




ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT

## “An Exact Union of System”: Bute’s Cabinet Revolution and Imperial Reform, 1762–63

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### Abstract

In his brief ministerial career, John Stuart, third Earl of Bute, undertook a project to remake how the king’s ministers would perform. Eschewing the personal power accorded to ministers like William Pitt and the Duke of Newcastle under George II, Bute and the young King George III attempted to reform the cabinet into a place of debate, unity, and resolution where administration was shared by all ministers equally. In this they were following the moral and aesthetic sensibilities of the age into a new form of political arrangements, adapting the 1688 settlement into a structure capable of administering territorial empire so long as one did not look too closely at issues of sovereignty or representation. The seemingly small and inconsistently applied shift nonetheless had enormous consequences as it shaped the hemisphere-defining policies of Bute’s ministry: the Treaty of Paris of 1763 and the Royal Proclamation of 1763 that followed close on its heels. While historical accounts of Britain’s 1763–83 imperial crisis tend to focus on the revenue schemes of 1764–65 as the primary origin point for conflict, Bute’s “cabinet revolution” played a larger role than has generally been acknowledged in setting the stage for grander visions of imperial power and the larger protests over that power.

In the winter of 1762–63, a small revolution unfolded in George III’s closet. Grown out of the anxieties of the previous decade, the young king and his principal advisor, favored minister, and eventual First Lord of the Treasury, John Stuart, third Earl of Bute, engaged in a project to refashion the inner workings of government to create a more unified and coordinated ministry that could end the Whig dominance of government and (in their minds) represent all Britons on both sides of the Atlantic. They had spent years planning for the moment but it happened so quickly that it has been easy to write it out of accounts of the era. However, the results were unmistakable: the Treaty of Paris of 1763 and the Royal Proclamation of 7 October 1763 were two of its most obvious accomplishments. The stationing of peacetime troops in North America and the Sugar and Stamp Acts raised in support of them were two of its most notorious. Their actions were at the same time carefully considered and “very silly.”<sup>1</sup> In their attempt to reorient the cabinet, they had unraveled the process of decision-making. Suddenly the issues of British political alignments, Native American diplomacy, colonial finances, and the overall rights of Britons became inextricably intertwined, with no plan to manage them. While new scales of policymaking were now possible, so were new scales of protest. Instead of a confident empire attempting to absorb its wayward colonies, Bute’s actions revealed

<sup>1</sup> Lord Northington, quoted in R. A. Humphrey, “Lord Shelburne and the Proclamation of 1763,” *The English Historical Review* 49, no. 194 (1934): 241–61, at 241.

a kingdom fearful of parliamentary and imperial fragility. This fear, projected onto the Treaty of Paris and the Proclamation alike, underlay what critics saw as the authoritarian tendencies of the young king's new reign. In their efforts to create union out of disharmony, George III and Bute unwittingly set the stage for decades of tumult and revolution.

### Re-returning to Bute and the Constitution

The legacies of these reforms are well known, especially in the imperial spaces where they were first, and most intensely, felt. The ambitious plan to limit settlement west of the Appalachian Mountains and the subsequent abandonment of that plan sparked the fury of settler-colonization and Indigenous dispossession that marked the 1760s and the century afterward.<sup>2</sup> The revenue bills passed to fund royal garrisons sparked colonizer protests and eventually the American Revolution.<sup>3</sup> In both cases, scholars have understandably tended to read these hemisphere-changing developments as outcomes of the hemispheric war that ended in 1763, whether the result of Britain seizing France and Spain's imperial claims in eastern North America or the massive debts incurred to fund those seizures. The Proclamation of 1763 has usually been read as some combination of revenue-cutting and reactionary response to Pontiac—interpretations that have had a remarkably long shelf life in spite of the mismatch between the development of the policies of 1763 and the actual arrival of news from Detroit of Native American uprisings.<sup>4</sup> The emphasis on war debts and revenues, of course, has its own lengthy tradition in American historiography, despite the Sugar and Stamp Acts' explicit purpose to fund the new American garrisons

<sup>2</sup> The most sustained treatment is probably Colin Calloway, *The Scratch of a Pen: 1763 and the Transformation of North America* (Oxford, 2006). For other examples of how the Proclamation of 1763 is treated in Native American historiography, see Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815* (New York, 1991), 269–314; Daniel H. Usner, *Indians, Settlers & Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley before 1783* (Chapel Hill, 1992), 105–06; Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge, 2001), 189–216; Steven C. Hahn, *The Invention of the Creek Nation, 1670–1763* (Lincoln, 2004), 265–69; Claudio Saunt, *West of the Revolution: An Uncommon History of 1776* (New York, 2015), 119–23; Robert Michael Morrissey, *Empire by Collaboration: Indians, Colonists, and Governments in Colonial Illinois Country* (Philadelphia, 2015), 194; Jacob F. Lee, *Masters of the Middle Waters: Indian Nations and Colonial Ambitions along the Mississippi* (Cambridge, 2019), 121–24. For more recent work that places 1763 within a longer history of settler-colonialism in early America, see Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* (Boston, 2014), 70–71; Allan Greer, "Dispossession in a Commercial Idiom: From Indian Deeds to Land Cession Treaties," in *Contested Spaces of Early America*, ed. Juliana Barr and Edward Countryman (Philadelphia, 2014), 69–92, at 89; Patrick Spero, *Frontier Country: The Politics of War in Early Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 2016), 172–75.

<sup>3</sup> While a full review of the historiography of the American Revolution would be difficult to conduct here, see the central role of the Sugar and Stamp Acts in the imperial crisis in such landmark works as Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, 1967), 94–102; Edmund S. Morgan, *The Birth of the Republic, 1763–89*, 3rd ed. (Chicago, 1992), 15–29; Edmund S. Morgan and Helen M. Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis: Prologue to Revolution* (Chapel Hill, 1953), 21–23; and Gary B. Nash, *The Urban Crucible: The Northern Seaports and the Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, 1986), 292–312. Even relatively recent trans-Atlantic work that understands imperial policy and the imperial crisis in terms of Britain's engagement with Europe still emphasizes George Grenville's political economy as the prime motivator and in some cases, authors skip the years between 1760 and 1763 almost entirely. For example, see Eliga Gould, *The Persistence of Empire: British Political Culture in the Age of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, 1999), chs. 3–4.

<sup>4</sup> Much of the current understanding of British western policy is still shaped by Charles Ritcheson's 1954 *British Politics and the American Revolution* and Jack Sosin's 1961 *Whitehall in the Wilderness*, works that attributed the policies of the Proclamation to a combination of ad hoc reactions to postwar conditions and Grenville's desire to save money and/or theoretically deescalate tensions after Pontiac. Charles Ritcheson, *British Politics and the American Revolution* (Norman, 1954), 9–14; Jack Sosin, *Whitehall and the Wilderness: The Middle West in British Colonial Policy, 1760–1775* (Lincoln, 1961), 52–58. On recent work citing these two for explanations of the Proclamation's origins, see Woody Holton, *Forced Founders: Indians, Debtors, Slaves, and the Making of the American Revolution in Virginia* (Chapel Hill, 1999), 28fn and Calloway, *Scratch of a Pen*, 92–94. Those who have more closely studied British motives in this period, such as Keith Perry, do more than Ritcheson to locate the policy in the Bute administration, but still largely follow Ritcheson's attribution of the policy to Grenville. See K. Perry, *British Politics and the American Revolution* (New York, 1990), 31.

rather than pay down Britain's war debts. It has been easy to accept these elisions in interpretation because the initiative of Native Americans in challenging both imperial and settler-colonial claims to their territory did not depend on London directives. Likewise, British indifference to Indigenous affairs is well established. The Treaty can thus be explained away as another "scratch of a pen" or careless act of diplomats who "traded islands and continents like poker chips."<sup>5</sup> The focus on war debts and revenues fits well within a British historiography that for most of the twentieth century emphasized stability and structure in British politics—the revenues mattered no matter who came up with the plan or when.<sup>6</sup> And whatever the origins of the policy, the coming of the Revolution still largely depended on colonizer protests over Parliament's taxing authority.

