

---

Power Versus Plenty as Objectives of Foreign Policy in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

Author(s): Jacob Viner

Source: *World Politics*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Oct., 1948), pp. 1-29

Published by: The Johns Hopkins University Press

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2009156>

Accessed: 12/10/2009 06:22

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=jhup>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).



The Johns Hopkins University Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *World Politics*.

# POWER VERSUS PLENTY AS OBJECTIVES OF FOREIGN POLICY IN THE SEVEN- TEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

By JACOB VINER

**I**N the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries economic thought and practice were predominantly carried on within the framework of that body of ideas which was later to be called "mercantilism." Although there has been almost no systematic investigation of the relationship in mercantilist thought between economic and political objectives or ends in the field of foreign policy, certain stereotypes have become so prevalent that few scholars have seriously questioned or examined their validity. One of these stereotypes is that mercantilism was a "system of power," that is, that "power" was for mercantilists the sole or overwhelmingly preponderant end of foreign policy, and that wealth, or "plenty," was valued solely or mainly as a necessary means to attaining or retaining or exercising power. It is the purpose of this paper to examine in the light of the available evidence the validity of this interpretation of mercantilist thought and practice. Tracing the history of ideas, however, always runs to many words, and limitations of space force me to confine myself, even with respect to bibliographical references, to samples of the various types of relevant evidence. That the samples are fair ones I can only attest by my readiness in most cases to expand them indefinitely.

The pioneer historians of mercantilism were nineteenth-century German scholars, predominantly Prussians sympathetic to its economic and political philosophy, and especially to its emphasis on state interests as opposed to the private interests of citizens. The interpretation of mercantilism by Schmoller as primarily a system of state-building is familiar, and com-

monly accepted by economic historians.<sup>1</sup> A similar stress on the political aspects of mercantilist commercial policy is common in the German writings. The proposition that the mercantilists sought a favorable balance of trade, wealth, and the indefinite accumulation of the precious metals solely as means to power seems first to have been launched by Baron von Heyking, who indeed claims priority for his interpretation.<sup>2</sup> Schmoller similarly interpreted the uncorrupted mercantilism of Prussia and of the non-maritime countries in general, but he maintained that the "imperialism" of the maritime powers was a debased mercantilism, characterized by an unscrupulous use of military power to promote ultimate commercial ends, and half-condemned it on that ground.<sup>3</sup>

This distinction between "pure" mercantilism, a "Staatsmerkantilismus," which can obtain its full development only in an absolute monarchy, and the mercantilism of countries where the commercial classes are influential and the state has to serve and to reconcile private economic interests, is also made much of by a later German writer, Georg Herzog zu Mecklenburg Graf von Carlow. For "pure" mercantilism, the ruling principle is not economic but the promotion of the power of the state.<sup>4</sup> In general, however, the historians have not distinguished between the mercantilism of the absolute and the constitutional

<sup>1</sup> I suspect, nevertheless, that it is highly questionable. The economic unification of the nation-state appears mostly to have occurred before the advent of mercantilism, as in England, or after its decay, as in France, Spain, Russia, Switzerland, Italy, the United States, or the British Dominions, if the national unification of tariffs or other significant criteria are applied. Even Colbert promoted regional as well as national self-sufficiency. As Moritz Bonn has commented (*Journal of Political Economy*, LIV [1946], 474), "A parochialist like Gustav Schmoller naturally deduced his impressions of mercantilism from the policies of primitive Prussia."

<sup>2</sup> *Zur Geschichte der Handelsbilanztheorie*, Berlin, 1880, Ch. 2, "Die Beziehungen der Theorie der Handelsbilanz zur Theorie des politischen Gleichgewichtes." The claim for priority is on p. 43. This chapter is a pioneer and valid demonstration of the existence of a close relationship between mercantilist balance-of-trade and balance-of-power theorizing and policy, but there is not a trace of valid demonstration in it that wealth considerations were made wholly subservient to power considerations.

