An Empire on the Edge: How Britain Came to Fight America

Nick Bunker
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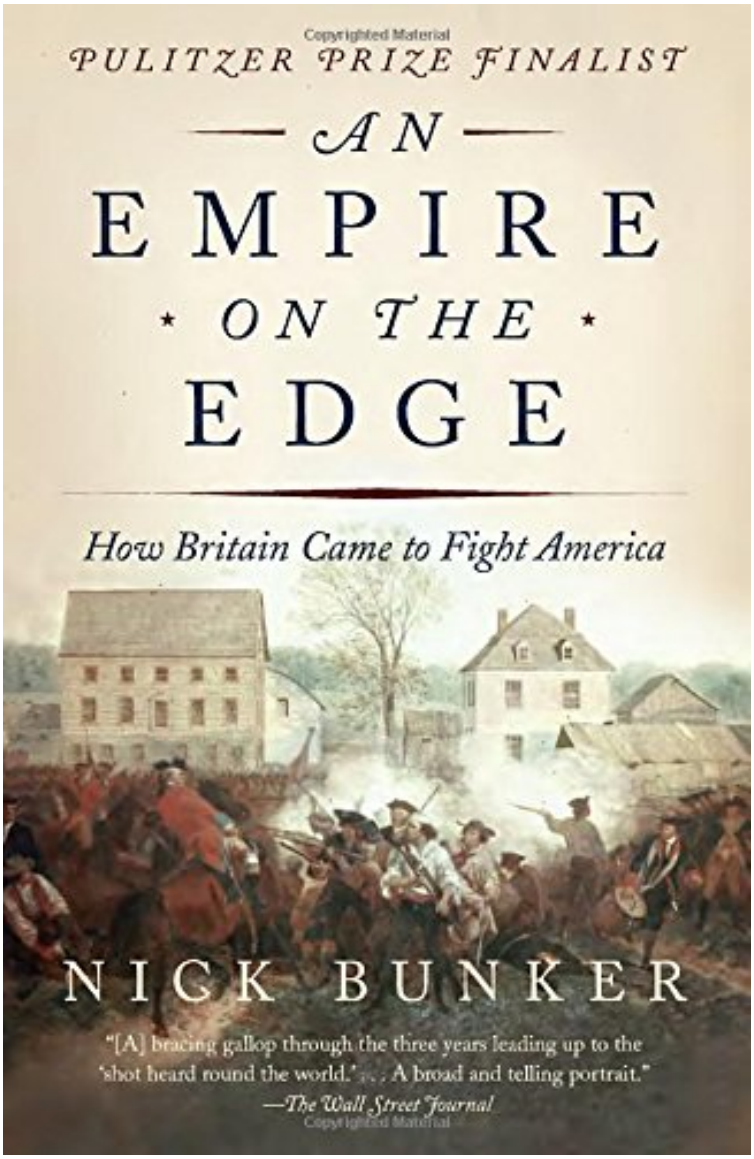

#276994 in Books Nick Bunker 2015-08-04 2015-08-04Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 8.00 x .90 x 5.30l, .0 #File Name: 030774177X448 pagesAn Empire on the Edge How Britain Came to Fight America | File size: 23.Mb

Nick Bunker : An Empire on the Edge: How Britain Came to Fight America before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised An Empire on the Edge: How Britain Came to Fight America:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A Conventional Whig Narrative of the EventsBy J. AronsonThis is a very good book that examines the proximate causes of the American Revolution from the British point of view. But it

is not without its faults, weaknesses and omissions.All historical narratives must pick a reference point and Bunker, clearly following the conventional Whig narrative, has chosen as his reference point the Glorious Revolution and Bill of Rights of 1688. That has proven to be very unsatisfactory for explaining the American Revolution because, like many others before him, he is then forced to argue that the colonials quite suddenly became a revolutionary people between 1772-74 because of the Stamp Act and the legislation that followed. It also requires the reader to believe that somehow, some way, the several committees of correspondence and delegates to the First Continental Congress were suddenly able to make revolutionaries out of a people who had been content to be ruled by Great Britain before 1772.A better narrative would recognize that the independent political history of American colonies began in 1630 in the Massachusetts Bay Colony and that the Puritans who founded the Bay Colony framed their government with reference to Coke and Selden's Petition of Right of 1628 and with reference to Part One (and likely Part Two) of Coke's Institutes. Bunker should also have known that from 1630 until at least 1782, New Englanders were effectively one people and that Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Maine and New Hampshire were individual colonies or districts spun off from Massachusetts and formed what amounted to a New England federated republic that imagined its natural borders to be the Atlantic Ocean and the Hudson and St. Lawrence Rivers.A better narrative would recognize that between 1630-60 New England was a mirror of the Parliamentary faction that won the English Civil War and cut Charles I's head off on January 30, 1649, complete with a Presbyterian/Grandee/proto-whig faction and an Independent/Leveller/republican faction The narrative should have noted that New England had been on the verge of rejecting English sovereignty in 1635, 1662 and 1689. It should have noted that New England sent many volunteers to the Eastern Association and New Model Army; that New Englanders were well represented in the New Model Army Council and at the Putney debates. It would have noted that the Massachusetts Body of Liberties of 1641 heavily influenced the several Leveller "Agreements of the People" published between 1647-49. It would have noted that Sir Henry Vane the Younger, Hugh Peter and Col. Thomas Rainborowe all had strong connections to Massachusetts and that John Winthrop was related by marriage to Peter and Rainborowe. It would have noted that John Winthrop's son, Stephen, was a colonel in the New Model Army during the Commonwealth and Protectorate and that governor John Leverett, another New Model veteran, provided sanctuary to three of Charles I's regicides. It would have noted Roger Williams obtained Rhode Island's charter from Oliver Cromwell in 1652 and that all of New England can be accurately characterized as a federation of Leveller republics because they were based on the idea of popular sovereignty in the context of constitutional democratic republic based on broad male suffrage. It would have observed that while Bay Colony shipping flew the red ensign at sea and at the entrance to Boston Harbor, inland the colony flew the defaced red ensign (with the cross of St. George removed) and never acknowledged that the king of England was sovereign in any official document except in the papers carried by its ships at sea. It might have noted that after 1707, New Englanders tended to refer to themselves as "English" and to those in the mother country as "British." He might have noted that while the colonial upper class tended to be Presbyterian/Grandees who became more