

**STRATEGY
RESEARCH
PROJECT**

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THE BATTLE OF QUEBEC, 1759 — STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

BY

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The Battle of Quebec, 1759 – Strategic Implications

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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

The Battle of Quebec in 1759 was one of the most decisive engagements of early North American history and resulted in changing the political landscape of the world for over 200 years. At the time France was the dominant land power in the western world with over 250,000 soldiers under arms. France faced no peer rival that could reasonably expect to defeat its Army in a direct confrontation. Britain, historically antagonistic towards France, maintained only a small standing Army and was of limited threat to France's worldwide dominion. Thus, in order to establish an unchallenged worldwide trading empire and to allow for colonial expansion, Britain formulated a strategy to defeat France without direct confrontation on the European continent. Britain maintained a substantial Navy, which provided its Army with significant strategic mobility. The British strategy called for execution of numerous small-scale contingencies around the world, which would cause France to commit both resources and personnel. With France over-committed and embroiled in numerous worldwide contingencies, Britain could then attack the French strategic center of gravity in North America: the city of Quebec.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS AND MAPS.....	vii
QUEBEC, 1759 – STRATEGIC OVERVIEW.....	1
STRATEGIC SETTING.....	4
THE ANTAGONISTS.....	12
THE COMMANDERS.....	14
THE POLITICIANS.....	17
THE BATTLE OF QUEBEC.....	20
RAMIFICATIONS.....	32
CURRENT IMPLICATIONS.....	34
ENDNOTES.....	37
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	43

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS AND MAPS

FIGURE 1 - Progress of the Seven Years War, French and Indian War and associated conflicts.....	3
FIGURE 2 - The American Colonies and New France, Circa 1755.....	4
FIGURE 3 - The British Operational Concept for defeating the French in North America, 1757.....	8
FIGURE 4 - Quebec and the Saint Lawrence River Valley, 1759.....	21
FIGURE 5 - The Battle of Quebec, 1759.....	24
FIGURE 6 - The Plains of Abraham, September 12, 1759, 1000 Hours.....	30

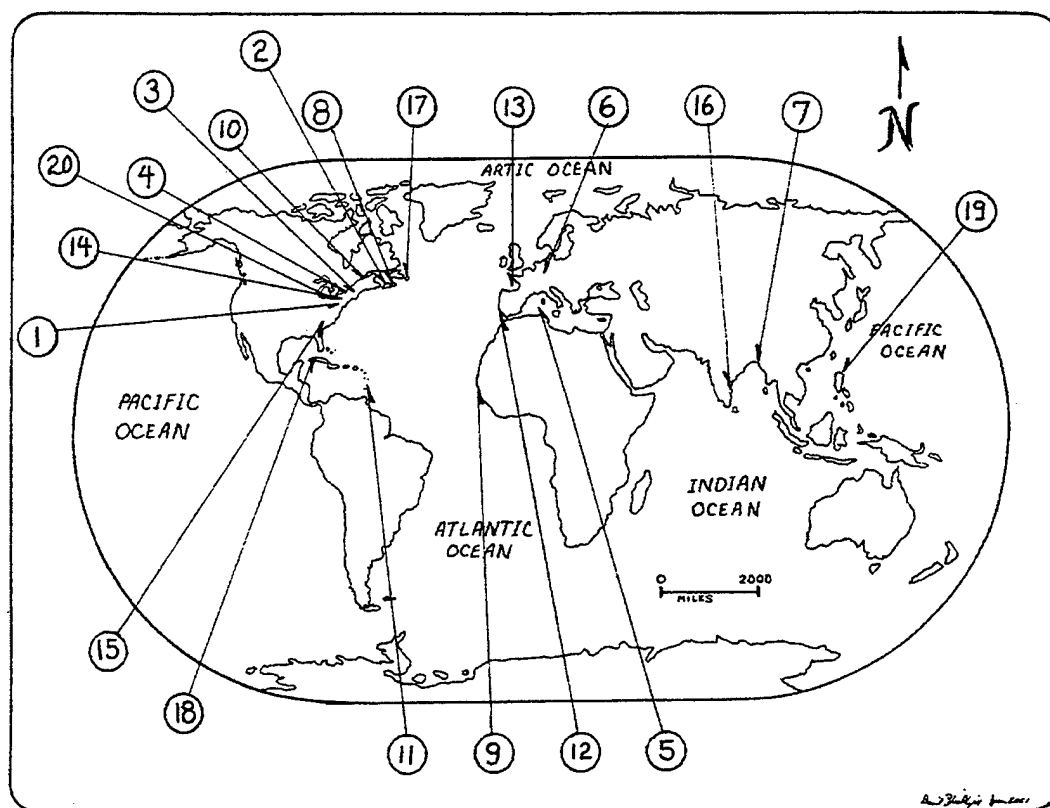
QUEBEC, 1759 – STRATEGIC OVERVIEW

In the French and Indian War, the North American equivalent of the Seven Years War in Europe, a British expeditionary force defeated a highly organized French force at the Battle of Quebec. The expeditionary force composed of British regulars and American militia were operating on exterior lines of communication where supplies and reinforcements often took up to six months to cross the Atlantic. The defending force, composed of French regulars, Canadian militia and Indians held the initiative and operated on interior lines of communication. The French forces were deployed along highly defensible positions above the Saint Lawrence River on the heights around the city of Quebec. The British force, commanded by Major General James Wolfe, enjoyed the benefit of absolute unity of command. The French forces, commanded by the Marquis de Montcalm, were subject to the operational oversight by the Governor General of Canada. The Governor General held ultimate approval authority over all of Montcalm's orders, movement of forces and conduct of the defense.¹ As a result, the French forces lost not only the Battle of Quebec, but also almost all of their holdings in North America. The British victory proved an operational success, but set into motion a chain of events resulting in strategic disaster.

Following the defeat of the French at Quebec, the political landscape of the Western Hemisphere would drastically change. The American Colonies' westward expansion would no longer be restricted by French territories situated from New Orleans, up the Mississippi River and through the Ohio River region to Canada.² The French loss at Quebec led to their ultimate loss of North America. They were forced to cede vast tracts of land west of the Appalachian Mountains and all of their possessions in Canada to the British. Almost immediately, American colonists began surging into the Ohio River regions in search of free land, furs and a chance for prosperity.³ In turn, the British, who were forced to commit over 40,000 soldiers in defense of the North American Colonies, attempted to present a bill in the form of taxes and customs duty.⁴ The American Colonies, capitalizing on new found confidence resulting from their part in the victory over the French, began to exert an independent and rebellious voice against what was deemed as unfair taxation without representation.⁵ Their defiance continued to grow until deteriorating relations with Britain culminated in open rebellion. The resulting revolution would forever change political landscape of not only North America, but all of the Western

Hemisphere. Had the French won the Battle of Quebec, it stands to reason that there may never have been a Revolutionary War and independent United States.

There are significant strategic lessons resulting from the Battle of Quebec that remain relevant to this day. England instituted a strategy that forced France into simultaneously fighting in two major theater wars and multiple small scale contingencies. **(See Figure 1)** The British strategy focused on attacking France's center of gravity in North America while avoiding direct conflict with the French Army on the European continent. Although France maintained one of the world's largest standing armies, it lacked the strategic mobility to respond globally. England, possessing a much smaller army, maintained a significant navy with global reach. Britain effectively neutralized France's land combat power by controlling the sea lines of communication and shaping the European environment. Forced to provide resources to European allies while facing economic ruin and global assault, France resourced North America as an economy of force theater. France's failure to identify the British main effort led to the loss of not only North America, but the Seven Years War and stature as a world colonial super power.



1 – Virginia / Pennsylvania and Ohio Frontier Conflicts
 Washington's Expedition, 1753
 Fort Necessity, 1754
 Braddock's Expedition, 1755
 Forbe's Expedition, 1758
 Bouquet's Expeditions, 1763, 1764

2 – Nova Scotia (Acadia), 1754

3 – Hudson River / Lake Champlain and Richelieu River Corridor, 1755 - 1760
 Battle of Lake George, 1755
 Siege of Fort William Henry, 1757
 Battle of Ticonderoga, 1758
 Amherst's Expedition, 1759
 Haviland's Expedition, 1760

4 – Mohawk Valley / Lake Ontario and Upper Saint Lawrence Valley, 1756 - 1760
 Siege of Oswego, 1756
 Bradstreet's Expedition, 1758
 Amherst's Expedition, 1760

5 – Battle and Siege of Minorca, 1756

6 – Central European Operations, 1756-1762

7 – Operations in Bengal and the Battle of Plassey, 1757

8 – Siege of Louisbourg, 1758

9 – West Africa Expeditions, 1758

10 – Quebec and the Upper St. Lawrence Valley, 1759 – 1760
 Battle of Quebec, 1759
 Second Battle of Quebec, 1760
 Murray's Expedition, 1760

11 – The Eastern Caribbean, 1759 – 1762

12 – British Naval Operations from Gibraltar, 1758 – 1759

13 – British Operations on the Coast of France, 1757 – 1761

14 – Upper Great Lakes, 1759 – 1764
 Siege of Niagra, 1759
 Bradstreet's Expedition, 1764

15 – The Cherokee War, 1759 – 1761

16 – Operations on the Coromandel Coast, 1758 – 1760

17 – Newfoundland Expeditions, 1762

18 – Siege of Havana, 1762

19 – Conquest of Manila, 1762

20 – Pontiac's Rebellion, 1763 – 65

Figure 1: Progress of the Seven Years War, French and Indian War and Associated Conflicts.

