, *Blue Jacket Warrior of the Shawnees*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), p. 200-202.

services, prompting the Kickapoos to switch their allegiance whenever profitable opportunities arose. Agreeing to peace at Fort Pitt, many Kickapoos later joined a Niagara-bound British army of seven hundred, consisting of Canadians as well as Senecas, Mohawks, Chippewas, Ottawas, and Pottawattamies.⁵⁸ In 1778, a few Kickapoos aided George Rogers Clark in his attack on Kaskaskia and Cahokia.⁵⁹ Clearly, the only nation the Kickapoos intended to support was their own, and early Kickapoo relations with the incipient United States are best defined by conflict. During the American Revolutionary War, opportunistic Kickapoos raided settlements, thieving livestock, goods, and captives. And just as before, they promised peace whenever attending Indian councils.⁶⁰

By the end of the American Revolution, the newly independent Euro-Americans hoped to subjugate Indian nations, just as Britain had expected after the French and Indian War. This time, however, European inroads penetrated the backcountry far deeper than before. Kickapoos were no longer beyond the reach of colonists. During the Euro-American era of influence, Kickapoos impunity would diminish, and the tribe would suffer first hand from the advancing United States army. Regardless of hopes inspired by the British posts remaining in the backcountry after the war, the tribes' days of oscillating loyalties were brought to an end as British forces withdrew following the 1814 Treaty of Ghent. The glory days of the Kickapoos' diplomatic system drew to an inglorious end.

⁵⁸ "Information from John Hamilton & John Bradley, delivered to the Commissioners, Pittsburgh, September 13, 1776." Col. George Morgan's Letter Book, Books 2, OVGLE Archive.

⁵⁹ Gibson, p. 34.

⁶⁰ Frances Smith Cain, "The Kickapoo Indians, 1832-1895" (Ph.D. dissertation., University of Oklahoma, 1940), p. 5.

During the thirty years from the early days of the French and Indian War through the American Revolution, Kickapoos determined their own relations with European powers. Kickapoos had decided when and how long peace would last, and usually their assurances of peace proved to be stop-gap measures between opportune raids and covert exploitation of imperial powers. The “middle ground” may well have been a place of compromise and cooperation for many tribes, but to the Kickapoos it served more as a hunting ground, not of furs and hides but a place where European merchants and settlers could be raided with impunity. Striking from deep in the backcountry, the Kickapoos did not fear unlikely. But more importantly, the tribal diplomacy offered sufficient reconciliatory gestures and pledges of fidelity, generally dissuading Europeans from full scale attacks like those that haunted early French relations. Competing European nations, desperate to control Native American populations, eagerly accepted empty assurances, repeatedly opening themselves up to Kickapoo exploitation. Just like the European imperial powers who acted in their own self-interests, Kickapoos remained truly only loyal to themselves.

With the Purchase of Louisiana and the eventual expulsion of Britain, the United States effectively eliminated European competition in Kickapoo areas of interest. Finally able to unilaterally manhandle tribes that were formerly “indulged,” the Euro-Americans rendered the Kickapoo diplomatic system ineffective. A variety of cultural adaptations would follow, further diverging the three Kickapoo bands. But from 1750 to 1780, as one historian put it, the Kickapoos were truly the “lords of the middle border.”⁶¹

⁶¹ Gibson, *Kickapoos: Lord of the Middle Border*.

The Collapse of Colonial Kickapoo Foreign Policy, 1790-1830

During the early and late colonial periods, Kickapoos developed a distinct political and diplomatic strategy. From the first arrival of Europeans southwest of the Great Lakes until the French and Indian War, France steadily extended its influence westward. Jesuit missionaries and wealth-seeking traders penetrated the backcountry hoping to convert Indians to Christianity and to profit from the fur trade. Tribes responded to the intrusions in varied ways, but Kickapoos were among the last to align themselves with foreigners. Finally accepting the inevitability of European intrusion, Kickapoos found themselves in a position to profit when Britain engaged France, both vying for territorial dominance and access to the lucrative Indian trade. European rivalries reinvigorated the struggling Kickapoo nation as the tribe pledged their loyalty to whoever offered gifts, trade and services. From the French and Indian War to the American Revolutionary War, the tribe retained its sovereignty longer than other Indian nations by mastering the concept of neutrality and shifting alliances towards Europeans while asserting territorial dominance over marginal tribes in the Illinois Country. But American independence initiated unique political and territorial changes after two centuries of European rivalries that gradually undermined Kickapoo independence.

As the United States organized itself and pushed west, the tribe faced new challenges that caused Kickapoo diplomacy to collapse. Increasing Euro-American settlers, United States military conflicts subjugating Indians and expelling European influences, and Indian treaties forcing land cessations and terminating tribal diplomatic relationships with other nations, effectively ending long-practiced Kickapoo diplomacy.

The rise of United States territorial dominance in the backcountry overwhelmed the Kickapoos and rendered useless their former foreign policies.

Fighting for independence in the Revolutionary War, Euro-Americans competed with Britain for backcountry posts and Indian alliances. Britain hoped to retain the forts both as profitable fur trade posts and as diplomatic centers whereby Indians might be convinced to blockade, raid, and destabilize expanding Euro-Americans. Even after the war's conclusion the British were slow to relinquish these posts.

The Revolutionary War was a time of intense conflict and competition in the backcountry. Representing the rebellious colonists, George Rogers Clark swept through Vincennes, Cahokia and Kaskaskia winning Indian loyalties with military success and overt intimidation.¹ The war effort gradually turned to the east, soldiers withdrew, and Euro-American officials lacked the funds to bribe backcountry Indians. One such official complained,

I wish you'd tell me how Mr. Machieval advises to keep up the Indian Interests with out Goods, either to give or sell. The fear of Col. Clark & his 500 men has hitherto terrified them but ... will not they shortly find out that he has not 200? I ought to have blankets & Stroudings for them before winter if possible. Mr. Lindsay's commission, if he succeeds, will not purchase half enough for the Indian nations bordering upon us. I wish some Gentleman of business would undertake the matter with further powers.²

Taking advantage of declining Euro-American influence, Major Arent de Peyster from a Canadian base pursued British designs in the backcountry, mingling with Indians and

¹ "George Rogers Clark to George mason, November 19, 1779," *Illinois Historical Collection*, G.R. C, Virginia Series, vol. 3, p. 124, OVGLE Archive; "George Rogers Clark to George mason, November 19, 1779," *Illinois Historical Collection*, G.R.C., Virginia Series, vol. 3, pp. 124, OVGLE Archive.

² "John Todd to William Flemming, Aug. 18, 1779," Draper Manuscripts, 23 J 103 – A.L.S., Alvord, Virginia Series, Vol. 2, 1902, p. 109-110, OVGLE Archive.

securing promises of a unified resistance to Euro-American expansion. Meeting privately with the Kickapoos and Piankishaws, and later with the Mascoutins, Ouattonong, Miamis and Peorias as well, Peyster convinced the Indians of their own self-interest to seal off the Wabash and Ohio Rivers from expanding Euro-Americans. He instructed the Wabash tribes to “shut up the Wabash on the approach of an enemy and that some of our people should go to reconnoiter towards the fall of the Ohio [River].³ And though not directly involved in the War, Spain also intensified Indian meetings to ensure the tribes resisted any British or Euro-American encroachment into the region then serving as a buffer to the Southwest. St. Louis Commandant Francisco Cruzat bribed Kickapoos with wampum belts, tobacco, and other goods. He admonished the tribe to abstain from an alliance with either the British or Euro-Americans, and even encouraged an attack on a British fort to dispel any non-Spanish foreigners.⁴

In 1781 the war was coming to an end as revolutionary forces surrounded Lord Cornwallis, and the new nation immediately looked west. In October, 1781, Cornwallis was defeated and the Revolutionary War was all but over. In the fall of 1781 a Euro-American official met with the Kickapoos. He promised them peace and trade as long as they delivered up the wampum belt the English had given them along with an “assurance

³ “Indian Council, Detroit, June 14, 1782,” Haldimand Papers, *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society Collections*, vol. 10, p. 587-591, OVGLE Archive; “Indian Council, Detroit, June 14, 1782,” Haldimand Papers, *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society Collections*, vol. 10, p. 587-591, OVGLE Archive; “Major Arent S. de Peyster to Brig. Gen. H. Watson Powell,” *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections*, vol. 20, p. 34, OVGLE Archive.

⁴ “Fco. Cruzat, to Doge, December 15, 1780,” in Lawrence Kinnaird (ed.), *Spain in the Mississippi Valley*, pt. 1, p. 405, OVGLE Archive; “Leonard Helm to George Slaughter, Fort Jefferson, Fe. 14, 1781,” Calendar of Virginia Sate Papers, vol. 1, p. 516, OVGLE Archive; “Franco Cruzat to Miro, St. Louis of Ylinuesez, Aug. 8, 1782,” in Lawrence Kinnard, *Spain in the Mississippi Valley*, part 2, p. 52-53, OVGLE Archive.

of their future fidelity.”⁵ As they had before, Kickapoos offered friendship to the new would-be backcountry power. But within a year Kickapoos were pressing their new friends for more and more gifts. In February 1782, after prolonged pressure, one Euro-American official capitulated, giving the Kickapoos six bushels of corn, fifty pounds of bread, four pounds of gun powder, ten pounds of ball, and one gallon of tafia rum in exchange for unspecified services.⁶ Again in 1783 agents of the new nation visited the Kickapoos and other western tribes, hoping to strengthen their relationships and surely bringing gifts.⁷ Although the war ended, Kickapoos concurrently extracted gifts from all the parties—the British, Spanish, French traders, and Euro-Americans.

