**Indian Centres, Colonial Peripheries: Locating the International in Early America**

What defined the international society of early America? [1] This essay seeks to frame a preliminary answer to this question by using diplomacy and spatial representations of Indigenous power as lenses to consider inter-polity relations in the Northeastern Woodlands. A series of interlinked historiographical moves help us to bring the international character of this region into focus. The first is the re-centring of Indigenous power, a development that has cut colonialism down to size and redrawn the map of power dynamics within, across and between zones of cross-cultural interaction. The re-conceptualisation of Indigenous power in terms of location, movement, linkages, and networks foregrounds interactions within common worlds across multiple spatial and jurisdictional contexts.[2] Second, a range of studies have revealed these zones—grounds, lands, frontiers, inposts, meridians—as places where "local affairs" were "world revealing," linked to and illustrative of wider movements in international affairs.[3] Third, historians have sought to bring order to this eclectic and borderless set of places by searching for common and commensurate experiences, languages and meanings.[4] Europeans were obliged to both

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**Abbreviations**: *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New-York*, ed. E. B. O'Callaghan, 15 vols (Albany, 1853–87): *NYCD*; *Early American Indian Documents: Treaties and Laws, 1607–1789*, gen. ed. Alden T. Vaughan, 20 vols. (Washington, 1979–2004): *EAID*. Research for this essay was supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council of the UK (Grant ref: AH/T006099/1).

[1] Erez Manela, "International Society as a Historical Subject," *Diplomatic History* 44 n. 2 (2020), 185, 186.

[2] Pekka Hämäläinen, "The Shapes of Power: Indians, Europeans, and North American Worlds from the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Century," in *Contested Spaces of Early America*, ed. Juliana Barr & Edward Countryman (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 31–68.

[3] Richard White, "Is There a North American History?" *Revue Française D'etudes Américaines* 79 (Janvier, 1999), 8–28; Joshua Piker, "Lying Together: The Imperial Implications of Cross-Cultural Untruths," *The American Historical Review* 116 n. 4 (2011), 969, 984; Kristin Hoganson, "Inposts of Empire," *Diplomatic History* 45 n. 1 (2021). DOI:10.1093/dh/dhaa076; Brooke L. Blower, "Nation of Outposts: Forts, Factories, Bases, and the Making of American Power," *Diplomatic History* 41 n. 3 (2017), 439–59.

[4] Gregory Ablavsky, "Species of Sovereignty: Native Nationhood, the United States, and International Law, 1783–1795," *The Journal of American History* 106 n. 3 (2019), 591–613.

understand Indigenous epistemologies of power and to work within them by adopting the sets of customs through which they were expressed.[5] In the process, they became treaty people.

Where colonial, imperial, and state power were concentrated around enclaves of settlement and a loose arc of posts and fortifications, diplomatic links with Indigenous polities pulled Europeans into a multi-nodal world of kinship, alliance, and exchange. Anglophone officials sought to create a colonial world, but they were repeatedly obliged to operate in an international one. This reality is captured in contemporary maps that juxtapose Indigenous and colonial polities in spaces where neither had a monopoly of power. John Mitchell's map of British and French domains (1755) depicts spaces where violence, movement and diplomatic accommodation shaped multi-layered relationships among Indigenous and Anglophone social formations. On the ground, treaties—particularly the sequence of Covenant Chain councils held in New York and Pennsylvania—constituted points of intersection in a broader geography of international relations that were conducted according to a hybrid set of political and cultural norms.

This essay locates the international in two senses. First it places Indigenous polities within a framework of relations that is inflected by the epistemologies of colonialism and the state. Recent work on imperial locations helps to position diplomatic relationships in contexts that are shaped by multiple interactions, shared concepts, historical ties, and cultural knowledge.[6] Second, it locates the international in points of intersection between Indigenous and (for the purposes of this essay) Anglophone polities. To do so, it uses Mitchell's map as an illustration of Indigenous territoriality and history, centred on Iroquoia and its precincts, that places colonies as one power grouping sited in a landscape of multiple nations and diffused sovereignties. The deep textures of relations within these spaces are evident, albeit transmitted through European eyes, in the records of diplomacy that were produced by imperial officials as they negotiated the complex

[5] Witgen, "Native New World," 293.

[6] Yarimar Bonilla, "Ordinary Sovereignty," *Small Axe* 17 n. 3 (2013), 151–65.

protocols of the Covenant Chain. What New York's secretary of Indian affairs Peter Wraxall described as 'this peculiar Specie of Politics' was conducted in locales of the international and defined by cross-cultural diplomacy that was characterised by distinct languages, norms and customs.[7]

In Marshall Beier's concise formulation, Indigenous diplomacies are not new but "newly noticed," having been obscured by European epistemologies and concepts of international relations.[8] Historians of international thought have suggested that we focus on the locations where the norms that structured inter-polity relations were formed and applied.[9] Iroquoia and the broader spaces illustrated by Mitchell form one such locale. Interactions within these locations were not exclusively statist, but included individuals, small nations, peoples, and companies; they constituted an "array of actors" who observed negotiated principles of "amity."[10] Most importantly, sovereignty—the defining concept of modern states and the states system—emerged as contingent and malleable, rather than as a "fixed" and perfect category. Negotiated and plural concepts of sovereignty defined the politics of inter-polity zones, in which diplomatic alliances and treaty protocols created a particular space and set of nation-to-nation relations.[11] The Covenant Chain exemplifies this pattern of relations. It was a mechanism of consensus, sovereign negotiation, and the regulation of commerce and settlement. It

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[7] Peter Wraxall, "Some Thoughts upon the British Indian Interest in North America," 1756, *NYCD*, vol. 7, 26.

[8] *Indigenous Diplomacies*, ed. J. Marshall Beier (Palgrave, 2009), 2, 3, 11; Kevin Bruyneel, *The Third Space of Sovereignty: The Postcolonial Politics of U.S.-Indigenous Relations* (University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 23; Roger Epp, "At the Wood's Edge: Toward a Theoretical Clearing for Indigenous Diplomacies in International Relations," in *International Relations: Still an American Social Science?*, ed. Robert Crawford & Darryl Jarvis (SUNY Press, 2001), 301, 311, 312, 313.

[9] Here, there has been an emphasis on "local legal politics." See Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400-1900* (Cambridge, 2010), 5; Annabel Brett, *Changes of State: Nature and the Limits of the City in Early Modern International Law* (Princeton, 2011), ch. 7.

[10] Manela, "International Society," 207.

[11] Lauren Benton, "Made in Empire: Finding the History of International Law in Imperial Locations," *Leiden Journal of International Law* (2018), 3.

transformed Britain's imperial domain into an international system that was regulated by cross-cultural norms of amity, alliance and negotiated sovereignty.