A close inspection of Bute's actions, however, reveals much about the specific constitutional questions at stake in his reforms and helps us understand why such a relatively modest program so quickly spiraled into domestic, imperial, and authoritarian crises in a supposedly stable era of British politics. To approach the topic of Bute, George III, and designs on the constitution is, of course, to wade into one of Britain's oldest historiographic questions, one whose antiquity was already bemusing scholars at least half a century ago.<sup>7</sup> While accusations of Bute and George III's absolutist inclinations might have been exaggerated by the Rockingham Whig opposition in the 1760s and the generations of historians who sustained that interpretation, there was nonetheless some important truth to the charge.<sup>8</sup> In the operations of the cabinet, Bute did attempt to clarify, perhaps even revise, the separation of powers between king and Parliament. That this attempt was made within the cabinet's purview of foreign policy and imperial administration may explain why it did not much alter the structure of parliamentary elections. Yet it did radically reshape imperial politics, giving London Whigs and American protestors some grounds for their charges of authoritarianism. Moreover, by raising these constitutional issues of American governance, the reform agenda destabilized the entire Atlantic system and set the stage for the massive upheavals to come in the empire.<sup>9</sup>

For all that, it was no grand conspiracy. Rather, Bute's program can best be seen as an outgrowth of the transformations scholars have noted in the broader field of British politics in the mid-1700s. The anxieties of those decades gave moral shape and purpose to Bute's

<sup>5</sup> Calloway takes his title from nineteenth-century historian Francis Parkman's description of the Treaty of Paris: see Calloway, *Scratch of a Pen*, xi. Saunt uses the "poker chips" metaphor because of the heavy gambling habits of the Duc de Choiseul who negotiated the treaty for France: see Claudio Saunt, *West of the Revolution: An Uncommon History of 1776* (New York, 2015), 120.

<sup>6</sup> Lewis Namier established the outlines of this tradition with his *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III*, first published in 1929, and his *England in the Age of the American Revolution*, first published in 1930. Namier's core assertion was that the Glorious Revolution had settled authority over both Parliament and the monarchy in the hands of a select few aristocratic families who contended with each other for power and influence within a relatively stable system of politics. See Lewis Namier, *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III*, 2nd ed. (London, 1963) and L. Namier, *England in the Age of the American Revolution*, 2nd ed. (London, 1930), 4. See also Romney Sedgwick's introduction to his edited collection of George III's correspondence: Romney Sedgwick, 'King George III,' in *Letters from George III to Lord Bute, 1756–1766*, ed. Romney Sedgwick (London, 1939). Even those focused more specifically on George III and Bute tended to concern themselves with evaluating the successes and failures of George's actions within the prevailing system, giving room to more sympathetic accounts but without much caring for George as a political thinker. See, for example, John Brooke, *King George III* (New York, 1972) and Peter D. G. Thomas, *George III: King and Politicians, 1760–1770* (Manchester, 2002). Within these works, Bute appears as the exception that proves the rule that ideologically motivated men were not long for the world of eighteenth-century British politics. As Brooke put it, Bute's "proper place was in an Oxford common room. He is the most finished example in British history of the don in politics." Brooke, *George III*, 47.

<sup>7</sup> Brooke, *King George III*, 85–86.

<sup>8</sup> On how the Rockingham Whigs shaped the interpretation of George's reign by later generations, see Max Skjongsberg, "Richard Champion and the Rockingham Whigs: The Aristocratic Politics of a Bristolian Quaker Merchant in the Age of the American Revolution," *English Historical Review* 138 (2023): 157–84, at 159–60.

<sup>9</sup> Here I am working within the general framework established in P. J. Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires: Britain, India, and America, c. 1750–1783* (Oxford, 2005).

methods but he was not alone.<sup>10</sup> He and the king were both of their time—decades in which anxieties over Britain’s commercial and imperial transformations raised political questions for which there were no easy answers to be found in the Newcastle Whig view that government was best seated in a combination of English borough patronage and Continental alliance.<sup>11</sup> Bute’s willingness to effect his reforms through the channels of imperial administration and foreign policy were also in keeping with the politics of a decade in which the existing Atlantic system was called into question and modified through the fortunes of war.<sup>12</sup> In this reform-minded era, there was room for a more ideological politics, as recent scholarship has begun to show.<sup>13</sup> These ideas moved from pamphlet to policy thanks to Bute’s cabinet maneuvering, but it was only upon their application to American governance that their more radical implications became clear.

### The Search for Union and the Origins of Bute’s Plan

The roots of their reforms lay in the 1750s. As prince, George III came of age in a decade where essayists constantly fretted that Britain’s internal stability was under threat from the lingering influences of some combination of Jacobite royalism, French invasion, Continental effeminacy, and the corrupting influences of luxury. While historians have debated exactly how new this sense of anxious nationalism was, there is little doubt that the 1750s saw its share of handwringing about the moral character of Britain and its ability to survive its own internal divisions.<sup>14</sup> Upon becoming the prince’s de facto tutor in 1755, Bute, worried about division and moral decay, helped George to identify the ministry as the most suitable site for reform. They hoped that once George III took the throne they could solve the specific problems of factionalism by transforming the king’s meetings with his advisors into a place of debate and decision under the young monarch’s unifying presence. In this way, the cabinet could limit parliamentary factions’ influence over policy by using the king’s (theoretically) independent opinion to determine the national interest and a suitable course of action. After the resignations of William Pitt in 1761 and Henry

<sup>10</sup> Following on the work of John Bullion, recent scholarship has revived and deepened our understanding of the close connections between Bute, George III, and the particulars of opposition thought during the anxious 1750s. See John L. Bullion, “‘To Know This is the True Essential Business of a King’: The Prince of Wales and the Study of Public Finance, 1755–1760,” *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 18 (1986): 429–54, at 440–49; J. L. Bullion, “‘The Ten Thousand in America’: More Light on the Decision on the American Army, 1762–1763,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 43 (1986): 646–57; J. L. Bullion, “Security and Economy: The Bute Administration’s Plans for the American Army and Revenue, 1762–1763,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 45 (1988): 499–509; J. L. Bullion, “The Prince’s Mentor: A New Perspective on the Friendship between George III and Lord Bute during the 1750s,” *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 21 (1989): 34–55, at 34–35; and his capstone work, J. L. Bullion, *Prelude to Disaster: George III and the Origins of the American Revolution, 1751–1763* (New York, 2017), xvi–xvii. Bullion and his perspective are also well represented in the essays included in Karl W. Schweizer, ed., *Lord Bute: Essays in Re-Interpretation* (Leicester, 1988).

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Gerald Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism: A Cultural History, 1740–1830* (New York, 1997); Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven, 1992); Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture, and Imperialism in England, 1715–1785* (Cambridge, 1998). On commercial expansion in this era, see Frank O’Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century: British Political and Social History, 1688–1832* (London, 2016), 186–87.

<sup>12</sup> Daniel Baugh, “Maritime Strength and Atlantic Commerce: The Uses of ‘A Grand Marine Empire,’” in *An Imperial State at War: Britain from 1689 to 1815*, ed. Lawrence Stone (London, 1994), 185–223, at 202–10; S. Max Edelson, *The New Map of Empire: How Britain Imagined America before Independence* (Cambridge, 2017), 8–10; Bullion, *Prelude*, xvi–xvii.

<sup>13</sup> James Vaughn, *The Politics of Empire at the Accession of George III: The East India Company and the Crisis and Transformation of Britain’s Imperial State* (New Haven, 2019), 172–84; Justin Du Rivage, *Revolution Against Empire: Taxes, Politics, and the Origins of American Independence* (New Haven, 2017), 91–98; and Max Skjönsberg, *The Persistence of Party: Ideas of Harmonious Discord in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge, 2021), 224–27; Patrick Griffin, *The Townshend Moment: The Making of Empire and Revolution in the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven, 2017), 70–86; Rachel Banke, “Bute’s Empire: Reform, Reaction, and the Roots of Imperial Crisis” (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 2017), 17–29.

<sup>14</sup> Newman, *English Nationalism*, 21–23; Colley, *Britons*, 85–87; Wilson, *Sense of the People*, 139–79. On the longer view of these concerns, see David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 2000).

Pelham-Tolles, the Duke of Newcastle, in 1762, Bute attempted to use the cabinet's oversight of treaty negotiations with France to demonstrate his model's merits. Gambling with foreign policy and colonial administration opened the possibility of things going very wrong very quickly but they proceeded anyway. By pulling at a few small strings at the heart of government, king and advisor unraveled large parts of overseas affairs, leaving crisis and revolution as the means to sort them out.

