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ANGLO-FRENCH RELATIONS IN THE MID-EIGHTEENTH CENTURY 1740–1756*

When it is once taken God knows what will be the consequence, but the least bad must be bad enough

Earl of Chesterfield on impending fall of Bergen-op-Zoom, 1747[1]

the taking the proper measures for maintaining and improving the Old Alliance, and only solid system of Europe ... I am afraid your Royal Highness will find this more difficult with our friends in England, than your Royal Highness imagines, I doubt the great objection to me and my politics is my known and firm resolution never to vary from that principle

Duke of Newcastle to Duke of Cumberland, November 1748[2]

In the period 1683–1789 there were three decisive confrontations in European international relations. The first was the defeat of the Turks in 1683–99, a defeat that was consolidated by Austrian victories in the war of 1716–18. Though the Turks were not driven from the Balkans, as was hoped, their defeat at Vienna (1683) and their subsequent loss of the kingdom of Hungary marked a dramatic alteration in the European relationship between Christendom and Islam, one that subsequent Austrian failures in 1737–9 and 1788 were not to reverse. The second decisive confrontation was between Peter I of Russia and his enemies in the Great Northern War (1700–21). Peter not only decisively defeated Charles XII of Sweden and conquered the eastern Baltic provinces of the Swedish empire, but he also destroyed the Swedo-Polish-Ukrainian-Tatar alliance that Charles had sought to create and repelled in 1719–20 an Anglo-French attempt to organize a European coalition that would force him to return his Swedish conquests. Challenged unsuccessfully by Sweden in 1741–2, the effect of Peter's triumph was far-reaching. The buffers between Russia and the German states had been fatally weakened and Russia thereafter was to dominate eastern Europe until confronted by western or central European powers. Economically directly linked to the west, Russia developed considerably in ways that would have surprised Peter's predecessors.

* I should like to acknowledge the assistance of the British Academy, the Staff Travel and Research Fund of Durham University and the Wolfson Foundation. I am grateful to Her Majesty the Queen for permission to consult the Cumberland papers. Unless marked (os), all dates are in New Style.

1 Chesterfield to Earl Gower, 6 Aug. (os) 1747, London, Public Record Office (hereafter PRO) 30/29/1/11 f. 307.

2 Newcastle to Cumberland, 15 Nov. 1748, Windsor Castle, Royal Archives, Cumberland papers (hereafter RA. CP.) 41/143.

The third decisive confrontation was more drawn out. It was between Britain and France and though it involved both conflict and rivalry in Europe not least in the British Isles, through France's sponsorship of the Jacobites, its most decisive consequences were in the colonial and maritime sphere. In 1740 Britain and France were both important colonial and maritime powers, though neither ruled the extent of territory or number of people that Spain possessed. By 1815 Britain was clearly the leading European commercial, colonial and maritime power. Her success owed much to the course of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars: the successes of British naval power, the pressure of French commitments and demands and vulnerability to Britain that the conflicts placed on Spain, the United Provinces and Denmark, the longevity of the wars that allowed Britain to mount numerous amphibious operations once the maritime structure of the French empire had been destroyed[3]. However, British predominance had already been clearly established during the Seven Years' War and was reflected in her conquests during the conflict, the position of strength from which she negotiated and the ability of her naval power to intimidate France and Spain in the immediate postwar years[4]. This success was to be challenged during the War of American Independence, though the espective of the maritime threat posed then by the Bourbons has generally been exaggerated[5]. The situation in 1778–9 was definitely one of the Bourbons challenging Britain and seeking to take advantage of her American difficulties. It was not initially a conflict between powers in an equal position and for the Bourbons success was to be measured in forcing Britain to return past gains, an aspiration reflected in the determination of Vergennes, the French foreign minister, that the Peace of Paris of 1763 should not serve as the basis of the eventual negotiations.

Any account of how Britain achieved mastery by 1763 must necessarily include a discussion of such matters as naval strength and administration, military planning, the neutrality of Spain until 1761 and the too-oft overlooked question of respective financial strengths[6]. It is also important to remember the role of chance, not least in the defeat of the French invasion plans of 1759 at Lagos and Quiberon Bay. However, it is also important to look at the objectives of British policy and power, not least the determination to concentrate resources on North America. This constituted an obvious contrast with Britain's previous conflict, her participation in the War of the Austrian Succession, in which British forces had first fought in 1743, leading to the declarations of war between Britain and France the following spring. Britain signalled her commitment to fight in 1742 by sending troops to the Austrian Netherlands, whereas in 1755 she ordered her ships to prevent the dispatch of French reinforcements to Canada. In 1743 Britain's military effort had centered on the

3 M. Duffy, Soldiers, Sugar and Seapower. The British Expeditions to the West Indies and the War against Revolutionary France, Oxford 1987, is an important recent study.

4 N. Tracy, Navies, Deterrence, and American Independence. Britain and Sea Power in the 1760s and 1770s, Vancouver 1988.

5 D. A. Baugh, Why did Britain lose command of the sea during the war for America? in J. M. Black and P. Woodfine eds., The British navy and the Use of Naval Power in the Eighteenth Century, Leicester 1988, pp. 149–69.

6 R. Middleton, The Bells of Victory. The Pitt-Newcastle Ministry and the Conduct of the Seven Years' War 1757–1762, Cambridge 1985; J. C. Riley, The Seven Years' War and the Old Regime in France. The Economic and Financial Toll, Princeton 1986.

western parts of the Empire, where George II fought an unexpected battle at Dettingen, in 1744–8 on the unsuccessful defence of the Low Countries. In the Seven Years' War there was no possibility of Britain defending the Low Countries. The Austrian-ruled Netherlands were allied to France, while the United Provinces were neutral. As an ally of Frederick II and in order to protect Hanover, British troops did fight in the Empire[7], but the military commitment to the continent was relatively far less than in the previous war. This was due to the interwar shift in British views on foreign policy, and indeed on Britain's place in the world, one that it is important to probe. The question of how and why a shift in consciousness occured requires examination. Another shift was that in Anglo-French relations. The two powers had been allied in 1713–14 and 1716–31. Thereafter for a decade relations were poor but conflict was avoided, both during the War of the Polish Succession (1733–5) and on account of the outbreak of the Anglo-Spanish War of Jenkins' Ear in 1739[8]. However, from 1742 until 1763 relations were dominated by war and the threat of war. The cross-currents and ambiguities that had affected British diplomacy and debate about foreign policy in 1713–31, with Austria, Spain and Russia at times appearing as serious threats, were replaced from the early 1740s by a concentration on France that was to last, despite international changes and a ministerial anti-Russian interlude in 1789–91 during a period of French weakness, until after the Napoleonic wars. Though not to the same extent, British enmity rose as a priority for French foreign policy. Again the nature and consequences of this shift require examination.

Two other important topics can be discerned in a consideration of Anglo-French relations in 1740–55. The first is the causes of war, for Britain and France went to war twice in this period, though in the second case formal hostilities were not declared until the French invasion of Minorca in 1756. Second, the period invites consideration of the relationship between short term developments in international relations and those in the longue durée. It also invites consideration of the extent to which an international system existed and the relationship between that, the activities of particular states and the actions and views of individual monarchs and ministers.

There have been valuable studies of British public and ministerial attitudes towards mid-century foreign policy[9], including two centering on changing attitudes towards colonial commitments[10]. However, there is room for a fresh reexamination of the subject based both on a wide range of manuscript sources and on the

7 P. F. Doran, Andrew Mitchell and Anglo-Prussian Diplomatic Relations during the Seven Years' War, New York 1986; K. W. Schweizer, England, Prussia and the Seven Years' War. Lewiston 1989.

8 P. Vaucher, Robert Walpole et la politique de Fleury, Paris 1924; J. M. Black, Natural and Necessary Enemies. Anglo-French Relations in the Eighteenth Century, London 1986, pp. 21–35.

9 M. Schlenke, England und das Friderizianische Preussen 1740–1763, Freiburg, 1963; S. Baxter, The Myth of the Grand Alliance, in Baxter and P. R. Sellin eds., Anglo-Dutch Cross Currents in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, Los Angeles 1976, pp. 43–59; H. M. Scott, The True Principles of the Revolution: The Duke of Newcastle and the idea of the Old System, in Black ed., Knights Errant and True Englishmen. British Foreign Policy 1660–1800, Edinburgh 1989, pp. 55–91.

10 G. Niedhart, Handel und Krieg in der Britischen Weltpolitik 1738–1763, Munich 1979; M. Mimler, Der Einfluß kolonialer Interessen in Nordamerika auf die Strategie und Diplomatie Großbritanniens während des 18. Jahrhunderts, Hildesheim 1983.

contemporary word of print, and looking at the situation against the background of a period when hostility to France and concern about the colonies had not been axiomatic. Indeed the impetus behind British foreign policy had been distinctly continental. This owed much to a generally unwanted feature of the Protestant Succession, the defence of Hanover, which had aroused considerable public debate[11]. However, though the Hanoverian Succession altered the political context of the debate about Britain's relations with the continent and specifically interventionalism, the essential direction of British policy had been laid by William III following his invasion of 1688, the most successful early-modern example of the combination of domestic intrigue and external intervention[12]. William had ensured that Britain would be concerned about continental developments, specifically French progress, though the negotiation with Louis XIV of the partition treaties for the Spanish Succession in 1698 and 1700 demonstrated that this did not have to be through conflict. This was to be underlined in 1713–14, in the brief period of co-operation that followed the Peace of Utrecht, in 1716–31 during the Anglo-French alliance, and in 1734–5 in the negotiations at The Hague during the War of the Polish Succession. There was no obvious reason why this pattern should not be maintained: rivalry moderated or even diminished by negotiations, but such a pattern did not characterise Anglo-French relations during the period 1740–55 and when it was next seriously attempted, in 1772–3 in response to the First Partition of Poland, it rapidly proved a non-starter[13].

The failure to ease relations in mid-century was not due to the French. As in 1772–3 and 1786, it was the French who launched the major attempt to improve relations, that made by their foreign minister, Puysieulx, in the aftermath of the War of the Austrian Succession. There was no comparable effort in Walpole's last years or when he fell in 1742, but the situation then was hardly auspicious. France trod a difficult course in 1739–40, neither seeking to tie her foreign policy to the interests or quixotic policies of Spain by joining her in her war with Britain, nor wishing to needlessly antagonise Spain or, more dangerously, allow Britain to make major Caribbean gains, by maintaining a strict neutrality. The message that France did not wish to see such gains was delivered and backed up by the dispatch of Antin and a fleet to the West Indies in 1740. However, the British ministry, under the pressure of a bellicose public opinion that had played a role, albeit not the sole one, in leading to war with Spain[14], was in no position to accept French guidance, let alone French mediation. Earl Waldegrave, the British envoy, made it clear to the Duke of

11 R. M. Hatton, The Anglo-Hanoverian Connection 1714–1760, London 1982. A. M. Birke and K. Kluxen eds., England und Hanover, Munich 1986, pp. 17–51, 127–44; Black, The British State and Foreign Policy in the Eighteenth Century, in: Trivium 23 (1988) pp. 127–48; Black, Parliament and Foreign Policy in the Age of Walpole: the case of the Hessians, in Black ed., Knights Errant (see n. 9) pp. 41–54.

12 G. C. Gibbs, The Revolution in Foreign Policy in: G. S. Holmes ed., Britain after the Glorious Revolution, London, 1969, pp. 59–79; Black, The Revolution and the Development of English Foreign Policy in E. Cruickshanks ed., By Force or by Default? The Revolution 1688, Edinburgh 1989, pp. 135–58.

13 M. Roberts, Great Britain and the Swedish Revolution, 1771/2, Historical Journal 8 (1964) pp. 1–46.

14 P. Woodfine, The Anglo-Spanish War of 1739 in: Black ed., The Origins of War in Early Modern Europe, Edinburgh 1987, pp. 185–209.

Newcastle, the Secretary of State for the Southern Department, that French restraint owed a lot to Cardinal Fleury, the leading French minister, *I can observe no disposition in him to quarrel with us,* adding *they know, they cannot undertake anything against us, but at a great expence and hazard; for they cannot depend upon any support from Spain.* Fleury told Waldegrave that *he was under a sort of necessity of having everything done under his eye, hinting that he could not be sure any other way, that his directions would be followed*[15].

Whether an understanding could have been reached with France over the Caribbean in 1740, there was no basis for one over the Austrian Succession, once Fleury's pacific inclinations had been swept aside. Britain and France had both guaranteed the Pragmatic Sanction, Fleury had made a Franco-Austrian alignment the centre-piece in French diplomacy in the late 1730s and he responded to the news of Charles VI's death by assuring the Austrian envoy Prince Liechtenstein that Louis XV would observe all his engagements with Austria[16]. It is not clear what France would have done had Prussia not invaded Silesia in December 1740. The nature or alleged dynamics of the international system, the supposed structural factors, the longue durée, provides little guidance on this. Instead one is pushed back to looking at individuals. Frederick II's action suddenly and unexpectedly made international relations more volatile and abruptly increased the opportunities, the stakes and the dangers, not least the danger that by not acting France would not only be unable to advance her own interests but would lose the possible support of other powers. This raised volatility increased the pressure for action on the elderly Fleury. Just as in Britain politicians had to consider the possibility that Walpole would not survive the Parliament elected in the elections of 1741, so the octogenarian Fleury appeared an inappropriate first minister for a period of opportunity.

