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JEREMY BLACK

A DIFFERENT WEST? COUNTERFACTUALISM AND THE RISE OF BRITAIN TO GREAT POWER STATUS[*]

> »Such speculation ... is regrettable in this instance because it obscures or evades the political and cultural content in which Asquith and his colleagues made their agonizing decision to go to war.«
> Brian Bond review of Niall Ferguson's »The Pity of War«[1]

If the ›Rise of the West‹ is one of the meta-narratives of world history over the last half-millennium, it is the case that more attention has been devoted to the linked questions of when/how/why Rise?, rather than which West? Yet the latter can be profitably re-examined. It is important in its own right and also needs to be addressed as a second-order counterfactual. In short, would the Rise of the West have occurred at all or possibly followed another path had there been a different West? Instead of posing the question of whether once Western dominance had been established it had to take the forms it did, it is more pertinent first to ask if a variety of possible courses of Western development existed that might have precluded such a dominance. That is the intention of this contribution.

This essay focuses, in particular, on the struggle between Britain and France in 1688–1815, although that is not the sole counterfactual in terms of which West? For example, it is also worth noting that the contingent events of 1776, 1914 and 1917 greatly altered the relationships between the USA, Germany, Russia and the rest of the West, and changed the character of the West. More generally, it is possible to stress a number of different courses and related interderminacy points, all of which would have altered the character of the West and definitely, probably or possibly its impact in the wider world. Yet, as it was the struggle or rivalry between Britain and France that was most important to the course of Western overseas expansion in the period 1680–1900, the ›tipping period‹ in relations between the West and Asia, Africa, Australasia and, arguably, North America, it is on this struggle that I will focus.

More specifically, in large part as a consequence of this struggle, the West was left in 1815 without a hegemonic power, and also with a political settlement that left much of Europe stable, in so far as territorial boundaries were concerned, and with both Britain and Russia free to pursue expansionist interests elsewhere in the world. This resolution of the struggle in the Western ›core‹ was far from inevitable; it was also very important to the subsequent century of European expansion.

In focusing on Britain and France, I link five counterfactuals. First, the question just suggested, namely Would a different course and result to that struggle have affected the relationship between the ›West and the Rest‹ both then and thereafter? Secondly, Did Britain have to win? Thirdly, Could Britain have developed differently in this period? Fourthly, Could the Jacobites have won?, one of the more obvious instances of the last, although not the only one. Radicals for example could have been more successful in the 1790s and 1800s. Lastly, Could the British have suppressed the American Revolution?

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[*] I would like to thank Jonathan Clark, Eveline Cruickshanks, Grayson Ditchfield, Paul Fideler, Bill Gibson, Richard Harding, Harald Kleinschmidt, Ned Lebow, Geoffrey Parker and Philip Tetlock for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

[1] English Historical Review, 114 (1999), p. 130.

These questions are very different in character and scale, but they are all important and all invite valid counterfactuals. Furthermore, they are all linked, which itself poses problems in terms of actual and implied relationship and causality, and prioritisation. As effects ramify through the system, so positive and negative feedback loops greatly complicate causal and counterfactual inference in history, but, at the same time, it is all too easy to assert links that are, at best, without much supporting evidence and, at worst, questionable. For example, there is no evidence to support the claim that the successful suppression of the Jacobite rebellions led to complacency in Britain's policy towards her North American colonies, however plausible that might seem. Secondly, it is foolish to claim that the financial crisis caused by intervention in the War of American Independence led directly to the French Revolution. Attempts to improve financial administration and/or to produce a political solution were not foredoomed to failure[2]. Before, however, counterfactuals and links are addressed, it is necessary to offer the context and to explain why the character of the ›West‹ was indeed important. This will lead directly into the first of the counterfactuals.

Furthermore, this approach relates to what I feel to be a very important aspect of counterfactual studies, namely their explicit awareness of the role of the scholar as interpreter. This approach draws on the task of the historian in organizing material and asking questions, but takes it a stage further. As such, it is appropriate to add the authorial voice, rather like Henry Fielding in his novel »Tom Jones« (1749), a work that captures the sense of indeterminacy held by contemporaries. By so doing, the role of the scholar as organiser of questions is made explicit and the counterfactualism can be introduced and discussed in a helpful manner. In addition, this process underlines a postmodernist dimension to counterfactualism, not that that is the sole philosophy/methodology that is at issue. However, a stress on postmodernism helps counter the charge that those interested in counterfactualism are primarily reactionaries reluctant to accept the process or results of change. The question What if? is very heuristic and should remain in dialogue with Why? and How? Counterfactuals must be included in Why? and How? explanations if those explanations are to be true to their historical moments. This can be linked to shifts in the history of political thought. The cultivation of ›counterfactual‹ awareness is in the general spirit of Michael Oakeshott's revision of political ›traditions‹: from Whiggish determinism to an accretion or cumulation of choices made from among contingencies. Oakeshott in particular resented the notion that a political ›tradition‹ was driven by a priori assumptions, to an unalterable destination. Rather, to him, a political tradition was the accretion of what people actually had done and thought[3].

How and why did the West triumph? Many answers have been given to a question that evades empirical constraints. In the nineteenth century, answers focused on issues of cultural and religious superiority. Technological advances were seen as indicators of cultural norms, a concept revisited in a different form in the late twentieth century. For several decades, accounts of the rise of the West have primarily focused on technological explanations. At one level, this approach has concentrated on particular devices and their development. This has led to important work on the so-called Gunpowder Revolution and comparable studies of aspects of maritime technology. More generally, technology has been seen as relating not only to devices but also to their use as part of a culture of organisation in which analysis, planning and informed prediction came to play a major role. In short, technology was the opposite of fatalism, it was an earned providence that was then used to construct rationality and a scientific world view in which dominance by the West was both natural and attainable. This view, furthermore, survived to affect subsequent analysis of the very process.

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[2] Amongst the massive literature on this subject it is worth noting, D. R. WEIR, Tontines, public finance, and revolution in France and England, 1688–1789, and E. N. WHITE, Was there a solution to the Ancien Régime's financial dilemma?, in: Journal of Economic History, 49 (1989), p. 124, 545–568.

[3] M. J. OAKESHOTT, Experience and Its Modes, Cambridge 1933.