STRATEGIC SETTING

In 1759, the strategic setting in North America was governed by two rival colonial powers. The French, along with their Canadian and Indian allies were locked in a blood feud against the British and their American Colonies. The French, having possession of Canada in the north, along with the Ohio and Mississippi valleys in the west and Louisiana in the south, effectively contained the thirteen American Colonies to the eastern coastal regions. (See Figure 2) The French and Indian controlled territories effectively blocked the American Colonies expansion West of the Allegheny Mountains.⁶ The French strategy launching included preemptive strikes into the western reaches of the American Colonies. These strikes were intended to keep pressure on not only the American colonists' westward expansion, but to prevent Britain from increasing influence over the North American continent.⁷

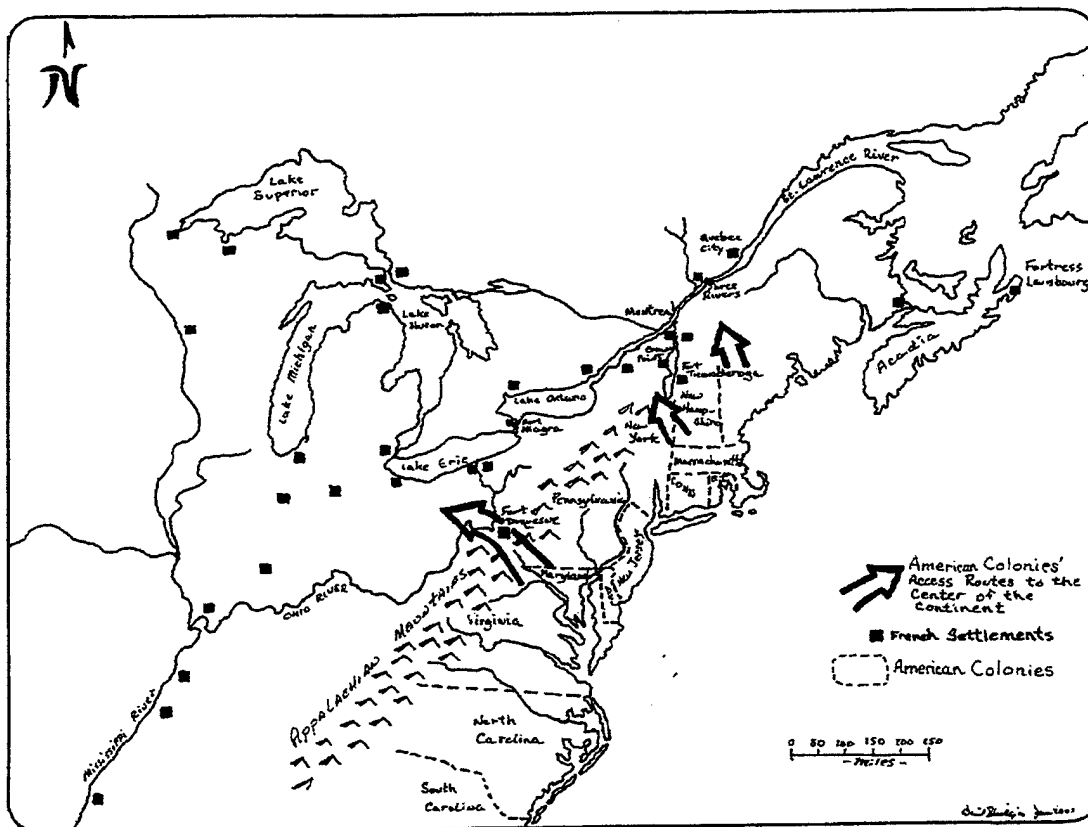


Figure 2: The American Colonies and New France, Circa 1755

The antagonism between the French and English raged for over a century. Several times open hostility culminated in war, which spread from the European continent to North America. In the late 1600s, animosity between the Protestant English monarch and France's Catholic ruler resulted in a series of skirmishes from 1675 to 1676 that would become known as King Philip's War.⁸ Twelve years later the two colonial powers were again involved in open conflict in Europe and North America with King William's War lasting from 1689 to 1697.⁹ Battles took place on both sides of the Atlantic, with the American Colonists fighting without the benefit of significant British forces. In the winter of 1689-90, French and Indian forces pushed south against the American colonies. The American colonies responded to the French incursions by launching a two-pronged attack to seize Montreal by land and Quebec by sea.¹⁰ The attacks were supposed to take place simultaneously, but were delayed while waiting for supplies from England. Due to the delay, the French were able to reinforce Montreal and the American colonists were repulsed and forced to retreat. The attack on Quebec was not launched until August, which was well over two months later than planned. The naval armada, transporting over 2,300 American militia, did not arrive at Quebec City until October 1690.¹¹ The American militia forces arrived in adverse weather and were not prepared for the heavily reinforced defenses of Quebec City. An unusually strong early winter storm struck the region resulting in the loss of four ships, including the flagship, HMS Elizabeth and Mary. The Americans were forced to retreat with a loss of over 400 men. The abortive attack on Quebec City effectively ended the War on the North American continent, although the French continued skirmishing with the American colonists for another 70 years.¹²

Following the disasters during King William's War, the American Colonies were on continual guard against the French. In the ensuing years the Colonies were twice more forced to defend themselves against the French. In Queen Anne's War from 1702 to 1713, the counterpart of Marlborough's campaigns in Europe, the American Colonies successfully defended themselves against the French and Indians with little direct support from England.¹³ From 1744 to 1748, the American colonists became embroiled in King George's War, which was an extension of the War of Austrian Succession.¹⁴ Again, with little direct support from England, the American colonial militias united and not only successfully defended against the French, but also experienced several surprising victories. The most significant American victory was in 1746, when the colonial militia captured the French fortress of Louisbourg at the mouth of the Saint Lawrence River. Unfortunately, at the conclusion of hostilities and much to the consternation of the American Colonies, England returned the fortress to the French.¹⁵ For the next twenty

years, the American colonies were forced to defend themselves against continual French encroachments.

In the years following Queen Anne's War, the French executed a strategy aimed at containing the American colonies from any westward expansion. Control of the vast Mississippi and Ohio frontier regions gave the French a monopoly on the growing fur trade. The American Colonies, restricted to the coastal areas, quickly depleted their respective beaver population. The French containment strategy was so successful, that by the early eighteenth century the French were exporting over 150,000 pelts a year as compared to the American Colonies' meager 8,000.¹⁶ Even with the French threat, the lucrative European market enticed many colonists to venture into the Ohio Valley region in search of furs. The French reacted violently to these incursions and used Indians to catch the encroaching colonists. Those who were caught in the French territories suffered whipping, branding and frequently death.¹⁷ In opposition to the Virginia Colony claim on the Ohio River region, the French built a series of forts along a vast arc that stretched from Quebec to New Orleans. By 1750, over 1000 French soldiers were quartered in the disputed frontier regions along the Ohio River.¹⁸

In 1750 the population of New France, known as Canada, had a population of only 55,000 as compared to 250,000 in the American colonies.¹⁹ The growing population of the American colonies made westward expansion into French territories inevitable. The Virginia Colony maintained its claim on the vast Ohio River Valley. In 1754, an attempt to organize and expel the French was raised by the Governor of Virginia, Robert Dinwiddie.²⁰ Unfortunately, distrust between the colonies resulted in little support for the initiative. The thirteen colonies could not agree on a common campaign plan against the French. Thus, Dinwiddie appealed to England for assistance in mounting a campaign against the French. The English asserted that the territories of Ohio River region belonged to the British Crown and that the French were merely trespassing.²¹ The British insisted that the French vacate all forts along the Ohio River valley or they would be expelled by military force.²² The British responded to Dinwiddie's request for support and dispatched a force under the command of Major General Edward Braddock.

General Braddock, aided by a young American major named George Washington, was to attack into the Ohio River region and seize Fort Duquesne. His force consisted of two British Regiments along with some Virginia militia. The Virginia Colonial General Assembly hesitated in providing support; thus the military expedition was delayed due to a lack of supplies, horses

and wagons.²³ Finally, the Governor of the Pennsylvania Colony, Benjamin Franklin, sent Braddock 200 wagons, which allowed the operation to commence in May 1755.²⁴ The movement towards Fort Duquesne was painstakingly slow, due to Braddock's insistence on developing a well-established supply line. Washington complained to Braddock on the British concern with "leveling every molehill, and erecting bridges over every brook," instead of pressing the attack.²⁵ The slow progress of the British expeditionary force allowed the French time to plan an ambush on terrain of their choosing. On July 9, 1755, Braddock's advance guard encountered over 600 Indians and 300 French soldiers.²⁶ The British forces attempted to move into battle formations, but were restricted by the forest and terrain. Only the Virginia militia understood the tactics required in fighting Indians and broke for cover.²⁷ Braddock saw the Indian style tactics of the colonials as a lack of courage and discipline.²⁸ Although, Braddock fought courageously, he was totally unfamiliar with Indian methods of fighting. Braddock suffered a mortal wound and Washington took charge of the force. Washington made a heroic effort to rally the British Regulars and colonial militia, but was forced to retreat after 3 hours of battle. The British suffered nearly 1000 casualties, including the loss of 63 officers.²⁹ The French lost only ten men and less than 100 Indians.³⁰

The French were now actively engaged several major fronts in two major theaters of War; Europe and North America.³¹ In addition, the French had resources committed in the Mediterranean, Austria, India and Africa. The French viewed North America as a secondary theater and treated it as such.³² The French forces in North America numbered only 3,500 regular soldiers and 14,500 Canadians and Indians, but were initially very successful against the American militias.³³ It became apparent that the American Colonies lacked unity and the ability to defeat the French without substantial direct support from England. Unlike previous wars, England now viewed the North American continent as vital to their growth as a trading empire. Therefore, the British committed substantial resources and over 40,000 regular soldiers to operations in North America.³⁴

The French executed a strategy of defending from strong points, while exerting pressure all along the frontier region. They initiated armed military excursions deep into American territory. Indians, with French encouragement, ravaged the frontier region by attacking colonial homesteads.³⁵ Frontier settlers were often carried off into captivity by marauding bands of Indians. The French treated some of the captured as prisoners of war, but a majority were

turned over to the Indians as virtual slaves.³⁶ Many of the prisoners were tortured or killed. The French and Indian forces were exacting an extreme toll against the American colonists.