As French policy moved towards war with Austria, the scope for any Anglo-French understanding diminished. This was hightlighted by the domestic political situation in Britain. When in 1741 the threat of a French invasion of Westphalia led George II to sign a neutrality convention for Hanover, abandoning his attempts to create an anti-Prussian alliance and agreeing to vote for the French-supported Charles Albert of Bavaria as next Emperor, in short accepting a French inspired German settlement, this caused a political storm in Britain and was not welcomed by the British ministry. Lord Harrington, the Secretary of State who accompanied George II to Hanover, informed Anthony Thompson, who was left in charge of affairs after Waldegrave left, that the Convention *is purely an Electoral affair, and does not in the least tie up His Majesty's hands, as King, or engage him to anything relating to his future conduct, as such, or to the affairs of England*[17]. This constitutional distinction convinced few in 1741, no more than it was to do so at the time of the Fürstenbund in 1785. Politically the episode was charged with significance. It was

15 Waldegrave to Newcastle, 10 Aug. 1740, PRO. State Papers (hereafter SP) 78/223 f. 266–9; Horatio Walpole to Robert Trevor, 29 Sept. (os) 1738, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire Record office, Trevor Papers (hereafter Trevor Papers) vol. 14; Newcastle to Harrington, 12 Aug. (os) 1739, London, British Library, Additional Manuscripts (hereafter BL. Add.) 35406 f. 138.

16 Black, Mid-Eigthteenth Century Conflict with particular reference to the Wars of the Polish and Austrian Successions, in: Black ed., Origins of War (see n. 14) p. 225.

17 Harrington to Thompson, 15 Oct. 1740, PRO. SP. 78/226 f. 236–39.

believed to provide concrete demonstration of the way in which Hanover controlled British policy. The domestic storm over the episode and the manner in which the new ministry that replaced that of Walpole pressed successfully for the abandonment of the Convention set the tone for Anglo-Hanoverian relations for the rest of George II's reign. It was made politically apparent that Britain could not be bound publicly by a Hanoverian arrangement, and that even the suggestion that such was a possibility had to be avoided. This was a marked contrast both to the period of George I's diplomacy in the Great Northern War and to the episode in 1729 when British support had been promised against a threatened Prussian attack on Hanover[18]. George II was forced to conceal his anti-Prussian diplomacy in the latter stages of the War of the Austrian Succession, while in 1757 the convention of Klosterseven, by which George II's younger son, the Duke of Cumberland, commander of the Army of Observation that had failed to defend Hanover against a superior French force, agreed to disband the army, was disowned by George II under pressure from his British ministers, despite the fact that the Army included no British troops[19].

The reception of the neutrality convention of 1741 and of Klosterseven demonstrated that it would be impossible to arrange an understanding between Britain and France through Hanover or by threatening Hanover. British ministers were not open to suggestions or pressure this way, a marked contrast to the role of the Hanoverian minister Münchhausen in 1748 in fostering the idea of British diplomatic intervention in the Empire to create a collective security system aimed against France and Prussia, an idea that was to serve as the basis of the Imperial Election Scheme. The failure to maintain pressure on George II via Hanover served like the fall of Walpole to exacerbate Anglo-French relations in 1742. It would be wrong to attribute this to France. She could no more control British politics than prevent Frederick II from settling with Austria, thus altering the military balance in the Empire, to the advantage of Hanover and the detriment of Bavaria. Louis XIV might have helped to bring down Danby but Britain in 1741–2 was a different political world to 1678–9. In 1741 the French envoy Bussy denied reports that France had sought to finance opposition electoral activity[20].

If political attitudes made compromise with France difficult in 1740–2, it is reasonable to consider the source and strength of these attitudes, for anti-French feeling during the wars of 1689–1713 had not prevented a subsequent reconciliation. A major problem was that the Anglo-French alliance had not been based on empathy and had put down no political roots. This was even more true of the attempts to improve relations in the 1730s, not only The Hague conferences of 1734–5, but also the discussions of 1736–7, the suggestions of co-operation over the Jülich-Berg question, the replacement of the provocative French envoy Chavigny by the more

18 H. Schilling, Der Zwist Preussens und Hannovers 1729–30, Halle 1912; Black, Foreign Inspirations of Eighteenth-Century British Political Material: an example from 1730, in: Trivium 21 (1986), pp. 137–42; Black, The Collapse of the Anglo-French Alliance 1727–1731, Gloucester 1987 pp. 141–2.

19 W. Mediger, Hastenbeck und Zeven. Der Eintritt Hannovers in den Siebenjährigen Krieg, in: Niedersächsisches Jahrbuch für Landesgeschichte, 56 (1984) pp. 137–66. On Anglo-Hanoverian relations in general U. Dann, Hannover und England, 1740–1760. Diplomatie und Selbsterhaltung, Hildesheim 1986.

20 Bussy to Amelot, French foreign minister, 17 May 1741, Paris, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Correspondance politique Angleterre (hereafter AE. CP. Ang.) 412 f. 63.

conciliatory Cambis, the British attempt to bribe the French foreign minister Chauvelin. All had been part of the world of largely secret diplomacy. There had been no ministerial defence of good relations with France, no attempt to explain the need for an understanding with her. The ministry's public position had not been helped by divisions over neutrality in the War of the Polish Succession and by the need to rely on essentially prudential reasons when defending British neutrality. As a result the public debate had been largely surrendered to the opposition, as it was to be at the time of the controversy over Spanish depredations in 1738–9, or at least they had been able to take the initiative with their reiterated and related themes of ministerial failure to defend national interests and a serious deterioration in international relations.

The French refusal to press their military and diplomatic advantages in the 1730s[21] had ensured that there was no crisis in which the British ministry would be forced to take note of domestic political views, as it was over Spanish depredations. During the War of the Polish Succession the neutrality of the Austrian Netherlands had been respected and Belle-Isle's successful campaign in the Moselle valley had not been followed up by an invasion of northern Germany. In order to obtain peace with Austria France had allowed her alliance with Spain to collapse. In 1741, however, the situation was very different. In place of the distant throne of Poland, the integrity of the Habsburg inheritance was at stake. The French might respect the neutrality of the Austrian Netherlands until 1744, thus denying the British the most obvious invasion route into France, but elsewhere a comprehensive recasting of the European system appeared to be a prospect. This apparently vindicated hostile British views of France and made the task of suggesting any accommodation with her impossible, despite the fact that Britain was already involved in a popular war with another power, Spain, and that, as was pointed out, opposition to France would necessarily reduce the effort made against Spain. The Commons motion of 1741 for a subsidy to Maria Theresa saw both government and opposition speakers in harmony. Walpole's protégé Henry Pelham, the Paymaster General, warned of

what may be expected from an emperor whose elevation was procured by the forces of France ... they may all conspire to dismember the empire into petty kingdoms, and free themselves from the dread of a formidable neighbour, by erecting a number of diminutive sovereigns, who may be always courting the assistance of their protectors ... Thus will the House, by which Europe has been hitherto protected, sink into an empty name, and we shall be left to stand alone against all the powers that profess a different religion, and whose interest is opposite to that of Great Britain.

William Pulteney, the leader of the opposition Whigs in the Commons, replied *I shall not delay, for a single moment, my consent to any measures that may re-establish our interest on the continent, and rescue Germany once more from the jaws of France*[22]. That May Bussy sent a lengthy report to Amelot, the French foreign minister, explaining why it was in the British interest to try to negotiate differences with France. He pointed out British vulnerability to invasion, the financial strains of

21 Black, British Neutrality in the War of the Polish Succession, 1733–1735, in: International History Review, 8 (1986) pp. 345–66; Black, French Foreign Policy in the Age of Fleury Reassessed, in: English Historical Review, 103 (1988) pp. 359–84.

22 W. Cobbett, Parliamentary History of England, 36 vols., London 1806–20, XII, 176–8.

war and the difficulties of relying on Austria and suggested that it would be in Britain's interest to settle the pretensions of the various claimants on the Austrian succession jointly with France[23]. This vision of Anglo-French co-operation was to be offered on a number of occasions during the century, but, as in 1741, it ignored not only British domestic political pressures, but also the state of international relations. There was no basis of trust in Anglo-French relations, a situation exacerbated in 1741 by the suspicion that France was supporting the Jacobites[24]. Nevertheless, despite the absence of any Anglo-French co-operation, Bussy argued that the fall of Walpole would be bad for France. He stressed national antipathy to France, in contrast to Chavigny, who had stressed popular hostility to Walpole. On 1 January 1742 Bussy wrote of the

sentimens de cette nation personellement pour nous; elle ne voit qu' avec les yeux de la plus noire jalousie les avantages de notre superiorité partout sur eux .... ou trouverions nous un ministere plus convenable? nous qui ne pouvons jamais pretendre a l'amitié des anglais et qui n'avons a craindre que leur inimitié. C'est aussi ce qui excite mes voeux tres sinceres; mais peutetre infructueux, pour le present ministere d'Angleterre[25].

It might therefore be asked whether the move towards Anglo-French hostilities should be seen as inevitable, a necessary consequence of Walpole's fall in early 1742 and the rise of Carteret, who became Secretary of State for the Northern Department, and Stair, who was given command of the forces sent to the Austrian Netherlands, men who in 1723 had been referred to as members of *la cabale autrichienne* by the French chargé d'affaires[26]. In qualification of this view it should be pointed out that the two powers did not formally declare war until 1744 and that eighteenth-century international conflicts included numerous instances of *incomplete hostilities*, combatants who were not at war with all their allies' enemies or who were fighting as auxiliaries only. There was also the obvious points of political choice and international circumstances. In 1742 the new ministry had the choice of escalating the war with Spain, which Walpole had been criticised for not prosecuting vigorously enough, or of sending military forces to the continent to oppose France in a commitment whose future extent it would be difficult to envisage or control. International circumstances might not be propitious for British intervention, though Austrian successes in the winter of 1741–2 helped to encourage a sense that the French might have been over-ambitious.

Bussy promptly warned Paris that the new ministry intended to assist Austria[27], though the rumours that flourished in the volatile political atmosphere that accompanied and followed the fall of Walpole ensured that contrary reports were received, including the inaccurate suggestion that an envoy, possibly the Earl of Chesterfield,

23 Bussy to Amelot, 17 May 1741, AE. CP. Ang. 412 f. 52–61.
24 Harrington to Thompson, 3 Sept. 1741, PRO. SP. 78/226 f. 123.
25 Bussy to Amelot, 1 Jan. 1742, AE. CP. Ang. 414 f. 18, 26.
26 Chammorel to French Foreign Minister, Dubois, 5, 26, Ap. 1723, AE. CP. Ang. 344 f. 181–1, 234.
27 Bussy to Amelot, 19 Feb. 1742, AE. CP. Ang. 414 f. 141; Bussy memorandum, 1745, AE. Mémoires et Documents (hereafter MD.) Ang. 40 f. 107.

would be sent to Paris to attempt to negotiate a peace favourable to Maria Theresa[28]. The French ministry was, however, under no illusions about the intentions of the new ministers, Amelot writing to the envoy in Madrid that the government was considering the state of its frontier defences[29]. An interesting feature of the discussions about Anglo-French relations in this period was that they centred on the state of continental affairs. There was scant consideration either of Anglo-French relations in the colonies or the impact on them of conflict between the two powers. Indeed one consequence of the events of 1742 was a move away from concern with the colonies. Not only was the Caribbean war with Spain substantially abandoned, but the fact that Britain and France were not formally at war, but were instead involved as auxiliaries, limited the possibilities of trans-oceanic confrontation between them. As Thomas Anson pointed out in 1743, *We have been fighting all summer in Germany with the French, without a war.*

Carteret set out the objectives of the new ministry clearly in a letter to Stair of May 1742,

His Majesty and this whole nation being fully convinced that it is upon the preservation of the House of Austria in a condition to resist the mischievous attempts of that of Bourbon, that the maintenance of the common liberties of Europe, the support of the Empire, the continuance of the Protestant religion, and the security and independence of both the Maritime Powers do chiefly depend[30].

Thus British interests were to be identified with a particular state of continental affairs, one that in the circumstances of 1742 dictated conflict with France. This was a radical shift from Walpolean precepts and indeed from William III's willingness to settle the Spanish Succession with Louis XIV without consulting the Austrians, though Carteret was to reveal, in his successful pressure on the Austrians to yield territory to Prussia and Sardinia, that his view of the ›preservation of the House of Austria‹ was not that held in Vienna. Stair was also clear about his anti-French views, writing in June 1741, while in opposition,

I was always of opinion that it was absolutely necessary for the very being of this nation to support a balance of power in Europe, and that it was the interest of this nation to be on the side of the House of Austria, both because the House of Austria was the weakest, and because the House of Austria was not our rivals in trade, nor could be our rivals in point of power at sea.

In office the following May, Stair wrote to a fellow diplomat, Thomas Robinson,

I have never been nor understood to be a partisan of the House of Bourbon; I have almost always had occasion to consider that House as too strong, and therefore I have been of opinion, that it was the interest of the king and of the nation of Great Britain, to put their weight into the scale of the House of Austria; this doctrine I have preached at a time when it was neither safe nor fashionable so to do, I think so still.

28 Givry, agent at Dunkirk to Maurepas, naval minister, Feb. 1742, Paris, Archives Nationales, Archives de la Marine B3 406 f. 21; Bussy to Amelot, 1 Mar. 1742, AE. CP. Ang. 414 f. 163. This dispatch, like many of the period, was intercepted by the British, PRO. SP. 107/53.

29 Amelot to Bishop of Rennes, 27 Mar. 1742, AE. CP. Espagne 470 f. 183.

30 Thomas to George Anson, 30 Nov. (os) 1743, BL. Add. 15955 f. 29; Carteret to Stair, 4 May (os) 1742 PRO. SP. 87/8 f. 107.

