

The Age of the Projectors: British Imperial Strategy in the North Atlantic in the War of Spanish Succession

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The Age of the Projectors: British Imperial Strategy in the North Atlantic in the War of Spanish Succession

AMBITIOUS PROPOSALS FOR commercial expansion and military conquest in the Atlantic theatres were often promoted during the War of Spanish Succession (1702-1713). One of the striking features of Queen Anne's War, however, was the British government's lack of enthusiasm for such projects. Historians have tended to view the war in the context of long-term imperial issues and with a knowledge of a developing British Empire; from this perspective they have seen the inconsistencies of imperial strategy in this period as a lost opportunity in the construction of the British Empire.¹ Although the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 secured several gains for Britain, including a favourable resolution of the disputed claims to Newfoundland, Hudson's Bay and Nova Scotia, the colonial objectives of the war were limited. British wartime strategy was directed primarily to the successful completion of the European struggle; overseas goals were restricted largely to the maintenance of a favourable status quo. British policy-makers were clearly not as committed to imperial expansion as it seems in retrospect they might have been. In large part this was because they lacked the resources and the mentality for such initiatives and were under no significant pressure to undertake aggressive expansionist projects. The central administration formulated trans-Atlantic wartime strategy without access to independent sources of reliable and relevant information. Instead the government depended heavily upon mercantile interest groups and individual promoters to propose and implement overseas imperial projects. While mercantile groups were often conservative in

1 In particular, see George M. Waller, *Samuel Vetch, Colonial Enterpriser* (Chapel Hill, 1960). Relevant examples include H.E. Egerton, *A Short History of British Colonial Policy* (London, 1910), pp. 126-7, P.S. Haffenden, *New England in the English Nation, 1689-1713* (Oxford, 1974), pp. 232, 236-7, 252-3, 283, J.H. Rose, A.P. Newton and E.A. Benians, eds., *The Cambridge History of the British Empire: The Old Empire* (Cambridge, 1929), pp. 325-9, 346. For a more recent assessment which emphasizes the extent to which "imperial policy" consisted of pragmatic responses to immediate problems and opportunities, see W.A. Speck, "The International and Imperial Context", in Jack P. Greene and J.R. Pole, eds., *Colonial British America: Essays in the New History of the Early Modern Era* (Baltimore, 1984), pp. 384-407.

their advice, aggressive would-be imperialists such as Michel de Bereau Monsegur, Thomas Ekines and Samuel Vetch advanced several projects of imperial expansion and conquest. These individuals belonged to a period in the evolution of British imperialism which could be aptly described as the age of the projectors. Their occasional successes and more usual failures offer insights into the conflicting goals and competing priorities in the formation of British imperial policy during the opening decade of the 18th century.

Scholars for whom military and naval intelligence has been a passing concern have exaggerated the organization and competence of the British during the War of Spanish Succession.² The general tendency has been to assume that Britain possessed a very strong intelligence system because it did achieve a few spectacular successes during this period. Intelligence did serve the British administration fairly well, most notably in the early warnings of attempted invasions and the capture and decoding of enemy diplomatic correspondence. The activities, however, were piecemeal, the personnel frequently amateurish, and the initiative not uncommonly lay in the hands of private individuals. To the extent that the British administration strongly encouraged and promoted intelligence gathering, it tended to focus upon main interests within the European theatre, in particular diplomacy and offensive enemy military activity against British armies or Britain itself.³ The British experienced considerable difficulty in securing timely, consistent, and reliable espionage from within the borders of France. Although diplomatic and consular representatives in Europe were under instruction to provide the British administration with extensive reports, as far as military operations overseas were concerned, embassy officials recorded next to nothing and what they did note was essentially rumour.

The Crown representatives within British colonies were also under instruction to forward relevant intelligence to the central government and most did so, to the best of their abilities, at regular intervals. Colonial governments might act promptly on the basis of their own surveillance, but an essential difficulty with colonial intelligence was that — in addition to being partial and frequently of questionable reliability — it was late in reaching Britain. Reports of even

2 Sir Winston S. Churchill, *Marlborough: His Life and Times* (London, 1933); David Chandler, *Marlborough as Military Commander* (London, 1973), pp. 133, 170, 188, 206; Henry L. Snyder, ed., *The Marlborough-Godolphin Correspondence* (Oxford, 1975), I, pp. xxx-xxxi.

3 K.L. Ellis, *The Post Office in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1958), p. 74; Peter Fraser, *The Intelligence of the Secretaries of State and Their Monopoly on Licenced News, 1660-1688* (Cambridge, 1956), pp. 20-1; David B. Horn, *The British Diplomatic Service, 1689-1789* (Oxford, 1961), pp. 230, 261-78; S.P. Oakley, "The Interception of Posts in Celle, 1694-1700", in R. Hatton and J.S. Bromley, eds., *William III and Louis XIV, Essays 1680-1720* (Liverpool, 1968), pp. 95-116; J.D. Alsop, "The Detection of Matthew Prior's Peace Mission of 1711", *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, VII (1984), pp. 61-7; Paul S. Fritz, "The Anti-Jacobite Intelligence System of the English Ministers, 1715-1745", *Historical Journal*, XVI (1973), pp. 265-89.

momentous events, however rapidly dispatched, took months to arrive.⁴ In any event, espionage in America was assigned a low priority in comparison with events within Europe. A large proportion of useful intelligence actually reached the administration by chance, rather than deliberate planning. Valuable naval information relating to the enemy was derived from commercial contacts. The administration learned of ship movements at Brest, Toulon or Bordeaux frequently through British merchants or occasionally former allied or British prisoners-of-war; English fishing ships on the Grand Banks occasionally upon their return passed on news of enemy activity.⁵ None the less, most naval intelligence secured through British merchants was normally irregular and of limited value.

Although surviving British archival information concerning espionage activity is fairly extensive, this is not true of naval and military intelligence for the North Atlantic. Throughout the war, surviving British intelligence on French naval activity remained extremely limited. Virtually the only news the secretaries of state had for the ports of Brest, La Rochelle, and St. Malo came entirely from public newsletters. Manuscript newsletters frequently contained better information than printed newspapers, and the British paid considerable sums to secure regular access to voluminous quantities of French newsletters. It is conventional wisdom that military intelligence justifiably depends heavily upon careful analysis of readily accessible public information. Nevertheless, the quantity and quality of useful material for overseas policy were both weak. Administrators deemed even trivial information to be worthy of serious interest. The undersecretaries of state regularly extracted comments from the newsletters and despatched them to the Admiralty. In general the office of the secretary of state kept in close communication with the Admiralty. But again, the relevant material for the Atlantic theatre was meagre. The agencies did what they could, but without a stroke of good fortune information was either non-existent or of poor quality.⁶

4 For average times and communications in general see Ian K. Steele, *The English Atlantic 1675-1740: An Exploration of Communication and Community* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 113-250, 295, Table 4.4. For one illustration: Cecil Headlam, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies* [hereafter *C.S.P.*] (London, 1913-25), XXIV, nos. 69, 135; British Library [B.L.], Add. Mss. 61601, fo. 219; *Postscript to the Flying Post*, no. 2088 (16 September 1708); *The London Gazette*, nos. 4459, 4476.

5 B.L., Add. Mss. 61125, fo. 81, 61145, fos. 12-13, 60-75, 61527, fo. 172, 61546, fo. 136, 61623, fo. 5v, 61644, fo. 35, 61653, fos. 105v, 126; Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Report on the Manuscripts of His Grace the Duke of Portland*, IV (London, 1899), pp. 96-7; Ragnhild Hatton, "John Drummond in the War of Spanish Succession: Merchant Turned Diplomatic Agent", in R. Hatton and M.S. Anderson, eds., *Studies in Diplomatic History* (London, 1970), pp. 69-96.

6 Public Record Office [P.R.O.], SP 101/7, 24, 109-10; B.L., Add. Mss. 61264-5A, 61400, fo. 124, 61548-61562, 61579, fo. 149, 61653, fos. 105v, 126, 127, 150v, 194, 198v, 199, 200, 202v; Snyder, *Marlborough-Godolphin*, p. 1093; G.F. James, "Some Further Aspects of Admiralty Administration, 1689-1714", *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, XVII (1939), pp. 20-6.