DISPOSSESSION BY LEGISLATION AND ENCROACHMENT

In 1778 a U.S. topographical research expedition examined the Wabash River, particularly noting its adequacy for settlement. The engineers reported that the Wabash was “a beautiful River, with high and upright banks.” It was “less subject to overflow, than any other river (the Ohio excepted) in this part of America.” They boasted the river’s nearly year long navigatable nature, and noted it was a gentle river unobstructed by falls. More importantly, they reported that the land bordering the river was “remarkably fertile, and several parts of it are natural meadows.” Covered with “fine long grass,” these meadows were only overshadowed by the variety of plentiful and high timber. But for those whom fertile farm lands and ample lumber was not sufficient, the

⁵ “V.T. Dalon to G. R. Clark, St. Vincent, November 3, 1781,” Clark Papers, Missouri Historical Society, OVGLE Archive.

⁶ “Thimothe Demumbrunt, entry, February, 1782,” in John Todd’s Record book, in Edward Mason, *Early Chicago and Illinois*, pp. 315, OVGLE Archive.

⁷ Ephriam Douglas, “Report to Sec. Of War, Princeton, Aug. 18, 1783,” Pennsylvania Archives 1st Series, vol. 10, p. 83-90, OVGLE Archive.

report also identified a silver mine and speculated that others awaited discovery nearby. Additionally, the Wabash “abounds with Salt Springs, and any quantity of salt may be made from them,” and “the hills are replenished with the best coal, and there is plenty of lime and free stone, blue, yellow and white clay, for glass works and pottery.” Many delicious European fruits could be found as well: apples, peaches, cherries, currants, gooseberries, and melons. A good strain of hemp grew wild, as did a variety of grapes that were ideal for a “well-tasted Red Wine.” But wine was not the only alcohol easy to produce along the Wabash, because the report explained that good large hops grew wild as well, and the region was “particularly adapted to the culture of rice.” Less anyone fear entering a wild untamed land, the report also reminded readers that there were two nearby posts, Vincennes and Ouistanon, where corn, wheat and tobacco were produced. These villages also enjoyed large herds of horses, stocks of swine, and plenty of cattle. Indeed, the region appeared to have all the supplies any settler, miner, or other European might need in order to thrive in the paradisiacal Wabash River Valley.⁸

The one item missing from the report was the Native American inhabitants—but in the eyes of most Europeans those inhabitants did not count. At that time approximately 4,000 Indians (including several hundred Kickapoos) lived between Lake Michigan and the Mississippi River. Another 1,000 Kickapoos, Piankashaws, Musquitons, and

⁸ “Hutchins, Thomas. Topographical Description of Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and North Carolina. 1778,” p. 26-30, in Gilbert Imlay, *A Topographical Description of the Western Territory of North America*, p. 485-506, *Indiana Historical Collections*, vol. 3, OVGLE Archive; Harlow Lindley, *Indiana as Seen by Early Travelers*, p. 7-8, OVGLE Archive.

Quiatonons lived immediately south of Lake Superior.⁹ A 1778 report counted 800 Kickapoos, Piankashaws, Mascoutins and Vermillions just around Fort Pitt (present-day Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania).¹⁰ Despite these expansive populations, Europeans continued to press westward “settling” the Ohio Country.

Among other tools, Euro-Americans disposed the Ohio Country Indians through legislation and encroachment. The 1783 Treaty of Paris served to conclude the Revolutionary War, but it also carved up western lands without consideration of Indians. The United States of America claimed all lands east of the Mississippi and below the middle of Lake Superior. To raise revenues, the new nation immediately prepared the region for sale to already anxious settlers. Facilitating such endeavors, New York ceded its western claims (from Lake Erie to the Ohio River) in 1782.¹¹ In 1784 Virginia ceded its western lands to Congress.¹² In return, Congress created the Virginia Military district in present-day Ohio, providing Virginia her own lands to repay veterans. Payments varied from lots of 100 acres to 17,500 acres, depending on rank.¹³ Also in 1784, the United States hosted the second Treaty of Fort Stanwix. At the first treaty in 1768 the Iroquois surrendered the lands south of the Ohio River (present day Kentucky), though it

⁹ “A Lists of the Different Nations and Tribes of Indians in the Northern District of North America, with the Number of their Fighting men &c In the year 1778,” Parkman Papers, vol. 27, p. 454-457, Massachusetts Historical Society, OVGLE Archive.

¹⁰ “Fort Pitt, March 27, 1778,” Col. George Morgan’s Letter Book, Book 3, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, OVGLE Archive.

¹¹ Robert V. Hine and John Mack Faragher, *The American West: A New Interpretive History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 106.

¹² At this time, “Congress” operated under Articles of Confederation, which remained in effect until the United States constitution was ratified by a ninth member in June, 1788. For the purposes of fluidity, that legislative body is simply termed *Congress*, whether acting under the Articles of Confederation or the United States constitution.

¹³ Lloyd DeWitt Bockstruck, *Revolutionary War Bounty Land Grants Awarded by State Governments* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1996), p. xxii-xxiii.

was really never theirs to give. At the second treaty, the United States reaffirmed those cessations, once more agreed to by the Iroquois who still had no significant presence in the region. The following year the United States met with Wyandots, Delawares, Chippewas and Ottawas representatives at Fort McIntosh likewise to obtain their title to the lands surrendered by the Iroquois. The Treaty of Fort McIntosh “legalized” Euro-American settlement south of the Ohio and north of it as far as the Muskingum River, which begins about a hundred miles south of present-day Cleveland and meanders south to present-day Marietta where it feeds into the Ohio River. Also in 1785, Congress passed the infamous Land Ordinance, which established the principles by which the nation would divide up and settle western lands. The bill called for systematic surveys of the West to facilitate its lands division into six-square-mile townships of 36 640-acre lots. In 1787 Congress passed the Northwest ordinance. This legislation organized the Northwest Territory and set the precedent for absorbing western lands as new states. Famous for their long term implications, these two ordinances offered a presumptuous declaration of the United States’ intent to incorporate the West. These treaties and congressional decrees primarily carved up lands immediately east of the Kickapoos. Nevertheless, the legislation validated and stimulated Euro-American migrations down the Ohio and closer to the Kickapoos’ Wabash homelands.

Under pressure from expanding Euro-Americans, many Indians looked to the British, still entreating Natives from their illegal backcountry posts. On several occasions British representatives met with angry Indians: Chippewas, Delawares, Kickapoos, Miamis, Ottawas, Shawnees, Wyandots, and others. Meeting at Fort Detroit, the British helped organize many such tribes into a unified unit. This Wabash confederacy had a

fluid membership which at various times consisted of bands from different tribes, including: Wyandots, Shawnees, Pottawattamies, Ottawas, Ojibwas, Delawares, Miamis, Iroquois, Kickapoos, Mascoutins and Kaskaskias. Again in 1786 many of these tribes gathered at a Wyandot village where they pledged to uphold the Ohio River as a final boundary against the encroaching Euro-Americans. When the United States invited northwestern tribes to council in 1785, few Indians participated.¹⁴ When the United States hosted another treaty at the mouth of the Miami River the following year, attendance remained low. Kickapoos and other Wabash tribes were among those that refused to attend.¹⁵ For the time, they chose to unify with Britain against the encroaching Euro-Americans. Indeed, when a band of Chickasaw Indians complained to Spanish authorities about Kickapoo raids, the Spanish admitted they held little sway over the marauders, but rather that the British were the tribe's strongest allies.¹⁶ Again in 1786 Indians met at Detroit, complaining to the British about the expanding Euro-Americans. One chief explained, "the Americans have given us great trouble since the peace concluded between you and them, in which we, the Indians were left out." The Indians resolved to send a letter to the Congress inviting that assembly to travel out to the Ohio hinterlands to directly discuss a definitive boundary between Indians and Euro-American

¹⁴ "The Northwest Expedition of George Rogers Clark, 1786-1787," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, vol. 25, p. 317-334; "Letter, Detroit, May 8, 1786," Haldimand Papers, *Michigan Pioneer Collections*, 11, p. 488-489, OVGLE Archive.

¹⁵ "McKee to Sir John Johnson, Detroit, Feb 25, 1786" Haldimand Papers, *Michigan Pioneer Collections*, 11, p. 482-483, OVGLE Archive.

¹⁶ "Franco Cruzat to Don Estevan Miro, St. Louis of Ylinueses, August 13, 1785," in Lawrence Kinnaird, *Spain in the Mississippi Valley*, pt. 2, p. 133-135, OVGLE Archive.

settlers. The Indians insisted that they wished for “a lasting peace between them and us.”¹⁷

The Indians never got their chance to meet with Congress, and peaceful negotiations quickly deteriorated into settler encroachment and Indian raids. In the summer of 1785 a mixed group of Shawnees, Miamis, Cherokees and Kickapoos scalped and killed some Euro-American adventurers traveling down the Ohio.¹⁸ The following summer George Rogers Clark received word that there were hostile Indians around Vincennes.¹⁹ George Croghan explained that Indians neighboring Vincennes, among the first to accept United States authority, were growing apprehensive about counseling with the Euro-Americans. Another letter to Clark from a schoolmaster and speculator named John Filson also revealed new attitudes at Vincennes, explaining “this place...that once trembled at your victories arms...is now entirely anarchical and we shudder at the daily expectation of horrid murders.” Filson felt abandoned, noting Virginia had withdrawn its garrisons when it ceded the region to Congress. But more so, he blamed the changing attitudes on “British intrigue, lack of organized government, and land hunger.”²⁰ The backcountry inhabitants were turning against the Euro-Americans.

Congress resolved to nip this upheaval in the bud. In 1786 it called for the mobilization of a small army. Secretary of War Henry Knox explained that the troops’

¹⁷ “Indian Council, Detroit, Dec. 24, 1786,” Haldimand Papers, *Michigan Pioneer Collections*, vol 11, p. 470-472, OVGLE Archive.