In 1757 the Earl of Holdernesse, Secretary of State for the Southern Department, described France as *the constant .... enemy of England*[31]. Such remarks might suggest an immutable hatred of France, located firmly in a longue durée of attitudes that constituted an important factor in the structure of British foreign policy, but Carteret and Stair, like the Duke of Newcastle, who was to organize a continental anti-French diplomatic strategy of containment in 1748–55, had held responsible posts during the period of the Anglo-French alliance, Carteret and Newcastle as Secretaries of State and Stair as envoy in Paris. Carteret and Stair had eventually fallen in large part because of their views, while Newcastle had keenly supported the reconciliation with Austria in 1731, but all had been prepared to accept and act in accordance with the alliance. This willingness and the subsequent vigour and stridency of their anti-French views can be considered from a number of aspects. In the 1720s and 1730s France definitely became a more vigorous, powerful and diplomatically active power, the contrast between her military forces at the time of the War of the Quadruple Alliance with Spain (1719–20) and during the War of the Polish Succession being especially instructive. Thus, a rational explanation of views changing in response to alterations in international relations can be advanced, though it scarcely testifies to the quasi-emotional force of the arguments advanced. It is also possible to locate a shift in the British political context. In its early days the Anglo-French alliance had appeared to be closely linked to the Hanoverian Succession, as indeed it was. After the suppression of the Jacobite Atterbury Plot of 1722 the Succession appeared to be less under threat, a view confirmed by George II's peaceful accession in 1727 and by the Jacobite failure to benefit markedly from the Anglo-French breach of 1731[32]. This encouraged a consideration of national interests that did not centre on the defence of the Hanoverian Succession and thus, diplomatically, on the maintenance of the Anglo-French entente. That entente had not of course been solely intended or maintained for that purpose, but royal and ministerial concern about the defence both of Hanover and of the Hanoverian Succession had given it an impetus and located it in the world of domestic politics.

The other important reason for a shift in consciousness was the development and definition of opposition Whig views. There had been opposition Whigs before 1725, both in 1717–20 and in the under-studied Cowper Group of the early 1720s[33]. They had not, however, concentrated their attacks on foreign policy, largely because there were more tempting targets, the radical domestic programme of the Stanhope-Sunderland ministry and the attempt to ›screen‹ the South Sea Company. The ›new‹ opposition that began in 1725 devoted far more attention to foreign policy. This was a measure of Walpolean caution in domestic policy, the sense that policy could now be criticised without accusations of Jacobitism and a growing concern about the implications of British foreign policy. It was one thing to fight Spain and seek to

31 Stair to Earl of Nottingham, 27 June 1741, Leicester CRO. Finch MSS DG/7/4952: Stair to Robinson, 30 May 1742, BL. Add. 23810 f. 492; Holdernesse to Onslow Burrish, 18 Mar. 1757, PRO. SP. 81/106.

32 Black, Jacobitism and British Foreign Policy, 1731–5 in: Black and E. Cruickshanks eds., The Jacobite Challenge, Edinburgh 1989, pp. 142–60.

33 Black, Parliament and the Political and Diplomatic Crisis of 1717–18, in: Parliamentary History, 3 (1984), pp. 77–101; C. B. Realey, The Early Opposition to Sir Robert Walpole 1720–1727, Lawrence 1931, pp. 78–88.

resist the advance of Russia in the late 1710s, quite another to appear ready in alliance with France to attack Austria after the negotiation of the Treaty of Hanover in 1725. Support for Austria was to be the central theme of opposition Whig thinking on foreign policy. It was glanced at in the pseudonymous name of the author of the »Craftsman«, the most influential opposition newspaper, Caleb d'Anvers, and repeated in press and Parliament. As a cause it lacked the immediacy, emotional fervour and populist possibilities of Spanish depredations, which were to create political difficulties for Walpole in 1729 as well as 1738–9, but support for Austria did offer a means to analyze international relations and British foreign policy while providing a historical framework that linked the opposition critique to the anti-French Whig heroes, William III and Marlborough. These views were developped in 1725–42 without having to confront the reality of difficulties in Anglo-Austrian relations[34]. They were to guide foreign policy from 1742 until 1755, providing the crucial politically-acceptable or plausible continental anchor for an interventionalist diplomacy that support for Hanover and opposition to Prussia could not offer, as George II was made to realise.

Carteret and Stair therefore acted with the vigour of men who had been preaching in the political wilderness for a long time a policy that seemed suddenly to be both really necessary and, thanks to a happy combination of domestic and international circumstances, possible. In such a situation talk of Anglo-French arrangements and negotiations appeared both dangerous and superfluous and Carteret failed to follow up discussions with Bussy in March 1742[35]. This was to remain the case until difficulties and failure in war and growing problems with allies lent urgency to the possibility of peace negotiations. It was believed that France could not afford a long war[36], and the French were well aware of the determination of the new ministry. In June 1742 Amelot wrote to Fénelon, the French envoy at The Hague, that France wanted peace, but did not doubt that the principal opposition would arise from the British who, he wrote, wanted *rétablir la Cour de Vienne dans son ancienne splendeur, mais qui de plus sont animés contre la France d'une fureur qui va jusqu' au fanatisme*. Fénelon, employing language similar to that which the British opposition had used against France for several years, wrote that Britain wished *se rendre arbitre despotique des affaires de l'Europe*[37].

The mood in Britain in the summer of 1742 was optimistic. *If our politicians have good intelligence, the French are to be driven out of Germany: confined to their own country: Germany to be parcelled out to confederate princes: The new works of Dunkirk entirely to be demolished: and the ambition of France rendered incapable of disturbing the peace of Europe for some ages*[38]. This optimism flew in the face of the

34 Black, When »Natural Allies« Fall Out. Anglo-Austrian Relations, 1725–1740, in: Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Staatsarchivs, 36 (1983), pp. 120–49; Black, Anglo-Austrian relations, 1725–1740. A study in failure, in: British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies, 12 (1989), pp. 29–45.

35 Bussy, memorandum, AE. MD. Ang. 8 f. 272–6, 40 f. 107–14; Thompson to Newcastle, 14 July 1742, PRO. SP. 78/227 f. 276–82.

36 Thompson to Harrington, 26 Sept. 1741, PRO. SP. 78/226 f. 169–71; Stair to Robinson, 30 May 1742, BL. Add. 23810 f. 492; Bussy to Amelot, 14 June 1742, AE. CP. Ang. 415 f. 24.

37 Amelot to Fenelon, Fénelon to Louis XV, 28 June, 25 June 1742, AE. CP. Hollande 443 f. 69, 102.

38 George Harbin to Thomas Carew MP, 28 Aug. (os) 1742, Taunton, Somerset Record Office, Trollop-Bellew papers, DD/TB FT 18.

recent experience of the war with Spain, namely deflated hopes, but reflected the hopes of a new government and an apparently propitious international situation.

Optimism was to last until late 1743 when the failure to exploit Dettingen, the realisation that the issue of favour for Hanover would cause a parliamentary storm and the growing divisions within the ministry over Carteret's failure to consult his colleagues led to an appreciation of the domestic political implications of the war. The following year the international situation deteriorated when France supported the Jacobites openly, Britain became a principal in the conflict and Frederick II's attack on Austria fatally handicapped her war effort. The British found, as the French had earlier done, that the window of opportunity in the early stages of a conflict, created by favourable diplomatic and domestic circumstances, could not survive the problems and exigencies of alliance politics and the pressure of failure. The British lost the ability to determine how far they should intervene because interests judged vital were directly affected by French support for the Jacobites and military action in the Austrian Netherlands. In October 1743 the veteran diplomat Horatio Walpole sent his former protégé Robert Trevor, now envoy in The Hague, the accurate prediction that the ministry would survive parliamentary attacks *but yet I don't see so clearly as I could wish how we shall make a good end of this war.* Carteret was needlessly optimistic about the value of Britain's alliances and her relative diplomatic strength vis à vis France, necessarily so as his views about France had not diminished in their intensity. He told the House of Lords in December 1743, *there is an enemy at once nearer and more powerful, an enemy which equally in peace and war endeavours our destruction, and whose trade and armies are equally to be dreaded; an enemy so artful, that even the utmost friendship which can subsist between us, is only an intermission of open hostilities*[39].

However attractive this view might be for a domestic audience, especially at a time when Carteret was trying to restore his domestic credentials in the face of criticism for apparently favouring Hanover, it was one that was to cause considerable difficulties for British foreign policy. The argument that France could not be trusted limited Britain's room for manoeuvre vis à vis both her allies and France and that at a time both when wars generally ended as a result of unilateral negotiations and when such negotiations were common during a war[40]. British intransigence also made subsequent compromise at a time of peace politically less palatable and encouraged the French to concentrate their efforts against Britain by in particular supporting the Jacobites in 1744–6[41]. French support for the Jacobites was the immediate cause of the outbreak of war in 1744, just as the French attack on Minorca was in 1756. In neither case, were these immediate causes the first instance of fighting, let alone of confrontation or hostility between the two powers. In both cases they were of importance, however, because there was no sharp divide between war and peace in

39 Walpole to Trevor, 22 Oct. (os) 1742, Trevor Papers vol. 36, Finkenstein, Prussian envoy in Hanover, to Frederick II, 30 Oct. 1743, PRO. SP. 43/32; Cobbett (see n. 22) XIII, 125.

40 Material on Austro-French negotiations can be found in: R. Butler, Choiseul 1, Oxford 1980, pp. 327–683 passim.

41 J. Colin, Louis XV et les Jacobites. Le projet de debarquement en Angleterre 1743–44, Paris 1901; F. McLynn, France and the Jacobite rising of 1745, Edinburgh 1981; Black, Culloden and the '45, Gloucester 1990, chap. 4.

this period, but rather a continuum including states of undeclared war that could enable powers to retain a degree of freedom of choice about their commitment to the struggle. A formal declaration of war lessened this dramatically, as well as ensuring that the conflict would have to be waged in order to obtain the best peace terms. French support for the Jacobites was an unambigious declaration of hostility and one that caused Britain very considerable problems in 1744–6. It marked the culmination of Jacobite aspirations and the French recognition that their conflict with Britain was not a limited war subject to limitations and compromise. By supporting the Jacobites the French were seeking a radical solution, a total victory both diplomatically and militarily, in stark contrast to the usual portrayal of ancien regime warfare and international relations as limited in their aim. The '44 was a failure but the following year French successes in the Austrian Netherlands offered the prospect of a militarily more secure road to victory. Rather than relying on the vagaries of wind and naval success, as in 1744, or on the unpredictable nature of the relationship between George II and his British ministers by threatening Hanover, as in 1741, and as was suggested again in May 1745[42], it was clearly possible to achieve success in the Low Countries. Chesterfield reflected in July 1745, *I look upon Flanders now as gone and whatever else the French have a mind to, as going. Where then are we? What will our friend Louis XV say to us? I fear he will think himself in a situation to dictate, rather than propose. The only way therefore in my opinion to converse with him upon equal terms is first to whisper and agree with Antimac* (Frederick II). Newcastle was struck by *the melancholy and almost desperate situation of things in every part of Europe*[43].

In that situation the ministry was willing to negotiate with France, though the ministers in London expressed a clear preference for settling with Prussia first, Newcastle writing in July 1745,

> *were it possible to flatter ourselves with the hopes of making a tolerable general peace under these disadvantageous circumstances, it would, undoubtedly, be best of all; and as we consider the detaching of France, in no other light, than that of making a general peace; it is from the difficulty, or impossibility, of doing this, at present, upon tolerable terms, that we give the preference to that which we think may be obtained, vizt an accomodation with the King of Prussia*[44].

The context, ministerial correspondence in a period of anxiety about a deteriorating military situation rather than a parliamentary statement designed to elicit support, was different, but Newcastle's language was not that of Carteret, who had been forced out in February 1744 by opposition from his fellow ministers. Newcastle's language was that of prudential assessment, of finding the best time for successful negotiations. He was willing to support talks through Bussy, while writing *no kind of judgment can be formed either as to the real intentions of the court of France, to come to an accommodation at all; or, if they were so disposed, as to the conditions*

42 Anon. memorandum, May 1745, AE. MD. Ang. 40 f. 122; For Hanoverian fears, Grote to Hyndford, 16 Ap. 1745, Hanover, Niedersächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Calenberg Brief Archiv 24 Nr. 6617 f. 44.

43 Chesterfield to Trevor, 6 July (os) 1745, Trevor Papers vol. 49; Newcastle to Harrington, 12 July (os) 1745, PRO. SP. 43/414.

44 Harrington to Newcastle, 4, 29 July 1745, BL. Add. 32704, 419, 510; Papiers Raisonné to Harrington, 6, 8 July 1745, PRO. SP. 43/361; Newcastle to Harrington, 12 July (os) 1745, PRO. SP. 43/114.

upon which that accommodation was to be made[45]. However, the prospect of exploratory talks was swept aside by the '45, the landing of Bonnie Prince Charlie in Scotland and his subsequently invasion of England. As there is no scholarly account of Anglo-French discussions or negotiations, with the exception of Lodge's book, which concentrates on the last years of the war and omits French and many British sources[46], the significance of exploratory talks is unclear. It possibly can only be elucidated when the extent of scholarship on the conflict approaches that of the work on the Seven Years' War, which at present seems unlikely.

The events of 1745–6 set the tone for the rest of the war. The French-supported Jacobites were unable to challenge the Hanoverian Succession successfully, though the British government remained concerned about Jacobite schemes for the remainder of the war. Conversely the British and their allies were unable to defeat the French in the Low Countries, and by 1747 the French had invaded the United Provinces, an ample demonstration of the strength and success of the French military machine. The French success further exacerbated the security situation in Britain. Newcastle's private secretary Andrew Stone wrote from Whitehall in August 1745, *We hope we shall soon have a pretty strong squadron in the Channel: But I know too well, the great delays and uncertaintys that service is liable to, to depend very much upon it. When Ostend is gone (as it will soon be) I tremble to think of the constant alarms we shall be subject to; and of the effects those alarms will naturally produce*[47].