Into this information gap flowed the special interest groups and the projectors of early 18th century Britain. These were the very individuals likely to have some knowledge of the topics they specially favoured, but their information was tailored to suit their own ambitions and needs. In commerce and in military affairs the early 18th century has been referred to as the age of the projector.⁷ Yet there has been no study to the present of the extent to which the central government utilized and was dependent upon projectors and interested parties in the development of overseas policies during the war. These hopeful adventurers were intent upon personal ambition but boldly sounded the rhetoric of public advantage. Samuel Vetch asserted that his 1707-9 project for the conquest of French Canada could be “putt in the Balance with the greatest Enterprises, that have bein projected since the revolution [of 1688] both with regard to the honour, and Intrest of the Brittish Empyre, both att home and abroad”, and identified himself as an “Intirely devoted servant to the Crowne and Interest of Great Brittain”. He neglected to mention his recent conviction for illegal wartime trade with the French at Port Royal, and did not initially make explicit that the quid pro quo for his knowledge and assistance was the colonial governorship of all conquered territories. John Graves, in urging the necessity of a strong British military presence in the devastated Bahama Islands during 1709 emphasized his own expertise and his willingness “to serve the Crowne and My Nation at those Islands in what Post hir Maj^{ty} shall think fit”, although he strongly hinted that he too desired the governor’s office. Others, more modest or lacking in specific proposals, simply outlined their past experience in the Americas and left their employment to what they hoped was a suitably impressed administration.⁸

The middle years of the war — the period from late 1706 until late 1710 — possess considerable significance for British wartime military policy. Until the autumn of 1707 British strategy reflected Marlborough’s own priority of direct pressure upon France’s frontiers. In the campaigns of 1702-1707 the colonies were left almost entirely to their own devices. Not only were assertive overseas expeditions considered useless diversions of manpower and finance from the main struggle in Europe, but inadequate attention was paid to defence. The resources of the British navy were concentrated upon the European theatre with serious consequences for the defence of the seaboard colonies, the Newfound-

7 Joan Thirsk, *Economic Policy and Projects* (Oxford, 1978); Peter Jones, “Antoine De Guiscard, ‘Abbé De La Bourlie’, ‘Marquis De Guiscard’”, *The British Library Journal*, VIII (1982), pp. 94-113.

8 Vetch to Robert Hunter, Boston, 20 November 1709, B.L., Add. Ms. 61647, fo. 22; Vetch, “Canada Survey’d”, B.L., Add. Ms. 61647, fo. 10. For Vetch see Waller, *Samuel Vetch* and J.D. Alsop, “Samuel Vetch’s ‘Canada Survey’d’: The Formation of a Colonial Strategy, 1706-1710”, *Acadiensis*, XII, 1 (Autumn 1982), pp. 39-58. For Graves see B.L., Add. Ms. 61623, fos 14-17. For another illustration see J.D. Alsop, “A Darien Epilogue: Robert Allen in Spanish America, 1698-1707”, *The Americas*, XLIII (1986), pp. 197-201.

land fishery and merchant shipping. The diversion of naval resources from the Atlantic region to the Mediterranean was particularly noticeable in 1707 for the full-scale sea-borne attack on Toulon. The failure of this expedition, accompanied as it was by heavy losses of British shipping, the collapse of an early war boom in Spanish American trade and general dissatisfaction with the progress of the war, produced sustained criticism of the government in the autumn 1707 Parliament. The ministry supported a convoy act for trade protection and agreed to devote greater resources for the conquest of Spain and its colonies for the Austrian claimant.⁹ In subsequent years interest in overseas aspects of the conflict broadened. The virtual stalemate on the European battlefields encouraged the political search for alternative locations where rapid and relatively effortless military advantages could be secured. Meanwhile existing mercantile interest groups brought their concerns before both Parliament and the ministry. It was in this context that the British government came to support the projected 1709 expedition against Canada, the 1710 attack on Port Royal, the 1711 effort at Quebec, the 1709-10 rescue of St. John's, Newfoundland, as well as the 1709 resettlement of the Bahamas.¹⁰ Since all these colonial initiatives of the later stages of the War of Spanish Succession originated with projectors, it is useful to examine the characteristics which distinguished the successful projector from the unsuccessful.

More than vague assurances of great gains were necessary to advance a proposal beyond the petitionary stage. Along with a coherent project, topical and relevant to ministry interests, what was essential was the support of existing vested interests, particularly commercial concerns. Projectors and special interest groups went hand-in-hand. The projector on his own was engaged in an unlikely pursuit of ministerial attention and funding against equally persuasive schemes in the minds of competitors and the wariness — even inertia — of the government. Without a stroke of exceptionally good fortune the unassisted projector was unlikely to succeed. Successful projectors had to link their proposals to the existing concerns of particular influential interests in order to win, and retain, ministry approval.

9 Ian K. Steele, *Politics of Colonial Policy: The Board of Trade in Colonial Administration, 1696-1720* (Oxford, 1968), pp. xiv, 93, 100-6; Churchill, *Marlborough, III*, pp. 277-87; Patrick Crowhurst, *The Defence of British Trade, 1689-1815* (Folkestone, 1977); Chandler, *Marlborough*, pp. 200-3; William L. Sachse, *Lord Somers* (Manchester, 1975), pp. 255-7; Steele, *English Atlantic*, pp. 177-80; D.W. Jones, *War and Economy in the Age of William III and Marlborough* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 156, 161-4; *Votes of the House of Commons in the First Parliament of Great Britain, Appointed to Meet at Westminster the Three and Twentieth Day of October in the Sixth Year of the Reign of Queen Anne, An. Dom. 1707* (London, 1707).

10 Crowhurst, *British Trade*, pp. 112-20; Alsop, "Vetch's 'Canada Survey'd'", pp. 39-58; W.T. Morgan, "Some Attempts at Imperial Co-operation During the Reign of Queen Anne", *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 4th ser, X (1927), p. 177 and *passim*.

Michel de Bereau Monsegur provides a relevant illustration of the unsuccessful imperial projector. A minor military adventurer from Bayonne, Monsegur entered the British military scene as a protégé of the controversial Marquis de Guiscard, who came to London in February 1706 to pursue his plan for an allied seaborne invasion of France.¹¹ The initiative eventually foundered when the expeditionary force was diverted to Spain, but Guiscard was at the peak of his influence, patronized by prominent members of the government and an acknowledged leader of a faction among the Huguenot immigrants. The attraction of French exiles into his orbit and the creation of Huguenot regiments for the invasion provided employment for a number of refugees, among whom were Monsegur and also Jean-Paul Mascarene, a young Huguenot from Languedoc who had been raised in Geneva and arrived in England by early 1706.¹²

The patronage provided by Guiscard (Monsegur characterized it as “fatherly” support and assistance¹³) proved useful in the aftermath of the aborted French venture, when Monsegur turned his attention to a military enterprise of his own. According to statements Monsegur made in 1710, during the English raids in the mid-1690s, Jacques-François de Mombeton de Brouillan had placed the disposition of the defence of Placentia (or Plaisance) almost entirely in his hands. Since the garrison is known to have been under the command of other officers, there was presumably some exaggeration in this claim. However, there is no reason to doubt his employment at Placentia and he may well have held a favoured position under the governor Brouillan, a member of a Protestant noble family in Gascony who converted to Catholicism soon after his arrival in New France in 1687.¹⁴ Clearly, inside knowledge of the fortress was a valuable asset and Monsegur hoped to convince imperial administrators that he could arrange a certain and easy surprise of Placentia and the removal of French influence in Newfoundland.

