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Performing World Order: Sovereignty and Diplomacy in Britain and France, 1688–1783

By

Jonah Wilfred Stuart Brundage

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Sociology

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Dylan Riley, Chair
Professor Neil Fligstein
Professor Peter Sahlins

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Abstract

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Professor Dylan Riley, Chair

What are the determinants of geopolitical governance? By this I mean: why do certain states, at certain points in time, influence and lead other states and non-state actors in world politics? And why do other states fail to do so? Traditional explanations emphasize the military and economic capabilities of states. Such accounts suggest that the greater the material resources of a state—or the capacity to deploy those resources—the better positioned it is to influence and lead its rivals. This dissertation argues that such accounts, while not wrong, are in significant respects incomplete. It does so through a historical analysis of European geopolitics between 1688 and 1783. As I show, Britain exercised comparatively little governance over other European polities relative to its striking military and economic dominance in this period. By contrast, I show that France enjoyed more effective geopolitical governance, despite its military and economic weakness with respect to Britain (though not with respect to most European states).

This dissertation accounts for the discrepancy between French and British governance in eighteenth-century European geopolitics by offering an alternative theoretical model. According to this alternative model, the sources of geopolitical governance inhere not just in the material capabilities but in the symbolic capacities of states to secure recognition from their foreign counterparts. Further, I identify social conditions of possibility of symbolic capacity itself. One such condition, I argue, is a degree of “fit” or congruence between the sociopolitical structures of governing states and those polities over which they exercise their governance. This is because structurally similar states tend to produce diplomatic agents with similar dispositions—*habitus*—leading them to conduct diplomacy according to forms that are mutually legible. And it is because they tend to embody similar relations of sovereignty itself, leading them to conduct diplomacy according to interests that are mutually legitimate.

Concretely, then, I argue that France exercised significant governance in eighteenth-century European geopolitics because, in addition to its extensive military and economic capabilities, France’s external agents (its diplomats) embodied dispositions and represented interests that major European polities tended to recognize as legible and legitimate. Such diplomacy involved the *habitus* of a courtier, and it involved the interests of dynastic reproduction and patrimonial property. By contrast, Britain’s geopolitical governance was limited because its diplomats embodied dispositions and represented interests that appeared questionably legitimate and at

times illegible to major continental polities. They did so because the social relations of capitalism and of relatively impersonal sovereignty that were developing in Britain constituted elites who were ill-equipped to pursue diplomacy according to the rules of courtly-patrimonial geopolitics. Ironically, however, this means that the very factors which account for eighteenth-century Britain's remarkable military and economic dominance—its capitalist relations, its non-patrimonial bureaucracy, its parliamentary regime—actually impeded its exercise of geopolitical governance, given the historically specific system of courtly-patrimonial polities within which Britain was constrained to participate.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

“That some of our ministers can neither dance nor sing, would not be a reproach to them, if they had but somebody with them that could; for, as long as courts exist, the social virtues will influence the most serious transactions.”

— *General Remarks on our Commerce with the Continent* (1806)

Eighteenth-century Britain was not known for skillful diplomacy. The pages of *The Monitor*, an English newspaper, captured the prevailing sentiment in 1761. “Britons were never celebrated for the arts of negotiation,” the author noted. “We have never attempted to practice it but to our loss . . . and we have given up that by treaty, which war could never have taken from us” (quoted in Black 2001:53). Such impressions, it is one of the tasks of this dissertation to show, were indeed well founded, at least considering the material power that Britain brought to bear on behalf of its diplomacy. For during the late seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, this island polity developed the most dominant military and the most dynamic economy in Europe, quite possibly in the world. Taking stock of these socio-technical breakthroughs—its early transition to capitalist property relations, its precociously bureaucratic treasury, its innovations in public finance, its navy—some scholars have gone so far as to declare England (after 1707, Britain) the first modern state (see, for instance, Beier, Cannadine, and Rosenheim 1989; Brewer 1989; Brenner 1993; Lacher 2006; Pincus 2009; Prados de la Escosura 2004; Teschke 2003; Winch and O’Brien 2002; Wood 1991).¹ Yet none of that sufficed to make Britain’s diplomacy especially effective. The case of eighteenth-century European diplomacy thus presents a puzzle: why did Britain fail to convert its impressive military and economic capabilities into *geopolitical governance*, that is, the exercise of diplomatic influence and leadership over other polities?

The puzzle of Britain is all the more striking when we compare it to the polity whose diplomacy was widely—and correctly—viewed as the most effective in eighteenth-century Europe: namely, France (see Scott 2007 for a contemporary reiteration of this point). Of course, France too was one of Europe’s most dominant military and economic powers. Seen relatively, however, both the military and the economic capabilities of the French state were already weaker than those of England by 1700 or so. And yet, as I will also show, it was France, not Britain, which exerted preponderant governance over European geopolitics for much of the eighteenth century, at least until the former’s defeat in the Seven Years’ War (1756–1763)—and perhaps beyond it. The puzzle of the present dissertation can thus be reframed in comparative terms: why did France exercise more effective governance over eighteenth-century European geopolitics than did Britain, when it was Britain that enjoyed greater material capabilities?

The epigraph that starts this chapter provides the thread with which I will attempt to weave an answer. An observation gleaned from an anonymous British pamphlet penned in the first decade of the nineteenth century, it expressed the existing social framework of European diplomacy in particularly stark terms. Perhaps this was because the existing framework of European diplomacy was, by this time, in crisis, part and parcel of an “old regime” that had become subject to active criticism and debate. In any event, the author saw it clearly. British diplomats, according to the latter, were neither lazy nor ignorant. However, they often failed to

¹ The 1707 Act of Union incorporated the Scottish crown into the English, creating the kingdom of Great Britain.

demonstrate competence in the specific codes that were necessary to win over their European counterparts. If British diplomats were to do better, then, they—or someone in their entourage—should master such seemingly trivial tasks as the proper performance of after-dinner entertainments. As the author explained:

That some of our ministers [i.e., diplomats] can neither dance nor sing, would not be a reproach to them, if they had but somebody with them that could; for, as long as courts exist, the social virtues will influence the most serious transactions. I knew a gentleman abroad, who was deservedly esteemed a *clever, learned, honest* man, yet was he now and then the subject of ridicule, on account of his manner of dancing, and his imperfect knowledge of French (Anonymous 1806:49; emphasis in original).²

This recommendation captures the two fundamental arguments that I would like to make regarding the foundations of geopolitical governance, both in eighteenth-century Europe and beyond. First, effective influence and leadership in world politics require a common set of cultural codes in which leaders and led are both invested. Absent such a framework, those whom a polity endeavors to govern are unlikely to recognize it, regardless of the material power at its disposal. Second, however, the content of these codes is neither timeless—no symbolic system is intrinsically more or less suited to diplomacy—nor is it free-floating. Rather, it varies with the historically specific, social structures of the interacting polities in question, in particular, the structures through which their elites reproduce their social power. In eighteenth-century Europe, the relevant structures were royal courts and associated forms of largesse founded in the patrimonial prerogatives of ruling dynasties. Hence the diplomatic necessity of proper dancing and singing and—more broadly—all manners and etiquette belonging to the extended household that was the court, a familial-based mode of elite reproduction that blurred the boundaries between public and private life.

As I will show, then, Britain failed to exercise effective governance in eighteenth-century European geopolitics—despite its preponderant military and economic capacities—because its diplomatic agents and their rulers tended to lack recognition from their major counterparts abroad. And France governed more effectively—given its significant military and economic capacities—because its diplomats and rulers tended to secure recognition from their major counterparts. This, in turn, occurred because most polities in eighteenth-century Europe, including France, were embedded in structures of *courtly-patrimonial* relations, structures in which elites reproduced themselves through their direct access to political and legal privilege, a sort of “private” (familial and corporate) property in “public” power.³ Diverging from this general trend, however, the British polity was increasingly responsive to *Parliament* rather than the court, and British elites were increasingly reproducing themselves through their *capitalist* property in land (and financial instruments) rather than patrimonial property in the state. As a result, France and most of its geopolitical rivals shared cultural codes that the British simply lacked, facilitating the recognition of the former and inhibiting that of the latter. Ironically, this also means that the very factors which likely account for eighteenth-century Britain’s remarkable military and economic dominance—its capitalist social relations, its non-patrimonial

² I first discovered this passage in Black (2001:39).

³ For a recent discussion of patrimonialism in comparative and historical perspective, see Charrad and Adams (2011).

bureaucracy, its parliamentary regime (Allen 2000, 2001, 2009; Brenner [1976] 1985a, [1982] 1985b; Brewer 1989; Lachmann 2000, 2003, 2009; North and Thomas 1973; O'Brien 1996; Prados de la Escosura 2004; Teschke 2003; Winch and O'Brien 2002)—*impeded* its geopolitical governance, given the historically specific system of courtly-patrimonial polities with which Britain interacted.

My explanation thus advances theories of geopolitical governance in several ways. Most existing theories emphasize the military and/or economic capacities of states (Arrighi 1990, 1994, 2007; Arrighi and Silver 1999; Gilpin 1975, 1981, 1987; Kennedy 1987; Keohane 1984; Modelski 1978, 1987, 1995; Modelski and Thompson 1988, 1996; Thompson 1988, 1992; Tilly 1990; Wallerstein 1980, 1984, 2002). Seen from these perspectives, that is, material resources—or the ability to mobilize those resources (Adams 1994, 2005; Lachmann 2003, 2009, 2014)—are the principal determinants of effective geopolitical governance. In this dissertation, I show that such accounts, while not wrong, are in significant respects incomplete. Military and economic capacities may indeed constitute necessary conditions of geopolitical governance, but they are not sufficient to bring it about. This is because geopolitical governance depends as well on the *symbolic* capacity of a state to elicit *recognition* from its competitors in geopolitics. However, and by contrast with some cultural approaches to geopolitics—most prominently the notion of “soft power” (Nye 1990, 2004)—I show that a state’s capacity for recognition does not inhere in any particular set of institutions or “national cultures,” nor of course is it just a choice for policymakers. Rather, symbolic capacity is the fully *relational* product of a relative and contingent fit between a state’s sociopolitical structures and those of its rivals: a state tends to enjoy recognition from its rivals to the degree that they are *socially congruent*, embodying similar types of elite who reproduce themselves with similar strategies ultimately anchored in similar forms of sovereignty.

If my account extends theories of geopolitics in general, it also challenges a set of received narratives about early modern European geopolitics in particular. Most important, historical sociologists have long stressed the geopolitical dynamics of sixteenth-, seventeenth-, and eighteenth-century Europe—especially war and trade—to explain the rise of the modern, territorial state as such. Interestingly, despite increasing attention to the cultural *origins* of the modern state (Adams 2005; Bourdieu [2012] 2014; Gorski 2003; Loveman 2005), the standard explanation of the latter’s *institutionalization* continues to privilege its military effectiveness and/or economic efficiency above all else (but see Gorski and Sharma 2017). That is to say, on this account, the modern state won out over rival polity forms—city-states, empires, all non-bureaucratic and non-territorial authorities—because it was functionally superior to them, better at waging war, raising taxes, or reducing transaction costs more generally (Mann 1986; Spruyt 1994; Tilly 1990).

But if the rise of the modern state was a process of “selection” by the broader “environment” of geopolitics—precisely what these accounts suggest—*and yet* military and economic power is insufficient to explain patterns of influence and leadership in geopolitics, then military effectiveness and economic efficiency do not suffice to explain the rise of the modern state either. Indeed, by standard sociological metrics, the eighteenth-century British state was much *more* modern (bureaucratic, impersonal, autonomous) than its European rivals, and it outperformed them militarily and economically as well. Yet such success, in itself, did not induce other European elites to adopt the British polity form, as it was simply not legitimate to them, failing to resonate with their own cultural codes. Ultimately, it did not fit with their means of reproduction as courtly-patrimonial elites. In this sense, the British state was uniquely *ill-adapted*

to its broader geopolitical environment. I will suggest in the conclusion that it would take the French Revolution's partial delegitimation of courtly-patrimonial structures *from within* before the British model could become a viable alternative.

The present chapter elaborates the theoretical bases of my argument in detail, while the rest of the dissertation turns to my historical case. I begin by defining my object of explanation: geopolitical governance. Then, I review existing theories of geopolitical governance before presenting my own model. After a brief discussion of my research methods and the organization of subsequent chapters, I conclude the present chapter with some further implications.

The Nature of Geopolitical Governance

This dissertation will attempt to account for patterns of *geopolitical governance* in Europe between roughly 1688 and 1783. By geopolitical governance, I refer to the process by which a sovereign state elicits the cooperation and regulates the behavior of other sovereign (formally independent) states as well as non-state actors in world politics (or geopolitics). We can understand the latter as a patterned social space defined by the fact that it transcends the jurisdictional bounds of any given polity. Accordingly, geopolitical governance expresses the power of a state to secure *followers* (for instance, through alliances) and otherwise *influence* and *lead* political actors *beyond its own frontiers*.

Conceptualizing geopolitical governance in this way has certain advantages and limitations. To do so is to suggest that what gives order and regularity to world politics is, to a major degree, the strategic activity of particularly influential states, acting in concert with allied states and social groups. This is by no means to ignore the ways that geopolitics is patterned by more anonymous, impersonal forces—say, the rhythms of the world economy—or the actions of various non-state organizations, both of which exceed the agency of states altogether. Rather, it is simply to identify states as one locus of such patterning, albeit a theoretically and—in the last several centuries—an empirically significant one. Furthermore, while geopolitical governance may well involve processes of informal empire and the indirect exercise of colonial-like power, it excludes direct imperial rule over subject populations—those who are *formally* incorporated into the jurisdictions of the imperial state yet simultaneously denied full enjoyment of its civil and political rights. Somewhat distinct from metropolitan state formation, to be sure, formal colonialism of this sort is external to what I am explaining as well. This is primarily because it has historically tended toward a much more immediately coercive process and is thus likely to rest on a somewhat different set of conditions than those that shape the exercise of geopolitical governance as presently defined (Guha 1997).⁴

⁴ Indeed, according to Fanon ([1952] 2008:191–197), modern colonialism was defined by the very impossibility of “recognition” between colonizer and colonized, by a violence—no less symbolically mediated for that reason—which is the very negation of a (Hegelian) dialectic of self and other. Thanks to Paige Sweet for alerting me to this observation. Of course, none of this is to deny that the resources extracted from colonial plunder may help to create the conditions for a state's geopolitical governance, nor is it to imply that *imperialism*—as a specific period of modern colonialism—was unconnected historically to the broader geopolitical dynamics with which I am concerned. It is merely to say that conceptually, the scope conditions of my claims are coterminous with the presence of *inter*-polity relations, thereby excluding relations of intra-polity rule (whether imperial or fully domestic).

Many scholars describe features of geopolitical governance with what is perhaps a more familiar term, one that I will employ occasionally as well. This term is *hegemony* (see, for instance, Arrighi 1994; Cox 1987; Gilpin 1981; Keohane 1984; Lachmann 2014). From my perspective, hegemony is best understood as the limit condition of geopolitical governance—that is, governance over *all* other actors in a regional or global system that falls short of eliminating their formal independence (a boundary beyond which “hegemony” becomes “empire”). Hegemony is an exceedingly rare phenomenon in the history of interstate relations. Most accounts posit the existence of two or at most three hegemonies since the advent of recognizably sovereign states: the United States after 1945, Britain during part of the nineteenth century, and (perhaps) the Netherlands during part of the seventeenth. In fact, as I will suggest later on, only the American case meets all of the criteria of hegemony (see also Lacher and Germann 2012). As I will also show, however, situations in which one state enjoys military and economic *dominance* over all other actors in a system are considerably more common, despite the fact that such dominance is typically seen as the key condition or cause of hegemony. This means that there are more “negative” cases of dominance *without* hegemony than there are positive cases of hegemony itself.⁵ The class of cases defined by dominance without hegemony prominently includes the period following the First World War, in which the United States had already attained globally unrivalled economic and military capabilities yet remained utterly non-hegemonic in Europe or elsewhere (Kennedy 1987; Kindleberger 1973; Tooze 2014). Increasingly, it appears to apply to the United States in world politics today (Lachmann 2017; Tooze 2018; Walt 2018). However, this also means that cases of dominance without hegemony may still exhibit meaningful patterns of governance, and that—with regard to such cases—we can explain both the absence of hegemony *and* the presence of those patterns of governance that did obtain. This is precisely what I will endeavor to achieve in the context of late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe.

The Determinants of Geopolitical Governance

Geopolitical governance is thus *conceptually* distinct from a simple preponderance of material power (Arrighi 1994:28–30; Kindleberger 1981). Leading accounts, however, tend to *explain* geopolitical governance precisely in terms of the relative material capacities of polities. Orthodox approaches maintain that a state exercises governance over other states and non-state actors in a system to the extent that its coercive and/or economic capabilities exceed those of the latter. In the present section, then, I first outline a military and an economic model of the determinants of geopolitical governance. Of course, economic factors are themselves logical conditions of military power, and coercive force is a conceivable—and historically pervasive—

⁵ I borrow the concept “dominance without hegemony” from Guha (1997), who employs it to describe the non-hegemonic character of colonial rule in South Asia, as well as that of the ruling bourgeoisie in postcolonial India. As I show below, theories of rising and falling hegemonic states are more or less explicit transpositions—from a domestic to an international context—of theories of rising and falling classes, with the concept of “hegemonic war” modeled especially closely on that of “bourgeois revolution.” One consequence of this, however, is that the former are subject to some of the same theoretical limitations as the latter, particularly witnessed in their (at least implicit) embrace of a techno-determinist logic of historical necessity (for important internal critiques of the bourgeois revolution paradigm that make this point, see Brenner 1989; Teschke 2005; Wood 1991).

means to wealth accumulation (through the monopolization of markets, the forcible maintenance of trade barriers, the myriad forms of violence inflicted in the interest of labor control).⁶ In what follows, however, I present separate military and economic models in a deliberately schematic form, not to describe mutually exclusive literatures but to isolate analytically distinct and testable mechanisms of governance: essentially, *military subjugation* and *economic dependency*. I then introduce a set of critiques that place greater emphasis on *cultural* or *symbolic* determinants. Finally, I present my own approach, which acknowledges military and economic capabilities as necessary—but insufficient—conditions while extending cultural approaches in a more socially embedded direction.

Military Determinants

According to what is undoubtedly the most traditional perspective across sociology, international relations (IR), and diplomatic history, the principal source of geopolitical governance is *physical force*: states exercise influence and leadership in world politics by means of coercion (or the threat thereof); the will of the strongest determines the rules of the geopolitical game (Dehio [1948] 1962; Ertman 1997; Gilpin 1975, 1981, 1987; Hintze 1975a, 1975b; Tilly 1990; Kennedy 1987; Mann 1986; Modelski 1978, 1987, 1995; Modelski and Thompson 1988; Thompson 1988). Seen from such a perspective, coercion elicits its own consent. This position is associated, especially in political science, with “hegemonic stability theory” (Gilpin 1975, 1981, 1987) and the “long-cycle” approach to world politics (Modelski 1978, 1987, 1995; Modelski and Thompson 1988; Thompson 1988), both of which view the global concentration of military resources as a critical basis of interstate rule-making.⁷ But it also finds implicit expression in historical sociology, as witnessed by the still-orthodox account of modern state formation as a process of competitive selection, whereby the militarily most effective forms of state became the models to which other polities conformed at pain of extinction (see, for instance, Mann 1986:416–517; Tilly 1990).

From this perspective, then, the major mechanism through which states influence and lead their rivals is *warfare*. In particular, scholars seek to identify “hegemonic” (Gilpin 1981) or “global” (Thompson 1988) wars, the outcomes of which establish new geopolitical leaders (or hegemons).⁸ As William R. Thompson (1988:6–7) puts it: “Global wars ... are wars fought to decide who will provide systemic leadership, whose rules will govern” (see also Gilpin 1981:15;

⁶ As the historian Paul Kennedy (1987:xvi) puts it, “wealth is usually needed to underpin military power, and military power is usually needed to acquire and protect wealth.” Unsurprisingly, then, the most sophisticated accounts that I consider (Adams 2005; Arrighi 1994; Lachmann 2014; Tilly 1990) comprehend both economic and military factors.

⁷ Heralding from the broadly “realist” tradition in IR, hegemonic stability and long-cycle theorists each use different metrics of military capability itself, the former emphasizing total military resources and the latter isolating naval power. Modelski and Thompson (1996) later modified their perspective to incorporate an economic dimension (see also Thompson 1992).

⁸ Hegemonic wars appear easier to theorize than to empirically document. Possible examples include: the Thirty Years’ War (1618–1648) as the source of Dutch hegemony; the Napoleonic Wars (1801–1815), the Seven Years’ War (1756–1763), or even the War of the Spanish Succession (1702–1714) as the source of British hegemony; and the entire span of the two World Wars (1914–1945) as the source of American hegemony. All of these examples, with the exception of the last, are heavily disputed.

Modelski and Thompson 1988:19). These wars are typically preceded by a period of turmoil in the interstate system, a leadership vacuum in which the decline of a formerly dominant power has become irreversible but no rival has yet replaced it. They are followed by a peace settlement that restructures the rules of the interstate system to accord with dictates of the victorious party: “One world power emerges from that conflict in an advantageous position and organizes the world system as the struggle still goes on and then formalizes its position in the global layer in the peace settlement. For the space of another generation that new power maintains basic order and is the mainspring of world institutions” (Modelski 1978:217; see also Gilipin 1981:15; Thompson 1988:46). It follows that a state’s governance endures as long as its military preponderance does.

The military determinants of geopolitical governance are expressed particularly starkly, in sociology, by what arguably remains the dominant approach to European state formation. Dubbed a “fiscal-military” (Downing 1992) or “bellicist” (Gorski 2003) model, this account stresses the causal primacy of war and mobilization for war, albeit less to explain the hegemony of any particular state than the hegemony of the modern, “national state” as such. Charles Tilly’s (1990) *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990–1990* is the most sophisticated in this regard, extending an essentially military model to incorporate the influence of socioeconomic variation. Given conditions of endemic warfare in late medieval and early modern Europe, Tilly argues, all rulers attempted to extract resources from their subject populations as a means to military mobilization. In so doing, they pursued varying strategies, determined by their variable access to “concentrated capital” and “concentrated coercion,” which hinged, in turn, on the uneven presence of trading centers and peasant populations within their boundaries. These competing strategies engendered different organizational forms: a “capital-intensive” path led to city-states (Venice, Florence, the German free cities), a “coercion-intensive” path led to agrarian empires (Russia, the Ottoman Empire), and a “capitalized-coercion” path led to what Tilly regards as national states (France and England first and foremost). Gradually, however, the rough balance of capital and coercion found in national states gave the latter a competitive advantage at war because they were uniquely able to field and fund large armies. In short, these states—or rather, their form—became hegemonic. Through combination or mimicry, other polities conformed to the organizational structure of the national state—or else they were eliminated altogether (Tilly 1990:15, 30–31, 90–91, 183–191; see also Ertman 1997:4; Hintze 1975a:174, 1975b:205–206; Mann 1986:437–440, 490; Modelski 1978:231).

Military models of geopolitical governance thus suggest certain expectations for the historical evidence. States should influence and lead their rivals to the extent that they concentrate and deploy military resources more effectively than the latter. (In early modern Europe, the most important were standing armies and naval power.) Most decisively, and whatever the means involved, states that win wars should exercise geopolitical governance in their wake.

Economic Determinants

If military models stress physical coercion, a second position identifies *economic compulsion* as a critical source of geopolitical governance. On this account, states influence and lead their competitors to the degree that they accumulate capital more extensively, or allocate it more efficiently, than the latter (Adams 1994, 2005; Arrighi 1990, 1994, 2007; Arrighi and

Silver 1999; Bousquet 1980; Chase-Dunn 1989; Hopkins and Wallerstein 1979; Keohane 1984; Lachmann 2003, 2009, 2014; Wallerstein 1980, 1984, 2002). Associated especially with world-systems analysis but arguably the dominant view in general, this perspective, at its plainest, explains states' capabilities in world politics as a function of their positions in the world economy. Accordingly, in the extreme case, a state that achieves simultaneous productive, commercial, and financial dominance ("hegemony" in the strictly economic sense) "can largely impose its rules and wishes," not merely in the world economy but also in the "political, military, diplomatic, and even cultural arenas" (Wallerstein 1984:38–39). Although military force is thereby implicated in such accounts (Keohane 1984:42–43; Wallerstein 1980:65, 1984:42–44), the fundamental mechanisms of geopolitical governance are the material capacity to invest in supra-state institutions (Arrighi and Silver 1999:28; Keohane 1984:46) and, more immediately, the simple fact of *structural dependency* that accompanies concentration in the world economy (Cardoso and Faletto [1969] 1979; Frank 1969). In other words, a state exercises governance to the degree that other states—or their ruling elites—are reliant on it for their own accumulation, along with the order and stability that facilitate it.

In this vein, Immanuel Wallerstein's (1980, 1984, 2002) world-systems theory identifies a series of purely economic stages through which states progress on the way to becoming global hegemon. The first stage, according to Wallerstein (1980:38), is "[m]arked superiority in agro-industrial productive efficiency." This leads to "dominance in the spheres of commercial distribution of world trade," which "leads in turn to control of the financial sectors of banking ... and of investment." States become hegemonic at the moment that they "manifest *simultaneously* productive, commercial, and financial superiority *over all other core powers*" (Wallerstein 1980:39, emphasis his; see also Hopkins and Wallerstein 1979).⁹ Their hegemony then endures as long as they sustain that superiority.

A series of works at the intersection of the state formation and transition to capitalism literatures have pushed this model the furthest. Giovanni Arrighi's (1994) magnum opus, *The Long Twentieth Century*, articulates the world-systems approach to both military accounts and a more cultural understanding of hegemony in a manner that nonetheless reveals an invariant conjunction between economic development and geopolitical governance (see also Arrighi 1990, 2007). For Arrighi, as for the bellicists, geopolitical leaders emerge amid a period of interstate turmoil, itself a sign that accumulation has reached its limits within the present structure of the world economy. Against this backdrop of "systemic chaos," the state that assumes leadership is that which manages to reestablish order, facilitating a new cycle of accumulation that makes credible its claim to leadership. But what enables a state to reestablish order in the first place? The historical record, in Arrighi's (1994:14–15) reading, is clear: "the state that controlled or came to control the most abundant sources of surplus capital" assumed the mantle of governance for that reason. Such a state, unlike its competitors, has the material ability to satisfy the "system demand for order" (Arrighi 1994:31; see also Arrighi 1990:369; Arrighi and Silver 1999:28). Or as Arrighi (1994:145) explains the governance that the Dutch Republic supposedly exercised over seventeenth-century European geopolitics: "The more the Dutch succeeded in their endless accumulation of capital ... the more this accumulation was turned into ever-growing capabilities to shape and manipulate the European *political system*" (emphasis mine).

⁹ Or as Keohane (1984:30) puts it, from a more theoretically eclectic perspective: "Hegemonic powers must have control over raw materials, control over sources of capital, control over markets, and competitive advantages in the production of highly valued goods."

More recently, Julia Adams (1994, 2005) and Richard Lachmann (2003, 2009, 2014) have taken this line of argument in a new direction. For these scholars, states' economic resources, as a raw tally, decrease in importance. Instead, states' capacities for governance depend primarily on their varying structures of elites and those elites' variable systems of rule. In Lachmann's (2009:57) words: "changes in each state's capacity to fight wars, take or hold territories, and exert hegemony in the world economy are outcomes contingent on prior sequences of elite conflict and structural change within each polity." As is already clear from this way of putting things, however, elites matter for governance precisely because they determine a state's ability to mobilize its underlying economic (and military) resources. Thus Adams (2005:38–105) shows how a historically specific set of familial and gendered models of ruling allowed the seventeenth-century Netherlands to achieve the very economic supremacy that world-systems theorists regard as the basis of hegemony. For his part, Lachmann focuses more on the structure than the content of elite relations. The essence of his argument is that stable, multipolar systems of elite rule—as obtained, according to Lachmann, in the Dutch, British, and American hegemons—have enabled states to project their power more effectively than have alternative structures. The latter include situations of heightened inter-elite conflict, which constrain polities' power because such conflicts squander resources; and unipolar elite structures, ironically just as constraining because they empower elites to monopolize resources for their exclusive, short-term benefit (Lachmann 2003:352–353, 369; 2009:56–57; 2014:22, 33–34). In short, even in these accounts, economic (and military) power remains the *proximate* cause of geopolitical governance, the principal means by which it is secured.

Economic models thus afford their own historical expectations. Following world-systems theory (Wallerstein and colleagues), if a state is to exercise effective governance in geopolitics, it should enjoy comparative advantages in contextually pertinent sectors of production, occupy a privileged position in trading networks, and/or control the principal sources of global or regional finance. More broadly, and whatever the pre-determinants, a state that enjoys larger gains from accumulation (Arrighi) and/or allocates those gains more efficiently (Adams and Lachmann) than its competitors should thereby influence and lead the latter.

Cultural Correctives (and their Limits)

As many of the foregoing accounts already acknowledge, however, the military and economic capacities of states are best seen as *necessary* rather than *sufficient* conditions of effective geopolitical governance (Arrighi 1990:404; Kennedy 1987:xix–xx; Keohane 1984:34–35; Modelski 1995:30). Why might this be the case? According to Robert Gilpin (1981:48), it is because actual influence in world politics depends as much on the "hierarchy of prestige" as it does on the "balance of power," yet the former *lags* the latter. Prestige, for Gilpin, represents actors' perceptions of material power rather its objective distribution, and perceptions change slowly—they are, so to speak, sticky. Moreover, says Robert Keohane (1984:38–39), although military and economic factors explain states' "ability" to project power, they cannot explain states' "willingness" to do so (see also Arrighi 1990:404; Gilpin 1987:126–127; Modelski 1995:30). Particularly influential here is Charles Kindleberger's (1973) groundbreaking attempt to account for the depth and duration of the Great Depression by the fact that Britain was no longer able and the United States not yet willing to act as a global economic stabilizer, even though the latter had already attained the material means necessary to exercise such governance.

Nevertheless, Gilpin (1981:30) is clear: “Ultimately ... the hierarchy of prestige in an international system rests on economic and military power.” Prestige, in other words, is an epiphenomenon, and cultural lags inevitably resolve themselves with time. Perhaps surprisingly, it is an especially orthodox reading of Marxism that provides the explicit—if analogical—model for Gilpin’s IR realism in this regard: just as the development of the forces of production eventually necessitates the revolutionizing of its relations from such a perspective, the evolution of the balance of power eventually realigns the hierarchy of prestige by an equally inexorable logic—via the mechanism of hegemonic war, which is the exact counterpart, at the level of inter-polity relations, to the mechanism of revolution within polities (see especially Gilpin 1981:30–34, 48–49). Meanwhile, Keohane’s recourse to the “willingness” of states simply adds a degree of indeterminacy to the theory.¹⁰ Keohane (1984:34–35) does not attempt to *explain* states’ willingness to lead; rather, he regards it as exogenous: “Unlike the crude basic force model ... this modification of the theory declares that states with preponderant resources will be hegemonic *except when they decide* not to commit the necessary effort to the tasks of leadership, yet it does not tell us what will determine the latter decision ... Only the cruder theory generates predictions” (emphasis mine).

But why is willingness not amenable to explanation as well? Moreover, might a putative matter of will ultimately conceal additional state *capacities* that remain invisible because they are irreducible to military and economic capacities? Might prestige, therefore, have its own determinations that exceed the lagged effects of material distributions? In fact, these are the contentions of much contemporary work on geopolitics, which emphasizes the cultural or symbolic aspects of external state power. Emerging from a wide range of theoretical traditions, such accounts converge, for my purposes, on one critical claim: converting material (and other) resources into effective geopolitical governance requires that states conduct themselves in ways that appear legitimate, or at least legible, to their counterparts.¹¹ In other words, exercising geopolitical governance requires that a state elicit *recognition* from a community of states and non-state actors; and—these accounts suggest—military and economic capacities do not, in themselves, guarantee such recognition.¹² As Richard Ashley (1984:259), an early proponent of the cultural turn in IR, put it: “the power and status of an actor depends on and is limited by the conditions of its *recognition* within a community as a whole. To have power, an agent must first secure its recognition as an agent capable of having power” (emphasis his; see also Pouliot 2016:57, 66; Williams 2007:33).

¹⁰ Thus Keohane (1984:34) argues that the lack of American global leadership in the Great Depression is ultimately explained by “American politics, not ... material factors.” Yet he offers no *theory* of the relationship between domestic and international politics, preferring to treat the former as an exogenous contingency.

¹¹ By “legibility,” I refer to what Suchman (1995:582–583), writing from within the institutionalist tradition, calls “cognitive legitimacy” (that which is intelligible, or just taken-for-granted). I reserve “legitimacy” for Suchman’s (1995:579) “moral legitimacy” (normative approval), the more colloquial sense of the term.

¹² “Recognition” should be understood here in its fully philosophical sense, specifically in the Hegelian sense that consciousness of self requires recognition from the other, that “Self-consciousness exists in itself and for itself ... it *is* only by being acknowledged or ‘recognized’” (Hegel [1807] 1977:229; emphasis his). This concept has been tremendously productive for modern social theory, but only in recent decades has it been applied, in anything resembling a systematic fashion, to the relations between states (two path-breaking interventions are Ashley 1984; Der Derian 1987).

Considerably less clear, however, are the *social conditions under which* states secure recognition in the first place. Indeed, just as I will accept (with military and economic accounts) that significant material capacity is a necessary condition of effective geopolitical governance while challenging its sufficiency as a causal explanation, I will accept (with culturalist accounts) that recognition is a principal means by which states convert their material capacities into geopolitical governance, yet I maintain that inter-polity recognition has not been adequately explained in sociological terms. Doing so is of paramount importance if cultural accounts of geopolitics are to avoid reducing capacities for recognition to the pure will of policymakers—or alternatively, essentializing certain national-cultural styles as inherently more or less conducive to legitimacy than others. The next section develops a theoretical model adequate to this task. But first, we must consider what existing approaches have to say about the social bases of inter-polity recognition in order to highlight their limitations. Two broad families of approach are relevant here, which can be classified according to whether they emphasize what I will refer to as bottom-up or top-down processes.

Bottom-up accounts foreground factors that are internal to the hegemonic (or otherwise influential) state in question, such as its ideologies, institutions, and practices. Most prominent in both a popular and policy sense, Joseph Nye (2004:x) claims that effective geopolitical governance requires *soft power*, defined as “the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments” and arising from “a country’s culture, political ideals, and policies” (see also Nye 1990). Occupying a very different theoretical and political standpoint but arriving at strikingly similar conclusions, a number of critical theorists of international relations follow Gramsci (1971) in construing hegemony as a matter of ideological leadership, simultaneously material and cultural in its basis (Cox 1981, 1983, 1987; Gill 1986, 1990; Murphy 1994; Rupert 1995). On this account, the key condition for a state’s geopolitical, *interstate* hegemony is its prior achievement of domestic, *interclass* hegemony: the former “can be founded only by a country in which [internal] social hegemony has been or is being achieved” (Cox 1987:149); it is “an outward expansion of the internal (national) hegemony established by a dominant social class” (Cox 1983:171). This is primarily because a state’s capacity to achieve internal consent makes credible its claim to external leadership vis-à-vis foreign ruling classes and elites (Rupert 1995:2).

Both of these accounts reveal the major lacuna of internalist approaches: they fail to explain why different ideologies and institutions are attractive to different groups in different socio-historical contexts; they have little to say, that is, about the varying *external audiences* for a state’s cultural forms. Thus Nye (2004:11) asserts that “universal” cultures are more conducive to soft power than “parochial” ones, but he never inquires how certain cultural formations become (perceived as) universal. If Nye thereby disembeds geopolitical governance from any historical context, neo-Gramscians generalize it from a radically singular context: U.S. global power in the immediate post-World War II period. As critics (Lacher 2006:122–127; Lacher and Germann 2012) have pointed out, the latter is the only instance in which a country has ever enjoyed interclass *and* interstate hegemony on the *same* social foundations: essentially Fordism, internationalized through the Bretton Woods institutions in the form of what is sometimes called “embedded liberalism” (Ruggie 1982), a state-interventionist “politics of productivity” (Maier 1977). Thus there is little reason to suspect that neo-Gramscian mechanisms of geopolitical governance obtained prior to 1945—or that they will obtain in the future (or the present).¹³

¹³ This critique is separate from the question of whether neo-Gramscians offer a compelling account of American hegemony as a unique but utterly critical phenomenon in its own right.

Most recently, a different type of bottom-up account maintains that recognition can never be (fully) explained in advance anyway, since it is always (partly) a situational accomplishment of a state's foreign-policy agents: its *diplomats* of various sorts (Adler-Nissen 2014; Adler-Nissen and Pouliot 2014; Neumann 2012; Pouliot 2016). Drawing inspiration from Bourdieu's theory of practice and Goffmanian symbolic interactionism, this approach forms part of a broader "practice turn" in IR (Adler and Pouliot 2011a, 2011b; Neumann 2002). In so doing, it seeks to show, as Vincent Pouliot (2016:46) argues, that "the play of diplomatic practice is a socially productive process in itself ... in many ways, social standing emerges from situated interactions per se" (see also Adler-Nissen and Pouliot 2014:909). Practice theorists thus foreground what Isaac Reed (2013:207) calls the performative dimension of power: "the situated effectiveness of acts themselves as movers in the world," over and above their structural locations and discursive authorizations.¹⁴ Taken to its logical conclusion, this perspective suggests that the very question of the *conditions* for geopolitical governance can only be answered on a case-by-case basis. Such conditions, it would seem, are radically ungeneralizable.¹⁵

The practice turn in IR thus discloses the same lacuna, at the level of diplomatic micro-interactions, which limits the explanatory reach of the soft power concept and the work of the neo-Gramscians in the context of state-to-state interactions. Specifically, it attributes an independent force to diplomats' own practices without considering the degree to which those practices—and *the way they get interpreted*—are externally conditioned. One can indeed identify, by way of speech-act theory, that set of "performative" (as opposed to "constative") social acts, those practices which appear to make the world in their own image (Reed 2013:201–202; cf. Austin 1962; Butler 1999). But then one can also, following Bourdieu (1991a:73) himself, ask about performativity's "conditions of felicity," the conditions under which a performance *works*—or in their absence, falls flat.¹⁶ None of this is to deny the creativity of diplomats, and it is certainly not to dogmatically accuse practice theory of an insufficient "structuralism." Quite the contrary, the relationship between interactions and structural conditions ought to be seen as an empirical question, a topic for investigation, but such an investigation requires testable theoretical claims about both sides of that relation—something that cannot be achieved by bracketing structure in advance. In fact, it is interesting to note that although the most recent statements of practice theory in IR strongly emphasize the emergent power of situated interactions, its empirical work has already moved in a more structural—and historical—direction. Thus Neumann and Pouliot's (2011) explanation of the repeated failures of Russian diplomats in their negotiations with Western Europe shows how the dispositions of the former have tended to poorly fit their external environment, giving rise to "hysteresis effects." Such a claim necessarily implies that practices *and* their perception are shaped by acquired histories.¹⁷ I will develop this idea extensively in the next section.

¹⁴ Or as Pouliot (2016:11) puts it: "practices are socially productive ... they are a generative force in and of themselves." For the state as a (partially) performative accomplishment in its own right, see Reed (2019) and Weber (1998).

¹⁵ While acknowledging "dynamics that are common to different sites," Pouliot (2016:65) insists that "ultimately the politics of competence is very local. The play of practice is eminently contingent."

¹⁶ Reed (2013:207–208) himself raises this problem as an area for further investigation.

¹⁷ The authors go so far as to argue "that *throughout the past ten centuries*, several features in the complicated relationship that Moscow has with international society were due to a set of *deep-rooted, historically inherited dispositions* generative of diplomatic practices that looked clumsy and untimely in

In order to do so, however, we must first consider the top-down version of the culturalist approach, which goes some way toward compensating for the limitations of bottom-up accounts. Rather than emphasizing attributes of states and their agents, this approach starts from a systemic or global level of analysis. Initiated by John Meyer and his colleagues, the *world society*, or *world polity*, research program treats the global system as a cultural structure in its own right, an assemblage of legitimated models and scripts (Meyer 1980, 1999; Meyer et al. 1997; Thomas et al. 1987; for an analogous approach within IR, see Wendt's [1999] strongly systemic version of "constructivism"). As Meyer et al. (1997:147–148) explain, "the culture involved is substantially organized on a worldwide basis, not simply built up from local circumstances and history." Similarly, Julian Go (2008) proposes a theory of geopolitics as a *field*, structured in terms of both material and symbolic relations (see also Dezalay and Garth 1996, 2002; Go 2011; Steinmetz 2007, 2008). As Go (2008:207) elaborates, "we can think of a *global field* or 'global political' field as a worldwide arena in which states and other actors (corporations, nongovernmental institutions, international organizations) compete with each other over species of capital" (emphasis his).¹⁸

The move that all of these approaches make is to relocate the sources of state legitimacy to the global field or world polity itself; it is the latter structures, transcending and enveloping states, which ultimately confer recognition on them—or withhold it (Go 2008:208–209; Meyer et al. 1997:148–149). In this way, however, top-down approaches reveal the inverse limitation of their bottom-up counterparts. The latter, as we saw, were unable to fully account for the conditions under which states succeed (or fail) in securing recognition because they did not explain variations in the external audience for—or the environment of—state actions. Top-down approaches cannot fully account for the conditions of recognition either, albeit for the opposite reason, as they do not explain the ways that states *themselves* vary in relation to their external audience or environment. In fact, the major contribution of these approaches is to explain states' policies—and sometimes their identities—as a *product* of their degree of embeddedness (or their relative position) in an already existing world polity or field. Precisely to the extent that states are integrated into the latter, the reasoning goes, they tend to adhere to the models and scripts of the world culture, or of those associated with their socio-spatial region of the global field in its given historical state (Go 2008:203, 222–223; Meyer et al. 1997:150–153, 157).

But what, then, do we make of polities that fail to conform to the legitimated codes of the world society in which they are nonetheless participants? How do we explain states that remain poorly adjusted—that suffer hysteresis—with regard to the field in which they are nonetheless inserted? As I will show later on, this was exactly the situation that characterized eighteenth-century Britain in the context of European geopolitics. It is also what Neumann and Pouliot (2011) show to have happened with Russia, which was undoubtedly integrated into the European geopolitical system by the early eighteenth century. Deviant cases like these cannot be explained away by restricting our scope conditions—say, by taking conforming behavior as a measure of world-society or global-field membership and then treating nonconforming actors as non-members by definition. At least we cannot do so if, like top-down approaches, we still want to

the eyes of foreign diplomats" (Neumann and Pouliot 2011:106; emphasis mine). Incorporating habitus and hysteresis into IR was, in fact, a critical theoretical contribution of Pouliot's (2010) first book. This work, however, was not directly concerned with the problem of diplomatic influence and leadership, whereas practice-oriented attempts to theorize the latter (Adler-Nissen and Pouliot 2014; Pouliot 2016) seem to have adopted, or at least emphasized, a much more radically interactionist position.

¹⁸ For the idea of "global fields" more generally, see Buchholz (2016).

explain actors' behavior *in terms of* world-society or global-field membership, which is the whole point of such theories.¹⁹ Otherwise we would be engaging in explanatory circularity.²⁰

Despite these limitations, cultural approaches to geopolitical governance offer several important points of departure for the theory that follows. Moving beyond military and economic accounts, we can expect that (1) geopolitical governance is never only a product of states' material capacities (plus an unexplained increment of will); it is also a product of states' symbolic capacities to elicit recognition from other states and non-state actors. What is more, in explaining recognition itself, we should (2) refrain from taking either the individual polity or the system in which it is embedded as the primary unit of analysis; rather, we must grasp the relations between these "bottom-up" and "top-down" processes, processes that vary somewhat independently even as they interact. We can thus expect that (3) a state's symbolic capacity for recognition hinges on a relative and historically contingent fit between its internally legitimated forms and those that are anchored in a broader field of polities.

At the same time, taking practices seriously shows that (4) states themselves are only ever "actors" in a metaphorical sense: they are better conceptualized as principals that call upon agents to enact their policies. Finally, then, assessing the relative fit among states demands that we attend to their respective agents, whom we can broadly define as diplomats when they operate in the realm of interstate relations. That is to say, it requires that we (5) ascertain the degree of convergence among these agents' own social orientations.

¹⁹ For instance, Meyer et al. (1997:153) argue that "[t]heories reasoning from the obviously large differences among national economies and cultural traditions have great difficulty accounting for ... observed isomorphisms [of modern nation-states]," similarities and convergences which, however, become "sensible outcomes if nation-states are enactments of the world cultural order." Conversely, Go (2008, 2011) argues that the differences between the imperial policies of the nineteenth-century British and twentieth-century American hegemony can only be explained if we attend to the different historical phases of the global fields in which they were respectively embedded.

²⁰ Of course, the world society research program is primarily a set of claims about a particular historical epoch, essentially the post-1945 global order. Although Meyer et al. (1997:145) do maintain that "[w]orld models have long been in operation as shapers of states and societies"—suggesting that their account has broader reach—they then assert that such models "have become especially important in the postwar era as the cultural and organizational development of world society has intensified at an unprecedented rate." To that degree, it may be unfair to assess world polity theory against evidence derived from a pre-World War II period, as the latter may simply exceed its *historical* scope conditions. But then, to the same degree, we would have to conclude that world polity theory cannot account for its own conditions of validity: much like neo-Gramscian theorists, Meyer and colleagues never explain *why* the dynamics of world society apply under the specific historical conditions of the postwar period and not others. In fact, the explanation that appears most plausible in light of their own periodization—that world society's global reach is itself a *product* of American postwar hegemony—contradicts Meyer et al.'s (1997:145, 172–173) explicit dismissal of interstate hierarchy and domination as causally relevant to the contemporary global order (but see Jepperson [2002], who pushes in this direction without, however, reconciling the fact of American hegemony to the core premises of the world society research program). Put differently, either world society is a historical description that begs the key explanatory questions, or it is an explanation that poorly fits the historical data (including its favored case).

Toward a Social Theory of Geopolitical Governance

To simplify, I am suggesting that an adequate theory of geopolitical governance should describe the symbolic processes by which polities do (or do not) recognize their rivals, and that it should explain the social conditions of possibility of this recognition. Specifically, I argue that while some degree of military and economic capacity is indeed a necessary condition of effective geopolitical governance, the latter also depends on a materially powerful state's *symbolic* capacity to elicit *recognition* from the polities that it endeavors to influence and lead. And I argue, further, that polities tend to enjoy recognition from each other to the degree that they embody *sociopolitical structures* that are objectively similar—that is, structurally *congruent* or homologous.²¹

I draw on two key sources of theoretical inspiration to explain why this is the case, why social-structural similarities between polities promote their mutual recognition and, therefore, the governance of the materially dominant polity. The first alerts us to the social dispositions, or *habitus*, of state agents themselves, primarily diplomats in this case, along with the individual and collective rulers who accredit them.²² Following Bourdieu ([1972] 1977, [1980] 1990, [1997] 2000a), we can expect that agents who inhabit similar positions and trajectories within similar social structures tend to embody similar habitus. Systems of socially acquired, “durable, transposable dispositions,” habitus disposes agents to certain strategies of action (“regulated improvisations”) and certain ways of perceiving and classifying (“principles of vision and division”)—and not others (Bourdieu 1990:53, 57; 2000a:120). As Bourdieu himself makes clear, agents whose habitus is congruent to that of their interlocutors tend, for that reason, to secure the latter's recognition. In *The Logic of Practice*, for instance, he writes:

The habitus is ... the precondition not only for the co-ordination of practices but also for practices of co-ordination. The corrections and adjustments the agents themselves consciously carry out presuppose mastery of a common code; and undertakings of collective mobilization cannot succeed without a minimum of concordance between the *habitus* of the mobilizing agents (prophet, leader, etc.) and the dispositions of those who recognize themselves in their practices or words (Bourdieu 1990:59, emphasis his; see also Bourdieu 1977:81).

A precondition for “mobilization,” such recognition is thus a means of influence. As Bourdieu (2000:169) elaborates in *Pascalian Meditations*, the dispositions of the habitus are the critical source of that “symbolic violence” which dominant agents sometimes exert over the dominated:

Produced by the incorporation of a social structure in the form of a quasi-natural disposition that often has all the appearances of innateness, habitus is ... the potential energy, the dormant force, from which symbolic violence, and *especially*

²¹ Following Bourdieu ([1980] 1990:60), homology refers to a relationship “of diversity within homogeneity” in which each instance is a “structural variant” of the others (see also Bourdieu [1972] 1977:86).

²² Here and throughout, I employ the term “state agent” in two senses, one of which contains the other. Broadly, a state agent is any *social* agent that formulates or enacts policy. More specifically, however, I treat diplomats as the agents of a principal—their home governments. Note, however, that the latter are themselves “agents” in the broad sense.

that exercised through performatives, derives its mysterious efficacy. It is also the origin of that particular form of symbolic efficacy, “influence” ... which is often invoked as a tautological explanation and which loses all its mystery as soon as its quasi-magical effects are related to the conditions of production of the dispositions which predisposed certain agents to undergo it (emphasis mine).

Although Bourdieu does not specifically say so, it follows that *absent* some alignment of habitus, the violence of domination cannot rely on the symbolic, “gentle” form entailed by such a pre-reflexive recognition; in the terms of the present argument, dominance will fail to become governance absent such conditions. Put differently, performative acts succeed *to the degree* that they resonate with the habitus of their audience: some measure of convergence between the habitus of actor and audience is thus a key condition of their felicity.²³ In a specifically geopolitical context, then, we can expect that a state’s capacity to convert its material power into geopolitical governance hinges in part on the recognition conferred on its diplomatic agents by the diplomats (and rulers) of competitor states, and that this hinges, in turn, on the degree of congruence between these agents’ respective dispositions—and hence their *social* positions and trajectories.

Consider a common way in which this works. According to Adler-Nissen and Pouliot (2014:894), who write from the practice-theoretical perspective described above, “power involves a socially recognized competence or mastery ... Being so recognized typically allows one to wield a form of endogenously generated power often called *influence*, that is, power without apparent coercion” (emphasis theirs; see also Ashley 1984:271–279). But what is the condition of possibility of socially recognized mastery? From my perspective, it is precisely the congruence of habitus: diplomatic agents with a habitus that is well-adjusted to their audience tend to execute performances that the latter perceives as competent. We might think of such competence as a sort of (context-specific) social skill (Fligstein 2001; Fligstein and McAdam 2012:45–53). Competent action, in other words, is that which enrolls support and cooperation in the pursuit of collective projects, in this case diplomatic projects; these, in turn, should tend to the advantage of the materially dominant state (all else equal).

²³ My interpretation, it should be noted, differs somewhat from Bourdieu’s (1991a) more explicit discussion of performativity in *Language and Symbolic Power*, a text that Judith Butler (1999) rightly criticizes for reinstating the very agent-structure distinction that Bourdieu’s concepts were meant to transcend. In that text, performativity’s key condition of felicity is the immediate *position* from which certain agents are authorized to speak, namely the condition of being authorized by the state. Yet the idea that agents contingently internalize their position over time, and that this might bear on their *disposition* to elicit or confer recognition, is strangely absent from consideration. By contrast, Butler reads Bourdieu against himself, arguing that the immanent reality of habitus, not the external authorization of the state, ought to be seen as the proper locus of performative power. Intriguingly, it seems that Butler made this argument without having read (or engaged) *Pascalian Meditations*—which had recently been published and would only appear in English the following year—yet the latter text confirms her interpretation, if implicitly for the most part (and without any reciprocal citation of Butlerian performativity). Note that this reinterpretation of Bourdieu is particularly suited to world politics, where *all* diplomats, by definition, are authorized to speak by their own states and yet *none* of them are authorized by a higher authority to which speaker and audience are mutually subject (a nonexistent world state). How, then, is it the case—which it clearly is—that some diplomats are more effectively performative than others? This is something that Bourdieu’s programmatic statements in *Language and Symbolic Power* obviously cannot explain—but which his attention to habitus as the basis of recognition perhaps can.