¹⁸ “Josiah Harmar to Mifflin, Fort McIntosh, June 25, 1785,” in Consul Willshire Butterfield (ed.), *Journal of Capt. Jonathon Heart*, 1785 (Albany: J. Junsell’s Sons, 1885), p. 76.

¹⁹ “Simeon Spring to George R. Clark, Post St. Vincent, July 22, 1786,” Clark Papers, Missouri Historical Society, OVGLE Archive.

²⁰ L. C. Helderman, “The Northwest Expedition of George Rogers Clark, 1786-1787,” *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, vol. 25, no. 3 (December, 1938): p. 321.

purpose was peacekeeping, their presence intended to combat “warm hostilities” from the Wabash tribes with simple intimidation. Two companies were stationed on the Miami, one at the confluence of the Tuscarawas and the Muskingum, four at the mouth of the Muskingum at the Ohio, from which they could support troops stationed nearby at Fort McIntosh and Fort Pitt.²¹ The troops were in position by late summer and by October they were marching toward the Wabash.²²

As Euro-American troops advanced, tensions elevated in the backcountry. Many Indians turned to the British for support. Among the first, two Kickapoos reported to Detroit with intelligence regarding the armies advancing on the Wabash from different routes. The British officials offered their condolences, but little more.²³

The crisis was heightened when an upstart party of Euro-Americans seized Vincennes in 1786, claiming they were acting in the interests of the United States.²⁴ Knox was particularly concerned with the occurrence at Vincennes. He viewed the seizure of the town as a threat to the sovereignty of the United States.²⁵ In July of 1787 the captors of Vincennes sent a petition to Congress, requesting formal recognition of their ownership of the surrounding lands, amounting to thirty square miles. They claimed the land was given them by Virginia and that the Indians had surrendered the land at that

²¹ “Knox to Harmar, War Office, June 27, 1786,” Harmar Papers, Reel 2, William L. Clements Library, OVGLE Archive.

²² “Finney to Harmar, Fort Finney, July 3, 1786,” Harmar Papers, Reel 2, William L. Clements Library, OVGLE Archive; “W. Ancrum, Detroit, Oct 13, 15, 20, 1786,” Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, vol. 24, p. 35-39, OVGLE Archive.

²³ “Indian Speech, St. Joseph’s, Sept. 19, 1786,” *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections*, vol. 24, p. 33, OVGLE Archive.

²⁴ “Wyllys to Harmar, Fort Finney, February 6, 1786,” Harmar Papers, reel 2, William L. Clements Library, OVGLE Archive.

²⁵ “H. Knox, Secretary at War to the President of Congress, War Office, April 16, 1787,” in Clarence Carter, ed. *Territorial Papers of the United States*, vol. 2 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1934-), p. 26.

time. With the withdrawal of Virginia and its cessation of land to Congress, the capturers feared they would lose their claim. Most of all, they intended to earn federal recognition of their property before any conflict broke out, and they wanted the U.S. Army to help defend their lands if such should occur.²⁶

The incident at Vincennes is a prime example of the audacious encroachment of Euro-Americans onto Indian lands. Knox observed that the Indians quickly learned that “some of the whites, on the frontiers, are not so impressed of the propriety of justice, and moderation, as to be governed thereby, in their conduct towards the Indians.”²⁷ Indeed, the land-hungry Euro-Americans pressed forward into Indian-occupied territories, and they did not hesitate to violate laws if there was no body to enforce them. One congressional committee concluded,

lawless persons attack the Indians with impunity—but there is, at present, no system of civil law established in the territory of the United States north west of the River Ohio, whereby the conduct of individuals can be controlled, or the offences of Crimes prevented or punished therein.²⁸

The committee’s remedy was remarkably simple, and equally ineffective. Much like King George’s 1763 solution to a similar problem, the congressional committee resolved to prohibit all civilian and military Euro-Americans from entering the region without a permit. This stop-gap measure was short lived, but it seemed the major war was averted. But once the military withdrew, Congress essentially removed any iota of governance it

²⁶ “J.M.P. Legrace, Pierre Gamelin, N. Perrot, Petition of the Inhabitants of Post Vincennes to the Honourable Congress of the United States of North America, July 26, 1787,” in Carter, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 2, p. 58-61; “Bartholomew Tardivean, Petition to Congress from the Illinois Country, Kaskaskia, August 27, 1787,” Carter, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 2, p. 68-70.

²⁷ “Knox to Harmar, war Office, July 24, 1787,” Harmar Papers, rel 2, William L. Clements Library, OVGLE Archive.

²⁸ “Report of Committee: Indian relations, July 26, 1787,” in Carter, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 2, p. 56-58.

had in the region. Congress turned administration over to states and those adjacent to the recently organized Northwest Territory took on the tasks of monitoring wrongful settlement of Indian lands, further removing any federal constraints.²⁹ Nothing beyond weak and passive state governments remained to stop the advancing hordes of Euro-American settlers.

Three months after the former resolution, Congress reversed its decision and presented a new idea to administer the Ohio Country. By the authority of its military might and the Treaty of Paris, Congress resolved to allow settlement in the region north of the Ohio River in October, 1787. The newly available lands reached all the way out to the Wabash and then down to the Ohio. Though only one more advance in the relentless conquest of the west, for the first time the Kickapoos were directly affected as their eastern territory was then open to Euro-American settlement.³⁰ Arthur St. Clair was appointed governor of the new Northwest Territory (composed of present-day Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, and eastern Minnesota), and directed to “extinguish the Indian rights to the westward as far as the River Mississippi.” His one bargaining chip with the Indians was to allow them to punish Euro-Americans “in such manner as the Indians shall think proper” should they cross whatever new lines St. Clair negotiated. That did little to benefit the Indians living east of the Wabash who preferred to stay in their own lands unmolested. Last, St. Clair was to identify the most powerful

²⁹ “Report of Committee: Indian relations, July 26, 1787,” in Carter, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 2, p. 56-58, OVGLE Archive.

³⁰ “Resolutions concerning bounty lands and an Indian treaty, Oct. 22, 1787,” in Clarence Carter, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 2, p. 76-77, OVGLE Archive.

men in the tribes and then apply any means necessary to endear them to the United States in order to ease future dispossession.³¹

The first United States census, performed in 1790, reveals intense early settlement in the West. The four most western counties of Pennsylvania (Westmoreland, Allegheny, Washington, and Fayette) totaled 63,518 Euro-Americans. Kentucky boasted 73,677. Two major settlements developed in the Virginia military district: Massie's Station (present-day Manchester, Ohio) was founded in 1791; Chillicothe was founded in 1796, hosted a constitutional convention in 1803, and became the capital of Ohio when the state was organized in 1803.³²

DISPOSSESSION BY CONFLICT

The post-Revolutionary War era was not one of peace. The United States needed to generate revenue, and land hungry citizens uncontrollably coveted western lands. These two problems pointed to one simple answer—military conquest and settlement of Indian lands. The Kickapoos previously prospered from European competition and war, but for the first time the tribe itself was the target of a unified large scale massive campaign to not only subjugate the Indians but to confiscate their lands.

Following the 1783 Treaty of Paris, encroaching settlers increasingly came into conflict with backcountry Indians. Minor Indian raids typified their relationship as

³¹ “Anthony Wayne and the Battle of Fallen Timbers,” *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society*, vol. 31, p. 473, OVGLE Archive; “Chas. Thomas, the Secretary of Congress to Governor St. Clair, October 26, 1787,” in Carter, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 2, p. 78-79.

³² *Return of the Whole Number of Persons within the Several Districts of the United States, According to “An Act Providing for the Enumeration of The Inhabitants of the United States;” passed March the first, one thousand seven hundred and ninety-one* (Philadelphia: United States, 1793), p. G2.

settlers overran present-day Kentucky and then suffered attacks from tribes that retreated across the Ohio River. In May of 1787 an officer on the frontier, Colonel Josiah Harmar, reported that the Wabash tribes were raiding Kentucky and “plundering the inhabitants of their horses, and occasionally murdering them.” Harmar requested a new fort and garrison to be erected on the high end of the Wabash in order to “keep the Indians in awe, and, in great measure, secure the frontier inhabitants.”³³

In the following month Secretary of War Henry Knox made a similar request, suggesting new forts at the Miami and Cayahoga villages southwest of Lake Erie along with the dispatch of 1500 troops to the region. Examining the conflict between Indians and Euro-American settlers, Knox concluded, “either one or the other party must remove to a great distance, or government must keep them both in awe by a strong hand.” Knox even suggested a long chain of forts from Fort Pitt to the Wabash and down to the Ohio, creating a military barrier between the Indians and Euro-American settlers.³⁴ Congress demanded a treaty with the Wabash tribes and ultimately ordered troops dispatched to discourage Indian hostilities. Congress instructed the U.S. Army to join up with the Kentucky militia and then only to attack if Indians could not be induced peacefully to tolerate the theft of their lands.³⁵

United States representatives found few Indians willing to evict themselves; instead, the Natives grew angry at the expansion of Euro-Americans. Governor St. Clair

³³ “Colonel Harmar to the Secretary of War, Fort Harmar, May 14, 1787,” in W. Smith, *St. Clair Papers*, 1882, vol. 2, p. 21, OVGLE Archive.

³⁴ “H. Knox, Report of the Secretary of War to Congress, July 10, 1787,” in Clarence Carter, *Territorial papers*, vol. 2, p. 31-35; “H. Knox, Report of the Secretary at War, Indian Affairs, March 31, 1788,” in Clarence Carter, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 2, p. 100-102.

