

## A Note from Steven Pincus

Dear Kind Readers,

I apologize for the length of what I have sent. It is very much part of a work in progress. The book that I am in the process of finishing is called the Global British Empire, ca. 1650 to ca. 1788. The central theoretical claims of that book are 1) that one needs to take empire seriously as conceptual frame and as a state form in analyzing the British Empire 2) The British Empire was unusual among empires in being held together as much by horizontal linkages as it was by vertical ties and 3) Throughout the period the British empire was riven by partisan politics on an imperial scale. This party strife turned on competing notions of political economy and the proper strategy to promote imperial development.

In the presentation I will use the material you have to read to test two kinds of hypotheses. One, a relative recent one, associated with the work of Buzan and Lawson, that international relations were fundamentally transformed in the 19th by the emergence of global modernity. 2) a more long-lived story that war makes states and states make war associated with Charles Tilly and his many followers.

Best,

Steve

## The Global Origins of the Seven Years War

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Days before Gaston Pierre de Lévis, Duc de Mirepoix left London in July 1755 without taking leave of George II, a contributor to *The London Evening Post* opined that “we are apparently on the eve of a war of a new kind in which our commerce is at stake.”<sup>1</sup> At the same time, the editors of the *Pennsylvania Gazette* highlighted the importance of political economy by reprinting an essay from the *Utrecht Gazette* proclaiming that “in order to give a just idea of this affair, one must look to the origins of differences both in the East and West Indies.” In the East Indies, the author of this essay asserted, friction began with the insistence of Joseph Francois Dupleix, the French Governor General, for the French East India Company “to have possessions whose revenues might serve to defray the expenses of their settlements.” “As to the American affairs,” the essayist continued, “the settling of Nova Scotia has been the epoch of the differences in that part of the world.”<sup>2</sup> The prolific and ubiquitously cited political economist Malachy Postlethwayt echoed these assessments. In his view the French for a long time, and especially since the Treaty of Aix la Chapelle, had dramatically augmented their commerce “in all the four quarters of the world.” The French, he warned, have established “a

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<sup>1</sup> *London Evening Post*, 12 July 1755, p. [1]. On Mirepoix’s departure: *Whitehall Evening Post*, 24 July 1755, p. [1]; *London Evening Post*, 24 July 1755, p. [4]; *Public Advertiser*, 24 July 1755, p. [1]; Sir Thomas Robinson (Whitehall) to Ruvigny de Cosne, 22 July 1755, NA, SP 78/250, f. 328r.

<sup>2</sup> *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 17 July 1755, pp. [1-2].

broad bottomed foundation ... for the commercial dominion, which will give them that general empire over Europe, that their grand system aims at; unless they are prevented at this juncture.”<sup>3</sup> The Scotsman David Hume accepted Postlethwayt’s assessment of French commercial expansion while rejecting his policy recommendations. “Nothing is more usual among states which have made some advance in commerce, than to look on the progress of their neighbors with a suspicious eye” and “to consider all trading states as their rivals, and to suppose that it is impossible for any of them to flourish, but at their expense,” Hume wrote in 1758, reflecting, no doubt, on the origins of the Seven Years War. Where Postlethwayt thought that French aggressive commercial advance necessitated war, Hume denounced such a conclusion as “narrow and malignant politics.”<sup>4</sup>

These contemporary accounts of the global political-economic origins of the Seven Years’ War are at odds with the overwhelming majority of historical explanations. While historians differ, and differ profoundly, about the origins of the war, they by and large emphasize narrowly geopolitical concerns, rather than broad political economic ones, in their accounts. They overlook the intense public partisan debate over these issues in Britain and across the Empire. Much of this scholarship describes the decision to go to war as the choice of a narrow political elite. One group of historians has ascribed the origins of the war to the conflict in the upper Ohio Valley. Another set of scholars has insisted on the war’s European origins.

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<sup>3</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *Great Britain’s True System*. (London: A. Millar, J. Whiston and B. White and W. Sandy, 1757), pp. lxi, lxxxiii-lxxxiv.

<sup>4</sup> David Hume, *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects*. New Edition. (London: A. Millar, 1760), “Of the Jealousy of Trade,” Vol. II, pp. 105, 110.

For many historians, the origins of the Seven Years' War can be found in the unregulated actions of settlers and adventurers in the Ohio Valley. "The peace of 1748 proved short-lived," posits Alan Taylor in his widely circulated account, "as both the French and the British overreacted to local aggressions as if they were part of some grand power play by the other empire."<sup>5</sup> In his deeply researched and influential narrative, Fred Anderson accords Indians more agency, but equally insists on the peripheral origins of the global conflict. "The Seven Years' War would not have begun unless a single desperate Iroquois chief had tried to keep the French from seizing control of the Ohio Valley," Anderson explains. This was a "war that began when the diplomatic miscalculations of the Six Nations of the Iroquois allowed the French and British empires to confront each other over the control of the Ohio Valley," according to Anderson. As an unintended consequence of these "miscalculations," then, "the ensuing conflict spread from North America to Europe, the Caribbean basin, West Africa, India, and the Philippine archipelago."<sup>6</sup> For these scholars, while the War might have become global, its origins were distinctly local.<sup>7</sup>

This account of the local origins of the Seven Years' War, in turn, depends on the widely held assumption that the British, at least, had no imperial state or defined colonial policy. In the view of one of the leaders of the so-called 'imperial school' of early American history, Lawrence Henry Gipson, the British Empire, unlike its French and Spanish counterparts, had

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<sup>5</sup> Alan Taylor, *American Colonies: The Settling of North America*. (New York: Penguin, 2001), p. 428.

<sup>6</sup> Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War*. (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), pp. xx-xxi; Matthew C. Ward, *Breaking the Backcountry: The Seven Years' War in Virginia and Pennsylvania, 1754-1765*. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2003), p. 31. These events are also narrated by Eric Hinderaker and Peter C. Mancall, *At The Edge of Empire*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), pp. 92-108. But they are careful not to ascribe the origins of the Seven Years' War to the conflict in the backcountry.

<sup>7</sup> Daniel A. Baugh, *The Global Seven Years War, 1754-1763*. (Harlow: Pearson, 2011), p. 8.

little effective central direction. In fact, in Gipson's view, it was "an Empire that was constitutionally not an empire at all, an Empire that only with great reservations could be considered as possessing unity of pattern and unity of purpose, an Empire that was increasingly less and less the product of influence exerted by the Mother Country." "British expansion in both the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries," Gipson maintained, "took place largely as the result of private rather than state initiative."<sup>8</sup> So deeply ingrained has this view of British imperial neglect before 1760 become that Fred Anderson relegated its discussion to an extended footnote in his magnum opus. "The British empire in the 1750s was not and never had been a territorial entity, and it had never really governed much more than the produce and goods and credit that had traversed the Atlantic ocean," Anderson claims, "the Crown's colonial policy for most of the first half of the eighteenth century was to do nothing," lending "the weight of inertia to the institutional incapacity of English officials to influence American affairs."<sup>9</sup> Alan Taylor confidently dismisses British imperial policy before the Seven Years' War as "benign neglect."<sup>10</sup> "In matters of colonial administration," maintains Eliga Gould, "the Whig ministries of both George I and George II generally opted for what Edmund Burke would later call a policy of 'salutary neglect,' in effect permitting much of the Crown's imperial

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<sup>8</sup> Lawrence Henry Gipson, *The British Empire Before the American Revolution. Vol. V: Zones of International Friction*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1942), pp. viii-ix; 340. For a balanced appraisal of Gipson's contribution, see Patrick Griffin, "In Retrospect: Lawrence Henry Gipson's *British Empire Before the American Revolution*," *Reviews in American History*. Vol. 31, No. 2 (June 2003), pp. 171-183.

<sup>9</sup> Fred Anderson, *The Crucible of War*. (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), p. 752. Anderson's vision, I think, is influenced both by his focus on the Ohio Valley which was not a central concern of imperial administrators, and by his vision of early America being limited to the future United States.

<sup>10</sup> Alan Taylor, *American Colonies: The Settling of North America*. (New York: Penguin, 2001), p. 421.

authority to devolve onto provincial assemblies and great trading concerns like the East India and Royal African companies.”<sup>11</sup>

Early Americanists are not alone in suggesting that the Seven Years’ War could not have been the result of a coherent British imperial policy. “Even to speak of colonial policy before the Seven Years’ War is somewhat misleading,” according to Paul Langford. Senior ministers provided no “direct or even much interest” in colonial affairs, which was “the essence of salutary neglect.”<sup>12</sup> Hamish Scott is less emphatic, noting merely that “London and Versailles were unable to exert the degree of control, over events outside Europe which they wished.”<sup>13</sup> In the East, too, we are told there was no imperial state in the mid-Hanoverian period. Only after 1756, William Dalrymple explains, did the “international corporation” that was the East India Company begin the process “of transforming itself into an aggressive colonial power.” Even then “it was not the British government that began seizing great chunks of India in the mid-eighteenth century,” Dalrymple reminds us, “but a dangerously unregulated private company.”<sup>14</sup> Throughout the period that it ruled in India, Jon Wilson agrees, “British imperial administrators were driven by irrational passions rather than calculated plans.” “The British empire,” Wilson succinctly puts it, “was never a project or a system.”<sup>15</sup>

The notion that events in the distant Ohio Valley led ineluctably to war, also depends on a deeply held belief in the existence of a unified and singular British imperial attitude, if not of a

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<sup>11</sup> Eliga H. Gould, *Persistence of Empire: British Political Culture in the Age of the American Revolution*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), p. 16.

<sup>12</sup> Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 171-172.

<sup>13</sup> H. M. Scott, *The Birth of a Great Power System 1740-1815*. (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2006), p. 74.

<sup>14</sup> William Dalrymple, *The Anarchy: The East India Company, Corporate Violence, and the Pillage of an Empire*. (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019), pp. xxiv-xxv.

<sup>15</sup> Jon Wilson, *The Chaos of Empire: The British Raj and the Conquest of India*. (New York: Public Affairs, 2016), pp. 5, 9.

consistent imperial structure. Ideological consensus, not partisan division, characterized the British attitude towards empire. Rather than partisan divisions, Eliga Gould notes “the increasingly moderate character of British politics” allowed “government to cultivate at least the appearance, if not always the reality of national unity amid the renewed warfare of the 1740s and 1750s.” Importantly, for Gould, at mid-century that growing consensus turned towards a “‘Blue water’ policy calculated to strengthen Britain’s imperial power by seizing French possessions in North America, India, and the Caribbean” while “reducing” European commitments. A younger generation of politicians had embraced the policy prescriptions of Viscount Bolingbroke, the former Tory Secretary of State. “Paeans to blue water empire” thus “inundated the metropolitan press during the later 1740s and 1750s.”<sup>16</sup> British politicians at mid-century, in this view, embraced a piratical spirit of military adventurism, a spirit that framed their overreaction to French advances in the Ohio Valley.<sup>17</sup>

A second group of historians ascribe the origins of the Seven Years’ War to developments in European grand strategy rather than to the activities of settlers in the Ohio Valley. In the period following the peace of Aix La Chapelle (1748), “ministerial attention in both Britain and France was directed rather to European affairs,” explains Jeremy Black. There

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<sup>16</sup> Gould, *Persistence of Empire*, pp. 17, 37, 42, 57. Daniel Baugh also describes a turn to blue-water policy at mid-century. But he means something very different by blue water policy than does Gould. In Baugh’s case blue-water did not mean turning away from military commitments on the continent: Daniel A. Baugh, “Great Britain’s ‘Blue-Water’ Policy, 1689-1815,” *International History Review*, Vol. 10 No. 1 (February 1988), pp. 54-55. In Gould’s view, as best as I can deduce, blue water policy meant resolving European problems by drawing on Britain’s Atlantic strengths. Gould, it must be emphasized, does not see the war as having begun in the Ohio Valley. Langford also emphasizes the politics of “consensus,” “the politics of politeness, the pursuit of harmony within a propertied society.” Langford, *Polite and Commercial People*. P. 5

<sup>17</sup> It is worth noting the similarity in interpretation and language among this group of historians to the arguments developed in Niall Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), pp. xxv- xxvi, 19.

was by contrast “a relative absence of anxiety on colonial matters.”<sup>18</sup> Thomas Pelham-Holles, 1<sup>st</sup> duke of Newcastle, “effectively ran British foreign policy first as Northern Secretary and then (after Henry Pelham’s death in 1754) as first Lord of the Treasury,” Hamish Scott observes, and Newcastle’s obsession was not colonial affairs or long-distance trade but the “Old System” of continental alliances against France.<sup>19</sup> “What concerned British statesmen between the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748 and the Diplomatic Revolution of 1756, was the future of the Holy Roman Empire – Germany – and its outworks,” argues Brendan Simms in the most well developed work in the Peterhouse tradition. “The most mortal threats to British interests, they believed, was to be found not in the Pennsylvania and Virginia backcountry, Canada, or the Ohio Valley, but in northern and north-western Europe, where the geopolitical system erected by an earlier generation was in a state of terminal disrepair.”<sup>20</sup>

Where historians arguing for the Ohio Valley origins of the Seven Years War have emphasized moderation and unanimity, if overall neglect, in British policymaking, those who argue for the European origins of the Seven Years’ War have emphasized partisan divisions. Brendan Simms, who focuses on the divide between Europeanist Whigs and imperialist Tories, finds similar divisions in the 1740s and 1750s. Whereas “the principal decision-makers” placed “European concerns” first, “whole swaths of British public opinion continued to be mesmerized by the prospect of colonial wealth.” This popular sentiment was given voice by a small group of

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<sup>18</sup> Jeremy Black, *America or Europe? British Foreign Policy 1739-63*. (London: UCL Press, 1998), p. 68.

<sup>19</sup> H.M. Scott, “‘The True Principles of the Revolution’: The Duke of Newcastle and the Idea of the Old System,” in Jeremy Black (editor), *Knights Errant and True Englishmen: British Foreign Policy, 1660-1800*. (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1989), pp. 70-71.

<sup>20</sup> Brendan Simms, *Three Victories and a Defeat*. (New York: Basic Books, 2007), p. 356



politicians who were “enthusiasts for colonial expansion.”<sup>21</sup> Whigs assumed that “the struggle” against France “must be fought predominantly in Europe,” agrees Hamish Scott, as opposed to “the kind of ‘blue-water’ strategy advocated by many Tories.”<sup>22</sup> British politicians were divided between those who emphasized the importance of the European “balance of power,” thought Richard Pares, and those who had a “preference for colonial aims.” Though, of course, Pares was Namierite enough to insist that these divisions did not correspond to Whig and Tory.<sup>23</sup> “British foreign policy throughout the eighteenth century,” writes Daniel Baugh, was fought over between two “opposing schools of thought” the “‘Maritime’ and ‘Continental’.”<sup>24</sup> In the 1740s and 1750s, according to Baugh, this division was made manifest in the struggles between Newcastle, “a devoted continentalist,” and William Pitt.<sup>25</sup>

Because the continentalists had the political upper hand in Britain, according to those who argue for European origins, high diplomatic developments in 1756 precipitated war. The Convention of Westminster, signed in January 1756 between the Prussians and the British, precipitated “a diplomatic revolution.” The Holy Roman Empire, long a reliable British ally in the struggle against France, responded to the Anglo-Prussian rapprochement by allying in May 1756 with France at the Treaty of Versailles. This, according to Simms, “came not only as a blow but also as a complete surprise to London.” Britain also immediately declared war.<sup>26</sup> It

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<sup>21</sup> Simms, *Three Victories and a Defeat*, pp. 357-358.

<sup>22</sup> H. M. Scott, “The True Principles of the Revolution,” p. 57.

<sup>23</sup> Richard Pares, “American versus Continental Warfare, 1739-63,” *English Historical Review*, Vol. 51, No. 203 (July 1936), pp. 430, 436. Where Simms and Scott admire Newcastle’s foreign policy acumen, Pares describes “a long career of diplomatic ineptitude.” On Pares and Namierism, see D. W. Hayton, *Conservative Revolutionary: The Lives of Lewis Namier*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019), pp. 79, 182, 340. Hayton also notes the anti-semitism of the Pares family.

<sup>24</sup> Baugh, “Great-Britain’s ‘Blue-Water’ Policy,” pp. 33-34.

<sup>25</sup> Baugh, *Global Seven Years War*, p. 26.

<sup>26</sup> Simms, *Three Victories and a Defeat*. Pp. 408-410.

was “the Diplomatic Revolution” made manifest in the First Treaty of Versailles of 1 May 1756, agrees Hamish Scott, that “struck at the heart of the alignments upon which the Old System rested” and immediately precipitated the Seven Years War.<sup>27</sup>

Political economy plays little role in either the American or the European origins stories. Most scholars agree that there was no cause for economic anxiety. “Most” commentators, observes Paul Langford, “agreed that they lived in a commercial age, an era in which the progress of production and exchange had dramatically increased the wealth, improved the living standards, and transformed the mores of western societies.” While this was true for France and the United Provinces, Langford notes, “Britain, in particular, seemed to be in the very forefront.”<sup>28</sup> Most across the Empire, Eliga Gould notes, rejoiced “in the increasing tempo of overseas commerce.” The age of George II, he says, was one of “buoyant optimism.”<sup>29</sup> At mid-century, Britain’s economy was humming along; only the French had reason for “commercial jealousy.”<sup>30</sup>

With things going so well, it stands to reason, there was no need for political economic debate. All agreed Britain’s economy and overseas trade was booming. Broad ideological consensus reigned in Britain. Britons all accepted that they lived in a commercial society, insists

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<sup>27</sup> Scott, “‘The True Principles of the Revolution’,” p. 74. This is a revival of an older interpretation: Patrice Higonnet, “The Origins of the Seven Years’ War,” *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 40 No. 1 (March 1968), pp. 57-90.

<sup>28</sup> Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 3.

<sup>29</sup> Eliga H. Gould, *Persistence of Empire: British Political Culture in the Age of the American Revolution*. (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2000), pp. 11-12.

<sup>30</sup> Richard Pares, “American versus Continental Warfare, 1739-63,” *English Historical Review*, Vol. 51, No. 203 (July 1936), p. 437. This term, of course, evokes David Hume’s “Jealousy of Trade” essay of 1758 and Istvan Hont’s influential reading of that essay. It is telling in that account that while Hume was writing amidst “the unfolding commercial and colonial war between Britain and France,” Hont does not offer any analysis of the immediate contemporary arguments against which Hume was positioning himself. Istvan Hont, *Jealousy of Trade*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), p. 36.

Linda Colley; “this cult of trade crossed party divisions, just as it crossed social boundaries.” “Ambiguities and tensions” there might be, but before 1763, they held no real political significance. “Britain’s empire had been small enough and homogeneous enough to seem reasonably compatible with the values that the British, and above all the English, believed they uniquely epitomized,” she notes.<sup>31</sup> In a more detailed analysis of the pamphlet literature relating to empire, Jack Greene observes that, by the 1720s and 1730s, most writers asserted “the view that Britain’s economic growth and visible social improvement were principally the results of its expansion overseas.” By the Walpolean era, Greene maintains, “people” were convinced that Britain was reaping the benefits of empire without the need for “guidance.” There was very little ideological dissonance. Support for chattel slavery was but one of the many areas in which British commentators on empire agreed. “During the years from 1725 to 1750,” Greene continues, “every major economic writer touted the commercial and utilitarian benefits of the African trade.”<sup>32</sup> Ideological consensus, rather than bitter disagreement, characterized the discussion of political economy mid-Hanoverian Britain.

Even the continentalists, who are more likely to admit ideological disagreement at the level of Grand Strategy, scoff at the importance of political economic debate. For Richard Pares, any claims that the importance of colonial commerce might lead some to call for war, “was nonsense.”<sup>33</sup> Baugh claims that Pitt’s political-economic “notions were not doctrinaire.” Instead his motivation was narrowly geopolitical: he wished “to contain or diminish French

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<sup>31</sup> Linda Colley, *Britons*. Second Edition. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), pp. 60, 100-102.

<sup>32</sup> Jack P. Greene, *Evaluating Empire and Confronting Colonialism in Eighteenth Century Britain*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 26, 32 and 158.

<sup>33</sup> Pares, “American versus Continental Warfare,” p. 442.

power.”<sup>34</sup> Because most of Britain’s trade was still with Europe, Simms agrees, “the preoccupation with colonial trade reflected not economic but strategic concerns.” “Britain,” Simms affirms, “asserted herself overseas in order to secure her position in the Great Power system.”<sup>35</sup> There was no consequential political-economic debate that might have precipitated the Seven Years’ War.

In fact, perceived political-economic decline, rather than unregulated expansion in the Ohio Valley or a European diplomatic revolution, led British politicians to plump for war in 1754. Widespread economic discontent and the resulting public pressure forced cautious British politicians to respond aggressively to French encroachments which had taken place on a global scale. Indeed, the widespread acknowledgement of relative economic decline in the 1740s and 1750s precipitated a deeply partisan debate about how best to revive the British economy. The Old Guard argued that political reforms would allow the British to retain their economic lead. A group of authoritarian Whigs and neo-Tories maintained only that abandoning Europe and pursuing a narrowly Atlantic policy of imperial aggression would reverse Britain’s decline. Imperial conquests would finance a British economic revival. Finally, a group of Patriot’s argued for a global economic strategy. They relied on a mass of empirical research to argue for a series of actions, based on regional specificities, to respond to manifest French commercial aggression and success. The last two groups, in essence, were convinced that only a radical restructuring of Britain and its empire would allow it to compete successfully with the buoyant French behemoth.

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<sup>34</sup> Baugh, *Global Seven Years’ War*, p. 27.

<sup>35</sup> Simms, *Three Victories and a Defeat*, p. 366.

After 1748, neither the Pelhamites nor their ideological opponents pursued a policy of salutary neglect. Indeed the massive government infrastructural project of settling Nova Scotia, demonstrated both the ambition and capacity of the robust British imperial state.<sup>36</sup> The Duke of Newcastle, who was never as narrowly continentalist as some have maintained, ultimately felt a global response was warranted. His actions were more timid, and less successful than Pitt's would prove to be. Yet their differences were temperamental rather than ideological. When Newcastle decided to send royal troops to the Coromandel Coast, to commission the British navy to cut the commercial links between New France and the European continent, and when he agreed to send General Edward Braddock to attack the French at the forks of the Ohio, there was no turning back. It was news of Admiral Edward Boscawen's attack on the French navy in 1755, not of Braddock's defeat, that led the British and French to break off diplomatic relations. Long before the Diplomatic Revolution of 1756, commentators throughout Europe, America and Asia knew that a new phase of Anglo-French conflict had begun. This time it was clear that war was precipitated by economic rivalry across the globe. Diplomatic events surely shaped the contours of the conflict. But they did cause the Seven Years' War, nor did they alter its fundamentally commercial quality.

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<sup>36</sup> My point is that many scholars by focusing their research gaze on the Ohio Valley, a part of the future United States, rather than on Nova Scotia, have mistaken a different set of imperial priorities for imperial neglect or incompetence. There has been historiographical neglect of Britain's imperial projects and aims rather than imperial salutary neglect.

The British economy emerged from the War of the Austrian Succession battered. Not only had the war in Europe gone badly since the glorious victory at Dettingen, not only had Britain's fiscal situation deteriorated, but many knew that Britain was losing its commercial competitive edge against France. Indeed, mid-Hanoverian Britain faced a tremendous economic crisis.

Britain's most prominent economic commentators agreed that the economy was in crisis. In an oft-reprinted and deeply influential, pamphlet Matthew Decker took it for granted that "the foreign trade of Britain declines," pointing to the petitions pouring into Parliament "complaining of the decay of the woolen industry" and "the starving condition the poor are reduced to in the clothing countries," among other symptoms.<sup>37</sup> "During the war it is true both our commerce and or manufactures began to revive," admitted John Perceval 2<sup>nd</sup> earl of Egmont. But that was only because the British navy "put a stop to the French commerce" and the French diverted all their resources to the war effort. "Both of these advantages" had now disappeared.<sup>38</sup> "However parties may differ about other things," wrote the political economist Malachy Postlethwayt, "they seem all to agree that the nation is, at present reduced to a very melancholy state."<sup>39</sup>

The evidence for the mid-century economic downturn is widely scattered but superabundant. The Treasury papers are filled with reports of economic hardship in a variety of

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<sup>37</sup> Matthew Decker, *An Essay on the Causes of the Decline of the Foreign Trade*. Second Edition. (Dublin: George Faulkner, 1749), p. 9.

