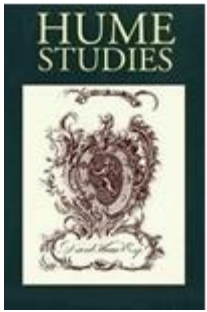

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Abstract: This paper examines David Hume's vision of how maritime trade opened up new strategic prospects and challenges for England in the Stuart age. It shows that his emphasis in the *History of England* was not simply European, as most Hume scholars have believed, but, more importantly, trans-Atlantic. He maintained that England's maritime trade in America and the West Indies from the seventeenth century onward tied her fortunes to the opaque and uncertain destiny of imperial politics. This had important implications for the dynamic relationship between Britain and its American colonies as well as for the resulting contest of European powers around the world. This paper shows that maritime trade served as the focal point for Hume in explaining England's role in the European balance of power. Although some attention has been drawn to this aspect, no systematic study has investigated his Stuart history as an important text for understanding his views on foreign policy. This paper fills the gap by explaining the connections between his views on political economy and foreign policy It shows how he explained the crucial importance of trading interests in the English strategic thinking as well as why the European balance of power was significant for England's maritime security and national interests.

The problem of the balance of power within the European state system constituted an important part of Hume's historical vision. From the vantage point of

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mid-eighteenth-century Europe, the maxim of the balance of power, proven to be a universal principle in Greek and Roman history, was believed by many to be essential to mutual prosperity and security (Sheehan, *Balance of Power*, 97–116).[1] This was particularly because France, partaking actively in the international competition for commercial wealth in Europe and the New World, created increasing anxieties over the danger of universal monarchy. Hume was a strong advocate of the classical doctrine of the balance of power, which, he observed, was "founded . . . on common sense and obvious reasoning" ("Of the Balance of Power," 157). Yet his defense of the balance of power was not simply made through the prism of Thucydides's *Peloponnesian War* or Cicero's *Republic of Rome* (Ahn, "British Strategy," 98–153).[2] His views on foreign policy demonstrated a clear understanding of England's progress towards a trans-Atlantic empire as well as of its new role within the European state system (Armitage, *Ideological Origins*, 188–91).

In the past few decades, Hume's views on foreign policy have invited some degree of interest. Duncan Forbes contended that Hume's argument for the balance-of-power doctrine indicated his adherence to the cosmopolitan ideal. According to Forbes, Hume consistently advocated a cosmopolitan or, more precisely, a "Europocentric" view of geopolitics ("European Dimension," 57–60). This is in contrast to the insular views of the mid-eighteenth century, when England had commonly been seen as an island nation. Karen O'Brien and Robert Manzer have echoed this reading, placing Hume's integrated continental strategy in the context of a mid-eighteenth-century public call for a new geopolitics of emancipation from universal monarchy, from autocratic rule, and from religious oppression (O'Brien, *Narratives*, 56–92; Manzer, "Promise," 369–82). Frederick Whelan has adopted a comparative approach, bringing into focus the significant lessons Hume drew from Machiavelli's statecraft. In Whelan's view, Hume endorsed a realistic approach to foreign policy by taking into account all the potential costs and benefits (Whelan, *Hume and Machiavelli*).[3]

Although the above works have shed important light on Hume's strategic orientation, they have not scrutinized his close examination of the infighting among European states and of the political uncertainty continuously faced by England abroad. This is partly because these works have more often than not focused on Hume's essays rather than on his *History of England*. While J. G. A. Pocock and Istvan Hont have contended that Hume's starting point was England's role as a trading nation, they have not explained how he connected commercial interests to England's strategic role in Europe in the Stuart age (Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, 423–61 and *Barbarism*, 2:163–257; Hont, "Commercial Society," 54–94). Emma Rothschild devoted some attention to Hume's *History*, yet her focus has been more on the moral and economic aspects of Hume's views of the Atlantic world than on their foreign policy implications (Rothschild, "Seagods," 81–96; "Atlantic Worlds," 405–49).

The main goal of this paper is to show how Hume's vision of foreign policy was intrinsically connected to his observation that Britain had become a trading nation and that Britain's fast-paced progress towards a commercial empire had brought about a series of challenges to its national security. The reason for this reappraisal is twofold. First, the existing literature has not paid enough attention to Hume's account of how colonial settlement enabled England to carve out a position within the European state system. This paper focuses his argument that colonial interests should have been used as the most important leverage for England in the European balance of power. Second, this paper establishes the connection between Hume's political essays and his *History*. It highlights his intellectual development on the views of diplomacy and foreign policy, with particular focus on his argument against the mercantilism underlying the isolationist strategy in his time. A complicated, sometimes paradoxical, and yet essentially coherent picture emerges through investigating Hume's analysis of foreign policy in the context of his Stuart history.

The Jealousy of Trade

In his essay "Of the Jealousy of Trade" (1758), Hume wrote that "the increase of riches and commerce in any one nation, instead of hurting, commonly promotes the riches and commerce of all its neighbours; and . . . a state can scarcely carry its trade and industry very far, where all the surrounding states are buried in ignorance, sloth, and barbarism."[4] To this he added that as "a British subject" he prayed for "the flourishing commerce of GERMANY, SPAIN, ITALY, and even FRANCE itself" ("Jealousy of Trade," 351).[5] This statement has been picked over by generations of Hume scholars, and they have almost invariably focused on Hume's political economy. However, his concern was also strategic, because what was at stake was not simply how to gain the greatest material advantages from international trade but, more importantly, how to maintain England's national security within the European state system (Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, 462–505).[6]

Six years earlier, in his essay "Of the Balance of Trade" (1752), Hume had still maintained that some government regulation was necessary in order to stimulate domestic industry: "[a] tax on German linen encourages home manufactures, and thereby multiplies our people and industry. A tax on brandy increases the sale of rum and supports our southern colonies" ("Balance of Trade," 343–44).[7] Roger Emerson has suggested that this claim was very possibly based on Hume's observation of the successful operation of the British Linen Company in Scotland ("Scottish Contexts," 19). Established in 1746, this company protected the nascent Scottish linen industry by subsidizing domestic craftsmen and providing them with necessary facilities, which were at the expense of "the linen producers in Ireland, Holland, and the Baltic" ("Scottish Contexts," 18–19). According to the

General Report of the Agricultural State, and Political Circumstances, of Scotland, Drawn up for the Consideration of the Board of Agriculture and Internal Improvement (1812), Scotland in the middle of the eighteenth century remained agrarian "before the introduction of improved industry" (Sinclair, *General Report*, 1:605). More specifically, "[i]n every town and village, saddlers, carpenters, plough and cart wrights, mill-wrights (for threshing machines and fanners), masons, bakers, and butchers, now abound, where such trades before hardly existed" (Sinclair, *General Report*, 1:605). Hume was a keen observer of Scotland's transformation from a feudal to a commercial society during this time and was convinced that his native country would eventually follow the same path as England.[8]

Hume's admission of the need for some degree of government protection for trade was, nevertheless, pointedly refuted in his later essay "Of the Jealousy of Trade," (1758) in which he mounted a campaign against the protectionist policy which had consistently been upheld by the Walpole government. He argued against the "narrow and malignant opinion," according to which a nation's commercial wealth and power could be gained only by shouldering its rivals out of the competition (Hume, "Of the Jealousy of Trade," 347). Such a position revealed the strong influence of Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot, who had argued that an increase of imports and exports would stimulate industry and promote the interests of individuals (Fieser, *Early Responses*, xii–xiii; van de Haar, "International Political Theory," 236). Another source of inspiration for Hume, according to Eugene Rotwein, was Josiah Tucker—one of the leading exponents of free trade. As Rotwein has noted, Hume and Tucker exchanged letters on the poor-country/rich-country debate from March to July 1758, and Tucker's thoughts on this subject so impressed Hume that he completely renounced any residual protectionist tendency (Rotwein, "Introduction").[9]

Hume's endorsement of free-trade policy resembled in many ways the Tory position. Since the Prohibition of 1678, free trade had become a party principle for the Tories (Ashley, "Tory Free Trade," 338–39). They held that Britain's power relied chiefly upon the international demand for its industrial products, and the only way to maintain its maritime advantage in the face of fierce competition was to promote free trade. It was, therefore, a grave mistake for the Walpole government to continue the mercantilist policy that had been dominant since the Tudors. The longer the mercantilist policy lasted, the Tories argued, the more it would weaken British influence in Europe and undermine its capacity for self-defense.