wiggish after 1691, inland the people remained republicans of the Leveller variety. It might have been noted that by definition, a republican is not a whig because all whigs hold that the institutions of government, not those being governed, are sovereign.I could go on.Bunker's grasp of American colonial history and political system seems to be as weak as that of Lord North and George III but his understanding of the doings at court and in Parliament between 1770-75 as the relate to the final breach with the American Colonies is enlightening and well worth five stars.63 of 64 people found the following review helpful. The Other Side Of A Revolutionary Coin: An Essential Guide to the British POVBy Laurence R. BachmannNick Bunker's "An Empire On The Edge" continues the now-and-then tradition of exploring the American Revolution from a British perspective. It is, I think, a key ingredient to understanding our history. It also has the wonderful advantage of putting a fresh face on familiar tales. As well as providing balance and perspective, Bunker tackles the question of why in the world the British would allow themselves to be involved in the 18th century version of our Vietnam War....Bernard Bailyn's Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson and Robert Middlekauff's The Glorious Cause (among others) have laid groundwork for Bunker's effort. Bailyn's story of the loyalist governor of Massachusetts just before the outbreak of hostilities tells the tale of a decent, if nepotistic and confrontational man whose conservative instincts were completely out of step with the colony he governed. The rabble (or Patriots) confirm this Loyalist's worst fears during the Stamp Act crises burning down his home as he literally runs out the back door. Bailyn's work was important, showing a Loyalist not as a toady or sycophant, but an aggressive conservative trying to maintain an old order that was beyond saving.Twenty years later I thought The Glorious Cause, added an important layer to the story with Robert Middlekauff successfully arguing George III Co., were hardly tyrants. In fact, their greatest crimes were obduracy, a lack of imagination and a complete misreading of what today we would call "the situation on the ground." The British elite failed to realize, that ousting the French from the continent, had ironic and unintended consequences. Americans no longer regarded a British army as its protector, but rather an occupying force, delaying their migration to and through the Ohio valley. Middlekauff added the significant observation that colonies in most regards, were rarely on the front burner of British policy. Too often they were hardly noticed.Now comes Nick Bunker's An Empire On The Edge, a marvelous book delving deeper into the British perspective than any I have encountered before. From prologue to epilogue, and the 350 pages in between, the author debunks stale

assumptions, does a superb job of dusting off newspaper accounts and cabinet ministry minutes to look at what people were actually saying and doing at the time. This "on-the-scene perspective" is an importantly different POV that challenges a few treasured assumptions and arrives at more censorious conclusions. Where Bailyn saw Hutchison as out-of-step but decent, Bunker sees a man self-serving and prickly. Middlekauff's conclusion the British were unimaginative is ratcheted up by Bunker to ineffectual and hidebound.There is also some nice emphasis on less familiar tales such as the importance of Rhode Island and the Gaspee incident leading up to what everyone considers the main event--Boston's Tea Party. Per Nick Bunker, Rhodies were the first colony to openly revolt with the merchant class devising not only an argument for rebellion but then implementing it with the attack upon and seizure of a British ship of the line, The Gaspee. The letters of Rhode Islanders such as Stephen Hopkins, and the Brown brothers, leave no question of intent. The response of the Admiralty and its supporters back in England leave no doubt of England's complete horror at the precedent and the dire consequences that would follow. Lord North's response was sparked not by Bostonians disguised as Indians but by Rhode Islanders acting as pirates. Bunker makes a convincing argument the Gaspee incident and not the Tea Party that sent the British government on a disastrous course.This re-emphasis and another look at events such as at the Gaspee incident is just one of the pleasures of An Empire On The Edge. The book is distinguished with excellent chapters about