<sup>3</sup> See his *Umriss und Untersuchungen*, Leipzig, 1898, especially Ch. I, "Das Merkantil-system in seiner historischen Bedeutung," pp. 42-60; see also "Die englische Handelspolitik des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts," in *Jahrbuch für Gesetzgebung, Verwaltung, und Volkswirtschaft*, XX (1899), 1211-1241. F. Brie, *Imperialistische Strömungen in der Englischen Literatur*, 2nd ed., Halle, 1928, p. 68, characterizes English mercantilism of the eighteenth century, along Schmollerian lines, as "kaufmännisch gefärbte Imperialismus."

<sup>4</sup> *Richelieu als merkantilistischer Wirtschaftspolitiker und der Begriff des Staatsmerkantilismus*, Jena, 1929, pp. 198ff.

states, and where they have dealt at all with the questions of the ultimate aims of mercantilism they have almost invariably asserted that these were solely or preponderantly political, although only too often with ambiguity or even outright self-contradiction, and almost invariably without presentation of substantial evidence.

A case in point is William Cunningham, the English economic historian. His predominant interpretation of English mercantilism was that it sought power rather than or much more than plenty, and that it valued plenty solely or mainly as an instrument or support of power, although he easily slipped, in this as in other analytical issues, into ambiguity if not hopeless contradiction.<sup>5</sup> An English economic historian sympathetic to mercantilism, W. A. S. Hewins, regarded this interpretation as unfair to the mercantilists, and offered the following rendition of Cunningham's position to indicate its inacceptability:

... one might almost imagine him [i.e., Cunningham] saying: "The mercantile system is concerned with man solely as a being who pursues national power, and who is capable of judging the comparative efficacy of means to that end. It makes entire abstraction of every other human passion or motive, except those which may be regarded as perpetually antagonizing principles to the pursuit of national power—viz., neglect of shipping and aversion to a fish diet. The mercantile system considers mankind as occupied solely in pursuing and acquiring national power."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Cf., for contradiction with the view that power was the predominant objective, *The Growth of English Industry and Commerce in Modern Times*, Vol. II, *In Modern Times, Part I*, Cambridge, 1903, p. 459: "From the Revolution till the revolt of the colonies, the regulation of commerce was considered, not so much with reference to other elements of national power, or even in its bearing on revenue, but chiefly with a view to the promotion of industry." Cf. also, *The Wisdom of the Wise*, Cambridge, 1906: "In the pre-scientific days the end which men of affairs kept in view, when debating economic affairs, was clearly understood; the political power of the realm was the object they put before them, . . ." (p.21) "We recognize [today] that the defense of the realm is essential to welfare, but we are no longer so much concerned about building up the power of the country, or so ready to engage in aggressive wars for the sake of commercial advantages, as Englishmen were in the eighteenth century." (p. 22) The italics are mine. The contradiction the italicized words seem to indicate may not be real, since Cunningham may have had in mind that the "commercial advantages" were sought for the sake of their contribution to British power, but such exposition, ambiguous, if not contradictory, is so common in the literature that it provides of itself a justification for an article such as the present one.

<sup>6</sup> In a review of Cunningham's *Growth of English Industry and Commerce* in *The Economic Journal*, II (1892), 696. Cunningham, in a reply to Hewins and other reviewers, *ibid.*, IV (1894), 508-16, permitted this interpretation of his position to pass without comment, although it must have been obvious to him that Hewins regarded it as a *reductio ad absurdum*.

All the German and English economic historians who found in mercantilism the complete subordination of economic to political considerations seem to have been themselves sympathetic to the subordination of the individual to the state and to the exaltation of vigorous nationalism characteristic of mercantilism, and to have been hostile to nineteenth century liberalism and its revolt against the residues of mercantilist legislation. Where this was combined, as in Schmoller and Cunningham, with a dislike of the rise of the bourgeois and his values to dominance over politics, to attribute to the mercantilists the conception of power as the sole or preponderant end of national policy was to praise rather than to blame them.

