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THE ANGLO-FRENCH ALLIANCE 1716–1731

A Study in Eighteenth-Century International Relations

the union between England and France, had, under God, been the only means of preventing the Courts of Vienna, and Madrid from putting their ambitious schemes and designs in execution ..., Viscount Townshend, Secretary of State for the Northern Department, December 1727[1].

The period 1689–1815 was marked by so much Anglo-French conflicts that it has often been termed the ›Second Hundred Years War‹. And yet the years 1716–31 saw an Anglo-French alliance which both served as the basis of the foreign policies of both states and was of great importance in the international system. This article will consider the alliance in order to throw light on a number of problems. In particular the relationship between the alliance and the widely diffused anti-French views of the British political nation will be considered, and attention will be devoted to the light that the alliance throws upon the workings of the international system in this period, and, in specific terms, the difficulties of ensuring cooperation between allies. The alliance has been the subject of several scholarly works[2], but these have tended to concentrate on the first decade of the alliance, and very little attention has been devoted to its last years. This article is based on extensive archival work in London and Paris, but in addition archives of a number of other European states, in particular Austria, Saxony, Bavaria and Sardinia, have been used.

The chronology of and initial reasons for the alliance are well established. Following the Nine Years and Spanish Succession Wars both Britain and France needed peace. George I's Huguenot private secretary Jean de Robethon wrote in June 1715 that it seemed *que la France a besoin de repos, c'est là ce qui l'obligera à en donner aux autres*[3]. The need for peace was increased by the precarious position of the succession in both countries. In Britain the Elector of Hanover, George I, who had become King on 12 August 1714, was threatened by the Jacobite challenge. The Pretender, James III,

1 Townshend to Horatio Walpole, younger brother of the leading British minister Sir Robert Walpole, envoy in Paris, 13 Dec. (os) 1727, London, British Library, Additional Manuscripts (hereafter BL. Add.) 48982 f. 118.

2 J. Dureng, Le Duc de Bourbon et l'Angleterre 1723–1726, Paris 1911; J. F. Chance, The Alliance of Hanover, London 1923; R. Lodge, ›The Anglo-French Alliance, 1716–31‹, in: A. Coville and H. Temperley (eds.), Studies in Anglo-French History during the Eighteenth, Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, Cambridge 1935, pp. 3–18; E. Bourgeois, La diplomatie secrète au XVIII siècle. I. Le Secret du Régent et la Politique de l'Abbé Dubois, Paris 1907; G. C. Gibbs, ›Britain and the Alliance of Hanover April 1725–February 1726‹, in: English Historical Review 73 (1958); A. Goslinga, Slingelandt's Efforts towards European Peace, The Hague 1915.

3 Robethon to Earl of Stair, envoy in Paris, 3 June 1715, Edingburgh, Scottish Record Office (hereafter SRO), Stair papers, GD 135/141/4.

son of James II who had had to flee Britain in 1688, enjoyed widespread support in Britain that would become more threatening could he secure foreign, particularly French, support. In 1715 the Hanoverian position was threatened by a major Jacobite rising. In France Louis XIV died in 1715 to be succeeded by his infant great-grandson Louis XV who was not to marry until 1725 and only acquired a male heir in September 1729. Should he die control of France would be contested by the Regent, Philip Duke of Orléans, and Louis' uncle, Philip V of Spain who possessed the best dynastic claim, but whose claim had been barred at the Utrecht peace settlement of 1713 as part of the price for European recognition of the acquisition of Spain for the House of Bourbon. Orléans, the nephew of Louis XIV, found his authority as Regent challenged by courtiers, such as the Duke of Maine, and ministers, supported and encouraged by Philip V[4].

Both George I and Orléans thus had a mutual interest in strengthening themselves by an alliance. Orléans could seek assistance against Spain, George I ensure that France did not aid the Jacobites. It was against this background that negotiations took place in 1715–16. They were far from easy. Distrust was strongly expressed on both sides. British ministers, such as James Stanhope, Secretary of State for the Southern Department, and diplomats such as George Bubb, envoy in Madrid, distrusted the French ministry, whilst writing from London the Hanoverian minister Baron Bernstorff ascribed the difficulties encountered in the negotiations to *le prejugé ou la cour de France étoit à l'égard des intentions du Roy et de l'etat de ce pays icy*[5].

Nevertheless, mutual interest produced an alliance. An Anglo-French treaty of mutual guarantees was negotiated in late 1716, and, the following year, this was broadened into the Triple Alliance of Britain, France and the United Provinces. The Anglo-French alliance was to persist until March 1731, when, with the Second Treaty of Vienna, Britain reached a unilateral agreement with Austria, that France both resented and refused to support. Though there were periods during the alliance when both powers were far from satisfied with the conduct of the other, particularly in 1721–2[6] and 1728–30, the alliance nevertheless remained the basis of their respective foreign policies. Both powers unilaterally developed good relations with third parties, Britain with Prussia in 1723, France with Spain in 1721–4 and 1727[7], and often sought to persuade their alliance partner to yield in disputes with other powers, (France

4 P. E. Lémontey, Histoire de la Régence et de la minorité de Louis XV jusqu'au ministère du Cardinal du Fleury, 2 vols. Paris 1833; J. Shennan, Philippe Duke of Orleans, London 1979; A. Baudrillart, ›Les pretensions de Philippe V à la couronne de France‹, in: Séances et travaux de l'Académie des sciences, morales et politiques 127 (1887) pp. 723–43, 851–97; Stair to Craggs, Secretary of State for the Southern Department, 7 Mar, 1718, 24 Feb. 1719, BL. Stowe Mss. 247; Stanhope to Stair, 23 Jan. (os) 1718, Maidstone, Kent County Record Office (hereafter Maidstone), U 1590 0145/24.

5 Stanhope to Stair, 15 Dec. (os) 1715, London, Public Record Office (hereafter PRO) 78/160 f. 169; Bubb to Stair, 9 Mar., 13 Ap. 1716, SRO. GD. 135/141/6; Bernstorff to Stair, 2 Mar. 1715, SRO. GD. 135/141/4; Stair to Stanhope, 31 Jan. 1716, SRO GD. 135/137 No. 46; Molesworth, envoy in Turin, to Craggs, 25 Jan. 1721, PRO. 92/30.

6 Dubois, French foreign minister, to Destouches, French envoy in London, 21 Ap. 1722, Paris, Quai d'Orsay, Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères (hereafter AE.), Correspondance Politique (hereafter CP.), Angleterre (hereafter Ang.) supplément (hereafter sup.) 7 f. 30, 32.