the importance of the East India Company in helping determine a ruinous policy; the penchant for speculation that precipitated financial insolvencies, leading colonists to believe England less and less a reliable source for capital, and a scathing account of the influence (or lack thereof) of a woeful Colonial Office. The colonial system that would later be honed to perfection in India, and the embrace of Adam Smith's free market philosophy were decades away.Bunker's writing is engaging and thorough (some might say repetitive, but not I). The use of primary sources (news articles, letters, dispatches to Whitehall) keeps the reader in the moment. I didn't always agree with the author--I give no credence whatsoever to the notion that an imaginative, revised policy could have kept the colonies in the Empire. When France was evicted, the die was cast. Also, there is a tendency to hold Britain's feet to the fire but let Americans off the hook. To whit there is passing reference but no analysis of the hypocrisy of Americans using intimidation and threats of violence (to force tea brokers' resignations) whilehowling from the other side of their mouths they were being coerced by Parliament. Or the morally dubious behavior of burning down a governor's home to complain about unfair treatment. Is a violent mob or handful of "enforcers" any better than an arrogant Parliament or unsympathetic monarch? Bunker doesn't seem interested in exploring these questions beyond a page an a half that contributed to a hard line approach when a mob physically tortured a consignee for hours. One can argue they were equally obdurate and rigid.More disconcerting is the occasional lapse in characterization. When describing the mob that had gathered to brow beat the men appointed consignees of the hated tea he writes "...the consignees failed to appear. Another half hour passed and the meeting voted to pursue the guilty men." Guilty? What were the consignees guilty of other than failing to bow to mob intimidation? Bunker seems so caught up in his own revolutionary fervor or just his characterization of the British as short sighted and inept that he forgets the rather important point being unpopular is not the same thing as being guilty.These criticisms, however, are either my opinion or not substantial enough to detract to the book's overall appeal. Bunker defends his conclusions with verve, clear writing and solid research. I think any fair minded person will excuse the occasional lapse and delight in the overall excellence of An Empire On The Edge. First rate.2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A different view of the background of the American RevolutionBy Steven PetersonThis is an interesting take on the origins of the American Revolution. With a twist. Many works on the subject speak of the mighty British Empire against the underdog colonies. This book provides a fascinating variation on that theme. Indeed, according to this book, Great Britain was in difficult straits for a variety of reasons: serious economic difficulties, strained budget by government, the need to trim spending on the military, a complete lack of understanding of the American colonies, decades of having let the colonies "do their thing."The book does not explore the Revolutionary War itself. The focus is what happened up to the outbreak of war. Key issues examined: the problems faced by the East India Tea Company, leading this major economic player in Great Britain to the economic brink; the debt incurred by the "French and Indian War" (which was actually a global struggle); the drifting away from subservience to the Empire by the colonies; the lack of understanding in London by leaders of events and trends within the colonies. At the same time, the colonists did not have a clear picture of politics in London. They would take hold of minor news to assume that they had considerable support from the people in the Empire. A series of misunderstandings by both parties. . . .The work explores the runup to the Boston Tea Party, including events in Rhode Island and elsewhere. The Tea Party, in fact, was only one part of existing resistance as a result of various taxes and enforcement actions by the Empire. The leadership in London is portrayed as bungling, with little clue to the facts on the ground in the colonies. General Gage is portrayed as a ditherer. The major colonial leaders are also described as well as their perceptions of relations with London.This work is a nice corrective to the view that the British Empire was a mighty force.