Any peace would have to be a compromise. The dream of a dictated peace, such as Louis XIV had nearly been brought to accept in 1709–10, was clearly no longer on the agenda. However, the realisation that peace would have to entail compromise helped to awaken divisions within Britain over foreign policy. These centred on what should be the top priority in the peace negotiations. Essentially the clash was one of America versus the continent of Europe, national interests versus those of allies and the maintenance of a collective security system. Such a contrast in Anglo-French relations was new, though there was a significant precedent in Anglo-Spanish relations. By the Treaty of Seville in 1729 the Walpole ministry had agreed to support Philip V's interests in Italy, against the wishes of Austria and her British supporters, in order both to seal the dissolution of the Austro-Spanish alliance of 1725 (the Treaty of Vienna) and to obtain a satisfactory settlement of Anglo-Spanish differences, particularly over Caribbean trade. In contrast, Anglo-French colonial disputes had played little role in Anglo-French relations, either in the wars of 1689–1713 or in the creation, course and collapse of the Anglo-French alliance. The opposition attempt to inspire a parliamentary storm in 1730 over French aggression in St. Lucia had failed. Concern over French schemes in the West Indies lacked the political resonance and popular interest aroused by Spanish policies there or, in 1730, by French works at Dunkirk.

In contrast the retention of Cape Breton Island and the French base of Louisbourg on the island was to be a major political issue in 1745–8. The capture of the leading French fortress guarding the approaches to Canada was popular in Britain, Philip

45 Newcastle to Harrington, 19 July (os) 1745, PRO. SP. 43/114.

46 R. Lodge, Studies in Eighteenth-Century Diplomacy 1740–1748, London 1930.

47 Stone to Edward Weston, 2 Aug. (os) 1745, Farmington, Connecticut, Lewis Walpole Library, Weston Papers vol. 16.

Yorke, writing to his brother Joseph in August 1745, *the surrender of Cape Breton has put our merchants in high spirits ... being the best managed expedition of any that has been undertaken during the whole course of the war*[48]. Aside from the intrinsic importance of the gain, the political climate was propitious for a new stress on the value of colonial conquests. By 1745 both public and ministerial disenchantment with Britain's allies, continental commitments and the role of Hanover were far advanced. The hope that the fall of Carteret would both ease these concerns and would lessen George II's zeal for both Hanover and anti-Prussian policies was not realised. »Old England«, a leading London opposition newspaper, painted a dire picture in August 1745,

we may soon expect to see England the wretched appendix of a despicable corner of Germany; we may expect to see the Hanoverian sergeants beating up for recruits on the streets of London, and a bill brought in for cancelling the few articles of the Act of Settlement still in force ... a Broad-bottomed ministry, whose sole merit in the opposition was to oppose the encroachments of Hanover, and whose merit in the administration has been to encourage them[49]

The opposition press was obliged to concentrate on Hanover, because it was not informed of the details of Britain's troubled relations with her allies, but ministers who were complained about them. Newcastle drew attention to the role of political opinion in his complaints about the failure to defend the Austrian Netherlands adequately,

the behaviour of the Queen of Hungary, in totally abandoning the Netherlands; and the refusal of the court of Brussels, to let the places there have the defence, which the nature of their situation gives them, by the inundation; have raised here the utmost resentment against the Court of Vienna, and rendered their cause much less popular, that it formerly has been. And when it shall be known, that the court of Vienna has formally refused to lessen the number of their enemies, at present so numerous, by making up with the king of Prussia, and persist in pursuing their own particular views and interests, at the expence of their allies, there will be very little room for them to hope for any assistance from this country in the support of those measures..

And yet Newcastle also asserted the strategic need for the support of continental states that he felt Britain had, *in all events, the recovery of Flanders is so capital a point for this country, that we cannot but humbly hope, that it will take place of all other considerations*[50]. This view was shared by Stair who wrote the same month that he was not afraid *of the Pretender nor of an invasion on any part of Great Britain but if the machine of the alliance should happen to fall to the ground I'm afraid the affairs of this nation will be found to be in a very dangerous situation whatever some people have been in use to say*[51]. Thus, the guidelines of a future clash were already evident. Whatever the problems with Britain's allies, ministers held that they were needed and the maintenance both of their alliance and of the strategic situation in the Low Countries might compete with overseas priorities. This was to become a pressing diplomatic and political problem because of the failure to reverse France's gains in

48 Philip to Joseph Yorke, 1 Aug. (os) 1745, BL. Add. 35363 f. 91.
49 Old England, 3 Aug. (os) 1745.
50 Newcastle to Harrington, 9 Aug. (os) 1745, PRO. SP. 43/115.
51 Stair to Earl of Loudoun, 10 Aug. (os) 1745, San Marino, California, Huntington Library (hereafter HL.), Loudoun papers 7609.

1745 and her subsequent success in making further gains, a process that owed something to the diversion of troops to fight the Jacobites, more to the Austrian failure to meet their quotas and much to French military skill.

The French attempt to regain Cape Breton by a naval expedition fell victim to Atlantic storms and disease in 1746[52], but they were to succeed in their goal as a result of the campaign in the Low Countries, the peace negotiations serving to reconcile the different political expectations and contrasting military successes of the combatants. France returned her acquisitions in the Low Countries, Britain Cape Breton. This was criticised in Britain where the propaganda and polemic of naval strength against Spain in 1738–9 was now employed against France. This striking development reflected naval and colonial success against her, a contrast to the situation during the last war with France, that of the Spanish Succession, which had been essentially characterised by victories on land; the compromising of land victories, primarily Dettingen (1743), by accusations of royal favour for Hanover; and the growing importance of maritime and colonial affairs in the British perception of France. The power that in 1733 and 1741 had appeared poised to repeat Louis XIV's triumphs on the continent, was by 1748 increasingly seen as a maritime rival. Typical of the jingoistic propaganda was a ballad of early 1748 that was dubious of the results of the peace negotiations at Aix-la-Chapelle, preferring to rely on naval strength

If Britain's sons all Gallic arts despise,
Why listen we at Aix to Gallic lies?
If on our navy Heaven confers success,
Why this long quibbling, and this fine address?
...

Why not our wooden world in motion keep?
Say, is not Britain regent of the deep?
Superior force invincible is ours.
...

If the Grand Monarch will insist on things
Beneath the dignity of generous kings;
Let him insist – and if he's e'er so stiff
Man well the fleet.[53]

Such arguments ignored the practical problems of employing naval power to achieve diplomatic ends[54], and therefore played no part in the British ministerial debate of 1747–8 over the peace negotiations, but they helped to shape public attitudes towards France. The extension of the application of such views from Spain to France was arguably the most important shift in public consciousness in the 1740s. The extent of the public under discussion is difficult to assess. It was essentially

52 G. S. Graham, Empire of the North Atlantic, The Maritime Struggle for North America, Toronto 1950, pp. 132–5.

53 The Monosyllable IF, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Firth c8 (61).

54 Black, The British Navy and British Foreign Policy in the first half of the eighteenth century, in: Black and K. W. Schweizer, eds., Studies in European History in Honour of Ragnhild Hatton, Lennoxville 1985, pp. 137–55; Black, Naval power and British foreign policy in the age of Pitt the Elder, in: Black and Woodfine, eds., British Navy (see n. 5) pp. 91–107.

urban[55] and the notion of there being only one public opinion is misleading. However, just as the voices of those who did not want conflict with France, such as most Catholics and those who traded with her, were muted, so the public voice of those who were opposed to aggressive policies and war was less obvious than those who stridently proclaimed a definition of national interests in terms of hostility to France. Opposition to high taxes and concern abail the size of the national debt could be a coded or not so implicit call for peace, but they were not dominant themes in the public debate, though they were important considerations for Newcastle's brother Henry Pelham, First Lord of the Treasury from 1743 until his death in 1754, as they had been earlier for Walpole.

It would be wrong to place too much weight on the public debate and the role of public opinion. They are too often employed as explanatory devices when the structure of the political system and the detailed development of affairs have not been probed adequately. Hostility to France and the call for *blue water* policies against her neither prevented the government from negotiating peace in 1748 and successfully defending its terms in Parliament, nor stopped Newcastle from developing and following an agenda for British foreign policy in 1748–53 that centred on continental affairs, specifically planning means to prevent a repetition of the varied strategic problems of 1745–8, ranging from the weak state of the Barrier in the Austrian Netherlands to the need to confront the possibility that both France and Prussia would be hostile. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to suggest that altering perceptions played some role on explaining the difference between the Anglo-French conflict that began in 1754 in North America and escalated to a full-scale war and earlier conflicts whose origins, course and consequences were essentially European. The causes of the conflict of 1754 are clear[56], but it has not generally been adequately related to the background of recent Anglo-French relations, in particular efforts to ease European tensions.

Eighteenth century wars commonly ended as a result of collapses of alliances and the coming of peace in turn further exacerbated this situation. Thus the Franco-Spanish alliance which had challenged Austria for control of Italy during the war of the Austrian Succession was replaced by an Austro-Spanish understanding that excluded France, while Spanish neutrality for much of the Seven Years' War crucially helped to swing the balance of maritime advantage against France. Puysieulx, the French foreign minister at the end of the War of the Austrian Succession, hoped to improve relations with Britain and the British ministry was not left in the dark about his plans, Lord Chancellor Harwicke's son, Joseph Yorke, who was sent to Paris in early 1749 as Secretary of Embassy, reported in March 1749, *to convince your lordship how much the French ministry have deceived themselves with false hopes of drawing England into a connection with them, since first the negotiation was begun at Aix-la-Chapelle,* that St. Severin, their plenipotentiary there, had returned from the Congress saying that he founded his glory *on having sowed the seeds of*

55 K. Wilson, Empire, Trade and Popular Politics in mid-Hanoverian Britain: the case of Admiral Vernon, in: Past and Present, 121 (1988), pp. 74–109; M. Peters, Pitt and Popularity. The patriot minister and London opinion during the Seven Years' War, Oxford 1980.

56 T. R. Clayton, The Duke of Newcastle, the Earl of Halifax and the American origin of the Seven Years' War, in: Historical Journal, 24 (1981), pp. 571–603.

dissension between the courts of London and Vienna, and having made an irreparable breach between them and that from this notion came French offers *to unite with us, in pacifying the rest of Europe.*Later that month he reported his discussions with Puysieulx, *that minister is not displeased with what I told him, though he certainly wished a little more readiness to connect with them; however I hope this way of proceeding will take away those violent jealousies, he certainly had conceived of the designs of England in the North, and I really believe he is satisfied, at present, of the king's desire to maintain the public tranquility.* Yorke added the following month that Puysieulx had told him both that Austria would draw Britain into a war and that she had approached France at Aix-la-Chapelle,

it appears to me very plain, that Mr. Puysieulx wants to persuade us, to enter into some defensive, if not offensive engagements with his court ... he went even so far as to say, he thought that England and France should tell the rest of Europe, that they would unite their force against whoever should attempt to disturb the peace; that we should always find them ready to oblige us, in everything, and he hinted, though they were only hints, at some marine disputes, which he gave me to understand, they should be ready to determine amicably, and in our favour.

Yorke regarded the approach as dangerous, informing his father, *I am really always alarmed, when anything is said to me that tends to separate us from our allies*[57].

French good wishes were to be demonstrated by their efforts to keep the peace in the contemporary Baltic crisis caused by the prospect of an attack by Russia, a British ally, on France's ally Sweden, though Puysieulx was concerned about the British failure to consult France adequately in the crisis[58]. Puysieulx's views are of considerable interest in the pre-history of the ›Diplomatic Revolution‹ of 1756. They indicate a conviction that diplomatic links were not immutable, an equally correct assessment that the Anglo-Austrian alliance, which had essentially revived under the pressure of war, was weak, and a belief that France could best defend her interests in a changing international system by co-operating with Britain. This analysis was facilitated by the strains in France's alliance with Frederick II, whose relations with George II had not improved after the war[59]. Puysieulx's attitude suggests that the eventual French acceptance of the Austrian approaches that led to the First Treaty of Versailles of 1 May 1756 should not be seen as revolutionary as it is sometimes presented. Furthermore, the discussions and suggestions of new alignments in 1748–9, which included agreements between Britain and Prussia, Austria and France, and Britain and France, throw a new light on the somewhat schematic arguments used to explain the events of 1756 from a systematic perspective[60]. It is clear both that different arrangements were envisaged and that the order of realignments that occurred in 1755–6 was not the sole possible one. The extent to which opportunities

57 Joseph Yorke to Hardwicke, 8, 22 Mar., 5 Ap. 1749, BL. Add. 35355 f. 22, 27, 34; Joseph to brother Philip Yorke, 16 Mar. 1749, BL. Add. 35363 f. 232.

58 J. R. Danielson, Die Nordische Frage in den Jahren 1746–1751, Helsinki 1888; Puysieulx to Durand, envoy in London, 14 Mar. 1749, AE. CP. Ang. 425 f. 406.

59 R. N. Middleton, French policy and Prussia after the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, 1749–1753, Ph. D. Thesis, Columbia University, 1968; R. Lodge, The Mission of Henry Legge to Berlin, in: Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, 14, (1931), pp. 1–38.