Eli Heckscher, the great Swedish economic historian and the outstanding authority on mercantilism today, follows the standard interpretation of the mercantilist objectives, but clearly to add to their shame rather than to praise them. Heckscher is an outstanding liberal, an individualist, a free-trader, and clearly anti-chauvinist. When to the section of his great work dealing with the foreign policy of the mercantilists he gives the heading "Mercantilism as a System of Power,"<sup>7</sup> and applies it to mercantilism in general and not only to the mercantilism of the absolute monarchies or of the non-maritime countries, he is reinforcing the indictment of it which he makes on other grounds, for to him "power" is clearly an ugly name for an ugly fact. More systematically, more learnedly, and more competently than anyone else, he supports his thesis that the mercantilists subordinated plenty to power. His argument calls therefore for detailed examination if this proposition is to be questioned.

Heckscher really presents an assortment of theses, ranging from the proposition (1) that for mercantilists—whether for most, or many, or only some, not being made very clear—power was the *sole* ultimate end of state policy with wealth merely one of the means to the attainment of power through the "eclectic" thesis (2) that power and plenty were parallel ends for the mercantilists but with much greater emphasis placed on power than was common before or later, to the concession (3) that mercantilists occasionally reversed the usual position and regarded power as a means for securing plenty and treated purely com-

<sup>7</sup> *Mercantilism*, translated by Mendel Shapiro, 2 vols., London, 1935, II, 13-52.

mercial considerations as more important than considerations of power. His central position, however, and to this he returns again and again, is that the mercantilists expounded a doctrine under which all considerations were subordinated to considerations of power as an end in itself, and that in doing so they were logically and in their distribution of emphasis unlike their predecessors and unlike the economists of the nineteenth century.

It is difficult to support this account of Heckscher's position by direct quotation from his text, since he presents it more by implication and inference from mercantilist statements than by clear-cut and explicit formulation in his own words. That mercantilists according to Heckscher tended to regard power as the *sole* end is to be inferred by the contrasts he draws between the position he attributes to Adam Smith—wrongly, I am sure—that “power was certainly only a means to the end . . . of opulence,” and the “reverse” position of the mercantilists,<sup>8</sup> the “reverse,” I take it, being the proposition that wealth was only a means to power. That there is something special and peculiar to mercantilism in conceiving power as an end in itself underlies all of Heckscher's exposition, but the following passages come nearest to being explicit. “The most vital aspect of the problem is whether power is conceived as an end in itself, or only as a means for gaining something else, such as the well-being of the nation in this world or its everlasting salvation in the next.”<sup>9</sup> This leaves out of account, as an alternative, Heckscher's “eclectic” version, where both power and plenty are ends in themselves. On John Locke's emphasis on the significance for power of monetary policy, Heckscher comments, with the clear implication that the injection into economic analysis of considerations of power is not “rational,” that it is “interesting as a proof of how important considerations of power in money policy appeared even to so advanced a rationalist as Locke.”<sup>10</sup>

Heckscher later restated his position in response to criticisms, but it seems to me that he made no important concession and

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, II.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 16.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 47.

indeed ended up with a more extreme position than at times he had taken in his original exposition.

The second of the aims of mercantilist policy . . . —that of power— has met with a great deal of criticism from reviewers of my book . . . I agree with my critics on that point to the extent of admitting that both “power” and “opulence” . . . have been, and must be, of importance to economic policy of every description. But I do not think there can be any doubt that these two aims changed places in the transition from mercantilism to *laissez-faire*. All countries in the nineteenth century made the creation of wealth their lode-star, with small regard to its effects upon the power of the State, while the opposite had been the case previously.<sup>11</sup>

