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Slavery and the "American Way of War," 1607–1861

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INTRODUCTION: SLAVERY AND THE HISTORIANS OF AMERICA'S "WAY OF WAR"

For the two and a half centuries that followed the establishment of England's first North American colony at Jamestown, Virginia in 1607, the practice of slavery and warfare on that continent were inextricably intertwined. The enslavement of Native Americans taken captive in war was a recurrent objective of early military campaigns in the colonies, from New England to the Carolinas. Slave raiding not only provided labor, it served vital strategic functions. It allowed the militarily weak English colonies to cement alliances with powerful Native American confederacies by providing a ready market for their prisoners. Slave raiding was also a form of proxy-war, by which the authority of rival imperial powers was undermined by the enslavement of their native subjects. The relationship between slavery and warfare was, however, a dynamic and contingent one. Slave raiding declined as a characteristic of North American conflict by the early eighteenth century. As racialized plantation societies developed in the southern colonies, enslaved Africans and their descendants supplanted indentured Europeans and Native Americans in the rice and tobacco fields. Yet war and slavery remained intimately bound. The colonies' own plantation societies proved strategically vulnerable, as runaways and rebels forged alliances with external enemies. Plantation slavery itself took on the characteristics of an "internal war." The fundamental insecurities generated by an actually or potentially rebellious enslaved population forged a militarized southern society and shaped America's early military institutions to a degree that has largely gone unrecognized. America's "way of war" cannot be understood without reference to slavery.

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Neither historians of America's military experience nor historians of North American slavery have recognized the depth or significance of this connection. Thus, slavery has not figured in the long-running debate, initiated by Russell Weigley in 1973, concerning the existence of a paradigmatic "American way of war."[1] For Weigley, this was characterized by a dichotomy between an early, essentially Fabian, strategy of "attrition" (as waged by George Washington during the War of Independence), later supplanted by an inflexible, fire-power heavy strategy of "annihilation" (allegedly exemplified by Ulysses Grant's campaigns during the Civil War). This thesis proved both influential and enduring. Yet, as Antulio Echevarria II has observed, its appeal was as much political as it was academic, for it buttressed the case of policymakers urging fresh approaches to the application of conventional force in the nuclear, and post-Vietnam, era.[2] Military historians, however, eventually began to point to the limitations in the simple duality inherent in Weigley's analysis. In 2002, Brian McAllister Linn offered a particularly telling critique. Weigley, he noted, had paid insufficient attention both to those conventional campaigns where the United States had avowedly pursued limited objectives, such as the Spanish-American War (1898) or Korea (1950–1953), and to colonial campaigns of counterinsurgency and pacification. He concluded that "if an 'American way of war' indeed exists, it is far more complex than can be accommodated by Weigley's central thesis."[3]

Over the course of the last two decades, the debate over "the American way of war" has been powerfully shaped by current affairs. The wars of the early twenty-first century in Iraq and Afghanistan waged by the United States have been strategically complex and interminable struggles against non-state actors, in which "victory" has proved hard to define, yet alone achieve.[4] Yet some commentators (generally not historians) have argued that these conflicts have heralded a "new American way of war": "spurred by dramatic advances in information technology, [seeking] a quick victory with minimal casualties on both sides. Its hallmarks are speed, maneuver, flexibility, and surprise. It is heavily reliant upon precision firepower, special forces, and psychological operations."[5] For historians, wary of both technological determinism in the study

[1] Russell Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973).

[2] Antulio Echevarria II, *Reconsidering the American Way of War: US Military Practice from the Revolution to Afghanistan* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2014), 10.

[3] Brian M. Linn and Russell F. Weigley, "'The American Way of War' Revisited," *Journal of Military History* 66 (2002): 501–33.

[4] The literature is extensive, but for indicative examples, see Colin Grey, *Irregular Enemies and the Essence of Strategy: Can the American Way of War Adapt?* (Carlisle: United States Army War College, 2006); Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (London: Penguin, 2006).

[5] Max Boot, "The New American Way of War," *Foreign Affairs* 82 (2003): 41–58. For more sceptical assessments, see Colin Grey, *Strategy for Chaos: Revolutions in Military Affairs and the Evidence of History* (London: Frank Cass, 2002); Brice Harris, *America, Technology and Strategic Culture* (London: Routledge, 2009).

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of war and the pitfalls of attempting to identify a distinctive and paradigmatic pattern of "American" warfare, there has thus been a renewed incentive to re-examine the conflicts of the past in all their complexities, to search for any distinctive American style of warfare. Crucially, this has included consideration of not only their narrow technical, strategic, or operational aspects but also the wider political, social, and ethno-cultural contexts in which they took place, and which shaped their course and conduct.

Some of the most striking, and long overdue, recent studies are of the earliest "American way of war." Two authors in particular, John Grenier and Wayne Lee, have offered suggestive accounts that pointed to a colonial military culture that left a profound legacy for subsequent wars. Both rooted the American experience in the precedents set by English "unlimited" warfare against the "savage" and "barbarian" Irish in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These campaigns were characterized by the destruction of the material resources upon which hostile populations lived, the targeting of non-combatants, the expropriation of land, and a willingness to treat "savages" outside of the prevailing moral restraints common in early modern warfare. Soon engaged in incessant conflicts against Native American peoples, English colonists (among them veterans of the Irish wars) subsequently transplanted this "first American way of war" to the New World.[6] The conclusions of these studies are unsettling in the extreme; as Grenier starkly affirms, "violence directed systematically against non-combatants through irregular means, from the start, has been a central part of America's way of war."[7] Yet neither the particular circumstances of conflict with Native Americans nor the legacy of English wars of conquest in Ireland can alone explain the rapacious character of colonial warfare. Nor do they explain (or even acknowledge) the evolution of a highly militarized plantation society in the southern colonies, whose social and legal character was underpinned by sustained and organized violence. To do this, and thus to fully understand the evolution of an American way of war, we must consider the role of the institution of slavery.

This is not to suggest that historians, especially historians of slavery, have failed to note the impact of war on plantation societies and their enslaved workforce. Yet their attention has overwhelmingly been focused on three conflicts in this regard: the American War of Independence, the War of 1812, and the American Civil War. The British, in two conflicts, offered freedom to the enslaved as a deliberate strategy to undermine the foundations—economic, political, and social—upon which their enemy's war effort rested. During the Civil War, the Union ultimately pursued the same strategy, to far greater and more lasting effect, ending chattel slavery in the United States. In all three

[6] John Grenier, *The First Way of War: American War Making on the Frontier* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Wayne E. Lee, *Barbarians and Brothers: Anglo-American Warfare, 1500–1865* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[7] Grenier, *First Way of War*, 224.

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conflicts, the enslaved themselves took advantage of the disruption caused by war either to self-emancipate or simply defy the authority of master or overseer locally.[8] However, the narrow focus on these conflicts does not reveal the full extent to which war and slavery were intertwined, right from the establishment of the earliest English settlements on continental North America, through to the sectional conflict of the mid-nineteenth century. War was not an aberrant or temporary phenomenon in the history of American slavery. Enslavement of those captured in war and the defense of a peculiarly exploitative form of racialized slavery as an institution were defining characteristics of the rapacious and unrestrained "first American way of war."

Servile insurrection, *marronage*, and the sustained, organized, and violent responses to these by slaveholding regimes, were particularly important formative elements.[9] These should be understood as forms of "internal war": "any resort to violence within a political order to change its constitution, rulers, or policies."[10] Indeed, for historians of the Caribbean, such as Hilary Beckles, conceptualizing slave resistance as "war" is a long-established practice.[11] For historians of the North American continent, however, the fundamentally "political" nature of violent resistance to slavery has often been minimized or denied.[12] Yet, as shall be emphasized here, internal resistance to slavery was often catalyzed by an awareness of wider conflicts, with Native Americans or rival European imperial powers, and thus the real possibility of forging alliances or finding refuge from bondage. This surely constitutes a "political" motivation for violent acts and serves as a reminder that the boundaries between external and internal wars can be very blurred. Crucially, too, the response of the slaveholding regime to the threat, perceived or actual, of insurrection must be considered. Systematic violence was a central characteristic of labor management on the plantation. Slave societies organized themselves to meet any potential challenge

[8] For the Revolutionary War, see Sylvia Frey, *Water from the Rock: Black Resistance in a Revolutionary Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Jörge Nagler, "'Achilles' Heel': Slavery and War in the American Revolution," in Roger Chickering, ed., *War in an Age of Revolution, 1775–1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 285–98; and Laura Sandy, "Divided Loyalties in a 'Predatory War': Plantation Overseers during the American Revolution," *Journal of American Studies* 48 (2014): 357–92. For 1812, see Alan Taylor, *The Internal Enemy: Slavery and War in Virginia, 1772—1832* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2013); and Gene Allen Smith, *The Slaves' Gamble: Choosing Sides in the War of 1812* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). For the Civil War, see James Oakes, *Freedom National: The Destruction of Slavery in the United States, 1861–1865* (New York: Norton, 2013).