Because diplomats are the agents of a principal, however, we cannot stop there. Diplomats' own dispositions never determine inter-polity relations in isolation; rather, world politics is always overdetermined by the interests and identities of the principals whom diplomats represent. These principals are (individual or corporate) sovereigns. Geopolitics can indeed be characterized, then, as a kind of field (Go 2008), but it is a field with the peculiar quality that its agents exist firstly as representatives, as mandatories or spokespeople of a putative external interest. It is thus a rough analogy, at the *inter*-polity level, of the *intra*-state "political field"—the field of professional politicians and parties—that Bourdieu (1991b, 2000b) himself has described. In this way, what has been called the work of "articulation" (de Leon, Desai, and Tugal 2009, 2015; Gramsci 1971; Laclau and Mouffe 1985), the process by which parties and other political agents partially constitute the groups that they claim to represent, has its geopolitical counterpart in what I am calling the performativity of diplomatic practice: at the limit, I am suggesting, successful—*recognized*—diplomacy brings sovereignty into being through the very act of representing it. However, it is also the case that articulation occurs within structural constraints, which are set, among other things, by the social groups thus articulated (Ackerman n.d.; Eidlin 2016, 2018; Riley 2015). In the same way, then, diplomatic performativity finds its conditions of felicity, not merely in the habitus of diplomats themselves, but secondly, in the very structure of sovereignty that diplomats partially enact—and which partially precedes them as well.²⁴

Such a structure is usefully described by what the critical theorists of world politics, Benno Teschke (2003:3, 2005:19) and Hannes Lacher (2005:33–34, 2006:81, 84; Teschke and Lacher 2007:572), call the *social relations of sovereignty*. My second major source of theoretical inspiration, social relations of sovereignty should be understood as somewhat broader than political "regimes," a concept with which social scientists are typically more familiar. Instead, they capture the overall structure of state/society relations, the prevailing mode(s) of social domination within a given polity. For Teschke and Lacher, these are rooted in the systems of strategies by which elites reproduce themselves with respect to each other and over and against non-elites, which are shaped, in turn, by the combined balance of inter-elite and elite–non-elite conflict at a given historical moment (for roughly consonant statements, see also Bourdieu 1977:58–71, 183–197; 1994; Brenner 1985a, 1985b; Lachmann 2000, 2003, 2009). Following the German historian of early modern Europe, Heide Gerstenberger ([1990] 2007), from whom this concept is partly derived, Lacher and Teschke distinguish empirically between three historically prevalent types of sovereign social relation: parcellized personal domination (e.g.,

²⁴ As Eidlin (2016:495) puts it, in the context of modern party politics: "parties' actions are constrained by prior political identities, cultures, and institutional arrangements. These establish a range of possible identities or coalitions that exist prior to parties. But there is a gap between this range and the coalitions/identities that actually develop. Parties' actions bridge the gap between possible and actual outcomes." As Riley (2015:184) argues more broadly: "to show that politics matters requires the idea of a prepolitical identity, that is, a social class or some equivalent, that *could* be organized in different ways. It is precisely the gap between what is politically possible and what actually occurred that shows the importance of politics. But of course the concept of different politically possible coalitions implies that there are some coalitions that are impossible. In effect, to show the importance of politics implies that its limits be carefully specified" (emphasis his). What I am suggesting is that the relationship between parties and the space of possible identities and coalitions that precedes them is of the same basic type as that between diplomats and the space of potential sovereign arrangements that similarly precedes them. Both are relations of political *representation* (in all senses of that word).

the hierarchically nested, territorially non-exclusive powers of “feudalism”); *generalized* personal domination (e.g., “absolutist” states in which power was centralized and territorialized to a significant extent but remained a lordly right over persons and their surplus, rather than an abstract claim to geometric space); and *generalized impersonal* domination (e.g., relatively autonomous, “modern” states with linear territorial boundaries and a formal division between state and civil society). These are intended as descriptive classifications of a certain range of European experience, not as an exhaustive typology. Still, they provide historical substance to the concept, especially useful given the geographical and temporal focus of the present dissertation.

Just as the congruence between diplomats’ habitus facilitates their mutual recognition, then, polities tend to elicit recognition from their rivals to the degree that they are embedded in social relations of sovereignty that are congruent with those in which the latter are embedded. This is because diplomats representing socially similar sovereignties tend to be tasked by their principals with pursuing the same kinds of *interest* in geopolitics, rendering their interests mutually legible and often legitimate, even when they conflict in practice.²⁵ Such polities (and their agents) are thus oriented to a common set of stakes. They enjoy a solidarity owing to their investment in a common game, a shared *illusio* (Bourdieu 1990:66–67).²⁶ This too facilitates cooperation—often in and through conflict—which again tends to the advantage of the materially dominant state (all else equal).

It is worth noting the affinity between social relations of sovereignty and what Bourdieu (1977:183–197, 1994) calls “modes of domination.” This is no coincidence. As I have tried to show elsewhere (Stuart Brundage 2017:791–793), Bourdieu’s social theory and a certain sort of Marxist class analysis associated most closely with the historian Robert Brenner—the other key influence for Teschke and Lacher—bear a much stronger resemblance than either Bourdieuians or the followers of Brenner have acknowledged. In both cases, the social orientations of individual agents and the social structures that they collectively enact are largely seen as the *unintended* consequences of these agents’ routine efforts to *reproduce* their existing positions—even when the outcomes thereby generated include massive social change. To put things at their boldest, the key driver of history, from both perspectives, is what each tradition refers to as “strategies of reproduction” (Bourdieu 1977:58–71; 1994; 2014:237–242; Brenner 1985b:213–214, Lacher 2006:66, 70; Teschke 2003:7, 59–60).²⁷ Most important for my purposes, this means

²⁵ These broader pressures on diplomats could be explicated in terms of habitus as well, to the extent that they express the dispositions of other influential agents in diplomats’ polities. However, doing so is not necessary to sustain the following argument, nor do my data shed direct light on the dispositions of these broader agents.

²⁶ In this respect, my argument bears a family resemblance to “democratic peace theory” (Doyle 1983), the claim that mutual recognition between liberal democracies prevents such regimes from going to war with each other (for the democratic peace as a problem of recognition, see Williams 2007:43–51). However, I make no assumption about liberal democracies per se. This is because my explanatory object is *governance* rather than peace. States that coordinate their actions may indeed become “security communities” (e.g., NATO), but coordination may also increase the likelihood of war under other conditions.

²⁷ Brenner and his followers are more commonly associated with the phrase “rules for reproduction” (as formalized in Brenner 1986), but he has employed the term “strategies” as well, particularly in his early work on the transition to capitalism in England. The latter seems preferable inasmuch as it suggests that social reproduction is an active, open-ended process, which requires an inevitable degree of improvisation and is never guaranteed in advance; indeed, Teschke and Lacher embrace it for just this reason (for a

that the relationship between diplomatic habitus and social relations of sovereignty is itself something more than accidental: to the extent that diplomatic agents originate socially in the polity that they represent (an empirical question), those diplomats' dispositions and their state's sovereignty are broadly conditioned by the *same* structure of social relations.²⁸

To illustrate the logic of this model with a concrete example that previews the historical argument to come, consider how Norbert Elias, in *The Civilizing Process*, explains the preponderant cultural influence of the French royal court in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe. According to Elias ([1939] 2000:189):

The most influential courtly society was formed ... in France. From Paris the same codes of conduct, manners, taste and language spread, for varying periods, to all other European courts. This happened not only because France was the most powerful country at the time. It was only now made possible because, in a pervasive transformation of European society, *similar social formations, characterized by analogous forms of human relations* came into being everywhere (emphasis mine).

That France set the rules of the game for European courts, in this reading, owed not merely to coercive imposition or even conscious imitation. It also rested on the presence of similar social relations and similar elites, who adopted French institutions and conventions because they faced similar social demands as the French (Elias 2000:189–190). French courtly influence thus flowed from a combination of material power *and* social-structural congruence.

Empirically, Elias overestimated the degree to which early modern European polities converged on similar structural arrangements. Although the generalized personal domination that characterized French absolutism was indeed the most prevalent form of sovereignty in early modern Europe, state formation exhibited significantly greater heterogeneity than Elias allowed (Adams 2005; Duindam [1992] 1994; Gorski 2003; Lacher 2006:61–98; Oresko, Gibbs, and Scott 1997; Teschke 2003:151–270). In particular, as we will see, England (and to some extent the Netherlands) departed from generalized personal domination as such, hitting upon a precociously “modern” form of impersonal, public power anchored in an incipient separation between processes of economic appropriation and legal-political coercion. It is thus unsurprising that neither country fully adopted the cultural model of the French court that was so influential in other parts of Europe—despite the concerted efforts of some English and Dutch elites to do just this (Bucholz 1993; Spierenburg 2013; Stuart Brundage 2017, 2018). By the same token, however, there is no reason to suspect that the alternative cultural forms of the English and Dutch would have exerted much influence on those countries whose social relations did converge with France, regardless of the material power that the former might bring to bear on the latter. This is especially significant because, as I show in chapter 2, it was Britain, and not

powerful critique of the “rules for reproduction” concept in Brenner’s later work and among his more orthodox followers, see Knafo and Teschke 2017). Note, again, how closely this move mirrors Bourdieu’s theoretical development within the somewhat distinct context of structural anthropology, which hinged precisely on his rejecting the Lévi-Straussian “rule” in favor of the more Wittgensteinian “strategy” (see especially Bourdieu 1977:1–71).

²⁸ In discussing these two dimensions of the analysis separately, then, my aim is simply to suggest that diplomatic habitus and relations of sovereignty both exert an *effect* of their own, not that their sources are independent. It is in the former sense alone that we can treat them as distinct causal mechanisms.

France, that had become the most powerful European state—in both military and economic terms—by the early eighteenth century. Yet it is hard to deny that the prestige of Paris and Versailles exceeded that of London at least until the French Revolution.

To summarize, then: my theoretical model holds that states are liable to exercise effective governance in geopolitics to the extent that they (a) enjoy significant military and economic capacities and (b) embody sociopolitical structures that are congruent with those of their competitors.²⁹ This (c) allows them to deploy their material capacities on behalf of ends, and according to forms, that their competitors tend to recognize as legible and legitimate. Such states thereby influence and lead other polities to a degree that neither a materially dominant but illegitimate nor a legitimate but materially weak state would be able to achieve.

Methods and Cases

In order to assess this approach in relation to existing theories of geopolitical governance, I will pursue a historical analysis of European geopolitics during the late seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. The timeframe under consideration is usefully bounded on one end by England's "Glorious Revolution" of 1688, a critical juncture in the formation of the modern British state and, therefore, its departure from the prevailing framework of courtly-patrimonial diplomacy. It is bounded on the other end by the Peace of Paris of 1763, which concluded the American Revolutionary War (1775–1783) and in so doing, marked the collapse of the so-called First British Empire as well as the fiscal exhaustion of French absolutism.

As already indicated, I will compare two theoretically relevant European polities within this larger geopolitical context—France and England, the latter of which I refer to as Britain after 1707, when the Scottish crown and parliament were formally incorporated into the English. These polities are strategically selected. By the standards of both military and economic models, Britain should have exercised preponderant governance over European geopolitics during the period of interest. Yet in fact, France governed more effectively, despite its weaker military and economic capacities. This outcome thus presents a puzzle for military- and economic-based theories of geopolitical governance. With respect to these theories, that is, the European interstate system between 1688 and 1763 appears as an anomalous, deviant, or *negative* case (Emigh 1997). Consistent with what is known as negative case methodology (Emigh 1997, 2009;

²⁹ This "fit" between structures is obviously a matter of degree. Bourdieu ([1984] 1988:175), for instance, distinguishes between an *identity of condition* (e.g., all those originating from the same class) and a *homology of position* (e.g., the analogous relationship that dominated classes and dominated dominants share with respect to dominant dominants). Yet even "identity" rests ultimately on homology, as no individual trajectory is exactly replicable (Bourdieu 1977:86–87, 1990:60). Moreover, it is important to note, I am not arguing that structural homologies of this sort are the *only* condition under which material capacities translate into geopolitical governance, nor that they *invariably* facilitate such translation. This is another way in which my argument differs from most variants of democratic peace theory. Rather, I am simply arguing that structural homology is *one* means of translation; my wager is that it is a causally and historically significant one. In other words, whereas my critique of orthodox approaches aims to be maximally charitable in regarding their postulated causes as necessary—but not sufficient—conditions, my own intervention is no longer framed according to a logic of necessity and sufficiency at all. Rather, it presumes a world of "mechanisms" that *tend* to produce certain outcomes (all else equal), which implies both the possibility of counteracting tendencies (which inhibit the outcome despite the mechanism's presence) and of functional substitutes (which bring about the outcome despite its absence).

Riley 2003, 2010; Riley and Fernández 2014; Wilson 2011), my emphasis on anomalies is not meant to refute or “falsify” existing theories, however. Instead, my intention is to effect what the post-positivist philosopher of science Imre Lakatos (1970:118) called a “progressive problemshift” in the geopolitical governance literature as a whole. My aim, in short, is to *extend* the explanatory range of this literature by accounting for its anomalies in a way that remains consistent with its core claims. The core claim that I take as given is the idea that some degree of military and economic power is indeed a necessary condition of effective geopolitical governance.

In the analysis that follows, I will refer to my empirical “cases” in two somewhat different senses, corresponding to two different levels of analysis. On the one hand, we can think of the polities of France and Britain as distinct cases, the former a “successful,” the latter a “failed” case of geopolitical governance. To this extent, the structure of my comparison resembles Mill’s ([1843] 1974) method of difference inasmuch as I am comparing variation on an observed outcome (governance) across two broadly similar cases in order to demonstrate a necessary condition of that outcome (symbolic capacity for recognition, founded in structural congruence). My case selection, however, is not informed by Millian induction.³⁰ Rather, as I just noted, it is embedded in a Lakatosian epistemology—what Emigh (1997:660–661) calls “loose deduction”—in which my cases become relevant precisely because they represent empirical anomalies with respect to a specific, preexisting body of theoretical statements, a research program. In this instance, the relevant research program is the literature on geopolitical governance.

On the other hand, I conceptualize the European interstate system between 1688 and 1783 as a totality: a *single* historical case. This is the sense in which eighteenth-century Europe is itself a negative case. Seen in this way, it reveals an additional, if related, anomaly: the anomaly of “dominance without hegemony.” Described earlier, dominance without hegemony refers to the puzzling fact that one state (Britain) attained a position of unrivalled military and economic primacy in this system, and yet no state (Britain, France, or any other) exercised sufficient governance to reach the threshold of hegemony as typically defined in the scholarly literature. As such, eighteenth-century Europe belongs to a larger *class of cases*, which prominently includes the world system during the interwar period and arguably world politics today, both of which I will discuss in the conclusion. Thus my aim, at its broadest, is to reconstruct existing theory in a way that successfully incorporates this anomalous class of cases.

Chapter Overview

The subsequent analysis proceeds in three basic steps. In chapter 2, I establish the set of puzzles to be explained, which turn on the disjunction between material dominance and geopolitical governance in Europe between 1688 and 1783. In so doing, I rely partly on the conclusions of existing historiography, particularly on economic and diplomatic histories of Britain and France. I also present an original social-network analysis of international treaties

³⁰ The appropriateness of Mill’s methods to historical sociology is a contentious topic in its own right. It is undeniable that their (self-described) application has been tremendously generative of powerful explanations. Yet their underlying assumptions have been heavily criticized, and it is not in fact clear that these methods have *ever* been applied wholesale, despite the claims of some practitioners (most notably Skocpol 1979).

based on data that I have coded myself. Rather than advancing a network-based explanation or otherwise making causal inferences at this juncture, however, I employ such quantitative data for a *descriptive* purpose: to help specify an outcome that demands subsequent qualitative explanation.³¹

Chapters 3 and 4 thus commence my *explanation* of this outcome with an in-depth, historical analysis aimed at identifying causal mechanisms (see, for instance, Steinmetz 2004). In these chapters (and in chapter 5), I employ as my primary evidence the official—and sometimes the private—correspondence of French and British diplomats with their respective administrations, as preserved in manuscript form and collected in published works. To this end, I analyzed collections in three archives: for Britain, the National Archives (of the United Kingdom) and the British Library; for France, the official archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the *Archives du ministère des Affaires étrangères*. I complemented these documents by considering, where relevant to the events of interest, the observations of third-party diplomats and rulers regarding British and French diplomats, as contained in published primary and secondary sources. I focus empirically on diplomats because they are the actual agents responsible for carrying out relations between states. Although diplomats are obviously not the only agents charged with doing this—soldiers are another prime example—they are a special kind of agent that bears uniquely on the present study: diplomats, by definition, are the external *representatives* of sovereign authority, those who *stand in for* sovereigns in their mutual relations (Hamilton and Langhorne 1995). To the degree that recognition between sovereigns is a necessary condition of geopolitical governance, as I posited above, then diplomatic interactions are the critical site where recognition is won or lost.³²

Accordingly, chapter 3 compares the dispositions of British and French diplomats, their *habitus*. I show that the habitus of French diplomats tended to align with the social expectations of other actors in European geopolitics, which facilitated their recognition and thus—contingent on France’s military and economic power—their exercise of geopolitical governance. By contrast, the habitus of British diplomats tended to be misaligned with these social expectations, which hindered their recognition and thus their exercise of governance—despite Britain’s military and economic power. Chapter 3 also presents an original prosopographical (socio-biographical) analysis of the British diplomatic service between 1660 and 1789 to complement existing studies of the French and other continental diplomatic services during this time.³³ These

³¹ For a useful exposition of this type of approach, see Spillman (2014).

³² Thus the IR theorist James Der Derian (1987), drawing on Hegel and the early Marx, describes the fundamental function of diplomacy as the “mediation of estrangement.” Interestingly, Antonio Gramsci, the great theorist of hegemony, grasped at this point himself. According to Gramsci (1971:182), diplomats perform the function of *intellectuals* at the international level, the function, that is, of promoting hegemony by “mediating the extremes” and “devising compromises.” Although these qualities of diplomats pertain as much to the contemporary world as they did to eighteenth-century Europe, diplomats offer an especially useful lens onto governance in the latter context for a further reason: early modern jurists and diplomats themselves maintained that by assuming the character of representatives, ambassadors literally embodied sovereignty, carrying it in their physical persons (Mattingly 1955:251). To the degree, then, that geopolitical governance is—in part—the performative process that I described above, it necessarily passed through the bodies of diplomats in such a context.

³³ For a canonical statement on the method of prosopography, or collective biography, see Stone (1971). For an application inspired in part by Bourdieuan theory, see Charle (1980).

data are crucial for situating the habitus of diplomats in relation to their social positions and trajectories.

Chapter 4 turns to the sovereign principals whom British and French diplomats represented. Here I show how the differing *social relations of sovereignty* in which Britain and France were embedded led their diplomats to articulate and pursue different styles of interest in geopolitics. As I show, French diplomats pursued interests that tended to appear legible and legitimate to other geopolitical actors, because the latter's relations of sovereignty were structurally congruent to those of France. This too facilitated France's recognition and thus its governance. By contrast, British diplomats tended to pursue interests that appeared questionably legitimate and at times illegible to other geopolitical actors, because Britain's relations of sovereignty diverged from those which prevailed in most of continental Europe. This hindered Britain's recognition and thus its governance.

Having identified mechanisms that promoted and inhibited the recognition of France and Britain, chapter 5—the third step in the analysis—then completes my explanation with a detailed case study of a concrete sequence of episodes in which these mechanisms were in play. I select a particular event of diplomatic history—the Peace of Utrecht (1713)—that offers a “hard case” for my theory. That is, the balance of military and economic power *especially* favored Britain over France at this juncture. Yet as I will show, Britain failed to institutionalize its advantage in the peace, whereas France fared surprisingly well given its military and economic weakness with respect to Britain. The case of the Peace of Utrecht thus serves to further illustrate how my posited mechanisms of recognition mattered for geopolitical governance in practice. However, the Peace of Utrecht also constitutes a major historical turning point in its own right: a series of happenings *absent which* Britain might have come to govern European geopolitics more effectively, perhaps exercising hegemony. In this way, Utrecht serves additionally as counterfactual evidence. In other words, it allows me to better identify what would have needed to occur for Britain to convert its material dominance into geopolitical hegemony and, therefore, to explain why Britain failed to do so, why eighteenth-century Europe was in fact a period of dominance without hegemony.

Finally, chapter 6 concludes the dissertation by returning to the broader implications of my argument. These involve the ways that it pertains to larger theoretical concerns as well as additional historical cases.

Conclusion

Before proceeding, it is worth reviewing what is at stake in my attempt to reformulate theories of geopolitical governance. Earlier, I suggested that my account requires us to rethink standard historical-sociological narratives of early modern European geopolitics and state formation, a task in which the remainder of this dissertation will engage. However, it also bears directly on our understanding of contemporary world politics. For the predicament of dominance without hegemony increasingly characterizes the superpower that is the twenty-first-century United States, which continues to enjoy worldwide military and economic primacy even as its global influence and leadership appear to be in decline (Lachmann 2017; Tooze 2018; Walt 2018). Rather than attribute the non-hegemonic dominance of the United States to a failure of will, the personal idiosyncrasies of individual leaders, or even larger movements like isolationism—as recent lamentations about the end of the so-called liberal international order

do—a more sociological, and critical, approach might study American leaders and movements *in relation to* their relevant and potentially shifting external audiences. It might attend, for example, to the relations between the social dispositions and reproduction strategies of American elites and those of their major counterparts abroad.³⁴ For if I am correct, a state's capacity for soft power is never fully intrinsic to its own institutions; it is rather the relational product of a contingent fit between sociopolitical structures.

³⁴ In this context, we might note that American elites have seemingly rediscovered patrimonial strategies of reproduction in recent decades (Lachmann 2011), something that the Trump administration and its openly familial forms of patronage have accelerated—but which they can hardly be credited with inventing.

Chapter 2: Dominance without Hegemony in Eighteenth-Century Europe

If economic and military capabilities are the principal means by which states exercise governance over geopolitics, as traditional theoretical perspectives maintain, then both Britain and France were well suited to the task of governing geopolitical relations in Europe between 1688 and 1783. On average and in aggregate, France enjoyed the largest economy, tax base, and standing army of any European polity in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Lachmann 2000, 2009; Maddison 2001, 2007). Yet it was Britain that constituted the leading edge of European economic development. Early modern England initiated the transition to fully-fledged capitalist property relations on the land (Brenner 1985a, 1985b), producing an “agricultural revolution” by 1700 (Allen 1999; Kerridge 1967). Britain dominated eighteenth-century colonial trade (and plunder), constructing Europe’s largest overseas empire in the process (Marshall 1998; Simms 2007). It was home to the “leading sectors” of the eighteenth-century world economy, those bundles of socio-technical innovations that possibly form the basis of growth in the very long run (Goldstein 1988; Modelski and Thompson 1996; Thompson 1992). And England was the principal site for an exponential takeoff of public credit—a veritable “financial revolution”—from the 1690s onward (Carruthers 1996; Dickson 1967). Meanwhile, and closely connected, eighteenth-century Britain had the world’s largest navy (Modelski and Thompson 1988), and its war-financing capabilities were unmatched (Brewer 1989; Carruthers 1996). Consequently, Britain repeatedly defeated other European states, including France, in continental and colonial warfare from 1688 onward (Baugh 2004; McKay and Scott 1983; Simms 2007). As this chapter shows, then, Britain enjoyed a position of military and economic *primacy* in eighteenth-century Europe. While both France and Britain were well positioned to exercise geopolitical governance, Britain was something more: a theoretically relevant candidate for global hegemony.

And yet, Britain remained utterly non-hegemonic throughout the eighteenth century. Britain never managed to organize enduring coalitions of states in either peacetime or war. Indeed, for much of this period, it had no major allies at all. Despite winning wars, Britain repeatedly failed to forge durable institutions in the subsequent peace settlements. Furthermore, a quantitative overview of all international treaties contracted during the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which this chapter will present in detail, shows that Britain never occupied a central position in treaty-making networks. Consequently, the conventional image of British hegemony as a nineteenth-century phenomenon, not an eighteenth-century one, remains descriptively valid (see, for instance, Arrighi 1994:53–54; Arrighi et al. 1999:58; Gilpin 1981:134–135). But it also follows that the theoretical tenets embedded in conventional *explanations* of British hegemony fit awkwardly with its actual timing, since Britain had already attained military and economic primacy a century earlier.

What, then, was the structure of geopolitics in the European core of the world system between 1688 and 1783? Some accounts see this period as a sort of “interregnum”¹ between declining (Dutch) and rising (British) hegemonies (Adams 2005:137–196; Arrighi 1994:52, 145–148; Arrighi et al. 1999:45–58; Lachmann 2003:364, 2009:63–65; Wallerstein 1980:244–289). From this perspective, eighteenth-century geopolitics might be characterized by a *lag* (Gilpin

¹ The term is owing to Arrighi (1994:164): “Through the 1780s, and to a lesser extent the 1790s, Dutch rule in high finance coexisted uneasily with the emerging British rule ... These were periods of transition, *interregna*, characterized by a dualism of power in high finance analogous ... to the Anglo-American dualism of the 1920s and early 1930s” (emphasis his).

1981:30) in which shifting relations of material force had not yet achieved realization in actors' perceptions and, most crucially, new institutions. More specifically, the narrative goes, Britain had not yet fought the necessary "hegemonic war" that would realign what Robert Gilpin (1981:30–34, 48–49) calls the "hierarchy of prestige" with the transformed "balance of power." That would come later, of course, with Britain's victory over Napoleonic France, institutionalized at the Congress of Vienna in 1814 and 1815 (see, for instance, Schroeder 1992).

There is much to be said for such claims. In this chapter, however, I take a different tack. References to lags, while perhaps adequate descriptively, presuppose a causal imagery that is simultaneously too deterministic *and* underspecified to anchor the robust explanation that I will endeavor to develop in the remainder of the dissertation. For a "lagged" process already contains its own resolution, an eventual catching-up that we know to have occurred in retrospect but which cannot be presumed from the vantage point of the eighteenth century. Britain's translation of material primacy into geopolitical hegemony did not simply take time; it *need not have happened at all*, certainly not at the particular moment and in the specific way that it did. Yet faced with these questions of timing and mechanism, arguments about lags are also explanatorily *indeterminate*: they make no predictions about the conditions under which the process of translation does or does not occur. Invoking the phenomenon of hegemonic war is equally insufficient. To do so is not yet to explain any particular hegemonic war. Moreover, this concept primarily serves the purpose of labeling wars that produced new hegemons as ipso facto hegemonic, without thereby explaining why other comparable wars—similar in scope, intensity, and duration—failed to do so. In this sense, it risks confirmation bias. For as I will show below, Britain had already fought and decisively won two wars prior to the nineteenth century that embodied all of the characteristics of the hegemonic kind: the War of the Spanish Succession (1702–1714) and the Seven Years' War (1756–1763).² Yet neither of these conflicts issued in British hegemony, whereas the early nineteenth-century Napoleonic Wars (1801–1815) did.

As opposed to a period of lag, then, this chapter characterizes eighteenth-century Europe as a period of *dominance without hegemony* (Guha 1997) at the inter-polity level. Britain did not lack the material capabilities necessary to exercise hegemonic governance—it was the system's dominant power in material terms. But it failed to exercise hegemonic governance nonetheless. What is more, to the degree that eighteenth-century European interstate relations were subject to any governing institutions—and I will stress that they were, that this was no mere "anarchy"—these institutions primarily emanated, not from Britain, but from *France*. Yet France fits poorly with any existing narrative of hegemonic rise and fall. Despite its considerable material capacity, France had never enjoyed the military and economic primacy that Britain already enjoyed by 1700 or so, and which the Netherlands may have briefly held in the mid-seventeenth century. In terms of material capabilities, it was always a runner-up.

Ultimately, I will conclude, it is most accurate to say that eighteenth-century European geopolitical relations were subject to the governing and regulating strategies, not so much of a single dominant state (Britain or otherwise), but of a *transnational, courtly-aristocratic society*, one with Paris and Versailles at its core. As Norbert Elias (2000:189–190) once put it:

What slowly began to form at the end of the Middle Ages was not just one courtly society here and another there. It was a courtly aristocracy embracing Western Europe with its centre in Paris, its dependencies in all the other courts, and

² This war actually began in 1754, albeit in undeclared form, with fighting between British and French colonialists in North America.

offshoots in all the other circles which claimed to belong to the great world of ‘Society’ ... The members of this multifarious society spoke the same language throughout the whole of Europe, first Italian, then French; they read the same books, they had the same taste, the same manners and—with differences of degree—the same style of living. Notwithstanding their many political differences and even the many wars they waged against each other, they oriented themselves fairly unanimously, over greater or lesser periods, towards the centre at Paris.

Although it maps poorly onto world-systems descriptions of contemporary economic structure as well as “realist” descriptions of contemporary military rivalry, this social configuration was the basis of interstate governance in eighteenth-century Europe.³ And it was a configuration in which eighteenth-century Britain, despite its material dominance, played a relatively marginal role.

Economic Development in Eighteenth-Century Europe

Already centered by this time on northwestern Europe and the Atlantic world, the core of the global economy experienced an internal redistribution of power in the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, a shift from the Netherlands to Britain (more specifically England) as the leading edge of world-economic development. Britain attained competitive advantages in the spheres of production, trade, and state financial capacity (if not overall credit creation) by 1700 or shortly thereafter—that is to say, the indicators of economic dominance favored by world-systems theory (Bousquet 1980; Chase-Dunn 1989; Hopkins and Wallerstein 1979; Wallerstein 1980, 1984, 2002) and those who critically engage it (Adams 1994, 2005; Lachmann 2003, 2009, 2014; Arrighi 1990, 1994, 2007). During this period, Britain also became the global hub of technical innovation, broadly defined, which is the principal metric employed by neo-Schumpeterian theories of long-term economic growth (Boswell and Misra 1995; Boswell and Sweat 1991; Goldstein 1985, 1987, 1988; Modelski and Thompson 1996; Thompson 1990, 1992; van Duijn [1979] 1983). Meanwhile, the region controlled by the French monarchy, the largest European economy in aggregate, stagnated on all of these measures, in both relative and absolute terms. Yet it remained sufficiently wealthy to make France the key economic runner-up to both the Dutch and later the British.

England became the first area in Europe to develop large-scale, capital-intensive farming in the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Brenner 1985a:46–54, 1985b:284–319; Crafts and Harley 2004; O’Brien 1996:215–217, 226).⁴ In consequence, by the eighteenth century if not earlier, it enjoyed Europe’s most efficient and productive agrarian sector,

³ As Elias (2000:190) adds, this configuration would endure until “the old aristocratic society lost its centre once and for all in the French Revolution.”

⁴ Although there is no consensus on the matter, the historiographical narratives with the strongest evidentiary basis tend to agree that these productive techniques were rooted, in turn, in a unique *social* structure characterized by the tripartite relation among large landlords, capitalist tenant farmers, and landless wage-laborers (see, from a Marxist perspective, Brenner [1985a, 1985b] and, from an institutionalist perspective, O’Brien [1996]). This system contrasted sharply with the small peasant property found in most of continental Western Europe, the mix of sharecropping arrangements and large estates (*latifundia*) worked by day laborers in Mediterranean Europe, and, of course, the relations of serfdom that predominated east of the Elbe.

surpassing even the Netherlands, the economically ascendant power of the seventeenth century (Allen 2000:18–24, 2009:23–132; Coleman 1977:196–201; Crafts 1989:419–421; Crouzet [1985] 1990:65–66; Overton 1996:75; Simpson 2004; Slicher van Bath 1963; van Bavel and Thoen 1999). There are several ways to demonstrate this point. Perhaps the best measure of productivity in an agrarian economy is per capita agricultural output (Allen 2000:18). Accordingly, Table 2.1 shows estimates of agricultural output per capita in different regions of Europe between 1600 and 1750. As we can see, England surpassed all other regions by 1700 at the latest.

Table 2.1: Agricultural Output Per Capita, 1600–1750

	1600	1700	1750
England	1.00	1.21	1.31
France	0.93	0.90	0.93
Netherlands	1.00	1.00	1.21
Belgium	1.29	1.10	1.21
Germany	0.79	0.69	0.69
Spain	0.93	1.07	0.93
Italy	0.97	0.93	0.79
Poland	1.03	1.14	1.07
Austria	0.78	0.93	1.07

Note: England in 1600 = 1.00

Source: Allen 2000:19

Crop yields per unit of land are another common measure of productivity in an agricultural context (Allen 1999:222–225). Although estimates require a great deal of extrapolation, the existing bodies of evidence tend to point in the same direction, suggesting that yield ratios on a range of cereals and other foodstuffs in both southeast and Midlands England had exceeded those in any other region of Europe—including the most productive regions of the Netherlands, Belgium, and France—by the end of the seventeenth century.⁵ Finally, in an agrarian but increasingly commercialized economy like that of early modern Europe, wage estimates provide a further, if still cruder, measure of the efficiency of production (Allen 2001, 2009). Strikingly, among European countries, real wages increased *only* in England during the

⁵ See the extensive collections of tables in Slicher van Bath (1963) and van Bavel and Thoen (1999).

early modern period, declining dramatically almost everywhere else.⁶ This meant that already by the eighteenth century, England enjoyed a significantly higher standard of living than most of continental Europe, which again reflected its higher agricultural productivity (Allen 2001:427–432, 2009:25–56).⁷ Taken together, these figures are sufficient to suggest that eighteenth-century Britain was Europe’s dominant polity in the sphere of *production*, which was overwhelmingly based in agriculture and associated rural industries like woolen fabrics (see Mendels 1972; Thirsk 1961).

With twenty million inhabitants, France was the most populous polity in Europe and the wealthiest in aggregate throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Maddison 2007:376, 379). For this reason, France maintained a larger tax base than any other European state between the mid-seventeenth century and 1789 (Lachmann 2000:168, 2009:47). However, as we can see from table 2.1, French agricultural productivity suffered stagnation (if not outright decline) between the mid-seventeenth and the mid-eighteenth centuries (Allen 2000:19; Crouzet 1990:14, 63; Hoffman 1996:132–142; Le Roy Ladurie 1975:395; Slicher van Bath 1963; van Bavel and Thoen 1999). The result was a recurrent pattern of subsistence crisis: France continued to undergo periodic countrywide famines until the second decade of the eighteenth century (Crouzet 1990:36). England, by contrast, had experienced its last countrywide famine over a century earlier, in the 1590s, and even localized subsistence crises disappeared from the English countryside after the 1620s (Brenner 1985b:318; Crouzet 1990:67; Parker 1996:224). Meanwhile, France was again on the verge of a full-blown subsistence crisis in the 1780s, just before the Revolution (Lefebvre [1939] 2005:100–103). As we will see, such crises, and the ever-present risk of such crises, severely hindered the capacity of the French state to mobilize the wealth that was theoretically at its disposal.

Of course, economic development does not just bear on geopolitics indirectly, making human and material resources available for state mobilization; it does so directly as well, producing relations of dependency. As for the latter, *trade* is probably the most proximate link to geopolitics, whatever theory one favors of the relation between trade and production. And if eighteenth-century Britain was ascendant in production, its primacy was even more striking in the realm of trade. Scholars tend to agree that Britain—that is, its semi-sovereign trading companies in combination with private British merchants—seized the dominant position in the emerging network of world trade by the early decades of the eighteenth century (Adams 2005:175–180; Arrighi 1994:210–212; Cuenca Esteban 2004:47–55; Lachmann 2003:361; Modelski 1978:221; North and Thomas 1973:149). As Erikson (2014:5) notes: “By 1720–31 the average annual value of the English [East India] Company’s imports from Asia was exceeding the value of Dutch imports” (see also Steensgaard 1990:110, 112). As for the Western Hemisphere, between 1701 and 1800, British merchants forcibly transported an estimated 2.53 million slaves to the Americas, compared to roughly 1.8 million slaves shipped by France and Portugal respectively and 351,000 slaves shipped by the Dutch (Maddison 2001:58). Indeed, Modelski and Thompson (1996:97) estimate that the British transported more slaves than any other merchant community during *every decade* between the 1690s and the 1790s.

⁶ Because real wages declined only slightly in the Netherlands, the latter too outpaced the rest of Europe in terms of living standards.

⁷ Thus Allen (2001:430) concludes that England’s lead in economic development was an early modern phenomenon, *preceding* the industrial revolution: “the nineteenth century pattern of relative prosperity in England and the Low Countries matched by wretched poverty in the rest of the continent was established by 1750.”

As the above makes eminently clear, “trade” is a bit of a misnomer. The global commercial system of the eighteenth century was a colonial system, marked by slavery and other forms of forced labor, militarized competition for captured markets, and outright plunder by a handful of European merchant companies and settler colonies in the extra-European world (Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson 2005; Wallerstein 1980; Williams 1944). Unsurprisingly, then, Britain was the leading colonial power of this period: Britons constructed Europe’s largest overseas empire, the so-called First British Empire, in the latter part of the seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth centuries (Marshall 1998; Simms 2007). The consequence, as Paul Kennedy (1987:138) remarks, was that “overseas expansion had given the country unchallenged access to vast new wealth which its rivals did not enjoy.”

With the decline of the Dutch commercial system in the early decades of the eighteenth century (Israel 1989:377–398), France became, and would remain, Britain’s major colonial rival. However, French trading companies were never as profitable (or as durable) as their British counterparts, which outcompeted them for foreign markets (Adams 2005:113–122, 166–167). At the Peace of Utrecht in 1713, Britain secured from Spain the *Asiento*, an exclusive right to transport slaves to Spanish America, thereby denying this monopoly to the French, who had briefly held it since 1701 (Blackburn 1997:495). By 1763, Britain had ejected France from the entirety of North America east of the Mississippi (Simms 2007:422–500). In short, France never came close to matching Britain’s commercial power or its capacity for colonial expropriation.

Orthodox world-systems definitions of hegemony—in the strictly economic sense—characterize it as a condition of simultaneous supremacy in production, trade, and finance (see especially Wallerstein 1980:38–39). With regard to *finance*, the eighteenth-century evidence is somewhat more ambiguous. Britain did not become the financial entrepôt of the world economy—its principal source of credit creation—until the 1770s or even the 1780s, when London finally supplanted Amsterdam as the leading banking center of Europe (Arrighi 1994:163–164; Arrighi et al. 1999:53; Braudel [1979] 1984:266–272). In terms of *state finances*, however, England had established itself as the real engine of innovation much earlier when, in the 1690s, it borrowed and scaled up a system of originally Dutch institutions of public credit—a national bank, long-term funded debt, capital markets—producing a “financial revolution” over the next few years (Carruthers 1996; Dickson 1967; Kramnick 1968:39–55).⁸ Between the 1670s and the 1690s, England had already developed the most efficient fiscal apparatus in Europe via the bureaucratization of its treasury administration, the abolition of tax farming, and the termination of office venality in a whole range of departments that had previously captured substantial revenue flows as economic rents (Brewer 1989:21–131; Ertman 1997:187–207; O’Brien 2002).

France, by contrast, failed to undergo any such change as long as the *ancien régime* endured. Eighteenth-century France never developed a stable system of long-term public debt, and the French attempt to create a national bank collapsed in 1721 (Adams 2005:167–171). Although the monarchy briefly stripped the Farmers General of its privileges in 1709, it reestablished tax farming as the primary mode of revenue collection in 1726, which it would remain until the Revolution (Brewer 1989:102; Durand 1976). More broadly, office venality remained rampant in most administrative departments (Bien 1987; Bonney 1991, 1995; Bossenga 1987; Dessert 1984; Doyle 1984, 1996; Kwass 2000; Parker 1996). France may have enjoyed Europe’s largest fiscal base on paper, then, but a relatively small proportion of nominal

⁸ This is especially critical because, as Carruthers (1996:71) observes, English “borrowing was mostly from domestic sources, and there was little reliance on money raised abroad.”

revenue actually landed in the treasury. Brewer (1989:104) calculates that “as late as 1788, the French royal treasury was receiving only half of the state’s total revenues.” In fact, according to Mann’s (1993:180) estimate, during the ten-year period spanning 1776 and 1787, “*only 24 percent* of direct and indirect taxes raised reached the treasury” (emphasis mine). As a cumulative result of these factors, the French monarchy was repeatedly forced to reschedule its debt: in 1698, 1714–1715, 1721–1722, 1726, 1759, 1764, 1771 (Bonney 1998:646). Indeed, throughout this period, “Each war cycle ended in bankruptcy” (Collins 1995:17). By contrast, the English state faced its last ever crisis of insolvency in 1672 (Carruthers 1996:54).⁹

Thus far, I have primarily focused on economic indicators employed by the world-systems tradition, as it is these scholars (and their interlocutors) who have done the most to theorize the causal link between economic development and geopolitical governance (see especially Adams 1994, 2005; Arrighi 1990, 1994, 2007; Bousquet 1980; Chase-Dunn 1989; Hopkins and Wallerstein 1979; Lachmann 2003, 2009, 2014; Wallerstein 1980, 1984, 2002). However, it is also worth considering measures originating from a parallel research program that similarly grasps the nexus of economics and geopolitics: the broadly neo-Schumpeterian study of Kondratieff waves, or K-waves—long-term cycles of world-level economic growth (Boswell and Misra 1995; Boswell and Sweat 1991; Goldstein 1985, 1987, 1988; Modelski and Thompson 1996; Thompson 1990, 1992; van Duijn 1983).¹⁰ K-waves are propelled by *leading sectors*, systems of socio-technical innovation that constitute “the most dynamic elements of the economy, those that prove over time to have been the driving force of development” (Boswell and Misra 1995:460–461; emphasis theirs). In this respect, too, Britain had attained world-economic primacy by the end of the seventeenth century. Synthesizing the results of this research program, Modelski and Thompson (1996:69, 84–100, 111) find conclusive evidence that the leading sectors of the late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century K-waves—ranging from roughly 1660–1690, 1714–1740, 1763–1792—were all centered on Britain, specifically British-dominated colonial trade in tobacco, sugar, and textiles during the first two waves and British-dominated cotton consumption and pig-iron production during the third.¹¹

Taken cumulatively, then, the above evidence supports the simple conclusion that Britain “led the world economy in its eighteenth-century phase,” as Richard Lachmann (2000:169) puts

⁹ Although the English system of public finance and tax collection was clearly more efficient than its French alternative from a purely economic standpoint, this is not to suggest that the latter was *ineffective* as a tool of state formation, or that it was somehow poorly “adapted” to its “environment,” that is, the specific sociopolitical context in which it was employed. Carruthers (1996) makes the important point that both systems were highly productive means of securing the *consent* of the dominant class, giving elites in both countries a strong investment—in the double sense—in the perpetuation of their states, whether through their legally guaranteed claim to a portion of state debt or their legally guaranteed claim to an office or jurisdiction. Indeed, as I will argue below, the French system was *especially* well adapted to the tasks of geopolitical governance because of the way that it spurred a process of elite class formation with transnational reach, organizing a well-regulated courtly aristocracy that would serve as both a point of social contact with, and a cultural model for, the courts and nobilities of other countries.

¹⁰ In practice, there is a good deal of overlap between the K-waves and world-systems approaches to economic development, much more than either shares with, say, neo-classical economic theory. Accounts that explicitly incorporate both approaches include Boswell and Misra (1995) and Boswell and Sweat (1991).

¹¹ Britain also dominated the early nineteenth-century K-wave (1815–1850), according to Modelski and Thompson (1996), which was centered by this time on steam power and railroad construction. The leading edge of world-economic growth thereafter shifted to the United States, on this account.

it.¹² Britain, in other words, constituted the leading edge of eighteenth-century world-economic development, whatever the theoretical frames through which the latter is understood. Seen in terms of its economic capabilities, Britain's prospects for governing the European interstate system were better than those of France—or any other eighteenth-century polity.

Military Rivalry in Eighteenth-Century Europe

If Britain was the ascendant economic power of eighteenth-century Europe, it was also the dominant military one. Eighteenth-century Britain outweighed the coercive capacity of any other European state. Such military primacy was manifest in the size and sophistication of its navy; in its war-financing capabilities, themselves a function of its overall financial capacity as described above; and ultimately, in its ability to win decisive battles and wars.

Scholars agree that the British navy attained mastery of the seas sometime between 1692 and 1713 (Arrighi et al. 1999:46–47; Modelski 1978:225; Wallerstein 1980:113–114). The detailed data collection of Modelski and Thompson (1988:68–70) has shown that Britain maintained a greater number of warships than any other navy in the world for *every year* between 1702 and 1799.¹³ Figure 2.1 presents these results as ten-year averages, alongside those for Europe's other major navies, from 1670 to 1799. Because it takes sea power as its primary metric (prior to the advent of aerospace technologies), the “long-cycle” approach to global politics thus regards Britain as the unrivalled world power of the eighteenth century (Modelski 1978, 1987, 1995; Modelski and Modelski 1988; Modelski and Thompson 1988, 1996; Thompson 1988, 1990, 1992).¹⁴ But Britain's capacity to put soldiers in the field was becoming unparalleled as well, at least at decisive moments. Between 1710 and 1711, during the War of the Spanish Succession, Britain “supported armies totaling 170,000 troops ... while France, a nation with almost four times the population, managed to amass an army of about 150,000 troops” (Carruthers 1996:15).

As in the economic sphere, France was Europe's other major military power. On average, France maintained a larger standing army than Britain or any other European state throughout the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Kennedy 1987:79; Maddison 2001:81). Despite this, British (and British-funded) soldiers repeatedly outperformed their French rivals in continental and colonial warfare. Of seven Anglo-French wars waged between 1689 and 1815, the island power lost only *one* (Simms 2007; Teschke 2003:259). Consider the two largest conflicts to fall within my period of focus (roughly 1688–1783). During the War of the Spanish Succession (1702–1714), the British-led coalition decisively defeated its French opponent on the battlefield (though not, as we will see, at the negotiating table). By 1709, France's war effort was so exhausted that its monarchy was on the verge of bankruptcy while the French countryside suffered—as both consequence and cause—a major subsistence crisis (Bély 1990:35–38;

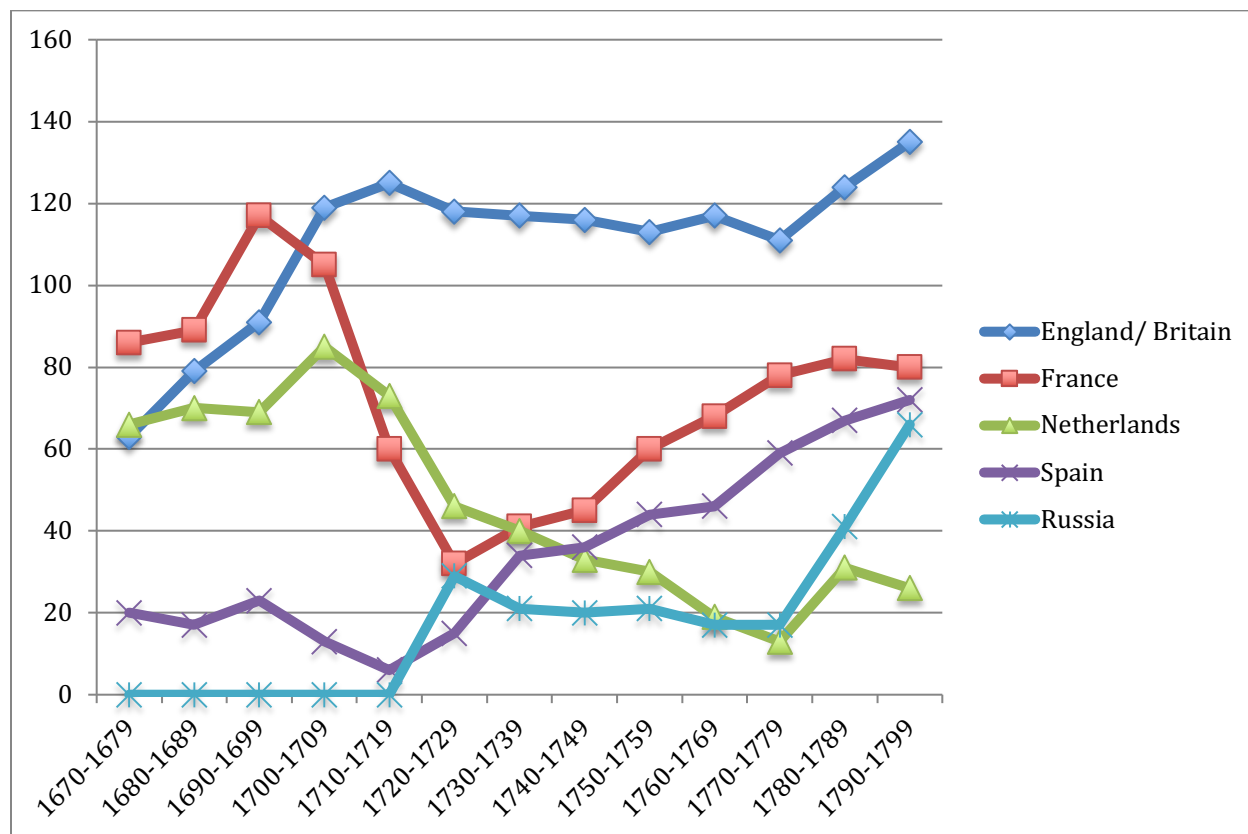
¹² Or as Coleman (1977:199) summarizes the weight of the evidence: “England was probably unique in the century after 1650 in significantly increasing its urban and non-agrarian population, in diversifying its manufacturing industry, in extending its exports of goods and services, and yet at the same time in becoming a net exporter of foodstuffs.”

¹³ As it did in every year thereafter until 1926 (Modelski and Thompson 1988:70–72, 75–76, 78).

¹⁴ As Kwon (2011:599) explains, this view holds that sea power “is the best measure of global military supremacy given its ability to capture national military capacity *and* global military reach, both of which allow a state to define and defend its world order” (emphasis his).

Kennedy 1987:102–106; Wolf 1968:559–573). The Seven Years’ War (1756–1763), for its part, was a total military victory for Britain over France. As noted above, Britain acquired France’s entire Canadian colony as a result (Kennedy 1987:114–115; McKay and Scott 1983:199–200; Simms 2007:422–500).

Figure 2.1: Total Warships by Country, 1670–1799



Note: 10-year moving averages

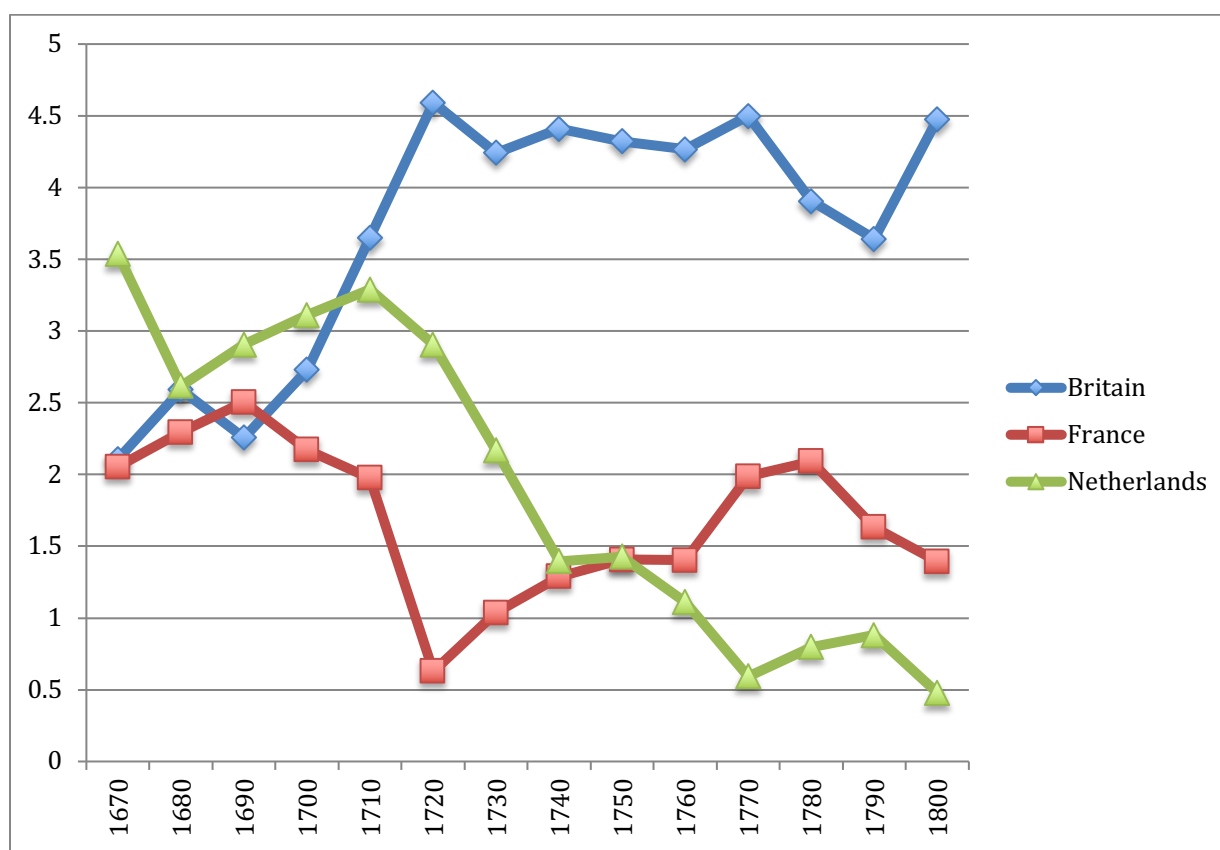
Source: Modelski and Thompson 1988:68–70

Britain’s military supremacy was visible even in its sole defeat. The loss of its non-Canadian North American colonies in the American Revolutionary War (1775–1783) reflected British diplomatic isolation, not military weakness, as I will show below. In fact, despite the combined efforts of the French, the Spanish, and—for a time—the Dutch navies, as well as the more or less overt hostility of all neutral fleets, Britain had regained its command of the seas by war’s end (Simms 2007:615–661).