The evidence which Heckscher presents that the mercantilists considered power as an end in itself and as an important end, and that they considered wealth to be a means of power need not be examined here, since there is no ground for disputing these propositions and, as far as I know, no one has ever disputed them. That the mercantilists overemphasized these propositions I would also not question. Nor will I enter here into extended discussion of the rationality of these concepts beyond stating a few points. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, colonial and other overseas markets, the fisheries, the carrying trade, the slave trade, and open trade routes over the high seas, were all regarded, and rightly, as important sources of national wealth, but were available, or at least assuredly available, only to countries with the ability to acquire or retain them by means of the possession and readiness to use military strength.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries also, “power” meant not only power to conquer and attack, and the prestige and influence which its possession gave, but also power to maintain national security against external attack. “Power as an end in itself” must, therefore, be interpreted to include considerations of national security against external aggression on the nation’s territory and its political and religious freedom. Given the nature of human nature, recognition of power as an end in

<sup>11</sup> “Revisions in Economic History, V, Mercantilism,” *The Economic History Review*, VII (1936), 48. The foreign policy implications of the nineteenth century economics, I believe, need investigation as much as do the aims of mercantilism. Until such investigation is systematically made, comparisons with mercantilism are liable to be misleading with respect to the true position of both bodies of doctrine.

itself was therefore then neither peculiar nor obviously irrational unless there is rational ground for holding that the promotion of economic welfare is the sole sensible objective of national policy to which every other consideration must be completely subordinated.

There remains, therefore, to be examined only whether Heckscher has demonstrated that mercantilists *ever* regarded power as the *sole* end of foreign policy, or ever held that considerations of plenty were *wholly* to be subordinated to considerations of power, or even whether they ever held that a choice has to be made in long-run national policy between power and plenty.

Despite his wide knowledge of the mercantilist literature, Heckscher fails to cite a single passage in which it is asserted that power is or should be the *sole* end of national policy, or that wealth matters *only* as it serves power. I doubt whether any such passage can be cited, or that anyone ever held such views. The nearest thing to such statements which Heckscher does cite are statements maintaining that wealth is a means of power and is important as such, unaccompanied by express acknowledgment that wealth is also important for its own sake. In almost every case he cites, it is possible to cite from the same writer passages which show that wealth was regarded as valuable also for its own sake. The passage of this type which Heckscher most emphasizes is a "passing remark" of Colbert in a letter: "Trade is the source of finance and finance is the vital nerve of war." Heckscher comments that Colbert here "indicates clearly the relationship between means and ends."<sup>12</sup> But argument from silence is notoriously precarious, and if it were to be pressed would work more against than for Heckscher's thesis, since there is a great mass of mercantilist literature in which there is no mention whatsoever, and no overt implication, of considerations of power. Colbert does not here indicate that the relationship was a one-way one. To make a significant point Heckscher would have to show that Colbert would not also have subscribed to the obverse proposition that strength is the vital nerve of trade and trade the source of finance.

Of all the mercantilists Colbert is the most vulnerable, since he carried all the major errors of economic analysis of which

<sup>12</sup> *Mercantilism*, II, 16.

they were guilty to their most absurd extremes both in verbal exposition and in practical execution, and since, either as expressing his own sentiments or catering to those of his master, Louis XIV, he developed more elaborately than any other author the serviceability to power of economic warfare, the possibilities of using military power to achieve immediate economic ends, and the possibilities of substituting economic warfare for military warfare to attain national ends. Even in his case, however, it is not possible to demonstrate that he ever rejected or regarded as unimportant the desirability for its own sake of a prosperous French people or the desirability of guiding French foreign policy, military and economic, so as to augment this prosperity. In many of his official papers he is obviously catering to Louis XIV's obsession with power and prestige, or perhaps to a conventional fashion of *pretending* that a great monarch would be so obsessed,<sup>13</sup> so that there is no reason to reject as unrepresentative of his genuinely-held views, such passages as the following :

. . . comme toutes les alliances entre les grands rois ont toujours deux fins principales, l'une leur gloire particulière et quelquefois la jonction de leurs intérêts, soit pour conserver, soit pour acquérir . . . et l'autre les avantages de leurs sujets, . . . Et quoique dans l'ordre de la division, celui de l'avantage de leurs sujets soit le dernier, il est néanmoins toujours le premier dans les esprits de bons princes . . .