In an attempt to regain the initiative in North America, the Prime Minister of England, William Pitt, devised a strategy to cut the French land and sea lines of communication.³⁷ (See Figure 3) The British Navy would curtail the flow of reinforcements, resources and supplies between France and Canada. Also, the British Army and colonial militias would attack west and north severing the lines of communication between Canada and the French forts along the Ohio River. The first significant British and colonial operation was the amphibious assault to seize the French Fortress of Louisbourg on Cape Breton Island. This Fortress provided access to the Saint Lawrence River, which was the main sea line of communication between France and Canada. This was the same fortress that was captured by the American militias during King George's War in 1746, only to be returned to France.³⁸

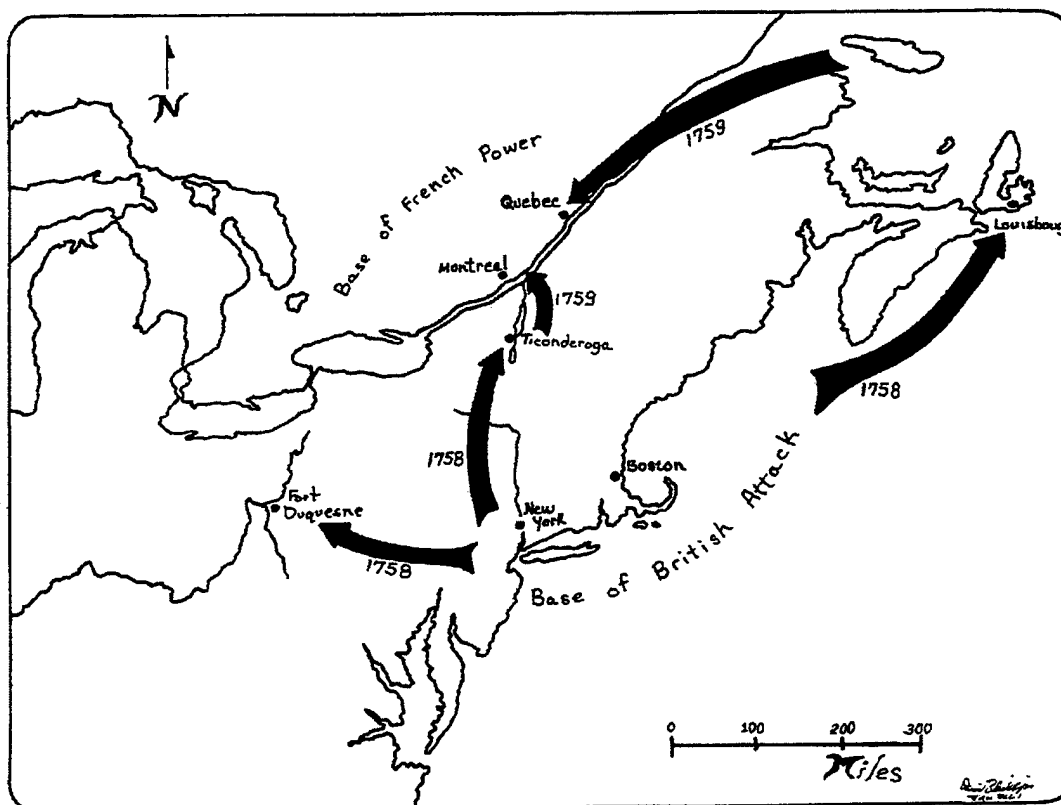


Figure 3: The British Operational Concept for defeating the French in North America, 1757

In June 1758, a significant number of British ships arrived in preparation to seize the French Fortress of Louisbourg, which was critical to the entire British campaign strategy. If the British could seize Louisbourg, the main sea line of communication between France and Canada would be severed. Louisbourg controlled access to the Saint Lawrence River and was the gateway to the interior of Canada. Any French reinforcements or supplies destined for Montreal or Quebec City would have to pass this fortress. The British force numbered over 12,000 regular soldiers under the command of General Amherst. The French garrison at Louisbourg numbered only 3,500 defenders. Despite the British superiority in numbers, the French held a distinct advantage due to the rocky shorelines, which were reinforced with over 200 cannon and mortars.³⁹ There were few points where landings could be made and the French had these approaches fortified and covered by artillery. In addition, the French placed five ships-of-the-line and seven frigates, with over 500 cannon, in the narrow harbor preventing a direct frontal assault.⁴⁰ The British reconnoitered the coast and discovered only three possible landing points. The British navy provided feints at two of the landing points, while the main assault would take place at a point called Freshwater Cove. The landing force was under the command of Brigadier James Wolfe. Unknown to Wolfe, the French had over 1000 soldiers hidden in the forest above Freshwater Cove.⁴¹ As Wolfe approached the landing, the French opened fire with canister rounds and grapeshot. Wolfe, realizing that the landing was impossible without suffering huge casualties, ordered the amphibious assault craft to veer away from the beach. Three of the assault craft were caught in the swift current and carried to a narrow beach, which was hidden from the sea and over a kilometer from the main French positions. Wolfe, seeing an opportunity to land virtually unopposed, directed the remaining boats to land on the beach. Wolfe later stated, "We made a rash and ill-advised attempt to land and by the greatest good fortune imaginable, we succeeded."⁴² Immediately after landing on the beach, Wolfe led his force of several hundred soldiers up the cliffs and assaulted a small French gun battery. After taking casualties, the French force manning the battery retreated into the forest. Over the next ten days, the British reinforced Wolfe with personnel, extensive equipment and artillery. Wolfe instituted a siege of Louisbourg that lasted over a month until a British cannon shell struck a French powder magazine. The resultant explosion created a large fire that rapidly spread and destroyed three French ships. The French garrison commander, realizing that he could not expect a relief force and suffering over 25% casualties, decided that he had done his duty in delaying the British until so late in the season.⁴³ On July 12, 1758 the French garrison at Louisbourg surrendered. Due to the length of the siege, the British force would not be able to move on and assault Quebec until the following spring.

The British expedition in the west started in 1758 with multiple assaults along the French lines of communication between Fort Duquesne and Canada. Careful preparations were made in an attempt to avoid the same fate as the Braddock expedition. First, the English initiated plans to disrupt the alliance between the French and Indians. Much to the surprise of the French, the English were successful in negotiating treaties with the Mingo, Delaware and Shawanoe tribes.⁴⁴ Within days of the treaties, the French forces at Fort Duquesne were abandoned by over half of their Indian allies. In addition, the British raids along the Ohio River Valley left the French at Fort Duquesne exposed and without support. The French forces, alarmed at the loss of their Indian allies and British interdiction of their supply lines, determined that Fort Duquesne was not defensible.⁴⁵ The French destroyed the fort and evacuated the area before British forces even arrived.

The British ground expedition aimed at Montreal did not fare as well as operations in the west. Pitt named General James Abercrombie as the Commander in Chief of the expedition. Abercrombie, known as being overcautious and in poor health received the support of an outstanding leader named Brigadier Lord Howe as his second in command. Unlike Braddock, Howe trained the force to fight Indian style tactics in the forest. Abercrombie's expeditionary force numbered over 10,000 men. This force successfully negotiated hundreds of miles of unmapped, trackless dense forest. Once arriving at Lake George, they initiated operations to cross the lake with men, supplies and cannon. They built a fleet of 900 small boats in order to cross the lake and make an amphibious landing at a small French outpost at the entrance to Lake Champlain. The British force met little resistance at the outpost and pursued the fleeing French soldiers. Lord Howe was leading the British force deeper into the forest when they received fire from the French rear guard. Howe, at the head of the column, was instantly killed. Even though the French force numbered only 3,500 men, Howe's death was a critical blow to the British expedition.⁴⁶ The Marquis Charles de Montcalm, who was a brilliant military leader, was the French commander. Montcalm reinforced the French defenses at Fort Ticonderoga and cleared extensive fields of fire. Abercrombie, leaving his heavy cannon in the boats at the landing site, pressed forward against the French strong point. Instead of laying siege and bombarding the French fort with artillery, Abercrombie ordered a direct frontal assault. The attack was disastrous with the British suffering over 1600 casualties. Disillusioned, Abercrombie ordered a withdrawal even though his forces still significantly outnumbered the French.

By 1759, British Forces in North America numbered over 40,000 regulars in addition to the colonial militias.⁴⁷ The Commander in Chief of the British forces, General Amherst, was directed by Pitt to commence military operations to seize Fort Ticonderoga and Crown Point. Simultaneously, General James Wolfe was directed to seize Quebec City. Following the seizure of Fort Ticonderoga and Quebec City, the two were to meet in Montreal concluding the military campaign. The British viewed Quebec City as the French center of gravity in North America, and if taken by British forces, New France would no longer exist.⁴⁸

With the French forces being attacked on multiple fronts and realizing their significant disadvantage in numbers, they moved north and consolidated their forces.⁴⁹ Unknown to the British, the French evacuated Fort Ticonderoga and concentrated their efforts in defense of Montreal and Quebec City. General Amherst moved north against Fort Ticonderoga and found virtually no resistance. In May 1759, General Wolfe sailed from Cape Breton with a formidable fleet of 170 vessels to assault Quebec City. Unfortunately for Wolfe, Quebec City was now heavily reinforced by French regulars and under the command of the Marquis de Montcalm. Thus, Quebec stood to be the culminating battle between France and England for control of North America.

THE ANTAGONISTS

France:

The foundation of French policy leading to the Seven Years War originated with the peace at Aix la Chapelle in 1748, which did not settle previous grievances.⁵⁰ The terms of this peace led to the division of North America into two spheres of influence. The thirteen American colonies were situated along the eastern coastal regions, while the French maintained Canada and vast tracts west of the Allegheny Mountains to New Orleans in the south. Both France and the Virginia colony claimed ownership of the Ohio River Valley.⁵¹ The French required control of the Ohio River Valley in order to maintain land lines of communication between Canada and New Orleans. In addition, France and Spain feared that English expansion in North America would eventually give Britain the power to overshadow her European colonial rivals.⁵² The basic French policy was to maintain control of the frontier regions and contain Britain's expansion in North America. Starting in 1749, the French implemented a policy of prohibiting the American colonists from trading with the Indians of the Ohio frontier region. In 1750, the Canadian Governor General, the Marquis de la Jonquiere, dispatched French forces from into the Ohio region to set up a series of forts along the Niagara River.⁵³ This strategy was intended to prevent westward expansion of the American colonies and forestall British domination of North America.