**Locating the International**

Historians of early American diplomacy have long debated where Indigenous peoples fit both in relation to colonial and imperial powers, and to the foreign policy of the early Federal government.[12] To consider Indigenous nations as purely domestic entities has the effect of "normalising" colonialism, subtracting them from the sphere of international relations.[13] Additionally, international relations as a discipline is difficult to disentangle from the conceptual frameworks that surround both the state and the emergence of international law, which vindicated "advanced colonial practice."[14] Much of the historiography on this topic is focussed on the early national period, where the supremacy of the domestic sovereignty of the United States went in parallel with its emergence as a "treaty-worthy" international power. A different kind of internationalism can be applied to the colonial Northeast, a place that was defined by

[12] P. Richard Metcalf, "Who Should Rule at Home? Native American Politics and Indian-White Relations," *The Journal of American History* 61 n. 3 (1974), 651–65; Arthur N. Gilbert, "The American Indian and the United States Diplomatic History," *The History* Teacher 8 n. 2 (1975), 230, 233; Emily S. Rosenberg, "Walking the Borders," *Diplomatic History* 14 n. 4 (1990), 565–73; Brian Delay, "Indian Polities, Empire, and the History of American Foreign Relations," *Diplomatic History* 39 n. 5 (2015), 927–42; Gautham Rao, "The New Historiography of the Early Federal Government: Institutions, Contexts, and the Imperial State," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 77 n. 1 (2020), 97–128.

[13] Nick Estes, *Our History is the Future: Standing Rock Versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance* (Verso, 2019), 138; Isabelle Schulte-Tenckhoff, "Reassessing the Paradigm of Domestication: The Problematic of Indigenous Treaties," *Review of Constitutional Studies* 4 n. 2 (1998), 239–89.

[14] Antony Anghie, "The Evolution of International Law: Colonial and Postcolonial Realities," *Third World Quarterly* 27 n. 5 (2006), 739-53; "AHR Forum: Liberal Empire and International Law," *American Historical Review* 117 n. 1 (2012), 67-148; Jennifer Pitts, *Boundaries of the International: Law and Empire* (Harvard, 2018), ch. 1; Charles S. Maier, "Dis/Relocating America: Approaches to Global History in the United States," in *Internationale Geschichte in Theorie und Praxis*, ed. Barbara Haider-Wilson, William D. Godsey, Wolfgang Mueller (Austrian Academy of Sciences Press, 2017), 322; J. Marshall Beier, *International Relations in Uncommon Places: Indigeneity, Cosmology, and the Limits of International Theory* (Palgrave, 2005), 4.

social worlds, village worlds, and middle grounds that contained what Richard White called "aspects of a world system." The Covenant Chain—multi-national and multi-local—was an approach to alliance that created a "peculiar political arena" of movement, exchange, and alliance whose sinews were Iroquoian languages and concepts of law and diplomacy.[15]

European concepts of international law were framed in relation to Indigenous cultures.[16] These concepts contained embedded cultural assumptions that defined Indigenous peoples as stateless nomads, whose rights to land were recognised for the purely instrumental purpose of rendering their cessions legally sound.[17] Native Americans were classified as "subjects," as peoples requiring protection, incorporation, and ultimately—in the formulation of the Marshall court—as "domestic dependent nations."[18] Likewise, in common with the diffused sovereignty of the British imperial constitution, the character of the federal order that emerged in the 1780s was Janus-faced; its relations with individual states, as well as the Indigenous nations of the Continental interior, tilted between domestic and foreign affairs. It is little wonder, then, that so much early work on foreign policy in colonial and early national settings made only tentative

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[15] Michael Witgen, "The Native New World and Western North America," *Western Historical Quarterly* 43 n. 3 (2012), 294; Jay Gitlin, *The Bourgeois Frontier: French Towns, French Traders, and American Expansion* (Yale, 2009), 31; Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge, 2011), xxvii; David Armitage, *Foundations of Modern International Thought* (Cambridge, 2013), 7.

[16] J. H. Elliott, *The Old World and the New, 1492-1650* (Cambridge, 1970); L. C. Green & Olive P. Dickason, *The Law of Nations and the New World* (The University of Alberta Press, 1989); Alexander Orakhelashvili, "The Idea of European International Law," *European Journal of International Law* 17 n. 2 (2006), 318, 325.

[17] Robert A. Williams, *The American Indian in Western Legal Thought: The Discourses of Conquest* (Oxford, 1990), 7, 287; Robert J. Miller, *Native America, Discovered and Conquered: Thomas Jefferson, Lewis and Clark, and Manifest* Destiny (University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 1; Paul McHugh, *Aboriginal Societies and the Common Law: A History of Sovereignty, Status, and Self-Determination* (Oxford, 2004), 293; Craig Yirush, "'Chief Princes and Owners of All': Native American Appeals to the Crown in the Early Modern British Atlantic," in *Native Claims: Indigenous Law against Empire, 1500-1920*, ed. Saliha Belmessous (Oxford, 2012), 129-51; Daniel K. Richter, "To 'Clear the King's and Indians Title': Seventeenth-Century Origins of North American Land Cession Treaties," in *Empire by Treaty: Negotiating European Expansion, 1600-1900*, ed. Saliha Belmessous (Oxford, 2015), 5–77.

[18] Stuart Banner, *How the Indians Lost Their Land: Law and Power on the Frontier* (Harvard University Press, 2005); Lindsay G. Robertson, *Conquest by Law: How the Discovery of America Dispossessed Indigenous Peoples of Their Lands* (Oxford, 2005).

steps toward positioning Indigenous polities as diplomatic sovereigns.[19] One state of the field essay that appeared in the wake of *The Middle Ground* noted "how profitably the tribes can be made full actors in the story of white rivalries."[20]

By contrast, historians of early America broadly agreed that internationalism was implicit in the broader processes of state formation and exchange that shaped the geographical proliferation of the colonial system.[21] This is not a new insight. As early as 1934 Max Savelle argued that diplomacy was shaped by impulses that were "inherent in the geographical situation of colonies," and that the rise of European imperial formations in the west created a "new international situation."[22] Emily Rosenberg noted that the edges of the expanding American domain were not protean national spaces, but the "borders of global power." It followed that colonialism generated "international relationships" where frontiers dissolved into "international zones," and where colonial wars, the American Revolution, and westward expansion were all "episodes in *international* history."[23] For Karen Kupperman, "America was international before it became national" and in the process of the consolidation of national state power, "margins were crucial locations."[24] Even the "west" was internationalised as a multi-national "meeting ground"

[19] Kinley Brauer, "The Great American Desert Revisited: Recent Literature and Prospects for the Study of American Foreign Relations, 1815-61," *Diplomatic History* 13 n. 3 (1989), 395–417; William Weeks, "New Directions in the Study of Early American Foreign Relations," *Diplomatic History* 17 n. 1 (1993), 73–96; Kinley Brauer, "The Need for a Synthesis of American Foreign Relations, 1815-1861," *Journal of the Early Republic* 14 n. 4 (1994), 467–76.

[20] Bradford Perkins, "Early American Foreign Relations: Opportunities and Challenges," *Diplomatic History* 22 n. 1 (1998), 120.