60 A highly intelligent account is offered by K. W. Schweizer, The Seven Years' War: A System Perspective, in Black (ed.), Origins of War (see n. 14) pp. 242–60.

were missed in 1748–9 is open to discussion, but the role of chance in 1755–6 is worth underlining because it encourages caution in adopting too forthright an approach to the questions of 1748–9. It was the unexpected Anglo-French North American Crisis that led Britain to turn to Prussia in 1755 when hopes that Austria would agree to protect Hanover proved misplaced. Had this crisis not occurred then the British ministry would probably have maintained its hopes about Austria. That would not have prevented the planned Austro-Russian attack of Prussia, but such an attack would not have led Britain to come to Frederick's assistance, though she would not have assisted Austria either, unless possibly France had attacked the Austrian Netherlands.

If chance played a major role in 1755–6, it is inappropriate to mimic the duke of Newcastle in his certainties about British national interests in 1748–54. Newcastle did not subscribe to a view of international relations as fixed. He put so much effort into fostering Anglo-Austrian relations[61] precisely because he believed that if Austria was mishandled the alliance would not survive. Newcastle wrote to Cumberland in October 1748,

I can see the follies, and the vanity of the court of Vienna, but I see the danger and ruin of being dependent upon France. I was once catched in the year 1725 when the Hanover treaty was made. I got out of it in the year 1730 (sic) *by the Treaty of Vienna ... no considerations shall ever catch me again. Whenever it will go no longer upon the old foot I shall not help its going at all*[62].

His commitment was shared by Cumberland and in July 1748 Pelham wrote that both had *a very commendable partiality for that power, founded upon principles of the truest policy, and most extensive good to Europe, but I flatter myself I shall not offend, when I suggest that you have met with but unequal returns. They have never come up to their engagements in any one particular*[63]. Newcastle's commitment to what he termed the Old System was personal, but he also had pragmatic reasons for querying suggestions of better relations with Prussia and France. The former he feared would endanger Anglo-Austrian and Anglo-Russian links, while he was concerned about the strength of *›the military party in France‹*[64]. The threat of improved relations with France, and a peace signed without Austria, could be used to push Austria into accepting the termes of Aix-la-Chapelle[65], but suspicion of France remained strong. On that ground Newcastle opposed George II's suggestion that France be asked to make a promise not to oppose his views on Osnabrück, telling Münchhausen, the head of the Hanoverian administration, of

the difficulties that from the experience of above twenty years together both in the present and late reign, had arose to the King, as King and Elector, from applications of this sort to the court of France, who had never failed to give into them, in order to embarrass affairs, and influence

61 R. Browning, The Duke of Newcastle and the Imperial Election Plan, 1749–1754, in: Journal of British Studies, 1 (1967), pp. 28–47.
62 Newcastle to Cumberland, 22 Oct. 1748, RA. CP. 40/166.
63 Pelham to Cumberland, 12 July (os) 1748, RA. CP. 37/157.
64 Newcastle to Earl of Sandwich, plenipotentiary at Aix-la-Chapelle, 10, 11 July, Sandwich to Newcastle, 14 July 1748, PRO. SP. 43/48 f. 3155, 209, 84/434 f. 321.
65 Pelham to Earl Gower, Lord Privy Seal, 9 Aug. (os) 1748, PRO. 30/29/1/11 f. 311; Sandwich to Newcastle, 11 Aug. 1748, PRO. SP. 84/435 f. 229.

the King's conduct with regard to the great system of Europe, and that the same experience had also showed us, that these facilities in the part of France had never been of any service to the Electorate, but to distress and confound them[66].

The matter was not pursued, but Newcastle's attitude revealed the wishful thinking in Puysieulx's suggestions and implied that as the Imperial Election Scheme was defined and developed it would not be in association or even co-operaton with France.

While it might be possible to make transitory use of France, as in setting peace terms or easing the Baltic crisis, difficulties in Anglo-Austrian relations were also seen as temporary, Sandwich writing in 1748 to Robert Keith, the newly-appointed Minister at Vienna, *in the sort of scene that you and I are engaged in fluctuations will frequently happen, but where people mean the same thing at the bottom, and pursue a system, matter generally subside in the end, which I flatter myself is the present case*[67]. It could be argued that Anglo-Austrian differences over the following seven years were to prove Sandwich wrong, but equally it could be said that the alliance served Britain's purpose until the crisis of 1754–5 pushed the defence of Hanover to the forefront of ministerial attention. The assessment hinges on the questions of whether Britain had any viable alternatives and what would have happened had she not had her Austrian alliance. That of course would have depended on the degree of royal and ministerial commitment to the continent but, given that these were strong, it is reasonable to point out that the British position would have been weaker but for the Austrian alliance, however imperfect that might have been. Hanover would certainly have been more vulnerable to the Prussian attack that was feared in 1753. The notion floated in late 1748 of a German collective security system without Austria was not credible. It was proposed by the Ansbach envoy Baron Seckendorf to Münchhausen, Newcastle commenting, *The immediate business is to preserve the Margraviates of Bareith and Ansbach from falling into the King of Prussia's hands, but he has opened a very extensive scheme to His Majesty's German ministers, of creating a party in the Empire, which I am afraid might give some umbrage to the Emperor and the Court of Vienna, as if the Imperial authority was infringed.* Munchhausen was told by Newcastle *very plainly that we had spent twenty millions for the support of the House of Austria this war and that I hoped that would not be all set aside by a coup de plume*[68]. A German alliance system without Austria could only be credible if Prussia was a member, but an alignment with Frederick would bring the enmity of Austria and Russia and without Austria it would be impossible to gain Russia. As France was allied to Prussia and Sweden, the danger of heeding her suggestions of co-operation was that Britain might lose her freedom of manoeuvre and become committed in the Baltic crisis to hostility to Russia and thus Austria.

In July 1750 Puysieulx wrote, *il est assez simple, que chacun de son coté a faire des alliances pour les évenemens et les circonstances futures. Si la rivalité eut permis d'etablir une parfaite confiance entre les deux plus grands mobiles de l'Europe, toutes*

66 Newcastle to Cumberland, 23 July 1748, RA. CP. 37/162.
67 Sandwich to Keith, 26 Sept. 1748, BL. Add. 35464 f. 55.
68 Newcastle to Cumberland, 29 Oct. 1748, RA. CP. 40/149. Newcastle claimed the credit for bringing Münchhausen ›of from all his resentment to the Court of Vienna and prejudice against a King of the Romans‹, to Hardwicke, 14 July 1752, BL. Add. 35410 f. 253.

ces alliances eussent eté chimeriques et en pur perte pour l'Angleterre et pour nous[69]. The British failure to align with France later in the century has been criticised and there has been reference to ›the series of sterile confrontations with Britain's colonial rivals, France and Spain‹[70]. However, though it may seem attractive and plausible to portray the two traditional rivals co-operating against the rising powers of eastern Europe the practicalities of this prospectus appear to have been largely overlooked. Had Britain accepted French leadership, then she would have been obliged to support France's traditional protégés, Sweden, Poland and Turkey, powers that it would have been difficult to assist other than by what had already appeared in Peter I's reign and was to appear again in 1791 as the overrated factor of naval power. Co-operation with France in 1748–9 would also have entailed support for Fredrick II, a course that was scarcely likely to recommend itself to those who envisaged a stable collective security system, for Fredrick was still seen as an aggressive and unpredictable ruler.

The failure to reach an understanding with France did not lead to a rapid deterioration in relations. The French government was absorbed in domestic problems and adverse to taking an assertive role in international relations, to the irritation of Frederick. Prepared to defend their diplomatic interests and unenthusiastic about the Imperial Exchange Scheme, the French nevertheless were not the active force in diplomacy they had been in the late 1730s, nor were they seeking to assemble a coalition of allies that would stand them in good state in an imminent or developing crisis, as they had been in 1732–3 and 1741. It was not surprising that the principal panic to affect British foreign policy in the period 1749–53 arose in 1753 from suspicion of Prussian rather than French actions. Indeed Prussia appeared more of a problem than France to George II and his ministers in this period. Valory, the French envoy in Hanover, reported in June 1750, *Monsieur le Duc de Newcastel croit ou veut paroitre croire le Roy de Prusse comme un prince dangereux, dont la politique est d'animer les puissances les unes contre les autres pour pêcher en eau trouble*[71]. The collective security system developed by Newcastle had thus overcome what had been a major political problem during the War of the Austrian Succession, the contrasting concerns of George II and his ministers about Prussia and France respectively. In April 1751 the Austrian and Russian envoys gave Newcastle Austrian and Russian declarations containing a guaranty of Hanover in case it was attacked on account of George II's accession to the 1746 Austro-Russian treaty, and all three agreed that the declarations *were considered as part of the treaty of accession and equally binding with that treaty*[72]. As the likeliest attacker of Hanover was Frederick II[73], this agreement and indeed the entire thrust of British policy could be seen as serving to protect Hanover, without implying that that was the sole purpose. As such it could

69 Puysieulx to Marquis de Valory, envoy in Hanover, 2 July 1750, AE. CP. Brunswick-Hanover 50 f. 223.

70 J. R. Dull, A Diplomatic History of the American Revolution, New Haven 1985, p. 28.

71 Valory to Puysieulx, 5 June 1750, AE. CP. Brunswick-Hanovre 50 f. 209.

72 Sbornik imperators kago Russkago istorisches kago obshchestvo, 148 vols. St. Petersburg 1867–1916, 148 p. 223.

73 This period is not really considered in R. Hatton's interesting, Frederick the Great and the House of Hanover, in O. Hauser ed., Friederich der Große in seiner Zeit, Cologne 1987, pp. 151–64.

be seen as part of the gradual process of reconciliation between George II and the Pelhams that included such moves as accepting the appointment of Carteret, now Earl Granville, as Lord President of the Council in June 1751. This process was one in which the Pelhams had made much of the running and indeed they had been criticised from 1744 for continuing the broad direction of Carteret's foreign policy. There is no doubt that Newcastle saw the Imperial Election Scheme and the other policies he fostered as designed against both France and Prussia, but it is reasonable to suggest that much of the impetus behind the policies derived from George, Cumberland and the Münchhausens. The policies were essentially formulated in 1748 when George and Newcastle visited Hanover and major efforts to forward them were made on the subsequent visits in 1750 and 1752.

The stress on the Imperial Election Scheme helped to exacerbate relations with France and Prussia, both of which sought to prevent the Electors from lending their support. In July 1752 Newcastle wrote from Hanover to his fellow Secretary of State, the Earl of Holdernesse,

the King is far from thinking that the Court of France has acted with that fairness and sincerity which His Majesty's behaviour towards them (particularly in this last negotiation), has deserved: in which the King has performed every part, that was to be expected from him; and the court of France have done the reverse, throughout the whole ... this behaviour in the Court of France, this departure from their most solemn promises, is, in a great measure, owing to that ascendance, which the King of Prussia has gained over their councils ... There is too much reason to fear, that, however justified His Majesty's conduct will undoubtedly be, in the opinion of all the world; the disappointment of this measure will, and must, tend to increase his Prussian Majesty's credit, and influence over the French councils; and, jointly, create such a power, as may not only affect the independency of the Empire; but, in its consequences, that of all Europe. And the Court of France have sufficiently show'd, by the return which they have made, in this instance, to the King's confidence and communication with them, the little dependance, that is to be had upon them; and, consequently, how dangerous and impracticable, any system, to be formed with them, must prove in the event.

The letter also included a reference to royal support for strong action overseas, George II approving *the directions for fitting out, with the greatest expedition, a stronger squadron for the coast of Africa, than the French will have there. In the present circumstances, there is no other certain way of doing with then, but by being stronger, where we can*[74].

The Imperial Election Scheme, a project that did not command wide support within the British ministry, thus served to provide instances that apparently demonstrated the accuracy of Newcastle's fears of French intentions. Had Britain not supported the scheme it is possible that her continental foreign policy would not have given rise to such occasions but, equally, the alignment with Austria and Russia and the link with Hanover would have served to maintain tense relations with Prussia and, therefore, France. It might appear paradoxical to argue, on the eve of an Anglo-French war that was to break out as a result of colonial differences, that it was Britain's continental policy that served to exacerbate relations. There were colonial disputes, in North America over the Canadian border and Nova Scotia, in the West Indies over Tobago, in West Africa and India, and they featured in Anglo-French

74 Newcastle to Holdernesse, 26 July 1752, PRO. SP. 36/119 f. 138–9, 143.

diplomacy in 1749–53[75]. It would be possible to paint a dire picture of mutual mounting concern, especially in North America, which appears to point towards inevitable conflict[76]. However, it is worth noting that ministerial attention in both Britain and France was directed rather to European affairs and that there were signs of an absence of anxiety on colonial matters, Newcastle writing to a colleague in July 1750 *our late enemies seem disposed to be quiet, and ... to do us justice in America, which is a great point*[77]. Joseph Yorke writing to his brother the following month from Paris was less optimistic, but also less alarmist than William Shirley, Governor of Massachusetts, one of the advocates of a forward policy in America who argued that the fate of *North America and indeed of our marine depends on the success of Nova Scotia. I believe it is of great consequence, but I can't imagine it is so nice an affair as he represents it. We continue to say here that we desire peace, and so we do I believe, but we shall not be so ready to give up any pretensions we may have in the New World, of which England is so jealous*[78].