Les avantages de leurs sujets consistent à les maintenir en repos au dedans et à leur procurer par le moyen du commerce, soit plus de facilités de vivre aux nécessiteux, soit plus d'abondance aux riches.<sup>14</sup>

Certain peculiar features of mercantilist economic analysis—features incidentally which modern apologists for mercantilist

<sup>13</sup> Cf. the following passage in his famous "Mémoire au Roi sur les Finances" of 1670: "Il est certain, Sire, que Vostre Majesté . . . a dans son esprit et dans toute sa nature la guerre par préférence à toute autre chose . . . Vostre Majesté pense plus dix fois à la guerre qu'elle ne pense à ses finances." *Lettres Instructions et Mémoires de Colbert*, P. Clément, ed., Paris, 1870, VII, 252. This long memoir is a plea to the king to look to his economic policy, including economic warfare, as an essential instrument for attaining his ends. Even in the case of Louis XIV, himself, it is easy to show from his writings that the prosperity of his people, while no doubt inexcusably underemphasized, was a matter of some concern to him for its own sake.

<sup>14</sup> "Dissertation sur la question quelle des deux alliances de France ou de Hollande peut estre plus avantageuse à l'Angleterre," March, 1669. *Lettres*, VI, 261. A letter of Colbert to Louis XIV in 1681 contains the following passage: "Ce qu'il y a de plus important, et sur quoi il y a plus de réflexions à faire, c'est la misère très-grande des peuples." C. Dareste de la Chavanne, *Histoire de l'Administration en France*, Paris, 1848, II, 258.

economics such as Lipson seem strangely to avoid discussing—do seem to imply a disregard on the part of mercantilists for economic welfare.<sup>15</sup> What was apparently a phase of scholastic economics, that what is one man's gain is necessarily another man's loss, was taken over by the mercantilists and applied to countries as a whole. They incorporated this with their tendency to identify wealth with money, and with their doctrine that, as far as money was concerned, what mattered was not the absolute quantity but the relative quantity as compared with other countries. Since the quantity of money in the world could be taken as constant, the quantity of wealth in the world was also a constant, and a country could gain only at the expense of other countries. By sheer analogy with the logic of military power, which is in truth a relative matter, and with the aid of the assumption of a close relationship between "balance of power" and "balance of trade," which, however, they failed intelligently to analyze, the mercantilists were easily led to the conclusion that wealth, like power, also was only a relative matter, a matter of proportions between countries, so that a loss inflicted on a rival country was as good as an absolute gain for one's own country. At least one mercantilist carried this doctrine to its logical conclusion that plague, war, famine, harvest failure, in a neighboring country was of economic advantage to your own country.<sup>16</sup> On such doctrine, Adam Smith's trenchant comment is deserved, although he exaggerates its role in mercantilist thought and practice:

By such maxims as these, however, nations have been taught that their interest consisted in beggaring all their neighbours. Each nation has been made to look with an invidious eye upon the prosperity of all the nations with which it trades, and to consider their gain as its own loss. Commerce, which ought naturally to be, among nations, as among individuals, a bond of union and friendship, has become the most fertile source of discord and animosity. The capricious ambition of kings and ministers has not, during the present and the preceding century, been more fatal to the repose of Europe, than the impertinent jealousy of merchants and manufacturers. The violence and injustice of the rulers of mankind is an ancient evil, for which, I am afraid, the

<sup>15</sup> See Ephraim Lipson, *The Economic History of England*, Vols. II-III, "The Age of Mercantilism," 3rd edition, London, 1943.