Key to their plans was the uncertain space of the "cabinet." The king's body of advisors had emerged from the Privy Council of the 1500s and 1600s, a group tasked with assisting the royal household and the administration of the kingdom. After the Glorious Revolution, and particularly with the institution of yearly Parliament sessions, this old institution increasingly performed a more professionalized bureaucratic role in English (and, after 1707, British) governance, particularly those departments related to military, financial, and foreign affairs—the Treasury, the Northern and Southern Secretaries of State, the Admiralty, and the War Office.<sup>15</sup> By the eighteenth century, the king ostensibly held prerogative over all appointments but in practice had to appoint ministers in such a way as to maintain the good grace of Parliament. In this way, the conflicts of 1688 were peacefully, if not always amicably, re-fought as gentry, aristocracy, and royalty mediated and negotiated monarchical privilege with Parliament's financial control.<sup>16</sup> British history has often remembered kindly those who handled this ill-defined power with particular ability, such as Robert Walpole and Henry Pelham, even as their contemporary opponents branded them as factious and corrupt.<sup>17</sup> Under these great ministers of the "Whig Supremacy," politics flowed in a fairly stable channel, with opposition Tories locked out of power and comfortable Whig majorities returned to Parliament election after election with only occasional interruption.

However, developments in the 1740s and 1750s undermined the routine operations of this system and set the stage for revision. The lengthy cycle of war and peace between 1739 and 1748 had sparked a triumphant, imperial nationalism that intersected with the growing political power of the merchants and tradesmen of Britain's growing port cities. These boroughs chafed at the limits the old system placed on their representation in Parliament and thus their ability to shape the empire from which they profited. Social change intersected with acute political crises such as the untimely deaths of, first, the royal heir, Prince Frederick, in 1751 and then the prime minister, Henry Pelham, in 1754, both of which upset the patronage networks by which the old system had maintained its stability and further confusing political alignments in an already confused age. Another lengthy cycle of war with France and Spain in 1754 further exacerbated the sense that things were going badly quickly and that the Whigs' committing Britain to these continental and imperial engagements was somehow at the root of it all.<sup>18</sup> The confused situation was in part how Lord Bute, a Scottish aristocrat from the edges of Prince Frederick's social circles and known primarily for his love of botany, ended up as tutor and mentor to a future king. Seeking to disarm Frederick's opposition circles, King George II insisted on his new heir's political and social isolation, leaving him and the constitutional principles of the British monarchy in the hands of Bute.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Joanna Innes, "The Domestic Face of the Military-Fiscal State: Government and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain," in *Imperial State*, ed. Stone, 96–127, at 97–99.

<sup>16</sup> O'Gorman, *Long Eighteenth Century*, 140–41.

<sup>17</sup> For assessments of Walpole and Pelham's political skill and central place in eighteenth-century British politics, see the two broad syntheses of O'Gorman, *Long Eighteenth Century*, 94–97 and Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England, 1727–1783* (New York, 1989), 20–27, 190–207.

<sup>18</sup> Wilson, *Sense of the People*, 147–79, 192–204; Kathleen Wilson, "Empire of Virtue: The Imperial Project and Hanoverian Culture c.1720–1785," in *Imperial State*, ed. Stone, 144–50; Newman, *English Nationalism*, 63–79. On the basic dynamics of the Prince of Wales and political opposition, see Sedgwick, 'Introduction', in *Letters from George III to Lord Bute*, xii–xv. On Pelham's death as a cause of political instability, see Langford, *Polite*, 225–27; O'Gorman, *Long Eighteenth Century*, 154–55; Skjónsborg, *Persistence*, 202.

<sup>19</sup> On the circumstances of Prince George's education, see Bullion, *Prelude*, chs. 1–2, as well as Bullion, "Prince's Mentor."

Inside and outside the prince's residence at Leicester House in London, these anxious years more broadly gave rise to a keen desire to glorify the act of finding unity among division. As Max Skjönsberg has demonstrated, British thinkers of the period began to develop a small but significant tolerance for the idea of "party" as a way of reconciling themselves to the seemingly intractable problem of factional politics. After decades of inveighing against the spirit of faction in the Walpole and Pelham ministries, British commentators began to develop something of a nascent party spirit, trying to divine what separated a worthwhile faction from a malevolent one, grasping at moral and motivational distinctions in an effort to redefine loyal opposition, party organization, and an idea of "harmonious discord" as key features of British politics at mid-century.<sup>20</sup> In the intermingled worlds of politics, philosophy, aesthetics, and morality, this desire for union out of seeming disorder inspired some of the most prominent thinkers of the age.

Part of the shift to acceptance of party was a broader cultural imagination that Britain was a place where disunity could be turned to productive and moral purposes. Britain had long celebrated its somewhat centrifugal forces of Protestantism, commerce, and "freedom," but by the 1750s the celebration of harmony arising from discord had become a more persistent theme.<sup>21</sup> Writers as distinct as David Hume, William Hogarth, and the Reverend John Brown still shared a common yearning for Britain as a place where opposing ideas were forced to interact for the public benefit.<sup>22</sup> As Alexander Broadie has noted, the idea of "uniformity or unity amidst diversity" was a common refrain among the "Scottish Enlightenment" thinkers who looked to Bute as a patron.<sup>23</sup> For example, in his 1748 essay "Of National Characters," Hume defined Britain by the absence of a unifying national character, replacing it with an idea of interaction. "Where a number of men are united into one political body," Hume argued, "the occasions of their intercourse must be so frequent, for defense, commerce, and government, that, together with the same speech or language, they must acquire a resemblance in their manners."<sup>24</sup> In his theory of taste, Hume advocated a similar idea of beauty emerging from the interaction of humans in conversation rather than any fixed ideal of aesthetics.<sup>25</sup> Hogarth, influenced by Hume, also sought beauty in the push and pull of opposing impulses in his 1753 *Analysis of Beauty*, where he advocated for his famous "line of beauty" as the balance between competing forces: "FITNESS, VARIETY, UNIFORMITY, SIMPLICITY, INTRICACY, and QUANTITY;—all which co-operate in the

<sup>20</sup> Skjönsberg, *Persistence*, 5–10. On Bute's patronage links to various Scottish Enlightenment figures, see Roger L. Emerson, "Lord Bute and the Scottish Universities," in *Lord Bute; Essays in Re-Interpretation*, ed. Karl W. Schweizer (Leicester, 1988), 147–81.

<sup>21</sup> On the long history and development of England/Britain's celebration of itself as Protestant, maritime, commercial, and free, see Armitage, *Origins*.

<sup>22</sup> Hume, Hogarth, and Brown have also played significant roles in helping historians identify the concerns and values of the age. Hogarth has been the subject of significant analysis as one of these early nationalist thinkers by Gerald Newman who referred to him as a sort of "patron saint of the movement." Newman, *Rise*, 63–65, quote at 63. Hogarth's nationalist sentiments are closely analyzed in Colley, *Britons*, 33–34, 44–46, 56–59, 105. Hogarth's search for a British national artistic tradition is also examined at length in Robin Simon, *Hogarth France and British Art: The Rise of the Arts in 18th-century Britain* (Cornwall, 2007); Carolina Brook and Valter Cruz, *Hogarth Reynolds Turner: British Painting and the Rise of Modernity* (Milan, 2014); Douglas Fordham, "William Hogarth's *March to Finchley* and the Fate of Comic History Painting," *Art History* 27, no. 1 (2004): 95–128. Hume studies are of course enormous but his role as a political thinker in this era is given extensive analysis in Skjönsberg, *Persistence*, 151–201 and as an imperial thinker in Armitage, *Origins*, 180–82 and Gould, *Persistence of Empire*, 27–30. Brown, while a lesser known figure, has received extensive analysis due to his popularity in the 1750s and his ability to bring Bolingbrokean ideas of patriotism into political discourse in that decade; see Newman, *Rise*, 80–84; Skjönsberg, *Persistence*, 214–23, 228–35.

<sup>23</sup> Alexander Broadie, *The Scottish Enlightenment: The Historical Age of the Historical Nation* (Edinburgh, 2001), 45–46. On Bute's patronage networks, see Emerson, "Lord Bute and the Scottish Universities," 151–56.

<sup>24</sup> David Hume, *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. Eugene F. Miller (Indianapolis, 1987), 202–03.