7 Chavigny, French envoy in Hanover, to Morville, French foreign minister, 21 Oct. 1723, AE. CP. Ang. 346 f. 179–80.

supporting Russian claims against Britain in 1724)[8]. Nevertheless, they avoided supporting the interests of the other powers, when they threatened the vital concerns of their partner. This was particularly clear in the case of relations with Spain in the 1720's. France had little support for the commercial privileges Britain had gained in the Spanish Empire at the Peace of Utrecht in 1713. These privileges challenged French attempts to gain commercial concessions in this Empire, limited French profits, and led to persistent complaints from mercantile circles to the French government[9]. As the French government frequently pointed out, it was not immune to domestic pressue, however absolutist the theory of government might be in France[10]. In addition, France supported Spanish demands for the return of Gibraltar captured by Britain in 1704, and recognised as hers in the Utrecht settlement. In 1721 George I had promised to ask Parliament to return Gibraltar, a promise he evaded[11]. French support for Spain also reflected wider conceptions of the international system. Though some French politicians supported an alliance with Austria, and this approach was to be attempted in 1728, the dominant theme in French international policy was opposition to Austria[12]. Austria had gained much in the Utrecht settlement, receiving Spain's Italian possessions – Naples, Milanese, Sicily – and the Pays Bas. Determined to weaken Austria, France looked with favour on Spanish schemes to regain her Italian possessions.

Britain was most suspicious of France in the case of Franco-Spanish relations[13]. She feared that France would gain commercial concessions and would support aggressive Spanish policies in Italy. There is no doubt that the French ministry sought to do both, and yet France avoided endangering British interests when it came to the crunch. Though she clearly sympathised with the demands for the return of Gibraltar, she never overtly pressed them[14]. France yielded to British pressure in 1718 to declare war

8 Horatio Walpole to the Duke of Newcastle, Secretary of State for the Southern Department, 31 May 1724, BL. Add. 32739 f. 23; Chavigny to Morville, 26 Jan. 1724, AE. CP. Ang. 347 f. 34; Morville to Broglie, French envoy in London, 8 Jan. 1725, AE. CP. Ang. 350 f. 22.

9 Vandermeer, Dutch envoy in Spain, to Horatio Walpole, 30 Aug. 1727, PRO. 94/98; L. VIGNOLS, ›L' asiento français, 1701–1713, et anglais, 1713–1750, et le commerce franco-espagnol vers 1700 à 1730, in: Revue d'histoire economique et sociale 17 (1929) pp. 403–36; Horatio Walpole, William Stanhope and Stephen Poyntz, British Plenipotentiaries to the Congress of Soissons, to Newcastle, 10 Aug. 1728, BL. Add. 32757 f. 326; French memoranda on Spanish trade, 5, 15, Sept., 6, 27 Oct., 5, – Nov., 4, 18, –, Dec. 1727, 12 Ap., 22 May 1728, AE. CP. Ang. 361 f. 153–7, 172–9, 194–201, 220–22, 227–32, 242–54, 260–73, 277–90, 291–3, vol. 364, 172–86, 242–5.

10 Horatio Walpole, Stanhope and Poyntz to Newcastle, 22 Dec. 1728, BL. Add. 32759 f. 416.

11 Newsletter to George I's brother, Ernst-August of Osnabrück, 9 Feb. 1723, Osnabrück, Staatsarchiv, Repertorium 100, Abschnitt 1, 253 f. 25.

12 A. N. WILSON, French Foreign Policy during the Administration of Cardinal Fleury, 1726–1743, Cambridge Mass. 1936; M. BRAUBACH, Versailles und Wien von Ludwig XIV bis Kaunitz, Bonn 1952.

13 Craggs to Stair, 10 Mar. (os) 1719, Stair to Stanhope, 20 July 1719, SRO. GD. 135/141/19A; Weekly Journal or Saturday's Post 5 Sept. (os) 1719; Destouches to Dubois, 4 Jan. 1723, AE. CP. Ang. 344 f. 10, 13; Chammorel, French Chargé d'Affaires in London, to Morville, 10 Feb. 1724, AE. CP. Ang. 347 f. 57–8; Horatio Walpole to St. Saphorin, British envoy in Vienna, 7 July 1726, Hanover, Niedersächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, (hereafter Hanover), Han. Des. 91., St. Saphorin Nr. 3 f. 26–7; Albert, Bavarian envoy in Paris, to Toerring, Bavarian foreign minister, 7 July 1726, Munich, Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Kasten Schwarz, 17091.

14 Chauvelin, French foreign minister, to Broglie, 24 June 1728, AE. CP. Ang. 362 f. 239; Horatio Walpole and Stanhope to Newcastle, 20 July 1728, BL. Add. 32757 f. 125; R. A. MARINI, La Politica

on Spain, in response to the Spanish invasion of Sicily that year. In cooperation with the British navy France invaded Spain the following year, a move that led to claims, within France, that the ministry was simply a British tool[15]. In late 1727 the French envoy in Spain, Count Rottembourg, arranged a temporary settlement of Anglo-Spanish differences that could permit the opening of an international peace congress. The British ministry rejected the settlement and threatened war with Spain. The French, though clearly believing Rottembourg's settlement to be acceptable and fair, (it had been agreed to by the British envoy in Spain), backtracked and agreed to support British pressure to negotiate a new agreement[16].

Thus, as in any alliance between major powers, there was strain within the Anglo-French alliance, and this was concentrated on, and rendered specific by, relations with third parties. It had been possible to reach agreement in 1716 over constructing the alliance, when it was a matter of mutual guarantees and a defensive mentality. However, attempts to expand the alliance, both in intentions, and by means of negotiating additional agreements with other powers, proved to be very difficult, and productive of strain and quarrels. Indeed, it is noticeable that the two periods when the alliance worked best were those when it was clearly defensive, in 1716–17, and again in 1725–7. In the later case the Anglo-French alliance was threatened by a new, dramatic and unpredictable international grouping, the Austro-Spanish alliance, created in the negotiations leading up to the first Treaty of Vienna in the spring of 1725[17], and fortified the following year by the accessions of Russia and Prussia. This pact represented a formidable military threat, particularly to Hanover, and it led to the reassertion of the Anglo-French alliance, first in the Treaty of Hanover in September 1725, and secondly in joint efforts to gain allies and to plan for war. Both powers realised their mutual need, and the unilateral policy-making that had characterised the early 1720's was replaced by cooperation. This was not free of dispute. Strains were clear; possibly indeed greater as the attempt to cooperate led to quarrels that had been mostly avoided whilst each power was largely going her separate way in the early 1720's. However the general theme of these years was of an alliance strengthened by outside threat. In May 1727 the Secretary of State for the Southern Department greeted the news of the Preliminaries of Paris, which appeared to augur a peace settlement, by drafting a dispatch for John Hedges, Envoy Extraordinary at Turin, *... the preserving and cementing the Union betwixt England and France which has proved so useful and advantagious to both Kingdoms, is what His Majesty looks upon*

Sabauda alla Corte Inglese dopo il trattato d'Hannover 1725–30 nella Relazione dell' ambasciatore piemontese a Londra, Chambery 1918, p. 116.

15 R. Hatton, George I, London 1978, pp. 232–3. For similar claims in the 1720's, Horatio Walpole to Newcastle, 15 Oct. 1726, BL. Add. 32748 f. 1. It was also claimed that French ministers were bribed by Britain, for which I have found no archival evidence, Baron Walef, correspondent of the Austian minister Prince Eugene, to Eugene, 22 Feb. 1726, Macanas, Spanish diplomat, to Walef, 11 Dec. 1726, Vienna, Haus..., Hof..., und Staatsarchiv, (hereafter HHStA), Große Korrespondenz (hereafter GK.) 150a.