In sum, by the eighteenth century, Britain had attained a position of material (economic and military) primacy or supremacy in the world system. We can lend supplemental support to this conclusion by considering an index of material capabilities that the world-systems scholar Roy Kwon (2011) has generated, which interacts common metrics of military and economic

power from the sixteenth century to the present. A country's score is calculated by multiplying a standardized measure of its estimated GDP by a standardized measure of its estimated GDP per capita by its total "seapower" (its estimated share of the world's warships).¹⁵ Figure 2.2 reproduces the results for Britain, France, and the Netherlands at ten-year intervals between 1670 and 1800. Kwon's index suggests that Britain became the most dominant state in the world system, in conventional material terms, by 1708. Especially significant, during the entire period between 1723 and 1777 and again after 1782, Britain's score on this index is actually *twice* that of its nearest competitor. This is a clear demonstration of unrivalled material primacy. In direct contrast, then, to the standard world-systems narrative of eighteenth-century Europe as a multi-polar, competitive field that lacked a stable hierarchy of power—an interregnum of sorts—Kwon's (2011:606) "most critical finding" is that "England is, *by far*, the most powerful nation-state during most of the 18th century" (emphasis mine).

Figure 2.2: Material Capabilities Index, 1670–1800



Note: "Britain" is inclusive of Britain and Ireland for estimates of GDP and GDP per capita.

Source: Kwon 2011:612

¹⁵ Seapower estimates, taken from Modelski and Thompson (1988; see also figure 2.1), are available on an annual basis. GDP and GDP per capita estimates, taken from Maddison (2007), are only available at 100- to 120-year intervals before 1820, so Kwon interpolates them for each year in between. For a full discussion of the measurement strategy, see Kwon (2011:597–602).

It should be noted that for Kwon (2011), combined military-economic supremacy simply *is* “hegemony,” by definition. This formulation contrasts with my own approach, and with those discussed in chapter 1, which take military-economic supremacy as a hypothesized *condition* or *cause* of hegemony. Out of necessity, then, one would expect Kwon to conclude that Britain became hegemonic in 1723, the moment by which—to put it in my terms—Britain enjoyed indisputable world “dominance.” Instead, he attempts to reconcile his findings to the existing world-systems periodization of British hegemony as a *nineteenth-century* phenomenon, arguing that Britain’s hegemony was limited to the 1833–1918 period because a disaggregated version of the material capabilities index shows that it was only during this time that Britain had the world’s highest per capita GDP.

This is to introduce a rather ad hoc distinction. By Kwon’s (2011:600) own account, military and economic capabilities do not combine in an “additive” way; rather, they produce “catalyzing,” mutually reinforcing effects. Indeed, it is precisely for this reason that, by contrast with an approach that would take the sum of military and economic scores, his model requires “multiplying these measures to obtain an interaction effect.” Decomposing the index into its constituent military and economic parts would thus appear to have little meaning.¹⁶ Moreover, there is a major measurement issue at stake here: the data that Kwon uses for Britain (which he designates with the shorthand “England”) actually appear to encompass both Britain *and* Ireland (compare the tables in Maddison 2007:309, 382). The problem, of course, is that Ireland was emphatically not part of the metropolitan English state but, rather, a British colony.¹⁷ Because Ireland’s per capita GDP was also significantly lower than that of Britain throughout the period of interest (Maddison 2001:247), Kwon’s estimates of “English” GDP per capita are downwardly biased. In fact, if we re-estimate these figures using the actual boundaries of the eighteenth-century Kingdom of Great Britain as the unit of interest, British GDP per capita surpasses the Netherlands between 1700 and 1800. And if we limit our analysis to the true metropolises of the Dutch and British empires—which requires a comparison between the Netherlands and *England*—then metropolitan British GDP per capita is *well* above that of its Dutch rival by 1800 (compare the tables in Maddison 2001:247 and Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson 2002:88).¹⁸

Judged by its capacity for both coercion *and* accumulation, then, Britain was better suited than France or any other state to exercise governance over eighteenth-century European geopolitics. As another recent commentator summarizes the cumulative result: “This combination of revolutionary institutional innovations—Britain’s naval superiority and exceptional fiscal responsiveness in the face of external military pressure on the basis of a self-sustaining capitalist economy—gave the [eighteenth-century British] state the decisive *comparative economic, fiscal and coercive advantage* over its continental competitors” (Teschke

¹⁶ In this regard, Kwon’s attempt to salvage the world-systems periodization of hegemonic rise and decline reads as a sort of “degenerating problem-shift,” to put it with Lakatos (1970). If the world-systems account of hegemony is to advance, Giovanni Arrighi’s (1990, 1994) reformulation thus provides the best route, for on this account, military-economic supremacy may well be a *necessary* condition of hegemony and yet totally *insufficient* to bring it about (for an explicit statement of this point, see Arrighi 1990:404).

¹⁷ Even at a formal, juridical level, Ireland was only incorporated into the Kingdom of Great Britain in 1801 (creating the United Kingdom)—that is, after the conclusion of my period of study.

¹⁸ Note, then, that if we were to regenerate the material capabilities index itself using Britain or England as the unit of interest, its eighteenth-century lead would increase by a considerably greater amount than the attendant increase in per capita GDP, given the multiplier effect of the military-economic interaction.

2005:16; emphasis his). By the standards of long-cycle theory, “realist” theories of military competition, and, indeed, world-systems theory itself, eighteenth-century Britain was even a candidate for hegemony.

Geopolitical Governance in Eighteenth-Century Europe

It is thus puzzling, in light of such evidence, that Britain was not at all hegemonic in eighteenth-century Europe, at least not in the sense that I employed in chapter 1 to refer to the exercise of *governance* over all other polities. In fact, Britain largely failed to convert its military and economic dominance into *any* effective governance over the core—the metropole—of the eighteenth-century world system, that is, over its own European neighbors. Instead, it was France that governed eighteenth-century European geopolitics most effectively and durably, despite its military and economic weakness with respect to Britain (though not with respect to most European states). In what follows, I consider a range of indicators of geopolitical governance. In each case, I show that (a) Britain failed to approach any reasonable criterion of hegemony and that (b) France exercised significantly more effective governance than did Britain.

Treaties

An original network analysis of treaties signed between 1661 and 1785 offers preliminary support for this conclusion. I have compiled the network from a comprehensive reference guide to international treaties, published by the *Consolidated Treaty Series* (Parry 1979–1986). Nodes represent contracting parties (states and other actors with the sovereign power to sign treaties). Ties represent treaties. Specifically, a tie is a discrete treaty signing: I cumulate ties to generate networks of all parties that were connected by treaty at any time within successive 25-year intervals.¹⁹ (Different specifications of the intervals yielded similar interpretations.) Typical categories of treaty during the period of interest are: treaties of alliance, treaties of peace, treaties of commerce, treaties of marriage (often accompanying alliances), treaties of dynastic succession, treaties regarding the cession or partition of territory, various wartime agreements (truces, ceasefires, capitulations), and unknown.²⁰

Although the formal properties of the treaty network do not *directly* capture patterns of geopolitical governance, beginning with a global overview of treaties sensitizes us to *likely* patterns that qualitative analysis can then verify by exploring the contents of interstate agreements (as I will do in the next two sections). There are several reasons for such an approach. For one, the literature on hegemony maintains that hegemonic states have tended to institutionalize their leadership positions through treaty arrangements like alliances, peace congresses, and commercial and financial agreements (Arrighi 1994:14–15; Boswell 1995:7, 11–12; Gilpin 1981:15; Lachmann 2014:33; Modelski 1978:217; Thompson 1988:46). Thus a state that occupies an exceptionally central position in a treaty network is likely to be exercising hegemonic-level governance. Beyond the special case of hegemony, the world-systems, world-polity/world-society, and IR literatures all recognize treaty networks as a proxy for overall status

¹⁹ This is necessary because most termination dates are unknown.

²⁰ Given the non-negligible size of the unknown treaty category, decomposing the network by type (e.g., alliances) is of questionable utility because of the missing data problems that arise.

hierarchies (Beckfield 2008; Hughes et al. 2009; Keene 2012, 2014; Snyder and Kick 1979). While status is obviously not synonymous with the active *influence* on which geopolitical governance depends, most theoretical imageries of social structure—including most network theories—presume these phenomena to be highly correlated. Finally, it is worth considering what a treaty actually is: the material presence of international law (what eighteenth-century Europeans called the law of nations), “commonly taken by lawyers as the primary and most reliable source of international rules and obligations” (Keene 2012:475). Indeed, this was especially true in the eighteenth century because the total lack of what we today call intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) meant that virtually all international-legal precedent was set by state-to-state agreements (Dhondt 2015; Keene 2012). Given the historical context of eighteenth-century Europe, then, a state’s capacity for treaty-making is a good measure of its contribution to the rules and institutions of interstate politics, in a word, the stuff geopolitical governance.

I assess actors’ treaty-making capacity by measuring their network centrality at each interval. Specifically, I measure states’ *degree centrality* in the treaty network. Degree centrality is defined as “the number of ties incident upon a node” (Borgatti 2005:62; cf. Freeman 1979), that is, a simple count of a node’s ties. The degree centrality of a node thus shows the numerical extent of its treaty partners in a given interval. As such, it captures a node’s influence in the specific sense of other nodes’ risk of exposure to it. In the context of treaties, then, the degree centrality measure can be thought of as indicating the socio-spatial *reach* of a state’s contribution to international law (which might also indicate its *popularity* as a treaty partner). In sum, actors occupying more central positions on this metric are likely to have been more influential in the interstate system—in the strictly non-causal sense that their centrality indicates this likelihood.

Indeed, it bears emphasis that I view centrality as a descriptive rather than an explanatory tool, an indicator of the outcome of an exogenous influence process—not a causal mechanism that produces influence.²¹ For this reason, I am not as interested in centrality measures that capture a more structural form of power like a brokerage relation. Nevertheless, supplemental analysis of *betweenness centrality*—a better measure of structural dependence—largely reproduces the trends presented here.²² Those additional results are reported in Appendix A.

Table 2.2 depicts states’ degree centrality scores (number of ties) at each interval.²³ I include every state that ranked in the top five during at least one interval. As we can see, Britain did enjoy a relatively high level of degree centrality over time. However, it by no means occupied a position of primacy in the treaty network that was in any way equivalent to its primacy in the economic and military spheres. At no interval did Britain have the most ties. Although Britain was the second-ranked actor in the 1761–1785 period—its highest rank—its *absolute* number of ties was merely half that of France. Indeed, Britain had more treaty partners than France in only one interval (1686–1710). Britain also ranked behind Austria during most of the eighteenth century.

²¹ Because I employ network properties as descriptive indicators (rather than explanatory factors), the conceptual simplicity of degree centrality further recommends it for my purposes.

²² Betweenness centrality is defined as “the share of times that a node *i* needs a node *k* (whose centrality is being measured) in order to reach a node *j* via the shortest path” (Borgatti 2005:60; cf. Freeman 1977, 1979). That is to say, the betweenness centrality of a node measures the degree to which it lies on the shortest path between all pairs of nodes.

²³ Thanks to Mike Schultz for helping to produce these models.

Table 2.2: Degree Centrality: Interstate Treaties, 1661–1785

	1661–1685	1686–1710	1711–1735	1736–1760	1761–1785
France	43 (1)	24	31 (1)	31 (1)	43 (1)
Brandenburg-Prussia	37 (2)	38 (5)	29 (2)	14	13
England/Britain	19	39 (3)	24 (4)	19 (4)	22 (2)
Austria-Hungary	30 (5)	42 (1)	29 (2)	23 (2)	20 (3)
Netherlands	27	39 (3)	15	14	9
Spain	22	29	13	20 (3)	11
Denmark	33 (4)	20	9	15	16 (5)
Münster	23	42 (1)	0	0	3
Savoy-Sardinia	7	26	8	18 (5)	11
Russia	5	13	19 (5)	15	17 (4)
Sweden	30 (5)	18	12	11	8
Palatinate	34 (3)	18	4	8	5

Note: Unbracketed numbers indicate centrality scores (number of partners); numbers in parentheses indicate ranks for the top five states in each interval. Austria-Hungary includes both the hereditary House of Austria and the elective Holy Roman Emperor (with the exception, for the latter, of the years 1742–1745, the only time that the imperial crown was not held by Austria).

Rather than Britain, France was the polity that occupied the most privileged position in the late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century treaty network. The degree centrality measure shows that France had the most ties at *every interval* except 1686–1710. The latter was the period of major coalition wars against Louis XIV (reigned 1643–1715): the Nine Years' War (1688–1697) and the War of the Spanish Succession, both of which grouped the “Grand Alliance” of England, Holland, and the Holy Roman emperor on one side and the French House of Bourbon on the other. Clearly, France's desirability as a treaty partner suffered in consequence. Equally clearly, France fully recovered its treaty-making capacity at war's end. Not only did France have the most partners at every interval from 1711 to 1785; the *extent* of its lead grew progressively: while France and the runners-up were roughly equal in 1711–1735, France had almost 50 percent more ties than the second-ranked actor in 1736–1760 and twice as many in 1761–1785.

To the extent that the wars of the Grand Alliance aimed to dislodge France's preponderant influence in European geopolitics, the treaty network thus suggests that they failed.

Interestingly, this may have been obscured by the fact that the traditional interpretation of these wars has tended to see them as checking Louis XIV's supposed designs for something altogether more ambitious, a project of continental dominion that contemporaries called "universal monarchy" (Dehio 1962:72–90; Kennedy 1987:100–114; McKay and Scott 1983:36–66; Pincus 1999). The latter term, however, is more accurately seen as fear-mongering propaganda; unfortunately, the traditional interpretation has been much too ready to take it at face value.²⁴ For in fact, Louis XIV never conceived of *ruling* Europe as a whole, a dream that persisted among Holy Roman emperors as late as the sixteenth century. What he most desired, it seems, was to be the "arbiter" of European territorial and succession disputes—a less polemical term by which Louis's contemporaries also knew him and which corresponds more closely to what I have called governance—primarily because this enabled him to promote the dynastic interests of his own extended family (Bély 1999:8; Rowen 1980:75–76, 93–94).²⁵ But if it was continent-wide arbitration, and not universal monarchy, that Louis was after, we must conclude that the countervailing efforts of the Grand Alliance were considerably less successful than has sometimes been suggested.

Contrary, then, to the theoretical expectations that follow from Britain's military and economic primacy, the treaty data show that Britain was unlikely to have been hegemonic in eighteenth-century Europe. Moreover, it is likely that France exercised a greater degree of geopolitical governance than any other state, including Britain. At this stage, however, we cannot rule out the possibility that Britain rivaled France for influence and leadership, as Britain's centrality was by no means negligible. It is thus necessary to unpack the treaty trends.

²⁴ For instance, Steven Pincus's (1999) generally astute interpretation of England's involvement in these conflicts fails to distinguish between universal monarchy as a figure of English political discourse and as a real objective of French policy. Thus when he writes that "[t]he English people did indeed prove willing—if not always cheerfully—to spend their money in wars against *the French aspirant to universal monarchy* ... that Englishmen and women were willing to suffer through the infringements on their personal liberty implicit in the Augustan state because *they knew the alternative was subjugation to a universal monarch*" (Pincus 1999:201; emphasis mine), the actual presence of such a monarch is taken for granted. Such an account may well capture English perceptions, but it is wildly inaccurate as a description of Louis XIV's motivations. Conflating the two is damaging, in this case, because it lends unwarranted support to a primacy-of-foreign-policy explanation of how modern nations were forged. "Nationalism," writes Pincus (1999:203–204), "arises out of the nexus of international politics ... This ideology—made possible but not inevitable by the advent of print capitalism—*became plausible and persuasive* in the context of a pan-European struggle against an aspiring universal monarch" (emphasis mine). The problem, of course, is that insofar as the aspiring universal monarch was much more a subjective phantasmagoria than an objective possibility, Pincus's account begs the question of why certain agents and groups *within* England were inclined to perceive France this way in the first place, a question that necessarily returns us to a more "social" rather than "geopolitical" theory of nationalism's emergence (but see Pincus 2012, which tackles this question more explicitly, if partially).

²⁵ As Frederick William of Brandenburg (reigned 1640–1688) put it in 1679, at the time of the Peace of Nijmegen: "France has already become the arbiter of Europe ... henceforth no prince will find security or profit except with the friendship and alliance of the King of France" (quoted in McKay and Scott 1983:36).

Alliances

In order to explore the extent to which British and French treaty-making elicited actual cooperation from other states, recruiting the latter as reliable followers and otherwise influencing and leading them, I consider the principal alliances in which Britain and France were involved. Britain's most consistent ally in the eighteenth century was Portugal. The latter, however, had become a geopolitically marginal polity by this time. As can be seen from table 2.2, Portugal did not fall within the top five European states in terms of its total number of treaty partners during any of the intervals between 1661 and 1785. What is more, cooperation between Britain and Portugal was primarily limited to the commercial sphere. Jeremy Black (1988:596) provides a telling gloss on eighteenth-century Anglo-Portuguese relations:

As Britain and Portugal did not compete in colonial terms, while Portugal and Spain did, the basis was clear for an Anglo-Portuguese alliance, complementing commercial links. However, the relations between the two powers also throws [sic] light on why Britain was such an unattractive alliance partner for other European states. Even with a country to whom she was so closely linked commercially as Portugal, Britain proved unwilling to make the military commitments that her ally sought. Successive British ministries were not interested in Portuguese dreams of territorial gains from Spain, or, in Portuguese eyes, in providing sufficient support when Spanish attack appeared imminent.

Thus even Portugal (“a steady, indeed dependent, ally—the only one, in fact” [Baugh 1988:47]) was a perennially unhappy party to the British alliance.

Britain's second most consistent ally was the Dutch Republic, a formerly dominant but fading power. As table 2.2 showed, the Dutch Republic ranked in the top five on degree centrality at only one interval, the 1686–1710 period. Its quantity of treaty partners declined precipitously thereafter. The Anglo-Dutch alliance, for its part, endured from the late seventeenth to the mid-eighteenth centuries (Cesa [2007] 2010:85–118). However, Britain's actual influence over its Dutch ally diminished to the point that in 1739, the Dutch remained neutral in Britain's war with Spain despite their treaty obligations (Black 1986b:365–366). Later on, the Dutch were to permanently abandon Britain, remaining neutral in the Seven Years' War and even fighting against Britain in the early 1780s (Black 1986a:72).

In effect, Britain had *no allies at all* in the late 1730s and early 1740s and for the entire period from 1763 to 1787, a fate to which eighteenth-century France was never subject (Black 1986a:21–22, 39; Dull 1985:26–32; McKay and Scott 1983:161, 216–217; Roberts 1970). Significantly, multiple British ministries tried—and failed—to secure allies during these periods. The historical record is particularly clear as to the latter period. As McKay and Scott (1983:216) describe it:

The virtual disappearance of Britain from any active role in Europe was surprising, coming as it did in the aftermath of the most successful war she had ever waged. Nor was it, initially, a matter of deliberate calculation. *Britain's isolation was not the result of a conscious policy but of the failure of her diplomacy*, which for some time after 1763 in fact aimed at securing alliances with major states on the Continent (emphasis mine).

According to Roberts (1970:19): “For ten years after 1763, so far from ministers being isolationist, they rather devoted their energies to an attempt to put an end to isolation ... ‘Splendid Isolation’ was never their policy.” Even Baugh (1998:24), in a work that otherwise emphasizes just those willfully isolationist aspects of eighteenth-century British foreign policy, plainly concurs in this regard: “From 1760 to 1790 ... Britain’s European diplomacy was an exercise in futility.”

It is thus a mistake to attribute Britain’s diplomatic isolation to an *intentional* strategy of avoiding the constraints of durable alliances, as one recurring interpretation does (see, for instance, Dehio 1962:72–90; Gulick 1955:65–68; Sheehan 1989, 1996:97–120). According to these accounts, eighteenth-century Britain was the classical case of a “balancer,” a geopolitical actor whose overarching objective is to maintain the balance of power in an interstate system, ultimately as a means to preserve the very independence of the system’s constituent units and prevent its descent into universal empire. Critically, “The balancer maintains the balance through its *diplomatic flexibility*, shifting its support from one side to another, supporting the weaker against the stronger, if necessary even up to the use of military force” (Sheehan 1989:24; emphasis mine). As a description of British foreign policy in the eighteenth century, this characterization misses the mark by some measure. A more representative approach was that of the duke of Newcastle, a towering figure who ran the British foreign ministry for thirty years, between the mid-1720s and the mid-1750s. As students of his policy have shown, Newcastle was guided by a *rigid*, unwavering desire to recreate the turn-of-the-century Grand Alliance, which had had Britain, the Netherlands, and Austria at its core (Browning 1967, 1975; Scott 1989). That Britain never succeeded in this endeavor—that, to the contrary, Newcastle’s efforts culminated during the 1750s in the alienation of both Austria and the Netherlands²⁶—is clearly not explained by a predetermined policy of “flexibility.” The latter was an outcome forced upon Britain much more than it was Britain’s design.

Notwithstanding its generally consistent (and consistently unsuccessful) ventures in alliance building, Britain did willfully abandon its allies on other key occasions, most prominently toward the end of three major wars—the War of the Spanish Succession, the War of the Austrian Succession (1740–1748), and the Seven Years’ War (Baugh 1988:54; Sheehan 1996:63). Even here, however, there is little evidence to suggest that these decisions formed part of a larger policy, a grand strategy. As I will show much more fully in chapter 4, they are best read as the unplanned result of a stalemate between two competing policies: Newcastle’s interventionist approach and that of a growing ministerial minority who insisted that Britain’s objectives resided not in Europe at all but in the colonial sphere (for the latter position, see

²⁶ According to Horn (1930:466), “so far from giving quiet to Europe,” Newcastle’s policies during the 1750s “resulted in a futile subsidy competition between Britain and France, set Germany in uproar, and contributed to the alienation of Austria from Britain, and the break-up of the old system of alliances which Newcastle had intended to confirm and consolidate.” According to Black (1986a:55), “It was partly due to Newcastle’s maladroit handling of the complex European situation that Britain found herself in 1755–6 in conflict with France without a reliable European alliance system.” The work of Browning (1967, 1975), Newcastle’s biographer, is somewhat revisionist inasmuch as it conveys a higher estimation of his competence than most historians had previously allowed, but it too concludes that the results of his policies were largely failures, whatever the personal talents that he brought to them.

Baugh 1988, 1998).²⁷ And in each case, these decisions ultimately *undermined* Britain's ability to influence and lead its competitors, alienating specific powers while damaging its reputation more broadly. Without consulting its allies, Britain negotiated what amounted to a separate peace with France between 1710 and 1713, imprinting an image of British fickleness—a “perfidious Albion”—that would endure for a century (Teschke 2003:259; see also chapter 5). Britain's bilateral peace negotiations with France in 1748, to the exclusion of its Austrian ally, probably contributed to the latter's long-term alienation toward Britain and embrace of France, which would endure until the French Revolution (McGill 1971:229–230; McKay and Scott 1983:172). Financially disowned by Britain in 1762 amid the Seven Years' War, Frederick II of Prussia (reigned 1740–1786) remained embittered toward the former for the rest of his life, refusing all subsequent British overtures for an alliance (McKay and Scott 1983:217; Roberts 1970:13, 19).

In striking contrast to Britain, the most durable allies of France in the eighteenth century were two major powers: Spain and (in the century's second half) Austria. The latter, in fact, had a consistently greater number of treaty partners than any other state except France itself. France and Austria were allied between 1735 and 1741 and continuously from 1756 to 1792 (Black 1986a:31–32; Cesa 2010:176–210). France and Spain were allied from 1700 to 1715, intermittently over the next two decades, and continuously from 1733 to 1748 and 1761 to 1793 (López-Cordón Cortezo 2003; McKay and Scott 1983:146–147, 253–254). Although Austria would benefit strongly from the French alliance after it was established on a permanent basis in the so-called Diplomatic Revolution of 1756, France was by no means helping the Habsburgs for their own sake. Close relations with the quasi-dynastic occupants of the Holy Roman imperial throne worked to the advantage of the French Bourbons as well. As McKay and Scott (1983:190) describe it: “the alliance served French interests well ... since the other Bourbon powers, Spain, Naples and Parma, were to be invited to join.” Furthermore, “It had an immediate effect in The Hague, where it reinforced Dutch determination to keep out of the Anglo-French War,” thereby securing France's longstanding goal of separating the Netherlands from its erstwhile British ally.

French influence with Spain, for its part, was especially strong. Here France was unequivocally the dominant party. Spain entered France's wars against Britain in 1761 and 1779 even though it would gain little from these conflicts (McKay and Scott 1983:199, 260; Scott 2003:209, 218–219). Hamish Scott (2003:210) captures the extent to which the duc de Choiseul, French foreign minister, guided Spanish policy during the 1760s: “according to contemporaries and historians alike, Choiseul was the principal minister, not only of France but of the two dominant Bourbon powers.”²⁸

France also maintained a following of dependents among the German princes and estates of the Holy Roman Empire by supplying them with semi-permanent subsidies. Britain, on the other hand, was typically unwilling to provide such subsidies during peacetime, which meant

²⁷ Obviously, this pro-colonial, anti-European position corresponded even less to a policy of “balancing” than Newcastle's rigidly pro-Austrian position did. Take, for example, William Pitt the elder, the British statesman who served as first minister during much of the Seven Years' War. A somewhat ambiguous figure, as he did favor active support of Prussia, Pitt ultimately belongs in the colonial camp, as he saw European policy more or less exclusively as the means to an end—not balance in Europe but *empire* in America. Thus according to the naval historian Daniel Baugh (1988:46), “when Pitt said that his purpose was to conquer America in Germany, he meant it ... *Pitt never thought that Great Britain was fighting for a European balance of power*” (emphasis mine).

²⁸ Scott (2003:210) adds that the Spanish foreign minister, the marquis de Grimaldi, “did not usually ask for anything more than to follow the instructions of his French counterpart.”

that it enjoyed a less extensive and loyal following (Baillou 1984:236; Baugh 1998:8–9, 24–25; Black 1988:577; Browning 1967; Horn 1930; Roberts 1970:25–29). Chapter 4 will explore the reasons for this contrast in detail, but critically, it did not stem from financial constraints. British governments may have been unwilling, but they were certainly not unable to pay peacetime subsidies: they could have afforded any subsidy that they desired. Conversely, it is not actually clear that France *could* afford its subsidy policies. Unlike in Britain, the threat of bankruptcy was a recurrent problem for the eighteenth-century French monarchy. Indeed, from the 1760s onward, the financing of French foreign policy became a major factor contributing to the very collapse of the old regime—as ultimately occurred in 1789 (Skocpol 1979:51–67; Teschke 2005:19–21).

Finally, France enjoyed a loyal following in Italy primarily via dynastic rather than financial links. Aside from Spain, cadet branches of the French-led House of Bourbon came to acquire the principalities of Naples, Sicily, and Parma-Piacenza in the course of the early eighteenth century (Dhondt 2015:108–156, 466–487; López-Cordón Cortezo 2003:187–191; Scott 2003:213–214). In this regard, of course, the transnational, multi-nodal Bourbons might seem to offer an unrealistic comparative frame for the much more localized royal families of Britain: neither the Stuarts (who occupied the British throne until 1714) nor the Hanoverians (who held the crown thereafter) enjoyed sovereign claims on the continent, excepting the latter’s ancestral seat in Germany. Yet this also begs the question of why the House of Bourbon expanded in the first place, whereas the House of Hanover did not. For until 1700, the Bourbons too were limited to a single branch: the French monarchy. Nor did the Hanoverians lack dynastic connections that could have formed the basis for expansion, as they were closely intertwined with other German and Scandinavian houses through intermarriage. Yet even with the material power of the British state at its disposal, the House of Hanover never institutionalized its dynastic appendages in the form of territorial gains, while the House of Bourbon collected ever more sovereign claims for its cadet branches during the same period.

In sum, France acquired and maintained more allies and influenced those allies more effectively than did Britain in eighteenth-century Europe. Furthermore, France’s most important allies were themselves stronger and more influential than those of Britain. This is not particularly surprising if one assumes that Britain, as a geopolitical balancer, was uninterested in the entanglements of continental alliances to begin with. It is much more puzzling, however, if we recognize the simple fact that in every British cabinet of this period, “most ministers believed [alliances] were valuable and tried to conclude them” (Scott 1992:450).

Negotiations

Beyond the character of its alliances, a state’s contribution to geopolitical governance is evidenced by the negotiating skills of its diplomats, another critical dimension of influence. Historians (and contemporaries) have tended to regard French diplomats, between the late seventeenth century and the Revolution of 1789, as the most effective negotiators in Europe. As Roosen (1976a:77) puts it, “French ambassadors had a reputation for being among the most successful in that calling of all Europeans.” According to Keens-Soper (1972:353), by the early eighteenth century, “French ‘diplomatic method’ had asserted itself as something of a model in international relations.” More recently, Scott (2007:71) concurs:

Louis XIV's diplomatic service—exactly like the court at Versailles and domestic regime, headed by the intendants—came to enjoy enormous prestige, while its sustained success ensured that it was copied by his rivals, who modified existing structures and practices to take account of developments in France. These decades also saw a series of peace conferences at the end of major wars ... and these also fostered the growth of reciprocal diplomacy as well as increasing admiration for the skill of French diplomats.

As Kugeler (2006:258) sums it up, “the French character came to be regarded as best fitted to negotiation.”²⁹

This was not a reputation that the British shared. In 1739, for instance, a speech in the House of Commons could claim “that in all our Treatys with France we have been the dupe. That they have prov'd as much too hard for us in the Cabinet as we for them in the field” (quoted in Black 1986a:109). British self-deprecation in the face of France's diplomatic skill appears well founded indeed. French diplomats, unlike the British, repeatedly won gains from treaties that outweighed their military's performance in war. Thus during the War of the Spanish Succession, Britain defeated France on the battlefield. Yet at the Congress of Utrecht (1712–1713), which ended the war, France avoided concessions. In fact, France consolidated its frontiers, and a member of the Bourbon dynasty acquired the Spanish crown (with its American empire), precisely what Britain and its allies had waged the war to prevent (Bély 1990:35–47; Osiander 1994:90–165; see also chapter 5).

The War of the Polish Succession (1733–1738) was a victory of significantly greater scope for French diplomacy. France dictated the terms of peace, primarily through its negotiations with Austria rather than its military victories. As a result, France gained a preponderant influence over the affairs of the Holy Roman Empire, secured an inheritance claim to the duchy of Lorraine, and acquired Naples and Sicily for another branch of the Bourbons (Black 1986a:31–35; Dhondt 2015:483, 488; López-Cordón Cortezo 2003:189, 191; McKay and Scott 1983:149–153). McKay and Scott (1983:151) describe the Treaty of Vienna (1738), which put a formal end to the war:

Skilful diplomacy, with limited military effort, had secured a considerable success for France. The future absorption of Lorraine would strengthen France's eastern frontier and complete the work of French diplomacy since 1648. A branch of the Bourbon family now reigned in Naples, while the relentless territorial expansion of the Habsburgs had been reversed and the monarchy weakened. The conflicts of western and central Europe had been resolved, as [French foreign minister] Fleury had intended, between Versailles and Vienna, and then accepted by the other powers ... France had become once again, in the words of Frederick the Great, ‘the arbiter of Europe’. Yet her conduct had left all the belligerents with some grounds for satisfaction, in that they had all gained something.³⁰

²⁹ Further observations to this effect include Bély (1995); Black (2010:66); Keens-Soper (1973:490–492, 495); Kugeler (2006:249); McClure (2006:152, 177–184); McKay and Scott (1983:202); Picavet (1923:383); Roosen (1970:318, 1973:121).

³⁰ McKay and Scott (1983:152) add that “[i]n effect, Austria became for a year or two almost a dependent of France.” As Kennedy (1987:108) elaborates: “Bolstered by military and diplomatic successes in western Europe, by the alliance with Spain, the deference of the United Provinces, and the increasing

Or as Black (1986a:33) describes it: “the French sought, with considerable success, a diplomatic hegemony in Europe.”

To be sure, Britain had the upper hand at the Treaty of Paris (1763), which concluded the Seven Years’ War: the peace ceded most of France’s North American empire to Britain (McKay and Scott 1983:199–200, 253). Yet even amid its greatest military victory to date, Britain’s apparent hegemony was immediately short-circuited. The war’s end marked the commencement of Britain’s diplomatic isolation on the continent, which endured until the 1780s (Dull 1985:26–32; Roberts 1970). Despite its ever-growing military and economic strength, “*in diplomatic terms* [Britain’s] position in the latter half of the century, and particularly after 1763, was less advantageous than it had been hitherto” (Black 1986a:90; emphasis mine). The direct consequence was successful French revanchism, as France managed to avenge itself in the American Revolutionary War: that Britain was the one making concessions at the Peace of Paris in 1783 owed much more to its continued diplomatic isolation than to any military weakness on its part (Dull 1985:75–136; Roberts 1970:39–41; Simms 2007:615–661).

Britain’s major eighteenth-century attempts to act as the mediator of negotiations between other polities also ended unsuccessfully. These events reveal, once again, the degree to which Britain’s lack of European influence was not a product of *willful* isolationism. Britain sought and failed to mediate an end to the War of the Polish Succession in 1735 (Black 1986a:21–22, 31–32). Similarly, Britain’s effort, spearheaded by the duke of Newcastle, to influence constitutional issues in the Holy Roman Empire during the early 1750s ended up alienating both Austria and France, and it may have contributed to their long-term realignment against Britain, which commenced later that decade and would last for 35 years (Baugh 1988:45; Black 1986a:55–56; McGill 1971:236; McKay and Scott 1983:184).

By contrast, France successfully mediated the conclusion to an Austro-Russo-Turkish war in 1739, which further elevated its influence and prestige in central Europe (Dhondt 2015:491; Kennedy 1987:108; McKay and Scott 1983:157). Even in 1772, when its influence was certainly on the wane, France still helped to orchestrate a coup in Sweden that brought the pro-French party to power and transformed the very structure of the Swedish state from a constitutional monarchy into an absolutist one (Dull 1985:36–37; Fraguier 1912; Roberts 1964).³¹

Accordingly, if hegemonic states, as the literature suggests, have constructed their hegemony by leading coalitions of states in major wars and then institutionalizing their

compliance of Spain and even Austria, France now enjoyed a prestige unequalled since the early decades of Louis XIV.”

³¹ To be sure, French diplomacy suffered notable failures after 1763 as well, particularly in Eastern Europe, where both Britain *and* France were effectively excluded from the Austro-Russo-Prussian negotiations that produced the First Partition of Poland in 1772 (Blanning 2016:304–320; McKay and Scott 1983:222–229). As I have stressed throughout, eighteenth-century France was not a *hegemonic* state, at least not after 1763 and probably not beyond 1713, if it ever was before. Yet this does not change the fact that British diplomacy was consistently *less* influential than its French counterpart, despite it being Britain—and *not* France—that met the necessary military and economic conditions for hegemony in the eighteenth century.

leadership in the peace settlements that followed,³² Britain did little either to organize these sorts of coalition or to institute these kinds of settlement in eighteenth-century Europe. In fact, France outperformed Britain in both alliance formation *and* treaty negotiation.

Taken cumulatively, then, the relevant evidence (treaty-network centrality, character of alliances, negotiating capacities) suggests that France exercised much greater *governance* over eighteenth-century European geopolitics than did Britain. Eighteenth-century Europe thus presents a puzzling case given the military and economic conditions cited by traditional theories of geopolitics. Although France's own contribution to interstate governance is not puzzling (France was a major military and economic power), military and economic conditions cannot explain the discrepancy between the French and British contributions. That is, they cannot tell us why France exerted more influence and leadership than did Britain, given Britain's superior military and economic capabilities. Indeed, such theories ultimately fail to explain why Britain was not in fact *hegemonic* in eighteenth-century Europe, why, that is, it failed to convert its material dominance into geopolitical hegemony. In short, the presence of dominance without hegemony in eighteenth-century Europe constitutes an anomalous case for the hegemony literature.

Conclusion: Toward an Explanation of Eighteenth-Century Geopolitical Governance

Before turning to my own explanation, it is useful to consider the most compelling ways in which military and economic accounts do attempt to deal with the puzzle of dominance without hegemony, and of discrepancies between material power and geopolitical governance more generally. As described in the introductory chapter, one approach would likely explain Britain's failure of governance—in spite of its military and economic primacy—as the product of a lack of interest or *will* (Arrighi 1990:404; Gilpin 1987:126–127; Keohane 1984:38–39; Kindleberger 1973; Modelski 1995:30). It should be clear from the above that this account has a certain degree of truth to it. Although it was never the dominant view within British cabinets, at least prior to the 1770s, an increasingly assertive minority of ministers held that foreign policy should opt out of Europe altogether, reorienting itself exclusively to Britain's commercial-colonial empire (Simms 2007:2). What is more, this view appears to have enjoyed a substantial backing among the broader propertied classes in Britain, the so-called political nation (Black 1986a:72; Peters 1980).

That a significant fraction of the eighteenth-century British elite was thus inclined to diplomatic isolationism—a sort of Euroskepticism *avant la lettre*—should not be attributed to some indeterminacy of personal preference, however, which is what the theoretical literature typically sees as bridging the gap between ability and willingness (Keohane 1984:34–35). Rather, it is a historical puzzle that requires its own account. The problem with approaches that emphasize states' willingness to lead, then, is not they are wrong; it is that they are

³² See chapter 1. As Modelski and Thompson (1996:55) put it, “during global wars ... world powers [their term for hegemons] skillfully practiced coalition leadership. This in turn served as the basis of their postwar influence.”

fundamentally question-begging. Such approaches presuppose precisely that which demands explanation.³³

Even if we bracket its social preconditions, however, lack of will is at best an exceedingly partial account of Britain's failure to effectively govern eighteenth-century European geopolitics. After all, most British ministers, most of the time, still favored an active European policy, whatever the opposition it faced in and out of cabinet. On balance, then, European geopolitics was not a field from which eighteenth-century Britain had exited; it was a field with respect to which Britain was *internally ill-adapted*, suffering hysteresis even as it continued to actively participate. To put the point with Brendan Simms (2007:1), who writes against prevailing orthodoxies of British historiography that focus overwhelmingly on the Atlantic world: "the history of eighteenth-century Britain was in Europe." As far as official foreign policy was concerned, this observation grasps a fundamental, if somewhat polemical, truth.

This brings us to the second alternative account, which would explain Britain's failure of governance in eighteenth-century Europe as the product of a *lag* between its material power and its cultural *prestige*. On this account, prestige is the concrete mechanism through which material dominance produces geopolitical hegemony. But critically, it is a mechanism that works with a lag, because prestige represents agents' perceptions of material power rather than its objective distribution, and perceptions change slowly. Hence the need for rising hegemonies to fight "hegemonic wars," which realign the hierarchy of prestige with the newfound balance of power (Gilpin 1981:30–34, 48–49). Indeed, in the case of British hegemony, Robert Gilpin (1981:134–135), the progenitor of this approach, identifies the early *nineteenth-century* Napoleonic Wars (1801–1815) as just such an event (see also Arrighi 1994:53–54; Arrighi et al. 1999:58; Schroeder 1992). Following the prestige account, then, one might conclude that the eighteenth century was an interregnum of sorts, a period in which Britain had yet to fight the necessary war that would institutionalize its dominance in the form of durable governance.³⁴

This account has two major weaknesses, however. First, the eighteenth century had *already* witnessed two wars which, judged by their scope, their scale, and the extent of Britain's military success, are appropriately classified as hegemonic wars: the War of the Spanish Succession (1702–1714) and the Seven Years' War (1756–1763). Indeed, for precisely these reasons, the long-cycle approach to world politics codes the War of the Spanish Succession as a "global war" (its term for a hegemonic war) that secured Britain's "world leadership" (Modelski 1978:221; Modelski and Thompson 1988:16, 1996:54–56; Thompson 1988:46). (Long-cycle theorists would presumably say the same about the Seven Years' War if they did not believe that Britain was already hegemonic by this time.) However, if long-cycle theory is correct that the

³³ Of course, all explanations are question-begging at some level. At some point, we must stop the infinite regress and treat some things as exogenous—for entirely pragmatic reasons. There is, however, a non-arbitrary justification for endogenizing Britain's growing lack of will to intervene in Europe. As I will show in the remainder of this dissertation, the *non-interest* that some British elites betrayed with respect to Europe and the *way* that other British elites expressed their enduring interest in Europe are ultimately explained by the *same* set of conditions: they were simply two different responses to the fundamental lack of social "fit" between the structures of the British polity and those that predominated in continental Europe. To treat one of these responses as a contingent matter of will while treating the other as structurally determined would thus be analytically incoherent.

³⁴ For examples of historical narratives that support such a conclusion, see Adams (2005:137–196); Arrighi (1994:52, 145–148); Arrighi et al. (1999:45–58); Lachmann (2003:364, 2009:63–65); Wallerstein (1980:244–289).

Spanish Succession conflict was a global war that Britain won, *and yet* Gilpin and virtually all other commentators are correct that British hegemony had to wait another century, then “prestige” (as lagged effect) remains an insufficient means to account for governance.

The second weakness of arguments about cultural lags is that they cannot actually explain why it was France, in particular, that governed eighteenth-century European geopolitics most effectively. For during the eighteenth century, the formerly dominant but declining power—seen in strictly material terms—was not France at all. France had never enjoyed true material primacy in Europe; it had always been a runner-up. The state that had constituted the leading edge of economic development and overall military effectiveness during the seventeenth century was, rather, the Netherlands. After all, both the long-cycle *and* the world-systems literatures presume that the Dutch Republic was the hegemonic state of seventeenth-century Europe for just these reasons. Thus it should have been the Netherlands that benefited most from any lag between material-power balances and prestige hierarchies in the century that followed. Yet in fact, the Dutch were no more successful than the British in rivaling eighteenth-century France for influence and leadership. It should be clear, then, that arguments founded on supposed lags between “power” and “prestige” fall short as explanations for geopolitical governance in eighteenth-century Europe. Put differently, we must identify sources of states’ prestige that are external to the lagged effects of material distributions.³⁵ It is to this task that the next two chapters turn.

³⁵ See Keene (2014:661–662) for a similar critique, internal to the IR literature, of this kind of prestige-based argument.

Chapter 3: Courtly Society versus Capitalist Aristocracy: Modes of Habitus in French and British Diplomacy

How are we to explain patterns of geopolitical governance in eighteenth-century Europe if military and economic accounts are insufficient to the task? This chapter begins to present my own explanation. In so doing, I fully allow—indeed, I take as given—that France’s geopolitical governance was significantly shaped by its considerable military resources and its rich fiscal and economic base. However, the *discrepancy* between French and British governance, the fact that France translated its material capacities into effective influence and leadership where Britain failed, is best explained by the relative congruence between the sociopolitical structures of the French polity and those of its European counterparts. It was such a social fit that Britain lacked.

French congruence and British divergence were, in turn, products of the uneven, heterogeneous pathways of state formation and economic transition that characterized early modern Europe. More concretely, they were products of the fact that the English core of what became the British state had, over the previous several centuries (c. 1400–1650), undergone a transition directly from a “feudal,” manorial economy and society to “modern,” capitalist relations characterized by a relative separation between structures of surplus appropriation and legal-political domination, a structural differentiation between state and society. Such conditions, however, remained largely nonexistent in most of continental Europe as late as the eighteenth century.¹ For contrary to the received narratives of macro-sociological thought, virtually nowhere in continental Europe did a direct transition from feudalism to capitalism occur at all. Rather, a sizable quantity of historical research now supports the conclusion that, simultaneous with England’s transition to capitalism, most of Europe underwent a transition to a qualitatively distinct structure of social relations, neither feudal nor capitalist, characterized by what Heide Gerstenberger (2007) aptly calls “generalized personal power” (see also Brenner 1985a, 1985b; Lacher 2006:61–98; Teschke 2002, 2003:151–270; Wood 1991).² As discussed in chapter 1, this term captures two critical dimensions of early modern European social formations. On the one hand, as with the manor or *seigneurie*, power remained essentially *personal* here: the “political”

¹ The benefit—or curse—of hindsight makes it extraordinarily difficult to appreciate this fact, since all of these societies would become capitalist, and capitalism itself would become global, in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Ultimately, however, reading capitalism back into early modern Europe is largely teleological. Seen prospectively rather than retrospectively, *capitalist relations*—in the specific sense of a system of generalized production for exchange predicated on the commodification of labor-power separated from its means of subsistence—were utterly foreign to most of Europe, even though *commercial transactions* (and indeed, wage-work itself) were widespread. Nor should these relations be seen, as many accounts implicitly see them, as an unrealized potential, waiting in embryo for the lowering of the relevant “transaction costs,” the removal of the relevant blockages (cultural, political, institutional, or whatever), perspectives which, often despite themselves, leave the strong impression that the rise of capitalism was ultimately in the natural course of events. On the contrary, capitalism need not have occurred at all, and it did not become a global system until surprisingly late in modern history, even if a “world economy”—a relatively globalized structure of exchange relations—long predated this (see, for instance, Lacher 2006; Polanyi 1977; Teschke 2003; Zolberg 1981).

² Teschke (2003) is an especially clear summary of the relevant evidence. Although he reads it from a Marxist perspective, it should be noted that the evidence itself is, in large part, owing to “revisionist” historians of a typically anti-Marxist persuasion: one of Teschke’s contributions is to show how, despite revisionists’ claims to the contrary, their findings remain compatible with a certain sort of class analysis.

and the “economic”—rights over persons and claims to surplus—remained intimately fused.³ On the other hand, power was, to a significant degree, *generalized*: the fused nexus of rule and appropriation was itself “displaced upwards” (Anderson 1974:429) in the form of centralizing, territorializing—if far from centralized and territorial—administrative complexes: sovereign states in a recognizable sense. It is this form of polity that is sometimes called the “tax/office state” (Brenner 1985a, 1985b) or, more evocatively if somewhat misleadingly, the “absolutist state” (Anderson 1974).⁴

How, then, did the relative social fit that the French state enjoyed with its competitors, and which the British state lacked, shape European geopolitics in the eighteenth century? The present chapter identifies a mechanism of geopolitical governance located at the level of diplomats’ own dispositions. Because they occupied relatively similar social positions and trajectories in relatively similar social formations, French diplomatic agents and their European counterparts tended to share similar *habitus* (Bourdieu 1977, 1990, 2000a), homologous systems of socially acquired dispositions. The prevailing habitus of early modern European diplomats was that of the well-mannered courtier. French diplomats’ adherence to a courtly habitus thus contributed to the legibility of French diplomatic practice. Combined with the substantial military and economic capacities of the French state, such legibility improved the capacity of its diplomats to recruit followers, negotiate, acquire information, and shape the very rules of the diplomatic game, all of which facilitated the geopolitical governance of France. By contrast, the habitus of British diplomats tended to be maladjusted to the courtly mold. As a result, British diplomats frequently appeared unmannered and incompetent to their continental counterparts. This hindered their ability to recruit followers, negotiate, acquire information, and shape the diplomatic rules of the game, impeding British governance despite Britain’s dominant military and economic capabilities.

³ “Fusion” is actually a poor term because it implies the coming together of things that were originally separate. The opposite is closer to the truth. But we can never fully escape the language of our own socio-historical context.

⁴ The next chapter will develop the macro-structural aspects of this historical transformation in fuller detail. The cursory synopsis presented here inevitably conceals some major differences of interpretation. Anderson (1974) continues to situate the absolutist state vis-à-vis an economic “base” in which emerging capitalism coexisted with other elements (while insisting on the thoroughly anti-bourgeois character of its political “superstructure”). My own view is closer to Teschke (2003), for whom any presence of capitalism remains empirically unsupported by the agrarian and mercantile histories of the relevant polities and theoretically inconsistent with the fused political/economic nature of the absolutist form that Anderson himself identifies: how can we distinguish between “base” and “superstructure” at all in a context where the state is the primary engine of appropriation and accumulation? (Put differently, Anderson, deploying Althusserian concepts, sees the absolutist state as “overdetermined” by a confluence of several modes of production in which capitalism is already present but not yet dominant. In this respect, too, the problem persists: far from a *method* of history, is not the causal complexity of structuralist Marxism a *historically specific feature* of modern capitalist societies with their characteristic separation of “spheres” or “fields,” which was patently absent from early modern European societies with their “fused” powers?) Nevertheless, Teschke is overly dismissive of Anderson’s seminal interpretation of absolutist administrative structures themselves, without which Teschke’s own account could not exist and which, remarkably, anticipates (preempts?) the revisionist historiographical consensus by at least a decade.

Courtly Institutions and Dispositions in Eighteenth-Century European Diplomacy

In the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the hierarchically embedded and territorially overlapping jurisdictions of feudal Europe gave way to a system of increasingly bounded and centralized (if jurisdictionally non-uniform) states. Rather than redistributing power to a bureaucratic administration or a field of professional politicians, however, this process of state formation maintained the fundamentally personal nature of rule, relocating sovereign authority to dynastic heads (monarchs or princelings) in most cases (Anderson 1974; Lacher 2006:61–98; Teschke 2003:151–196).⁵ Because such states were headed by dynastic families, then, *royal courts* became their principal locus of government (Duindam 1994, 2003; Elias 1983, 2000).⁶ As a result, European diplomacy became largely an extension of the court. Whereas it was not uncommon in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries for clerics, minor nobles, and even merchants to fill high diplomatic posts, from the later seventeenth century the diplomatic services of Austria, Spain, France, Russia, most German, and some Italian principalities became the preserve of the court nobility (Bély 1990:291–329; Frigo 1991:119–152; Maiorini 2000; Müller 1976:180–215; Ozanam 1998; Storrs 2000:245).⁷ Such diplomacy was entirely embedded in the social life of the court. As Kugeler (2006:162) puts it, eighteenth-century “diplomacy was tied to a European court culture based on social status and aristocratic manners.” According to Mori (2010:6), “Diplomats were, in essence, courtiers who belonged to a corps with its own codes and rules of etiquette.”