<sup>16</sup> Theodor Ludwig Lau, *Aufrichtiger Vorschlag*, 1719, as reported in Walther Focke, *Die Lehrmeinungen der Kameralisten über den Handel*, Erlangen (dissertation), 1926, p. 59.

nature of human affairs can scarce admit of a remedy. But the mean rapacity, the monopolizing spirit of merchants and manufacturers, who neither are, nor ought to be, the rulers of mankind, though it cannot perhaps be corrected, may very easily be prevented from disturbing the tranquillity of any body but themselves.<sup>17</sup>

Heckscher cites mercantilist doctrine such as Adam Smith here criticizes as evidence that the mercantilists were not interested in economic welfare for its own sake, but subordinated it to considerations of power. Adam Smith's assumption that the exposition of such doctrine was confined to merchants rather than statesmen (or philosophers) is invalid. But in so far as it was expounded by merchants, it is scarcely conceivable that these were so different from merchants at other times that they were governed more by chauvinist patriotism than by rapacity. The significance of such doctrine is not that those who adhered to it placed power before plenty, but that they grossly misunderstood the true means to and nature of plenty. What they were lacking in was not economic motivation but economic understanding.

What then is the correct interpretation of mercantilist doctrine and practice with respect to the roles of power and plenty as ends of national policy? I believe that practically all mercantilists, whatever the period, country, or status of the particular individual, would have subscribed to all of the following propositions: (1) wealth is an absolutely essential means to power, whether for security or for aggression; (2) power is essential or valuable as a means to the acquisition or retention of wealth; (3) wealth and power are each proper ultimate ends of national policy; (4) there is long-run harmony between these ends, although in particular circumstances it may be necessary for a time to make economic sacrifices in the interest of military security and therefore also of long-run prosperity.

The omission of any one of these four propositions results in an incorrect interpretation of mercantilist thought, while additions of other propositions would probably involve internal dispute among mercantilists. It is to be noted that no proposition is included as to the relative weight which the mercantilists attached to power and to plenty, respectively. Given the general

<sup>17</sup> *Wealth of Nations*, Cannan, ed., I, 457-58.

acceptance of the existence of harmony and mutual support between the pursuit of power and the pursuit of plenty, there appears to have been little interest in what must have appeared to them to be an unreal issue. When apparent conflict between these ends did arise, however, differences in attitudes, as between persons and countries, did arise and something will be said on this matter later.

That plenty and power were universally regarded as each valuable for its own sake there is overwhelming evidence, in the contemporary writings of all kinds, and what follows is more or less a random sampling of the available evidence. In the text accompanying and interpreting the Frontispiece of Michael Drayton's poem, *Polyolbion*, 1622, there is the following passage:

"Through a Triumphant Arch see Albion plac'd,  
In Happy site, in Neptune's arms embrac'd,  
In Power and Plenty, on her Cleevy Throne"

In Barbier d'Aucour's *Au Roy sur le Commerce, Ode*, 1665,<sup>18</sup> an early French equivalent of *Rule Britannia*, appear the following lines:

"Vos vaisseaux fendant tous les airs,  
Et cinglant sur toutes les Mers,  
Y porteront vostre puissance;  
Et ce Commerce plein d'honneur,  
Fera naistre dans vostre France,  
Un flus et reflux de bon-heur."

Montchrétien opens his book with this passage: "Ceux qui sont appelez au gouvernement des Estats doyvent en avoir la gloire, l'augmentation et l'enrichissement pour leur principal but."<sup>19</sup> Another Frenchman, writing in 1650 says:

Deux choses sont principalement necessaires pour rendre un Estat florissant; c'est assavoir le Gouvernement, & le Commerce; & comme sans celuy-là il est impossible qu'il puisse longtemps subsister; de mesme sans celuy-cy on le voit manquer de mille sortes de choses im-

<sup>18</sup> The citation from D'Aucour in the text is made from a reprint extracted from J. Carnandet, *Le Trésor des Pièces Rares . . . de la Champagne*, Paris, 1863-1866. D'Aucour was a tutor of Colbert's son. F. C. Palm, *The Economic Policies of Richelieu*, Urbana, 1920, pp. 178-79, quotes from an earlier *Ode à . . . Richelieu*, in much the same vein by Jean de Chapelain (1595-1624), which similarly stresses power and plenty.