<sup>38</sup> John Perceval, 2<sup>nd</sup> earl of Egmont, 16 November 1749, *The Parliamentary History of England*. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1806-1820), Vol. 14, pp. 582-583.

<sup>39</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *Britain's Commercial Interest Explained and Improved*. (London: D. Browne, J. Whiston and B. White, and W. Sandby, 1757). Vol. I, pp. iii-iv. It is this crisis that surely explains the "peak" in political economic publishing in the 1750s that Hoppit has difficulty accounting for: Julian Hoppit, "The Contexts and Contours of British Economic Literature, 1660-1760," *Historical Journal*. Vol. 49, No. 1 (March 2006), p. 86.

sectors. Petitions, memorials, and complaints were filed with the Board of Trade. Some groups petitioned the House of Commons. Some individuals remarked on local concerns in letters to business partners or government officials. Several sectors in particular seemed to contemporaries to be badly hit. Many commented on the malaise in the sugar trade. Merchants submitted petitions worrying about the decline of the Caribbean sugar trade. The Board of Trade filed reports echoing their concerns.<sup>40</sup> London-area sugar refiners and grocers lamented in 1753 “that the foreign markets are supplied with sugar from the French at less than half the price it is here sold for.”<sup>41</sup> In 1754, a group of merchants, factors, and agents residing in Jamaica warned that “the trade of this your Majesty’s island of Jamaica for a great while past has been in a declining state and still continues to decline.”<sup>42</sup> Merchants trading with North America complained that the various currency manipulations adopted by the American colonies made it impossible to recover their debts.<sup>43</sup> The Currency Act of 1751, aimed at limiting colonial paper money, only exacerbated the problem. By 1754, New England suffered from an extreme “want of money,” which meant that trade had “stagnated, many are

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<sup>40</sup> Merchants Petition Concerning the Sugar Trade, 1748, TNA, T1/331/22; “Observations on Sugar,” ca. 1749, TNA, T1/338/17; *Journals of the Board of Trade*, 1750 [from Nell’s data]

<sup>41</sup> *London Magazine*, October 1753, p. 468.

<sup>42</sup> Petition of the Merchants, Factors, and Agents Residing in Jamaica, 1754, BL, Egerton MS 3490, f. 19r; Address of Merchants, Factors and Agents of Jamaica to Board of Trade, [1754], TNA, CO 137/60, f. 85.

By one estimate the population of Jamaica had declined by one third since the beginning of the War of Jenkins’ Ear: Minute of Council (Hampson Nedham, Edmond Hyde, Benjamin Hume, William Williams, Charles Dawes), 20 July 1747, TNA, CO 137/48, f. 153. For the perception of British relative decline in the Sugar Trade in this period see Trevor Burnard and John Garrigus, *The Plantation Machine: Atlantic Capitalism in French Saint-Domingue and British Jamaica*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), p. 84. “St. Domingue’s exports had exceeded those of Jamaica by the 1750s,” notes B. W. Higman: “British West Indies Social and Economic Development,” in Stanley L. Engerman and Robert E. Gallman (editors), *The Cambridge Economic History of the United States*. Vol. I *The Colonial Era*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 318.

<sup>43</sup> Petition of Merchants Trading to New England, 21 September 1748, TNA, T1/330/29; Report of Board of Trade on Merchants petition to stop bills of credit in Rhode Island, 12 February 1751, TNA, T1/345/10.

become bankrupts, and the middling and lower class of people have not money to go to market with.”<sup>44</sup>

African merchants warned that they were losing markets to the French, and desperately begged for state support to maintain their coastal forts.<sup>45</sup> In 1748, the Royal African Company, merchants from Bristol and from Liverpool, and a group of London merchants and American planters all petitioned the House of Commons complaining that “the most valuable branches of the African trade” were in danger of “being lost to the nation.”<sup>46</sup> The following year another group of merchants petitioned for the elimination of the joint-stock company, based on the same premise that the British were losing ground to their European rivals in the African trade.<sup>47</sup> In 1749 and 1750, Midlands iron manufacturers complained that the inflated cost of Swedish raw iron imports putting the livelihoods of “several thousand families” at risk.<sup>48</sup>

The Levant and Mediterranean trade had been in crisis since the 1740s. Though many debated fiercely the cause of the decline in Britain’s trade to the Levant, no one doubted that Britain had lost that valuable market to the French. “The Turkey trade has been in a declining state for some years past,” observed John Russell, 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Bedford, uncontroversially.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> *Whitehall Evening Post*, 4 June 1754; Marc Egnal, *A Mighty Empire: The Origins of the American Revolution*. With New Preface. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), p. 41.

<sup>45</sup> Memorial of the Committee of the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa, 20 June 1753, TNA, T1/353/16; Petition of the Royal Africa Company, 1740s, NLI, O’Hara Papers, MS 20,390 (ii).

<sup>46</sup> *Journal of the House of Commons*, xxv, (1745-1750), 676; *Journal of the House of Commons*, xxv, (1745-1750), 732; *London Magazine*, October 1748, pp. 457-458.

<sup>47</sup> *Journal of the House of Commons*, xxv, (1745-1750), 977

<sup>48</sup> *Journal of the House of Commons*, xxv, (1745-1750), 1046; *Journal of the House of Commons*, xxv, (1745-1750), 1096; *Journal of the House of Commons*, xxv, (1745-1750), 1098. This risk to iron manufacturers is all the more significant as Marie Rowlands has suggested that metalwares provided the sole exception to the general economic downturn in the period: Marie Rowlands, *Masters and Men in the West Midlands metalware trades before the industrial revolution*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1975), p. 127.

<sup>49</sup> John Russell 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Bedford, 7 May 1744, *The Parliamentary History of England*. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1806-1820), Vol. 13, p. 896.



Henry Lowther, 3<sup>rd</sup> Viscount Lonsdale, who detested Bedford, agreed with him that the French “outdo us in the Turkey trade.”<sup>50</sup> The French “run away with the greatest part of the trade” in Turkey, agreed Daniel Finch, 8<sup>th</sup> earl of Winchilsea, whose family had a long-time interest in the Levant trade.<sup>51</sup> In 1753, merchants complained of a stark decline in the export of woolen manufactures to the Levant, implying they were losing out to French competition.<sup>52</sup> The following year one merchant reported from Bilbao that in the Spanish market, too, “France has got the start of Britain.” The French, it was claimed, produced textiles “as fine to the eye, and not of half the substance of the British superfines.” The result was “that if the manufacturers of cloth in Great Britain cannot invent a cloth as cheap as the French, they must expect to be beaten by them out of their trade.”<sup>53</sup>

By far the largest category of complaints was from textile manufacturers, England’s staple industry. Thomas Burrington, for example, worried that French manufacturers had so outclassed English production that French cambrics and lawns were being smuggled into the country, displacing English productions on the home market.<sup>54</sup> Burrington’s observations merely reinforced the claims advanced in a petition from manufacturers in London and Southwark in 1749.<sup>55</sup> Half a decade earlier, Worcester woolen manufacturers had reported that because of the collapse of trade, they were reduced from fifty master manufacturers to

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<sup>50</sup> Henry Lowther, 3<sup>rd</sup> Viscount Lonsdale, 7 May 1744, *The Parliamentary History of England*. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1806-1820), Vol. 13, p. 936.

<sup>51</sup> Daniel Finch 8<sup>th</sup> earl of Winchilsea, 4 April 1750, *The Parliamentary History of England*. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1806-1820), Vol. 14, p. 766.

<sup>52</sup> *Journal of the House of Commons*, xxvi (1750-1754), 590; *Journal of the House of Commons*, xxvi (1750-1754), 591; *Journal of the House of Commons*, xxvi (1750-1754), 594

<sup>53</sup> *Whitehall Evening Post*, 31 October 1754, p. [1].

<sup>54</sup> Report of Thomas Burrington on Lawn and Cambric, 16 April 1753, TNA, T1/351/14; Observations on a Bill for Preventing fraudulent French imports of Cambric and Lawn, [1753], TNA, T1/351/15.

<sup>55</sup> *Journal of the House of Commons*, xxxv (1745-1750), 978

five.<sup>56</sup> Others feared that the cost of manufacturing French cloth was so much less than the British could manage, that Irish and British raw wool was being run into France at unprecedented rates.<sup>57</sup> Horatio Walpole Sr., long a spokesman for English textile manufacturers, lamented that “our trade at Norwich,” the center of East Anglian textile production, “is very dead.”<sup>58</sup>

This anecdotal evidence of British economic misery in the late 1740s and 1750s is confirmed by statistical analyses.<sup>59</sup> Long ago, Ralph Davis pointed out that the period “1752-54 was marked by a turn down towards depression” in English foreign trade.<sup>60</sup> Davis himself suggested that the stagnation in exports of English woolen manufactures to Europe may have been due in part to growing French competition. More recent scholarship has confirmed that this was indeed the case. In fact the period between 1713 and 1755 was the “golden age” of French commercial exports. Between the 1720s and 1750s, French exports grew at an annual rate of 3.5% in value, as against 1.5% growth of English exports in the same period. In that same period, French exports tripled in volume. By the 1750s, French manufactured exports had caught up with the value of English ones after lagging well behind for the previous half century.

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<sup>56</sup> Samuel Sandys 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Sandys, 7 May 1744, *The Parliamentary History of England*. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1806-1820), Vol. 13, p. 923.

<sup>57</sup> George’s Bonnell’s Memorial to stop smuggling, 1 May 1754, TNA, T1/356/21; George Bonnell’s Scheme to prevent Smuggling, [1754], TNA, T1/356/22; Report of the Irish Commissioners of Revenue of running of wool from Ireland to France, 29 January 1755, TNA, T1/361/21; *London Magazine*, March 1748, p. 109; Sir William Yonge, 26 March 1752, *The Parliamentary History of England*. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1806-1820), Vol. 14, p. 1305.

<sup>58</sup> Horatio Walpole (Wolterton), to Thomas Pelham-Holles 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Newcastle, 2 September 1754, BL, Add MS 32736, ff. 407-408.

<sup>59</sup> It should be noted that many who have highlighted long term patterns of growth have missed the severe downturn of the late 1740s and 1750s because their analyses are based on snapshots. It is not wrong to say that there was long-term growth. My point is that there were structural reasons for the mid-century downturn that were only reversed by the Seven Years.

<sup>60</sup> Ralph Davis, “English Foreign Trade, 1700-1774,” *Economic History Review*, New Series, Vol. 15 No. 2(1962), p. 286.

In particular, the French had surpassed the English in textile exports to southern Europe and the Mediterranean and had come to dominate the European market for sugar.<sup>61</sup> In the 1730s and 1740s, according to one estimate, French overseas commerce grew at a rate between 2.4 and 3 times that of Britain.<sup>62</sup> In the East Indies, too, the French outpaced the English. After 1720 the French East India Company's sales grew faster than those of both its Dutch and English rivals. Significantly, it was only in the years 1751-1755 that the French East India Company's profits outpaced those of the English East India Company in absolute terms.<sup>63</sup> The story was similar in the West Indies. While sugar imports from the British West Indies had boomed in the latter half of the War of Austrian Succession, they declined precipitously 1748-1753.<sup>64</sup> French interest rates, too, long thought by economists to be a measure of economic vibrancy, had caught up with the British. Hume observed that, during the War of Austrian Succession, Louis XV "borrowed money at lower interest than ever his grandfather did, and as low as the British parliament." Hume's concern was warranted. In the period before the outbreak of the Seven Years War, for the only time in the eighteenth century, French and British government bond yields converged.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> François Crouzet, *La Guerre économique franco-anglaise au xviii<sup>e</sup> siècle*. (Paris: Fayard, 2008), pp. 367-370.

<sup>62</sup> Paul Cheney, *Revolutionary Commerce: Globalization and the French Monarchy*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), p. 22; Baugh, *Global Seven Years' War*, p. 101

<sup>63</sup> Paul Butel, "France, the Antilles, and Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: renewals of foreign trade," in James D. Tracy (editor), *The Rise of Merchant Empires*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 168-172.

<sup>64</sup> Richard B. Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies 1623-1775*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), p. 439. Sheridan discusses the recovery of 1754-1755 as being pre-war. But in fact the situation in the West Indies had already returned to a wartime footing by the second half of 1754.

<sup>65</sup> David Hume, *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects*. Third Edition. (London: A, Millar, 1754), "Of Public Credit," Vol. IV, p. 121; David Stasavage, *Public Debt and the Birth of the Democratic State: France and Great Britain, 1688-1789*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 96. See, for example, Douglass North and Barry Weingast, "Constitutions and Commitment: The Evolution of Institutions Governing Public Choice in Seventeenth-Century England," *Journal of Economic History*, Vol. XLIX, No. 4 (December 1989), pp. 823-828.

British textile manufactures, the traditional bedrock of the British economy and one of the most celebrated sectors of industrial takeoff in the next generation, were clearly lagging behind the French. Cloth exports from the west of England, including both Lancashire and the West Country, declined substantially in the 1740s and 1750s. Yorkshire textile manufactures “stagnated” during the same period.<sup>66</sup> Scottish linen manufacture, designed at once to provide work to potential Jacobite sympathizers and to break into a European market dominated by French and German producers, was in “severe depression” in the 1750s.<sup>67</sup>

Contemporaries were well aware that Britain’s commerce was falling behind that of France, in both rate of growth and also perhaps, by the 1750s, in absolute terms.<sup>68</sup> Upon reviewing “fresh accounts which the King has received relating to the state of the manufactures and commerce of France” in 1750, Thomas Pelham-Holles, 1<sup>st</sup> duke of Newcastle, felt that “the true state of that great kingdom” made clear the absolute urgency for Britain “to be securing ourselves against the effects of their power.”<sup>69</sup> “A decay of trade,” urged one commentator in the Whiggish *London Magazine*, “and a difficulty to support and provide for their families by the profits of their trade, are the ailments which all the traders and shopkeepers of this kingdom now complain of with too much reason.”<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Julia de Lacy Mann, *The Cloth Industry in the West of England from 1640 to 1880*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), pp. 37-38; Herbert Heaton, *The Yorkshire Woolen and Worsted Industries*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1920), p. 278.

<sup>67</sup> Alastair J. Durie, *The Scottish Linen Industry in the Eighteenth Century*. (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1979), pp. 22, 65; Durie, *The British Linen Company, 1745-1775*. (Edinburgh: Scottish History Society, 1996) p. 5

<sup>68</sup> Bob Harris, *Politics and the Nation: Britain in the Mid-Eighteenth Century*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 4-5. Harris writes of the period as a “world of insecurity and challenges.”

<sup>69</sup> Thomas Pelham-Holles 1<sup>st</sup> duke of Newcastle (Hanover) to Henry Pelham, 4/15 July 1750, BL, Add MS 32721, f. 229.

<sup>70</sup> *London Magazine*, April 1749, p. 161

The situation was indeed dire. Many understood something that the contemporary French political economist George Marie Butel-Dumont observed, and that modern economic historians have confirmed, this was that “the colonies” alone “made the balance of trade tilt in England’s favor.” With Britain losing out to French manufactures in market after market in Europe, colonial trade was the only dynamic area of British commerce.<sup>71</sup> On this point, one of the most experienced experts on commerce and manufactures agreed. “The American colonies are great favorites to this country in general, and indeed very justly, as being the principal sources of our balance in trade, and consequently of our riches and strength,” Horatio Walpole explained to the first Lord of the Treasury Newcastle in June 1754.<sup>72</sup>

Far from being buoyant, the British economy at mid-century was fragile and under threat.<sup>73</sup> Britain was losing market share to the French in a variety of areas from textiles to sugar. Only booming exports to the colonies offset declines almost everywhere else. And many believed that French advances in that area were putting British colonial commerce at risk. Far from being smug or self-confident, British politicians, political economists, and public opinion, sought anxiously for remedies. Britons avidly discussed ways to make Britain once again the preeminent trading nation in Europe.

## II

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<sup>71</sup> George Marie Butel-Dumont, *Histoire et commerce des colonies Angloises*. (London [actually Paris]: Le Breton, Dessaint, Pissot, Lambert, 1755), p. viii. (my translation); Cheney, *Revolutionary Commerce*. Pp. 104-109; Davis, “English Foreign Trade, 1700-1774,” p. 290.

<sup>72</sup> Horatio Walpole (Norwich) to Thomas Pelham-Holles 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Newcastle, 18 June 1754, BL, Add MS 32735, f. 486.

<sup>73</sup> The social fragility of the British economy in the immediate aftermath of the outbreak of the war has been discussed by Nicholas Rogers, *Crowds, Culture and Politics in Georgian Britain*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp. 59-84.

What could be done to rectify Britain's loss of commercial standing? What needed to be done to make sure that Britain would never again be forced to accede to a peace as humiliating as that of Aix la Chapelle?

These issues were actively debated, discussed, and at times fought over, in a complex political climate in the late 1740s and 1750s. Sir Robert Walpole's establishment Whig administration had been brought down by an alliance of Patriot Whigs and Tories in the struggle over Georgia that gave rise to the War of Jenkins' Ear and then the War of Austrian Succession. But neither the Patriots nor the Tories had succeeded in forming a coherent and stable administration. As a result, Henry Pelham, one of Robert Walpole's leading supporters in the 1720s and 1730s, became first Lord of the Treasury in November 1744. Pelham remained chief minister until his death, in March 1754. But Pelham's ministry by the late 1740s bore little resemblance to Walpole's regime.

Henry Pelham's method of government was to bring, as much as possible, all ideological positions within the administration. He created a cabinet of rivals.<sup>74</sup> One of the leading critics of Pelham's guidance of the war effort was John Russell, 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Bedford. In February 1748 Pelham appointed him Secretary of State for the Southern Department. Three years later, in June 1751, George II dismissed Bedford, and his great political ally and ideological bedfellow John Montagu, 4<sup>th</sup> earl of Sandwich. But they were dismissed for inactivity rather than political

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<sup>74</sup> Here I disagree with Langford's view that the Pelham, ministry "came to have a distinct appearance of *déjà vu*, with Pelham enjoying a personal preeminence very similar to Walpole's, the Whigs more or less united in an impressively solid alliance, the Tories and the heir to the throne acting together in opposition." Langford, *Polite and Commercial People*, pp. 207-208. Harris calls it a strategy of "political conciliation." Harris, *Politics and the Nation*, p. 28.

opposition.<sup>75</sup> At the same time that Sandwich and Bedford were dismissed, Pelham advised that John Carteret, 2<sup>nd</sup> earl Granville, be made President of the Council. Carteret had been the Patriot Prime Minister whom Pelham had displaced in 1744. In the late 1740s and for most of the early 1750s, Pelham and his brother the Duke of Newcastle, worked closely with William Pitt the elder and his future brother-in-law, Richard Grenville-Temple, 3<sup>rd</sup> Viscount Cobham. Their efforts focused on making policy and on organizing support for administration initiatives in the House of Commons.<sup>76</sup> In fact, when tensions between Pitt and Newcastle rose in 1753-1754, the key issues dividing them were not ideological. Newcastle felt compelled to call on Henry Fox to lead the government in the Commons after Pelham's death, infuriating Pitt. But even then, Newcastle consulted Pitt before deciding whether and how to respond to George Washington's defeat at Fort Necessity.<sup>77</sup> Newcastle and Pelham both consulted regularly with solicitor general William Murray, the future 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Mansfield, on a wide range of issues well beyond the scope of narrowly legal affairs despite his Jacobite associations.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Thomas Pelham-Holles 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Newcastle (Hanover) to Henry Pelham, 4/15 July 1750, BL, Add MS 32721, f. 239; Henry Pelham (Greenwich Park) to Thomas Pelham-Holles 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Newcastle, 2 July 1750, BL, Add MS 32721, f. 256r; Philip Yorke 1<sup>st</sup> earl of Hardwicke (Powis House) to Thomas Pelham-Holles 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Newcastle, 13 July 1750, BL, Add MS 32721, f. 366v; Henry Pelham to Thomas Pelham-Holles 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Newcastle, 25 July 1750, BL, Add MS 32721, f. 453r; Thomas Hay Viscount Dupplin (London) to Thomas Pelham-Holles 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Newcastle, 3 August 1750, BL, Add MS 32722, f. 48; Thomas Pelham-Holles 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Newcastle (Hanover) to Henry Pelham, 12/23 August 1750, BL, Add MS 32722, ff. 114-115.

<sup>76</sup> Henry Fiennes Pelham Clinton 9<sup>th</sup> earl of Lincoln (Oatlands) to Thomas Pelham-Holles 1<sup>st</sup> duke of Newcastle, 3 May 1750, BL, Add MS 32720, f. 271v; Thomas Pelham-Holles 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Newcastle (Hanover) to Henry Pelham, 26 June/7 July 1750, BL Add MS 32721, f. 189r; William Pitt (Enfield Chase) to Thomas Pelham-Holles 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Newcastle, 13 July 1750, BL, Add MS 32721, f. 354r; Henry Pelham to Thomas Pelham-Holles 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Newcastle, 3 August 1750, BL, Add MS 32722, f. 33r; Marie Peters, *Pitt and Popularity*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 32.

<sup>77</sup> William Pitt (Bath) to Thomas Pelham-Holles 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Newcastle, 24 March 1754, BL, Add MS 32734, f. 323; Thomas Pelham-Holles 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Newcastle (Newcastle House) to William Pitt, 2 April 1754, BL, Add MS 32734, ff. 8-9; Thomas Pelham-Holles 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Newcastle (Claremont) to Philip Yorke 1<sup>st</sup> earl of Hardwicke, 21 September 1754, BL, Add MS 32736, f. 555r; Thomas Pelham-Holles 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Newcastle (Newcastle House) to Philip Yorke 1<sup>st</sup> earl of Hardwicke, 2 October 1754, BL, Add MS 32737, f. 24.

<sup>78</sup> William Murray (London) to Thomas Pelham-Holles 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Newcastle, 5 July 1750, BL, Add MS 32721, f. 263v; William Murray (London) to Thomas Pelham-Holles 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Newcastle, 27 July 1750, BL, Add MS 32721, f.

Both Henry Pelham and the Duke of Newcastle were willing, often eager, to bring opposition figures into the government. It is true that Newcastle was often anxious, not to say paranoid, about perceived slights. But while Newcastle was quick to take offense, in most cases, he was willing to follow his younger half-brother's example in making the administration as inclusive as possible. In the immediate aftermath of the Peace of Aix La Chapelle, Newcastle, Hardwicke and even Henry Pelham were convinced that William Augustus, Duke of Cumberland, victor at Culloden and favorite son of George II, was actively plotting to establish an opposition party. He was thought to be plotting along with his sister, Princess Amelia.<sup>79</sup> Nevertheless, by 1754, Newcastle was happy to allow Cumberland to take the lead in organizing the response to the French threat, praising him for his "great ability, decency, and moderation" in the crisis.<sup>80</sup> Henry Pelham worked closely with the Patriot economic guru Sir John Barnard to devise a plan to pay down the national debt more rapidly than planned.<sup>81</sup> In December 1754, Newcastle secured George II's agreement to make John Perceval, 2<sup>nd</sup> earl of Egmont, a member of the Privy Council. Egmont had long been the leader of the so-called Leicester House opposition in Parliament.<sup>82</sup> Henry Pelham had wanted to bring his brother-in-law John

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490r; William Murray (Bath) to Thomas Pelham-Holles 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Newcastle, 7 September 1754, BL, Add MS 32736, f. 438.