Hume's adherence to the principle of free trade, however, did not incline him to show any sympathy towards the Bolingbroke-led Country platform, the target of which was not only Walpole's commercial policy but also his foreign policy (Ahn, "Anglo-French Treaty").[10] In contrast to Whig propaganda that emphasized the "corrupt" nature of men exemplified by a Hobbesian state of war, Bolingbroke's anti-government charge championed virtue and the "spirit of freedom" (Targett,

"Government and Ideology," 294–303). As David Armitage has pointed out, Hume, from the 1730s onwards, launched a challenge to "the ideological foundations of the anti-Walpolean, pro-imperial campaign" (*Ideological Origins*, 188–91).[11] For Hume, the party zeal behind Bolingbroke's patriotism had jeopardized British foreign policy because the latter's pan-Atlantic concept of British Empire had overstated the implications of Britain's success in maritime trade and overseas conquest (Armitage, *Ideological Origins*, 192–94).

For several decades, the connection between trade and conquest had been part and parcel of British public discourse on empire (Marshall, "Nation Defined"; Wilson, *Senses of the People*, 137–205). Daniel Defoe, in *The Evident Approach of a War; and Something of the Necessity of It, in Order to Establish Peace, and Preserve Trade* (1727), wrote that "[p]eace is a Friend of Commerce, and Trade flourishes under the Banner of the general Tranquility" (13). To this Defoe added that the power of Great Britain and its Allies "is always exerted to protect their Trade; 'tis their Business to keep the Seas open, the Ports open, and all the Doors of Commerce open for their Merchants, and for their Ships . . . if this cannot be done by peaceable and quiet Means, they must do it by Force, and so they are as ready for War as other People" (*Evident Approach*, 13).

Although Hume agreed that Britain's foreign policy was closely associated with its commercial interests, he believed that such a view was far-fetched. As an economist, he warned that the political arithmetic of colonization was incompatible with British mixed government, and therefore, it would be folly to believe that the politics of ancient commercial empires could be transplanted into modern Britain. Abandoning such hope, he argued, was the only way to maintain Britain's hard-won liberty (Ahn, "British Strategy," 219–87). Meanwhile, Hume was not sympathetic to the propaganda promulgated by the ministry that exaggerated the danger of the French military and of the Counter-Reformation. He feared that the exaggeration of such a danger, which had brought about so much jealousy of French commercial power, would lead England to adopt an isolationist position.

Hume's argument for free trade had a different strategic purpose than Bolingbroke's, aiming at modifying rather than completely overturning Walpole's continental strategy. His main worry was that the failure of the government to understand the importance of free trade might damage Britain's capability for national defense. As a trading nation, Britain needed to maintain free trade not only because it was essential to its competitive edge but also because its defense system was firmly anchored in the dynamics of market relations between Britain and the Continent (Hont, *Jealousy of Trade*, 185–266). In Hume's view, this system would be unavoidably damaged if Britain were to impose more trading barriers (Hont, *Jealousy of Trade*, 185–266). He observed that the protectionist tendency which underlay its isolationist position in foreign policy posed the most formidable obstacle to British strategic thinking. This thinking was demonstrated most

clearly by the Earl of Sandwich in the debate of the Upper House on taking the Hanoverian Troops into British pay on February 1, 1743. According to him, Britain should only command "the dominion of the sea" and avoid expensive wars with the formidable power of France (Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, 12:1071–83).[12] The "wanton expences" for experimenting in "the guardianship of the liberties of Europe," Sandwich argued, had led to the distresses of the public and the "heaviest calamites" (Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, 12:1072–73).

Such a view represented one of the two strands of thought in British strategic discourse in the first half of the eighteenth century.[13] As *The Annual Register* observed, one strand, championed by the "popular party" with little influence in Parliament, emphasized that Britain's power lay in its "maritime strength" (*Annual Register*, 11–12; quoted in Simms, *Three Victories*, 424–25). According to this view, seaborne trade had become the focal point around which English national interests, both domestic and foreign, ought to be articulated (*Annual Register*, 11–12). The priority should be to maximize commercial wealth with a strong navy, and this could only be achieved by avoiding "that inextricable labyrinth of continental politics" (*Annual Register*, 11–12).[14] The other strand, advocated by two factions with great parliamentary influence, emphasized that Britain's national security lay in the ability to defend its allies on the Continent (*Annual Register*, 10–11). From their perspective, "a considerable regular landforce ought to be constantly maintained," and the navy should only play a secondary role and "only to be cultivated and employed subserviently to the more comprehensive continental system" (*Annual Register*, 11).

In the mid-1750s, the rivalry between the two views escalated, with the focus shifting towards the other side of the Atlantic (Baugh, "Withdrawing from Europe."). Writing *The History of Great Britain, under the House of Stuart: containing the Reign of James I and Charles I* in 1752–1754, Hume observed that colonial differences with France in North America wrought huge domestic and geopolitical changes, and there was growing concern about whether Britain should place its priority on continental alliances or on naval supremacy (Lloyd, *British Empire*, 66–73).[15] From the perspective of Patriot Whigs, only a strong naval power could protect Britain's colonial interests and might even serve as a serious deterrent to France in Europe (Simms, *Three Victories*, 355–83). William Pitt the Elder, the leader of the Patriot Whigs, proposed naval supremacy as a part of the grand project of building a maritime empire. As his follower Robert Darcy, Lord Holderness put it, Pitt's principle was "that we must be merchants while we are soldiers, that our trade depends upon a proper exertion of our maritime strength; that trade and maritime force depend upon each other, and that the riches which are the true resources of this country depend upon its commerce" (Langford, *Eighteenth Century*, 24). With its vital interests invested in colonies and maritime trade, so the argument ran, Britain should maintain its naval supremacy and eschew costly wars on the Continent. The

Hanoverian dynastic link was a burden rather than an asset, because the need to protect the king's interests in Hanover could distract the government from maintaining both colonies and maritime power (Black, "Hanoverian Nexus," 10–27). However, such preoccupation with colonies and naval power was toned down by the Whig ministry, led at the time by Thomas Pelham, the Duke of Newcastle. The latter saw the imperative need for European alliances, because they could be used to contain France and prevent it from retaining colonial dominance. The security and long-term interests of the thirteen colonies, Newcastle maintained, demanded an encirclement of France by an Anglo-Austrian alliance buttressed by lesser powers such as the Netherlands and the German states (Simms, *Three Victories*, 355–83; Black, *System of Ambition*, 38–40).

In this conflict between isolationist and continental strategies, Hume came down on the side of the latter, which required Britain to side with the weaker Austria against the stronger France (Pocock, "Empire," 332). In 1742, he wrote to William Mure of Caldwell that he had given an Aye to "the Approbation of Treaties," referring to the Treaty of Seville (1729) and the Treaty of Vienna (1731) (Hume to Mure, 14 November 1742, 1:44). These treaties effectively substituted an Anglo-Austrian for an Anglo-French alliance, thus making France a rival rather than a partner. Article IV of the Treaty of Seville laid down that "the Commerce of the *English* and *French* Nations, as well in *Europe* as in the *Indies*, should be re-established on the Foot of the Treatise and Conventions antecedent to the Year One thousand seven hundred twenty five, and particularly, that the Commerce of the *English* Nation in *America* should be exercised as heretofore (Walpole, *Treaty of Peace*, 8–9)." Despite strong opposition from the Patriots, Hume believed that this move was a diplomatic victory because it provided a means to facilitate Britain's role as the main balancing force within Europe.[16] Four years later, in 1746, Hume accompanied Lieutenant-General James St. Clair as his secretary on a diplomatic mission to Turin and even participated in an unsuccessful raid on Brittany ("Diary," 18 Sept.–2 Oct. 1746, 1: 240–66). His commentary on this operation showed his belief that a unified Germany would overpower France and that the Hanoverian interests should be given due weight in Britain's strategic plan on the Continent ("Fragments," 1: 441–56).[17]

Such reflections were encapsulated in Hume's argument that the European balance of power was the desired means to English national security, most notably in his "Of the Balance of Power." Describing France as an ambitious power, he wrote that "[i]n the general wars, maintained against this ambitious power, Britain has stood foremost; and she still maintains her station. Beside her advantages of riches and situation, her people are animated with such a national spirit and are so fully sensible of the blessings of their government, that we may hope their vigour never will languish in so necessary and so just a cause" ("Balance of Power," 359). For Hume, only an Anglo-Austrian alliance could protect the European

balance by preventing the further expansion of the French empire (van de Haar, "International Political Theory," 233). He traced the balance-of-power doctrine back to ancient Greece, arguing that this maxim was "founded on true politics and prudence, and . . . preserved distinct for several ages the partition made after the death of [Alexander]" ("Balance of Power," 355).[18] In his view, this doctrine had served, and would continue to serve, as the strongest barrier against any great-power pretension from France. As Hume wrote:

> Europe has now, for above a century, remained on the defensive against the greatest force that ever, perhaps, was formed by the civil or political combination of mankind. And such is the influence of the maxim [of the balance of power] here treated of, that tho' [France], in the five last general wars, have been victorious in four, and unsuccessful only in one, they have not much enlarged their dominions, nor acquired a total ascendant over Europe. ("Balance of Power," 634)" [19]