<sup>25</sup> For Hume's ideas of aesthetics and taste, see Broadie, *Scottish Enlightenment*, 178–84. See also James Harris, *David Hume: An Intellectual Biography* (New York, 2015), 159–62; Alessandra Stradella, "The Fiction of the Standard of Taste: David Hume on the Social Constitution of Beauty," *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 46, no. 4 (2012): 32–47, at 33; Alastair Smart, *Allan Ramsay: Painter, Essayist, and Man of the Enlightenment* (New Haven, 1992), 139–44.

production of beauty, mutually correcting and restraining each other occasionally.”<sup>26</sup> In his popular 1757 jeremiad against Britain’s decayed moral state, the Reverend John Brown still made room for a “National Spirit of *Union*” that “when ... Divisions arise from a *Freedom of Opinion* only ... not from the detached and selfish Views of Individuals; a Republic is then in its *Strength*, and gathers Warmth and Fire from these Collisions.”<sup>27</sup> Anxieties could be turned to hope if division was made productive by some mediating force—common manners, pleasing prospects, a spirit of union.

Or, a patriot king. Significantly, George III and Bute echoed these ideas that Britain was bruised and damaged by the evil intentions of faction but that it could also be fixed and made whole again. They firmly aligned their own ideas with older opposition writers, including Henry St. John, first Viscount Bolingbroke, whose writings opened the door for the idea of party as opposed to faction.<sup>28</sup> But they also echoed the 1750s ideas of union and beauty that resonated with the works of Hume, Hogarth, and Brown (and Montesquieu’s ideas of constitution that ran through many of these same works).<sup>29</sup> George III imagined the British constitution as a mechanism of interconnected pieces, working to correct and harmonize each other,

where one part of the Legislative body checks the other by the privilege of rejecting, both check’d by the Executive, as that is again by the Legislative, all parts moving & however they may follow the particular interest of their body yet all uniting at last for the public good.<sup>30</sup>

Notably in this model, the executive’s role was to check the excesses of the legislature so that the constitution could become a sort of machine producing a defined “national interest” as an outcome.

As a place where king, commoner, and lord met face to face, the cabinet therefore seemed the natural site for productive collision. Bute believed that the first step should be to transform how information moved through the highest levels of government. Open and equal access was the solution to the personal and individual power of ministers and therefore was the best place to start. Policy resulting from open debate could then be used to guide parliamentary agendas, reducing but not eliminating the disruptive influence of factional loyalties within the legislature. Although not a move to absolutism, Bute’s plan did threaten a different sort of reprise of 1688. His agenda suggests a modernization effort that sparked an imperial crisis and a revolution that, as Steven Pincus has identified, were characteristic of the Glorious Revolution and the long eighteenth century.<sup>31</sup>

### Remaking the Cabinet, Making Peace

At the heart of the program was Bute’s belief that the king should be bound by Parliament, law, and constitution, and not by the personal power and influence of individual ministers. In Bute’s interpretation of Bolingbroke’s “measures, not men,” the older, personal system of Whig patronage embodied in the Duke of Newcastle should be replaced with a cabinet of

<sup>26</sup> William Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty*, ed. and intro. Ronald Paulson (New Haven, 1997), 23; emphasis original.

<sup>27</sup> John Brown, *An Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times* (London, 1757), 105, <https://books.google.com/books?id=5qBbAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA1#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

<sup>28</sup> On Bute and/or George III’s links to Henry St. John, first Viscount Bolingbroke, see James McKelvey, *George III and Lord Bute: the Leicester House Years* (Durham, 1973), 84–87; Bullion, “Essential Business,” 432; Bullion, “Prince’s Mentor,” 49; Vaughn, *Politics*, 56–57, 174–75; Skjönsberg, *Persistence*, 225–27.

<sup>29</sup> On Montesquieu’s connection to the work of Bolingbroke, Hume, and (more indirectly) Brown, see Skjönsberg, *Persistence*, 102–05, 113–16, 216–29.

<sup>30</sup> RA GEO/ADD/32/706-912, 815-816 George III, “Of Laws Relative to Government,” undated, Royal Archives, Windsor, UK.

<sup>31</sup> Steven Pincus, *1688: The First Modern Revolution* (New Haven, 2009), 30–45.

ministers that had equal access to information, reducing the influence individual ministers could wield by retaining the information within their departments.<sup>32</sup> Rejecting the old Whig doctrine that “every king must make use of human means to attain human ends,” Bute imagined that the problems besetting Britain derived from George II’s having been too beholden to the power of seemingly irreplaceable ministers.<sup>33</sup> Demonstrating his lack of familiarity with both institutions, Bute considered these negotiated power relationships as a form of enslavement. Bute articulated his basic political goal in November 1762 when he explained to George Townshend, “that were it possible for me to retire without leaving my Prince a Slave to Faction, I would embrace the part with Extacy.”<sup>34</sup> His primary aim as a minister, first as Groom of the Stole, then as Secretary of State, and finally, after supplanting Newcastle, as Treasurer and first minister was to liberate George III from these supposed shackles. By the time of his resignation in April 1763 he had made this rhetoric something of a governing agenda, writing to the Duke of Bedford that “the Basis of his future Administration” rested in the first part on the king resolving “never upon any Account to suffer Those Ministers of the late Reign, who have attempted to fetter, and enslave Him [the king].”<sup>35</sup>

The keys to the king’s “liberation” would be changing the flows of information into the cabinet and the process of making decisions. Under George II and earlier kings, ministers had been privileged with control over the information generated by their departments—required to produce reports to the cabinet upon request but with themselves as the mediator. Bute crossed Pitt and Newcastle alike by insisting that information be shared equally among ministers. He ruffled Pitt’s feathers within two days of George III’s accession by insisting that he be present for all meetings between the new king and Pitt.<sup>36</sup> A few months later, in February 1761, Bute initiated a small scuffle with Newcastle over appointments to the Treasury, with Bute seeking to place two of his friends, the MPs James Oswald and Gilbert Elliott, in the department. Newcastle replied “that he was ready to do anything to please Lord Bute, but that he should appear ridiculous” and “would not be master of his own Board.”<sup>37</sup> It took over a year, but Newcastle’s worries proved well founded when Bute used information provided directly to him by Oswald and Elliott to undercut Newcastle in the cabinet over the issue of subsidizing the Prussian army.<sup>38</sup> Bute seemed to have two goals here: the short-term undermining and resignation of Pitt and Newcastle but also a longer-term goal of making the cabinet work something like a salon—a discussion among peers with equal access to information coming to a common conclusion. At the end of this maneuvering, Bute believed he would have what he wanted: a cabinet that could provide vent for the various parliamentary factions but that could be moderated and reconciled by the keen scrutiny and power of the monarchy. The cabinet would be the place factions could be represented, contained, and disarmed.

Because the cabinet oversaw diplomacy, Bute intended to use the new system to form a stronger peace—his key political objective. The added benefit was that Parliament’s approval of the peace terms would in a sense ratify his reforms at the same time. Procedure therefore shaped policy as Bute maneuvered the peace talks in such a way as to preserve ministerial unity. These preoccupations help explain one of the most puzzling historical questions of Bute’s government: why Britain would return so many conquests to France and Spain in

<sup>32</sup> On Bolingbroke’s idea of contests over methods of government as worthwhile and distinct from personal politics, see Skjönsberg, *Persistence*, 86–87, 104–07.

<sup>33</sup> William Cavendish Devonshire, *Memoranda on State of Affairs, 1759–1762: The Devonshire Diary* (London, 1982), 52.

<sup>34</sup> Bute to George Townshend, 2 November 1762, Ryder MSS, 37967, British Library, London (henceforth BL).

<sup>35</sup> Bute to the Duke of Bedford, 2 April 1763, v, Ryder MSS, 37967, BL.

<sup>36</sup> Richard Middleton, *The Bells of Victory: The Pitt-Newcastle Ministry and the Conduct of the Seven Years’ War, 1757–1762* (Cambridge, 1985), 171–72.

<sup>37</sup> Devonshire, *Memoranda*, 86.