³⁵ “Congressional Resolution, July 21, 1787,” Harmar Papers, reel 4, William L. Clements Library, OVGLE Archive.

observed, “Our settlements are extending themselves so fast on every quarter where they can be extended.” But to the Indians, he concluded, “The idea of being ultimately obliged to abandon their country rankles in their minds.”³⁶

Hoping to appease the Ohio Country tribes, Knox requested Congress to appropriate \$40,000 to purchase lands. Congress began doling out funds for such treaties, but the plan was frustrated by conflicting land claims and the Indians’ refusal to sell.³⁷ Many tribes simply boycotted the United States’ treaty councils. One such meeting was held at Detroit in 1788, but the Kickapoos refused to attend.³⁸ The tribe ignored another treaty attempt later that year.³⁹ The Euro-American’s even employed the Wyandots to mediate peace with the Kickapoos, but the tribe refused.⁴⁰ Instead, Kickapoos continued to raid across the Ohio. Governor St. Clair concluded, “a war with the Western tribes, at least, seems inevitable.... A war with them will probably involve some others, and it will soon become general.”⁴¹

In early spring of 1788 Euro-American concerns were validated when a party of Kickapoos captured William Biggs, a merchant carrying beaver pelts to Cahokia. The

³⁶ “Governor St. Clair to the Secretary of War, Pittsburgh, July 5, 1788,” in Carter *Territorial Papers*, vol. 2, pp. 119-120.

³⁷ “H. Knox, Report of the Secretary at War, Indian Affairs, May 2, 1788,” in Carter, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 2, p. 103-105; “Chas. Thomas, Additional Instructions to Governor St. Clair, July 2, 1788,” Clarence Carter, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 2, p. 117-118.

³⁸ “Governor St. Clair to the Secretary at War, Fort Harmar, Oct. 7, 1788,” in Carter, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 2, p. 160-161.

³⁹ “Harmar to Knox, Fort Harmar, Jan. 13, 1789,” Harmar Papers, reel 2, Letter 12, B, William L. Clements Library, OVGLE Archive.

⁴⁰ “Council of Wiandots, Ottawas, Chipaways, Peotewatamas, and Munseys with Kickapoos, Detroit River’s Mouth, July 22, 1788,” Historical Society of Pennsylvania, reel 5, Wayne Mss, Indian Treaties, 1788-1795, Appendix to the Minutes of the Treaty of Fort Harmar, 1789, p. 6-8, OVGLE Archive.

⁴¹ “St. Clair to the Secretary of War, Fort Harmar, Country of Washington, Sept. 14, 1788,” In W. Smith, *St. Clair Papers*, 1882, vol. 2, p. 87-91, OVGLE Archive.

Indians asked his nationality. “French? English? Long Knife?” When Biggs answered in the affirmative to the latter, his inquisitor grew angry and offered up the only English words the merchant would hear during his captivity—“Son of a bitch!” Certainly over the past five years the Wabash Kickapoos developed great hostility towards Euro-Americans. After some debate on whether or not to kill their captive, Kickapoos took Biggs to a nearby village and explained that his life would replace that of an Indian whom the Long Knives had killed. During the next two weeks Biggs convinced his captors that he had no valuable skills (claiming he was a writer) and would be little more than a drain on their resources, at which point they agreed to sell him to a Frenchman at a nearby post.⁴²

Trans-Ohio raiding was spiraling out of control as frequent reports flooded the desks of military post commanders and Governor St. Clair.⁴³ The military outposts at Vincennes and Fort Harmar struggled to protect their own supplies, let alone ever encroaching settlers.⁴⁴ In a formal petition the Kentuckians complained that Wabash Indians “kill our people, steal our horses and at times have killed and drove off numbers of our horned cattle.” The plea continued, “neither can we cultivate our land but with a

⁴² William Biggs, *Narrative of William Biggs, while he was a prisoner with the Kickapoo Indians, then living opposite the Old Weawes Town on the West Bank of the Wabash River* (June 1825), p. 7.

⁴³ “Governor St. Clair to the President, New York, May 2, 1788,” in Carter, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 2, p. 191-193; “John Wyllys to Harmar, Rapids of the Ohio, May 26, 1788,” Harmar Papers, vol. 7, William L. Clements Library, OVGLE Archive; “Harmar to Knox, Fort Harmar, Jan. 13, 1789,” Harmar Papers, reel 2, Letter 12, B, William L. Clements Library, OVGLE Archive; “John Rice Jones to Major John Hamtramck, Oct. 29, 1789,” Alvord, Virginia Series, Vol. 2, 1909, p. 514-517, OVGLE Archive; “Summary statement of the Situation of the Frontiers by the Secretary of State, May 27, 1790,” in W. Smith, *St. Clair Papers*, vol. 2, p. 146-147, OVGLE Archive.

⁴⁴ “Harmar to Secretary of War, Fort Harmar, Sept 4, 1788,” in W. Smith, *St. Clair Papers*, 1882, vol. 2, p. 87, OVGLE Archive.

guard of our inhabitants equipt with arms.”⁴⁵ Joined by other Wabash tribes, the Kickapoos mounted ever-growing bands of disgruntled and aggressive warriors. Western settlements regularly appealed for support from their recently estranged Virginia government.⁴⁶ Many Kentuckians organized their own raids, likewise crossing the Ohio and attacking Indian settlements. In a request for additional soldiers to guard the border, St. Clair wrote to President George Washington with a full explanation:

It is not to be expected, sir, that the Kentucky people will or can submit patiently to the cruelties and depredations of those savages; they are in the habit of retaliation, perhaps, without attending precisely to the nation from which the injuries are received.... they also will march through that country to redress themselves, and the government will be laid prostrate.⁴⁷

Murders and plundering occurred on both sides of the Ohio at the hands of Indians and Euro-Americans. Knox observed, “The injuries and murders have been so reciprocal, that it would be a point of critical investigation to know on which side they have been the greatest.”⁴⁸

In addition to settler encroachment and violent Indian reciprocity, British influence contributed to the hostilities in the backcountry. The British met regularly with many of the Ohio Country tribes, pledging support and encouraging the Indians to restrain

⁴⁵ “The American Inhabitants of the Illinois to Governor St. Clair, no. 7, Great Run, May 23, 1790,” in Carter, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 2, p. 252-253; “H. Knox, The Secretary of War to Governor St. Clair, War Office, Dec. 19, 1789,” in *Territorial Papers*, vol. 2, p. 224-226.

⁴⁶ “Governor A. St. Clair to Secretary at War, Fort Harmar, July 16, 1788,” in Carter, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 2, p. 130-132.

⁴⁷ “Gov. St. Clair to the President, New York, September 14, 1789,” in W. Smith, *St. Clair papers*, 1882, vol. 2, p. 123-124, OVGLE Archive.

⁴⁸ “Report from H. Knox, Secretary of War, to the President of the United States, War Office, June 15, 1789,” *American State Papers*, vol. 4, *Indian Affairs*, Vol. 1, Washington, 1832, Doc. 2, 1789. No. 1, p. 12-14, OVGLE Archive.

advancing settlers through violent tactics.⁴⁹ The United States attempted to limit British influence by reaffirming trade restrictions, stating only U.S. citizens could trade with the Indians. Their empty declarations had little impact.⁵⁰ Increasingly it seemed only one solution remained—war.

Since 1788 leading U.S. officials perceived war as inevitable. Governor St. Clair, Secretary of War Henry Knox, and President Washington all supported war.⁵¹ In a final attempt at peace, Governor St. Clair gathered representatives from the Wyandots, Delawares, Ottawas, Chippewas, Pottawattamies, and Sauk for a treaty at Fort Harmar in January, 1789. Threatening a massive campaign, St. Clair forced the Indians to agree to the former cessations granted in the illegitimate treaties of Fort Stanwix and McIntosh. As before, the Kickapoos refused to attend, and the treaty did little to stop the violence. By the winter of 1789 Congress empowered Washington to call forth state militias for a war in the West, and by June 1790 troops were mobilized.⁵²

The ensuing war lasted from 1790 to 1794. The first major battle occurred in October of 1790, wherein Miami Chief Little Turtle led a confederacy of tribes against

⁴⁹ “Major John Hamtramck to General Josiah Harmar, march 28, 1789,” Alvord, *Virginia Series*, vol. 2, 1909, p. 502-504, OVGLE Archive.

⁵⁰ “Governor St. Clair, Instructions to Capt. John Baptiste Maget, Cahokia, June 1, 1790,” Carter, *Territorial Papers*, Vol. 3, p. 309-310, OVGLE Archive; “An Act to Regulate Trade and Intercourse with Indian tribes, approved July 22, 1790,” *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections*, vol. 24, pp. 149-151, OVGLE Archive.

⁵¹ “Henry Knox to Gov. St. Clair, War Office, Dec. 8, 1788,” W.H. Smith, *St. Clair Papers*, 1882, vol. 2, p. 100-101, OVGLE Archive; “Gov. St. Clair to John Jay, Fort Harmar, Dec. 13, 1788,” W. Smith, *St. Clair Papers*, 1882, vol. 2, p. 1910-1915, OVGLE Archive.

⁵² George Washington to Governor Arthur St. Clair, New York, October 6, 1789.” In Fitzpatrick, *The Writings of George Washington*, vol. 30, p. 429-431, OVGLE Archive; W. Smith, *St. Clair Papers*, vol. 2, 1882, p. 125-126, OVGLE Archive; “President’s Speech to Congress, December 8, 1790” *American State Papers*, vol. 4, *Indian Affairs*, vol. 1, Washington, 1832, OVGLE Archive; “Draft of a proposed message to Senate, Dec. 1789,” in Carter, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 2, p. 227-228.