Notwithstanding Hume's belief that the adherence to the European balance of power had been "founded so much on common sense and obvious reasoning," he warned that it had been actuated among the British more by "the ancient Greek spirit of jealous emulation" than by "the prudent views of modern politics" ("Balance of Power," 345). The dynamics of emulation, as Sophus A. Reinert has explained, produced perennial struggle between commerce and conquest in eighteenth-century Europe (*Translating Empire*, 13–72). For Hume, such struggle had led to a certain level of diplomatic inflexibility, such as carrying the war further than had been necessary ("Balance of Power," 634). As Armstrong Starkey has contended, Hume's worry was that "Britain's defence of the balance of power often concealed more predatory motives" (Starkey,"'To Encourage Others,'" 34). The most harmful consequences of a deep embroilment in the European struggle had been, for Hume, the accumulation of large debt, and this had been precisely Bolingbroke's concern. The latter would, in 1754, observe that "a moneyed interest being firmly established by this time, and such numbers being accustomed to make immense profit at the publick expense, there is no room to wonder, if we proceeded on the same plan during the reign of queen Anne" ("Some Reflections," 4:359). It is on the basis of the "cancerous" debt that Bolingbroke argued that "[t]he interest of Britain required, no doubt, that we should turn our eyes from the continent to our own island, and that we should improve the opportunity and the advantages which a peace gave us" ("Some Reflections," 4:360).

In his essay "Of Public Credit" (1752), Hume demonstrated exactly the same worry about mounting public debt (Hont, *Jealousy of Trade*, 33). He famously warned that "either the nation must destroy public credit, or public credit will destroy the nation" (174).[20] As he wrote, "our children, weary of the struggle, and

fettered with incumbrances, may sit down secure, and see their neighbours oppressed and conquered; till, at last, they themselves and their creditors lie both at the mercy of the conqueror" ("Of Public Credit," 177). This would lead to the "violent death" of public credit and eventually to the collapse of the state ("Of Public Credit," 177). In order to prevent this, Hume, together with Bolingbroke, proposed—to borrow Hont's expression—a "*coup d'état* against debt and creditors" (Hont, *Jealousy of Trade*, 336), which would eradicate public debt through voluntary bankruptcy. Hume admitted that voluntary bankruptcy would lead to an increase in interest rates, which would subsequently lead to a decrease in commerce and industry ("Of Interest," 132–33). Nevertheless, he maintained that more monetary sources would shift from creditors, mainly annuitants and stockholders, to merchants in the long run. For him, this would provide a stimulus for commercial activities and compensation for the losses incurred by the marginalization of moneyed interests ("Of Interest," 132–33). He was fully aware of the difficulties of implementing this plan, given the extensive influence of creditors in government, and yet he was adamant that a viable state apparatus with a well-coordinated financial system was essential to Britain's defense strategy ("Of Public Credit," 177).

Colonial Settlement and Trans-Oceanic Trade

In his Stuart history, Hume showed that England's preoccupation with colonial trade from the seventeenth century onwards had profoundly influenced its identity in Europe. As England embarked upon the path towards colonial wealth, he explained, maritime security became the first and foremost issue in national defense.[21] How to cast its role in Europe, therefore, depended largely on England's approach to colonization. Hume gave credit to the Stuarts for their establishment of American settlements "on the noblest footing that has been known in any age or nation" (Hume, *History*, 5:146).[22] He maintained that England had adopted a completely different—and far better—approach to colonial settlement than Spain. The gold- and silver-mining industries established by the Spanish needed constant injections of manpower and therefore had depopulated the mother country (*History*, 5:146–47).[23] In contrast, English merchants had, from the very beginning, occupied "the fine coast . . . which reaches from St. Augustine to Cape Breton," which had been neglected by Spaniards, and took important steps to initiate plantation projects of tobacco production (*History*, 5:147–48). According to Hume, although colonial settlement had started during the reign of Elizabeth, it was not until the reign of James I that England had begun to make a serious foray into trans-oceanic trade (*History*, 5:146–47). The expansion of trade routes created an opening for merchant adventurers. In particular, the discovery of "a more direct and shorter passage to Virginia" in 1609 reshaped the trade route

between England and its Virginian settlement, allowing their connection to be rebuilt without provoking Spain (*History*, 5:147).[24]

The Dutch, who had adopted an approach similar to that of the English, exerted monopolistic control of the spice trade through the Dutch East India Company. As Josiah Child observed in his *A New Discourse of Trade* (1690), "the Dutch, with good reason, esteem the trade of the East-Indies more profitable to them, than are the mines of gold and silver in America to the King of Spain" (120). Six decades later, Hume echoed this view by maintaining that the English approach to colonization had proven more successful than the one adopted by the Spanish. Unlike Davenant, who had criticized chartered companies for having stunted the development of a more efficient economy, Hume gave credit to such institutions in the earlier phases of colonization (*History*, 5:20). He maintained that it was not until James I had granted a new patent to the East-India Company that English merchants started to gain a foothold in that region (*History*, 5:145). Thereafter, chartered companies had played a significant role in building the maritime infrastructure not only by establishing a network of trading routes but also by making regular "recruits of provisions, utensils, and new inhabitants" (*History*, 5:147). Hume also noted that chartered companies had operated on a different basis from the previous tenuously-held settlements under Elizabeth.[25] More specifically, the chartered companies ensured the importation of the required raw materials for England's newly developing manufacturing base. This kind of institution, in Hume's view, had propelled commerce towards a modern phase. Nonetheless, he maintained that chartered companies should be abolished once their initial function had been fulfilled. On these grounds, he argued that Charles II's revival of the charter of the East-India Company had been unwise (*History*, 6:538). Referring to the 1624 Bill against monopolies,[26] he equated the removal of this kind of monopoly with the beginning of the development of economy and liberty. The resulting principle of civil liberty, he maintained, supposed that "every subject of England had entire power to dispose of his own actions, provided he did no injury to any of his fellow-subjects; and that no prerogative of the king, no power of any magistrate, nothing but the authority alone of laws, could restrain that unlimited freedom" (*History*, 5:114).

Hume maintained that colonies had been and were still a most vital asset, since the flourishing agricultural system of colonial economy had helped Britain acquire a highly competitive edge in the European market. Notwithstanding his concerns about the immorality of a plantation economy based on the low costs and the "little humanity" of slave labor ("Populousness of Ancient Nations," 386), Hume never entertained the possibility of giving up such an economic advantage.[27] A letter in Felix Waldmann's recently published *Further Letters of David Hume* provides interesting evidence. On March 20, 1766, Hume wrote to Francis Seymour Conway, first Earl of Hertford, on behalf of three London brokers, trying

to persuade Hertford to invest in a Grenada plantation (*Further Letters*, 65–69). As Waldmann relates, Hume's bank account showed that he had, a month earlier, lent £400 to one of the brokers, Mr. Stewart the wine merchant, leaving the suspicion that Hume himself might have invested in this plantation (*Further Letters*, 66). We may reasonably think that, for Hume, to circumvent the most immoral effects of plantation economy would mean giving up the built-in advantage supplied by slave labour, which had been part and parcel of trans-Atlantic trade.

Maritime trade, of which the slave economy had constituted a crucial part, played a central role in Hume's strategic vision. He observed that maritime power had become pivotal to English foreign policy since England's colonial settlements in the New World.[28] The imperative to seek out profit had been a continual *leitmotiv* of sea adventures, and through this process colonial trade had been gradually tied to England's obsession with maritime supremacy.[29] For Hume, a decisive contributor to England's sea power and its European standing had been colonial settlement. He claimed that "such advantages have commerce and navigation reaped from these establishments, that more than a fourth of the English shipping is at present computed to be employed in carrying on the traffic with the American settlements" (*History*, 5:148).

With the *raison d'état* becoming increasingly commercial, there was an intrinsic need for naval power because it was necessary to maintain a firm control of seaways, ports, and *entrepôts* and to protect merchants from privateering and piracy (*History*, 6:537). Hume noted that it was common practice to pillage merchant ships since the fifteenth century, and one of the accusations against the Duke of Buckingham in 1626 was his failure to protect merchant ships from being captured by the French (*History*, 5:169). Moreover, the difficulties of launching war on *terra firma* for England also made it necessary to rely on a strong navy for the sake of national security. "As England had no military force, while all the other powers of Europe were strongly armed," Hume claimed, "a fleet seemed absolutely necessary for her security" (*History*, 5:235).[30] Colonial settlement played an important part in building a navy, which was to underpin England's main advantage in both war and foreign policy. In particular, it created a substantial body of skilled seamen employed in merchant ships, who could be readily enlisted in time of war (*History*, 5:142). Such manpower could be maintained by merchants during peace time, thus reducing the financial burden on the government (*History*, 5:142).