[9] *Marronage* refers to the establishment of autonomous communities in isolated locations, raiding plantations and resisting attempts at re-enslavement; from the Spanish c*imarron*, "wild."

[10] Harry Eckstein, "On the Etiology of Internal Wars," *History and Theory* 4 (1965): 133–63, 133; Gerald Mullin, *Flight and Rebellion: Slave Resistance in Eighteenth-Century Virginia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 155–60.

[11] Hilary Beckles, "The 200 Years War: Slave Resistance in the British West Indies. An Overview of the Historiography," *Jamaican Historical Review* 13 (1982): 1–12.

[12] See, for example, George M. Frederickson and Christopher Lasch, "Resistance to Slavery," *Civil War History* 13 (1967): 315–29.

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with organized violence. From the overseer's lash and the packs of bloodhounds, through to the mandatory slave patrols and the militia, slave societies were societies organized for war against the enslaved. Focusing on the weaponizing of bloodhounds as instruments of torture and execution, Sara Johnson has posed the question, "Can one ever speak of a peaceful cohabitation of the enslaved and free in the context of slavery such that the use of dogs in the quotidian context is much different from their use during a declared state of full rebellion?" She notes that "Violence was the *modus operandi* for sustaining elite slave holding lifestyles." Her conclusion is highly significant: "Plantation America poses a challenge to conventional understandings of 'warfare' and 'torture' as terms for supposedly discrete, bounded activities (a military encounter between multiple states, a particular moment of cruelty) with utilitarian purposes (the achievement of military goals, the extraction of information)."[13] American historians should now extend their analysis beyond conventional bounded definitions, to consider the violent, rapacious, "quotidian context" of plantation slavery as an integral element in the story of "the American way of war."

EARLY ORIGINS: WARFARE AND THE ENSLAVEMENT OF NATIVE AMERICANS IN NEW ENGLAND

It is particularly important to acknowledge the extent to which colonial warfare was driven by the desire to enslave Native Americans. While the system of racialized slavery that was established in British North American was eventually dependent upon enslaved Africans and their descendants, tens of thousands of Native Americans captured in the conflicts of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries had previously been reduced to bondage. This enslavement was not simply a byproduct of conflict—it was an objective. For example, in the earliest phases of their establishment, the New England colonies had a pressing need for bonded labor beyond that which could be provided by European indentured servants. However, under English law, capture in "just war" was the only means by which Native Americans could legitimately be reduced to such status. Indeed, the opportunity to enslave Native American women for domestic servitude was central to the mobilization and payment of New England's soldiers. During the Pequot War, 1636–1637, it was recorded that "Conetecut men have had their equall share in women and treys [plundered household goods]."[14]

The significance of slavery to the Pequot War has often been overlooked. The conflict has chiefly drawn the attention of historians because of the

[13] Sara E. Johnson, "'You Should Give Them Blacks to Eat': Waging Inter-American Wars of Torture and Terror," *American Quarterly* 61, 1 (2009): 65–92, 81–82.

[14] Margaret Ellen Newell, "Indian Slavery in New England," in Alan Gallay, ed., *Indian Slavery in Colonial America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 38–40.

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extraordinary level of lethal violence evident at the massacre of several hundred inhabitants of a Pequot village, on 26 May 1637, without regard to age or gender, at West Mystic, Connecticut. This act was perpetrated by soldiers of the Massachusetts Bay and Connecticut colonies. Their Native American allies, Narragansetts and Mohegans, were reportedly horrified by the bloodletting: "Our Indians came to us, and much rejoyced at our victories, and greatly admired the manner of English mens fight," Captain John Underhill recorded, "but [they] cried mach it, mach it; that is, it is naught, it is naught, because it is too furious, and slaies too many men."[15] Historians such as Adam J. Hirsch and Ronald Dale Karr have, thus, debated the extent to which the Pequot conflict was indicative of a broader "clash of military cultures," contrasting the high lethality of European warfare with the (putative) low lethality of Native American warfare. In a similar vein, Geoffrey Parker has pointed to the same massacre as evidence that early modern European colonists fought primarily to kill, *not* to enslave, and that this characteristic was part of an early modern "military revolution" that laid the foundations for Western global hegemony.[16]

The problem with this line of argument is that the outright, physical extirpation of the village on the Mystic River was not typical of patterns of lethal violence during the war as a whole. Massacres of prisoners were commonplace, but they were usually gendered: men of military age were killed (unless they had some especial value, as translators or guides). Women and children were generally enslaved. Both Lee and Grenier only briefly mention the enslavement of Pequot captives by the Narragansetts and Mohegans, which they note was in accordance with established indigenous practice.[17] In fact, a high proportion of the women and children captured during the war also entered Puritan households as slaves. Contemporary English accounts note the brutal torture and execution of male captives (a practice shared with indigenous warfare): "[The prisoner] braved the English as though they durst not kill a Pequot.… But it availed this salvage [*sic*] nothing, they tied one of his legs to a post and 20 men with a rope tied to the other, pulled him in pieces, Captain Underhill shooting a pistoll through him to dispatch him." And they note how the women and children were condemned to involuntary servitude (also a shared characteristic with Native American warfare): "captain Patrick … brought eightie captives to the bay of Boston."[18]

[15] John Underhill, *News from America; Or, A New and Experementall Discoverie of New England* (London: 1638), 42–43.

[16] Adam J. Hirsch, "The Collision of Military Cultures in Seventeenth-Century New England," *Journal of American History* 74 (1988): 1187–212; Ronald Dale Karr, "'Why Should You Be So Furious?': The Violence of the Pequot War," *Journal of American History* 85 (1998): 876–909; Geoffrey Parker, *The Military Revolution: Military Innovation and the Rise of the West, 1500–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 118.

[17] Grenier, *First Way of War*, 28–29; Lee, *Barbarians and Brothers*, 154–56.

[18] Philip Vincent, A True Relation of the Late Battell fought in New England between the English and the Pequet Salvages (London: 1638), 6, 9.

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It is difficult to establish exactly how many Pequot captives were enslaved as a consequence of the war. Most were quickly distributed to individual households, with no definitive count of their total. Michael Fickes has, on the basis of Governor John Winthrop's testimony, suggested that about three hundred captives were taken by the English. This may not seem a significant number but, as Fickes points out, considering the low overall population of the colonies at the time, "if only 280 Pequot captives remained within Massachusetts Bay, Connecticut, and Plymouth, they would have boosted the colonies' combined total population by an estimated 3% and the servant population by approximately 18%." War-captured Native Americans were thus of some importance to the demography of the early New England colonies. Fickes' focus on the servile population is particularly telling since it emphasizes the motive for the enslavement of Native American women and children: the acute shortage of domestic (mostly female) servants during the early phases of colonization. Beyond that immediate demand for domestic labor, enslavement of women and, particularly, children served a wider assimilationist agenda: it was expected that the captives would, in the school of servitude, both Anglicize and Christianize.[19]

Yet the historical significance of the Pequot War goes beyond the mere number of captives consigned to Puritan households. The war was indeed, as Grenier terms it, "a war of extirpation." Yet that extirpation was achieved as much through enslavement as through massacre. Nor was this an isolated example. New Englanders would continue to enslave Native Americans in significant numbers in later conflicts. Even after 1644, by which time Boston merchants were importing enslaved Africans into New England (and they and their descendants would eventually displace Native Americans as domestic servants), Native Americans captured in war continued to be reduced to servitude, either within New England, or, increasingly, sold outside the colony to help offset the costs of war. The precise nature of that servitude did differ from colony to colony. For example, in the aftermath of Metacom's (King Philip's) War (1675–1676), some one thousand Native Americans were enslaved by New Englanders, from a regional prewar population of about twelve thousand, three thousand of whom died during the course of the conflict.[20] The Connecticut General Court ordered that of former enemies who had surrendered, "That such of them as cannot be proved murtherers shall have theire lives and shall not be sould out of the Country for slaves. They shall be well used in service with the English where the Councill shall dispose of them." After ten years of "good service" they were to have their "liberty to become sojourners or to dwell on our respective townes for themselves…." In short, their condition was to be similar to that of European

[19] Michael L. Fickes, "'They Could Not Endure that Yoke': The Captivity of Pequot Women and Children after the War of 1637," *New England Quarterly* 73 (2000): 57–81, 61–64.