In the mid-eighteenth century, France was considered one of the greatest military land powers in Europe. The country maintained a standing army of 200,000 and had a total population of over 20,000,000.⁵⁴ Although France maintained a formidable standing army, they lacked strategic mobility and were in financial ruin. In addition, France relied on sea lines of communication, but lacked sufficient sea power. The French did not have the financial means or naval resources to send ample reinforcements to North America. Even as frontier skirmishes developed into open warfare, France lacked the ability to rapidly reinforce their holdings in North America. The French policy was to provide support to her European allies and attack British interests in the Mediterranean. France believed that the American colonial militias were no significant threat, therefore dispatched only 3,500 soldiers to Canada as opposed to providing 100,000 soldiers in support of Austria's war with Prussia.⁵⁵

England:

The British maintained an openly antagonistic policy towards France as a rival colonial power and continental enemy. They felt that the American colonies were threatened as long as the French remained in North America. The Virginia colony's claim of the Ohio River region resulted in open conflict with the French along the frontier regions. Britain served notice that France must immediately vacate the Ohio River region or face forced expulsion. This policy created a situation where the British could strike at the French in North America and avoid direct conflict on the European continent.

In the mid-eighteenth century, England was a small country with a population of only 8,000,000, but was rapidly developing into the first truly industrialized nation.⁵⁶ Britain's small army was no match for France in open warfare on the European continent. Thus, Britain proceeded with a series of alliances that would entangle France in Europe and prevent them from committing significant resources in North America. In pursuing this policy, Britain provided financial support to Frederick of Prussia in his ongoing war with Austria. This support caused France ally itself with historically antagonistic Austria. France was forced to commit massive resources and over 100,000 soldiers to ground combat in Europe in support of Austria. Even if the British support of Prussia failed to keep France occupied in Europe, the strong British Navy maintained control of the sea lines of communication. The British Navy could interdict French reinforcements and supplies bound for North America. The British overall strategy would focus on defeating the French center of gravity in North America, while avoiding direct combat with the large standing French army in Europe. Also, Britain would deploy over 40,000 soldiers and a large naval armada to support their North American campaign.⁵⁷ Understanding that France lacked the strategic mobility and resources to react globally, Britain would also attack French holdings in Africa, India and the Philippines. Thus, worldwide commitments, alliances and a lack of strategic mobility would weaken France's ability to defend its holdings in North America.

THE COMMANDERS

Marquis Charles de Montcalm:

The Marquis de Montcalm was born in the south of France in 1712. He entered the army as an ensign at the age of fifteen and within two years he received his captaincy. Shortly after promotion to captain he experienced combat and came under fire at the siege of Philipsbourg, in the Leeward Islands. As a young officer, Montcalm maintained a strong loyalty to both the Catholic Church and the King of France. In 1743, two years after the Bohemian Campaign, he was promoted to colonel of the regiment of Auxerriens. Montcalm led his regiment in Italy and received five sabre wounds at the walls of Piacenza. After twice rallying his regiment, he was overcome by his wounds and was made a prisoner. After receiving parole, Montcalm returned to France and was promoted to Brigadier. Shortly after promotion, Montcalm returned to the field army and was wounded by a musket shot. Once again Montcalm returned to France and was placed on convalescent leave. In 1755, while on leave, Montcalm visited Paris and was informed that the King was considering him for command of French forces in North America. Shortly after returning home, Montcalm received official notification of his selection to command. The King personally promoted Montcalm on his departure for North America to the rank of Major General.

Montcalm immediately proved himself one of the finest leaders in New France. He rallied his forces to victory at Fort Ticonderoga and Oswego. These victories immediately placed him at odds with the Governor General, the Marquis de Vaudreuil. Montcalm received extensive praise for the victories, which infuriated Vaudreuil's jealousies and his Canadian prejudices. These differences exasperated Montcalm's efforts to defend New France and impaired any unity of effort between the French and Canadian forces.

In the end, Montcalm fought a valiant battle, but political infighting confounded his every effort to save New France. Even with the British at the walls of Quebec, Montcalm's repeated requests for artillery support from Jean Baptiste Ramezay, the garrison commander of Quebec City, were met with denial. Ramezay was responsible only to the orders of Vaudreuil. Unfortunately, Vaudreuil was overcome with stress and was issuing incoherent orders.⁵⁸ It was not until the battle of Quebec was nearing an end that the Canadian forces finally turned to Montcalm for orders. Montcalm, who was dying from a mortal wound suffered on the Plains of

Abraham, replied in pathetic bitterness, "I will neither give orders nor interfere anymore. I have much greater importance than your ruined garrison and wretched country."⁵⁹ Montcalm died without the benefit of being able to defend his actions. Vaudreuil was forced to answer criminal charges in France, but was later acquitted after placing much of the blame on Montcalm. Montcalm's countrymen would denounce his actions as the cause of the loss of North America.⁶⁰

General James Wolfe:

James Wolfe was born in 1727 at Westerham in Kent. He was the son of a prominent British officer, Major General Edward Wolfe, who had distinguished himself in the Marlborough campaign and the rebellion of 1715. James Wolfe began his service to the King at the age of thirteen when he accompanied his father on the ill-fated Cartagena expedition. Illness overtook the youth and his father sent him home prior to experiencing the horrors of that expedition. Two years later, James Wolfe began his formal service to the King as a youth of sixteen by serving as an adjutant at Flanders. He was identified early for his ability to command men and received rapid promotion. At the age of twenty-three he was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and placed in command of a regiment at Inverness. His regiment was charged with the maintenance of order over the turbulent Highlander population. The rebellious population gave no quarter to Wolfe's men. Likewise, Wolfe took few Highlanders prisoner. He learned to dislike not only the Highlanders, but also all Scotsmen. He believed that they were a people better governed by fear than by favor.⁶¹

In 1757, with the Seven Years War raging, he was appointed Quartermaster General for the expedition sent to raid the French coast at Rochefort. The raid was a disaster, due to tactical disagreements between the naval and army commanders. Wolfe, witnessing the ongoing disagreements, requested permission to reconnoiter the shore and prepare a plan of attack. His superiors denied the request as being impractical. The senior commanders were unable to resolve their tactical differences and therefore ordered the force to retire to England. Only Wolfe and Richard Howe, who would later be killed at Lake Champlain, escaped the criticism at a subsequent inquiry. At Rochefort, Wolfe learned a valuable lesson in command and control of a joint amphibious operation. This lesson would serve him well in the near future as he led the expedition to seize Quebec City.

Wolfe contacted the Prime Minister, William Pitt and offered his services in the North American war. Pitt, who had received good reports on Wolfe's conduct at Rochefort, accepted the offer. James Wolfe was promoted to Brigadier and placed under General Amherst for the campaign to seize the French fortress at Louisbourg. Wolfe distinguished himself during this operation and was promoted to Major General. Pitt personally directed that Wolfe lead the assault to seize Quebec City.

Wolfe's most noteworthy accomplishments occurred in a relatively short period of time from 1758 to 1759. His actions leading up to the seizure of Quebec caused him to be heralded as one of the finest military leaders Britain ever produced.⁶² At 32, Wolfe died from wounds on the Plains of Abraham. Significantly his death was not the end of his accomplishments, but the beginning. Wolfe's place in history will be forever linked with the addition of the Dominion of Canada to the British Empire and the birth of the United States. B. H. Liddell Hart wrote, "for as he founded one, so he made possible the other."⁶³

THE POLITICIANS

Marquis de Vaudreuil:

In 1755, King Louis XV named the M. le Marquis de Vaudreuil, a French - Canadian as the Governor General of New France. As French – Canadian, his loyalty was not to the King of France, but to the colony of Canada.⁶⁴ Vaudreuil possessed an egocentric personality and jealous attachment to the colony. These characteristics led him to take credit for all military achievements, while placing blame for failures on the French soldiers and Montcalm. The pronouns of “I” and “my” occur with monotonous frequency in his correspondence.⁶⁵ Before the capture of Oswego, Vaudreuil wrote, “I am confident that I shall reduce it...my expedition is sure to succeed if Monsieur de Montcalm follows the directions I have given him.”⁶⁶ When news of Montcalm’s victory arrived, Vaudreuil claimed that the victory was due to his Canadian forces. He gave only the faintest praise to the soldiers from France.

As Governor General, Vaudreuil maintained supreme authority over all of Canada, including the military. There were two types of standing forces in Canada at the time of the battle of Quebec. The first were 3,500 regular soldiers from France under the command of the Marquis de Montcalm. The second were the Canadian colonial Army and militia of New France. The militia was composed of ordinary Canadians who could be called to fight. These French – Canadian born forces numbered over 14,500 men and were under the direct command of Vaudreuil. Unfortunately for Montcalm, Vaudreuil exercised ultimate authority over all military operations in New France.⁶⁷ Montcalm was forced to submit all operational orders to Vaudreuil for approval and justify their rationale.

Vaudreuil had limited military experience and had never led forces in combat. His lack of military experience, coupled with his supreme authority over operations, led to frequent quarrels with Montcalm. Montcalm, realizing that the English forces far outnumbered the French, insisted on fighting a defensive war.⁶⁸ Vaudreuil, in opposition, demanded a bold policy of offensive operations, but lacked the manpower to take the battle to the American colonies. Vaudreuil requested additional forces from France, but received only 300 additional soldiers.⁶⁹ Vaudreuil was forced to acquiesce to Montcalm that the French abandon Fort Ticonderoga and consolidate at Montreal and Quebec. The continual clash between Montcalm and Vaudreuil over the defense of Quebec would inhibit their integration of capabilities through a lack of unity

of effort. These differences would not only lead to defeat at Quebec, but also forever labeled Vaudreuil as a villain in the eyes of the French.