Throughout his Stuart history, Hume displayed an optimistic view concerning colonial settlement and its role in Britain's grand strategy. He noted that there had been, from the very early phase of colonial settlement in North America and the West Indies, a concern about whether Britain should ever have planted colonies in such remote regions. As he wrote, "[s]peculative reasoners, during that age, raised many objections to the planting of those remote colonies; and foretold, that, after draining their mother-country of inhabitants, they would soon shake

off her yoke, and erect an independent government in America" (*History*, 5:142). In Hume's time, this critique was most pronounced in Josiah Tucker's works, notably his tract *A Brief Essay on the Advantages and Disadvantages, which Respectively Attend France and Great Britain* (1749).[31] Casting doubt on the view that colonial trade had brought about advantages to the mother country, Tucker raised concerns about England's being drawn into a long-distance contest for maritime trade among European states. He saw that the increasing significance of the East-India Company and the American colonies meant that competition for hegemony in the world economy would no longer be restricted to Europe. In 1664, the French minister, Jean-Baptiste Colbert, had inaugurated his project of mercantilist expansion to the Indian Ocean, and the rivalry between England and France in North America had thereafter escalated (Ames, *Mercantilism*, 66–88; Nester, *Great Frontier War*, 3–26). From Tucker's point of view, such rivalry had brought about important challenges for England's national defense. Three decades later, in his letter to Lord Kames in 1782, Tucker wrote, "I look upon it to have been a very *imprudent act*, to have settled any distant colonies at all, whilst there remained an inch of land in [G]reat Britain capable of further cultivation" (Kames, *Memoirs*, 2:180–81) Drawing on the example of Spain, he warned that American colonization not only drained population from the mother country but also staked the whole English economy on a "very foolish and absurd" quarrel with the French and the Spaniards (Kames, *Memoirs*, 181).

Although Hume did not cite Tucker in his critique of those "speculative reasoners," and there is no evidence that they had exchanged views directly in the years 1754 to 1756, when Hume was writing his *History of Great Britain*, it seems very likely that he was responding to Tucker's arguments.[32] In response to the latter's belief that colonial settlement had drained the home population, Hume thought that the reality might be that the English population had in fact increased. "Peopled gradually from England by the necessitous and indigent, who, at home, encreased neither wealth nor populousness," he explained, "the colonies, which were planted along that tract, have promoted the navigation, encouraged the industry, and even perhaps multiplied the inhabitants of their mother-country" (*History*, 5:147). Using William Petty's statistical evidence on the population in London (Petty, *Political Arithmetick*, 9–43), Hume wrote that, "[f]rom 1600, it doubled every forty years; and consequently, in 1680, it contained four times as many inhabitants, as at the beginning of the century" (*History*, 5:141).

In addition, Hume noted that maritime trade had boosted the growth of agricultural knowledge as manifested in the publication of numerous new "books and pamphlets, treating of husbandry" (*History*, 5:148). For him, maritime trade was largely responsible for the development of this branch of knowledge, which, in turn, resulted in a demographic increase. In his essay "Of The Rise and Progress of The Arts and Sciences" (1742), Hume wrote that "[t]he emulation, which naturally

arises among those neighbouring states, is an obvious source of improvement" ("Rise of Arts," 64). Later on, in "Of the Jealousy of Trade" (1758), he was to attribute the greatness of Great Britain to its ability to learn "[a]ll the arts both of agriculture and manufactures" from its continental neighbors (150). As a crucial consequence of maritime trade, knowledge transfer between rich and poor countries enabled the latter to imitate the former and share the benefits of trade (Hont, *Jealousy of Trade*, 269). Moreover, Hume maintained that maritime trade had provided stimulus to the development of sophisticated manufacturing skills, which, in turn, helped to establish England's nascent industrial base. In addition to the ship industry, Hume noted that "[s]everal new manufactures were established; in iron, brass, silk, hats, glass, paper, &c" (*History*, 6:538).

Unlike Tucker, who criticized colonial trade for having entangled Britain in the European struggle for universal monarchy, Hume argued that Britain was irrevocably bound to European geopolitics. He saw that the English and the Spanish had made competing claims regarding the colonies, and their respective claims had been built upon entirely different foundations (*History*, 5:75–76). The Spanish and the Portuguese justified their title to colonies not only by their "arts and arms" but also by papal authority (*History*, 5:75). They had "applied to Alexander VI. who [in 1493 and 1494] filled the papal chair; and he generously bestowed on the Spaniards the whole western, and on the Portuguese the whole eastern part of the globe" (*History*, 5:75).[33] On the other hand, the Protestant colonists "who acknowledged not the authority of the Roman pontiff, established the first discovery as the foundation of *their* title; and if a pirate or sea-adventurer of their nation had but erected a stick or stone on the coast, as a memorial of his taking possession, they concluded the whole continent to belong to them" (*History*, 5:75–76).[34]

It was hardly surprising that the English and the Spanish found themselves entangled in conflict regarding their claims to the American and West Indian colonies. As Hume noted, although Sir Walter Raleigh had "acquired to the crown of England a claim to the continent of Guiana" in 1595, such claim was not supported by any settlement (*History*, 5:76). Accordingly, the later settlement of the Spaniards in some part of Guiana created a source of conflict "on the river Oronooko" in the early seventeenth century (*History*, 5:76). Hume observed that England and Spain continued thereafter to trade with each other's colonies until the conclusion of "the first American treaty between England and Spain" in 1667 (*History*, 6:538).

For Hume, the security and strategic interests of the American and West Indian colonies depended on a stable European balance of power. The contest with other European states for colonial trade was not an imminent disaster but a potential opportunity to consolidate Britain's own defensive position on the Continent. Reflecting on Cromwell's project of invading the Spanish West Indies in 1654, Hume wrote that the national interest demanded "that balance of power, on which the greatness and security of England so much depend" (*History*, 6:79).[35]

He explained the Anglo-Spanish War (1655–1660) by reference to Cromwell's plan of transforming England into a consolidated trading bloc that could compete on equal terms with Spain in the West Indian colonies. Cromwell's more immediate goal in launching this war, according to Hume, was to pre-empt Spaniards from using Indian treasure, which "the extensive empire and yet extreme weakness of Spain" was unable to safeguard, and to finance the English army with these resources (*History*, 6:79).[36] Notwithstanding the failure of this ambitious project, England acquired possession of Jamaica from the Spanish—"a conquest of greater importance, than [Cromwell] was himself at that time aware of" (*History*, 6:82). Although Hume did not explain this in detail, he very possibly meant that England would compensate for its loss on the Continent by stemming the Habsburg tide in the New World.

Hume observed that the seventeenth-century colonial settlements in America and the West Indies had bolstered England's maritime supremacy and was setting the stage for its greatness in the eighteenth century. In addition to the conquest of Jamaica and Tangiers (formerly Spanish), England made significant progress in the competition with the Dutch colonists in America: "[t]he recovery or conquest of New York and the Jerseys was a considerable accession to the strength and security of the English colonies; and, together with the settlement of Pensilvania and Carolina, which was effected during that reign, extended the English empire in America" (*History*, 6:537). For Hume, increasing stakes in maritime trade might indeed distract the attention of the government from its traditional defense of continental interests. However, this did not imply that England was drifting away from the European state system, but rather it meant that colonial trade had become part and parcel of the pursuit of a European balance of power.[37] The American and West Indian colonies were, according to Hume, important sources of power which could consolidate England's position in Europe.

Hume noted that colonial interests constituted an important factor for England in making its European alliances. It explained why Charles II would eventually choose a Portuguese rather than a Spanish princess for marriage: "[t]he interest of the English commerce likewise seemed to require, that the independency of Portugal should be supported, lest the union of [the Crown of Portugal] with Spain should put the whole treasures of America into the hands of one potentate" (*History*, 6:178). In Hume's view, the bond with Portugal through dynastic marriage provided the most necessary support for Portugal to check the formidable power of Spain in both Europe and the Atlantic world, giving England the opportunity to advance its colonial interests.[38] He further observed that this move rendered it impossible for Charles to seek support from Spain against France and created obstacles to maintaining a strategic balance in Europe: "Charles [II]'s alliance with Portugal, the detention of Jamaica and Tangiers, the sale of Dunkirk to the French;

all these offences sunk so deep in the mind of the Spanish monarch, that no motive of interest was sufficient to outweigh them" (*History*, 6:199).

Tucker's most serious objection to remote settlement abroad had been that English colonies would eventually become independent of their mother country. He had been one of the first to foresee the independence of the American colonies. Hume, however, argued in his *History* that "[a] mild government and great naval force have preserved, and may still preserve during some time, the dominion of England over her colonies" (*History*, 5:148). His optimism regarding Britain's retention of its colonies was indeed confirmed by the huge victory Britain had won on the North American front in the French and Indian Wars (1754–1763). Its thirteen colonies would seize the opportunity of reducing France's colonial presence by expanding their own territorial claims. However, Hume was aware that Britain's control over its colonies depended on whether England could remain a "mild government," granting the commercial and political freedom demanded by the colonists. He soon realized that this kind of freedom would become utterly impossible, since the entanglement in the French and Indian Wars required imposition of increased taxes on the colonies.[39] Perceived by colonists as intrusive and unjust, these taxes severed the already sensitive link between them and the mother country.