<sup>38</sup> Bullion, *Prelude*, 211–14.



exchange for peace in 1762–63.<sup>39</sup> When forced to choose between conquest and cabinet, Bute chose the latter. This approach created the kind of treaty that Bute wanted—one that could not be used as a political weapon against his (or anybody else’s) ministry since no single individual could either claim credit or be forced to take blame. A peace without any particular authorship would starve faction of its favorite fuel. This was an important step to consider as peace tended to be unpopular in Britain. The Treaty of Utrecht had divided and weakened the Tories two generations earlier and more recently Henry Pelham had struggled to survive the response to Aix-la-Chapelle.<sup>40</sup>

The core challenge was that treaties carried major consequences, and it was difficult to shield ministers from unpopular diplomatic sessions. Unanimity would be necessary to weather any opposition. Bute believed that he could at least force critics to oppose the entire government rather than individuals, preserving unity in the process. The extra challenge was his apprehension that negotiations were racing against the clock, for he believed that at the start of the next session in November 1762, “when they [Parliament] met and money was raised the people of England would have blood for their money.”<sup>41</sup> The fall of Havana added to the pressure. After dispatching the Duke of Bedford to peace talks in Paris in September 1762 with one set of instructions, Bute was forced to adapt when word arrived almost immediately of Britain’s Caribbean conquest. The news scrambled popular sentiment and Britain’s bargaining position alike and prompted Bute reportedly to remark “that he wished it had not come so soon by two or three days.”<sup>42</sup> Havana’s fall inspired renewed aggression and division in the cabinet as some ministers, particularly the Secretaries of State George Grenville and Charles Wyndham, the Earl of Egremont, hoped to trade Havana for the entire island of Puerto Rico and insisted on having the cabinet revise Bedford’s instructions.<sup>43</sup> Fearing that he was witnessing a new faction emerging, Bute acquiesced, playing for time but also out of philosophy. As he wrote to the insulted Bedford, by “making this peace (against which so loud a clamour is raised) the immediate act of all ministers, rather than of yours alone” he was “putting it out of power of every man to screen himself by flinging odium upon you.”<sup>44</sup> Cabinet consensus was the way to defend against factions forming against the peace—by tying every minister, and their parliamentary support, to the terms, opposition could be no more than token and easily handled.

Puerto Rico, though, was not as desirable as a faster peace. Fearing that a demand for the island would prolong negotiations and risk another year of war, Bute and the king resolved on Florida as the solution. Fittingly, a united continental claim to North America would result from efforts to unify the cabinet. It would also give Bute and his allies some rhetorical power in the struggle to secure parliamentary approval for the peace terms and to forestall any additional expenditures for war. Weighing this decision gave the king time to lobby Grenville and ultimately move him to the Admiralty (and farther from the heart of negotiations), citing “the public rumor of division in the Cabinet, which weakened Government as much if ideal as real.”<sup>45</sup> With Grenville moved out, Bute and George could then empower Bedford to finalize the treaty by offering to exchange Havana for Florida. This “material compensation” in exchange for the “rich acquisition” of Havana was unanimous—“I never was present at a more unanimous cabinet than the one held on Friday,” asserted Bute. If

<sup>39</sup> Nancy F. Koehn, *The Power of Commerce: Economy and Governance in the First British Empire* (Ithaca, 1994), 157–58.

<sup>40</sup> O’Gorman, *Long Eighteenth Century*, 76; Langford, *Polite*, 210. And if there is any doubt that Utrecht was on Bute’s mind, opposition writers like John Wilkes were making long and explicit comparisons to that earlier treaty in the papers. See *The North Briton*, #14, 4 September 1762, for a lengthy discourse on “the shameful peace of Utrecht.” John Wilkes, *The North Briton, Revised and Corrected by the Author*, 2 vols. (London, 1764), 1: 72.

<sup>41</sup> Devonshire, *Memoranda*, 177–78; on Bute’s thoughts about debt, see Bullion, “Essential Business,” 446–48.

<sup>42</sup> Devonshire, *Memoranda*, 186.

<sup>43</sup> Bullion, *Prelude*, 272; John Russell Bedford, *Correspondence of John, Fourth Duke of Bedford*, 3 vols. (London, 1842), 3: 114–15.

<sup>44</sup> Bute to Bedford, 28 September 1762, in Bedford, *Correspondence*, 3: 117.

<sup>45</sup> George III to Bute, 11 October 1762, in *Letters from George III to Lord Bute*, 145.

Bedford failed in this, Bute warned, the treaty terms would go before the next Parliament via the king's speech and at that point "the articles once brought into debate, and descanted on by so numerous an assembly, will put it out of the power of this or any other administration ... to continue negotiation, or make any peace."<sup>46</sup> For George III, Florida was valuable because it "would most have arrondi [rounded off] our possessions" even though he admitted to Grenville that Puerto Rico "may most advance our trade."<sup>47</sup> When given the choice between economic value and the "roundness" of the territory, the king clearly preferred roundness.

When it was time for debate and descanting in Parliament, Bute's allies presented the unity and harmony of the preliminary terms as an antidote to the popular desire for further conquest. The preliminary terms had reached the press and John Wilkes and his allies had raised the alarm over Bute's trading away too much for too little. The deposed Pitt and Newcastle carried this opposition view into the Commons and the Lords, respectively. Formidable as they were, they were being forced to stand up in favor of division and war in the face of a unified cabinet presenting an entire landmass as the crowning achievement in a peace Pitt and Newcastle had helped create. The government extended this argument out of doors with prints such as William Hogarth's "The Times," portraying George III and his supporters as a harmonious body of firefighters putting out the flames of war while scowling British opponents attacked them from all sides (Figure 1). The treaty's defenders played upon the Enlightenment ideal that territorial integrity was the preferred space for peace and prosperity.<sup>48</sup> Britain's long history of romanticizing its island borders likely generated some sympathy for the argument.<sup>49</sup> Facing parliamentary and public opposition for having given back Cuba, Martinique, and numerous other Caribbean islands, the treaty's defenders leaned into the North American acquisitions and emphasized the abstract ideal of continuous borders and territorial integrity. In their equation, wholeness was worth more than sugar, and British prosperity in North America would provide more than enough future growth and wealth. Behind all of this was the knowledge that approving the treaty was also sanctioning the continuation of Bute's ministers and his program.

Supporters of the treaty appealed to the idea of a diverse and divided America finally being made whole, the pieces working together to generate British prosperity. William Petty Fitzmaurice, Lord Shelburne, was called upon to make the case to the Lords. Young, ambitious, and well versed in the moral-commercial philosophies of Adam Smith and the Scottish Lowlands, Shelburne was able to portray the history of the war as a grand gesture that would soon open the way for an even grander enrichment of the empire.<sup>50</sup> Shelburne began his speech with an appeal to unity as the main benefit of the war. "The security of the British colonies in N. America was the first cause of the war," he began, but was now resolved with Britain's possession of "the universal empire of that extended coast."<sup>51</sup> From that unity,

<sup>46</sup> Bute to Bedford, 24 October 1762, in Bedford, *Correspondence*, 3: 137, 138.

<sup>47</sup> George III to Bute, 6 November 1762, in *Letters from George III to Lord Bute*, 158.

<sup>48</sup> Norman J. G. Pounds, "France and 'Les Limites Naturelles' from the Seventeenth to the Twentieth Centuries," *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 44 (1954): 51–62, at 51–53; Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley, 1989), 93–102; Peter Sahlins, "Natural Frontiers Revisited: France's Boundaries since the Seventeenth Century," *The American Historical Review* 95 (1990): 1423–51, at 1435–38; Michael Biggs, "Putting the State on the Map: Cartography, Territory, and European State Formation," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 41 (1999): 374–405, at 387–88.

<sup>49</sup> For the history of Britain's island nation ideals, beginning with Henry VIII, see Armitage, *Origins*, 36–39; Colley, *Britons*, 17–18; Martin Brückner, *The Geographic Revolution in Early America: Maps, Literacy, and National Identity* (Chapel Hill, 2006), 88–89.

<sup>50</sup> On Shelburne and his links to Smith, see Edelson, *New Map*, 39–45.

<sup>51</sup> "Speech, 1762," The William Petty, 1st Marquis of Lansdowne, 2nd Earl of Shelburne Papers, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor (henceforth WLCL), vol. 165: 312. On Smith's ideas of the American colonies' future manufacturing growth and even relocation of the British capital to North America, see Ned C. Landsman, "The Provinces and the Empire: Scotland, the American Colonies and the Development of British Provincial Identity," in *Imperial State*, ed. Stone, 264.



