

***Borrowed Guerrilla Tactics: The Seven Years War and The American War of Independence as a Case Study for the History of Applied Guerrilla Tactics***

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**Introduction**

The depth of strategic planning and applied tactics in The American War of Independence is well known. Less well-known is the reason for the applied guerrilla tactics and their origins. Guerrilla tactics often evolve from the experiences of previous wars; thus, the guerrilla tactics witnessed in the American War of Independence can be credited to three key elements, all stemming from the Seven Years' War. First, the importance of allyship and support; second, the tactics of Indigenous peoples; and finally, George Washington's encounter with Fabian tactics. While the American War of Independence involves a vast amount of strategy and fundamental elements such as naval power, the perimeters of this research will remain solely on guerrilla tactics, as taken from the Seven Years' War and applied in the War of Independence. A strict evaluation of guerrilla tactics will allow for a greater understanding of the importance of the lessons taken from the Seven Years' War for the victory of the American rebel forces and further, will expand on the idea of borrowed guerrilla tactics. A brief account of the Seven Years' War will be necessary to fully comprehend the more complex elements of applied guerrilla tactics during the War of Independence.

The Seven Years' War began in 1756 after England declared war on France. Motivated by land claims in America, France went to war against Britain, aided by their Indigenous allies. Indigenous allyship was an essential element not only during the Seven Years' War but also as an explanation for guerrilla tactics during the American War of Independence.<sup>1</sup> Among several other critical American

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<sup>1</sup> Patrice L. Higonnet, "The Origins of the Seven Years' War." *The Journal of Modern History* 40: 1968, 58.

figures, George Washington played a crucial role in fighting against the French and their Indigenous allies. Developing Fort Necessity, George Washington quickly took on new tasks that would later contribute to his success in the War of Independence. He learned from Indigenous close contact fighting and hit-and-run tactics the aspects of successful warfare that would become essential to American success against the British during the American War of Independence. Further, fighting alongside the British gave way to understanding British tactics and counterinsurgency as it was applied to the French and their allies.

Ultimately, the British prevailed against the French during the Seven Years' War primarily by providing outside support to those fighting against the French in combination with winning over the hearts and minds of the American Troops. In the end, the French faced large and unstoppable forces of both Prussia and Britain and its American colonies.<sup>2</sup> The ability to fund and encourage a rise of morale, driven primarily by the boom in overseas trade which not only gained the favour of the British colonies but cushioned Britain's pockets was the major drive in British success against the French. The favour of their people and the American colonies was a factor later forgotten or otherwise impossible to implement due to Britain's falling share in the East India Trading company and in the case of the American War of Independence the faltering trade agreements and loss of American loyalty.<sup>3</sup> Among the ability to raise spirits and numbers against the French, it is essential to acknowledge that the British also led in naval power.<sup>4</sup> It was these very elements of funding and power that the American forces would lack in the American War of Independence thus, they had to turn to other strategies that could benefit them.

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<sup>2</sup> Higonet, "The Origins of the Seven Years' War," 89.

<sup>3</sup> Higonet, "The Origins of the Seven Years' War," 74.

<sup>4</sup> Christian Buchet, *The British Navy, Economy and Society in the Seven Years War*. Translated by Anita Higgin and Michael Duffy. Boydell Press. 2013, 262.

The Seven Years' War ended in 1763 with the creation of the Treaty of Paris, which removed any French threat to the British North American Colonies as the French were forced to give them all up.<sup>5</sup> However, peace in the North American Colonies did not last long, considering the start of the American War of Independence in 1775. Interestingly, George Washington, who fought on the British side of the Seven Years' War, was appointed to lead the independence movement. Under several frustrations towards the British, including taxation without representation and the Townshend Acts, the desire for freedom from the British quickly rose. The Seven Years' War acted as the gateway for the American War of Independence and as a manual for stratagem regarding guerrilla tactics.

### **Alliances and Support Systems Essential to Guerrilla Warfare**

The Seven Years' War and the American War of Independence are significantly interconnected, primarily because of the commonality of the forces involved, namely France, Britain and the American colonies. The importance of allyship begins to reveal itself, first in the Seven Years' War and again in the War of Independence, in which you see the tides turn as France and the American colonies become allies against the British. Not only are the allyships of these larger forces crucial in developing guerrilla warfare, as first observed in the Seven Years' War, but winning over the hearts and minds of those at home and the Indigenous tribes of America played a crucial part in both wars. As seen in a long history of guerrilla warfare, allyship is critical to the success of a force reliant on material and funding to continue a war; this is especially prudent when it is taken into consideration that both the American War of Independence and the Seven Years' War were wars of attrition. As two of the primary forces in both wars, France and their Allied Indigenous tribes are perhaps one of the most significant examples of the importance of allyship, mainly when observed through the lens of the Seven Years' War.