Yet the West was not only more varied than this notion might suggest. There was also greater complexity in what might be termed the cultural politics of conquest or, more bluntly, the why question; and this question can be related back to the issue of the inherent variety of the West, in short its problematic character. This can be addressed first by looking at European development as a whole (and seeing that in terms of a complex narrative in which our own assessment appears as a counterfactual) and then by turning to specifics. First, a different timeframe to the dominant one in much of the literature can be offered. This provides a context for multiple indeterminacies and thus for counterfactual approaches. The notion of a modernising early-modern European world as a prelude to a modern Western world can be seen as an artificial and misleading construct that exaggerates aspects of modernity in Europe, gives them a false causal power and underrates conservative social/cultural/intellectual patterns in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, presenting a false antithesis to the rest of the world. Established beliefs and practices in Europe were disrupted in the eighteenth century by the ›Enlightenment‹, but it was far from inevitable that the new ideas and governmental practices of the period would do more than shore up existing structures, as they did in Turkey. Indeed, the interactions of reform, change, revolution and novelty in the eighteenth century were not fixed and this remained the case until the utilitarian hegemony and self-consciously rationalising drive of the mid-nineteenth century. This point is integral to this essay, not something that can be left to an introduction by a specialist on another period. It is only if the cultural context of the eighteenth century is grasped that it is possible to avoid the ahistorical theorising that characterises so much work on the history of international relations, a point ably demonstrated in Harald Kleinschmidt's important new book[4].

Counterfactualism needs to be directed to the varieties of cultural politics, and in terms that would have made sense to contemporaries. It is necessary to understand the cultural and racial ideas of the people of Christian Europe, and of other societies, in order to apply counterfactual perspectives to the notion of drive for ascendancy and the trajectory towards an appropriating psyche. The utilitarian/mercantile conception of territorialisation, of land that should and could be profitably seized, even if not then settled, although already formed in the New World, developed late in other spheres of European activity, certainly in so far as European attitudes towards South and East Asia and most of Africa were concerned, and was not inevitable. In short, European dominance did not have to take the forms it did. In many respects a distinctive form(s) did not arise until quite late. The culture of Christian Europe was important to its global role.

One counterfactual perspective can be provided by disaggregating Europe and comparing and contrasting the Atlantic West and the Continental powers. It is possible to suggest that Continental expansion by Austria and, especially, Russia, was not so different from expansion by non-European empires, particularly once the initial ›mercantile‹ (Cossack) phase of the conquest of Siberia ended. Thus, a model of Euro-Asian landward conquest can be provided and it can be suggested that it was different to maritime expansion. However, caution is necessary, first as there were differences between European and non-European empires, and, secondly, because Continental European powers drew on different societies and cultures, as a comparison of Austria and Prussia indicates. Furthermore, European attitudes towards conquered fellow Europeans, such as Poles, was different from those towards conquered non-Europeans.

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[4] H. KLEINSCHMIDT, The Nemesis of Power: A History of International Relations Theories, London 2000.

Aside from disaggregating the West, this focus on the difference between maritime and Continental Europe provides another sphere for counterfactual analysis. It is possible that different political developments within Europe would have affected the balance between maritime and Continental expansion. These might include the suppression of the Dutch Revolt as well as the struggle between Britain and France. It is also necessary to consider whether domestic developments within individual European states would have made a major difference. These might include for example different political trajectories within France, such as the triumph of the Huguenots in 1560–1600 or in Britain, for example Stuart victory in the Civil Wars of the 1640s, or in Germany the earlier adoption of primogeniture, which would have avoided the patchwork of tiny states.

There is not the space in this essay to address all these possibilities. Mentioning them both highlights the number and range of indeterminacies and underlines the role of authorial choice in selecting a focus. This focus on the Anglo-French struggle and on related conflicts within the British world reflects a belief that the period was of particular importance, and that options had not been foreclosed by the earlier rise of the Iberian powers and the Dutch.

Different developments within particular European states would have affected the cultural suppositions that moulded the use and choices of power. Thus, an understanding of Europe as fluid in its development can be seen as crucial to any counterfactual analysis of her expansion. This fluidity has to be seen in terms of relations between *and* within European states. Both can be seen as important in terms of structures, priorities and ideas. The forms of government and structures of politics and administration that enabled societies to mobilise and control resources, both for relations with the non-West and more generally, were not fixed, indeed far from it. Secondly, the priorities for the use of resources were not fixed. Thirdly, the ideas that influenced relations with the non-West were culturally conditioned and affected by developments within Western societies.

What does this mean? To take the case of Britain, the deployment of regular troops from the 1750s to assist the East India Company in India, for example, involved choice and reflected particular priorities and ideas that had not been present twenty years earlier. Similarly, but here within the trans-oceanic European world, with the attempt in 1763–1775 to increase the contribution of Britain's American colonies to imperial resources. These attitudes and ideas can be seen as more important than the mechanics and techniques of force, and as necessarily open to counterfactual speculation.

If France had beaten Britain during their protracted conflict for much of the period 1688–1815 then this would have greatly affected the struggle of the West versus the Rest. Why? France after all had oceanic and trans-oceanic interests and ambitions of her own. It was unclear which power would prevail in North America until the failure of the French attempt to regain Québec in 1760. In 1750, France was more powerful than Britain in India. France put as much effort as Britain into Pacific exploration. She was also energetic in trying to develop links in South-East Asia, Persia, the Turkish empire and West Africa. Allied with Spain, the third most powerful naval power, France, the second most powerful, was able to challenge the most powerful, Britain, on a number of occasions. Furthermore, after 1815, France again took a path of trans-oceanic expansion, and successfully so, first in North and West Africa and, then, in Indo China and Madagascar.

Thus, had France beaten Britain it is at first glimpse unclear why this should have made a difference to the extension of European power; although the nature of that power would have been different, and, as already suggested, that might have been very important to the rationale and process as well as consequences of conquest. A French-dominated trans-oceanic world would have looked to Catholicism, civil law, French culture and language, and a different notion of representative government and politics to that of Britain[5]. Furthermore, after the French Revolution (had that not been prevented by French predominance and mercantile success), there would have been a different racial politics, one that can in part be glimpsed by considering official French attitudes to ethnicity over the last half century. Martinique and Guadeloupe, for example, are currently part of metropolitan France in a way that none of Britain's trans-oceanic colonies ever became.

Had France beaten Britain, the trans-oceanic situation would also have been very different in other ways. This was due to geopolitics, priorities, and assumptions about the international system. The geopolitics were that France was both a maritime and a European continental power, far more so than Britain, even when ruled by the Electors of Hanover, as it was in 1714–1837[6]. French geopolitics led to conflicting priorities, for example in 1741 when France could have helped Spain against Britain in the Caribbean rather than attacking Austria, or 1778 when France could have intervened in the War of the Bavarian Succession, rather than the War of American Independence. Priorities and prioritisation, of course, are a matter that immediately invite counterfactual speculation, as they did for contemporaries. In 1756 and 1805, the British feared that the French would invade England or Ireland; instead the French turned elsewhere, as they also did with most of their forces when invasion attempts were mounted on the British Isles in 1708 and 1796–1798. British survival had something to do with the fact that Britain was not the first priority for French policy-makers for much of the period.