William Pitt:

In 1757, one of the most successful governments in British history was formed when William Pitt became the Prime Minister.⁷⁰ In essence, he forced his way into leadership by mercilessly attacking the all-powerful Whig Junta and King George II.⁷¹ He accused the government of surrendering to foreign arrogance and criticized England's poor military posture. The English people were disgruntled due to the continuing defeat of their armed forces in North American, India, Europe and on the high seas. Within months of assuming power, Pitt demonstrated enormous personal energy in rallying the British people. Within a few short months the entire national character changed. The morale of the people of England drastically increased along with their support for the war effort. He effectively lobbied significant funding from Parliament for pursuing the ongoing war with France. Frederick of Prussia stated that, "England had long been in labor, and at last she has brought forth a man."⁷²

Pitt formed a grand strategy for defeating the French, which focused on an operational campaign to seize all of North American. The strategy consisted of cutting the French lines of communication and then striking into the heart of New France. He saw Quebec City and to a lesser extent, Montreal, as the French center of gravity in North America. If the British and American forces could successfully seize the two cities, French control of Canada would end.

Pitt shaped the global environment by use of strategic mobility to attack French possessions worldwide. Pitt knew that the French lacked significant naval power to rapidly respond to the British assaults. Also, France was in financial ruin, therefore they had limited resources to expend beyond their borders as long as war raged on the European continent. As previously noted, France had committed over 100,000 soldiers in Austria's war with Prussia. To counter this, Pitt financed Frederick of Prussia's ongoing war with Austria and France. Pitt's strategy ensured that French commitments would exceed its capability to respond and support worldwide warfare.

The achievement of Pitt's strategy allowed Britain to defeat the French, become the predominant power in North America and consolidate a trading empire upon which the sun

would not set for two centuries.⁷³ Pitt lived another 15 years, in which he consolidated one of the greatest empires of modern history. In addition, he took on the difficult task of trying to reconcile the differences between Britain and her American colonies. Although his strategy brought Canada into the British Empire, it also set into motion a chain of events that would ultimately lead to the loss of America. Long after his death, his accomplishments are still viewed as both patriotic and heroic in nature. To this day the accomplishments of his government are still heralded as one of the high points of English history.⁷⁴

THE BATTLE OF QUEBEC

The battle to seize Louisbourg ended late in the summer of 1758, just as the harsh Canadian winter set in. Thus, the Marquis de Montcalm, gained six months to consolidate over 16,000 soldiers and prepare the defenses of Quebec. Unfortunately for the French cause, we have seen that King Louis XV of France subordinated Montcalm to the inept Marquis de Vaudreuil, Governor General of New France. Montcalm was continually thwarted in his attempts to plan offensive operations or position forces outside of a relatively small area around Quebec City. Vaudreuil dictated that Montcalm consolidate all forces on the heights above the North shore of the Saint Lawrence River and remain within 4 miles East and West of Quebec City.⁷⁵

After completing the campaign to seize Louisbourg, the British were in a favorable position to commence operations against Quebec the following spring. **(See Figure 4)** William Pitt, the First Earl of Chatham, received numerous reports that the victory at Louisbourg was the result of the leadership of Brigadier James Wolfe. Pitt promoted Wolfe to Major General and placed him in command of the expedition to seize Quebec. Admiral Sir Charles Saunders, commander of the British naval forces in North America, would transport Wolfe's force and support the operation. Wolfe, having witnessed defeat at Rochefort due to differences between the Naval and Army commanders, worked to ensure Saunders' cooperation and support.

The British soldiers wintered in Nova Scotia, while Saunders' fleet refitted at Halifax. Wolfe arrived at Nova Scotia in April 1759, and having been informed that he would lead a force of over 12,000, was dismayed to find fewer than 8,500 soldiers and officers.⁷⁶ Even though Wolfe discovered less soldiers than promised for the operation, they were exceptionally well trained, fully equipped and in good health. Wolfe directed the blockade of the Saint Lawrence River to prevent the French from reinforcing or resupplying Quebec City. Unfortunately for the British, Halifax remained ice bound until May 5, which prevented Saunders from commencing timely blockade operations. Just prior to the arrival of the British blockade force off of Louisbourg, a French convoy of 3 frigates and 17 store ships slipped into the mouth of the Saint Lawrence River.⁷⁷ Bad weather and ice delayed the British invasion fleet from arriving May 15. Finally, on June 4, Wolfe and Saunders departed for Quebec City with a fleet of 119 ships, escorted by 19 ships of the line and 13 smaller vessels. The French, believing that no vessel could proceed up the Saint Lawrence River past the rocky traverses without a pilot, removed all of the

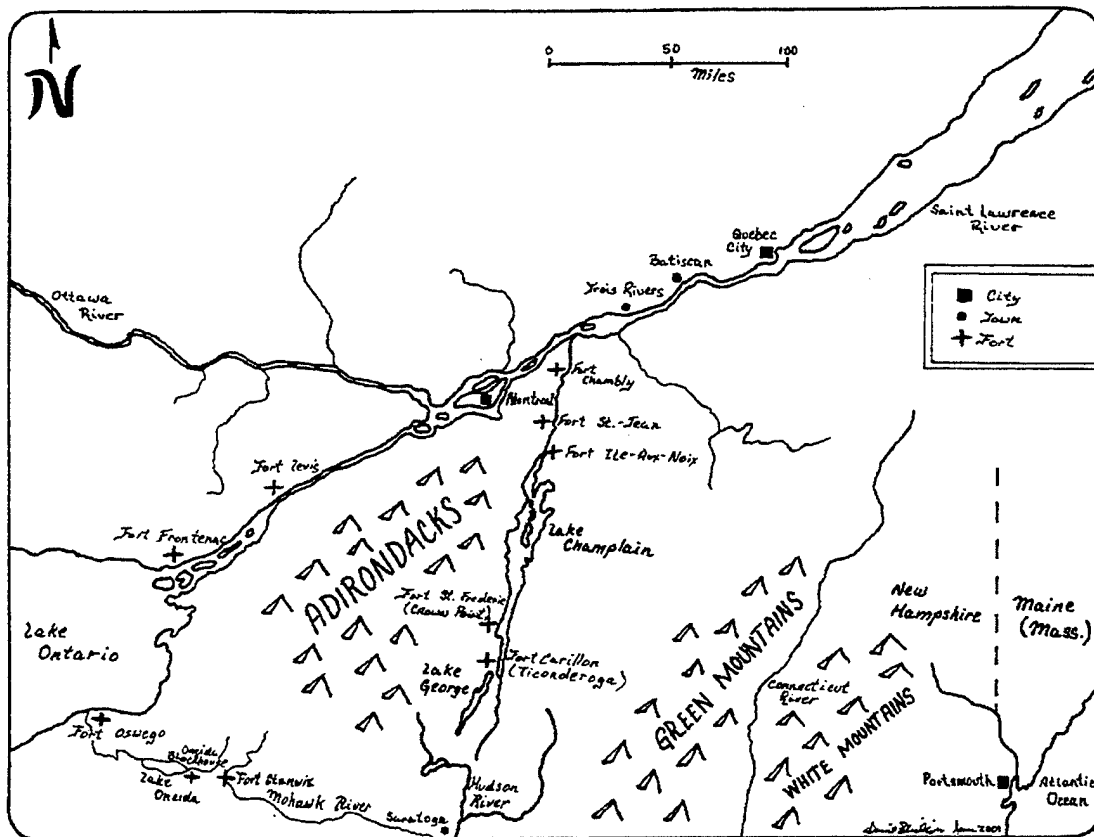


Figure 4: Quebec and the Saint Lawrence River Valley, 1759

navigational aids and buoys.⁷⁸ In fact, a British expedition under Sir Hovenden Walker and General Hill had met with disaster in 1711 off of the Island of Anticosti near the mouth of the Saint Lawrence River. A gale force wind drove 8 of the transport ships into the rocks with a loss of nearly 900 men.⁷⁹ A council of British naval officers convened after the loss and determined that it is impossible to navigate ships of war and transports up the Saint Lawrence River as far as Quebec.⁸⁰ Saunders, realizing the challenge of navigating the Saint Lawrence, issued comprehensive instructions to the captains of all ships. These instructions included procedures in case of fog or grounding and signals for water depth sounding and the landing of troops.

Montcalm, realizing that the British fleet would be exposed to artillery fire if they attempted to pass the narrow points along the Saint Lawrence River, requested that Vaudreuil approve emplacement of a battery at Cape Tourmente, which commanded exceptional fields of fire from a rock position 50 feet above the river. Any vessel sailing up river would have to pass the Cape prior to entering into the rocky traverses. The ship could be raked from bow to stern, while the height of the Cape would secure the battery from return fire. Vaudreuil turned down the request, believing that the river was impossible to navigate without marking buoys and

experienced pilots and therefore the deployment of artillery was unnecessary.⁸¹ The denial of both this request, and Montcalm's subsequent request to position a battery opposite the western end of the Isle aux Coudresat, allowed the British fleet to slowly navigate the river unmolested.