It followed that demonstrating courtly manners and etiquette was crucial to a sovereign’s reputation abroad: “Since international image was therefore a projection of court culture, balance was maintained as much through ritual and etiquette as through lobby work” (Mori 2010:6). Indeed, because European elite society was so heavily embedded in the court, the variable courtly honors accorded to diplomatic representatives—their order of precedence in ceremonies, the size of their gifts, their titles—came to indicate the relative standing of their sovereigns in what, everyone agreed, was a hierarchical social order (Bély 1990:363, 392; Hatton 1969:157; Roosen 1976a:51–52, 1980:463, 474–476; Teschke 2002:16, 2003:224). Some contemporaries even claimed that proper manners and etiquette could determine the outcomes of diplomatic negotiations. As a British periodical argued in 1757 (while criticizing the previous failure of British diplomats in this very respect): “address and a graceful appearance have some influence in all courts, and often contribute to the carrying of great points” (quoted in Black 2001:33). More mundanely, successful diplomatic missions depended on diplomats’ ability to gather information, and this required maintaining extensive contacts at court (Bély 1990:391; Black 2001:142). In practice, then, socialization at court was the typical means of “training” for eighteenth-century European diplomats, their principal means of acquiring diplomatic competence. As Scott (2007:62) sums it up, diplomatic culture was transmitted firstly “*by immersion* in the court societies in which many noble diplomats grew up and lived” (emphasis mine).

⁵ This double movement—a partial centralization wedded to a reconfigured personalism—constitutes the two dimensions of the shift from “parcellized personal power” to “generalized personal power” documented by Gerstenberger (2007).

⁶ For a fuller discussion of forms of government and of sovereignty in eighteenth-century Europe, see chapter 4.

⁷ See also the English-language summaries of the relevant figures and associated literature in Kugeler (2006:161–162, 194), Scott (2007:72–75), and Scott and Storrs (2007:46–48).

To be sure, some eighteenth-century officials and writers in the Holy Roman Empire, France, Britain, and elsewhere floated schemes to establish a more formal curriculum for prospective diplomats. Typically founded on the model of the learned or military academy, some of these schemes were even implemented. However, they were quickly abandoned for the most part. Enduring from 1752 until 1800, the diplomatic academy at the University of Strasbourg was the exception, one that proved the rule in many ways. Jürgen Voss (1996:212) has calculated that 352 pupils enrolled in the academy between 1752 and 1791. Certainly a non-negligible figure, it still represents a relatively small fraction of the total population of European diplomats during this period, not to mention the entire period of study. It thus remains the case that a large majority of eighteenth-century European diplomats received no formal training at all. Significantly, the best represented country at Strasbourg, Russia (138 pupils), was also a latecomer to the European interstate system and underwent a top-down, self-conscious effort to Europeanize its institutions, including its diplomatic institutions, during the eighteenth century (Hennings 2016:202–248). Participation in the Strasbourg academy was thus consistent with this effort, inculcating through formal instruction what others acquired in a primary, pre-reflexive way.⁸ For what Strasbourg sought to provide, in the first instance, was hardly “bureaucratic” training but, rather, the formation of young noblemen in keeping with the tradition of related academies (military, dancing, fencing,) that had emerged for this purpose since the seventeenth century (Kugeler 2006:226–229; Voss 1996). In other words, while the very notion of a formal curriculum in diplomacy was novel, its function was primarily to objectify, to elevate into discourse, the embodied, practical sense of amateur diplomacy itself. To the degree that Strasbourg had any effect on European diplomatic practice, then, it was by helping to constitute European diplomats, not as a modern profession, but as a *corporate group*—“a pan-European cameralist cadre,” as Mori (2010:8) puts it—one that was structurally analogous to any of the other guild-like associations that pervaded early modern Europe.

A cursory glance at the three most prestigious and widely circulated manuals of diplomacy published between the 1680s and the 1730s registers this process of corporate formation without professionalization. Pieces in a broader prescriptive literature, all three were penned by erstwhile officials of the French foreign ministry. As late as 1681, Abraham de Wicquefort’s *L’ambassadeur et ses fonctions* could maintain that acquired “merit” was much more important than noble “birth” for successful ambassadors (Béchu 1998:344–345; Scott 2007:73). It is with respect to this view that François de Callières’s *De la manière de négocier avec les souverains*, published in 1716 but possibly written as early as 1697 (Kugeler 2006:20), marks a fundamental break. Callières’s text is often noted as the first of its kind to explicitly discern the presence of a European system of states, described as an emergent arena or field to which diplomacy owed its function (Hamilton and Langhorne 1995:68; Keens-Soper 1973:501–502). Callières ([1716] 1983:68) identified the condition of possibility of diplomacy as a context in which states have “necessary ties and commerces with one another . . . And that there can hardly happen any considerable change in some of its members, but what is capable of disturbing all the others.”⁹ Such a context thus necessitated diplomacy as a “*profession à part*,” a

⁸ For an insightful take on the “hysteresis” experienced by Russian diplomats in the European interstate system, see Neumann and Pouliot (2011).

⁹ Callières distinguished such a context from both “universal monarchy,” in which there is no need for diplomacy because all interaction takes place in the same polity, and from a situation in which polities lack sufficient interdependence or interaction to necessitate diplomacy in the first place (Keens-Soper 1973:496).

specialized task in its own right (quoted in Bély 1990:312). Strikingly, however, Callières also argued that it was noble birth, and *not* merit, that best suited a diplomat to fulfill such a task, totally reversing Wicquefort's judgment in this regard (Bély 1990:311; Scott 2007:73).¹⁰ Finally, in 1737, Antoine Pecquet's *Discours sur l'art de négocier avec les souverains* reproduced Callières's position that only nobles were fit to serve as ambassadors, which Pecquet tellingly justified on the basis of their familiarity with the court. In Scott's (2007:73) gloss: "They were endowed with the connections and social poise to open doors, while the titles many possessed were intended to impress the courts to which they were sent." Pecquet's text is also noteworthy as the first to make reference to the idea of a diplomatic corps, one with its own *esprit de corps* (Hamilton and Langhorne 1995:71; Keens-Soper 1973:505–506). Given Callières's and Pecquet's restriction of legitimate diplomacy to the hereditary nobility, however, their apparent recourse to notions of vocational specialization and professional ethos clearly needs to be seen in the early modern sense of the word "profession," meaning precisely a corporate or status group, and not anachronistically in its more modern sense.¹¹

What is more, and despite these idealizations on the part of diplomacy's organic intellectuals, the simple fact that relatively few eighteenth-century European diplomats received any prior training whatsoever, beyond their practical experience of courtly life, qualifies the degree to which they truly autonomized themselves even in the limited corporatist sense just described. Ultimately, the effort to objectify even courtly skills remained a minority movement. Not only did diplomats remain courtiers in eighteenth-century Europe, then, but courtly competencies remained—primarily though not exclusively—in their incorporated, pre-discursive state.

In sum, the "failure" to professionalize diplomacy in eighteenth-century Europe resulted less from a lack of state capacity per se than from an absence of sufficient interest or demonstrated usefulness to the relevant agents themselves. While a far-sighted concern with professionalization on the part of some individuals is interesting, professional diplomacy would hardly have made for *better* diplomacy in such a context—that is, unless and until a multiplicity of states moved in a professionalizing direction.¹² For as long as court ceremonial remained such an integral part of diplomatic protocol for one's counterparts, recruitment from the "amateur," courtly elite remained the most effective means of ensuring competent performance for one's own diplomatic service. The socially recognized diplomatic habitus in eighteenth-century Europe was thus a *courtly* habitus.

¹⁰ It is possible that this reversal of emphasis between Wicquefort and Callières marks less of a temporal break than it does a socio-spatial contrast: although he worked extensively for the French foreign ministry, Wicquefort was himself of Dutch origin. Callières, by contrast, was a French noble. Whatever the explanation for their differences, it is clear that Callières's had become the orthodox position in eighteenth-century Europe (Scott 2007:73).

¹¹ As Kugeler (2006:163) explains: "The medieval and early modern periods employed the term 'profession' with respect to social orders ... In the eighteenth century, 'profession' still comprised both status and occupation."

¹² It is easy to retrospectively criticize un-bureaucratic practices in early modern Europe for their lack of efficiency, but this ignores the ways in which such practices were actually well adapted to their *specific* socio-historical environment.

France: Courtly Diplomacy *Par Excellence*

France adhered fully to the courtly mold. Indeed, French elites were exemplary in their courtliness. By the mid-seventeenth century, if not earlier, France had established the largest royal court in Europe. The extended royal household comprised 10,000 people by the 1660s (Scott and Storrs 2007:49). From around this time, “3,000 or so nobles ... presented at court each year” (Parker 1996:193). More or less permanent attendance at court became socially mandatory for the upper nobility. And as Norbert Elias (1983, 2000) has forcefully maintained, the French court was not merely the largest but the most prestigious in Europe, providing the cultural model for other courts, especially once it relocated to Versailles, a gradual process unfolding between the 1660s and 1682. Although Elias’s specific empirical claims and his broader theoretical model have each been the subject of revision and critique (Bourdieu 2014; Duindam 1994; Gordon 1994; Le Roy Ladurie [1997] 2001; Sahlin 2012), recent research continues to confirm his basic observation that Versailles constituted the essential frame of reference for European courtly society from the late seventeenth century down to 1789 (Duindam 2003).¹³

Much—though certainly not all—of the international prestige of the French Enlightenment can be explained in terms of France’s courtly prestige as well. Recent scholarship compellingly shows the absence of any real opposition between the court of Versailles and the salons of Paris, whether seen in terms of personnel or values. On the contrary, much of the emergent “public sphere” in France was subject to the hegemony of the court, at least until the 1750s or 1760s: courtly men and especially women sponsored and patronized all of the salons, where discussion and debate remained apolitical, prioritizing the forms of sociability and worldliness over the contents of some Habermasian critical discourse (see most importantly Lilti 2005; see also Charle 2009; Charle and Roche 2002; Kale 2002; Pekacz 1999; Roche 1996; Rollin 2006).¹⁴

Unsurprisingly, then, French diplomats overwhelmingly sprang from the world of the court. Prosopographical research has shown that between the mid-seventeenth and the late eighteenth centuries, the French diplomatic service was predominantly (and increasingly) recruited from individuals who were born and raised in courtly circles, and it was exclusively recruited from individuals with strong ties to the court at the time of their appointment (Baillou 1984:306; Béchu 1998; Bénazet-Béchu 1982; Roosen 1973). In these respects, the social composition of French diplomacy was entirely consistent with the broader European trend. Indeed, the tendency in French diplomatic recruitment toward complete dominance by the court was on the very cutting edge of this trend, taking root during the period of Louis XIV’s personal rule, which commenced in 1661, and achieving its full realization as early as the 1690s (Roosen 1973).

Some French diplomats also passed through the Strasbourg academy, the one school for ambassadors with staying power in eighteenth-century Europe. Significantly, the school was founded and operated, in part, through the sponsorship of the French foreign ministry itself

¹³ Perhaps it is better to view the status of Versailles in European courtly society as *orthodox* (Bourdieu 1977) rather than *hegemonic*. As Duindam (2003) shows, even in the case of Versailles’s major cultural rival, Vienna, the very ways in which the latter distinguished itself always made more or less implicit reference to the French standard, thereby supplying the heterodoxy to French orthodoxy.

¹⁴ I discuss the gender implications of France’s courtly-aristocratic society and of Britain’s much more bourgeois—and gender exclusionary—public sphere later on.

(Kugeler 2006:228–229; Voss 1996:205, 207, 209–210).¹⁵ Far from making it an exception to the broader European world of amateur diplomacy, however, France’s participation in the Strasbourg academy signals its effort to *lead* that world. As we have seen, the skills that the academy imparted were primarily those of a courtly aristocrat, not a bureaucrat. And rather than a nationally specific institution, the academy was explicitly designed to serve a European-wide population of prospective diplomats (Kugeler 2006:226–228). Not only was it “the French center where future ministers and diplomats were formed,” according to Voss (1996:205), but this “center for the formation of political elites enjoyed an international influence beyond the kingdom.” Indeed, during its fifty-year existence, the academy’s pupils included future diplomatic personnel (and a few princes) from the Holy Roman Empire, France, Russia, Poland, Sweden, Denmark-Norway, Britain, and the Netherlands, “thus offering an attractive international meeting-place for the European aristocracy” (Kugeler 2006:228; see also Black 2010:100; Voss 1996:209, 213–214). As for the French “Académie politique,” a nationally specifically school for diplomats, during its brief lifespan from 1712 to 1721, this academy trained a mere handful of the roughly one thousand individuals who participated in the eighteenth-century French diplomatic service (Keens-Soper 1972). Nor did it constitute a fully “modern” bureaucratic curriculum either. Although studies included history, languages, international law (the *droit publique*), and an analysis of recent treaty negotiations, an additional subject, according to a memorandum of the French foreign ministry, concerned “ceremonial for ambassadors and other ministers of the King at Foreign courts” (quoted in Keens-Soper 1972:351). This again highlights the unavoidable centrality of manners and etiquette to proper diplomatic conduct. Clearly, diplomacy remained a courtly-aristocratic preserve in France, as it did in most of eighteenth-century Europe.

Thus far, we have seen that the social positions and trajectories of French diplomats were fully aligned with the courtly institutions of eighteenth-century European diplomacy. What, then, of their dispositions, their habitus? And what were the implications of the latter for French geopolitical governance in the eighteenth century?

French Diplomatic Habitus

That which goes without saying under normal conditions, the incorporated schemes of habitus are necessarily difficult to textually document. Of course, this is especially true to the extent that the habitus of French diplomats aligned with that of their European counterparts—exactly what I am suggesting. French diplomatic habitus is thus most visible in those circumstances, however exceptional, where it was out of place. One such circumstance involved French interactions with Britain. For as we will see more fully in the next section, Britain departed significantly from the courtly norm.

Consider, then, how the duc d’Aumont, French ambassador to London in 1713, compared English manners to his own. As Aumont explained in a letter to Louis XIV: “the circumspection and the precautions [*les ménagements*] so well received in France do not produce the same

¹⁵ Indeed, Johann Daniel Schöpflin, the academy’s founder and a professor of history at the University of Strasbourg, was himself a longtime agent of the French foreign ministry: “a noted member of the Republic of Letters and the academy-movement ... he also had diplomatic experience in the service of France and was associated with the French foreign ministry under Chauvelin, for which he composed several memoranda. From 1741, he held the post of ‘historiographe et conseiller du roi’” (Kugeler 2006:226).

effects here; rather, politeness and discretion are taken as weaknesses” (National Archives [NA] Public Record Office [PRO] 31/3/201:16). Aumont thus identified politeness and discretion (*la politesse et la discretion*) as *French* virtues, revealed through their contrast with a society that—in his view—took them for weaknesses. The term “*politesse*” is especially striking in this context. According to Antoine Lilti (2009:8), this concept helped to anchor the intertwined cultures of court and salon in eighteenth-century France, serving as both “a linguistic value (a way of speaking *which held up the court as its model*) and as a social value (*a habitus* forged in the company of the *monde*)” (non-French emphases mine).

Indeed, not only did Aumont see politeness as a French virtue; he explicitly associated it with the French *court*. As he contrasted Versailles to the British court of St. James’s: “the difference between the celebrations at Versailles and at St. James, is the opposition between a polite, polished, and respectful court and an assemblage of vain ... people, which the spirit of [political] party has stripped of the little politeness that the ethos of this nation permits” (NA PRO 31/3/201:18). The opposition of “court” and “assemblage” suggests that St. James’s did not even count as a fully formed court in Aumont’s perceptual scheme. That he also described it as impolite shows that Aumont classified politeness and courtliness together, articulating both, in turn, with France (hence the mention of Versailles).¹⁶ Aumont’s observations represent something more than simple cultural imperialism, however. Of course, they represent that too, but he also sought to capture a genuine difference in kind between France and Britain, claiming that he was trying to learn English manners to better fulfill his duties. As his letter added, if one is to succeed diplomatically in Britain, “from time to time one must speak with a somewhat firmer tone” than French manners typically allow (NA PRO 31/3/201:16).

If the prevailing habitus of French diplomacy was especially visible when placed in a context that did not share its codes, French diplomats who failed to embody the expected manners of their *own* service gave it a clear expression as well, revealing the presence of a norm by violating it. One such individual was Claude Louis Hector, the maréchal de Villars, a commander of the French armies in the War of the Spanish Succession who negotiated France’s bilateral peace with Austria at Rastatt in 1714. A career military officer from an old noble family, Villars subscribed to a sort of politics of nostalgia, romanticizing that pre-court, warrior nobility which had not yet undergone a “civilizing process” (Bély 1990:326–327, 667). Thus Villars’s memoirs recorded with approval how Eugene of Savoy, his Austrian counterpart and a military commander himself, proposed that they negotiate “as men of honor and in a manner totally removed from *all the finesses that many regard as necessary for all negotiations*.” As Eugene added to Villars, according to the latter: “I have always thought, and I know that you think the same, that there is no better *finesse* than to have none” (Villars 1891:18; emphasis mine). Although they claimed to reject “*finesse*” for plain speaking, then, Eugene and Villars acknowledged it as a generalized social expectation in so doing, admitting that “many regard” it as such. That Villars associated such subtleties of language with the *court* is evident from his reply to a French official who had reprimanded him for seeking to impress his own views on Louis XIV in his dispatches from Rastatt. According to his memoirs, Villars (1891:28–29) explained in response “that he knew well that the *maxims of courtiers* were to prefer the happiness of pleasing their master to the glory of serving him well, but that, as he had always been very distant from these principles, he would not change now” (emphasis mine).

¹⁶ Note also that Aumont blames the court’s poor manners on the corrupting influence of party conflict—in effect, on the dominant position of Parliament in the British state.

British diplomats, for their part, agreed that their French counterparts tended to embody courtly dispositions. As the earl of Chesterfield, a senior British diplomat of the mid-eighteenth century, enviously put it: “a French [diplomat] will have the upper hand on an English, in whatever court of Europe he may be. The French have something *more attracting, more insinuating, more appealing*” (quoted in Kugeler 2006:256; emphasis mine). That British diplomats appreciated the courtly skill of French diplomats need not contradict their repeated inability to imitate it in practice, which I will discuss below. In fact, as Mori (2010:18) has shown, they were all the more likely to verbalize it because it was foreign to them.¹⁷ Of course, not all British commentators saw these skills in a positive light. Chesterfield’s opinion was certainly the minority one in the literate circles of eighteenth-century England, perhaps even in the British diplomatic corps. While reversing its moral valence, however, English Francophobes shared Chesterfield’s *description* of French diplomatic manners. This was evident, for instance, when writer and future secretary of state Joseph Addison, in the pages of *The Spectator* in 1712, mocked the scheme of the marquis de Torcy, French foreign minister, to establish an academy for ambassadors. As Maurice Keens-Soper (1972:329–330) recounts:

[Addison] imagined “Six wise masters” in charge of the curriculum. One would give instruction in “State Legerdmain,” defined as “how to take off the Impression of a Seal, to split a Wafer, to open a Letter, to fold it again, with other like ingenious Feats of Dexterity and Art.” The students would then be handed over to a “Posture Master” who would teach them “how to nod judiciously, to shrug up their Shoulders in a dubious Case, to connive either Eye, and in a word, the whole Practice of Political Grimmace.” A third professor, “a sort of Language Master,” was to inculcate the niceties of “Political Stile” so that his charges might learn never to give a direct answer to any question ... A Master of Ceremonies completed the list of appointments. His province was to provide embryo diplomats with “stiffening” and “infuse into their Manners that Beautiful Political Starch, which may qualifie them for Levées, Conferences, Visits, and make them shine in what vulgar Minds are apt to look upon as Trifles.”

In Keens-Soper’s interpretation, Addison was mostly mocking as absurd the notion that the “art” of diplomacy could ever be taught in a classroom. But equally apparent is what Addison thought about the diplomatic arts themselves: to the last, they were those of a *courtier*, which he mocked simply because he found them to be so exceedingly *French*.¹⁸ Addison’s rhetorical move here is

¹⁷ Jorge Ardití (1994, 1998) has made the interesting observation that the word “etiquette,” while obviously French in origin, first assumed its modern meaning in English, specifically in Chesterfield’s letters to his son. Ardití thus associates this word—as opposed to the French courtly-absolutist *civilité* (civility)—with a uniquely English social structure. It is important to note, however, that Chesterfield’s letters were designed to instruct his son to serve *as a diplomat abroad*, and in so doing, they repeatedly urged their reader to imitate the French (see Chesterfield 1992). Accordingly, it may be better to attribute the English-language origins of the modern word etiquette to the very *foreignness* of its referent in the English context—precisely that which required its elevation to a discursive level in the first place. Indeed, Mori (2010:18) argues that Chesterfield’s letters were an explicit attempt to teach through discourse what the British did *not* acquire in practice.

¹⁸ Indeed, Keens-Soper (1972:330) also notes that the diplomatic academy was “a scheme whose very Frenchness [Addison] sensed with distaste.”

to praise a supposedly English concern for the “real” substance of things, over and against a French concern with their “artificial” form: the sarcastic quip about “Levées, Conferences, Visits” that “vulgar Minds are apt to look upon as Trifles” betrays Addison’s belief that they really were trifles. Note that in so doing, however, Addison takes for granted that the French were masters of good form itself.

Lest we reduce these depictions to cultural stereotypes (which they certainly were as well), consider how Louis XIV himself unapologetically embraced and defended just this concern for form at the French court. As he famously wrote in his memoirs of the 1660s: “Those people are gravely mistaken who imagine that all this is mere ceremony. The people over whom we rule, unable to see the bottom of things, usually judge by what they see from outside, and most often it is by precedence and rank that they measure their respect and obedience” (quoted in Elias 1983:117–118). Louis thus evoked the same distinction between form and content that Addison held so dear. But what is really significant is the different way in which he configured this distinction. In Louis’s view, form served to *indicate* its content: “ceremony” was never “mere” ceremony precisely because it was a performance of “the bottom of things,” a demonstration or display (through “precedence and rank”) of the underlying social order. Addison, by contrast, thought just the opposite. For him, form served to *conceal* its content, which explained its artificiality.¹⁹ It seems hardly a stretch to suggest that these opposing conceptualizations expressed, in some sense, the respective structures of French absolutism and English capitalism. After all, the former tended to legitimate social domination through its open *justification*, whereas the latter—increasingly, if still hesitantly—did so through its *obfuscation*, its concealment (see, for instance, Bloch 1960; Brenner 1985a, 1985b; Gerstenberger 2007; Parker 1996; Wood 1991).

Like the British, Austrians noted (and like Chesterfield, praised) the courtly competence of French diplomats. Thus in 1750, the baron Ignaz von Koch, secretary to the empress Maria Theresa (reigned 1745–1765), wrote to the count of Kaunitz-Rietberg, ambassador at Paris and one of the empress’s chief advisors, regarding the “gentleness and good manners” of France’s ambassador at Vienna, the marquis d’Hautefort (Schlitter 1899:28). Kaunitz concurred. As he replied to Koch concerning “what I have been told about M^r and Mad^e d’Hautefort, I understand that they will do very well at Vienna” (Schlitter 1899:38). Kaunitz also described Hautefort’s predecessor, Louis-Augustin Blondel, as an “honnête homme” (Schlitter 1899:2), a term that explicitly invoked the social type of the well-mannered courtier. As Lilti (2009:8–9) argues, *honnêteté* and its accompaniment *politesse* together defined the essence of the “aristocratic habitus” in eighteenth-century France. Koch, for his part, employed the same term to describe the marquis de Puysieux, French foreign minister (Schlitter 1899:76). Unsurprisingly, then, the Austrians saw diplomatic life in France as constituting the very pinnacle of courtliness. After his initial reception at the court of Fontainebleau in 1750, Kaunitz reported to Koch that he was impressed by the “*politesses*” that he received “from everyone” (Schlitter 1899:23).

Further reinforcing their already embodied competence in the ways of the court, the instructions that French diplomats received from their principals systematically stressed the personalities, manners, and ceremonies of the courts to which they were accredited, often devoting more attention to these issues than to the official purpose of their mission, as the definitive study of the *ancien régime* French diplomatic corps has shown (Baillou 1984:224–227,

¹⁹ Addison added, of the English, that “our country is more famous for producing men of *integrity* than statesmen,” and that “French *Truth*” and “British *Policy*” were each oxymorons (quoted in Keens-Soper 1972:354; emphasis mine).

247–248). Mandatory in such instructions was a section on the ceremonial order of the host court. Indeed, this concern with ceremony remained consistent throughout the eighteenth century. In order to trace French diplomatic perceptions over time, in controlled comparison to British perceptions, I have read all instructions received by French and British diplomats resident in Sweden between 1689 and 1789, a historical comparison that I will employ occasionally in both this chapter and the next.²⁰ Thus in 1727, the instructions for the sieur de Casteja, French minister plenipotentiary in Sweden, enclosed at the end a “copy of the *mémoire* concerning ceremonial that had been given to the comte de Brancas,” Casteja’s predecessor, explaining that “the sieur de Casteja should conform to it in all respects” (Geffroy 1885:335). Correspondingly, the instructions for Casteja’s own replacement in 1737, the comte de Saint-Séverin (alternatively Saint-Saurin), concluded in the following manner:

With regard to the ceremonial of the ambassadors of His Majesty in Sweden, the sieur comte de Saint-Saurin will be perfectly and sufficiently instructed by the copies that the sieur comte de Casteja will leave him of the *mémoires* concerning ceremonial that were given to [Casteja] on his departure for Sweden, and His Majesty is persuaded that [Saint-Saurin] will uphold with dignity the prerogatives and the representation with which His Majesty honors him (Geffroy 1885:349).

And when Saint-Séverin’s successor, the marquis de Lanmary, departed for his mission in 1741, he received a copy of Saint-Séverin’s own observations on Swedish courtly ceremonial (Geffroy 1885:358). As late as 1763, the instructions (now for the baron de Breteuil, the current ambassador in Sweden) still concluded by enclosing the past “*mémoires* concerning ceremonial,” which should “regulate the conduct of the baron de Breteuil on everything that relates to this part of the functions of his ministry” (Geffroy 1885:406). Note, then, that the French regarded ceremony as one of diplomacy’s “functions,” one that remained remarkably constant over time.

French diplomatic instructions also asked that their recipients, upon returning to France, present a written report, or “relation,” of the major proceedings that occurred during their embassy. Inspired by the famous *relazione* of Renaissance Venetian diplomacy, these too included a mandatory section on ceremony in case of the French foreign ministry.²¹ As the instructions for the comte de Brancas explained in 1725: “His Majesty’s intention is that all of his ambassadors and ministers abroad, when they return from their employment, deliver to him an exact relation of what has occurred in their negotiations, of the state of the countries where they have served, *of the ceremonies that are observed there*, whether in the audiences or in any

²⁰ Focusing on a single host country helps to isolate both changes *within* French and British diplomacy and differences *between* French and British diplomacy, as observed variation cannot be explained by France and Britain tailoring their diplomacy to different local contexts. (Of course, the Swedish polity itself changed over time—most notably transforming from a constitutional into an absolute monarchy in 1772—but here we can at least observe how France and Britain responded to the same set of changes.) Sweden also provides a useful control because it was a genuine third party: it was neither a military nor an economic dependency of either France or Britain, nor could it claim any exogenously induced affinity for these states (say, a shared ruler, as Britain at times enjoyed with the Dutch, or a shared dynasty, as France enjoyed with Spain and much of Italy). In the absence of such factors, both France and Britain vied for Swedish support through the strength of their diplomatic skills.

²¹ Critically, as we will see, British diplomats were asked to present a similar report—minus the section on ceremony.

other encounter, etc.” (Geffroy 1885:318; emphasis mine). This requirement persisted unmodified as well. Thus in 1768, the instructions for the comte de Modène, minister plenipotentiary to Sweden, could still refer to the king’s order “that all of the ministers at foreign courts deliver, at their return to His Majesty, an exact relation of everything that has come to pass ... whether regarding negotiations or ceremonial” (Geffroy 1885:429). Cultivated by the preservation of memoranda and the collection of “relations,” such institutional memory of foreign courts was, at root, a practical accomplishment of the instructions’ authors: prominent courtiers in their own right, the French secretaries of state for foreign affairs invariably shared the courtly habitus of their diplomatic agents (see Bély 2005).

It also worth noting the theoretically relevant attributes that French diplomatic habitus tended *not* to include. Absent was a pre-reflexive orientation to the world of commerce. Although individuals with special knowledge of trade were occasionally attached to French embassies, official diplomatic representatives were typically ignorant of such matters (Baillou 1984:209). When forced to confront the commercial world, a standard response was to regard it with disdain. Thus in 1713, Aumont was disgusted by the “vile” English people because of their concern with money: “the most certain way to loosen this haughty and independent nation, and to make it serve one’s designs, is with money, for which I have experienced their greed ever since I set foot in England” (NA PRO 31/3/201:5). In 1697, the French plenipotentiaries to the Congress of Ryswick found the Dutch untrustworthy because of their commercial orientation, reporting that “these people here are merchants capable of sacrificing all other interests to the desire that they have to enrich themselves with trade” (Archives du ministère des Affaires étrangères [AAE] Correspondance politique [CP] Hollande 169:186). In short, French diplomats tended to view commercial matters as below their dignity. As the mid-eighteenth-century courtier, the duc de Luynes, summed it up: “the ambassador of France should not be interested in commerce” (quoted in Baillou 1984:196). This made sense considering that laws of derogation, which barred nobles from most types of trade, remained in effect in France until the Revolution. And it was nobles, of course, who dominated French diplomacy.

Geopolitical Consequences of French Habitus

Visible, then, in both their acute concern for manners and etiquette and their relative disregard for commerce, French diplomats (and their principals) tended to embody precisely that habitus which was pre-adjusted to the courtly institutions of eighteenth-century European diplomacy. Such adjustment thus enabled them to secure from their European counterparts the social *recognition* which, I have argued, helps to convert material power into geopolitical governance. Already suggested by the comments of their British and Austrian rivals, the recognition accorded to French diplomats is further evidenced by the fact that they tended to become close confidants of their host sovereigns at the major courts of eighteenth-century Europe. During the 1740s and 1750s, the marquis de Chétardie was the court favorite of Elizabeth of Russia (reigned 1741–1762). The comte de Ségur accompanied Catherine II (reigned 1762–1796) on her sojourn through the Russian empire in the 1780s. The marquis de Valori maintained a personal correspondence with Frederick II of Prussia, his intimate friend, in the 1740s and 1750s. During his eighteen-year tenure as ambassador (1759–1777), the marquis d’Ossun was a favorite at the Spanish court of Charles III (reigned 1759–1788). The marquis de Gournay, also ambassador to Madrid (1705–1709), actually served as the chief advisor to

Spain's Philip V (reigned 1700–1724, 1724–1746).²² The latter case is somewhat exceptional, as Philip was born a French prince. However, the expansion of the House of Bourbon from France to Spain (and then to much of Italy) during the eighteenth century is itself causally relevant to the convergence of French diplomatic habitus with that of its European counterparts.

Backed, of course, by the considerable military and economic capabilities of the French state, social recognition mattered for France's geopolitical governance in several ways. These involved the negotiating skills of French diplomats, their capacity to recruit supporters, their contribution to the very rules of the game of diplomacy, and their ability to acquire information from host courts. Roosen (1976a:77) and Kugeler (2006:249, 257–258) both suggest that French diplomats owed their reputation as the most effective negotiators in Europe precisely to the fact that French diplomatic protocol and European courtly etiquette were one and the same. Indeed, European elites commented on French diplomats' skill at "intrigue," a term that also referred—tellingly—to courtiers' machinations more generally. Thus in 1712, the elector of Hanover (the future George I) worried that the Congress of Utrecht would give rise to "intrigues, of which France has accustomed itself so usefully in these sorts of assemblies, to foment division among the allies" (Parke 1798b:169). In 1747, the earl of Sandwich, British plenipotentiary to the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle, feared that "the Court of France may have had skill" in playing the Spanish against the British, although he consoled himself that "they may have possibly carried their refinement too far in this particular, and in order to make Spain impracticable with us, may have made her impracticable with themselves" (NA State Papers [SP] 84/424:26). Note that Sandwich associated French diplomatic stratagems with manners and etiquette ("their refinement").

Regarding the recruitment of followers, the correspondence of the Austrians Koch and Kaunitz made explicit that French diplomats' courtly habitus was a means to success. As Koch reported of the well-mannered French ambassador to Vienna, discussed above, "M. d'Hautefort continues each day to gain [supporters] to his side with his good manners [*bonnes façons*] and with his uprightness," noting, as an example, the count of Colloredo, a high-ranking official and court favorite, who "accompanied [Hautefort] yesterday to the stag hunt, which succeeded marvelously" (Schlitter 1899:33). Koch added that Hautefort "is very well with M. Doyan, he is all the better with the dames of Lorraine, and consequently, he proceeds in such a way as to make friends everywhere, appearing also to be well enough with the chancellor" (Schlitter 1899:34).

Of course, courtly skill worked at Vienna because the Austrians embodied a courtly habitus as well. Thus Koch was pleased to report to Kaunitz that the latter's sons had performed in a play at court, and that Maria Theresa "is happy with each of them, that they both have an attentiveness and a *politesse* that exceeds their age, that the eldest *speaks French* with more finesse than anyone" (Schlitter 1899:43; emphasis mine). Kaunitz graciously thanked Koch for the news, admitting that it put him at ease because he had feared "that one would have glimpsed the little care that I have been able to give to their education thus far" (Schlitter 1899:53). In short, Kaunitz considered politeness and, for that matter, the French language as essential to the "education" of an Austrian nobleman. Absent such an orientation, it seems unlikely that Kaunitz would have become—as he did—the principal architect of the Diplomatic Revolution of 1756,

²² These cases are discussed in Baillou (1984:174, 210–211, 216) with the exception of Ossun, who is discussed in (Scott 2003:213)

whereby Austria and France reconciled their differences to form an alliance against Britain that would endure for 35 years (McGill 1971).²³

Because French diplomats and their counterparts tended to share a courtly habitus, and yet France tended to outweigh them militarily and economically, it also followed that France contributed disproportionately to the rules of the game—the formal and informal institutions—of eighteenth-century European diplomacy. This promoted French influence and leadership as well, as it helped France to set the terms on which negotiation took place. France’s most obvious contribution was the very language of diplomacy: French. The observation of the early twentieth-century historian of the French language, Ferdinand Brunot (1905), holds good in this regard: “French became the language of states because it had become the language of courts and aristocracies” (quoted in Anderson 1993:102). During the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, indeed, French replaced Latin as the *lingua franca* of European diplomacy, becoming the language of both written treaties and verbal negotiations. By the eighteenth century, French was also standard for the *internal* correspondence of a number of diplomatic services—Denmark, Prussia, Savoy-Sardinia, Bavaria, Saxony, and at times Austria, Russia, the Dutch Republic, and (during the 1720s) even Britain (Anderson 1993:101; Black 2010:110–111; Kugeler 2006:258–259; Ostrower 1965:278–297; Scott 2007:65–69). The Austrians Koch and Kaunitz, for instance, communicated with each other in French. In the view of contemporaries, French linguistic hegemony was not just an indication of France’s preponderant influence; it was also a means to that influence. As the English warned of France as early as the 1670s, a bit hyperbolically to be sure: “a nation’s taking of language from another nation, and preferring it before their own, hath usually been a fore-runner of, and prepared the way for, its conquest” (quoted in Pincus 1999:192).²⁴

Similarly, in the broader realm of diplomatic protocol, European elites overwhelmingly looked to French precedents from the late seventeenth century onward (Black 2010:75; Kugeler 2006:253–257; McKay and Scott 1983:202; Scott 2007:70–72). As one recent study summarizes the evidence:

During the later seventeenth and earlier eighteenth centuries, French-style diplomacy spread to other countries, which adopted its practices and structures. Their established diplomatic traditions and practices were overlaid and sometimes even replaced by a francophone mode of conducting relations ... As countries rose in political importance—for example, the Savoyard state or Brandenburg-Prussia—or emerged from obscurity—Russia—and played a larger international role, they embraced this culture, with its foundations in Louis XIV’s France, to a greater or lesser extent (Scott 2007:61–62).

Indeed, because the ceremonial honors exchanged by diplomats were held to indicate the relative standing of their sovereigns, France became the very arbiter of inter-sovereign hierarchies. As Kugeler (2006:254) explains: “The literature on ceremonial and the ‘droit d’ambassade’ [the sovereign right to accredit ambassadors] looked to Versailles when assessing the status of new sovereigns.”

²³ Indeed, Kaunitz was not just the architect of the Austro-French alliance; he championed it for its entire duration, as Kaunitz would remain in office until the early 1790s.

²⁴ For similar observations from German sources, see Kugeler (2006:258) and Ostrower (1965:282).

Finally, the courtly habitus of French diplomats facilitated their efforts to acquire information, a central task of early modern diplomacy and one that was critical both to effective negotiation and to successful alliance formation. Chesterfield's mid-eighteenth-century letters identified the mechanism at work:

A French [diplomat] ... has not been six weeks at Court, without having, by a thousand little attentions, insinuated himself into some degree of favour with the Prince, his wife, his mistress, his favourite and his minister. He has established himself upon a familiar and domestic footing in a dozen of the best houses where he has accustomed the people to be not only easy, but unguarded before him ... By these means he knows the interior of those Courts (quoted in Roosen 1970:318).

Chesterfield's impressions were widely held. As Kugeler (2006:247–248) concludes: “With regard to intelligence,” commentators “were united in considering the French system ... superior to any other state in this period.”

In summary, eighteenth-century French diplomats tended to embody a courtly habitus because courtly institutions were integral to the social conditioning of French elites, diplomats included. As a result, the French shared a common diplomatic culture with many of their European counterparts, because the latter too stemmed from court societies. Taking French military and economic power as necessary conditions, then, the courtly habitus of France's diplomats (and their principals) improved their negotiating chances, enabled them to win supporters, helped them to shape the diplomatic rules of the game, and facilitated their access to information at court.

Britain: Courtly-Maladjusted Diplomacy

In stark contrast to the broader European trend, the early modern English polity became progressively *disembedded* from the courtly world after the mid-seventeenth century. By the start of the eighteenth century, Parliament was replacing the court as the locus of English (then British) government (Brenner 1993:714; Ertman 1997:187–223; Pincus 2009:305–365). Equally dissimilar to the continental experience, British elites were reorienting their strategies of reproduction away from the fees and perquisites of royal office and toward the consolidation and maintenance of their large, landed estates—through techniques like enclosure and strict settlement—estates that were henceforth run on a capitalistic basis (Brenner 1985a:46–54, 1985b:284–319; O'Brien 1996:215–217, 226; Thompson 1974, 1978).²⁵ Accordingly, the

²⁵ This flies in the face of yet another widely accepted narrative about the rise of capitalism, whereby Western Europe underwent a unified, if temporally uneven, process of “primitive accumulation” in the course of the early modern period, that is to say, commencing in the wake of the fifteenth-century “crisis of feudalism” and largely complete by the time of the French Revolution (a narrative that is reproduced in historical sociology, most recently, by Hung 2015, 2017). Admittedly, the concept of primitive accumulation may index several distinct processes, perhaps even within the section of *Capital* that is its most important theoretical source. Thus Hung (2015:9) can define it as simply “the first round of capital accumulation ... which was usually conducted through coercion and violence that concentrated scattered economic resources into capitalists' hands.” If, however, it refers more specifically to “the historical

attraction of the court declined significantly for British elites (Bucholz 1993:11; Colley 1984:95; Stuart Brundage 2017:800–802, 808–809), both because Parliament’s fiscal supremacy restricted courtly splendor and patronage (there were simply less positions available), and because Parliament and capitalist ground rent were themselves more effective means of, respectively, state power and social reproduction.

Diplomatic recruitment followed suit. Again in contrast to the general trend, the British diplomatic service became considerably less embedded in the social milieu of the royal court between the later seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. I have coded all diplomatic agents formally accredited by the English (after 1707, British) crown between 1660 and 1789 (N=460) based on whether they belonged to the social world of the English court or any other royal court (for determining courtly membership, see the methodology in Duindam 2003:45–51). As figure 3.1a shows, between 1660 and 1689, 62 percent of all English diplomats belonged to the court. Between 1690 and 1789, a mere 32 percent of British diplomats were members of court society. This was not due to some “bourgeoisification” of the early modern British diplomatic service. Quite the contrary, as figure 3.1b shows, British diplomacy remained an enduring privilege of the landed elites of noble and gentry background: whereas 80 percent of all diplomats between 1660 and 1689 were nobles (peers) or gentry, this figure had declined only slightly, to 70 percent, during the 1690–1789 period. Instead, what was happening was that the British aristocracy was itself becoming divorced from the court, as Parliament came to outweigh the royal household as a means of political influence and as the legally enclosed, entailed estate came to outweigh royal office and largesse as a means of transmitting inter-generational privilege.²⁶ If the key socializing experiences for French diplomats involved courtly life (both within and outside the family), those for British diplomats involved an upbringing on a country estate and a subsequent trajectory rotating between Parliament and estate life.

process of divorcing the producer from the means of production” (Marx [1867] 1976:875), and thus the very creation of the capital-labor relation, then we must reckon with the fact that up to the *nineteenth* century, primitive accumulation had occurred *only* in Britain, along with some of its settler colonies and, most likely, parts of the Low Countries, northern Italy, and Catalonia: everywhere else, elites had responded to the feudal crisis, not by expropriating peasant producers, but by reasserting formal, juridical rights over the latter’s persons and the fruits of their labor—whether through the (re)introduction of serfdom or the “centralized feudal rent” (Porshnev 1963:395–396) of royal taxation—while peasants, for their part, continued to possess their means of production (and subsistence) (see most importantly Brenner 1985a, 1985b; for a foundational analysis of the Anglo-French contrast in this regard, see Bloch 1960).

²⁶ Elsewhere, I have documented at length this shift in reproduction strategies, among the late seventeenth-century English aristocracy, from the court and its client networks (ultimately founded in the patrimonial power of the royal prerogative) to Parliament and capitalist ground rent (ultimately founded in the power of law, both statute and common law) (Stuart Brundage 2017). Indeed, the institutional spaces of Parliament and the capitalistically run estate were themselves intimately connected, not merely because most large landowners served in Parliament, but because the mechanisms for consolidating landed property were essentially *legal* devices. For instance, virtually all enclosure from the end of the seventeenth century was certified and legitimated by act of Parliament.

Figure 3.1a: Social Composition of the English/British Diplomatic Service, 1660–1789

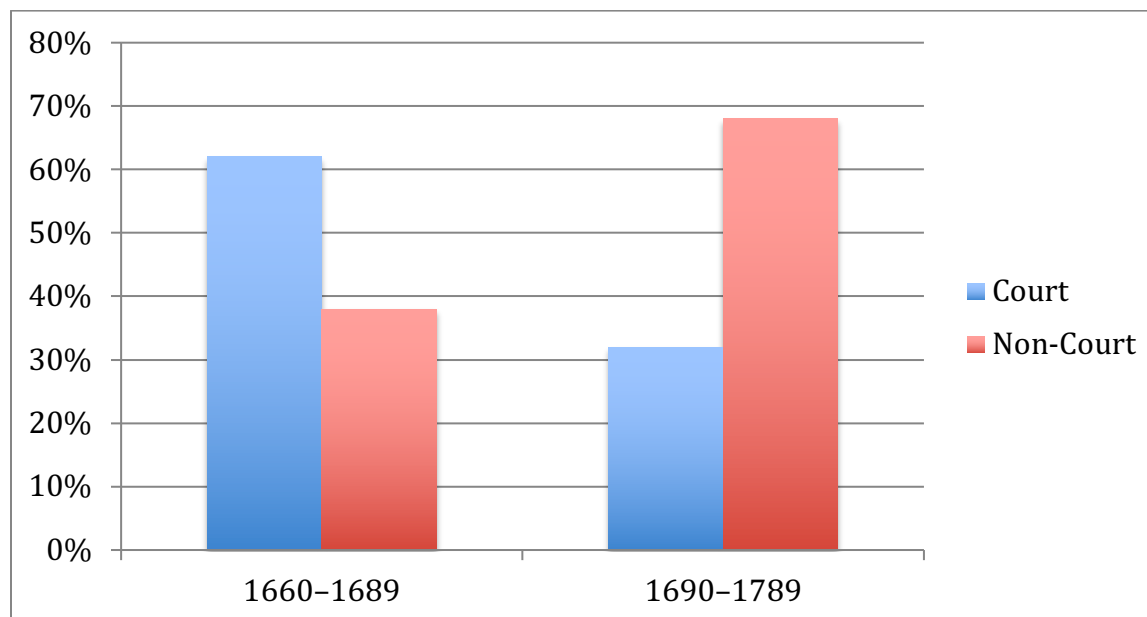
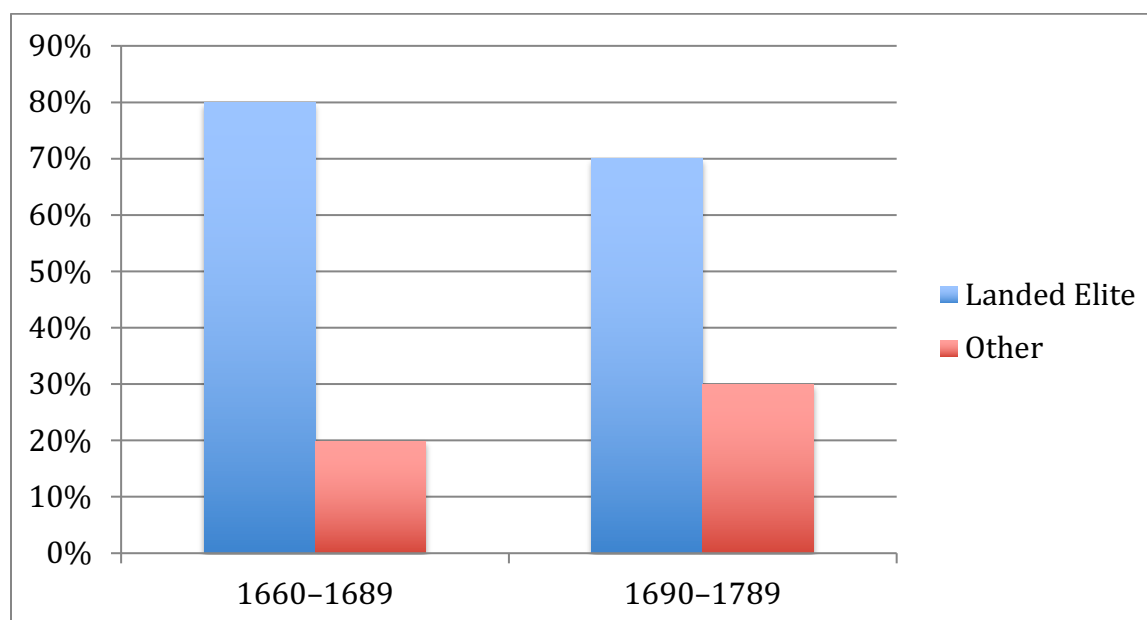


Figure 3.1b: Social Composition of the English/British Diplomatic Service, 1660–1789



Note: Individuals are identified from the lists in Bell 1990; Horn 1932. Corresponding biographies are primarily from the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (www.oxforddnb.com) and the *History of Parliament Trust* (www.historyofparliamentonline.org). Individuals belonged to the court if (a) they ever held a court office (of whatever rank), (b) their informal social contacts were heavily intertwined with the court, or (c) one of their parents was known to be a courtier. N=132 for the 1660–1689 period; N=328 for the 1690–1789 period.

Britain also saw one scheme for a more formal diplomatic education achieve implementation. In 1724, both Oxford and Cambridge established professorships for the express purpose of training future officials in the office of the secretaries of state or in foreign embassies. The curriculum mostly involved instruction in modern history and modern languages (French, Italian, German). However, it was quickly discontinued in 1728, having managed to train only six future officials (Black 2010:100; Kugeler 2006:188–190). Meanwhile, only four prospective British diplomats are known to have attended the French-sponsored academy at the University of Strasbourg out of the academy's 352 total alumni, and out of 460 total British diplomats considered in this study (Voss 1996:213–214). As throughout Europe, diplomacy remained an amateur activity in eighteenth-century Britain. The question, then, is not whether British diplomacy was more or less professionalized but whether amateur British diplomacy was similar in kind to amateur diplomacy on the continent.

Thus far, we have seen that the social positions and trajectories of eighteenth-century British diplomats differed markedly from those of their major continental peers. Again, this was not because British diplomats were any less likely to be recruited from their respective elite than were continental diplomats (nor, for that matter, were they more bureaucratized or professionalized). The point, rather, is that the social basis of the British elite itself—its means of social reproduction, its relationship to the state—was diverging sharply from its major continental counterparts. Did the dispositions of British diplomats, their habitus, thus differ accordingly? Was the British diplomatic habitus thereby maladjusted to the courtly codes that continental diplomats tended to share as incorporated dispositions, and if so, what were the geopolitical consequences?

British Diplomatic Habitus

As it turns out, many high-profile British diplomats considered themselves (and were considered by their continental contemporaries) to be ill-at-ease with courtly culture, that is, lacking a courtly habitus. For instance, the earl of Portland, a Dutch native representing a particularly weighty English embassy to France in 1698, described the court of Louis XIV to his king William III (reigned 1689–1702) as such: “I must admit, Sire, that it is impossible for anyone to come suddenly to this Court to find his bearings, and your Majesty says rightly that it is utterly unlike anything I have ever seen, and *utterly foreign to my habits and disposition*” (NA SP 8/18:59; emphasis mine). Several weeks later he added: “as I do not understand ceremony, I become embarrassed and can only meet [the French] with obstinacy” (NA SP 8/18:93). Portland's unease cannot be explained as mere self-deprecation, for the French took note as well. An internal account of the French foreign ministry commented that both Portland and his English secretary, Matthew Prior, repeatedly misinterpreted courtly ceremonial during their mission to France (British Library [BL] Stowe MS 247:46–83).²⁷ As I show in the next section, the foreign diplomatic corps in France likewise objected to Portland's handling of ceremony.

Numerous examples recurred over the eighteenth century that similarly point to British diplomats' unease with courtly practices. In 1720, the British ambassador to France, the earl of Stair, offended the French princes of the blood with his poor handling of ceremony, violating forms that were “perfectly known and practiced without dispute by all the Ambassadors”

²⁷ Incidentally, these notes, taken in 1698, were sent to the British secretary of state in 1720 in the course of a dispute involving the present British ambassador to France, the earl of Stair (described next).

according to the French foreign minister (BL Stowe MS 247:40).²⁸ Similarly, in 1721, the British diplomat James Scott found no joy in the courtly sociability that marked his post at Dresden, writing to the secretary of state: “I could wish it had been my lot to serve in a place where sobriety is fashionable ... nor is it a small hardship to me that I must either avoid going into some companies or do prejudice to my health” (quoted in Black 2001:99). In 1723, Charles Whitworth, British plenipotentiary to the Congress of Cambrai, dreaded the festivities that often accompanied such occasions, complaining: “I live in the midst of high entertainments, as if I was still at the Colledge ... One satisfaction is that we have nothing like drinking here nor does any one ever pass a glass of wine. I hope dear G. our abstinence will at last put us in a condition of passing what remains of life with some cheerfulness both as to our Business and Friends” (NA SP 78/172:168–169). Here Whitworth expresses an almost ascetic disposition, eschewing “entertainments” and “drinking” while praising “abstinence.” Writing from Paris, also in 1723, Horatio Walpole castigated himself as “being an entire stranger to this Court very weak in ye French language and manner of address” (quoted in Dhondt 2015:242). More generally, Chesterfield complained in his letters that his colleagues were ill-equipped to serve as ambassadors because of their poor manners (Kugeler 2006:256–257; Mori 2010:18).