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<sup>5</sup> Jeremy Black, "Recasting the New World: Britain and the Treaties of 1713 and 1763." *Historically Speaking* 14 (2013), 29.

French allyship with Indigenous forces began long before the Seven Years' War in their first colonial contact. A significant element of this allyship was the consideration for guns and steel and the conversion of Indigenous peoples to Catholicism. Especially regarding the French-Canadian Iroquois allies during the Seven Years War, this tie to Catholicism is one key factor that motivated the allyship between the Indigenous along with trade and land. This situation gave France the upper hand, especially in terms of guerrilla warfare as learned by the Indigenous people.<sup>6</sup> At several points during the Seven Years' War, the alliance almost broke apart between the Iroquois and the French. Still, this element of Catholicism kept them together for a considerable amount of time. The shared practice of baptism tied them together as “one blood,”<sup>7</sup> indicating that they should fight and die together as such. The strength of the Indigenous allyship was crucial to the French during the Seven Years' War; this becomes even more apparent when observing the sheer advantage British troops had in men and artillery.

The French allyship of the Indigenous peoples was most beneficial in terms of manpower and strategy. The British had massive forces of their own men and the allied American colonies. The British firepower also dominated the French in terms of artillery and naval power.<sup>8</sup> The French, therefore, relied heavily on their Indigenous allies, so much so that they enacted “a wide-scale system of diplomacy and gifts [...] to maintain positive relations”<sup>9</sup> with them. This imbalance of numbers of accounts for active fighting forces and the colonial conquests of the Americas. The British colonies consisted of 1.5 million people, while the French-Canadian colony only had an estimated sixty thousand.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the Indigenous allies, both in terms of the balance they brought to the disadvantage of numbers and the unique way of

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<sup>6</sup> D. P. MacLeod, “Catholicism, alliances, and amerindian evangelists during the Seven Years' War.” *The Canadian Catholic Historical Association* no. 62 (1996), 1.

<sup>7</sup> MacLeod, “Catholicism, alliances, and amerindian evangelists during the Seven Years' War,” 2.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Army Command and Staff College, U. S. A., and Adam Bancroft. *Savages in a Civilized War: The Native Americans as French Allies in the Seven Years War, 1754-1763*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform. 2014, 2.

<sup>9</sup> Bancroft. *Savages in a Civilized War: The Native Americans as French Allies in the Seven Years War, 1754-1763*, 2.

<sup>10</sup> Matthew C. Ward, “Understanding Native American Alliances.” In *The Seven Years' War*, 47-71. Brill. 2012, 48.

warfare essential to those fighting at a disadvantage, were crucial. The relationship between the French and Indigenous posed a significant threat to Britain, something that Washington would observe at Fort Necessity and no doubt applied during the War of Independence. The French would not have succeeded against Britain if it were it not for their Indigenous allies. In fact, it is the loss of the Indigenous allyship that was detrimental to them in the Seven Years' War.

The delicate relationship between France and its Indigenous allies could very well change the tides of war if it were to fall apart, which is precisely what would occur in Ohio. In 1758, French troops faced significant losses against Britain in Ohio, so they called for the aid of their Indigenous allies. When a Wampum belt and a message from the French leader were delivered to Indigenous tribe leaders, the Mingos rejected the invitation to fight with them as they believed their loss of life was too great.<sup>11</sup> This turning point in the Indigenous allyship that led to the French loss in Ohio against the British demonstrated just how necessary winning over the hearts and minds of allies is in a guerrilla war. The delicate relationship with Indigenous allies, the American colonies, and the French would be recognized and carried forward into the American War of Independence.

One of the most essential alliances to the American colonies during the War of Independence was with the French, an interesting dynamic considering the fight against them during the Seven Years' War. This alliance, however, offered not only manpower but a greater understanding of irregular forms of warfare as first illustrated by the French and their Indigenous allies during the Seven Years' War.<sup>12</sup> These ways of war, although essential to American success in the War of Independence, sparked conflict between allies as the Americans remained wary of the brutality displayed by the Indigenous and French forces, as illustrated during the Seven Years' War. It would soon become apparent to Washington and

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<sup>11</sup> Paul Kelton, "The British and Indian War: Cherokee Power and the Fate of Empire in North America." *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 69 (2012), 763.

<sup>12</sup> Anthony J. Joes, *America and Guerrilla Warfare*. University Press of Kentucky. 2004, 22.

other American rebel leaders however that this brutality and irregularity were necessary to win a war against Britain.

The benefits of France's intervention in the War of Independence went beyond those of irregular war tactics, as many of these had already been observed and understood by American rebels during the Seven Years' War. Still, the allies also became a distraction from the American colonies and brought Britain into a naval war with France. This change in landscape lifted some of the fire and manpower off of the American colonies but, more importantly, changed the concerns of the British away from the American Colonies and towards India and, more importantly, their own shores.