Monsegur’s previous experience determined the objective for his project, but he also had some reason to expect that the capture of Placentia would prove

11 Jones, “Guiscard”, pp. 93-113.

12 Mascarene (1685-1760) came to North America for the aborted 1709 expedition against Canada, took part in the 1710 capture of Port Royal, and eventually rose to the rank of major general and to the post of lieutenant governor of Annapolis Royal: *Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Volume III* (Toronto, 1974), pp. 435-9; J.B. Brebner, “Paul Mascarene of Annapolis Royal”, in G.A. Rawlyk, ed., *Historical Essays on the Atlantic Provinces* (Toronto, 1967), pp. 17-32; J.D. Alsop, “The Distribution of British Officers in the Colonial Militia for the Canadian Expedition of 1709”, *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, LXV (1987), pp. 120-1.

13 B.L., Add. Ms. 61648, fo. 1; William A. Shaw, ed., *Calendar of Treasury Books, 1660-1718* (London, 1904-57), XXVIII (1714), pp. 460, 462.

14 C.S.P., XXV, no. 506; *Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Vol. II* (Toronto, 1969), pp. 478-81.

appealing to the ministry. The British claimed all Newfoundland by right of discovery and settlement, and in their view the French were dangerous interlopers threatening British sovereignty as well as commercial and strategic interests. The French attack on English settlements in the winter of 1704-5 aggravated fears and led the commander of the St. John's garrison, Major Thomas Lloyd, to press repeatedly from the summer of 1705 onwards for an attempt against Placentia. Although he was supported in London by the merchant Solomon Merrett, these efforts had no immediate success; indeed, they frequently took second place to the necessity of justifying Lloyd's conduct of affairs at the St. John's base in the face of repeated hostile accusations.¹⁵ Although Major Lloyd was well informed on the state of Placentia, including recent accounts of new fortifications derived from spies, without influential assistance at Whitehall his efforts to interest the central administration in even a modest expedition stood little chance of success.

In the autumn of 1706, relying upon the favouritism of Guiscard, Monsegur first approached the commissioners of the Navy with his project, who sent a favourable recommendation to Secretary of State Sir Charles Hedges. When Hedges was replaced by Charles Spencer, Earl of Sunderland, in December 1706 Monsegur dispatched the first of a lengthy series of communications to Sunderland and undersecretary of state Joseph Addison. The initial arguments advanced by Monsegur focused upon the significance of Newfoundland for French interests in Acadia, Quebec and Hudson's Bay, and the harm which Placentia did to the Grand Banks fishery and to all Britain's American colonies as a base for naval operations. This was far from empty rhetoric since other sources besides Monsegur and Major Lloyd were presenting similar advice. Sunderland considered the Huguenot worthy of some encouragement and on 17 October 1707 recommended that the destitute Monsegur be awarded a pension, although it was not until June of 1708 that an annual allowance of £91.5.0 was awarded.¹⁶ As time slipped by without action, Monsegur decided to widen the appeal of his project. His December 1707 memorial placed the capture of Placentia in a European context by emphasizing the economic dislocation which would occur in France's maritime provinces where employment was linked to the Grand Banks fishery. But Monsegur was grasping at straws. His connections lay within the Huguenot community, not the Newfoundland fisheries lobby, and by 1707-8 the influence within the British administration of his patron Guiscard had tumbled.¹⁷

15 *Journal of the Commissioners for Trade and Plantations from April 1704, to February 1708-9* (London, 1920), pp. 311-12, 419, 442; *C.S.P.*, XXII, no. 315, XXIII, nos. 419, 446, 1109.

16 *C.S.P.*, XXV, no. 506; B.L., Add. Mss. 61648, fos. 1-12, 28-9, 61652, fo. 34; Shaw, *Treasury Books*, XXII (1708), p. 275.

17 B.L., Add. Ms. 61648, fo. 14; Jones, "Guiscard", pp. 105-7.

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After the approval in late 1708 of an attack upon French Canada, Monsegur managed to have himself attached, as an aide-de-camp, to the expeditionary force assembled at Portsmouth under the command of Brigadier Thomas Whetham. Perhaps this was a precautionary move by Whitehall; the supplementary instructions of 9 May 1709 for Whetham ordered that, if due to his late arrival at Boston or the insufficiency of the colonial forces an attempt against Quebec was impractical, then he was to seize Placentia and remove the French from Newfoundland. In the event, the entire expedition was diverted to Spain in July and Monsegur was ordered to remain in Britain.¹⁸ Although Monsegur once again pushed his favourite scheme during the 1710 preparations against Port Royal and the 1711 expedition to Quebec, the inattention of the ministry was obvious. Indeed, his allowance remained unpaid from the end of 1710 until 1713; finally in 1715 the new regime fixed his pension at a mere £15 per annum and these annual payments constitute the only known evidence of a would-be imperialist over the subsequent years.¹⁹

Monsegur had offered the government a timely and knowledgeable proposition, and pursued his quest diligently for at least five years. He failed because he was a military adventurer lacking close contacts with, or the support of, the English Grand Banks fishing interest, and because Newfoundland, in itself, did not constitute a high strategic priority within the administration. No matter how broadly Monsegur attempted to sell his project, an attack against Placentia had limited appeal and at best would merely be added onto a more significant campaign against New France.

Probably the most assiduous imperial projector of the War of Spanish Succession was Thomas Ekines, whose experience provides another case study in the failure of imperialist schemes. Ekines' endeavours began at least as early as the Glorious Revolution. On 16 January 1689 he convinced William III, as Prince of Orange, to assign him temporary command of a Dutch man-of-war in an effort to capture the French *St. John of Rochelle* lying off the Isles of Scilly and reputedly worth £20,000. According to Ekines he seized the ship but it was later released on appeal, leaving him with unpaid debts and no reward.²⁰ In December 1689 he acquired command of a small 20-gun frigate utilized as a Post Office packet boat between Falmouth and Corunna in Spain during the hostilities with France, but lost the post when disabled by sickness. He later served as a volunteer in the Royal Navy without pay and in 1705 took part in the Earl of Peterborough's expedition into the Mediterranean. Apparently he proposed to take five British

18 C.S.P., XXIV, no. 297; B.L., Add. Ms. 61648, fos. 17-27; Shaw, *Treasury Books*, XXIII (1709), pp. 215, 422; Robert Pringle to Monsegur, Whitehall, 2 July 1709, B.L., Add. Ms. 61653, fo. 168.

19 C.S.P., XXV, no. 506; Shaw, *Treasury Books*, XXVIII (1714), p. 288, XXIX (1714-15), pp. 365, 681.

20 Officers of the Prize Office to the Lords of the Treasury, Westminster, 20 January 1694, B.L., Add. Ms. 61644, fos. 45-6.

ships and 1,000 soldiers from the main force across the Atlantic to seize and sack Buenos Aires. He served with the expedition at sea for nine months without pay and even brought along at his own expense knowledgeable pilots, but Peterborough's capture of Barcelona negated his project. As pressure began to mount by 1707 for a more assertive British overseas policy, Ekines once again found an opportunity. When in July 1707 the Board of Trade and Plantations was considering the topic of an attack upon the pirates at Martinique and Guadeloupe, Ekines offered to command a fourth-rate man-of-war in the expedition; he was informed that the Board did not make recommendations for the employment of specific individuals.²¹

By the following year Ekines had raised his expectations considerably. On 17 June 1708 he dispatched to the ministry an elaborate proposal for a substantial naval campaign in Spanish America. The projector was very specific about the size of the expedition he desired to command: 1,500 men and six fourth-rate men-of-war. He knew how the ships could be acquired without inconvenience: six of the best merchant ships would be requisitioned, supplied with ordnance from the Tower of London and exchanged for Navy men-of-war currently guarding the coal colliers on Britain's east coast. He had also calculated the cost of the expeditionary force, with provisions for 18 months, down to the last shilling: £28,647.10.0, including £730 for his own salary. Ekines had researched his theme extensively, providing fulsome information on all the silver production in South and Central America and the routes used to transport it, including as well the Philippines to Acapulco shipments. Where he was extremely vague was in regard to the destination of the force. He stated only that he would go to every colonial port apart from Lima and Panama, destroy their navigation, take or ruin the French traders, destroy all fortifications, compel the inhabitants to pledge allegiance to King Charles (the British candidate contesting the Spanish throne with the Bourbon Philip V) and if possible seize a Spanish silver fleet.²² Ekines was very obviously attempting to capitalize upon the government's stated intention to devote greater attention to the conquest of Spain and its colonies for the Austrian claimant. British concern that the French were coming to dominate Spanish American commerce to the severe impediment of British interests was at a peak by 1708,²³ and Ekines skilfully played upon this fear with extensive commentary and evidence in his proposal. By the summer of 1708 the central administration, led by Lord Treasurer Godolphin, was seriously considering

21 *Ibid.*, fos. 44-6; P.R.O., SP 35/77, fo. 228; C.S.P., XXIII, no. 1025; *Journal of Trade and Plantations, 1704-1709*, p. 398.