[21] Paul A. Gilje, "Commerce and Conquest in Early American Foreign Relations, 1750-1850," *Journal of the Early Republic* 37 n. 4 (2017), 735–70.

[22] Max Savelle, "Colonial Origins of American Diplomatic Principles," *Pacific Historical Review* 3 n. 3 (1934), 335.

[23] Emily S. Rosenberg, "A Call to Revolution: A Roundtable on Early U. S. Foreign Relations," *Diplomatic History* 22 n. 1 (1998), 63, 65.

[24] Karen Kupperman, "International at the Creation: Early Modern American History," in *Rethinking American History in a Global Age*, ed. Thomas Bender (University of California Press, 2002), 105, 106, 109 (margins).

and a "global frontier."[25] This frontier comprised a set of locales where settlerism operated within "spaces of transnational history," for example in the Great Lakes region that linked the Indigenous west to the colonial outposts of the Atlantic coast.[26]

Such transnational spaces of interaction required hybridised and cross-cultural norms of diplomacy. On one view, colonial-era diplomacy was an extension of the Westphalian system of states into Indigenous domains, where European rules and norms were introduced and adopted by a process of "global dissemination."[27] With colonialism came public law and diplomatic conventions, with the consequence that Europeans did not consider treaties concluded with Indigenous peoples to be equal to state-to-state agreements.[28] As Leonard Sadosky argued, while Europeans were initially obliged to work within the framework of borderlands diplomacy, these unformed spaces were ultimately incorporated into the Westphalian system through a process of territorial and juridical state-formation. Here, borderlands were peripheries that would ultimately be transformed by European-style statecraft and, ultimately, by the imperatives of republican state-formation. It followed that if borderlands were impermanent, then so too were the diplomatic cultures that structured relations within them.[29] Yet the nascent United States found itself confronted with Indigenous confederations that "encircle the Union from Maine to Georgia" and assumed their previous role as foils to the expansion of a land-based imperial

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[25] Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York, 1987), 27; Patricia Nelson Limerick, "Going West and Ending Up Global," *Western Historical Quarterly* 32 n. 1 (2001), 4–23; Nathan J. Citino, "The Global Frontier: Comparative History and the Frontier-Borderlands Approach in American Foreign Relations," *Diplomatic History* 25 n. 4 (2001), 680.

[26] Ian Tyrrell, "Beyond the View from Euro-America: Environment, Settler Societies, and the Internationalization of American History," in *Rethinking American History in a Global Age*, ed. Thomas Bender (University of California Press, 2002), pp. 171, 177, 178; Witgen, "Native New World," 293.

[27] Paulina Starski & Jörn Axel Kämmerer, "Imperial Colonialism in the Genesis of International Law—Anomaly or Time of Transition?" *Journal of the History of International Law* 19 (2017), 56, 58.

[28] Eliga Gould, *Among the Powers of the Earth: The American Revolution and the Making of a New World Empire* (Harvard, 2012), 30.

[29] Sadosky, *Revolutionary Negotiations*, 3, 7, 8.

formation.[30] The pivot of the United States away from middle ground style diplomacy toward a single sovereignty may have closed off internationalism east of the Mississippi, but the Haudenosaunee re-forged Covenant Chain links with Britain in the Grand River, making new international locales in the process.[31]

One premise of the legal framework of colonialism was that European claims to *de jure* sovereignty had to be worked out in a context of "intersocietal law."[32] "Treaties"—mutually ratified agreements with Indigenous sovereigns—were instruments of colonialism in that they provided evidence of the rightful possession of "foreign" territory and signalled Indigenous acceptance of European presence.[33] In this sense, colonial North America was incorporated into the "extended treaty system" of Europe.[34] The treaty-making revolution of the nineteenth century led to the extension of international society, as new American states entered the international system as "highly active treaty makers."[35] International law served to legitimise colonialism, but colonialism was also defined in a juridical sense by treaties that revealed the "international quality of relations" between states and Indigenous sovereigns. Notwithstanding, diplomatic agreements with Indigenous powers were not constrained by the universalist

[30] Robbie J. Totten, "Security, Two Diplomacies, and the Formation of the U. S. Constitution: Review, Interpretation, and New Directions for the Study of the Early American Period," *Diplomatic History* 36 n. 1 (2012), 79, 104; *The Federalist with Letters of "Brutus,"* ed. Terrence Ball (Cambridge, 2003), 124; Max M. Edling, *Perfecting the Union: National and State Authority in the US Constitution* (Oxford, 2021), 7–15; Gregory Ablavsky, *Federal Ground: Governing Property and Violence in the First U.S. Territories* (Oxford, 2021), ch. 4, 5; Bethel Saler, *The Settler's Empire: Colonialism and State Formation in America's Old Northwest* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 27, 28.

[31] Taylor, *Divided Ground*, ch. 9.

[32] Kent McNeil, "Factual and Legal Sovereignty in North America: Indigenous Realities and Euro-American Pretensions," in *Sovereignty: Frontiers of Possibility*, ed. Julie Evans et al. (University of Hawai'i Press, 2013), 50.

[33] Jeffrey Glover, *Paper Sovereigns: Anglo-Native Treaties and the Law of Nations, 1604-1664* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 3, 5.

[34] Dorothy V. Jones, *Licence for Empire: Colonialism by Treaty in Early America* (University of Chicago Press, 1982), 1.

[35] Edward Keene, "The Treaty-Making Revolution of the Nineteenth Century," *The International History Review* 34 n. 3 (2012), 479–80.

principles of equity and justice within international law.[36] Colonialism helped to universalise aspects international law, but it did not foreclose the sovereignty of Indigenous powers within that system—a premise that underpins current calls for the recognition of Indigenous rights in the international sphere.[37] As I will suggest below, the Covenant Chain reveals the prevalence of locally-determined norms of inter-polity relations, which functioned as parts of an international society that was formed by and within processes of imperialism.[38]

**Mapping the International**

The international locales of early America were defined by strong diplomacy and weak borders. In such a context, an account of sovereignty predicated on absolute power within defined territories was less prevalent than legitimacy, recognition, and the capacity for diplomacy. Integration and movement defined sovereignty to a greater extent than firm boundaries.[39] As European states sought to project their power into Indigenous spaces, that power "weakened at the periphery." Perfect spaces of sovereignty under the jurisdiction of states and bounded by borders were, in fact a "fabric full of holes," confined to "islands of occupation," an "archipelago" situated inside and among vividly mapped concentrations of Indigenous powers.[40] Europeans created maps to exhibit their territorial claims to themselves and rival states, but in

[36] Nancy Shoemaker, *A Strange Likeness: Becoming Red and White in Eighteenth-Century North America* (Oxford, 2004), 86, 87; DeLay, "Indian Polities," 939; Donna L. Akers, "Decolonizing the Master Narrative: Treaties and Other American Myths," *Wicazo Sa Review* 29 n. 1 (2014), 58-76.