Priorities owed something to resources and a sense of the possible, especially in the case of invasion plans. They also reflected ideas, in this case the dominance of European conceptions in French geopolitical thought; and, more specifically, concern with dynastic and landward aggrandisement until the mid eighteenth (and territorially from the 1790s also); and anxiety about the impact in Europe of the rise of other land powers, the Habsburgs from the early sixteenth century, and Russia and Prussia also from the early eighteenth.

Furthermore, more generally, French society was less dominated than her main maritime rival Britain by an ethos of commercial strength and maritime destiny, the ethos that was the prelude to territorial ambitions in South Asia, Africa and the Pacific. It is, however, worth noting that there were many competing views in Britain, especially in the critical period post 1650 when she was establishing the infrastructure for expansion. The ethos may have been the result of expansion rather than the cause.

The spatial composition of French power was largely that of inland France. The landed nobility was crucial in Valois and Bourbon France, and the role of land in elite identity was underlined under Napoleon by his reliance on a new service aristocracy who were provided with estates. The nobility were far more interested in the army than the navy, in the land, rather than trade or empire. The economic focus on land affected military and political policy. These values affected French society as a whole. The loss of Canada to Britain in 1760 and Louisiana to Spain in 1763 was criticized in mercantile circles in the Atlantic ports, but had only limited impact elsewhere, not least because they were seen in fashionable circles as barren and profitless. Aristocratic families had scant presence in French North America.

The values of aristocratic power were important to French policy-making and diplomacy. Trade was not the most resonant symbol of national identity. A key element in counterfactual history must be the role of individuals, and the character of individual rulers was crucial to policy in eighteenth-century Europe. Louis XIV was no Peter the Great, keen to develop and sustain a navy and to move the capital to the coast, while Louis XV lacked the Emperor (ruler of Austria) Charles VI's ostentatious commitment to trading companies, and Louis XVI failed to match Charles III of Spain's interest in the colonies and trade. There were choices in French foreign policy. Policy-makers put Europe first, and were able to maintain their leading position in Western Europe, but not to gain a comparable one in the expanding European world.

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[5] J. F. Bosher, French colonial society in Canada, in: Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada, 4th series, 19 (1981), p. 156.

[6] Further details and references for the following section can be found in J. M. Black, From Louis XIV to Napoleon: The Fate of a Great Power, London 1999.

Had France achieved greater success overseas, then it is likely that the resources of the trans-oceanic world would have been employed to further European ambitions. For example, France's long-standing interest in European allies, such as Bavaria, Poland, Sweden and Turkey, might have led to a more sustained intervention in Central and Eastern Europe. The attempt in 1741 to reorder Central Europe that led French troops to St. Pölten and Prague might have been given greater force. So also with the attack on Prussia in 1757. Further east, the expeditionary force sent to Danzig in 1734 and the squadron dispatched to the Baltic in 1739 could have been part of a stronger effort to help Poland and Sweden against Russia. When, in 1783, Vergennes, the French Foreign Minister, negotiated peace with Britain it was not in order to pursue plans in India but rather better to oppose Russian aggrandizement in the Crimea.

The best case scenario for France would have been first to dismember the British empire in 1778–1783, then, partly through the acquisition of British commerce, to avoid revolution herself, and finally to compete with Britain for empire overseas from a new and equal starting-point. All this was feasible.

A stronger France might have avoided revolution: greater success could have encouraged obedience and respect for the political system and monarch. That, however, might not necessarily have left France freer to pursue international ambitions outside Europe. Instead, it might have encouraged a more assertive, even hegemonic, stance within Europe. This counterfactual is important, because the period 1789–1842 was very much the ›tipping point‹ in South and East Asia. During that period, the Turks, Marathas, Gurkhas, Burmese, Chinese and Mysore were all defeated, as was the Egyptian fleet. European territorial gains included Singapore, Aden, Karachi and Hong Kong, all gained by Britain. Promising political and military developments in the defeated powers were cut short or seriously curtailed. To suggest that in some way there would have been no expansion had France not Britain been the leading European power is implausible. The British bombarded Algiers in 1816, but the French occupied it in 1830. They also established themselves in the Marquesas and Tahiti in 1842 and Gabon in 1844. However, the pace and extent of European overseas expansion would probably have been less had France been the prime European power, whether it had had a Revolution or not. The race hotted up with the fear of the ›closing door‹ in Africa after 1880, but there might have been no such fear had there been one dominant European power. A slower pace of European overseas expansion might well have given other non-European powers, including, but not only, those listed above, a vital opportunity to consolidate politically, to develop militarily, and to acquire Western industrial technology by trade and investment, rather as Latin America, and later Japan, did.

Did then Britain have to win? For geographical, cultural and political reasons, France was different to Britain as an economy, a society and a state. When the Count of Broglie arrived in London as French ambassador in 1724 he was astonished by the apparently innumerable quantity of shipping in the Thames[7]. Structural limitations have a role, not least because the character of French political culture affected the perception of options. Rulers living in Versailles were much less exposed to the dynamic forces of European economics and overseas activities than a government and Parliament located in London, a growing centre of world trade. This affected, *but did not determine*, policy choices, resource availability, and international responses. Louis XIV could have devoted more resources to trans-oceanic activity in the 1660s and 1670s[8]. He could have sought to prevent Anglo-Dutch co-operation in 1689–1713, either by making more of an effort earlier to retain Dutch support, or by thwarting William III of Orange's invasion in 1688, or by providing more assistance to the Irish thereafter. Greater effort could have been put into sustaining and strengthening the promising French positions in India and North America in the early 1750s. Possibly the promise of 1783–1786 – expanding trade, alliance with Spain and the Dutch, an isolated Britain, and moves towards peaceful reform within France – could have been developed. Maybe, despite his aggressiveness, Napoleon could have maintained the Tilsit agreement, successfully incorporated Iberia, peaceably or by conquest, into his system, and then forced Britain to terms. There were ministers during the eighteenth century, for example Maurepas and Sartine, who wanted to devote more effort to commercial and colonial goals. France's failure, and thus Britain's success, was as much the consequence of political, diplomatic and military contingencies and decisions, as of structural and socio-economic factors.

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[7] Paris, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Correspondance Politique Angleterre 348 fol. 56.

If in 1815 Britain was the strongest state in the world, the situation had been very different seventy years earlier, as Jacobite forces under Bonnie Prince Charlie advanced on Derby, out-manoeuvring the armies sent to defeat them, and the British government feared a supporting French invasion of southern England. By 1815 Britain was the dominant military power in India, but, in 1746, the British had lost Madras to the French. In the 1780s[9], and again in the late 1790s, British politicians had worried about France's global and Middle East ambitions, especially in the Indian Ocean. There had been fears that the French would overthrow the British in India, as they had earlier done in North America.