22 Ekines to Lords [of the ministry? retained by Secretary of State Sunderland], 17 June 1708, B.L., Add. Ms. 61644, fos. 34-7.

23 Joseph Addison, *The Present State of the War, and the Necessity of an Augmentation, Considered* (1707), in Richard Hurd, ed., *The Works of the Right Honourable Joseph Addison* (London, 1856), IV, pp. 340-6 and *passim*. Also, Governor Handasyde to Sunderland, Jamaica, 20 July 1708, B.L., Add. Ms. 61643.

an overseas initiative and Spanish America was one of the favoured targets.²⁴

With historical hindsight it would be easy to dismiss Ekines as a hopeless adventurer whom no one in authority took seriously. Yet Ekines attracted considerable ministry interest with his June 1708 scheme. He entered into discussions with both Godolphin and Sunderland and all discerned a reasonable prospect for an immediate 1708 expedition. A central difficulty, of which Ekines was well aware, was that of resources. The national government in its consideration of overseas activity always desired the maximum military, political and economic advantage with the minimum commitment of manpower, ships and money. Although the conscription of merchant shipping would be politically troublesome, West Indian commercial interests were at this very time protesting to the administration about the limited British presence in the region.²⁵ The solution was to turn the endeavour into one administered and financed by a mercantile consortium. This was a serious proposition before the end of June 1708, but one to which Ekines expressed complete opposition even though the development was a logical extension of existing war strategy. Britain was committed to supporting the Austrian Hapsburg claim to both Spain and its colonial empire, and expected preferential peacetime trading arrangements in return.²⁶ The potential for territorial expansion in Spanish America was therefore negligible. As the Duke of Marlborough disparagingly remarked in 1709 when suggestions for a West Indian expedition surfaced once again, such campaigns always served as "a pretext to plunder". Since Britain would not undertake an obligation to maintain a strong presence in any captured territories for the duration of the war, short-term disruption and plunder was all that could be expected. Even Marlborough, opposed to any diversion from the main struggle against France, acknowledged the ready appeal of such a pecuniary endeavour for English commercial interests and some politicians.²⁷

As for Ekines, he could see the control of the expedition slipping from his grasp. While protesting against mercantile direction, he requested a letter from the government to the involved (unspecified) merchants appointing him as commander so that he could negotiate terms with them.²⁸ Events unfolded slowly, far too slowly for Ekines, and time elapsed without results. The news at

24 Snyder, *Marlborough-Godolphin*, pp. 1093-5; Alsop, "Vetch's 'Canada Survey'd'"; Churchill, *Marlborough*, III, pp. 277-87. For other projected 1708 military initiatives in Spanish America: B.L., Add. Mss. 61596, fo. 130, 61644, fos. 54-9.

25 Crowhurst, *British Trade*, pp. 179-80.

26 Curtis Nettels, "England and the Spanish American Trade, 1680-1715", *Journal of Modern History*, III (1931), pp. 1-32; Geoffrey J. Walker, *Spanish Politics and Imperial Trade, 1700-1789* (London, 1979), pp. 19-92.

27 Snyder, *Marlborough-Godolphin*, pp. 1355, 1485.

28 B.L., Add. Ms. 61644, fos. 42-3.

the beginning of September, that Ducasse had brought the Spanish treasure fleet to the Bay of Biscay but left behind a number of galleons at Carthagená, brought a focus to his activities. He immediately sent Godolphin a proposal to renew the expedition. This time he desired the command of seven or eight men-of-war and 2,600 soldiers for a three-phased project: first he would take Carthagená and the galleons; then the expedition would fall upon Vera Cruse and destroy the flotilla reported to be there; and finally the force would make use of the prevailing currents to run north to Placentia, where they would arrive in February or early March before the return of French ships and fishermen for an easy conquest and a triumphant return home in May. Godolphin was favourably disposed, and in a letter to Marlborough of 3 September he noted both the “great ferment here” in support of the initiative and his own intention to take 2,500 men from the regiments currently with the fleet intended for Portugal, to be replaced by others presently in Ireland and Scotland.²⁹ He did, however, conclude with a mixed final comment “I own, I think, the thing is right, but wee want proper persons for the execution of almost anything”. The implied criticism of Ekines, not mentioned by name by Godolphin, was of less consequence than Marlborough’s own influence within the ministry. As Godolphin related on 6 September, no matter “how pressing in their several respects” the expedition would be, the fortuitous arrival of a letter from Marlborough had led the Queen to divert the regiments intended for Portugal directly to the Spanish Netherlands for Marlborough’s service. “And as for getting the regiments we want every moment to send to the West Indies, there remains no expedient but to take them from Ireland. But I must own I expect difficulties in that matter from my Lord Lieutenant [of Ireland]”.³⁰ Although Godolphin dispatched Ekines to Sunderland on 8 September for further consultation, Ekines’ best opportunity for imperial fame and personal advancement had passed.

In evaluating the 1708 initiatives, it is fairly certain that Ekines’ character and record was a handicap. In itself this was not an insurmountable difficulty. The adventurer’s ability to develop topical and well-documented proposals was a worthwhile asset for a government largely lacking information and slow to engage in imperial planning. Lord Treasurer Godolphin took Ekines seriously. The first effort collapsed apparently because Ekines failed to acquire the support of the relevant commercial interests and indeed was actively opposed to their involvement in the enterprise. Had it not been for this lack of cohesion between projector and merchants it is likely that a Spanish American campaign, with limited state assistance, would have been mounted during 1708. The later September scheme collapsed because of tensions within the ministry. Historians,

29 Ekines to Sunderland, 8 September 1708, B.L., Add. Ms. 61644, fos. 44-v; Snyder, *Marlborough-Godolphin*, pp. 1093-4.

30 Snyder, *Marlborough-Godolphin*, pp. 1089, 1095.

especially those writing from a North American perspective, frequently assign the imperial failures of the War of Spanish Succession to a Eurocentric governmental policy where European concerns always took priority over colonial interests. This case demonstrates a greater complexity. Godolphin, as head of the ministry, was eager to divert troops intended for Portugal to the Caribbean. It was a coincidence that Marlborough, writing before news of the Carthagena galleons had been received and concerned with his own military strength, successfully asserted his influence to alter the destination of the force from Portugal to Ostend. The struggle for scarce military resources took place within the European theatres and not simply between Europe and the colonies. The West Indies, in this instance, took precedence over Portugal; with a slightly modified combination of events the decision might have been very different.

Ekines was not deterred by the events of 1708. He soon turned his attentions to Newfoundland, as did others in a period of increasing concern about the security of the island and the state of the fishery following the successful French assault on St. John's in December 1708. In early 1709 Ekines attempted to influence developing British policy.³¹ The obvious move would have been to re-establish a military force at St. John's and retaliate against Placentia. Ekines argued directly against this course. Since the capture of Placentia had been on his agenda in September 1708, the conclusion must be that Ekines was once again shaping his plans to combine topicality with personal advantage. Since others, Monsegur included, knew far more about Placentia than did Ekines, he tailored his proposal around what he knew best: naval affairs and, by extension, the fishery:

The ffrench have Encouraged it [the fishing trade] mightily, for it was the sole Rise, and still is the Chiefe support of their Maratin power...for in peace they carry vast Numbers of the kings Soldiers to make them seamen... so that by this ffishery they Imploy 25 thousand seamen which is the better part of all the Seamen of ffrance it being probable her Ma^{tie} may soon retake St. John's, and if we could take Placentia also yet that would not hinder much of their fishery, for it could no way prevent any from ffishing on the Bank which is 30 or 40 Leagues off shore, and Newfound Land being an Island as big as the Kingdome of England and but a Thousand English men on it and they ffishermen that only mind getting a livelyhood Tis unlikely wee should prevent the ffrench from running into any uninhabited Port with their Armed ships and ffish and do what they please Tho we had Placentia.

