CHAPTER – 6
THE CONQUEST AND AFTERMATH (1744-1775)

We have seen in the preceding chapters that Canada faced a perpetual threat from two quarters: the Iroquois and the English colonies. While peace was established with the former by 1701, the Anglo-French rivalry continued unabated. In this chapter, therefore, we intend to look into the final phase of the conflict between the two powers and the demise of Canada as a French colony. In particular, it is important to see the role played by the community itself in this struggle and the consequences that the conquest of New France entailed for the Canadiens- for their existence as a well-organized, cohesive community- and for their culture and identity.

The War of Spanish Succession (1702-1713) had resulted in the British conquest of Acadia, but Canada as a whole had been able to survive the threat posed by England and its colonies on the Atlantic coast. This was due in no small measure to the militarized nature of the colony, where practically the entire male population was trained to serve in the militia. It was thus that Canada, with less than one tenth the population of the English colonies, had been able to raise a sufficiently large military force for the defense of the colony. We have seen that even though peace prevailed in the colony for close to three decades after the Treaty of Utrecht, there was no fundamental transformation of the military organization of the colony, since the threat of warfare was always present. The fate of the colonies, both English and French, was inextricably linked to that of England and France, which were competing for a long time by now for a worldwide maritime empire. Thus the causes of conflict were both internal and external to Canada, and even
though the Canadiens had evolved by this time as a distinctive community, there was never any weakening of their ties with the mother country.

Anglo-French Conflict: The Last Round:

It was the War of Austrian Succession (1744-48) that brought the next round of conflict to Canada. As England and France were competing for power and influence both within and without Europe, the death of Charles VI, the Austrian emperor, without leaving any male heir, was seen by both of them as a good opportunity to carve out a niche for themselves in central Europe. France was tempted to take the plunge into the War of Austrian Succession partly due to the disputed nature of succession, with Poland, Prussia and Bavaria forming an alliance to prevent Maria Theresa from ascending the throne of her deceased father. Both France and Spain entered the conflict on behalf of this alliance, and this forced England to come to the rescue of the other side, since a comprehensive victory for France and its allies in central Europe would have led to a new balance of power in Europe that would be detrimental to its own interests.

There is no need for us to discuss the details of the War of Austrian Succession (1744-48) but to the extent it had repercussions for Canada and its people, it is important for our purposes. In the aftermath of the War of Spanish Succession, Louisbourg on L'île Royale on the Atlantic coast had emerged as the principal entrepot for France in North America. Though it was essentially a fort far removed from Quebec and other centers of the colony and without a large population, its economic and military importance for the latter was immense. As we have seen in the preceding chapters, Canada though increasingly heading towards self-sufficiency, was still dependent upon France for much of the crucial supplies. In any case, unhindered access to the Atlantic coast was required for
maintaining the linkages between Canada and the mother country. It was Louisbourg, considered the most powerful fort on the North American coast, that ensured this access both for the colony itself and for France, and as long as Louisbourg was in the French possession, it was difficult for England and its colonies to carry out a naval attack of Quebec\(^1\). That the Crown was serious in its effort to maintain the French possessions in North America is borne out by the fact that it spent close to thirty million livres on the building of Louisbourg, a princely sum at that time\(^2\). It was no wonder then that once the war started in 1744, it became the prime target for the English attack, though the first salvo in the ensuing conflict was fired by Louisbourg, when it sent an expedition to capture Annapolis. The story of this expedition is thus narrated by an ‘habitant de Louisbourg’:

> 'The appearance of the French before Annapolis so frightened the governor that he promised to surrender the Fort, without firing a shot, as soon as he should see the two vessels, with the coming of which they had menaced him. We were a long time before the place without anything happening on the one side or the other. Our people got ready to attack as soon as the ships should appear, and in case the enemy should attempt a defense, they had caused the settlers to prepare for them arrows, provided with an artifice for lighting fire, of which they had already made trial. M. du Vivier was relieved of the command by M. de Ganas, another captain of a free company, who had left Louisbourg later. This second commander maneuvered badly. Out of patience because the ships for which he was waiting did not come, he imprudently abandoned the investment and retired more than fifty leagues inland. It was this that caused the expedition to fail\(^3\).'

On the other hand, the English naval expedition, soon after the siege of Annapolis, achieved an easy victory against the supposedly impregnable fort of Louisbourg. Even

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\(^2\) Ibid. p. 106
though Louisbourg was to be restored to France at the end of the hostilities, its loss
during the war signified a loss of face to New France, and it exposed the vulnerability of
the colony to a determined naval attack by the English forces.

However, even as Louisbourg fell to the English arms during the War of Austrian
Succession, Canada gave a good account of itself, as far as the defense of the colony was
concerned. As on the earlier occasions, it was the colonial militia and the native warriors
who played a crucial role in taking the fight to the English colonies. Thus from the close
of 1745 until the end of the next year, a series of raids were organized by Canada against
the English colonies\(^4\). While the colonial militia led some of these raids, others were
carried out mainly by the Micmacs and Abenakis\(^5\). These were largely successful raids
that put the Atlantic colonies on the defensive, resulting as they did in large-scale
destruction of property and the loss of lives in the region of Boston and Albany\(^6\). Besides,
large number of English colonists were captured in the course of these raids.

This aspect of international relations has been characterized as 'imperialism from below'
consisting of the absence of a ‘centralized metropolitan policy of imperialism’ and the
formation of a porous structure based in the colony in which the native peoples were the
prominent fighters\(^7\). Colonial input into imperial policy and the geographic distance from
the metropole promoted the evolution of a distinctive identity among the francophones of
North America. Under French rule hey remained part of a larger francophone community,

\(^5\) Ibid., pp. 270-313.
For an account of the course of the conflict in English colonies during these raids, see Breaking the Backcountry: The Seven Years' War in Virginia and Pennsylvania, 1754-1765 Matthew C. Ward, Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, c2003.
to be sure, but once the imperial tie to France was severed the francophone Catholic population of the colony turned inwardly upon itself for survival and maturation.

It was the Treaty of Aix la Chapelle signed in 1748 that brought to an end the War of Austrian Succession. By the terms of this treaty, England agreed to restore Louisburg to France in return for the restoration of St. Fort George in India. However, it was obvious to both sides that the treaty was nothing more than a truce and the final struggle for empire in North America was not very far. The two sides, therefore, used the period between Aix la Chapelle and the Seven Years War (1756-63) to prepare for the next round of the inevitable conflict.

While the underlying reasons for the Anglo-French conflict in North America remained the same, their rivalry in the Ohio valley provided added ammunition to the existing antagonism. The fur trade carried out by Canada had by this time extended to the Ohio valley and had acquired economic importance for the colony. Besides, the region called the ‘forks of the Ohio’, the junction of the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers, had great strategic importance for Canada, since it was seen as an important line of defense against the English colonies. Commenting on the significance of this area to Canada, Captain Jean Daniel Dumas, who later led successful forays against the Anglo-American forces, concluded that:

".... All the resources of the state will never preserve Canada, if the English are once settled at the heads of these western rivers."

With the outbreak of the Seven Years War in 1756 the final struggle for supremacy in North America began. As earlier, it was a shift in the balance of power in Europe that
 ignited the conflict in North America. Prussia, an ally of France during the War of Austrian Succession, shifted its loyalties to Britain at this time, and France was left with no other choice than to ally with the erstwhile enemy Austria. The war in North America started in 1755, and came to an end in 1763. The details of this warfare are irrelevant for our purposes. Suffice it to say here that it was the battle fought on the Plains of Abraham in 1759 that led to the capture of Quebec, after which the fate of the colony was more or less sealed\(^9\). The capitulation of Montreal the following year put to rest whatever hopes of the survival of Canada as a French colony may still have been there. The Treaty of Paris signed in 1763 put the official seal on the conquest of Canada at the hands of the British.

The Conquest and the Great Divide in Canadian Historiography:

The British conquest of Canada constitutes undoubtedly the most controversial issue in the history of Canada, in general, and the French-Canadian community, in particular. On the one hand, we have a number of Anglophone historians, led by the famous nineteenth century American historian, Francis Parkman, who have seen the Conquest more or less as an inevitable outcome of the Anglo-French rivalry in North America, due primarily to what they describe as the inherent defects of the Canadian economic, political and religious organization. George Wrong and Howard Peckham did history the disservice of unquestionably repeating the Parkman thesis of a 'contest between the forces of light and darkness, constitutional freedom and despotic authoritarianism'\(^10\). On the other hand, we have a number of French-Canadian historians who have attributed the defeat of Canada

\(^9\) See John Murdoch Harper, The Battle of the Plains, Quebec 1895.

to more concrete factors that had very little to do with any inherent defect in the way
Canada as a French colony in North America had evolved.

Therefore, more than the details of the war that led to the Conquest, it is important for us
to examine the causes behind this momentous development. There are two sets of factors
responsible for the outcome of Anglo-French rivalry in North America; there are the
underlying causes and there are the more immediate ones. It is the former that are more
relevant for our purposes, since they relate to the very nature of the socio-political and
military organization in French Canada. Among the underlying reasons we have
demography, naval power, mercantilism and economic organization and institutions,
cultural factors and political organization. Some of these factors are thus summed up by
Stanley and Jackson:

'In any all-out test of strength New France stood but little chance against her enemy. Her
population was but sixty thousand against the 1,500,000 of the Thirteen Colonies. Her agriculture
was insufficient to feed her own people, who were dependent upon old France for foodstuffs and
her fur trade was not the type of industry that made for economic strength. The diversified
economy of the English colonies, with their fishing, farming, plantations, embryo manufacturing
and extensive maritime commerce, gave the Anglo-Americans such sinews of war as the
Canadians could never hope to possess. With its limited resources Canada could hardly expect to
retain control over the lands drained by the Saint Lawrence, the Great Lakes, the Ohio River and
the Mississippi; it had neither the men nor the means of settling this area nor of providing troops
in sufficient numbers to guard so long a frontier against the English intrusion. Geography was
undoubtedly a great aid in Canadian defense, but those lateral water communications, so useful in
time of war and to the fur trade, served to stretch Canadian resources beyond their strength, and to
performed, brings its satisfaction and its reward. There is little need for striving, little occasion for the notion of progress. The rural life harmonizes well with this conception: man is subject to nature and to nature's moods; he learns to acquiesce in the drought and the flood, the good years and the bad. As his animals and plants grow and come to harvest, so he grows and comes to harvest, a creature of nature and of nature's God. It is the simplest and the oldest of all religions, Catholic almost by accident.

Even though Lower does not put it in so many words, the insinuation is quite clear: it was this unchanging nature of the colonial society, without the idea of 'progress,' that proved to be the nemesis of the Canadiens. It would be difficult to find a more ethnocentric account of the underlying defects of Canada as a French colony that led to its eventual defeat at the hands of the English forces. Thus the words like 'medieval', 'rural', etc. are used in a more or less pejorative sense to suggest that such a society apparently stood little chance of winning against an enemy that was, by extension, not 'medieval' and 'rural'. The life of the Canadiens was thus little more than a ritual; they were born in ritual, lived in ritual and died in ritual, without ever trying to see anything more meaningful in human existence. This is then a condemnation of the religion, culture, in fact, the entire world of the Canadiens; defeat was thus the only destiny of such a people.

Before we examine the issue of how the Catholic, 'rural' and 'medieval' nature of Canada in the eighteenth century made it inevitably prone to defeat, it would be germane to look at some of the similar sentiments expressed by Francis Parkman of legendary fame. For him, it was a struggle between 'liberty', presumably of British origin, and 'absolutism', infecting the Canadiens and, of course, France, that had to end the way it did, since that was for the good of all. As he puts it:

'Liberty may thank the Iroquois that, by their insensate fury, the plans of her diversity were brought to naught, and a peril and a woe averted from her future... The contest on this continent between liberty and absolutism was never doubtful; but the triumph of the one would have been dearly bought, and the downfall of the other incomplete. Populations formed in the ideas and habits of a feudal monarchy, and controlled by a hierarchy profoundly hostile to freedom of thought, would have remained a hindrance and a stumbling block in the way of the majestic experiment of which America is the field.