[20] Matthew S. Muelbauer and David J. Ulbrich, *Ways of War: American Military History from the Colonial Era to the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 35–36.

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indentured servants. Massachusetts and Plymouth, on the other hand, "freely sold their Indian captives into perpetual slavery, both inside and outside their borders."[21] To the South, in the Chesapeake, the situation was the same. Contemporary Virginian legislation declared "all Indians taken in warr be held and accounted slaves dureing life."[22]

There was, by this point, some concern within New England communities about the potentially dangerous presence of enslaved Native Americans, drawn from hostile local populations, in their households. Metacom's War had been an existential crisis for the New England colonies, during which 10 percent of the male population became casualties. It catalyzed a change in attitudes towards their indigenous neighbors among Puritans, who were abandoning their pious hopes that "savages" might be transformed into Godly Englishmen. Now the colonists tended to articulate prejudices concerning the immutable and beastly nature of Native Americans, "Monsters shapt and fac'd like men," that indicated the emergence and hardening of a recognizably racist ideology.[23] Some colonists petitioned to have the captives removed altogether. Others, especially those who had taken captive children and youths into their homes as servants and apprentices, argued that their labor was required, to make good that of lost fathers, sons, and brothers.[24] However, just as the practice of enslaving (local) captives of war was beginning to be questioned in New England, it would become a central dynamic in the wars fought by the recently established colonies of the Carolinas.

WARFARE, SLAVE RAIDING, AND IMPERIAL RIVALRY IN THE SOUTHEAST

According to Alan Gallay's estimates, from 1670, the year South Carolina was established as a colony, to 1715, somewhere between thirty and fifty thousand Native Americans were either captured directly by Carolinian colonists, or, more frequently, were traded to them by their native allies, and enslaved.[25] As Gallay explains, this was not simply an incidental corollary of the colonization of South Carolina; the settlers "[actively pursued] slaving expeditions as a tool for imperial growth." As a military strategy, slave raiding weakened the position of imperial rivals, Spain in Florida and the French in Louisiana, by targeting the native people who had allied themselves to those powers. This, in itself, is a

[21] Quoted in James Drake, "Restraining Atrocity: The Conduct of King Philip's War," *New England Quarterly* 70 (1997): 33–56, 43. John A. Sainsbury, "Indian Labor in Early Rhode Island," *New England Quarterly* 48 (1975): 378–93, 382.

[22] Quote in Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 110.

[23] Alden T. Vaughan, *Roots of American Racism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 24–25.

[24] Jenny Hale Pulsipher, "'Our Sages are Sageles': A Letter on Massachusetts Indian Policy after King Philip's War," *William and Mary Quarterly* 58 (2001): 431–48 433–34.

[25] Alan Gallay, *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670–1717* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 299.

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notable characteristic of this early "way of war"; it was an example of a strategic "indirect approach." Carolinians "learned that they could make greater profits by attacking and enslaving a European foe's allies than by assaulting the Europeans directly." Much of the actual fighting was also done by proxies. The physical involvement of the colonists themselves in slave raiding expeditions in the South was limited.[26]

This is another reminder of the particular circumstances governing the "first way of war": like all the English colonies established on continental North America, South Carolina was perilously weak, in military terms, for decades after its establishment. The colony's survival depended upon forging alliances with regionally powerful Native American peoples, supplying them with valuable manufactured goods and arms, and enmeshing them in the emerging trans-Atlantic commercial economy. The Richahecrians, later known to the Carolinians as the Westos, were first armed with muskets by Virginian colonists in the 1650s. The colonists also provided them with a ready market for beaver pelts and for slaves, who would be set to work in their tobacco fields. They would subsequently enter into similar trading relations with the Carolinians, aggressively targeting the peoples under Spanish paramountcy in Florida.[27] Indeed, the unremitting pressure of the slave raids devastated the Spanish colony. John Worth commented that "from a far-flung mission system encompassing more than twenty-five thousand Indians in the mid-seventeenth century, Spanish Florida by 1706 was reduced to a handful of refugee missions with just over four hundred Indians huddled around the terrorized residents of St. Augustine." The ramifications of this way of war go far beyond simple extirpation or dispossession. Ultimately, the slave raiding "way of war" pursued by the English colonists and their native allies had effected the complete transformation of the established demographic, political, and social structures of the southeast and eroded a Spanish hegemony that had been established long before the English arrived.[28]

Slave raiding also critically shaped the internal development of South Carolina itself, promoting rapid economic growth but in the context of demographic instability and systemic violence. It ultimately provoked a war that threatened to destroy the colony. Many of the first English migrants to settle in South Carolina came not direct from England but from the Caribbean colony

[26] Ibid., 164, 187, 197.

[27] Eric E. Bowne, "'Carrying awaye their Corne and Children,' The Effects of Westo Slave Raids on the Indians of the Lower South," in Robbie Ethridge and Sheri M. Shuck-Hall, eds., *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone: The Colonial Indian Slave Trade and Regional Instability in the American South* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 105.

[28] John E. Worth, "Razing Florida: The Indian Slave Trade and the Devastation of Spanish Florida, 1659–1715," in Robbie Ethridge and Sheri M. Shuck-Hall, eds., *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone: The Colonial Indian Slave Trade and Regional Instability in the American South* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 295–311.

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of Barbados, founding Charles Town (now Charleston) in 1670. Their experiences in a Caribbean colony, where slavery was well established, ultimately drove South Carolina's economic and social development in the direction of a plantation society, in which rice production would prove the most profitable crop.[29] About a quarter of the captives of slave raiding were put to work on Carolinian plantations but, in the long term, the preferred labor force for cultivating rice was African. The trade in enslaved Native Americans allowed Carolinians quickly to raise the capital necessary to establish plantations and purchase the bondspeople they required for rice production. Thus, Alan Gallay has now suggested that, up until 1715, Charles Town actually exported more slaves than it imported. Many, perhaps most, were exported northward. Carolina slaves were cheaper than Africans and were thought more tractable and less likely to escape than locally enslaved Wampanoags or Narragansetts. A retrospective account, *A Description of South Carolina*, published in 1761, recorded the colony's early exports to "New England, New York and Pensilvania" as "tanned hides, small Deer Skins, Gloves, Rice" and "Slaves taken by the Indians in War."[30] Yet the volatile nexus of war, enslavement, and commerce provoked a decisive conflict between the Carolinians and the Yamasee confederacy, until recently the most powerful military arm of South Carolina's own slave-raiding expeditions.

The confederacy drew its military strength from warriors who represented almost all the nations of the southeast, among them not just Yamasee but others such as Apalachee, Catawba, Waxhaw, and Creek. These had fought as allies of the Carolinians against the French and their native allies during Queen Anne's War (1702–1713), and against the Tuscarora, during a protracted recent conflict in North Carolina (1711–1713). Their precise motives for turning against the colonists are much debated. The high-handed and abusive behavior of English traders has often been seen as a principal cause of the conflict. More recently, accounts have stressed other factors, such as colonists' encroachment on Yamasee territory. Significant, too, was a breakdown in diplomatic relations. Traditional mechanisms by which allegiances had been maintained (gift-giving, hospitality, speech-making) were undermined by the discipline of the market economy and pressure from traders for the Yamasee to pay their mounting debts. Most accounts, however, emphasize the destabilizing influence of slavery in triggering the conflict. Although the Tuscarora War had recently provided the Yamasee with a bountiful source of captives, the internal Carolinian slave trade had been in a longer-term decline, undercutting both their economic position and the diplomatic leverage they had exercised over the colonists. Yamasee

[29] Peter Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1975), 4–6, 9, 35.