Was it the French victory at Minden in 1759 or in the Mediterranean in 1798, or Napoleon's triumphant entry into London in 1805 that put paid to the idea that France's geopolitical position was such that she could be the dominant power on the landmass of Western Europe, but would fail to be the leading European colonial and maritime power? To buy peace in each case, Britain had to return colonial gains, as she had also done in 1748. In each case France was able to assert her position in the world, both in her own right and in conjunction with her allies, especially Spain. The claims of domestic and foreign critics that particular aspects of French society and the French state made them less likely to prevail over more mercantile, tolerant and populist Britain seemed redundant.

France of course did not win these wars, but the fancy outlined above directs attention to the question whether her failure was inherent or the product of contingency and chance. Those who are inclined to emphasise resources and their mobilisation will tend to see failure as inherent, while the proponents of choice and policy will be more cautious. There is much for the latter to stress. In particular, Napoleon's exploitative and insensitive treatment of his allies compromised France's position within and outside Europe. It contrasted, with the greater success of French policymakers in creating and sustaining alliances in the period 1713–1786. More generally, focusing on diplomatic failures makes sense of the contrast between long-term ›structural‹ characteristics and the very varied fates of Britain and France as great powers.

Britain, therefore, did not have to win. Ex-post facto determinism is totally inappropriate in this case, and British ministers of the period had no confidence in the eventual outcome. This remained the case until Napoleon's failure in Russia in 1812. After that, there were still strong fears in 1813, and even as late as early 1814, that he might divide his opponents and settle, in particular, with Austria, leaving a situation in which France was more powerful than was to be the case after the Peace of Vienna. Austria distrusted Russia and Britain and would have liked to retain a strong France, while the Russians sought a strong France in order to balance Britain. Napoleon's instinctive refusal to accept limits wrecked such schemes, but either would have had serious implications for Britain's position and might therefore have lessened her post-war trans-oceanic expansion. This would have been particularly the case if France had then been able to support non-European opponents of British expansionism, and if she had sought to do so. For example, instead of French adventurers supporting the Sikhs, they could have benefited from government support.

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[8] G. J. Ames, Colbert, Mercantilism and the French Quest for Asian Trade, Dekalb, Illinois 1996.

[9] J. M. Black, British Foreign Policy in an Age of Revolutions, 1783–1793, Cambridge 1994.

The issue of whether, and with what consequences, Britain could have been beaten by France can be linked to the question of whether and with what effects Britain could have developed differently as a state and society[10]. This is not a foolish question, but was a counterfactual posed throughout the period from the 1530s. There was a sense of precariousness about religious, ecclesiastical, dynastic, institutional and political settlements, not only within England but also in the other parts of the British Isles and with reference to the relations between these parts. Furthermore, these disputes did not take place in isolation. Instead, foreign, especially French, Spanish and Dutch, intervention, was frequent. This had been true for centuries. The French had sent troops to England in 1216 in the crisis following Magna Carta. They had subsequently supported Scottish opposition. As a consequence, developments within Britain were played out in a wider international context and, thus, had consequences for European power politics and for the position of Britain and other countries in the global system.

A comparison between Britain and Poland is instructive, not least because both were linked in personal unions with German principalities: Britain with Hanover from 1714 and Poland with Saxony from 1697. Comparisons can be drawn earlier, with the British Union of 1603 compared to the Polish-Lithuanian one of 1569, but, for the purposes of drawing contrasts in the eighteenth century, it is necessary to focus on these later personal unions. George I's accession in Britain in 1714 was followed by civil strife in 1715/16 as those of James II (1685) and William III (1689) had been, while in Poland the Saxon rulers, Augustus II and Augustus III gained the throne through violence. However, the civil wars in Britain after 1637–1651 were swiftly over, especially in England (for example in 1660, 1685, 1688, 1715), and, although England and Britain were bitterly divided in the 1640s and 1680s, Britain acted like a major power in the 1650s and 1690s. There was an elective character to the Williamite position and the Act of Settlement (1701), as there was to Polish kingship, but Poland did not develop a strong government comparable to that in Britain. Possibly the important difference was that in Britain the Jacobites were not able to prevent William III and the Hanoverians, both of whom also represented the hereditary principle, from winning parliamentary support, whereas, in Poland, the political and constitutional system did not work to the benefit of the Saxons. Indeed, Jacobitism helped to preserve a measure both of Whig unity and of Whig-royal cohesion.

Earlier, Britain parted from a more general European trajectory because the monarchs were defeated in the late 1630s, 1640s and 1688, thus obliging opponents to consider new political, constitutional, ecclesiastical and dynastic arrangements. None of these defeats were inevitable, and all were reversible, as was to be shown by the restoration of the Stuart dynasty (and much, but by no means all, else) in 1660. The Stuart cause had seemed hopeless after Charles II's defeat at Worcester in 1651, but it triumphed easily in 1660. The unwillingness of many in England to fight for an unpopular regime in 1688 could have been repeated in the 1740s. A second Stuart restoration after 1688, at the behest and with the help of France, would probably have had much impact on British policy, not least by leaving an unpopular, Catholic dynasty and its political supporters dependent on France.

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[10] J. M. Black, Convergence or Divergence? Britain and the Continent, London 1994.

Was such a second restoration possible? That question can be focused by looking at the closest chance, the Jacobite invasion and rising of 1745[11]. Again there are the two dimensions of counterfactualism, to adopt a simple typology, first, the specific, in this case military, in which the possibility of different developments is constrained by the context of a particular conjuncture, much of which can be recovered and assessed within the prime Western tradition of historical research, namely empirical positivism. For this reason, it is possible to dwell on this example at some length. Sources for all the major players are available.

Secondly, there is the wider context, that of possibilities stemming from a conjuncture that in fact worked out differently. In this case, they relate most interestingly to the possibility that a new political settlement in 1745 would have altered Britain's position in the world, and thus the West, not only with regard to geopolitical alignments but also with reference to the nature of public culture, economic interest and social dynamics. In turn, these would have affected other counterfactuals.

The Jacobite invasion of Scotland under Charles Edward Stuart (Bonnie Prince Charlie) in 1745 quickly succeeded with a total victory at Prestonpans on 21 September. After Prestonpans, Charles Edward consolidated his position around Edinburgh while his opponents assembled an army under the elderly Field Marshal George Wade (1673–1748) at Newcastle. Wade was familiar with northern Britain, but his combat experience was on the Continent, most recently in 1744, and he proved too slow moving to cope with Charles Edward. The latter avoided Wade by invading England via Carlisle, which fell after a short siege (10–15 November). The defences were not impressive, but, even had they been, the defending force was insufficient in number and it lacked civilian support. Wade's slow attempt to march via Hexham to Carlisle's relief was hampered by the winter weather, leading to a ›non-battle‹, a basic building block in counterfactual studies. Instead, the Jacobites advanced unopposed through Penrith, Lancaster, Preston and Manchester, en route towards London. Their advance west of the Pennines followed, at least initially, the course of the invading Scots in the Second Civil War in 1648 and that of the Jacobites in 1715, but, in contrast to both the former occasions, the advancing force outmarched its opponents. The ability of armies to respond differently to similar strategic parameters, and the role of their leadership in doing so, were amply demonstrated in these three advances.

