



The impact of British victory in the Seven Years' War went far beyond such particular defeats. When the Peace of Paris and related agreements transferred Florida, New France, and Louisiana east of the Mississippi and north of New Orleans to Great Britain in 1763, the structural framework upon which the modern Indian politics had depended for two generations imploded with a few strokes of European pens. The French Father was entirely gone from the continent, retaining only two tiny islands off the coast of Newfoundland. New Orleans and trans-Mississippi Louisiana passed into Spanish hands, but elsewhere the British in theory reigned supreme. Thus the ring of competing imperial powers that had provided an odd security to the Indian country it surrounded suddenly collapsed, replaced by a novel advancing frontier line—Reds defending the west, Whites pushing relentlessly across it from the east—that later generations of Americans would incorrectly define as the historic norm. A generation earlier, when Virginia governor Alexander Spotswood had complained of a colonial population eager to attack “Indians who . . . annoyed the frontiers,” those frontiers had been plural, and Native and European peoples, however separate their day-to-day lives may have been, had shared a complicated landscape in which royal governors had “to steer between Scylla and Charybdis, either an Indian or a civil war.”<sup>77</sup> Suddenly, in 1763, a far simpler, racially defined frontier line popped into view.

In what seemed a newly clarified situation complicated only by the feeble Spanish presence at New Orleans, many British government and military officials saw no need to maintain the former system of intercultural diplomacy. Freed at last from the worry that Indians might take their business and their arms elsewhere, commander-in-chief Sir Jeffrey Amherst sought to confine the Great Lakes and Ohio Country fur trades to army posts, to ban the sale of weapons, ammunition, and rum to Indians, and to halt the expensive custom of diplomatic giftgiving everywhere.<sup>78</sup> “It is

not my intention . . . ever to attempt to gain the friendship of Indians by presents," he crowed.<sup>79</sup> A more detached commentator in Great Britain lamented that "our superiority in this war rendered our regard to this people still less, which had always been too little." As a result, "decorums, which are as necessary at least in dealing with barbarous as with civilized nations, were neglected."<sup>80</sup> The success of those "decorums"—of the treaty rituals through which a Mohawk orator nearly ninety years earlier had articulated his accommodationist vision of Native-European coexistence—depended on the balances of power at the heart of the modern Indian politics. In 1763 the shared Euro-Indian transatlantic imperial world in which that politics could be practiced and in which Natives and colonists could live parallel lives disappeared forever. In coming years, Euro-Americans would deliberately erase that past from their memories as they constructed a new future in which Indian nations—and the empires that made room for them—had no place.