General Harmar in a mutually costly stalemate, resulting in the temporary retreat of U.S. forces.⁵³ Among many tribes, the Kickapoos participated and suffered injuries and fatalities. Harmar recorded that the tribe's losses were comparable to the other major contributing nations—the Shawnee, Delawares, Cherokees and Pottawattamies.⁵⁴ Regardless, the retreat of Harmar's troops strengthened the Indian confederacy, and by December Indian raids resumed. This also reaffirmed the United States' intentions to regroup and invade the region in the following year.⁵⁵ In the interim, the Euro-Americans responded by offering rewards for Indian, British, or French scalps, revealing open hostility towards both the Natives and Europeans inciting the conflicts.⁵⁶ Then in March, 1791, the U.S. sent one last warning to the tribes. Circulating a speech that threatened "such a number of warriors as would drive you entirely out of the country," the U.S. demanded the Indians peacefully accept encroaching settlers and consequent land theft.⁵⁷

In May of 1791 another United States army marched along the Ohio.⁵⁸ This second attempt was led by Arthur St. Clair; meanwhile the Kentucky militia, organized

⁵³ "Extract of a letter from Montreal, Dec. 11, 1790, endorsed in Mr. Birchwood's, 1 February, 1791," in *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections*, vol. 24, p. 159-162, OVGLE Archive.

⁵⁴ "Josiah Harmar to Knox, Fort Washington, February 15, 1791," Harmar Large Letterbook, letter 11, p. 42-43, William L. Clements Library, OVGLE Archive.

⁵⁵ "Petition from the town of Clarksville to Harmar," Clarksville, Dec. 3, 1790," Harmar Papers, reel 2, William L. Clements library, OVGLE Archive.

⁵⁶ "Journal of what happened at the Miamis and the Glaize with the Ouias & Piconnas, Detroit, May 1, 1791," *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections*, vol. 24, p. 22-23, OVGLE Archive.

⁵⁷ "H. Knox, Secretary of War to Col. Thomas Proctor, War Department, march 10, 1791" *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society Collections*, vol. 24, p. 180-183, OVGLE Archive; "H. Knox 'To the Head men and Warriors of the Tribes of Indians of the Miami Town and its Neighborhood and Inhabiting the Waters of the Miami River of Lake Erie, and to the Tribes inhabiting the Water of the River Wabash,' March 11, 1791," in *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections*, vol. 24, p. 185-186, OVGLE Archive.

⁵⁸ "Journal of General Charles Scott's Proceedings from Ohio River to Louisville, May 23-June 16, 1791," Clark Papers, Missouri Historical Society, OVGLE Archive.

under Brigadier-general Winfield Scott and Colonel James Wilkinson, launched precision strikes against the Wabash tribes. Fearful that Euro-Americans might take advantage of the high winter waters to sail up the Wabash, Kickapoos evacuated their winter sites early and moved further west by April. Nevertheless, in July Scott's militia caught up with the Kickapoos, killing thirty-two Indians and taking some fifty prisoners.⁵⁹ Again in August Wilkinson's militia burned down several Wabash villages, killing ten and capturing thirty.⁶⁰ In November, Little Turtle led allied tribes to repulse the US army under Arthur St. Clair, and the U.S. forces again retreated. Nevertheless, Wabash Kickapoos were utterly routed by the militia; their villages burned; their crops destroyed. Wilkinson reported, "The enemy was unable to make the smallest resistance."⁶¹

For the first time since their 1715 climactic defeat at the hands of the French, the Kickapoos felt the full ramifications of a European nation's wrath. The tribe's 1715 defeat had forged a dramatic shift in Kickapoo policy and their relationship with the dominant foreign power. Suffering a comparable loss to the U.S. surely spawned similar

⁵⁹ "Journal of what happened at the Miamis and the Glaize with the Ouias & Piconnas, Detroit, May 1, 1791," in *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections*, vol. 24, p. 222, OVGLE Archive; Footnote, *American State Papers*, vol. 4, p. 131, Scott's Report, June 28, 1791, OVGLE Archive; "Report of Brigadier General Scott, Lexington, June 28, 1791," *American State Papers*, vol. 2, *Indian Affairs*, Washington, 1832, Doc. 20, 1791, p. 131, OVGLE Archive.

⁶⁰ John Sugden, *Blue Jacket: Warrior of the Shawnees* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), p. 114; George Inlay, *From a Topographical Description of the Western Territory of North America*, 1793, p. 66-67, 81, 93-97, 113, 137-138, 402-413, 427. in *Indiana Historical Collections*, vol. 3, OVGLE Archive; "Letter to Colonel A. McKee, Glaize, June 15, 1797," in *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections*, vol. 24, p. 261-262, OVGLE Archive.

⁶¹ "Lieut. Colonel-Commandant Wilkinson's Report, Frankfort on Kentucky, August 24, 1791," *American State Papers*, vol. 4, *Indian Affairs*, vol. 1, Washington, 1832, Doc. 20, 1791, OVGLE Archive; "William Wells and the Indian Council of 1793," edited by Dwight L. Smith, in *Indiana magazine of History*, vol. 56, no. 3 (September, 1960), OVGLE Archive.

questions and led Kickapoos to rethink their position of hostile resistance once more. Though no uniform policy transformation immediately rose from the ashes of these 1791 disasters, Kickapoos certainly must have questioned their methods of diplomacy.

The following year passed more peacefully as the Euro-Americans, British, Kickapoos and other tribes all maneuvered for better strategic and diplomatic positions. In January, U.S. soldiers at Vincennes observed that the Kickapoos shared their “great intention of making a solid peace with the United States.”⁶² Meanwhile other Kickapoos pledged their support to Blue Jacket and Little Turtle who remained unwilling to yield to U.S. expansion.⁶³ In April some Kickapoos continued their raids against the Osages, while turning down a Sauk invitation to raid Americans.⁶⁴ Backcountry tribes met with British agents as well, who observed a general discontentment with all Europeans.⁶⁵ Unyielding, St. Clair distributed a speech among the tribes yet again, admonishing them to tolerate peacefully dispossession by settlers.⁶⁶

The United States spent 1792 entreating the Wabash tribes. Brigadier-General Rufus Putnam organized a U.S. council in June.⁶⁷ Many Kickapoos, anxious to avoid

⁶² “John Francis Hamtramck to Geners [?], Ft. Vincennes, Fort Knox, January 4, 1792,” Askin Papers (John, 1786-1792), Reel no. 3, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library, OVGLE Archive.

⁶³ Sugden, John. *Blue Jacket: Warrior of the Shawnees* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), p. 130.

⁶⁴ “Manuel Perez to Con Estevan Miro, St. Louis of Ylinueses, April 26, 1792.” Lawrence Kinnaird, *Spain in the Mississippi*, pt. 3, p. 35, OVGLE Archive.

⁶⁵ “John Smith to Messrs. Geo. Leith & Co, Miamis, Feb. 14, 1792,” *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections*, vol. 24, p. 375, OVGLE Archive.

⁶⁶ “Arthur St. Clair to the Chiefs & Warriors of the Wabash,” *W. Sergeant Papers*, Massachusetts Historical Society, OVGLE Archive.

⁶⁷ “Rufus Putnam, Memorandum of goods delivered to Indians, July 1792,” Misc. Manuscripts, Marietta college library, OVGLE Archive; “Rufus Putnam to James Wilkinson, Fort Washington, July 3, 1792,” Wayne Papers, vol. 20, Historical Society of Pennsylvania Ms., OVGLE Archive.

another severe routing, agreed to peace and even accepted U.S. demands to build a fort near present-day Peoria.⁶⁸ In a letter to General Knox, Putnam explained his intent to win over the Wabash tribes with gifts and annuities, hopefully isolating the Miami-Shawnee confederacy from their Wabash allies.⁶⁹ In exchange for their fidelity, Knox authorized Putnam to guarantee the Kickapoos' lands against encroaching Euro-Americans.⁷⁰ In September, 1792, Putnam signed a treaty with the Kickapoos and other western tribes in which both pledged peace, and the United States promised to remain south of the Ohio.⁷¹

The year of 1793 was a prosperous one for the Kickapoos. They regularly received gifts at Fort Vincennes and enjoyed trade goods from Euro-American traders. An officer posted there commented, "They have been supplied with goods on their own terms by reason of a number of traders having, on the news of the peace, flocked hither

⁶⁸ "John Francis Hamtramck to Arthur St. Clair, Fort Knox, June 17, 1792," Wayne Papers, vol. 20, Historical Society of Pennsylvania Ms., OVGLE Archive.

⁶⁹ "Rufus Putnam to General Knox, Fort Washington, July 8, 1792," in W. Smith, *St. Clair Papers*, Vol. 2, 1882, p. 302-309, OVGLE Archive; "Major John F. Hamtramck to Knox, Secretary of War, Fort Knox, Vincennes, October 4, 1792," Wayne Papers, Reel 5, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, OVGLE Archive.

⁷⁰ "Henry Knox to Putnam, War Department, August 7, 1792," Bueil, *The Memoirs of Rufus Putnam*, p. 313-316, OVGLE Archive; "Manuel de Lanzos to Beron de Carondelet, Mobile, August 12, 1792," Lawrence Kinnaird, *Spain in the Mississippi Valley*, pt. 3, 72-73, OVGLE Archive.

⁷¹ "Anthony Wayne and the Battle of Fallen Timbers," *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society*, vol. 31, p. 473, OVGLE Archive; "List of Signers of 1792 Treaty," Putnam Papers, vol. 2, no. 142, Marietta College Library, OVGLE Archive; "A Journal of the Proceedings at a council held with the Indians of the Wabash and Illinois at Post Vincents, by Brigadier General Putnam, September 24-27, 1792," in Bueil, comp., *The Memoirs of Rufus Putnam*, p. 335-362, OVGLE Archive; "H. Knox, the Secretary of War to the president, War Department, Nov. 7, 1792," in Carter, *Territorial Papers*, vol. 2, p. 414; "Rufus Putnam, Rations Delivered to Indians at the Treaty of Vincennes, September, 1792," *Putnam Papers*, vol. 2, no. 144, Marietta College Library, OVGLE Archive; "George Washington Message to the Senate, United States, February 13, 1793," in Fitzpatrick, *The Writings of George Washington*, vol. 32, p. 343-344, OVGLE Archive; "Proceedings of the 2nd Congress, no. 39," *American State Papers*, vol. 4, *Indian Affairs*, vol. 1, Washington, 1832, OVGLE Archive.

with considerable stores.” He explained that “the presents made them by the United States” placed them in a “comfortable condition.”⁷² Officers all over the West likewise noted the complacent status of Indians following the peace treaty.⁷³ It seemed a win-win situation.