These new events on both sides of the Atlantic led to a significant change in Hume's attitude to British colonial policy.[40] His cautionary remarks on the necessity for a "mild government" would, in 1768, be changed into fury, when Hume observed that the political connection to the thirteen colonies was on the verge of breakdown (Rothschild, "Atlantic Worlds," 418). As he wrote bitterly to Gilbert Elliot in 1768, "how I long to see America and the East Indies revolted totally & finally, the Revenue reduc'd to half, public Credit fully discredited by Bankruptcy, the third of London in Ruins, and the rascally Mob subdu'd" (Hume to Elliot, 22 July 1978, *Letters*, 2:184).[41] According to Hont, with the increasing tension between France and the allies on the Continent, which would soon lead to the Seven Years' War (1756–1763), Hume thought that the whole system of English government was on the verge of collapse and that the deficit finance of a war economy would ultimately lead to despotism (Hont, *Jealousy of Trade*, 325–53).[42] Seven years later, rage turned into despair. In his 1775 letter to William Strahan, Hume wrote, "if we retain any anger, let it only be against ourselves for our past Folly; and against that wicked Madman, Pitt; who has reducd [sic] us to our present Condition" (26 October 1775, *Letters,* 2:301). The navalist strategy engineered in the French and Indian Wars, he now understood, had in fact alienated American colonies because of the huge taxes needed to be levied there to pay off war expenses.

In this same letter to Strahan, Hume wrote that "[t]he Colonists cannot at any time [pay for an army of 20,000 men], much less after reducing them to such a State of Desolation: We ought not, and indeed cannot, in the over-loaded or

rather over-whelm'd and totally ruin'd State of our Finances" (Hume to Strahan, *Letters*, 2:301). He thus foresaw that the "Scheme of conquering the Colonies" was doomed to fail, and even if it were to succeed, there would be the persistent problem of how to govern them in "so wide and disjointed a Territory" (Hume to Strahan, *Letters*, 2:300–301). He commented that "a limited Government can never long be upheld at a distance," and implanting an arbitrary power in that region would be inconsistent with the internal organization of British government (Hume to Strahan, 2:300–301). In the latter case, "[w]e must . . . annul all the Charters; abolish every democratical Power in every Colony; repeal the Habeas Corpus Act with regard to them; invest every Governor with full discretionary or arbitrary Powers; confiscate the Estates of all the chief Planters; and hang three fourths of their Clergy" (Hume to Strahan, 2:300–301). All this would require greater manpower than was available (Hume to Strahan, 2:300–301). The inner structure of British government, therefore, became one of the most formidable obstacles to maintaining the American colonies. Perhaps Hume now realized the mistake he made in his Stuart history, namely, neglecting to consider how the structure of domestic government set constraints upon England's colonial policy.

The Quest for a Foreign Policy

In his Stuart history, Hume brought to bear a perspective on foreign policy somewhat different from that of his earlier discussion in "Of the Balance of Power." Previously he had seen the European balance of power simply as the desired means to English national security. In his Stuart history, by contrast, he was concerned with England's role as a driving force for a peaceful international order against Continental attempts at universal monarchy—the most formidable obstacle to political freedom throughout Europe.

Moreover, Hume's proposed English foreign policy in the *History* was based upon a more sophisticated understanding of England, namely, as a trade-based nation with colonies as its most valuable strategic asset. His emphasis on the context of contemporary continental politics, rather than that of ancient Greek empire, showed that he was not just a follower of the classical maxim of the balance of power. He maintained that England continually readjusted its role in foreign affairs in order to meet the demand of European geopolitics. Identifying the rivalry of Spain and France as the fulcrum of European politics since the beginning of the Tudor age, Hume maintained that the best policy for England had always been to support the weaker side. As he explained, "[t]he two great monarchies of the continent, France and Spain, being possessed of nearly equal force, were naturally antagonists; and England, from its power and situation, was intitled to support its own dignity, as well as tranquility, by holding the balance between them" (*History*, 4:55).

The first two reigns of the Stuarts, according to Hume, showed that their initiatives in foreign policy were not only irresolute but also misplaced. As a consequence, he observed, foreign policy had become a source of increasing conflict between Crown and Parliament. This was best illustrated by "murmurs and complaints against the king's neutrality and unactive disposition" in the crisis of Palatinate in 1620 (*History*, 5:83). The divisive answers to the question of whether England should send troops to help James I's son-in-law Frederick, who had been elected as "King of Bohemia" in the wake of the Protestant Reformation, demarcated the line between the Court and the Country parties (*History*, 5:556–59).[43] Although Hume noted the religious controversies behind this potential conflict between England and Spain, he observed that the question was equivalent to that of "whether peace and commerce with Spain, or the uncertain hopes of plunder and of conquest in the Indies, were preferable?" (*History*, 5:83–84). He believed that trading interests should weigh far more than religious principles. It was based on this reasoning that he sided with the Court's appraisal of the situation: the danger for England had been distant, there were difficulties of launching a long-distance land war, and a naval attack could cause little distraction to the enemy (*History*, 5:83).

From the perspective of the Country party, however, the Court had dangled the tantalizing possibility of disabling the Spanish Habsburgs' command of its maritime borders. Motivated by Protestant zeal, the Country party felt an imperative to push the state to adopt an interventionist strategy. This was one of a handful of cases throughout his Stuart history in which Hume inclined to the Court position. As he argued, "interposition in the wars of the continent, though agreeable to religious zeal, could not, at that time, be justified by any sound maxims of politics" (*History*, 5:83). This shows his approval of James's perception of England as a member of the European state system, with priority given to maintaining "peace and commerce" with other European powers rather than defending religious freedom. This case also illustrates Hume's belief that the European balance of power now lay in England's collaboration with Spain to contain France.[44] Joining the war against Spain to rescue the Palatinate would no doubt contribute to the Protestant cause, but, for Hume, the battle lines were drawn between dynastic families (Bourbons, Habsburgs and Stuarts) rather than competing religions.[45] What mattered was, therefore, to maintain peace with Spain in order to contain the rising power of the French.

From this perspective, Charles I's seeking an alliance with Bourbon France to contain Habsburg Spain had been a dangerous move, because it indicated a false perception of the European balance of power. Failing to see that France had become a real threat, Charles's actions actually facilitated France's move towards European hegemony. Moreover, the wars against Spain in 1625 demanded a vigorous naval campaign for which Charles's government was ill-equipped. This was,

according to Hume, partly due to the shrinking revenue of the Crown, given high inflation after the importation of gold and silver from the West Indies, and partly because of the reluctance of Parliament to grant sufficient funds (*History*, 5:38–42, 84–86, 113–15, 161–66, 202, 247–48).[46] The constraints upon war finance due to the upheavals of domestic politics had, therefore, led to the later Stuarts' military passivity on the international stage.

In Hume's view, Stuart England should have maintained an intermediate position as long as the rivalry of the Bourbon and the Austrian families continued. As he explained:

> Nothing more happy can be imagined than the situation, in which England [during the reign of Charles I] stood with regard to foreign affairs. Europe was divided between the rival families of Bourbon and Austria, whose opposite interests, and still more their mutual jealousies, secured the tranquility of this island. Their forces were so nearly counterpoised, that no apprehensions were entertained of any event, which could suddenly disturb the balance of power between them . . . . And thus Charles, could he have avoided all dissentions with his own subjects, was in a situation to make himself be courted and respected by every power in Europe; and, what has scarcely ever since been attained by the princes of this island, he could either be active with dignity, or neutral with security. (*History*, 5:218–19)

Apart from the abortive attempt of a naval expedition against Spain in 1625, Charles followed the policy of neutrality, giving priority to colonial interests and naval dominance rather than engaging militarily with the major powers on the Continent. This, for Hume, was a reasonable policy given the geopolitical situation of England. As he observed, "England enjoys a profound peace with all her neighbours: And what is more, all her neighbours are engaged in furious and bloody wars among themselves, and by their mutual enmities rather ensure her tranquility" (*History*, 5:246).

Hume saw that trans-oceanic exploitation had brought a new dimension to foreign politics but that it would be unwise to stake national defense and a whole economy on naval power (*History*, 5:246). Arguing against the laws which forbad the king to keep "the militia under arms above fourteen days in the year," he observed that "[t]he situation of this island, together with its great naval power, has always occasioned other means of security, however requisite, to be much neglected among us" (*History*, 6:187).