[30] "A Description of South Carolina" (London: 1761), in B. R. Carroll, ed., *Historical Collections of South Carolina*, vol. 2 (New York: Harper Brothers, 1836), 255.

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population was falling too, heightening their growing sense of vulnerability. Their slave raiding expeditions and the subsequent commerce in captives had, Paul Kelton notes, "served as a primary mechanism for the spread of infectious germs throughout the South." Between 1699 and 1712, a series of epidemics—influenza, typhus, measles, smallpox—had trailed in the wake of conflict in the southeast and had taken a dramatic toll of slavers and enslaved alike.[31] Weakened, indebted, and all-too-mindful of the growing strength and wealth of the colonists, the Yamasee themselves began to suspect that they too would be enslaved. In April 1715 they and their allies struck at outlying plantations and trading posts.[32]

The colony reeled. Refugees abandoned the countryside and fled into Charles Town. For months, the future of the province hung in the balance. From a total population of only about sixteen thousand (including the enslaved, a slight majority since 1708), upwards of four hundred had been killed by spring 1717, when the fighting began to abate. The colony's militia, which at this point comprised both free and enslaved soldiers, had been hard-pressed, but vital reinforcements and military supplies had arrived from Virginia and New England in 1715. Crucially, fighting between Native Americans, such as the Cherokee and Creek, weakened the Carolinians' enemies.[33] The aftermath of the conflict saw highly significant developments in the southern colonies that, once again, illustrated the deep but evolving relationship between war and slavery in America.

The conflict did not mark a definitive end to slave raiding against Native Americans as a characteristic of American warfare. The practice would revive over a century later during the United States' colonization of the Southwest. For example, some twenty thousand Native Americans, many of them children seized in violent raids on their settlements, were held in some form of involuntary servitude in California following the war with Mexico (1846–1848).[34]

[31] Paul Kelton, "'Shattered and Infected': Epidemics and the Origins of the Yamasee War, 1696–1715," in Robbie Ethridge and Sheri M. Shuck-Hall, eds., *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone: The Colonial Indian Slave Trade and Regional Instability in the American South* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 312–32.

[32] Richard L. Haan, "'The Trade Do's Not Flourish as Formerly': The Ecological Origins of the Yamasee War of 1715," *Ethnohistory* 28 (1981): 341–58; and William L. Ramsey, "'Something Cloudy in Their Looks': The Origins of the Yamasee War Reconsidered," *Journal of American History* 90 (2003): 44–75. See also Claudio Saunt, "'The English Has Now a Mind to Make Slaves of Them All': Creeks, Seminoles, and the Problem of Slavery," *American Indian Quarterly* 22 (1998): 157–80.

[33] See Larry Ivers, *This Torrent of Indians: War on the Southern Frontier, 1715–1728* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2016); and William L. Ramsey, *The Yamasee War: A Study of Culture, Economy, and Conflict in the Colonial South* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008).

[34] See Benjamin Madley, "'Unholy Traffic in Human Blood and Souls': Systems of California Indian Servitude under U.S. Rule," *Pacific Historical Review* 83 (2014): 626–67, 655; and Michael F. Magliari, "Free State Slavery: Bound Indian Labor and Slave Trafficking in California's Sacramento Valley, 1850–1864," *Pacific Historical Review* 81 (2012): 155–92.

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Yet, notwithstanding this later revival, the Yamasee War did mark the conclusion of enslavement of Native American captives as a primary characteristic of colonial warfare. And this fact had decisive consequences for the development of plantation economies and the use of organized violence that maintained them as slave societies.

"ROBBERYS, MURDERS, AND PIRACYS": MAROONS AND THEIR ALLIES

The ending of the colonial trade in captive Native Americans catalyzed the transition to reliance upon enslaved Africans and African Americans as the labor force of plantation enterprises, eventually supplanting both European indentured servants and captive Native Americans. The latter, whilst undoubtedly the object of hardening racial prejudices, were not consigned to the same legally mandated, permanently degraded, inherently servile status that Euro-Americans associated with those of sub-Saharan African descent.[35] This transition had been underway since at least the 1660s in Virginia, but was hastened by on-going military pressures such as the Yamasee conflict. The legal framework for racial slavery took shape; the hitherto somewhat blurry distinction between "servant" and "slave" was drawn ever more firmly. The latter category was defined by its association with skin color, its permanence, its inheritance through the mother's status, and its commodification of people as "chattel," a form of movable property. Notwithstanding the crucial service of enslaved soldiers in early colonial wars, they were soon denied the right to bear arms and disbarred from military service. Fear of insurrection cast bondspeople as the enemy within, as a military threat rather than a military resource. Exclusion from militia service on racial grounds became, in Benjamin Quarles' words, a policy "so prevalent as to constitute a basic tenet of American military tradition."[36]

The relationship between this process and war is particularly well illustrated in the case of South Carolina and the evolving role of overseers as both managers of plantation enterprises and defenders of slavery in times of conflict. In 1712, the South Carolina assembly passed a "deficiency law" that penalized planters upon whose properties "…six negroes or slaves shall be employed without one or more white person living and residing on the same plantation." Such laws were a response to a number of concerns including rumors of servile conspiracy

[35] See Gregory Ablavsky, "Making Indians 'White': The Judicial Abolition of Native Slavery in Revolutionary Virginia and Its Racial Legacy," *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 159 (2011): 1457–531; and Owen Stanwood, "Captives and Slaves: Indian Labor, Cultural Conversion, and the Plantation Revolution in Virginia," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 114 (2006): 434–63.

[36] Benjamin Quarles, "The Colonial Militia and Negro Manpower," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 45 (1959): 643–52, 643. For the legal context, see Eugene Sirmans, "The Legal Status of Slaves in South Carolina, 1670–1740," *Journal of Southern History* 28 (1962): 462–73; and William Wiecek, "The Statutory Law of Slavery and Race in the Thirteen Mainland Colonies of British America," *William & Mary Quarterly* 34 (1977): 258–80.

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and a sense that many white colonists (principally those who had not arrived via the established slave society of Barbados) failed to understand the true character of chattel slavery (some were allowing their bondspeople to labor unsupervised, travel freely, and trade and earn wages in their own right). Yet the timing of the legislation also indicates the extent to which war was a factor. The trigger for the 1712 legislation was South Carolina's decision to join their neighbors in North Carolina in their conflict against the Tuscarora. Five years later, further legislation restricted the behavior of the enslaved and tightened up the requirements for their supervision in the (protracted and violent) aftermath of the Yamasee War.[37]

This in itself was a reflection of the extent to which servile insurrection and war against external foes were inextricably bound. While the Carolinians negotiated peace terms with the majority of their enemies in 1717, the surviving Yamasees themselves remained defiant. They physically relocated away from the orbit of English colonists into that of Spain and launched attacks against isolated plantations. They did not do so alone. Many enslaved Africans had either escaped during the war or been captured by Native American forces. Some of these now joined the Yamasee in their guerrilla war against South Carolina. In 1728, over a decade after the Yamasee war was officially concluded, it was reported that an on-going campaign of "Robberys, Murders and Piracys" was being waged against South Carolinian plantations by Yamasees, Creeks, and runaway slaves based in Spanish Florida.[38] This phenomenon was not restricted to the conflicts ebbing and flowing around English colonies, it was characteristic of warfare in the Southeast as a whole. Africans, for example, were numbered among the defenders of Natchez fortifications in January 1730, resisting a Franco-Choctaw army.[39] In these circumstances, attempting to distinguish between war with an external enemy and servile insurrection becomes a largely meaningless exercise. Both were shaping America's "way of war."

In the Southeast, this pattern of warfare, with the slave-holding regime engaged in an on-going conflict with maroons and their Native American allies, would persist with varying degrees of intensity for well over a century and was absolutely formative to the creation of "the Old South," a militarized and militant slave society. While Florida remained part of the Spanish Empire, the authorities there were well aware of the strategic possibilities that destabilizing slavery in

[37] *Statutes at Large of South Carolina* (Columbia: A. S. Johnson, 1836–1841), Thomas Cooper and David McCord, eds., 10 vols., 2: 363, 3: 193, 272, 4: 97, 175.