**Figure 1.** Hogarth, “The Times,” 1762. Source: Image in the public domain.

Shelburne promised prosperity. British manufacturers would reap the benefits of “clothing” Indigenous Americans and turning the settler colonies’ “Rice, Tobacco, Corn, & Fish” into foreign exports for the European market. The colonies as they grew would “increase population & of course the consumption of our manufactures, pay us for them by their Trade with Foreigners, & thereby giving employment to M[illio]ns of Inhabitants in G. Britain & Ireland.” These developments, Shelburne concluded, were “of the utmost consequence to the Wealth & Safety & Independence of these kingdoms and must continue so for ages to come.”<sup>52</sup> Shelburne’s revived mercantilism fitted well with the ministry’s ongoing efforts to revise and support a more aggressive approach from the East India Company in the same years.<sup>53</sup>

While it is unlikely that any single speech swayed many votes, Bute’s plan to win a unified government worked. The final Commons division supported the treaty 319 to 64 and the Lords carried it in a simple voice vote. The mercantilist pitch likely targeted the support of the City of London’s financiers and it worked (surely in combination with some form of private persuasion). By whatever means, Bute had pulled off a coup, breaking Newcastle’s hold over the City and leaving Pitt and his supporters as a small, albeit vocal, rump opposition, and American interests with few outlets in the years ahead.<sup>54</sup> Parliament’s approval of the preliminary terms set the stage for the final ratification of the treaty in February 1763. Bute, linking the treaty to his plan of government, felt that he had done nothing less than “silence Faction, and battle all the arts of implacable

<sup>52</sup> “Speech, 1762,” Shelburne Papers, WLCL, vol. 165: 312–13.

<sup>53</sup> Vaughn, *Politics of Empire*, 131–64.

<sup>54</sup> Du Rivage makes clear that one of the key dynamics in the developing imperial crisis was the disorganized nature of British opposition just when Americans needed allies with influence. Du Rivage, *Revolution against Empire*, 110–11.

designing Men.”<sup>55</sup> His work done, he promptly resigned within weeks, leaving a disordered cabinet with the responsibility of sorting out an orderly, prosperous future for North America.

### Unity and the Plan for America

Things could have ended there, but instead the cabinet began a months-long process of designing a new plan for America from the ground up, indicating that cabinet unity was something more than a short-term stratagem for George III. The king’s commitment to this new procedure and his belief that America needed guidance demanded that the North American territories live up to the promises Shelburne made to the Lords. In his speech, Shelburne noted that the French and Spanish intrigues with Native Americans had been the cause of conflict in North America but now there was “the pleasing hopes of a lasting peace.”<sup>56</sup> The divided and confused jurisdictions of overlapping colonial systems had produced a disordered state of war that divided the interests of its inhabitants. This theory of the war’s origins explains the steps that government took toward North America in the spring of 1763. Their actions likewise followed a process similar to the treaty: the king’s cabinet debated and resolved a program of colonial reform that was then taken to Parliament for approval of funds. While they did not say so explicitly, their actions indicate that the king and cabinet did not trust a factious Parliament to govern the American cessions any more than they trusted it to manage the treaty. Divisions did not only come from foreign nations. Britain’s internal divisions and overlapping colonial jurisdictions created their own problems.

Unfortunately, no one stopped to consider the uncertain jurisdictions of the cabinet itself. Despite being the same group of people, the cabinet acted in multiple capacities at once. It was the king’s old body of advisors and, therefore, was tasked with helping him oversee his responsibilities, such as his royal colonies overseas via the Board of Trade and Plantations. It was also the post-1688 body where weighty members of the Lords and Commons represented the acts and opinions of those bodies to the king. It was, further, the 1700s innovation tasked with the executive authority of the king in the ever-expanding fiscal-military matters of nation. These roles were intertwined and had worked well enough, and it must have seemed like the matter of legislating and managing North America fell under one of these responsibilities. However, the Board of Trade itself was not sure it had the authority to do what was being asked of it. Only five days after the treaty’s approval in Parliament, the Board’s secretary John Pownall asked Lord Egremont, “Whether the Board in its present state is at all equal or efficient [sic] to discuss or determine what may be necessary to be done in respect to our new Acquisitions in America.”<sup>57</sup>

The Board brushed these concerns aside and took on its new challenge in April 1763. Planning had already begun in earnest in the late summer and fall of 1762 as the outline of the treaty terms took shape. The king himself was heavily involved in the planning and assumed oversight of the initiative to station ten thousand British regulars in North America during peacetime.<sup>58</sup> The Board’s responsibilities grew as they generated new surveys and new information about America to assist the reform and planning process.<sup>59</sup> Two new Surveyors General required the enlistment of cross-departmental collaboration and resourcing similar to a wartime campaign, if at a greatly reduced level of funding.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Bute to the Duke of Bedford, 16 February 1763, Ryder MSS, BL.

<sup>56</sup> “Speech, 1762” Shelburne Papers, WLCL, vol. 165: 312.

<sup>57</sup> John Pownall to Charles Wyndham Egremont, 15 February 1763, Charles Wyndham, Earl of Egremont Papers, Library of Congress Manuscripts, Washington, D.C.

<sup>58</sup> Bullion, “The Ten Thousand,” 656–57.

<sup>59</sup> Edelson, *New Map*, 8–10.

<sup>60</sup> Alexander Johnson, *The First Mapping of America: The General Survey of British North America* (New York, 2017), 29–41.

The results drastically redefined Britain's relationship with its colonies and called into question fundamental constitutional issues in regard to the structure of the empire in America. In addition to the stationing of royal soldiers in North America, the cabinet and Board added three new colonial governments on the mainland—Quebec, East Florida, and West Florida—each with its own distinct form of government, radically reformed the system of trading licenses in the trade with Native Americans, drew a temporary boundary line down the eastern watershed of the continent, and committed to a lengthy and expensive series of border negotiations with dozens of Indigenous confederacies, nations, and tribes beginning in 1763. These policies became official with the issuance of the Royal Proclamation of 7 October 1763. Such a grand redesign was only possible with the seeming authority of a unified cabinet. While twentieth-century historians attempted to identify the particular authors of these policies, it was in practice a combined effort that led to the drafting of these policies in the spring and summer of 1763.<sup>61</sup>

Moving from orator to administrator in April 1763, Shelburne took over the Board of Trade and began assembling an extensive archive of old reports, correspondence, and other documents necessary to answer the cabinet's queries about how to manage the new cessions. The resulting reports would let the king and cabinet approve a plan of reform and, as with the treaty, present the results as necessary to Parliament for approval and funding. On his way out of the ministry, Bute helped set everything in motion, lobbying Shelburne to take over the Board, with Grenville as Treasurer and the Duke of Halifax and Lord Egremont as the two secretaries of state. None of these men particularly liked each other or the king, nor did the king particularly like any of them. But while he privately lamented to Bute that "the unhappy system ... of preferring men who have opinions of their own, has aided to weaken Government," he nonetheless accepted the necessity of such cabinet-building.<sup>62</sup> If not exactly a team of rivals, the cabinet was certainly built on the idea that a critical mass of personal differences could be overcome in common conversation and joint decision, guided by the king himself without help from Bute.

Bute likely would have answered that the personalities of the ministers did not much matter because the drafting of policy would proceed jointly. It was the structure that made this possible—the Board of Trade recorded and transmitted American affairs to the king and did not report to or receive authorization from Parliament as a rule. The lessons of the Treaty of Paris could now be applied to America. The cabinet wielded executive authority to balance the interests of America in such a way as to make them productive rather than destructive. But, crucially, in order for this to work, America would have to be transformed, through imperial intervention, into something visible and knowable. The cabinet had already known the interests of Britain and Parliament. To apply the same principles to American management, the cabinet needed to quickly transform America into a visible space so that the continent's interests could be properly identified and managed. George III's cabinet had to construct an apparatus with which to see.<sup>63</sup>

The result was an effort to demonstrate that the treaty justifications could become reality. The tricky business was that the rhetoric of wholeness and harmony within bounded territories applied to *national* characters, as Hume's essay made clear. How colonies fit into this

<sup>61</sup> Historians have variously attributed the Proclamation's authorship to Shelburne, Lord Egremont, Henry Ellis, the former governor of Georgia, or Grenville. The case for Egremont is made in Verner Crane, "Hints Relative to the Division and Government of the Conquered and Newly Acquired Countries in America," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 8 (1922): 367–73 and Sosin, *Whitehall and the Wilderness*, 55–57. Humphreys advocated for Shelburne in R. A. Humphreys, "Lord Shelburne and the Proclamation of 1763," *The English Historical Review* 49, no. 194 (1934): 241–64. Ritcheson argued that the policy was of a piece with Grenville's policy agenda in Ritcheson, *British Politics and the American Revolution*, 9–12, a statement supported by Keith Perry, *British Politics and the American Revolution* (New York, 1990), 31.

<sup>62</sup> George III to Bute, 17 March 1763 and 25 March 1763, in *Letters from George III to Lord Bute*, 198, 206.