Aside from that under Wade, another regular army was assembled to confront the Jacobites. The government was not short of money: substantial sums were voted by Parliament in November 1745. Built up in the West Midlands and commanded by George II's younger son, William, Duke of Cumberland, this force, however, was out-manoeuvred, misled by deliberately circulated reports that the Jacobites intended to advance on Chester and North Wales. Cumberland moved to block such an advance and, therefore, failed to stop a Jacobite advance on Derby which they entered unopposed on 4 December. At that point, the Jacobites held the strategic initiative and were also in a central position while their opponent's forces were divided. Wade's army was still in Yorkshire and Cumberland's was exhausted by its marches. The government was assembling a new army on Finchley Common to protect London, but it was a relatively small force. Unlike the Scots, the English population had had no access to arms, and even the Whig militia, who did obtain arms in 1745, would not fight, perhaps less because they would not uphold the Hanoverian succession than because they did not regard themselves as soldiers.

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[11] The extensive literature on this rising includes J. PREBBLE, Culloden, London 1961; W. A. SPECK, The Butcher. The Duke of Cumberland and the Suppression of the '45, Oxford 1981; F. J. MCLYNN, The Jacobite Army in England, Edinburgh 1983, and Charles Edward Stuart, London 1988; J. M. BLACK, Culloden and the '45, Stroud 1990; S. REID, 1745. A Military History of the Last Jacobite Rising, Staplehurst, Kent 1996.

Nevertheless, the Highland chiefs were disappointed by the lack of the support promised them by Charles Edward: both assistance from English Jacobites and the absence of a French landing in southern England. After bitter debates, the chiefs forced Edward to turn back and he began his retreat on 6 December. The outnumbered and outgunned Jacobites were to be crushed at Culloden on 16 April 1746. Was this defeat inevitable?

Culloden can be seen as a defeat for an army emphasising speed, mobility and primal shock-power by a force reliant on the concentrated firepower of disciplined infantry and their supporting artillery. That, indeed, is how the battle has been depicted, and visual force is lent by the contrast between disciplined rows of British troops with their standard weaponry and the more fluid, but also archaic individualism of their opponents generally, but misleadingly, presented as without guns. The mental picture created is somewhat similar to the modern film »Zulu« (1964). It is made clear that the two sides are starkly different and that one represents order and other characteristics commonly associated with military activity and progress. Although the Zulu charge was at times effective, it was only so at the cost of heavy casualties and British firepower generally defeated it. Thus the Jacobites can be seen as representatives of an earlier form of warfare that was bound to fail because it was redundant for tactical and technological reasons. It can be compared to other eighteenth-century forces using non-western tactics, for example the Cossacks and the Tatars. They can be seen as examples of barbarian warfare, rather as Edward Gibbon presented the Tatars, or at the very least as dated by the March of Modernity, as an Ossianic fragment of times past, primitive virtue, and prowess, that might be impressive on an individual basis, but was unsuccessful as an organised, i.e. social, means of waging war[12].

Another dimension can be added by noting the success of the British state in dealing with its military opponents in the British Isles from the 1640s. The New Model Army was successful under Oliver Cromwell against both Irish and Scots, so that, from the early 1650s for the first time, all of the British Isles was under effective control from London: the failure of this to occur earlier indicates the questionable nature of what might be termed geopolitical determinism. In 1685, James II defeated the Duke of Monmouth's rising and in 1688 he would have destroyed any domestic risings had it not been for the invasion of a regular army under William of Orange. William's forces suppressed opposition in both Scotland and Ireland, Jacobite risings in 1715/16, 1719 and 1745/46 were defeated, and, in 1798, the Irish rising was crushed. Within the British world, only the American colonists were successful in rebelling, but the American War of Revolution (1775–1783) is commonly seen as different, and treated in both its military and political aspects as a harbinger of a new world, an aspect of the Modernity of the period[13]. The apparent differences with the Jacobite risings thus help to underline the necessary failure of the latter. Such an approach can, however, be challenged by adopting a counterfactual approach. It can be suggested both that Jacobite warfare was not anachronistic and that the Jacobites came near to success in 1745. The entire set of assumptions underlying the supposed context and chronology of military modernity can be queried.

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[12] J. M. Hill, Gaelic Warfare 1453–1815, in: J. Black (ed.), European Warfare 1453–1815, London 1999, p. 201–23; J. P. C. Laband and P. S. Thompson, Field Guide to the War in Zululand and the Defence of Natal, 1879, Pietermaritzburg 1983; I. Knight, The Anatomy of the Zulu Army: from Shaka to Cetshwayo, 1818–1879, London 1995.

[13] S. Conway, The War of American Independence 1775–1783, London 1995, p. 23–40. For a challenge to the notion of political modernity, J. C. D. Clark, The Language of Liberty 1660–1832. Political Discourse and Social Dynamics in the Anglo-American World, Cambridge 1993.

Detailed consideration and contextualisation of the warfare of the period provides an empirical underpinning for the counterfactual argument. Although irregular warfare was atypical in Europe in the middle of the eighteenth century, refusing to follow suit in the rigorous orders that were imposed on warfare under the auspices of linear tactics was not specific to the Jacobites but a general aspect of the ›little war‹ at the time. Furthermore, later in the century, there was to be a major breach in the rules pertaining to linear tactics with the formation of columns[14]. Thus, the Jacobites can be seen as anticipating the kinds of warfare that were to become more prominent towards the end of the eighteenth century.

The Jacobites were helped by the unfortified nature of most of Britain. The major fortified British positions were in Ireland, or naval dockyards or overseas bases, such as Gibraltar and Fort St. Philip on Minorca. There was no system of citadels protecting major domestic centres of government, especially in England. Berwick was a prominent exception, not part of a system. Not only did this ensure that the Jacobites did not have to fight their way through a series of positions, losing time and manpower as they did so, but it also meant that the British army lacked a network of bases that could provide shelter and replenish supplies. After Charles Edward captured poorly-fortified Carlisle he faced no fortified positions on his chosen route to London and had he, instead, chosen to invade north Wales, as was feared for a while, he would have been able to bypass Chester. Thus, the determinism offered by discussion of fortification and its ability to focus hierarchies of capability based on resources and applied science, can again be subverted by an empirical understanding that opens the way for the counterfactual argument.