[38] Verner W. Crane, *The Southern Frontier 1670–1732* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004), 247; L. H. Roper, "The 1701 'Act for the Better Ordering of Slaves': Reconsidering the History of Slavery in Proprietary South Carolina," *William and Mary Quarterly* 64 (2007): 395–418, 400.

[39] George Edward Milne, "Picking up the Pieces: Natchez Coalescence in the Shatter Zone," in Robbie Ethridge and Sheri M. Shuck-Hall, eds., *Mapping the Mississippian Shatter Zone: The Colonial Indian Slave Trade and Regional Instability in the American South* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 408.

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the neighboring English colonies presented. In 1738, runaways were granted their own settlement, Gracia Rel de Santa Teresa de Mose. Some enlisted in Spanish military units and played a key role in defending St. Augustine from a British invasion in 1740. Even more alarmingly for planters dependent upon cowed and captive African labor, the Spanish forces that invaded Georgia in 1742 included an entire "regiment of Negros," with their own officers.[40] The lure of freedom in nearby territory encouraged flight from the plantations of the Carolinas and Georgia, and fostered armed conflict. John Thornton has argued that the Stono Rebellion of 1739, the most serious insurrection that South Carolina faced, was led by recently enslaved African prisoners of war, experienced soldiers who aimed to fight their way to Spanish Florida.[41]

While rebels and maroons may have been denounced as murderers, pirates, and brigands by slaveholders, there is telling evidence that some of them, at least, understood their own activities very much as a form of warfare. An encampment of some forty maroons sheltering in a swamp north of the Savannah River in 1765 was organized "on military lines." Each morning, the insurgents raised their colors, to the beat of a drum.[42] After the withdrawal of the British from Georgia after the War of Independence, Loyalist maroons continued to refer to themselves as "soldiers of the King of England." They offered a "general asylum" to runaways in the region and waged a partisan warfare against plantations along the Savannah River until 1787. Their suppression in that year by a considerable force of Georgian and South Carolinian militia, supported by Native American auxiliaries, was a stark illustration of the significance of military activity aimed at re-establishing racial slavery in the post-revolutionary era.[43] Similarly, in the spring and summer of 1795, North Carolinians launched

[40] Jane Landers, "Spanish Sanctuary: Fugitives in Florida, 1687–1790," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 62 (1984): 296–313, 301; Kevin Mulroy, *Freedom on the Border: The Seminole Maroons in Florida, the Indian Territory, Coahuila and Texas*, (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 1993), 9–10.

[41] John K. Thornton, "African Dimensions of the Stono Rebellion," *American Historical Review* 96 (1991): 1101–13. Thornton's analysis reflects a significant historiographical trend, with a number of scholars emphasising the transmission of African military expertise into enslaved communities across the Atlantic world. See, for examples, Manuel Barcia, "'Weapons from Their Land': Arming Strategies and Practices among West African-Born Soldiers in early Nineteenth-Century Bahia and Cuba," *Slavery & Abolition* 39 (2018): 479–96; and Vincent Brown, *Tacky's Revolt: The Story of an Atlantic Slave War* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2020).

[42] Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 170.

[43] Timothy Lockley, "'The King of England's Soldiers': Armed Blacks in Savannah and Its Hinterlands during the Revolutionary War Era, 1778–1787," in Leslie Harris and Daina Berry, eds., S*lavery and Freedom in Savannah* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2014), 26–41. The military service of former slaves in the British army during the war had crucial subsequent implications for the British Empire, too, as many such soldiers continued to serve in the West Indies. See Maria Alessandra Bollettino, "'Of equal or of more service': Black Soldiers and the British Empire in the Mid-Eighteenth-Century Caribbean," *Slavery & Abolition* 38 (2017): 510–33; and Gary Sellick, "Black Skin, Red Coats: the Carolina Corps and Nationalism in the Revolutionary British Caribbean," *Slavery & Abolition* 39 (2018): 459–78.

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successive military strikes against well-organized maroons led by "the General of the Swamps."[44] An understanding of these activities as essentially martial in nature appears to have been long maintained within African American families. Among the oral testimonies collected by the Federal Writers Project in the 1930s was that of George Cato, a laborer from Columbia, South Carolina. He believed himself to be the direct descendent of Cato, who had led the rebels at Stono. Reflecting what he had learned of family history from his own grandfather, he did not speak of flight or rebellion. His language casts the event entirely in military terms; his ancestor was "cap[tain] Cato" and he led "a slave army" in a "war."[45]

Marronage was the most viable tactic in this war and it was a running sore to Carolinian and Georgian slavery. Spain ceded Florida to Britain in the 1763 Treaty of Paris and evacuated many of the inhabitants to Cuba. Yet Florida, sparsely settled, politically unstable, and with remote and inaccessible areas offering sanctuary to those fleeing servitude, continued to act as a magnet for the resistant and the rebellious. Those who escaped slavery and established autonomous communities in Florida forged close bonds with the Seminoles, a Native American people who had also recently migrated into the region. Although the maroons lived in their own, self-governing villages, they paid tribute to Seminole chiefs, took a lead in joint military ventures and acted as intermediaries with whites in trade and diplomacy. Many historians, such as Kenneth Porter, simply refer to them as "Black Seminoles."[46] During the Revolutionary War, they would ally with the British and continue their cross-border attacks on plantations, in conjunction with other local Loyalist forces.[47]

The return of Florida to Spanish rule in 1783 exacerbated the maroon threat to the plantations of South Carolina and Georgia. The growing black population in Florida (including hundreds armed and trained by the Spanish in their garrison forces) fueled acute racial anxieties, especially in the aftermath of the Haitian Revolution (1791–1804), for it was feared that "the exiles of Florida" might form the revolutionary vanguard of a wider servile insurrection. The United States engaged in frantic diplomacy to secure the return of runaways from both the Spanish authorities and various Native American peoples, but with little success.

[44] Herbert Aptheker, "Maroons within the Present Limits of the United States," *Journal of Negro History* 24 (1939): 167–84, 170–71.

[45] "'As it come down to me': Black Memories of Stono in the 1930s," in Mark M. Smith, ed., *Documenting and Interpreting a Southern Slave Revolt* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2005), 55–56.

[46] Kenneth W. Porter, *The Black Seminoles: History of a Freedom-Seeking People* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996); Y. N. Kly, "The African American Insurgency 1739–1858," in Y. N. Kly, ed., *The Invisible War: The African American Anti-Slavery Resistance* (Atlanta: Clarity Press, 2006), 46–87.

[47] Jim Piecuch, *Three Peoples, One King: Loyalists, Indians and Slaves in the Revolutionary South, 1775–1782* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2008), 148.

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Georgians and Carolinians were thus soon looking for a military solution to protect the institution of slavery.[48]

In 1812, American "Patriots," supported by an invasion from Georgia and U.S. naval forces, and with the (initial) backing of President James Madison, launched an abortive revolution against the Spanish crown to secure East Florida (West Florida, administered as a separate colony, having already been annexed by the United States in 1810).[49] Although in many respects this filibustering expedition was a simple land-grab, exploiting Spanish weakness and preempting any attempt by the British to re-establish themselves in the region, its connection to slavery was strong. The Patriots hoped to end the threat posed by the maroons and their Native American allies. The ensuing conflict effectively demonstrated that the difficulties of drawing clear distinctions between war, *marronage*, and servile insurrection apply to the early republic as much as to the colonial period. The Patriots seized the town of Fernandina on Amelia Island in March, and a force of two hundred men then moved to take St. Augustine. There, however, they were stalled before the fortifications of Castillo de San Marcos. As the United States then found itself embroiled in an altogether bigger war with Great Britain, Madison began to entertain serious doubts about the dubious legality and adventurism of events in Florida. It was concern for slavery that prolonged the unfolding debacle. Governor D. B. Mitchell of Georgia informed the wavering President "nearly two companies of black troops" had arrived from Havana and "[if these soldiers] are suffered to remain in the province, our southern country [will] soon be in a state of insurrection."[50]

Subsequent events heightened these fears. In June, a new Spanish provincial governor, Don Sebastian Kindelan, arrived. While astutely maintaining a diplomatic fiction that Spain and the United States were not at war, he forged an alliance with the maroons and Seminoles. These attacked Patriot-owned plantations, foraging parties, and outposts. By the autumn, the invader's position was untenable. On 12 September, U.S. Marines and Georgia militia escorting a supply convoy suffered heavy casualties in a well-executed ambush in the Twelve Mile Swamp, northwest of St. Augustine. This defeat "signaled the swift collapse of the entire East Florida invasion."[51]

Yet the continued desire to acquire Spanish Florida and secure slavery's vulnerable southern frontier would impel southerners into further military adventures, and they would drag the rest of the Union, however reluctantly, with them. Although often subsumed within larger, overlapping conflicts, the role that

[48] James G. Cusick, *The Other War of 1812: The "Patriot War" and the American Invasion of East Florida* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003), 48.