Finalist for the 2015 Pulitzer Prize in HistoryWritten from a strikingly fresh perspective, this new account of the Boston Tea Party and the origins of the American Revolution shows how a lethal blend of politics, personalities, and

economics led to a war that few people welcomed but nobody could prevent. A great Empire, like a great Cake, is most easily diminished at the edges, observed Benjamin Franklin, shortly before the American Revolution. In An Empire on the Edge, British author Nick Bunker delivers a powerful and propulsive narrative of the road to war. At the heart of the book lies the Boston Tea Party, when the British stumbled into an unforeseen crisis that exposed deep flaws in an imperial system sprawling from the Mississippi to Bengal. Shedding new light on the Tea Partys origins and on the roles of such familiar characters as Benjamin Franklin, John Hancock, Thomas Hutchinson, and the British ministers Lord North and Lord Dartmouth, Bunker depicts the last three years of deepening anger on both sides of the Atlantic, culminating in the irreversible descent into revolution.

Finalist for the 2015 Pulitzer Prize in HistoryWinner ofthe 2015 George Washington PrizeWinner of the 2015 Fraunces Tavern Museum Book Award[A] bracing gallop through the three years leading up to the shot heard round the world.. . . Abroad and telling portrait. The Wall Street JournalAbsorbing and detailed. . . . Bunkers narrative is human and even-handed; and from the Boston harbourside to the salons of London, a complex and epic tale is told with colour and enthusiasm. The Sunday Telegraph (London)Bunkers tightlyargued and deeply researchedbook shows how a broader perspective can shed new light on even the most familiar events. Foreign AffairsA joy. . . . An exciting backstage look at the events that caused the American Revolution. . . . [and] an excellent analysis of the situation in the American colonies and Great Britain in the 18th century.New York Journal of BooksNearly two and a half centuries after the fact, it would seem all but impossible to shed fresh light and insight into the origins of the American Revolution. And yet, this is precisely what journalist-turned-financial analyst-turned-historian Nick Bunker has accomplished in a majestic new study of the events leading up to shots being fired at Lexington and Concord in 1775.The Manchester JournalHighly recommended. Andrew Lambert,BBC History MagazineA nuanced global analysis of Britains failure to hold onto its American colonies. . . . riveting. . . . With a sharp eye for economic realities, Bunker persuasively demonstrates why the American Revolution had to happen. Publishers Weekly(boxed review)An eye-opening study of the British view of the American Revolution and why they were crazy to fight it. . . . the failure of British leadership to recognize the warning signs will astonish readers who thought the Revolution was just about tea. A scholarly yet page-turning, superbly written history.Kirkus(starred review)[An] enthralling examination of the three years leading up to the American Revolution. . . . Bunker sets the story in its global context. However, he is also good at zeroing in on the local and unfamiliar. The Times (London)Utterly absorbing and full of colour, we learn afresh what a mess Britain made of leaving America and, crucially and importantly, how that mess shaped the American psyche. Justin Webb, presenter, BBC Today ProgrammeBunkers isa fascinating historical account, with implications that go beyond its subject matter into the question of how empire-building worksor doesnt. The Columbus DispatchNick Bunker dazzles the reader with a deeply researched and clear-eyed accounting of the dissolution of the mightybut woefully overextendedBritish Empire, and in particular its 13 colonies in North America. Bunkers mellifluous prose fairly jumps off the page, drawing the reader deeper and deeper into this intricate and fascinating tale. William D. CohanAbout the AuthorNick Bunker is the author of Making Haste from Babylon, a history of the Mayflower Pilgrims, described by The Washington Post as a remarkable success. Educated at Kings College, Cambridge, and Columbia University, he was a journalist for the Liverpool Echo and the Financial Times, and then an investment banker, chiefly with the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation. During his careers in journalism and finance, he traveled widely in China, India, the former Soviet bloc, and the United States. He now lives in Lincolnshire, England.Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.OneThe Finest Country in the WorldLet the savages enjoy their deserts in quiet.Thomas Gage, commander in chief of the British army in AmericaIn the summer of 1771, the Mississippi River marked the western boundary of the British Empire.A few miles from the waters edge, in the furthest corner of what is now the state of Illinois, a traveler brave enough to venture overland from the east would come to a tall, rocky bluff, pitted with caves and crevices among the trees. Reaching the top he would look down across a wide and muddy tract of land filled with corn and ripe tobacco. Beyond the fields and just before the river, his gaze would fall upon a line of battlements built with limestone quarried from the ridge. They belonged to a fort with platforms for cannon at each corner and a British flag flying above it. As the traveler crossed the plain, more details would emerge from out of the haze. He would see a moat, a sloping earthwork, and a row of huts near the fort, with the smoke from kitchen fires hanging in the sunshine.From a distance the forts defenses seemed solid enough, but the traveler would soon identify odd traces of neglect. Nobody had cut the tall grass by the gate. Heaps of rubble lay beside the track, all that was left of a village or a few abandoned farms. Some broken fences remained, but the cattle they corralled had vanished long ago; the corn was running wild; and many years had passed since a field hand took a harvest of tobacco leaf. In the dusk, the traveler might exchange a greeting with the redcoats who stood sentry in this corner of the wilderness. They would offer him some rum and show him around the back of the fort, where he would find more evidence of decay. Close to the walls, the riverbank dipped away steeply in a cliff of yellow sand. From time to time parts of it crumbled and fell, to be carried off by the Mississippi in the night.Far away at army headquarters in New York, the base by the river was officially listed as Fort Cavendish, after an English general of noble blood who never found time to cross the Atlantic. On the frontier, the redcoats chose to keep the name the

French had given to the place. To a Frenchman, the post was known as Fort de Chartres, mispronounced by the British as Fort Charters. By the early 1770s, it was slipping into ruin like the rest of the imperial system to which the base belonged. From the French, the British had inherited a post constructed on moist, low-lying ground, close to a bayou and next to a swamp, in a site so exposed that the walls needed constant repair until at last they collapsed entirely. Handsome to look at but far too costly to maintain, the fort was built on weak foundations, the British had acquired it without a cogent plan for its future, and in time it was bound to collapse. In other words, the post symbolized Great Britains plight in North America as a whole, a continent she did not comprehend and could not hope to rule.In theory, Fort Charters controlled a long line of communication from Lake Michigan down to the Gulf of Mexico. In practice, the authority of King George III stretched no further than a field gun could fire six pounds of iron from the ramparts. Much the same was true in the rest of his American dominions, where his position would soon become almost as untenable as the fort.In the story of what happened to the British in Illinois, we can find a parable about the vanity of empire. It is a tale of error and misunderstanding, of ideas only half thought out, of neglect and delay and occasional corruption. The occupation of Fort Charters would end in failure after a pitiful waste of lives and money: a foretaste of what was to come when, soon afterward, the British lost not only the Mississippi valley but also the loyalty of their old colonies along the eastern seaboard, as the American Revolution started to unfold.The British involvement in the far west had begun in 1763, by the stroke of a pen at a conference in Paris. A treaty negotiated at the Louvre put an end to the Seven Years War, a conflict fought out on three continents between France, Spain, and Austria on the one hand, and Great Britain and its Prussian allies on the other. In exchange for peace the French king Louis XV ceded away a string of islands in the Caribbean and all his possessions on the frontier from Quebec to Alabama. Suddenly the British acquired a vast new domain beyond the Appalachians: a territory so immense that two more years passed before they could hoist their colors above every post the French had surrendered.Caring nothing for the politics of Europe, soon after the signing of the peace of Paris the native tribes rose in rebellion, forcing the British to fight the bloody campaign known as Pontiacs War. Even when it ended, not in outright victory but in a fragile truce, the redcoats could not occupy Fort Charters immediately. First