[37] *Indigenous Rights in the Age of the UN Declaration*, ed. Elvira Pulitano (Cambridge, 2012)

[38] Jennifer Pitts, *Boundaries of the International: Law and Empire* (Harvard, 2018), ch. 1. See titles cited 194 n. 5. Anghie argues that it was colonialism that made international law "universal," but retained what he calls a "dynamic of difference," which served as the justification for denying sovereignty to certain cultures. Anghie, "Evolution of Natural Law," 742.

[39] Charles Maier, *Once Within Borders: Territories of Power, Wealth and Belonging since 1500* (Harvard, 2016), 76; Benjamin Mueser, "The Nation and Property in Vattel's Theory of Territory," *Global Intellectual History* 3 n. 2 (2018), 140.

[40] White, *Middle Ground*, xxvii; Benton, *Search for Sovereignty*, 2; Truett, "Settler Colonialism," 438.

the process, they also mapped the domains of Indigenous polities and the relationship of imperial powers to them.

John Mitchell's 1755 map of eastern North America is a well-known point of reference in negotiations over territory and borders in the American interior (fig. 1).[41] It presented a layered landscape of imperial, colonial and Indigenous domains—a conflation of homelands and empires.[42] Its imperial elements are indicated most obviously in the title, and the cartouche, dominated by the royal arms and depicting the Indigenous as subjects under the protection of the Crown.[43] Out in the field of the map, Mitchell ran lines that demarcated the "bounds" of Virginia and New England as they were set out in early seventeenth century charters.[44] Positioned around the map are blocks of text that narrate episodes in the diplomatic history of the interior. For instance, Mitchell indicated the territory "formally surrendered" by the Cherokee to the Crown under the terms of the Treaty of Westminster.

The colonial Northeast is conspicuous in its density of place names, partially obscuring an Indigenous toponymy, while at the same time historicising a long process of conflict and the acquisition of territory.[45] Inter-colonial borders are dimly drawn, whereas putative claims to the

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[41] S. Max Edelson, *A New Map of Empire: How Britain Imagined America before Independence* (Harvard, 2017), ch. 4; *An Argument Delivered on the Part of New-York at the Hearing [] to Settle and Determine the Boundary Line* (London?, 1769), 28; Matthew H. Edney, "John Mitchell's Map of North America (1755): A Study in the Use and Publication of Official Maps in Eighteenth-Century Britain," *Imago Mundi* 60, pt. 1 (2008), 63-85; Chad Anderson, "Rediscovering Native North America: Settlements, Maps, and Empires in the Eastern Woodlands," *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 14 n. 3 (2016), 478–505.

[42] Jeffers Lennox, *Homelands and Empires: Indigenous Spaces, Imperial Fictions, and Competition for Territory in Northeastern North America, 1690-1763* (Toronto, 2017), ch. 1–2.

[43] Martin Brückner, *The Geographic Revolution in Early America: Maps, Literacy, & National Identity* (University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 65.

[44] Ken MacMillan, *Sovereignty and Possession in the English New World: The Legal Foundations of Empire, 1576-1640* (Cambridge, 2006), ch. 3, 5.

[45] J. B. Harley, "New England Cartography and the Native Americans," in *The New Nature of Maps: Essays in the History of Cartography*, ed. Paul Laxton (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 170–95; Arthur J. Krim, "Acculturation of the New England Landscape: Native and English Toponymy of Eastern Massachusetts," in *New England Prospect: Maps, Place Names and the Historical Landscape*, ed. Peter Benes (Boston University Press, 1982), 69–

trans-Appalachian are indicated by prominent labels, particularly Virginia's, reflecting a long sought "prospect into unlimited Empires."[46] Imperial officials remarked on the raw potential of colonial dominion, all the more apparent "for viewing a map made on a large scale"—which map, we do not know—"we found them seated on an extensive continent . . . and which we dreaded, least time should [be] established into an empire of dangerous consequence."[47]

The most compelling feature of Mitchell's map is its treatment of Indigenous territoriality. At least since 1751, agents of the British empire had corresponded with Mitchell to discuss the relationship between Indigenous polities and British territorial claims. In July of 1751, Cadwallader Colden reminded him that "the Indians have no registers whereby they can prove their right to what they claim. It wholly depends on Tradition and hearsay evidence […] therefore their claims must be subjected to disputes."[48] Haudenosaunee territoriality is present in the diplomatic record, where council speakers characterized the Confederacy as an expansive regional presence, with extended domains, influence, and a strategy of using conquest and alliances as mechanisms for consolidating power. Mitchell's map inscribed those Indigenous claims to space through mediums that included Indigenous toponyms and explanations of migrations and territorial transactions.

Mitchell's map portrayed the Haudenosaunee as an expansive confederacy whose political history was inscribed on the land and whose power was amplified by water and projected through key nodes of communication and exchange. On the map, the domain of the Six Nations is, next to New France and Louisiana, the largest territorial formation. These

88; Mark Warhus, *Another America: Native American Maps and the History of Our Land* (New York, 1997), ch. 2; Benton, *Search for Sovereignty*, 10–12, 14, 56; Karen Haltunnen, "Grounded Histories: Land and Landscape in Early America," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 68 (2011), 513–32.

46 William Berkeley, *A discourse and view of Virginia* (1663?), 3, 4, 6, 10; William Talbot, *The discoveries of John Lederer, in three several marches from Virginia to the West of Carolina* (London, 1672), "Dedication," n. p.; 3–5.

47 [Anon], *The Late Occurrences in North America, and the Policy of Great Britain Considered* (London, 1766), 3, 10, 31.

48 *EAID*, vol. 9, 593.

prominent homelands stretch from Virginia to northeast New York, and are labelled with each of the constituent nations' homelands and networks of villages. Viewers can see locations of strategic importance. *Canahogue*—the site of modern Cleveland—is labelled as a "seat of War, the mart of Trade & the Chief Hunting Grounds" of the Six Nations. Mitchell also depicted the history of the territoriality of the Haudenosaunee, using the French name given to the peoples of the Longhouse: *Irocoisia*, "the original country of the Iroquois" is positioned in the vicinity of Lake Champlain. By 1755, the St Lawrence River was the "river of the Iroquois," above which were the territories of the "northern Iroquois."