16 Newcastle to Horatio Walpole, 8, 14. (os), Horatio Walpole to Newcastle, 17, 29 Dec. 1727, BL. Add. 32753 f. 345–8, 458, 460, 276, 537–7, 539–40; Townshend to Horatio Walpole, 13 Dec. (os) 1727, BL. Add. 48982 f. 117–18.

17 G. Syveton, Un traité de mariage et d'alliance entre les cours de Vienne et de Madrid en 1725, in: Revue Historique 54 (1894) pp. 77–97; G. Mecenseffy, Karls VI Spanische Bündnispolitik 1725–9, Innsbruck 1934.

as a principle not to be departed from ... this prosperous Turn of affairs, which, next to the wisdom of His Majesty's Councils, and the chearful concurrence of his Parliament, must, in justice, be ascribed greatly to the constancy firmness and upright behaviour of France.

The next section of the draft was deleted, but it serves to illustrate the attitude in 1727 of Newcastle, a minister not later noted for his French sympathies, *where the present administration appears to act upon different Maxims from those which may have been pursued in a former reign*[18].

Thus, outside threat produced a stronger alliance, an obvious point perhaps, but one lacking from references to the alliance, which have tended to treat it as an unchanging entity, rather than a developing and complex relationship between two states, each possessing the capacity to advocate their disparate, and far from shared, interests. When only one power was threatened, the response of the alliance was very different. This was particularly the case in Baltic diplomacy, for, whereas in Mediterranean affairs both powers had interests that could, through skilful diplomacy, be combined, in the Baltic their interests were very different. France was a traditional ally of Sweden, and was disinclined to abandon Charles XII of Sweden in the Great Northern War (1700–21), which pitched Sweden against a number of powers including Hanover, which was able to call on British diplomatic and naval assistance[19]. This angered and worried the British ministry, but more serious were growing signs of a Franco-Russian alliance. Aware of Swedish decline and of Russia's growing importance, France followed a policy of cultivating Russia in the early 1720's[20]. This was at variance with the Hanoverian – influenced policy, which from 1717 until 1730, was concerned to construct a Baltic alliance system that would restrain Russian power, and, in particular, prevent Russian military intervention in the empire against Hanover, on behalf of Russia's German protégés, the Dukes of Mecklenburg, and Holstein-Gottörp[21]. Britain, under George I, followed this policy with scant consultation of France, negotiating treaties in which France was not consulted: the January 1719 anti-Russian treaty of George, as Elector of Hanover, Augustus II of Saxony-Poland and the Emperor Charles VI, and the August 1719 and 1723 treaties of George I and Frederick William I of Prussia[22]. These treaties, and the policy they represented, angered the French ministry, and British arguments, such as that advanced in 1719, that the treaties involved Hanoverian, not British, commitments, were dismissed as spurious. The French argued, correctly, that, whatever differences there may be between the British and the Hanoverian ministers, (and they were well aware of their disputes), agreements entered into by the latter invariably led to British involvement. Stressing the role of the crown in British foreign policy the

18 Newcastle to Hedges, 27 May (os) 1727, PRO. 92/32 f. 387–8.

19 R. HATTON, Charles XII of Sweden, London 1968; Stair to Lord Stanhope, 31 Jan. 1716, SRO. GD. 135/137 No. 46.

20 Stair to Craggs, 25 Feb. 1719, Dubois to Craggs, 8 Mar. 1719, BL. Stowe Mss 247.

21 J. F. CHANCE, George I and the Great Northern War, London 1909; W. MEDIGER, Moskaus Weg nach Europa, Brunswick 1952; D. ALDRIDGE, Sir John Norris and the British Naval Expeditions to the Baltic Sea 1715–27, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, London 1972; H. BAGGER, Ruslands Alliancepolitik efter freden i Nystad, Copenhagen 1974, English summary.

22 Senneterre, French envoy in Hanover, to Dubois, 7 July 1719, Hanover, Calenberg Brief Archiv 24 Nr. 1988 f. 9.

French were well aware of the influence of Hanoverian interests, and frequently complained on this score[23].

Totally different policies in the Baltic produced strain, and led to British diplomats, who were heavily involved in Baltic affairs, such as Charles Whitworth[24], being extremely suspicious of the French alliance and of French policies, and ready to advocate alternatives; in Whitworth's case the concept of a Protestant league anchored on an Anglo-Prussian alliance, the idea that was to attract many British diplomats, particularly Horatio Walpole in the 1730's. One method of analyzing the Anglo-French alliance would be to draw attention to those periods when the international system was dominated by the Russian threat, and to examine the consequences for Anglo-French relations. In 1717–20 this threat was keenly perceived by George I, and there was a considerable difference between Britain and France in their Baltic policies, (as there had been over relations with Sweden in 1716–17), but these differences were subordinated, in Anglo-French relations, to the common problem posed by Philip V's aggression, which threatened both the Utrecht settlement and Orléans' position in France. The improvement of Anglo-French relations with Spain in the early 1720's – Spain acceded to the Quadruple Alliance of Britain, France, the Emperor and Savoy, in February 1720, signed a treaty with Britain and France in June 1721 and maintained generally favourable relations with both powers until the spring of 1725 – led to more attention being devoted to Baltic affairs. Though the Great Northern War had been ended by the Peace of Nystad in 1721, Russia was still perceived as a threat. The development of Russian military, and, in particular naval, power, and annual war scares as Russia mobilised large forces and threatened to invade Denmark, Hanover and/or Mecklenburg (where Hanoverian troops were stationed), excited great interest on the part of the British ministry, largely, though not entirely, inspired by George I's concern[25]. France did not share this concern, enjoyed good relations with Russia, and sought to negotiate an Anglo-Russian reconciliation on terms judged unfavourable by George I[26].

This period, the early 1720's, thus witnessed poor Anglo-French relations, largely because the principal British concern, Russia, was not shared by France, and because France, confronted with no other threats, was not forced to rely on British support. The situation altered in 1725. The death of Peter the Great, and the succession of his widow, Catherine I (1725–7), and his grandson Peter II (1727–30), led to Russia

23 Chauvelin to Chavigny, 23 Jan. 1730, AE. CP. Allemagne, 376 f. 20; Chavigny to the leading minister of the Elector of Cologne, Plettenberg, 26 Dec. 1729, Münster, Staatsarchiv, Dep. Nordkirchen, NB. 286 f. 62.

24 Whitworth to Townshend, 14 Oct. 1721, Whitworth to the Hanoverian minister Bothmer, 22 Nov. 1721, Whitworth to George Tilson, Undersecretary of State in the Northern Department, 20 Dec. 1721, PRO 90/15.

25 Whitworth to Tilson, 15 Nov. 1721, PRO. 90/15; M. Hughes, The Imperial Supreme Judicial Authority under the Emperor Charles VI and the crises in Mecklenburg and East Frisia, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, London 1969; Whitworth to Leathes, envoy in Brussels, 14 Feb. 1722, BL. Add. 37388 f. 12; Lady Glenorchy, wife of envoy in Copenhagen, to her father, the Duke of Kent, 25 Ap. 1722, Bedford, Bedforshire County Record Office, Lucas papers, 30/8/8/16; Newcastle to Robert Walpole, 26 July (os) 1723, BL. Add. 32686 f. 286–7.