The lack of British popular support may have been the deciding factor in the British loss of the American colonies, demonstrating just how vital the element of allies, or hearts and minds, was, a weapon wielded by Washington and others who had observed this importance during the Seven Years' War. One of the most significant contributors to widespread support for George Washington in particular was, surprisingly, the British press, which painted him as an honourable man. This may have been because of the notion that the American colonies were no longer the most significant colony to the English empire. Either way, the way in which Washington was portrayed pushed peace times in America.

There was no longer an interest in fighting against a force led by a man who had previously “fought for king and country”<sup>13</sup> during the Seven Years' War. This sentiment was so strong that it appeared in many English newspapers, including the *Critical Review*, and a poem dedicated to Washington called *A Poetical Epistle To His Excellency Georgy Washington*, written in America but

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<sup>13</sup> Troy O. Bickham, “Sympathizing with Sedition? George Washington, the British Press, and British Attitudes during the American War of Independence.” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 59 (2002), 101.

spread throughout Britain, which portrayed Washington as a wise and virtuous leader.<sup>14</sup> Washington's image and the lack of support from their own people led to the ultimate British failure when it is taken into consideration that had the desire been there, a war of attrition could have been won by Britain, thus illustrating just how critical the element of support from those funding the war and providing manpower is when fighting a guerrilla war, beyond additional allied countries.

Without the allyship of France and the support of the British people, Washington would have inevitably faced defeat. The same can be said for the French when it came to their relationship with Indigenous allies during the Seven Years' War. Despite that relationship failing, its importance was recognized and carried on in the War of Independence. Like Catholicism for the French and Iroquois during the Seven Years' War, American rebels and Indigenous allies were connected by their desire for the autonomy of their land.<sup>15</sup> Although this relationship was complex due to neither Britain nor the rebels consistently meeting the needs of Indigenous tribes, they contributed to both sides where they saw it most beneficial to themselves.<sup>16</sup> The complications of allyship from Indigenous people to the American rebels did not negate the influence they would have on manpower but especially tactical knowledge. The unique tactics of war provided by Indigenous people were essential to the French during the Seven Years' War. That influence would carry over to the American War of Independence.

Colonial contact with Indigenous peoples has been a significant reflection on warfare and the difference in organized, regular forms of military power against irregular warfare. Although initially unsuccessful against the European colonists, Indigenous ways of war prove the usefulness of guerrilla

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<sup>14</sup> Charles H. Wharton, "A poetical epistle to His Excellency George Washington, Esq., commander in chief of the armies of the United States of America, from an inhabitant of the state of Maryland. To which is annexed, a short sketch of General Washington's life and character ..." 1779, 12.

<sup>15</sup> Karim M. Tiro, "Ambivalent Allies: Strategy and the Native Americans." In *Strategy in the American War of Independence: A Global Approach*, edited by Donald Stoker, Kenneth J. Hagan, and Michael T. McMaster, 120-140. Routledge. 2011, 120.

<sup>16</sup> Tiro, "Ambivalent Allies: Strategy and the Native Americans," 121.

tactics against those European countries unsuspecting of such ways of war. Despite the disadvantage of European disease, starvation and the advantage of firepower, in many instances, the guerrilla tactics of the Indigenous people in the Americas gave them a temporary upper hand in close combat, the knowledge of the terrain and the element of surprise.<sup>17</sup> The elements of ongoing aggression and warfare among Indigenous tribes in the American colonies are not unique to European conquest but rooted in their culture as a way to outwardly diffuse conflict. Warfare was not a unique idea for Indigenous people. It was often welcomed; thus, the aggression and brutality described in the Seven Years' War and the War of Independence should not come as a surprise but rather as a lesson in successful approaches to warfare.<sup>18</sup> Aggression is only one element of Indigenous tactics adopted by the American rebels during the War of Independence, many of which would have been seen during the Seven Years' War.

### **The Role of Indigenous Tactical Application**

Although accounts of Indigenous warfare are often accounts of brutality and savagery, these accounts may reflect the historical mindset and narrative of colonists. To understand the flourishing nature of Indigenous warfare, it is essential to look past the so-called savagery of their warfare and analyze it through the lens of guerrilla fighting. The savagery that colonists saw was only a reflection of the irregularity of Indigenous warfare in contrast to the honorific European approach. Specifically odd to colonists was the hit-and-run tactics along with looting, both of which are necessary for combating a more significant force but, compared to regular warfare, are looked down upon.

The French were allied with the Indigenous people of their colonies during the Seven Years' War. The unique tactics displayed by the Indigenous people during the Seven Years' War challenged the

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<sup>17</sup> Philip J. Deloria, and Salisbury, Neal, eds. *A Companion to American Indian History*. Newark: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated. 2002, 31.

<sup>18</sup> Deloria, *A Companion to American Indian History*, 162.