31 B.L., Add. Ms. 61647, fos. 207-v. The report is undated, but since Ekines knew of the French taking of St. John's but not of any British response it must date from 1709, probably soon after the news reached England.

42 *Acadiensis*

The truth of Ekines' argument that Placentia was not essential to the French Grand Banks fishery,³² does not disguise the special pleading involved in his own preferred remedy:

But the most Effectuall and Easy way to ruine that Trade to the ffrench is by appointing a Governour for the Island with as good provision of sallary as any of the Sugar Islands have, and lett him provide 600 Seamen and as many Soldiers Regimentall as the Mariens... and shall not only defend the fforts and other places of the Island But shall Man 4 good ships with upwards of 200 Men in each which may be the largest Gallyes hired as Transports and by lying there in Port may sudenly or att all times run Out and fall on the ffrench Bankers, Or Range along shore and take all advantages of burneing and destroying all ships and ffishing Boates, stages, and houses.... by this they will be continually suffering till they are ruined by Clean ships just running Out upon them, which will be more advantageous then ten times the money and fforces Employed any other way....

When the government made its plans for Newfoundland in 1709-10 Ekines' scheme was entirely ignored. To be acceptable, an imperial initiative had to be in harmony with current ministerial attitudes, and every event demonstrates that the ministry was intent upon exactly what Ekines argued against: a limited re-occupation of St. John's with a reprisal raid on Placentia and no desire for a permanent extension of military or naval forces on the island. Then too, Ekines apparently made no effort to involve the existing fishery interests in his project. Indeed, the West Country fishing lobby would hardly have been pleased with a proposal for a British governor in Newfoundland. Ekines was simply casting around for any feasible employment. Later in 1709, with the arrival in England of large numbers of German refugees from the Palatinate, he devoted more than eight months to a scheme to settle 150 Palatine families on the Isles of Scilly. Although he received the personal approval of Queen Anne for the plan and a royal commission (which he later claimed amounted to the joint-governorship of the isles), Ekines was still petitioning in the 1720s for a financial recompense for the service.³³ In his later years Ekines continued along the path which he had already trod with so little effect. He was engaged in a series of law suits, and in 1723 he promoted a scheme to settle Tobago in order to protect Barbados from the French and increase sugar production; his predictable reward was to be the post of lieutenant-governor of the colony. The next year Ekines attempted to

32 C. Grant Head, *Eighteenth Century Newfoundland* (Toronto, 1976); JeanFrançois Brière, "Pêche et politique à Terre-Neuve au XVIIIe siècle: la France véritable gagnante du traité d'Utrecht?", *Canadian Historical Review*, LXIV (1983), pp. 168-87.

33 B.L., Add. Mss. 61649, fos.92-3v, 61652, fo. 184; P.R.O., SP 35/77, fo. 228.

interest the government in the colonization of another Caribbean island.³⁴

Monsecur and Ekines represented the unsuccessful imperial entrepreneur. One of the very few projectors in colonial affairs to achieve unqualified acceptance of his proposals by the ministry was Samuel Vetch. His career has been subjected to detailed study, and at this point it is necessary only to sketch briefly his imperial policy and to explain his success with the national government.³⁵ A former soldier and survivor of the Scottish Darien colony on the Isthmus of Panama, Vetch had settled first in New York (where he married the daughter of the merchant and frontier developer Robert Livingstone) and later at Boston. From both New York and Boston he was active in the trade with New France, and by 1707 had visited the French territories on five occasions, claiming to be the best informed Briton on that subject.³⁶ An ambitious man, Vetch was on amicable terms with many of the colonial elite. His first known imperial scheme was submitted in February 1706 to the influential Earl of Halifax and Lord Somers. Vetch proposed three possible initiatives: the capture of Quebec and the establishment of a Scottish colony on the St. Lawrence; the re-assertion of the English claim to Nova Scotia as a protection for the northern colonies and a base for naval supplies; and the creation of a new colony north of Massachusetts between the Kennebec and St. George's rivers to serve as a barrier against the French and as a source of naval stores and fish.³⁷ Evidently Vetch at this date sought personal advancement through colonial expansion, but was willing to undertake any project within his field of expertise in northern mainland America. Writing from Boston, he was unaware which, if any, of his ideas would interest the central government. Although he astutely stressed the advantages to Britain and the empire, his goals were vague and he lacked influential connections within the administration. The predictable result, as with many such proposals, was that the plans were ignored and appear never to have left the possession of the Earl of Halifax.

Yet within two and a half years the adventurer was to enjoy unprecedented ministerial success with his proposal to remove the French from North America. His detailed and knowledgeable tract of 1707-8 entitled "Canada Survey'd", with its plan for a combined overland and seaborne conquest of New France,

34 B.L., Add. Mss. 61119, fos. 19-23v, 61649, fo. 3, Stowe Ms. 246, fos. 73-4, Sloane Mss. 4046, fos. 354-7, 4047, fos. 169-70. Since in 1723 and 1724 Ekines attempted to use Sir Hans Sloane as an intermediary with the government, and the projects remain amongst Sloane's papers, it is apparent that Sloane did not transmit the obviously farfetched proposals.

35 For his career see Waller, *Vetch*; G.M. Waller, "Samuel Vetch", in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Volume II*, pp. 650-2; *The Dictionary of American Biography* (New York, 1936), XIX, pp. 260-1; *The Dictionary of National Biography* (London, 1885-1901), LVIII, pp. 293-6. For the development of his colonial proposal see Alsop, "Vetch's 'Canada Survey'd'".

36 Vetch to Sunderland, London, 15 June 1708, B.L., Add. Ms. 61647, fos. 1-2.

37 B.L., Egerton Ms. 929, fos. 90-4.

secured government acceptance and led directly to the successive campaigns of 1709, 1710 and 1711. Together, these constituted the most notable imperial initiative of the war. How had Vetch, by 1707 a discredited former merchant convicted of illegal wartime commerce with the enemy, managed to influence the formation of public strategy? In the first place, the climate of opinion within the administration by later 1708 was conducive to overseas activity which would not tax resources and which promised substantial military gains.³⁸ Secondly, knowledge ability, perseverance and contacts all featured in Vetch's endeavour. Undoubtedly he was a persuasive individual with valuable information on New France. Having travelled to London in 1707 for a successful appeal against his trading conviction, Vetch could argue his proposal in person. However he was hardly a charismatic figure who secured ready acceptance for his ambitious scheme. When "Canada Survey'd" was first presented to Secretary of State Sunderland on 15 June 1708 the only response was indifference, and indecision followed Vetch's subsequent presentation of an extensively revised tract to the commissioners for Trade and Plantations on 27 July. Vetch demonstrated single-minded perseverance from his first approach in June 1708 until the eventual agreement of the ministry six months later and the formal grant of his commission at the end of February 1709. Given the complexity and competing priorities of the British administrative system continual prompting was necessary. After Vetch's departure for North America in March 1709 to organize the colonial resources for the projected expedition he continued to stress, and even exaggerate, the attractions of his policy. After his departure the central government demonstrated little durable support for the agreed aims in the face of competing pressures.³⁹ Even after the 1709 initiative had to be abandoned due to the diversion of the British regiments and naval support to Spain and the exhaustion of colonial forces, Vetch renewed efforts for a limited 1710 campaign directed against Port Royal.⁴⁰ With the success of this endeavour and Vetch's installation as the British governor, he served as commander of the colonial forces in the ill-fated 1711 Walker expedition against Quebec.