On June 13, the first ships of the British fleet arrived within sight of Quebec. The remainder of the fleet continued moving cautiously up the river. Wolfe expected to need only a few small vessels in support of his attack on Quebec. The remainder of the fleet would anchor below the Isle of Coudres in preparation to fight any French reinforcement by sea. This plan would prevent Saunders from risking navigation of the fleet through the rocky traverses. Saunders disagreed with the plan and correctly reasoned that Quebec was the focal point of the operation, thus Wolfe would need all possible assistance from the Navy. Saunders ordered his fleet beyond the Isle of Coudres and carefully navigated past the dangerous rocks opposite the Saguenay River and through the hazardous traverses. On June 26th, Saunders and Wolfe reached the south shore of the Isle of Orleans and were joined by the remainder of the fleet over the next few days. Vaudreuil was incredulous at the British fleet's ability to navigate through the traverses and stated, "The enemy has passed over sixty ships of war where we had hardly dared risk a vessel of a hundred tons."⁸²

The French appreciated the importance of Quebec no less than the British. Montcalm wrote to the French Minister of War, "If we are left without a fleet at Quebec, the enemy can come there; and Quebec taken, the colony is lost..."⁸³ Montcalm accurately assessed that holding Quebec was key to the war in North America and that the fate of all Canada rested in its defense. He used the fortress city of Quebec as the pivot point for his defensive strategy. Steep cliffs dominated the shoreline west of Quebec, therefore Montcalm expected the British attack at an area between the Saint Charles and Montmorency Rivers. In this area the mud flats and shoals extended out from shore from one half to three quarters of mile, which made it impossible to land at low tide. In addition, there was a natural defensive ridgeline, which runs parallel to the Saint Lawrence River. Montcalm reinforced the area with battery emplacements, redoubts and entrenchments. The city of Quebec was itself a natural defensive strong point positioned at an elevation that protected it from naval gunfire. Also, the city defenders possessed artillery pieces, which could fire completely across the river. The belief was that the artillery pieces made it impossible for any vessel to pass beyond the city of Quebec. Unfortunately, Montcalm did not command the city's artillery or the 650 men charged with its

defense.⁸⁴ The Chevalier de Ramezay, who answered only to Governor General Marquis de Vaudreuil, commanded the defenses of the city of Quebec.

As soon as Wolfe arrived in the proximity of Quebec he discovered that the French were not concentrated in the city, but were entrenched along the whole northern bank of the Saint Lawrence River from Montmorency to Saint Charles. His initial reconnaissance also showed that the cliffs west of Quebec provided an impossible barrier. The day following his arrival, he ordered a landing on the Isle of Orleans. Earlier, Vaudreuil disapproved Montcalm's request to position French forces on the Isle; thus the British landed unopposed and encountered no resistance. The disposition of the French defenses, coupled with the natural barriers, caused Wolfe to adjust from his original plan to attack between the Montmorency and Saint Charles rivers. Instead, he planned to land forces on the north shore just to the east of the Montmorency River. **(See Figure 5)**

On July 9th, Wolfe landed with a force on the north shore as planned. He received virtually no opposition from the French and was able to build an encampment, but unable to immediately launch an attack. Wolfe would have to first ferry forces across the Montmorency, then fight through 9 miles of prepared French defenses to arrive at the Saint Charles River. Montcalm, believing his defenses were impenetrable, stated "Drive them from thence and they will give us more trouble. While they are there they cannot hurt us...let them amuse themselves."⁸⁵

A gale caused Saunders to move the fleet from south of the Isle of Orleans to the open basin off of Quebec. This position was much closer to the French defenses and was dominated by Point Levis. As a defensive measure, Wolfe landed four battalions at Point Levis and encountered only a small force of Canadian militia. Montcalm, realizing the significance of Point Levis, planned to attack and retake the position. After allowing the British forces seven days to become complacent in their position, Montcalm initiated a night attack by crossing the Saint Lawrence with a force of 1,500 soldiers.⁸⁶ Neither the British guards nor naval sentries discovered the approaching French force. Unfortunately, Montcalm lost the element of surprise soon after the landing as the French forces became disoriented in the forest. The French

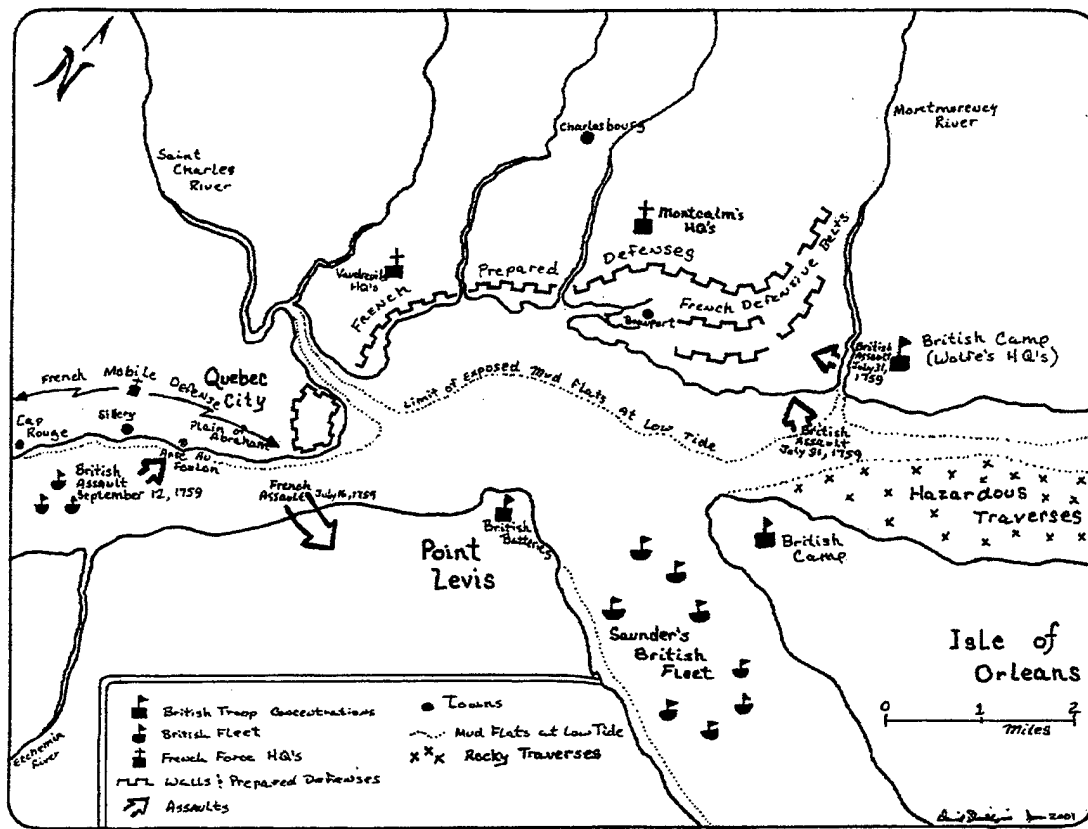


Figure 5: The Battle of Quebec, 1759

soldiers, believing they were within the British positions, began to fire without discipline or identification of the enemy. The night attack crumbled into a mass of confusion as French forces fired at each other, believing that they were being attacked. In order to reconsolidate, the French forces retreated back across the river to the north shore. Had Montcalm succeeded in retaking Point Levis, the French would have threatened the entire British fleet.⁸⁷ Discouraged by the failure of the attack, Vaudreuil refused to listen to any of Montcalm's further proposals for offensive operations. Montcalm was ordered keep all future operations defensive in nature.

Wolfe believed that the French store ships, which passed Louisbourg ahead of the Royal Navy blockade force, were anchored above the city of Quebec. He devised a plan to send several warships and a small force of 600 men up river past the city.⁸⁸ He believed that control of the river above Quebec might afford the British another avenue of attack and cause the French to commit forces away from the strong point east of Quebec. The French were not concerned about the possibility of a British vessel sailing past the city, believing that it would be impossible for a ship to pass the gun batteries of Quebec's fortress. On July 18th, Wolfe sent

four armed sloops loaded with provisions past the city without losing a single man. With the ships successfully past Quebec, Wolfe sent the force 18 miles up the Saint Lawrence River to Point aux Trembles. Wolfe hoped to destroy French stores and disrupt the lines of communication between Montreal and Quebec. Montcalm, realizing the implications of British ships operating beyond Quebec, dispatched a 600 man force to defend the access points on the north shore as far as Cap Rouge.

In order to defend Quebec, Montcalm realized that the, operational center of gravity, British fleet, must be destroyed. On the night of July 28th, the French attacked by setting several barges afire and releasing them into the strong current of the receding tide towards the anchored British fleet. The British seamen grappled the burning barges and towed them clear without experiencing any severe damage to the warships.

By late July, the British had not gained any definite advantage. The officers were concerned that time was running short and that severe weather would soon halt the operation. Wolfe decided to launch a full-scale attack from the Montmorency River line and seize Montcalm's extreme left flank. The tide in both the Saint Lawrence and Montmorency Rivers raised and lowered an average of 13 to 16 feet, which could drastically affect the navigable waterways in a few short hours.⁸⁹ When the tide ebbed, British scouts discovered a low water crossing on the Montmorency. Soldiers could rapidly cross on nearly dry ground and attack the French flank. Planning the attack as the tide ebbed was a serious oversight by Wolfe. The mud flats would also be exposed preventing the landing of British reinforcements. The ebb tide occurred in late afternoon, thus the British attack would be within clear view of the French defenders. At 1200 hours on July 31st, the British naval bombardment commenced. Wolfe waited six hours for the tide to ebb before ordering the initial force to cross the Montmorency River.⁹⁰ Unfortunately, by this time all of the landing barges with reinforcements were grounded on the mud flats and susceptible to French fire. Thirteen companies of Grenadiers and a platoon of Royal Americans took over 30 minutes to negotiate the mud and reach the beach. They discovered that their position on the beach was exposed to direct fire, therefore they immediately formed and charged the defenses. The French used both artillery and disciplined musket fire to cut down the charging forces. The attack broke as the British and American force fled downhill to the mud flats. Many of the wounded were left on the slopes to face the tomahawks and scalping knives of the Indian allies of the French.⁹¹ Wolfe, viewing the slaughter, ordered the British forces to retire back across the Montmorency River. As the British force returned to the crossing

point, they discovered that the tide raised the water level, thus slowing their retreat. The British force suffered over 440 casualties, including 1 colonel and twenty-seven junior officers.⁹²

The French were elated at the easy victory over the British at Montmorency. Vaudreuil stated that, "I have no anxiety about Quebec," and wrote in a letter to Wolfe, "M. Wolfe I can assure you will make no progress."⁹³ Wolfe's force was now positioned at Point Levis, the Isle of Orleans and Montmorency. Montcalm, realizing Wolfe's tactical error of dividing his forces between three non-mutually supportive locations, pressed for attacking the British at Point Levis. Vaudreuil, now extremely confident from the victory at Montmorency, prohibited Montcalm from conducting an attack.⁹⁴ Thus, the British were given a free hand to plan and maneuver without the threat of a French attack, even though their disposition was exceptionally vulnerable.