[49] For further background, see J.C.A. Stagg, "James Madison and George Mathews: The East Florida Revolution of 1812 Reconsidered," *Diplomatic History* 30 (2006): 23–55.

[50] Quoted in J. H. Alexander, "The Ambush of Captain John Williams, U.S.M.C.: Failure of the East Florida Invasion, 1812–1813," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 56 (1978): 280–96, 286.

[51] Ibid., 81.

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suppressing maroons, re-enslaving runaways, and driving a wedge between Native Americans and African Americans played in the early republic's "way of war" should not be underestimated. A punitive expedition of Georgia militia, itching to avenge the failure of the recent invasion, drove once more into Spanish territory in late September 1812, with the objective of destroying the Seminoles. Having penetrated one hundred miles into Florida, they found themselves surrounded, harassed on all sides, and cut off from supplies. By early October, they were much bloodied and in full retreat. They plundered Spanish settlers as they went. Amongst their booty was "a large number of slaves, owned by Spanish masters."[52] In February 1813, another punitive force, comprised of Tennessee volunteers and U.S. regulars, succeeded in doing far more damage, burning hundreds of homes, destroying thousands of bushels of corn and stealing livestock. By this time, however, the fate of Florida's peoples was tied to two larger conflicts: The First Creek War (1813–1814), and the U.S. war against Britain, (1812–1815).

The British well understood the military opportunities slavery presented. Forging an alliance with the Seminoles and maroons of Florida comprised a key part of their operations in the southeast. This strategy rested upon establishing a fortified settlement at Prospect Bluff, well furnished with cannons, small arms, and ammunition, at the mouth of the Apalachicola River, just 60 miles from U.S. territory. When, in the aftermath of the Treaty of Ghent (1814), the British withdrew, they left the settlement in the hands of the maroons. As recent historians such as Nat Millett and Matthew Calvin have highlighted, the story of this fort demonstrates, in principle, the *potential* for maroon colonies on the North American continent to thrive, if left in peace. Its population quickly grew to several hundred men, women, and children. They established a viable exchange economy and grew their own crops.[53] Yet the evident success of this community made it intolerable to the slave society to the north. Southern planters quickly christened it "the Negro fort," focusing on its martial character, and chafed at the danger it supposedly represented. In Georgia, U.S. Brigadier General Edmund Gaines made repeated communications throughout 1815 to the War Department, in which he variously, and without any particular justification, described the people within the fort's walls as "stolen Negroes," "outlaws," "pirates," "runaways," and "murderers," as he sought to justify a military strike into Spanish territory.[54]

Given the failure of previous American military adventurism in Florida, a degree of wariness on the part of the authorities in Washington was to be

[52] Joshua Giddings, *The Exiles of Florida* (Columbus: Follett, Foster & Co., 1858), 30.

[53] Matthew J. Clavin, *The Battle of the Negro Fort: The Rise and Fall of a Slave Community* (New York: New York University Press, 2019); Nathaniel Millet, *The Maroons of Prospect Bluff and Their Quest for Freedom in the Atlantic World* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2013).

[54] Giddings, *Exiles of Florida*, 37.

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expected. However, the military balance of power in the southeast had now changed dramatically. Andrew Jackson's decisive victory over the Creek Redsticks (a millenarian religious faction hostile to the United States) in 1814 had broken the power of one of the most formidable Native American regional confederacies, securing U.S. military dominance in the region. This conflict had, inevitably, also been shaped by slavery. The rapacious expansion of an agrarian economy based upon plantations was one factor that drove the Redsticks into war against the United States. Furthermore, they contained within their faction many African Americans, some runaways, some who had intermarried, and some themselves enslaved by the Creek (albeit with a high degree of autonomy and a mutable status). These were both a significant cultural influence in shaping the Redstick response to the remorseless advance of agrarian slavery and an important battlefield presence. At Fort Mims, in August 1813, Siras, an enslaved man within the stockade, appears to have facilitated the initial Creek assault. As the fighting wore on, it was African American warriors among the Creek who rallied their wavering line and ensured the fort's downfall. The violent aftermath of that victory confirmed slavery's significance in the conflict: the enslaved members of the defeated garrison were spared; the free, whites, and *métis*, were massacred. By July 1814, the Redstick cause had collapsed, but some two thousand warriors, African Americans among them, fled into Florida rather than surrender.[55]

They would be pursued even there, as the victorious American commander then turned his attention southward. The re-enslavement of maroons was clearly a priority for Jackson, demonstrating how national strategy was bending to serve the sectional interests of slaveholders. In July 1816 Jackson dispatched a combined naval and land force with the orders, "Blow up the [Negro] fort, and return the negroes to their rightful owners." The abolitionist Joshua Giddings would thus later describe this military venture as the "first slave-catching expedition undertaken by the Federal Government."[56] The people of Prospect Bluff fought hard in defense of their freedom. For four days, American forces and their Creek allies were stalled before the fort's walls. On the fifth day however, ill-fortune sealed the defenders' fate: a "one-in-millions" cannon shot hit the fort's magazine and detonated their powder, causing a massive explosion that killed almost the entire garrison of three hundred people.[57] Two years later, in March 1818, Jackson himself led a 3,500-strong force into Florida, which finally ended Spanish rule. That the conflict was firmly rooted in the racial anxieties that plagued slave-holding southerners was evident in the justification Jackson offered to a Spanish officer when he demanded his garrison surrender: "To chastise a savage foe, who, combined with a lawless band of Negro brigands, have for

[55] Joel W. Martin, *Sacred Revolt: The Muskogees' Struggle for a New World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991), 72–74, 156–57, 163.
[56] Giddings, *Exiles of Florida*, 39.
[57] Millet, *Maroons of Prospect Bluff*, 234.

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some time past been carrying on a cruel and unprovoked war against the citizens of the United States, has compelled the president to direct me to march my army into Florida."[58]

In February 1821, a treaty of cession with Spain was finally ratified. This did not mark the end of the United States' conflicts with either the Seminoles or the maroons. Indeed, subsequent pressure from the United States upon the Seminoles to accept exile to the Indian Territory in the west led to the long and costly Second Seminole War (1835–1842). Rightly fearing enslavement, the maroons were the fiercest opponents of removal. Usually fighting in their own companies, under their own leadership, they played a significant role in ensuring that the conflict was peculiarly protracted and frustrating for the forty thousand U.S. regulars and militia that it took to finally subdue a population of some five thousand Seminoles and maroons. Contemporaries well understood the relationship of the conflict to the question of racial slavery; General Thomas Jesup, upon assuming command of the United States forces in Florida in 1836, commented simply that this was "a negro and not an Indian war," and added the familiar refrain, "If not speedily put down, the south will feel the effects of it on their slave population before the end of the next season."[59]

While Florida represented the most striking example, it is worth noting that similar anxieties were manifested during other expansionist wars that Americans waged to secure slavery at this time. In December 1835, Sam Houston accused the Mexican President Antonio López de Santa Anna of "departing from chivalric principles of warfare" by arming African Americans for service against the American-led rebellion in Texas. This allegation was made against a backdrop of fears that enslaved Texans were seeking to forge alliances with both Native American peoples and the Mexican government, whose abolition of slavery in 1829 had done much to spark Houston's revolt. While larger nations such as the Cherokee proved largely unresponsive to these overtures, Houston's fears were not wholly unfounded even after he secured independence for the slaveholding Republic of Texas. For example, in March 1839, Texan cavalry clashed with a mixed band of "runaway Negroes from the eastern Texas plantations, and Biloxi Indians, commanded by the Mexican General Vicente Cordova."[60]

PLANTATION SOCIETIES AND INTERNAL WARFARE

Although it may never have reached the scale or significance that the phenomenon did in the Caribbean or South America, and despite the relatively small

[58] Quoted in John K. Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War, 1835–1842* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1967), 26.