Vetch's real ability as a projector negotiating with the British administration lay in the skilful manipulation of his proposals to harmonize with current concerns of the government and existing interested parties. He imaginatively interwove British sensitivity about Newfoundland, the Spanish American trade, the Carolinas-Florida border and the ruin of the Bahamas into his scheme. More important, he had the support of interested parties. In 1708 he benefitted from the support of leading figures within both New York and Massachusetts Bay,

38 Alsop, "Vetch's 'Canada Survey'd'", pp. 45-9 and *passim*.

39 *Ibid.*, pp. 52-6; B.L., Add. 61647, fos. 1-35.

40 Waller, *passim*; Bruce T. McCully, "Catastrophe in the Wilderness: New Light on the Canadian Expedition of 1709", *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd. ser., XI (1954), pp. 441-56; B.L., Add. Ms. 61647, fos. 20-5, 181.

including the latter's Governor Joseph Dudley. And, as "Canada Survey'd" reveals, Vetch was in contact with London merchants involved with the northern colonies.⁴¹ His ability to draw Francis Nicholson (the previous lieutenant-governor of the Dominion of New England and Virginia, and former governor of Maryland and Virginia) into his plan as the unofficial second-in-command was likely crucial in acquiring the support of the commissioners for Trade and Plantations in November 1708. Later during the winter of 1709-10 Vetch was pushing the necessity of an attack upon Port Royal under the handicap of writing from New England, but Nicholson was dispatched to London to argue the case and those actively in favour included Governor Dudley, the commercial elite of Boston (who petitioned the Queen directly), and the Salem fishing interest.⁴²

In explaining the acceptance of Vetch's proposal as official policy, stress has traditionally been laid upon the breadth and visionary quality of "Canada Survey'd", a reversal of military policy at Whitehall, and the acquisition of inside political patronage in the form of "a certain gentleman" who, in effect, secured ministry approval.⁴³ Such an argument constitutes a fundamental misunderstanding of the creation of imperial strategy in this period. The British authorities were less interested in the visionary aspect of the scheme than in its effectiveness for current wartime goals. There is no evidence that his plan depended upon or instilled a new imperial consciousness in the government. Similarly, the search for a single administration supporter of the plan has proved to be futile.⁴⁴ The ministry in general demonstrated little concern for overseas initiatives in the absence of repeated prompting from projectors and vested interests, while the commissioners for Trade and Plantations rarely committed themselves to military policy recommendations in these years.⁴⁵ The projector was very much on his own. As Vetch's case reveals, his success depended upon an ability to determine appropriate goals, to work in harmony with the existing forces, including the colonial governors and commercial interests, and to pursue his personal ambition relentlessly.

41 Alsop, "Vetch's 'Canada Survey'd'", pp. 50-2; B.L., Add. Ms. 61647, fo. 7. For Vetch's support from New Hampshire and elsewhere see Haffenden, *New England in the English Nation*, pp. 249-50.

42 S.S. Webb, "The Strange Career of Francis Nicholson", *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., XXIII (1966), pp. 513-48; Bruce T. McCully, "Governor Francis Nicholson, Patron Par Excellence of Religion and Learning in Colonial America", *ibid.*, 3rd ser., XXXIX (1982), pp. 310-33, and works cited there. George A. Rawlyk, *Nova Scotia's Massachusetts* (Montreal, 1973), pp. 110, 116; B.L., Add. Ms. 61647, fos. 26-7.

43 Waller, *Vetch*, pp. 114-6, 169-70, "Vetch", p. 651; Haffenden p. 250.

44 Alsop, "Vetch's 'Canada Survey'd'", pp. 40-4, 54-5.

45 Steele, *Colonial Policy*, pp. 104, 116, 132.

Vetch was by no means unique, although his project has acquired the highest historical profile. Richard Jennings, a projector who had earlier been involved in proposals to seize the Havana silver fleet and to remove French privateers from Martinique, and John Graves, the displaced colonist and customs collector of the Bahamas, worked together to interest the government in the resettlement of New Providence, Bahamas. Commercial groups as far flung as London, Jamaica, Carolina, New York and Bermuda were reported in support of the endeavour. The disruption created by French and Spanish infiltration of the Bahamas led to petitioning of the Crown, which activity produced the 1709 effort to reassert British influence in the area.⁴⁶ The relief of St John's, Newfoundland, in 1709-10 provides another illustration of the role of mercantile interests in provoking government action, in this instance partly led by James Campbell of London. The administration ignored the projectors in the end and placed the command of the project in the hands of the regular British officer John Moody, who was — surely not by coincidence — Campbell's recommended choice and also his former commercial agent in Newfoundland.⁴⁷ These additional initiatives re-enforce the general observations already presented. The central administration was usually deficient in acquiring reliable and timely information and, in the development of imperial strategy, it was strongly influenced by interested individuals and groups.

Merchants have left less extensive archival evidence of their activity than projectors. But what does exist demonstrates that mercantile groups were actively involved in the attempt to create overseas policies during the war. The concerns for trade protection and naval convoys are well known,⁴⁸ and commercial involvement in the projected expeditions for Canada, Spanish America, the Bahamas and Newfoundland has already been noted. There existed, however, a basic disjunction between the priorities of projectors and those of most commercial interests. In developing strategies, the projector needed to promote a new or underdeveloped area of endeavour in order to meet his own desire for personal advancement. Military projectors were by nature supporters and creators of

46 *Journal of Trade and Plantations, 1704-1709*, pp. 371-4, 387-9, 390-1, 394-6, 399, 400, 414-15, 478-9, 504, 529, 583-5; *Journal of the Commissioners for Trade and Plantations from February 1708-9 to March 1714-15* (London, 1925), pp. 48, 95; C.S.P., XXIV, nos. 448, 606; B.L., Add. Mss. 61599, fos. 1-7, 61623, fos. 6, 14-17.

47 B.L., Add. Ms. 61623, fos. 4-5v, 61647, fos. 36-59, 60-88v, 121-4v; C.S.P., XXV, no. 85. It should be noted that while Moody was a regular army officer and former commander at St. John's, his own scheme as it developed in 1709-10 was to re-establish British authority in Newfoundland virtually as a government contractor in return for the set sum of £5000. Moody's initiative warrants further study.

48 Crowhurst, *British Trade*. For the general context of interest group accommodation within the central administration see Alison G. Olson, "The Board of Trade and London-American Interest Groups in the Eighteenth Century", *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, VIII (1980), pp. 33-50.

ambitious and aggressive policies usually focused upon conquest. The prevalent emphasis within all established sectors of trans-Atlantic British trade appears to have been to minimize the disruption and losses of the war. Hence, commercial interests emphasized trade protection rather than imperial expansion.⁴⁹ Although some merchants could favour aggressive or expansionist policies, as for example in the support of a 1708 Spanish American expedition, the urgency of defensive appeals stands out. Most trans-Atlantic trade and fishing was under threat and in many instances the war created a protracted slump from pre-war levels of prosperity.

The Grand Banks fishery was a case in point. Between 1698 and 1701 the lowest level the annual quantity of the catch had reached was approximately 216,000 quintals; between 1702 and 1706 the highest was 106,000 quintals and in one year the catch fell as low as 75,000. In 1699 234 English ships had participated in the fishery; in 1706 the number stood at 46. Raids on settlements on the island, losses at sea, and the uncertain state of affairs had created a substantial decline in the industry, with consequent economic disruption in west country seaports and political dissatisfaction, even before the French destruction of St. John's in late 1708.⁵⁰ In spite of losses, that event was viewed as virtually a godsend by interested parties in Britain since it almost necessitated a governmental response. The proposals for the defence of Newfoundland and the fishery descended upon the ministry. A decisive one came from James Campbell, a London merchant and former resident of St. John's who estimated his personal losses in the Newfoundland fishery since the outbreak of war at between £9,000 and £10,000.⁵¹ Significantly, those overseas initiatives supported by existing mercantile groups tended to lie in areas where commercial activity had been most disrupted: the Bahamas lay astride principal American trade routes; Port Royal was repeatedly described as the "very dunkerk of thiss Country" because it served as a base for privateers; and the Newfoundland fishery was in crisis.⁵² It was in these fields that projectors and commercial interests were most likely to find profitable common ground.