In early August, the French intercepted letters indicating that the British had taken Ticonderoga, Crown Point and Fort Niagra.⁹⁵ Vaudreuil received the report that a strong British force under General Amherst was now progressing north from Lake Champlain and would soon threaten Montreal. He directed that the Chevalier de Levis, depart without troops and take charge of the Montreal defenses. Levis was commanding Montcalm's left flank and would be sorely missed by the French defenders.

Wolfe's health rapidly declined following the British defeat at Montmorency. He was diagnosed with both tuberculosis and rheumatism.⁹⁶ Also, the morale of the British force was weakening through sickness and the perception that the French position was invulnerable. The entire month of August was a stalemate with the British making no substantive gains. Wolfe had to devise a new plan of attack or risk failure at the hands of the approaching Canadian winter. On August 29, 1759, Wolfe's subordinate commanders submitted an estimate which outlined the situation: "The natural strength of the Enemy's situation between the River St. Charles and the Montmorency, now improved by all the art of their Engineers, makes the defeat of the French Army, if attacked there, very doubtful."⁹⁷ They continued their assessment stating that the British must establish a force on the north side of the Saint Lawrence River above Quebec. This would sever the French interior lines of communication and cause Montcalm to come out from his defenses and fight on British terms.

Wolfe developed plans for pursuing the attack above Quebec. He moved the British ships up the river as far as Point aux Trembles and Bougainville, not knowing where he would attempt

a north shore landing. The French, realizing that the British now seriously threatened their line of supply, began to guard the north shore above Quebec. The French force was raised to 1000 and later increased to 3000 men. Vaudreuil, determined to use his remaining frigates, now anchored at Batiscan, dispatched all seamen who were currently defending Quebec to man them. The British, in preparation for the attack, sent five additional ships past Quebec at night, suffering only minor damage. The British naval forces beyond Quebec were now distinctly superior to the French fleet at Batiscan. Vaudreuil, realizing that his naval forces were outmatched, recalled the seamen back to Quebec and disregarded further proposals to attack the British fleet via water.

Wolfe placed 2000 men on the vessels above Quebec and had them sail up and down the river with the tide.⁹⁸ The French were not able to determine if this was a British plan to attack above Quebec or merely a ruse to draw forces away from the city. Montcalm designated 1500 troops; consisting of all his grenadiers, volunteers from the French Regiments, along with the best Canadian and Indian forces, to closely follow the movements of the British fleet above Quebec.⁹⁹ The British fleet moved up and down the river scouting for a landing point while the French followed on shore. The current with the flood tide has strength up to 3 ½ knots while the ebb tide reaches as high as 4 ½ knots.¹⁰⁰ The British force moved up and down the river without any physical effort, while the French became exhausted trying to oppose each threatened landing.

On the night of September 7, the British fleet made a demonstration off of Beauport as though preceding an attack. Montcalm believing he faced an imminent attack moved a battalion of French regulars to the north shore above the Plains of Abraham. Vaudreuil countermanded Montcalm's order and directed the withdrawal of the battalion.

By the night of September 8, the British had 18 warships moving with the tide above Quebec, along with a number of sloops, transports and ordnance vessels. The British force consisted of over 3600 troops, but Wolfe had not yet selected a landing point. Wolfe continued to reconnoiter for a landing point in the vicinity of Quebec, while his subordinates reconnoitered farther up river as far as Pointe aux Trembles. By September 9, congestion caused by the large number of troops on the ships was becoming a severe problem. The British landed 1600 soldiers on the south shore above Quebec to wash and refresh. Wolfe landed on the shore just below Etchemin and surveyed the north shore with a telescope. He noticed a small cove at the

Anse de Foulon about 1 mile above Quebec. There was narrow path leading 200 feet up the cliff to an area with only a few tents. This appeared to be a weak point in the French defensive line. He notified his Brigadiers of his decision to land the British force at this point. The landing force would rapidly scale the path, overpower the French force and gain a foothold on the Plain of Abraham. Wolfe selected the night of September 12 for the assault.

On September 11, the British troops returned to the ships and rode the tide up river with the French force maneuvering on foot along the cliffs in an attempt to keep pace. Just after midnight on September 12, Saunders began the naval bombardment of the beaches at Beauport. Sailors and marines filled the small boats of the fleet and made a feint landing. This demonstration focused Montcalm's attention away from the British fleet above Quebec. By 0200 hours, the tide began to ebb and the British landing force began to rapidly drift down river. At 0400 hours, Wolfe leaped ashore with a force of 24 volunteers, rapidly negotiated the path up the cliff and completely surprised the French defenders.¹⁰¹ The small French force withdrew allowing Wolfe to gain a foothold on the Plains of Abraham.

The British landed a force of over 1600 soldiers within a short time. The French battery at Samos began to fire at the final British landing party, but was soon silenced by British Grenadiers and light infantry. Shortly after sunrise, Wolfe's entire force had landed, negotiated the cliff and consolidated on the Plains of Abraham. Montcalm heard the cannon fire from the Samos battery and rode to Vaudreuil's headquarters where he was informed that the British were on the heights. Montcalm realized the seriousness of the situation and began to rally his force, leaving only two battalions to guard Beauport.¹⁰² Vaudreuil immediately countermanded these orders and directed that the left wing should remain in place to defend against a landing on the Beauport beaches. Montcalm argued with Vaudreuil, and finally received permission to displace one regiment from the left wing.¹⁰³ Montcalm also requested that the Marquis de Ramazay release all 25 cannon from the city battery. De Ramezay, although junior to Montcalm, was answerable only to Vaudreuil. De Ramezay only released three cannon to Montcalm, stating that he needed the rest for the defense of Quebec City.¹⁰⁴ De Ramezay failed to comprehend that if Montcalm was defeated on the Plains of Abraham, Quebec City would certainly fall.¹⁰⁵

Montcalm arrived on the Plains of Abraham by 0900 hours and saw that the situation was extremely serious. The British forces had scaled the cliffs and were well established on the

plain west of Quebec, but had not had time to build entrenchments. The British troops on the Plains of Abraham were well disciplined, but their line of supply up the cliffs was dubious. Montcalm's forces vastly outnumbered the 4800 British troops, but were divided between several locations. There were 3000 French troops at Cap Rouge and 1500 still stationed at Beauport beaches. Also, there were 1500 soldiers under De Ramezay at the Quebec garrison. Even at that, the five French regiments at Montcalm's disposal were numerically superior to the British. Unfortunately, a considerable portion of these regiments consisted of Canadian militia and could not be relied on in open field combat.

Montcalm contemplated between two courses of action.¹⁰⁶ The first option was to attack immediately and attempt to defeat the British before they could firmly establish themselves on the heights. The second option was to mass his forces and attack with vastly superior numbers. Montcalm called for a Council of War with his subordinate commanders, which resulted in their unanimous opinion to take immediate action and attack.

Montcalm maneuvered his regiments out onto the Plains of Abraham with minimal artillery support and faced the British who were only 500 yards away. **(See Figure 6)** Montcalm's force advanced towards the British formations and at 300 yards the Canadian militia were the first to break from the advancing line began to fire, dropping to the ground to reload.¹⁰⁷ Large gaps developed in the French formations, due to the disarray of the militia. The French regiments made an effort to fill the gaps by extending their ranks to the flanks. As the two armies closed to within 150 yards, the pace of the French advance quickened. The French commanders directed their forces to open fire and British soldiers dropped, but were quickly replaced. The British officers enforced discipline and warned their troops to hold fire. The French regiments continued to advance, firing irregularly, until they closed to within 50 yards of the British formations. One British soldier stated that "you could count the buttons on their coats," and yet not a shot had been fired.¹⁰⁸ As the French closed within 40 yards, Wolfe personally gave the order to fire, which was relayed down the British lines. A French officer subsequently described the British instantaneous volley as sounding like shots from six cannon.¹⁰⁹ Within short order, the British fired a second volley and the French ranks fell back in disorder. Montcalm tried in vain to reconstitute the French formations, but before he could succeed, the British launched a charge. The French formations broke and ran for safety inside the walls of the city of Quebec.

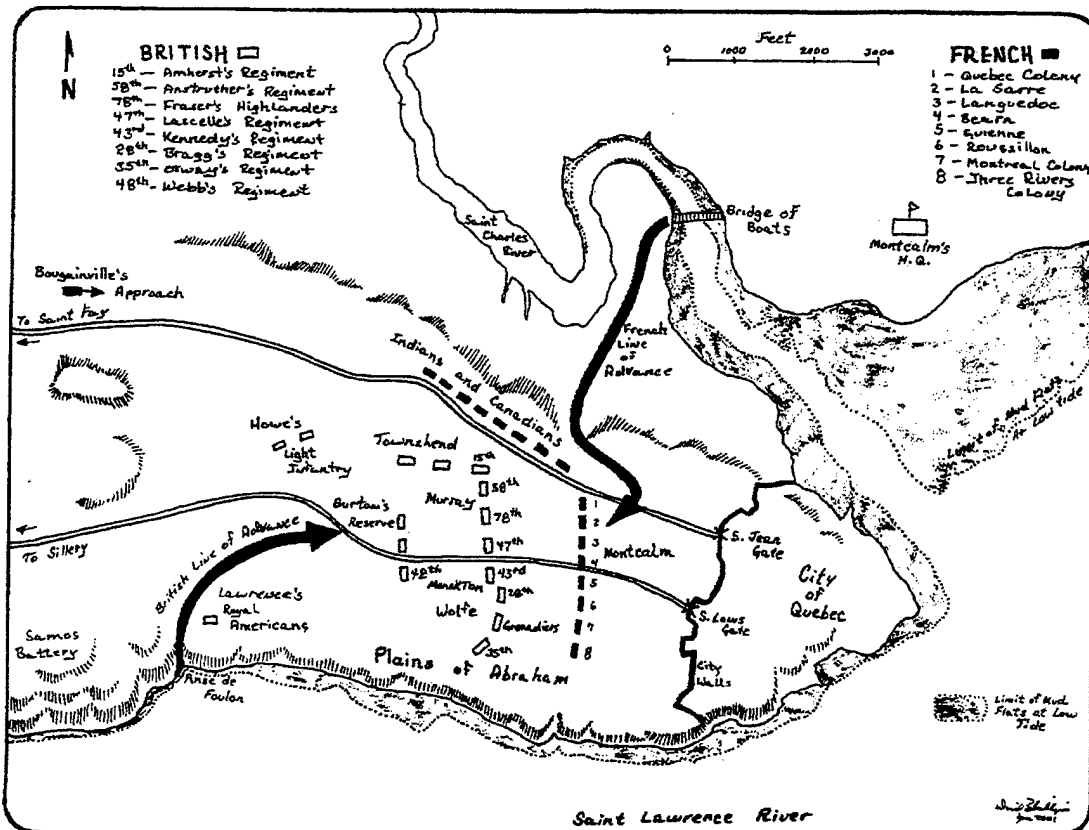


Figure 6: The Plains of Abraham, September 12, 1759, 1000 Hours

The Canadian militia provided devastating covering fire from the flanks, but the British charge did not break. Even though the Canadian militia inflicted considerable casualties on charging British forces, the battle was decided. One French officer later wrote, "Never was a rout more complete than that of our army."¹¹⁰