<sup>79</sup> Thomas Pelham-Holles 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Newcastle (The Hague) to Henry Pelham, 9/20 May 1750, BL, Add MS 32720, f. 296v; Thomas Pelham-Holles 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Newcastle (Hanover) to Henry Pelham, 9/20 June 1750, BL, Add MS 32721, f. 75; Thomas Pelham-Holles 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Newcastle (Hanover) to Henry Pelham, 2/13 September 1750, BL, Add MS 32722, f. 304v.

<sup>80</sup> Thomas Pelham-Holles 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Newcastle (Newcastle House) to William Murray, 28 September 1754, BL, Add MS 32736, f. 591r.

<sup>81</sup> Philip Yorke 1<sup>st</sup> earl of Hardwicke (Powis House) to Thomas Pelham-Holles 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Newcastle, 3 November 1754, BL, Add MS 32737, f. 255v. The plan had to be finally abandoned when the decision was made to send Edward Braddock to America.

<sup>82</sup> Thomas Pelham-Holles 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Newcastle (Newcastle House) to John Perceval 2<sup>nd</sup> earl of Egmont, 24 December 1754, BL, Add MS 32737, f. 479r; Horace Walpole (Arlington Street, London) to Richard Bentley, 13 December 1754, *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, Vol. 35, p. 195. On Egmont and the Leicester House



Manners, 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Rutland -- one of the founding governors of the great Patriot London Foundling Hospital project -- into government.<sup>83</sup>

The ministries of Henry Pelham and his brother the Duke of Newcastle were ideologically complex. Their strategy, as opposed to that pursued by their political mentor Robert Walpole, was to bring ideological diversity into the government. While Walpole sought ideological purity, ditching long-time allies when they disagreed with him, Pelham and Newcastle sought to bring the spokesmen for a wide variety of viewpoints indoors. Where Walpole promoted and co-opted a wide variety of journalists to promote his policies in the press, Henry Pelham made little effort to promote his agenda in print. Only after Pelham's death did David Mallet and Josiah Tucker offer their pens to defend administration policies.<sup>84</sup> In the late 1740s and the 1750s, Henry Pelham and his administration pursued a series of reforms with a minimum of public and popular discussion.

Pelham sought to govern Britain by avoiding popular debate out of doors and partisan divisions in Parliament. But this does not mean that there was ideological consensus in Britain, a tendency towards moderate politics, or a single unified imperial policy. Far from it. The Pelham brothers were anxious to avoid public contention because they knew well that discontent and ideological division were omnipresent in Britain at mid-century.

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Opposition, see Aubrey N. Newman, "Leicester House Politics, 1750-1760," in *Camden Miscellany*, Fourth Series, Vol. XXIII (1969), pp. 85-228.

<sup>83</sup> Philip Yorke 1<sup>st</sup> earl of Hardwicke (Wimple) to Thomas Pelham-Holles 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Newcastle, 20 September 1750, BL Add MS 32722, ff. 450-451; Horace Walpole, *Memoirs of King George II*. Edited by John Brooke. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), Vol. II, p. 35. In 1755, after Henry Pelham's death, Rutland was named Lord Steward of the Household. On the Patriot politics of the Foundling Hospital, see Lisa Forman Cody, *Birthing the Nation*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 18-20; Catherine Tourangeau, *An Empire of Joiners: Voluntary Associations in the British Atlantic, 1680-1800*. (Yale PhD Dissertation, 2020), Chapter 2.

<sup>84</sup> Harris, *Politics of the Nation*, p.60.

Indeed, many commentators knew that partisan divisions had become intrinsic to British politics, at least since the Revolution of 1688, if not before. “Were the British government proposed as a subject of speculation to a studious man,” wrote David Hume, “he would immediately perceive in it a source of division and party, which it would be almost impossible for it, under any administration, to avoid.”<sup>85</sup> “As to the unanimity of the people,” Thomas Hay Viscount Dupplin, a supporter of the Pelhams and member of the Board of Trade, informed the House of Lords, “I believe it can never be expected, whilst we preserve our liberties: in free countries there will always be parties and divisions.”<sup>86</sup>

While the Pelhams and their political allies sought to minimize partisan conflict in Parliament, their success was always fragile and limited to Parliamentary politics. As the War of Austrian succession wound down, an essayist in the *London Magazine* noted that “the squabbles between the two political parties runs very high at this time, and the weekly writers are frequently employed in exposing one another’s characters.”<sup>87</sup> The Pelhamites tried desperately to head off issues that might accentuate partisan conflict, and successfully prevented a partisan debate about the creation of bishoprics in North America, for example. Still, bitter partisan squabbles re-emerged.<sup>88</sup> In 1753 pamphleteers, newspaper writers, and politicians inflamed partisan sentiment over the Jewish Naturalization Act. Almost every

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<sup>85</sup> David Hume, *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects*. Fourth Edition. (London: A. Millar, 1753), “Of the Parties of Great Britain,” Vol. I, p. 90.

<sup>86</sup> Thomas Hay, Viscount Dupplin, 7 May 1753, *The Parliamentary History of England*. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1806-1820), Vol. 14, p. 1378.

<sup>87</sup> *London Magazine*, March 1748, p. 137.

<sup>88</sup> Philip Yorke 1<sup>st</sup> earl of Hardwicke (Powis House) to Thomas Pelham-Holles 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Newcastle, 25 May 1750, BL, Add MS 32720, ff. 405-406; Horatio Walpole 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Walpole of Wolterton (Cockpit) to Thomas Sherlock Bishop of London, 29 May 1750, BL Add MS 32721, ff. 63-64; Robert G. Ingram, *Religion, Reform and Modernity in the Eighteenth Century: Thomas Secker and the Church of England*. (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007), pp. 240-244.

interaction throughout Britain and the Empire took on a partisan tinge. The reason was in part, but only in part, the one offered by Thomas Herring, Archbishop of Canterbury: the “innocent” and inconsequential Act, had been used by “faction” to drum up “the good old spirit of High Church” making “wild work in the nation.”<sup>89</sup> Whatever the cause, by late 1753, no one could doubt that “the influence of party is strong.” “There is a sort of magic in party,” an essayist noted in the leading London-based opposition newspaper, implying that the majority of the nation had been bewitched by partisanship.<sup>90</sup> “Our good nature was necessarily soured by the spirit of party,” agreed another journalist.<sup>91</sup> “The spirit of party prevails so universally,” wrote one contributor to an essay paper about village life in the 1750s, “that the very children are instructed to lisp out the names of the favorite chiefs of each faction.” “Every petty village abounds with the most profound statesmen,” this writer observed, “it is common to see our rustic politicians assembling after sermon, and settling the good of their country across a tombstone.”<sup>92</sup> The 1754 election in Nottingham, for example, was “a trial between the Whig and Tory interest.”<sup>93</sup> “In our degenerate time/ When most deem poetry the knack of rhyme,” one wag mused that the greatest crime was that “party interests govern works of wit.”<sup>94</sup> “Politics is also of pernicious influence,” noted another wit at the height of Jewish Naturalization kerfuffle,

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<sup>89</sup> Thomas Herring Archbishop of Canterbury (Croydon House) to Thomas Pelham-Holles 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Newcastle, 30 October 1753, BL, Add MS 32733, f. 162v. The Bill’s historian notes that it “touched upon genuine and long-standing party differences and questions of economic policy”: Thomas Whipple Perry, *Public Opinion, Propaganda and Politics in Eighteenth Century England: A Study of the Jew Bill of 1753*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), p. 70.

<sup>90</sup> *London Evening Post*, 30 October 1753, p. [1].

<sup>91</sup> *The World*, 19 December 1754, p. [2].

<sup>92</sup> *London Magazine*, May 1754, p. 212.

<sup>93</sup> John Clay (Nottingham) to Thomas Pelham-Holles 1<sup>st</sup> duke of Newcastle, 24 October 1753, BL, Add MS 32733, f. 122r.

<sup>94</sup> *London Daily Advertiser*, 6 March 1753, p. [2].

“tending to inflame the ladies with party-rage.”<sup>95</sup> “A set of disaffected Jacobitical persons” were so boisterous in Halifax that “a hot Whig cannot bear to live amongst them.”<sup>96</sup> “All the Whigs” in Bristol preferred to support Sir John Philipps “a broken Jacobite” than the “wild West Indian” Tory Richard Beckford, brother of the popular and increasingly politically prominent William Beckford Alderman of London.<sup>97</sup>

Partisanship was a fact of life right across the empire. In Ireland, struggles between the Lord Lieutenant Lionel Sackville, 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Dorset, and Henry Boyle, the Speaker Irish House of Commons, was widely seen as a battle between Patriots and their establishment Whig opponents. “The present political contest in Ireland,” noted one observer, “has almost set that whole kingdom in a flame.”<sup>98</sup> Another observer found that “no less than 300 Patriot Clubs” celebrated Henry Boyle’s victory in Parliament.<sup>99</sup> Partisan conflict ran high between “the monied and the landed interest” in Jamaica as well. “The animosities,” wrote one observer, “have dissolved friendships, divided families, and turned every man’s voice, if not his hand

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<sup>95</sup> *Gray’s Inn Journal*, 6 October 1753, p. [4].

<sup>96</sup> John Roberts (Richmond) to Thomas Pelham-Holles 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Newcastle, 2 January 1754, BL, Add MS 32734, f. 11.

<sup>97</sup> Thomas Pelham-Holles 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Newcastle (Kensington) to George II, [8 April] 1754, BL, Add MS 32735, f. 50r. On William Beckford’s increasing political prominence and the Bristol election, see Perry Gauci, *William Beckford: First Prime Minister of the London Empire*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), pp. 62-76.

<sup>98</sup> George Stone Archbishop of Armagh (Dublin) to Thomas Pelham-Holles 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Newcastle, 10 October 1753, BL, Add MS 32733, f. 42r; Lionel Sackville 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Dorset (Dublin Castle) to Thomas Pelham-Holles 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Newcastle, 14 January 1754, BL, Add MS 32734, ff. 39-42; George Sackville (Dublin Castle) to Robert Maxwell, 11 February 1754, f. 131; *London Magazine*, March 1754, p. 99; *London Magazine*, April 1754, p. 147; *Whitehall Evening Post*, 16 February 1754, p. [1]. For discussion of how the money bill dispute of 1753 was transformed into a widespread pamphlet war, see Ian McBride, *Eighteenth Century Ireland*. (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2009), pp. 299-300.

<sup>99</sup> *Public Advertiser*, 31 December 1754, p. [2]. On the money bill and Patriot politics: James Kelly, “The Politics of Protestant Ascendancy, 1730-1790,” in James Kelly (editor), *The Cambridge History of Ireland*, Vol. III. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 55-57; James Kelly, “Patriot Politics, 1750-91,” in Alvin Jackson (editor), *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Irish History*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 482-484. Kelly is skeptical of the term party, but provides much evidence for political divisions and the importance of public debate. Bob Harris, “The Patriot Clubs of the 1750s,” in James Kelly and Martyn Powell (editors), *Clubs and Societies in Eighteenth-Century Ireland*. (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2010), pp. 224-243.

against his neighbor.” The planters, apparently, had turned against the administration, with the “merchants in general” being the “hearty friends” of Governor Charles Knowles.<sup>100</sup> Partisanship was a concern in the other sugar islands as well, as the editor of the *Antigua Gazette* reprinted an essay warning against printers becoming “the tool of any party.”<sup>101</sup> In North America, too, partisan divisions dominated the political landscape in colony after colony. “Party feuds” reemerged in New York in 1753 after the resignation of the unpopular Governor George Clinton. While the issues debated ranged in the province from collective colonial defense to the nature of the new college to be founded in New York City, they consistently poised the followers of James De Lancey against the grouping around Lewis Morris and Peter Livingston.<sup>102</sup> The Quaker party remained dominant in Pennsylvania throughout the late 1740s and 1750s. But those who wanted a more aggressive response to French commercial and military aggression sparked a vitriolic essay debate that had all the characteristics of “party zeal.”<sup>103</sup> Massachusetts was divided into complex and bitty partisan divisions. This intense partisanship led one Boston newspaper to reprint Sir Thomas Burnet’s opinion that it “may be affirmed with freedom, and I am sure it may be maintained with truth, that the weak part in the constitution of our government is a tendency to tumult, sedition and rebellion.”<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Charles Knowles (Jamaica) to Thomas Pelham-Holles 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Newcastle, 29 January 1754, BL, Add MS 32734, ff. 85-86; Charles Knowles (Jamaica) to Robert d’Arcy 4<sup>th</sup> earl of Holderness, 6 February 1754, TNA, CO 137/60, f. 69; Humble Representation of the Governor and Council of Jamaica, 11 November 1754, TNA, CO 137/60, f. 121v; *Gentleman’s Magazine*, August 1754, p. 351; Extract of a Letter from a merchant in Kingston, Jamaica in *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 26 March 1754, p. [2]

<sup>101</sup> *Antigua Gazette*, 12 April 1755, p. [1].

<sup>102</sup> *Independent Reflector*, 19 January 1753, p. [2]; *Independent Reflector*, 22 February 1753, p. 51; *New York Mercury*, 2 December 1754, p. [2]; *New York Mercury*, 30 December 1754, p. [1]; Egnal, *Mighty Empire*, pp. 64-65.

<sup>103</sup> *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 26 September 1754, p. [1]; Egnal, *Mighty Empire*, p. 77.

<sup>104</sup> *Boston Evening Post*, 15 July 1754, p. [1]. I find Egnal’s account of divisions over imperial policy more persuasive than Peterson’s division between those who had New England sensibilities versus a small group around Governor Shirley with imperial sensibility, not least because the prominent New England families, the Otises and the Hancocks as well as the popular preacher Jonathan Mayhew most actively supported the imperial struggle with

Britons across the Empire, then, confronted French economic and colonial expansion in a complex political environment. This was not a period of moderate consensus. Heated ideological discussion and debate was omnipresent throughout the Empire. At the same time, Pelhamite politics involved bringing a range of ideological positions into the administration, in an attempt to contain political disagreement within doors. And Henry Pelham and his political supporters made little effort to defend their positions in the press. The consequence was that ties between ideological positions and groupings of elite politicians were less straight-forward than they had been in the 1720s and 1730s. The opposition press, including the *London Evening Post* and the *Gentleman's Magazine*, voiced criticisms of government policies from a variety of perspectives. They did not articulate a single coherent position. Instead Britain's diminished international standing in general, and its relatively, if not absolutely, declining commercial position, led to the articulation of new arguments and created the possibility for new political alignments.

### III

How, then, did mid-Hanoverian Britons respond to the growing commercial and colonial threat posed by the French? What kind of remedies did Britons advance to the loss of commercial standing?

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France: Egnal, *Mighty Empire*, pp. 38-42. On Mayhew, see Jonathan Mayhew, *A Sermon Preach'd in the Audience of His Excellency William Shirley*. 29 May 1754. (Boston: Samuel Kneeland, 1754). Several years earlier Mayhew had made it clear that he understood politics in an imperial rather than Bostonian context by preaching a laudatory sermon on the death of the Patriot Prince Frederick Henry: Jonathan Mayhew, *A Sermon Preach'd at Boston in New-England, May 26 1751 Occasioned by the much lamented death of His Royal Highness Frederick Prince of Wales*. (Boston: Richard Draper and Daniel Gookin, 1751).

French commercial ascendancy was widely perceived and increasingly widely discussed. By mid-century, it was not only the people involved directly in manufacturing textiles and refining sugars who perceived Britain's loss of relative economic standing.<sup>105</sup> In 1745, "when the finances and commerce of France were so far recovered from the ruinous state into which they were plunged by the wars of Queen Anne, as to enable it again to disturb the peace of Europe," a group of Londoners formed the Anti-Gallican association. Their overriding concern was "the increase of the trade and navigation of France since the peace of Utrecht," noting that French products were able to "rival those of this country, and even exceed them in many particular branches of arts and manufactures."<sup>106</sup> While the group had distinctly Patriot and partisan connections -- Edward Vernon served as its president for many years and it was publicly supported by the Prince of Wales and his Leicester House coterie -- the Antigallicans' concern about French commercial ascendancy had widespread appeal. The Association soon spread beyond its London base. Lodges opened across "South Britain, North Britain, Ireland and all the British plantations." Isaac Hunt recalled that in North America lodges were founded in Massachusetts and Casco Bay.<sup>107</sup> Regular sermons, many subsequently printed, repeatedly warned auditors and readers of the immense threat posed by French commerce. "Since the interest and commerce of the British empire are so inseparably united," warned Richard King in

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<sup>105</sup> Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715-1785*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 178.

<sup>106</sup> Isaac Hunt, *A Sermon Preached before the Laudable Association of Antigallicans*. St. George's Middlesex. 23 April 1778. (London: T. Evans, 1778), pp. 7-8; *Boston News-Letter*, 2 August 1753, p. [1]. The best account of the Anti-Gallicans is D. G. C. Allan, "The Laudable Association of Antigallicans," *RSA Journal*, Vol. 137, No. 5398 (September 1989), pp. 623-628. Linda Colley also discusses the group and acknowledges its "mercantilist" origins but claims that its proposed remedies were largely calls for "moral" reform. Colley, *Britons*, pp. 89-90. Colley bases her claim on analysis of the works of John Free. Free was unusual in the extreme in not focusing primarily on the commercial threat posed by France.

<sup>107</sup> *London Evening Post*, 2 March 1751, p. [1]; Isaac Hunt, *A Sermon Preached before the Laudable Association of Antigallicans*. St. George's Middlesex. 23 April 1778. (London: T. Evans, 1778), p. 9.

one such sermon, it was “the true public spirit” of the Antigallicans that led them to oppose “the growing strength” of French commerce that “depriving you of your truest source of wealth, trade.”<sup>108</sup> “As true lovers of our country,” Matthew Audley the curate and lecturer of St. Mary’s Rotherhithe observed, the Antigallicans were “studious to promote the consumption of our own manufactures and to discourage those of so formidable a neighbor.” The ultimate goal, he affirmed, was that “foreign commerce, the strength and only source of these kingdoms be increased.”<sup>109</sup> Like many later groups that sought to limit the importation of foreign products, women played an increasingly prominent role. Though only Grace Sackville, countess of Middlesex was formerly made a member of the association, “the patriotic principles” of eschewing French fabrics was “very generally adopted” among women in the 1750s.<sup>110</sup>

The Antigallicans publicized the dangers from French commercial competition at mid-century. But their proposed remedies – buying British and offering small bounties for commercial activity – did little on their own to slow the French takeover of overseas commercial markets. Instead, a wide variety of politicians, political economists and social commentators proposed programs to reverse Britain’s commercial malaise. Indeed, the 1740s

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<sup>108</sup> Richard King, *A Sermon Preached before the several associations of the Laudable Order of Anti-Gallicans*. Bow-Church Cheapside. 24 May 1751. (London: W. Raven, 1751), pp. 6-13.

<sup>109</sup> Matthew Audley, *A Sermon Preached before the several associations of the laudable order of Anti-Gallicans*. Bow Church in Cheapside. 23 April 1752. (London: J. Robinson, 1752), pp. 18-19. See also Thomas Jones (Chaplain of St. Saviour, Southwark), *A Sermon Preached before the several associations of the Laudable Order of Anti-Gallicans*. St. Bridget London. 23 April 1754. (London: J. Robinson, 1754), p. 16.

<sup>110</sup> Isaac Hunt, *A Sermon Preached before the Laudable Association of Antigallicans*. St. George’s Middlesex. 23 April 1778. (London: T. Evans, 1778), pp. 8-9. On later female participation in boycotts in America and Ireland, see Padhraig Higgins, *A Nation of Politicians: Gender, Patriotism, and Political Culture in late Eighteenth-Century Ireland*. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010), pp. 82-105; T. H. Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 230-234.



and 1750s proved to be one of the most fecund, bitterly contested, and understudied period in the history of British political economic debate.<sup>111</sup>

How, then, did Britons respond to the economic crisis? What remedies did they offer? It turns out that there were three different types of responses. The first was offered by an Old Guard that took a position most closely associated with the public stance of the establishment Whigs. Unlike Walpolian apologists of the 1720s and 1730s, they acknowledged France's dramatic commercial development. But, they insisted, a series of policy tweaks were more than sufficient to maintain Britain's economic advantage. War, they thought, was always to be avoided by any nation relying on trade.

A second group of polemicists melded some of the ideas of the Patriots and Tories. They argued that Britain's economic malaise was caused by Britain's obtuse European commitments. These costly wars and subsidies had dramatically increased labor costs in Britain, making British manufactures uncompetitive in overseas markets. The remedy was for Britons to turn their backs on Europe and pursue an aggressive imperial policy in the Atlantic. Obsessed with the effects of the national debt on British labor costs, this group insisted that a forward Atlantic policy would pay for itself. The colonies could be made to foot the bill for defeating the French in North America and the West Indies.

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<sup>111</sup> These debates have been understudied in part because they represent an unusual moment when British political economy was focused on fears that Britain was lagging behind and in part because of the recent vogue for rejecting comparative history. Mid-century political economists were in no doubt that political economy was an intrinsically comparative discipline: [Josiah Tucker], *A Brief Essay*. Dedicated to the earl of Halifax. (London, 1749), p. 56; [Louis Joseph Plumard de Dangeul], *Remarks on the Advantages and Disadvantages of France and of Great Britain with Respect to Commerce*. (London: T. Osborne, 1754); Malachy Postlethwayt, *A Dissertation on the Plan, Use, and Importance of the Universal Dictionary*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1749), p. 23. On skepticism about comparisons, see among others Eliga H. Gould, "Entangled Histories, Entangled Worlds: The English-Speaking Atlantic as a Spanish Periphery," *American Historical Review*, Vol. 112, No. 3 (June 2007), pp. 764-786.

A third group, that included many Patriots who felt that Walpole had been too soft on France, insisted on a global approach. In their view the French state was making a determined effort to establish global hegemony through commercial and colonial domination. Only a global response would suit. But, these polemicists argued, such an approach required tailoring policies to the specific local conditions in each region. They were skeptical of general economic theories.<sup>112</sup> While they agreed with the Old Guard that, in general, trading nations like Britain should avoid wars, they believed that in the current climate a long peace would only benefit France. While they shared with the authoritarian Whig/neo-Tory grouping the belief that previous British administrations had spent too much on protecting Hanover and maintaining the balance of power on the European continent, they rejected as absurd the notion that Britain could turn its back on Europe. Britain needed a global commercial strategy, not a narrowly European one. But that strategy needed to be one in which Europe played an important role. Unlike the authoritarian Whig/neo-Tory grouping, they did not advocate abandoning or ignoring the East Indies. All three groupings developed and enunciated their concerns in the press and in Parliament. And all three groupings drew support from, and indeed derived many of their ideas from, Britons from across the empire.

The Old Guard political economists knew well that the British economy was in a perilous state. Far from seeing the economy as buoyant, they acknowledged that the French had made dramatic strides in improving their commercial standing. Josiah Tucker, rector of All Saints Bristol, was a client of the Lord Chancellor Philip Yorke, 1<sup>st</sup> earl of Hardwicke, as well as of the

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<sup>112</sup> This may explain why Malachy Postlethwayt, one of the most widely read and cited political economists of the period in Britain and throughout Europe, does not merit a mention in Istvan Hont's magisterial *Jealousy of Trade*.

President of the Board of Trade George Montagu-Dunk, 2<sup>nd</sup> earl of Halifax. Tucker wrote his first of many tracts on political economy analyzing the dramatic improvements in French commerce compared to British trade.<sup>113</sup> David Hume contributed to the discussion in his well-known *Political Essays*. Like Tucker, David Hume had learned a great deal about commerce from his time spent in Bristol. Like Tucker, Hume had close ties to establishment Whiggery. He served as Secretary for his kinsman, James St. Clair, successively commander-in-chief of the intended Canada expedition of 1746 and then, in 1748, special envoy to Vienna and Turin. As these appointments make clear, Hume's patron St. Clair was highly esteemed by both Robert Walpole and by Archibald Campbell, 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Argyll. Hume considered himself an admirer of Argyll's. In Parliament Hume's employer St. Clair was a loyal defender of both the Walpole and Pelhamite ministries. Between his time in Bristol and his employment by St. Clair, Hume spent substantial stretches in France, where he came to appreciate the vast extent of France's flourishing trade.<sup>114</sup> Matthew Decker was another of the most influential Old Guard political economists. Sir Matthew Decker, like Hume and Tucker, began from the assumption that the French had in the past several decades gained dramatically on the British in foreign markets. The Dutch-born Decker had begun his long public life as a Governor of the South Sea Company, with the support of the Tory prime minister, Robert Harley. But in 1720 he enthusiastically supported Robert Walpole's scheme for restoring public credit against widespread Tory

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<sup>113</sup> [Josiah Tucker], *A Brief Essay on the Advantages and Disadvantages which Respectively Attend France and Great Britain with regard to Trade*. (London, 1749).