British forces fighting against them; however, they became valuable tools when applied later by the Americans during the War of Independence. One such tool, as George Washington learned during the Seven Years' War, was the importance of the local support of the Indigenous people, especially given their allyship to the French.<sup>19</sup> George Washington's appeal to the Indigenous people to change allyship would be seen again in the War of Independence, and Indigenous tribes, alongside Washington himself, would fight against British forces. It can be assumed that the importance of Indigenous allyship became apparent to Washington through close combat and defeat by them during the Seven Years' War.

The best-known and some of the most essential elements of guerrilla warfare are knowledge of the terrain, hit-and-run techniques and small, close-quarter attacks. These irregular forms of warfare were displayed by the Indigenous people during the Seven Years' War, often presenting a lack of formality or following of the rules of battle, taking the British forces by surprise. British casualties were high in instances where Indigenous tribes had the upper hand in terrain and the ability to lay siege on small forts, often looting for supplies as they went.<sup>20</sup> On many occasions, due to the terrain, British forces were forced to engage in personal attacks with Indigenous people who, in some cases, were more suited to hand-to-hand combat.<sup>21</sup> The irregularity of this kind of fighting and lack of training often led to the defeat of the British. The inability to adjust to the irregularities of warfare, as presented by the Indigenous people during the Seven Years' War and adopted by the Rebel forces during the American War of Independence, would be one of the reasons Britain lost to the colonies.

The irregularity observed during the Seven Years' War surprised British forces. The British were accustomed to regular warfare and found honour in following the rules of war. In their encounters with Indigenous allies to the French, the major disadvantage was the element of surprise, not just in the case

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<sup>19</sup> Joseph J. Ellis, *His Excellency: George Washington*. Vintage, 2004, 14.

<sup>20</sup> Bernd Horn, *Battle Cries in the Wilderness: The Struggle For North America in the Seven Years' War*. Dundurn, 2011, 85.

<sup>21</sup> Horn, *Battle Cries in the Wilderness*, 106.

of close combat and knowledge of terrain but in the overall irregularity of Indigenous warfare. The aspect of irregularity also applied to the British Indigenous allies, the Cherokee. However, this allyship did not come without its disagreements. One such example of the tensions between the British and the Cherokee was at Fort Loudoun during the Cherokee Wars, which occurred in the background of the Seven Years' War. Fort Loudoun was built at the request of the Cherokee people to secure their allyship.<sup>22</sup> Despite the efforts of the British, the Cherokee remained unpredictable and after a series of attacks against white settlers and huge Indigenous loss of life, Cherokee warriors began to lose interest in allyship with the British.<sup>23</sup> The Cherokee and British tensions continued to rise, and the scalping of several Britons occurred, proving the disloyalty and irregularity of Indigenous allies to the British.<sup>24</sup> The inability to maintain relations with Indigenous peoples and the impact their unpredictable nature had on both British and French forces proved the power of irregular tactics.

Not only would the British and American forces observe just how unpredictable guerrilla tactics could be, but the superior use of terrain, especially in hit-and-run scenarios, was a considerable advantage to Indigenous allies practicing guerrilla warfare during the Seven Years' War. The apprehension of land was especially important regarding fort building and utilizing the terrain to the benefit of those fighting. Many of these forts became battlegrounds; thus, the way in which terrain was managed and the understanding of the surrounding area as applied was crucial.<sup>25</sup> One such example was Fort William Henry. Surrounded by a dry moat and placed in an advantageous location, the massacre that occurred there was unusual; however, it is essential to consider the poor conditions of the fort when an attack was mounted and the verbosity of the attack, which included around "2000 Natives,"<sup>26</sup> who

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<sup>22</sup> P. M. Hamer, "FORT LOUDOUN IN THE CHEROKEE WAR 1758-1761." *The North Carolina Historical Review* 2 (1925), 442.

<sup>23</sup> Hamer, "FORT LOUDOUN IN THE CHEROKEE WAR 1758-1761," 443.

<sup>24</sup> Hamer, "FORT LOUDOUN IN THE CHEROKEE WAR 1758-1761," 445.

<sup>25</sup> Horn, *Battle Cries in the Wilderness*, 83.

<sup>26</sup> Horn, *Battle Cries in the Wilderness*, 85.

breached the fort walls from behind and “killed and scalped wounded British soldiers,”<sup>27</sup> while also looting them for supplies. There is no doubt that the Indigenous knowledge and ability to address the uneasy terrain played an essential role in their success compared to how a regular military approach might have failed given the Forts security. The case of Fort William Henry displays the importance of terrain knowledge during the Seven Years' War and the advantage of surprise, looting, and close contact combat, all practiced by the Indigenous forces. The concerns about terrain, among other benefits of guerrilla tactics, were mirrored during the American War of Independence.