Increasingly marginal to the social conditioning of British diplomats, the court was becoming marginal to the political, economic, and cultural interests of the broader British elite as well (Bucholz 1993). Consequently, diplomats’ lack of embodied courtly competence was compounded by the instructions that they received from the British secretaries of state, which devoted little attention to court customs and ceremonial. As a study of the late seventeenth-century English diplomatic service found, diplomats’ instructions “were businesslike documents ... Unlike the French, the English documents told the recipient little of the political leanings and personal characteristics of the men he was likely to meet during his mission” (Lachs 1965:19). This pattern seems to have held during the eighteenth century, for British diplomats frequently complained that they were insufficiently informed of their host courts (Black 1986a:95, 2001:78). British diplomats’ instructions did resemble those of their French counterparts in one particular, requesting a written “relation” upon their return. However, at least in the case of the embassy in Sweden, the British instructions are sharply distinguished by the fact that these requests never included matters of ceremony. Typical instead were the instructions for John Lord Carteret, ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary to Sweden in 1719:

At your return We shall expect a full and exact account of the affairs that have passed through your hands, together with your observations upon the present state of the dominions of the queen of Sweden and the several interests and alliances of that crown, particularly as they may concern Our affairs, with other such like remarks on the policy government and ministry there as you may be able to collect for Our use and information (Chance 1922:106–107).

Rather exhaustive in matters of “policy,” this request makes no mention of ceremony. Thus British diplomats could not call upon the institutional memory of courtly customs that their French counterparts readily enjoyed.

If British diplomats were poorly attuned to the culture of the court, however, they revealed a striking familiarity with the world of *commerce*—trade, finance, colonies, commercial

²⁸ For the full account, see BL Stowe MS 247:18–20, 29–33, 40–45.

agriculture. As a major study of the eighteenth-century British diplomatic service puts it, “the support of commerce was an automatic response for most envoys” (Black 2001:150). This was emphatically not because merchants were well represented among the occupational or family backgrounds of British diplomats. Typically nobles or (more commonly) gentry, the landed elites who filled the British diplomatic service were *themselves* commercially oriented. While ambassador to France in 1720, the earl of Stair took it upon himself, unsolicited by his principals, to draw up a “Proposal ... for the establishment of a national bank in Britain” (see NA SP 78/167:274–276). Designed to replace the publically chartered but privately owned Bank of England with a state-held enterprise, a fledgling central bank,²⁹ Stair’s proposal included the following details:

The Bank may be impower’d to lend upon Land Security which will be an other great and certaine Revenuse ariseing to the Publick and a very great advantage to the Landed Interest of Brittain which will give a great facility to Gentlemen to pay their Debts and raise the value of Lands very considerably. The Bank lending at 3 p Cent must of necessity bring interest between Man and Man to 3 p Cent and probably under that rate which will be a vast advantage to Merchants and all Traders in evry kind of thing who are at present forced to neglect many usefull Branches of Trade because they cannot be carried on with any Advantage by reason of the great Intrest must needs be paid for Money (NA SP 78/167:275).

Himself a Scottish noble (Stephens and Lowe 2004), Stair revealed a much greater facility with the workings of public finance than with the intricacies of courtly etiquette. To be sure, these types of financial *activity* were by no means unique to Britain. In fact, Stair’s proposal was inspired by the contemporaneous, albeit unsuccessful, effort of France to establish a national bank under the leadership of John Law, himself a Scottish exile. What bears emphasis, however, is the relationship *between* the financial and diplomatic arenas in each of these countries: that a British diplomat would interest himself in the minutiae of public finance—in the context of his official correspondence, no less—appears to distinguish Britain from France and many other continental countries, whose diplomatic personnel were much more insulated from such matters.

During his mission to The Hague in 1709 and 1710, Charles Townshend frequently reported on the state of Dutch finances, even advising the Dutch—apparently unsolicited by the latter or his home government—to raise their interest rate (NA SP 84/233:502–504, 522).³⁰ Sent to Paris in 1761 for the specific purpose of negotiating peace, the British representative Hans Stanley also spent his time pursuing “that most important study of publick finances, and their Oeconomy.” Indeed, Stanley doubted “that any Minister of France has so compleat an account of their Finances.” Anticipating his recall as the peace negotiations foundered, Stanley expressed “distant hopes, if my stay here should be prolonged, to obtain some more perfect informations as to the number of the people, the riches, and the produce of the several Provinces, and the History, as well as the present state of their trade, than may perhaps have come by other means

²⁹ As Stair explained: “For the security of the said National Bank all the lands of Great Britain may be engaged by Act of Parliament which is a better sort of Foundation than any other Bank in the World ever had or can have” (NA SP 78/167:274).

³⁰ Townshend was the eldest son of a noble family. He also took a direct interest in estate management. After retiring from politics in 1730, he would become a major proponent of so-called agricultural improvement, earning himself the nickname “Turnip Townshend” (Frey and Frey 2004).

into his Royal hands” (NA SP 78/251:234–235). Stanley was simply following the spirit, if not the letter, of his instructions: by contrast with their disregard for courtly ceremony, the British secretaries of state did routinely request economic reports from their agents. Note the striking similarity between Stanley’s voluntary proposal and the formal request to Thomas Wroughton, envoy extraordinary to Sweden, in 1779:

You are farther to procure an account of the population of the king of Sweden’s dominions and of the extent and nature of the commerce and manufactures carried on in the different parts of them, and in so doing you are to pursue the method pointed out in the circular dispatch of Our principal Secretary of State, dated the 27th of April 1773, written by Our command for the purpose of obtaining regular accounts of the state of the commerce of Our subjects in foreign parts and of the increase and decrease of the same (Chance 1928:236).

In other words, reporting on economic conditions in one’s host country was an official duty of British diplomats.

Some diplomats went further, however. In 1755, Onslow Burrish managed, entirely on his own initiative, to secure the importation of British tobacco to the electorate of Bavaria, where he was stationed. As Burrish explained:

[A]lthô I have never received any immediate Commands upon this Subject, *yet as the Utility of the Thing was self-evident*, I have continued my Endeavours to introduce the Use of our Tobacco into this Electorate, and I have now succeeded. The Samples mentioned in the inclosed extract having been approved, the Chamber of Finances desired me to procure them five Hogsheads, which I did ... Part of this Tobacco has been cut for smoaking, and the Rest made Rappe Snuff, and the Experiment has succeeded so well (NA SP 81/105:unpaginated; emphasis mine).

In light of his success, Burrish revealed: “I have now proposed the Importation of our raw Sugars” (NA SP 81/105:unpaginated). Contrary to what one might expect from such correspondence, Burrish was not a consul but, rather, George II’s (reigned 1727–1760) personal representative to the elector of Bavaria. As throughout the rest of Europe, the British diplomatic and consular services were institutionally unrelated at this time (Black 2010:114–115). Yet Burrish’s correspondence shows that in the British case, the *social* barriers between them were quite fluid. Note also that Burrish acted without instruction because he took for granted the “utility” of his doing so (it was “self-evident” to him). In short, British diplomats betrayed a relatively pre-reflexive attention to financial and commercial matters that they lacked with regard to courtly customs.

Geopolitical Consequences of British Habitus

British diplomats (and their principals) thus embodied a relatively non-courtly, commercially oriented habitus, the very inverse of the French diplomatic habitus. As such, British diplomatic habitus was particularly ill-adapted to the courtly field of eighteenth-century

European diplomacy. What were the overall geopolitical implications of this dispositional misalignment? Analogous to the ways that the convergence of French diplomats' habitus with their social environment facilitated geopolitical governance, the divergence of British diplomats' habitus from that same environment inhibited such governance because it limited their capacity to elicit *recognition* from their continental counterparts. This, in turn, constrained their abilities to negotiate, to recruit supporters, to shape the diplomatic rules of the game, and to acquire information—despite Britain's unrivalled military and economic capacities.

The earl of Stair, for instance, lost access at court in the wake of his offense, discussed above, losing his “credit” as he admitted in a private letter (NA SP 78/167:105). In a direct way, then, a failure to adequately perform the representational and ceremonial tasks of his mission hindered Stair's ability to perform its more “utilitarian” tasks as well, because he lost his very interlocutors as a result.³¹ Such tasks included Stair's efforts to secure French assistance in Britain's disputes with major third-party states like Spain and Russia. Clearly, an ambassador so lacking in social credit would have been helpless to recruit supporters for these causes. For this reason, among others, Stair had no choice but to demand his recall to Britain (BL Stowe MS 247:167–168).

Similarly, in 1752 and 1753, the diplomat Sir Charles Hanbury Williams accounted for the failure of his colleague—the earl of Hyndford, ambassador at Vienna—to enroll Austria's participation in a British-led coalition of German states by emphasizing Hyndford's ignorance of the Vienna court's customs (BL Additional MS 51393:108–110, 130). In reality, the failure of Britain's ambitions for leadership in the Holy Roman Empire, the signature project of secretary of state Newcastle, was an overdetermined outcome (Browning 1967, 1975). Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the private correspondence of Maria Theresa's secretary, baron Koch, repeatedly referenced the “impetuosity,” the “misplaced tenacity,” “the unseasonable tenacity,” the “false measures” that characterized Britain's approach at this time (Schlitter 1899:24, 63, 66, 90). The collapse of Newcastle's scheme had momentous geopolitical consequences in its turn, contributing to Austria's long-term realignment with France against Britain, which endured from 1756 until 1792 (Baugh 1988:45; Black 1986a:55–56; McKay and Scott 1983:184; McGill 1971:236).

British diplomats were also insecure about their ability to negotiate treaties. This is attested by their repeated claims that Britain should rely on force rather than persuasion if it was to achieve anything at the bargaining table. As the British secretary of state, Henry St. John (later Viscount Bolingbroke), wrote in 1711 of Portugal, one of Britain's closest allies at that: “let it be considered that we have never had any hold on the court of Lisbon, but by their fears, and that hold will subsist as long as Britain and Holland are masters of the sea, which I hope in God will be as long as the world endures” (Parke 1798a:301). Even for Chesterfield, writing as secretary of state to his plenipotentiary at the Congress of Breda in 1746, there was “nothing more obvious, than that an early and vigorous [military] Preparation will be *the only probable Means* of making these Conferences conduce to the End proposed by His Majesty ... of a General Pacification” (NA SP 84/421:200–201; emphasis mine). On this view, only armed force could help Britain negotiate a peace, not negotiation itself. In much the same vein, Hans Stanley, writing from Paris in 1761, despaired of his ability to make peace with France, explaining that the ill-intentioned Austrian and Spanish ambassadors had “gained much ground upon me,

³¹ By the same measure, Stair lost his key informants, those whom he needed for intelligence purposes, since major policy decisions in France were taken within the court's more intimate circles, at this time surrounding the French regent, duc d'Orléans.

notwithstanding my most earnest endeavours to prevent them; I avoid the mortifying sight of their joy at *my ill success in this negociation*, comforting myself with the hope of seeing them *humbled by His Majesty's arms*" (NA SP 78/252:34; emphasis mine). Stanley made it clear that the Austrian and Spanish ambassadors (Messieurs Staremberg and Grimaldi) had outmaneuvered him due to their superior courtly connections: "M. Grimaldi, being an Ambassador de famille³² (as it is here called) has perpetual opportunities of following the Court; he acts on all occasions in concert with M. de Staremberg, who is extremely well with Mad.^e de Pompadour [Louis XV's mistress and principal advisor] ... I need not repeat what infinite advantages they have lately had" (NA SP 78/252:115).

Indeed, the failed Anglo-French peace negotiations of 1761, of which Stanley was the primary British agent, show how a failure to abide by the courtly style of diplomacy—those dispositions toward *politesse* and *honnêteté*—could render a state incapable of securing consent for its demands, whatever amount of coercion it might bring to bear on their behalf. During the negotiations, the French repeatedly complained of the *form* in which William Pitt the elder, the British secretary of state, framed his proposals. Thus in August, the French negotiator at London, the marquis de Bussy, wrote to Pitt to report on "the surprise of my Court regarding the form both of the letter that you wrote me, and of the Ultimatum of England," surmising that "this form ... reveals the opposition of the Court of London to the Peace." As Bussy made clear, France's chief complaint involved "the imperative tone, *ill fit for negotiation*, that England employs in its Responses" (SP 78/252:40–41; emphasis mine). Stanley had already reported this to Pitt, writing several days earlier to inform him that the duc de Choiseul, French foreign minister, had "complained with warmth, of the authoritative tone" of Pitt's memorandum: Choiseul had "added that, tho' less a master of stile than yourself, he could easily have conveyed the same determinate sense in less offensive expressions, and that your chusing the contrary method was a clear proof, of what he had doubted from the first, and had constantly been told, that you personally never had any real intention to conclude a Peace" (NA SP 78/252:14).

Stanley's response to Choiseul was equally telling. As the former reported, his approach was to question the very connection between style and substance that Choiseul had drawn: "I then told him that the austerity of Language which he called imperious ... I must call plain, and ingenuous" (NA SP 78/252:15). Justifying his conduct to Pitt, later in the same letter, Stanley reiterated a disinterest in linguistic niceties and other such forms of etiquette: "when you named me to His Majesty as the publick Minister of Great Britain, I cannot doubt that you beleived, and knew me ... to be a man whom frowns and haughty speeches would not intimidate like a coward, whom flattery and fair words would not win like a Girl" (NA SP 78/252:25–26). Note Stanley's equation of French manners with femininity, contrasted more or less explicitly with a manly British concern for plain speaking. An obviously sexist quip, it also reflected a real social difference between the relative prominence of aristocratic women in the courtly-salon milieu of eighteenth-century France and their relative absence in the cotemporaneous public sphere of Britain (Cowan 2013; Kale 2002; Pekacz 1999).³³

Nevertheless, even Stanley beseeched Pitt to moderate his tone when making demands on France in the future:

³² Grimaldi enjoyed special access as a "family ambassador" because Spain and France belonged to different branches of the same dynastic family, the House of Bourbon.

³³ See, relatedly, Rosenblatt (2002) on the misogynistic register in which Rousseau's republican critique of aristocratic sociability was similarly pitched.

the French are to be treated with great firmness, and dignity; but now that His [British] Majesty's honour has been so nobly asserted ... I submit it to you, whether it may not be expedient, to soften that asperity which might before be necessary: my reason for this intimation is, that I know that the King of France has been grieved, not to say personally offended at some particular expressions, and has said with great warmth, "that he was ready to resign Provinces for the peace, but that he would not be deprived of his honour, and of the character of a man of truth, and probity"; I beg leave to remind you that the main spring from whence a desirable conclusion can be expected, is His [French] Majesty's private disposition, and temper of mind; this particular circumstance may in some instances perhaps make it more prudent to defer general reflections upon the morality, and punctilio of transactions, till the issue is seen (NA SP 78/252:129).

Pitt, however, was not to be dissuaded. Quoting verbatim to Stanley from Bussy's remarks, Pitt had already proclaimed that whether his tone was "imperative" and "ill fit for negotiation" he would "leave to the Duc de Choiseul, and *the French Academy* to determine." As he concluded: "I am sensible this is too much on such a frivolous and ill founded Exceptionousness about *Words*, and will now hasten to *Things*, which demand my whole Attention" (NA SP 78/252:92–93; emphasis mine). Here again we see the contrast between French and British conceptualizations of the relation between form and content. Because forms, for Pitt, were superficial appearances (they were "frivolous"), he could turn his attention to more material "things" without overly concerning himself for "words." But for Choiseul and Bussy, these same forms, far from superficial or deceptive, were an *indication* ("clear proof") that Pitt acted in bad faith, that he had no desire for peace at all. As a result, and despite his own intentions to some degree, Pitt's words had eminently material consequences.³⁴ Negotiations broke off in September, the French refusing Britain's ultimatums despite the sad state of their military forces so as to avoid what they themselves called a Carthaginian peace.³⁵

A less formal but equally consequential aspect of diplomatic negotiation was the everyday jockeying for position on behalf of one's sovereign in the ritual hierarchies of foreign courts. A sovereign's standing in what Lucien Bély (1999) calls the European "society of princes" inhered not merely in those qualities intrinsic to the sovereign; it also required that the latter's diplomats properly perform the rituals of sovereignty abroad. As Teschke (2002:16) explains, early modern diplomats' "[a]nxiety over reputation and dignity should not be dismissed as ceremonial quibbles ... Acceptance of a demoted place at diplomatic meetings was tantamount with acceptance of inferiority that could have material implications for questions of

³⁴ The French were somewhat mistaken about Pitt's intentions. Despite the imperiousness of his tone—and, admittedly, the stringency of his demands—it seems that Pitt really did desire peace. Whether he was willing to make it on terms that France could have tolerated is another question, of course (see Simms 2007:477–480).

³⁵ Obviously, the French were upset by the substance of Britain's demands as well, but even in his internal correspondence, Choiseul explicitly cited both form and substance, on equal terms, when discussing France's refusal to concede (see, for instance, AAE CP Espagne 533:173–174). As the French ambassador to Spain put it, expressing approval of Choiseul in this regard: "when the Romans granted Peace to a vanquished People ... they did not impose Laws as harsh as those that M. Pitt would like to give to France, and they did not employ expressions as shocking as those contained in this Minister's note to M. de Bussi" (AAE CP Espagne 533:232; emphasis mine).

precedence in inheritances struggles” (see also Kugeler 2006:19; Hatton 1969:157; Roosen 1976a:51–52, 1980:463, 474–476; Teschke 2003:224). Indeed, official diplomatic meetings were just one occasion in a wider constellation of events that demanded vigilant assertions of rank: the order of precedence at festive gatherings like feasts and public processions had similar implications (Bély 1990:363, 392).

The earl of Portland’s mishandling of ceremony during his embassy to France in 1698 reveals how much was at stake in such rituals. As his secretary Matthew Prior explained in a memorandum, Portland broke with standard etiquette by visiting the French princes of the blood in private before the public ceremony marking his entry to court. This upset the other foreign ambassadors, “particularly him of Portugal,” because they knew that the princes “would not return My Lords privat Visit till my Lord had payed them his Visit of Ceremony so that My Lord for two Visits payed them ... would have but one returned, *which might be aledged for the Future, and took off from ye Equality wch Ambassad:rs pretend to have with Princes*” (NA SP 105/26:19; emphasis mine). In other words, Portland’s ceremonial faux pas—paying the French princes two visits while receiving only one—undermined in practice the equality of rank enjoyed in principle by ambassadors and princes alike. Ambassadors could claim equality with princes because they claimed to embody the sovereignty of the very princes who sent them (Mattingly 1955:251). As this incident shows, the legitimate personification of princely sovereignty was, in part, a *performative* accomplishment, achieved or lost through the execution of ceremony and etiquette—as I suggested in chapter 1.³⁶ By failing to uphold his sovereignty vis-à-vis princes, Portland was inadvertently setting a new precedent (“which might be aledged for the Future”) that potentially undermined the position of the entire diplomatic corps in France.³⁷ As such, he was not merely damaging England’s rank vis-à-vis France; he was violating the corporate solidarity that ambassadors owed each other. His actions thereby threatened England’s standing in the eyes of *all* European powers. Even so, Portland appears to have understood ceremony better than his English colleague, the duke of St. Albans. As Portland himself complained to William III, St. Albans left Paris without making the proper gifts, “which has made a very bad impression, *even as regards your Majesty*” (NA SP 8/18:108; emphasis mine). Note again how a ceremonial mistake risks the reputation, not merely of the diplomatic agent, but of the sovereign whom the latter represents.

In the British case, the sovereign’s intrinsic qualities were by no means secure either. As the next chapter will show in detail, the British crown enjoyed questionable dynastic legitimacy in the eyes of continental elites because Parliament had repeatedly modified the royal succession, subordinating dynastic right to the sovereignty of statute. In such a context, British diplomats’ failures to compensate performatively for the already shaky foundations of their monarchy were all the more consequential.

The maladjusted habitus of its diplomats also helps to explain why Britain contributed little to the rules of the diplomatic game in the first place. That is, to the extent that the conventions and institutions of eighteenth-century European diplomacy were, as historians maintain, “an amalgam of the different ‘court societies’” (Bély 1990:374), Britain was relatively underrepresented in this amalgam, precisely because the court was relatively marginal to the

³⁶ As Kugeler (2006:19) puts it, “diplomacy possessed a performative quality, as the inner hierarchy and the relations between the system’s actors were made visible by the interactions of diplomats.”

³⁷ Note, however, that contrary to the most thoroughgoing statements of practice theory in IR, discussed in chapter 1, the conditions of this (failed) performative were *external* to the interaction itself. For they stemmed from Portland’s “habits and disposition.”

social experience of its own elite, diplomats included. British diplomats thus found themselves constrained to partake of conventions and institutions that they had not acquired as primary dispositions. The most obvious example was that “language of courts and aristocracies,” hence the language of diplomacy: French. As Viscount Bolingbroke put the issue during the negotiations of the Peace of Utrecht in 1712: “The French have undoubtedly a great advantage in treating in their own language” (Parke 1798b:309). But so, for that matter, did any continental aristocrat who had acquired French in the home.

Consequently, British diplomats faced a fundamental tradeoff: either appear as illegible to their continental peers or secure their peers’ recognition at the cost of adopting conventions that were not of their own making. Thus far, I have emphasized the former cases. The latter, however, are the exception that proves the rule. Thus Bolingbroke was unusually effective among eighteenth-century British diplomats precisely because of his unusual degree of investment in the rituals of court society. Chapter 5 is, in part, a case study of Bolingbroke’s maneuvers vis-à-vis the French court in this regard. Suffice it to say for the moment that Bolingbroke’s facility with courtly etiquette paid off, as he managed to win major commercial and colonial concessions from France at the Congress of Utrecht in 1712 and 1713.

Yet Bolingbroke’s success hinged on his willingness to play by the rules of the courtly game; and in the courtly game, France remained the undisputed frame of reference. Thus Bolingbroke actively deferred to the French in matters of protocol. When preparing the reception of the Spanish ambassador to London in late 1712, he wrote: “I cannot help thinking he expects some compliment at his arrival ... it might be proper to do by him as Monsieur de Torcy did by me [during Bolingbroke’s visit to France earlier that year], to send a servant to meet him, and as soon as he comes to his lodging to see him, and perhaps, since he comes at that hour, to entertain him at dinner” (Parke 1798c:206). It is striking that even Bolingbroke could not take such etiquette for granted. Unable to rely on his instincts—nor, evidently, on the standard protocol of his own court—Bolingbroke found himself imitating the model of the *French* court.

Therein lies the paradox: precisely to the extent that Bolingbroke successfully invested in the French courtly game, influencing France where his colleagues failed, he undermined his position domestically, as his colleagues suspected him of French sympathies. While many historians view the Peace of Utrecht as a success for British diplomacy, British contemporaries vehemently disagreed. When Bolingbroke’s ministry fell to the opposition Whig party in 1714, the latter publically condemned the peace and impeached its negotiators, while Bolingbroke himself fled to France (Dickinson 1970:131–135).

The earl of Waldegrave, ambassador to the Holy Roman Empire and France in the 1720s and 1730s, reveals the same paradox. A grandson of the deposed monarch James II (Woodfine [2004] 2008), Waldegrave counted among the diminishing number of British diplomats whose social background remained fully embedded in the courtly world. For this reason, fellow British diplomat Horatio Walpole could write, in 1735, that Waldegrave’s “suppleness and address” made him better suited than Walpole to influence the French—at the very same time that he chastised Waldegrave for the latter’s “pitiful and weak conduct” toward France (quoted in Black 2001:39).³⁸

In this regard, it is extremely telling that, by contrast with the failed Anglo-French negotiations of 1761, Britain’s successful peace with France in 1763, which ended the Seven Years’ War and constituted, without question, its greatest diplomatic victory of the eighteenth

³⁸ Black (2001:62) elaborates the paradox: “the very ‘suppleness and address’ that could pass as a lack of firmness could also be seen as a crucial way to win confidence.”

century, was negotiated by a plenipotentiary with an anomalously strong orientation to continental court society. Totally unlike the merchant-born, career party politician, Hans Stanley, the duke of Bedford was, in the description of Fred Anderson (2009:112), “Conservative, Francophile, historically conscious, Europe-minded, and aristocratic ... ideally suited to the diplomatic role to which he was assigned.” However, Anderson (2009:112–113) also notes, astutely:

Of all the politicians in Britain, therefore, Bedford may have been one of the *least* able to understand the significance of the interest that his countrymen were also taking in the terms on which peace should be made. Yet, that interest would have been manifest to anyone taking even a casual look at the pamphlets on sale in London booksellers’ shops between the end of 1759 and late 1763 (emphasis mine).

The brute obviousness of Britain’s gains in the Treaty of Paris (1763) meant that Bedford could never have suffered a domestic humiliation like that which Bolingbroke underwent. Nevertheless, as Anderson (2009) extensively documents, major elements in the British public sphere sought to achieve just that: the press overwhelmingly detected a betrayal in his (relatively) conciliatory style of negotiation. Britain’s diplomats with the greatest social skill thus remained, for that very reason, in an unstable, liminal position, straddling two social universes simultaneously, always vulnerable to losing their domestic political authorization.³⁹

Finally, the lack of courtly conditioning that characterized most British diplomats inhibited their ability to gather information. In the spring of 1756, the British envoy to Vienna, Robert Keith, failed to ascertain that Austria and France were negotiating an alliance, perhaps the century’s major diplomatic realignment. As Keith wrote, just three days before the signing of the Austro-French alliance: “it is the general Opinion that this Court [Vienna] will hardly enter into any Engagements with France” (NA SP 80/197:91). Significantly, Keith was born to an obscure family in the Scottish gentry and enjoyed little social connection to the courtly world (Archbold and Eagles 2004).⁴⁰

During the Anglo-French negotiations of 1761, Stanley similarly mistook the French court’s intentions toward Spain, with whom France was secretly forging an alliance. (Spain would eventually declare war on Britain in support of France.)⁴¹ Although Stanley was aware of the Franco-Spanish negotiations, he believed that the French foreign minister Choiseul was antagonistic toward Spain and would prefer to settle with Britain. As he wrote in August:

What I now communicate to you confirms me in the opinion, I have always entertained, that the Duc de Choiseul was most seriously desirous of concluding a

³⁹ As Mori (2010:3) puts it, these were individuals “who inhabited two worlds at once, were neither fix nor fowl.”

⁴⁰ Although the British diplomat Hanbury Williams actually praised Keith over his apparently incompetent colleague at Vienna, the earl of Hyndford, it is worth noting that Keith too lacked the qualities that ideally suited a representative to the Austrian court, according to Hanbury Williams: “there is no treating with that House unless much more able Ministers are imployd, there must be a Duke with a Blue Ribbon at Vienna” (BL Additional MS 51393:110).

⁴¹ Ultimately, what became known as the Seven Years’ War lasted another two years, Britain, France, and Spain finally making peace in 1763.

treaty of peace with England, since nothing can be more evident than that, the introduction of Austrian, *and Spanish* intelligence in the Councils here must be prejudicial to his power; this likewise throws a very full light upon the dislike, which the Duc de Choiseul has always shewn to Mess.^{rs} de Staremburg, and Grimaldi (NA SP 78/252:113; emphasis mine).

In fact, Choiseul was the architect of the Spanish alliance, which he had envisaged since the late 1750s. He was likewise a close confidant of the Spanish ambassador Grimaldi.⁴² Stanley's ignorance of the relationships and opinions of such major personages at Versailles strongly suggests the poor quality of his courtly access. Born to a merchant family, Stanley was himself a career politician in the House of Commons, understandably more invested in party politics than in courtly pageantry or intrigue (Courtney and Smith 2004). Thus neither his upbringing nor his career trajectory gave Stanley direct experience of courtly life. The Spanish alliance, like the Austrian, would last three decades. In short, British diplomats lacked the necessary information to anticipate either of the two major diplomatic realignments of the later eighteenth century.

To summarize, by the eighteenth century, courtly reflexes had become relatively marginal to the habitus of British diplomats because the court itself was relatively marginal to the social positions and trajectories of Britain's landed elite, from which its diplomats were overwhelmingly recruited. By contrast, commerce was relatively "second nature" to these diplomats because Britain's landed elite was itself a commercially oriented class, owners of capitalist estates and investors in trading companies and stock markets (albeit rarely working as merchants or "stockjobbers" themselves). As a result, the habitus of British diplomats was maladjusted to the courtly dispositions and institutions that characterized the dominant culture of European diplomacy in the eighteenth century. Maladjusted habitus, in turn, hindered British diplomats' efforts to recruit allies and negotiate treaties, damaged the status and reputation of their monarch, reduced their contribution to the rules of the game of diplomacy, and limited their access to information at court.

Conclusion

This chapter identified a mechanism of geopolitical governance embedded in the dispositions—or habitus—of diplomats, itself shaped by these agents' social trajectories and systems of strategies of inter-generational reproduction. The following chapter will identify a second, reinforcing mechanism at the level of the interests that diplomats, as agents of sovereigns, were tasked with representing.⁴³ Already at this stage, however, we can observe a fundamental irony about the nature of geopolitical governance in eighteenth-century Europe. After all, the precociously capitalist social formation that characterized eighteenth-century

⁴² For Choiseul's role in precipitating and shaping the so-called Third Family Compact between France and Spain, signed in 1761, see Ozanam (1961) and Scott (2003). Although Choiseul's desire for peace with Britain was genuine—given the desperate state of France's war effort—his first inclination had always been toward a Franco-Spanish union. Significantly, by the time Stanley penned the above report in August 1761, Choiseul had already committed himself to the Spanish policy, correctly surmising that peace talks with Britain would soon collapse (Ozanam 1961:332–334).

⁴³ These two mechanisms should be seen as interdependent and interpenetrating, rather than constituting distinct "causal streams" in any meaningful sense.

Britain was, by most accounts, a principal condition for its remarkable economic—and military—dominance in the first place (Allen 2000, 2001, 2009; Brenner 1985a, 1985b; Brewer 1989; Lachmann 2000, 2003, 2009; North and Thomas 1973; O’Brien 1996; Prados de la Escosura 2004; Teschke 2003; Winch and O’Brien 2002). But if this is indeed the case, then the very forces that produced Britain’s *material* primacy in eighteenth-century Europe were ultimately the same forces that impeded its *geopolitical* governance—that is, given the durably pre-capitalist social field with which British diplomats continued to interact.

Chapter 4: Patrimonial Property versus Public Instance: Forms of Sovereignty in French and British Diplomacy

In the previous chapter, I showed that eighteenth-century French and British diplomats embodied fundamentally distinct habitus; that the French habitus was well adjusted to the courtly style of European diplomacy while the British habitus was maladjusted; and that, as a result—and given these states' material capacities—France exercised more effective geopolitical governance than did Britain. As this chapter shows, it was not merely their embodied dispositions that diverged: French and British diplomats were the agents of different kinds of principal. If the French and British diplomatic services were each the external representatives of sovereign authority, they represented sovereignties founded on different sociopolitical logics, internally related to different types of elite that reproduced themselves through different social strategies (Bloch 1960; Brenner 1985a, 1985b; Gerstenberger 2007; Teschke 2003; Wood 1991). In short, France and Britain diverged with respect to what chapter 1 called the *social relations of sovereignty* (see Lacher 2005:33–34, 2006:81, 84; Teschke 2003:3, 2005:19; Teschke and Lacher 2007:572). Consequently, French and British diplomats were tasked by their principals with advancing fundamentally distinct kinds of interest in geopolitics.

Of course, diplomats' habitus may well align with the interests that they represent. Indeed, this was the normal scenario for both the French and the British diplomatic services: as we have seen, each was heavily recruited from its country's elite. Even to the extent that diplomats' dispositions diverged from the interests of those who accredited them, however, their practice was overdetermined by the latter: because diplomats are the agents of a principal, their own dispositions are never the sole determinant of their practices.

Like the habitus of French diplomats, the relations of sovereignty of the French polity tended to converge with other European states: such polities shared *patrimonial* forms of sovereignty in which “public” power was “privately” owned by the collective ruler (the titular dynastic family, if one existed, along with legally privileged elites). Consequently, French diplomats pursued interests that tended to appear as legible and legitimate to their allies and enemies alike, because even enemies were invested in the same stakes—a shared *illusio* (Bourdieu 1990)—centered on the reproduction of familial property-in-jurisdiction. Allies, for their part, were liable to share some of the *same* interests as France because they often belonged to the same dynastic house (the transnational House of Bourbon). This convergence of stakes and interests promoted French governance of geopolitics—given France's substantial material capacities.

By contrast, British sovereignty strikingly diverged from the continental norm: parliamentary more than dynastic, the British state was ruled by elite-level parties but it was not owned by elites themselves. In this sense, it was uniquely *non-patrimonial*, constituting a relatively impersonal, public authority. Distinct *from* civil society, however, the state was also uniquely subservient *to* organized capitalists within civil society itself. Owing to both of these features, British diplomats pursued interests that were questionably legitimate and at times illegible to their European counterparts. This suppressed Britain's exercise of geopolitical governance—despite its dominant material capacities.

Patrimonial Sovereignty in Eighteenth-Century Europe

Just as the rise of dynastic states inculcated European diplomats into a common courtly culture, it produced sovereigns who were themselves socially similar. First of all, a considerably larger proportion of European polities could claim hereditary monarchs as their rulers in the eighteenth than in the seventeenth century, a trend in which Osiander (1994:109) discerns the “growing strength of monarchism.” In such a context, accredited diplomats became the personal representatives of sovereign individuals.¹ By the end of the seventeenth century, foreign policy was the most firmly entrenched of all royal prerogatives, the more or less exclusive monopoly of monarchs wherever monarchs existed (Bély 1990:27; Rowen 1980:35). Eighteenth-century European geopolitics was thus primarily an inter-dynastic politics: a personal politics among ruling families—Bély’s (1999) “society of princes”—in which the primary issue at stake was familial reproduction itself. These dynastic struggles presupposed the state as a form of private property, typically inherited according to rules of male primogeniture and (under certain conditions) transferred through purchase and sale (Bély 1999; Rowen 1980; Teschke 2003).

State formation of this kind enrolled broader elites in the inter-dynastic game of ruling families. Second, then, a whole patchwork of households and corporate groups enjoyed their own proprietary claims on state power: despite the symbolism of absolute monarchy, effective property in the state was distributed between ruling dynasties and legally privileged elites via such mechanisms as venal office-holding, tax farming, chartered monopolies, and the simple persistence of seigniorial rights (Adams 2005; Anderson 1974; Gerstenberger 2007; Henshall 1992; Rowen 1980). The period of growing “monarchism” was thus a renaissance for nobilities throughout Europe, who strengthened their grip on state offices and associated resource flows (Dewald 1996; Duindam 1994; Scott and Storrs 2007:34–52). But the collective ruler also included merchants with property in legally chartered trading companies (Adams 2005; Gerstenberger 2007). Moreover, even in the most commercialized areas of continental Europe like the Netherlands and France, successful merchant families tended to convert their wealth into proprietary office (and in the latter case, noble title) in the long run (Adams 2005:145–154; Anderson 1974:97; Parker 1996:132).

Such patrimonialism (Charrad and Adams 2011) pertained beyond the dominant regime-type of dynastic monarchy altogether. As is clear from the Dutch evidence, it partially characterized the merchant republic of the Netherlands as well: by the second third of the eighteenth century, the urban Dutch patriciate had become an overwhelmingly rentier class with monopoly claims on proprietary office (Adams 2005:145–154; De Vries and Van der Woude 1997:561–596). Similarly, the presence of an elective (and weak) monarchy in Poland simply meant that notables collectively owned the state, which was no less proprietary for all that (McLean 2004, 2011).

Conversely, the proprietary character of political power applied even to those German dynastic states that lacked a market in venal offices, like Prussia, which historical sociologists have questionably characterized as bureaucratic *instead of* patrimonial (Ertman 1997:245–263; Gorski 2003:79–113). Although the venal–non-venal distinction is indeed noteworthy, so too is the fact that Prussian officials’ dispossession of their means of administration failed to transform the latter into an impersonal public power or “autonomous” state; rather, it relocated sovereignty

¹ The absence of an impersonal state in foreign policy applied equally to republics, where diplomats were the personal representatives of corporate bodies (the Dutch States-General, the Venetian Senate), rather than the “United Provinces” or “Venice” as such.

to the private disposal of the Hohenzollern dynasty, as is clearly attested by the wars of Frederick II, unwaveringly focused as they were on a disputed personal claim to the Silesian inheritance (Blanning 2016).² Moreover, aside from the relatively tiny central administration—“about half the size of the English” (Brewer 1989:103)—the vast majority of eighteenth-century Prussian elite households reproduced themselves locally through what can only be described as property-in-jurisdiction: the institution of serfdom (Anderson 1974:263–264; Brenner 1985b:275–283; Carsten 1989).³ Finally, Frederick’s later years even saw Prussia revert to patrimonialism at the heart of its fiscal bureaucracy: “In Prussia, supposedly the paradigm case of the well-defined state apparatus, Frederick the Great called upon a group of French tax farmers to take over the collection of the *Akzise* [excise] between 1766 and 1786” (Brewer 1989:102–103).

Whether invested in orthodox (dynastic) or heterodox (republican) forms, then, most eighteenth-century European elites ruled polities that were characterized by social relations of *patrimonial sovereignty*. At root, this meant that “public” power counted as “private” (familial and corporate) property.⁴ These polities constituted what Julia Adams (2005:34–35) calls familial states. Their prevailing mode of domination (Bourdieu 1977:183–197; 1994) amounted to what Heide Gerstenberger (2007) calls generalized personal power. Described earlier, such a term usefully captures both the ruptures and the fundamental continuities in state formation of this period. Breaking with the *parcelized* personal power of the feudal relations from which they emerged, these polities tendentially relocated authority toward an administrative point of focus, “a centralized, militarized summit” (Anderson 1974:19). By contrast with the generalized *impersonal* power of the modern states that some of them would later become, however, such authority remained a matter of lordly right fused to personal proprietorship, an authority over persons that was itself a claim to the fruits of their labor.⁵

Table 4.1 codes the major polities of later seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe according to both their regime-type and their relations of sovereignty. Using Levy’s (1983) classification of “great powers,” it includes all polities that achieved great-power status at any time between 1648 and 1789. As is clear, dynastic-absolutist monarchy was the dominant or orthodox—but not universal—type of regime (Oresko et al. 1997). Patrimonial sovereignty, for its part, was considerably more widespread, characterizing *all* great powers except for Britain and (partially) the Netherlands (both discussed below).

² As E. H. Carr (1945:8) long ago realized: “Frederick the Great still belonged to the age of legitimate monarchy, treated his subjects as instruments of his ambition, despised his native land and culture and regarded Prussia *not as a national entity but as his family domain*” (emphasis mine).

³ “The [central] State thus exercised *no direct jurisdiction at all* over the mass of the rural population, who were governed by the junkers” (Anderson 1974:264; emphasis mine).

⁴ See Charrad and Adams (2011) for a recent discussion of the concept of patrimonialism and its application to early modern Europe among other places and times.

⁵ In such states, “power was at once political and economic” (Rowen 1980:8). Peter Sahlins (1989:28) similarly refers to the “jurisdictional sovereignty” of old-regime states: authority over sets of persons and areas of competency, independent of precise territorial boundaries, it is distinguishable not only from feudal relations of “suzerainty” (an *absence* of sovereignty), but also from the *territorial* sovereignty of the modern state (see also Girard d’Albissin 1969).

Table 4.1: Regime Types and Forms of Sovereignty: European Great Powers, 1648–1789

Polity	Regime Type	Form of Sovereignty
France	Absolutist	Patrimonial
England/Britain	Parliamentary-Monarchical	Impersonal
Austria	Absolutist	Patrimonial
Spain	Absolutist	Patrimonial
Ottoman Empire	Absolutist	Patrimonial
Netherlands	Parliamentary-Oligarchic	Mixed Patrimonial/Impersonal
Sweden	Mixed Constitutional/Absolutist	Patrimonial
Russia	Absolutist	Patrimonial
Prussia	Absolutist	Patrimonial

French Sovereignty

France was an especially orthodox case of patrimonial sovereignty, an especially early and complete developer of generalized personal power. France had already abolished any formal claim to sovereignty by its estates and *parlements* in the early seventeenth century (Lublinkskaya [1965] 1968; Parker 1971; Smith 1996). Over the next hundred years, the French state symbolically vested sovereignty in the person of the monarch to a greater extent than anywhere else in Europe (McClure 2006). Louis XIV (reigned 1643–1715) was “the very exemplar of early modern monarchy,” according to Herbert Rowen (1980:75). During the entire period spanning 1661 and 1715, he ruled without a first minister (Wolf 1968). Whether or not Louis ever claimed that he *was* the state (his apocryphal quip that “L’État, c’est moi”), he certainly took for granted that he *owned* or *possessed* the state (“L’État, c’est à moi,” as Rowen [1961] puts it). Proprietary conceptions of political power pertained even in French legal theory, which maintained that the state was the property of the crown, held in usufruct by the crown’s incumbent. In practice, this meant ownership by the incumbent or, more accurately, the dynastic house of which he (women being barred from the succession) was the representative (Rowen 1980:16–24, 99–100).⁶ To be sure, real limitations and encumbrances were placed on the king’s disposal of his political property. But these owed less to any “public” rule than to the “private” arrangements common to all aristocratic families (Hanley 1989). For instance, the practice of entail, a key institutional support of male primogeniture, prevented the alienation of the royal domain (the strict patrimony of the ruling dynasty) in exactly the same way that it preserved the demesne lands of the king’s most powerful subjects (Rowen 1980:16, 101).

French monarchs’ claims to “absolute” sovereignty persisted right down to the Revolution of 1789. Louis XV’s (reigned 1715–1774) decree of 1766 is often cited: “It is in my person that the sovereign power resides ... it is to myself alone that the legislative power belongs, without dependence and unshared ... The entire public order emanates from me, I am

⁶ Rowen (1980) calls these practices “proprietary dynasticism.”

its supreme guardian; my people are only one with me, and the rights and interests of the nation ... are necessarily united with my own and rest only in my hands” (quoted in Rowen 1980:126). Significantly, the royal claim to personal-familial possession of the state was most pronounced in external relations. Here, too, France was the trend-setting country: “Foreign policy constituted the reserved domain of the prince ... and Louis XIV, more than any other, conserved this prerogative” (Bély 1990:27).

Yet paradoxically, despite monarchs’ formal claim to exclusive sovereignty, France also developed an especially sturdy institutional framework for elites to share in the de facto ownership of jurisdictional power (Beik 1985, 2005; Bien 1987; Bonney 1995; Bossenga 1991; Dessert 1984; Doyle 1996; Kwass 2000; Parker 1996). France settled on a stable set of rules for venal office-holding and corporate privilege by the 1660s, albeit following considerable elite contention (Lachmann 2000:118–138; Rowen 1980:75–92). Beik (1985) and Parker (1996) both credit this settlement for the surprising *lack* of elite conflict that characterized the polity over the subsequent century, the ease with which old noble families and new bourgeois alike accepted their supposed subjection to the administrative state (see also Duindam 1994, 2003; Mettam 1988; Smith 1996). While the market of purchasable and/or inheritable offices included some 4,000 posts in 1515, it boasted 46,000 by 1665 (Bonney 1991:340–343). By the late eighteenth century, there were well over 50,000 venal offices (Bien 1987; Doyle 1984:832). Briefly abolished in 1709, tax farming was reestablished in 1726 and persisted until the Revolution (Brewer 1989:102; Durand 1976).

Of course, monarchs’ claims to exclusive sovereignty and elites’ claims to proprietary office always existed in tension. Motivated by fiscal necessity, the crown even began to eliminate noble tax privileges from 1695 onward, although such efforts remained largely incomplete when the Revolution cut them short (Sahlins 2004).⁷ In fact, the 1780s witnessed a seigneurial reaction whereby nobles gained *increasing* rights to monopolize office (Adams 2005:173–174; Bien 1974; Lucas 1973). What bears emphasis pre-1780, however, is the degree to which royal and aristocratic claims reinforced each other over time: because elites literally invested in royal administration for their own reproduction, they became symbolically invested in the reproduction of royal authority (Beik 1985:13; Carruthers 1996:110–111; Lachmann 2000:130–131; Parker 1996:181–182, 204, 269–270).⁸

French Sovereignty in Diplomatic Practice

How, then, did French diplomats and their principals express sovereignty in the course of everyday negotiation, as a category of practice? Unsurprisingly, French diplomats saw themselves as representatives of the king. The duc d’Aumont, French ambassador to Britain in 1713, justified himself to Louis XIV in terms of “Your Majesty’s service” (NA PRO

⁷ Sahlins (2004:55) refers to this paradoxical, indeed dialectical, dynamic—whereby the crown pressed toward the homogenization of jurisdictions, and thus the elimination of privileges, at least partly in order to better uphold privilege—as the “essential contradiction of French absolutism.”

⁸ One of Louis XIV’s advisors acknowledged this explicitly when considering the contrasting situation in England (discussed below) during the latter’s Glorious Revolution of 1688: “if England had as many officials supported by the king as France does, the revolution would never have occurred. *For it is certain that so many officials means so many committed people attached to the maintenance of royal authority*” (quoted in Tilly 1986:161; emphasis mine).

31/3/201:11). The marquis d'Ossun, ambassador to Spain, claimed in 1761 to be animated by “a respectful zeal” for the king’s “glory [*gloire*] and for the good of his service” (AAE CP Espagne 533:333). In his own instructions for Ossun, the duc de Choiseul, French foreign minister, tasked the former with upholding “the honor of the crown and the glory of the King” (AAE CP Espagne 533:36).

Interestingly, however, French diplomats also expressed loyalty to—and claimed to represent the interests of—a more abstract entity. This entity was “the state” (*l'État*). Writing from the Congress of Utrecht in 1712, the maréchal d'Huxelles begged pardon for presuming to advise the king on policy because “in such a matter, every man that loves the King and the State must do so as well” (AAE CP Hollande 233:71). The following week, Huxelles and his colleagues at Utrecht wrote to Louis XIV to discuss their negotiations with the British to defend “the good of the State” (AAE CP Hollande 233:226). A letter penned by an unknown French foreign ministry official, probably in 1709, even referred to “the interest of the State” (NA PRO 31/3/196:52). French diplomatic reasoning went so far as to personify states as actors in geopolitics. As early as 1699, the instructions for the comte de Guiscard, ambassador to Sweden, explained how he should proceed “if any prince *or State* wishes to enter into” the recently concluded Franco-Swedish alliance (Geffroy 1885:198; emphasis mine).

But what did French diplomats mean when they referenced the state? Significantly, theirs was not the impersonal authority that modern connotations suggest to us. As Huxelles’s frequent apologies for overstepping his bounds make clear, the king and the state were hardly so separate. Thus Huxelles justified himself to the marquis de Torcy, French foreign minister, on another occasion in 1712: “I realize that writing with so much frankness is not the way to please, but I love *the King and the State* and when it comes to the repose of *His Majesty and his Kingdom* [*son Royaume*] I gladly sacrifice all hope of fortune” (AAE CP Hollande 233:342; emphasis mine).⁹ The parallelism here suggests that *the state* and *Louis’s kingdom* were synonymous entities for Huxelles. His colleague, Nicolas Mesnager, was even more explicit. Sent to London in 1711 to negotiate the preliminaries for the Utrecht peace, Mesnager reported that Britain was unwilling to settle as long as James Edward Stuart, the disinherited claimant to the English throne, continued to reside in France, because “England could not enter into a peace treaty with a Prince who kept [James] in *his States* [*ses Estats*]” (NA PRO 31/3/197:86; emphasis mine). Note again the possessive form. Note also, as the pluralization of “states” indicates, that monarchs could (and did) possess multiple kingdoms under this logic, trading them like the aristocratic estates of which they were the symbolically privileged instance. Indeed, the French fully accepted that a single “crown” could possess multiple “states.” The instructions for the comte de Croissy, ambassador to Sweden in 1715, referred to “the interest that [Louis XIV] took in the conservation of the *States of the crown of Sweden* in Germany” (Geffroy 1885:258; emphasis mine). The same instructions characterized Frederick William I of Prussia as “a prince engaged by his interest not to let any army penetrate his own States” (Geffroy 1885:261–262). And those for the comte de la Marck, in 1717, observed that Peter I of Russia “appeared to be attached principally to the conservation of Petersburg and of the dependencies necessary to maintain communication between this place and his States” (Geffroy 1885:288).

The word *état* is, of course, deeply polysemous. I have translated it as “States” in these cases because it is capitalized, as the latter always is in French, although the use of the plural evokes a possible alternative translation as “Estates”—especially considering that eighteenth-

⁹ Torcy’s own letters employed roughly the same language (e.g., NA PRO 31/3/198:20, 25, 29, 30, PRO 31/3/199:74).

century French diplomats capitalized a range of nouns in a rather ad hoc manner. However, this secondary reading simply reinforces the proprietary character of sovereignty, suggesting that French diplomats and their principals conceptually reduced the state to the royal domain, the familial *estates* of the ruling dynasty. Indeed, the point is that “state” and “estate” had essentially the same referent in this context. For instance, when the instructions for la Marck mentioned, in another passage, the “Estates of the [Holy Roman] Empire” (Geffroy 1885:288), we could just as well render this phrase as “States of the Empire” with no change in meaning.

Monarchs did not merely possess their states metaphorically under this logic; French diplomats presumed that they literally owned them as property, employing a formal legal idiom to this effect. Thus during the Utrecht negotiations, Torcy sought to compensate the elector of Bavaria for his loss of rank in the Holy Roman Empire (he had sided with France against the emperor and was punished accordingly). Torcy proposed two options: “either the Elector of Bavaria should obtain, by the peace, the property [*propriété*] and the possession of the Low Countries ... besides the restitution of his electorate, or otherwise the kingdom of Sicily should be given to him as an equivalent” (Parke 1798b:468). Sicily was on the bargaining table at this moment because, while belonging to the former Spanish empire, the British insisted that Spain’s Philip V cede it in exchange for retaining the core of his monarchy in Iberia. The French plenipotentiaries’ defense of Philip’s rights similarly invoked the proprietary character of kingdoms. As they argued, “if the King of Spain made this sacrifice [ceding Sicily] it would be just for him to at least choose the owner [*propriétaire*]” (AAE CP Hollande 236:238–239). French diplomats extended this proprietary logic to France’s colonial empire. As late as 1761, the French ambassador Ossun could refer to Louisiana as “the legitimate property of France” (AAE CP 533:123–124).

Nor did the territorial contiguity of the relevant states matter in these calculations, by contrast with modern principles of sovereign territoriality (for which, see Branch 2014; Sahlins 1989, 1990; Spruyt 1994). After the British rejected his initial proposals for the elector of Bavaria, Torcy suggested granting him the kingdom of Sardinia instead, which would at least confer on him “a title of royalty ... as a sort of compensation.” As Torcy defended his proposal: “Despite the distance and the little connection between Sardinia and the electorate of Bavaria, there is no contradiction [*nulle incompatibilité*] in the same Prince possessing both” (Parke 1798b:501). Even in the case of modern sovereignty, of course, conceptions of political space as territorially contiguous and uniform are routinely violated in practice—through all forms of imperialism and empire (Go 2011, 2014). For Torcy, however, sovereignty expressed no such conception for practice to violate in the first place.

Just as it treated the state as the property of sovereigns, French diplomatic practice reflected the highly personal relation between sovereigns and their subjects, which Peter Sahlins (1989:28) describes as jurisdictional—as opposed to territorial—sovereignty. In marked contrast to contemporaneous British conceptions of citizenship as inherent in—and limited to—male heads of household possessing landed property (Corrigan and Sayer 1985:116, 183), French diplomats, as late as the 1760s, conceptualized citizenship (better: subjecthood) in terms of a personal bond between subjects and their monarch. This contrast could become the source of misunderstanding in Franco-British negotiations. During the failed peace talks of 1761, British diplomat Hans Stanley reported that the French foreign minister Choiseul had initially refused Britain’s demand that French inhabitants of Quebec be “permitted to sell their lands, only to the [British] King’s subjects” if they wished to emigrate following France’s forthcoming cession of

Canadian sovereignty to Britain. However, Stanley soon discovered why the dispute had actually arisen:

if understood to relate to *none except to those who have the happiness of being born under His Majesty's allegiance*, [such a demand] might render the permission useless, and nugatory from the want of purchases; but as it appeared, that those [French] inhabitants who chuse to remain in the Province may likewise be considered under the same title [subjects of His British Majesty], this condition was agreed to in the sense which I have explained (NA SP 78/252:147).