<sup>114</sup> I have relied heavily on Margaret Schabas and Carl Wennerlind, *A Philosopher's Economist: Hume and the History of Capitalism*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020), pp. 32-39; David Hume to Charles Erskine, Lord Tinwald, 13 February 1748, in J. Y. T Greig (editor) *The Letters of David Hume*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017) Vol. I, p. 113.

opposition.<sup>115</sup> Subsequently, Decker aligned himself firmly with the Whig establishment, serving as a director of the East India Company until 1743, and frequently advising the Board of Trade and Secretaries of State on commercial matters.<sup>116</sup>

All three Old Guard political economists, then, were well aware of the recent inroads into overseas markets made by French merchants and French manufactures. All three had reasonably close ties to both the Walpoleian and Pelhamite regimes.

In the 1720s and 1730s, most Walpoleians waxed euphoric about the dynamism of British commerce. But these Old Guard political economists could not but acknowledge that British commerce was in relative, if not absolute, decline. Unlike their ideological and political opponents, these polemicists called for reform rather than structural change. In their view, Britain enjoyed an economic head start and natural advantages. While British manufacturers and British merchants might lose particular markets to the French, unless its governors made grave political errors, Britain's would always be Europe's leading traders.

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<sup>115</sup> John Oldmixon, *A Supplement to Rapin's History of England*. (London: T. Cox, 1741), p. 706.

<sup>116</sup> 26 January 1721, 'Journal, January 1721: Journal Book X', in *Journals of the Board of Trade and Plantations: Volume 4, November 1718 - December 1722*, ed. K H Ledward (London, 1925), pp. 240-247. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/jrnl-trade-plantations/vol4/pp240-247> [accessed 17 August 2020]; 6 September 1722, 'Journal, September 1722: Journal Book Y', in *Journals of the Board of Trade and Plantations: Volume 4, November 1718 - December 1722*, ed. K H Ledward (London, 1925), pp. 379-385. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/jrnl-trade-plantations/vol4/pp379-385> [accessed 17 August 2020]; 18 November 1731, 'Journal, November 1731: Journal Book H.H', in *Journals of the Board of Trade and Plantations: Volume 6, January 1729 - December 1734*, ed. K H Ledward (London, 1928), pp. 242-250. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/jrnl-trade-plantations/vol6/pp242-250> [accessed 15 August 2020]; Thomas Pelham-Holles 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Newcastle (Kensington) to Sir Matthew Decker, [August 1732], TNA, SP 36/28/78, f. 78; Thomas Pelham-Holles 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Newcastle (Kensington) to William Stanhope 1<sup>st</sup> earl of Harrington, 7 July 1732, TNA, SP 36/27/53, f. 141. It is also significant that Decker relied overwhelmingly on Whiggish authorities in his work: Roger Coke, John Locke, the De La Court brothers. While he does cite Josiah Child and Charles Davenant he does so sparingly.

Over and over again the Old Guard political economists emphasized that Britain's natural advantages and early commitment to trade gave it a big head start over France in commercial affairs. "England has always enjoyed an advantage in trade, as its manufactures have ever been in high repute for their skill and ingenuity," opined Josiah Tucker. "England enjoys a very visible advantage over France," he added, "as the whole bulk of our people may be concerned in trade if they please, without any disreputation to their families."<sup>117</sup> England, he continued, also had ports in better locations for trade, and enjoyed the "advantage" of its "free government and liberty of conscience."<sup>118</sup>

David Hume derided countries that made policy based on "jealousy of trade." This was because "where an open communication is preserved among nations, it is impossible but the domestic industry of every one must receive an increase from the improvement of others." "The commodity is first imported from abroad, to our great discontent, while we imagine it drains us of our money," Hume mused, "afterwards the art itself is gradually imported to our visible advantage." Hume instead that even if French improvements in woolen manufactures were to displace British-produced goods in foreign markets, this was no disastrous loss. The manufacturers will simply shift from making woolens to manufacturing "silk, iron, or any other commodities" to the nation's great benefit. "Any people is happier who possess a variety of manufacturers," noted Hume, "than if they enjoyed one single great manufactory, in which they are all employed." The conclusion to be drawn from this doctrine, in Hume's view, was

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<sup>117</sup> [Josiah Tucker], *A Brief Essay*. Dedicated to the earl of Halifax. (London, 1749), p. 19.

<sup>118</sup> [Josiah Tucker], *A Brief Essay*. Dedicated to the earl of Halifax. (London, 1749), pp. 8, 18. Tucker later condemned commercial warfare: Peter N. Miller, *Defining the Common Good*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 400.

that though other countries might improve their commercial conditions over time, Britain would not lose its first-mover advantage for the foreseeable future. “The advantage of superior stock and correspondence is so great” in the early commercial leaders, Hume insisted, “that is not easily overcome.” In a well-studied epistolary exchange, Hume and Tucker belatedly came to understand that on this significant point they were in complete agreement.<sup>119</sup>

Matthew Decker, in his slightly earlier treatise, had also come to the conclusion that despite France’s manifest commercial development, Britain retained significant economic advantages. “It is a manifest instance of the great natural advantage in trade this nation enjoys,” Decker claimed, “that it hath not been ruined long ago by the consequences of our ill management.”<sup>120</sup> Decker emphasized Britain’s many natural advantages over the French and the Dutch. “Our situation is the securest in Europe,” he began. “We have more good harbors than any nation on the continent, open all year, our country is healthy and pleasant; whereas Holland is cold, marshy, and unwholesome,” he wrote from deep personal knowledge. “Our plenty of provisions exceeds all Europe; no nation having that plenty both of corn and flesh-meat that we abound in.” “Our sailors are the most expert, and our ships the best built of any; so that we could have the preference in the carrying trade.” The conclusion was obvious. “With all these superior natural advantages, we cannot be hurt but by ourselves; tis our own

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<sup>119</sup> David Hume, *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects*. New Edition. (London: A. Millar, 1760), “Of the Jealousy of Trade,” Vol. II, pp. 106-110; Schabas and Wennerlind, *A Philosopher’s Economist*, pp. 186-189; Hont, *Jealousy of Trade*, pp. 70-71, 283-289. Sophus Reinert has pointed out that fears that British policy was motivated by jealousy of trade was omnipresent in Europe during this period: Sophus Reinert, *Translating Empire: Emulation and the Origins of Political Economy*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), p. 19.

<sup>120</sup> Matthew Decker, *An Essay on the Causes of the Decline of the Foreign Trade*. Second Edition. (Dublin: George Faulkner, 1749), p. 73.

covetous folly only that can undo us.”<sup>121</sup> There was no reason, he thought, to be jealous of French trade. Britain “by disencumbering and making its trade quite free,” Decker insisted, “cannot be hurt by any other power in Europe, but must of necessity hold the first rank in trade.”<sup>122</sup>

As a rich country with many advantages, Britain should move to free up trade. Because of “the great natural advantages our country is blessed with superior to any nation in Europe,” Decker argued pithily in the introduction to his work, the best way to “preserve these” was “by unburdening trade, which will employ our poor, increase the stock of people, and increase our riches; all which must terminate in increasing the value of lands.”<sup>123</sup> He added that “trade cannot, will not be forced, let other nations prohibit by what severities they please, interest will prevail; they may embarrass their own trade, but cannot hurt a nation whose trade is free, so much as themselves.”<sup>124</sup> David Hume excoriated “those numberless, bars, obstructions, and imposts, which all nations of Europe, and none more than England, have put upon trade.” “Could anything scatter our riches,” he insisted, “’twould be such impolitic contrivances.”<sup>125</sup> “We want nothing to complete our happiness under a race of excellent princes but that liberty of commerce to which every man is entitled both by right of nature, and the general tenor of

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<sup>121</sup> Matthew Decker, *An Essay on the Causes of the Decline of the Foreign Trade*. Second Edition. (Dublin: George Faulkner, 1749), pp. 73-75.

<sup>122</sup> Matthew Decker, *An Essay on the Causes of the Decline of the Foreign Trade*. Second Edition. (Dublin: George Faulkner, 1749), p. 144.

<sup>123</sup> Matthew Decker, *An Essay on the Causes of the Decline of the Foreign Trade*. Second Edition. (Dublin: George Faulkner, 1749), p. v.

<sup>124</sup> Matthew Decker, *An Essay on the Causes of the Decline of the Foreign Trade*. Second Edition. (Dublin: George Faulkner, 1749), pp. 126-127.

<sup>125</sup> David Hume, *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects*. Third Edition. (London: A. Millar, 1754), “Of the Balance of Trade,” Vol. IV, p. 85; Schabas and Wennerlind, *A Philosopher’s Economist*, pp. 179-180; Hont, *Jealousy of Trade*, pp. 292-293.

the laws of his country,” agreed Josiah Tucker in the printed fragment of his intended great treatise on political economy. Fortunately Britain had been making progress under Hanoverian leadership. Since the Hanoverian accession “many monopolies have been destroyed, and the trade thrown entirely open” Tucker pointed out, “and many more greatly weakened, and rendered less oppressive; and yet not one new exclusion hath been erected.” Nevertheless there was still more work to be done.<sup>126</sup>

The Old Guard political economists thus adopted a cautiously optimistic tone. France had made strides, it was true. But Britain still had substantial advantages. The key was for British politicians to maximize those advantages by removing restraints on trade, encouraging immigration, and, they added, by radically paying down the national debt. In these areas, the Old Guard could look to Robert Walpole’s achievement as a guide.<sup>127</sup>

The Old Guard prescriptions for policy reform began with their full-throated attacks on monopolies. “In free countries monopolies are absurd, inconsistent and destructive, as encouraging idleness, villainy, and extravagant demands for wages or goods, whereby the many are deprived of the advantages of their birthrights without having committed any crime to forfeit them, and for the benefit of a few only,” insisted Matthew Decker. Decker, in particular, complained about “the East India, South Sea, and Turkey Companies” for limiting “the vent of our manufactures abroad.” Their policies, he lamented, “starve the poor.”<sup>128</sup> Hume, too, hoped that Parliament would eliminate the remaining joint stock companies.<sup>129</sup> “The English

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<sup>126</sup> [Josiah Tucker], *The Elements of Commerce*, [1755], p. 168.

<sup>127</sup> Tucker was most explicit about this: [Josiah Tucker], *The Elements of Commerce*, [1755], pp. 148-149.

<sup>128</sup> Matthew Decker, *An Essay on the Causes of the Decline of the Foreign Trade*. Second Edition. (Dublin: George Faulkner, 1749), pp. 43-44; Miller, *Defining the Common Good*, p. 401.

<sup>129</sup> Schabas and Wennerlind, *A Philosopher’s Economist*, p. 180.



monopolies, which are our destruction, become to [the French] of the greatest benefit and advantage,” chimed in Josiah Tucker. He blamed the monopolistic practices of the Levant Company for having made Marseilles a great city. He claimed that the myopic Hudson’s Bay Company “is the only cause which can make the French settlements in so wretched a country as Canada to flourish.”<sup>130</sup> Above all he lamented that “we have yet to direct our attack against another great monopoly, and indeed the most unwieldy Monster of them all – the reader need not be told that this is the East India Company.”<sup>131</sup> “We still want the Glorious Revolution in the commercial system, which we have happily obtained in the political,” Tucker lamented. But lest one think Tucker was here arguing for radical structural change, he quickly pointed out that “these chains are now looked upon by a considerable part of the nation as a matter of ornament,” and therefore one could be confident that the legislature would “undermine them by degrees.”<sup>132</sup>

Old Guard political economists embraced support for immigration, a staple of Whig political economy since at least the 1690s. “The greater number of people and their greater industry are serviceable in all cases; at home and abroad, in public and in private” David Hume stated confidently.<sup>133</sup> In particular, Hume wrote favorably of the contribution of Huguenot and Jewish immigrants to British society.<sup>134</sup> Decker, himself an immigrant from the Netherlands, took it for granted that a “scarcity of people” would prove detrimental to Britain:<sup>135</sup> since “tis

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<sup>130</sup> [Josiah Tucker], *A Brief Essay*, 1749, pp. 15-16.

<sup>131</sup> [Josiah Tucker], *The Elements of Commerce*, [1755], pp. 94-96, 132; Miller, *Defining the Common Good*, p. 401.

<sup>132</sup> [Josiah Tucker], *The Elements of Commerce*, [1755], pp. 88-89.

<sup>133</sup> David Hume, *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects*. Third Edition. (London: A, Millar, 1754), “Of Money,” Vol. IV, p. 37.

<sup>134</sup> Schabas and Wennerlind, *A Philosopher’s Economist*, pp. 13, 47-48.

<sup>135</sup> Matthew Decker, *An Essay on the Causes of the Decline of the Foreign Trade*. Second Edition. (Dublin: George Faulkner, 1749), pp. 47-48.

men that trade, and bring in money, therefore the fewer they are, the less money will be brought in; and the less money, the less rent can be given for land.”<sup>136</sup> Decker emphasized that one of the advantages of his various proposed tax reforms was that it would induce “foreigners settling here continually to teach [British workers] new branches of trade.”<sup>137</sup> Josiah Tucker was even more vociferous in his support for immigration. In 1749 he proposed “a general Naturalization Act for all Protestants,” reasoning that “by this means the price of labor is continually beat down, industry is encouraged, and an emulation excited: all which are greatly for the public good.”<sup>138</sup> Britain, he later elaborated, needed to do much more to attract “artificers, sailors, and manufacturers” from abroad.<sup>139</sup> Little wonder, then, that Tucker was a vociferous defender of the ill-fated Pelhamite Jewish Naturalization Act.<sup>140</sup>

The Old Guard political economists argued that the National Debt created structural problems for the British economy. Just as Walpole had deployed his considerable financial acumen to devise schemes to pay down the National Debt<sup>141</sup>, the Old Guard political economists devised ingenious schemes for ridding Britain of what they perceived to be a huge drag on the economy. The large national debt “has ruined our trade, by serving for pretense to continue those taxes on commodities” which were “destructive,” argued Matthew Decker. Since so much of the national debt was owned by foreigners, Decker pointed out, it “wastes the

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<sup>136</sup> Matthew Decker, *An Essay on the Causes of the Decline of the Foreign Trade*. Second Edition. (Dublin: George Faulkner, 1749), p. 70.

<sup>137</sup> Matthew Decker, *An Essay on the Causes of the Decline of the Foreign Trade*. Second Edition. (Dublin: George Faulkner, 1749), p. 94, 105.

<sup>138</sup> [Josiah Tucker], *A Brief Essay*, 1749, pp. 26-27, 38; Josiah Tucker, *Reflections on the Expediency of a Law for the Naturalization of Foreign Protestants*. (London: T. Trye, 1752)

<sup>139</sup> [Josiah Tucker], *The Elements of Commerce*, [1755], p. 16.

<sup>140</sup> Josiah Tucker, *A Letter to a Friend Concerning Naturalizations*. (London: Thomas Trye, 1753); Josiah Tucker, *A Second Letter to a Friend Concerning Naturalizations*. (London: Thomas Trye, 1753).

<sup>141</sup> Hume praised “Lord Orford’s conduct” in this regard: David Hume, *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects*. Third Edition. (London: A. Millar, 1754), “Of Public Credit,” Vol. IV, p. 110.

body politic” by paying out interest abroad which would only serve to bolster the economies of Britain’s competitors. David Hume later echoed these concerns.<sup>142</sup> Decker proposed to “pay off our debts by public bonds, bearing interest, negotiable by endorsement, and liquidating part of our debts yearly.”<sup>143</sup> Tucker was less worried than Hume about the national debt, insisting only that the “Sinking Fund” could be deployed in peacetime to pay down the debt quickly.<sup>144</sup> Yet, Tucker, Decker and Hume, worried that a large National Debt generated taxes, leading to “high price of labor” which was itself an “insuperable bar to a large trade.”<sup>145</sup> Nevertheless it is clear that for Tucker, Walpole’s commitment to parsimonious spending and paying down the debt made him “ a model for all Princes to proceed upon in regard to National Commerce.”<sup>146</sup>

For Hume, by contrast, the institutions created by the Financial Revolution were on balance deleterious. “Banks, funds, and paper credit, with which we are in this kingdom so infatuated,” he fumed, merely served to “raise proportionably the price of labor and commodities.”<sup>147</sup> Paying for wars by creating a National Debt, Hume insisted was a “poison” that “no evil, but the greatest and most urgent, should ever induce us to embrace.”<sup>148</sup> The National Debt, serviced through the selling of “public stocks” merely serves to “banish gold and silver from the most considerable commerce of the state” and, according to Hume, “by that means render all provisions and labor dearer than otherwise they would be.” But above all,

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<sup>142</sup> Matthew Decker, *An Essay on the Causes of the Decline of the Foreign Trade*. Second Edition. (Dublin: George Faulkner, 1749), pp. 65-66. Schabas and Wennerlind, *A Philosopher’s Economist*, pp. 198-199.

<sup>143</sup> Matthew Decker, *An Essay on the Causes of the Decline of the Foreign Trade*. Second Edition. (Dublin: George Faulkner, 1749), p. 75.

<sup>144</sup> [Josiah Tucker], *The Elements of Commerce*, [1755], p. 132.

<sup>145</sup> [Josiah Tucker], *A Brief Essay*. Dedicated to the earl of Halifax. (London, 1749), p. 30.

<sup>146</sup> [Josiah Tucker], *The Elements of Commerce*, [1755], pp. 148-149.

<sup>147</sup> David Hume, *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects*. Third Edition. (London: A, Millar, 1754), “Of the Balance of Trade,” Vol. IV, pp. 78-79.

<sup>148</sup> David Hume, *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects*. Third Edition. (London: A, Millar, 1754), “Of the Balance of Power,” Vol. IV, p. 98.

Hume thought it virtually inevitable, that states would eventually be forced to default on their debts, that there would be a “breach of national faith,” in the midst of an international crisis leading to a foreign invasion in which “at last, they themselves and their creditors lie both at the mercy of the conqueror.” The best solution, was a voluntary national bankruptcy.<sup>149</sup> Hume came out against the National Debt largely because it created the condition for endless wars, disrupting his vision of mutually beneficial commercial development.

Since the Old Guard political economists were so convinced that Britain held a great advantage in international commerce and that the size and consequence of the National Debt were an insuperable problem, it is hardly surprising that they and their supporters in Pelhamite circles thought that war needed to be avoided at all costs. War, they insisted again and again, was inconsistent with the principles of a trading nation.<sup>150</sup> “Let us go on improving in the arts of peace,” Tucker advised in 1755, “in which from the very nature of our constitution we are sure to be victorious.” Britain should “avoid the lighting up a general war as much as possible,” since France “is still capable of exerting great powers, and doing much mischief, if provoked to despair.”<sup>151</sup> War, Tucker pointed out, required “numerous fleets, augmented land armies, and various subsidiary treaties, all which are detrimental to commerce” and therefore “an industrious trading nation should avoid as much as possible.”<sup>152</sup> Hume condemned the very notion of wars fought for jealousy of trade. He famously warned “princes and states, fighting

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<sup>149</sup> David Hume, *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects*. Third Edition. (London: A. Millar, 1754), “Of Public Credit,” Vol. IV, pp. 114-123; Schabas and Wennerlind, *A Philosopher’s Economist*, pp. 196-204; Hont, *Jealousy of Trade*, pp. 84-86.

<sup>150</sup> Decker wrote his tract in the midst of the War of Austrian Succession so devoted little space to avoiding war.

<sup>151</sup> Josiah Tucker, *The Important Question*. (London: R. Griffiths, 1755), pp. 18-19.

<sup>152</sup> Josiah Tucker, *The Important Question*. (London: R. Griffiths, 1755), p. 63.

and quarrelling amidst their debts, funds, and public mortgages” was like “ a match of cudgel-playing fought in a china-shop.”<sup>153</sup> “All our public debts are owing more to our imprudent vehemence” in wars “than to the ambition of our neighbors.”<sup>154</sup>

In the immediate aftermath of the War of Austrian Succession Pelhamites echoed these views. “Peace,” said Henry Pelham in the House of Commons, “is generally deemed a desirable thing for a nation, especially a nation that subsists chiefly by trade and commerce.”<sup>155</sup> Robert Walpole’s brother, Horatio, concurred: “I believe there is not a gentleman in England, especially among those concerned in trade,” that will not agree that peace is “better than a dangerous and expensive war.”<sup>156</sup> Maintaining peace in Europe, chimed in Henry Fox, was the best way for “our debts” to be “cleared.” For all of his carping behind closed doors, Fox was a publicly loyal Pelhamite.<sup>157</sup> Indeed Pelham himself made clear that Britain could not so much as contemplate belligerent action “before we have paid off a great part of our present debt.” To do otherwise would be to risk national bankruptcy.<sup>158</sup> One of the Lords of the Admiralty, William Wildman, 2<sup>nd</sup> Viscount Barrington, agreed, noting that “under that heavy load of debt, which the expensive wars we have been engaged in have brought upon us, it is absolutely

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<sup>153</sup> David Hume, *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects*. Third Edition. (London: A. Millar, 1754), “Of Public Credit,” Vol. IV, p. 119.

<sup>154</sup> David Hume, *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects*. Third Edition. (London: A. Millar, 1754), “Of the Balance of Power,” Vol. IV, pp. 96-97.

<sup>155</sup> Henry Pelham, 29 November 1748, *The Parliamentary History of England*. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1806-1820), Vol. 14, p. 346; Henry Pelham, 22 February 1751, *The Parliamentary History of England*. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1806-1820), Vol. 14, p. 931.

<sup>156</sup> Horatio Walpole Senior, 17 January 1751, *The Parliamentary History of England*. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1806-1820), Vol. 14, p. 811.

<sup>157</sup> Henry Fox, 25 January 1751, *The Parliamentary History of England*. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1806-1820), Vol. 14, p. 859.

<sup>158</sup> Henry Pelham, 22 February 1751, *The Parliamentary History of England*. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1806-1820), Vol. 14, p. 931; Henry Pelham, 25 January 1751, *The Parliamentary History of England*. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1806-1820), Vol. 14, p. 842.

necessary to contract every article of public expense.” A belligerent foreign policy was at the moment out of the question.<sup>159</sup> Sir George Lee, who like many of the Leicester House group made peace with the Pelhams after the death of the Prince of Wales, opined that “public tranquility” “must be acknowledged to be a great happiness to Europe in general, but more especially to this nation in particular, as our well-being depends upon our trade and commerce.”<sup>160</sup> Even after the disaster at Fort Necessity, the Pelhamite Henry Bilson Legge insisted “that we ought at all times, and upon all occasions, to avoid, as much as possible, coming to an open rupture with any nation.”<sup>161</sup>

Nevertheless, the Old Guard, for all their pacific inclinations, believed Britain needed to do everything to maintain the balance of power in Europe against possible French aggression. They were by no means isolationists.<sup>162</sup> For the Old Guard political economists, the doctrine of maintaining the balance of power in Europe was both sensible and necessary. “Europe has now, for above a century, remained on the defensive against the greatest force that ever, perhaps, was formed by the civil or political combination of mankind,” David Hume wrote of France. He hoped that “by maintaining the resistance some time, the natural revolutions of human affairs, together with unforeseen events and accidents, may guard us against universal monarchy.” While he lamented that Britain had unnecessarily augmented its debts by carrying

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<sup>159</sup> William Wildman, 2<sup>nd</sup> Viscount Barrington, 25 January 1751, *The Parliamentary History of England*. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1806-1820), Vol. 14, pp. 828-829.