Like the Seven Years' War, terrain played a vital role in the success of the Americans, primarily the location and co-operation of the colonies use of farmland and the navigation of terrain as weather conditions changed and adaptations were necessary. The advantage to the American rebel forces was, again, their allyship with Indigenous forces, which, as seen through the exploration of the Seven Years' War, was essential in terrain navigation and in enhancing the power of the existent force. It is important to remember that during the Seven Years' War and the American War of Independence, regular standing armies were most heavily used, and strategic marches were a primary form of warfare. Some were concerned that weather conditions often affected the strategy of such marches. One letter dated February 10th, 1776, noted the harsh weather conditions under which a march would be necessary in order to reinforce a standing army by the Saint Lawrence River.<sup>28</sup> Scenarios like these required the adaptability learned through the American experience with Indigenous forces during the Seven Years' War and their ability to navigate uneasy terrain.

During the American War of Independence, there is no doubt that the adoption of Indigenous ways of warfare was utilized. Washington, Hamilton, and other American leaders saw and applied

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<sup>27</sup> Horn, *Battle Cries in the Wilderness*, 85.

<sup>28</sup> “Extract of Minutes from a Meeting of the Continental Congress.” 1717. Letter. 2004, 1.

Indigenous irregular tactics where regular warfare could not win. The same disregard for the rules of war as displayed by Indigenous forces was shown by Hamilton at the disapproval of Jefferson.<sup>29</sup> Despite the brutality in the approach, the irregularity of such forms of warfare was often successful. The violence and efficiency of the tactics applied to the Frontier during the War of Independence were no doubt defined by those same techniques of brutality as displayed by Indigenous participation in the Seven Years' War. The irregularities of the American approach were often difficult for the British to adjust to. The use of frontal attacks by the Americans and the employment of regular untrained forces by the British, in the sense of irregular infantry, combined to become a significant failure on their part.<sup>30</sup> This unique tactic applied by the Americans, although the result of several factors, was undoubtedly adopted in some form from the Indigenous tactics of the Seven Years' War.

### **Strategy Beyond Indigenous Guerrilla Tactics, Including Fabian Strategy**

The allyship of Indigenous people during the Seven Years' War to the French posed a considerable threat to the British Forces. This same threat was applied again during the War of Independence by those who recognized the success of irregular warfare in a battle where one force ultimately had a disadvantage in manpower and artillery. For the rebels to organize against a force as large as Britain, the irregular techniques adapted from those used by Indigenous people in the Seven Years' War became an essential element of American success. George Washington among other leaders in the rebellion, recognized from their individual experiences that fighting against Indigenous forces was just as successful as irregular warfare could be when facing a superior opponent. Thus, George Washington learned to apply Indigenous tactics and took up a Fabian approach in his stratagem for

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<sup>29</sup> John Grenier, *The First Way of War: American War Making on the Frontier, 1607-1814*. Cambridge University Press, 2008, 17.

<sup>30</sup> Huw J. Davies, *The Wandering Army: The Campaigns that Transformed the British Way of War*. Yale University Press, 2022, 119-120.

Independence that would be crucial in defeating the British as it applied irregular elements of guerrilla warfare, as seen in the Seven Years' War.

George Washington's experience during the Seven Years' War was incredibly informative, suggesting that the tactics he saw applied by the French would have been adopted against the British during the War of Independence. George Washington not only encountered Indigenous strategy during this period but other forms of irregular warfare, which he would later apply in the Fabian style during the American War of Independence. The importance of the elements of guerrilla warfare becomes abundantly clear in George Washington's past experiences, particularly in his inability to understand the irregular elements that lead to British success during the Seven Years' War.

Perhaps the most outstanding example of Washington's failure during the Seven Years' War was at Fort Necessity. Washington first failed to clear the forest perimeter, thus leaving him vulnerable to his Indigenous and French enemies who hid in the brush, illustrating a lack of awareness in terms of the importance of terrain.<sup>31</sup> Washington and his troops came under fire for nine hours, showing again his lack of knowledge in terms of irregular warfare, given the little preparation against the firepower of the French enemy. Fort Necessity would become a remarkable loss for Washington; however, Washington proved his understanding of the importance of allyship as he pursued one with the Indigenous people. Later, Washington would adopt other necessary elements of irregular warfare during the War of Independence.

While it is apparent in the practices of both the Seven Years' War and the War of Independence that the natural tendency of any British general at this time, including Washington, was towards regular forms of warfare, as things progressed, it became clear that the stratagem of the British during the Seven

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<sup>31</sup> Ellis, *His Excellency: George Washington*, 13.

Years' War could not be applied against them in the War of Independence.<sup>32</sup> Instead, like France, as the war progressed, Washington was increasingly forced to take on Fabian's strategy, among other irregular strategies to strengthen his forces against one much larger.