Albeit quickly resolved, this miscommunication discloses a fundamental contrast between French and British ontologies of the juridical subject. By demanding that Canadian émigrés alienate their land only to “the King’s subjects,” the British meant to comprehend all those who *resided* in British territory (as opposed to those who resided elsewhere). Since all residents of Quebec would thereby become British subjects upon the French cession, émigrés could sell their land to any Québécois who chose not to emigrate, a condition to which the French could hardly object. Note that the British presupposed an essentially territorial conception of sovereignty here. In Choiseul’s initial understanding, by contrast, only those “born under His Majesty’s allegiance” enjoyed the unrestricted status of British subjects, at least as far as rights to acquire property were concerned: this would explain “the want of purchases,” since virtually all residents of Quebec were born subjects of the French king. In short, Choiseul presumed that subjecthood inhered in persons and their legal privileges and disabilities—apparently independent of territorial residence—thus expressing the enduringly personalistic nature of French sovereignty.¹⁰

What is more, although the concrete interests of different European dynasties were in almost constant conflict, the very concept of sovereignty as dynastic prerogative lent the French a certain solidarity with foreign rulers. In principle, of course, inter-dynastic competition was a much more zero-sum affair than that entailed by modern conceptions of interest, as dynastic interest was ultimately rooted in land, a fixed quantity (Anderson 1974:31). And indeed, wars were endemic to early modern Europe. This, however, did not prevent European patrimonial elites from collectively coordinating to minimize the social (class and confessional) instability that their conflicts unintentionally promoted, at least after that instability had reached visibly threatening proportions in what historians call the “general crisis” of the seventeenth century (see Aston 1965; Parker and Smith 1978; Rabb 1975).¹¹ These efforts found expression in the

¹⁰ This understanding appears to be consistent with legal theories of citizenship in early modern France, which revolved around the *transfer*—rather than the possession—of property, as Sahlins (2004:19–64) shows.

¹¹ Lest we take the language of crisis for a retrospective imposition of historians, see Giovanni Arrighi’s (1994:43) insightful observation about James I of England (reigned 1603–1625): “As James I put it at an early stage of the general crisis, there existed ‘an implicit tie amongst kings which obligeth them, though there may be no other interest or particular engagement, to stick unto and right one another upon insurrection of subjects’” (quoted originally in Hill 1958:126). James inhabited a liminal time in which the patrimonial position of English monarchs conferred considerably greater privilege than that which their eighteenth-century successors enjoyed but which, nevertheless, had already ceased to command a doxic adherence. Perhaps this explains his clear-sightedness about the social foundations of dynastic right.

institution of congress diplomacy itself, first adopted on a European scale to conclude the Peace of Westphalia (1648) and thereafter employed at the end of all major wars (Langhorne 1982).¹² More surprisingly, perhaps, they partially succeeded (within objective limits): “by the standards of the wars of religion that dominated European society in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the patterns of conflict of the period that followed (whether a consequence of the Peace of Westphalia or not) were ‘limited’ both in the scope of objectives being pursued by rulers *and* in terms of the lethality and social disruptiveness of warfare” (Sharma 2014:3; emphasis his).¹³

In practice, then, and despite the ubiquity of inter-dynastic rivalry, inter-dynastic *solidarity* found considerable expression in French diplomatic writings, anchored in a still implicit commitment to uphold what later monarchists would identify as “tradition.” In 1756, for instance, France sought to intervene in a dispute between the Landgrave of Hesse-Kassel and his son, the former having disinherited the latter for his conversion from Protestantism to Catholicism. If French actions stemmed from a desire to protect coreligionists, their diplomatic instructions made no such mention; instead they explicitly cited the “society of princes,” stressing the common interest of the latter to maintain the principle of dynastic heredity. As the French foreign minister, Antoine-Louis Rouillé, explained to his ambassador at Vienna, Louis XV was motivated by:

the feeling of humanity, by that of paternal tenderness, by the interest that all Princes should take in such grave events in the society of Princes, and by the obligation of the Emperor in his capacity as Head of the Empire to look after the maintenance of the union between the members that compose it, and above all between the different members of the ancient houses, which are the foundation of the luster of the Germanic union (AAE CP Autriche 255:85–86).

Because Rouillé’s was an internal instruction to his own ambassador, written in confidence, his reasons presumably reflected Louis XV’s motives. Thus a commitment to dynastic heredity gave the French what they considered legitimate grounds to intervene in the affairs of the Holy Roman Empire.

French diplomats also saw it as their task to uphold legitimate hierarchies *among* sovereigns. Starkly opposed to present-day notions of (formal) sovereign equality, Roosen (1980:460) explains how such hierarchical conceptions of international order stemmed from the dynastic nature of sovereigns themselves:

the actor-units were not nation-states but (for the most part) monarchical states. Therefore, the relationship was not between impersonal units but a personal one between rulers ... One of the most important consequences of this assumption

¹² These efforts are also evident in the genre of schemes for “perpetual peace,” which, despite its later appropriation by Rousseau and Kant as a *critique* of dynastic interests, was originally developed, in the first decades of the eighteenth century, by officials of the French foreign ministry itself (Bély 1990:696–740).

¹³ Sharma (2014:3) adds that “describing eighteenth-century warfare as limited is not to downplay the reality and horror of its violence; it is instead to note that compared with the patterns of conflict and violence observed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as well as that observed in subsequent periods the eighteenth century seems a paragon of restrained conflict.”

was that just as societies within states were presumed to be hierarchically organized, so too ‘international society’ in the early modern period was held to be hierarchical.

Although the precise ranking of individual sovereigns was a constant source of tension, such conceptions invariably ranked the category of dynastic monarch above republics and elective monarchs (excepting the Holy Roman emperor). Thus during the Utrecht negotiations in 1712, the French foreign minister Torcy pressured the British to take the lead over their Dutch allies, urging them “not to suffer a grand Queen to imitate a Republic which should not provide an example to Crowned heads” (NA PRO 31/3/198:86). Once again, French diplomats deployed a notion of collective dynastic interest, in this case an interest in maintaining the privileged status of monarchs with respect to republics.

In light of diplomats’ own perceptions, then, it is altogether inaccurate and anachronistic to draw any hard and fast distinction between dynastic interests and the interests of the state in eighteenth-century French diplomacy—at least until the crisis of the old regime itself—as does the literature on so-called *raison-d’État* in early modern Europe.¹⁴ Rather, insofar as they pursued the interests of the state, guided by *raison-d’État*, French diplomats *were* pursuing dynastic interests, because the state was itself dynastic property. None of this is to deny that the agents of the French monarch presented his role in terms of a general interest or public good, which exceeded his personal following and included the welfare of his subjects. In fact, they defended his sovereignty precisely on the grounds that by standing over and above competing corporate interests, only monarchs could mediate and unify particular wills into a general will.¹⁵ But as Ellen Meiksins Wood (1983, 1991:43–49) has noted, such claims—presuming as they do the incapacity of civil society to realize a general will *on its own*—are themselves testimony to the absence of an impersonal public realm in eighteenth-century France.¹⁶

Geopolitical Consequences of French Sovereignty

Through their enactment of patrimonial sovereignty in foreign policy, then, French diplomats and their principals rendered themselves socially congruent with most of their continental counterparts. That is, French agents and their counterparts were invested in the same *stakes*; they shared the same *style* of interests. For instance, Torcy (1903:80), who saw the Low Countries as property (*propriété*), wrote in his private journal that the elector of Bavaria himself

¹⁴ The seminal text on the subject is Meinecke (1957). In the context of foreign policy, Gilbert (1951) suggests that it informed the emergence of a “new” diplomacy in the course of the eighteenth century, one that took the interests of the state rather than the dynasty as its ultimate reference point. More recent work in historical sociology (e.g., Bourdieu [1997] 2004; Tilly 1990) continues to reproduce this false dichotomy, although the full publication of Bourdieu’s (2014) lectures on the subject goes part way to correcting it.

¹⁵ For the foundations of this justification in the work of Bodin, see Parker (1981).

¹⁶ Rowen (1980:123–158) argues that the radicalism of French Enlightenment thinkers thus resided in subverting this formula, locating the capacity to mediate particular wills not with the king but with the “people,” the true “owner” of the state. In so doing, then, the *philosophes* continued to operate on the conceptual terrain set by patrimonial sovereignty, replacing the sovereign agent but accepting the proprietary character of sovereignty itself (see also Wood 1983).

“regarded as his property [*son bien*] the domain of the Low Countries.” Similarly, a French report, in 1715, concerning an ongoing dispute between the kings of Sweden and Prussia with respect to the region of Stettin, makes clear that both shared with the French an essentially proprietary understanding of their own sovereignties. The Swedish king, for his part, “demanded the restitution of Stettin as a property [*comme d’un bien*] that belonged to him.” Rather manipulatively, yet quite explicitly, the king of Prussia responded that Stettin was a sort of collateral, which he had taken “as a deposit” (*en dépôt*) and would retain in place of debts outstanding from Sweden (Geffroy 1885:260–261).

Congruence of style persisted even when interests conflicted in substance, as the competing claims to the inheritance of the Spanish crown at the start of the eighteenth century reveal. The French Bourbon claimant maintained that “the monarchy of Spain was the *property* of the Queen his mother, and consequently his own, and, for the sake of the tranquility of Europe, that of his second son, to whom he ceded it with all his heart.” A pamphleteer of the Austrian Habsburg claimant disputed this assertion, because Spain was an “*entailed estate* ... in such a way that the property ... remains wholly in perpetuity in the family” (quoted in Rowen 1980:113–114, 115; emphasis mine). Although they emphasized different kinds of property, the claimants fundamentally agreed on sovereignty’s proprietary character.

Owing to their shared stakes, the interests of French diplomacy tended to appear as legible and, in principle, legitimate to its rivals. Of course, this was especially pronounced in the realm of *intra*-dynastic relations, where interests were not merely legitimate but partially convergent. Such convergence facilitated France’s efforts to form and maintain alliances. Eighteenth-century France enjoyed close dynastic ties with both Spain (from 1700) and several Italian states (from the 1730s and 1740s). All of these states occupied branches of the Bourbon dynasty. Significantly, France represented the senior branch. Accordingly, the major Franco-Spanish alliances of the eighteenth century—signed in 1721, 1733, 1743, 1761—were literally “family compacts,” based on private family law, accompanied by marriage treaties, and designed to forward the collective dynastic interest of the House of Bourbon (Bély 1999:64; Dhondt 2015:236, 462). Louis XV’s personal correspondence with the king of Spain, his first cousin, during the negotiations of the Third Family Compact in 1761 bears witness to both the dynastic and the patrimonial-proprietary qualities of sovereignty underlying this arrangement. As the former wrote on the eve of its completion: “I regard this intimate and invariable union as the most solid foundation for the glory [*gloire*] of Our House and for the property [*propriété*] of Our Monarchies” (AAE CP Espagne 533:169). While many eighteenth-century treaties were broken on a whim, Spain was France’s most loyal ally in the century’s latter half (López-Cordón Cortezo 2003; Scott 2003). This strongly suggests that, rather than a rationalization of more “instrumental” interests, familial allegiances carried a moral force of their own.

Yet French interests tended to remain legitimate to their counterparts even when they conflicted with the latter. This facilitated cooperation in and through conflict, a sort of solidarity owing to investment in a common game (cf. Bourdieu 1990:66–67). It was thus a means to success in France’s treaty negotiations. At the Congress of Utrecht in 1712–1713, for instance, France avoided ceding territory to Savoy by drawing on shared patrimonial categories. French diplomats marshaled a distinction between conquered lands (unencumbered private property) and the royal domain (an entailed estate): whereas the former was freely alienable, the latter was not (NA PRO 31/3/200:115; NA SP 105/28:88; Parke 1798c:387–388). That other European diplomats shared this view is confirmed by the correspondence of a third party, the marquis de Monteleon, an *Italian* representing the *Spanish* crown. Monteleon wrote approvingly that Louis

XIV “would readily accord a [territorial] barrier to the Dutch on the side of Flanders, this being a conquered land [*pays conquis*] ... but it did not seem that His Most Christian Majesty could ever detach anything from any side of the proper Domain of the Kingdom of France” as compensation for Savoy (NA PRO 31/3/200:110). Although France and Spain were allied, the latter had no stake in this dispute. Rather, Monteleon’s approval stemmed from the legitimacy of the distinction between domanial and conquered lands. Tellingly, the *British* secretary of state, Viscount Bolingbroke, remained skeptical of this distinction. Yet both he and his diplomatic agents were forced to accept it as non-negotiable (NA SP 105/28:88; Parke 1798c:8–10, 437). As Bolingbroke put it: “I wish I could have prevailed on the head of the barrier [for Savoy] ... but it was impossible, at least it was so for me” (Parke 1798c:8).

France also benefited from the shared commitment to interstate hierarchy, which, as discussed above, tracked forms of sovereignty rather than material strengths. Because French sovereignty was so symbolically unified in the person of the king, France enjoyed a claim, over and above its material power, to be *more* sovereign than many of its rivals—whether monarchies that were less “absolute,” or republics whose sovereignty was “divided” (Croxtton 1999:586–588; McClure 2006:172; Rowen 1980:75). This too facilitated France’s negotiating influence. A particularly illuminating example occurred, again, during the Congress of Utrecht. One of the Dutch plenipotentiaries offended his French counterpart by declaring: “I serve a sovereign as much as you do” (NA SP 84/244:441). As the British plenipotentiaries explained, this comment was so offensive because it implied an “equality of Sovereignty” between the Netherlands and France (NA SP 84/244:437). What is significant is that both parties agreed that sovereign equality did not exist. The Dutch diplomat, Rechteren, appears to have made the claim as an intentional insult (AAE CP Hollande 237:73; NA PRO 31/3/199:84). Later he denied having said it (NA SP 84/244:437–438). Eventually, the Dutch recalled Rechteren and issued a public apology, declaring that “although they had the misfortune of being at war with the king of France, his majesty should do them justice to believe that they had never lost the respect, nor the high esteem that a republic owes to a great king” (AAE CP Hollande 237:159).

There is no doubt that France’s material advantages over Savoy, the Netherlands, and even Spain contributed to its influence and leadership in these cases. However, it is unlikely that French diplomats would have succeeded were their demands not legitimate, or at least legible. In sum, and given the substantial material resources at the French state’s disposal, the shared stakes of patrimonial sovereignty promoted France’s exercise of geopolitical governance—via its alliances and its negotiations—because they (a) directly aligned the interests of French monarchs with some of their European counterparts and (b) rendered French interests legible and legitimate to nearly all of their counterparts.

British Sovereignty

Eighteenth-century Britain represented a major exception to patrimonial sovereignty. In contrast to dynastic rule, the seventeenth century had seen the emergence of a parliamentary regime in England. After the “Glorious Revolution” of 1688, Parliament even controlled the royal succession (Brewer 1989:113; Carruthers 1996:39–43). To be sure, foreign policy—unlike taxation—remained the formal “prerogative” of the crown. Technically, British diplomats were the personal representatives of their monarch, much like their French counterparts. And the ruling House of Hanover certainly *tried* to pursue its dynastic interests through British diplomacy

during the eighteenth century. By contrast with almost everywhere else in Europe, however, *Parliament* increasingly dominated British foreign policy in practice (Pincus 2009:305–365). Once the revolutions of 1640–1649 and 1688 had ensured its fiscal supremacy, Parliament monopolized the power to raise troops and subsidize allies (Brenner 1993:714; Brewer 1989:35; Teschke 2003:252–253). Crown ministers who lacked parliamentary backing tended to lose their positions (McKay and Scott 1983:148, 181). According to Mark A. Thomson (1953:239–240), then, from the start of the eighteenth century, “English foreign policy became to some extent a policy declared in parliament ... the prerogative was in practice weakened.” In fact, through the 1701 Act of Settlement, Parliament acquired part of the prerogative itself (Teschke 2003:256–257). According to the bill, in the event that the crown was ever held by an individual who was not native born, “this Nation be not obliged to ingage in any Warr for the Defence of any Dominions or Territories which do not belong to the Crown of England *without the Consent of Parliament*” (Act 12 & 13 Will. III c. 2; emphasis mine). Because this exact condition obtained for much of the eighteenth century—George I (reigned 1714–1727) and George II (reigned 1727–1760) were both non-natives—it meant that Parliament enjoyed formal powers over the declaration of war.

More important, late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century British elites were simply ceasing to reproduce themselves through property-in-politics. Office venality was abolished in most administrative departments between the 1670s and the 1690s, as was tax farming (Brewer 1989:21–131; Ertman 1997:187–207; O’Brien 2002).¹⁷ Instead, Britain’s aristocracy came to live off the fruits of agrarian capitalism: private property in land and its attendant rents, secured from market-dependent tenants who increasingly employed market-dependent wage-laborers (Brenner 1985a:46–54, 1985b:284–319; Lachmann 2000:173–176, 180–185).¹⁸ As chapter 3 showed, Britain’s diplomatic service was itself overwhelmingly recruited from this capitalist aristocracy: between 1690 and 1789, 70 percent of diplomats belonged to the landed elite.¹⁹ But English capitalism also gave an independent social basis to merchant and financial elites, an increasing number of whom reproduced themselves through private trade outside the framework of state privilege (Adams 2005:177–178; Brenner 1993:3–198; Erikson 2014). Merchants and financiers could then organize to pressure the state as external lobbies in civil society (Black 1986a:134–

¹⁷ The heart of the fiscal administration, the English excise was, by the end of the seventeenth century, “[d]ependent upon a complex system of measurement and bookkeeping, organized as a rigorous hierarchy based on experience and ability, and subject to strict discipline from its central office,” leading John Brewer (1989:55–56) to claim that it “more closely approximated Max Weber’s idea of bureaucracy than any other government agency in eighteenth-century Europe.” Recall that the Prussian excise, by contrast, actually reverted to tax farming as late as the 1760s (Brewer 1989:102–103).

¹⁸ This is what most strikingly distinguishes Britain from eighteenth-century Prussia, despite the fact that some historical sociologists (Ertman 1997; Gorski 2003) classify both as “bureaucratic” states, largely on the grounds that they both lacked widespread office venality and courtly perquisites. To do so is to treat the difference between agrarian capitalism and serfdom as merely an *economic* one, or perhaps to reduce state power to its *centralized* expression. Both moves are essentially anachronistic: the very separation of the economic from the political, and of central administration from locally embedded authority are, in large part, phenomena internal to the social framework of the modern state and capitalism (and state socialism in the case of central administration), something that Gorski’s (2003) own analysis shows quite clearly in other respects. Yet serfdom was as much a form of state power—at *local* level—as a means of surplus extraction: indeed, it was the appropriation of surplus *through* the exercise of political rule. In this way it remained incompatible with the centralized, bureaucratic state.

¹⁹ See figure 3.1b.

158; Pincus 2009:366–399), something lacking on the continent, where such groups were incorporated into—but for that reason asymmetrically dependent upon—the patrimonial state itself.

In short, most British elites (including those who staffed the diplomatic service) were no longer invested in patrimonial sovereignty by the eighteenth century. And those elites who retained an interest—principally the crown and its privileged company merchants—were progressively constrained in their scope of action.²⁰ Absolutely singular in these respects, Britain had made a qualitative break to a form of generalized *impersonal* power in the wake of its seventeenth-century revolutions (Brenner 1993:714; Lacher 2006:70–73, 90–92; Pincus 2009; Teschke 2003:250–255; Wood 1991). With the possible, at best partial, exception of the Netherlands, considered below, this form of sovereignty was present nowhere else in Europe.

British Sovereignty in Diplomatic Practice

How, then, did British diplomatic agents, in the course of their own social practice, express the nature of their accrediting sovereign? Certainly, the British claimed to represent their monarch, routinely referencing their contribution to the king or queen’s “service” (e.g., Parke 1798c:497; Parke 1798d:275, 299; NA SP 78/252:64; NA SP 84/421:180). Like the French, British diplomats further justified their actions in terms of their service to an abstraction. Rather than making reference to the “state,” however, British diplomats claimed to serve the interests of their “country” (and somewhat less commonly, their “nation”). Consider, for instance, how Onslow Burrish defended his effort, described in chapter 3, to secure the importation of British tobacco to the electorate of Bavaria while serving as the crown’s representative to the elector in 1755. As Burrish argued, “what I have done, [is] founded on the same Zeal, with which I have and ever shall be actuated upon every Subject, where His Majesty’s Service, *and the Interest of My Country*, may be concerned” (NA SP 81/105; emphasis mine). As early as 1712, Matthew Prior wrote from Paris regarding his role in the negotiations of the Peace of Utrecht: “I hope to have done service to my Queen *and country*” (Parke 1798c:148; emphasis mine). Later, Prior claimed to act on behalf of “every thing that is to the advantage of her Majesty’s interest, and the good of our country” (Parke 1798d:4). As the earl of Strafford, British plenipotentiary at the Congress of Utrecht, congratulated a colleague upon the latter’s appointment as ambassador to Madrid, also in 1712: “it cant but be a great Sattisfaction to see ... your Lordship again imploy’d in the Service of your Country” (BL Additional MS 46547:2). During his failed peace negotiations with France in 1761, Hans Stanley claimed to pursue “the true interests of my country” (NA SP 78/251:177) and defend “the reputation of my country” (NA SP 78/251:184).²¹ And as the earl of Stair put it while ambassador to France in 1719: “I was serving ye king and my country and my friends” (BL Stowe MS 247:167). Despite their formal status as the personal

²⁰ Obviously, direct ownership of extra-economic coercion was a much more pervasive elite strategy in the colonial empire, including among non-company merchants.

²¹ Stanley’s letters also reference “the advantages my country could attain” (NA SP 78/251:185), “the councils of my country” (NA SP 78/252:192), even “that first duty which every subject owes to his own Country” (NA SP 78/252:126). He even sought to reason with the French foreign minister Choiseul by appealing to the latter’s allegiance to *his* “country,” that is, to France. Stanley explains: “I have urged him very strongly, tho’ with dignity from considerations both of *the publick interest of his Country*, and of humanity in general to alter several expressions” (NA SP 78/252:19; emphasis mine).

representatives of monarchs, then, British diplomats likewise stressed their de facto status as representatives of their “country.”

British diplomats also claimed to act on behalf of their “nation.” In 1713, Prior was distressed that the British embassy had failed to follow proper etiquette in a French courtly proceeding. Rather than express concern for the standing of the British monarch in the society of princes, however, he stressed the reputation of the English “nation” itself (Parke 1798c:358). Later, Prior discussed his desire to hold a party commemorating Queen Anne’s birthday “for the honour of the nation” (Parke 1798d:450). Thus Prior’s emphasis remained the nation, rather more than the crown, even when—or perhaps because—the relevant ceremony referenced the person of the queen herself.

The British secretaries of state, to whom diplomats directed their dispatches, likewise recognized the latter’s dual obligation to both monarch and country (or nation). As Viscount Bolingbroke, secretary of state from 1710 to 1714, wrote to Strafford at Utrecht regarding the forthcoming treaty of peace with France: “we shall very soon receive from your hands the most welcome present that you can make to your Queen and country” (Parke 1798c:494). As he wrote to the earl of Orrery, another British diplomat: “I know your Lordship’s part will not be wanting, where the service of the Queen, the interest of your country, and the honour of your friends, are so much concerned” (Parke 1798d:85). Similarly, William Pitt the elder, writing to Stanley at Paris in 1761, defined the stakes of the latter’s negotiation as “the Glory of His Majesty, and ... the National Honor, and Welfare of Great Britain” (NA SP 78/252:93).

But what did Britain’s diplomats mean by their country or nation? Unlike their French counterparts, they did not intend to reference the property of the crown. Rather, crown and country appeared here as ontologically distinct, mutually irreducible entities. As Bolingbroke described the impending accession of the German House of Hanover to the British crown in 1714: “our crown has been given, but our country must not be conquered” (Parke 1798d:493). Bolingbroke allowed that he would accept the Hanoverian succession, but only on the condition that “the plain interest of this House [of Hanover] is ... to ascend the throne with a *national* concurrence, and not be handed to it by any particular set of men” (Parke 1798d:530; emphasis mine). Bolingbroke was a Tory. His Whig opponents, who defended the Hanoverian succession, likewise justified their actions in terms of protecting the nation—specifically its subjects’ rights to the Protestant faith and their private property—against the Catholic, proto-absolutist Stuart monarchy-in-exile (Pincus 1999, 2009, 2012). In so doing, they placed (their understanding of) the national interest above a concern for dynastic right, since the Stuarts were actually the much more legitimate heirs. Thus it is all the more significant that the essentially pro-Stuart Bolingbroke, despite adhering to the dynastically orthodox position, never made recourse to dynastic right as a justification; instead, he argued for an *alternative*—in his view superior—conceptualization of the national interest itself. Already by 1714, then, political conflict between Whigs and Tories involved competing definitions of national interest, rather than a competition between national and dynastic interests as such. Bolingbroke even employed the phrase “national interest” in his letters (Parke 1798a:157).

In short, the extent to which crown and country aligned in the perceptual schemes of British diplomats was contingent on the behavior of the crown’s occupants; no necessary relation obtained. Take George III (reigned 1760–1820), whom historians characterize as the first Hanoverian monarch to identify as British (Colley 1984, 1992:204–217). Just a year into George III’s reign, Hans Stanley could already praise him for prioritizing British interests over his dynastic patrimony in Hanover. As Stanley wrote from Paris in 1761:

His Majesty's immutable concern for *the honour, and interests of our country* in situations so precarious for His Electoral dominions [Hanover], has, in my poor opinion, dashed, and confounded his enemies even more than the signal success with which the *Patriot virtue* of this magnanimous Prince has been crowned; the fortune of arms is inconstant, and variable, but no event can affect the more solid blessing which *our country* enjoys in the noble fortitude, and constancy of His Majesty (NA SP 78/251:230–231; emphasis mine).

Note the clear distinction between the dynastic patrimony of the Hanoverians and the “country” of Britain. The alignment of crown and country in the person of George III thus hinged, not on his capacity as king, but on his character as a “patriot.”

Unsurprisingly, the Hanoverian monarchs *themselves*, unlike their diplomats, continued to equate state sovereignty with patrimonial property. Thus during the negotiations to end the Seven Years' War (1756–1763), even that patriot George III—or at least those texts issued by his royal person—shared with the French a proprietary conceptualization of colonial sovereignty. As George's instructions for the duke of Bedford, who ultimately settled the peace with France, explained in the fall of 1762: “the great Object We propose ... besides the Acquisition of an extended Territory, is the establishing a certain, fixed Boundary between our Dominions in North America, and Those of the Most Christian King [Louis XV], which may ascertain, beyond all possibility of doubt, *the respective property of the Two Crowns* in that part of the World” (SP 78/253:6–7; emphasis mine). Tellingly, however, when the earl of Egremont, George's secretary of state who probably penned this instruction, wrote in his own name, he discussed the same boundary negotiations in an entirely different register, emphasizing not the limits of crown properties but the borders of national communities. Thus in July of the same year, Egremont had stressed to Bedford the need “to forestall all disputes respecting *the boundaries of the two nations* on the American Continent” (quoted in Anderson 2009:116; emphasis mine).

Despite lacking such a lofty term, then, British diplomats actually represented (in both senses of the word) a *more* abstract entity than that which the French “État” indexed. To be sure, they also invested this entity in a specific, socially exclusive institution: Parliament. British diplomats explicitly equated Parliament with the “country” or “nation” itself. As early as 1699, while stationed at Paris, Matthew Prior recalled in his diary the means by which William III had replaced James II ten years earlier (the “Glorious Revolution” of 1688): “K: J: [King James] cast himself into the hands of the Enemy of *his Country*” with the result that “*the whole body of the Nation* begged the P: [William] to accept the crown” (BL Additional MS 70367; emphasis mine). Actually, it was Parliament that crowned William III (and thus expressed “the whole body of the Nation” for Prior). For his part, Bolingbroke identified the House of Commons, in particular, with the national interest. As he explained to the envoy of Hanover in 1712: “The study of all that has been or could become prejudicial to the interest of the nation, is a privilege of the House of Commons, so well recognized that Sovereigns themselves do not dare impede such researches” (Parke 1798b:172–173).

Significantly, the French agreed that British diplomats, despite their formal accreditation by the crown, represented Parliament as well. The French agent at London in 1712, the abbé Gaultier, observed that “the House of Commons ... according to the constitution of this government, should be principally regarded in affairs of war or peace” (Parke 1798b:207). Indeed, the French too made a direct link between the House of Commons and the English

“nation.” In a letter to his plenipotentiaries at Utrecht, also in 1712, Louis XIV even asserted that “the House of Commons ... truly represents the body of the English nation” (quoted in Bély 1990:518). In his parallel correspondence with the Utrecht plenipotentiaries, French foreign minister Torcy could refer to “the House of Commons, *and consequently* the largest part of the Nation” (AAE CP Hollande 233:140; emphasis mine).

Although the House of Commons was a highly exclusive institution, mostly limited to large landowners, its link to an incipient notion of national interest ought to be seen as more than mere hypocrisy. As Derek Sayer (1992:1397) has pointed out, the House of Commons was rather unusual among the lower houses of early modern European states in that its mandate was not to speak for the third estate—*commoners*—but, rather, to represent *communes*, “the administrative cells of the kingdom.” In this sense, while selected by the (typically miniscule) enfranchised members of a given constituency (a county or borough), MPs formally represented the constituency as a whole (Corrigan and Sayer 1985:28–29). The point, of course, is not to suggest that the formal mandate had substance, but to note that the form was even possible.

In direct consequence, and although parliamentary membership and the franchise were both limited—*increasingly*—to the possessors of landed estates during the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, diplomats’ pursuit of the national interest might have conceivably involved the interests of any broader class of agents who could bring to bear the necessary resources to exert pressure on Parliament. In practice, however, there was only one such agent: Britain’s powerful commercial-colonial lobby (Black 1986a:134–158; Pincus 2009:366–399). Commercial interests translated into diplomatic practice. Late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century British diplomatic instructions included, as one of their recipient’s official duties, the support and protection of the British merchant community, insofar as one existed where the diplomat was stationed. These instructions typically concluded with some variant of the stock phrase: “You shall protect and countenance on all occasions Our subjects trading, etc.” (e.g., Chance 1922:2, 16, 50, 106, 172).

Diplomats’ own dispatches stressed their responsiveness to the commercial-colonial lobby as well. As the earl of Essex, envoy to Turin, put it in 1734: “I ever looked upon it as one of the most essential parts of my duty to protect as much as possible His Majesty’s trading subjects” (quoted in Black 2001:150). As discussed earlier, Onslow Burrish managed, entirely without instruction, to secure the importation of British tobacco to the electorate of Bavaria while he was stationed there in 1755—as an envoy, not a consul.

At times, diplomats even equated commercial interests with the interests of their “nation.” As the earl of Portland reported to William III, regarding his negotiations with France in 1698:

I replied ... that there were much stronger reasons which prevented your Majesty from doing what was wished, since, *over and above your Majesty’s interest*, you were obliged to take care to do what *the two nations* [England and Holland] would find to be evidently *in their interest and in the interest of their trade*, as otherwise it would be impossible in future to make them engage heartily in a war ... to guarantee and secure what might be agreed upon now (NA SP 8/18:210; emphasis mine).

In other words, William III’s own interest was not sufficient to determine his diplomacy because he was further obliged to the interests of the “nations” of which he was sovereign, and these

interests, in turn, revolved around “trade.” As Prior explained to Torcy while negotiating peace preliminaries with France in 1711: “We are a trading nation, and as such must secure our traffic” (HMC Portland 5:38).

The French too equated commerce with the English nation. Thus an internal report of the French foreign ministry, in 1749, distinguished between “the private view of the King [of England] and of his family,” which looked to “the North” (Germany and Scandinavia), and that of the English “Nation,” concerned principally with “the state of its commerce and of its navigation, in the Seas of America” (AAE MD Angleterre 40:142). Similarly, the instructions for the French diplomat Gaultier, sent to London in 1712, recommended that he make concessions on “trade and navigation” as the most effective way to “attract to the Queen of England the praise of the English Nation” (NA PRO 31/3/199:15). The agents of the Holy Roman emperor thought similarly. Writing from London in 1712, the imperial general and diplomat, Eugene of Savoy, noted that the British saw “commerce” as “the support [*soutien*] of the nation” (NA PRO 31/3/198:15). Most remarkably, the French plenipotentiaries at Utrecht even referred to “the spirit of England, *where the body of merchants and the laborer* are more consulted and better heard than in any other place in the world” (AAE CP Hollande 240:180; emphasis mine).

Of course, such a perception was patently false. If merchants had no formal political power in eighteenth-century Britain, the “laborer” had none whatsoever. Yet what matters for diplomacy is just that—perception, independent of its retrospective truth-value. And if we are to move beyond simply describing diplomatic perceptions to explaining them, we must ask under what conditions it was even possible for the French to hold such a view. Indeed, while they should not be taken at face value, French perceptions do reflect a structural fact about the eighteenth-century British polity that sharply distinguished it from the continent: the fact that British elites, unlike their continental counterparts, tended not reproduce themselves through personal ownership of jurisdictional authority or the means of coercion. What the observations of French diplomats registered, and what the categories of British diplomats themselves embodied, was the fact that eighteenth-century Britain had already effected a partial separation between “economic” appropriation and “political” domination whereby the state ceased to be the *property* of any individual or corporate group (even though royalty, nobility, and gentry monopolized its *management*). For it is only when the beneficiaries of appropriation do not wield politico-legal rights over the persons from whom they appropriate (e.g., “the laborer”) that the state can assume even the appearance of a public forum for the consultation of former and latter alike.²² Ironically, then, although they rarely employed the term “state,” British diplomats encoded in their writings and practices a concept of impersonal power—a public instance—that was absent from the writings of French diplomats despite the latter’s invocation of “l’État.” Therein lies the

²² This interpretation is heavily indebted to Bloch (1960), Brenner (1985a 1985b, 1993), Gerstenberger (2007), and Wood (1981, 1983, 1991). Of course, British elites *needed* the state to reproduce themselves—through its disciplining, enforcing, regulating, normalizing activities—but the point is that they did not *own* it as a form of private property. Some of them did own the sovereign East India Company, certainly a form of property-in-jurisdiction, but even here, private trade was surpassing company trade by the eighteenth century (Adams 2005:177–178; Erikson 2014). Nor is this to ignore the very real ways that extra-economic coercion promoted the ongoing development of British capitalism, most strikingly via slavery (Williams 1944). Nevertheless, slavery was not integral to the *immediate* reproduction strategies (and hence the perceptual schemes) of the capitalist aristocracy of England (and Scotland and Wales) in the way that it obviously was to, say, the planter aristocracy of colonial Virginia—however much the former too remained its beneficiaries.

distinguishing feature of eighteenth-century British sovereignty as it was embodied in diplomatic practice.

It is important to note that in recent decades, a large revisionist literature has challenged precisely the kind of narrative that I have been constructing. Such scholars actively minimize the sociopolitical differences between Britain and continental Europe in the eighteenth century; in so doing, they stress, among other things, the continuing primacy of the crown in British foreign policy, founded in the supposedly dynastic and patrimonial nature of the British state itself.²³ If we are to trust British diplomats' own claims, however (or better, the practical logics that those claims conveyed), then it would appear that the revisionists are mistaking the essentially *formal* continuities of institutions—indeed striking in the British case—for their social *content*, which changed radically.²⁴ Words may have endured from the early modern and even the medieval periods (“crown,” “Parliament,” even “country”²⁵). Yet already by the eighteenth century, the very things that those words indexed had been totally transformed.

Geopolitical Consequences of British Sovereignty

Just as French diplomats' deployment of patrimonial categories tended to converge with the classificatory schemes of their European interlocutors, British diplomats' enactment of non-patrimonial, parliamentary, and openly commercial interests placed them strikingly out of alignment in a continental context. Indeed, it meant that British diplomats and their principals were by and large unwilling or unable to recognize the very stakes of the continental diplomatic field. This divergence of Britain's diplomacy from European geopolitical stakes, just like France's convergence, is clearly expressed in the Spanish Succession dispute of the early eighteenth century. Although Britain defended the Habsburg claim, its justification had nothing in common with that of the Austrians. According to a pamphlet of the British ministry, kings “have no right to dispose” of their kingdoms, not because of their entailment (the Austrian position), but because “[e]veryone knows that kingship is an office, an administration, giving kings *no proprietary possession*” (quoted in Rowen 1980:117; emphasis mine). In fact, *no one* seemed to know this except for the British, all of the principal antagonists accepting that kingdoms were precisely proprietary possessions.

²³ See, most importantly, Clark (1985). The implications for diplomacy are discussed in Black (1988). Adams (2005) applies the insights of this literature to the historical sociology of early modern English state formation.

²⁴ After all, foreign policy is *still*, formally, the crown prerogative. Yet the prerogative's *exercise* now rests exclusively with the cabinet. Indeed, these were the exact grounds on which the government of Theresa May recently defended its sovereign authority to leave the European Union (to trigger Article 50 of the Treaty of Lisbon). Remarkably, then, “crown prerogative” can even be used to justify, of all things, a particularly intense form of *direct democracy*, i.e., the Brexit plebiscite. Equally telling, however, is that the British Supreme Court ultimately rejected this claim, locating the power to invoke Article 50 with Parliament, not the crown-cum-cabinet, thereby reaffirming 300-plus years of parliamentary supremacy in all things statutory.

²⁵ For the rapid evolution of the meaning of the term “country,” between the late fifteenth and early seventeenth centuries, from a specific locale (the country of West Riding, or Kent), to the countryside in abstraction (as opposed to the city), to the countryside *and* the nation, see Zagorin (1969).

If British diplomacy was misaligned with the stakes to which most European geopolitical actors oriented themselves, it followed that the latter were unable to recognize British interests in turn: Britain's social relations of sovereignty were never fully legitimate, and they were at times illegible, to these agents. British diplomats may have claimed loyalty to an impersonal power, an abstract public authority, but paradoxically, continental diplomats and their principals did *not* perceive British sovereignty to embody a general will in the way that their own patrimonial monarchs claimed to mediate and unify particular wills. On the contrary, they stressed the factional character of Parliament and the party conflict to which it gave rise, perceiving the parliamentary locus of British sovereignty as a source of instability and division, rather than unity.

In the eyes of continental elites, parliamentary politics rendered the British government an untrustworthy partner because its composition was liable to change after every election (NA PRO 31/3/197:68; AAE CP Hollande 234:70, CP Hollande 236:236; Black 1986a:125–128, 1988:575–576). At a deeper level, Parliament symbolized a threat to the very social order in which dynastic-patrimonial elites were invested (Adams 2005:186–187; Bély 1990:518). After all, recent events had seen Parliament execute an English king (in 1649), depose another (in 1688), temporarily abolish monarchy itself (1649–1660), and repeatedly modify the royal succession, that supposedly natural right of heirs (between 1688 and 1701).²⁶ Foreign diplomats' depictions of Britain frequently combined impressions of political mutability and social disorder. Thus in 1713, the duc d'Aumont, French ambassador at London, wrote that one should always expect "a revolution" in England, "a nation that counts variation and license among the rights of society" (NA PRO 31/3/201:21, 25). As a Swedish diplomat explained as late as 1770: "In a country such as [Britain], where the hasty and changeable feelings of the public and the common people can readily be inflamed, and where they infallibly force the administration to adopt the convictions of the public ... it is difficult to foresee the unexpected events and convulsions which could arise in the future" (quoted in Roberts 1970:8).

Because it lacked legibility and legitimacy among continental elites, Britain's parliamentary sovereignty hindered Anglo-European cooperation. In 1751, Austrian diplomat and statesman, the count of Kaunitz-Rietberg, despaired of cooperating with the British in Austria's effort to calm political unrest in the Netherlands. As he explained: "It would be easiest for the Court of London to remedy this evil; but I fear that the spirit of party and of private interests will prevent it from acting as effectively as would be desirable" (Schlitter 1899:105). Britain's prospects for forming alliances suffered in consequence. In the 1760s, for instance, Frederick II of Prussia justified his refusal to ally with Britain on the grounds of its supposed domestic instability (Roberts 1970:12).

Once again, the point is not that continental perceptions were correct. Equating parliamentary sovereignty with popular sovereignty was a stretch at best. And Britain's parliamentary regime was ultimately more stable (and congenial to monarchy) than absolute monarchies themselves, as later revolutions would prove.²⁷ But continental perceptions were eminently plausible, given the events of recent memory and the radically divergent relations of sovereignty present in Britain. British diplomats were well aware of the "perception problem" that they thereby faced. As the envoy John Robinson complained to his principals in 1739: "The

²⁶ Two important recent interpretations of these events, which stress their genuinely radical character while doing justice to their complexity, are Brenner (1993) and Pincus (2009).

²⁷ The irony is that Parliament was in fact critical to the *long-term* stability of aristocratic power in Britain, but eighteenth-century continental elites could not have been expected to anticipate this.

Warmth of your parliamentary debates do no good abroad ... Foreigners have not an adequate notion of our constitution” (quoted in Black 2001:75). Writing from Berlin as late as 1781, Hugh Elliott “regretted that a sense of dignity in the House [of Commons] does not put a stop to personal invective against foreign princes ... In England where that species of writing is as usual to us as our daily bread it is scarcely remarked, here the shoe pinches and a tight shoe upon a gouty foot is apt to raise ill humours” (quoted in Black 2001:5).

Beyond its own questionable legitimacy, Parliament suppressed the one aspect of British foreign policy that would have otherwise converged with the dynastic-patrimonial interests of some continental rulers: the familial allegiances of the British crown. Because of its German royal family, eighteenth-century Britain, like France, enjoyed substantial dynastic connections in Europe, which the crown sought to cultivate. (This tells against an intuitive counterargument that would explain Britain’s diplomatic isolation by its geographic isolation as an island country.) In the British case, however, Parliament actively impeded these efforts: despite the wishes of its kings and some ministers, Parliament consistently refused to pay peacetime subsidies to foreign governments, foregoing the standard currency of ally recruitment among continental rulers. As historians have shown, this refusal was a major reason why—despite its efforts—Britain was unable either to act as mediator in the Holy Roman Empire during the 1750s (Browning 1967, 1975; McKay and Scott 1983:184) or to forge any alliances whatsoever between the 1760s and the 1780s (Baugh 1998:24–25; McKay and Scott 1983:221; Roberts 1970:25–29). Whereas France depended on dynastic links with Spain and Italy, Parliament prevented Britain from enrolling its dynastic connections in Germany. As Frederick II aggrievedly put it (in French, naturally), combining Britain’s perceived fickleness with its financial stinginess: “It is not that England does not want any allies; but she only desires them to profit from their assistance, in case of need, without committing herself to any reciprocity or other advantage in their favor” (quoted in Roberts 1970:19). It is important to note that Parliament was not constrained by fiscal or financial incapacity in this regard: it *could have* afforded to pay any subsidy that it desired. Parliament’s refusal was motivated, rather, by the socio-culturally induced pressure toward efficiency that gave Britain its remarkable fiscal-financial capacity in the first place—but which ironically hindered its capacity for diplomatic influence.

Britain’s responsiveness to commercial and colonial interests was similarly jarring to a continental European milieu in which diplomats tended to be insulated from merchant communities, however active the latter. At times, continental elites were unable to decipher these interests. Thus during the 1720s, the French foreign ministry failed to comprehend why Britain was unwilling to relinquish Gibraltar to Spain, a move that would have done much to win the loyalty of the latter. From the perspective of the French, this move required a minor sacrifice (Gibraltar had no dynastic significance for Britain) for the sake of the essential (influence over a major European power) (NA SP 78/167:167–168). From the British perspective, however, Gibraltar was itself the essential, as it was critical to controlling Mediterranean trade (Black 1986a:14). Tellingly, the British agent with the strongest patrimonial investment—Britain’s king—actually agreed with the French. Thus George I promised Spain an eventual return of Gibraltar (McKay and Scott 1983:120; NA SP 78/167:116–117). But Parliament overruled him, citing commercial interests (Dhondt 2015:185). The result was to alienate Spain: thereafter, the

Spanish royals kept George's promise "locked away in a separate box, as a perpetual proof of British perfidy" (Dhondt 2015:238).²⁸

In short, the influence of the commercial-colonial lobby further damaged the legibility of British diplomatic interests. It thereby worsened distrust in British diplomacy. Unsurprisingly, then, continental diplomats associated Britain's responsiveness to commerce with its perceived fickleness as an ally. In 1756, the marquis d'Aubeterre, French ambassador to Vienna, speculated as to the reasons why the Austrian chancellor Kaunitz was reorienting the longstanding alliance policy of the Habsburgs away from the British: "He does not at all approve their conduct regarding their own interests. He finds much more . . . prudence in the measures of France; Perhaps he even thinks that England would be capable of sacrificing its allies to the least advantage that it could obtain for its commerce" (AAE CP Autriche 255:44–45). Indeed, Kaunitz, who always held the French court in high esteem, was expressing distrust of Britain as early as 1751, as we just saw (see also Schlitter 1899:121, 128). Austria's realignment with France against Britain would commence in May of 1756, three months after Aubeterre's observation, and it would last for 35 years under the consistent stewardship of Kaunitz, who lived until 1794.

That the misalignment between British and continental relations of sovereignty had negative consequences for Britain's geopolitical governance is supported, finally, by considering one European polity over which it did exert considerable influence and leadership: the Dutch Republic between the 1670s and the 1740s. As Steven Pincus (2009, 2012) has shown, Anglo-Dutch cooperation rested on deep cultural affinities. In particular, the dominant Whig party of Britain shared with the Dutch patriciate a vision of sociopolitical order involving constitutional limitations, partially free trade, a reformed church, and "national"—rather than dynastic—interests. In this regard, the Netherlands was the exception proving the rule: British governance was anomalously effective here because the Dutch were anomalously embedded in British-style relations of sovereignty.

Conversely, it is worth noting that Britain's influence over the Dutch Republic dramatically waned in the mid-eighteenth century just as Dutch elites were increasingly investing in patrimonial sovereignty (for which, see De Vries and Van der Woude 1997:561–596). Although the Netherlands' neutrality after the 1740s is retrospectively rational in light of its declining world-economic and military position (Carter 1975), this cannot explain why Britain failed to enroll Dutch support—and it tried—*despite* the latter's "interests" (for once understood in the externally imputed sense). For Britain had previously succeeded in doing just this: Dutch support of Britain in earlier decades had actually helped to shift world-economic primacy from the former to the latter (Bély 1990:46; Crouzet 1990:16; Modelski 1978:221).

In summary: precisely insofar as they enacted non-patrimonial relations of sovereignty anchored in the will of Parliament, itself responsive to the commercial-colonial lobby, British diplomatic interests lacked legibility and legitimacy. This hindered Britain's capacity to forge alliances or otherwise secure the loyalty of its continental counterparts—despite its preponderant military and economic power.

²⁸ As Dhondt (2015:193) explains, this confusion would never have arisen in the first place if the French foreign minister, Dubois, had not delivered it to the Spanish in his capacity as mediator, mistaking George's word for a legal engagement—as it would have been in France.

Conclusion

Just as they embodied distinct habitus, then, French and British diplomats pursued distinct styles of interest in eighteenth-century European geopolitics. These contrasting investments were rooted in the contrasting social relations of sovereignty found in France and Britain. The sovereign state that French diplomats expressed and enacted in their writings and practices was a form of patrimonial property and, as far as foreign policy was concerned, a privileged preserve of dynastic right. British diplomats, by contrast, expressed and enacted an emergent form of impersonal power, structurally distinct from civil society, albeit subject to monopoly management by a landed aristocracy in Parliament and organized lobbying by merchant capital.

Ultimately, the patrimonial sovereignty that French diplomats encoded in their practices was congruent with the social relations of sovereignty of most other European states. The generalized impersonal power encoded in British diplomacy was not. As a result, French diplomacy was legible and legitimate to the European geopolitical field, while British diplomacy appeared as questionably legitimate and often illegible. In this way, social relations of sovereignty became a mechanism that facilitated the geopolitical governance of France, and inhibited that of Britain, even though it was Britain that mobilized military and economic resources more effectively.

Chapter 5: Forging the Peace of Utrecht, 1709–1714

In chapters 3 and 4, I isolated two distinct but internally related mechanisms of geopolitical governance in eighteenth-century Europe, mechanisms which promoted the governance of France, given its military and economic capabilities, and which hindered that of Britain, despite its military and economic capabilities. To recapitulate, these mechanisms involved France's convergence with, and Britain's divergence from, the prevailing diplomatic habitus (*courtly*) and the prevailing relations of sovereignty (*patrimonial*) in eighteenth-century Europe. Having documented the above mechanisms through a synchronic, comparative analysis in the previous two chapters, I now endeavor to set them in motion, so to speak, employing them to account for a concrete, theoretically relevant *event* of eighteenth-century diplomatic history: a diachronic sequence of episodes, the geopolitical outcome of which these mechanisms help to explain. The happenings in question involved the lead-up to, negotiations of, and fallout from the Peace of Utrecht, which ended the War of the Spanish Succession, and which covers the period from 1709 to 1714.

The Peace of Utrecht bears particularly strongly on my overall argument, for two reasons.¹ On the one hand, it offers a “hard case” for my own theoretical perspective: given the determinants cited by existing theories, Britain's prospects for governing European geopolitics were *especially* good—and considerably better than those of France—at this moment, as the balance of military and economic power especially favored Britain over France during the War of the Spanish Succession itself. Yet as I will show, France managed to reassert its governance through the negotiation and, even more profoundly, the subsequent institutionalization of the peace settlement, while British governance was concomitantly suppressed. My analysis thus shows why, despite its characterization—by long-cycle theorists, for instance²—as a “global war” that should have secured Britain's “world leadership,” the War of the Spanish Succession did not in fact issue in British hegemony.

On the other hand, the Peace of Utrecht is itself a major “historical event” (Sewell [1996] 2005c), one with profound consequences for the subsequent trajectory of eighteenth-century European geopolitics (Bély 1990; Sarmant 2014).³ Utrecht contains within itself “suppressed historical alternatives” (Moore 1978:376–397): it represents a conjuncture in which Britain *could have* restructured the European interstate system in a hegemonic fashion yet ultimately did not.⁴ That is, the Utrecht conjuncture embodied the “objective possibility” (Weber 1949:164–188) that

¹ Furthermore, an up-to-date, English-language interpretation of these events, anchored in the relevant manuscript sources, is currently lacking. The following analysis aims to fill that historiographical gap as well.

² This claim is found in, among others, Modelski (1978:221); Modelski and Thompson (1988:16, 1996:54–56); Thompson (1988:46).

³ For Sewell ([1996] 2005c:227), “events” refer, broadly, to “sequences of occurrences that result in transformations of structures” (see also Sahlin 1985; Sewell [2000] 2005b).

⁴ Moore's (1978:376) use of this term is meant to convey the notion that “history may often contain suppressed possibilities and alternatives obscured or obliterated by the deceptive wisdom of hindsight.” As such, it guides a strategy of historical, causal analysis that aims “to show in some concrete historical situation just what was possible and why,” and then to explain why some of these possibilities were *not* realized, the assumption being that “any explanation of what actually took place connotes an explanation of why something else failed to occur” (Moore 1978:376–377; see, relatedly, Elster 1978:175–232; Hawthorn 1991; Weber 1949:164–188).