Making the year additionally prosperous, Kickapoos also enjoyed gifts from the Spanish. Ever concerned about maintaining a buffer against other European peoples, Spain continued to send gifts to the Kickapoos in hopes of checking U.S. gestures. By January 1794 U.S. officials began to worry “that the minds of the Indians was much poisoned” by gifts of tobacco and wampum belts.⁷⁴ Additionally, Kickapoos received invitations from the Miamis to rejoin the confederacy, threatening the U.S. strategy of divide and conquer. As usual, when confronted by U.S. officials, Kickapoos declared they “would forever be faithful.”⁷⁵

In October of 1793 the United States Great Lakes legion marched out under the command of “Mad” Anthony Wayne.⁷⁶ Engaging Indians on October 16th, the U.S. soldiers drove back the Natives. During the winter Wayne began constructing forts, and by March 1794 his forces erected Fort Recovery on the site of St. Clair’s earlier defeat.

⁷² “Henry Vanderburgh to Winthrop Sargent, Post Vincennes, January 6, 1793,” W. Sergeant Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, OVGLE Archive.

⁷³ “Anthony Wayne to Thomas Pasteur, Hobson’s Choice, August 1, 1793,” Wayne Papers, vol. 28, reel 1, Historical Society of Pennsylvania Ms., OVGLE Archive; “Thomas Pasteur to Anthony Wayne, Fort Knox, Dec. 8, 1793,” Wayne Papers, vol. 31, Historical Society of Pennsylvania Ms., OVGLE Archive; Dwight L Smith, “Notes on the Wabash River in 1795,” *Indiana Magazine of History*, vol. 50, no. 3 (September, 1954): 285-89.

⁷⁴ “Thomas Pasteur to Anthony Wayne, Fort Knox, March 8, 1794,” Wayne Papers, vol. 33, Historical Society of Pennsylvania Ms., OVGLE Archive.

⁷⁵ “Pasteur to Wayne, Fort Knox, August 4, 1794,” Wayne Papers, reel 5, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, OVGLE Archive.

⁷⁶ “Anthony Wayne and the Battle of Fallen Timbers,” *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society*, vol. 31, p. 483, OVGLE Archive.

On the last day of June, the confederacy attacked the fort. Finding the army well defended, Little Turtle ordered the retreat on the first of July. This incident cost the Miami chief a degree of prestige; and the Shawnee chief Blue Jacket seized leadership of the confederacy, leading them into the Battle of Fallen Timbers on August 20, 1794. In this major battle between the U.S. army and the Miami Confederacy, the Indians were utterly defeated. Retreating to the gates of the British Fort Miami, Indians found no support. The gates were pulled shut and the Indians left to hopelessly defend themselves against the advancing U.S. army. Overwhelmed, the Indians were thrashed and the confederacy shattered.⁷⁷ And though the Kickapoos did not participate in the battle, their fate was equally determined by its outcome.

LOSS OF TERRITORIAL AND POLITICAL SOVIEGNTY

After losing the Battle of Fallen Timbers, the Ohio Indians were forced to agree to the Treaty of Greenville the following year. That treaty required Indians to cede most of the Ohio Country in exchange for annuities. It also specified the United States as the only nation with whom the Indians could interact. Last, the treaty demanded ten Indian chiefs remain hostage to the U.S. until all captured soldiers were released. Over fifteen tribes signed the treaty. Of the eighty-five signatories, Kickapoos accounted for three.⁷⁸ Though the U.S. had organized the Northwest Territory in 1787, it was not until the Treaty of Greenville that Euro-Americans could semi-safely settle the Ohio River Valley.

⁷⁷ “Anthony Wayne and the Battle of Fallen Timbers,” *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society*, vol. 31, p. 485, OVGLE Archive.

⁷⁸ “Treaty of Greenville, August 9, 1795,” Collections and Researches made by the Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society (1912), vol. 20, p. 410-419, OVGLE Archive.

Three months later a second treaty was signed that had a major impact on the Kickapoos. In November of 1795 the United States and Great Britain signed Jay's Treaty. Generally remembered as a negotiation over navigation and commerce, the treaty also had a provision for the withdrawal of British forces and traders from the Ohio Country. It prescribed, "His Majesty will withdraw all his troops and garrisons from all posts and places within the boundary lines assigned by the treaty of peace to the United States." Not only did the treaty allow the U.S. to expand, but it stripped the Ohio Country Indians of convenient contact with a potential ally—Great Britain.

The defeat of the Indian confederacy and consequent treaties had harsh territorial and cultural consequences. Indian community order spiraled out of control. Youthful warriors, angered by perceived failures of their leaders, plunged Native villages into chaos. One historian has observed,

The chiefs who tried to manage this rapidly changing world of first neglectful and then demanding fathers failed in their attempts. They failed most obviously in the Ohio Valley and the southern Great Lakes country.... They failed as mediators; they failed to hold support among their own people; they failed to preserve peace in their own towns. Many of them fell as victims of their own relatives and warriors. The final crisis of the political middle ground was marked by the blood of chiefs.⁷⁹

As the influence of traditional leaders was replaced by riotous youth, Indian communities struggled to maintain their cultural stability. One Indian recounted, "When our sensible chiefs were alive... our young men were better and more obedient—but when our wise chiefs died—the wisdom of the nation died with them."⁸⁰ It was in the wake of this

⁷⁹ *Middle Ground*, p. 493-94.

⁸⁰ "Thu-pe-ne-bu-naw-ac, Speech to Col. Hamtramck, Fort Wayne, March 21, 1796," Wayne Papers, vol. 44, reel. 1, Historical Society of Pennsylvania Ms., OVGLE Archive.

cultural turmoil that various revitalization efforts originated, such as the Handsome Lake movement and the followers of Tenskwatawa (the Shawnee Prophet).

Over the following years the United States reaffirmed its territorial claims over the disjointed Indian tribes. In 1800 Congress organized Indiana Territory, essentially replacing the Northwest Territory lands except the region that became the state of Ohio three years later. In 1803 the U.S. gathered Kickapoos and other tribes to sign the Treaty of Fort Wayne. The treaty reaffirmed the Treaty of Greenville, particularly focusing on the cessations of lands, and demanded that the tribes relocate to the region between Vincennes, Kaskaskia and Clarksville. The treaty also set the precedent of forced land exchanges and migrations—a new concept for Kickapoos. Also in 1803, the United States secured Louisiana, purchasing French claims over the region and more importantly removing French and Spanish influences and support from the Indians' diplomatic playbook. The following year the U.S. forced a treaty on the Sauks and Foxes and another upon the Delawares and Piankashaws, confiscating Indian land for Euro-American settlement. In 1805 the Treaty of Grouseland made Delawares, Otawatomis, Miamis, Eel River and Weas surrender lands. In that same year, the Piankashaws were also forced to cede lands constituting the southwest corner of present-day Illinois.⁸¹ In 1809 Congress organized Illinois Territory, including present-day Illinois and Wisconsin, from lands confiscated from Ohio Country Indians. Also in 1809, William Henry Harrison forced the Kickapoos into a treaty reaffirming the Fort Wayne agreements and ceding the Wabash and Vermillion River Valleys. Having lost their Spanish support, and vicariously and directly experienced territorially thieving U.S. treaties, the Kickapoos

⁸¹ Clayton, *Frontier Indiana*, p. 210.

observed the gradual subjugation of Natives in the Old Northwest. Indeed, Harrison saw all of the recent treaties as the end of an era. In a letter to the Secretary of War, Harrison penned,

The happiness they enjoyed from their intercourse with the French is their perpetual theme—it is their golden age. Those who are old enough to remember it, speak of it with rapture and the young ones are taught to venerate it as the Ancients did the reign of Saturn ‘you cal us’ said an old Indian chief to me ‘your children why do you not make us happy as our fathers the French did? They never took from us our lands, indeed they were in common with us – they planted where they pleased and they cut wood where they pleased and so did we – but now if a poor Indian attempts to take a little bark from a tree to cover him from the rain, up comes a white man and threatens to shoot him, claiming the tree is as his own.’⁸²

Native Americans throughout the backcountry were losing territorial control of their homelands, and the Kickapoos were no exception. Over the next few years Euro-Americans migrated into Illinois, encroaching on the once sovereign Kickapoos homelands. Skirmishes arose, but the Kickapoos next great opportunity surfaced when the United States engaged Britain in the War of 1812.

Hoping to delay the advance of Euro-American settlement, many Indians in the Indiana Territory found a new opportunity in the War of 1812. As the rumblings of war grew obvious, one Kickapoo chief and eleven warriors approached an American officer to confess their loyalty. That chief, Miche Pah-ka-en-na, stated that the Kickapoos were among the only Indians who were friendly with the United States.⁸³ Nevertheless, as Tecumseh rallied Indians in the War of 1812, many Wabash and Vermillion Kickapoos joined the war effort, likewise siding with the British. Still other Kickapoos on the

⁸² “Harrison to Secretary of War, July 5, 1809,” in Logan Esarey (ed.), *Messages and Letters of William Henry Harrison*, 2 vol. (1922, reprinted 1975), p. 353-54.

⁸³ Ninian Edwards, *History of Illinois from 1778 to 1833: and life and Times of Ninian Edwards*, (New York: Arno Press, 1975), p. 43.

Wabash, Vermillion, and along the Mississippi chose to abstain from the conflict. The Kickapoos were divided.