[59] Quoted in Kenneth Wiggins Porter, "Negroes and the Seminole War, 1835–1842," *Journal of Southern History* 30 (1964): 427–50, 427.

[60] Kenneth Wiggins Porter, "Negroes and Indians on the Texas Frontier, 1831–1876," *Journal of Negro History* 41 (1956): 285–310, 198–99.

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numbers of individuals involved, such *marronage* in North America significantly shaped first colonial, and later national politics, and is a forceful reminder of the place of slavery in shaping international relations and as a cause of war. This is most obvious in the case of Florida. Yet it is perhaps too tempting to regard the Florida example as wholly exceptional in the history of North American slavery and its relationship to warfare. Peter Kolchin has described the "concrete realities" that determined power relations in the slave South: the large white population, small-scale and dispersed slaveholdings, well-armed and organized militia and slave patrols, and political stability. Consequent upon these realities, historians have generally accepted that neither *marronage* nor organized insurrection occurred as anything other than rare episodes, limited in scale and duration.[61] A few, notably Herbert Aptheker, have argued for a continuous and active revolutionary tradition among North American slaves. They have shaped the historiography less than those who have understood resistance, and indeed mere strategies for survival, as encompassing a spectrum of activities, strongly influenced by contingent factors of time, space, and gender. These include isolated and episodic outbreaks of physical resistance but, far more frequently, instances of temporary absconding (*petit marronage*) and permanent flight, passive resistance, and sabotage, through to behaviors that accommodated or even collaborated with the slaveholding regime in order to make the ordeal of enslavement bearable.[62] Yet by so doing historians have risked marginalizing the centrality of organized violence to the maintenance of plantation slavery and plantation society's essentially warlike qualities.

In part, this may necessitate a reconsideration of the level and persistence of physical resistance by the enslaved. Notwithstanding those "concrete realities" that stacked the odds so decisively against insurgents and maroons, much recent work has been suggestive of more long-standing and challenging levels of physical resistance amongst the enslaved than hitherto generally allowed for. There is now recognition by scholars such as Sylviane A. Diouf that influential historians like Eugene Genovese deliberately downplayed *marronage* within their analysis, partly because of a paucity of documentary evidence and partly because the scale of such activity was clearly so much greater elsewhere in the Americas. Nevertheless, by blurring the unhelpful traditional distinctions between *petit* and *grand marronage*, Diouf has uncovered a far more persistent

[61] Peter Kolchin, *American Slavery, 1619–1877* (London: Penguin, 1995), 155–56.

[62] Key works on the subject include Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943); Stephanie M. Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Perry L. Kyles, "Resistance and Collaboration: Political Strategies within the Afro-Carolinian Slave Community, 1700–1750," *Journal of African American History* 93 (2008): 497–508; Gerald W. Mullin, *Flight and Rebellion: Slave Resistance in Eighteenth Century Virginia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972).

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and extensive phenomenon, one that needs to be drawn in from the margins of the historiography of both slavery and American military activity.[63] Timothy Lockley's recent studies of *marronage* in South Carolina make much the same point. These trace an active tradition, from the "arm'd, robbing and plundering" of houses and plantations by a band of "runaways" led by Sebastian, the "Spanish Negro," in 1711, through to a "final flourishing" of maroon communities in the early nineteenth century, evident, for example, in a newspaper report concerning "serious depredations" on the properties of planters along the Santee River in 1829. Lockley notes that the apparently "episodic" nature of such incidents may in large part simply reflect the gaps in the available source material, and thus the true extent and essential continuity of South Carolinian *marronage* is difficult to gauge. And, as with Florida, there were contingent circumstances that especially assisted the maroon in South Carolina: the remote and inaccessible "back swamps," the presence of significant numbers of African-born slaves into the early nineteenth century and the concomitant slow rate of creolization, and the high proportion of the total population who were enslaved.[64]

Yet the South Carolinian example cannot be simply dismissed, alongside Florida, as somehow "exceptional"; Georgia, Alabama, Virginia, North Carolina, and Louisiana readily offer examples of maroon communities. There are, in each case, important questions of individual context to consider. For example, Marcus Nevius' recent study of the multiple, semi-permanent maroon communities established in North Carolina and Virginia's Great Dismal Swamp, from 1763–1856, has demonstrated that they developed informal but beneficial trading networks with nearby plantations and slave labor camps, fostering, in some instances, a degree of mutual accommodation.[65] Still, the inherent threat posed by such autonomous communities, even if their only goal was sanctuary, was generally held intolerable within a slave society. Armed conflict involving maroons was thus a recurrent event. As late as March 1850, residents of Cumberland County, North Carolina, requested the appointment of a patrol committee to secure "the services of young men in the Neighborhood…"

[63] Sylviane A. Diouf, *Slavery's Exiles: The Story of the American Maroons* (New York: New York University Press, 2014).

[64] Timothy Lockley, *Maroon Communities in South Carolina: A Documentary Record* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2009), 8–9, 127, 128–30. The extent of *marronage* should not, however, be taken to indicate any kind of unified opposition to enslavement. Relationships between maroons and those who remained enslaved were complex and often volatile. See Timothy Lockley and David Doddington, "Maroon and Slave Communities in South Carolina before 1865," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 113 (2012): 125–45.

[65] Marcus Nevius, *City of Refuge: Slavery and Petit Marronage in the Great Dismal Swamp* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2020), 66–78. For a provocative anthropological analysis of the lives of these communities, based upon the archaeological evidence of their material culture, see Daniel O. Sayers, *A Desolate Place for a Defiant People: The Archaeology of Maroons, Indigenous Americans, and Enslaved Laborers in the Great Dismal Swamp* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida; 2016).

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to move against the "forty or fifty Negro Men" in the area who were committing "thefts and depredations." We might conclude that their "depredations" should be understood as acts of war against the slaveholding regime.[66]

Such episodes need to be integrated into the mainstream of slavery's historiography. The limitations in the source material, combined with a too-hasty dismissal of Aptheker's central thesis, have led to an over-emphasis on non-violent forms of resistance. It has also fostered a tendency to view the "handful" of planned or actual explosions of violence in the United States, such as the New Orleans revolt of 1811, Gabriel's (abortive) Richmond insurrection of 1800, or Nat Turner's "fierce rebellion" in Southampton County, Virginia in 1831, as isolated "local outbreaks," essentially inconsequential, limited in both scale and duration, which allow for no meaningful comparison to "massive collective resistance" elsewhere in the Americas.[67] However, understood within the context of an on-going tradition of physical resistance, epitomized particularly by a tradition of *marronage*, these episodes were highly consequential. They led to the forging of a militarized and militant plantation society that existed, from day to day, in a de facto state of "internal war."

Thus, it is not merely the actions of the enslaved, constrained as they were by formidable forces arrayed against them, that demonstrate the full significance of this internal warfare. It is in the organization and employment of force by those that held them in chains that reveals once more the centrality of slavery to "the American way of war." White southerners had long understood the revolutionary potential inherent in acts of resistance. Following the discovery of rebellious plots in Virginia in 1709 and 1710, the colony's governor denounced those among the enslaved who would "levy Warr against her majesty's Government."[68] In November 1802, the citizens of Northampton County, North Carolina, petitioned for tougher laws to deal with slave conspiracies, to deter the enslaved from their "constant efforts to effect their freedom by insurrection."[69] The persistent and consuming fear of such servile conspiracies led white society to employ preemptive organized, collective violence against the enslaved even in, to use Sara Johnson's phrase, "the quotidian context" of plantation slavery's operation. In response to rumors of a general insurrection on Christmas Eve 1808, in Westmoreland County, Virginia, armed whites stormed into cabins on various plantations, with orders to "put to death such as resisted." Joe, an enslaved man who had slipped out of his own quarters simply to visit his wife on

[66] Petition of James Butler, et al., Mar. 1850, *Race and Slavery Petitions Project*, Series 1, Legislative Petitions (hereafter *RSPP*), accession #1285004, https://congressional.proquest.com/histvault?q=016455-004-0186&accountid=12507 (accessed 5 May 2021).