Britain would reconfigure the courtly-patrimonial institutions of European geopolitics to better align with its diplomatic habitus and relations of sovereignty—and vice versa. But in failing to do so, it instead helped to lock those institutions—and its divergence from them—into place. That another century would pass before Britain acquired hegemony in European geopolitics is thus a consequence, at least in part, of this historical turning point. In short, my explanation of the structure of eighteenth-century European geopolitics rests on the event of the Peace of Utrecht in a double sense: positively, as confirmatory evidence for the mechanisms identified above, and negatively, as a counterfactual (Elster 1978:175–232), because Utrecht comprises a sequence of happenings *absent which* those mechanisms would not have produced the durable effects that they did.⁵

The following sections turn on four major claims. First, I show that during the early stages of peace negotiations in 1709 and 1710, French diplomats took an extremely conciliatory approach but failed to secure recognition from their diplomatic audience—the Whig party of Britain—due to a disjuncture between the sociopolitical structures in which the French and the British Whigs were embedded. Conversely, however, British diplomats failed to take advantage of the extraordinarily generous terms that France was offering at this time, since the same disjuncture led them to formulate demands that the French were themselves unable to recognize. Second, I show that ironically, despite the failure of France’s most generous proposals, the French ultimately secured peace at the Congress of Utrecht in 1712 and 1713 on significantly improved terms, because the Tory party of Britain had replaced the Whig government in the meantime. As the Tories were relatively more invested in courtly culture and patrimonial sovereignty than were the Whigs, they conferred much greater recognition on France’s style of diplomacy. At the same time, however, the Tories made these sacrifices to France in the broader interest enrolling French support for a British-led geopolitical order that they sought to institutionalize in the Peace of Utrecht. Third, then, I show that Tory grand strategy had a real chance of success, that Britain might have become hegemonic in early eighteenth-century Europe had the Tories remained in power, because the long-term result would have brought the habitus of British diplomats and the relations of British sovereignty into closer alignment with the continental norm. Finally, however, I show that Tory efforts failed because—for historically contingent reasons—the Whigs regained power in 1714, commencing a period of one-party rule that would endure for the next fifty years of British history. As a result, Britain’s social

⁵ In elaborating these two dimensions of the Utrecht case, side by side, my aim is by no means to reproduce a rigid distinction between a “conjunctural” history (the realm of mechanisms) and an “eventful” one, histories that never quite intersect because they work on different temporal levels (Braudel [1966] 1972). Nor, however, is it ultimately to reduce mechanisms to events (as would seem to be the case with Sewell [1996] 2005a:83, 100–103)—or vice versa. I fully accept, in a realist yet simultaneously historicist fashion, that social mechanisms are actual, more or less durable structures *and* that they are intrinsically historical, necessarily amenable to change. Utrecht is thus a significant event because it represents a moment in which the courtly-dispositional and patrimonial-political mechanisms discussed in chapters 3 and 4 had not yet been embedded in geopolitics in an entirely durable way, but one whose outcome served to do just that. That such an outcome was, in this sense, “accidental”—that nothing in advance guaranteed that these mechanisms would coalesce—obviously does not mean that this moment was somehow external to structure as such. It simply means that the relevant determinations were contingent *with respect to* the courtly and patrimonial mechanisms in question: that Britain had the capacity at this moment to reconfigure those mechanisms and its relation to them, and that it ultimately failed to do so, can both be explained in retrospect, but they cannot be explained *in terms of those mechanisms themselves*. Such an explanation is the task of the present chapter.

divergence from the continent was locked into place, and rather than constituting hegemony, British governance over European geopolitics was largely suppressed.

The Failure of Whig-French Negotiations, 1709–1710

The War of the Spanish Succession was fought to decide who would inherit the crown of Spain after the last Spanish Habsburg monarch, Charles II, died heirless in 1700. Although historians have sometimes blamed the war on the personal hubris of the French Bourbon king, Louis XIV, it is best seen as a structural effect—which is not to say an inevitable one—of the increasingly patrimonial character of late seventeenth-century European geopolitics. When Charles II died without an immediate heir, several dynastic houses enjoyed, through intermarriage, a legitimate claim to the Spanish inheritance, by far the largest inheritance in Europe because it encompassed much of the Americas as well. Significantly, legitimate claimants included both the French Bourbons and the Austrian Habsburgs, who already disposed of the other largest European patrimonies.

The French and the Austrians had each made efforts, in previous years, to secure a partition of the Spanish inheritance in order to avert the prospect of a war on Charles II's death (Rowen 1980:110–111). But such efforts were directly at odds with the equally patrimonial logic guiding Charles and the Spanish court. The latter were concerned, above all else, to maintain the integrity of the Spanish patrimony inter-generationally—that is, to prevent either its partition *or* its incorporation into another major kingdom like France or Austria. According, Charles in his will left the entire Spanish inheritance to the second grandson of Louis XIV, the Bourbon Philip of Anjou, on the condition that the latter renounce any future claim to the French throne. If Philip refused to renounce or otherwise rejected the will, then the entire inheritance would go to an Austrian Habsburg, the second son of the Holy Roman emperor. His hand effectively forced, Louis XIV accepted the will on behalf of his grandson, even though he lamented that it would make war unavoidable.⁶ Which it did, for the Austrian Habsburgs could never accept being excluded from an inheritance to which they enjoyed just as good a claim as the Bourbons. What is more, England and the Dutch Republic—the so-called “maritime powers”—were unable to accept a situation that gave their commercial rival, France, such direct control over Mediterranean and Atlantic trade and such unmediated access to the New World itself (Simms 2007:47–49).⁷ The result was a war that aligned, as principal parties, the Holy Roman emperor, England, the Netherlands, and a Habsburg “king of Spain” against France and a Bourbon “king of Spain.” Thus the War of the Spanish Succession commenced with France in a relatively isolated position, one that obviously did not bode well for its future European governance.

Although France made territorial gains in Germany during the early stages of the war, the Bourbons' war effort had totally collapsed by 1708 or 1709, their forces on the verge of defeat

⁶ Louis XIV wrote to his ambassador in Spain, of the approaching conflict: “We know when we begin it, but we do not know how it will end. What is more certain than anything else is the misfortunes it will bring in its train and the sufferings of the people” (quoted in Rowen 1980:112). Clearly, eighteenth-century wars were no mere “sport of kings,” waged for their own sake, even if the valorization of martial culture by dynastic rulers—not least Louis XIV—gives that impression.

⁷ The English were also concerned to maintain their royal line in Protestant hands. This they saw as threatened by any expansion of the House of Bourbon, primarily because Louis XIV was harboring the Catholic claimant to the English throne, James Edward Stuart.

and the French state itself on the verge of economic ruin. This was the direct consequence of Britain's superior military and economic power, anchored in its financial capacity (Britain overwhelmingly funded the anti-Bourbon forces) and its command of the seas.⁸ In fact, British-led forces outmaneuvered France on land as well: the war's turning point came in 1704, when an army under the command of the English general, the duke of Marlborough, "smashed a French army" at the Battle of Blenheim (Simms 2007:50). Thus the material balance of forces between France and its opponents during the war itself rendered the future prospects of French geopolitical governance even less auspicious.

Beginning, then, in 1709 and continuing through the early summer of 1710, the French entered into preliminary peace negotiations with their opponents. Louis XIV extended extraordinarily generous terms. Not only was he willing to abandon the French claimant to the Spanish throne, his own grandson Philip of Anjou, offering the vast majority of the Spanish inheritance to the Habsburgs on the condition that Philip receive some territorial compensation in Italy. Louis also offered to cede territory within France's boundaries, and—most dramatically—he even agreed to fund his enemies' continued war on Philip if the latter rejected the terms of peace (Bély 1990:38; Thomson 1968:202–208; Torcy 1903:205; Wolf 1968:570–571). That Louis acted in earnest is attested by his foreign minister and chief advisor, the marquis de Torcy (1903:85), who concluded in his private journal that France was reduced to "the pure necessity to wish for peace, at whatever price it was made." Indeed, by the summer of 1709, Louis himself was writing to the Spanish court to inform it that "I will never be able to conclude [the peace] as long as the king my grandson remains master of Spain," and that "it is impossible for the war to end while he remains on the Spanish throne" (quoted in Baudrillart 1889:358, 360).⁹

France's opponents, however, pressed further. They demanded that Louis XIV commit his own troops to fight Spain if Philip refused to come to terms; ultimately, they demanded that France fight Philip *alone* (Torcy 1903:213–214, 222; Wolf 1968:573). This Louis categorically rejected, owing to what, by all accounts, was a genuine concern that making war on his grandson would violate his fundamental obligations as a dynastic head, undermining his familial-based honor (Baudrillart 1889:355–356; Torcy 1903:157). As the French negotiators argued the point, at least according to their own report, Louis XIV concurred with his enemies that Philip's departure from Spain was "absolutely necessary," and he "even wished to contribute to it, as far as justice, conscience, honor and nature" would allow. But "to arm the father against the son"—that was a request which they could not allow (AAE CP Hollande 223:54, 58). Or as Louis expressed it, approving his diplomats' stance, such a request was "contrary to all the sentiments of honor and humanity" (AAE CP Hollande 223:70).¹⁰ As the British negotiators themselves reported (although we will see in a moment that they did not take it at face value): "in order to save ye *honour of their master* ... [the French] proposed that a Subsidy should be payd monthly on ye part of France *as an equivalent* for their proportion to carry on ye War against Spain" (NA SP 84/235:164–165; emphasis mine). This conception of honor stemmed, of course, from the *patrimonial interests* that guided Louis's policy—in other words, and at root, from the patrimonial relations of sovereignty in which the French state was embedded.

⁸ See figure 2.1

⁹ For further evidence that Louis's expressed intentions were his real intentions at this juncture, see Torcy (1903:59).

¹⁰ As the marquis de Torcy elaborated in his parallel correspondence with the French negotiators, the proposition that Louis XIV should wage war on his grandson instilled in the former an "irremovable repugnance" (AAE CP Hollande 223:75).

Most likely, Louis's enemies never truly thought that he would have to wage war on Philip, because they overestimated his personal influence on the latter (Frey and Frey 1995:182–183; Thomson 1968:208).¹¹ Yet they also revealed a striking disregard for the patrimonial rules and interests that constrained him. The British representatives, at least, believed that material conditions alone were sufficient to secure from France whatever demands they made, even those that directly contradicted Louis's familial obligations.¹² In July 1709, the British diplomat Horatio Walpole could surmise that as the “misery of France dayly encreases for want of corn, mony & credit, surely ye hand of God & Man will at last oblige the Grand Monarch [Louis XIV] to lett Europe be in peace” (NA SP 84/233:126). In September, he responded to the news of a military victory by concluding that “we will make ye old Tyrant sign what we please” (NA SP 84/233:208–209). Walpole's colleague John Laws was just as confident: “However Advantagious and Glorious these Conditions appear in relation to the Allies,” he had written in May 1709, “‘tis certainly believ'd, the Present Miseries of France ... will oblige that Court to a ready Compliance with those Demands” (NA SP 84:233:64).¹³ As Louis XIV himself explained in a letter to his ambassador in Spain, although his offers “infinitely surpassed the hopes that my enemies should have reasonably had in starting the war,” they remained unsatisfied due to “the confidence that they had in their [military] forces” (quoted in Baudrillart 1889:354–355).

The British were not mistaken about material conditions in France. In April 1710, Torcy (1903:169) was observing in his journal that “with such means for commencing the campaign, it did not seem to me that France was in a state to change the harsh law that its enemies wished to impose on it.”¹⁴ Already in June 1709, Louis XIV had admitted to his ambassador in Spain that “the war becomes absolutely impossible for me to sustain. It is now beyond my will” (quoted in

¹¹ As the British representatives reported as late as July 1710, which was the very month that negotiations broke off, the Dutch were declaring “that it could not be imagined but ye French king at such a conjuncture is able to persuade ... his Grandson to quitt that kingdom, and ye West Indies,” and that the latter's refusal to do so would be “contrary to all expectations” (NA SP 84/235:202–203). This was in response to the French insisting that Louis was “sensible that he shall nott be able to persuade his Grandson to quitt that kingdom voluntarily” (NA SP 84/235:200). Unsurprisingly, then, “the French Ministers seem'd very angry & much perplexed wth what ye [Dutch] Deputys had sayd” in reply (NA SP 84/235:203).

¹² The 1709 and 1710 negotiations were conducted in the United Provinces under the aegis of the Grand Pensionary of Holland, Anthonie Heinsius. However, the French believed that the British were in fact calling the shots (AAE CP Hollande 223:89; Torcy 1903:28–29), and this assessment is largely borne out by historical research (Frey and Frey 1995:182). Hence my primary focus on the perceptions of the British negotiators in explaining why the allied coalition rejected France's offers.

¹³ Similarly, the duke of Marlborough, British general-diplomat, observed in April 1709: “considering the misery and the low ebb which the French were reduced to, which was confirm'd from all parts, so as to render it almost impossible for them to continue the Warr, we [?] might justly hope they would be oblig'd to comply with whatever might conduce towards a Solid and Lasting Peace” (NA SP 84/233:18). As Laws noted on another occasion, France's “affairs are in a miserable condition ... These wants join'd to the apprehensions the French are in of a general Famine throughout the Kingdom, have brought them to so just a Sense of their Misery, that 'tis probable they will at last submitt to the Conditions of an honourable and durable peace” (NA SP 84/233:53).

¹⁴ Just how far France had fallen by this point is evident from the fact that Louis's closest advisor Torcy, his wife Madame de Maintenon, and his leading general the maréchal de Villars all believed that he should fight Philip if needed, something that Louis nonetheless rejected for the reasons described above (Torcy 1903:153–157, 177; Wolf 1968:563).

Baudrillart 1889:358). What the British *were* mistaken about, however, were the patrimonial constraints to which Louis XIV felt himself subject.

This misinterpretation of Louis's motives was not so much a tactical error as a consequence of the contrasting social relations of sovereignty in which Louis and his opponents were each embedded. For the French were negotiating with the two European geopolitical actors who were *least* invested in patrimonial sovereignty: the Dutch and (especially) the British Whigs. The patricians who dominated the early modern Dutch Republic were probably unique among western European elites in the extent of their urban orientation, merchant origins, and social distance from the courtly-dynastic monarchies of neighboring states (Gorski 2003:39–77; Spierenburg 2013:45–55). Dutch patricians, in turn, were closely aligned with the Whig political party that controlled British foreign policy during these negotiations. (All of the British diplomats quoted above were loyal Whigs as well.) According to their Tory opponents, the Whigs represented England's "moneyed" interest of financiers and merchants, destructive for the "landed" interest of country gentlemen that the Tories themselves claimed to represent (Kramnick 1968:56–63; Parke 1798b:210–211; Pincus 2012:24–25; Pocock 1975:441–442). Political propaganda to be sure, this classification had an objective basis: Whigs were overwhelmingly responsible for England's financial revolution of the 1690s, creating the Bank of England and the New East India Company (Carruthers 1996; Kramnick 1968:41). As I noted in the previous chapter, Whig-Dutch cooperation rested on deep political-cultural similarities (see also Pincus 2009, 2012). The Whigs' affinities for the Dutch are borne out by the diplomatic correspondence during the 1709 and 1710 negotiations. The principal British negotiator, the Whig Charles Townshend, wrote approvingly in August 1709, for instance, of what he perceived as Dutch efforts "to establish a confidence, & lasting freindship between England & Holland whose interests ... are inseperable" (NA SP 84/233:175–176).¹⁵

The upshot of these contrasting social orientations is that a Whig-Dutch coalition was uniquely ill-adjusted to the style of interest that guided and constrained Louis XIV; it was uniquely unprepared to appreciate what was at stake for him. Faced with Louis's rejection of their demands, British and Dutch diplomats failed to grasp his real motives, leaving themselves no option but to assume that he had acted in bad faith from the start. As Torcy (1903:166) had already realized in April 1710, although the French plenipotentiaries "spoke the truth," their claims were "regarded as a mark of bad faith," the Dutch and British leaderships persuading themselves that "the intention of the King was only to gain time and not to negotiate."¹⁶ By July, Townshend was arguing in a letter to the British secretary of state: "it is very evident that ye French resolved nott only to break off ye conferences, but to create divisions among ye allys, and to exasperate if possible ye subjects of [the Dutch Republic] against ye present administration,"

¹⁵ The Tories, by contrast, saw the Dutch as manipulating Townshend for their own commercial gain: they would later accuse him of *sacrificing* British interests, effectively serving as a Dutch agent. As Britain's later secretary of state, the Tory Henry St. John, was to suggest to one of his diplomats in 1711, Townshend and his colleague Marlborough "have acted like deputies of the States [General of the United Provinces], and Britain has submitted like a province" (Parke 1798a:156; see, similarly, Parke 1798a:88). St. John also condemned the Whigs for being "a faction at home, which has supported itself here, among other artifices, by that of being popular there," that is, in the Netherlands (Parke 1798a:126). Britain's political parties thus agreed that Whig and Dutch interests were tightly coupled, although they obviously drew opposite conclusions about the desirability of that pairing.

¹⁶ Torcy (1903:128) had similarly observed in January 1710 that the Dutch and British were "always ready to suspect the good faith of France."

which justified Townshend's conclusion that it was "impossible for us on our part to continue ye conferences any longer" (NA SP 84/235:214).¹⁷ According to Townshend and his colleague, the duke of Marlborough, their Dutch counterparts shared this view as well (NA SP 84/235:54–55). Peace negotiations thus broke off in July 1710.

In this instance, then, the British failed to convert their material advantages into governance over European geopolitics, failing, that is, to secure a general peace treaty that would have unequivocally cemented their material supremacy in international law—even though the balance of material power, taken alone, suggests that they *could have* done just this. That they failed to do so was the result of an inability (or unwillingness) to recognize the interests that flowed from—and thus to articulate their own interests to—the logic of patrimonial sovereignty.

The Success of Tory-French Negotiations, 1711–1713

Indeed, the Whigs and the Dutch squandered their last opportunity to dictate the terms of peace when they refused Louis XIV's offers. As it was ultimately settled at the Congress of Utrecht in 1712 and 1713, the peace would hand wildly better terms to France than what even Louis XIV was prepared to accept as late as 1710. The Bourbon Philip V was allowed to keep the Spanish crown, preserving to himself the vast majority of the Spanish inheritance (both Spain and Spanish America). Far from making territorial concessions, France consolidated its frontiers with Germany and Savoy (Osiander 1994:143–144, 146–147). In essence, the Bourbons achieved everything that their enemies had waged the war to prevent. As one standard assessment concludes: "compared with the concessions which Louis XIV had been willing to make in the disastrous years around 1709, the actual terms of the Utrecht treaties seem unbelievably good" (Roosen 1976b:84).

That France's fate improved so dramatically had little to do with an improvement in its military capabilities; rather, it owed to diplomatic causes, as France managed to forge what amounted to a separate peace with Britain that completely undermined the anti-French coalition. In so doing, France benefited from a combination of dynastic accident and the *mechanisms of recognition* identified in chapters 3 and 4. In 1711, the Austrian Habsburg claimant to Spain, styled Charles III, became the new Holy Roman Emperor upon the death of his elder brother.¹⁸ Because the prospect of a Holy Roman Emperor ruling Spain was as worrisome to most European elites as that of a Bourbon, France's overall bargaining position undoubtedly improved, as historians have long maintained (Bély 1990:41; Wolf 1968:579). That France translated this improved position into actual influence at the negotiating table, however, owed to a shift in its diplomatic audience—from the Whigs to the Tory party, which had defeated its rival in Britain's parliamentary elections of autumn 1710, forming a new Tory-dominated government

¹⁷ It seems that the British had never accepted Louis's professed motives at any point in the negotiation. In November 1709, for instance, Townshend had already concluded: "I think it appears now very plainly that the French had never any design to restore the Spanish Monarchy, nor to act sincerely throughout the whole course of this Negotiation" (NA SP 84/233:355). Indeed, the British repeatedly referred to the "insincerity" of the French, making additional observations to this effect in August, October, and December 1709, in February, March, April, May, and June 1710, and again in July just as they submitted their ultimatum to France—that is, before they had even heard the French response (NA SP 84/233:194, 289, 361–362, 467; NA SP 84/235:17–18, 21–22, 26–27, 60, 87–88, 98, 156, 158, 181).

¹⁸ As emperor, he would be styled Charles VI.

in their wake. As we will see, the Tory government, which would endure until 1714, constituted a brief, internal exception with respect to the British case itself, because the Tories, unlike their Whig predecessors (and successors), were socially predisposed to recognize the legibility and legitimacy of French diplomacy.

The French immediately perceived the diplomatic advantages that a Tory victory afforded them, correctly ascertaining that the Tories would be more approachable than their Whig counterparts. Interestingly, the French at first attributed Tory sympathies to what we might call, following Bourdieu (1988:175), a “homology of position” between the Tories and the French themselves: a shared opposition to the Whigs anchored in distinct but contingently analogous fields, the Tories occupying the anti-Whig pole of British parliamentary politics and the French the anti-Whig pole of European *geopolitics*. As a memorandum of the French foreign ministry explained in October 1710, before the outcome of Britain’s party-political struggle was even certain: “The present divisions in England can contribute more ... than any other event” to the peace (NA PRO 31/3/196:118). This was because:

the party of the Anglican Church [the Tories] will be more inclined to peace than was the previous government, composed of Presbyterians [Whigs], or were the Anglicans themselves when they occupied the principal charges at the start of this war. *The desire to condemn the conduct of those who came before, is often a sufficient reason to oblige one to hold an opposite conduct ...* One may go wrong in the measures that one takes with one party or the other ... But one will not go wrong, if one regards the division of these two parties, as the surest means to achieve a peace (NA PRO 31/3/196:120–121; emphasis mine).

In other words, the French attributed the Tories’ proclivity for peace to the internal oppositions of English politics, rather than external motives. Indeed, despite nominally depicting England’s political division in terms of substantive differences in religious practice (Anglicans versus Presbyterians), the document also argued that religious conflict was mostly a post hoc justification for party conflict itself: “Religion serves but a pretext and as a signal to each party to pursue its particular plans and assemble its forces” (NA PRO 31/3/196:120).

The French were not wrong about the Tories’ desire for peace. Upon forming their government in the fall of 1710, the latter immediately sought peace with France on significantly milder terms than those which Louis XIV himself had offered a few months prior. Although they initially tried to conceal this from Parliament, the diplomatic correspondence of the Tory ministers made their intentions crystal clear. As the Tory secretary of state, Henry St. John, wrote in March 1711 of the previous Whig administration’s approach to the negotiations: “I think I could show the most egregious marks of folly or knavery that ever appeared in our manner of declining peace, and dragging on the war.” By October 1711, he had gone further, condemning the Whig-Dutch proposals of 1709 as “the plan of those who only intended to strain for pretences of carrying on the war” (Parke 1798a:105, 416). St. John’s opinion of his Whig compatriots was, by this time, identical to the Whigs’ view of the *French*—that they had negotiated in bad faith with no intention of making peace.¹⁹

¹⁹ In a similar vein, St. John wrote in defense of his efforts “to pursue another method than that which has been hitherto tried, and found to be only a means of eluding a peace, and was certainly an invention of those who ... made a grimace of carrying on a treaty *without any intention of concluding*” (Parke 1798a:446; emphasis mine). Indeed, before he even took office in autumn 1710, St. John had made his

To reduce the Tories' pro-French policy to a mere anti-Whig reflex, however, does not do sufficient justice to the ideological coherence of their commitments. Whatever their immediate strategic motives,²⁰ the Tories' recognition of French diplomacy was consistent with their longstanding investment in *patrimonial* conceptions of sovereignty, conceptions that were absent among their Whig counterparts, as we have seen. Indeed, the Tory affinity for France dates to the very founding of the party in the late 1670s, when it emerged as a response to the newly-formed Whigs' effort to exclude the king of England's brother (the future James II) from the royal succession on the grounds of his Catholicism. In defense of James, the Tories enrolled conceptions of divine-right monarchy that derived primarily from France (Pincus 2009:118–178). Arguably the founding moment of modern party conflict as such, the Tories formed at this juncture, not because they were Catholics themselves, but because, as court dependents, the Tories reproduced themselves through patrimonial means, ultimately the crown's prerogative rights as supreme manorial lord. They were thus concerned to maintain royal authority via the integrity of the legitimate dynastic succession (Carruthers 1996:40–43).²¹ As the historian Steven Pincus has recently shown, Tory pamphlets, newsletters, and treatises continued to uphold this patrimonial interpretation of crown prerogative into the first decades of the eighteenth century, well after the Glorious Revolution of 1688 made it the heterodox view in England by deposing James II and placing the succession under the authority of Parliament. Indeed, Pincus (2012:23–28) suggests that the contrasting stances of England's political parties were grounded in distinct

intentions known, writing: "I can see no immediate benefit likely to accrue to this nation by the war, let it end how and when it will" (Parke 1798a:26–27). For the almost constant recurrence of these sentiments in St. John's letters of 1710 and 1711, see, for instance, Parke (1798a:68, 121, 134, 145, 155–156, 159, 170–171, 395, 457–458; 1798b:8–9, 85–86). St. John, who in 1712 would become Viscount Bolingbroke, was a principal architect of the Peace of Utrecht. The following analysis relies heavily on his official and private letters during his tenure as one of Britain's two secretaries of state (1710–1714), which have been collectively published in a four-volume series (Parke 1798a, 1798b, 1798c, 1798d).

²⁰ Some scholars (e.g., Ahn 2010:168–169; Sheehan 1988:36) discern in the Tories' approach—particularly in their willingness to abandon their Austrian, German, and Dutch allies—an early manifestation of eighteenth-century Britain's "blue-water policy," which supposedly eschewed the entanglements of alliances in favor of a single-minded reliance on naval power (the so-called "wooden walls of England"), and which thereby avoided continental theaters in favor of colonial ones. It is true that the Tories' most astute geopolitical thinker, Henry St. John, articulated at this very time the lineaments of a blue-water strategy as a justification for Britain's exit from the War of the Spanish Succession. Thus he wrote to a correspondent in August 1711 that "we have been these many years on the land-war so very intent, that the naval interest has been almost entirely disregarded ... I am hopeful that we shall at last see our error, and that the sea will, for the future, have a greater share of our attention applied to it" (Parke 1798a:293). On another occasion, he argued that land war "is not our natural effort" (Parke 1798a:88). And indeed, his later political writings would help to develop the theoretical basis of this strategy in full (Baugh 1988:52–53). However, to leave matters there is to ignore the Tories' genuine sympathy and admiration for French customs and institutions, indeed, their efforts to adopt major aspects of the latter (discussed below). In this regard, one could argue that it was the Whigs' earlier alignment with Austria, not the Tories' alignment with France, that constituted the true marriage of convenience during the War of the Spanish Succession.

²¹ The founding Tories were, for the most part, Anglicans. By the time of the Peace of Utrecht, Tories typically represented an orthodox Anglican position in the sense that they vehemently supported the hierarchical structure of the established Church of England against any further reform in a Presbyterian direction, the latter a cause to which leading Whigs were typically more sympathetic, although open religious dissent was rare among them as well.

beliefs about the very bases of social order: Whig pamphleteers and politicians systematically maintained that wealth inhered in labor and was therefore infinite in principle, while the Tories held that wealth inhered in land and was therefore fixed.²² If this made Whig political economy remarkably anomalous in the broader context of early modern absolutism (McNally 1988:55–66), the Tories were adhering closely to the continental mercantilist mainstream, which notably included, among its leading lights, the thinkers of the French ministry of the marine.²³

Such commitments did not just inform the Tories' printed propaganda. They can be found in the secret correspondence of their foreign ministry. Thus in a letter of January 1712, secretary of state Henry St. John could defend the present Tory government for having “combated an habit of thinking falsely, which men have been used to for twenty years” (Parke 1798b:160), that is, St. John almost certainly meant to say, since the Glorious Revolution had undermined England's dynastically legitimate monarchy and its natural constituency, the “landed interest.”²⁴ Two months later, he was penning a private letter to the British plenipotentiary at the Utrecht congress, the earl of Strafford, to justify their effort to make peace with France “in opposition to all the confederates [Britain's allies], in opposition to a powerful turbulent faction at home [the Whigs], in opposition even to those habits of thinking, which mankind had contracted by *the same wrong principle of government, pursued for twenty years*” (Parke 1798b:256; emphasis mine). In short, St. John was disavowing the very style of regime that the Glorious Revolution had engendered.²⁵

The Tories expressed their appreciation for dynastic legitimacy and hierarchy to the French as well. Their diplomatic agent told the latter in July 1711, according to a memorandum written by the marquis de Torcy, that the British “condemned absolutely the conduct of their [Whig] Ministers and their Allies during the Peace Conferences, and that the present [Tory]

²² Pincus's important work focuses on the ideological position-takings of the Whigs and the Tories, but it does not attempt to connect these to their respective *social* positions. Were early eighteenth-century Tory households really less oriented to capitalism than those of their Whig counterparts? Were wage labor and commercial rents less prevalent on their landed estates, for instance? Were they more likely to depend on forms of patronage flowing from the crown's remaining patrimonial rights—isolated venal offices in a bureaucratizing central government—as strategies of reproduction? Future work might endeavor to answer these questions.

²³ For seventeenth-century mercantilist thought, as produced by Jean-Baptiste Colbert and others in the French ministry of the marine, see Mettam (1988:288–308) and Minard (1998).

²⁴ Interestingly, St. John was mistaken about this. It was actually not the case that the Glorious Revolution undermined English landlords—quite the contrary, the returns to landed property would accelerate dramatically in the decades that followed. Nonetheless, St. John and other Tories genuinely believed that the Whigs' active promotion of war finance, the attendant creation of new fortunes in financial instruments (and cruder forms of war profiteering), and the resulting takeoff of the national debt amounted to just such a threat on a grand scale (Kramnick 1968:56–83; Pocock 1975:441–442). This makes total sense considering that Tories rejected the labor theory of value as articulated by Whigs like John Locke.

²⁵ Similarly, in a letter of July 1712 discussing the destabilizing effects of England's relatively free press on British foreign policy, St. John (recently elevated to Viscount Bolingbroke) lamented “that the laws of our country are too weak to punish effectually those factious scribblers ... This, my Lord, among others, is a symptom of the *decayed condition of our government*, and serves to show how fatally we mistake licentiousness for liberty” (Parke 1798b:486; emphasis mine). As we will see below, however, Bolingbroke was not exactly a proponent of “absolutism” either. His admiration for French institutions was adapted to a uniquely English context.

Government of England knew perfectly that the manner of negotiating had not been consistent with *the honor owed to such a great king*” as Louis XIV (NA PRO 31/3/197:25; emphasis mine). As a French agent reported of the earl of Oxford, the Tory first minister, in October: “he told me that he acted with me as a friend, that he regarded [Louis XIV] as the good ally of England and began drinking the health of His Majesty” (NA PRO 31/3/197:84). This at a time when Britain and France were at war—not allies, but enemies in the most technical of senses.²⁶

What I am suggesting is that it was not just their opposition to the Whigs but their relationship to the practice of *sovereignty* that made the Tories well suited to recognize the legibility and legitimacy of French patrimonial interests, in a way and to a degree that was unavailable to their Whig predecessors (and would become unavailable to the British government again after 1714 when the Tories fell from power). Consequently, Tories conceded much more to French diplomatic claims than the Whigs were willing to grant. It was this that formed a critical cause of France’s surprisingly good showing at the Peace of Utrecht. Indeed, the Tories’ secret correspondence with the French court reveals that they were already willing to let the Bourbons keep Spain in December 1710—*before* the accession of the Habsburgs’ claimant, Charles, to the Holy Roman Imperial throne.²⁷ Such an admission suggests that the threat of a Holy Roman Emperor ruling Spain was, for the Tories, mostly just a pretext for the French-aligned policy that they intended to pursue regardless.

Further breakthroughs quickly followed. In October 1711, the Tory ministry signed peace preliminaries with France—without consulting its allies. These preliminaries set in motion the process of convening an official peace congress, which, it was decided, would meet in the Dutch city of Utrecht the following January.²⁸ That the French and the British managed to settle at this moment owed primarily to the on-the-spot creativity of the French negotiator in London, Nicolas Mesnager, who found a compromise solution to the remaining points in dispute even though his instructions did not technically empower him to do so. In a letter to Torcy, Mesnager explained his actions: “I believed that the service of the King required that I take a stand, rather than break a negotiation that was so advanced. This stand was to draw up general proposals myself” (NA PRO 3/31/3/197:97–98). As will become clearer when we consider the comparative case of Britain’s diplomats at Utrecht, who seemingly lacked this creative capacity, Mesnager was able to violate the letter of his instructions, in the interest of what he considered to be their spirit, precisely *because* sovereignty over French foreign policy was so securely vested in the person of the monarch who gave the instructions. No one doubted that sovereignty resided in Louis XIV, in other words, even when it was French diplomats themselves who took sovereign decisions in practice—not just enacting but inventing foreign policy, not just representing but reproducing sovereignty (in the very name of representing it). As I suggested in chapter 3, such actions, when

²⁶ As the French agent reported, Oxford sent his servants out of earshot before proposing this toast (NA PRO 31/3/197:83–84).

²⁷ As Wolf (1968:576) notes: “Just before Christmas [1710], Torcy received a letter from England saying that the United Kingdom [sic] would no longer insist upon the restoration of the Hapsburgs in Spain, ‘provided France and Spain will give us good security for our commerce.’”

²⁸ Indeed, these preliminaries formed the basis of the official peace treaty that Britain and France would eventually sign in April 1713.

they produce their desired effects, make diplomacy a *performative* practice.²⁹ Thus the Tories accepted Mesnager's proposals *as if* they came from Louis XIV.

Perhaps the key turning point came in the summer of 1712. The Congress of Utrecht had begun in January of that year, but war was ongoing. Then in June, the British unilaterally ceased military operations against France (Bély 1990:660; Wolf 1968:587–588). Given Britain's preponderant contribution to the war effort, the consequence was to hand France the decisive advantage over the German, Dutch, and Austrian forces with which it was still fighting. As the Tory Henry St. John, who gave the order to desist, wrote the following year: "I will not say that this order saved [the French] army from being beat, but I think in my conscience it did" (Parke 1798c:78). The French were convinced that it did, as they later confided to St. John (Osiander 1994:155). Britain's allies, for their part, saw its actions as a clear "betrayal [*trahison*]" (AAE CP Hollande 236:31).

The Tories did not just recognize patrimonial interests. They were also unusually receptive—for Britons—to the dispositions of the *courtly habitus*. Mesnager was impressed with the earl of Oxford's regard for etiquette (NA PRO 31/3/197:83), a mark of praise, we saw in chapter 3, that the British rarely received, least of all from the French. Sent to the French court of Fontainebleau to negotiate in person after the Utrecht proceedings stalled in August 1712, St. John, who had recently been elevated to the British peerage with the title Viscount Bolingbroke, displayed a respect for etiquette and rank that struck Louis XIV and his advisors as noteworthy.³⁰ The eighteenth-century French moralist Nicolas Chamfort has left us a colorful account of Bolingbroke's audience with Louis XIV. In Chamfort's telling, Louis confessed that he was "especially touched" by Bolingbroke's performance, since "your English countrymen, they do not like kings," a clear reference to England's seventeenth-century Civil Wars and Glorious Revolution. To which Bolingbroke responded: "Sire ... we are like husbands who, disliking our own wives, are all the more eager to please those of our neighbors" (quoted in Bély 1990:304). Evidently, Bolingbroke demonstrated more than just a formal adherence to courtly protocol; he grasped its implicit basis in manners, embodying the expected combination of wit, flattery, masculinity.

Bolingbroke appears genuinely "taken in" by the courtly game.³¹ His correspondence in the period following his return from Fontainebleau is concerned as much with the intrigue and gossip of the French court as with peace itself, regularly soliciting from the official British agent in France, Matthew Prior, the following sort of social report (as Prior supplied it, in this case, on September 9, 1712):

I have a thousand compliments to make you; every night I dine with M. de Torcy, *en famille*, Madame drinks two healths I have taught her, *à Harré & à Robin*; Madame Parabart is very proud of her good fortune, and the whole Court is

²⁹ In other words, successful—that is, *recognized*—diplomacy brings into being the very thing that it claims to represent: namely, sovereignty in its external face. But then, the question arises as to the social conditions under which diplomacy elicits recognition in the first place.

³⁰ For Bolingbroke's own account of his reception, see Parke (1798c:16–17). As Torcy (1756:403) described Bolingbroke's audience with Louis XIV in his memoirs: "Viscount Bolingbroke fulfilled the commission, with which the Queen his mistress had charged him, with as much grace as nobility, and at the same time with respect for the person of the King."

³¹ After his fall from power in 1714, Bolingbroke would be literally taken in by court society, living in exile in France.

pleased that upon that point Madame Courcillon's absolute power is retrenched. Madame de Feriolle's memoir I must not forget; she has a sister that is run away from a nunnery, and now pleading the causes of her renunciation (Parke 1798c:55–56; emphasis in original).³²

When such information was not forthcoming from Prior, Bolingbroke would nudge the latter's compatriots in Paris, writing, for instance, to Sir Thomas Hanmer in December: "pray give me some account of Mat's *private life*. Once I was in the gentleman's secret; but his last dispatch contains, in almost a ream of paper, nothing but *solemn accounts of business*." Hinting at what he was after, Bolingbroke added: "We hear much of a certain eloped nun, who has supplanted the nut-brown maid" (Parke 1798c:275–276; emphasis mine). In short, Bolingbroke was disappointed to find that Prior's account of the French court limited itself to "business" at the very moment that they were negotiating the business of the Peace of Utrecht.

Bolingbroke also kept up his own correspondence—and exchanged gifts—with numerous French courtiers, especially the court's leading noblewomen, after his return to Britain. On one occasion, he received a snuffbox from Torcy's mother, the marquise de Croissy, to which he responded by sending her "eau de miel," "eau de Barbade," and "Spanish wine, which will succeed, I hope, better than cider." On another occasion, he sent her a timepiece (Parke 1798c:286–287, 1798d:71).³³ Torcy himself had become close to Bolingbroke by this point as well, the two foreign ministers forging a personal bond that would endure well beyond the conclusion of the treaty—a far cry from the contingent coincidence of interests that the French had initially discerned in the Tories' inclination for peace. Bolingbroke even enrolled British diplomacy in support of Torcy's "private" interests, defending the latter's effort to secure a sovereign principality for his brother-in-law, the duc de St. Pierre, at the Congress of Utrecht.³⁴ As Bolingbroke put it in a letter to Torcy, concerning St. Pierre: "that he belongs to you [*qu'il vous appartient*] is enough to make me devoted to his interests (Parke 1798c:50).³⁵

³² *Harré* refers to Bolingbroke, who at times went by Harry. *Robin* was his and Prior's nickname for the earl of Oxford. For further examples of Prior's reports to Bolingbroke on court gossip, see Parke (1798c:387–388, 1798d:2–3, 182–183, 374); NA SP 105/28:88.

³³ As Bolingbroke wrote to Madame de Croissy on the latter occasion: "There is nothing that I would seek more eagerly than opportunities to please you; in this world each is useful according to his capacity, and one can have some degree of merit even with trifles [*dans les bagatelles*]" (Parke 1798d:71). For further evidence of Bolingbroke exchanging letters and gifts with French courtiers, see Parke (1798c:90, 106, 151, 154, 257–258, 464; 1798d:75–76, 182, 273–274, 313–314, 322, 372, 374); NA SP 105/28:80, 84; NA PRO 31/3/200:12, 14.

³⁴ The Bourbon king of Spain, Philip V, had originally granted St. Pierre the principality of Sabbioneta in lieu of repayment for a loan. Sabbioneta was subsequently taken from him by the Habsburgs during the War of the Spanish Succession. Accordingly, St. Pierre demanded an equivalent from the Holy Roman Emperor as compensation (see Parke 1798c:50). Of course, this whole episode exposes the public/private distinction for the anachronism that it is in an early eighteenth-century continental European context, as I have stressed throughout this dissertation. The "public" claims of sovereigns like Philip V and the "private" claims of (not-yet-sovereign) individuals like St. Pierre were of a piece in the diplomacy of Utrecht, elements in a common patrimonial framework.

³⁵ Bolingbroke then added, enrolling his sovereign, Queen Anne, on St. Pierre's behalf: "& the Queen has been very pleased to have this occasion to show you her esteem & her friendship by giving her Plenipotentiaries very precise orders [written by Bolingbroke] to second their French counterparts in every instance that they can to procure for Monsieur the Duke the satisfaction that he demands with such

The Tories' relative orientation to the culture of courtly society, like their relative investment in patrimonial sovereignty, thus served to improve France's standing at the Congress of Utrecht. Indeed, during his visit to Fontainebleau, Bolingbroke had personally conceded the key territorial prizes that France would acquire in the peace treaty (Osiander 1994:144–146). It is telling that in so doing, he exceeded the instructions of his own monarch (Parke 1798c:8).

British Hegemony as Objective Possibility

By acceding to French demands, however, Tory peacemakers were not exactly giving away the store (although the Whigs would later accuse them of doing just that). Instead, theirs is best read as an active attempt to influence the French *on the latter's cultural terms*. The paradox here is that just as it served to improve France's standing in the Peace of Utrecht, the Tories' recognition of French courtly and patrimonial forms gave them a means of influence that the Whigs lacked, because it secured their reciprocal recognition *from* France. That the French recognized Bolingbroke's (court-based) diplomatic competence is attested by the memoirs of the marquis de Torcy. Regarding Bolingbroke's visit to Fontainebleau, Torcy (1756:405–406) recorded: "Viscount Bollinbroke [sic] pleased the Courtiers no less than he had had the good fortune of pleasing the King. *The French Court was in no way foreign to him, as he himself did not appear as a foreigner*" (emphasis mine).³⁶ This is a remarkable judgment, given that its target was an English diplomat. To put it in theoretical terms, Torcy seems to be saying that Bolingbroke had acquired the dispositions of the French courtly habitus or, at least, that he performed them sufficiently well to give that impression. Meanwhile, the duc d'Aumont, the French ambassador to Britain who ridiculed the English as impolite and unmannered in chapter 3, nevertheless made an exception for Bolingbroke. As Aumont expressed it in a letter to Louis XIV, upon meeting Bolingbroke in England at the start of 1713: "It is not possible to say too much in favor of the latter, no one seemed so capable, so true, or so accredited as him" (NA PRO 31/3/201:3).³⁷

Bolingbroke's agent, Matthew Prior, enjoyed similar levels of courtly credit. Prior was perfectly adjusted to his role as the British diplomat responsible for negotiating the commercial terms of the treaty with France: a bureaucrat of the customs bureau and thus an expert in matters of trade, he was also an acclaimed poet (Bély 1990:304; Rippey [2004] 2006). This lent him cultural cachet at the French court. As Prior reported to Bolingbroke, in February 1713, of his relationship to the Noailles family, who occupied the leading ranks of French courtiers:

justice" (Parke 1798c:50). For further evidence that Bolingbroke was actively pursuing St. Pierre's cause, see Parke (1798c:90, 194, 204–205, 216–217, 226–227, 360; 1978d:55–56, 69, 71–72, 145, 167–168); NA PRO 31/3/200:14, 81.

³⁶ Or as Torcy put it in a letter to the earl of Oxford, Bolingbroke "pleased the king just perfectly, and he won the hearts of all those who had the honor to see him. As I treated more particularly with him, I believe I know his fine qualities even better" (NA PRO 31/3/199:85). As the leading French diplomatic historian of the period, Lucien Bély (1990:365), elaborates: Bolingbroke "durably seduced the world of Paris and Versailles ... it seems that his personality won the hearts of the king and the courtiers to the point that he became a social and intellectual model of the eighteenth century: a man of the Enlightenment *avant la lettre*." For a similar interpretation, see Fumaroli ([2001] 2011:55–69).

³⁷ As Aumont added a couple months later, Bolingbroke's "vivacity for the conclusion of this affair is very great; if it merely depended on him, things would be finished soon" (NA PRO 31/3/201:19).

“Mademoiselle Noailles is to be married this day fev’nnight to old Châteaurenault’s only son, and I am to be at the wedding; Duchess Noailles is very much your servant; we all dined there last week very splendidly” (Parke 1798c:387–388). Prior was indeed embedded in the social world of the French court.

But Bolingbroke and Prior did more than just adapt themselves to the French rules of the game; what bears emphasis is that in so doing, they leveraged, to their own advantage, the recognition that they thereby received. Bolingbroke and Prior were especially vigilant in their efforts to guarantee commercial-colonial privileges—more accurately, rights to forced accumulation—for the British merchant community (Dickinson 1970:104–105; Parke 1798c:360–361, 1798d:59–60). And here, the Tories were wholly successful: among other colonial prizes enshrined in the Utrecht treaties, France ceded to Britain a monopoly to transport slaves to Spanish America, the so-called *asiento* contract (Blackburn 1997:495). A dynastic victory for the House of Bourbon, to be sure, it is also the case that the treaties of Utrecht amounted to the formal recognition of Britain’s primacy in the world economy (Bély 1990:46; Crouzet 1990:16; Lachmann 2003:361; Modelski 1978:221). To that end, securing the Bourbons on the Spanish throne was a price that the Tories were more than willing to pay, however much the Whigs begged to differ.

The Tories’ courtly and patrimonial orientation motivated British attempts to influence Spain as well. Paralleling their support of the duc de St. Pierre, the Tories used the Utrecht congress to advocate the patrimonial interests of the princesse des Ursins, a French aristocrat who had become a favorite at the Spanish court. Specifically, they backed her claim to a piece of sovereignty within the Spanish Netherlands.³⁸ For Bolingbroke, this venture was an explicit means to acquire a following in Spain. As he reasoned to the earl Strafford, British plenipotentiary at Utrecht, in February 1713: “we have established already ... a confidence with the court of Madrid, and particularly with the Princesse des Ursins. Your Lordship will, in a short time, see some proofs of this, which cannot fail to surprize you agreeably, and which will not be very welcome in France” (Parke 1798c:364). Although the Tories’ ostensible goal went unrealized—Ursins failed to get her sovereignty—Bolingbroke’s final observation makes clear that he was by no means helping Ursins for her own sake; rather, he sought to supplant the preponderant influence that France had previously enjoyed with Madrid. Bolingbroke was rather cynical about this.³⁹ As he explained to Strafford the following year, when peace had been signed but negotiations over the Anglo-Spanish commercial treaty were ongoing: “We are, I believe, obliged to the Princess des Ursins, for having this treaty sent us back in the manner it is ... As long as this Queen of Spain lives, she will govern her husband, and as long as the Princess lives, she will govern her, so that the advantage of flattering this old woman’s pride ... must be solid and lasting” (Parke 1798d:473). In other words, Bolingbroke suggested that the beneficial terms of Britain’s treaty of commerce with Spain stemmed from the goodwill that he had elicited from Ursins. That Bolingbroke used Ursins instrumentally, however, does not mean that he lacked a real investment in the courtly-patrimonial game. Quite the contrary, proper knowledge of the informal hierarchies of the Spanish court and the legal intricacies of patrimonial

³⁸ The Spanish Netherlands encompassed the territory that today constitutes Belgium. The Peace of Utrecht ceded it to the Habsburgs, and it was henceforth known as the Austrian Netherlands.

³⁹ Indeed, as Bolingbroke put it to Strafford on another occasion, when Ursins’s cause was becoming hopeless: “we must humour the King of Spain, and keep up the appearance of supporting our engagements: if the point is lost, let France have the odium of losing it, as, in good measure, they have already” (Parke 1798d:527–528).

sovereignty were the indispensable conditions that allowed him to play the game so expertly—indeed, instrumentally—in the first place.⁴⁰

The central irony of Tory diplomacy, then, is that the party for which the “moneyed interest” was *subjectively* anathema became the *objective* champion of Britain’s moneyed interests at the negotiating table, securing major commercial-colonial concessions from both France and Spain.⁴¹ But this was no accident, for subjective disavowal facilitated objectively strategic action in such a case. Whereas the Whigs had failed to exercise governance over the Bourbons because they neglected the courtly and patrimonial rules of the diplomatic game, the Tories succeeded *to the degree* that they were meaningfully invested in that courtly-patrimonial game.

What is more, in adhering to the rules of the game, the Tories began to transform it from within. Thus it was owing to British (Tory) influence that the treaties of Utrecht placed commercial clauses front and center to an extent that was hitherto unknown (Rosenberg 1994:39–43).⁴² More subtly, yet perhaps more profoundly for the subsequent history of interstate politics, the Utrecht treaties were also the first to make reference to the “balance of power” as a principle of international law (Der Derian 1987:133). The Tories had viewed the latter as an essential condition of the peace from the start of their ministry. Bolingbroke, for instance, had assured a Savoyard ambassador, as early as June 1711, that Queen Anne “regards the aggrandizement of the house of Savoy as one of the surest means of maintaining this balance of power that is so essential to the repose and the well-being of Europe” (Parke 1798a:236). Indeed, while its intellectual lineage dates to antiquity, the terms in which this concept was framed at the time of Utrecht were almost entirely English in origin (Finkelstein 2000; Sheehan 1988). Consequently, and most explicitly, Article 2 of the “Treaty of Peace and Friendship” between Britain and Spain, signed July 13, 1713, encodes the following:

But whereas the war which is so happily ended by this peace, was at the beginning undertaken, and was carried on for so many years with the utmost force, at immense charge, and with almost infinite slaughter, because of the great danger which threatened the liberty and safety of all Europe, from the too close conjunction of the kingdoms of Spain and France. And whereas to take away all uneasiness and suspicion, concerning such conjunction, out of the minds of people, and to settle and establish the peace and tranquility of Christendom by *an equal balance of power* (which is the best and most solid foundation of a mutual friendship, and of a concord which will be lasting on all sides) as well the Catholic King [of Spain] as the Most Christian King [of France] have consented,

⁴⁰ For further evidence that Bolingbroke was pursuing Ursins’s interests, see, for instance, Parke (1798d:185–187, 222, 519, 522).

⁴¹ As Bolingbroke tellingly put it in a letter of May 1713 to the duke of Shrewsbury, ambassador to France following the peace: “we on our part, and the Ministers of France on theirs, ought ... to finish what relates to commerce, *more in the character of Statesmen, than of merchants*” (Parke 1798d:141; emphasis mine). Bolingbroke was always careful to avoid the suggestion that he was pursuing commercial interests for their own sake. It appears that he was in earnest about this: as I will show below, Bolingbroke viewed trade primarily as a means to broader geopolitical ends.

⁴² In particular, Articles 5–13 of the Franco-British treaty were explicitly concerned with commerce. Significantly, these were the articles that the House of Commons, at the behest of the Whigs, would then refuse to ratify (Ahn 2010:168).

that care should be taken by sufficient precautions, that the kingdoms of Spain and France should never come and be united under the same dominion, and that one and the same person should never become King of both kingdoms (28 CTS 295; quoted in Chalmers 1790:43, emphasis mine).⁴³

The novelty of this formulation is not its claim to uphold the separation of the Spanish and French kingdoms. All of the parties to the conflict had at least paid lip service to that goal from the outset. But recall that for Charles II of Spain, in his will, maintaining the independence of Spain from France was a means to preserve the integrity of the Spanish monarchy as a distinct *patrimony*, a condition that its incorporation into the inheritance of future French monarchs would have obviously violated. Under British influence, by contrast, the treaties of Utrecht justified the permanent division of the French and Spanish successions on the basis of something altogether more abstract: the principle of *equilibrium*.⁴⁴

It is thus important to recognize that while the Tories' admiration of French institutions had deep ideological roots (as I have been wont to stress), they were not just mimicking "absolutism" either. Bolingbroke's political theory, which appears to have remained largely constant over his tumultuous career, could be encapsulated as follows: hereditary monarchy was the ideal form of government, not because monarchs actually ruled by divine right (he considered this absurd), but because centuries-long acquisitions of custom and precedent were the best possible basis of order and stability.⁴⁵ In these respects, he was the obvious intellectual forebear to Edmund Burke, although Burke himself seems to have missed this.⁴⁶ The point is that Tory policies necessarily bore the stamp of the uniquely English context out of which they emerged: they may have occupied the courtly-patrimonial *pole* of English domestic politics, with respect to the Whigs, but the Tories' policy orientation was overdetermined by the English polity itself, seen as a totality.⁴⁷ In this sense, of course, they were no different from the Whigs. The

⁴³ Later in Article 2, the treaty refers to "the fundamental and perpetual maxim of the balance of power in Europe, which persuades and justifies the avoiding, in all cases imaginable, the union of the monarchy of France with that of Spain" (28 CTS 295; quoted in Chalmers 1790:44). The modifier "in Europe" is not at all incidental here: far from extending the balance-of-power principle to the colonial world, Britain sought monopoly in that sphere. The treaty of peace between Britain and France similarly states (without using the term) that the settlement is designed to maintain the balance of power in Europe.

⁴⁴ The British ambassador Shrewsbury even proposed that mutual renunciations should become a general principle of the peace treaties—that Philip V of Spain and Charles VI of Austria should renounce their rights to each other's successions in the same way that Philip and the French royals were in the process of doing—"because the renunciations lay down *the balance of power in Europe as their foundation*" (1798c:503; emphasis mine).

⁴⁵ For this point, see especially Kramnick's (1968) socially grounded history of Bolingbroke's political thought, a work that remains unrivalled.