The Jesuits saw their hopes struck down; and their faith, though not shaken, was sorely tried. The Providence of God seemed in their eyes dark and inexplicable; but from the standpoint of Liberty, that Providence is clear as the sun at noon. Meanwhile let those who have prevailed yield due honor to the defeated. Their virtues shine amidst the rubbish of error, like diamonds and gold in the gravel of the torrent'.

It is obvious that Parkman starts with strong preconceived notions of what should have prevailed in North America, and the eventual outcome was something ‘devoutly to be wished’, as far as Parkman is concerned. Parkman’s ideas regarding the defects of the Canadian society that led to its defeat are based on teleology of ‘progress’ and ‘liberty’ finding their way against the French ‘absolutism’. The British conquest of Canada is, therefore, an occasion for triumphalism for Parkman; it was the destiny of the British, who were supposedly endowed with the notions of ‘liberty’ to defeat the scourge of ‘absolutism’. Since the ‘majestic experiment’ that America symbolized for him could only be successful under the benevolent care of the British ‘liberty’, it is natural for him to assume that the fault lay with the very nature of the Canadian society. It is evident that for Parkman the Canadiens were condemned to defeat by their political and social organization and by their flawed religion. In his eyes, only Protestantism, preferably of the Anglican variety, could serve the cause of freedom; Catholicism symbolized slavery.

and a lack of ‘freedom of thought’. There is a sense of graded condescension here. Parkman is obviously highly critical of pre-Conquest Canadian society and especially of Catholicism, but, in a fit of generosity, he concedes that the Jesuits had some virtues, after all. Protestantism was obviously more righteous than Catholicism, but the latter was, to be sure, better than the ‘rubbish of error’ and the ‘gravel of the torrent’ that the native religions represented. Thus the Canadiens were perhaps better than the natives, but were no match for the vastly superior Anglo-Protestants. Elsewhere, Parkman portrays the conflict between Canada and the English colonies almost as an epic battle between the forces of good and evil. As he puts it:

‘This was the strife of a united and concentrated few against a divided and discordant many. It was the strife, too, of the past against the future; of the old against the new; of moral and intellectual torpor against moral and intellectual life; of barren absolutism against a liberty, crude, incoherent and chaotic, yet full of prolific vitality.’

Thus, in Parkman’s accounts, the cohesiveness and unity which the habitants had is also rendered into a negative trait that unnecessarily delayed the great Anglo-Protestant mission of conquering Canada. Since the Canadiens lived in the past, they became the past; in the struggle between the past and the future, it is always the latter that wins in the end; there is thus no need to look into the more mundane causes behind the defeat of Canada. It is self-explanatory; its very existence was the proof of its inevitable fate. In the linear view of time that Parkman has, future could not but be better than the past; the English were the torchbearers of the ‘new’ against the ‘old’. Their victory was thus morally sanctified by the very logic of the cosmic order that he conjures up into existence.

We have emphasized in the earlier chapters the paternalistic nature of the French monarchy as against its supposedly despotic and the absolutist nature. Strangely enough, Parkman concedes that the administration of Louis XIV was indeed paternalistic, but then this was a part of the problem with the Canadian society! As he puts it:

“One of the faults of his [Louis XIV’s] rule is the excess of his benevolence; for not only did he give money to support parish priests, build churches and aid the seminary, the Ursulines, the missions and the hospitals; but he established a fund destined, among other objects, to relieve indigent persons, subsidized nearly every branch of trade and industry, and in other instances did for the colonists what they would far better have learned to do for themselves16.”

Thus the Canadian society was to be damned both for tyranny and despotism as well as for benevolence. The money that Louis XIV spent for the economic development of the colony was not the money spent well, or so Parkman would suggest. In his nineteenth century laissez faire view, the state had no responsibility towards its subjects, except the maintenance of law and order and maintaining the exploitative hold of capitalism on the common people. The fact that Louis XIV cared for his subjects, of whatever rank they might be, is itself a symbol of ‘absolutism’, as far as Parkman is concerned. Elsewhere, he ascribes the economic ‘weakness’ of Canada to the paternalistic nature of the Crown:

“The besetting evil of trade and industry in Canada was the habit they contracted, and were encouraged to contract, of depending on the direct aid of the government. Not a new enterprise was set on foot without a petition to the King to lend a helping hand17.”

Thus the only kind of economic activity that could have won the approval of Parkman is the one in tune with the classic laissez-faire model. Just what was the relationship between the government aid and economic backwardness is never sufficiently explained

16 Francis Parkman, *The Old Regime in Canada*, Boston 1922, pp. 281-82.
17 Ibid., pp. 312-13.
by him; for his views on the subject are based on nothing more than unquestioning faith in the triumphant political economy of the day.

Thus, according to Parkman, the sins of the Canadiens and their mother country were too big to have escaped retribution. However, this particular view of Canadian society in the pre-Conquest era is based at best on stereotypes and at worst on crass ethnocentrism. As we have seen in the course of this thesis, society in Canada was lacking neither in economic initiative nor in freedom of action within the broad framework of monarchical paternalism.

It may even be argued that mercantilism worked as much in favor of the colony as it did for the metropole. The colony’s imports came necessarily from France or the French Antilles, but it was also mercantilist policy that assured the colony a market for its furs, lumber and the beginning of wheat exports. The British conquest did not mark an end to mercantilist restrictions and the commencement of free trade. Rather, the Conquest resulted in the introduction of the British mercantilist regulations more stringent than those associated with French rule.\(^\text{18}\)

The defect in the colonial society was not that the state was caring and benevolent; if anything, it could have been more so. The abstract idea of ‘liberty’ as symbolized by the English is nothing more than a figment of Parkman’s imagination. The English colonies were, of course, more free in some ways. One of these was their participation in piracy on the high seas; the other was their elimination of the native population. As we have pointed out earlier, the colonial practices of England in the seventeenth and eighteenth century differed considerably from those of France, but this was so not because of any supposed counter-position between liberty, on the one hand, and absolutism, on the other.

Rather, it was due to the very different nature of their economic and social priorities. To be sure, the English were more successful mercantilists, but that has nothing to do with serving the cause of 'liberty' and everything to do with serving their own cause. It is another matter, of course, that for Parkaman and his ilk the latter was naturally synonymous with the fight for 'liberty', which would have died a premature death without the English mercantile endeavors.

The assumption that runs through these arguments seeks to portray Canada as a society controlled by two agencies: the 'absolutist' monarchy and the Catholic Church. We have seen that even though the high administrators in the colony were appointed from France, and much of the colonial policy was framed in Paris, the Canadiens were a people who valued independence in all matters, religious, political and economic. The defect did not lay either in the church or in the Catholic faith; nor did it lay in the 'excessive benevolence' of the Crown nor the supposedly medieval nature of the Canadian society.

The fault lay somewhere else, and it is there that we turn our attention now.

The Role of Demography in the British Conquest of Canada:

At the beginning of this section, we mentioned demography as a factor in the outcome of the Anglo-French rivalry in North America. It has been assumed by most historians of Canadian history, as seen in the statement of Stanley and Jackson cited earlier, that demographic gap between the Canadiens and the English colonies is what, along with other factors, sealed the fate of the former, outnumbered as they were by a ratio of more than one to twenty. Yet, what was the impact of demography either on the Canadians as a community or their eventual subjugation by the British?
Admittedly, Canada had a small population as compared to that of the English colonies, and this did have its own consequences. More than anything else, perhaps, it limited the economic expansion of the colony both in terms of production and consumption. A population of 60,000 could not possibly compete, in economic terms, with the much larger population of the Atlantic colonies. It was due to this reason, and not to the supposed lack of liberty, that the kind of economic activities that were a part of the English settlement of North America could not take roots among the Canadiens. The limited success or, more occasionally, outright failure of many enterprises was not so much due to the 'excessive benevolence' of the Crown but rather to the inhibiting factors associated with all three: labor, capital and the market.

It is, however, wrong to assume that, as far as the military struggle between the two powers was concerned, population was a determining factor. We have already seen that the entire male population of Canada, except the children and the old people, was trained in warfare, and that it gave a consistently good account of itself, whenever it was called upon to take the field either against the English colonies or the Iroquois. There was hardly any parallel to this in the English colonies, and it was only during the moments of crisis that sections among English colonists united to fight against the Canadiens. The ramshackle militia that they occasionally raised was, however, no match to the seasoned guerrilla fighters that the Canadiens were. The thirteen English colonies were deeply divided among themselves, and it was always difficult for them to rise as a whole against Canada. Thus there was no occasion for a direct struggle between the two groups in terms of their entire population, particularly in the case of the English colonists. Throughout the eighteenth century, Canada was able to raise, apart from the Troupe de la Marine, a few
thousand warriors at short notice, and there is nothing to suggest that the English colonies were in a position to raise a much bigger force. Therefore, it was not the size of the Canadian population per se that tilted the military balance in favor of the English colonies, but other factors to which we would come a little later.

In terms of demography, what historians have sometimes overlooked is the Amerindian factor. The native peoples, with their guerrilla type of warfare, were for the most part staunch allies of the French in the struggle against the Anglo-American penetration over the Appalachian mountains into the Ohio and Mississippi valleys. The small hinterland French settlements like Detroit, Michilmachinac, Ste. Genevieve and Kasbasbia with attendant mission stations, trading posts and small military garrisons established a French presence beyond the St. Lawrence valley settlements, properly known as Canada, around which native peoples rallied not so much to preserve a French colony as to assure their own survival against 'English incursion'\footnote{Peter Cook, French – Amerindian Diplomacy on New France’s Western Frontier, 1703-1725, M.A. thesis, University of Ottawa, 1993. D. Peter MacLeod, For the role of the Iroquois on the English side, see *Les Iroquois et la guerre de Sept Ans* by D. Peter MacLeod, Montréal: VLB, 2000.}.

The relatively small population of New France meant that the region it claimed throughout the length and breadth of North America remained mostly uninhabited. That it did perhaps unduly lengthen the defense line of the colony against the English colonies is quite plausible, but the impact of this factor in the outcome of the struggle could not have been anything more than minor. In this context, it is important to remember that the bulk of the population of New France was located in the St. Lawrence valley, with all other regions having only small pockets of colonists. While this distribution would be an important factor in deciding the issue in the southern and western regions of the continent, it could not be an important factor in the final outcome of the war. It was the
defeat at Quebec and Montreal, where the bulk of the habitants lived, which decided the future of Canada. Once these centers of French power in North America succumbed to the English onslaught, the other regions could not but follow suit. In any case, we need to remember that the region around the Great Lakes, the Mississippi valley and the Ohio valley was more under the joint control of the French colonists and the allied native tribes rather than the exclusive control of the former. While the authorities in Canada certainly considered this whole region under their control, they were realistic enough to understand that they could maintain their hold over it only as long as the French-native alliance was intact. Thus, in this region at least, the population of the natives on the side of New France was also a factor to be reckoned with, a fact that goes against the idea of overstretched defense line of Canada. Thus, demography did affect the nature of Canadian economy and society, but it did not have much of a direct influence on the military outcome of the conflict. If anything, the small size of the community went a long way in making it significantly more united and cohesive as compared to the English colonies. In the Lawrence valley at least, it was a highly compact community that could and did rise for self-defense.