Historians have tended to view Haudenosaunee claims to "conquest" with skepticism, interpreting them as part of a symbiotic relationship with Britain that added territories gained by conquest to the Crown's imperial domains.[49] Certainly, the Crown sought power in borderland spaces that were not captured by the rational geography of surveyed bounds and lines of property; cession of land from Confederacy to Crown pushed British domains west. At *Quadoghe* (modern Chicago), Mitchell indicated the "Bounds of their deed of Sale to y$^{e}$ Crown of Britain," agreed first at Albany in 1701, and then renewed in treaties in 1720 and 1744. Around the Great Lakes, Mitchell noted the "ancient" villages and homelands of the Illinois, Eries, Outaouais (Odawa), Hurons, and Algonquians which were absorbed by "Right of Conquest," the details of which were narrated in two blocks of script that also detailed the history of those nations who were under the "alliance and subjection" of the British Crown (fig. 2).[50] "Conquest" and the details of abandoned villages are markers of layers of movement, driven by mourning wars which

[49] *EAID*, vol. 10, 549, 550, 552. This "myth" and "mystique" of Iroquois conquest was used as an expedient by William Johnson to neutralise the Shawnee and Delaware, but figures like Gage were sceptical: "If we are to search for truth and examine her to the Bottom, I don't imagine we shall find that any conquered Nation ever formally ceded their Country to their Conquerors, or that the latter every required it." Quoted: White, *Middle Ground*, p. 352; see also Calloway, *Pen and Ink Witchcraft*, 49.

[50] Francis Jennings, *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire: The Covenant Chain Confederation of Indian Tribes with English Colonies* (New York, 1984), ch. 2.

were themselves spurred by the biological effects of colonial intrusion in the form of smallpox. Haudenosaunee, carrying superior weapons and moving swiftly by water, pushed into the villages of the western Great Lakes in the search for furs and captives.[51] Mitchell's labels convey processes of change within and between Indigenous polities.

The Mitchell map presents us with a conflation of imperial and Indigenous territoriality. First and foremost, it is a map defined by Indigenous presence rather than erasure. Colonial knowledge of Indigenous nations was shaped by proximity and so the coastal and trans-Appalachian regions are more detailed than the speculative and conjectural trans-Mississippian spaces. Iroquoia is the literal center of the map: cutting across colonial borders, its toponyms intermingled with new names in a patchwork of villages. Reaching out from this center were unseen connections that Mitchell hinted at in brief commentaries: kinship, exchange, tribute, and other forms of linkage between Indigenous nations in lands well beyond what the map labelled as the "extent of English settlements" – located at the headwaters of the Cumberland River in present day Kentucky. The map reveals the extent to which contemporaries defined space in terms of activities, a set of dynamic processes defined by the "ability to control movement and access" to specific locations and resources.[52] We need to think beyond our assumptions of inevitable settler expansion that the open western borders of the colonies suggest, and consider a second story, defined by deep cultural interaction, diplomatic negotiation, and movement along negotiated routes of trade.

**The Covenant Chain as an International System**

[51] Daniel K Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* (University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 60-74.

[52] Rachel St John, "Imperial Spaces in Pekka Hämäläinen's *The Comanche Empire*," *History and Theory* 52 (2013), 76, 77; Rachel St. John, "State Power in the West in the Early American Republic," *Journal of the Early Republic* 38 n. 1 (2018), 87, 90.

Where many historians have been guarded in their characterisations of Iroquois power, work on international relations has taken a very different tack. The Confederacy has been characterised as a "security regime," an "international organisation" whose power was extended through a realist foreign policy of alliances.[53] The Great Law of Peace was a normative system that governed "inter-nation(al) relations," while the oral tradition that contained the founding of the Confederacy was an account of "nation-formation," the development of foreign policy, and positions on the "rights of foreign nations."[54] Iroquoian power "rested on location, numbers, and political organization," and in the capacity to influence diplomacy, both in terms of conduct and outcomes.[55] The Iroquois sent diplomatic missions to articulate their foreign policy to locations throughout the Great Lakes, the Southeast and to the British imperial capital.[56] But perhaps the most obvious expression of their power lay in the ability to set and shape the terms on which the diplomacy of the American Northeast was conducted, which resulted in relationships framed by the use of wampum, condolence ceremonies, and councils held in key locations in Iroquoia. The Covenant Chain was the vehicle of this diplomatic power and reflected Iroquoian self-determination and what Iris Marion Young has aptly described as "procedural unity."[57] These procedures were components of a diplomatic relationship that was

[53] Neta C. Crawford, "A Security Regime among Democracies: Cooperation among Iroquois Nations," *International Organisation* 48 n. 3 (1994), 345.

[54] David Bedford & Thom Workman, "The Great Law of Peace: Alternative Internation(al) Practices and the Iroquoian Confederacy," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 22 n. 1 (1997), 88; Christopher Vecsey, "The Story and Structure of the Iroquois Confederacy," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 54 n. 1 (1986), 79, 86, 89

[55] Jones, *Licence for Empire*, pp. 21, 30; Hämäläinen, "Shapes of Power," pp. 46–50.

[56] Alexandra Harmon, "American Indians, American Law, and Modern American Foreign Relations," *Diplomatic History* 39 n. 5 (2015), pp. 950, 954; Coll Thrush, *Indigenous London: Native Travelers at the Heart of Empire* (Yale, 2016), ch. 3.

[57] Iris Marion Young, "Hybrid Democracy: Iroquois Federalism and the Postcolonial Project," in *Political Theory and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, ed. Duncan Ivison, Paul Patton & Will Sanders (Cambridge, 2000), 241.

historically rooted, culturally complex, and that bound and constrained Anglophone officials within a set of conventions and norms. [58]

Covenant Chain diplomacy was a system that the British joined rather than fashioned, and only partially understood. Its particular character became a topic of discussion in metropolitan diplomatic circles and in the wider public sphere of print. Accounts of treaties and "Indian affairs" formed part of the expansion of the political culture of empire and the imperial claims to territory that accompanied it. The Iroquois appeared in these texts as both fearsome adversaries and shrewd diplomats, what one observer described as "thorough bred politicians." Cadwallader Colden noted that they "use many Metaphors in their Discourse" which "under the Pen of a skilful Interpreter may strongly move our Passions by their lively Images."[59] William Johnson, writing in the 1750s and describing a collection of treaties he had negotiated, explained that the (male) reader would learn about "the sentiments of nations, as far distant from him on the globe, as, perhaps, he imagines them to be, with respect to his superior attainments as a rational creature." However, the student of global affairs needed to understand that while a "Hyde-park education" was a requirement for grasping European politics, it was "very useless, indeed" when "transported to the banks of the Ohio."[60] Abridged sections of Colden's text became a standard preface for treaties printed in London. For instance, the record of a council held at Philadelphia (1742) was prefixed with an account of the "first Confederacy," and a list of the principal nations, tributaries and peoples in alliance with the Iroquois. The power of the

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[58] Gail MacLeitch, *Imperial Entanglements: Iroquois Change and Persistence on the Frontiers of Empire* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 2. Eric Hinderaker, "Diplomacy between Britons and Native Americans, c. 1600-1830," in *Britain's Oceanic Empire: Atlantic and Indian Ocean Worlds, c. 1550-1850* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 221; Nancy L. Hagedorn, "'A Friend to Go Between Them': The Interpreter as Cultural Broker during the Anglo-Iroquois Councils, 1740-70," *Ethnohistory* 35 n. 1 (1988), 61.