Newcastle did not want war with France and he argued that by strengthening Britain's continental position he would make France less likely to challenge her, *I was always of opinion that the more we strengthened ourselves, and our system upon the continent, by measures, and alliances, pacific and justifiable in themselves, (provided as the same time, that we adhered strictly and religiously to the terms of our Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle), the more France would covet our friendship, and be more disposed to preserve the peace, and this, the present experience shows to be the case*[79]. This analysis overlooked the role of developments within France and failed to give any weight to the possibility of what actually occurred, an escalating crisis that neither government wanted. Indeed, Newcastle's policy of deterrence through strength both in Anglo-French relations in general and in continental developments was to fail precisely because the mechanistic, systemic approach he adopted was unable both to cope with the strains and ambiguities of alliance politics seeking to reconcile different interests and to comprehend adequately the possibility of an unwanted crisis in which both governments felt it impossible to back down. The French were not to be deterred from reinforcing Canada in 1755 by Britain's alliances. In the meantime the tension that both led to the development and strenghtening of the alliance system and was created by it did not create an atmosphere in Anglo-French relations that would be conductive to their peaceful settlement. This argument can be pushed too far. Newcastle was not the hawk in Anglo-French North American disputes, while negotiations over the North American border were conducted in Paris, Joseph Yorke writing in September 1750 about Nova Scotia, *I hope as this Court seems really desirous of living at peace with us, that we shall be able to settle these points amicably, I dare not flatter myself that it will be speedily*[80].

75 Puysieulx to Valory, 13 July, 10 Aug., 12 Sept., Valory to Puysieulx 19 Sept. 1750, AE. CP. Brunswick-Hanovre 50 f. 240–1, 256, 290–1, 299.
76 Durand, envoy in London, to Puysieulx, 13 July 1750, AE. CP. Ang. 429 f. 15.
77 Newcastle to Gower, 15 July 1750, PRO. 30/29/1/11 f. 320.
78 Joseph Yorke to Philip Yorke, 19 Aug. 1750, BL. Add. 35363 f. 277.
79 Newcastle to Hardwicke, 19 Sept. 1750, BL. Add. 35411 f. 51–2.
80 Joseph Yorke to Philip Yorke, 26 Sept. 1750, BL. Add. 35363 f. 279.

However, while proclaiming that they were fulfilling their obligations, for example over the demolition of the works at Dunkirk[81], the French saw no basis for trust in Anglo-French relations. Puysieulx complained in December 1750,

nous avons bien des motifs de nous défier de la bonne foy de l'Angleterre. Les princes comme vous savés ne se jugent reciproquement que sur les aparences; on voit rarement le fond de leur coeur. Partant de ce principe, il faut convenir que la conduite de la cour de Londres depuis le Traité d'Aix-la-Chapelle n'announce pas le desir d'entretenir la paix dans l'Europe et de nous inspirer de la confiance ... elle forme des alliances dans l'Empire comme si elle etoit a la veille d'une rupture; elle a commencé et suivi la negotiation pour l'Election d'un Roy des Romains d'une façon si peu obligeante pour le Roy et si outrageante pour le Roy de Prusse, qu'il semble qu'elle tienne le fort de l'Europe et de l'Empire dans sa main. Rien de tout cela ne convient a la dignité de Sa Majesté. Que l'Angleterre n'entreprenne rien sans nous consulter; qu'elle nous donne satisfaction sur les pretentions de nos alliez ... qu'elle ne nous fasse point un crime de nos egards pour le Roy de Prusse; qu'elle agisse avec moins de detours et plus de cordialite et de simplicité, et elle nous trouvera très disposés a nous entendre avec elle; mais il ne faut pas qu'elle s'imagine que nous ayons pu voir avec indifference ses negociations d'Hannovre et ses preparations tant en Amerique qu'ailleurs.

Puysieulx added that Britain appeared to be preparing an invasion of Canada[82]. The optimistic hope of better relations, of a new international order, had therefore been replaced by resentment at Britain's continental diplomatic strategy and anxiety about her American plans. It was this anxiety that helped to lead to French projects that were in turn viewed as aggressive by Britain and that led to confrontation in the Ohio river valley. However, conflict did not come for several years and indeed in December 1750 Mirepoix, the French Ambassador, sought to reassure Puysieulx about British intentions. He argued that Britain was not in a state for war and he stressed the role of George II's concern about Hanoverian vulnerability to Prussian attack as the basis for British diplomacy, which was thus to be seen as essentially defensive despite the suspicions it gave rise to. Mirepoix also argued correctly that Britain had no offensive plans in Canada, but he warned that domestic factors might affect her policy towards Nova Scotia and other problems,

Jamais le Ministere Britannique ne termineroit sur ces affaires parcequ' aucun Ministre Anglais n'oseroit en decider, de peur que dans les suites il ne fût exposé à en etre particulierement recherché par le parti qui luy seroit contraire dans le Parlement ... malgré toute l'irregularité de la conduite de ses gens – ci, je ne puis croire qu'ils ayent embrassé de projets, soit pour le present, soit pour l'avenir, de renouveller la guerre. Ils sont bien convaincus qu'ils ne pouroient la commencer par mer sans qu'elle devint generale et qu'ils ne fussent obligés de la continuer par terre, et c'est a qui l'Angleterre ne peut etre en etat de suffire de longtems.

Mirepoix argued that of the four most influential ministers, Bedford, Hardwicke and Pelham sought peace, while only Newcastle would support George II's desire to take a major European role, and that, although British policy was essentially defensive, it might lead to offensive action by Britain or her allies[83]. Mirepoix's analysis was a perceptive one, but it was not to guide French actions in North America. Arguably, had France had more confidence in the extent and purpose of British intentions, war

81 Puysieulx to Durand, 29 Sept. 1750, AE. CP. Ang. 429 f. 192.
82 Puysieulx to Mirepoix, envoy in London, 12 Dec. 1750, AE. CP. Ang. 429 f. 310–11, 315.
83 Mirepoix to Puysieulx, 17 Dec. 1750, AE. CP. Ang. 429 f. 324–5, 334, 336–41.

would have been avoided and France would not have lost Canada. However, British policy appeared especially transitory in this period because of the advanced years of George II, born in 1683, and the opposition of his heirs, Princes Frederick and George, to his ministers. More to the point, yielding pretensions was regarded as a dishonourable step and one, moreover, that was imprudent, because it would encourage further demands for concessions. The tradition in Europe was of long-standing legalistic disputes, especially in the Empire and Italy, while colonial controversies, for example that over Sacramento, the Portuguese colony on the north shore of the Plate estuary, could be both long-lasting and conducted without leading to hostilities in Europe. This was also the experience of Britain and France. Conflict in India in the early 1750s between their East India Companies played little role in diplomatic relations between the two powers and did not lead to war between them. Newcastle noted in June 1753 of negotiations concerning India, *This negotiation was purely between company and company; Though the East India Company would (as became them) do nothing without His Majesty's permission.*

The French were concerned that the pressure of British westward expansion in North America would undermine the security of their colonies there[84]. They saw no reason to yield points that would assist this process, and were anyway aware that the central concern of British policy in 1749–53 was European. Despite Puysieulx's fears in late 1753, there was no reason to anticipate a British attack on Canada and the number of reports and instructions devoted to American affairs in the series Correspondance Politique Angleterre does not jump until 1754. Other colonial quarrels in the years before were settled or conducted without the outbreak of war, Joseph Yorke writing in September 1752, *I am very easy about the coast of Africa. France will never attack us where we are strongest, and therefore we are mad, if we are not so everywhere, where we can*[85]. In the winter of 1752–3 the British appealed for French pressure on Frederick II to moderate his threats to Saxony and Hanover, action that did not stem from any trust in French intentions but that would hardly have been taken had negotiations over America been so tense that the ministry feared to show any weakness[86]. Indeed Newcastle argued that there was a direct relationship between Britain's colonial and continental strength, that America could be endangered if Hanover was lost, when in February 1753 he expressed the hope that France would interpose with Prussia,

84 Newcastle to Joseph Yorke, 26 June 1753, PRO. SP. 84/463; T. C. Pease ed., Anglo-French boundary disputes in the west, 1749–1763, Springfield Illinois, 1936; K. P. Bailey, The Ohio Company of Virginia and the westward movement, 1748–1792, Glendale, California 1939; M. Savelle, The diplomatic history of the Canadian boundary, 1749–1763, New Haven 1940; D. S. Graham, British Intervention in Defence of the American Colonies, 1748–56, Ph. D., London 1969; J. E. Stagg, Protection and Survival; Anglo-Indian relations 1748–63, Ph. D., Cambridge 1984; A. Reese, Europäische Hegemonie und France d'outre-mer. Koloniale Fragen in der Französischen Außenpolitik 1700–1763 Stuttgart 1988, pp. 249–73.

85 Joseph to Philip Yorke, 4 Sept. 1752, BL. Add. 35363 f. 308.

86 Newcastle to Earl of Albemarle, Ambassador in Paris, 18, 29 Oct., Albemarle to Newcastle, 25 Oct. 1752, PRO. SP. 78/245 f. 160, 170, 175; Newcastle to Joseph Yorke, envoy at The Hague, 12 Jan., 6 Mar. 1753, PRO. SP. 84/462; Saint-Contest, French foreign minister, to La Touche, envoy in Berlin, 23 Mar., 19 Ap. 1753, AE. CP. Prusse 171 f. 188, 225.

But if, either France should not be sorry, that His Prussian Majesty should begin, or should hope, that these acts of violence, if supported, might tend, as they undoubtedly would, to the ruin and destruction of the trade and navigation of His Majesty's kingdoms, and greatly lower and reduce the weight, reputation, and influence, of the naval force of this country; there would be reason to fear, that, in that case, The King of Prussia may be encouraged to support his present unjust proceeding[87].

Newcastle feared both that French military encampments might be connected with those of Prussia[88], and that Frederick II would press for French support over the eventual succession to the crown of Poland, *though perhaps, this may be too strong, and too uncertain a measure, for France to come into at present; there is, however, great reason to believe, that the court of France are preparing measures so, as to be able to strike, and with effect, whenever the case shall happen*[89].

Allegations of French works at Dunkirk in clear breach of treaty obligations also aroused distrust. Joseph Yorke thought them worth fighting over, while the London press discussed the issue, the opposition »Protester« bitterly criticising the government[90]. There is no doubt from Newcastle's correspondence that he distrusted France, even though he appreciated that her government was less aggressive that that of Prussia,

The late letters from Mylord Albemarle, have brought nothing, that can give any room to guess, what may be the final resolution of the court of France, upon the two material points, now depending; the election of the King of the Romans; and the particular disputes with the King of Prussia. Mor. de St. Contest varies his manner of talking, almost in every conversation. Sometimes he talks plausibly, and pretty satisfactory upon both points; and afterwards, in the next conversation, appears as difficult, and as unreasonable as ever. I think, their present view is, not to break the peace; but the King of Prussia will certainly carry them great lengths, if he shall think proper to insist upon it; and, therefore, we should always endeavour to prepare for the worst[91].

This was scarcely an optimistic assessment, and it helps to explain both why Newcastle continued his attempt to breathe life into the Anglo-Austro-Russian system and why he was to be filled with foreboding when the situation in America deteriorated. However, as Anglo-French hostility still revolved around continental issues in 1753 it was not surprising that Newcastle, who had been more interventionalist than his ministerial colleagues for a number of years, especially over the issue of subsidies, should in August 1753 inform the Sardinian envoy that he was alone in his view that Britain should adopt a firmer view in order to make France more tractable while his colleagues feared war[92]. As 1754 opened Mirepoix was not concerned about British policy. He reported that the British government had no

87 Newcastle to Yorke, 13 Feb. 1753, PRO. SP. 84/462, 463.
88 Newcastle to Yorke, 6 Mar., Yorke to Newcastle, 10, 13, 17 Ap. 1753, PRO. SP. 84/462; Joseph to Philip Yorke, 10 Ap. 1753, BL. Add. 35363 f. 326.
89 Newcastle to Robert Keith, envoy in Vienna, 30 Mar. 1753, PRO. SP. 80/191.
90 Yorke to Newcastle, 11, 22 May, 3, 22 June, Newcastle to Yorke, 1 June 1753, PRO. SP. 84/463; Whitehall Evening Post, 14 June 1753; Joseph to Philip Yorke, 3 July 1753, BL. Add. 35363 f. 332; Protester, 14 July 1753; Mirepoix to St. Contest, 1 Feb. 1754, AE. CP. Ang. 437 f. 49.
91 Newcastle to Yorke, 17 Ap. 1753, PRO. SP. 84/463.
92 D. B. Horn, The Cabinet Controversy on Subsidy Treaties in time of Peace, 1749–50, in: English Historical Review 45 (1930), pp. 463–6; R. Browning, The Duke of Newcastle, New Haven 1975,

plans which could threaten peace, that Pelham was too occupied with domestic and financial problems to support Austrian and Russian schemes and that George II's concern about Hanover had not led to ministerial support for these schemes[93]. Mirepoix did, however, touch on British domestic sensitivity to colonial issues, though the problem in question was Caribbean, not North American. He reported that news of French naval moves led the British government to press for the dispatch of help to the Indies, adding *Il paroit qu'il y a de l'affectation dans tous les mouvemens que se donne le gouvernement pour presser les preparatifs, et je crois volontiers que son objet principal est de satisfaire au murmure general qu' a excité dans Londres le depart de notre escadre, et je le suposerois bien plutôt que de croire, qu'ils veuillent par la nous en imposer, ou qu'ils soient determinés a donner lieu a de nouveaux troubles.* Mirepoix, nevertheless, warned that although the government wished to settle disputes, France should take precautions, while St. Contest wrote that Britain would be unable to intimidate France over the Indies[94]. Mirepoix's confidence in British passivity was somewhat hit by Pelham's death[95] but he was hopeful that domestic political problems would dissuade the government from taking a more forceful role abroad[96]. Rather than suspecting colonial trouble, Mirepoix reported that Newcastle sought good relations and that the only danger came from his complaisance for George II's pro-Austrian sentiments, an analysis whose stress on the continent accorded with Newcastle's views of the previous September[97]. Bar the affairs of India, there was little diplomatic activity in Anglo-French relations in May or early June 1754 and Mirepoix took leave of absence as a result of this lull. St. Contest was unhappy about this, but because of his concern about developments in India, not America[98].