Fabian's strategy calls for “incremental victories to increase and retain troop levels; exhaustion of the enemy [and] light, mobile forces”<sup>33</sup> among raiding and other elements less relevant to these case studies. The Fabian Strategy allowed for a combination of regular and irregular forms of warfare, a strategy Washington would have favoured due to the European pride in regular warfare he inherited during his time in the Seven Years' War. Fabian warfare was not a foreign concept to Europeans and was heavily applied by the French during the Seven Years' War. Despite the French loss, Fabian Strategy was primarily utilized by a weaker force unable to fight in complete regular form. As the elements of Fabian's tactics listed are explored further, it will become clear that Washington observed this form of irregular warfare during his time in the Seven Years' War. Although the French saw an overall loss during the Seven Years' War, the critical elements of the strategy would be successfully applied during the American War of Independence.

Fabian Strategy is one of attrition and indirect contact with the enemy. The French during the Seven Years' War and the Americans during the War of Independence were the weaker forces; therefore, they were those who would benefit most from the Fabian Strategy. In many ways, this strategy was favoured by Frederick the Great as he would wage small-scale battles<sup>34</sup> departing from the regular frontal attacks with which most European forces were familiar with at this point in military history. Although Frederick despised regular warfare, his issue, like Washington's, was that despite the need for

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<sup>32</sup> Andrew Carr and Benjamin Walsh, “The Fabian strategy: How to trade space for time.” *Comparative Strategy* 41 (2022), 80.

<sup>33</sup> Walsh, “The Fabian strategy: How to trade space for time,” 78.

<sup>34</sup> David R. Clonts “A DILEMMA OF WAR: DECISIVE FORCE VS. FABIAN STRATEGY.” *The Graduate School Of International Studies*. 1999, 13.

prolonged, small wins, a war of attrition would eventually not be in the favour of a smaller army in the case of the French.

Despite the element of funding, fire, and manpower, which seem to be the primary issues concerning guerrilla tactics, irregular forms of warfare, including Fabian Strategy, seemed in many ways to be the best way to win when faced with a superior force. For some during the Seven Years' War, it was becoming clear that "European armies have become too good at making war the old-fashioned way,"<sup>35</sup> Thus, it was impractical for an inferior force to assume success in this form, hence the taking up of irregular forms of warfare. Frederick's falling away from regular forms of warfare indicated the necessity of guerrilla strategies for an inferior force. Washington witnessed the failures of such a force and went further to implement irregular forms of warfare against the far superior British army.

The Seven Years' War consisted not only of large French armies but of forces from the Indigenous allies and the New France colony in Canada. This colony, although weak, was one of the first on the frontier fighting against British forces. Due to their size and lack of manpower, they also turned to elements of Fabian strategy, especially that of raiding and looting.<sup>36</sup> Of course, Indigenous allied forces also played a crucial role in this warfare. Interestingly, it seems as though Pierre de Rigaud de Vaudreuil de Cavagnial, the last Governor-General of New France, had little rejection to approaching the Seven Years' war in an irregular fashion. Cavagnial, familiar with the ways of war, did not hesitate to "encourage its Indian Allies to raid the frontiers of the British Colonies."<sup>37</sup> Although eventually defeated by the British due to sheer lack of manpower, even with the allied Indigenous forces, the Fabian raiding strategy contributed to a few early wins against the British.

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<sup>35</sup> Barry R. Posen, "Nationalism, the Mass Army, and Military Power." *International Security* 18 (1993), 90.

<sup>36</sup> Fred Anderson, *The War That Made America: A Short History of the French and Indian War*. Viking. 2005, 88.

<sup>37</sup> Anderson, *The War That Made America: A Short History of the French and Indian War*, 88.

One key example of successful raids is on the British forts, built against such tactics, yet often unsuccessful, or even worse a target for raiding. One such raid occurred on Fort Granville, which the French captured, killing the whole garrison and gaining supplies for future raids.<sup>38</sup> The irregularity of raids was in the ability to act undercover and utilize the element of surprise. Raids also offered the successful force both extra supply and prisoners of war, which were vital in a guerrilla war. While essential in any guerrilla war, these strategies were incredibly successful in a war in which the enemy could not adjust to its irregularity or refused to due to the European sense of honour around regular warfare. Raiding was just one element of Fabian's strategy that was successful during the Seven Years' War, although only for a limited time. The failure of French forces both in the New France colony and from France itself was its ability to fully embrace the irregularity of guerrilla warfare when they considered the brutality of the Indigenous ways of warfare and the dishonour in its irregular form. George Washington, although embracing Fabian's strategy, would also struggle to fully depart from the more honorific forms of warfare.