[67] Kolchin, *American Slavery*, 156.

[68] Quoted in Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 120.

[69] Petition of the Citizens of the County of Northampton, Nov. 1802, *RSPP*, accession #11280209, https://congressional.proquest.com/histvault?q=001542-004-0609&accountid=12507 (accessed 5 May 2021).

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another plantation, was shot and mortally wounded as he attempted to evade the gunmen.[70]

As John Hope Franklin observed, this militant Southern society exhibited a concomitant propensity for violence that contributed to the bitterness of the secession crisis and the prosecution of the Civil War.[71] Yet this was not simply a socio-cultural characteristic; it determined the nature of the South's military and quasi-military institutions. In 1704, fears of servile insurrection and threats of Spanish invasion led South Carolinians to recognize that "the colony needed two military forces: a militia to repel foreign enemies, and a patrol to leave behind as a deterrent against slave revolts."[72] Such slave patrols, in which all white men were liable for service, were established in all the slave colonies/states, effectively becoming the front line in the internal war being waged against the enslaved and their allies. In some instances, there was pressure for standing military forces to be established precisely to secure slavery. At the end of the century, in December 1797, the military imperative remained. Citizens of Charleston petitioned for the formation of a permanent garrison of fifty infantrymen and twenty-four horsemen, in response to the "dangerous designs and machinations of certain French West India Negroes."[73]

Indeed, in practice, the militia was also frequently mobilized in this internal struggle, to an extent that historians of America's military institutions have not fully recognized. The documentary record is replete with examples of militiamen deployed against maroons, runaways, and "conspirators," even in times of "peace." In 1795, South Carolinian slave owner John Adams sought compensation for a "valuable" slave who had been shot and killed "by a Party of Militia in pursuit of some runaways."[74] In 1802, militia colonel Martin Byrd requested compensation for expenses incurred during his efforts to suppress a "threatened Conspiracy of the Negroes" in Washington County, North Carolina.[75] Similarly in 1805, in Wayne County, North Carolina, Isaac Hanley, a captain of militia cavalry, recorded how his troopers maintained order following the execution of a number of enslaved people and how the "most active" among them then suppressed "a conspiracy of the slaves."[76] During the

[70] Petition of Samuel Templeman, Dec. 1809, *RSPP*, accession #11680924, https://congressional.proquest.com/histvault?q=001542-016-0751&accountid=12507 (accessed 5 May 2021).

[71] John Hope Franklin, *The Militant South, 1800–1861* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956).

[72] Sally E. Hadden, *Slave Patrols: Law and Violence in Virginia and the Carolinas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 19–20.

[73] Petition of Thomas H. McCalla, et al., Dec. 1797, *RSPP*, accession #11379706, https://congressional.proquest.com/histvault?q=001542-008-0457&accountid=12507 (accessed 5 May 2021)

[74] Petition of John Adams, Dec. 1795, *RSPP*, accession #11379508. https://congressional.proquest.com/histvault?q=001542-008-0420&accountid=12507 (accessed 5 May 2021).

[75] Petition of Martin R. Byrd, 1675 Dec. 1802, *RSPP*, accession #11280204, https://congressional.proquest.com/histvault?q=001542-004-0581&accountid=12507 (accessed 5 May 2021).

[76] Petition of Isaac Hanley, Dec. 1805, *RSPP*, accession #11280502, https://congressional.proquest.com/histvault?q=001542-005-0074&accountid=12507 (accessed 5 May 2021).

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summer of 1819, the militia was deployed in Williamsburg Parish, South Carolina to suppress a "rebellion" by maroons "committing depredations of various kinds."[77] Two years later, in Craven County, North Carolina, "a number of negroes were collected together in arms … committing thefts, and alarming the inhabitants.… The outrages of these villains became so frequent and daring that … it was thought necessary to adopt measures either to arrest or to disperse them." The militia was mobilized, only to be fired upon by nervous slave patrollers in the dark, seriously injuring four of their number.[78] That policing slavery was, de facto, considered a primary function of the militia is confirmed by an 1830 petition to the North Carolina State Assembly to reorganize the militia to meet the challenge of an enslaved population that had become, "Almost Uncontrolable they go and come when and where they please."[79] The militiamen themselves clearly understood these duties as war service. In 1825, Colonel John Hill, of the Carteret County North Carolina militia, sought compensation for his regiment, which had been called out to "suppress a number of slaves and free persons of color who had collected with arms and were going about the county aforesaid, committing thefts and alarming the inhabitants." Hill maintained that his men should receive the same pay and rations "as the troops of the United States when in actual service."[80]

CONCLUSION

The persistent use of organized military force exemplified by the militia against the enslaved serves to confirm the essential nature of North American slavery as an "internal war." More broadly, it is just one element in the long and deeply intertwined relationship between slavery and warfare in North America. This began in the earliest days of colonization, as Native Americans seized in war were enslaved in colonial households and plantations or traded within and between colonies. Slave raiding by Native American allies to feed this commerce in captives was a foundation of, in particular, South Carolina's war making. The business of slave raiding served both to cement alliances with native confederacies and undermine rival colonial powers, through an indirect strategy of attacks

[77] Petition of David Rogers, Nov. 1820, RSPP, accession #11382006, https://congressional.proquest.com/histvault?q=001542-009-0556&accountid=12507 (accessed 5 May 2021).

[78] Petition of John Rhem, Alexander Taylor, Christopher Bexley, and Thomas Ewell, Nov. 1822, *RSPP*, accession #11282206, https://congressional.proquest.com/histvault?q=001542-005-0619&accountid=12507, (accessed 5 May 2021).

[79] Petition of P. Cromartie et al., 1830, *RSPP*, accession #11283004, https://congressional.proquest.com/histvault?q=001542-006-0294&accountid=12507, (accessed 5 May 2021).

[80] Petition of John H. Hill, Dec. 1825, *RSPP*, accession #11282505, https://congressional.proquest.com/histvault?q=001542-006-0107&accountid=12507 (accessed 5 May 2021).

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on people under their protection. Yet slavery was a strategic "Achilles' heel" for southern colonies themselves. Fear of enslavement turned the military might of the Yamasee Confederacy against their Carolinian allies in 1715. Spanish deployment of African American troops and their protection of maroons in Florida fostered acute racial anxieties that drove a military response from white southerners. After independence, these anxieties would drag the rest of the union into successive conflicts in the southeast to secure slavery. The persistence of maroon activity ensured that those racial anxieties continued to shape the day-to-day operation of slavery, forging a militant and militarized society, and making it difficult to draw meaningful distinctions between "peace" and "war" on plantations. Slavery must, thus, take its place in any consideration of "the American way of war."

This conclusion should shape the next stage of debate. Antulio Echevarria II has recently argued that a significant component of any future study of the "American way of war" ought to be a comparative study of the United States' British, German, French, and Russian "counterparts."[81] Yet the formative military experiences of the United States were shaped by a powerful nexus of race slavery and "wars of extirpation" waged against indigenous peoples. Metropolitan powers such as Britain and France, it is true, were involved in these struggles. Yet they did not exert the same long-term influence over their development; they were not their "first way of war." External and internal conflicts around slavery, and successive wars against Native Americans, link the formative military experiences of the United States most closely to those of the other nation-states that emerged from European colonialism in the Americas. It is now time to make the debate about the "American way of war" both genuinely *American* and comparative, by considering the formative U.S. experiences of conflict in the context of how the other slave-holding regimes of the Americas waged war.

[81] Echevarria II, *Reconsidering the American Way of War*, 176.

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Abstract: Slavery and warfare were inextricably intertwined in the history of Britain's North American colonies and, subsequently, the early republic. Yet this deep connection has not been acknowledged in the historiography. In particular, the debate about an "American way of war" has neglected the profound significance of slavery as a formative factor in America's "first way of war." Here, these two forms of organized, systemic violence are considered not merely within a comparative framework but as phenomena whose relationship is so deeply enmeshed that they cannot be meaningfully understood in isolation. Slavery is thus placed centrally in an examination of American war making, from the colonial to the antebellum period. Three main areas are highlighted: slave raiding against Native Americans, slavery as a factor in imperial and national strategy-making and diplomacy, and slavery as an "internal war."

Key words: slavery, "American way of war," *marronage*, African Americans, Native Americans, militia, slave resistance

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