North America had been a cause of diplomatic activity and ministerial concern for a number of years, but its sudden rise to prominence in the summer of 1754 was a surprise. Horatio Walpole, a diplomatic veteran of the Anglo-French alliance, was aware of the importance attached to the issues at stake but hopeful that they could be settled without war. He wrote in July 1754 to Robert Dinwiddie, Lieutenant-Governor of Virginia, of his

concern at the unjust attempts of the French upon the boundaries of our colonies; if they go on in the project they seem to have in view, they will encompass all our northern colonies in the back by a chain of communication between the rivers Canada, and Mississippi, and come masters of all the Indians, and the trade on that continent, which require our utmost attention, and exertion of strength to prevent it, but as it is a common cause to all our northern colonies ... they might I am fully persuaded, considering their connection and the number of their inhabitants, soon disperse the French and their Indians, and disappoint their dangerous schemes, which at the beginning may be done, if cordially undertaken, without any great

pp. 159–80; Perron to Charles Emmanuel III, 23 Aug. 1753, Turin, Archivio di Stato, Lettere Ministri Inghilterra (hereafter AST. LM. Ing.) 57.

93 Mirepoix to St. Contest, 10 Jan. 1754, AE. CP. Ang. 437 f. 17–18.

94 Mirepoix to St. Contest, 25 Jan., St. Contest to Mirepoix, 25 Jan. 1754, AE. CP. Ang. 437 f. 32–3, 35.

95 Mirepoix to St. Contest, 7, 14, 25 Mar. 1754, AE. CP. Ang. 437 f. 76, 85, 109.

96 Mirepoix to St. Contest, 25 Ap. 1754, AE. CP. Ang. 437 f. 97, 109.

97 Mirepoix to St. Contest, 23 Ap. 1754, AE. CP. Ang. 437 f. 181.

98 Mirepoix to St. Contest, 6, 11 June, St. Contest to Mirepoix, 14 June 1754, AE. CP. Ang. 437 f. 220–1, 226, 228–9.

expense, and they might think fit to retire at once; before the councils of France shall have openly owed it, and made it a matter of state; but if they are suffered to make a strong settlement there and get together forces enough to support it, it may occasion troubles between the two nations of such expense and extent as may make it difficult to put an end to[99].

North American differences were not, however, as easy to overlook as Indian problems. St. Contest's replacement Rouillé, certain that the French had only maintained their rights and repelled force by force, argued that border problems could be dealt with by the commissioners already empowered to do so, but added ominously, but accurately, that once clashes had begun their consequences would be difficult to contain. He stressed French moderation[100], but in late September the British decided to send two regiments to America in order to conduct offensive operations. The most recent discussion of the subject has concluded that this was due to the bellicose views of the Duke of Cumberland and two ministers, the Earl of Halifax, President of the Board of Trade, and Henry Fox, the Secretary-at-War[101]. Foreign diplomats, less well-informed about ministerial disputes, stressed the danger of parliamentary opposition[102]. The session was imminent, problems of management considerable in the volatile political world created by Pelhams death and, as in 1739, the prospect of parliamentary difficulties interacted with ministerial disputes. The imminence of the session obliged the ministry to have a policy, though it would be misleading to suggest that Cumberland and Halifax were primarily swayed by parliamentary considerations. Halifax had long been associated with Nova Scotia, while Fox was Cumberland's ally. Knowing that military matters were under the sway of George II and Cumberland, Newcastle gave way to Cumberland, ensuring that *from mid October American issues suddenly ceased to matter in the struggle for the leadership,* Sir Gilbert Elliot wrote of the first day of debates in the Commons that the opposition *expostulated ... chiefly upon the American affairs, but declared they would not directly oppose it, as the appearance of unanimity was at present very necessary with regard to our foreign affairs*[103].

The decision to send reinforcements to America and to adopt an aggressive plan of operations made war with France more likely, though Newcastle hoped that an escalation in stages would leave room for negotiations[104]. There was an element of wishful thinking, comparable to his hope in 1731 that France would accept the Second Treaty of Vienna, but Newcastle had no choice in light of George's support for Cumberland. Whereas in 1744 and 1746 it had proved possible for the Pelhams to drive George into parting with Carteret, in 1754 Newcastle was not supported by a

99 Walpole to Dinwiddie, 15 July 1754, HL. HM. 9406.

100 St. Contest to Boutel, French agent in charge in Mirepoix's absence, 9 Sept., Rouille to Duras, French envoy in Spain, 1754, AE. CP. Ang. 437 f. 296–7, 335–40.

101 Clayton (see n. 56), pp. 592–603.

102 Perron to Charles Emmanuel, 10 Oct. 1754, AST. LM. Ing. 58; Haslang, Bavarian envoy, to Preysing, Bavarian foreign minister, 11 Oct. 1754, Munich, Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Bayerische Gesandschaften, London (hereafter Bayr.) 229; Boutel to Rouillé, 24 Oct. 1754, AE. CP. Ang. 437 f. 355–6.

103 J. C. D. Clark, The Dynamics of Change. The crisis of the 1750s and English party systems, Cambridge 1982, p. 104; Elliot to his father, the Earl of Minto, 16 Nov. 1754, Edinburgh, National library of Scotland MS 11001 f. 10.

104 Clayton (see n. 56) p. 593.

united ministry, while the point at dispute, opposition to apparent French aggression in North America, was one that was popular. The specific political impact of the shift in public consciousness over colonial disputes, especially North America, was limited, but there seems little doubt that in late 1754 the prevalent opinion in political circles was of a need to stand up to France, and that this was not really related to the more general problems of Britain's diplomatic standing towards France. The fall of Cape Breton in 1745 and naval victories over France in the War of the Austrian Succession had encouraged an optimistic assessment of Britain's chances in a future conflict, one that was fully reflected in the press[105]. A front page essay in the opposition London newspaper »Old England« on 15 December 1750 began

The all-grasping views of the House of Bourbon have been so manifest for half a century past, that it is equally the duty of politicians to watch over and expose, and of princes to obstruct and restrain them ... The two heads of France and Spain are continually aiming at new encroachments ... The practices now on foot to wrest from us the best part of Nova Scotia, and establish French colonies in defiance of our better right, and a mutual agreement to leave them in a neutral state, in the islands of Tobago, St. Lucia, and others, cannot but raise the indignation of every Briton at this time[106].

The French ministry was kept fully informed of this agitation. One set of newspaper verses surviving in the French archives ended with a call for naval action against France,

To settle this point send out forty good sail,
With Warren or Hawke to inspect each minutia:
They'll teach us to whom shall belong without fail,
Tobago, Dominica, St. Vincent, St. Lucia[107]

Such items carried no reference to the cost of conflict, the difficulty of keeping hostilities local, the possibility of French pressure on Hanover and the Low Countries and the danger of invasion. The experience of 1739, when the United Provinces had refused to provide assistance against Spain, was a warning, and in March 1754 the French envoy in Vienna reported Austrian displeasure with British naval preparations, on the grounds that Britain might be thus distracted from European affairs and that hostilities, once begun, would spread to Europe[108]. European commitments would entail a level of expense that would test the ministry's parliamentary strength, as the Bavarian envoy warned in October 1754. Joseph Yorke wrote from The Hague that France *feels too strongly her own force in this part of the world, where the false politics of the Court of Vienna leaves us naked and defenceless*[109].

The French, however, as Newcastle told the Sardinian envoy, did not wish to fight. Rouillé could not imagine that George would use open force and he decided to send Mirepoix back to London, whence Boutel warned that the British reinforcements sent to America and the terms of the royal speech suggested that George

105 Old England, 6 Oct (os), 3 Nov. (os) 1750.
106 Old England, 6 Oct (os), 3 Nov. (os) 1750.
107 AE. CP. Ang. 429 f. 203.
108 Aubeterre to St. Contest, 2 Mr. 1754, AE. CP. Autriche 253 f. 48–9.
109 Haslang to Preysing, 11 Oct. 1754, Bayr. 229; Joseph to Philip Yorke, 26 Nov. 1754, BL. Add. 35364 f. 17.

would not keep the peace[110]. Mirepoix arrived in London on 8 January 1755, his mission made more important by the death of the Earl of Albemarle, the British envoy in Paris, the previous month. In his audience with George II on 10 January, the king told Mirepoix that he sought peace but was determined to protect his subjects, goals that the ambassador unsurprisingly declared were shared by Louis XV. The same day Newcastle told Mirepoix of his desire for peace but he added untruthfully that the troops being sent to America would only be used for defence, and that they were destined less against France *que pour contenir leurs propres colonies peu soumis depuis long tems aux ordres du Gouvernement Brite*. The better-informed Sir Thomas Robinson, Secretary of State for the Southern Department, drew attention to the differences between British and French maps of the interior of America[111]. Newcastle and Robinson told Mirepoix, and Newcastle and Holdernesse, Perron, that the ministry was affected by the domestic pressure for action[112], and Mirepoix stressed the need for France to take precautions. Naval armaments by both powers increased tension and distrust. Robinson wrote to Benjamin Keene, the envoy in Madrid, *We have, on one side, polite and handsome professions, from M. de Mirepoix, of His Master's sincere desire for peace; on the other hand, every letter from Paris, and other ports, brings advice of the great armaments making at Brest, Toulon, and Rochfort .... We shall not, we must not, be behind with them*[113]. While Mirepoix stressed the need for speedy action to stem the developing crisis, the French ministry was unwilling to make the sort of concessions that were necessary. Rouillé argued correctly that the British were not telling the truth about the reinforcements they were sending to America, suggested that Britain would accept an armistice only in order to reinforce her American colonies and claimed that the French position on the Ohio was no threat to these colonies. He pointed out that the Appalachians were a considerable obstacle[114]. However, such remarks were no longer appropriate. Robinson pressed Mirepoix on the need for a quick and definite settlement, citing the position of the ministry *vis à vis la nation*, while Mirepoix wrote of the need for both speed and precautions, *La nation Anglaise est preveniie et vivement animée. Le gouvernement est faible et peut d'un moment à l'autre etre entrainé avec luy*[115]. Rouillé, however, replied in terms of distrust and argued that George II should assure Parliament of France's sincerity[116]. Conferences between Mirepoix and the British ministers failed to provide a satisfactory solution to the Ohio dispute, while Rouillé pressed the need for the government to oppose popular agitation for war, *Nous connoissons le degré d'influence que les clameurs de la nation peuvent avoir sur leurs opérations, et c'est, en partant de cette connoissance, que nous*

110 Perron to Charles Emmanuel, 5 Dec. 1754, AST. LM. Ing. 58; Rouillé to Boutel, 6 Dec., Boutel to Rouillé, 19 Dec. 1754, AE. CP. Ang. 437 f. 399, 416–17.
111 Mirepoix to Rouillé, 16 Jan. 1755, AE. CP. Ang. 438 f. 15–21.
112 Mirepoix to Rouillé, 16 Jan. 1755, AE. CP. Ang. 438 f. 21–22; Perron to Charles Emmanuel, 23 Jan. 1755, AST. LM. Ing. 59.
113 Rouillé to Bonnac, French envoy in The Hague, 16 Jan. 1755, AE. CP. Hollande 488 f. 19; Mirepoix to Rouillé, 16, 23, 30 Jan. 1755, AE. CP. Ang. 438 f. 27–8, 42, 54; Robinson to Keene, 27 Jan. 1755, Leeds, Archive Office, Vyner Mss (hereafter Leeds Vyner) 11834.
114 Rouillé to Mirepoix, 3 Feb. 1755, AE. CP. Ang. 438 f. 76–80.
115 Mirepoix to Rouillé, 10 Feb. 1755, AE. CP. Ang. 438 f. 116, 120.
116 Rouillé to Mirepoix, 19 Feb. 1755, AE. CP. Ang. 438 f. 152–3, 163–87.

sommes persuadés qu'il ne tient qu'au Roi d'Angleterre et à son conseil de rallentir la fermentation populaire a Londres[117].

Valuable evidence about ministerial attitudes, which cast light on Anglo-French negotiations, can be found in other diplomatic series. On 25 February 1755 Rouillé sent a long instruction to the Duc de Duras, the French envoy in Madrid, which revealed his opinion of the role of British domestic pressures. He noted that the British ministry cited the clamours of the nation to justify their considerable armaments, but he argued that it was only a pretext and that Britain sought war, *c'est le Roi de la grande Bretagne par sa harangue à son Parlement, ce sont les ecrits indecens avec quels on laisse un libre cours à Londres qui ont excité l'animosite du peuple anglois, et il ne tient qu'au ministere de faire cesser cette fermentation qui n'a aucun fondement raisonable.* Rouillé continued by arguing that the Spanish colonies were the true British objective and that French America was simply a preliminary barrier for them, an obvious plea for Spanish support that also testified to concern about the likely scale of British intentions. Bonnac reported from The Hague that Yorke had said that Britain would never yield over the Ohio, while Yorke clearly laid out a major obstacle to successful negotiations when he reported being told by Bonnac

that what had alarmed his court, was, the refusal we made to send orders to the governors in America, to suspend hostilities, which we avoided by offering to treat upon those orders, whilst our succours would have an opportunity to arrive in those parts, and perhaps obtain a superiority, which would render the negotiation more difficult and complicated; He added the most pacific declarations ... Yorke replied *that what seemed to me to have given rise to the expressions which had alarmed his court, was the idea that France meant to continue in possession during the negotiation, of what their governors had unjustly possessed themselves of*[118].