Political and Socio-Economic Organization of Canada: Implications for the Conquest:

As far as the nature of political organization in Canada is concerned, we have seen earlier that the administration, though authoritarian in theory, was reasonably responsive to what were regarded as the legitimate demands of the community. While it may have been inefficient on many occasions, there is little reason to believe that the political organization of the English colonies performed much better on this count. Thus, the
professed absolutism of the Crown had few, if any, negative consequences for the colony, unless we agree to ignore the form for the sake of substance. As we have shown in the course of the earlier chapters, it was only the broad policy that was decided from Paris, while the more immediate concerns were left to the colonial administrators who often had an excellent grasp of the prevailing conditions in North America, in general, and in Canada, in particular. While there is little doubt that France made every possible effort to maintain a close surveillance on the colony, those efforts were always limited by the sheer distance of the colony and the scarcity of the resources at the disposal of the state.

The cultural practices in Canada differed considerably from those in France, so much so that by the eighteenth century, the colony had a very distinctive identity of its own. There is little to suggest that this culture somehow destined the Canadiens for the eventual defeat. Parkman's assertion that the Anglo-Germanic 'race' was somehow more masculine than the Celtic 'race' represented by the French people is nothing more than a figment of his own imagination and has, in any case, very little to do with the nature of the Canadian society which was undoubtedly more militarized than the English colonies. Thus, the military weakness, if any, was not something intrinsic to Canada, nor was the opposite true of the English settlers of North America.

It is here that the question of the relative self-dependence of Canada and the English colonies enters into the picture, as it is often argued that the latter were far more self-dependent than the former, which factor is then presumed to have predisposed the Laurentian colony to the eventual defeat. As far as the basic requirements of Canada, in

terms of foodgrains, for instance, are concerned, the colony was, throughout the decades preceding the Conquest, largely self-sufficient. If manufacturing is taken into consideration, then Canada was at least partly dependent upon France, though important beginnings were made in this arena as well. How far the diversified nature of the Atlantic colonies helped in the British conquest of Canada is a matter of conjecture, since there is little occasion to argue that these colonies had a much more developed industrial or manufacturing base than Canada. Their economic base was surely much larger and they carried on far more trade than Canada, but that had very little to do with economic self-dependence.

The Role of French Naval Weakness in the British Conquest:

Perhaps the most important factor behind the fall of Canada was the naval weakness of France as compared to England. By the eighteenth century, the British navy was considerably larger than its French counterpart, both in terms of the merchant fleet and the battle fleet. To the extent that the European colonies in North America were maritime colonies, they could be defended only through the presence of a powerful navy. The defeat on the Plains of Abraham need not have been final, had France had a navy capable of destroying the British lines of communication across the Atlantic. Of course,

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21 Strengthening the navy had been a deliberate effort on the part of Britain whose politicians were acutely conscious of its efficacy in a maritime conflict. Between the end of the War of Austrian Succession and the beginning of the Seven Years War, there was a significant effort at the building up of the British navy. Thus, William Pitt emphasized the importance of navy in 1755 and charted out a plan for making the British navy supreme: "We ought to have our navy as fully and as well manned as possible before we declare war... Is it not then necessary for us, as we are upon the very brink of a war, to take every method that can be thought of for encouraging able and expert seamen into His Majesty's service?... An open war is already begun: the French have attacked His Majesty's troops in America, and in return His Majesty's ships have attacked the French King's ships in that part of the world. Is this not an open war?... If we do not deliver the territories of all our Indian allies, as well as our own in America, from our every French fort, and every French garrison, we may give up our plantations. William Pitt, as quoted in Niall Ferguson, Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British world Order and the Lessons for Global Power, New York 2002, p.27.
there were deeper reasons why a country half the size of France in terms of area and with much smaller population base and economy could have a navy more powerful than its rival. The most important among these was undoubtedly the geographical factor of being an island that enabled England to concentrate its resources on maritime power. There was no need to maintain a standing army for the defense of the island, as only a naval attack was possible. Thus, the maintenance of a powerful navy was central to both the defense of the island and the colonial expansion. France, on the other hand, was a continental power that had to spend much of its resources to maintain its position vis-à-vis other mainland powers. Maritime power could not be more than a part of the French military enterprise. In this regard, it is worthwhile to recall that the three large continental powers in Asia, the Ottoman empire, the Mughal empire and China, all of which had roughly twenty times more resources than countries like Portugal, England, Holland, etc. still found the going tough for them, as far as the naval power was concerned. And eventually, it was this weakness that led to the marginalisation of the Ottoman Empire, the colonization of India and the British subjugation and the subsequent indirect colonial domination of China. In fact, the Ottoman Empire did maintain a comparable navy at least up to the seventeenth century, but it declined subsequently. India under the Mughals, though technologically a little behind some European countries in the seventeenth century, could still have, in theory, built a powerful navy. And the same was, of course, true of China. Their involvement within the continent, however, meant that they had relatively little interest in the maritime power. To the great continental powers, the Portuguese, and later the English, naval exploits appeared to be little more than a nuisance, and thus did not lead to any significant naval build-up. With the benefit of the
hindsight today, one can easily blame France and the continental powers of Asia for having lacked the foresight to comprehend the future importance of the naval power. However, societies react to things according to their present requirements, and these powers could not have imagined in the seventeenth century or even the eighteenth century the subsequent course of history.

The Conquest: Implications and Consequences for the Canadiens:

One of the most important questions in relation to the Conquest is what it entailed for the Canadiens as a community. To begin with, the very process of warfare meant serious destruction of life and property for the people, which, of course, is inherent to all wars to a certain extent. That the Seven Years War symbolized the most destructive conflict yet in the history of the colony is beyond doubt, and it could not but have a traumatizing impact on the people. All means, fair and foul, were employed by both sides to win the war, and this had severe repercussions for Canada, since it was the losing party in the struggle. For instance, we have the following warning issued by General Wolfe commanding the British forces in the Battle of Abraham:

"The formidable sea and land armament, which the people of Canada now behold in the heart of their country, is intended by the King, my master, to check the insolence of France, to revenge the insults offered to the British colonies, and totally to deprive the French of their most valuable settlement in north America. For these purposes is the formidable army under my command intended. The King of Great Britain wages no war with the industrious peasant, the sacred orders of religion or the defenseless women and children; to these, in their distressful circumstances, his royal clemency offers protection. The people may remain unmolested on their lands, inhabit their houses and enjoy their religion in security; for these inestimable blessings, I expect the Canadians

will take no part in the great contest between the two crowns. But, if by a vain obstinacy and misguided valor, they presume to appear in arms, they must expect most fatal consequences; their habitations destroyed, their sacred temples exposed to an exasperated soldiery, their harvest utterly ruined and the only passage for relief stopped by a most formidable fleet. In this unhappy situation, and closely attacked by another great army, what can the wretched natives expect from opposition? The unparalleled barbarities exerted by the French against our settlements in America might justify the bitterest revenge in the army under my command. But Britons breathe higher sentiments of humanity, and listen to the merciful dictates of the Christian religion... In this great dilemma, let the wisdom of the people of Canada show itself; Britain stretches out a powerful yet merciful hand, faithful to her engagements, and ready to secure her in her most valuable rights and possessions: France, unable to support Canada, deserts her cause at this important crisis, and, during the whole war, has assisted her with troops who have been maintained only by making the natives feel all the weight of the grievous and lawless oppression”.

It is obvious that the objective General Wolfe had in mind in issuing such a threat was the neutralization of the civilian population which, it is important to remember, was the part of the colonial militia, and was thus expected to offer a stiff resistance to the invading forces. It is, of course, meaningless to argue whether or not such threats in the course of a war in eighteenth century North America were legitimate, since warfare was generally expected to lead to a degree of cruelty and violence, restrained as it was by the prevailing norms of a chivalrous military ethos. What is important for our purpose, however, is that a threat was already being held out to the Canadiens to make them desist from expressing their loyalty to France. It is this threat that symbolizes what the Conquest would later come to mean for the community: a demand to switch over their loyalty to Britain in

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23 Brian Connel, ed., *The Siege of Quebec and the Campaigns in North America, 1757-1760* by Captain John Knox, Toronto 1980, pp. 135-36. Also see *Military Operations at Quebec: From the Capitulation by De Ramezay, on the 18th September, 1759 to the Raising of the Siege by De Levis, between the Night of the 17th and the Morning of the 18th May, 1760* by W.J. Anderson, Quebec 1870. For more information on the subject, see *L’histoire militaire canadienne depuis le XVIIe siècle : actes du Colloque d’histoire militaire canadienne, Ottawa, 5-9 mai 2000* edited by Yves Tremblay.

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terms now of cultural assimilation. The actual conduct of the war entailed great hardship for the people, with starvation becoming the norm for the vast majority and with the utter destruction of three-quarters of Quebec. However, it is interesting to note that the British version of the ensuing conflict often presents a serene picture of the entire event:

"We then faced to the right, and marched towards the town by files, till we came to the plains of Abraham; an even piece of ground which Mr. Wolfe had made choice of while we stood forming upon the hill...

About ten o'clock the enemy began to advance briskly in three columns, with loud shouts and recovered arms, two of them inclining to the left of our army and the third towards our right, firing obliquely at the two extremities of our line, from the distance of one hundred and thirty, until they came within forty yards; which our troops withstood with the greatest intrepidity and firmness, still reserving their fire and paying the strictest obedience to their officers: this uncommon steadiness, together with the havoc which the grape-shot from our field — pieces made among them, threw them into some disorder, and was most critically maintained by a well-timed, regular and heavy discharge of our small arms, such as they could no longer oppose...

Hereupon they gave way, and fled with precipitation, so that, by the time the cloud of smoke was vanished, our men were again loaded and, profiting by the advantage we had over them, pursued them almost to the gates of the town and the bridge over the little river, redoubling our fire with great eagerness, making many officers and men prisoners. The weather cleared up, with a comfortably warm sunshine.

This is unmistakably a victor's account of the war in which things proceed quite naturally, without any idea of violence or cruelty defiling the sense of achievement at the conquest of Quebec. It is not a coincidence that no casualties are even hinted at, with the mention only of taking prisoners. Notice again how the 'weather cleared up' just after the battle was over. This is, of course in stark contrast to the reactions that the war provoked

24 Ibid., pp. 195-98.
among the *habitants*. This is how an Ursuline nun recorded her reaction to the bombardment of Quebec that preceded the Battle of Abraham:

"Un nuage de sang voile notre patrie. Nos parents et nos amis nous sont enlevés par les balles de nos ennemis. Mon Dieu! Nous avions mis notre confiance en vous. Nous avez-vous donc abandonné?"

As is evident from the above-mentioned statement, the war aroused high passions at least on the side of the *Canadiens*, who perceived it not merely as a struggle between two crowns in which they, as common people, had no stake but as a fight for the very survival of the community. This was a fact known even to the British. Hence the warning issued by Wolfe calling upon the *habitants* to desist from taking arms against the enemy. We have the testimony of Bishop Pontbriand, which clearly brings out how the process and outcome of the war was perceived by the colonial elite. As he put it:

"Quebec has been bombarded and cannonaded for the space of two months; one hundred and eighty homes have been fired by grenades, the remainder shattered by cannons and bombs. The walls, of the thickness of six feet, have not been proof against this; cellars to which well-to-do people had consigned their effects had been burned, forced and looted, both during and after siege. The Cathedral has been entirely destroyed. In the Seminary, the only habitable part remaining is the kitchen, to which the cure of Quebec has withdrawn in company with his vicar. The Seminary has suffered even greater losses outside the city, for the enemy has burned four of their farms and three considerable mills from which almost their entire revenue is derived. The church of the lower town has been completely demolished; those of the Récollets, the Jesuits and the Seminary are quite unfit for service without most extensive repairs. There is only the Ursulines church where a decent service can be held, although the English are using it for especial services. Both the Ursulines and the Hospitaliers have suffered greatly. They are without means of subsistence, all their lands having been ravaged. Meanwhile the nuns have managed to lodge themselves after a

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fashion, after having passed the entire time of the siege in the General Hospital. The Hotel Dieu is overcrowded, for the English sick are there. The Episcopal palace is practically in ruins and does not afford a single habitable room; the cellars have been looted. The houses of the Récollets and the Jesuits are almost as bad; the English have made some slight repairs in order to quarter their troops there. They have billeted their soldiers in those houses which suffered the least damage. They drive out from their own houses citizens who, at great expense, have temporarily repaired a room or two, or else so crowd them with the soldiers billeted upon them that nearly all have been obliged to leave this unhappy city. This they are by no means loath to do, for the English refuse to sell except for ready money, and it is well known that the local currency is paper. The priests of the Seminary, the cannons and the Jesuits are scattered over what little country has escaped English domination. There are actually people in the city who are without wood for winter, without bread, flour, or meat, and subsisting solely upon a bit of biscuit and a scrap of pork, which the English soldiers sell to them out of their rations. Such is the extremity to which our best families are reduced.