[59] *Memoir of Lieut. Col. Tench Tilghman, Secretary and Aid to Washington*, ed. S. A. Harrison (Albany, 1876), 99; Cadwallader Colden, *The History of the Five Indian Nations Depending on the Province of New York In America* (New York, 1727), ix.

[60] *An Account of Conferences held and Treaties made, between Major-general Sir William Johnson [and the] Indian Nations of North* America (London, 1756), ii, iii.

Confederacy reached – as Mitchell's map showed in detail - deep into the interior, to "the remotest Indian Nations of North America, and forc'd them to court the Friendship and Protection of such a formidable Power." Once again, Iroquoian diplomatic practice attracted comment, with the author observing that the Confederacy possessed a "nice Address in the Conduct of their Affairs."[61] It is notable that these accounts approached the Haudenosaunee in terms of power politics, and contained no glimpses of their inner workings, whether that included the foundational nature of the Great Law, the centrality of Clan Matrons, or the importance of clans or oral traditions.

The Covenant Chain was a potent mixture of history, symbol, and metaphor, a flexible approach to alliance that revolved around rituals of greeting and renewal; it bound people together and it expanded to scope of the community that the alliance contained.[62] Its treaty protocols are well known. Council speeches symbolised narrations of sovereignty and were a medium for the representation of temporal and spatial connections and paths, an Indigenous epistemology of unity, amity and fictive kinship; they symbolised alliances, served as calls to war, and as declarations of peace, trust and friendship.[63]

In elements of council speech, wampum was critical, and belts produced for Covenant Chain councils presented multilateralism in pictorial form. At Philadelphia, the Seneca orator Kanickhungo presented the British with a "large belt of white Wampum of eleven Rows, with four black St George's Crosses in it." This belt combined key symbols of the political culture of each nation. Speaking on it, he explained that it bound "all the *English* Governments and all the Indians," and that those "who have the Direction of Affairs in our own nations" employ

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61 *The Treaty Held with Indians of the Six Nations at Philadelphia* (London, 1742), ix, xi.

62 Charles W. A. Prior, *Settlers in Indian Country: Sovereignty and Indigenous Power in Early America* (Cambridge, 2020), 12-26; Jacob T. Lee, *Masters of the Middle Waters: Indian Nations and Colonial Ambitions along the Mississippi* (Harvard, 2019), 5.

63 William N. Fenton, *The Great Law and the Longhouse: A Political History of the Iroquois Confederacy* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), ch. 16.

wampum as "an Account of all these Things . . . faithfully preserved." The Covenant Chain was not only "between the Chiefs of our Nations, and the Chiefs or Principal Men of this Government, but likewise between all our People, and all your People" and "several other Nations of Indians around us."[64] As an object, the belt had been fashioned over a period of time in order to provide a map of alliances, a networked structure that bound together the nations of the Confederacy, the Crown, colonial governments, and the wider international community of Indigenous and Anglophone peoples.

Wampum was also a central element of the treaty council which gathered at Easton in 1758. This was a large conference that convened during war, and its importance is indicated by the fact that colonial clerks—unusually—noted the presence and number of Iroquois women, likely Clan Matrons.[65] A number of belts are mentioned in the record: those exchanged at earlier councils and kept as part of the Iroquoian repository of the material and oral culture of diplomacy; belts sent from place to place to summon nations to councils; belts presented by William Johnson; individual strings of wampum, and requests for the return of belts sent to relay messages. Colonial officials arrived with their own belt which was fashioned to symbolise the agreements reached around the "ancient" council fire at Philadelphia, presenting what is described as "A large white Belt, with the Figure of a Man at each End, and Streaks of Black, representing the Road from the Ohio to Philadelphia."[66]

The metaphors of path and road predominate in council speech and were employed by both Indigenous and European speakers, not to reference hard boundaries, but to underscore mobility, limber networks, and lines of communication. Yet behind the ritual and metaphorical elements of diplomatic culture lay clear objectives which the Confederacy sought to achieve in diplomatic transactions. Metaphors expressed using speeches and wampum conveyed

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[64] *A Treaty of Friendship held with the Chiefs of the Six Nations at Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1736), 7, 8.

[65] MacLeitch, *Imperial Entanglements*, ch. 4.

[66] *The Minutes of a Treaty held at Easton in Pennsylvania, in October 1758* (Woodbridge, New Jersey, 1758), 25

Haudenosaunee policy that Europeans who entered Indigenous territory exercised no direct supremacy there, instead becoming the newest among neighbouring nations. In the words of the Cayuga sachem Toka'en:yon "A Road has been made from our Country to this Council Fire, that we might treat about Friendship; and as we came down the Road, we saw, that by some Misfortune or other, Blood has lately been spilt on it."[67] The reply, from Thomas King (Saghughsuniunt, Oneida), reveals how the central issues of trade, land and strategic alliance were put in motion:

> When we first heard of the French coming to *Ohio*, we immediately sent Word to the Governors of *Virginia* and *Pennsylvania*; we desired them to come, and likewise to supply us with such Things as were proper for War, intending to defend our Lands, and hinder the *French* from taking Possession of them: but these Governors did not attend to our Message; perhaps they thought there was no Foundation for our Intelligence. The *French* [] came, and become our Neighbours; and you neither coming yourselves, nor assisting us with warlike Stores, our People of Necessity were obliged to trade with them for what we wanted, as your Traders had left the Country. The Governor of *Virginia* took Care to settle on our Lands for his own Benefit; but when we wanted his Assistance against the *French*, he disregarded us.[68]

The speech reveals not just connections, but their internal dynamics. The orator's words reveal agency in the sense that the nations of the Haudenosaunee determine the nature of their relationship with Europeans, and specifically seek trade in desired goods that could be relayed across Indigenous networks of exchange. Trade, access to Indigenous networks of alliance and military assistance were vital to the Confederacy's pragmatic political stance that sought to preserve the cohesion and influence of the Haudenosaunee amid inter-imperial rivalry in the Great Lakes. Alliances with Europeans were effective levers to provide security of territory, and

[67] *Minutes of a Treaty*, 8. **Formatting**: need a special character here to replace the apostrophe. See Fenton, *GL*, 508.
[68] *Minutes of a Treaty*, 19.

to establish buffer zones to limit foreign incursion. Underpinning the whole is a seam of pragmatism combined with an insistence on reciprocity, but this did not mean that the Iroquois were irrevocably bound in obligation to the English.