<sup>160</sup> Sir George Lee, 14 November 1754, *The Parliamentary History of England*. Vol. XV 1753-1765. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1813), p. 334.

<sup>161</sup> Henry Bilson Legge, 14 November 1754, *The Parliamentary History of England*. Vol. XV 1753-1765. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1813), p. 347.

<sup>162</sup> Decker, it is true, writing in the midst of the War of Austrian Succession, thought that the War of Spanish Succession could have been fought to greater effect had Britain fully “exerted our natural Naval Force”: Matthew Decker, *An Essay on the Causes of the Decline of the Foreign Trade*. Second Edition. (Dublin: George Faulkner, 1749), p. 146.

on its wars with too much “vehemence,” he by no means recommended a withdrawal from Europe. Indeed, he was sensitive to contemporary complaints about the regime’s continental commitments, which might render “us totally careless and supine with regard to the fate of Europe.”<sup>163</sup> Tucker was even more adamant about the necessity of continental engagement. “The notion that Great Britain has no concern, and ought to have none with that part of the continent which is at our very doors, is so very extravagant and absurd, that it never entered any man’s heart till of late years, and is never vented by any now, but by those who are either the determined enemies of the government, or want to create a disturbance in the administration,” he fumed.<sup>164</sup> Britain had “numerous and well-appointed fleets,” Tucker acknowledged, but because the sea was “an unstable element” there was no certainty that they could prevent an invasion. Few of Tucker’s readers would need to be reminded of the events of 1745-46. An army, once landed, could easily ravage Britain “from end to end.”<sup>165</sup> It was folly to think the French could be brought to “their knees to sue for peace” by destroying their shipping. French had a vast internal trade and its chief trading partners were on the continent of Europe.<sup>166</sup> In Tucker’s view the best way to maintain the balance of power was to pay subsidies to German princes to keep the French pinned down on the continent, augment the navy, and modestly increase the size of Britain’s standing army. Abandoning Europe, and investing in the navy alone would allow the French to disband “one third of their land army,

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<sup>163</sup> David Hume, *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects*. Third Edition. (London: A. Millar, 1754), “Of the Balance of Power,” Vol. IV, pp. 95-98; Schabas and Wennerlind, *A Philosopher’s Economist*, p. 195.

<sup>164</sup> Josiah Tucker, *The Important Question*. (London: R. Griffiths, 1755), pp. 8-9.

<sup>165</sup> Josiah Tucker, *The Important Question*. (London: R. Griffiths, 1755), pp. 11-12. Tucker clearly had the experience of the ’45 in mind.

<sup>166</sup> Josiah Tucker, *The Important Question*. (London: R. Griffiths, 1755), pp. 13-14, 17.

particularly the most expensive part” and divert those resources to building a navy that could rival or surpass Britain’s.<sup>167</sup>

Pelhamite politicians repeatedly insisted on the importance of continued engagement with European powers. They defended the importance of maintaining the balance of power on the continent and insisted that European subsidies, the Old System, was the best way to do this. Britain could not remain “unconcerned,” argued Henry Fox, “when the dispute happens to be whether the French, or any other nation upon the continent of Europe, shall bring the rest under subjection.” In such a case “we must join the confederacy formed against any such ambitious design, and if it be necessary, we must join with our whole force both by land and sea.”<sup>168</sup> The last war had been fought to prevent “the balance of power from being overturned by the empire being rendered dependent on France,” recalled Henry Pelham, with no regrets. This must remain Britain’s policy.<sup>169</sup> The goal was to maintain “the internal quiet of Germany” which could most efficiently and cheaply be achieved through dispensing “a few subsidies,” Pelham maintained. Maintaining the balance of power through subsidiary treaties was far less costly than war.<sup>170</sup> William Murray, the solicitor general and at this time a fully committed Pelhamite, argued the compared to “the expense of a new war” German subsidies to maintain the balance of power was “money wisely and frugally laid out.”<sup>171</sup> Pelham argued forcefully

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<sup>167</sup> Josiah Tucker, *The Important Question*. (London: R. Griffiths, 1755), pp. 36-38, 47.

<sup>168</sup> Henry Fox, 8 February 1748, *The Parliamentary History of England*. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1806-1820), Vol. 14, p. 165.

<sup>169</sup> Henry Pelham, 16 November 1749, *The Parliamentary History of England*. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1806-1820), Vol. 14, p. 597.

<sup>170</sup> Henry Pelham, 25 January 1751, *The Parliamentary History of England*. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1806-1820), Vol. 14, p. 846; Henry Pelham, 22 January 1752, *The Parliamentary History of England*. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1806-1820), Vol. 14, p. 1136.

<sup>171</sup> William Murray (Solicitor General), 22 February 1751, *The Parliamentary History of England*. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1806-1820), Vol. 14, p. 950. By 1754 Murray was clearly drifting away from this position and his close association with Old Guard policies.



that focusing on the navy alone was myopic, for “the French alone would soon render themselves superior to us at sea if they had nothing to fear from any attack upon the continent.”<sup>172</sup> After Pelham’s death, Horatio Walpole echoed the late Prime Minister’s argument. “We have no way of preventing the French from becoming an over-match for us, even at sea, but by cultivating and engaging an alliance on the continent of Europe as shall give them so much to do in defending themselves at land, that it shall not be in their power to spare money enough for repairing. Much less for increasing their naval strength.”<sup>173</sup> The Pelhamite Old Guard’s deep commitment to the balance of power in Europe, reflected, in part, their hope that British manufactures, newly unfettered from the constraints of monopoly, would gain renewed traction on European markets. They believed that only French hegemony would prevent such a development.

Old Guard political economists held a view of British colonies entirely consistent with their concerns about both the national debt and monopolies. They condemned imperial conquest. Empires, or “enormous monarchies, such as Europe at present is threatened with,” Hume maintained, “are, probably, destructive to human nature, in their progress, in their continuance, and even in their downfall, which never can be very distant from their establishment.”<sup>174</sup> “The less we aim at conquests, the more desirous would every people be to traffic with us,” argued Josiah Tucker. The result would be “that all nations would covet our

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<sup>172</sup> Henry Pelham, 22 February 1751, *The Parliamentary History of England*. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1806-1820), Vol. 14, pp. 935-936.

<sup>173</sup> Horatio Walpole, 14 November 1754, *The Parliamentary History of England*. Vol. XV 1753-1765. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1813), pp. 362-363.

<sup>174</sup> David Hume, *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects*. Third Edition. (London: A. Millar, 1754), “Of the Balance of Power,” Vol. IV, p. 98; Schabas and Wennerlind, *A Philosopher’s Economist*, pp. 177-178. In this essay Hume explicitly prefers the Greek commitment to balance of power to the Roman establishment of empire.

manufactures, because we could sell them the best and cheapest” which would ultimately “swell the amount of our yearly revenue by the customs, duties, and taxes put upon them.”<sup>175</sup> “Our numerous colonies, extensive and distant navigation, perilous and unwholesome trades” Tucker maintained, “are great and continual drains upon us.”<sup>176</sup>

Instead, the Old Guard political economists wanted to improve Britain’s colonies by augmenting their trade, focusing in particular on colonial production. The Old Guard political economists held that the time had come to eliminate, or significantly curtail the Navigation Act, which they viewed as yet another pernicious monopoly. Matthew Decker insisted that “our Navigation Act gives the sailors a monopoly against our merchants, so that on the least spurt of trade they extort excessive wages.” The consequence was “very prejudicial to our manufactures” by artificially raising the price of “necessaries and materials of manufacture.” Without the Navigation Act, Decker thought, Britain would naturally dominate the carrying trade. “As no people by their natural advantages can navigate so cheap as we, so no people are enabled to give such a vent to their growths, manufactures and imports as we.” With no restrictions on colonial trade, “those nations that would give their the same vent must employ our shipping or trade to disadvantage.”<sup>177</sup> Strict regulation of trade with the colonies through the Navigation Act resulted in “our trade, particularly to our Northern colonies ... growing less and less.” Instead, Britain should seek to promote “an exchange of commodities to mutual benefit.”<sup>178</sup> When Hume blamed the jealousy of trade for “innumerable barriers and

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<sup>175</sup> [Josiah Tucker], *The Elements of Commerce*, [1755], pp. 134-135.

<sup>176</sup> [Josiah Tucker], *The Elements of Commerce*, [1755], p. 16.

<sup>177</sup> Matthew Decker, *An Essay on the Causes of the Decline of the Foreign Trade*. Second Edition. (Dublin: George Faulkner, 1749), pp. 53, 139.

<sup>178</sup> Josiah Tucker, *A Brief Essay*. Third Edition. (London: T. Trye, 1753), pp. 94-96. This section on colonial commerce was added to the third edition.

obstructions upon commerce” which have proven counterproductive, it is hard to believe that he did not have the Navigation Act in mind.<sup>179</sup>

Old Guard political economists thought Britain should do everything it could to promote colonial production. Both Decker and Tucker emphasized the potential value to Britain of augmenting colonial production of “naval stores” and ships made from the superabundant timber in the colonies.<sup>180</sup> Both Decker and Tucker emphasized that one of the benefits of eliminating the restrictions on colonial shipping would be “to encourage our plantations in raising growths.” Such “raw materials as are to be manufactured here in England,” even if they could be produced domestically, should be “particularly encouraged.”<sup>181</sup> And, Decker and Tucker, though critical of the irrationality of corn bounties in Britain, enthusiastically embraced bounties to encourage colonial production of raw materials.<sup>182</sup>

The Old Guard political economists, it should be noted, were no advocates of slavery. In this they differed from the political economists like the Quaker Joshua Gee and William Wood embraced by Robert Walpole.<sup>183</sup> Despite his famous embrace of racial hierarchies, Hume consistently condemned slavery.<sup>184</sup> He wrote, “the remains that are found of domestic slavery, in the American colonies, and amongst some European nations, would never surely create a

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<sup>179</sup> David Hume, *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects*. Third Edition. (London: A. Millar, 1754), “Of the Balance of Trade,” Vol. IV, p. 77.

<sup>180</sup> Josiah Tucker, *A Brief Essay*. Third Edition. (London: T. Trye, 1753), p. 93; Matthew Decker, *An Essay on the Causes of the Decline of the Foreign Trade*. Second Edition. (Dublin: George Faulkner, 1749), p. 74.

<sup>181</sup> Matthew Decker, *An Essay on the Causes of the Decline of the Foreign Trade*. Second Edition. (Dublin: George Faulkner, 1749), pp. 75-76; Josiah Tucker, *A Brief Essay*. Third Edition. (London: T. Trye, 1753), pp. 97.

<sup>182</sup> Matthew Decker, *An Essay on the Causes of the Decline of the Foreign Trade*. Second Edition. (Dublin: George Faulkner, 1749), p. 127; Josiah Tucker, *A Brief Essay*. Third Edition. (London: T. Trye, 1753), pp. 102.

<sup>183</sup> Hume was explicitly critical of Gee: David Hume, *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects*. Third Edition. (London: A. Millar, 1754), “Of the Balance of Trade,” Vol. IV, p. 71.

<sup>184</sup> “I am apt to suspect the negroes, and in general all other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) to be naturally inferior to the whites.” David Hume, “Of National Characters,” *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects*. (London: A. Millar, 1753), Vol. 1, p. 291.

desire of rendering it more universal.” Masters, who lorded it over slaves, retained “little humanity.” Slavery historically promoted “barbarous manners.” Economically, slavery made no sense. Slaves, even if threatened with severe punishment, would never work as hard as those who had the incentives of wages. And evidence from the West Indies showed that “a stock of slaves grow worse 5 percent every year.”<sup>185</sup> As Tucker put it, pithily, “trade and vassalage, commerce and slavery, are in their natures repugnant to each other.”<sup>186</sup>

The Old Guard political economists offered no proposals to reform the governance of Britain’s overseas colonies. But they did believe in the advantages of incorporating union within the British Isles. David Hume believed that Scotland had benefited from the union of 1707 by “an increase of its art and industry.”<sup>187</sup> In Hume’s view, the removal of commercial restraints between the two kingdoms of Scotland and England had been mutually beneficial. Both Matthew Decker and Josiah Tucker advocated an incorporating union with Ireland.

The Old Guard political economists, then, did not advocate colonial expansion. Nor did they lobby for tighter or more comprehensive controls over colonial life. Instead, in their view, Britain’s colonies were best served by integrating their social and economic life more fully with Britain’s. Decker wanted to “unite Ireland, and put all the subjects in these three kingdoms on the same footing in trade.”<sup>188</sup> Removing the restrictions on Irish trade, from cattle exports to

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<sup>185</sup> David Hume, “Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations,” *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects*. (London, A. Millar, 1754), Vol. IV, pp. 140 -149. Schabas and Wennerlind, *A Philosopher’s Economist*, pp. 191-194.

<sup>186</sup> [Josiah Tucker], *The Elements of Commerce*, [1755], p. 13. Tucker would later elaborate his critique of slavery, but his opposition to slavery was already manifest before the outbreak of the Seven Years’ War.

<sup>187</sup> David Hume, *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects*. Third Edition. (London: A, Millar, 1754), “Of the Balance of Trade,” Vol. IV, p. 75.

<sup>188</sup> Matthew Decker, *An Essay on the Causes of the Decline of the Foreign Trade*. Second Edition. (Dublin: George Faulkner, 1749), p. 75.

woolen manufacture, would benefit Ireland, in Decker's view. And because Ireland was "too poor to give it the extent it is capable of" the producers of that country would allow the English to carry its goods to market. The lack of Irish manufactures in many fields meant about "one third of what Ireland gets" would be sent to England for goods in trade. Therefore, "the richer Ireland grows, the richer must Britain become."<sup>189</sup> An Anglo-Irish Union would have the added benefit, thought Decker, of subjecting the Irish, like the Scots since 1707, to British taxes. "By an Union with Ireland," Decker therefore concluded, "the taxes on Britain will be lessened for the present, whereby they will continue to make our goods still cheaper, consequently more vendible."<sup>190</sup> Josiah Tucker agreed: "the Irish might be incorporated into the English Parliament, and make one nation with ourselves, bearing an equal share of the taxers, and so easing England at the same time Ireland is enriched."<sup>191</sup> He excoriated "our ill-judged policy and unnatural jealousy in cramping the trade of Ireland," reasoning that "if Ireland gets rich" the inevitable consequence would be that "England will be rich too; and the French will be the poorer."<sup>192</sup>

For all of their celebration of commercial society, for all of their advocacy of freer trade, the Old Guard political economists had an essentially conservative social vision. David Hume warned that the long-term effect of the national debt might be social upheaval. "In 500 years," he warned that the upper classes, "the posterity of those in coaches" and "of those upon the

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<sup>189</sup> Matthew Decker, *An Essay on the Causes of the Decline of the Foreign Trade*. Second Edition. (Dublin: George Faulkner, 1749), p. 157.

<sup>190</sup> Matthew Decker, *An Essay on the Causes of the Decline of the Foreign Trade*. Second Edition. (Dublin: George Faulkner, 1749), p. 156.

<sup>191</sup> [Josiah Tucker], *A Brief Essay*. Dedicated to the earl of Halifax. (London, 1749), p. 28. Tucker wanted to add at least 60 Irish members to the British Parliament and to increase gradually direct taxation of Ireland: p. 36.

<sup>192</sup> [Josiah Tucker], *A Brief Essay*. Dedicated to the earl of Halifax. (London, 1749), p. 28.

boxes,” their servants, “will probably have changed places.” This was troubling for Hume; “the landed gentry and nobility is much better rooted” than other classes of people.<sup>193</sup> In general, Hume maintained that the socially transformative effects of commercialization needed to be tamed by the refinement of the arts.<sup>194</sup> Decker accompanied his proposals for eliminating monopolies and making Britain into a free port with a proposal “to discourage idleness and regulate the poor.”<sup>195</sup> He proposed a tax on luxury goods that would prove “a sumptuary law to keep all people in their proper stations.”<sup>196</sup> Like Hume, Decker also thought refinement necessary to restrain the vices of a commercial society. Decker therefore proposed a “drawing school at the public expense” to promote “taste and invention.”<sup>197</sup> Tucker’s concerns about social disorder were even more profound. Britain’s greatest relative disadvantage in commerce, Tucker thought, “was the want of subordination of the lower class of people.” It was this lack of subordination, Tucker believed, that led to “the high price of their labor.”<sup>198</sup> Britons fondness for “electioneering is a fatal stab to trade” because it gave “manufacturers” “a taste for idleness and a thirst after drunkenness and all extravagance.” The solution Tucker

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<sup>193</sup> David Hume, *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects*. Third Edition. (London: A, Millar, 1754), “Of Public Credit,” Vol. IV, pp. 116,122.

<sup>194</sup> Schabas and Wennerlind, *A Philosopher’s Economist*, pp. 136-141. The authors emphasize Hume’s social vision was fundamentally “conservative in temperament.” (p. 43)

<sup>195</sup> Matthew Decker, *An Essay on the Causes of the Decline of the Foreign Trade*. Second Edition. (Dublin: George Faulkner, 1749), p. 75.

<sup>196</sup> Matthew Decker, *An Essay on the Causes of the Decline of the Foreign Trade*. Second Edition. (Dublin: George Faulkner, 1749), p. 88.

<sup>197</sup> Matthew Decker, *An Essay on the Causes of the Decline of the Foreign Trade*. Second Edition. (Dublin: George Faulkner, 1749), p. 76.

<sup>198</sup> [Josiah Tucker], *A Brief Essay*. Dedicated to the earl of Halifax. (London, 1749), pp. 9, 21-22; Harris has emphasized Tucker’s “authoritarian and often hostile attitude towards the labouring poor”: *Politics and the Nation*, p. 203.

proposed was to raise significantly the property qualifications for voting “to introduce a just subordination among the people.”<sup>199</sup>

Just as Henry Pelham had sought to bring a range of viewpoints into his administration to obviate the dangers of public and popular politics, so Tucker argued that policies were best discussed behind closed doors by the political elite. “In a despotic kingdom the ministry have none to oppose them in their good designs,” Tucker observed, “but among us let their plan be never so well calculated for the public good, yet if it clashes with the private interest of any particular persons, trading companies, or boroughs (as it must necessarily do) then it will be opposed under various pretenses by the united force of such false patriots.” In Britain, he worried, “a news-writer or a pamphleteer will put every measure of the court in the most odious light, in order to make his paper sell the better.” This was no way to make good policy.<sup>200</sup> While Tucker devoted less space in his mid-century political economic tracts to institutions designed to refine the population, he nevertheless insisted that “the good of any state doth plainly arise from the increase, employment and morals of its subjects.”<sup>201</sup>

The Old Guard political economists, then, called for gradual reform, rather than structural change, to meet the threat of French commercial development. They believed that Britain’s natural and political advantages gave it a substantial lead over its French rivals. Removing restraints on commercial exchange, rather than pursuing policies motivated by jealousy of trade, offered the British the best prospect for the future. Eliminating the National

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<sup>199</sup> [Josiah Tucker], *A Brief Essay*. Dedicated to the earl of Halifax. (London, 1749), pp. 22, 33-35. While Hume advocated frequent elections this may be understood to be a solution to the same problem.

<sup>200</sup> [Josiah Tucker], *A Brief Essay*. Dedicated to the earl of Halifax. (London, 1749), pp. 30-31

<sup>201</sup> [Josiah Tucker], *The Elements of Commerce*, [1755], p. 11.

Debt and promoting immigration would do a great deal to promote British prosperity. Though the Old Guard political economists very much believed that British prosperity, and freer trade, would benefit the poor, they had no interest in making British society less hierarchical.

#### IV

The Old Guard political economists and Pelhamite mainstream did not have a monopoly on political economic argument. In the aftermath of the War of Austrian Succession, there was no ideological consensus. There was no tendency towards political moderation. Instead, Old Guard arguments sparked intense ideological opposition. Two other groups offered deeply contrasting visions for the organization of Britain's economy and empire, visions that required a fundamental rethinking of Britain's strategy.

The debate over the Jewish Naturalization Act provided the occasion for Tories, a Patriot rump, and a group disillusioned establishment Whigs, called "authoritarian Whigs" to advance a very different political economic blueprint from that offered by the Old Guard political economists.<sup>202</sup> From the outset John Russell, 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Bedford, was seen as the "head" of this new grouping.<sup>203</sup> They, too, began their analysis with an acknowledgement that French

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<sup>202</sup> Sarah Kinkel, *Disciplining the Empire: Politics, Governance and the Rise of the British Navy*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018), pp. 13-14. I am less convinced than Kinkel is that George Montagu-Dunk 2<sup>nd</sup> earl of Halifax was part of this grouping before the outbreak of the Seven Years War: he fought bitterly with Bedford over Nova Scotia policy and opposed direct taxation of the American colonies. Later he did appear to join the group. This grouping had strong ideological affinity with the group James Vaughn calls New Tories. But the personnel was slightly different. William Beckford had not yet joined the Patriot coalition. George Grenville remained aligned with the Pittites until after the outbreak of the Seven Years War. One of the important stories that remains to be told is the 1750s genesis of this grouping. James M. Vaughn, *The Politics of Empire at the Accession of George III*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), pp. 165-200.

<sup>203</sup> William Beckford (Soho Square) to John Russell 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Bedford, 4 June 1754, in Lord John Russell (Editor), *Correspondence of John, Fourth Duke of Bedford*. Vol. II. (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1843), p. 150.



commerce was overtaking. British trade or had even surpassed it. But unlike the Old Guard they did not believe that piecemeal reforms would suffice to reverse the trend.

The launching of the short-lived, but extremely opinionated newspaper *The Protester*, in 1753, marked the coalescence of this party. The Old Guard and Patriot groups can be closely identified with prominent political economists, whose works went through many editions in the period. By contrast, the Bedfordites made their views known in Parliamentary speeches and newspaper essays. Their views were often printed in journals like the *London Evening Post*, the *Gentleman's Magazine* and the *Westminster Journal*, periodicals that printed essays from a variety of viewpoints critical of Pelhamite policy.<sup>204</sup> In Spring 1753 the former Whig Secretary of State, the Duke of Bedford, joined with the Tory London alderman and West Indian planter William Beckford to hire the Pennsylvanian James Ralph to launch a new essay paper to enunciate their position. Ralph was a long-time opposition journalist. In many ways, *The Protester* merely elaborated and coordinated the themes developed by Bedford, Beckford and their friends.<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> In the *London Evening Post* the Britannicus essays, probably penned by Paul Whitehead the "bard of Leicester House," hewed most closely to the authoritarian Whig point of view. On Whitehead, see Captain Edward Thompson, "Life of Paul Whitehead," *The Poems and Miscellaneous Compositions of Paul Whitehead*. (London: G. Kearsley and J. Ridley, 1774), pp. xiii-xvii; Harris, *Politics and the Nation*, p. 51. Throughout I have referred to the author of the essays as "Britannicus" as the attribution is highly probable but not certain.

<sup>205</sup> Richard Rigby to John Russell 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Bedford, 4 June 1753, in Lord John Russell (Editor), *Correspondence of John, Fourth Duke of Bedford*. Vol. II. (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1843), p. 127; William Beckford (Soho Square) to John Russell 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Bedford, 28 July 1753, in Lord John Russell (Editor), *Correspondence of John, Fourth Duke of Bedford*. Vol. II. (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1843), p. 128. Robert W. Kenny, "James Ralph: An Eighteenth Century Philadelphian in Grub Street," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*. Vol. 64 No. 2 (April 1940), pp. 226-227. On the ideological significance of *The Protester*, see Kinkel, *Disciplining the Navy*, p. 94; Perry, *Public Opinion, Propaganda and Politics* pp. 106-109; Harris, *Politics and the Nation*, pp. 51-52. *The Protester* was wound up when Newcastle convinced his brother to provide Ralph a pension.

While the Bedfordites were just as concerned, as their Old Guard antagonists, about the growth of French commercial and political power, they diagnosed the cause of the problem differently. Their analysis began not with the structural problem of the national debt, but the cause of that debt.