The picture that emerges here is the very opposite of a smooth transition for Canada and its people from one crown to another. Rather, it has all the elements of destruction and consequent suffering associated with warfare. Like all wars go, this too was a traumatic experience, especially for the vanquished. What is important for the purpose of our analysis is not the veracity of all the claims made by the Bishop in his description of the immediate repercussions of the Seven Years War on the people of Canada. Some of these details may or may not be colored with his own subjective judgment, but that is precisely

26 Bishop Pontbriand, as quoted by Benjamin Sute, A History of Quebec, Toronto 1908, p. 100. That the conditions in the colony in the immediate aftermath of the war were deplorable is corroborated by the letter written by Murray, the British governor in charge of Canada at this time, to Amherst, the British Commander- in- Chief in North America. It read: "... To describe it is really beyond my powers and to think of it is shocking to Humanity. It has afforded the King’s British Subjects an opportunity of exerting that Benevolence and charity inseparable from the sentiments which the freedom of our laws of church and state must ever inspire. The merchants and officers have made a collection of five hundred pounds Halifax currency and the Soldiers insist on giving one day’s provision in a month for the support of the indigent, without these aids many must have perished and still I fear (in spite of all we can do) a famine unless a supply of corn is sent from Montreal or the British Provinces." PAC: Murray Papers, III, ‘Letters to and from Murray, 1759- 89,’ p. 49- 50, Murray- Amherst, 1 January, 1761.
the point. It is the popular perception of the conflict we are looking for, and it is in this context that the testimony of Pontbriand is rendered all the more important. The English forces were widely seen as occupation forces that destroyed the hearths and homes of the habitants, exiled them from their own houses and burnt down their fields. Whereas even a less traumatic war would still have created strong sentiments among the Canadiens, the death and destruction associated with it must have added fuel to the fire in this case, and some of the immediate resentment against the British forces must have been due to the inherently calamitous nature of the Conquest. Nor can all this destruction be attributed to the very nature of warfare in general. Whereas in the case of Quebec much of the destruction occurred during the siege of the city and was thus seen as more or less inevitable, in the case of the countryside, the destruction often took a wanton shape, which fact could not have been without its own consequences in terms of the lingering memories of the occupation among the people. Here again, we have the testimony of Bishop Pontbriand who thus commented on the state of affairs in the countryside:

"No supplies are to be had from the country, which is in a more deplorable condition than the city itself. All of the cote de Beaupré and the Ile de Orleans had been ravaged before the siege was over. Farms, dwellings, presbyteries, have been put to the flames. Whatever livestock remained has been seized; those who had been driven into Quebec before the siege have almost all been consumed by our own troops. In consequence, the poor habitant who returns to his land with his wife and children will be obliged to lodge like a savage. Their crops, only half harvested, will suffer from exposure; likewise their stock. The hiding places which they had contrived in the forest, have been discovered by the enemy, and so the habitant is without goods and chattels, without utensils, and implements for cultivating the soil and felling wood... I affirm that this
account of our misfortune is no whit exaggerated, and I entreat our lord bishops and all charitable persons to exert themselves in our behalf."

There are a number of historians who have presented a less traumatic account of the Conquest and its immediate consequences. In most such accounts, it is the economic, political and cultural continuity that supposedly remained intact in the immediate aftermath and even later of the Conquest that is employed to give a purely reductionist interpretation of a far-reaching development, as far as the future of the Canadiens as a community was concerned. For instance, we have Susan Trofimenkoff thus commenting upon the Conquest and its consequences for the habitants:

<< Ce sont les gens du people qui se ressentent le moins de la Conquete. Ils sont habitues à se battre; après tout, le changement politique est peut être une épreuve moins dure à supporter que la peste, la mort d’un époux dans l’Ouest ou d’une épouse en couches. En 1757, les femmes s’étaient révoltées contre les rations de viande de cheval distribuées aux civils; maintenant, et pour la première fois depuis de nombreuses années, elles entendent tinter des espèces sonnantes et trébuchantes. C’est pour les citadins surtout que le changement est sensible : les prix baissent et l’argent circule. Il se peut même que tous les commerçants situés dans l’échelle sociale au dessous des grossistes, des importateurs, des fournisseurs d’équipement et des négociants- c’est à dire les artisans, boutiquiers, aubergistes et prêteurs sur gage- aient eu le sourire. Ceux de Montréal, contrairement à ceux de Québec, n’avaient pas vu dévaster leur ville. Quant aux habitants qui, pour la plupart, vivaient dans les régions situées autour des deux villes principales, tous connaissent un parent ou un voisin dont la ferme ou la récolte a été détruite, quand la leur a été épargnée ...

...Transmises à travers les générations, et notamment pendant les longues veillées d’hiver, ces visions se sont inscrites de manière indélébile dans la mémoire collective, et ceci, bien que les Britanniques aient apporté avec eux la paix et de l’argent pour payer les produits agricoles. S’il est demande aux habitants de fournir du travail communautaire, ou plus rarement si leur blé est réquisitionné, ils remplissent ces devoirs avec la même mauvaise humeur qu’au temps du régime

27 Bishop Pontbriand, as quoted in Benjamin Sulte, A History of Quebec, Toronto 1908, p. 101.
It is this kind of historical materialism negating the very humanity of a community that is difficult to understand or appreciate. From Trofimenkoff's account it would appear that the *habitants* had no sense of identity, culture and community, their sole concern being their material well being, as if there was no connection between these different aspects of the life of the people. To regard the conquest merely as a change of political hands that came to govern the colony and to claim that their economic interests were, in fact, served the better by the Conquest is, at best, specious and, at worst preposterous. While a war-ravaged population would naturally feel relieved at the resumption of normalcy and would try to ameliorate the material conditions of its existence, this does not in any way signify any sense of contentment on its part, as far as the outcome of the conflict is concerned. The argument that the abolition of military service must have made the *habitants* happy does not hold water either. The counter-position between the interests of the different sections of the society ignores the fact that in a defeated society all the people, irrespective of their class, become subject to a new power, which may or may not be culturally or politically different from its predecessor. The elite in Canada suffered the loss of their dominant position, which would, with the passage of time, pass on to the English elite, but the *habitants* lost their position to the mass of the new-comers. In fact,

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28 Susan Mann Trofimenkoff, *Visions Nationales*, Toronto 1983, p. 51. Similarly, we have Mason Wade insisting that the Conquest was a remarkably smooth transition for the *Canadiens*: "In this age of ruthless oppression of conquered peoples the peaceful transition of Quebec from French to British rule is remarkable and noteworthy. The English conquest might well have meant the end of French Canada as a cultural unit in North America, and of the French Canadians as an ethnic group; instead, the survival of both was assured by legislation adopted a decade after the peace treaty had been signed. Mason Wade, *The French Canadians*, Toronto 1955, p. 47.
there is every reason to believe that for the habitants the sense of loss may have been much deeper than for the elites, since the latter had far more cosmopolitan background in terms of their commonness with the new ruling class. In the eighteenth century, French was the lingua-franca of Europe and was widely popular among the English elite, which may have provided them a shared ground with the Canadian elites. For the average habitant, however, the change would be far starker, since he would rarely have the kind of background that would enable him to find a common ground with the conquerors. Trofimenkoff’s account of the immediate consequences of the Conquest leaves a distinct impression that it was somehow the most natural, even wholesome, thing to have happened and was thus perceived by the Canadiens who welcomed it with open arms. The implication is that there was no distinctive identity, no community, just a group of people glad to be liberated from economic servitude. Neither the immediate aftermath of the Conquest nor the subsequent history of Canada provides any evidence for these assumptions. The trauma of the conquest is not a later day invention but is an integral part of the identity and consciousness of what later came to be called the French-Canadian community. To deny the reality of the Conquest as a conquest is to deny the very existence of the Canadiens as a community.

The consequences of the Conquest were manifold and extended over the entire life of the Canadiens—political, economic, social and cultural. Above all, the Conquest represented what was obviously perceived as a comprehensive loss of power and position by the Canadiens, marking the beginning of the struggle for la survivance.

The first indications of the shape of things in the future emerged during the Seven Years War itself when the siege of Montreal took place in 1760. According to the Articles of
Capitulation, general Jeffrey Amherst, the British commander, demanded that 'the whole garrison of Montreal must lay down their arms, and shall not serve during the present war'. Furthermore, he promised safety to members of the militia. It is the religious and cultural rights promised by the Articles of Capitulation that require a closer attention. Article XXVII makes an interesting reading:

"The free exercise of the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Religion, shall subsist entire, in such manner that all the states and the people of the Towns and countries, places and the distant posts, shall continue to assemble in the churches and to frequent the sacraments as heretofore, without being molested in any manner, directly or indirectly. These people shall be obliged, by the English Government, to pay their priests the tithes, and all the taxes they were used to pay under the Government of his most Christian Majesty."

These terms would no doubt have created a degree of reassurance among the habitants, since they promised continuity in matters of religion. It is no doubt true that they were offered in the course of a war, and were thus meant to serve the cause of a speedy conquest of the colony. However, as far as the Canadiens as a group are concerned, the motives behind the grant of these generous terms are less important than the expectations they created. Apart from freedom of religion, the articles also promised to the habitants the free exercise of their civil laws inherited from the French regime. Article XXXVII similarly promised economic continuity to Canada. It proclaimed:

"The Lords of Manors, the Military and Civil officers, the Canadians as well in the Towns as in the country, the French settled, or trading, in the whole extent of the colony of Canada, and all other persons whatsoever, shall preserve the entire peaceable property and possession of the goods, noble and ignoble, moveable and immovable, merchandizes, furs and other effects, even their ships; they shall not be done, nor the least damage done to them, on any pretense whatever.

They shall have liberty to keep, let or sell them, as well to the French as to the British; to take away the produce of them in Bills of exchange, furs, specie or other returns, whenever they shall judge proper to go to France, paying their freight, as in the XXVIth Article. They shall also have the furs which are in the posts above, and which belong to them, and may be on the way to Montreal; and, for this purpose, they shall have leave to send, this year, or the next, canoes fitted out, to fetch such of the said furs as shall have remained in those posts.  

Thus, apart from religious and cultural freedom, it was also promised by the first official document issued by the British after the Conquest that the economic interests of the people would be protected. However, it is obvious that these promises were instruments of a smooth transition from the French regime in Canada to the British. As such, their long-term impact on the colony could not be, and was not intended to be, really significant. What the Articles of Capitulation promised was a temporary accommodation of the French and Canadian economic interests, before a more stable policy could be put in place in the conquered territory. As for the long-term economic consequences, which were overwhelmingly negative for the community, we shall discuss them later.