<sup>19</sup> *Traicté de l'economie politique* [1615], Th. Funck-Brentano ed., Paris, 1889, p. 11.

portantes à la vie, & il est impossible que les peuples acquierent de grandes richesses.<sup>20</sup>

John Graunt, in 1662, states that "the art of governing, and the true politiques, is how to preserve the subject in peace, and plenty."<sup>21</sup> An anonymous English writer, in 1677, declares that: "The four main interests of a nation are, religion, reputation, peace, and trade . . ."<sup>22</sup> William III, in his declaration of war against France in 1689, gives as one of the reasons that Louis XIV's "forbidding the importation of a great part of the product and manufactures of our Kingdom, and imposing exorbitant customs upon the rest, are sufficient evidence of his design to destroy the trade on which the wealth and safety of this nation so much depends."<sup>23</sup> In the preamble of 3 and 4 Anne, cap. 10, are the following words: "The Royal Navy, and the navigation of England, wherein, under God, the wealth, safety, and strength of this Kingdom is so much concerned, depends on the due supply of stores for the same."<sup>24</sup> An English pamphlet of 1716 on the relations with Russia, after describing the Czar as "a great and enterprizing spirit, and of a genius thoroughly politic" attributes to him and his people "an insatiable desire of opulency, and a boundless thirst for dominion."<sup>25</sup> William Wood, a noted mercantilist writer, refers to the English as "a people . . . who seek no other advantages than such only as may enlarge and secure that, whereby their strength, power, riches and reputation, equally encrease and are preserved . . ."<sup>26</sup> Bernard Mandeville discusses how "politicians can make a people potent, renown'd and flourishing."<sup>27</sup> An anonymous English writer states in 1771 that:

<sup>20</sup> Cited from Ch. Vialart dit St. Paul, *Histoire du Ministère d'Armand . . . Duc de Richelieu*, Paris, 1650, I, 332.

<sup>21</sup> *Natural and Political Observations made upon the Bills of Mortality* [London, 1662], Johns Hopkins University Reprint, Baltimore, 1939, p. 78.

<sup>22</sup> *The Present State of Christendom, and the Interest of England, with a Regard to France* [1677], in *The Harleian Miscellany*, London, 1808, I, 249.

<sup>23</sup> As cited in *Mercator, or Commerce Retrieved*, No. 1, London, May 26, 1713.

<sup>24</sup> Cited in G. S. Graham, *Sea Power and British North America 1783-1820*, Cambridge Mass., 1941, p. 143.

<sup>25</sup> *The Northern Crisis; or Impartial Reflections on the Policies of the Czar* [London, 1716], as reprinted in Karl Marx, *Secret Diplomatic History of the Eighteenth Century*, London, 1899, p. 32.

<sup>26</sup> *Survey of Trade*, 2nd ed., London, 1719, Dedication, pp. iv-v.

<sup>27</sup> *The Fable of the Bees* [6th ed., 1732], F. B. Kaye ed., Oxford, 1924, I, 185.