The Bedfordites were in no doubt that French power was increasing and French aspirations were insatiable. “The French have long been aspiring to universal monarchy,” the Duke of Bedford matter-of-factly asserted.<sup>206</sup> The basis of French power, *Britannicus* claimed in the *London Evening Post*, was their flourishing empire. “The time when the French with great foresight and policy obtained their large possession in America is the epocha from which may be traced, by the most regular advances their degrees of growth,” this essayist maintained, “to their arrival at their present height of power and wealth; a state which is now so formidable and threatening to almost all the principle powers of Europe!”<sup>207</sup> Admiral Edward Vernon who had since the end of the war in 1748 been gravitating towards authoritarian Whig circles agreed: “France has been long aiming at a power to dictate to all the other princes and states of Europe.” But having discovered that “by extending her dominions and making conquests upon the continent of Europe” France only provoked a “confederacy” to defeat these aims, the French administration “entirely changed their conduct, and have ever since been endeavoring to acquire the power they aim at, by establishing their manufactures, extending their commerce, and improving and enlarging their colonies and plantations in America.”<sup>208</sup> Far from

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<sup>206</sup> John Russell 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Bedford, 27 April 1744, *The Parliamentary History of England*. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1806-1820), Vol. 13, p. 793.

<sup>207</sup> *London Evening Post*, 14 September 1754, p. [1].

<sup>208</sup> Admiral Edward Vernon, 16 November 1749, *The Parliamentary History of England*. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1806-1820), Vol. 14, p. 601.

rejecting arguments based on jealousy of trade, William Beckford unabashedly proclaimed that “I am jealous” of French commerce and French colonies.<sup>209</sup>

The authoritarian Whigs insisted that the commitment of Robert Walpole and the Pelhamites to maintaining the balance of power on the continent, and to protecting the Electorate of Hanover, were the source of all Britain’s economic woes. “We were once undeniably rich, and are now rich in paper only,” lamented the *Protester*. The cause was clear: the misguided pursuit of “political moonshine,” in other words “the balance of Europe.”<sup>210</sup> “We have seen,” complained Bedford’s close friend and political brother-in-arms John Montagu, 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Sandwich, “the wealth of this nation, that wealth for which our manufacturers labor, and our sailors defy the oceans and winds; that wealth which is either the gift of bountiful nature, or the profit of incessant industry, squandered in projects which had no other tendency than to extend the bounds and improve the interest of Hanover.”<sup>211</sup> While the lifelong Tory, Sir John Hynde Cotton admitted that British subsidies “always had great weight in Germany,” he insisted that “if we ever think of extricating this nation from the debts and taxes it groans under, we must conclude that we have no more of that great weight to throw.”<sup>212</sup> The debts caused by paying exorbitant subsidies required raising new taxes that were in turn destroying the competitiveness of British commerce, explained the duke of Bedford. He explained in the House of Lords that “those taxes lie so heavy upon our navigation and manufactures, and have

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<sup>209</sup> William Beckford, 12 December 1753, *The Parliamentary History of England*. Vol. XV 1753-1765. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1813), p. 179.

<sup>210</sup> *The Protester*, 25 August 1753, p. 75.

<sup>211</sup> John Montagu 4<sup>th</sup> earl of Sandwich, 31 January 1744, *The Parliamentary History of England*. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1806-1820), Vol. 13, p. 560.

<sup>212</sup> John Hynde Cotton, 17 January 1751, *The Parliamentary History of England*. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1806-1820), Vol. 14, p. 821.

so enhanced the price of all the necessaries and conveniencies of life, and consequently the wages of workmen, that foreigners are able to undersell us at every market, and to navigate their ships at a cheaper rate than we do.”<sup>213</sup>

These views were echoed in an essay reprinted in the *London Magazine*. “It is indeed a question whether we can recover any branch of trade we have lost, or even preserve some of those we have still left, if we do not soon abolish several of the taxes our people groan under,” this essayist opined, “this we can never do whilst we continue so much in love with being principals in carrying on wars upon the continent of Europe.”<sup>214</sup> The French “have a foreign commerce, they have foreign plantations,” moaned William Beckford, “their having got so much of both is chiefly owing to our late fondness for an alliance upon the continent of Europe.” “We have at present no occasion for an alliance with any power on the continent of Europe,” Beckford elaborated: “the expense of this we are, in our present circumstance, absolutely unable to support.”<sup>215</sup> The result of interference in “disputes upon the continent,” recalled Robert Harley’s cousin and longtime Leicester House supporter Velters Cornwall, was “to load our commerce and manufactures with taxes of various kinds” making British products uncompetitive in overseas markets.<sup>216</sup> “That our former folly in carrying on war upon the

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<sup>213</sup> John Russell, 4<sup>th</sup> duke of Bedford, 28 January 1752, *The Parliamentary History of England*. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1806-1820), Vol. 14, pp. 1181-1182; John Russell 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Bedford, 15 November 1753, *The Parliamentary History of England*. Vol. XV 1753-1765. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1813), p. 109.

<sup>214</sup> *London Magazine*, August 1753, p. 37

<sup>215</sup> William Beckford, 14 November 1754, *The Parliamentary History of England*. Vol. XV 1753-1765. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1813), p. 354.

<sup>216</sup> Velters Cornwall, 8 February 1748, *The Parliamentary History of England*. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1806-1820), Vol. 14, p. 158.

continent [of Europe], is the true cause of our present heavy debt and burdensome taxes is evident to every man,” emphasized *Britannicus* in the *London Evening Post*.<sup>217</sup>

The Bedfordites, therefore, saw no point in engaging in European affairs. They believed the very notion of a balance of power was a foolish doctrine. According to Edward Vernon, “I think our trade and navigation of more consequence to us than even what is called the balance of power in Europe, because upon our trade and navigation depends our naval power, and while in this we are superior to France, we might preserve our independency even though she were mistress of the whole continent of Europe.”<sup>218</sup> “When this balance is in real and apparent danger,” William Beckford said of the European situation, there was no reason for Britain to become involved because “the princes of Europe will be ready enough to exert the utmost of their strength, without any subsidy from us, even in time of war.”<sup>219</sup> For Beckford the notion of “a balance of power in Europe” was a “ridiculous doctrine” that needed to be “rooted out of every British bosom.”<sup>220</sup> Beckford’s fellow West Indian, Samuel Martin of Antigua, agreed that “it is not our interest as Englishmen to be the peacemakers or peace preservers of Europe.”<sup>221</sup> *The Protester* published an essay warning that being “inveigled by names and sounds, the *balance of power*, the *liberty of Europe*, the dread of an *Universal Monarchy*” the British people

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<sup>217</sup> *London Evening Post*, 1 April 1755, p. [1]

<sup>218</sup> Admiral Edward Vernon, 16 November 1749, *The Parliamentary History of England*. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1806-1820), Vol. 14, p. 601.

<sup>219</sup> William Beckford, 22 January 1752, *The Parliamentary History of England*. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1806-1820), Vol. 14, p. 1152. Bedford made this exact point in a later debate: John Russell, 4<sup>th</sup> duke of Bedford, 28 January 1752, *The Parliamentary History of England*. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1806-1820), Vol. 14, p. 1194.

<sup>220</sup> William Beckford, 14 November 1754, *The Parliamentary History of England*. Vol. XV 1753-1765. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1813), p. 357.

<sup>221</sup> Samuel Martin, 22 February 1751, *The Parliamentary History of England*. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1806-1820), Vol. 14, p. 938

had been bamboozled into exhausting “all that immensity of wealth, which the vast profits of our trade for such a number of years had accumulated.”<sup>222</sup>

The Bedfordites, therefore, fully embraced a blue water policy. They wanted Britain to turn its back fully on the European continent and aggressively pursue war and imperial expansion in the Atlantic. “We have nothing to do with the continent,” argued the naval man and Bedford client, Sir Peter Warren, “let us confine ourselves to our own element, the ocean. There we may still ride triumphant in defiance of the whole House of Bourbon.”<sup>223</sup> “We have no occasion to attack France by land in Europe,” maintained William Beckford, “nor can they attack us.” Instead Britain’s true element was the sea. “By confining ourselves therefore to a maritime war, and a war in America, we have from the nature of things every reason to expect success,” Beckford concluded.<sup>224</sup>

Whereas the Old Guard political economists thought wars deleterious for a trading nation and warned against imperial expansion, the authoritarian Whigs enthusiastically called for war and imperial expansion. During the War of Austrian Succession, the Duke of Bedford had been the loudest voice calling for the conquest of Canada, and for the complete eviction of the French from North America. In Bedford’s view “the reduction of Canada, Louisiana, and the French empire in North America” would inevitably “ruin” the French sugar islands,

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<sup>222</sup> *The Protester*, 14 July 1753, p. 38.

<sup>223</sup> Peter Warren, 5 February 1750, *The Parliamentary History of England*. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1806-1820), Vol. 14, p. 713. On his relationship with Bedford, see Peter Warren (Louisbourg) to John Russell 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Bedford, 4 October 1745, in Julian Gwyn (editor), *The Royal Navy and North America: The Warren Papers, 1736-1752*. (London: Navy Records Society, 1973), pp. 175-176; John Russell 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Bedford (London) to Peter Warren, 30 October 1745, in Lord John Russell (Editor), *Correspondence of John, Fourth Duke of Bedford*. (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1843), Vol. I, pp. 54-55. When Warren stood for Parliament in 1747, Bedford contributed substantially to his election for Westminster.

<sup>224</sup> William Beckford, 14 November 1754, *The Parliamentary History of England*. Vol. XV 1753-1765. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1813), pp. 354-355.

devastate “the trade of Old France,” and permanently “secure to us our present possessions on the continent of North America.”<sup>225</sup> Bedford and his political allies were no less enthusiastic for colonial war in the years after the Peace at Aix-La-Chapelle. *Britannicus* called for “a war carried on upon national principles, a war carried on by sea only” which could be done “without increasing the national debt.”<sup>226</sup> “That the nation in general calls out loudly for an immediate war with France, is both true and right,” *Britannicus* announced, “but then it is a war by sea, an English war; not a Dutch or German one.”<sup>227</sup> William Beckford darkly hinted that France always gained an advantage against Britain in peacetime. “We ought always to be jealous of the French in time of peace as well as war,” he said, “for they have always done us more harm in time of peace than they could ever do in time of war.” The corollary was clear: war rather than peace benefited Britain.<sup>228</sup> “If you confine yourselves to your own element [the sea],” Beckford later made clear, “you have the highest probability that every new war will add to your trade, and extend your dominion in America.”<sup>229</sup> The time to act was now, agreed an essayist in the *London Evening Post*. “After such flagrant proofs of French ambition and perfidy, what else

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<sup>225</sup> John Russell 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Bedford (London) to Thomas Pelham-Holles 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Newcastle, 24 March 1746, in in Julian Gwyn (editor), *The Royal Navy and North America: The Warren Papers, 1736-1752*. (London: Navy Records Society, 1973), pp. 223-224. It is important to note that Bedford soundly rejected Governor William Shirley’s proposal to effect the conquest by using American troops at British expense for fear “of the independence it may create in those provinces” as well as the cost. (p. 226). See also John Russell 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Bedford et al. (London) to Thomas Pelham-Holles 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Newcastle, 30 March 1746, in Lord John Russell (Editor), *Correspondence of John, Fourth Duke of Bedford*. (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1843), Vol. I, pp. 65-69.

<sup>226</sup> *London Evening Post*, 19 October 1754, p. [1].

<sup>227</sup> *London Evening Post*, 1 April 1755, p. [1].

<sup>228</sup> William Beckford, 12 December 1753, *The Parliamentary History of England*. Vol. XV 1753-1765. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1813), p. 179.

<sup>229</sup> William Beckford, 14 November 1754, *The Parliamentary History of England*. Vol. XV 1753-1765. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1813), p. 357.

have we now to do, but speedily repel force with force” this essayist urged, “and not wait till their marine be raised to a pitch sufficient to dispute with us the Dominion of the Sea.”<sup>230</sup>

Whereas the Old Guard political economists called for the elimination of monopolies, the Bedfordites saw this as less important than a reorientation of foreign policy away from Europe and towards the Atlantic. They denied, for example, that the loss of the eastern Mediterranean trade could be explained by the Levant Company’s monopoly. The Duke of Bedford, in fact, insisted that “the Turkey Company have no exclusive privilege, nor do they trade with a joint-stock.” Not monopoly but high taxes caused by over-commitment to European affairs was responsible for the British loss of this and so many other markets.<sup>231</sup> Bedford and his supporters did, however, denounce the East India Company. William Beckford denounced “the intolerable monopoly of the East India Company,” arguing in favor of an open trade to the subcontinent.<sup>232</sup> Beckford and the Bedfordite press, however, seemed more interested in criticizing Pelhamite support for the Company than in advancing a coherent alternative plan.<sup>233</sup> One essayist in the *London Evening Post* captured the tenor of Bedfordite thinking on the subject. After lambasting the administration for having done little to improve Britain’s situation in America, the essayist remarked that “perhaps the defense of a ruinous monopoly [in India] so far engrossed some people’s thoughts that there was then no room left

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<sup>230</sup> *London Evening Post*, 19 September 1754, p. [1].

<sup>231</sup> John Russell 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Bedford, 7 May 1744, *The Parliamentary History of England*. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1806-1820), Vol. 13, pp. 900-902.

<sup>232</sup> William Beckford, 25 February 1752, *The Parliamentary History of England*. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1806-1820), Vol. 14, pp. 1212-1220.

<sup>233</sup> *The Protester*, 1 September 1753, pp. 82-83.



for thinking of an object infinitely more valuable.”<sup>234</sup> Their primary concern was to reorient Britain toward an aggressive Atlantic policy.

The Old Guard political economists saw Britain as benefitting from a more liberal immigration policy, one that would attract skilled workers and manufacturers from all over Europe. The Bedfordites, by contrast, took an aggressive anti-immigrationist stance.

“Naturalization projects are no new things,” an essayist in the *Protester* correctly observed, “ever since the Revolution they have been continually promoted by some state-adventurer or other, and never without exciting a national disgust.”<sup>235</sup> In particular, the Bedfordites detested the Jewish Naturalization Act. Bedford had for a long time worried that Jews might “in a short time engross the whole trade” of the Mediterranean to themselves.<sup>236</sup> The Jewish Naturalization Act merely allowed Bedford the opportunity to express the fullness of his fears. Jewish “power will increase with their property,” he thundered in the House of Lords, “and as their power increases their privileges will increase.” Soon “the Jews would be the highest bidders for every landed estate brought to market in this island, by which means they might at last get possession of all the lay fees in the kingdom.” Controlling lay fees would allow them to control religious policy, so in the near future they will “establish Judaism” and “call this land their own land.”<sup>237</sup> In Bedford’s view the Jewish threat was so great that not only did he call for the repeal of the Jewish Naturalization Act, he also demanded that the Plantation Act “so far

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<sup>234</sup> *London Evening Post*, 5 September 1754, p. [1].

<sup>235</sup> *The Protester*, 11 August 1753, p. 63.

<sup>236</sup> John Russell 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Bedford, 7 May 1744, *The Parliamentary History of England*. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1806-1820), Vol. 13, p. 908.

<sup>237</sup> John Russell 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Bedford, 15 November 1753, *The Parliamentary History of England*. Vol. XV 1753-1765. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1813), pp. 104-105.

as relates to the naturalization of Jews ought to be repealed.”<sup>238</sup> Bedford’s anti-semitic diatribes were echoed in the press and by his supporters in the Commons.<sup>239</sup>

The Bedfordites rejected the Old Guard advice to free up trade with Britain’s American colonies. In their view, precisely the opposite was called for. Beckford and Bedford decided jointly to support the publication of “a small treatise” penned by the discontented North Carolinian land speculator, Henry McCulloh.<sup>240</sup> McCulloh began his analysis, like so many in the mid-Hanoverian British Empire, with an account of the threatening progress of French commerce. “It is not above half a century since France was not a soil wherein one could expect to find trade flourish,” McCulloh recalled, but following the establishment of the Board of Commerce under Louis XIV and the centralization of French colonial and commercial affairs, there had been “a surprising increase of trade and navigation in that kingdom.”<sup>241</sup> Not only did McCulloh document the spectacular growth of the French American and West Indian colonies,

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<sup>238</sup> John Russell 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Bedford, 15 November 1753, *The Parliamentary History of England*. Vol. XV 1753-1765. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1813), p. 107

<sup>239</sup> See, for example, Admiral Edward Vernon, 27 November 1753, *The Parliamentary History of England*. Vol. XV 1753-1765. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1813), pp. 160ff; Thomas Potter, 20 November 1753, *The Parliamentary History of England*. Vol. XV 1753-1765. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1813), p. 126 (condemning what he says as partisan views); and the extensive discussion in Perry, *Public Opinion, Propaganda and Politics*; Harris, *Politics and the Nation*, pp. 82-83.

<sup>240</sup> William Beckford (Soho Square) to John Russell 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Bedford, 4 June 1754, in Lord John Russell (Editor), *Correspondence of John, Fourth Duke of Bedford*. Vol. II. (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1843), p. 150. While Beckford claimed to introduce McCulloh to Bedford, he needed no such introduction having submitted a memorial to him several years earlier: Henry McCulloh, Memorial Addressed to the Duke of Bedford, 2 May 1748, TNA, CO 5/5, ff. 292-295. I have not in this section discussed the similar ideas of James Abercromby. This is because though Abercromby made great efforts to circulate his ideas in manuscript, to Thomas Pelham, earl Granville, and the earl of Halifax, in particular, he did does not appear to have secured connections with the Bedfordites. His treatise was not made public. Though it is clear from his later correspondence that he detested the policies of the Pelhamite Old Guard: he complained of “our Ministerial misconduct” always focused on the “affairs of another continent.” James Abercromby (Craven Street, London) to William Pitt, 25 November 1756, in Charles F. Mullett, “James Abercromby and French Encroachments in America,” *Canadian Historical Review*. Vol. 26, No. 1(March 1945), p. 57. For Abercromby’s centralizing 1752 plan see Jack P. Greene, Charles F. Mullett, and Edward C. Papenfuse Jr (editors), *Magna Charta for America*. (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1986), pp. 45-162.

<sup>241</sup> Henry McCulloh, *The Wisdom and Policy of the French*. (London: R. Baldwin, 1755), pp. 37-38, 74.

he also warned that the French commercial “regulations” have “had a surprising effect on their manufacture and other branches of trade, as they have been thereby enabled to carry on a great trade to India, Turkey, Africa, and even supply Spain with a great part of the commodities suited to the Spanish American trade, which brings a continual source of treasure and riches to the French nation.”<sup>242</sup> Not only had French commerce grown; it was displacing the British. The French had begun to “obstruct the English commerce in all parts of the world.”<sup>243</sup>

Since McCulloh attributed French success to their centralizing and uniform policies, it was hardly surprising that he thought the British would be best served by modeling their behavior on the French. The British, he said, should not be afraid to adopt “every scheme” of the French “which may suit our present interest and designs.”<sup>244</sup>

Where the Old Guard political economists have called for free trade in the Atlantic and the relaxation of the Navigation Act, McCulloh and the Bedfordites desired just the opposite. “In colonies, which always ought to have a dependence on their Mother Country,” McCulloh wrote, “too much care cannot be taken to prevent, nor too many restrictions laid in the way of their being supplied with merchandize, and all other things either for necessary use or luxury from foreign nations.” However the colonies might be prosper “while their supply is procured

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<sup>242</sup> Henry McCulloh, The Wisdom and Policy of the French. (London: R. Baldwin, 1755), pp. 77-78.

<sup>243</sup> Henry McCulloh, The Wisdom and Policy of the French. (London: R. Baldwin, 1755), pp. 125-126.

<sup>244</sup> Henry McCulloh, The Wisdom and Policy of the French. (London: R. Baldwin, 1755), p. 79. For McCulloh it was essential that plans agreed upon by the Board of Trade should never be deviated from. This was, he said, the French system (pp. 53, 67-68, 73-74). See the same point in Henry McCulloh, A Miscellaneous Essay Concerning the Courses Pursued by Great Britain in the Affairs of Her Colonies. (London: R. Baldwin, 1755), pp. 13-15.

in a wrong channel, they will not be of that real benefit, or service to this kingdom, which they might be, by a right direction of their trade and commerce.”<sup>245</sup>

Where the Old Guard proposed a bounty to encourage colonial production, and the support of every effort to promote mutual exchange between the colonies and Britain, McCulloh and the Bedfordites proposed new means to extract revenue from the colonies. In fact, McCulloh’s program exactly presages the reforms implemented by George Grenville’s administration after the Seven Years War.<sup>246</sup> McCulloh famously proposed a Stamp Tax to be applied to “all writings, deeds and instruments, or other matters relating to the law.” The result of such a new colonial tax, McCulloh thought, would be that the colonies would no longer be burdensome to this kingdom, in advancing money for their security and enlargement.”<sup>247</sup> He also called for reforming the Molasses Act (1733), lowering the duty on foreign sugar products so as to prevent smuggling French and Dutch sugar, molasses, and rum into the British colonies and thus raising “a very considerable sum of money” which could be applied to colonial defense.<sup>248</sup> McCulloh also thought restrictions on the use of paper money, like those imposed on New England in 1751, should be applied to all of Britain’s colonies to avoid laying “the foundation of a kind of independency in the colonies.”<sup>249</sup> Members of the

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<sup>245</sup> Henry McCulloh, A Miscellaneous Essay Concerning the Courses Pursued by Great Britain in the Affairs of Her Colonies. (London: R. Baldwin, 1755), pp. 101-102.

<sup>246</sup> This, of course, suggests that the Seven Years’ War did not generate a radical new departure in British imperial thinking. Only by recovering the ideological and partisan context of British politics is it possible to explain the legislation that paved the road to Revolution. A model of salutary neglect followed by imperial imposition is deeply misleading.

<sup>247</sup> Henry McCulloh, A Miscellaneous Essay Concerning the Courses Pursued by Great Britain in the Affairs of Her Colonies. (London: R. Baldwin, 1755), pp. 92-93.

<sup>248</sup> Henry McCulloh, A Miscellaneous Essay Concerning the Courses Pursued by Great Britain in the Affairs of Her Colonies. (London: R. Baldwin, 1755), pp. 89-92.

<sup>249</sup> Henry McCulloh, The Wisdom and Policy of the French. (London: R. Baldwin, 1755), p. 129. This despite the petitions presented by the agents for Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Massachusetts Bay, South Carolina,

Bedfordite coalition were convinced that an aggressive colonial policy, if properly administered, would pay for itself. Not only could the colonists be taxed, but they would, according to Beckford, “join heartily with us in driving the French as far as possible from their confines” and they would do so, “without subsidy or reward.”<sup>250</sup>

For all of their efforts to promote colonial reform, McCulloh had little interest in reorienting the nature of Britain’s imperial economic policy. They remained fully committed to an imperial economy of colonial raw material production. Whereas the Old Guard political economists were critical of the economic and social effects of slavery, McCulloh insisted on the primary value of the West Indian sugar colonies. “There is much to be urged in favor of the planters in the Sugar Islands, as they are very useful subjects, have most of their supplies from Great Britain, and also many of them spend their estates there,” argued McCulloh. They therefore not only deserved “great encouragement from the public,” but should “have a preference given to them.”<sup>251</sup> Unsurprisingly, the great Jamaican sugar planter, William Beckford was in full agreement. He roundly denounced all talk of increasing Sugar Duties to pay down the national debt. And, he mocked Patriot notion that the West Indians should diversify their economy. “By sugar they get their bread, and everything else they stand in need of,” Beckford said of the Sugar Island, “and neither the soil nor climate of these islands is fit for producing any other commodity.”<sup>252</sup>

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and New York against such a proposal: 3 March 1749 *The Parliamentary History of England*. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1806-1820), Vol. 14, p. 563.

<sup>250</sup> William Beckford, 14 November 1754, *The Parliamentary History of England*. Vol. XV 1753-1765. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1813), p. 358.

<sup>251</sup> Henry McCulloh, *A Miscellaneous Essay Concerning the Courses Pursued by Great Britain in the Affairs of Her Colonies*. (London: R. Baldwin, 1755), p. 87.