It is to the cultural and religious consequences of the Conquest that we turn our focus for the moment, for this is by far the most important question related to the future of the Canadiens as a distinctive community. Naturally, this is also the question that has generated the greatest amount of controversy within the realm of Canadian historiography. Those who emphasize the continuities in the life of the people after the Conquest tend to underplay the importance of the religious and cultural contest that it gave rise to. We have discussed Susan Trofimenkoff's approach earlier and seen how her argument favors continuity in material relations, even though she concedes that 'it was a

30 Ibid.
conquest’ and that ‘conquest is like rape’\textsuperscript{31}. Francis Parkman’s interpretation of the cultural implications of the Conquest goes a step further and hails the latter as a harbinger of ‘liberty’. This, of course, is an interpretation that seeks not so much to deny the existence of the Canadiens as a community with a distinctive identity as to denounce it in categorical terms. Here is Parkman commenting upon the meaning of the conquest for the colony:

“The English conquest was the grand crisis of the Canadian history. It was the beginning of a new life. With England came Protestantism, and the Canadian church grew purer and better in the presence of an adverse faith. Material growth; an increased mental activity; an education, real though fenced and guarded; a warm and genuine patriotism, - all date from the peace of 1763. England imposed by the sword on reluctant Canada the boon of national and ordered liberty. Through centuries of striving, she had advanced from stage to stage of progress, deliberate and calm, - never breaking with her past, but making each fresh gain the base of a new success, - enlarging popular liberties while bating nothing of that height and force of that individual development which is the brain and heart of civilization; and now, through a hard-earned victory, she taught the conquered colony to share the blessings she had won. A happier calamity never befell a people than the conquest of Canada by the British arms\textsuperscript{32}.”

Parkman’s approach to the consequences of the Conquest is the approach not only that of an outsider; it is that of a man with a strong notion of a ‘civilizing mission’ for the

\textsuperscript{31}Susan Mann Trofimenkoff, \textit{The Dream of Nation: A Social and Intellectual History of Quebec}, Toronto 1982, p. 31

\textsuperscript{32}Francis Parkman, \textit{The Old Regime in Canada}, Toronto 1899, Vol. II, pp. 204-05. Elsewhere, Parkman denounces the role of the church in the French-Canadian society of the late nineteenth century: “With the Peace of Paris ended the checkered story of New France; a story which would have been a history if faults of constitution and bigotry and folly of rulers had not dwarfed it to an episode. ..Civil liberty was given them by the British sword, but the conqueror left their religious system untouched, and through it they have imposed upon them a weight of ecclesiastical tutelage that finds few equals in the most catholic countries of Europe. Such guardianship is not without certain advantages. When faithfully exercised it aids to uphold some of the tamer virtues, if that can be called a virtue which needs the constant presence of a sentinel to keep it from escaping: but it is fatal to mental robustness and moral courage; and if French Canada would fulfill its aspirations, it must cease to be one of the most priest-ridden communities of the modern world.” Francis Parkman, \textit{Montcalm and Wolfe}, Toronto 1899, Vol. III, p. 259.

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English conquerors. The problem with this approach is not just the obvious condemnation of the conquered people but also the complete denial of any agency to them in the interpretation of their own past. What Parkman is commenting upon is not at all what the Conquest may or may not have meant for the Canadiens but what it meant for him and his 'civilizing mission'. It is ironical that he traces all the virtues he condescendingly acknowledges the later day French-Canadians to have to the great liberating experience of the Conquest—'material growth', 'increased mental activity', 'education'—as though none of these had anything to do with the Canadiens and could only be imposed by an outside agency. Parkman's characterization of the Conquest as a 'calamity' 'happier' than any other is the high watermark of his ethnocentric and deterministic approach to history. In fact, the best parallel one can draw is with Rudyard Kipling, 'the most celebrated poet of the empire', who invoked the 'white man's burden' thesis to civilize the world, except that in this case it is the burden that is emphasized and not the 'white man', and this for obvious reasons.

At the same time, we do have some English-Canadian historians who have displayed a more nuanced understanding of the consequences of the Conquest for the community itself. This is the approach seen, for example, in A. R. M. Lower who thus comments on the significance of the coming together of the two groups:

"Among white and Christian peoples no two more complete opposites could have been found than French and English as they grew up in America. In the old world the two races met in the persons of diplomats, soldiers, aristocrats and men of culture. Paris was London's cultural metropolis and France had given to England much of her civilization, her institutions and her language. In religion, Anglicanism, that via media, softened the contact between Catholicism and Protestantism. Though the two peoples were traditionally foes, the two civilizations had many bridges between them. But French culture had not emigrated to the new world, whereas the most
extreme type of French Catholicism had. So it was with New England, whose Protestantism was of a harsh and bigoted kind not representative of the old England. In New France, there had been built up the myth of les Bastonais, the dread Puritans from Boston who thirsted for all good Frenchmen's blood. The two frontiers met in terms of frontier roughness, interpreted to each other not by spirits like Montesquieu but by the leader of the Indian scalping party."

There is in this statement some understanding of both the linkages and the cleavages between the Canadiens and the newcomers. It is undoubtedly true that their mother countries shared much of their culture and cultural conflict was therefore not inevitable. Both France and Britain were what we now call 'ancien regime' societies, characterized by monarchy, state church, aristocratic values, military tradition and mercantilism. On the other hand, differences had probably grown further on the North American soil. The tussle between Catholicism and Protestantism had, of course, been a real tussle, and its extension to the North American theater was only natural. Whether or not their extreme varieties were represented on the continent may be debatable. Protestantism marked the English colonies but Jansenism never took root in the French colony. There is no question, however, that the Conquest itself, like all other conquests, was responsible for widening the gulf between the two groups, and bringing into play the cultural fault lines that would remain at work in Canada even two hundred years later. That the Conquest represented the loss of a whole world, as far as the people calling themselves les Canadiens are concerned, is beyond doubt. The rupture that it would necessarily bring about was an outcome of the very reality of conquest- a fact highlighted by Lower. As he says:

"It is hard for people of English speech to understand the feelings of those who must pass under the yoke of conquest, for there is scarcely a memory of it in all their tradition. Conquest is a type

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of slavery and of that too they have no memory. Conquest, like slavery, must be experienced to be understood. But anyone can at least intellectually perceive what it means. The entire life structure of the conquered is laid open to their masters. They become second-rate people. Wherever they turn, something meets their eyes to symbolize their subjection. It need not be the foreign military in force, it need not be the sight of the foreign flag, it may be some quite small matter: a common utensil of unaccustomed size and shape, let us say, taking the place of one familiar. And then there is the foreign speech, perhaps not heard often, but sometimes heard, and sometimes heard arrogantly from the lips of persons who leave no doubt that the conquered are, in their estimation, inferior beings. Even the kindness of the superior hurts. The educated may make their peace, learn the foreign language and find many areas in common, but the humble cannot cross the gulf: they feel pushed aside in their own homes... No one can suggest that the English conquest, as conquests go, was cruel or English government harsh. If the French in Canada had had a choice of conquerors, they could not have selected more happily than fate did for them. But conquerors are conquerors: they may make themselves hated or they may make themselves tolerated; they cannot, unless they abandon their own way of life and quickly assimilate themselves, in which case they cease to be conquerors, make themselves loved. As long as French are French and English are English, the memory of the Conquest and its effects will remain.\footnote{Ibid., p. 64.}

Here we reach the heart of the question regarding the consequences of the Conquest. There is the superficial answer that looks for the elements of economic and political continuity and there is the deeper answer that seeks to address the more abstract and the more symbolic meaning of the Conquest. The conquest of Canada did lead to economic and military marginalisation of the conquered people, as we would see later. But even apart from this is the issue of religio-cultural domination of the Canadiens resulting from their defeat at the Plains of Abraham. The Conquest represented to the habitant the supplanting of his world by an alien group with its own culture and dominant identity. It
was obviously not the social or cultural differences themselves that were primarily responsible for the ensuing conflict but their occurrence within the framework of a traumatic conquest. The social and cultural dislocation is the direct outcome of the fact that 'the entire life-structure of the conquered is laid open to their masters'. Without taking this into account, there is no way one can understand the effects of the Conquest on the life of the Canadiens. Identities are, of course, not fixed, but remain perpetually in flux, so that it is the specific historical experience that decides what aspects of a community’s identity, both as an image of the self by the self itself and of the self by the other, would come into play more than others. Since the French colonists in North America already had a distinctive identity and a strong sense of community, resentment at the sight of an alien culture would only be natural. What was alien in the context of eighteenth century Europe or its colonies in North America is no doubt a ticklish issue, and it would simply not do to try to essentialise alienness itself. However, we must remember that in both France and England the process of nation building was already at an advanced stage, and whatever may have separated the North American colonies from Europe, some of the core elements of the process were present there in as much vigor as in the old continent. And it is here that the reaction of the common people, who constituted the bulk of the Canadiens as a community, is all the more important, a point we emphasized earlier. Whereas the entire community must have found it difficult to reconcile to the loss of cultural power and autonomy as a result of the Conquest, it is reasonable to assume that the habitants, as against the seigneur or the priest, must have felt it all the more, for 'the humble cannot cross the gulf', at least not easily. In fact, their resentment towards these two classes in the immediate aftermath of the Conquest is well-
documented and may have been at least partly due to this sense of being let down by their leaders. The nonpayment of taxes and tithes may have a deeper meaning than 'stinginess'; and it may have had something to do with the habitants' sense of betrayal at the sight of the seigneurs and priests cooperating, if not collaborating, with the conquerors.

The other end of the spectrum in the interpretation of the Conquest, the antithesis to Parkman's thesis, is represented by none other than Francois Xavier Garneau, one of the first historians of French-Canada. This is an interpretation of the Conquest as conquest in stark terms, as an unmitigated disaster, the source of all troubles of the French-Canadian community. As Garneau puts it:

"The Canadians, meanwhile, felt all the chagrin arising from subjection to alien sway. The evils they had previously endured seemed light to them, compared to the suffering and humiliations which were in preparation, they feared, for them and their posterity. First of all, the British wished to repudiate whatever was Canadian, and to deprive the habitants even of the natural advantages Canada offered to them by its extent. The colony was dismembered...

From parceling our territory, the British passed to relegislating. Their king, by his sole authority, without parliamentary sanctions, abolished those laws of olden France, so precise, so clear, so wisely framed, to substitute for them the jurisprudence of England- a chaos of prescriptive and statutory acts and decisions, invested with complicated and barbaric forms... and the above substitution was effected merely in order to ensure protection and the benefits of the laws of their mother country to those of the dominant race who should emigrate to Canada."

This is virtually a litany of complaints all of which emanated from the very fact of the Conquest. The 'chagrin arising from subjection to alien sway' may or may not have been felt by the entire community in an equal measure, but its reality cannot be wished away.