26 Chavigny to Morville, 8 June, Duke of Bourbon, head of French Ministry, to Broglie, 25 July, Louis XV to Broglie, 8 Aug., Broglie to Louis XV, 3, 12, 17 Aug. 1724, AE. CP. Ang. 348 f. 19, 117–23, 163–4, 176, 200–206, 215.

becoming less assertive in international affairs, and being perceived as less of a military threat. In 1727 a British fleet was sent to the Sound, to protect Sweden against the threat of Russian attack, the last major British naval force sent to these waters in the first half of the century. Furthermore, Russia's Austrian alliance of 1726, and Austro-French hostility, helped to ensure poor Franco-Russian relations. Thus, relations with Russia were no longer a point at issue between Britain and France, whilst the different nature of the military threat posed by Russia to Hanover and France, became less important. Furthermore, the resumption of Franco-Spanish and Franco-Austrian hostility in 1725, led to stronger French interest in the British alliance.

Thus, just as the internal dynamics and development of the Anglo-French alliance can be examined from the point of view of relations with Spain, so it can be considered in the perspective of relations with Russia. Extending the latter it can be noted that, from 1726, Russia's place as the principal threat to Hanoverian interests, was taken by Prussia. Prussia had been one of the original members of the Alliance of Hanover, but had deserted it for an Austrian alliance the following year[27]. Thereafter, Anglo-Prussian relations steadily deteriorated, a development that owed little to the British ministry, several of whose members sought better relations, but much to personal hostility between Frederick William I and his brother-in-law and cousin George II, who acceded in Britain and Hanover in 1727. Prusso-Hanoverian disputes were continuous. A variety of issues, particularly border disputes and a struggle for primacy in Mecklenburg, and in East Friesland, whose inheritance both houses claimed, provided points for conflict, but George I had been generally successful in preventing them leading to a breakdown in relations or in taking priority over more wide-ranging diplomatic perspectives. George II failed to do this, and Anglo-Prussian relations during his reign provide a good example of the importance of dynastic factors and monarchical personality in *ancien regime* diplomacy[28], features that helped to make for instability and unpredictability, as can also be seen in the Spain of Philip V[29].

Poor relations with Prussia posed major problems for Hanover, problems that were to influence Anglo-French relations. The Prussian army was far larger than that of Hanover, and the Electorate of Hanover was militarily vulnerable, lacking fortifications and natural lines of defence. This was widely known. In 1729 the Prussians boasted that they could conquer the Electorate in less than four weeks. Nine years later the Prussian Field Marshal Schwerin informed the British envoy that Hanover would be easy to conquer, and *that it would only be a breakfast*. In 1741 the Sardinian envoy Ossorio described the Electorate as *un Pais ouvert and sans aucune bonne fortresse*[30]. The consequences of this military situation was clear. The military support

27 R. Lodge, Great Britain and Prussia in the Eighteenth Century, Oxford 1923; A. Berger, Karl VI und Friedrich Wilhelm I von Preussen ... 1716–30, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Vienna 1935; E. Preusser, Prinz Eugen und die Österreichische-Preussische Bündnispolitik 1726–28, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Vienna 1945.

28 Frederick William's son, Frederick the Great, commented in 1741, ›family hatreds were generally more violent than others‹, Dickens, envoy in Berlin, to Lord Harrington, Secretary of State for the Northern Department (the ennobled William Stanhope), 4 Feb. 1741, PRO. 90/49.

29 J. Black, The theory of the balance of Power in the first half of the eighteenth century, in: Review of International Studies 9 (1983) pp. 56–7.

30 Du Bourgay, envoy in Berlin, to Townshend, 27 Aug. 1729, Dickens to Harrington, 21 June 1738, PRO. 90/25, 90/44; Ossorio to Charles Emmanuel III of Sardinia, 9 Jan. 1741, Turin, Archivio di Stato,

of allies was required if Hanover was to be protected, and British diplomacy worked to secure this goal. In 1729 Lord Townshend wrote to the British envoy in Cassel, Brigadier Richard Sutton, then on a mission to obtain Danish military assistance, *You are very well acquainted with the exposed situation and extent of His Majesty's frontier, and that, as he has no fortifications to defend it, if he be not supported by a considerable body of his allies, there will be great danger from the first impression*[31]. Denmark could send 12000 men, Hesse-Cassel, with which Britain signed a subsidy treaty in 1726 in order to protect Hanover, was bound to provide the same number, and, in 1729, the Dutch offered to send assistance[32]. In November 1727 a subsidy treaty was also signed with Brunswick Wolfenbüttel, whilst some pressure on Prussia could be applied by Sweden, by means of a military buildup in her Pomeranian base in Stralsund, requested by the British in 1730[33]. However, the key to the defence of Hanover was the prospect of French military assistance, and by the late 1720's this was crucial to the Anglo-French alliance. Historians have failed to attach sufficient weight to Hanoverian weakness, and have therefore ignored its importance in Anglo-French relations. The Anglo-French alliance at its inception was desired by George I in order to secure the Hanoverian succession in Britain. For George II it was crucial to the very defence of Hanover.

The defence of Hanover had played a role in the Anglo-French alliance from the outset. In October 1716 Methuen, acting Secretary of State in the Southern department, wrote to the Earl of Stair, Ambassador in Paris, of the dual British reasons for the alliance, the Jacobite threat, and the defence of Hanover, and revealed that the latter was crucial to George I, *the new disturbances in the North, where the Czar seems resolved to lay aside the descent on Schonen, and to quarter his army in the King of Denmark's country, have made the king very desirous that his treaty should be concluded as soon as possible*[34]. This factor was of limited importance whilst relations were good with Prussia, as in 1720–26, but became crucial thereafter. In 1727 and 1730 the plans for war between Britain, France and their allies and Austria, Prussia and theirs', included as a significant element, to which the British negotiators had attached great importance, the movement of a French army into the Empire to protect Hanover from attack. Detailed plans were drawn up, and a Rhine crossing point, at the fortress of Rheinfels, selected. In 1729 and 1730, when a Prussian attack on Hanover was threatened, the French position was again crucial. In 1729 the French Secretary in Berlin, Sauveterre, declared to the Prussian government that France would support George II if he was attacked. The French ministry gave the British envoys in Paris assurances to this effect, and pressed Denmark to assure George of her support, *the Cardinal as well as Mor. Chauvelin* [the leading French ministers] *expressed himself with the greatest zeal and cordiality for His Majesty's interest and service on this*

Lettere Ministri Inghilterra 47; Chauvelin to Chavigny, 21 Aug. 1729, AE. CP. Brunswick–Hanovre 47 f. 134; Boissieux, French envoy in Cologne, to Chauvelin, 13 Sept. 1729, AE. CP. Cologne 70 f. 190.