<sup>252</sup> William Beckford, 8 February 1748, *The Parliamentary History of England*. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1806-1820), Vol. 14, pp. 190, 194.

The Bedfordite coalition was far more interested than the Old Guard political economists in the American interior. While Decker, Hume, and Tucker had little to say about American Indians, the Bedfordites were certain that the Pelhamites had mishandled Indian relations. While a range of commentators proposed ways to improve relations between the British and the various Indian nations, McCulloh and the Bedfordites gave a particularly military spin to their analysis. McCulloh did propose a centralized fund that might provide presents “to preserve the Indians in our interest.” But his primary focus was on the construction of forts.<sup>253</sup> The French had “greatly reduced” the power of the Six Nations “by treachery and sometimes by open force.” The key to their success was building forts at “Crown Point, Fort Frontenac, Niagara &c.” which both intimidated the Iroquois and allowed the French to “open a communication” to the Indians to the West and in Nova Scotia.<sup>254</sup> The proper British response was above all military. “We ought not only to demolish the forts which [the French] have lately built on the branches of the River Ohio, but to take Crown Point and Niagara from them,” McCulloh argued, “and also to build forts for the protection of the Five Nations” as well as forts among “the Upper Cherokees” and the “creek Indian settlements.”<sup>255</sup>

The Bedfordites, therefore, called for a radical reorientation of British political and economic priorities. They believed that only a radical transformation could allow Britain to respond to the growing French commercial threat. They advised abandoning Europe. They

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<sup>253</sup> Henry McCulloh, A Miscellaneous Essay Concerning the Courses Pursued by Great Britain in the Affairs of Her Colonies. (London: R. Baldwin, 1755), p. 78.

<sup>254</sup> Henry McCulloh, The Wisdom and Policy of the French. (London: R. Baldwin, 1755), pp. 92-93, 97-98.

<sup>255</sup> Henry McCulloh, The Wisdom and Policy of the French. (London: R. Baldwin, 1755), p. 103; Henry McCulloh, A Miscellaneous Essay Concerning the Courses Pursued by Great Britain in the Affairs of Her Colonies. (London: R. Baldwin, 1755), pp. 7-8.

insisted and putting an end not only to expensive European land wars but to endless European subsidies on the pretext that they would maintain the balance of power. Only such a strategy, they believed, would allow Britain to pay down the debt, lower taxes, and consequently lower wages sufficiently for British manufacturers to compete in the global marketplace. Instead Britain should adopt an Atlantic orientation and seek imperial expansion. Such a strategy would allow Britain to seize more valuable raw materials that could either be re-exported or be manufactured in Britain. To do this required tighter imperial control. The Bedfordites called for stricter enforcement of the Navigation Act, but also new taxes on the colonies. They had no intention of replacing an expensive European foreign policy with an equally expensive Atlantic one. Wars in America would pay for themselves.

For all of their political and economic proposals, the Bedfordites were uninterested in reordering British society. It is true that they insisted on the right to criticize government and on eliminating the “borough-system.” But that was in the service of fair representation of the propertied. “Every forty shillings in London and Middlesex ought to be as fairly and fully represented as any forty shillings in Devonshire and Cornwall,” was how *The Protester* put it.<sup>256</sup> Especially after the debate over the Jewish Naturalization Act, the Bedfordites, associated themselves with opposition to all foreigners, to the religiously heterodox, and to the vices manifested by the lower orders.<sup>257</sup> The Bedfordites, then, called both for reorientation and for tighter political and social control. Whereas the Old Guard political economists sought to tame

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<sup>256</sup> *The Protester*, 18 August 1753, pp. 71-72.

<sup>257</sup> Kinkel, *Disciplining the Empire*, pp. 94-96; Vaughn, *Politics of Empire at the Accession of George III*, pp. 172-180. Vaughn shows here that the social conservatism associated with the “Neo-Tories” predates the end of the Seven Years’ War.

the excesses of commercial society through institutions and associations, the Bedfordites looked to central control and tight enforcements of rules and regulations. Their ideological program had an authoritarian tinge.

## V

Yet another group of political actors offered a response to the threat posed by French commercial and colonial success. This group, which drew support from parts of the Patriot coalition that had emerged in the 1720s and 1730s, offered a different perspective. Whereas the Old Guard called for gradual economic reforms that involved freeing up trade, and the Bedfordites called for a radical turn away from Europe and towards the Atlantic, this new Patriot party insisted that the time had come for a global strategy. They argued that Britain needed to respond to the French aggressively on all fronts, not just in the Atlantic. They agreed with the Old Guard that, in all but the most extreme situations, Britain as a trading nation should avoid war. They agreed that it was foolish in the extreme to abandon Europe to the French. But they acknowledged that France was encroaching on British colonies and on British commercial interests in the American interior, in Nova Scotia, in the West Indies, in Africa, and in the East Indies. France, they agreed with the Bedfordites, had won the peace. Britain needed to take drastic action, on a global scale. Unlike the Old Guard and the Bedfordites, the Patriots favored policies that would promote greater socio-economic equality across the Empire as a whole. Instead of a centralized and uniform imperial policy, therefore, they sought to reimagine the British Empire as a confederation.

The most articulate, and also the most long-winded, spokesman for the new Patriot position was the political economist Malachy Postlethwayt. Postlethwayt consistently



associated himself with Patriot figures in the 1750s, dedicating his works to the Duke of Cumberland, John Manners Marquis of Granby, and the Duke of Rutland whose “noble family” provided support for his *magnum opus* the *Universal Dictionary*.<sup>258</sup> Postlethwayt’s influence was immense. His *Universal Dictionary* went through four editions between 1751 and 1774, despite running to thousands of pages.<sup>259</sup> Much ink has been spilt debating the extent to which Postlethwayt borrowed from other authorities without acknowledgment. Clearly, Postlethwayt’s fundamental contribution lay not in the originality of the ideas he presented or in the information he made available, but in the ways in which he compiled the material. Despite the benign and neutral connotation of *Dictionary*, Postlethwayt’s work had a sharp ideological edge.

Postlethwayt’s *Universal Dictionary* was designed to instruct his compatriots on the ways to overcome France’s growing commercial advantage. In his pamphlet explaining the design of the immense *Universal Dictionary*, Postlethwayt emphasized “the progress of the French trade for near a century.” He warned against underestimating the French achievement. He admired their success “in their application of speculative knowledge to practical arts” which was borne out in “their advancement in manufactures and universal trade.” The French have “of late years,” observed Postlethwayt, “extended their traffic into all parts of the world.”

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<sup>258</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *Britain’s Commercial Interest Explained and Improved*. Dedicated to the Duke of Rutland. (London: D. Browne, J. Whiston and B. White, and W. Sandby, 1757). Vol. I, pp. ix-x; Malachy Postlethwayt, *A Short State of the Progress of the French Trade and Navigation*. Dedicated to the Duke of Cumberland. (London: J. Knapton, 1756).

<sup>259</sup> Elspet Frtaser, “Some Sources of Postlethwayt’s Dictionary,” *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 48, Issue Supplement 1 (February 1938), p. 25; Richard van den Berg, “‘A Judicious and industrious compiler’: Mapping Postlethwayt’s *Dictionary of Commerce*,” *European Journal of Economic Thought*, Vol. 24, No. 6, p. 1168. Hoppit calls the text “the most important English language commercial dictionary of the eighteenth century”: Hoppit, “British Economic Literature,” p. 98.

While he acknowledged that Britain had led “the French in trade for above a century,” Postlethwayt did not believe, as the Old Guard political economists did, that this advantage would prove permanent. Indeed, he believed that the French had “in some respects” already “improved upon us” in commerce. Although Britain “has had the start” of the French in trade and navigation by some ages,” Postlethwayt concluded, darkly, “yet we experience, that they have already overtaken us.” Because “that nation which augments its commerce and maritime power to the greatest extent bids fair to give law to the rest,” warned Postlethwayt ominously, should “the House of Bourbon” surpass Britain in these areas it “would be an acquisition of much more consequence than any they have hitherto made in point of territories or dominion.” The goal of his *Universal Dictionary*, then, was “to put us more upon our guard than to be outdone by any rivals; either in industry, ingenuity, or good policy” relating to “trade.”<sup>260</sup> “If, by exposing the measures of this rival nation in their true light,” Postlethwayt wrote in the *Universal Dictionary* itself, “I can any way contribute to the inspiring my countrymen with a generous resolution to support trade, to maintain their reputation in maritime affairs, and to keep a vigilant eye over the ambitious and restless views of this haughty neighbor, my end will be fully answered.”<sup>261</sup> For Postlethwayt jealousy of trade was a watchword.

Postlethwayt’s approach was unabashedly global. Perhaps because he began his publishing career writing on behalf of the African Company, Postlethwayt evinced a curiosity about commercial developments around the world. He voraciously read and gathered

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<sup>260</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt], *A Dissertation on the Plan, Use, and Importance of the Universal Dictionary*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1749), p. 30; Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1751), p. 740, 854.

<sup>261</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1751), p. 713.

information. The detail with which he discussed commercial matters in a variety of locales was breathtaking. Such detail was necessary, Postlethwayt maintained: “without an acquaintance with FACTS, whereupon to ground judgment, it can at best be only conjectural and erroneous.” Too frequently, Postlethwayt believed, “the representative of the kingdom has been misled,” basing policies on general theories rather than “a more minute acquaintance with facts.”<sup>262</sup> Postlethwayt rejected the priority that both the Old Guard and the Bedfordites placed on the interests of Britain or England, narrowly conceived. “Commerce is that tie, by which the several, and even the most distant parts of this empire are connected and kept together, so as to be rendered parts of the same whole” Postlethwayt opined, so the colonies should “receive not only constant protection, but nourishment from the vital parts of our government.”<sup>263</sup> It was incumbent upon the policymaker, therefore, to delve into commerce, in particular, Anglo-French commercial competition, “in all parts of the globe.”<sup>264</sup>

Unlike the Bedfordites, Postlethwayt did not imagine that his global perspective involved turning away from Europe. Postlethwayt did think it was time to move away from the “Old System” of continental subsidies because of its “prodigious expenses.” But he envisaged Britain retaining close and intimate ties with its European neighbors.<sup>265</sup> In Postlethwayt’s view, Britain should abandon “temporary subsidiary treaties” in favor of alliances that “make our

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<sup>262</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt], *A Dissertation on the Plan, Use, and Importance of the Universal Dictionary*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1749), p. 1

<sup>263</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1751), p. 712.

<sup>264</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *Great Britain’s True System*. (London: A. Millar, J. Whiston and B. White and W. Sandy, 1757), p. lxxxiii-lxxxiv.

<sup>265</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *Britain’s Commercial Interest Explained and Improved*. (London: D. Browne, J. Whiston and B. White, and W. Sandby, 1757). Vol. II, pp. 507-508.

cause their cause, and we their cause their own in return.”<sup>266</sup> In the *Universal Dictionary* he maintained “to give some assistance on the continent when the liberties of Europe are threatened, is undoubtedly right.” Though “dominions on the continent cost more to get and keep than they are worth,” Postlethwayt elaborated, “nothing but the preservation of the balance of our power can induce Britain to intermeddle at any time upon the continent.” But when “this is really in danger, the weight of Great Britain thrown into the scale may have glorious consequences.”<sup>267</sup> Britain needed to be ready at all times to exert “ourselves, not without hazard or expense, in favor of some or other of our allies.” Not to be ready to do so was “selfish and surly.” “If we consult history, history will convince us, if we have recourse to experience, experience will read us the same lecture.” Alliances on the continent, by preserving the independence of various polities, allow Britain to “flourish from the commerce that we have with them,” so it was “our own interest” to preserve the balance of power in Europe.<sup>268</sup> “Instead of being unconnected with the continent,” Postlethwayt insisted, “we stand in need of being more closely connected therewith than ever we yet were.”<sup>269</sup>

Postlethwayt’s call for a revision of the Old System, and a simultaneous rejection of Blue Water policy, was echoed by a range of Patriot politicians. John Perceval, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Egmont, was long the leading spokesman of the Leicester House set. He believed the Old System had

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<sup>266</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *Great Britain’s True System*. (London: A. Millar, J. Whiston and B. White and W. Sandy, 1757), pp. xxvi-xxvii.

<sup>267</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1751), p. 712.

<sup>268</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1751), p. 713. Postlethwayt repeated these arguments in many of his works: Malachy Postlethwayt, *Britain’s Commercial Interest Explained and Improved*. (London: D. Browne, J. Whiston and B. White, and W. Sandby, 1757). Vol. II, p. 511; Malachy Postlethwayt, *Great Britain’s True System*. (London: A. Millar, J. Whiston and B. White and W. Sandy, 1757), p. iv.

<sup>269</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *Britain’s Commercial Interest Explained and Improved*. (London: D. Browne, J. Whiston and B. White, and W. Sandby, 1757). Vol. I, p. 520.

led previous administrations to spend too heavily on continental subsidies and continental wars, and insisted that it was “our true interest” to prevent “any nation on the continent” rendering “itself sole mistress of all the rest.”<sup>270</sup> Britain ought to embrace any possibility “for making a powerful diversion against that nation by land,” Egmont later maintained, as long as it did not put Britain to too much “expense.” “Even subsidies, though I think they ought never to be granted in time of peace, yet in time of war, or when there is a near prospect of it, I think we must grant some.”<sup>271</sup> “Even as a trading nation, it is our interest to endeavor all we can to preserve the peace of Europe, ” agreed William Pitt so often seen as a doctrinaire Blue Water man, “because it is safer and better for us to contend in peace for the balance of trade, than to contend in war for the balance of power.”<sup>272</sup> Henry Seymour Conway, who, like Postlethwayt counted himself a client of the Duke of Cumberland, argued passionately for a “confederacy” on the European continent which would place France “under a necessity to maintain such numerous armies at land, that it would be impossible for them to render themselves equal, much less superior to us at sea.”<sup>273</sup> “I should be glad to see a war lighted up on the continent against” the French, agreed one of Pitt’s political allies Thomas Potter, “provided we did not engage to take any greater or other share in it than we found convenient.”<sup>274</sup>

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<sup>270</sup> John Perceval, 2<sup>nd</sup> earl of Egmont, 22 February 1751, *The Parliamentary History of England*. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1806-1820), Vol. 14, p. 954.

<sup>271</sup> John Perceval 2<sup>nd</sup> earl of Egmont, 14 November 1754, *The Parliamentary History of England*. Vol. XV 1753-1765. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1813), p. 370.

<sup>272</sup> William Pitt, 22 February 1751, *The Parliamentary History of England*. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1806-1820), Vol. 14, p. 965.

<sup>273</sup> Colonel Henry Seymour Conway, 14 November 1754, *The Parliamentary History of England*. Vol. XV 1753-1765. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1813), pp. 340-341. Conway, of course, later became famous for his opposition to McCulloh’s Stamp Act. Conway was also an intimate friend of Horace Walpole, who at this time associated himself with the Patriots.

<sup>274</sup> Thomas Potter, 14 November 1754, *The Parliamentary History of England*. Vol. XV 1753-1765. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1813), p. 345.

At the same time, Postlethwayt and the Patriots argued that colonial trade was both the most important and the most dynamic part of Britain's commercial portfolio. Postlethwayt estimated that "above half the trade and navigation of Great Britain" depended on "her American settlements."<sup>275</sup> "Experience has hitherto shown that those powers who most wisely cherish their plantation trade and navigation in America," he maintained, "are likely to have the greatest share of mercantile shipping, the best nursery of seamen, and in a word, to be the best capable of maintaining the dominion and sovereignty of the seas."<sup>276</sup> Against the Bedfordites, Postlethwayt was not narrowly focused on the Atlantic. The trade to the East Indies was vitally important, in his view. "Was the whole of this [East India] commerce in the hands of any one European state," he wrote, fully cognizant of the aspirations of Joseph François Dupleix and the French East India Company, "however ruinous some imagine this trade may be, it seems more likely to enable such state to gain the universal empire, and mastery over all Europe, and thereby give law to the whole world."<sup>277</sup> Postlethwayt also retained his early appreciation of the importance of the African trade. He waxed euphoric about the potential for growth in this area. By penetrating into the African interior, and trading for a variety of products, British traders might "extend that commerce" to "such a height as might equal all the present improvements by colonies and plantations in America."<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1751), p. 55.

<sup>276</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1751), p. 56. Postlethwayt later in the work referred readers to Joseph Addison to affirm this point: Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1751), p. 381.

<sup>277</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1751), p. 682.

<sup>278</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1751), p. 738. Postlethwayt was opposed to both conquest and slave trading.

Many Patriot publications in the period after the War of Austrian Succession echoed this point. “Great Britain has enjoyed the benefit of a most extensive commerce since the discovery of America” argued Otis Little, a member of the powerful and influential Otis clan of Massachusetts, this trade “if properly attended to, will contribute more to its future interest than any other branches of trade, by enlarging the demand for all its manufactures and increasing the means of its naval force.”<sup>279</sup> “Near half the present shipping of Great Britain is improved in the commerce carried on with her plantations,” agreed William Clarke of Massachusetts, and given its current rate growth it will “in time employ a much greater quantity of shipping than all the present shipping of Great Britain.”<sup>280</sup> “America,” agreed the New York merchant, Nicholas Ray, “is the fountain of our riches.”<sup>281</sup>

Across the Atlantic, North American Patriots were just as likely to see the commercial struggle with France in global terms. Eighteenth century North Americans did not think in narrowly continental or regional terms. The American press was almost as obsessive in its coverage of French encroachments in India as it was about French advances in Nova Scotia and the Ohio.<sup>282</sup> News pieces in the North American press reminded their readers that “how the

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<sup>279</sup> [Otis Little], *The State of Trade in the Northern Colonies Considered*. (London: G. Woodfall, 1748), p. 9.

<sup>280</sup> William Clarke, *Observations of the Late and Present Conduct of the French*. (Boston Re-printed London: John Clarke, 1755), p. 34.

<sup>281</sup> Nicholas Ray (London) to Richard Ray Jr., 1 November 1756, Beinecke, GEN MSS 764/Box 25/Folder 445, pp. 176-177.

<sup>282</sup> For example: *Boston Post-Boy*, 1 January 1753, p. [1]; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 23 January 1753, p. [2]; *New York Mercury*, 26 February 1753, p. [2]; *Boston News-Letter*, 8 March 1753, p. [1]; *New York Mercury*, 26 February 1753, p. [2]; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 27 March 1753, p. [2]; *Boston Evening-Post*, 30 April 1753, p. [1]; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 3 May 1753, p. [1]; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 13 September 1753, p. [2]; *Pennsylvania Journal*, 13 September 1753, p. [2]; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 20 September 1753, p. [2]; *New York Mercury*, 24 September 1753, p. [2]; *Pennsylvania Journal*, 20 September 1753, p. [2]; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 4 October 1753, p. [2]; *Boston Gazette*, 16 October 1753, p. [2]; *Pennsylvania Journal*, 4 October 1753, p. [2]; *Boston News-Letter*, 8 November 1753, p. [1]; *Boston Evening Post*, 12 November 1753, p. [2]; *Pennsylvania Journal*, 15 November 1753, p. [2]; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 8 January 1754, p. [2]; *New York Mercury*, 15 April 1754, p. [2]; *Boston Evening Post*, 6 May 1754, p. [1]; *New York Mercury*, 15 April 1754, p. [2]; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 18 April 1754, p. [1]; *New York Mercury*, 22 April

French behaved towards the English in North America” was comparable to their behavior in “the East Indies.”<sup>283</sup> “All the world knows how enterprising the French are, and how willing to extend their power wherever settled,” concluded one news analysis.<sup>284</sup> The New York collector of customs, Archibald Kennedy, argued that the French as part of their “grand system” have become “of late everywhere our competitors in trade.”<sup>285</sup> Ellis Huske of New Hampshire called attention to French commercial and colonial advances in the Caribbean, Africa and Asia as well as those in Nova Scotia and the American interior.<sup>286</sup>

Unlike the Bedfordites, however, Postlethwayt and the Patriots laid far heavier emphasis on colonial consumption than colonial production of raw materials. “As our colonies increase our navigation” by taking “off our manufactures and superfluidities at home,” Postlethwayt argued, “they are justly looked on to be the greatest support of the power and affluence of the nation.”<sup>287</sup> Again and again Postlethwayt measured the value of colonies by the quantity of British manufactures they consumed. “There is scarce a more beneficial trade in all the English commerce” than that of New York; they “take off more of our woolen

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1754, p. [1]; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 25 April 1754, p. [1]; *Boston Evening Post*, 29 April 1754, p. [3]; *New York Mercury*, 29 April 1754, p. [1]; *New York Mercury*, 20 May 1754, p. [2]; *New York Mercury*, 27 May 1754, p. [2]; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 30 May 1754, p. [2]; *Boston News-Letter*, 6 June 1754, p. [1]; *Boston News-Letter*, 4 July 1754, p. [2]; *Maryland Gazette*, 4 July 1754, p. [1]; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 4 July 1754, p. [1]; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 18 July 1754, p. [1]; *New York Mercury*, 22 July 1754, p. [2]; *Boston Post Boy*, 29 July 1754, p. [1]; *Boston Evening Post*, 29 July 1754, p. [1]; *Boston Gazette*, 30 July 1754, pp. [1-2]; *New York Mercury*, 5 August 1754, p. [3]; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 8 August 1754, p. [2]; *New York Mercury*, 29 July 1754, p. [2]; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 1 August 1754, p. [2]; *Pennsylvania Journal*, 1 August 1754, p. [2]; *Boston News-Letter*, 5 August 1754, p. [1]; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 12 September 1754, p. [2]; *New York Mercury*, 16 September 1754, p. [1]; *Boston Evening Post*, 16 September 1754, p. [1].

<sup>283</sup> *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 17 October 1754, p. [2]

<sup>284</sup> *New York Mercury*, 28 October 1754, p. [2]; *Boston Evening Post*, 4 November 1754, p. [1].

<sup>285</sup> [Archibald Kennedy], *Serious Considerations on the State of the Affairs of the Northern Colonies*. (New York, 1754), p. 3.

<sup>286</sup> [Ellis Huske], *The Present State of North America*. Part I. (London: R. and J. Dodley, 1755), pp. 73-74.

<sup>287</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1751), p. 372.



manufactures than all this island colonies taken together, Jamaica excepted.” “There is scarce any sort of British manufacture, whether for use, ornament, or luxury, but is imported into New England,” he marveled.<sup>288</sup> Otis Little, similarly, supported plans for increasing bounties for North American “rough materials,” which “would soon enable them to supply the nation with a variety of articles in return for its manufactures, which are now purchased of foreigners in cash and imported in their ships.”<sup>289</sup> “It is computed that the plantations purchase one-third of all the merchandize and manufactures of Great Britain,” calculated the former Governor of North Carolina and long-time antagonist of Henry McCulloh, George Burrington. “And as the inhabitants and trade annually increase, they will be constantly more profitable to His Majesty’s European dominions.”<sup>290</sup> Massachusetts polymath and Harvard alumnus William Clarke agreed: “the advantage accruing to the Mother Country from the greater number of inhabitants in her Northern Colonies, will appear from a consideration of the consumption they will occasion of British manufactures.”<sup>291</sup> Benjamin Franklin made the same point. In the colonies “a vast demand is growing for British manufactures; a glorious market wholly in the power of Britain, in which foreigners cannot interfere, which will increase in a short time even beyond her power of supplying, though her whole trade should be to her colonies.”<sup>292</sup> “Full one third of our whole export of the produce and manufactures of this country is to our colonies,”

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<sup>288</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1751), pp. 366-367.

<sup>289</sup> [Otis Little], *The State of Trade in the Northern Colonies Considered*. (London: G. Woodfall, 1748), p. v.

<sup>290</sup> *London Evening Post*, 27 March 1755, p. [1]. Essay by George Burrington. On Burrington: Frederick G. Ribble, “George Burrington Sometime Governor of North Carolina: The ‘Janus’ of Fielding’s Champion,” in *Studies in Bibliography*, Vol. 50 (1997), pp. 272-294. Conflict with McCulloh, p. 282. Hated Bladen, p. 288.