The idea of the vivisection of the land the Canadiens had come to regard as their 'patrie' would have symbolized to the bulk of the people a complete loss of control over the world that had hitherto belonged to them. The replacement of laws 'so precise, so clear, so wisely framed' by 'chaos' and 'barbaric forms' sums up the frustration of the community with the disintegration of their world as a consequence of the Conquest. Whereas the exact nature of change in the institutional set up - up established in the post-1763 period may be a matter of debate, it cannot be denied that the laws and institutions were seen to be created afresh for the benefit of the conqueror, which was, of course, a natural reaction to any kind of departure in this regard. Thus, the Conquest signified the untimely demise of an autonomous world, and there can be little doubt that it resulted in the loss of political and cultural power for the Canadiens. It is true that the two groups had much in common, but that does not mean they could have come to terms with each other without a subtext of conflict owing its origins to the very fact of subjugation. In fact, the context of domination - subordination was likely to sharpen the edge of the differences between the Canadiens, on the one hand, and the English conquerors, on the other. This is precisely what would happen in Canada in the post- conquest period. It must be asserted, however, that the conquest did not, and could not have, ruled out all possibilities of cooperation. As we would see later, the British, from the very beginning, sought to gain the support of sections of the Canadien society and many individuals and groups did respond positively to these overtures. Without such cooperation, it would have been impossible for the British to rule over their 'new subjects', unless of course they were willing to embark on a policy of perpetual conflict with the Canadiens- something that no intelligent conqueror fancies, except when the intention is simply to exterminate
the conquered. However, there is no fundamental contradiction between a policy of limited cooperation, or even collaboration, and a more general, and perhaps more intense struggle for self-assertion. To be sure, the people would soon reconcile to the inevitability of the British rule and there would be no insurrection on their part for its overthrow for about seventy years. However, it is the silent opposition to the Conquest that constituted, from the very outset, the principal element of the dynamic between the Canadiens and the British. Significantly enough, Michel Brunet has described the Conquest as ‘les debuts de la resistance passive’. His approach is thus not very different from that of Garneau. According to Brunet:

<< Soumis à une domination étrangère, les Canadiens vivent dans un état permanent de résistance passive. Les circonstances ne leur permettront jamais de dépasser ce stade et d’organiser une résistance collective efficace. Ils n’ont pas de chefs pour les encadrer, les armes et les soulever contre l’occupant. Celui-ci est le plus fort. Ceux qui pourraient être ces leaders ont du faire leur soumission. Incapables de comprendre qu’ils n’étaient pas libres d’agir différemment, le peuple leur considère presque comme des traîtres. Il éprouve très peu de respect pour eux et n’est nullement disposé à suivre leurs directives. Les dirigeants canadiens auront la désagréable surprise de la constater plusieurs fois durant la première génération après la Conquête. Les paysans et les artisans, la masse des petites gens des campagnes et des villes continuent avec les faibles moyens dont ils disposent à s’opposer aux Anglais, à ceux qui pour eux demeurent toujours les ennemis. Comme individus, les Canadiens ne refusent pas avoir des relations avec les Anglais. Les commerçants britanniques qui parcourent les campagnes sont généralement bien reçus. Dans les villes, de nombreux canadiens ont déjà pris l’habitude d’acheter chez les marchands anglais. Mais comme collectivité, la majorité des Canadiens ne se reconnaît pas solidaire de ceux qui gouvernent la colonie conquise au nom du roi d’Angleterre et au bénéfice de l’empire britannique. Le peuple semble croire qu’un jour viendra où les occupants partiront et seront forces de laisser le Canada

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Brunet's comments on the manner in which the Canadiens reacted to the Conquest take one to the very heart of the matter. Once the colony was conquered, there was a decapitation of the society in the sense that its elites, since the bulk of these still had their roots in France, decided to leave for the mother country. Those who did remain in Canada lost their social and moral authority first by the very fact of the Conquest, which placed them in a subordinate position vis à vis the new ruling class, and also by their collaboration with the British. The latter is, of course, a general problem faced by conquered communities. What gives rise to it is the fact that the entire society is left open, as it were, to the intervention of the new rulers, and if the existing elites do not cooperate with the new rulers, they can always be replaced by the new ones, more amenable to the dictates of the dominant group. The possibility, therefore, that the

36 Michel Brunet, *Les Canadiens après la Conquête (1759-1775)*, Montréal 1969, p. 55. That the Conquest only further crystallized the distinctive identity of the community by initiating resistance to assimilation is mentioned by some English-Canadian scholars as well. Thus, W.J. Eccles comments: "The French Canadian concentrated in their seigneuries, by together by their language, their old culture and their religion- which now assumed far greater importance in their lives than it had since the early seventeenth century- successfully resisted the continuing fumbling efforts of the Anglo-Canadians and British officials to assimilate them, to make them over into English-speaking Protestants, or at least to exorcise their divisive language. All that this accomplished was to strengthen what the conquerors sought to eradicate. W.J. Eccles, *France in America*, Toronto 1973, p. 247. Maurice Seguin traces the roots of later day separatism on the part of the French-Canadians to the very nature of the community with a distinctive identity, and suggests that the measures taken by the British for the assimilation of the community in fact achieved the opposite results. "Ce mouvement séparatiste canadien-français est naturel. Ce n'est pas la politique anglaise qui l'a créée, elle n'a fait que l'intensifier et le cultiver. Dans une vieille colonie, riche de plus d'un siècle d'histoire, nettement différenciée par son origine, sa langue, sa religion, ses lois, isolée même des zones les plus peuplées de l'Amérique angloise, ne recevant au début que quelques milliers d'immigrants étrangers, les canadiens ne se sentent nullement menacés comme groupe et n'éprouveront pas la moindre tentation de démissionner. L'utilisation temporaire du particularisme canadien-français par l'Angleterre en 1774 et la subdivision en 1791, pour des fins d'assimilation graduelle, apparaissent au contraire, aux canadiens français comme des consécration de leur nationalisme et une invitation à s'ancre dans le séparatisme." M. Seguin, *L'idée d'indépendance de Québec*, Trois Rivières 1971, p. 13. The resolve of the community to maintain its distinctiveness may have been responsible for the steep rise in birth rate in Canada in the decade following the Conquest. With 65.3 per 1000 population, the birth rate during 1760-70 was reportedly one of the highest birth rates ever recorded for any society. See G. Langlois, *Histoire de la population canadienne-française*, Montréal 1934, p. 262.
habitants reacted more sharply to the Conquest than the colonial elites is very real and must not be dismissed on the basis of the fallacious and demeaning premise that ordinary people do not think beyond their immediate material needs.

The autonomous social and cultural domain of the Canadiens was thus supplanted by the advent of a new order of things, a new scheme of reverences. Even greater was the loss in terms of the complete rupture in ties with France, which meant that no augmentation of the cultural resources from the original locus was possible any longer, since the movement of people, and through them of ideas and institutions, from France could no longer take place. This consequence of the Conquest has thus been summed up by Marcel Trudel:

<< La société subit de dures conséquences. Séparée brusquement de son centre naturel (la France), elle ne peut plus compter sur une immigration française régulière, la mère patrie n’ayant plus intérêt à l’organiser ou l’Angleterre n’en voulant pas. Fonctionnaires et militaires se rembarquent; avec eux, des marchands : ils n’étaient que de passage pour retirer un bénéfice. Sauf rares exceptions, on ne verra plus de ces Français qui viennent une saison et repartent, reviennent et repartent. Les immigrants seront originaires des colonies américaines et de Grande-Bretagne.>>

The end of immigration from France would not only dry up the fountainhead of the social and cultural existence of the Canadiens as a community but also make them uniquely exposed to the onslaught of the conquerors. Since the future migration to the

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37 Marcel Trudel, Mythes et réalités dans l’histoire de Québec, Montréal 2001, p. 210. However, Trudel points out the fact there was no immediate threat perceived by the habitants regarding the use of their language: << Aucun des traits de 1759 à 1763 ne fait mention de la langue française. C’était le cas d’ravikantraillleurs des traites de cette époque entre la France et l’Angleterre: à ce niveau international, la religion faisait problème, non la langue. On n’a pas lieu, pour le moment, de s’inquiéter : le français est l’outil de communication entre les nations d’Europe; on le parle chez les élites d’Angleterre. On le parle aussi chez les officiers de l’armée britannique, dont le général en chef Jeffrey Amherst, James Murray, Thomas Gage, Ralph Burton, Fredrick Haldimand( Suisse francophone), qui vont un moment ou l’autre diriger la colonie. Et l’on sait que le théâtre en français revivra à Québec, tout de suite après la cession, grâce à des officiers anglais qui s’en feront les acteurs. Les Canadiens ne semblent pas, ces premières années, se poser des questions sur l’avenir de leur langue. >>Ibid.
colony was now going to be of Anglophone communities, the process of transformation from an autonomous ‘community in its own right’ to a minority supplanted by the conqueror was more or less inevitable. In this sense, it could reasonably be said that the Conquest made it virtually impossible for the people to be ‘masters in their own house’, since there was no ‘house’ owned by them any more; what was the ‘own house’ until the other day would now belong to the ‘other’.

The Conquest and Economic Subjugation of the Canadiens to the British:

As far as the economic effects of the Conquest are concerned, one can talk about the immediate and the long—term effects. We have already noted the destruction caused by the Seven Years War in terms of buildings destroyed, merchandise lost or carried away, homes looted or occupied by the English soldiers. Disastrous as they were in the short term, the community recovered from their ill-effects, once peace was established and normal life was resumed in the colony. It is the long-term economic impact on the French-Canadians that is more important for our analysis here. There are two principal views in this regard: one that regards the Conquest as the root cause of the ‘economic subordination’ and backwardness of the Canadiens and the other that more or less rejects the notion that the Conquest had any such effect. The two perspectives are not simply about the economic effects of the Conquest but about a wider arena of debate covering the entire web of social, economic and other issues. The notion of a social and economic ‘decapitation’ following the Conquest has had wide currency among the French-Canadian historians. This is a nationalist perspective on French-Canadian history and, as

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38 See Selections illustrating Economic History since the Seven Years’ War, compiled by Benjamin Rand, Cambridge [Mass.] : Waterman and Amee, 1888.
such, relates to the larger issue of the Conquest and its effects rather than economic question alone. According to Seguin:

"In practical terms, the Canadiens were isolated from the higher reaches of trade because of a change of empire in the age when mercantilism was in force. The obligation to concentrate trade within the foreign world of the British empire, the difficulty for the Canadiens of developing relations with the unknown businessmen of the new metropolis or the other colonies, as opposed to the ease with which Britons could arrange exports and imports among themselves, plus the British monopoly on the ocean transport were so many causes that combined to annihilate the external trade Canadiens had carried on before 1760, and even to force them out of a large portion of the internal trade, chiefly in activities closely linked to the external trade.

Similarly, the Canadiens were excluded from the primary exploitation of the great natural resources other than agriculture. The exploitation of furs or timbers by owners or employers was dominated by the trading group and thus fell primarily to the British. These important sources of wealth, particularly the forest, one of the bases of the Quebec economy, excluded the Canadiens."

There is a lot of merit in Seguin's views on the economic effects of the Conquest. Trade, and not agriculture, it needs to be emphasized, was the basis of the increasing economic prosperity of the mercantilist countries of Europe. As we have noted earlier, mercantilist enterprise was essentially an enterprise in coercion and economic exploitation of colonies. International trade, or at least the part of it in the hands of the European countries, was less about trade, as we know it today, and more about colonial expansion

39 M. Seguin, La Conquête et la vie économique des Canadiens, Action nationale, 1947, Vol. 28. Elsewhere, Seguin comments upon the Conquest as an unmitigated disaster in every respect: "Pour ceux qui savent apprécier 'a sa juste valeur l'indépendance nationale, cette conquête anglo-américaine est un désastre majeur dans l'histoire du Canada français, une catastrophe qui arrache cette jeune colonie à son milieu protecteur et nourricier et l'atteint dans son organisation comme peuple. Le Canada français ne sera plus seul. Sur le même territoire, dans ce Québec même, naît un deuxième Canada, une autre colonisation, anglaise cette fois, colonisation qui s'imposera dès le début par sa suprématie politique et économique et qui, finalement, consolidera par le nombre cette suprématie en devenant rite. M. Seguin, L'idée d'indépendance de Québec, Trois Rivières 1971, p. 12. Also see Great Britain's Woodyard; British America and the Timber Trade, 1763-1867 by Arthur R. M. Lower.
geared at economic subordination of different parts of the world. By the very logic of things, the Canadian merchants could not have retained their hold on the trans-Atlantic trade. The advent of new merchants from England and Atlantic colonies was bound to have a deleterious effect on the trade carried out by the Canadiens, in as much as the former had all the power, influence, network that were required to carry out long-distance trade in the eighteenth century. Many of the great merchants had left Canada after the Conquest, while the ones who remained had no contact left with France, which had been their commercial metropolis. France could not have continued to retain its position in this regard, for that would be a negation of the Conquest whose main purpose was economic aggrandizement through trade and commerce. The displacement of the Canadiens occurred not simply due to their inability to cope with the changes in the economic and commercial system. Once London became the metropolis of Canada, it would be natural to expect that the bulk of the trade would be carried out with it or with other English colonies. It could not be otherwise, since colonialism would otherwise lose one of its principal motives. What chance would a Canadien merchant have to compete with his English counterpart with a sound trade network on both sides of the Atlantic? Trade is carried out between parties and requires organic linkages between the societies participating in it - especially in an age when much of what passed under the name of trade was sheer robbery on land and piracy on seas. Such linkages existed between England and the English-Canadian merchants, and, therefore, they alone were in a position to trade effectively with the new metropolis.