In the decade preceding the Seven Years War, British officials used councils to gather information about the reach of the alliance structure of the Covenant Chain. At a council held at Philadelphia in 1742, Governor George Thomas sought information about the location of the warriors of each nation, where zones of peace were established, and whether the details of treaties concluded at Albany had made their way west. His principal interest was the "State and Condition of the Nations to the Westward of the Great Lakes." The answer, by an unattributed speaker, was that the Confederacy "had always Abundance of their Men out amongst the Nations situate to the West of their Lakes. That they had kindled a Fire with a vast many Nations, some whereof where Tributaries, and they had a good Understanding with all." They described embassies to the "southern Indians" and another sent to the Governor of New York. The reply shows the Iroquois fanning out to all points of the compass, extending diplomacy into the Great Lakes Middle Ground in order to bring nations there into the commercial and political orbit of the British polities of the Northeast, an association that gave the Six Nations additional political power.[69]

The extent of Iroquoian networks and conduits of diplomacy both penetrated and encircled the domains claimed by colonial governments. At the pivotal council at Lancaster (1744), the Onondaga diplomat Canasatego described a landscape of Indigenous alliances and connections.[70] This framework of Indigenous power relations is one that does not explicitly include colonial powers or peoples, and concerns passage through Virginia to the Tuscarora:

[69] *Treaty Held with Indians of the Six Nations at Philadelphia*, 9.

[70] Craig Yirush, "'Since We Came Out of This Ground': Iroquois Legal Arguments at the Treaty of Lancaster," in *Justice in a New World: Negotiating Legal Intelligibility in British, Iberian, and Indigenous America*, ed. Brian P. Owensby & Richard J. Ross (New York University Press, 2018), 118–150.

> with whom, we hold Correspondence; but the Road between us and them, has been stop'd for some Time, on account of the Misbehaviour of some of our Warriours, and they shall keep to that Road; but as that would be very inconvenient, for Messengers, going to the *Tuscaroro's*, we desire, they may go the old Road.[71]

The passage is important not for the substance of the issue, but rather for the way in which it reveals the networks of diplomacy between spaces which lacked exact borders. There are two roads, one recently taken by war parties making their way south, and the other agreed at Albany in 1722. At a later Albany council (1745), George Clinton reminded colonial officials that the Covenant Chain bound them to "all the far Nations of *Indians* in League with our Great King," while Canasatego confirmed the reach of Iroquoian alliances "with a Great Number of far *Indians*."[72]

British officials studied and coveted the power that was conveyed by these alliances. From the standpoint of metropolitan officials, the Iroquois opened the door to the west, and had the potential to draw other nations into relationships with the colonial inposts of the Anglophone east. According to a commentary attached to the 1746 treaty at Albany, "The Reputation they have gain'd among all the *Indian* Nations in North *America*, gives them an Influence in the Councils of every Nation." The same observer recorded that the Mohawk delegation present at Albany was not concerned with "Affairs on the other Side of the Sea" and preferred to attend to "what is properly their Business."[73] That business, as William Johnson noted in a memo to the Board of Trade, centered on relations with other Native Americans. He wrote, "The Eyes of all the Western Tribes of Indians are upon the behaviour of the Six Nations." He continued with the shrewd observation that their "fame of power" lay not in the

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[71] *The Treaty Held with the Indians of the Six Nations at Lancaster* (Williamsburg, 1744), 70.

[72] *An Account of the Treaty held at the City of Albany, in the Province of New York . . . with the Indians of the Six Nations* (Philadelphia, 1745), 10, 13.

[73] *Treaty between his Excellency the Honourable George Clinton . . . and the Six United Indian Nations* (New York, 1746), 9, 23.

actual use of force but in the ability to skilfully play the "neutral part." This, he concluded, "I apprehend to be their modern State."[74]

In memos to the Board of Trade, Johnson was emphatic that international diplomacy was a vital element of imperial reason of state: to tap into the circuits of power that shaped the Indigenous interior, he argued the British needed the Iroquois. After the French capitulation in 1761, the English found themselves facing a Confederacy that could set aside neutrality for a renewed phase of imperial policy, and each power looked at the western reaches of colonies and the Ohio as a space to widen access to markets, to consolidate buffer zones, and to cultivate new allies. Johnson was keenly aware of this shift and sought to find a balance between colonial security (forts, frontier settlement), and the expansion of diplomacy using the Covenant Chain as a mechanism: "the Six Nations in particular having a great influence over the rest, and being the best barrier for [New York] and the neighbouring provinces."[75]

Given the strategic importance of the Haudenosaunee, metropolitan officials and their colonial counterparts devoted a great deal of money and attention to diplomacy, which became a significant burden on the fiscal and military resources of an imperial system sited on American and Asiatic Indigenous continents. The British found themselves under heavy obligations in order to maintain their standing with the Iroquois, which is suggestive of the cultural "soft" power that the Confederacy could deploy in order to cement alliances and their accompanying obligations—access to trade goods, gifts of tribute, recognition of Iroquoian territoriality. Johnson sought to maintain clear and swift lines of communication, and used the spatial metaphor of the Longhouse to stress the importance of relaying news from locales of the interior back to his base at the eastern door in the Mohawk Valley:

> As you have always been looked upon as the door of the Six Nations where all news, especially from the Westward and Southward must enter and go out, we don't hear this

[74] "Colonel Johnson's suggestions for defeating the designs of the French," July 1754, *NYCD*, vol. 6, 897.

[75] "Sir William Johnson to the Lords of Trade," 13 November 1763, *NYCD*, vol. 7, 581.

> door open as we used to do formerly, and believe it to be worn out, & think it necessary to hang on a new one of such wood as will never decay; the noise of which when it opens should alarm all the Confederacy.[76]

The removal of the French and the decommissioning of forts and garrisons in the Ohio left the British with an imperial infrastructure of forts that became, in effect, expensive trading posts. In a memo to George III an official admitted that forts were costly, and neither "awe or distress the Indians, tho' they may contribute to our information of their transactions." The question which imperial officials faced in the 1760s was whether the necessary costs of diplomacy could be borne by an imperial economy that emerged from the war with a colossal debt. Writing to Thomas Gage in the wake of the Treaty of Niagara, where over sixty thousand pounds was spent on gifts, Johnson admitted "I am greatly concerned at the amount of the Indian expences." He continued to insist that diplomatic affairs were worth the costs of "supporting an interest with many nations."[77] Although the Haudenosaunee expected to deal many other Indigenous nations, they expected that British diplomacy would require the attention of a single sovereign power, national as opposed to local. A memorandum prepared by Lords of Trade on "Indian Affairs" referred to the "alteration" in the "State" of the Crown's dominions, which requires an "alteration in the System," particularly concerning "matters which the Indians would not submit to the discussion of particular colonies." The Confederacy's concern was not with marking out imperial possession but rather with creating a zone of international interaction. This zone, the Lords of Trade acknowledged, was "necessary for the preservation of the British interest with those Indians and for the preventing all foreign influence and Connection" in a setting where the British role is "increased by alliances with those numerous Nations heretofore under the

[76] "Conference between the Mohawks and Colonel Johnson," 26 July 1753, *NYCD*, vol. 6, 811.

[77] "Memorandum on the American Colonies," October 1766?, GEO Main 415a, Royal Archives, Windsor, fol. 5; *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, ed. Milton W. Hamilton, vol. 11 (Albany, 1953), 276, 521; William Johnson, "Review of the Trade and Affairs of the Indians in the Northern District of America," September 1767, *NYCD*, vol. 7, 973.