Furthermore, Hume maintained that conflicts in colonial interests had to be determined within a broader European framework. A deliberate neglect of England's European position would soon lead to a fatal outcome for its thirteen

colonies, because French dominance on the Continent encouraged French expansion overseas. Hume stressed the strategic imperative of continental intervention, begun in the seventeenth century, to halt French expansionist projects. According to him, Charles II's selling Dunkirk to France for 400,000 pounds in 1662 could not be "justified by any party" (*History*, 6:183). He observed that "[t]he chief importance indeed of Dunkirk to the English was, that it was able to distress their trade, when in the hands of the French: But it was Lewis the XIVth who first made it a good sea-port. If ever England have occasion to transport armies to the continent, it must be in support of some ally whose towns serve to the same purpose as Dunkirk would, if in the hands of the English" (*History*, 6:183). By losing Dunkirk, an important stronghold on the Continent, England lost the opportunity of disturbing French trade and de facto facilitated French expansionist ambitions thereafter. By emphasizing this issue, Hume reiterated the need to contain the predominant power in Europe, which in the Elizabethan age had been the Habsburgs and then under the Stuart was the Bourbons (Whelan, "Balance of Power," 325). In his eyes, the security challenges facing England could not be avoided by simply remaining neutral: they required an active continental policy binding the Holy Roman Empire and the Dutch Republic more closely to England.

Hume showed that except for a two-year period of the Triple League with the United Provinces and Sweden (1668–1670), the Stuarts maintained a rather passive military stance after the Restoration. Dubbed, generations later, the "blue-water policy," this strategy had been generally regarded as a sign of impotency by seventeenth-century Parliamentarians.[47] Hume tended to agree with this view, namely, that the neutral stance of England had been caused, in part, by the personal incapacity of the Stuarts to pioneer any project on the Continent. The dilemma in Charles I's foreign policy, as Hume pointed out, was that "[t]erms advantageous to the allies must lose him the friendship of France: The contrary would enrage his parliament" (*History*, 6:303). For Hume, Charles's conduct was far from satisfactory: "[b]etween these views, he perpetually fluctuated; and from his conduct, it is observable, that a careless, remiss disposition, agitated by opposite motives, is capable of as great inconsistencies as are incident even to the greatest imbecility and folly" (*History*, 6:303).

Hume also noted that Charles I's isolationist foreign policy resulted, to some extent, from his concern that a deep entanglement with the Continent would provide Parliament with an excuse to encroach upon royal prerogatives. Since Parliament as legislature had no traditional right to interfere in state affairs, the Stuarts seemed to believe, and not without reason, that avoiding an active foreign policy could reduce conflict with Parliament. A costly war on the Continent would have meant reliance upon parliamentary supplies and the necessity to make concessions to the demands of Parliament. This concern, according to Hume, caused not only "feeble irregular transactions in foreign affairs" but also "a continual uncertainty

in its domestic administration" (*History*, 6:234). With mercantile spirit and Puritan zeal on the rise, Hume wrote, Parliament was hazarding the whole defense of the nation on one high-stakes project, namely abolishing the discretionary power of the Crown. Furthermore, the Commons "neither sufficiently considered the indigent condition of their prince, nor the general state of Europe; where every nation, by its increase both of magnificence and force, had made great additions to all public expenses" (*History*, 6:234). Compared to the "harmony" of the government after the Revolution of 1688, he claimed, "the parliaments [under Charles II] seem rather to have merited a contrary reproach" (*History*, 6:234).

For Parliament, however, a general sense of crisis in defending religious liberty in face of the progress of the Counter Reformation grew into a demand for continental intervention. Central to this view was the connection between Protestant freedom and political alliances on the Continent based on England's perception of itself as the leader in the Puritan network of religious and political opposition to Catholicism. According to Hume, the Parliament of this time was dominated by a group of "political puritans," who argued that English interests lay in the defense of Protestant religion against the Counter Reformation (*History*, 5:284–85).[48] This rising puritan spirit clashed unavoidably with the Stuarts' anxious desire to retain monarchical authority. Although Hume disapproved of this underlying motive of religion, he generally agreed with the Parliamentary position that English liberty owed its very existence to the maintenance of a diplomatic consensus in favor of a European balance of power.

If it had been excusable for the early Stuarts to maintain an uneasy neutrality, Hume argued, the Stuarts' adherence to the same policy after the Restoration was nothing but "ignominious" (*History*, 6:321). On the threshold of this era of transformation into a trading nation, he observed, Stuart England stood finely poised between opportunity and danger. In the geopolitics of the seventeenth century, its relationship with its main commercial rival—the Dutch Republic—was marked by violent oscillations between the poles of love and hate. The emergence of a dominant French power on the Continent, moreover, posed a continuous threat to its national security and religious freedom. It was in this context that Hume noted that the contest between an isolationist (or navalist) and a continental strategy emerged, and he took an unflinching stand for the latter.

Hume observed that, from the perspective of the Crown and the ministry, England's main interests lay in commercial imperialism. That is, its maritime advantages should be employed to shoulder out its commercial rivals, particularly the Dutch Republic, by means of warfare. This stance, however, would render it unable to enforce an anti-French alliance with other European nations, because the Dutch Republic had been an indispensible member of such an alliance. For the Crown, the discretionary powers had been endowed by "birth-right," and it was through royal prerogatives that the policies of national defense could be

determined and executed (*History*, 6:321). In Hume's view, the Stuarts consistently failed to understand the changes of English society and perceived government to be as absolutist as that under their Tudor predecessors. Such a view was behind Charles II's "highly criminal and dangerous" project of allowing France to buy an alliance with England and James II's failed attempt to support the Augsbourg alliance (*History*, 6:498–508).

For the people and Parliament, in contrast, England's strategic interests and religious freedom lay entirely upon the European balance of power, requiring alliance with the Protestant nations against the emerging dominant power of France (*History*, 6:303.).[49] Hume observed that "[t]he glory of preserving the balance of Europe, a glory so much founded on justice and humanity, flattered the ambition of England; and the people were eager to provide for their own future security, by opposing the progress of so hated a rival" (*History*, 6:217). Accordingly, the key to maintaining national security was the use of naval power to contain France, whose ambitions, once unchecked, would soon pose a serious threat to England on both sides of the Atlantic. Hume placed specific emphasis upon the insensible and yet speedy transfer of national wealth into the hands of the middle station, which included the monied interests, merchants, gentry and yeomen (*History*, 6:170). Unified and represented by Parliament, they maintained that national privileges were "so sacred and inviolable, that nothing but the most extreme necessity could justify an infringement of them" (*History*, 6:170). With the Stuarts insisting on a French alliance at the expense of England's traditional allies, mainly the Dutch Republic, the gulf between Stuart monarchs and Parliament grew. As will be seen in Hume's account of the rivalry between England and the Dutch Republic throughout the seventeenth century, this problem persisted.

Naval Supremacy and the Anglo-Dutch Wars

In the mid-eighteenth century, Britain's competitive advantage in the international market was rooted in its ability to maintain a strong navy (Black, *System of Ambition*, 80–94). Moreover, the defense of religious and political freedom also lay almost entirely upon that very navy. Hume acknowledged this in his Stuart history, and yet he argued that the overriding importance of naval power in England's national defense system should not lead to an isolationist policy. Rather, a navy should be central to the defense of English domestic liberty against royal prerogatives and to the security of Protestants against France and Spain. The demand for maritime supremacy in the Stuart age, Hume maintained, did not mean that England should have employed its sea power to edge out its commercial rivals, particularly the Dutch Republic, by means of warfare. Nor did it mean that England should have isolated itself from the European contest for power. In Hume's view, the question of how to use the navy to advance strategic and commercial interests

had posed three problems: how to perpetuate maritime capabilities for retaining an unchallenged route to the international market, how to use diplomacy to advance its long-term interests, and most importantly how to fight off attempts from the Continent to establish universal monarchy (Haakonssen, "Introduction," xxii; van de Haar, "International Political Theory," 233).

Hume praised the Stuarts for their efforts in establishing a professional navy, particularly for enlarging the fleet size and improving the administration of the admiralty (*History*, 5:141–42; 6:50, 537). In contrast to Elizabeth's navy-building efforts, he observed, the Stuarts had made far more substantial progress in modernizing the navy. Therefore, it was mainly the latter's endeavors that had developed England's unprecedented defense capacity. However, the navy had been under financial pressure from the start due to the divisive effects of a domestic rivalry of power between the executive and the legislative. While foreign policy decisions had always been the prerogative of the monarch, they could not be executed without parliamentary grants and, therefore, had to be built into the administrative processes through the organization of war finance.