By 1778, it was clear to George Washington that the war could not be prolonged much longer due mainly to a lack of funding.<sup>39</sup> Where Britain had the resources to prolong such a war, the American rebel forces did not. This element itself is a significant indicator of why irregular forms of warfare were necessary and why Washington himself would have implemented them to some degree. Beyond his knowledge of the usefulness of Indigenous warfare, it is clear that Washington had observed several irregular tactics during his time in the Seven Years' War that he would apply to the War of Independence. Washington most notably applied tactics reminiscent of Fabian Strategy, in which small attacks were mounted over a long period of time to wear down the enemy. Despite his concerns for “whose finances

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<sup>38</sup>Anderson, *The War That Made America: A Short History of the French and Indian War*, 89.

<sup>39</sup> Christine Patrick, and Junius B. Stearns. “The Papers of George Washington.” *The Washington Papers*. 2007, 7.

(theirs or ours) is most likely to fail,”<sup>40</sup> a war of attrition, according to Fabian's strategy, was taken up as the war would continue until 1783. A war of attrition was familiar to those who had fought in the Seven Years' War because of French leader Fredrick; even more familiar would be the pros and cons of such a war.

Washington's implementation of Fabian Strategy during the War of Independence indicates his motivations for long-term American success. Fabian tactics ensured the application of irregular war tactics, which, through the Seven Years' War, Washington observed to be successful against the British who remained faithful to regular forms of warfare. Fabian's tactics, while a benefit in its irregularity, also ensured the balance of a formal and identifiable body, which would later help unite the colonies to make the United States the long-term win for Washington. Washington, like Fredrick, saw that direct confrontations with the British were deadly; thus, it was essential to draw on the use of a militia alongside the regular army for indirect attacks. These attacks prolonged the war, as is typical with a Fabian war, which calls for attrition; however, it wore down the British morale before it did the American citizens. Thus, it proved sustainable and successful.<sup>41</sup> Not only did this strategy for war prove successful, but it was essential when facing an enemy as large as the British. This strategy was familiar to Washington only because of his observance of Fredrick in the Seven Years' War. It was more successful in Washington's case because of the home advantage and ongoing support of American Citizens.

## **Conclusion**

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<sup>40</sup> Stearns. "The Papers of George Washington," 7.

<sup>41</sup> Samuel W. Bettwy, "Comparing Uses of the Strategic Defense (Fabian Strategy) by General Washington (1776-78) and Russian Generals (1904-05)." *Thomas Jefferson School of Law*, 2014, 1.

When observing guerrilla tactics, there are commonalities among the strategies that are essential to a guerrilla war. These tactics involve elements such as knowledge of the terrain, hit-and-run tactics, looting, and winning over the hearts and minds of those necessary for the overall strategy. While the cause and application of these elements may differ, it becomes clear that they remain the same across The Seven Years' War and the War of Independence. In fact, it can be observed that the significant factors that influenced the use of guerrilla tactics in the War of Independence can all be credited to the American and French experience during the Seven Years' War, mainly in terms of alliances and support, the tactics of Indigenous allies, and the application of Fabian strategy. However, it cannot be said that these elements of guerrilla warfare are unique to the Seven Years' War.

Both the Seven Years' War and the American War of Independence displayed the crucial need for alliances and support from those funding the war. A commonality among both wars was the desperate need for funding, manpower, and firepower. When a force is facing one much larger and stronger than itself, such as Britain in both wars, this need becomes even greater and irregular tactics evolve in an otherwise regular war. Such was the case for both the Seven Years' War and the War of Independence; however, it is not a case unique to just these two wars. Prior to both wars, ideas on the strength of alliances permeated war strategy, especially guerrilla strategy.

The idea of the importance of allyship is seen as far back as Sun Tzu's writings on guerrilla warfare in *The Art of War*. He first calls to generals to make powerful alliances and strengthen them with "valuables and silks,"<sup>42</sup> a practice applied by the French to their Indigenous allies during the Seven Years' War.<sup>43</sup> Sun Tzu also acknowledges how difficult it is to defeat an enemy with solid allies.<sup>44</sup> It

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<sup>42</sup> Mark McNeilly, *Sun Tzu and the Art of Modern Warfare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 287.

<sup>43</sup> McNeilly, *Sun Tzu and the Art of Modern Warfare*, 231.

<sup>44</sup> McNeilly, *Sun Tzu and the Art of Modern Warfare*, 283.

becomes clear just in the case study of Sun Tzu, one of the earliest writers on guerrilla warfare, how applicable the need for allies is in an irregular war. This same study can be applied to all three elements of this research, most notably Indigenous tribal warfare.

While it is clear how essential Indigenous warfare was to the success of first the French during the Seven Years' War, which was then noticed and carried forward into the American War of Independence by Washington, the tactics of tribal warfare are perhaps the first forms of guerrilla warfare. In fact, "conventional warfare is, by contrast, a relatively recent invention,"<sup>45</sup> Thus, it makes sense that guerrilla tactics were observed and adopted from the Iroquois by the French during the Seven Years' War, considering their considerable expertise. It can be understood that tribal warfare, in its irregular form, is a result of insufficient arms and funding, as was reflected in the Seven Years' War and the American War of Independence. The Iroquois have a rich history of guerrilla warfare predating colonial contact.