they had to send envoys with liquor and ammunition to win over the local chieftains who had never joined the uprising or been parties to the armistice. And when at last a deal was struck, the British still had to find a way to reach the Mississippi, a journey the army had never made before.To undertake the mission, they chose the Black Watch, a Scottish regiment used to empty stomachs and hard fighting in the rain. From their nearest camp on the Ohio River it took eight weeks by boat for the Highland soldiers to reach Fort Charters to collect the keys from the ragged platoon of Frenchmen who formed its garrison. That was in the autumn of 1765. At first, the redcoats were enthusiastic, finding the geography superb. Since every British officer either came from the landowning classes or aspired to join them, they appraised the landscape as though it were a vast estate at home, with ample capabilities for pleasure and for profit. It was, said one lieutenant, the finest Country in the known World, with its rich soil, its bears and buffalo, and a multitude of deer to stalk. But while the British admired the wildlife, they could not abide the people they met. Soon their letters east began to carry warnings that the fort could not be held.Your excellency knows the French, the base commander wrote. You will sooner imagine than I can describe the trouble they give me. In the Illinois country, King Louis had left behind hundreds of settlers, men and women from Quebec who inhabited their own little world by the river, growing wheat for the West Indies and drinking wine made from wild grapes. Unwilling to remain among the redcoats, most of the French soon disappeared across the water into Spanish-held territory, taking with them their cows and their Jesuit priest. Those who remained were defiant, demanding their own laws, free exercise of their religion, and their own elected assembly.If the French were difficult, the native people were impossible. In the spring they would gather at Fort Charters, hoping for gifts of food to tide them over until their own harvest of corn. This was part of a system the French had created to keep the peace without using force, but the British found it hard to feed even themselves. Unable to keep the old French bargain with the Indians, the Scotsmen were encircled by hostile clans more ruthless than any cattle raider from Loch Ness. One year, a war party silently entered the cottages outside the ramparts and slaughtered a British soldier and his wife in bed. A month later they took more scalps from a community of peaceful Indians who lived nearby. Too few to fight back, the redcoats could do nothing but send another weary letter to headquarters.Of all their adversaries, the most destructive was the Mississippi. When the snows melted far to the north, the river would begin to rise, sending a tide of brown water surging around a bend until the bastions at each angle of the fort began to shift and crack. After finishing their tour of duty the Black Watch had gone, to be replaced by Irishmen who tried to strengthen the walls by ramming stones into the bank in winter, only to see the spring floods wash them away. And when at last in late summer the river fell, it left stagnant pools filled with mosquitoes, from which disease crept up to infect the barracks and the married quarters. In a single month in 1768, fever killed sixty men, women, and children, leaving only a few dozen soldiers fit to hold a musket. We Carried out in a Cart four and five a day, wrote an ensign. The poor little Infant Orphans following.As each season went by, new tales of woe flowed back to New York to reach the desk of Thomas Gage, the British commander in chief. The dispatches made sorry reading for the officer who had drawn up the original scheme for occupying the frontier. After the truce with Pontiac, General Gage had planned to secure the wilderness with a series of posts like Fort Charters, slung like an iron chain around the pays den haut, the high country, between the

Great Lakes and Tennessee. Further east, the British hoped to keep the peace with their old treaties with the Iroquois, which left the tribes free to enjoy their ancient hunting grounds safe from interference by settlers from the colonies along the coast. Between them, the forts and the treaties would give the British control of the fur trade, the only kind of wealth Gage believed the wilderness could yield.From Manhattan the strategy might have seemed plausible, but it rested on foundations as flimsy as those of the fort. For their supplies and trading goods, the British in Illinois had to rely on shipments from Philadelphia, a thousand miles away, coming by a route so costly that they could rarely turn a