49 Crowhurst, *British Trade*, pp. 111-7, 139-40, 145-8, 174-82; Haffenden, *New England*, pp. 226-30; Steele, *Colonial Policy*, pp. 100-6; Gary B. Nash, *Quakers and Politics: Pennsylvania, 1681-1726* (Princeton, 1968), pp. 247, 252-4, 258-9; Jones, *War and Economy*, pp. 47-8, 54-5, 219, 221. Note also Bernard Bailyn and L. Bailyn, *Massachusetts Shipping 1697-1714* (Cambridge, Mass., 1959), p. 43.

50 Crowhurst, *British Trade*, pp. 112-3; Steele, *English Atlantic*, p. 302, Table 5.1; Head, *Newfoundland*, pp. 63, 85-6; Glanville J. Davis, "Military Leadership at Newfoundland Before 1729", *Journal of the Society of Army Historical Research*, LIX (1981), p. 199; *Journal of Trade and Plantations, 1704-1709*, pp. 312-17, 449, 461, 468-9, 471, 476, 487, 496; R.G. Lounsbury, *The British Fishery at Newfoundland, 1634-1763* (New Haven, 1934), pp. 227-34.

51 B.L., Add. Mss. 61623, fos. 4-5v, 61647, fos. 79, 121-4v, 152-3, 174-5.

52 Crowhurst, *British Trade*, p. 118; B.L., Add. Ms. 61647, fo. 22, Egerton Ms. 929, fo. 92v; C.S.P., XXV, no. 113.

Influential mercantile groups were generally more favourably inclined towards negotiated settlements of international disputes than they were supportive of the projectors' preference for armed conquest. The interests of commerce could be advanced as well, if not better, through peace negotiations which eliminated the necessity for active participation in an overseas expedition. For example, it is significant that the only known communications of the Hudson's Bay Company with Secretary of State Sunderland over four years of war occurred when peace talks were proceeding or being contemplated. In April 1709 the governor, Sir Stephan Evance, sent a long memorial which rehearsed the company's complaints against the French dating back to 1682, setting a figure of £108,514.19.8 in damages suffered, and sought reassurance that the Company would not be ignored in the peace talks then underway. Eleven months later the Company wrote an almost identical letter to Sunderland, desiring not to be forgotten in the peace process.⁵³ The Treaty of Utrecht established the Company's basic territorial claim, without any serious British military initiative ever being contemplated during the war. Similarly, when the merchant Solomon Merrett petitioned the government concerning the substantial losses of those engaged in the Grand Banks fishery, he did not request a military solution. Rather he desired favourable inclusion of the affected merchants in the negotiations for the commercial Treaty of Barcelona (1707) with the Austrian claimant to the Spanish empire so that a free trade in fish from Newfoundland to the Spanish colonies could be established.⁵⁴ When the merchants and inhabitants of Bideford, Devonshire, active in the fishery petitioned on 1 June 1710 they requested that whenever peace might come the treaty should exclude the French from both Newfoundland and the Grand Banks. Likewise, individual minor merchants could attempt private negotiation and compromise rather than push for an aggressive military policy. When the wine merchant Hugh Colley of Chester had his 50-ton vessel the *Eagle Galley* seized by the French in the North Atlantic and taken to St. Malo by way of Newfoundland, he turned to a commercial contact at Bordeaux in an effort to purchase the ship from its new owners. Newspaper accounts suggest that this could well have been typical behaviour.⁵⁵ Merchants were evidently less assertive as a rule than were the projectors and their views carried much greater political significance than those of individual adventurers.

The other main interested party was the leadership within the colonial administrations. Here as well the common response to war was defensive, favouring the status quo rather than the ambitions of the projectors. The colonies lacked unity

53 B.L., Add. Ms. 61647, fos. 131, 189. For Company lobbying and the peace, E.E. Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870* (2 vols., London, 1958), I, pp. 416-25.

54 Merrett to Secretary of State Hedges, 5 July 1706, C.S.P., XXIII, no 419. For the stillborn Treaty of Barcelona: Walker, *Spanish Politics*, pp. 72-3.

55 B.L., Add. Mss. 61599, fo. 159, 61546, fo. 136; *The Post-Man*, nos. 1287, 1303, 1565.

and their approaches to the war favoured sectional concerns. Those leaders who vigorously supported aggressive imperial policies, such as Governor Dudley of Massachusetts Bay, were exceptional.⁵⁶ The voluminous correspondence dispatched to the commissioners for Trade and Plantations and the secretaries of state during the War of Spanish Succession shows an overwhelming preoccupation with the problems of defence. This is understandable given the limitations of strength within each colony, relative isolation, uncertainty concerning enemy intentions, and the formal responsibility to defend British territory. Bold initiatives and advice of course stand out from the mass of defence-orientated communications and have attracted the attention of historians, but for their own reasons, merchants, governors and colonial agents exaggerated dangers and weaknesses in this period.⁵⁷ The central administration frequently lacked the information or perspective to assess the situation independently. Indeed, since internal factionalism existed in virtually every colony and the British government was used as a political court of appeal and an arena for extended conflict, the ministry was frequently inundated with memorials suggestive of wholesale governmental collapse across the Atlantic.⁵⁸

Colonial governments also demonstrated preference for negotiated gains through treaties which required no expenditure or military effort. In late 1709 the governments of New York, Massachusetts Bay, New Hampshire, Connecticut and Rhode Island requested "that if there are overtures of Peace, the 16 Article of the [1709] Preliminaries may be enlarged, so as to include all Canada, as well as Newfoundland, where by the French will be deprived of there great Nursery of seamen and her Maj^{ties} subjects whollie masters of the fish and furr trade". In September 1709 Jeremiah Dummer, soon afterwards appointed provincial agent for Massachusetts Bay in London, advanced a more developed argument along the same lines.⁵⁹ Even Samuel Vetch in 1705 was ambivalent whether to fulfill his ambitions through military activity or a suitable peace treaty; Governor Dudley

56 For example, Haffenden, *New England*, p. 232 and *passim*; Rawlyk, *Nova Scotia's Massachusetts*; Morgan, "Imperial Co-operation"; G.M. Waller, "New York's Role in Queen Anne's War, 1702-1713", *New York History*, XXXIII (1952), pp. 40-53; Vincent Harlow, *Christopher Codrington, 1668-1710* (Oxford, 1928); Thomas E. Norton, *The Fur Trade in Colonial New York, 1686-1776* (Madison, 1974), pp. 128-33.

57 For example, Crowhurst, *British Trade*, p. 179.

58 As a single illustration, the political dispute in Barbados produced in little more than three years some four hundred folios of manuscript recriminations in the archive of Secretary of State Sunderland alone, and one individual argued that the islanders spent considerably more time fighting each other than they did the French: B.L., Add. Mss. 61641-2. The Leeward Islands, South Carolina, Pennsylvania, New York and Newfoundland were some of the other colonies whose internal disputes were aggressively paraded before the central administration in these years. For the general context (for mainland colonies) see Alison G. Olson: *Anglo-American Politics, 1660-1775* (Oxford, 1973), ch. 3.