Using the example of the navy's success in defending the fishing rights of English subjects in 1636 against "the herring-busses of the Dutch," Hume argued that the significant improvement of the navy had been largely due to "ship-money"—an indirect tax which had been levied at seaports since the reign of Elizabeth (*History*, 5:239). He noted that only two years earlier, there had been strong resistance when the government extended "ship-money" from seaports to the whole kingdom (*History*, 5:235). Such resistance revealed an increasing concern about inroads upon individual property since the Stuart accession. At a deeper level, Hume claimed that there was a fervent belief that the preservation of English liberty demanded elaborate constraints upon the sovereign prince (Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, 462–505). According to this belief, individual property and life needed to be protected from the arbitrary infringements of the executive. It was feared that granting to the Crown the right of levying arbitrary tax would lead inexorably to the collapse of "all ancient laws and institutions"—the cornerstone of "national liberty" (Hume, *History*, 5:247). This commitment to the ideal of liberty, in Hume's view, had been the fundamental obstacle for war finance, thereby threatening to weaken the capability for national defense. The desire to maintain the liberties of the people against royal prerogatives was fomented by Charles I's impolitic use of writs to levy ship-money, which, in Hume's view, had blurred the boundaries between the legislature and the executive. As he wrote, "[t]he defenceless condition of the kingdom while unprovided with a navy; the inability of the king, from his established revenues, with the utmost care and frugality, to equip and maintain one; the impossibility of obtaining, on reasonable terms, any voluntary supply from parliament: All these are reasons of state, not topics of law" (*History*, 5:247).

Hume saw that the exclusive reliance upon the navy together with the deficiency of war finance posed structural difficulties for England in maintaining the European balance of power. Moreover, the relationship with the Dutch Republic had led England to adopt a navalist strategy. The joint mediation of James I and Henry IV in the truce between Spain and the Dutch Republic in 1609 had, in Hume's eyes, shaped European politics for the next century (*History*, 5:37–38).[50] The resulting Dutch emancipation from Spanish tutelage put the Anglo-Dutch relationship on an equal footing for the first time. Moreover, England's delivery of the cautionary towns, "Flushing, the Brille and Rammekins," to the Dutch seven years later led to the "full liberty of the Dutch commonwealth" (*History*, 5:64–66). Throughout the Stuart age, as Hume showed, England was faced with the challenge of how to handle its competitive relationship with the Dutch Republic. With neither manufacture, except "ship building and the founding of iron cannon," nor trading skills, England was playing catch-up (*History*, 5:143).[51] Although wool was the staple product of England, the rudimentary state of manufacture required the English to export raw cloth to Holland, where it was dyed and dressed before being sold throughout Europe. It was not until the Third Anglo-Dutch War (1672–1674) that the art of dyeing woollen cloth was brought to England from the Low Countries (*History*, 6:538). Since the wool trade comprised nine-tenths of English export, the competition with the Dutch played a constant role in defining strategic relations (*History*, 5:143).

Hume pointed out that fear of French dominance in Europe had ensured a "close union and confederacy" between England and the Dutch Republic for nearly seventy years (*History*, 6:191–92). However, by the mid-seventeenth century the consolidation of colonial interests turned them into rivals. A confrontation between these two maritime powers, as Hume explained, brought about a series of changes to constitutional arrangements with far-reaching consequences to both domestic and foreign policies.[52] He maintained that the navy under the Stuart government had been used largely to promote trading interests at the expense of strategic ones. In his view, England's envy of Dutch dominance in maritime trade drove it to a new geopolitical vision. The three Anglo-Dutch Wars were triggered chiefly by the desire of the English to utilize their formidable power to promote commercial dominance.[53] Such a desire was based on the belief that England's hold of commercial wealth and power was dependent on its abilty to defeat the Dutch navy.

Antipathy towards the Dutch was manifested in the Navigation Ordinance of 1651, "which prohibited all nations from importing into England in their bottoms any commodity, which was not the growth and manufacture of their own country" (*History*, 6:46–47). This, for Hume, demonstrated more a jealousy of Dutch commercial advantage than a rational understanding of national interests. The Navigation Acts of 1651 and of 1660 forbade importation to England

by foreign ships, effectively banning the Dutch trade with England (Williams, *Ancien Regime*, 484–86). Hume observed that England had thereby snatched away the commercial advantages of the Dutch, despite the latter's successful maritime defense. After the first Dutch War (1652–1654), "the whole commerce [of the Dutch] by the channel was cut off: Even that to the Baltic was much infested by English privateers. Their fisheries were totally suspended. A great number of their ships, above 1600, had fallen into the hands of the enemy" (*History*, 6:50). This victory against the Dutch, Hume observed, reinforced England's stance as a dominant commercial power in Europe.

According to Hume, the second and the third Anglo-Dutch Wars, in 1664–1667 and 1672–1674 respectively, were actually fought for the benefit of the French. The second Dutch war had been the mirror image of the first, since it was triggered by competition in the Western African slave trade. Hume gave paramount importance to the Triple Alliance of England, Sweden, and the Dutch Republic (1668), which had effectively ended this war. This alliance was the result of anxieties over Louis XIV's territorial advances into the Spanish Netherlands in the War of Devolution (1667–1668) (*History*, 6:216–22). According to Hume, this alliance was a rare success of using diplomacy to achieve the long-term mutual interests of England and the Dutch Republic, thanks to the expertise and hard efforts of William Temple and Johan de Wit (*History*, 6:219–22).[54] The resulting Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle forced France to cease its expansionist claims in the Spanish Netherlands, which had been a buffer state not only for the neighboring Dutch Republic but also for the whole of Europe. "And thus all Europe," Hume claimed, "seemed to repose herself with security under the wings of that powerful confederacy, which had been so happily formed for her protection" (*History*, 6:223). It also, however temporarily, reconciled Crown and Parliament: "[t]he great satisfaction, expressed in England, on account of the counsels now embraced by the court, promised the hearty concurrence of parliament in every measure, which could be proposed for opposition to the grandeur of France" (*History*, 6:223). This anti-French diplomacy was, however, thrown into reverse in 1670, since Charles II soon retracted his position and once again chose an alliance with the French. This move effectively supported French ambitions, enabling France to make "considerable conquests" afterwards (*History*, 6:320–21).

In Hume's view, the third Anglo-Dutch war (1672–1674) was launched because of the old jealousy of Dutch commercial success. The Lord Chancellor, Anthony Ashley Cooper, first Earl of Shaftsbury, activated by the desire to destroy the Dutch Republic completely, argued that "the Hollanders were the common enemies of all monarchies, especially that of England, their only competitor for commerce and naval power, and the sole obstacle to their views of attaining an universal empire, as extensive as that of ancient Rome" (*History*, 6:273). As a consequence of the Dutch defeat, France used the opportunity to move closer to complete

hegemony in Europe. According to Hume, this had been mainly due to Charles's attachment to France and his failure to recognize the French threat and the necessity to maintain the European balance of power.[55] While Hume claimed that this could have been due to a character fault, "mysterious and inexplicable," he suggested that Charles' motive might have been to use French power as the main support for his monarchical authority (*History*, 6:448). Citing John Dalrymple, he noted that in 1677, Charles received from France two million livres in return for prolonging the adjournment of Parliament and thereby pre-empting strikes against France (*History*, 6:311). This amount, Hume had claimed earlier, had been paid on a yearly basis (*History*, 6:302). In addition to these "mean pecuniary motives," which rendered Charles' conduct "highly criminal and dangerous," the King seemed to have entertained the hope of resorting to France in case of conflict with Parliament (*History*, 6:302, 320–21).

Notwithstanding that the three Dutch Wars had inflicted great damage on the Dutch Republic and its trade, Hume claimed that this had been at the expense of England's long-term security interests.[56] In his view, the Stuarts had missed the opportunity of strengthening England's leading role against attempts at universal monarchy stemming from the Continent. This was due, in part, to their inability to understand where strategic interests lay and how to implement foreign policy wisely. The failure of Charles II to maintain a balanced continental strategy had not proved fatal to national security, Hume explained, only because colonial expansion and maritime power had allowed England to assume an intermediary role amidst the great-power pretensions in Europe. The acquisition of Tangiers provided England with an advantage in the bargaining with other European powers. The English title to Jamaica and Tangiers, both of which having belonged to Spain for more than a century, would be officially confirmed by the American treaty between England and Spain in 1667. In addition, both countries renounced the right to trade with each other's colonies (*History*, 6:538). Thus, Hume's vision of an English grand strategy went far beyond England's immediate sphere of interest on the Continent, because colonial settlement played a significant role in his formula for an active yet not over-interventionist foreign policy.

It is a historiographical commonplace to claim that the Glorious Revolution eventually ended the decades of conflict between England and the Dutch Republic.[57] From Hume's perspective, the strategic importance of the Revolution lay in that it not only reconciled two previously intransigent domestic forces but also united dynastically the interests of two great maritime powers (Israel, "Dutch Role," 105–62; Haley, "The Dutch," 21–34). The latter was crucial, because it meant that the Revolution had brought about an evolution of maritime strategy and a new definition of England's strategic interests (Pincus, *1688*, 305–65).[58] Since Hume did not write a post-Revolutionary history, it is hard to know which direction he would have pursued after the unification of English and Dutch interests.