profit from dealing in skins. How much easier it would have been if the knives and blankets could have sailed upriver from New Orleans; but when the British signed the Paris treaty, they misread the map, giving the king of Spain all the open channels from the Mississippi to the gulf. And meanwhile, closer to home the old British deal with the Iroquois amounted to another bargain they could not guarantee. It would only survive while Gage maintained the flow of gifts and gunpowder and kept his promise that Pennsylvania and Virginia would leave the tribes unmolested. With each year that passed, these conditions grew harder to fulfill.Gage could not even trust his own subordinates. Rumors began to circulate about bullying, fraud, and embezzlement in the Illinois country: this was a way of life in the British army, where for years the officers went on claiming pay for men who were long since dead, but on the frontier the colonels and the majors plumbed new depths of scandal. Embarrassing, expensive, and impossible to manage, the western wilderness swiftly became a luxury that General Gage could not afford.Across his whole command from Nova Scotia to the Bahamas, he could deploy only fifteen battalions of foot. He had no cavalry at all. Including their engineers and their artillery, the redcoats in North America amounted to fewer than six thousand men, half as many as the British kept in Ireland. With such a small army and a budget that never seemed to be enough, the general could not police a continent. Although he was rarely a bold commander in the field, Thomas Gage understood the logistics of his army, and he kept careful accounts of every shilling he spent. Soon he bowed to the inevitable and began to plan the evacuation of the frontier barely two years after his soldiers had arrived in Illinois.By the spring of 1767, the generals letters home about the frontier had become essays in despair. Repeatedly, he made the case for abandoning it entirely, not only the post at Fort Charters, but also Pittsburgh and Detroit and all the others in the wilderness. Time and again, he met with little more than procrastination. As early as 1768, Gages new strategy of withdrawal from the wilderness received the backing of the relevant minister, Lord Hillsborough, the colonial secretary, a pessimist about the prospects for America, but Hillsborough could not make the rest of the British cabinet see sense. Compared with the affairs of Europe or the endless maneuvers for power at home, the Mississippi valley seemed too trivial to bother with. Decisions about it were continually deferred.Even the experts in London disagreed about the role the wilderness should play in the empires destiny. None at all, said some, because, according to a royal proclamation, dating from the same year as the peace of Paris, the American colonists were supposed to remain firmly behind the Appalachians, hugging the seaboard as docile subjects of the Crown. Allow them to cross the mountains, and they would provoke another Indian war like Pontiacs. Worse still, the settlers might shake off their loyalty to the king and begin to build workshops and factories on the frontier to compete with those of England. But while the official doctrine reserved the interior for the tribes, others took a different view, lobbying hard for expansion in the wilderness as a way to make money for the king or for themselves. Adrift between competing opinions, the British preferred to do nothing about the region, as though somehow or other the problems it posed would resolve themselves.And then at last, in the autumn of 1771, a moment came when a decision about the Illinois country could no longer be postponed. Sent out by General Gage, an officer of engineers arrived at Fort Charters, surveyed the post, and then under cover of night slipped out by canoe to avoid an Indian ambush. After many detours he made his way back to New York with the damning evidence that Gage required. By now, only a few yards of solid ground remained between the river and the walls. Another spring flood would cause the fort to collapse.Keen to concentrate his army on the eastern seaboard to deter the colonists from disobedience to the Crown, Gage relayed the report to London, where, in November, it reached Lord Hillsborough, who immediately took it to the cabinet and the king. Reluctantly, they gave the order to evacuate. The following spring, as the walls of Fort Charters began to slide into the Mississippi, the redcoats left the post for good. On the rim of the empire the army gave up one fort after another, but the orderly withdrawal that General Gage intended soon became a rout, as even bases that he meant to keep fell apart for lack of money to maintain them.