Dominion of France."[78] Here again, Mitchell's careful placement of Indigenous nations in spaces where borders were either tentative or absent suggests that contemporaries recognized broad zones of interaction.

Interaction with the Haudenosaunee also influenced the shape of the political system that developed in the colonies. Benjamin Franklin's well-known remarks about the confederal model of the Six Nations which has "subsisted Ages, and appears indissoluable" is one of many instances where colonial officials recognised that the political model of confederacy was well-suited to the diffusion of nations throughout the Northeast.[79] Colonial proximity to Indigenous sovereigns was a strong prompt to the articulation of distinct sovereign powers, all of which pertained to affairs outside sketchy colonial borders. The United Colonies in 1643 declared that "we live encompassed with people of several nations and strange languages" and this fact required a federal approach to "all affairs of our war or peace leagues" necessary for "such a confederation of amity." Similarly, the Albany Plan of Union gave the proposed President General the power "to hold or direct all Indian treaties in which the general interest of the colonies may be concerned; and make peace or declare war with Indian nations."[80] And, at Albany in 1775, the Twelve United Colonies presented themselves to the Iroquois as a diplomatic federation. In draft Articles of Confederation completed the previous month, Franklin recommended "A perpetual Alliance offensive and defensive, is to be enter'd into as soon as may be with the Six Nations; their Limits to be ascertain'd and secur'd to them."[81] The United Colonies' speaker at Albany recalled Canasetego's words (spoken at Lancaster in 1744) on the advantages of confederal government, and on this basis compared the union of colonies

[78] "Representation of the Lords of Trade on the State of Indian Affairs," 7 March 1768', *NYCD*, vol. 8, 20, 21, 23.

[79] *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin,* vol. 4, *July 1, 1750, through June 30, 1753*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree (Yale, 1961), 117–121

[80] "The New England Confederation" (1643), in *Colonial Origins of the American Constitution: A Documentary History*, ed. Donald S. Lutz (Liberty Fund, 1998), 368, 373.

[81] *The Declaration of Independence in Historical Context*, comp. & ed. Barry Alan Shain (Yale, 2014), 644.

to "twelve arrows" lashed together—a common Iroquoian usage.[82] They presented a union belt that signified the historic Covenant Chain, and asked the attending nations to remain neutral in the "family quarrel"—a rift between kin—between colonies and Crown that broke the "covenant chain" and led the King to "enter into a new covenant against us." The commissioners declared their intention to hold firm to the alliance, keeping the path "open with all our people and yours, to pass and repass without molestation," and pledging to "seek measures for healing the breach" in the event of conflict.[83] The discussions at Albany took place before the drafting of the Model Treaty, and represent a moment when, as Locke expressed it a century earlier, a newly coalescing "foederative power," exercising "the Power of War and Peace, Leagues and Alliances" engaged in structured international relations with "Communities without the Commonwealth."[84] The capacity to conduct international affairs was an intrinsic part of a long gestation of an account of sovereignty that crystallized in the Declaration of Independence, a document that positioned the United States within and beside an international community of sovereigns. Indigenous polities were among these powers of the earth.

If we accept that the Covenant Chain was an international system, locating the international in early America places two key conceptual issues in focus. The first is the premise that the state is both the primary unit in International Relations, and the product of the dismantling of imperial structures at the end of the eighteenth century.[85] The Iroquois did not relate to states as they are defined by these assumptions: colonies were dependencies sited on a ragged periphery of thinly applied imperial power that was inevitably diffused through and

[82] Prior, *Settlers*, 23; *EAID*, vol. 10, 87-8; *NYCD*, vol. 7, 146.

[83] "Treaty with the Six Nations, Albany, 25 August 1775," *NYCD*, vol. 8, 615, 616, 620; *Declaration of Independence*, 358.

[84] John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge, 1988), §. 146; David Armitage, *The Declaration of Independence: A Global History* (Harvard, 2007), 35, 47, 83.

[85] Armitage, *Declaration of Independence*, 17-18.

shaped by local circumstances. Colonies lacked fixed borders, and instead negotiated with Indigenous sovereigns to agree on their legitimacy and course; they lacked full scale international recognition outside of the Northeast; they did not exercise complete sovereignty but sat within an imperial structure of descending law and authority. Therefore, a definition of "international society" comprised of state and non-state actors does not capture the complexity of nation-to-nation diplomacy that characterized the Covenant Chain.[86] Instead, in this context the international was characterised by embedded diplomatic customs and rituals that were intrinsic to the political culture of the Haudenosaunee. Alliances of kin were thickened by diplomacy and reached toward the far edges of Mitchell's map, drawing Europeans into the orbit of the Confederacy along multiple paths, routes and circuits of exchange and power.

The second issue is the relationship between colonialism and diplomatic encounter. The spaces and peoples drawn into Covenant Chain diplomacy undoubtedly comprised a "peculiar political arena," a space that contained colonial and imperial political orders, but was not ruled by their sovereignty. Likewise, imperial claims to territory were as thin as the lines on Mitchell's map. The sequence of Covenant Chain councils also represent a particular moment in colonial and Indigenous relations, sitting between the more aggressive settler colonial contexts of seventeenth-century Virginia and New England, and the slow but certain orientation of the United States as a power that pledged to respect Indigenous territoriality in legislative mechanisms—the Northwest Ordinance—that were designed to annex it to the public domain of the state.[87] Yet we should not allow the settler colonial framework to trick us into thinking that the pre-revolutionary eighteenth century was a period "in between," a world of cross-cultural mixing in borderlands that were destined to become states. Instead, the Covenant Chain has a deeply rooted and living history, providing the basis of an account of Indigenous

[86] Manela, "International Society," p. 186.

[87] Saler, *Settler's Empire*, ch. 1; Jeffrey Ostler, "'Just and Lawful War' as Genocidal War in the (United States) Northwest Ordinance and Northwest Territory, 1787-1832," *Journal of Genocide Research*, 18, n. 1 (2016), pp. 1-20.

sovereignty within a living "right" relationship among sovereign nations, and in this form remains at the centre of contemporary and international discussions of resource stewardship, reconciliation, land claims, and Indigenous rights.[88]

[88] *The Right Relationship: Reimagining the Implementation of Historical Treaties*, ed. John Borrows & Michael Coyle (University of Toronto Press, 2017); *Keeping Promises: The Royal Proclamation of 1763, Aboriginal Rights, and Treaties in Canada*, ed. Terry Fenge & Jim Aldridge (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015); Michael Asch, *On Being Here to Stay: Treaties and Aboriginal Rights in Canada* (Toronto, 2014); *From Recognition to Reconciliation: Essays on the Constitutional Entrenchment of Aboriginal and Treaty Rights*, ed. Patrick Macklem & Douglas Sanderson (University of Toronto, 2016); Mark D. Walters, 'Brightening the Covenant Chain: Aboriginal Treaty Meanings in Law and History after Marshall'. *Dalhousie Law Journal* 75 (2001), 88, 89.