The Jacobites were of course different in several major respects. They lacked a navy and were, therefore, unable to challenge the maritime strength of the British state, a strength that was crucial in a number of respects in the '45, especially because it covered the movement of British troops back from the Low Countries in 1745 and the supply of advancing British forces on the eastern seaboard of Scotland in 1746[15]. The Jacobite army was also a volunteer and non-regular force, with non-bureaucratic supply and recruitment systems, and this necessarily affected its *modus operandi*, not least in matters of control and command, and logistics. Government action against Catholics and suspected Jacobites in England limited the popular support the rising might otherwise have received in England, as did popular anti-Catholicism. There was no popular rising, but then there had been none that was decisive when William III invaded in 1688. A measure of English support was shown by lack of resistance, especially at Carlisle where the aldermen presented the keys to the city to Charles Edward on bended knees. The English Jacobite leaders were waiting for the French to land and had not agreed to rise until then[16].

In his »Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire« (1776–1788), Edward Gibbon raised the question of whether ›barbarian‹ invasions of Europe could recur, and came to the comforting conclusion that advances in military technology, specifically the development of artillery and fortifications, made this highly unlikely. Thus progress, in the form of science, apparently allowed advanced and settled societies to employ a military technology that multiplied the impact of their soldiery. This he saw as crucial in enabling such societies to restrict military service to specialised forces and thus free the rest of society for productive activity and civilised pursuits. Progress therefore secured and benefited from military modernity, an analysis that could be applied in Europe and then on the global scale to limit any counterfactualism[17].

[14] J. LYNN, The Bayonets of the Republic. Motivation and Tactics in the Army of Revolutionary France, 1791–94, Boulder, Colorado, ^{2}1996.

[15] F. J. MCLYNN, Sea Power and the Jacobite Rising of 1715, in: Mariner's Mirror, 67 (1981), p. 163–72.

[16] E. CRUICKSHANKS, Political Untouchables. The Tories and the '45, London 1979.

[17] E. GIBBON, The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire (original, London 1776–1788), edition by J. B. BURY, 7 vols., London 1896–1900, IV, 166–167.

The Jacobite forces, indeed Celtic warfare in general, was recognisably different in type to contemporary and subsequent concepts of military modernity, but the '45 proved Gibbon wrong. The more ›advanced‹ society in conventional terms was nearly overthrown, and its eventual victory was far from inevitable. The Jacobites won two of the three battles they fought in 1745/46 and the projected night attack on Cumberland's forces at Culloden might also have been successful. Indeed, it is arguable that the Jacobites should have pressed on in their night attack at Culloden even when their advance had become disordered and they had lost the element of surprise. Poor visibility would have affected British fire discipline and morale. However, in 1685 Monmouth's night attack with irregular forces at Sedgemoor had been defeated.

The Jacobites not only won at Prestonpans and Falkirk, but they also managed to advance through Scotland and into the heart of England, creating a military crisis that, for example, was greater than any faced by France during the century. The nearest comparison is probably the Prussian advance on Paris in 1792, but, at Valmy, the Revolutionary French were able to field a substantial, undefeated force to block them: the British had no equivalent in 1745. Possibly the nearest equivalent was the Franco-Bavarian advance towards Vienna in 1741, an advance that was diverted to Prague.

The Jacobites had another advantage. Unlike in 1715, France was then at war with Britain and planned to assist the Jacobites, had indeed already attempted an invasion in 1744. France provided much that the Jacobites lacked militarily. It was the second leading naval power after Britain and, in 1745/46, the French navy was still undefeated. It was thus a potent force in being, a situation that lasted until the two defeats off Cape Finisterre in 1747. Until then, the British lacked a clear margin of naval superiority and the French fleet in Brest retained the strategic initiative because the port could not be blockaded effectively. In the summer of 1746, the Duc d'Anville's Brest fleet was able to sail for Cape Breton: the British had feared that it would mount a landing on the west coast of Scotland.

The French also had an effective army, much of which was stationed near a series of ports from which they could sail to Britain: Boulogne, Calais, Dunkirk and, once it was captured from an Anglo-Dutch-Austrian garrison in the summer of 1745, Ostend. Charles Edward asked the Duc of Richelieu, commander of the projected invasion in 1745/46, to make a junction with him near London. Richelieu himself was to mount a successful amphibious attack on Minorca in 1756. French battlefield superiority over British and allied forces was shown at Fontenoy (1745), Rocoux (1746), and Lawfeldt (1747). Cumberland was the defeated commander at the first and the last, and was, at the head of Hanoverian and allied forces, to be defeated again by the French, at Hastenbeck in 1757. That battle was followed by the overrunning of the Electorate of Hanover and the capitulation of Cumberland's army, an interesting indication of the possibility of achieving total victory, overthrowing a state, and forcing a Hanoverian capitulation. In 1745, the French had the advantage of making the English government believe preparations for the expedition were at Dunkirk, as they had been in 1744, whereas they were at Calais and Boulogne. In 1744, however, they abandoned the projected smaller expedition to Scotland, much to the anger of Lord Marischal and the Scots, and in 1745 they tried to help with some forces and money in Scotland, but were not prepared to send substantial forces under their best general. Their invasion plans for southern England came too late[18].

The potential role of French intervention highlights the importance of relatively good Anglo-French relations in 1713/14 and 1716–1730 and of the Walpole government's refusal to fulfil treaty commitments and help Austria against France in the War of the Polish Succession (1733–1735)[19]. Wars that did not take place are important in counterfactual debates. This was to be relevant in Anglo-Bourbon relations throughout the eighteenth century, for example, with the avoidance of conflict in the Falkland Islands crisis of 1770 and the Dutch crisis of 1787.

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[18] F. J. McLynn, France and the Jacobite Rising of 1745, Edinburgh 1981; J. Pritchard, Anatomy of a Naval Disaster: The 1746 French Naval Expedition to North America, Montréal 1995.

The prospect of French intervention raises the comparison of the '45 and the American War of Independence. In the latter, the British lost control of the sea, most obviously and importantly off the Chesapeake in 1781, but also off New York in 1778 and Savannah in 1779[20]. There was no such comparable loss during the '45, but no necessary reason for this difference. During the American war, the French had no other military commitments bar war with Britain. Crucially, despite her Austrian alliance, France did not get involved in the War of the Bavarian Succession of 1778/79. In contrast, in 1745 France was also at war with Austria and the Kingdom of Sardinia (Savoy-Piedmont) and fighting the Dutch. However, this did not weaken France appreciably at sea, and did not prevent the French from planning invasions of southern England both in 1744 and in the winter of 1745/46, nor indeed from overrunning the Austrian Netherlands.