Furthermore, it is equally true that the Canadiens had lost control over their economic life even within the colony- a consequence intimately related to their subsequent
weakness in trade and commerce. The English merchants had arrived in the colony almost with the arrival of the troops there and had started demanding concessions of various kinds to better control the internal and external trade of Canada. They were a very influential section of their society and had large amounts of capital at their disposal. Canada was now under the rule of their own people and they controlled the economy of the colony. It was only natural that the French-Canadian merchants would not be able to compete with them, since they had neither any control over the economic affairs of the new metropolis nor of their own country any longer. The economic objective behind the Conquest would have remained unfulfilled, if the Canadiens had been allowed to retain their hold over natural resources like fur or timber. They continued to pursue the fur trade after the Conquest both as voyageurs at the manpower end of the enterprise and as suppliers and investors at the negociant end. They were not alone, however, in these pursuits as had been the case before 1760. Little by little, Scots and English joined them, until the War of American Revolution deprived them of their richest fur-bearing region south of the Great Lakes. Even in the western plains, the English Hudson’s Bay Company edged out the Montreal-based traders and took over some of their personnel. Thus, there is little doubt about the economic marginalisation of the Canadiens as a community, though some merchants, especially at the local level, continued to flourish among them. We should also remember that economic marginalisation, especially in trade and commerce, is not something peculiar to the experience of the Canadiens in the era of mercantilism-colonialism. Thus in the case of India, where the British scored their first victory during the same Seven Years War that brought them gave them control of Canada, something similar happened by the second half of the nineteenth century.
Whereas in 1750, India accounted for approximately 25 percent of the total manufacturing output of the world and roughly the same amount of international trade, by the later date it hardly accounted for more than 2 percent. In contrast, England, accounting for less than two percent manufacturing and a slightly higher share in world trade in 1750 came to acquire 15 percent share in both. Of course, the rise of industrial revolution had raised the international trade volumes enormously, and this fact needs to be kept in mind when making such comparisons. The mechanisms used in the case of India were somewhat different, in that they even included direct loot from weavers, merchants farmers and other agents of production between 1757 and 1800. It is not the contention here that the Indian case provides a true parallel to Canada. However, it is important to remember that mercantilism and colonialism had a world – wide reach from the eighteenth century onwards and had similar effects in different places.

However, the decapitation theory has encountered some powerful critics. First of these is Fernand Ouellet who almost refuses to concede that the Conquest had any harmful consequences for the Canadiens as a community. In fact, he comes very close to saying that in the decades immediately following the Conquest there was even an improvement in the economic situation of the community. Here is what he says:

"The conquest did not engender any essential change in the life of the inhabitants of the Laurentian valley. It even, by eliminating the profiteers of the old system, clarified many situations and benefited a number of merchants... immediately after 1760, the citizen of New France is not a being whose psychological buoyancy has been shattered and whose single destination is bondage. Fruitful perspectives open before him, multiple choices are evident in the
challenges that bring themselves to his attention. His fate is thus related to the quality of his responses.

Ouellet's analysis of the economic consequences of the Conquest is problematic in many ways. It is difficult to understand what he means when he says the 'Conquest did not engender any essential change in the life of the inhabitants'. What is an essential change, one might ask? Was the advent of a large number of English merchants not an essential change? Was the new orientation of the commerce of Canada towards England not an 'essential change'? When Ouellet talks about 'eliminating the profiteers of the old system' he is by implication suggesting that the new system created by the British did not have these profiteers. The fact is that both the pre-1763 system and the one devised by the new rulers had a fair share of profiteers, who were regarded as a completely normal element of trade relations. The difference in the post-1763 era would lie in the fact that most of the profiteers in the new system would now belong to the English merchant class.

It is undoubtedly true that all the windows of opportunity did not close for the average Canadien after 1763 and the 'quality of his responses' was important. However, it could not reasonably be asserted that the range of responses available to him remained the same and that the British takeover had no circumscribing effects upon it. Ouellet's analysis is thus strongly inclined towards denying the reality of the Conquest as conquest. As against this, we have other historians of French-Canada who have seen the social, political and economic repercussions of the British takeover within a more nuanced framework that explains the linkages between all of them, suggesting how and why the economic

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subordination would emanate from the Conquest. Thus we have Ramsay Cook explaining the situation of the Canadiens:

"This Canadien nation, unfortunately, inhabited a land that no longer belonged to it. The conquest had fostered new colonization in the fifteenth English colony of America. At the beginning, the influx of English immigrants was not very great. A few hundred came from 1760 to 1775. Such a tiny minority, however, possessed an influence that was much greater than that of the Canadiens, whose only strength was their number. England naturally entrusted the administration of its new colonies to its own subjects. When Canadiens gained the right to hold public office, they had to be content with subordinate posts. In less than fifteen years, the whole of foreign trade and a considerable proportion of domestic trade had passed into the hands of the English merchants. Because of their connection with the London market they had quickly supplanted the Canadien merchants, who were cut off from the support of a metropolis. Control of the political and economic life of the vanquished colony belonged to a group that the Canadiens now called ‘Londeners’ or ‘the English’."\(^{41}\)

It is the ‘new colonization’ that really explains the economic subordination of the Canadiens. Needless to say, this ‘colonization’ was an inevitable outcome of the Conquest, for it was only when the colony was under the control of the merchants from the metropolis that the Conquest could be deemed to be meaningful.

There was an important demographic factor that the conquest debate largely failed to mention. Outside the three chief towns—Quebec, Trois Rivieres, Montreal—the population was not just rural and agrarian, but also settled in homogenous communities with little or no free land available for settlement by immigrants. Thus when British immigrants arrived—first the merchant class to the chief towns and later refugees from the American republic (United Empire Loyalists) to the unsettled eastern townships outside the

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seigneurial tract- the block settlement of the Canadiens was largely undisturbed. Intermarriage on a significant scale did not occur in the general population, nor did social and cultural interaction, even in seigneuries whose new seigneurs were British. The masses, in other words, were more isolated from the adverse consequences of the Conquest than the elites, though this does not at all suggest that they were unaffected by the trauma.

A second factor overlooked in the conquest debate was the traumatic effect on the conquerors who were forced with ruling a population that shared neither its language, customs, aspirations, nor religion. The governors were the first to face the challenge.

British Policy: Subordination versus Accommodation:

Even though the Conquest put the Canadiens in a position of weakness vis a vis the new comers, it should not be assumed that the British pursued a policy of total confrontation with them. As we have seen earlier, some economic and cultural rights were granted even before the conclusion of the war. Shortly after the Treaty of Paris in 1763, a broad policy of ‘toleration’ of the distinctive religio- cultural identity of the Canadiens was put in place. Thus, in a letter to Murray, the new governor of Canada, the British Secretary of State asserted that ‘the laws of Great Britain prohibit absolutely all Popish hierarchy in any of the Dominions belonging to the Crown of Great Britain, and can only admit of a Toleration of the exercise of that religion’. He further instructed Murray that ‘as far as
you can, consistently with your Duty in the Execution of the Laws, & with the Safety of the Country, avoid every Thing that can give the least unnecessary Alarm, or Disgust, to His Majesty's new Subjects. This was then a policy of accommodation of the interests of the Canadiens to the extent that it was necessary for the very establishment of the British rule in the colony. Added to this was the fact that Murray, steeped in martial ethos of a good soldier, had no patience with the newly arrived British merchants from the English colonies who were clamoring for more and more rights and privileges in the colony. In any case, a total refusal to grant any rights to the community was obviously not considered a feasible option, since that might well have put the recently gained colony in a state of perpetual turmoil and might have endangered the British occupation of Canada. Therefore, like all good conquerors who look for the means of governing a

thorough knowledge of the Views, Sentiments, & Faculties of the popish clergy of this province and perfectly sensible of the errors of their doctrine. He proposed Publickly renouncing the Roman Catholick Religion here, but such a measure would rather frustrate, than promote my schemes for the reforms of the inhabitants of this colony. For that reason I send him to London where he may be useful and co-operate with me under the immediate direction of His Majesty's Servants in the great task I undertake of converting a great part of the Canadians." Thus the subversion of the religion of the Canadiens was very much there on the cards. However, as noted earlier, the British took care not to push things too far, and in the process endanger their rule. Significantly enough, Murray adds: "I think I am not too sanguine in my hopes, I am at heart sure my hope my attempt cannot be attended with any bad consequence, because nothing but mild and persuasive measures, the reverse of persecution, shall be used..." PAC: Murray Papers, II, Letter Book, 1763-65, pp. 139-41, Murray: Halifax, 26 June 1764. Similarly, he made urgent efforts to establish the Anglican church in the colony with the same purpose of converting the Canadiens: "To the End that the Church of England may by Degrees be induced to embrace the Protestant Religion, and their Children be Brought up in the Principles of it." Short and Doughty, Const. Docs., pp. 139-40, Murray's Instructions, 7 December, 1763.

44 Ibid. At the same time, it was hoped by the British Government that the Canadiens would soon merge themselves with the English colonists and lose their separate identity. Thus they were expected to become English and not just British. Ibid., I, pp. 191-92

45 PAC: Murray Papers, II, Letter Book, 1763-65, pp. 53-55, Murray - George Ross, 26 Jan. 1764. Expressing his dissatisfaction with the English merchants, Murray said: "No military government was ever conducted with more disinterestedness and more moderation than this has been. Hitherto, it has not been easy to satisfy a Conquering army, a Conquered People, and a set of merchants who have resorted to a Country where there is no money, who think themselves in superior in rank and fortune to the Soldier and the Canadian, as they are pleased to deem the first Voluntary and the second born Slaves." Even though much of this irritation was certainly due to the pretensions of the merchants, one cannot rule out genuine sympathy for the Canadiens on the part of a soldier administrator in eighteenth century. Elsewhere, Murray is said to have described these merchants as 'licentious fanatics'. See Hilda Neatby, Quebec: The Revolutionary Age, 1760-91, Toronto 1966, pp. 33-35.
new territory inhabited by a well-established community with roots going deep into the soil, the British tried to create a via media for the governance of Canada, without, in any way, giving up the idea of their own superior position in the evolving scheme of things. Anglicization of the Canadiens would remain an integral part of the British colonial strategy, but the methods to be adopted would be more subtle and long-term in nature. In the immediate aftermath of the Conquest, the British administration benefited also from a popular feeling of alienation, a belief that France had abandoned them, or at least had made insufficient efforts to defend the colony against the Anglo-American invasion and to bargain for its restoration to French rule in the treaty negotiations in Paris. There was a strong resentment that Canada had been sacrificed for the valuable Antillean plantation colonies, notably Guadeloupe. It was an interpretation of events that was eventually taken up and perpetuated by Canadien nationalist historians. Voltaire’s oft-repeated dictum that Canada was only a few ‘arpents de neige’, a glacial desert, not worth fighting over, appeared to confirm French indifference and neglect. In fact, France had not voluntarily surrendered Canada but had succumbed to naval and military defeat by superior forces. France had launched an expensive naval expansion programme and had spent millions of livres on colonial defence after 1748.