31 Townshend to Sutton, 2 Sept. 1729, PRO. 81/123.

32 Chesterfield, envoy in the Hagne, to Townshend, 2, 9 Sept. 1729, PRO. 84/305; Titley, envoy in Copenhagen, to Townshend, 18 Feb. 1730, PRO. 75/54 f. 90–1.

33 Treaty of Westminster, 25 Nov. (os) 1727, Wolfenbüttel, Staatsarchiv, 1 Alt 22 Nr. 534 f. 104–8, BL. Add. 32753 f. 260–3; Townshend to Finch, envoy in Stockholm, 3 Feb. (os) 1730, PRO. 15/54 f. 27–9.

34 Methuen to Stair, 2 Oct. 1716, SRO. GD. 135/141/5.

occasion[35]. George ascribed the Prussian decision not to attack to the assistance of his allies[36].

Thus, by the late 1720's, Hanoverian security problems had lent new weight to the Anglo-French alliance, and posed major problems for British foreign policy, for French envoys, Chavigny in Hanover in 1729, Broglie in London the following year, stressed Hanoverian vulnerability in order to press the British ministry to support French policy initiatives[37]. Particularly important was French pressure on Britain to ally with the Wittelsbach Electors, the rulers of Bavaria, Cologne and the Palatinate. Such an alliance would entail peacetime subsidies, domestically unpopular in Britain, and would have committed Britain to a long-term anti-Austrian policy. Charles Albert of Bavaria was already interested in gaining part of the Austrian inheritance[38]. France sought to tie Britain firmly to a long-term anti-Austrian policy that was at variance with Britain's policy of bullying Austria into being a British ally on Britain's terms[39]. As so often in alliances there was a struggle for control of policy[40]. In May 1716, before the alliance had been signed, Horatio Walpole had drawn attention to the difficulty of translating common sentiment into detailed policies, *I really do not understand the conduct of France in affecting everywhere in general terms to show their desire of having a particular confidence and good understanding with His Majesty ... and by avoiding at the same time to explain themselves directly and plainly upon the terms necessary for His Majesty's future repose and security*[41].

Thirteen years later, the Lords of the Council, the inner group of ministers left in London whilst George II was in Hanover, expressed opposition to the French – supported Wittelsbach demand that George agree not to give any guaranty to any power whatsoever not included in the projected alliance, without the consent of all the contracting powers. They argued that such an undertaking, *would be an unnecessary tying up His Majesty's hands from doing a thing, which perhaps hereafter upon a change of circumstances, His Majesty may think adviseable, if the Emperor should ever make such proposals as His Majesty might think advantageous for himself and his*

35 Du Bourgay to Townshend, 20, 23 Aug. 1729, PRO. 90/24; Chauvelin to Chavigny, 21 Aug. 1729, AE. CP. Brunswick–Hanovre 47 f. 139; British Plenipotentiaries to Townshend, 21 Aug. 1729, PRO. 78/192 f. 246; Declaration by Sauveterre, 22 Aug. 1729, C. HÖFLER, Der Congress von Soissons, nach den Instructionem des kaiserlichen cabinets und den Berichten des Botschafters Stefan Grafen Kinsky, 2 vols. Vienna 1871–6 I, 146.

36 Townshend to Newcastle, 6 Sept., Newcastle to Townshend, 29 Aug. (os) 1729, PRO. 43/80; Chavigny to Chauvelin, 4 Sept. 1729, AE. CP. Brunswick–Hanovre 47 f. 207–8.

37 Chauvelin to Chammorel, 26 June, 7, 21 July 1729, AE. CP. Ang. Sup. 8 f. 117, 118, 119; ›Memoire pour servir d'instruction au s. de Chavigny allant à Hanovre‹, 26 June, Chauvelin to Chavigny, 3, 24 July, 21 Aug., Chavigny to Chauvelin, 18 Aug. 1729, AE. CP. Brunswick–Hanovre 47 f. 48, 61, 83, 134, 148; Broglie to Chauvelin 2 Jan. 1730, AE. CP. Ang. 369 f. 10.

38 J. DURENG, Mission de Théodore Chevignard de Chavigny en Allemagne, Paris 1912; P. C. HARTMANN, Geld als Instrument Europäischer Machtpolitik. Studien zu den Finanziellen und Politischen Beziehungen der Wittelsbacher Territorien Kurbayern, Kurpfalz und Kurköln mit Frankreich und dem Kaiser von 1715 bis 1740, Munich 1978.

39 Townshend to William Finch, Envoy Extraordinary at The Hague, 18 Mar. (os) 1726, PRO. 84/289 f. 194; Townshend to Chesterfield, 14 June 1729, PRO. 84/304 f. 153; Horatio Walpole, Waldegrave and Poyntz, British envoys in Paris, to Benjamin Keene, Minister Plenipotentiary in Spain, 2 Aug. 1730, BL. Add. 32770 f. 384.

40 Chavigny to Chauvelin, 24 Ap. 1731, AE. CP. Allemagne 379 f. 138.

41 Horatio Walpole to Stair, 8 May 1716, SRO. GD. 135/141/6.

people, and safe and honourable for his allies. Their Lordships have the greatest dependance upon the present good disposition of the court of France; But as considering the particular circumstances of that court, the same confidence may not always be preserved, their Lordships have ever lookt upon it as the wisdom of His Majesty's councils, that hitherto nothing has been done that should make the friendship of that Crown absolutely necessary, or a reconciliation with the Emperor impracticable[42].

It was this attitude that was crucial to both British, and French, attitudes to the alliance, and that was to lead to its end. The Lords of the Council, a group that included Sir Robert Walpole and Newcastle, expressed a strong belief in the mutability of international relations, and the role of *circumstances*, an interesting comment on accusations that have been made, albeit for later periods, that British foreign policy in the eighteenth century was trapped in rigid conceptions of international relations[43]. In fact, neither Britain, nor France, in the 1720's, saw the alliance as much more than a diplomatic expedient that should be used to further aims as long as it served that purpose, and discarded if there was *a change of circumstances*[44]. Possibly Stanhope in the late 1710's had genuinely hoped to make the alliance permanent and use it as the basis for the system of mutual guarantees and collective security he so favoured[45]. However, this idea had won little support in British policy making circles, where suspicion of France was never absent, and it was abandoned with his death in 1721. Thereafter the alliance was seen very much as an expedient, rather than the purpose of foreign policy. This was a more realistic view, given the kaleidoscopic nature of international relations in this period, and the fragility of French support for the alliance. Dependant in the late 1710's on the position of Orléans and his foreign minister Dubois[46], it was based on little more than the life of the elderly Cardinal Fleury a decade later[47]. British policymakers were uneasily aware of this fragility, and responded with fear to reports of Fleury's illhealth or impending fall, or, as in late 1728, to Louis XV's illnesses[48], developments that also called forth

42 Account of Council meeting, 11 Aug. (os) 1729, PRO. 43/80; Peter, Lord King, Lord Chancellor, ›Notes on Domestic and Foreign Affairs during the last years of the reign of George I and the early part of the reign of George II‹, in: appendix to P. King, Life of John Locke, 2 vols., London 1830 II, 122–5; Newcastle to Whitworth and Polwarth, Plenipotentiaries at the Congress of Cambray, 17 Aug. (os) 1724, PRO. 78/75 f. 117–18.