Neither Major General James Wolfe, nor the Marquis de Montcalm survived to see the surrender of Quebec. Wolfe received musket shots in the wrist and through the lung. As Wolfe lay dying on the Plains of Abraham, he spoke of cutting off the enemy's retreat and then stated, "Now God be praised, I will die in peace," and then expired.¹¹¹ Montcalm was also mortally injured on the Plain of Abraham with wounds in both his thigh and stomach. The French commander did not want his soldiers to see how serious his wounds were and asked two soldiers to hold him up on his horse until he was out of sight behind the walls of Quebec.¹¹²

Vaudreuil lost complete control of the situation and issued contradicting orders. He began to blame Montcalm for the defeat and stated, "Montcalm...unfortunately made his attack before I

joined him."¹¹³ After being persuaded to convene a Council of War, Vaudreuil sent a note to Montcalm's deathbed requesting advice. Montcalm sent a note in reply stating that Vaudreuil had only three options; "to mass the force and immediately counterattack, to retreat to Jacques-Cartier and consolidate for a future offensive or to surrender."¹¹⁴ At 2100 hours on 12 September, Vaudreuil gave the order to retreat, thus abandoning the De Ramezay's garrison and the citizens of Quebec.

The Marquis de Ramezay, gaining no response from Vaudreuil headquarters, went to see Montcalm. He requested orders from Montcalm for the appropriate measures to defend Quebec City. Montcalm replied, "I'll neither give orders, nor interfere any farther; I have much business that must be attended to of greater importance than your ruined garrison and this wretched country, my time is very short, therefore I pray that you leave me. I wish you all comfort and to be happily extricated from your present perplexities."¹¹⁵ In the early morning hours of September 13, the Marquis de Montcalm expired.

The French garrison offered a proposal for capitulation and surrendered the city of Quebec on the morning of September 18, 1759.

RAMIFICATIONS

The fall of Quebec in 1759 initiated worldwide ramifications and ultimately led to the conclusion of the Seven Years War. The French continued to put up a defense in Canada, but were quickly suppressed by the advancing British forces. By 1761, the British were in control of the entire continent of North America and also the French Caribbean Islands. King George III of Britain and King Louis XV of France were tiring of the war and anxious to come to terms. In contrast to the two monarchs, Pitt wanted to ensure a lasting peace by inflicting a ruinous defeat on France.¹¹⁶ The French realized that any negotiations with Pitt would be in vain, therefore they began secret negotiations with Spain. The result of the French and Spanish negotiations was a treaty known as the Family Compact.¹¹⁷ This treaty, signed in 1761, called for France and Spain to act unilaterally if either country were threatened. Italy and Portugal were invited to join the compact primarily as a counter the rising British Empire. As part of the Family Compact, a special agreement bound Spain to declare war on England, unless a negotiated peace was reached with France by May of 1762.¹¹⁸

Pitt was informed of the Family Compact and argued before the Cabinet Counsel in October 1761. He insisted that an ultimatum be issued demanding Spain's full explanation and rational for signing the compact.¹¹⁹ Further, if the explanation was not satisfactory, then England should immediately attack Spain. The Cabinet Counsel opposed Pitt's plan of action against Spain. Also, Pitt lost the support of his colleagues who controlled the votes that kept him in office. Lacking continued support, Pitt was forced to resign as Prime Minister.

The resignation of Pitt left Frederick II of Prussia without an ally. Britain, not wanting to abandon an ally, advised Frederick to negotiate peace with Austria. In securing peace, Prussia gained virtually nothing from the conflict other than the return of Silesia. In addition, Frederick was also able to negotiate peace with Russia and Sweden, because his bitter enemy, Czarina Elizebeth of Russia died in 1762.

In seeking terms with France, Britain debated the option of keeping or returning Canada. At issue was whether a continued French presence in North America was required to keep the American colonies in check. It was argued that without the French, the American colonies would expand westward over the continent, become self-sufficient and seek independence. Benjamin Franklin, the Governor of the Pennsylvania Colony, raised the most noteworthy

counter argument. Franklin stated, "If they cannot agree to unite against the French and Indians, can it reasonably be supposed that there is any danger of their uniting against their own nation...I will venture to say that union amongst them for such a purpose is not merely improbable, it is impossible."¹²⁰

Thus, the preliminaries for peace were signed at Fontainebleau in November 1763.¹²¹ In North America, Britain would retain Canada and the West Indies, with the exception of restoring Martinique, Guadeloupe and Saint Lucia to French control. Also, France would be able to maintain fishing stations on Miquelon and Saint Pierre, two small islands in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence, as long as no troops were garrisoned. In Africa, The French ceded Senegal, but were restored control over the Island of Goree.¹²² The French lost all colonies in India, although they could maintain factories held prior to 1749 and limited trading stations.¹²³ The French also renounced their rights to build forts or garrison troops in Bengal.¹²⁴ Spain recovered the Philippines and Cuba, yet ceded Florida to the British. Also, Spain received the City of New Orleans and all French holdings west of the Mississippi River.¹²⁵

Britain's King George called the terms of the treaty a "noble peace," while Lord Granville, speaking from his deathbed, described it as, "the most glorious war and the most honorable peace this nation ever saw."¹²⁶ At the ratification hearings in the House of Commons, Pitt addressed the assembly and charged that the terms, "obscured all the glories of war, surrendered the dearest interests of the nation and sacrificed the public faith by an abandonment of our allies."¹²⁷ Ultimately, on February 10, 1763 the House of Commons voted 884 to 65 to approve the terms of the treaty.

In the Seven Years War, the ramifications of Wolfe's victory on the Heights of Abraham affected the geopolitical structure of the modern world for centuries to come.¹²⁸ Wolfe's victory led to the consolidation and creation of a British Empire upon which the sun would not set for two centuries.¹²⁹ Also, the Battle of Quebec was the beginning of the history of the Independent United States.¹³⁰ After the war, Britain presented the American colonies a bill for the cost of sending over 40,000 soldiers to North America.¹³¹ The bill was collected in the form of organized taxes and customs duty. The American colonists fought these measures and unified around the idea of, "No taxation without representation."¹³² As the colonies expanded westward, so did their defiance of Britain. The end result was open rebellion and the birth of a nation.

CURRENT IMPLICATIONS

Although the Battle of Quebec was concluded over 240 years ago, there are still current implications for the United States. France was the dominant land power of the eighteenth century, much like the United States is today. There was no army that could expect to defeat the French in direct symmetrical warfare. Therefore, Britain as an antagonistic power used asymmetrical warfare and attacked French vital interests in North America. The "indirect approach" strategy avoided land force confrontation on the European continent, while North America became the British main effort.

The United States of 2000 is similar to France of 1759, in that both have no peer rival, which can directly challenge it in force on force high intensity land combat. Unfortunately, the United States has insufficient capability for rapid strategic mobility, similar to France's inability to reinforce Canada prior to the Battle of Quebec. Britain understood that France possessed a limited ability to project its power globally, therefore shaped the international environment to maximize French commitments and resources away from the British main effort. France realized too late that their economy of force operation in North America was actually the focus of the British main effort.

The United States, as the current lone global superpower, could easily fall into the same trap as France did in 1759. An antagonistic power could utilize a strategy that forces the United States to commit resources in support of an alliance, coalition or unilateral effort. Once the United States is committed, the antagonist power can execute operations in support of its military, political, religious or economic goals.

Currently, the United States military lacks the available forces and strategic mobility to prosecute two simultaneous major theater wars. Thus, the United States would be forced to develop a strategy to fight one theater as a main effort and the other theater as an economy of force or holding operation. Also, the main effort may not necessarily be determined by the vital interests of the United States, but by international alliances or even the United Nations. A potential antagonist could shape the environment and neutralize the United States' ability to react in opposition to its goal.

Just as Britain shaped the environment and forced France to commit resources and defend French national interests worldwide, the United States faces the same threat. The United States must develop the strategy that commits resources only in support of vital national interests. The United States must remove itself from antiquated alliances, outdated treaties and other interests, which do not support the national strategy.

The United States national strategy must include the understanding that every major theater war, every small scale contingency and every asymmetrical attack could be some antagonistic power's main effort. Neither France of 1759 nor the United States of 2000 possesses the resources to counter every political, military and economic threat. The United States must defend its vital interests by maintaining independence from external influences in determining when, where and how to commit national resources.

Word Count: 11,744

ENDNOTES

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¹² Ibid., 76.

¹³ Knox, 8.

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³⁶ Ibid.

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³⁸ Knox, 8.

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⁴⁶ Williams, 66-7.

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