Even without French intervention, the British had been badly handicapped in 1745 and 1775–1783 by other factors that do not relate to the issue of whether the Americans had a progressive, and the Jacobites had a regressive, military system. The Jacobites were more of a threat because they could readily threaten the centres of British power, but, equally, relative propinquity ensured that they could easily be attacked. This interacted with the issue of time, one of the central factors in counterfactual arguments. The British failure to crush the American rebellion in 1775 gave the Americans time to organise themselves politically and militarily, to extend the rebellion greatly, and to weaken the Loyalists. The Jacobites lacked this margin, just as they lacked the wealth of the American economy; both were arguably more important than the location of each movement in terms of military modernisation.

All these factors are military in the widest sense, but do not pertain to tactics and technology, the standard repertoire of military history and one in which it is inaccurate to claim that the Jacobites were doomed. A wider perspective casts light on the different results of the two conflicts, but does not ensure that the question of whether the Jacobites could have won should be answered in the negative. As so often, a study of a conflict from both sides reveals the danger of making its course or result appear inevitable. The gravity of the Jacobite threat should be underlined and mistaken notions of military modernity and consequences should be challenged. A rewriting of the mid-eighteenth century British crisis can therefore be offered. The Union with Scotland in 1707 nearly had as serious consequences for England as, in a very different fashion, that with Ireland was to do.

Had Charles Edward marched south on 6 December 1745 is a question that is superficially not too different to a number of hypotheticals in the War of Independence. These include what if Clinton had advanced on Philadelphia in December 1776, as he suggested, or what if Howe had moved north from New York in 1777, or if there had been more British ships off the Chesapeake in 1781. None of these are implausible, no more than the British fleet moving into the East River to block Washington's retreat from Long Island in 1776 or, indeed, France not entering the war.

The War of Independence was a series of highly contingent events and this must undermine notions of inevitable American victory. Even the American folklore of the conflict, with its stress on the heroic character of the resistance at Bunker Hill in 1775, still more the crossing of the Delaware in December 1776, and the privations and training at Valley Forge in the winter of 1777/78, affirms contingency. This is appropriate. A close reading of American military correspondence, for example the papers of Washington and Greene, scarcely suggests a confident sense of victory. Instead, there is a reiterated stress on acute deficiencies in resources, particularly manpower, money and munitions. There was also a need to respond to British initiatives that could not readily be countered, particularly because of the strength of the British navy until 1778 (and indeed also after French entry) and the extent to which from 1776 New York and Canada were safe bases from which the British could mount offensives.

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[19] J. M. BLACK, British Foreign Policy in the Age of Walpole, Edinburgh 1985.

[20] J. DULL, The French Navy and American Waters 1775–1783, Aldershot 1989; D. SYRETT, The Royal Navy in American Waters 1775–1783, Aldershot 1989.

The political dimension is also important. Because America became independent it is too readily assumed that loyalism could only be a failed option for Americans. The political counterfactuals of the struggle are not probed, not least the possibility that it might have led to a different political solution, one in which negotiations led to a conclusion short of full independence[21].

Furthermore, the issue of timing does not attract sufficient attention. In the Seven Years/French and Indian War, it was crucial to British success that the war did not end in late 1757 or early 1758, or even in October 1759 when Pitt told the Prussian envoy that he was ready for a peace that did not involve retaining Louisbourg, or Québec if captured[22]. In the American War, it is not clear whether a longer conflict might not have led to a different result, especially if Britain had been better able to exploit the naval situation after her triumph at the Saints in 1782. In the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, Britain was to make a greater and more sustained effort.

The historical purchase of counterfactual approaches such as those outlined in this paper is weak, however, for they do not correspond to the Whiggish teleology that is so powerfully established in Western public culture and intellectual life. This is especially the case with any argument that the Jacobites could have won or the Americans lost. The argument that counterfactual approaches throw light on situations by returning us to the uncertainty of the past is of scant interest to those in the present who lack such uncertainty, and it thus undermines a major social role of history as the assertion and support of public myth. This is seen both with eighteenth-century Britain and with American independence.

The argument that Britain could have become Jacobite or that independence was not inevitable, or might have been compromised, with, for example, South Carolina, Georgia and the Floridas remaining under the Crown, as Canada did, is a fundamental challenge to powerful suppositions[23]. Yet each was possible and both would have interacted with, indeed were episodes in, the struggle between Britain and France. Thus they contributed to the character and power of the leading power of the West, with all the possibilities that this entailed for changing the identity of that power and thus its relationship with the non-West.

Aside from the challenge to teleological assumptions and explanatory complacency buried deep in public culture, there is also a challenge to scholarly assessments. The counterfactual approach outlined undermines the Whiggishness of national schools of historiography. More specifically, it also queries the recent emphasis, seen, for example, in Linda Colley's influential study »Britons. Forging the Nation 1707–1837« (New Haven, 1992), to discern a national mood or identity, however manufactured, and to give it explanatory force. This new version of the *zeitgeist* is challenged by counterfactualism, for that necessarily places weight on a pluralism of attitudes and possible outcomes[24].

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[21] J. M. Black, War for America. The Fight for Independence 1775–1783, Stroud 1991.

[22] J. M. Black, Pitt the Elder, Stroud, ^{2}1999, p. 158–170.

[23] On the plasticity of America's geographic evolution, D. W. Meinig, The Shaping of America. I. Atlantic America, 1492–1800, New Haven 1986.

[24] This argument is probed at length in J. M. Black, Confessional state or elect nation? Religion and identity in eighteenth-century England, in: T. Claydon and I. McBride (eds.), Protestantism and National Identity. Britain and Ireland, c. 1650–c.1850, Cambridge 1998, p. 53–74.

Counterfactual approaches also query schematic accounts of international relations in systemic terms, for example those advanced by many political historians as well as by historians, such as Paul Schroeder, influenced by such theories[25]. A counterfactual approach to domestic outcomes challenges scholars of international relations who tend to treat states as building blocks and to underrate the extent, role and potential of domestic debate over foreign policy, for example the late Ragnhild Hatton[26].

It is a long way from Derby on 5 December 1745 to the East River on the night of 29 August 1776, let alone to British troops storming the Mysore capital at Seringapatam on 4 May 1799, or defeating the Marathas at Assaye on 23 September 1803, but maybe the distance and difference were not that great. Had the Jacobites succeeded, then it is unclear whether the imperial relationship with the Protestant American colonies would not have been sundered in 1746 (or earlier in 1689), and more rapidly than was to be the case in the 1770s. If not, it is still likely that suspicion of and hostility to British rule would have been greater and that the American revolution would have occurred earlier, although the Stuart breach with the Church of England *might* have been less unpopular in North America, and not only with Catholics in Maryland. James II awarded Pennsylvania to William Penn and the Quakers.

A Jacobite British state overshadowed by France might not have been able to mount an effective counterthrust to such a revolution, although so much would have depended on French attitudes, not least because the French would still have been in control of Canada. Had the French acted in 1746, or subsequently, to impose Stuart control then another counterfactual offers, one that is of major importance for American history. French-backed Stuart control might have led to a much more arduous independence struggle, and one that was far more revolutionary in character because it would have been necessary to mobilise national resources and energies to a greater extent than was done in 1775–1783. The obvious comparison is with the French Revolution.