59 B.L., Add. Ms. 61647, fo. 181v; C.S.P., XXIII, no. 794ii; B.L., Egerton Ms. 929, fos 119-22.

included both possibilities in his 1710 communications.⁶⁰ One of the most ambitious imperial proposals of the period, authored by William Penn of Pennsylvania, relied upon territorial and commercial expansion through treaty. During the peace negotiations of 1709 in Holland, Penn petitioned the Duke of Marlborough for a dual approach to the settlement of North American and Caribbean issues. British North America would be expanded by restricting the French through treaty to the area north of the St. Lawrence River and the Great Lakes. The British would possess all the Mississippi valley and the continent to the west: "I humbly refer it all to the Dukes English heart and head, to secure to his Country so great an one and of that vulture on many accounts (and no more, I think, than we have a real claime to)". Within the Caribbean region Penn called for a series of measures to protect British trade, provide freedom of the seas for peaceful nations, facilitate the suppression of piracy, and establish a right of British ships to refit in Spanish and French territories.⁶¹ Penn's proposals fitted the specific needs of his colony with its rapidly developing frontier and an expanding trade with the Caribbean. But his ideas were wholly out of tune with imperial policies at this date.⁶²

The material at the disposal of the central government for developing imperial policies was limited, frequently of questionable reliability, and most always biased towards a personal or sectional interest. The representations from the commercial and colonial groups which carried the greatest weight favoured defence, protection of existing interests and at most expansion through treaty rather than by means of military and naval initiatives. Some exceptions do stand out, but there is no reason to believe the government was favourably predisposed towards them. Clearly the projectors faced both a largely indifferent ministry and vested interests whose goals ran only partially parallel to their own. They had to create feasible projects and attract interest within restricted parameters, and it is little wonder that their success rate was so low. A government whose main objectives lay in Europe and which held few colonial objectives possessed little incentive to establish or even contemplate an ambitious imperial policy.

Most certainly the British ministry did not intend to conclude the war under

60 B.L., Egerton Ms. 929, fo. 94, Add. Ms. 61599, fo. 151; C.S.P., XXV, no. 81.

61 Penn to Marlborough, 6 and 22 May 1709, B.L. Add. Ms. 61366, fos 179-82, 191; J.D. Alsop, "William Penn's West Indian Peace Aims of 1709", *The Journal of Caribbean History*, XIX (1984), pp. 68-75. Although Penn mentioned territorial disputes in Hudson's Bay he did not attempt to resolve that issue and ignored entirely Newfoundland and other current issues.

62 Alsop, "Penn's Peace Aims", pp. 68-75; Crowhurst, *British Trade*, pp. 115, 117-8; Ruth Bourne, *Queen Anne's Navy in the West Indies* (New Haven, 1939), pp. 202, 211; Frederick B. Tolles, *James Logan and the Culture of Provincial America* (Boston, 1957), pp. 48-9; Nash, *Quakers and Politics*, pp. 252-4. For the negotiations of 1709 see Mark A. Thompson, "Louis XIV and the Grand Alliance 1705-10", *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, XXXIV (1961), pp. 16-35.

conditions harmful to overseas commerce, particularly with Spanish America. But did the Crown in its own right possess any notable colonial objectives? One possible objective was related to resources. Although the Newfoundland fishery was frequently promoted as a nursery of seamen, the government does not appear to have ever believed the war would drive the British permanently from the Grand Banks and the manpower implications for the British navy occur at best only sporadically in the documentation. More evident was the potential for the northern colonies to develop into a major provider of naval supplies. This argument featured prominently in the proposals of promoters such as Vetch and Simon Clement, as well as representations from Massachusetts Bay. The central administration was reasonably responsive to naval stores as a colonial objective, and proposals frequently met with an interested reception from the commissioners for Trade and Plantations and sometimes as well from the commissioners of the Navy.⁶³ However, the concern was never sufficiently substantial to be decisive. In December 1706 the commissioners of the Navy could appreciate the national advantage of exploiting American supply potential, but because their instructions were to purchase stores as cheaply as possible they considered the Baltic to be Britain's primary supplier.⁶⁴ It was only during the later stages of the war, as the consequence of the more immediate problem of numerous unsettled German refugees from the Palatinate arrived in England, that a number of the Palatines were sent to New York where they could be employed in the production of naval products.⁶⁵

The primary Crown objective was simply to maintain the authority and territories of the British monarchy. It has been argued that the geopolitics of all the 18th century Atlantic colonial empires — with the notable exception of the British — were essentially defensive.⁶⁶ The British exception, however, came in the later 18th century and British colonial policies during the War of Spanish Succession were both restricted and almost entirely defensive. Previous studies have tended to interpret this limitation overwhelmingly in terms of a Euro-centric preoccupation at Whitehall. Although British politicians certainly believed the main objectives of the war lay in Europe, the colonies could not be ignored. Alongside military, strategic and economic reasoning there still existed the notion of Britain's territories as an inalienable royal patrimony. Inheritance and royal

63 B.L., Egerton Ms. 929, fos. 90-4, 119-20, Add. Mss. 61599, fos. 132-7, 61645, fos. 162-70, 178-81, 61647, fo. 4, 61652, fos. 68v, 87; Steele, *Colonial Policy*, p. 122n; Robert G. Albion, *Forest and Sea Power: The Timber Problem of the Royal Navy, 1652-1862* (Cambridge, Mass., 1926), pp. 236-40; *Journal of Trade and Plantations, 1704-1709*, pp. 199, 224-6, 296, 313; C.S.P., XXIII, nos. 81, 172, 511, 637, 641, 1186 and *passim*.

64 *Journal of Trade and Plantations, 1704-1709*, pp. 303-4; C.S.P., XXIII, 673.

65 Steele, *Colonial Policy*, pp. 116-24.

66 John R. McNeill, *Atlantic Empires of France and Spain: Louisbourg and Havana, 1700-1763* (Chapel Hill, 1985), pp. 6-7, 46, 76 and *passim*.

prestige were interwoven and this was a far from negligible consideration for the Queen's government. All the Atlantic territorial acquisitions of the Treaty of Utrecht revolved around the recognition of Britain's claims to disputed land: St. Kitts, Newfoundland, Hudson's Bay and Nova Scotia. Viewed as imperial aggrandizement these territories were fragmented and limited in value. Viewed in relation to the existing empire the gains failed to resolve contentious issues or prevent future imperial strife. Viewed as the settlement and defence of an existing "historical" patrimony the acquisitions were reasonable objectives. As a Hudson's Bay Company official stated in 1709, "The Crown of England has an undoubted right to the whole Bay and Streights of Hudson, and *therefore* Her Majesty can never relinquish that claim".⁶⁷ In 1709, after Queen Anne received a memorial from the council and assembly of Massachusetts Bay relating to the need for the subjection of Port Royal, she specifically demanded to know at what date Nova Scotia had been taken from the English by the French.⁶⁸ The timing of the transfer obviously bore no relation to military or economic considerations. It could, however, reflect directly upon the honour of her family. During the war the Board of Trade and Plantations devoted considerable attention to documenting for the ministry the historical British claim to all Newfoundland. Proponents of colonial expansion frequently included related concepts in their arguments; Penn, for example, emphasized his proposal was "no more, I think, than we have a real claime to". In September 1709 Jeremiah Dummer began his memorial for the acquisition of Canada with the argument that the French colony on the St. Lawrence originally had, and of right still, belonged to Great Britain.⁶⁹ This can be rejected as a historical inaccuracy. But what should not be ignored is the climate of opinion at Whitehall which implicitly encouraged Dummer and others to present their ambitious policies in the guise of restoration and tradition. Clearly the ministerial mentality within Britain was not in tune with aggressive imperialism.

Imperial policy was very largely the fixation of individual projectors and some vested interest groups. The ministry devoted relatively little attention to the colonies and lacked reliable intelligence or information relevant to imperial planning. The pressure to develop a superior intelligence system or to formulate aggressive expansionist goals was largely absent. Even when political and military events favoured a more assertive overseas policy during the later stages of the war, the British administration had to rely almost entirely upon the self-interested schemes of individuals. There were many of these to choose between, and the astute parties recognized the need to align their projects, or at least their rhetoric,

67 Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company*, I, p. 418 (emphasis mine).

68 Sunderland to commissioners of Trade and Plantations, 24 May 1709, B.L., Add. Ms. 61652, fo. 147.

69 B.L., Add. Mss. 61599, fos. 159-62v, 61366, fo. 191, 61645, fo. 174, Egerton Ms. 929, fo. 119.

with the concerns of the state. The result was an overseas policy which shifted with the tides of external events, informed petitioning and influential prompting. Although the ultimate authority for British policy formation lay with the Queen and cabinet, they depended upon advice from several overlapping jurisdictions. Apart from the defence of the status quo, Whitehall lacked significant imperial goals of its own during the war. Those it supported — and frequently abandoned — were the initiatives of the projectors.