43 S. Baxter, The Myth of the Grand Alliance in the Eighteenth Century, in: S. Baxter and P. Sellin, Anglo-Dutch Cross Currents in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, Los Angeles 1976, pp. 42–59; M. Roberts, Splendid Isolation 1763–80, Reading 1970.

44 St. Saphorin, British representative in Vienna, to Townshend, 22 June 1724, PRO. 80/52 f. 192; Stair to Earl Stanhope, 10 July 1717, Maidstone U 1590 0145/24.

45 R. Hatton, George I, London 1978, pp. 216, 222–6.

46 Davenant, envoy in Genoa, to Townshend, 25 Mar. 1721, Pro. 79/14. The stocks dropped in London on the news of Dubois' death, Chammorel, to Morville, French foreign minister, 13 Dec. 1723, AE. CP. Ang. 346 f. 352.

47 Waldegrave to Townshend, 30 Oct. 1728, PRO. 80/63 f. 189–90; Townshend to Horatio Walpole, 23 June (os) 1728, BL. Add. 9138 f. 105 f. 194; Townshend to Chesterfield, 25 June (os) 1728, PRO. 84/300 f. 298–9; Horatio Walpole, ›Considerations relating to the marriage between Don Carlos and the eldest Archdutchess and the notion of a Provisional Treaty‹, 19 July 1728, Norwich, Norfolk County Record Office, Bradfer Lawrence Collection, Townshend State Papers and Letters.

48 Newcastle to Horatio Walpole, 16 Nov. (os), Horatio Walpole to Newcastle, 4 Dec. 1727, BL. Add. 32752 f. 56, 110–112; Newcastle to Horatio Walpole, 14 May (os) 1728, PRO. 78/189 f. 194.

public doubt about the French alliance and pressure on stock prices[49]. The British ministry was well aware that support for the alliance in France was fragile, just as the French were concerned about the stability of the British government[50], and the influence of ministers and diplomats deemed anti-French, Cadogan in the early 1720's, St. Saphorin in 1727[51].

It was ›a change of circumstances‹ that led to the end of the alliance. Anxious about Hanoverian security, fearful of the prospect of unilateral French and/or Spanish approaches to Austria, and conscious of domestic criticism of British foreign policy, the British began negotiations with Austria in the early autumn of 1730[52]. Disquiet over both long and short-term French policies played a role, but there was no wish to end good relations with France, and the British hoped, wrongly, that France would welcome the new diplomatic alignment[53]. Unilateral negotiations with Austria were not new: the British had considered them in 1728[54] and conducted them in 1729[55]. British commitment to the French alliance had never been so total as to preclude consideration of better relations with France's principal rival, Austria. The difference in 1730–1 was simply that the negotiations succeeded, because George II was ready to shelve Hanoverian demands, Austria, (having lost her Spanish ally in November 1729) felt more vulnerable, and the British ministry was willing to make a greater effort to achieve a settlement, probably because of the battering its French alliance had taken in the 1730 parliamentary session.

The end of the alliance did not lead to an immediate breakdown of Anglo-French relations, though the summer of 1731 saw a war-panic, each power fearing attack from the other[56]. Relations thereafter, until the outbreak of formal hostilities in 1744, were poor, but, as before, *circumstances* were crucial. Britain did not honour her treaty commitments by supporting Austria against France in the War of the Polish

49 Stanley's Letter 19 Oct. (os) 1727; Wye's Letter 19 Oct. (os) 1727, 22, 24 Oct. (os) 1728; Fog's Weekly Journal 4 Oct. (os) 1727. [J. Morgan] Whartoniana (London, 1727) p. 10; Farley's Bristol Newspaper 26 Oct. (os) 1728; Ipswich Journal 2 Nov. (os) 1728.

50 Chauvelin to Chammorel, 27 Ap. 1730, AE. CP. Ang. supplement 8 f. 164.

51 Destouches to Dubois, 4 Jan. 1723, AE. CP. Ang. 344 f. 11; Horatio Walpole to Tilson, 3, 21, Oct. 1727, BL. Add. 48928 f. 86, 90.

52 Private Instructions for Chesterfield, 4 Aug. (os) 1730, PRO. 84/307 f. 173–4; G. Steuer, England's Österreichpolitik in den Jahren 1730–5 nach den Berichten des englischen Gesandten am Wiener Hof, Thomas Robinson (unpublished dissertation, Ph.D., Bonn, 1975) pp. 42–6.

53 Delafaye to Waldegrave, 30 Nov. (os) 1730, Robinson to Waldegrave, 31 Mar., Newcastle to Waldegrave, 1 Ap. (os) 1731, Chewton; Waldegrave to Keene, 1 May 1731, BL. Add. 32771 f. 186, 316–18, 32772 f. 334.

54 Instructions for Le Coq and Count Hoym, Saxon Plenipotentiaries at the Congress of Soissons, 24, 30 June 1728, Le Coq to Augustus II of Saxony-Poland 28 July, 11 Aug., 18 Sept. 1728, Dresden, Sächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Geheimes Kabinett, Gesandtschaften (hereafter Dresden).

55 Count Philip Kinsky, Austrian Envoy Extraordinary in London, to Emperor Charles VI, 18, 25, 28 Jan. 1729, HHStA, Staatenabteilung, England Korrespondenz 65; Kinsky to Prince Eugene, leading Austrian minister, 8, 25 Feb. 1729, HHStA, GK. 94 (6); Tilson to Waldegrave, 21 Jan. (os) 1729, Chewton; Townshend to Waldegrave, 16 Feb. (os), 25 Mar. (os) 1729, PRO 80/64 f. 90–1, 175; Waldegrave to Townshend, 18 Mar. 1729, PRO. 80/64 f. 168–70, 172, 181.

56 Waldegrave to Delafaye, 6, 9, 16 July 1731, PRO. 78/199 f. 197, 199, 203; Harrington to Robinson, 29 June (os) 1731, PRO. 80/75; Harrington to Chesterfield, 29 June (os) 1731, PRO. 84/313 f. 160; Minutes of the Privy Council, 30 June (os) 1731, PRO. 36/23 f. 184.

Succession (1733–5)[57]; France ignored Jacobite requests for assistance, until 1744[58], and refused to support Spain fully in her war with Britain (the War of Jenkins' Ear that began in 1739), by declaring war, as had been feared in London[59]. Both states vied for alliance in other countries, particularly in Sweden, Denmark, Portugal and the United Provinces, but took care to maintain a peaceful hostility. A consideration of Anglo-French relations in the period after the alliance reveals what a study of the alliance shows, that the theoretical rigidity of international relations in this period, as marked in particular by the theories of the Balance of Power and of *Natural Alliances*, was not matched by an unchanging international situation. Rather, the powers, well-aware of the complexities of international affairs, displayed considerable maturity in their foreign policies. It is to this that the preservation of peace between Britain and France, after the ending of their alliance, was due, a preservation more notable in that it defied the numerous factors endangering relations, particularly commercial and colonial rivalry, and domestic political pressure on the British ministry.