<sup>291</sup> William Clarke, *Observations of the Late and Present Conduct of the French*. (Boston Re-printed London: John Clarke, 1755), pp. 33-34.

<sup>292</sup> [Benjamin Franklin], Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind, in William Clarke, *Observations of the Late and Present Conduct of the French*. (Boston Re-printed London: John Clarke, 1755), p. 45.

estimated Ellis Huske the New Hampshire Chief Justice.<sup>293</sup> “Infinite are the quantities of all our manufactories” which the colonists consume, enthused the New York merchants Nicholas Ray. That was why they were “almost the only fountain of our riches.”<sup>294</sup>

Unsurprisingly, given the emphasis they laid on the manufacturing sector, Postlethwayt and the Patriots most closely associated with William Pitt and his friends wanted to encourage laboring immigrants to come to Britain. Whereas the Bedfordites seethed with fury at the mere mention of naturalization, the Patriots endorsed general naturalization acts, and supported the controversial Jewish Naturalization Act. “The more labor there is in a state, the richer state is esteemed,” Postlethwayt noted.<sup>295</sup> He supported “an act of general naturalization” because it “would likewise probably increase our numbers very fast, and repair what loss we may have suffered in our people by the late war.” Such an act, he noted, “has been very warmly contended for by many good Patriots.”<sup>296</sup> Postlethwayt appears to have said little directly about the Jewish Naturalization Act. But he roundly denounced Bedfordite anti-semitic conspiracy theories. If a Jewish merchant was especially prominent in some aspects of trade it

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<sup>293</sup> [Ellis Huske], *The Present State of North America*. Part I. (London: R. and J. Dodley, 1755), pp. 78-79.

<sup>294</sup> Letter from Nicholas Ray to William Pitt in Nicholas Ray (London) to Richard Ray Jr., 1 November 1756, Beinecke, GEN MSS 764/Box 25/Folder 445, pp. 179-180. Ray carefully analyzed the consumption patterns of the American colonies in this lengthy letter: Nicholas Ray (London) to Richard Ray Jr., 1 November 1756, Beinecke, GEN MSS 764/Box 25/Folder 445, p. 160 (Nova Scotia); Nicholas Ray (London) to Richard Ray Jr., 1 November 1756, Beinecke, GEN MSS 764/Box 25/Folder 445, p. 161 (New Hampshire); Nicholas Ray (London) to Richard Ray Jr., 1 November 1756, Beinecke, GEN MSS 764/Box 25/Folder 445, p. 162 (Massachusetts); Nicholas Ray (London) to Richard Ray Jr., 1 November 1756, Beinecke, GEN MSS 764/Box 25/Folder 445, pp. 163-164 (Rhode Island); Nicholas Ray (London) to Richard Ray Jr., 1 November 1756, Beinecke, GEN MSS 764/Box 25/Folder 445, p. 165 (Connecticut); Nicholas Ray (London) to Richard Ray Jr., 1 November 1756, Beinecke, GEN MSS 764/Box 25/Folder 445, p. 168 (New York); Nicholas Ray (London) to Richard Ray Jr., 1 November 1756, Beinecke, GEN MSS 764/Box 25/Folder 445, p. 170 (Philadelphia merchants); Nicholas Ray (London) to Richard Ray Jr., 1 November 1756, Beinecke, GEN MSS 764/Box 25/Folder 445, pp. 172-173 (Virginia).

<sup>295</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. Second Edition. Vol. II (London: John Knapton, 1757), p. 6.

<sup>296</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. Second Edition. Vol. II (London: John Knapton, 1757), p. 439.

was not because he used unfair tricks and confessional connections, but because by his “skill and conduct, his integrity and fortune” he had “duly established a reputation at home and abroad.”<sup>297</sup>

Pittite Patriots were similarly enthusiastic about immigration in general, and the Jewish Naturalization Act in particular. Richard Grenville-Temple, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl Temple, thought the Jewish Naturalization Act “a law of very great importance, because I am convinced that it will in a few years bring a very considerable addition of wealth into this kingdom, and contribute to the increase of our manufactures, the extension of our commerce, and the enlargement of our navigation.”<sup>298</sup> Temple went so far as to intimate that the decline of the Levant trade may have had to do with the Levant Company’s efforts to avoid dealing with Jewish middlemen.<sup>299</sup>

Thomas Potter, the libertine son of the Archbishop of Canterbury and a loyal supporter of William Pitt, was flabbergasted by the anti-semitic tone of some newspaper essays. And, Potter predicted that when the Jewish Naturalization Act was repealed “we should see bonfires and illuminations in every disaffected town in England.” Jacobites he hinted were behind the repeal movement.<sup>300</sup> William Pitt himself ascribed the opposition to the Jewish Naturalization Act to “the old High Church persecuting spirit.”<sup>301</sup> Pittite arguments in favor the Jewish Naturalization

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<sup>297</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. Second Edition. Vol. I (London: John Knapton, 1757), pp. 95-96.

<sup>298</sup> Richard Grenville-Temple 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl Temple, 15 November 1753, *The Parliamentary History of England*. Vol. XV 1753-1765. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1813), p. 94.

<sup>299</sup> Richard Grenville-Temple 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl Temple, 15 November 1753, *The Parliamentary History of England*. Vol. XV 1753-1765. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1813), pp. 97-98.

<sup>300</sup> Thomas Potter, 20 November 1753, *The Parliamentary History of England*. Vol. XV 1753-1765. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1813), pp. 121-126.

<sup>301</sup> William Pitt, 27 November 1753, *The Parliamentary History of England*. Vol. XV 1753-1765. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1813), p. 154.

Act bore a strong resemblance to the position taken by the Old Guard. Unlike the Pelhamite Old Guard, however, the Pittites refused to endorse repeal.<sup>302</sup>

Postlethwayt and the Patriots, like the Bedfordites, praised French policy. Like the Bedfordites they ascribed French commercial dynamism to a sea change in French political behavior. But unlike the Bedfordites, who ascribed French advances to their uniform, centralized, and authoritarian military policies, Postlethwayt and the Patriots favored state support for commercial endeavors.

Postlethwayt praised the French for the substantial support they had given to commerce since the age of Louis XIV. They not only established a Council of Commerce in 1700, but the following year created “several chambers of commerce in the principal cities of the kingdom.”<sup>303</sup> These institutions, and the committed support of French politicians like the Regent “Duke of Orleans” and the “late Cardinal Fleury,” following “the plan of that able statesman Colbert,” explained “the extraordinary rise and prosperity of that great and flourishing kingdom.” As a result, it was now clear that the French “must inevitably advance the trade and navigation of that nation to the height they aim at.”<sup>304</sup> Postlethwayt noted French state support for a variety of commercial endeavors and infrastructural projects. Where McCulloh highlighted French military construction and centralized control, Postlethwayt

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<sup>302</sup> Interestingly this was the earl of Halifax’s position as well: George Monatgu-Dunk, 2<sup>nd</sup> earl of Halifax (Wroxton) to Thomas Pelham-Holles, 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Newcastle, 12 November 1753, BL, Add MS 32733, ff. 236-238.

<sup>303</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *A Dissertation on the Plan, Use, and Importance of the Universal Dictionary*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1749), p. 6; Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1751), pp. 477-478.

<sup>304</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1751), p. 124; Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1751), pp. 828-830.

highlighted state support for manufacturers, merchants, and colonists. State support for manufactures allowed the French to recruit talented artisans from all over Europe and to encourage their own.<sup>305</sup> State support enabled France “to supplant Britain and Holland in the manufacture of cloth.”<sup>306</sup> Colbert’s loans to Turkey merchants allowed them gradually to supplant the British in the Mediterranean trade.<sup>307</sup> The wise management by Jean-Louis Henri Orry de Fulvy, French Intendant des Finances, transformed The French East India Company. “In very few years,” thought Postlethwayt, Orry made the French Company “formidable in comparison to any in Europe.”<sup>308</sup> “The encouragement they have from the crown of France” explained the recent prodigious development of the French colonies in America and the West Indies.<sup>309</sup> A long record of “merit” was a necessary qualification for appointment to any colonial office in America.<sup>310</sup> “The French King grants lands in his plantations gratis to poor industrious people sent thither from France,” Postlethwayt wrote approvingly.<sup>311</sup> So successful

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<sup>305</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1751), p. 124.

<sup>306</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1751), p. 513. Later in the text Postlethwayt details Colbert’s great success in in establishing “woolen manufactories of diverse kinds in France.” (p. 814)

<sup>307</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1751), p. 814.

<sup>308</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1751), p. 830.

<sup>309</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1751), p. 443.

<sup>310</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1751), p. 443.

<sup>311</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1751), p. 870.

was the new French economic system that Spain had already adopted it.<sup>312</sup> Britain, thought Postlethwayt, should too.<sup>313</sup>

Postlethwayt and the Patriots imagined a radical reorientation of British commercial priorities. Whereas the Bedfordites enthusiastically supported the slave trade and the Sugar Colonies, Postlethwayt, surprisingly, called for the elimination of the slave trade and slave-based economies.<sup>314</sup> Postlethwayt came to share the antipathy of the Old Guard political economists for slavery.<sup>315</sup> “I cannot help thinking the slave trade as nationally disadvantageous as it is inhuman, cruel, and unchristian-like” Postlethwayt declared.<sup>316</sup> Postlethwayt was sympathetic to moral critiques. But his arguments were largely economic, focused on the slave trade being “nationally disadvantageous.” Slave trading, he pointed out, “will ever spirit up wars and hostilities among the negro princes and chiefs for the sake of making captives of each other for sale.” This prevented “the civilizing of the people” through commerce and made it impossible to extend “trade into the bowels of Africa.” He denied that British colonists had any real need for slave labor. “Europe in general affords numberless poor and distressed” folks who could be employed to do the same work. It was silly to think that Europeans could not

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<sup>312</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1751), p. 467, 469. Postlethwayt claimed that the Spanish political economist Don Geronimo de Uztariz, “the Patriot Spaniard,” modeled his proposals on the French design.

<sup>313</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1751), p. 124.

<sup>314</sup> Surprisingly, because in the 1740s, as an employee of the African Company, Postlethwayt wrote in defense of slavery. He then claimed that “negro labor hitherto has, so that *only* can support our British colonies, as it has done those of other nations.” Malachy Postlethwayt, *The African Trade, the great pillar and support of the Plantation Trade in America*. (London: J. Robinson, 1745), p. 13.

<sup>315</sup> David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 160-161; Christopher Leslie Brown, “The Origins of ‘Legitimate Commerce’,” in Robin Law, Suzanne Schwarz and Sillke Strickodt (editors), *Commercial Agriculture, the Slave Trade, and Slavery in Atlantic Africa*. (Rochester: Boydell and Brewer, 2013) pp. 145-146.

<sup>316</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1751), pp. 134, 534

work in Caribbean, “for, if the Europeans were obliged to live as soberly as the negroes, they would be as able to support a reasonable degree of labor.” Indeed, Postlethwayt was confident that the West Indies had no unique value. The “sugars of Barbados and Jamaica” “and every other plant which comes from these islands, would as easily be produced in Africa” by the unenslaved.<sup>317</sup> Postlethwayt insisted that all in Africa were fully capable of civilization. He condescendingly pointed out that “the primitive inhabitants of all countries, so far as we have been able to trace” were “once as savage and inhumanized as the negroes of Africa.” Indeed the “ancient Britons” themselves were “once upon a level with the Africans.” The slave trade was the cause of their being primitive, Postlethwayt implied, because it prevented commerce and commerce was the key to development.<sup>318</sup>

In addition to calling for the end of the slave trade and slavery in the American colonies, Postlethwayt also called for a fundamental rethinking of British policy towards the various Indian nations. On this point, Postlethwayt directly acknowledged that his thinking was in line with that of most Patriots. “The necessity of cultivating a strict friendship with the Indian nations in general, for the preservation of our colonies, from Georgia to Nova Scotia, is at present so well understood,” he remarked.<sup>319</sup> “The Indian affairs deserve the most serious

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<sup>317</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1751), pp. 25, 56.

<sup>318</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1751), p. 727.

<sup>319</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1751), p. 374. Postlethwayt was right: William Shirley, Speech to Massachusetts Assembly, 2 April 1754, in *Boston Gazette*, 30 April 1754, p. [1]; [Archibald Kennedy], *Serious Considerations on the State of the Affairs of the Northern Colonies*. (New York, 1754), p. 5; [Ellis Huske], *The Present State of North America*. Part I. (London: R. and J. Dodley, 1755), pp. 46-47; William Clarke, *Observations of the Late and Present Conduct of the French*. (Boston Re-printed London: John Clarke, 1755), p. 19.

attention of every colony in North America,” Postlethwayt confirmed.<sup>320</sup> Whereas McCulloh and others of the Bedfordite camp treated Indians as a whole as a group that could be tamed and coaxed into alliance largely by military means, Postlethwayt thought differently. He insisted that the various Indian nations in fact controlled the vast majority of North American territory. Beyond the East Coast littoral, Postlethwayt pointed out, “there seems to be little protection for us to rely on, except that of the Indians.”<sup>321</sup> He also rejected the common assessment that the Indians are “a poor” or “barbarous people, bred under the darkest ignorance.” In fact “none of the greatest Roman heroes have discovered a greater love to their country ... when liberty came in competition.”<sup>322</sup> “These Indian people bear the image of their creator no less than we Europeans,” he claimed in a later pamphlet.<sup>323</sup> British treatment of the Indians had been shameful. They had “basely defrauded and over-reached them in our way of traffic by dishonest weights and measures.” The British had “not always duly protected them as friends and allies against our common enemies.” The French by contrast “use every art of policy, and justice, and generosity to gain over these people to their interest.”<sup>324</sup> Postlethwayt called for a new Indian policy based on mutually beneficial commerce, and Parliamentary restraint on colonial treatment of Indians. The best way to promote “the steady alliance and

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<sup>320</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1751), p. 373. His point was that the various colonies were unable or unwilling to restrain unscrupulous activities by colonists. He called particular attention to examples in South Carolina and New England. (p. 444)

<sup>321</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1751), p. 443.

<sup>322</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1751), pp. 373-374.

<sup>323</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *Britain's Commercial Interest Explained and Improved*. (London: D. Browne, J. Whiston and B. White, and W. Sandby, 1757). Vol. I, p. 431.

<sup>324</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1751), p. 374. Throughout his text Postlethwayt cited specific examples of French behavior. For example, he discussed the “honor and honesty” which led to good relations with the Illinois Indians. (p. 442)



friendship of the Indian nations,” Postlethwayt believed, was to make it the “constant object of Parliamentary considerations” and “never more left to the vague, inconsistent, capricious, and impositious conduct of the respect colonies.” The unrestrained actions of colonials on the frontiers “only intoxicate these people, and deceive them in their traffic.”<sup>325</sup>

With respect to the East India trade, Postlethwayt and the Patriots also disagreed both with the Old Guard and with the Bedfordites. He rejected as preposterous the notion that the “trade of the East Indies is a losing trade to Europe in general.” If that were the case, why did “all the principal European potentates” seek “zealously to cultivate and promote a traffic that is detrimental to them?” Because gold and silver were merely “commodities” there was no harm done in exporting those precious metals to the East in exchange for their remarkable textile “manufactures.”<sup>326</sup> Postlethwayt accepted the general proposition that “freedom of trade, and the annihilation of monopolies, will ever produce greater increase and prosperity.” But he thought “the peculiar nature” of the East India trade created an exception. There needed to be some distance between Crown and commerce in this case. “A mere military force, capable only of supporting forts and garrisons, might, from the peculiarity of their conduct, be more liable to destroy, than cultivate and cement commercial friendships.” In any event, the fact that all of Britain’s rivals pursued the trade in a joint-stock only such a Company could “balance the weight of many others in the Indies with joint-capitals.”<sup>327</sup>

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<sup>325</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *Britain’s Commercial Interest Explained and Improved*. (London: D. Browne, J. Whiston and B. White, and W. Sandby, 1757). Vol. I, p. 428.

<sup>326</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1751), pp. 121-122..

<sup>327</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1751), p. 682.

Other Patriots offered a similar defense of the East India trade. They agreed that joint-stock monopolies were in general to be avoided, but there were exceptions. Economic policy needed to be based on detailed empirical analysis, not general theories. “The East India trade,” explained the wealthy London merchant and future critic of both the Marquis of Bute and George Grenville, “is a trade of the utmost importance.” Its chief advantage was that it “furnishes a vast variety of goods which may be exported and sold to advantage in every other part of the world.” Given the special nature of the East India trade – the need for both “forts” and “presents” – it was, Baker said, “impossible and always will be to carry on that trade without a company.”<sup>328</sup> The Earl of Winchilsea, a frequent opponent of Pelhamite policies was less enthusiastic about the joint-stock company, but agreed that the East India Company would likely survive because “our neighbors have all hitherto carried on that trade by companies as we do.”<sup>329</sup>

Postlethwayt called for a fundamental reorganization of the British Empire. He agreed with the Bedfordites that British imperial policy needed more coherence. But whereas the Bedfordites advocated tightening restrictions and increased central control, Postlethwayt called for a confederal empire. In *The Universal Dictionary* he outlined a proposal for “a special council of commerce to consist of experienced merchants, or such who have been long engaged in the concerns of trade and colonies.” The Council would be “properly elected by the principal trading cities and towns of Great Britain and Ireland.” It would also include “deputies

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<sup>328</sup> Alderman William Baker, 25 February 1752, *The Parliamentary History of England*. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1806-1820), Vol. 14, pp. 1209, 1228-1229.

<sup>329</sup> Daniel Finch 8<sup>th</sup> earl of Winchilsea, 4 April 1750, *The Parliamentary History of England*. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1806-1820), Vol. 14, p. 766.

from our colonies in America, the interest of those colonies being intimately interwoven with that of England.” The Council would “sit every week in London throughout the year” and would gather information “relating to the colonies and all branches of commerce and manufactures.” The Council would then advise Parliament on commercial and imperial policy. But it was clear that, in Postlethwayt’s formulation, this representative council from across the Empire would in fact be the true policymaking body. Parliament, armed with information from this confederal council, would “with far more ease, and less liability of deceit and imposition have the true and genuine state of all branches of trade laid before them.” It would deliver Parliament “the truth” which would lead to more efficient policy.<sup>330</sup>

Confederal Union, rather than central and uniform direction, would give vigor to British imperial policy, in Postlethwayt’s view. “Our great aim tends towards such a union amongst all His Majesty’s dominions, as will promote the strength and vigor, as well as mutual prosperity of them all.” “For the happy general union that we would cement,” Postlethwayt explained, “is no less constitutional than commercial, and such also as may the least interfere with the particular interest of each other, but advance that of the whole.” This was the only way to “strengthen the whole British Empire.”<sup>331</sup>

Postlethwayt and the Patriots accepted the Old Guard claim that, in normal circumstances, trading nations should avoid war. When everyone played by the rules of free and fair competition, economic striving led to emulation and increased prosperity for everyone.

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<sup>330</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1751), p. 873.

<sup>331</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *Britain’s Commercial Interest Explained and Improved*. (London: D. Browne, J. Whiston and B. White, and W. Sandby, 1757). Vol. I, pp. 461, 469-470..

“Long experience hath proved that drawing the sword upon every occasion is not the way to redress grievances.” “Every nation hath an equal right with ourselves to make all advantage by trade of their lawful territory and natural situation,” Postlethwayt proclaimed, “this no just cause for anger; but it ought to inspire emulation.”<sup>332</sup> The problem was that the French commercial program transcended the merely competitive. The French did much more than develop their lawful territory and natural situation. “They have by intrigue and treaty duped us in our greatest, even our commercial interests.”<sup>333</sup> “Superior craft and Machiavellian policy” rather than “superior industry” allowed the French to seize “the trade of the world.”<sup>334</sup> Postlethwayt quoted one “gentleman of good knowledge and experience” who maintained that the French “use all manner of artifices to lull their neighbors asleep with fine speeches and plausible pretenses, whilst they craftily endeavor to compass their designs” of taking control of “territories and dominions in time of profound peace.”<sup>335</sup>

Postlethwayt was convinced that France had crossed the threshold from economic rival to unfair competitor. Britain needed to act immediately or risk being reduced to a minor player on the world stage. “Numbers of men of the best sense in the kingdom, nay in Europe” now were certain that France sought “universal empire.”<sup>336</sup> In area after area, Postlethwayt detailed France’s illegal encroachments. Its activities in Nova Scotia will allow France “to be ever a

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<sup>332</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1751), p. 469.

<sup>333</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1751), p. 377.

<sup>334</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1751), p. 831.

<sup>335</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1751), p. 375.

<sup>336</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1751), p. 444.

terror to all our Northern colonies upon the continent.”<sup>337</sup> “The French have unjustly usurped” the neutral islands in the Caribbean which meant that “our sugar colonies must be ruined for want of supplies of timber.”<sup>338</sup> The long-time French project to draw “a line along the borders of our settlements in every province from the St. Lawrence to the Mississippi” will soon eliminate “all intercourse and traffic between us and the Indians inhabiting the inland countries.” The consequence was that the French could, when they chose, invade “all the English plantations at once, and drive the inhabitants into the sea.”<sup>339</sup> The commercial and imperial success of the French East India Company justly “alarmed all Europe.”<sup>340</sup> In Africa, the French had “absolutely excluded our separate traders as well as the [African] Company from the whole trade of the Gum Coast.”<sup>341</sup> The time had come to act. Postlethwayt proclaimed that “our indolence is at length awakened, our security alarmed” because everyone was now convinced that “the French have of late years gained very great advantages over us in trade.”<sup>342</sup>

In the aftermath of the War of Austrian Succession, then, Britons were obsessed with the threat posed by France to their prosperity and their Empire. They did not perceive their

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<sup>337</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1751), p. 376.

<sup>338</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1751), p. 380.

<sup>339</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1751), pp. 442-443, 825.

<sup>340</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1751), p. 830.

<sup>341</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1751), p. 830. Gum Arabic was an essential ingredient in making dyes for textiles.

<sup>342</sup> Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1751), p. 869; Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. Second Edition. Vol. II (London: John Knapton, 1757), p. 475.

economy as buoyant. They saw themselves losing ground to their chief rival. They understood the threat in broadly political-economic, not narrowly geopolitical, terms. In response, Britons did not coalesce around a moderate consensual position. They agreed neither on a European nor on a Blue Water policy. They divided bitterly along partisan lines. All three positions – the Old Guard, the Bedfordite, and the new Patriot – agreed that France posed a grave threat. All three agreed that the British Empire needed to be reimagined. No one advocated neglecting Britain's overseas possessions. But they agreed on little else. The Old Guard political economists called for freer trade, the elimination of monopolies, paying down the debt, and European engagement via the Old System of German alliances and subsidies. Since Britain retained a first mover's economic advantage, they called for reform rather than for fundamentally restructuring of state and society.

The Bedfordites, by contrast, thought that if the administration was allowed to continue its wasteful and economically disastrous engagement with Europe, Britain was doomed. Britain's future, they insisted, lay in turning its back on Europe and engaging in imperial expansion in the Atlantic. They believed that colonial products would drive the British economy. Above all this required a more structured, a more coherent, and a more uniform imperial organization. At the heart of their vision was military organization and colonial extraction.

The Patriots, in turn, called for a more global approach. While they admired the efficacy of French state support for the economy, they believed that French perfidy had given that country an unfair advantage on world markets. Britain needed to respond with a concerted state effort: increased state support of the economy and ramped up state vigilance against the

French global advance. The Patriots believed that Britain needed to remain engaged with Europe, albeit at a more modest level. Continued engagement was necessary for both military and economic reasons. Britain needed to keep the French military tied down on the continent. And Britain need access to European markets to sell its goods. The Patriots believed that the chief value of colonies lay in their consumption of British manufactured goods and therefore rejected calls for massively increased colonial taxation or tighter imperial control. They called, instead, for a confederal Empire. The Old Guard rejected demands for war based on jealousy of trade; the Bedfordites and Patriots believed the time had come to confront the French.