The French had already decided to send reinforcements to Canada, a decision that accorded with Mirepoix's warning of the need to prepare the defence of Cape Breton and of the despatch of British reinforcements[119], but that made the success of negotiations unlikely. Though certain of Mirepoix's desire for peace, the British ministry had already concluded that France was unwilling to offer acceptable terms. Robinson noted that France sought *to confine the present negotiation to a bare provisional cessation des voyes de fait, in order to find the means afterwards, for an amicable conciliation,* while Britain sought a definitive settlement, adding *The pretext of the war will be, la Gloire du Roi. The truth will be, their desire to keep les pretentions et droits, founded upon Mr. de la Salle's discoveries, eternally undecided; and more particularly to have an opening into the Bay of Fundy*[120]. Six days later, on 17 March 1755, Rouillé ordered Mirepoix to make no overture and informed him that Louis XV regarded the negotiations as completely broken off unless, as seemed unlikely, the British proposed more reasonable conditions. He also argued that there

117 Mirepoix to Rouillé, 28 Feb., Rouillé to Mirepoix, 5 Mar. 1755, AE. CP. Ang. 438 f. 238, 247–50.
118 Rouillé to Duras, 25 Feb. 1755, AE. CP. Espagne 517 f. 153–5; Bonnac to Rouillé, 25 Feb. 1755, AE. CP. Hollande 488 f. 122–3; Yorke to Holdernesse, 25 Feb. 1755, PRO. SP. 84/468.
119 President of the Council of Marine to Marquis de Duquesne, governor of Canada, 17 Feb. 1755, AN. Colonies B101; Mirepoix to Rouillé, 10, 13 Mar. 1755, AE. CP. Ang. 438 f. 273, 279.
120 Robinson to Keene, 11 Mar. 1755, Leeds, Vyner, 11835.

was a danger that Britain would take French moderation as timidity. Rouillé was sceptical about the position of Newcastle and Robinson,

Quelque bonne opinion qu'ils ayent de notre désir de conserver la paix, ils ne nous soupconneront pas apparemment de le porter jusqu' au point de servir aux dépens de notre gloire et de nos intérêts, le besoin qu'ils ont de justiffier aux yeux de leur nation les dépenses prodigieuses des armemens qu'on fait en Angleterre. S'ils ne peuvent maintenir leur crédit et leur consideration, qu'en produisant un traité qui fixe sur le pied qu'ils ont eu le courage de nous proposer, l'etat de nos colonies respective dans l'Amérique septentrionale, on peut conjecturer qu'ils ne conserveront pas longtems l'influence qu'ils ont eue jusqu' à present dans l'administration des affaires de leur cour. Au reste de quelle utilité pouroit être pour le repos et le bonheur public, la sincerite des intentions pacifiques des M. de Newcastle et de Robinson, s'ils ne prevoyent pas les suites des démarches qu'ils font, ou s'ils n'ont pas assés de force pour les soutenir contre les clameurs populaires[121]

Perron reported that both Mirepoix and the British government thought war inevitable and that Newcastle was being swept along by a bellicose *torrent*[122]. Negotiations continued in London between Mirepoix and Robinson[123], at the same time as both powers prepared their forces.

Preparations and public hostility themselves did not have to lead to war, as the Anglo-Bourbon crises over the Falklands (1770) and Nootka Sound (1790) were to illustrate, but in both those cases it proved possible to negotiate an agreement before there had been any clashes, other than the initial precipitants of the crises. In 1755, in contrast, as Rouillé pointed out, the chance of successful negotiations was really removed by the British refusal to suspend military steps[124]. On 5 May, two days after the French fleet had sailed from Brest for Canada, Mirepoix reported that Admiral Boscawen, who had sailed on 21 April, had been ordered to attack it, orders that the British ministry denied having given[125]. The London negotiations served to reveal the incompatibility of the two governments' views on America, at the same time that Mirepoix remained convinced that George II and Newcastle wanted peace[126]. Holdernesse, who accompanied George to Hanover as Secretary of State wrote, thence on 20 May, referring to the Mirepoix-Robinson negotiations, *You will see His Majesty is still willing, if possible, to bring these matters to an amicable conclusion, and to prevent the melancholy effects of a general war* but, having mentioned the sailing of the Brest fleet, he added, *as far as human foresight can reach, every measure has been taken that may enable His Majesty to resist the efforts of the French in that*

121 Rouillé to Mirepoix, 17 Mar. 1755, AE. CP. Ang. 438 f. 280–2.

122 Perron to Charles Emmanuel, 20 Mar. 1755, AST. LM. Ang. 59; Bonnac to Rouillé, 21, 27 Mar. 1755, AE. CP. Hollande 488 f. 147, 158.

123 Memoranda of conferences on 22, 23 Mar., Rouillé to Mirepoix, 27 Mar., British note to Mirepoix, 5 Ap. Leeds, Vyner 5725, 5727, 5728, Mirepoix to Rouillé, 28 Mar., 1, 5, 6, 10, 16, 25 Ap., 6, 10, 15 May, Rouillé to Mirepoix, 3, 13, 24 Ap., 9, 24 May 1755, AE. CP. Ang. 438 f. 339–40, 342, 344, 357, 359, 362–6, 385–6, 406–7, 440–8, 439 f. 6–11, 66–71, 76–9 438 f. 351, 357, 359, 362–6, 385–6, 406–7, 440–8, 439 f. 6–11, 66–71, 76–9 438 f. 351, 396, 401, 426–7, 439 f. 47–51, 96–7.

124 Rouillé to Mirepoix, 2 May 1755, AE. CP. Ang. 439 f. 15.

125 Mirepoix to Rouillé, 5, 10 May 1755, AE. CP. Ang. 439 f. 25, 71–2; Boscawen to John Cleveland, Secretary to the Admiralty, 21 Ap. 1755, PRO. ADM. 1/481; Rouillé to Bonnac, 18 May 1755, AE. CP. 488 f. 263.

126 Newcastle to Lord Hartington, 17 May 1755, London, History of Parliament, Chatsworth Transcripts; Robinson to Keene, 16 June 1755, Leeds, Vyner, 11840.

part of the world, and to recover such of His Majesty's possessions, as have been unjustly invaded. Later that month he added,

the operations at land, on the continent of America, will probably have been begun by His Majesty's troops during the course of the month of April; and I will not take it upon me to prophecy, whether the French will, or will not, look upon voyes de fait in that part, as justifiable causes of a declaration of war on their side, against His Majesty, or of their taking violent measures against his allies in Europe, or against his dominions upon the continent[127].

Any idea of a predictable international system had clearly broken down, while the British were having to consider the consequences of continuing negotiations and at the same time preparing for war. Robinson wrote on 16 June

we have not been amused; every thing is in motion, to recover self-evident encroachments in America. Our colonists, with the few regular troops there, will be beginning to beat up the French quarters, in five or six places, at a time, where they have been silently creeping in upon us. What may happen at sea, God knows. We look upon our American colonies in the north, as blocked, if not besieged; We have indeed thrown some few troops into them, but shall hardly be in a disposition to let the French reinforce the troops they are besieging us with. We have acted steadily and uniformly .... If France is willing to do us justice; she may do it with honour, by doing it at once, before she knows, that we have done it for ourselves in North America. If she only waits to know what is done there, in order to revenge herself here – alors comme alors[128].

This was the language of one of the more pacific members of the British ministry, but by June 1755 it was difficult to envisage successful Anglo-French negotiations and therefore, from the British point of view, it was necessary to act swiftly against French encroachments. Rouillé argued that French policy would be determined by British action[129]. On 10 June 1755 Boscawen attacked the French ships sailing to Canada. Before the news reached the French court at Compiègne on 17 July, Mirepoix had already been ordered to tell the British government that he would only remain in London if serious negotiations began. On 18 July he was recalled, as was Bussy from Hanover. Robinson had told Mirepoix that *it was impossible England could see with indifference so great a reinforcement of French troops thrown into North America*, and assured him that Boscawen had misinterpreted his instructions, but the French unsurprisingly were unimpressed. Holdernesse refused to give Bussy the *explicit answer he demanded that Boscawen had not received orders to attack the French ships*[130].

Contacts continued after the breaking off of Anglo-French diplomatic relations, an interesting example of negotiations on the brink of full-scale war that has not been systematically studied hitherto[131]. However, both governments turned their atten-

127 Holdernesse to Keith, 20, 31 May 1755, PRO. SP. 80/196 f. 3–5, 39.
128 Robinson to Keene, 16 June 1755, Leeds, Vyner, 11840.
129 Rouillé to Bonnac, 29 June 1755, Paris, Archives Nationales KK 1401 p. 534.
130 Mirepoix to Rouillé, 16 July 1755, AE. CP. Ang. 439 f. 252; Robinson to Holdernesse, 18 July 1755, BL. Add. 35480 f. 78–9; Rouillé to Bonnac, 20 July 1755, Paris, AN. KK. 1401 pp. 572–3; Holdernesse to Sir Charles Hanbury-Williams, envoy in Russia, 24 July 1755, Newport, South Wales, Public Library, Hanbury-Williams papers; Holdernesse to Keith, 26 July 1755, PRO. SP. 80/196 f. 137–9; Bussy to Rouillé, 29 July 1755, AE. CP. Brunswick-Hanovre 52 f. 18–25.
131 They are briefly mentioned in P. VAUCHER ed., Recueil des Instructions données aux Ambassadeurs et Ministres de France .... Angleterre III, Paris 1965, pp. 366–7, though there is more extensive archival material, for example the correspondence between Rouillé and Bonnac; Newcastle to

tion to diplomatic and military preparations for war. The diplomatic moves were to provide an instructive lesson in the fragility of international links. Not only were the French to be disappointed by the response of their Prussian and Spanish allies, but the British were to find that their Austrian and Russian alliances collapsed. The diplomatic realignments of this period, commonly summarised by the phrase, Diplomatic Revolution, have been discussed in terms of long-term shifts in the international system[132]. These were clearly of considerable importance, but it would be foolish to ignore the role of chance and of short-term problems in this period. Just as British diplomatic strategy in the post-war period had been concerned with continental problems, especially the Imperial succession and the security of Hanover, and had not considered adequately the possibility of a colonial war, so Austria and Russia had seen Britain in terms of continental relations, as indeed had Frederick II France. Given the immediacy of diplomatic activity over continental issues and the apparent success in 1749–53 in solving colonial disputes or letting them continue without apparently serious consequences, this was not surprising. Britain and France could present themselves as ›satisfied‹ powers, with no aspirations for continental conquests (though France sought gains in the Austrian Netherlands during the Seven Years' War)[133], but this did not describe their colonial position, and it was difficult to relate colonial aspirations to the desire of eastern European allies for greater power. It was not surprising that alliances based on essentially European problems and issues failed in 1755–6 to meet requirements resulting from an unwanted and unexpected colonial war. Equally it was not surprising that Newcastle, the British minister most concerned with continental diplomacy, should have been disinclined to support a forward policy in America. However, his anxiety about possible European consequences was not shared by the bulk of the British political nation. There had been a definite shift in consiousness towards knowledge of and interest in the situation in Nova Scotia or west of the Appalachians rather than in Flanders or the Rhineland. It is unclear how strong the latter had been in the 1740s: the apparently remorseless pressure of Louis XIV and the wars fought against him in which Britain had played a prominent role had arguably raised interest, only for it to be dissipate after 1713 as attention switched to the Baltic, the Mediterranean and the Caribbean and as concern about France declined. Nevertheless, North America had not been a key political issue in the early 1740s, as it was to become a decade later. North America served to focus concern about Anglo-French colonial rivalry at a time that public anxiety about their respective continental positions had diminished. This had little effect on the ministry during the years 1749–53, a period of relative diplomatic and domestic quiescence, and its impact in 1754–5 should not be

Devonshire, 2 Jan. 1756, BL. Add. 32862 f. 7; Joseph Yorke to Viscount Royston, 6 Jan. 1756, BL. Add. 35364 f. 65–6; Rouillé to Fox, 21 Dec., Yorke to Fox, 26 Dec. 1755, Fox to Devonshire, 7, 8 Jan., 9 Mar. 1756, council memorandum, 14 Jan. 1756, Chatsworth Transcripts; Fox to Rouillé, 13 Jan. 1756, BL. Add. 34728 f. 40. On the likelihood of peace before spring, Lord Cathcart to the Earl of Loudoun, 13 Sept. 1755, Huntington Library, San Marino, California, Loudoun papers 7087.

132 H. M. Scott (see n. 9) pp. 72–74; but see Black, Eighteenth century Europe, 1700–89, London 1989, pp. 292–3.

133 Rouillé to Aubeterre, 17 July 1755, AE. CP. Autriche 254 f. 226; Anon: The Crisis (London, 1756) p. 44. In 1756 Holdernesse tried to argue that it was not in Russia's interest to acquire more land or people as she already had sufficient, Holdernesse to Keith, 21 June 1756, PRO. 80/197 f. 179.

exaggerated. Nevertheless, the political world in London influenced the British response in North America, even if years of diplomatic distrust were also of great importance, as was the intractable nature of the particular points in dispute. Had, however, war broken out in the Baltic in 1747 or over Hanover in 1753, it is difficult to see the same alignments that were to develop in 1756 existing earlier in these very different situations. The role of chance and short-term problems should not be discounted in discussing the Diplomatic Revolution. If that was true of Anglo-French relations, it was presumably also true of those between other powers. One does not need to dwell solely on the role of monarchs, for example an earlier accession by the pro-Prussian Peter III of Russia. Much of the diplomatic agenda, though presented in terms of immutable long-term interests, was more transient, either in its importance or in the extent to which particular views were pressed at specific junctures. As it was those junctures that led to war, the reasons for specific concurrences of events are of considerable scholarly interest.