The War of 1812 was spawned of political differences between the United States and Great Britain, but in a war that ended in a stalemate between the two it was the Indians who paid the greatest cost. In November 1811, William Henry Harrison led 1,000 riflemen to Prophetstown, the capital city of Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa's pan-Indian movement. The battle was costly for both sides but particularly destructive to the burgeoning Indian confederacy. Tecumseh was killed the following year at the Battle of Thames, after which the confederacy shattered. Not long after the United States and Great Britain reconciled in the 1814 Treaty of Ghent.

Though some Kickapoos were present at Prophetstown on the fateful day of Harrison's attack, their numbers were few. Some Kickapoos rallied to Tecumseh's call to engage the United States; other Kickapoos migrated further east throughout Illinois and even down past St. Louis. Much as during the French and Indian War and the Revolutionary War, Kickapoos preferred not to align themselves with any side until they knew just who would win. Nevertheless, Kickapoos residing in present-day Illinois did take advantage of the militia and army's preoccupation with Britain and plundered settlements with little fear of retribution. Their activities were a central concern to Illinois Governor Ninian Edwards, who regularly complained of the Kickapoos in his journals and frequently attempted to negotiate peace with the tribe.⁸⁴ In March of 1812,

⁸⁴ "Ninian Edwards to the Principal Chiefs of the Kickapoos," Ninian Edwards, *History of Illinois*, p. 292-293; "Ninian Edwards to Secretary of War William Estis, Elvirade (Illinois Territory), Feb. 10, 1812," Ninian Edwards, *History of Illinois*, p. 302; "Gov. Ninian Edwards to Secretary of War William Estis, Elvirade (Illinois Territory), Feb. 15, 1812," Ninian Edwards, *History of Illinois*, p. 302-303.

Edwards ordered the mobilization of ranger companies to protect Illinois settlers who were still outnumbered by the region's Indian inhabitants.⁸⁵

Edwards' fear of Indian raids was heightened by a suspicion of British efforts to encourage such attacks. To counter suspected British influence and to minimize raids, Edwards organized an Indian council at Cahokia in April, 1812. The meeting drew Pottawattamies, Kickapoos, Ottawas, and Chippewas who all listened to Edwards declare that the British and Tecumseh were liars. He demanded peace by threatening war, warning of an army of 185,000 who would repay any raids against settlers. Most of all, Edwards tried to convince the Indians of Britain's disregard for the tribes. In response, one Kickapoo chief promised peace. A Pottawatomie chief also voiced the shared concern that elders could not control young warriors. The Indians concluded by promising they would never join the British, stating, "Whatever the English do, you may rest assured that none of us will join them."⁸⁶ But Edwards never believed the Indians promises, not as long as the British were mingling among the tribes.⁸⁷ Speaking to the Illinois assembly, the governor later declared his concern that the territory had "neither the means of conciliating nor any inducements to offer the Indians, sufficient to prevent over the double motives of hatred to us and partiality to our enemy."⁸⁸ Appealing to the

⁸⁵ Davis, *Frontier Illinois*, p. 139.

⁸⁶ Ninian Edwards, *History of Illinois*, p. 56-67.

⁸⁷ "Gov. Ninian Edwards to Sec of War William Eustis, Elvirade, May 6, 1812," Ninian Edwards, *History of Illinois*, p. 314.

⁸⁸ "Governor Ninian Edwards to the Legislative Council and House of Representatives," Ninian Edwards, *History of Illinois*, p. 78-84.

Secretary of War, Edwards concluded, "If the Illinois Indians become hostile, they will over-run this Territory."⁸⁹

Regardless of the council, Kickapoo warriors continued to raid in the Illinois. When Edwards demanded the tribe turn over those young men who murdered a Euro-American family, tribal elders refused.⁹⁰ By August 1812 Edwards received word that the Kickapoos had indeed "tendered their services to the British." He feared, "It is now well understood at Peoria that the Indians are for war, and are only waiting for direction from the British." On August 15th, 500 Kickapoos, Pottawattamies, Sauks and Winnebagos descended on Fort Dearborn near present-day Chicago, utterly routing Euro-American soldiers retreating from the post for fear of advancing British. In that same month, the Indians of the Illinois region attacked U.S. posts in four regions: some burned and destroyed Fort Dearborn; some raided Mississippi settlements; others joined Britain's army under General William Hull east of Lake Michigan; and still others attacked small settlements near Peoria. In all these endeavors, Kickapoos were well supplied with British powder.⁹¹

In October, Edwards called up 350 U.S. rangers and mounted volunteers to engage the Indians. The army began in search of the most problematic tribe—the Kickapoos. At the head of Lake Peoria, they fell upon a large village of Kickapoos and Miamis. They quickly routed the village and pursued Natives into the swamps, eventually killing thirty, capturing four, seizing eighty horses, and burning the village and

⁸⁹ "Gov. Ninian Edwards to Sec. Of War William Eustis, Elvirade, June 2, 1812," Ninian Edwards, *History of Illinois*, p. 325.

⁹⁰ "Ninian Edwards to William Eustis, Elvirade, June 16, 1812," Ninian Edwards, *History of Illinois*, p. 326.

⁹¹ "Ninian Edwards to William Eustis, Elvirade, Aug. 4, 1812," Ninian Edwards, *History of Illinois*, p. 333.

crops to the ground.⁹² The following year the war turned against the British, and by October of 1813 the Battle of Thames crushed Indian hopes of expelling the Euro-Americans. The 1814 Treaty of Ghent formally ended the war between Great Britain and the United States, as the former definitively surrendered up all the territory south of the Great Lakes to the latter. Kickapoos, and other Indians, lost any hope of any European ally against the encroaching United States.

With the British withdrawing and collapse of Tecumseh's confederacy, the United States forced treaties upon the splintered tribes of the Old Northwest, including the Kickapoos. In 1815 Kickapoos signed a treaty with William Clark ending their conflict with the U.S., pledging peace, promising to return any prisoners, and accepting all past treaties. Again in 1816 the U.S. pressed Kickapoos and Weas into another treaty with analogous terms and reaffirming prior land cessions along the Wabash and Vermillion River. In the same year, Sauks were forced into a similar treaty and Indiana received statehood. In 1818 Peorias, Kaskaskias, Mitchigamis, Cahokias, and Tamorois surrendered their lands to the U.S. in a treaty signed at St. Marys, Ohio.⁹³ With those tribes subjugated, Illinois received statehood in that same year.

In 1819 the Prairie and Vermillion/Wabash Kickapoos signed the harshest Kickapoo treaty to that date. Meeting at Edwardsville, Illinois, the "Prairie Kickapoos" legislative subjugation was definitively spelled out. On July 30th the Kickapoos agreed to surrender the Wabash Valley and all other lands east of the Mississippi River. Their long

⁹² "Ninian Edwards to Secretary of War William Eustis, Illinois Territory, Nov. 18, 1812," Ninian Edwards, *History of Illinois*, p. 69-72; Ninian Edwards, *History of Illinois*, p. 68-69.

⁹³ Clayton, *Frontier Indiana*, 263; Charles J. Kappler (ed.), *Indian Treaties, 1778-1883* (New York: Interland Publishing, Inc., 1972), p. 165-166.

held lands were now turned over to the United States for Euro-American settlement. In exchange, the U.S. promised less than ideal lands in Missouri in close proximity to the tribe's traditional enemies, the Chickasaws and Osages. Additionally, the Kickapoos received \$3,000 in merchandise and consolidated former annuities into a new annual payment of \$2,000 for fifteen years to be paid on the banks of the Osage River in Missouri. But the treaty did not simply dispossess Indian lands; it also politically isolated the tribe. Article three reads, "The said tribe acknowledge themselves now to be, and promise to continue, under the protection of the United States of America, and of no other nation, power, or sovereign, whatever." Article nine continues this idea, explaining:

The United States will take the said Kickapoo tribe under their care and patronage, and will afford them protection against all persons whatever, provided they conform to the laws of the United States, and refrain from making war, or giving any insult or offence to any other Indian tribe, or to any foreign nation, without first having obtained that approbation and consent of the United States.⁹⁴

In this July 1819 treaty, the United States' relationship to the Kickapoos changed from that of a fellow or competing nation to that of conqueror and "protector." The physical and political isolation from British forces in Canada left Kickapoos unable to rely on their play-off diplomacy, and the Edwardsville treaty made it a legal reality. There was no other European power to turn to. The Kickapoos were alone.

A second treaty in 1819 signed by the "Kickapoos of the Vermillion" made similar concessions. Articles one and two ceded the Wabash River and all of present-day Illinois; Article three articulated annuities; article four explained payment would occur at the new undefined homeland; and article five reaffirmed the binding nature of the treaty. The following year both treaties were amended and the Vermillion/Wabash Kickapoos

⁹⁴ Charles J. Kappler, *Indian Treaties*, p. 182-183.

were assigned to the region west of Kaskaskia, across the Mississippi River, along with the Prairie Kickapoos.

Over the next few years, the Kickapoo world drastically changed. Many Kickapoos moved west to Missouri, yet others remained scattered in their homelands across Illinois and Indiana. In 1822 the Sauk and Foxes signed a treaty surrendering lands to the United States; in 1825 the Sioux, Chippewas, Sacs, Foxes, Menominees, Iowas, Winnebagoes, Ottawas, and Pottawattamies agreed to U.S. territorial treaties.⁹⁵ In 1829 President Andrew Jackson offered his first inaugural address, explaining the debilitating cost to tribes that remained east of the Mississippi:

By persuasion and force they have been made to retire from river to river and from mountain to mountain, until some of the tribes have become extinct and others have left but remnants to preserve for awhile their once terrible names. Surrounded by the whites with their arts of civilization, which by destroying the resources of the savage doom him to weakness and decay.... That this fate surely awaits them if they remain within the limits of the States does not admit of a doubt.⁹⁶

Professing a concern for the increasingly dispossessed and subjugated tribes, Jackson warned of dangerous cultural destruction should the western tribes remain in the recently extended borders of the United States. This dilemma necessitated a solution that came to define federal policy towards Native Americans for the next twenty years—Indian removal. Jackson suggested “setting apart an ample district west of the Mississippi, and without the limits of any State or Territory now formed.” He intended to guarantee “to the Indian tribes [that] as long as they shall occupy it,” each tribe would enjoy “a distinct

⁹⁵ Charles J. Kappler, *Indian Treaties*, vol. 2, p. 202-203, 250-255.