Mourning wars, as practiced by the Iroquois, are one example of tribal wars that far predate colonialism, existing as an original form of guerrilla warfare. It is important to note that although an example of brutality within guerrilla wars, mourning wars had ritual importance and offered a channel to release grief given that the Indigenous belief was that battle was the best way to do so.<sup>46</sup> However, aspects of mourning wars directly reflect those tactics seen in both the Seven Years' War and the War of Independence. First, although these wars were sometimes large-scale battles, they were most often led by small groups, gathered by those women who were mourning their lost sons or husbands.<sup>47</sup> Second, these wars involved raiding.<sup>48</sup> While large-scale wars like the Seven Years' War often entailed raiding for

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<sup>45</sup> Max Boot, *Invisible Armies: An Epic History of Guerrilla Warfare from Ancient Times to the Present*. Liveright. 2013, 9.

<sup>46</sup> Daniel K. Richter, "War and Culture: The Iroquois Experience." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 40 (1983), 531-32.

<sup>47</sup> Richter, "War and Culture: The Iroquois Experience," 52.

<sup>48</sup> Richter, "War and Culture: The Iroquois Experience." 532.

supplies, mourning wars captured men to replace their lost people, thus restoring the manpower lost in previous battles. Although “this sort of instinctual guerrilla warfare remained the commonest kind until recent centuries,”<sup>49</sup> irregular warfare, as established in the study of the Seven Years' War and the War of Independence, took forms beyond the familiar Indigenous tactics.

As established first by Fredrick, fighting for the French during the Seven Years' War and most notably later by Washington during the War of Independence, Fabian strategy was a prevailing form of warfare that balanced both regular and irregular tactics, allowing for a conventional standard army with the advantages of guerrilla warfare such as looting and a lack of frontal attacks. For the French and American Rebels, despite the difficulties of a war of attrition, this war strategy benefited both troops in their irregularity, especially against a force that was so prone to honorific forms of conventional warfare, incapable of adjusting to the irregularity of Fabian Strategy.

Fabian Strategy first appeared during the Second Punic War. The Second Punic War, fought between Carthage and Rome in 3rd c. BCE, had two notable leaders, Hannibal and Fabius. Fabius is noted for his irregular approach to the common elements of Roman warfare, such as frontal attacks in which “the armies occasionally stood facing each other for several days.”<sup>50</sup> The critical difference in Fabius's strategy during the Second Punic War, as with Washington's approach in the War of Independence, was his strategy during the more common form of “light infantry and cavalry skirmishes”<sup>51</sup> that took place before the more significant battle. During this time, Fabius would encourage the looting of the enemy through indirect attacks, drawing out the war in an attempt to wear

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<sup>49</sup> Boot, *Invisible Armies*. 12.

<sup>50</sup> Philip Sabin, “THE MECHANICS OF BATTLE IN THE SECOND PUNIC WAR.” *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies. Supplement*, no. 67, 1996. 64.

<sup>51</sup> Sabin, “THE MECHANICS OF BATTLE IN THE SECOND PUNIC WAR.” 64.

down the enemy. The Second Punic War, long before the events of The Seven Years' War and the War of Independence, is a perfect example of the longstanding techniques of guerrilla warfare.

The writings of Sun Tzu, the Mourning Wars of the Iroquois and Fabian strategy during the Second Punic War all serve as examples of the lack of originality when it comes to guerrilla tactics of the Seven Years' War and the American War of Independence. There is no question of the borrowed guerrilla techniques of the Seven Years' War as applied to the War of Independence, both because of the shared forces, allies, and known techniques and because of the ongoing trend of borrowed irregular techniques as observed in a long history of guerrilla warfare, applied by the leaders of war when necessary. The common traits of irregular war tactics could be followed throughout the history of guerrilla warfare. The unique element of this research is in the fact that the Seven Years' War and the American War of Independence share three precise components of guerrilla warfare because of the mirroring of allies and opponents as well as the shared regions of war; this makes it a clear example of the borrowing of guerrilla tactics from previous wars.

The Seven Years' War in allyship, Indigenous guerrilla tactics, and the application of Fabian Strategy can similarly be seen during the American War of Independence. The observation of these three critical elements of guerrilla warfare as shared between both wars indicate that the tactics and strategies of the American War of Independence were, in fact, observed and borrowed from the events of the Seven Years' War. Beyond the components of the Seven Years' War and the American War of Independence, the evidence presented indicate that there is a long history of borrowed guerrilla strategies spanning centuries. The American War of Independence following the events of the Seven Years' War is a clear and comprehensible example of the lack of distinctiveness in guerrilla war tactics.

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