<sup>63</sup> The reference to the state and vision comes from James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, 1999).

philosophy was uncertain and the planners were terrified at the prospect of American independence developing in the new cessions. The Ohio Valley lands west of the Appalachians loomed as a particular threat. The Atlantic system had been based on river access to the eastern interior. Shipping goods between Britain and the Ohio Valley, on the other hand, was no easy matter, even with access through the St. Lawrence and Spanish New Orleans secured by treaty. Lacking access to British manufactures in the interior might mean the end of colonial dependence and the development of their own industries. This would create competitors, not the consumer markets the treaty's planners had promised.<sup>64</sup> Plans would therefore have to address this potential issue of settlers "planting themselves in the Heart of America, out of the reach of Government ... where, from the great Difficulty of procuring European Commodities, they would be compelled to commence Manufactures [sic] to the infinite prejudice of Britain."<sup>65</sup>

To solve this problem, the Board had to make America's competing interests visible to the king and cabinet alike, using imperial archives and the London print trade to create the illusion of sight over the Americas. The king could then act as he had done with the treaty—balancing all interests and creating a united and enduring system. The Crown's oversight was the operative authority for these actions, as the king was "pleased to fix His Royal attention upon the next important Object of securing to His Subjects & extending the Enjoyment of the Advantages which Peace has procured." The chief objects for his study, the instructions continued, would be "the Interest of His Colonies, which engaged him in a just and necessary War in support of their Rights."<sup>66</sup> The Board's initial instructions, sent by Egremont on 5 May 1763, did not specify any particular format for the Board's report, merely requesting that "you do as soon as possible report Your Opinion, upon such Points as shall appear to you most pressing."<sup>67</sup>

For this new assignment, though, the Board clearly felt that a quick verbal description was not enough; visual aids were needed. Despite acknowledging that their cartographic knowledge of the new cessions west of the Appalachians was limited because "there are not extant any Charts or Accounts that can be depended upon" the Board nonetheless felt that "forming an Opinion of what Government it may be proper to establish in this Country does not so materially depend upon a very precise and accurate knowledge of the Nature of the Country; a general Knowledge of its Situation and natural boundaries may suffice."<sup>68</sup> To assist in that "general Knowledge" the Board modified a published map (Figure 2) and included it with their report "to refer Your Majesty to the annexed Chart of North America ... agreeable to the verbal description of them in our Report, so that by comparing one with the other, Your Majesty will be enabled with the greater exactness and precision to form a Judgement of the several Propositions."<sup>69</sup> The Board elaborated in a second report on the same day that, thanks to "the annexed Chart ... Your Majesty will have a clearer Conception than can be conveyed by Descriptive words alone."<sup>70</sup> This simple explanation revealed the emerging imperial idea of using maps and texts to correct each other and to create a visual language that could rationalize human and physical geography and make it all seem governable at a distance, much as many of these same ministers would soon do for South Asia.<sup>71</sup> It was the form of representation that underpinned Bute's original model—interests could be presented to the king and thereby "represented" in governance.

<sup>64</sup> Marshall, *Making and Unmaking*, 163–68, 273–76.

<sup>65</sup> Crane, "Hints," 371.

<sup>66</sup> Egremont to Board of Trade, 5 May 1763, Shelburne Papers, vol. 49: 283, WLCL.

<sup>67</sup> Egremont to Board of Trade, vol. 49: 290, WLCL.

<sup>68</sup> Pownall, "Sketch of a Report Concerning the Cessions in Africa and America," 8 June 1763, Shelburne Papers, vol. 49: 335–6, WLCL.

<sup>69</sup> Pownall, "Sketch of a Report," vol. 49: 355, WLCL. The map with the Board's watercolor additions is held in The National Archives (TNA): MR 1/26, "An Accurate Map of North America," 1763.

<sup>70</sup> John Pownall, "Report of the Lords of Trade Relating to the Cession at the Peace of 1763," Shelburne Papers, vol. 49: 383, WLCL.

<sup>71</sup> Matthew Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765–1843* (Chicago, 1997), 16–18, 77–79. On George III's early reign, the East India Company, and South Asia, see Vaughn, *Politics*, 183–200.



**Figure 2.** Revised map by the Board of Trade, 1763. Source: The National Archives (TNA): MR 1/26, Map Library, “An Accurate Map of North America,” 1763.

Reflecting the beliefs circulating at court, the Board believed that the various “interests” in North America could balance and correct each other. While still in the dark about Indigenous uprisings and resistance in May 1763, the Board nonetheless worried about settler expansion into the interior as “a manifest Breach of our general Engagements with the Indians which would naturally excite them in a Jealousy and Disquiet that might prove of fatal Consequence,” citing earlier reports from colonial correspondence as well as the specific stipulations of the Treaties of Easton, Lancaster, and Detroit, “which Reports Treaties & Representations have already been laid before Your Majesty.”<sup>72</sup> To solve all the problems at once, the Board proposed what they called “an exact Union of System.” This system became the Proclamation of 1763 four months later: a boundary running along the sources of all rivers that ran directly into the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico, with interior territory “considered as Lands belonging to the Indians, the Dominion of which to be protected for them by Forts and military Establishments ... and with full Liberty to all Your Majesty’s Subjects in general to trade with the said Indians.”<sup>73</sup>

In keeping with George III’s vision of governance, there was a clockwork quality to the plan as presented, with each part of the map operating in coordination with the others. The “ancient” blue colonies would continue to provide the “Rice, Tobacco, Corn, & Fish” and other items Shelburne had catalogued in his speech to the Lords. Tied to Atlantic waters, they could import British manufactures and export produce as before, preserving the old Atlantic system. As they grew over time, excess populations could be diverted to the

<sup>72</sup> Pownall, “Sketch of a Report,” vol. 49: 336–38, WLCL.

<sup>73</sup> Pownall, “Sketch of a Report,” vol. 49: 335–36, 339, WLCL. For a full description of the plan, see Robert L. Gold, *Borderland Empires in Transition: The Triple-Nation Transfer of Florida* (Carbondale, 1969), 122–25.

Canadian colonies and Florida, taking advantage of the newly surveyed territories ready for settlement. Enterprising colonists seeking new sources of wealth could take out licenses to trade with Indigenous communities, forced by the pressures of the open market to offer the best and most honest terms while shouldering the costs of carrying British manufactures across the mountains (the Hudson's Bay Company would retain its privileged position in the Canadian territories). Indigenous peoples, given peaceful enjoyment of their hunting grounds, would provide a growing consumer market to Great Britain's manufacturers via these traders and prevent colonists from spreading westward and out of reach of British merchant vessels. And the royal soldiers would be stationed in the western territories and the new colonies to act as direct representatives of the king's authority to regulate and correct the mechanism as necessary. It seemed, on paper, to be a beautifully thought-out plan but the map did raise some questions that the cabinet had to settle.

In particular, what governed the western side of that line? Indigenous sovereignty was of course not considered, but developing an empire-friendly answer to this question was crucial to the plan's success, and its answer showed how the cabinet was crafting policy in unison. After reading the reports on 8 June, George III returned the proposal, suggesting that the entirety of the west be placed under Quebec's jurisdiction, thinking "that great Inconveniences might arise, from so large a Tract of Land being left, without being Subject to the Civil Jurisdiction."<sup>74</sup> The Board replied that this would give the people and governor of Quebec too much power, especially as the governor "would become virtually Commander in Chief" of the new American regiments. Union was threatened by overpowered individuals and their factions, after all, and such confusion of civil and military establishments would create "constant and inextricable Disputes" between the governor of Quebec and the king's royal officers. Better, the Board argued, to give the actual commander in chief of the army power over the civil government of the west and "a Commission ... for the time being adapted to the Protection of the Indians and the fur Trade."<sup>75</sup> The cabinet had thus exposed an important question regarding the American colonies. As Shelburne would later ask and answer in 1767, "what is it that secures Peace and good Order in America? To which the Answer is very obvious; a proper Exertion of the Civil and Military Authority."<sup>76</sup> Tellingly, it was assumed that a military government could more easily exert civil authority than civil authority could be trusted with governance of the military.

Unfortunately, that basic constitutional question was much more than the cabinet was ready or prepared to fully investigate in 1763, much less address. George III himself later recalled that during this crucial summer, "Mr. Grenville ... the Earls of Halifax & Egremont the two Secretaries of State ... were already fill'd with jealousys" and "they grew very insolent to Me ... their ill humor encreas'd to such a height in August that the Earl of Egremont parted from me the day preceding his sudden death not very amiably."<sup>77</sup> George III also privately grumbled that "the American affairs & indeed every other except those which Mr. Grenville thought tended to his acquiring popularity were neglected" during this same period.<sup>78</sup> Bute's cabinet revolution had left politics no less dependent on personality and faction. Indeed, by destabilizing Britain's coalitions, it had left power vacuums that those with personal ambitions attempted to fill.