There was no doubt of the widely diffused nature of anti-French feeling in the political nation. In June 1727 the French foreign minister Morville wrote to the French Chargé d'Affaires in London, Chammorel, *Vous vivez au milieu d'une peuple qui ne souffre pas patiemment qu'on le croye conduit qui que ce soit, ... Vous devez donc faire envisager l'heureux succes de nos demarches communes pour la paix comme le fruit de l'union qui subsiste entre la France et l'Angleterre, et vous pourrez en tirer une preuve pour etablir autant qu'il sera possible l'opinion que le maintien de cette bonne intelligence est egalement convenable aux interests reciproques*[60].

Morville was keenly aware of the need to make the Anglo-French alliance acceptable to the British political nation. Opposition attacks upon the alliance, both in Parliament and in the extremely active newspaper press, were a constant feature of British political life in the period of the alliance[61]. There were several reasons for this. First it was possible to suggest that, by allying with a traditional enemy, the ministry was in some way, (and it was not necessary to specify it) abandoning national interests. Secondly, the alien nature of the alliance could be related to a critique of the new Hanoverian dynasty, and to the suggestion that this alien dynasty had distorted British policy and was betraying national interests. Thirdly, the Whigs had, and continued to, make much of the Tories' supposed betrayal of national interests at Utrecht in 1713, and it was natural for the Tories to reply in kind[62].

57 J. Black 1733 – A Failure of British Diplomacy? in: Durham University Journal 74 (1982) pp. 199–210.

58 Chavigny, envoy in London, to Chauvelin, 1 July 1733, AE. CP. Ang. 381 f. 9; Waldegrave to Newcastle, 28 Feb. 1734, BL. Add. 32784 f. 106.

59 Newcastle to Lord Hardwicke, the Lord Chancellor, circa Aug. (os) 1739, BL. Add. 35406 f. 136.

60 Morville to Chammorel, 12 June 1727, AE. CP. Ang. sup. 8 f. 14.

61 Horatio Walpole to Newcastle, 4 May 1728, BL. Add. 32755 f. 362; Ossorio, Sardinian Envoy Extraordinary in London, to Victor Amadeus II of Sardinia, 20 Mar. 1730, Turin, Archivio di Stato, Lettere Ministri Inghilterra, 37.

62 The Englishman 18, 29 July (os), 9 Sept. (os) 1715; Flying-Post: or, Post-Master 2 Jan. (os) 1718; St. James' Journal 23 Feb. (os) 1723; Mist's Weekly Journal 12 Mar. (os) 1726, 3 June (os), 7 Oct. (os) 1727; Norwich Mercury 7 Mar. (os) 1730; Fog's Weekly Journal 16 Jan. 1731; Hyp-Doctor 19 Jan. (os) 1731; T. Gordon, The Creed of an Independent Whig, London 1720, p. 11.

Fourthly, the extensive commitments to European affairs, that had characterised British foreign policy from 1689 onwards, were both expensive and unpopular, and they could be attacked in the guise of the French alliance.

Aside from these political criticisms, (and there were in addition detailed attacks upon specific instances and consequences of Anglo-French cooperation), there was also a widespread opposition to French culture, society and religion, to the French political system and to the French themselves. This is clear from an examination of such sources as the press, and the journals and correspondence of British tourists in France[63]. France was not only a political threat; she was also, as far as British public opinion was concerned, the staunchest defender of Catholic interests and the prime exponent of absolutism. Consciousness of struggle between Protestantism and Catholicism was well-developed, and anti-Catholicism both widely expressed and the prime ideological supposition of many in Britain[64]. Furthermore, it was held that Britain was threatened both by absolutism and Catholicism. Many drew attention to Catholic resilience in Britain, the opposition claimed that the ministry sought to introduce absolutism, and support for continental social customs and fashions, such as French cooking, clothes and actors, were presented as signs of a ministerial attempt to subvert British culture and introduce pernicious foreign customs[65]. Thus, opposition criticism of Walpole made much of his supposed interest in French food[66]. Xenophobia was crucial to the public ideology of many, and it focused a widespread feeling of unease about the challenges posed by foreign norms of behaviour, threats made more controversial by the presence of a foreign ruler.

This hostility was noted by the French. In 1723, when the murder of four English tourists near Calais had been widely discussed, Morville wrote to Chammorel, *Je ne suis point étonné que le menu peuple de Londres ait tenu les discours que vous marqués par raport au meurtre commis aux environs de Calais, mais je n'aurois pas crû que des personnes de distinction, et des gens sensés eussent pû les adopter, ni regarder comme l'effet d'une disposition generale dans la nation, le crime d'une troup de voleurs*[67].

Eight years later Chammorel commented on *l'antipatie naturelle* of *le gros de la nation* against France, and claimed that it had been exacerbated by the systematic use of the press by the opposition to attack the Anglo-French alliance[68]. This was one of the great weaknesses of the alliance. It was not so much that it was very unpopular in Britain, but that its unpopularity was exploited by the opposition. As a fictional character noted in a London newspaper of 1729, *The French Allyance is a very tender point; and that it is unpopular to argue in its Defence; . . .*[69] And yet the ministry, forced to defend foreign policy from opposition attacks in Parliament did argue in its defence, and this, in turn, inspired more attack, by shifting the grounds of public political debate into a sphere where the opposition argument was a popular one. The ministry

63 J. Black, British Travellers in Europe in the early eighteenth century in: Dalhousie Review 61 (1981–2) pp. 655–67.
64 Flying Post: or, Post Master 27 June (os) 1724.
65 W. Cobbett, A Parliamentary History of England from 1066 to 1803, 36 vols. London 1806–1820, IX, 559; XI, 207, 338, 426. Fog's Weekly Journal, 13 Dec. (os) 1729.
66 Anon., The Norfolk Congress (London, 1728).
67 Morville to Chammorel, – Oct. 1723, AE. CP. Ang. sup. 7.
68 Chammorel to Chauvelin, 15 Jan. 1731, AE. CP. Ang. 373 f. 16.
69 Craftsman 30 Aug. (os) 1729.

claimed that France was a good ally; they could not reveal their private doubts and criticisms of French policy. In 1729 Horatio Walpole *affirmed France to be the most faithful to us through the whole course of those late differences*, ... Sir Robert Walpole, the same year, declared *that where some had compared Galica fides with Punica fides, we were to consider that states govern themselves by their interest and that the close alliance of Austria, the ancient enemy, with Spain made them as entirely sure to our alliance as heretofore they were enemies when they aimed at universal monarchy*[70]. Sir Robert's defence of the French alliance was an interesting one. He did not argue that it was essential to British interests, but rather claimed that in current circumstances, given the state of international relations, alliance was mutually beneficial and France could be relied upon. The opposition response was to blame the ministry for the state of international relations, and, in particular, for poor Anglo-Austrian and Anglo-Spanish relations, to argue that France could not be relied upon, and to claim that France was using the alliance to distort British policy[71]. In March 1730 one of the leading London newspapers, the »Daily Post Boy« carried the following advertisement, *This Day is published*... »Remarks on the Proceedings of the French Court, from Charles VIII, to the latter part of the reign of Lewis XIV. Shewing what little regard has been had to the Faith of Treaties; the Ties of Blood, Marriages, Friendship and Oaths etc ...« *Proper to be compared with the present Times, and to be perused by all True Englishmen; by which they may judge how far the French are to be depended on by their Allies, either in Time of Peace or War*[72].