⁴⁶ For Burke, Bolingbroke was primarily an exponent of Enlightenment rationalism, an image that probably derives from the latter's period of exile in France and his association at that time with the likes of Voltaire and Montesquieu. Ironically, Bolingbroke was much more Burkean than Burke allowed. "It is a mistake," says Kramnick (1968:88), "to read Bolingbroke's notions of natural law as if they culminate in optimistic rationalism with some implicit revolutionary call ... It is no revolutionary rationalist who could say: 'if our reasoning faculties were more perfect than they are, the order of intellectual beings would be broken unnecessarily, and man would be raised above his proper form'."

⁴⁷ Thanks to Eoin Devlin for originally alerting me to this point. Devlin (forthcoming) shows, among other things, how even the deeply pro-French, pro-Catholic foreign policy of James II, during the 1680s,

English polity was one in which, by the early eighteenth century, capitalist social relations and parliamentary political institutions were already quite entrenched. Such a context meant that the Tories found themselves defending the courtly-patrimonial position as a sort of rearguard orthodoxy. Doing so was an entirely different matter from the doxic adherence that courtly-patrimonial institutions and conventions commanded from elites in a place like France.⁴⁸

Especially telling in this regard was a debate between Bolingbroke and the marquis de Torcy, in the spring of 1712, concerning how to ensure that the Bourbon king of Spain, Philip V (and his descendants), would never hold the French and Spanish crowns in unison. This was a pressing matter, for Philip was next in line to the French throne after the present dauphin, the future Louis XV, who at the time remained a sickly child. Well rehearsed by historians, this debate deserves recapitulating here as it perfectly captures the fundamental difference between Tory and French categories of thought, despite the culturally robust recognition that the Tories really did confer on the French. Indeed, it shows that the Tories managed to embed their own (in some ways utterly English) categories into international law, precisely *because* of the recognition that Bolingbroke and the marquis de Torcy conferred on each other.

Bolingbroke and Torcy agreed that measures should be taken to guarantee that the kingdoms of France and Spain remain perpetually distinct and independent. Yet they clashed sharply over the appropriate method to achieve that end. Bolingbroke proposed that Philip should formally renounce his and his descendants' rights to the French succession as a condition of his remaining king of Spain. At first, Torcy refused to consider any such idea. As Torcy's memorial explained, in the strongest of terms, although France too sought to prevent the "union of the two monarchies," Philip's renunciation "would absolutely depart from the proposed aim, and would lead to infinitely worse evils," because it would violate "the fundamental laws of the Kingdom." Torcy continued:

According to these laws, the Prince who is closest to the Crown is its necessary heir, *it being a patrimony* that he received neither from the King his predecessor, nor from the people, *but from the law*, such that a King ceasing to live is succeeded immediately, without awaiting the consent of anyone. He succeeds ... not by choice, but by birthright alone; he owes his Crown neither to the testament of his predecessor, nor to any edict, nor to any decree, nor finally to anybody's generosity, but to the law, this law being regarded as the work of he who established all the monarchies, & we are persuaded in France that *God alone can abolish it* (Parke 1798b:224–225; emphasis mine).

Hence Bolingbroke's suggestion was not only improper, it was futile as well, for any so-called renunciation on Philip's part was legally meaningless; Philip could not renounce his rights to the

was unavoidably stamped by an English sociopolitical context the specificity of which James himself was probably unaware.

⁴⁸ In this respect, Pincus's (2012) emphasis on the ideological differences of Whigs and Tories tends to overlook the unique social situation of England itself, seen in its wider European context, which obviously shaped Whigs and Tories alike. However, pointing this out actually supports Pincus's larger attack on a "revisionist" historical position that would elide not just ideological conflict *within* England but social difference *between* England and the continent.

French succession even if he so desired.⁴⁹ Or rather—what amounts to the same thing—any renunciation would leave the door open for Philip to reclaim his rights at a later date, as he could legitimately assert that the contract was void.

Bolingbroke's response is a remarkably clear-eyed statement of the contrasting principles by which sovereignty was legitimated in Britain and France. As he put it in his reply to Torcy:

We happily allow that you in France are persuaded that God alone can abolish the law on which the right to your succession is founded; but permit us to be persuaded in Great Britain, that a Prince can relinquish his right by a voluntary cession; & that he in favor of whom this renunciation is made, can be justly supported by the powers that become guarantors of the treaty (Parke 1798b:229).

In this respect, and by comparison with French legal theory, Bolingbroke expressed a *non-patrimonial* interpretation of the laws of succession, even if it is the patrimonial aspect of his thought that bears emphasis when compared to Whig ideology. That Bolingbroke's position-takings contained both patrimonial *and* non-patrimonial aspects—the relative salience of which depends significantly on the relevant frame of reference—is, indeed, what makes his thought essentially ambiguous from a scholarly standpoint. It is also, from the standpoint of the actors themselves, what enabled him to function as a bridge between English and French modes of apprehending the world. What is so significant, however, is that the non-patrimonial view prevailed in this case. The French disgust with voluntary cessions appears genuine.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, Louis XIV gave way, consenting to Britain's demand that Philip either renounce his right to the French succession or otherwise abdicate the Spanish throne and return to France.⁵¹ Philip would ultimately choose the former course, renouncing his French rights and remaining king of Spain (Baudrillart 1889:484). The French did, however, reject Britain's further request that Louis XIV convoke the Estates General to ratify Philip's renunciation.⁵²

⁴⁹ See also Louis XIV's parallel correspondence with his ambassador in Spain, which makes the same point (Baudrillart 1889:474).

⁵⁰ Osiander (1994:130–131) cites substantial evidence to the effect that Torcy sincerely believed his claims. As Torcy put it in a private letter to the *princesse des Ursins*, concerning the demanded renunciation from Philip: “The laws of the kingdom are opposed to it and the order that they establish for the succession to the crown cannot be overturned for any reason whatsoever” (Baudrillart 1889:474).

⁵¹ As Torcy eventually promised Bolingbroke, Louis XIV would commit himself “to overcome all difficulties ... surrounding an article that should form the foundation of the peace, even sacrificing the interests of his house for the reestablishment of general tranquility” (Parke 1798b:314). As Louis himself informed the Spanish court, “The peace is absolutely broken if the king of Spain does not renounce his rights to my succession” (Baudrillart 1889:480–481).

⁵² As Torcy explained to Bolingbroke: “The Estates in France, do not meddle in the least with that which regards the Succession to the Crown, and they do not have the power, either to make or to repeal laws ... The examples of preceding Centuries made us see that these sorts of Assemblies have almost always produced troubles in the Kingdom.” Thus “the Estates, which, having been convened not once in almost a hundred years, are in some sense abolished in the Kingdom.” Instead of convoking the Estates, Louis XIV would “have the renunciation published and registered in all the *Parlements* of the Kingdom ... The Edicts and Declarations invested with these formalities have force of law: the French are accustomed to this usage” (NA PRO 31/3/198:94–95; for the contours of this additional debate, see also NA PRO 31/3/198:91, 97, 110; NA PRO 31/3/199:12). Note again the starkly contrasting interpretations of the very

Notwithstanding the latter refusal, the broader concession that Britain received from France (and, therefore, Spain) demonstrates that a British-led geopolitical order, governed by the Tories in consultation with the French, was a real prospect—an *objective possibility*—at the time of the Peace of Utrecht. Indeed, it places in an entirely new light the Tories’ “treasonous” decision to cease military operations against the Bourbon forces. Although Britain’s allies had good reason to see it as a betrayal, the suspension of arms was, for the Tories themselves, a legitimate means to compensate France for yielding on such a major negotiating point. As Bolingbroke had already acknowledged to Strafford in early May 1712, when France’s decision on the renunciation was still uncertain: “We have considered the point of a cessation of arms; if the enemy agree to our last proposition, it will be immediately granted.” Britain’s infamous “restraining orders” to its commander in the field, issued in June, followed promptly upon France’s promise to acquiesce in Bolingbroke’s proposal (Parke 1798b:309, 320). Writing to Torcy to inform him of these orders, Bolingbroke explained that Britain was now relying “on the good faith” of Louis XIV (NA PRO 31/3/198:70).⁵³

The larger implication, then, is that absent a revolutionary social transformation of *multiple* major polities, the geopolitical governance of a *single* revolutionary state—as post-1688 England undoubtedly was—paradoxically depends on its ability to incorporate the existing rules of the interstate game, even at the cost of reproducing built-in advantages for senior players, like France, in the short run.⁵⁴ Otherwise there is simply no one to recognize such a state.⁵⁵ Yet by incorporating those very rules, Britain might have turned them to its durable advantage in the longer run, embedding its influence in, and asserting its leadership over, the post-Utrecht

basis of law (and sovereignty) in Britain and France. Note also the French association of parliamentary sovereignty with social disorder.

⁵³ Bolingbroke issued these orders himself, and they appear to have been his personal handiwork (1798b:320). Remarkably, while he informed France, Bolingbroke did *not* warn Britain’s own allies of the decision to cease military operations. Britain’s “restraining orders” would later supply the basis for Bolingbroke’s impeachment and attainder by Parliament.

⁵⁴ At least to the extent that such governance relies on diplomacy at all. The alternative is more or less unmitigated force, as the Napoleonic and Nazi empires perhaps attest.

⁵⁵ “Revolutionary diplomacy” is thus somewhat of an oxymoron, as “realist” theorists of international relations are wont to insist (for a classical and a more contemporary statement, see, respectively, Morgenthau 1959; Mearsheimer 2001). Yet contrary to what realists usually claim, this is not because it violates some timeless *substance* that makes diplomacy effective. Rather, it stems from the simple, *relational* fact that such diplomacy has no external audience. Diplomacy is, indeed, a conservative social mechanism in the specific sense that it tends to *conserve* that which already exists (albeit with non-negligible slippages that I have tried to document), which is to say that it tends to conserve what has already been realized through *other* mechanisms (for a similar point, see Neumann 2007). Diplomacy is, nonetheless, agnostic about the content of what is thereby conserved. Diplomatic interactions between multiple socialist states, for instance, would tend to reproduce socialist institutions in the same way that diplomacy among absolutist states or among capitalist democracies tends to reproduce their respective regimes. Indeed, the classic (negative) case, in this regard, is probably the contradiction in terms that was “socialism in one country,” the geopolitical implications of which are well described by Lacher (2006:177): “Realists are quick to point out that the foreign policy of the Soviet Union after 1917 very quickly adhered to typical great power behaviour predicted by Realist theory. But even if this claim can be maintained, it does not follow that an international system constituted by ‘communist’ states would have the same logic and dynamic as the capitalist one *within which the Soviet Union was situated*” (emphasis mine).

European order. Had the Tories, with their (relatively) courtly-patrimonial orientation, remained in power, Britain might have established *hegemony* over France and, with its help, much of continental Europe.

The Collapse of the Tory Regime and the Suppression of Historical Alternatives

Remaining in power while simultaneously sustaining their French-aligned policy was no easy task for the Tories, however. Precisely because exercising *foreign* influence required departing—in some critical respects—from practices that were already well established in Britain, the Tories were never fully secure in their *domestic* positions. Tory policy bore an especially high risk of repudiation by future British governments, and the Tories were well aware of it. This created a situation of mutual distrust between the Tory ministers and their diplomats. Thus Oxford and Bolingbroke hid major points of negotiation from the British representatives at Utrecht, the earl of Strafford and the bishop of Bristol.⁵⁶ The awkward result was that the French representatives found themselves better informed of the Tories' intentions than were the latter's own agents (Bély 1990:482, 523). The French correctly grasped the motives inclining the British government to this secretive strategy. As the marquis de Torcy explained in a letter to the French plenipotentiaries at Utrecht, the inconsistent demands that the latter had received from the earl of Oxford appeared to be “less an effect of uncertainty or variation on his part as much as the consideration that he is obliged to have in regard to *the constitution of the government of his country* and to *the spirit of the Nation* to which he is responsible for his conduct” (AAE CP Hollande 233:343; emphasis mine). Insofar as they sought to chart a new path for British diplomacy, then, the Tories—for that very reason—risked delegitimizing themselves in the eyes of the “nation” (more accurately, Parliament) whose diplomatic style they were thereby violating.

The Tories' secrecy served to disorganize their own delegation at Utrecht. At some level, this was unimportant: in any event, Bolingbroke and Oxford's overarching approach was to rely as little as possible on the congress itself, where they faced the inevitable resistance of their nominal allies. Instead, as we saw above in detail, they turned to a direct, bilateral negotiation with the French court. Yet this strategy could only get them so far. Although Utrecht was meant as a *fait accompli*, it still required agents to faithfully *execute* points that the British and French had decided in advance. The French representatives performed their task expertly, at least for the most part. The problem was Strafford and Bristol—hardly a surprise, considering the extent to which they were kept in the dark. Already in January 1712, the first month of the congress, the French plenipotentiaries were writing to Louis XIV to complain that their British counterparts refused to cooperate. As the French explained: “We told them that your Majesty, having given Queen Anne the most intimate marks of confidence ... if we regarded them in public as enemies, we regarded them in secret as mediators.” However: “They did not respond to this overture as we would have wished; on the contrary they tepidly told us that until the conclusion of a general

⁵⁶ Remarkably, the British government did not initially inform Strafford and Bristol that it had decided to let Philip V keep the Spanish crown. The plenipotentiaries' original instructions of January 1712 continued to insist that the Bourbons vacate the Spanish monarchy as a *sine qua non* of the peace (Parke 1798b:96–97), even though the Tories had secretly relinquished this demand over a year earlier.

peace with all of the Allies, the Queen was still our Enemy” (AAE CP Hollande 232:67).⁵⁷ This was not at all what Bolingbroke and Oxford had desired. The reference to *mediation* is especially significant: a highly sought-after privilege in early modern European diplomatic negotiations, the role of mediator conferred a sort of “diplomatic capital” on sovereigns and their agents (see, for instance, Croxton 1999:590; Lachs 1965:112). Bolingbroke’s own correspondence shows that it is exactly what he was after.⁵⁸ As the French report makes clear, however, Strafford and Bristol failed to perform such a function.

This dynamic recurred over the course of the congress proceedings. A year later, on the eve of the peace, the British representatives were still frustrating the intentions of Oxford and Bolingbroke, who even confided to the duc d’Aumont, France’s ambassador at London, that they “doubted the good intentions [*bonne volonté*] of those whom they had sent to Utrecht.” According to Aumont, this left them so concerned “that M. de Bolingbroke has asked that the Queen send him to Utrecht to resolve all of the difficulties,” a request that Anne denied (NA PRO 31/3/201:34). Once again, the French correctly discerned the source of the Tories’ troubles. As the French plenipotentiaries at Utrecht noted on one occasion, Strafford and Bristol had failed to act due to “their fear of one day being investigated ... if the government of England were to change” (AAE CP Hollande 234:70). Several months later, the French observed that their British counterparts “remain fearful that a future Parliament will find something to blame in their conduct” (AAE CP Hollande 236:236).⁵⁹ In other words, the British diplomats’ concern to avoid condemnation by Parliament served to inhibit their *agency*—in both senses of that concept.⁶⁰

Conversely, when Bolingbroke took matters into his own hands, traveling to France in the summer of 1712 to settle with Louis XIV’s ministers in person, he was immediately rebuked by his ministry for exceeding his instructions. Bolingbroke was forced to plead that the French had willfully misinterpreted his intentions: “I observe so many ways that the French are desirous to construe what I said, whilst I was in France, by the Queen’s order, in another sense than it was meant, or will bear, and by consequence to carry the Queen farther in her engagements to them than she intends to go” (Parke 1798c:71). This claim was little more than a face-saving device, and Anne and Oxford removed Bolingbroke from the French negotiation as punishment. Bolingbroke quickly reestablished his commanding role. Nonetheless, it is clear that the unintended consequences of his self-authorizing act had differed markedly from anything attending the decision, taken by the French diplomat Mesnager, to violate his sovereign’s

⁵⁷ As the French plenipotentiaries elaborated in a letter to Torcy of the same date: “We would not be surprised, Monsieur, of the reserve *that the English Plenipotentiaries* showed us, if we had spoken in front of one of their Allies ... But in private this seemed to us more strange” (AAE CP Hollande 232:70; emphasis in original).

⁵⁸ As Bolingbroke wrote, for instance, in October 1711: “the Queen must be empowered separately to offer to the allies what may be reasonable for each to accept; her own interests being settled, she must be mediator for others” (Parke 1798a:455). Or as he put it on another occasion, after the congress was underway: “her Majesty ought to take upon her the part of mediatrice, *as well for her own honour*, as for the good of the negotiation” (Parke 1798b:309; emphasis mine). See, similarly, Parke (1798a:443–444; 1798b:31, 326–327; 1798d:219–220, 558–559).

⁵⁹ On yet another occasion, the French noted, simply, that Strafford and Bristol “fear the upper house,” i.e., the House of Lords (AAE CP Hollande 233:310).

⁶⁰ In fact, they were condemned anyway. Strafford and Bristol’s worst fears came to pass: when the Tories lost power to the Whigs in 1714, the new parliament impeached the architects of Utrecht peace, including Strafford.

instructions at a similar juncture. This is in spite of the fact that each of these agents appears to have operated with the same *intended* result in mind, making limited sacrifices for the sake of what he perceived to be his sovereign's broader interests. As Bourdieu (1991:73) has noted of performativity in general, the "conditions of felicity" of a performative utterance are *social* conditions that necessarily exceed the linguistic act itself. In short, Britain's social divergence from the major powers of continental Europe, already emergent by this time, continued to constrain even those British diplomats, like Bolingbroke, who successfully "code-switched."⁶¹ Adhering to the continental rules of the game and, therefore, eliciting recognition from the likes of Louis XIV, Bolingbroke was, by the same token, jeopardizing his standing in *British* politics.

More broadly, but analogously, Parliament itself dealt a major blow to Bolingbroke's geopolitical vision when in June 1713, just two months after peace with France was signed, the House of Commons refused to ratify those articles of the treaty that pertained to commerce. This was an exceptionally paradoxical episode, for it saw Bolingbroke and his associates pursuing a reduction in Britain's tariffs on France, while the Whigs resisted any such action. It has thus produced an interpretation, erroneous in my view, wherein the Tories figure as the original proponents of free trade (Ashley 1897; Packard 1923). As Kramnick (1968:12) explains, however, this is deceptive, for Bolingbroke's "arguments were not economic and involved no critique of mercantilism." Rather, they merely formed one element in his larger endeavor to secure the goodwill of France, thereby promoting British hegemony over the latter (Ahn 2010:169).⁶² But once again, Bolingbroke's geopolitics were rebuffed domestically: 72 Tory MPs broke ranks with the ministry to vote with their Whig colleagues against ratification, narrowly defeating the bill by a tally of 194 to 185 (Dickinson 1970:107–108).

In the light of subsequent events, the defeat of the Tory trade treaty would come to mark the commencement of the Whigs' resurgence in Britain (Ahn 2010:168; Holmes 1967:279–284). Even at the time, Bolingbroke immediately perceived that were it to transpire, such an outcome would eviscerate Britain's influence with the House of Bourbon. As he had already acknowledged to Matthew Prior in France, a month after the trade treaty went down in the Commons: "I do not at all wonder, that the people where you are, grow colder to us ... the ready way to fall into contempt abroad, is to fall, as we have done, into contempt at home" (Parke 1798d:202). By the spring of 1714, he was despairing altogether of "our influence abroad" in a letter to Strafford. Bolingbroke was unequivocal about the sources of decline:

[T]here is no ill-consequence of our domestic disorders which has touched me so sensibly as this ... the main cause of all, that which must be altered, or no other remedies can prove effectual, is our home economy: till the Queen's government

⁶¹ For code-switching as a sociological process, see, for instance, Eliasoph and Lichterman (2003). Thanks to Sandra Smith for alerting me to this concept as a relevant dimension of my analysis.

⁶² For Bolingbroke's own statements to this effect, see, for instance, Parke (1798d:141, 149–150). In fact, the Tories' preference for trade with France was, at least in part, a *product* of their mercantilist views. Bolingbroke recognized, correctly, that the Netherlands remained Britain's closest peer in the realm of commercial development. Yet precisely because he saw trade as zero sum, this recognition led Bolingbroke to identify the Dutch, and not the French, as Britain's primary commercial—hence geopolitical—rival. The abortive Franco-British trade treaty of 1713 was thus, as much as anything, a strategy of politically backed competition aimed against the Netherlands. Conversely, it was the Whigs' *rejection* of mercantilist orthodoxy that led them to see French geopolitics, and not Dutch trade, as the primary threat to Britain—and thus to oppose Franco-British cooperation in whatever form.

is on a stable foot, and those who serve her are, by their authority, as well as their personal character, *hors d'insulte*, little reverence will be paid, either at home or abroad, to the administration, little dependance on it will be shown, and we shall hope in vain to see the natural and genuine effects of that great work, which your Lordship had so great a share in accomplishing, produced (Parke 1798d:529).

By “home economy,” of course, Bolingbroke was referring to the state of Britain’s *government*, not the modern abstraction that is a national economy. Indeed, Bolingbroke appears to have become ever more envious of the French system of government as his own authority faltered. Writing to Prior in February 1714, he bitterly contrasted his lot to the situation in which France’s ministers found themselves:

I owe a thousand obligations to the good company you was at dinner with, when you writ last to me. They are great men, dear Matt, they are from the cradle to the grave in one scene of business, each according to the predestination of his parent; they have no affairs but that of their proper departments, and *they are accountable to but one master*, who knows when they serve well, and who has power to support and to reward. Had they as many cross-grained fellows to manage, as I have been treating with of late ... in a word, were they to serve without reward, and *instead of being supported by the prerogative of the Crown*, were they to form a strength to carry on the service of the public, I am apt to think, that they would have a better opinion of us, *than the part we act in foreign affairs, does perhaps give them*” (Parke 1798d:475; emphasis mine).

It would thus seem that no amount of diplomatic finesse on the part of Britain’s Tory ministers could have secured their leadership over Bourbon Europe, absent a greater degree of domestic authorization for their actions. Domestic authorization, in turn, would have surely required reworking Britain’s relations of sovereignty, realigning them—in some degree—with the patrimonial relations that had come to prevail on the continent. But critically, such a transformation was *itself* objectively possible in the immediate wake of Utrecht. During the winter of 1713–1714, with the death of the childless Queen Anne an imminent reality, Oxford and Bolingbroke took steps to realize just this outcome. Acting independently of each other, for they had fallen out by this time, they both initiated arrangements for the return of James Edward Stuart (styled James III), the exiled claimant to the British throne and Anne’s half-brother (Dickinson 1970:117–118).⁶³ From a *patrimonial* perspective, James was undoubtedly the legitimate heir. However, parliamentary statute had removed him and his father, James II, from the succession on the grounds of their Catholicism and the latter’s absolutist pretensions. Through the Act of Settlement of 1701, Parliament had instead conferred the succession on the German House of Hanover, not merely a tenuous claimant to this particular throne but a low-ranking member of the European dynastic hierarchy writ large (Brewer 1989:113; Carruthers 1996:43).

In sounding James’s restoration, Oxford and Bolingbroke were no doubt motivated by their own career interests: the Hanoverians were among the allies that the Tories had abandoned at Utrecht, so they were bound to back the Whigs on assuming the throne. Nevertheless, the

⁶³ See the correspondence reprinted in Wickham Legg (1915), on which this and the next four paragraphs rely.

consequence of crowning James III would have been to significantly elevate the status of Britain in European dynastic relations. It would have also endowed Britain with a sovereign whose formation was based in the highest echelons of courtly society, as James had spent his entire life in the orbit of the French court. In short, it would have provided Bolingbroke just the authorization that he needed to carry on his strategy of hegemony over Bourbon Europe.

Bolingbroke and Oxford's ploy enjoyed a real chance of success. Oxford made it clear that he was prepared to overturn the Act of Settlement in Parliament if James consented to his conditions (Wickham Legg 1915:514–515). James, for his part, promised to uphold all existing rights, laws, and property in England, and—a good Catholic himself—he nonetheless swore to maintain the Anglican Church. As he had already expressed it to Anne in a letter of January 1712, at the start of the Congress of Utrecht: “I am inviolably resolved to take the laws of the Kingdom [of Great Britain] for the rule of my government, to conserve to each their Rights, liberties and properties ... to maintain all of the members of the Anglican Church in all of their just Rights and Privileges established by the laws, and to accord to the nonconformists such toleration as Parliament will judge to be proper” (NA PRO 31/3/198:11).

Ultimately, however, such an alternative was suppressed. Any hope of James's accession was dashed when he refused to go one step further and renounce his own Catholicism, a *sine qua non* of his reestablishment.⁶⁴ Nothing in the nature of the social mechanisms, theorized above, could have guaranteed that he would not take the alternative course. That, indeed, is what makes the alternative counterfactually plausible (Elster 1978:175–232).⁶⁵ James acted for reasons of conscience. He even did so in spite of a French Catholic priest advising him to choose otherwise. As the abbé Gaultier, Oxford and Bolingbroke's intermediary in this affair, explained to James in a letter of February 1714: “it is absolutely necessary that you conceal your Religion or that you change it entirely and profess that of your country established by the Laws.”⁶⁶ James's reply was unequivocal: “I would always be ready to sacrifice my repose, and even my life for my country,” he informed the marquis de Torcy later that month, “but to sacrifice my honor and my conscience, that is too much” (Wickham Legg 1915:508, 513). James's choice was thus contingent—with respect to the parliamentary and capitalist relations of the British polity, relations that he might well have modified had he chosen differently.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Oxford and Bolingbroke had repeatedly stressed to James that converting to Protestantism was critical for his chances of restoration. As the abbé Gaultier, who served as an intermediary between the British ministers and James in this affair, reported to Torcy in February 1714: “we would absolutely *deceive him* [James] *if we let him hope that he could ever regain London without having first abandoned Rome*” (Wickham Legg 1915:512; emphasis in the original). At the end of March, Gaultier was still insisting to Torcy: “The Grand Turk will sooner be King of England than [James] as long as he remains a Roman Catholic; these are the last words that Mylord Bolingbroke spoke to me” (Wickham Legg 1915:517).

⁶⁵ These events should be sharply distinguished from the Jacobite rising of 1715, James's attempt to take the throne militarily, which had little chance of success. In 1714, by contrast, Bolingbroke and Oxford believed that he could have done so consensually had he converted to Protestantism (Wickham Legg 1915:509).

⁶⁶ Gaultier quickly added, as if to absolve himself: “It is not I who counsels you thusly ... you must not expect that any Roman Catholic should do so ... it is up to you to search yourself and to ask your Lord to show you the part that you must take for his greater glory, and to save a nation that could never be happy nor tranquil without you” (Wickham Legg 1915:508–509).

⁶⁷ In other words, I am not suggesting that James's actions were contingent in some absolute sense. Obviously, they are subject to explanation, but such an explanation is external to the argument that I am advancing here.

Yet *given* the contingency of James's actions, Britain's parliamentary-capitalist structure continued to restrain its capacity for geopolitical governance in Europe. By March, it had become clear that James's decision was final (Wickham Legg 1915:516–517). On Anne's death in August 1714, the Hanoverians assumed the throne, the Tories fell from power, the new Whig government condemned the Utrecht treaty (although its non-commercial articles remained in force), and they impeached its architects, charging Bolingbroke, who fled to France, with treason (Dickinson 1970:131–135). In the process, Britain acquired a questionably legitimate dynasty, and its reputation as one of Europe's most unstable polities—"this country of revolutions," as Bolingbroke had called it (Parke 1798a:188)—was fixed in the European elite imagination. It would take the *French* Revolution to finally put Britain's perceived instability in perspective. In the meantime, Britain's divergence from the courtly and patrimonial forms of continental diplomacy was locked in place. Its chances for European hegemony suffered the inevitable consequences.

Conclusion

An in-depth consideration of the Utrecht episode allows us to draw several key conclusions. For one, it offers further support for the mechanisms of geopolitical governance elaborated throughout this dissertation by showing how they explain a specific sequence of events, one that has generalizable implications and which constitutes a major historical turning point in its own right. To recapitulate: even at its most conciliatory, French diplomacy failed to achieve its goals when its recipients (the Whigs and the Dutch) did not share its investment in *patrimonial* sovereignty. By contrast, French diplomacy realized its more demanding goals when its recipients (the Tories) shared its patrimonial investments as well as its *courtly* habitus. We can thus draw a broader inference from Whig and Tory responses to French diplomacy: French governance over eighteenth-century European geopolitics hinged on the fact that most sovereign actors were socially akin to the Tories, not the Whigs.

Conversely, Britain might have established its own governance—indeed, it might have become *hegemonic*—through the War of the Spanish Succession were the Whigs willing to accept Louis XIV's offers in 1709 and 1710. But the Whigs were socially ill-disposed to negotiate with a polity like France in the first place, because they did not share its rulers' patrimonial relationship to sovereignty or its diplomats' courtly habitus. Of course, this means that the very possibility of Whig adherence to the rules of courtly-patrimonial diplomacy may be an unassertable counterfactual. More plausible is that the Tories might have retained power after 1714. Demonstrating an investment in the courtly-patrimonial game that their Whig counterparts lacked, the Tories might then have established British hegemony in Europe by acting as guarantors of the Utrecht settlement.

Ultimately, however, it was the Whigs, not the Tories, who set the tone of eighteenth-century British diplomacy. Returning to power in 1714, the Whigs ruled uninterruptedly *until 1760* (Williams 1962). Thus it is no surprise that Britain continued to diverge from the courtly-patrimonial forms of continental diplomacy—and that Britain's capacity for geopolitical governance was continuously suppressed. Nor is it surprising that France continued to exert influence and leadership throughout Europe—but not in Britain itself. Tellingly, after the Peace of Utrecht, the legal principle of the balance of power did not again appear in a major European treaty until the Congress of Vienna in 1814–1815. It is hardly a coincidence that the treaties

surrounding the latter, which would objectify balance-of-power *ideology* much more thoroughly than Utrecht ever had, were founded, *in practice*, not on balance at all but on the hegemony of one European state in particular: none other than Britain (Schroeder 1992).

Chapter 6: Conclusion

In this dissertation, I have sought to explain the relative ability of France and inability of Britain to exercise governance in European geopolitics between 1688 and 1783. By doing so, I have expanded theories of geopolitical governance beyond their traditional focus on military and economic power. That France exercised relatively effective and durable influence and leadership over other polities in eighteenth-century Europe, while Britain was considerably less successful in these respects, is a fact that remains puzzling for traditional theories. For it was Britain, not France, that enjoyed military and economic primacy throughout this period (though France was always a runner-up). The implication, I suggested, is that while extensive arrays of military and economic power may indeed constitute necessary conditions of effective geopolitical governance, they are not sufficient to bring it about. Incorporating recent insights from cultural theories of geopolitics, in particular, I argued that this is because a state's geopolitical governance depends as well on its symbolic capacity to secure recognition from rival polities.

In making this argument, I also sought to advance and reconstruct cultural theories themselves by identifying social conditions under which symbolic capacity obtains in the first place. In marked contrast to approaches that essentialize certain cultural formations as inherently more or less suited to securing recognition—most prominently the literature on soft power (Nye 1990, 2004)—I maintained that the conditions for recognition are fundamentally relational. A key basis of recognition, I suggested, is a social fit or homology between the sociopolitical structures of a governing state and of those states over whom it projects its governance. In particular, states tend to elicit recognition to the degree that (a) their diplomatic agents embody habitus that are relatively congruent with the diplomatic habitus of competitor states, and (b) their social relations of sovereignty converge with those in which competitor states are embedded. Under such conditions, a materially dominant state is liable to convert its military and economic capacities into effective geopolitical governance.

Specifically, then, I showed that France's convergence with both the patrimonial relations of sovereignty and the courtly mode of habitus that prevailed in eighteenth-century continental Europe allowed it to translate its significant military and economic capacity into a significant degree of governance over European geopolitics. By contrast, eighteenth-century Britain's even greater military and economic capacity translated into considerably less governance due to its divergence from both the patrimonial relations of sovereignty of major European polities and the courtly mode of habitus of their diplomats. That eighteenth-century Britain failed to convert its material *dominance* into geopolitical *hegemony*, I argued, is thus ultimately explained by this lack of social fit between Britain and the major polities of continental Europe.

Seen in this way, my argument has broader implications for how we understand and explain the role of geopolitics in the European transition to modernity (Reed and Adams 2011), a core area of analysis for historical sociology as well as international relations theory. It also bears more widely on theories of hegemony in world politics, including in the present day. In the remainder of this conclusion, I tackle these issues in turn.

Geopolitics in the Transition to European Modernity

The results of my analysis offer a strong corrective to what remains the orthodox understanding of the history of sovereignty, and of geopolitics more generally, in both

international relations (IR) and historical sociology: namely, an ongoing tendency to overestimate the *modernity* of states and their relations in seventeenth- and even eighteenth-century Europe. Specifically, these fields have tended to locate the advent of modern (impersonal, territorial) sovereignty amid the crucible of the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648), especially the Peace of Westphalia (1648) that concluded it. From such a perspective, Westphalian sovereignty *is* modern sovereignty. This claim has become so taken for granted in the academy that a scholar as tangentially related to the specific historical debate as is Nancy Fraser (2007) can refer to a “post-Westphalian world” to describe the present era of globalization. Interestingly, while some IR scholars have begun to challenge this narrative (Branch 2014; Lacher 2005, 2006; Osiander 2001, 2007; Reus-Smit 1999; Teschke 2002, 2003), it remains altogether more firmly entrenched in historical sociology. Bearing witness is the received wisdom that groups together England *and* France as the two canonical—hence analytically substitutable—cases of modern state formation, emblematic of a single historical type or category: whether the “capitalized coercion” path to the “national state” (Tilly 1990), the “organic state” (Mann 1986), or the “sovereign, territorial state” (Spruyt 1994). Equally telling is the continuing insistence of world-systems-inspired scholars that Westphalia represents the founding moment of modern geopolitics (Arrighi 1994; Arrighi and Silver 1999; Hung 2017)—which even includes those whose appreciation for postcolonial theory renders them otherwise suspicious of modernizing narratives per se (Go 2008:211–212).

Writing in an edited volume devoted to the current state of sociological theory, for instance, Ho-fung Hung (2017:111) reiterates the received wisdom in this regard, taking as given that “the Thirty Years War (1618–1648) marked a prolonged period of rivalry between the declining Spanish empire and a group of *capitalist states* that resulted in the rise of *Dutch hegemony*, under which the consensual principle of sovereignty *as dictated by the Treaty of Westphalia* (1648) became the ground rule of international politics *until today*” (emphasis mine). Unfortunately for historical sociology (and social theory), however, everything about this narrative—to put it bluntly—is wrong. First, Westphalian sovereignty was thoroughly non-modern. As contemporaries were well aware, it was killed at the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, which established large zones of restricted, conditional sovereignty in the heart of the former German empire, thereby rejecting unequivocally the classical, seventeenth-century definition of sovereigns as those who enjoyed supreme authority within their respective domains (Tooze 2014:255–320). Perhaps it was dead already.¹ Second, as the literature that I have cited in this dissertation shows just as clearly, the vast majority of early modern European states were in no sense capitalist, at least in no meaningful sense whereby capitalism is defined with any degree of historical specificity. For these states remained embedded, to a significant degree, in subsistence economies in which production for exchange was far from generalized and profits were not primarily made through the exploitation of wage-labor at the point of production but rather secured through the legally mandated taking of already-existing surpluses after the fact. And finally, while the seventeenth-century Dutch may have been hegemonic in a purely economic sense, they played no leadership role whatsoever in the Westphalian settlement: “The two dominant post-Westphalia powers were rather France and Sweden, who supervised the treaty provisions as quasi-hegemonic guaranteeing powers” (Teschke 2003:136). In fact, having signed

¹ Meanwhile, in England and, a fortiori, its former settler colonies like the United States, Westphalian sovereignty was never really born. Its development was cut short to the degree that the development of generalized personal power was itself short-circuited in the revolutions of 1640–1649 and 1688 (Brenner 1993:638–716; Corrigan and Sayer 1985:72–86; Teschke 2003:250–261; Wood 1991:43–80).

a separate peace with Spain earlier in 1648, the Dutch were not even present at the Peace of Westphalia, strictly defined, nor do these treaties mention the Dutch (Osiander 2001:268).

In stark contrast to the conventional narrative, this dissertation has enrolled substantial evidence, at the level of diplomatic practice, to support the conclusion that the prevailing form of sovereignty in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe, far from impersonal and abstractly territorial, was personalistic, proprietary, and by-and-large dynastic. European polities did indeed converge on a widely shared form of sovereignty, which did indeed entail a rupture with the “parcellized” sovereignty—or suzerainty—of feudalism (Anderson 1974:15; Sahlins 1989:28). In these respects, the phrase Westphalian sovereignty is entirely apt, corresponding essentially to what I have called generalized personal power (cf. Gerstenberger 2007). But Westphalian sovereignty was *not* modern sovereignty; it entailed, in the words of Benno Teschke (2003:191), “a *sui generis* social formation.”

Against the old orthodoxies of historical sociology and IR, this account dovetails with the new orthodoxy of a revitalized diplomatic history, which posits a distinctly pre-modern, “old-regime” culture of diplomacy in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe—and possibly beyond (Adams and Cox 2011; Bély 1999; Black 2010; Frigo 1991, 2000; Hennings 2016; Kugeler 2006; McClure 2006; Mori 2010; Mösslang and Riotte 2008; Oresko et al. 1997; Scott 2007; Storrs 1999; Thomson 2005). The “new diplomatic historians” thus guard against anachronistic and teleological tendencies to read modern sovereignty back into its Westphalian precursor, tendencies which deny the historical variability of sovereignty itself. Yet in issuing their corrective, new diplomatic historians risk ignoring equally important *synchronic* variations, overstating the cohesiveness and uniformity of the cultural form that they describe.² As this dissertation has shown, eighteenth-century France and Britain conform no better to a single case of “old-regime” diplomacy than they do to a single case of “modern” sovereignty.³

This is emphatically not to reject the notion of an old-regime diplomatic culture, however, nor is it simply to say that all cases are singular (though they are). Rather, French

² Major exceptions here are Kugeler’s (2006) and Thomson’s (2005) unpublished dissertations, which—not incidentally—are the only such texts that take an explicitly comparative approach.

³ In terms of *theory*, inattention to this kind of synchronic variation seems to derive from the historical profession’s wholesale turn against Whiggish notions of exceptionalism (English, French, American, or otherwise). In my view, this is unfortunate: it would be much better to say that exceptions only over exist *with respect to* theoretically relevant dimensions of interest. And while such dimensions are, in principle, infinite—which is why exceptions are never unproblematically given—all research, in practice, starts from certain theoretical premises, and not others, that sensitize us to certain dimensions, and not other ones. And in this sense, exceptional cases remain absolutely central—on some accounts, they drive scientific development (Kuhn 1962; Lakatos 1970)—provided that we are explicit about our theoretical premises. In terms of *method*, such inattention follows from the decline of comparative history in favor of transnational, “connected,” and “entangled” histories (what the French call *histoire croisée*). That is, to the degree that connections are everywhere, it is understandably harder to identify differences. (Alternatively, while those approaches that highlight core-periphery relations, like the postcolonial one, do see difference, they maintain that difference is so deeply constituted by the relation itself as to render core and periphery incommensurable in the first place.) Strong advocates of the transnational turn would thus seem to suggest that things which are entangled cannot also be compared (Go and Lawson 2017:5). And yet, Marc Bloch (1928) long ago showed how both unconnected *and* connected cases could be fruitfully compared, Bloch himself preferring the latter (see also Steinmetz 2004, 2012)—although here, it must be admitted that the *sociological* profession has not helped matters with its enduringly positivistic emphasis on the “independence” of cases.

diplomats did adhere to old-regime diplomatic culture, while British diplomats did not. What I am arguing, then, is that Britain ceased to partake of old-regime diplomatic culture precisely to the extent that Britain, by the eighteenth century, ceased to *be* an old regime. The specificity of eighteenth-century European geopolitics thus lies in the interaction between a numerically preponderant set of courtly-patrimonial states and a materially dominant, parliamentary-capitalist Britain (Lacher 2006; Teschke 2003). But of course, Britain enjoyed military and economic dominance in the eighteenth century *because* of its parliamentary sovereignty and its capitalist relations (Allen 2000, 2001, 2009; Brenner 1985a, 1985b; Brewer 1989; Lachmann 2000, 2003, 2009; North and Thomas 1973; O'Brien 1996; Prados de la Escosura 2004; Teschke 2003; Winch and O'Brien 2002). Ironically, then, the very factors that promoted Britain's military and economic dominance impeded its geopolitical governance in eighteenth-century Europe. To be clear, saying this is by no means to suggest that an old-regime style of diplomacy is most effective *in general*, a claim found among some diplomatic theorists with a penchant for tradition (Kissinger 1995; Morgenthau 1959). Quite the contrary: the efficacy of diplomacy, far from inhering in any substance, rests on a *relational* fit between structures. And structures evolve over time.

Reinterpreting early modern European geopolitics and sovereignty in this way also has profound implications for explaining when, where, and why modern states did in fact emerge across Europe and elsewhere. As discussed in the introduction, traditional theories of state formation tend to emphasize the same set of military and economic factors that the literature on geopolitical governance and hegemony does. More recently, and in contrast, historical sociologists have turned their attention to the cultural and symbolic determinants of state formation, complementing the conventional focus on coercive and fiscal activities of states with the legitimating, normalizing, and classifying mechanisms that may enable those activities in the first place (Adams 2005; Bourdieu 2014; Gorski 2003; Loveman 2005; Wilson 2011). Despite this development, however, the standard explanation for the diffusion or *institutionalization* of the modern state—the process by which bureaucratic, territorial, relatively autonomous authority structures won out over rival polity forms—continues to privilege its military effectiveness and/or economic efficiency. Whatever its origins, the eventual dominance of the modern state in Europe—and hence the globe—stemmed, according to most accounts, from its functional advantages with respect to rivals: city-states, empires, all non-bureaucratic and non-territorial authorities. Basically, the modern state prevailed because it was better at waging war, raising taxes, and reducing transaction costs of all kinds (Mann 1986; Spruyt 1994; Tilly 1990).⁴ Through a sort of neo-Darwinian selection process, then, European polities converged on the institutional logic of the modern state, while alternative forms were eliminated. To borrow the

⁴ Even Gorski's (2003) thoroughly cultural account stresses the competitive advantages of the modern state. To be sure, Gorski explains the *genesis* of the modern (rational-bureaucratic) state, in Weberian fashion, by way of a cultural (indeed, religious) impulse exogenous to the functional requirements of existing structures. Once extant, however, the bureaucratic state reveals itself to be "more effective and efficient than one which is patrimonial and corrupt" (Gorski 2003:35). Thus Gorski tacitly endorses an equally Weberian account of the modern state's institutionalization—namely, that "[t]he decisive reason for the advance of bureaucratic organization has always been its purely technical superiority over any other form of organization" (Weber [1922] 1978:973). What such accounts miss, I am suggesting, is the degree to which the relative efficacy of a polity form is conditional on its specific historical context, the extent to which *different* sociopolitical arrangements are more or less suited to *different* socio-historical environments. See, however, Gorski and Sharma (2017) for a move in this direction.

language of organizational sociology, the rise of the modern state is thus seen as a case of “competitive isomorphism” (DiMaggio and Powell 1983:149–150).⁵

But if the rise of the modern state was a process of selection by the environment of the interstate system, and yet—as I have stressed throughout—military and economic power is insufficient to explain influence and leadership within that system, then military effectiveness and economic efficiency do not suffice to explain the rise of the modern state either. In fact, it may be better to view the whole process as one of “institutional isomorphism” (DiMaggio and Powell 1983:150–154). This would mean that the modern state won out over alternative forms because of its greater legitimacy rather than—or in addition to—its military and economic competitiveness. After all, the British state was actually much more “modern” (bureaucratic, impersonal, autonomous) than its rivals in eighteenth-century Europe, and it outperformed them militarily and economically as well. Yet such success did not induce other European elites to adopt the British polity form, because it was simply not legitimate to them. Ultimately, this was rooted in the fact that the British polity form did not fit with their means of reproduction as courtly-patrimonial elites. In that sense, the British state was uniquely *ill-adapted* to its geopolitical environment. For the British model to become a plausible alternative, then, the courtly-patrimonial arrangements of European geopolitics had to cease working for European elites themselves; that is, they had to be deligitimated *from within*. The most likely way that this happened was through the French Revolution and the events that it set in motion.⁶

The Future of World Hegemony

This study also contributes to explanations of world hegemony, which I have defined as the limiting case of geopolitical governance, its exercise over all other actors in a system of polities (see also Arrighi 1990, 1994, 2007; Cox 1981, 1983, 1987; Gilpin 1981, 1987; Keohane 1984; Lachmann 2014; Wallerstein 1984, 2002). In particular, although the geopolitical influence and leadership of eighteenth-century France never reached the threshold of hegemony as typically defined, the mechanisms promoting French governance and inhibiting its British alternative offer hypotheses to guide research about hegemony in subsequent centuries.

Specifically, the “negative case” of eighteenth-century Europe sheds light on analogous cases in the world system: cases in which a materially dominant state fails to translate its dominance into hegemony. As most accounts now recognize, the United States already enjoyed globally dominant economic and military capabilities by the end of the First World War, yet it did not exercise hegemony over the capitalist West until 1945 (Kennedy 1987; Kindleberger 1973; Tooze 2014). And dominance without hegemony increasingly characterizes the United States in twenty-first-century world politics as well (Lachmann 2017; Tooze 2018; Walt 2018). Future research, therefore, might seek to explain these critical moments by looking for disjunctions between the sociopolitical relations in which the elites of a dominant yet non-hegemonic state are embedded and those that characterize their major counterparts abroad.

To take a contemporary example, American elites have arguably rediscovered patrimonial strategies of reproduction in recent years, entwined forms of economic accumulation and political rule that blur the very boundaries between the state and the market (Lachmann

⁵ Spruyt (1994:257) draws this connection explicitly.

⁶ See Sewell (2005c) for the symbolic ruptures and reconfigurations set in train, largely unintentionally, by the storming of the Bastille in July 1789.

2011; Neely 2018; Riley 2018). Of course, the entire developed world has moved in this direction to some degree, as global capitalism has become increasingly oligopolistic. Nevertheless, all is not homogeneous. It is interesting to note, in particular, that the most rigorous champions of market discipline now reside, not in the United States, but in the Eurozone. As the global financial crisis of 2007–2010 laid bare, it is the latter that remains much more committed to a politics of austerity—even at significant cost to profit margins—whereas American policymakers have revealed themselves much readier to deploy the full powers of sovereignty in support of corporate balance sheets. This contrast in approaches to economic policy has had eminently geopolitical effects. As Adam Tooze (2018:202–219) has shown, it was one of the reasons why the United States failed to embed its strictly technical response to the global crisis in a broader *hegemonic* ideology—something on par with, say, the symbolism of the Marshall Plan—even as it enrolled its ongoing material *dominance* to bail out both the American and the European banking sectors, operating as a lender of last resort to the world economy as a whole (see also McDowell 2017:139–174). In this sense, the discrepancy between a (neo-patrimonial?) American elite and a (persistently neoliberal?) European one actually predates the Trump administration’s open attack on the so-called liberal international order, with its potentially debilitating consequences for American hegemony. Indeed, one might suggest that this discrepancy is a condition without which such an attack would not have been conceivable.

More broadly, however, by highlighting failures to convert material dominance into geopolitical governance as recurrent phenomena in the history of world politics, my analysis questions the degree to which the present predicament of the United States is in any way anomalous at all. On the contrary, the sheer scale of the combined military, economic, *and* cultural power that the United States wielded during the post-World War II period should probably be seen as the true historical anomaly. If that is indeed the case, then we need to ask: is the cyclical imagery of recurrent hegemonic rise and fall that characterizes basically the entire literature on this topic inappropriately generalizing from the extraordinarily singular experience of the United States in the postwar period? Could it be the case that the other supposed hegemonies of the modern world system, the seventeenth-century Dutch and perhaps even the *nineteenth-century* British, despite their primacy in the military sphere and the world economy, were never truly hegemonic in the sense of exercising the kind and degree of global governance that the postwar United States really did exercise?⁷ If these suspicions are in fact correct—and they remain empirical questions for future research—then the present era of American hegemonic decline should be seen less as a crisis to be undone than as a return to a more profound historical norm, with all the dangers, but also the possibilities, which that implies.

⁷ See Lacher and Germann (2012) for an important statement to this effect.

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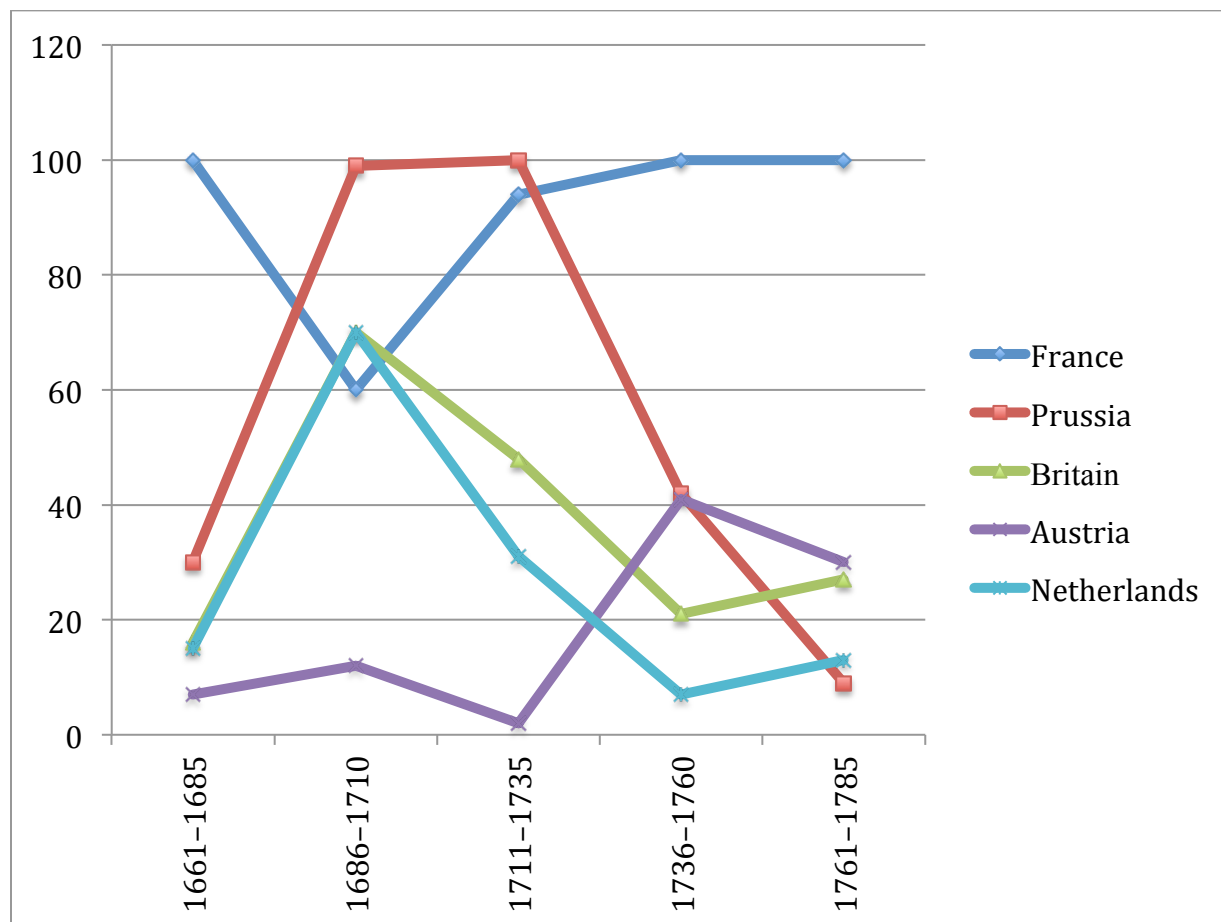
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Appendix A: Betweenness Centrality in Interstate Treaties: France, Britain, and their Major Rivals, 1661–1785



Note: Betweenness scores standardized on a 100-point scale