One of the most important aspects of the British policy in Canada in the early days after the Conquest was to come to terms with the Catholic Church in the colony in a limited way. Since Bishop Pontbriand had passed away during the course of the war, the colonial

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46 At this stage, the number of the English immigrants was still very small. It consisted of principally a few hundred merchants and the troops and administrators. That the British Government had no coherent plan for the Anglicization of the Canadiens at this stage is thus commented upon by Eccles: “Exactly how that tiny minority was to assimilate the great majority was never spelled out. It appears to have been taken for granted that the Canadians, heretofore suffering a cruel, despotic, arbitrary government, would quickly appreciate the superiority of the British institutions, laws and customs. Gentle treatment, indulgence to a degree, would then bring about the desired end. W.J. Eccles, *France in America*, Toronto 1973, p. 222.

church was facing an unprecedented crisis. A new Bishop could be appointed only by the
curch in France, but this was not permitted by the British laws; in the absence of a
Bishop, new priests could not be ordained and the Catholic faith was thus in the danger of
eventually dying out. In 1766, however, in an effort to bring about reconciliation with
the Canadiens, Murray, in consultation with the British Government, permitted Jean
Olivier Briand to be secretly consecrated as bishop in France and return to Canada48.
However, the title he was officially allowed to hold in the colony was not that of the
bishop but rather of the ‘Superintendent of the Romish Religion’, which was an
innovation in the history of the Catholic Church in North America as well as elsewhere.
What all this signifies is that the British attempted to create goodwill for their rule among
the Canadiens, without being seen to be compromising with the facade of legality.
The Quebec Act (1774):

This policy of measured accommodation of the various aspects of the distinctive identity
of the Canadiens as a community found an elaborate expression in the Quebec Act of
1774. By this time, the situation in North America had taken a drastic turn, portending ill
for British colonialism. Thirteen of the fifteen Atlantic colonies that had been loyal to the
mother country, as long as France had a presence in North America, reassessed their own
interests. With Canada now an English colony, that threat was suddenly removed from
the scene. This, coupled with the existing discontentment with Britain over political and
economic rights, was in the process of giving birth to the American independence

48 It is important to note that the British governor of Canada had agreed for this surreptitious consecration
of the Bishop only after ascertaining his pliability. Murray had strongly opposed the consecration of Abbé
Montgolfier, Superior of the Montreal Sulpicians on the grounds that ‘if a priest as haughty and imperious
and so well connected in France, is placed at the head of this Church, he can later cause much trouble’.
PAC: CO 42 I, Murray- Shelburne, 14 September 1763. On the other hand, Murray was convinced of the
pliability, real or supposed, of Briand, claiming ‘I know no one of his cloth who more justly deserves the
Royal favor’. Ibid., I, 258, Murray- Shelburne, n.d.
movement. In the face of the impending crisis, therefore, it became all the more important for the British to tighten their grip on Canada by trying to create more goodwill and support for their rule in the colony. The Quebec Act gave what could be regarded as major concessions to the Canadiens. The most important issue was, of course, religion and here the Quebec Act marked a clear departure from the established British laws. It declared:

"And, for the more perfect Security and Ease of the Minds of the Inhabitants of the said Province, it is hereby declared, That His Majesty’s Subjects, professing the Religion of the Church of Rome and in the said Province of Quebec, may have, hold, enjoy, the free Exercise of the Religion of the Church of Rome, subject to the King’s Supremacy, declared and established by an Act, made in the First Year of the Reign of the Queen Elizabeth, over all the Dominions and Countries which then did, or thereafter should belong, to the Imperial Crown of this Realm; and that the Clergy of the said Church may hold, receive, and enjoy, their accustomed Dues and Rights, with respect to such Persons only as shall profess the said Religion."

This was then a confirmation in what was the first constitution of the colony of the promises already made by the British rulers to the Canadiens. The grant of the ‘Dues and Rights’ of the Catholic Church was an important concession granted for the first time by the new rulers; in a way, it amounted to recognizing the ‘Church of Rome’. It also heralds the beginnings of a marriage of convenience between the church and the new regime, since without the security of the tithe and other dues traditionally earmarked for it, the Catholic Church would not have been in a position to maintain itself. This does not mean, however, that the Canadiens as a whole would not benefit from this concession, for this provision would permit them to maintain their autonomous religious domain. It is true

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that in the future the church would assume unprecedented power and prestige and would almost become a state within state, as far as Quebec was concerned. However, these developments were still far away. In the meanwhile, the Quebec Act had also imposed an important condition on the church:

"Provided nevertheless, That it shall be lawful for His Majesty, His Heirs or Successors, to make such Provision out of the rest of the said accustomed Dues and Rights, for the Encouragement of the Protestant Religion, and for the Maintenance and Support of a Protestant Clergy within the said Province, as he or they shall, from Time to Time, think necessary and expedient."  

Therefore, the British Government adopted a policy of reconciliation with the Catholic Church and of even recognizing it in a certain way, but it did not give up what it obviously considered was its right to propagate Protestantism within the colony. Thus the new regime was willing to permit the Catholic Church to function legally, but still put the official religion of Britain in an advantageous position. However, the Catholic Church in fact retained control of virtually all aspects of education, social service and community life. The Act also made another departure when it proclaimed:

"Provided always, and be it enacted, that no Person, professing the Religion of the Church of Rome, and residing in the said Province, shall be obliged to take the Oath required by the said Statute passed in the First Year of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth, or any other Oaths substituted by any other Act in the Place thereof; but that every such Person who, by the said such Statute is required to take the Oath therein mentioned, shall be obliged and is hereby required, to take and subscribe the... [oath of allegiance to His Majesty, King George]."

In this way, an oath of religious and political fealty was substituted by a purely political allegiance to the new regime. This was an important concession, as it would enable the Canadiens to hold office under the British rule, and would represent another attempt at

50 Ibid. p. 72.
51 Ibid. p. 72-73.
building an alliance with the local elite. Apart from all this, the Act also granted recognition to the French civil law prevalent in the colony and assured the continuation of the existing land and property regime:

"And be it further enacted by the Authority aforesaid, That all His Majesty's Canadian Subjects, within the Province of Quebec, the religious Orders and Communities only excepted, may also hold and enjoy their Property and Possessions, together with all Customs and Usages relative thereto, and all Civil Rights, in as large, ample, and beneficial Manner, as if the said Proclamation, Commissions, Ordinances and other Acts and Instruments, had not been made, and as may consist with their Allegiance to His Majesty, and Subjection to the Crown and Parliament of Great Britain; and that in all Matters of Controversy, relative to Property and Civil Rights, Resort shall be had to the Laws of Canada, as the Rule for the Decision of the same..."

The grant of these property rights meant that there was no outright liquidation of the economic and social order in Canada. Even if these rights were granted under the specific conditions of an impending rebellion in the Atlantic colonies, it could not but have provided some degree of assurance to all sections of the Canadiens that they would be able to maintain their peculiar system without any open hostility from the new regime. Furthermore, the Act also promised the constitution of a nominated assembly in the colony as soon as possible.

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52 Ibid.

53 The idea of an assembly had been mooted earlier also, since it was an integral part of the evolving structures of governance in Britain and its colonies. However, the proposal had faced two problems: under the British law, only a Protestant could hold office, and, therefore, the Canadiens could not participate in the assembly; on their part, the English merchants in the colony were too few to constitute an assembly, and, in any case, an assembly in Quebec without the Canadiens would have been untenable. It was because of this dilemma that Murray had refused to constitute an assembly, despite loud protests by the English merchants. Clarifying his position on this issue, he had declared: "For my part, My Dear Lord, I will with Joy undertake anything to distress & reduce to reason my Royal Master's Enemies, but I cannot be the Instrument of destroying, perhaps, the best and bravest Race on this Globe, a Race that have already got the better of every National Antipathy to their Conquerors, and could they be indulged with a very few Privileges, which the laws of England do not allow to Catholics at home, must in a very short time become the most faithful & useful Set of Men in this American Empire. PAC: Murray Papers, II, Letter Book, 1763-65, p. 170, Murray- Eglinton, 27 Oct. 1764.
The Quebec Act elicited a variety of reactions from the Canadiens. To the clergy and the seigneurs, mistakenly believed by the officials to be the key elements in maintaining order and British dominance, it came as an opportunity to consolidate their position within the colony. There is reason to believe that the merchants among them were unhappy with the Act, since it seemed to maintain the status quo in favor of the other two groups. On the side of the English colonies, the Act became a source of great discontent, and was almost universally despised by the American merchants, who saw in it an end to their dreams of quickly supplanting the whole economic order in the colony, which was hitherto based on the dominance of the Canadiens. To their mind, the conquest of Canada was meaningless, as long as the Canadiens were permitted to maintain their economic, legal and cultural patterns. It is to be noted that Carleton, the new governor of Quebec, had also received some secret instructions from the home government enjoining upon him the responsibility to gradually subvert the Catholic Church by starving it of resources and restricting its activities, and the same was to be done with regard to the legal system in the colony.

The outbreak of the American Revolution in 1776 came as the first test of loyalty for 'His Majesty's new subjects'. Whether or not the Quebec Act was passed keeping in mind the impending revolt in the Atlantic colonies, it proved to be more or less ineffective in eliciting support from the average Canadien. This was despite the fact that the Catholic Church came out strongly in favor of the British, and tried vigorously to garner support among the habitants. It was the same with the seigneurs who were sympathetic to the British cause, and tried to recruit the habitants on their side. However, the habitants, who

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54 This approach, commonly used in Africa, has been called the 'Negro king thesis', a form of indirect rule.
had been part of a seasoned militia, had no interest in fighting for the British rulers. It is here that the sense of betrayal that the common people had vis-à-vis the elites becomes apparent. Whereas the clergy and the seigneurs stood on the side of the British in the American War of Independence, it should be remembered that they did not have much of a choice in this matter. Their position in the society was henceforward dependent upon the pleasure of the new regime; refusal to side with it would have meant sacrificing the position. Moreover, the British, as in the case of all conquerors, were in a position to create a new elite, if they did not feel happy with the existing group. This is the dilemma that the ruling classes in all conquered societies have to face. They are no longer the true leaders of their society, having lost their prestige to the newcomers, but can continue to remain powerful in a subordinate position. Since the entire community was now laid open to the intervention of the new rulers, who had the power of patronage in their hands, collaboration on the part of the seigneurs and the church was only natural. The habitants did not come to the rescue of the elite, because the latter had lost much of their prestige among them. In any case, they saw the British as an alien power; they had fought in the colonial militia as a national and social obligation. With the demise of Canada as a French colony, this obligation ceased to hold good any more.

It is important to remember that during the American War of Independence, France was on the side of the American colonies, and had even launched a propaganda effort to incite
revolt among the *Canadiens*\(^56\). With the church and the seigneurs on the British side, however, the *habitants* were leaderless, and leaderless masses rarely rise in revolt\(^57\).

We have seen in this chapter that there was no inevitability about the conquest of Canada, and that it happened due to specific historical circumstances. The result of the conflict with the English colonies was not predetermined in favor of the latter, despite their much bigger population and economy. The Conquest came as a traumatic experience for the entire community, more so for the *habitants* than the seigneurs or the clergy, in that it put a well-established community, with a distinctive identity reflected in its entire way of life, under the yoke of an alien power.


\(^{57}\) There are numerous journals of the American invasion of Quebec, 1775, with a good summary of *Canadien* response in Gustave Lanctot, *Le Quebec et la Revolution americaine, Memoires de la societ royale du Canada, 3 serie, vol. 35, 1941, pp. 91-111.*