Supposed French ministerial connivance in repairs to the port of Dunkirk, prohibited in the Utrecht treaty, provided in 1730 the concrete instance for accusations that the Anglo-French alliance was being misused by France. It led to a serious parliamentary storm and threatened ministerial control of the House of Commons. The Prussian Minister, General Grumbkow, wrote, *les Ministres auront de la peine à se tirer d'affaire à moins que de choquer ou la nation ou la France*. Dunkirk led to the most serious parliamentary crisis since the South Sea Bubble of 1721[73]. Its role in persuading the British ministry, and, in particular, Sir Robert Walpole, to press for the abandonment of the French alliance, cannot be assessed with ease, as there is no series of British governmental papers comparable to the French »Mémoires et Documents«, and no council records comparable to those of the Austrian *Konferenz* of ministers. However, it is clear that in 1730 the British ministry realised that the French alliance could well be disastrous politically, rather than simply being a major inconvenience[74]. To that extent, the opposition exploitation of anti-French feeling had diplomatic consequences in 1730.

What is not clear is that opposition policy had any marked impact prior to the 1730

70 31 Jan. (os), 5 Feb. (os) 1729, debates in House of Commons, Historical Manuscripts Commission, Manuscripts of the Earl of Egmont. Diary of the First Earl of Egmont (3 vols., London, 1920–23) III, 338, 347; Horatio Walpole to Du Bourgay, British envoy in Berlin, 12 July 1726, Hanover, Des 91 St. Saphorin, Nr. 3 f. 32–3.

71 Wye's Letter 23 Jan. (os) 1729; Thomas Winnington to Lord Hervey, 24 Mar. (os) 1729, Winnington to Stephen Fox, 9 Ap. (os) 1729, Dorchester, Dorset County Record Office, D 124/box 240.

72 Daily Post Boy 18 Mar. (os) 1730.

73 Grumbkow to Reichenbach, Prussian Resident in London, 7 Mar. 1730, Hull, University Library, Hotham papers, DD HO 3/3; H. T. Dickinson, Bolingbroke (London, 1970) pp. 225–8.

74 Chauvelin to Chammorel, 22 June 1730, AE. CP. Ang. sup. 8 f. 169.

session. Despite the endlessly reiterated attacks on governmental foreign policy the ministry enjoyed secure parliamentary majorities on foreign policy topics in the period 1716–29. There were major difficulties in some sessions, particularly that of 1718, but these tended to reflect divisions within the Whig ministerial camp, rather than any successful opposition exploitation of an issue, as that over Spanish depredations on British commerce in 1729, or Dunkirk the following year. The reason for this is clear. It was very difficult for an eighteenth-century ministry to be defeated over policy. There were instances: much of Sunderland's legislation, including the Peerage Bill, failed in the late 1710's; Walpole's scheme for fiscal reform, the Excise Bill, was withdrawn in the face of sustained parliamentary opposition, in 1733. However, these instances were rare, and ministerial stability and control of Parliament was made likely if the ministry was assured of solid royal support. It was this support that allowed the Stanhope – Sunderland ministry to survive the Whig Schism in 1717–20, and enabled Walpole to enjoy such a long ministry, (1721–42). In the reorganization of the Whig ministry in 1721–2 the key feature was death – that of Stanhope in 1721 and Sunderland the following year – not parliamentary defeat. George II's decision to retain Walpole in 1727 was crucial. Given Walpole's power in the Commons he would have probably been included in any new ministry, but his continued predominance was by no means certain.

It is royal influence that, in the last resort, emerges as fundamental when explaining why widespread anti-French feeling did not defeat the Anglo-French alliance in the period 1716–29. The ministry needed the Crown as much as the Crown needed the ministry, possibly more so, as there were other politicians whom the Crown could have turned to. Politicians such as Cadogan, Carteret, Pulteney, Chesterfield and Compton in the 1720's might not have possessed large parliamentary followings, but royal support and secret service money might have altered the situation[75]. In foreign policy the Crown's role was crucial, though it is difficult to follow it in many instances, due to the relative absence of correspondence for George I and George II, and the widespread destruction in the »Niedersächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv« in Hanover in the 1940's, caused by bombing and flood[76]. The role of George I in the period 1721–7, and, in particular, in the negotiation of the Alliance of Hanover, is very obscure. Royal concern for Hanoverian interests dictated involvement in European diplomacy, and this was the dynamic element, on the British side, in the Anglo-French alliance. It became particularly important in the late 1720's, for the Jacobite failure to exploit the death of George I in 1727, suggested to many contemporaries that the Jacobite threat had diminished, and lessened the consequent need for the French alliance. Furthermore, whereas 1722–5 had witnessed remarkably strong control of Parliament by the ministry, in the late 1720's the rise of a new opposition Whig group under William Pulteney, and his attempt, to cooperate with the Tories, created a new stronger opposition, keen to attack on foreign policy issues; which it was easier for them both to exploit and to unite on. The French alliance was maintained however, partly because of royal pressure, for it was Hanoverian interests that led to the failure

75 It was widely believed that Walpole would fall on George II's accession.

76 C. Haase, W. Deeters and E. Pitz, Übersicht über die Bestände des Niedersächsischen Staatsarchivs in Hannover, 2 vols., Göttingen 1965/1968.

of the secret Anglo-Austrian negotiations in 1729[77]. The negotiations in 1730–1 nearly failed due to British demands on behalf of Hanover[78], and it could be suggested that the decision to turn to Austria reflected George II's realisation that it was necessary to reach a settlement of German affairs that would guarantee Hanoverian security by means of Austrian restraint on Prussia. The role of Hanoverian interests in the 1730–1 negotiations is still far from clear.

What is clear is that public opinion within Britain was simply one factor in influencing the course of and fate of the Anglo-French alliance, and that it was by no means the crucial factor. To argue that the storm over Dunkirk in the session of 1730 led to the decision to turn to Austria would be to go further than the evidence permits. Study of British relations with France indicates that a factor that must be given great attention is the role of the monarchy[79]. This accords with recent work in other areas of eighteenth-century British history, and suggests that a systematic study of the Crown in this period is called for.

77 Eugene to Kinsky, 2 May 1729, HHStA., GK. 94 (b).

78 Thomas Pelham, Secretary of Embassy at Paris, then in London, to Waldegrave, 23 Mar. (os) 1731, Chewton Mendip, Chewton Hall, correspondence of James, first Earl Waldegrave, box of correspondence with Pelham. I would like to thank Earl Waldegrave for permission to consult these papers.

79 J. Black, George II Reconsidered, in: Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Staatsarchivs 35 (1982) pp. 35–56. J. Black, Fresh Light on the Fall of Townshend, in: Historical Journal 29 (1986) p. 64; J. Black, Foreign Policy in the Age of Walpole, Edinburgh 1985, pp. 27–48.