Nevertheless, it seems clear that, for him, England's strategic role was thereby settled as the defender of commercial liberty against universal monarchy.

To sum it up, Hume's endorsement of the balance-of-power doctrine in his Stuart history was based upon an understanding of how English society had endorsed the fundamental principles of commerce. He reached a unique conclusion: there was an intrinsic need for a commercial society to defend its political freedom against universal monarchy. He highlighted the falsehood of the isolationist claims regarding naval supremacy by showing that maritime security should not be seen as a diversion but as part of an integrated continental strategy. In addition, continental alliances were essential to maintain England's commercial wealth and naval power because such alliances could pre-empt any rivals from challenging its maritime supremacy. Emphasizing the importance of maritime trade in devising foreign policy, Hume insisted that political leaders and the civilized public had to free themselves from ungrounded jealousy of trade. For him, this was essential to the implementation of the correct strategy, one that embodied both flexibility and modern prudence.

NOTES

1 In this book, Sheehan offers a general review of the development of the idea of the balance of power from ancient times to the seventeenth century (24–52). See also Dull, *Diplomatic History*, 13–25 and Thompson, *Protestant Interest*, 25–42.

2 See also Clark, "Realism, Ancient and Modern," 491–94. According to Clark, Hume's realistic thinking on foreign policy resembled that of Thucydides, whom he admired deeply.

3 See also Whelan's earlier paper "Balance of Power," in which Whelan draws an interesting parallel of the balance-of-power theme between Hume's *History* and William Robertson's *History of Charles V* (1769), (315–32).

4 "Of the Jealousy of Trade" first appeared in Hume's 1758 edition of *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects*.

5 See Hont, *Jealousy of Trade*, 185–266.

6 For a discussion of the rivalry between England and France in international trade, particularly in American and West-Indian colonies, see Black, *Necessary Enemies*, 134–58.

7 See Stockton, "Economics and Mechanism ," 296–320, particularly 306.

8 For a discussion of Scotland's economic and political conditions, see Colley, *Britons*, 118–34.

9 For a detailed discussion of the exchange between Hume and Tucker, see also Hont, *Jealousy of Trade*, 283–89.

10 For a discussion of Walpole's foreign policy, see Black, *System of Ambition*, 183–94. For a brief overview of Bolingbroke's foreign policy position against France, see Trevelyan, "Introduction," vii–x.

11 Hume's arguments against patriotism were in parallel with his encouragement for moderation in public discourse. See Schmidt, *Reason in History*, 291–93.

12 See also Western, *English Militia*, 104–26. Western has argued that this popular view against a continental war had important implications in the reform of the militia.

13 For a recent survey of the British public discourse on foreign policy debates of the time, see Ahn and Simms, "Great Power Politics."

14 Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, 462–505.

15 For a recent overview of this debate, see Simms, *Europe*, 107–110.

16 For the historical background of the Anglo-French relationship during this time, see Black, *Natural Enemies*, 1–35.

17 See Rothschild, "Atlantic Worlds," 410–13.

18 For a review of the eighteenth-century arguments regarding Britain's role as a balancer in European politics, see Haslam, *No Virtue like Necessity*, 89–127.

19 This passage first appeared in 1752, and was deleted in the 1770 and subsequent editions.

20 See Sonenscher, *Before the Deluge*, 51–52.

21 For a discussion of the role of sea power in modern European geopolitics, see Harding, "British Maritime Strategy."

22 For a general review of England's establishment of tobacco colonies in North America from the late sixteenth century to the seventeenth century, particularly in Virginia, see Lloyd, *British Empire*, 14–24.

23 For a study of the English and Spanish colonization in America in the seventeenth century, see Elliott, *Empire*, 88–114. For the impact of this colonial approach on Spanish war finance and European geopolitics, see Stein and Stein, *Silver, Trade, and War*, 40–56.

24 For a background of this part of colonial history, see Schwartz, "Virginia and the Atlantic World" and Heinemann et al., *Old Dominion*, 18–40.

25 For Hume's narrative of the two failed attempts at American colonization during the Elizabethan reign, one by Humphrey Gilbert and another by Walter Raleigh, see Hume, *History*, 4:216–17, 381.

26 The act is 21 Jas.1 c. 3.

27 For a discussion of the political implications of British slave trade, see Brown, "Politics of Slavery."

28 See Baugh, "Maritime Strength and Atlantic Commerce."

29 For an overview of Britain's colonial expansion from the Elizabethan reign, see Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, 3–50.

30 Hume was to make a more positive statement regarding a standing army in the last edition of his *History* (1778): "it seems a necessary, though perhaps a melancholy truth, that in every government the magistrate must either possess a large revenue and a military force, or enjoy some discretionary powers, in order to execute the laws and support his own authority" (*History*, 5:129). According to Duncan Forbes, this passage shows Hume's "half-hearted death bed conversion to the opinion of his friend Adam Smith, concerning the necessity of standing armies in modern states" (*Hume's Philosophical Politics*, 172). For Smith's view of standing armies, see *Wealth of Nations*, 2:701–708.

31 According to George Shelton, Tucker would make a more elaborate analysis of the problem of American independence in his later work, *Cui Bono*, 38–42 (*Dean Tucker*, 182–213).

32 The earliest letter from Tucker to Hume was dated 1764. See Greig, *Letters*, 1:270n2.

33 This claim was not very accurate, since the demarcation line which the Pope prescribed for Spain and Portugal was not precise, and it did not encircle the globe.

34 For the connection between Protestantism and British empire, see Armitage, *Ideological Origins*, 61–99.

35 For an overview of Cromwell's unsuccessful operations against Spain, see Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, 20–32.

36 The financial imperatives and their effects in the operations of the Anglo-Spanish War are explained in more detail in Venning, *Cromwellian Foreign Policy*, 118–21.

37 For a recent analysis of the divergence between Britain and the Continent in the early modern age, see Black, *Convergence or Divergence*, 116–38.

38 See also Black, *System of Ambition*, 142.

39 See, for instance, Hume's letter to Sir Gilbert Elliot of Minto on July 22, 1768, 2:184–85. For Edmund Burke's argument against taxation upon American colonies, see "Speech on American Taxation," 1:509–80. The speech was made on April 19, 1774.

40 Hume's exchange with Josiah Tucker during this period might have contributed to his changing attitude to British colonial policy. In his letter to Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot on July 8, 1768, Hume mentioned his exchange with Tucker, (Greig, *Letters*, 2:182–83). For Hume's view of American Independence, see also Schmidt, *Reason in History*, 293–94.

41 Hume followed closely the news about bankruptcies, see, for instance, his letter to Adam Smith on April 10, 1773, 467.

42 This point has been discussed by other scholars; see McNally, *Political Economy*, 201; O'Brien, "Inseparable Connections," 65–67; Stasavage, "Partisan Politics," 123–53; Whatmore, *Against War*, 275.

43 Hume's discussion of the emergence of Court and Country parties was moved from the main text to a note from the 1770 and subsequent editions.

44 For a detailed study of France in mid-seventeenth-century European geopolitics, see Lossky, *Louis XIV*, 38–63.

45 This was illustrated on several occasions when Hume compared Stuart England with Bourbon France and Habsburg Spain, for instance, *History*, 5:182.

46 For a detailed discussion of inflation and coinage, see Hume's essay "Of Interest," 303–15.

47 For an overview of this conflict between English kingship and the mercantilist interest in the light of the blue-water strategy debate, see Brewer, *Sinews of Power*, 170.

48 For a discussion of Hume's views on the political significance of Puritan revolutionaries, see Livingston, "Natural History."

49 For a background review, see Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, 80–94.

50 Citing Winwood's Memorials as evidence, Hume defended James's strict neutrality, however dangerous an approach to diplomacy, as "just and fair." For more details, see Winwood, *Memorials of Affairs of State*, 2:429–30, 456–76.

51 See also Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution*, 3–50.

52 For a detailed analysis of English political culture in the formation of foreign policy in the 1650s–1660s, particularly on the three Anglo-Dutch Wars, see Pincus, *Protestantism and Patriotism*.

53 For a detailed analysis of the historical context of the three Anglo-Dutch Wars, see Jones, *Anglo-Dutch Wars* and Claydon, *Making of England*, 132–52.

54 See also Courtenay, *Memoirs of the Life*, 1:143–70.

55 See also Davies, "Navy, Parliament and Political Crisis," 271–88.

56 Jonathan I. Israel offers an overview of the effects of the military defeat upon the Dutch commercial empire in his *Dutch Republic*, 700–806. For his analysis of how the two Anglo-Dutch Wars triggered the emergence of the British empire and European geopolitics, see "Emerging Empire," 1:423–44.

57 For a general background of this event, see Harris, *Revolution*, 308–63.

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