French-supported Stuart success in 1745/46 might have made the struggle for American independence more difficult. Thus the British 1745 counterfactual leads to an American counterfactual, one that challenges the benign exceptionalism that reigns in American public culture. Rather than seeing an independent America as necessarily a society with a federal state, weak government, a balanced political system, and a relatively tolerant public culture, it is possible to envisage a process of radicalism and authoritarianism under the pressure of struggle and war akin to that of France in the 1790s. This would have affected the character of what might still have been the greatest twentieth-century power. It might have ensured that, as with France, and later Russia, more effort might have been devoted to exporting the revolutionary struggle. In particular, support from France and her ally Spain for Jacobite rule of America could have led an independent America to sponsor revolution in the West Indies and Latin America. This might have been a co-operative process, but, as with France in the 1790s and 1800s the result could as easily have been conquest and expropriation. This might have led to a stronger military might. Thus, a more authoritarian America might have become an imperial power in its own hemisphere, possibly further accentuating its domestic authoritarianism.

More generally, the dynamics of the struggle might have led to a very different America geographically. Newfoundland might have joined a revolution against Stuart rule in 1746, Nova Scotia, but not Québec, one if held after 1763. There might also have been more energy devoted to extending the revolution to the British colonies in the West Indies and, even, to Ireland.

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[25] P. W. Schroeder, The Transformation of European Politics 1763–1848, Oxford, 1994. The nearest German equivalent is more alive to contingencies, H. Duchhardt, Balance of Power und Pentarchie 1700–1785, Paderborn 1997.

[26] R. M. Hatton, George I, London 1978.

Aside from the consequences for America, such a struggle, a bitter civil war *within* the British empire and thus the West, might well have left fewer resources and less drive for the projection of British power elsewhere, especially in India and to Australia. The notion that there was a ›turn to the east‹ in British imperialism as a consequence of the loss of America is controversial, but not without value.

Alternatively, a Jacobite Britain could be seen as more likely to lead to co-operation with France and thus to diminishing rivalry within the West and to increasing the force available for the pursuit of policies either in Europe or against non-Western powers. As already suggested, the net effect could have been a more assertive France within Europe *and/or* outside Europe.

Yet, a Jacobite Britain may not have been a French client state or pro-French for long. In 1678, Charles II had turned against Louis XIV. Aside from his poor relations with the Papacy, James II was neither the ally nor the client of Louis in 1688[27]. While in exile at St. Germain he became so, but once restored he would not necessarily remain compliant. D'Avaux and the French frequently remarked that his heart was ›too English‹. Charles Edward kept up an independent attitude to the French which worried them, and he would have been no tool of France. After all, the American colonists owed their independence to the help of France, but did not become clients of France, far from it[28]. Instead, George I and II were allied to France in 1716–1731 and accused by critics of being overly pro-French.

To take the counterfactual further, and, again, indicate the crucial interaction between international and domestic developments, a Jacobite Britain with its stress on legitimism, Catholicism and conservatism (although also maybe religious pluralism and Scots and Irish separateness), would presumably have been bitterly opposed to a Revolutionary and Napoleonic France, so that revolutionary change in France would have sundered the link between Britain and France, but done so when Britain was relatively less powerful in the world and less united than was in fact the case for Britain in 1793. This might have made French intervention in Britain in support of radical options, such as Irish independence or politico-social revolution in England, Scotland and Wales, more likely to succeed. Conversely, there might have been no revolution in France but, instead, one against the Stuarts in Britain. As with an American revolution against Stuart rule, this might have led to a more violent and radical period of transformation, specifically one in which politics became more authoritarian, and society, ideology and culture were radicalised.

The global implications can be crudely enumerated:

Option 1	Radical France and Radical Britain.
Option 2	Conservative France and Conservative Britain.
Option 3	Conservative France and Radical Britain.
Option 4	Radical France and Conservative Britain.

Terms such as conservative and radical of course conceal many differences and numerous tensions. Furthermore the history of the period 1500–1945 reveals conflicts between conservative powers, and also (for example the First Dutch War) between radical counterparts. Nevertheless, it is possible to see a mutual need in the case of options 1 and 2, especially option 2 with a Stuart regime dependent on French support. As already suggested, the energies of such a league might well have been concentrated on ambitions and anxieties in the European or Western world. In North America, the British and French devoted more energy to conflict with each other than with the native population (or the Spaniards). These choices were not inevitable.

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[27] J. M. Black, The Revolution and the Development of English Foreign Policy, in: E. Cruickshanks (ed.), By Force or By Default? The Revolution of 1688–1689, Edinburgh 1989, p. 135–158.

[28] P. P. Hill, French Perceptions of the Early American Republic, 1783–1793, Philadelphia 1988.

Yet, it is also possible to tease out a different global trajectory. Would an alliance of Britain and France as conservative or radical powers have made a major difference and, if so, more or less so had they been conservative or radical? Could the co-operation they were to display against the Turks in 1827, or against Russia in the Crimean War of 1854–1856, or in China in 1860, when the two powers occupied Beijing, have been seen earlier? The Anglo-French alliance of 1716–1731 had had scant global impact because both powers were then focused on European enmities, but the situation, thereafter, could well have been very different, not only because of the opportunities presented by expansion in India and the Pacific, but also because of the greater resources made available by sustained demographic and economic expansion from the 1740s.

The most exciting idea is that of two radical states, both benefiting from early industrialisation, setting out to expand their power, but, possibly, doing so with what was, at least in terms of the age, more progressive ideas. In 1792/93, French politicians toyed with the idea of winning British co-operation by proposing joint action against the Spanish empire. Anglo-French co-operation might have led not to the emphasis on territorial control and landed values discerned by Christopher Bayly in his account of British expansion in 1780–1830[29], but, rather, to a stronger emphasis on commercial growth.

It is difficult to feel confident on this head. France under the Third Republic was scarcely a benign imperial power, but the prospect of a very different character to the imperialism of the two leading Western maritime powers is worth considering. It re-focuses attention on the why question. Why the West should wish to extend its power, and what power meant in this context are both worth considering. Neither was fixed. We are in the realms of cultural construction, but those also are open to counterfactual scenarios and analysis. Looked at in this light; partly because Western political dominance did not have to take the forms it did, it was always changeable, even reversible, and *was* reversed after 1914. Counterfactual scenarios lend support to the need for better explanations of the rise of Western hegemony than Whiggish a priorism and also demand an improved narrative altogether about Western hegemony.

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[29] C. A. BAYLY, Imperial Meridian. The British Empire and the World 1780–1830, Harlow 1989.