⁹⁶ James D. Richardson, *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents* (New York: Bureau of National Literature, 1897), p. 1005-1025.

control over the portion designated for its use.”⁹⁷ The following year, the twenty-first convened Congress passed the Removal Act of 1830, effectively legislating and legalizing Jackson’s designs to push tribes across the Mississippi River.

Consistent with the new policy, William Clark met with Sauk and Fox Indians at Prairie du Chien where the Indians were pressured to surrender 26,500,000 acres east of the Mississippi in exchange for lands to the west.⁹⁸ When Black Hawk, a Sauk Chief, refused to accept the terms of the treaty, a violent conflict erupted in Illinois. Peaceful and hostile Kickapoos remained in the area and some of the latter joined in the Sauk resistance. But the resistance did not last long and with the August 1832 defeat of Black Hawk on the Bad Axe River, the uprising ended. Negotiating from a position of strength, the United States signed treaties with each of the tribes who formerly inhabited the region.

The Kickapoos’ 1832 treaty represented the end of their last violent attempt to retain their traditional lands. It further defined the terms of their new settlement in Missouri. The United States promised \$18,000 in annuities, \$12,000 of which was immediately distributed to the superintendent of Indian Affairs to manage supposed “debt of the said tribe.” The treaty provided funds for blacksmiths and iron, the construction of a mill and a church, schools and educational supplies, farming tools, labor and improvement on lands, cattle, hogs, and other miscellaneous stock. Most importantly, Kickapoos were to remove immediately.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Charles J. Kappler, *Indian Treaties*, p. 182-183.

Most of the Kickapoos gave into United States demands, migrating to Missouri as Euro-Americans occupied their former lands. However, a large band did remain in Illinois under the leadership of Kenekuk, a pacifist Kickapoo Prophet. Settlers continued to surround the Illinois bands and overran the remaining territory east of the Mississippi. In 1810 Illinois' Euro-American population was just over 7,000, fairly equivalent to the Native population. By 1820 the Euro-American population jumped to over 55,000. By 1830 some 157,000 Euro-Americans filled the state, and 476,000 arrived by 1840.⁹⁹

Though temporarily prospering during European conflict, and learning to extract resources from European powers anxious to win Indian allegiances, Kickapoos were unable to hold back the tides of Euro-American settlers and their military escort. With the expulsion of competing European powers, Kickapoos could no longer make demands of the dominant or minor foreign powers. Dispossessed of their land by settlers, military force, and legislation, the tribe's entrenched system of diplomacy no longer functioned. Overwhelmed, the Kickapoos diplomatic strategy irreparably collapsed.

⁹⁹ *Third Census of the United States: Illinois Territory, 1810 (Springfield, Illinois: Archives Division, Illinois State Library, 1929), 59; Letter from the Secretary of State transmitting sundry documents relating to the inhabitants of the United States (Washington: Gales & Brayton, 1821), 18; Abstract of the Returns of the Fifth Census, Showing the number of free people, the number of slaves, the federal or representative number, and the aggregate of each country of each state of the United States (Washington: Duff Green, 1832), 36; Compendium of the Enumeration of the Inhabitants and Statistics of the United States, as obtained at the Department of State, from the Returns of the Sixth Census, by counties and principal towns, exhibiting the population, wealth, and resources of the country (Washington: Thomas Allen, 1841), p. 86.*

Epilogue

When Father Claude Allouez, Jacques Marquette, and Louis Joliet first met the Kickapoos, the Europeans found little to distinguish the tribe from other Indian nations living in the Great Lakes region. Over three and a half centuries later, the tribe is still overshadowed in textbooks, library shelves, and Internet web pages by their Iroquoian and Siouan neighbors. Euro-centric history emphasizes the nations that contributed to European wars and empires, culminating in the establishment and growth of the United State of America. Smaller tribes, and those who resist simple categorization into French, British, or United States alliances, are sparsely discussed in historical narratives. Regardless of historiographical oversight, the Kickapoos' experiences illustrate alternative roles played by Native peoples. Concerned with their own complex motivations, Kickapoos navigated their changing political environment.

From the earliest records, it seems Kickapoos dynamically adapted to evolving international situations. Unable to repel neither the invading Sioux from the west nor Iroquois from the east, Kickapoos migrated southward from present-day Wisconsin into the Illinois River Valley. There they managed alliances and displaced local tribes, gradually asserting themselves as the dominant nation in the region. As French explorers, clergy, and traders penetrated the Great Lakes and ventured southwest from Lake Michigan, the Kickapoos met them with indifference. But from the mid-17th to the mid-18th century, Kickapoo treatment of the French underwent a series of changes. After a short period of indifference, Kickapoos met the newcomers with hostility. Unable to overtly challenge French authority, the tribe adopted a cooperative attitude that quickly slipped into loyalty.

By the mid-18th century, British merchants provided an alternative to French traders. Anticipating defeat in the French and Indian War, France ceded Louisiana to Spain, providing Kickapoos with a third European neighbor. Claiming fidelity to all three, the Kickapoos exploited each European nation for gifts, trade, and services, while simultaneously raiding and repelling permanent settlements encroaching upon their Illinois homeland. The tribe took advantage of European rivalries and seized opportunities to extend its own territorial dominion. All the while, European nations were kept at bay by a strange balance of pretended loyalty and aggressive raids against uninvited foreigners. Indeed, duplicitous extortion characterized Kickapoo diplomacy from 1750 to 1780.

As the United States won independence, foreign powers gradually withdrew and the “Long Knives” extended their sovereignty over the Old Northwest. Legislation and settlement, empowered by successful military campaigns, enabled the United States to exert control in the region. From 1791 to 1794, U.S. armies and militias overwhelmed the Ohio Country and eventually forced the Treaty of Greenville, opening present-day Ohio to Euro-American settlement. In 1803 France sold Louisiana to the United States, stripping the Kickapoos who remained in the Northwest of a European supporter. The War of 1812 likewise isolated the Kickapoos as the British withdrew from posts in the Old Northwest. Without foreign supporters, Kickapoos were unable to resist Euro-American settlers under military escort. Signing two treaties in 1819, the Kickapoos’ subjugation was formally spelled out as the tribe accepted the United States as its “protector” and surrendered relationships with other nations. The Kickapoos’ diplomatic system could no longer function.

Again facing a changing political environment, the Kickapoos splintered along divergent strategies for managing the new diplomatic world. Hostile Kickapoos, unable to challenge U.S. military might, migrated out of Illinois, shattering across the West. Some went to the new reservation in present-day Missouri, and later relocated to present-day Oklahoma; others migrated southwest, joining the Spanish Kickapoo bands in Texas and Coahuila, Mexico; still others peacefully resisted removal organizing under Kennekuk, the Kickapoo prophet. William Clark regularly negotiated with this pacifist leader, fruitlessly attempting to force the remaining Kickapoos into present-day Missouri. Finally, in 1832 the Kickapoos agreed to move onto lands near Fort Leavenworth, where some of their descendants remain today. Meanwhile the Missouri Kickapoos ran into conflict with their assigned neighbors and long time enemies, the Osages, inciting additional migrations to Oklahoma and Coahuila. Along with Lipan Apaches, Mexican Kickapoos conducted cross-border raids into Texas until 1870's when United States military interventions ended the attacks and forcefully repatriated half the Mexican Kickapoos to Oklahoma. Thereafter migrating between Oklahoma and Coahuila, the Kickapoos established a band in Eagle Pass, Texas.

Today, significant Kickapoo populations reside in Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, and Coahuila, while smaller groups can be found in Arizona and throughout the American West. Those in Kansas are concerned with landfill maintenance, reclamation, and the preservation of their agricultural economy. Those in Texas are rapidly transitioning from poverty and life in sheet-metal wickiups under the U.S.-Mexico International Bridge to wealth management following the 1996 opening of a reservation casino and the recent acquisition of tribal acreage. Kickapoos in Oklahoma remain culturally conservative and

generally isolated, attempting to retain pre-contact lifestyles but struggling to find access to traditional resources. Hunting deer out of season and salvaging cattail reeds has caused conflict with the Oklahoma state government, and more widely shared issues of poverty stemming from a decreasing land base continue to perpetuate tribal concerns. Last, the Kickapoos in Mexico have spent nearly 200 years under a completely different government whose policies have generally ignored the tribe, allowing the band to sustain traditional practices. However, mid-20th century Mexican enclosure movements and unsustainable hunting forced the Mexican Kickapoos to seek alternative methods of cultural and land preservation over the past fifty years. Many now labor as migrant workers, providing transient labor in the western United States during the harvest season but reside in the reclusive Nacimiento northern Mexican village for the remaining year.

Kickapoos early diplomatic experiences are significant for a variety of reasons, but perhaps none more than their usefulness as a model of adaptation and conflict management. Facing a changing international environment that was increasingly hostile to the tribe's preservation, Kickapoos forged their own identities independent of the designs of their would-be "father" nations. Whether engaging the French, British, Spanish or Euro-Americans, Kickapoos resisted the control of foreign powers and redefined their strategies resiliently to survive and prosper. The expansion of the United States certainly had an immeasurably enormous impact on the Kickapoos and other indigenous peoples, but Kickapoos remain one example of how individual tribes actively managed those pressures. Indeed, the Kickapoos remain the authors of their own destinies.

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