This instability meant that the royal soldiers in America were left to patch up the constitutional questions raised by the cabinet's proposals, adding new importance to securing their funding. Much like the king himself in Britain, the royal army in America had to

<sup>74</sup> Egremont to Lords of Trade, 14 July 1763, in Adam Shortt and Arthur G. Doughty, eds., *Documents Relating to the Constitutional History of Canada, 1759-1791* (Ottawa, 1907), 108. Internet Archive, [https://ia800202.us.archive.org/21/items/documentsrelatin00shor/documentsrelatin00shor\\_bw.pdf](https://ia800202.us.archive.org/21/items/documentsrelatin00shor/documentsrelatin00shor_bw.pdf).

<sup>75</sup> Board of Trade to Egremont, 5 August 1763, in Shortt and Doughty, *Documents*, 111.

<sup>76</sup> Shelburne, "Observations upon a Plan for the Future Management of Indian Affairs" [1767], *Shelburne Papers*, vol. 60: 137, WLCL.

<sup>77</sup> RA GEO/MAIN/168 George III, "Change of Ministry," George III Papers, Royal Archives.

<sup>78</sup> RA GEO/MAIN/171 George III, "Change of Ministry," George III Papers, Royal Archives.



perform the role of mediator between the competing interests and factions, except that the American arrangement had no 1688-like settlement behind it. While the original plan for the American detachments in 1762 had been “to over-awe and restrain” Native Americans “by a chain of strong forts and garrisons,” by August 1763 something much bigger had been tied to the regiments.<sup>79</sup> The army was now to be the civil establishment for the western territories and in that capacity regulate and mediate the ambitions of older colonial governments, despite being an ostensibly equal rather than superior establishment. While in late 1762 the king and others had justified the army in terms of defense and protection of the peace, by the next year the mission had expanded.<sup>80</sup> As the Board had put it in reference to Barbados as a potential capital for the ceded islands, government consisted of “Authority Jurisdiction Revenue and every other Circumstance of civil Establishment” and the army was now to fulfill those functions over one-fourth of North America.<sup>81</sup> Notably, the only part of the plan needing Parliament’s approval was funding for the new garrisons and this had already been secured in March on the promise that the American colonists would pay for them and that no action was needed until 1764.<sup>82</sup>

## Conclusion

Colonial funding for the North American regiments, of course, would be raised by new revenue acts proposed in 1764 and 1765—the Sugar Act and the Stamp Act. While historians have largely assumed that the two acts were directly tied to war debts and a supposed era of austerity, this interpretation misses the broader political context for this legislation.<sup>83</sup> Situating these acts and their subsequent crises as consequences of Bute’s cabinet reforms provides a richer understanding of these critical pieces of legislation. The funding of twenty-one regiments of troops, two massive coastal surveys, scores of diplomatic congresses with Native Americans, as well as the boundary surveys that resulted were not simply revenue-cutting measures. In many ways they resembled an imperial building project to make North America look more like it did on the Board of Trade’s map. Linking these expenditures to the proper establishment of civil governance in America explains the time and money Britain spent defending the colonial revenue system up to and including the prosecution of a global war during the American Revolution. Given that the Atlantic maritime system was a product of coordinated effort rather than “salutary neglect,” the Bute ministry’s reforms must be seen as a conscious revision of that system, one whose intentions matter for understanding the policies proposed.<sup>84</sup>

The plan’s direct links to the stability and authority of George III’s reformed cabinet also offer insight into its intolerance for colonial protest. Having used constitutionally uncertain means to lash the cabinet’s stability to American tranquility, any challenge to those constitutional questions would be felt most acutely at the very heart of government. The ways in which colonial protest and ministerial instability fed into each other throughout the 1760s was one manifestation of this dynamic. The hubris of the Board’s belief that it could recognize American interests from afar also sheds light on the quick turns to concepts such as “virtual representation” in response to those same protests. Given the origins of the cabinet revolution, it was ironic that George III ended up having to defend the supremacy of Parliament over the colonies in order to protect the authority of the throne, casting the Declaratory Act in a new light.

<sup>79</sup> *The Briton*, 25 September 1762.

<sup>80</sup> On the army as defensive force, see Bullion, “The Ten Thousand,” 653–54. Baugh, “Atlantic Commerce,” 203–05 notes that the defensive rationale might have been the reason, but it did not entirely make sense in the circumstances of 1763.

<sup>81</sup> Pownall, “Sketch of a Report,” vol. 49: 360, WLCL.

<sup>82</sup> Bullion, “The Ten Thousand,” 654–56.

<sup>83</sup> On the imperial crisis as driven by austerity politics, see Du Rivage, *Revolution against Empire*, 17–18, and Steven Pincus, *The Heart of the Declaration: the Founders’ Case for an Activist Government* (New Haven, 2016), 22–23.

<sup>84</sup> On the efforts to define and defend a maritime system, see Baugh, “Atlantic Commerce,” 201–04; also Andrew C. Beaumont, *Colonial America and the Earl of Halifax, 1748–1761* (New York, 2015).

The hemispheric reach of the reformed cabinet and its messaging to Native Americans provide better insight into the constitutional and political significance of Indigenous resistance to Britain and its colonies. The centrality of Native American sovereignty to the plan's operation suggests that Indigenous issues were more than a sideline to the imperial crisis; they were in fact much more central than might appear to be the case if one begins the story with Bute's successor at the Treasury George Grenville and his revenue plans. In keeping with K. Tsainina Lomawaima's reminder that issues of Native sovereignty and constitution were always intertwined, the cabinet's intentional, continent-wide linking of interests and representation helps us understand better the combined coastal and Indigenous responses to British reforms.<sup>85</sup> Recent work in American historiography supports this contention. Indeed, the cabinet's stumbles around the issue illustrate that the imperial crisis can only be fully understood by positioning Indigenous issues as central rather than peripheral to these events.<sup>86</sup>

But the reform of the cabinet also prefigured, albeit in a very haphazard and limited way, some of the turns in governance that would mark the next century. The idea that government should have more open access to information that could be shared across departments certainly foreshadowed the professionalization of government and bureaucracy in the European empires of the nineteenth century. The idea of cabinet solidarity also came to mark the years of William Pitt the Younger and beyond, when the cabinet formed the union between monarch and parliamentary majorities, and opposition was handled in the elected body of the Commons rather than the appointed body of the ministry.

However, in the short term, the acts produced crisis. Even before the royal proclamation became known, the fallout of Bute's cabinet revolution created chaos instead of unity. Pitt and Newcastle's opposition, and their allies in the press, waged a constant campaign against the peace, against Bute, and against anyone who was friend to either. Cabinet members resigned at a regular rate for the first several years of George's reign, a phenomenon made worse as colonial opposition and protest added fuel to the London fires. Bute had handed the empire a ready-made constitutional crisis that challenged the operation of government and raised significant questions about the status of the colonies. The chaos at the center made Britain at once more vulnerable and less receptive to colonial challenge and therefore susceptible to the overreaction and escalation that marked the entirety of the imperial crisis of the 1760s and 1770s. By showcasing the enormous power of such a small group of individuals to manufacture a crisis out of whole cloth, the storm in the king's closet played a larger part in the coming of revolution than has perhaps been realized to date.

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<sup>85</sup> K. Tsainina Lomawaima, "Federalism: Native, Federal, and State Sovereignty," in *Why You Can't Teach United States History without Indians*, ed. Susan Sleeper-Smith et al. (Chapel Hill, 2015), 273–86, at 273–78. For another discussion on the interconnectedness of the West and the imperial crisis, see Jessica Choppin Roney, "1776, Viewed from the West," *Journal of the Early Republic* 37 (2017): 655–700.

<sup>86</sup> Some recent work that demonstrates the centrality of native sovereignty, land use, and ideas of race to the imperial crisis include Woody Holton, *Liberty is Sweet: The Hidden History of the American Revolution* (New York, 2021); Alan Taylor, *American Republics: A Continental History of the United States, 1783–1850* (New York, 2021); Robert Parkinson, *The Common Cause: Creating Race and Nation in the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, 2016).