"Nature, reason and observation all plainly point out to us our true object of national policy, which is commerce; the inexhaustible source of wealth and power to a people."<sup>28</sup> In an undated memoir of Maurepas to Louis XVI, on the commerce of France, occur the following passages: "Le commerce est la source de la félicité, de la force et de la richesse d'un état . . . La richesse et la puissance sont les vrais intérêts d'une nation, et il n'y a que le commerce qui puisse procurer l'une et l'autre."<sup>29</sup>

Such evidence as the foregoing that in the age of mercantilism wealth and power were both sought for their own sakes could easily be multiplied many fold. In English literature of the period of all kinds, from poetry to official documents, the phrases "power and plenty," "wealth and strength," "profit and power," "profit and security," "peace and plenty," or their equivalents, recur as a constant refrain. Nor is there any obvious reason, given the economic and political conditions and views of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, why power *and* plenty should not have been the joint objectives of the patriotic citizen of the time, even if he had freed himself from the mercantilist philosophy. Adam Smith, though not a mercantilist, was speaking for mercantilists as well as for himself when he said that "the great object of the political œconomy of every country, is to increase the riches and power of that country."<sup>30</sup>

In all the literature I have examined, I have found only one passage which is seriously embarrassing for my thesis, not because it subordinates in extreme fashion economic to political considerations, but for the reverse reason. The passage, in an anonymous and obscure pamphlet of 1754, whose authorship I have been unable to determine, is as follows:

You want not, Gentlemen, to be informed by me, that commerce is the nearest and dearest concern of your country. It is what should be the great object of public attention in all national movements, and in every negotiation we enter into with foreign powers. Our neighbours on the continent may, perhaps, wisely scheme or quarrel for an aug-

<sup>28</sup> *Considerations on the Policy, Commerce and Circumstances of the Kingdom*, London, 1771, as quoted in the preface to G. S. Graham, *British Policy and Canada, 1774-1791*, London, 1930.

<sup>29</sup> *Mémoires du Comte de Maurepas*, Paris, 1792, III, 195.

<sup>30</sup> *Wealth of Nations*, Cannan ed., I, 351.

mentation of dominions; but *Great Britain, of herself, has nothing to fight for, nothing to support, nothing to augment but her commerce.* On our foreign trade, not only our wealth but our mercantile navigation must depend; on that navigation our naval strength, the glory and security of our country.<sup>31</sup>

It is much easier indeed to show that power was not the sole objective of national policy in mercantilist thought than to explain how historians ever came to assert that it was. The evidence they cite in support of this proposition is not only extremely scanty but is generally ambiguous if not wholly irrelevant to their thesis. It would be extremely difficult, I am sure, for them to cite even a single passage which unmistakably rejects wealth as a national objective worth pursuing for its own sake or unconditionally subordinates it to power as an ultimate end. It is only too probable that there has been operating here that intellectual "principle of parsimony" in the identification of causes which, whatever its serviceability in the natural sciences, has in the history of social thought worked only for ill.

Cunningham and Heckscher<sup>32</sup> make much of a passage of Francis Bacon's made famous by modern scholars in which he speaks of King Henry VII "bowing the ancient policy of this estate from consideration of plenty to consideration of power" when in the interest of the navy he ordered that wines from Gascony should be imported only in English bottoms. As a fifteenth century measure, this falls outside the period of present interest, but Bacon, no doubt, put much of his own ideas, perhaps more than of Henry VII's, in his *History of the Reign of King Henry the Seventh*. It is relevant, therefore, that Bacon speaks of Henry VII as conducting war for profit, and attributes to him even over-developed economic objectives. In 1493, Henry VII had declared an embargo on all trade with the Flemish provinces because the pretender, Perkin Warbeck, was being harboured there. The embargo after a time "began to

<sup>31</sup> *Mercator's Letters on Portugal and its Commerce*, London, 1754, p. 5. The italics are not in the original text.

<sup>32</sup> Heckscher refers to this as "a very characteristic passage" (*Mercantilism*, II, 16), but I find it difficult to cite a duplicate, whether from Bacon's writings or in the period generally. See also Heckscher, "Revisions in Economic History, V, Mercantilism," *Economic History Review*, VII (1936), 48: "I think Cunningham was right in stressing the famous saying of Bacon about Henry VII: 'bowing the ancient policy of this Estate from consideration of plenty to consideration of power.'"

pinch the merchants of both nations very sore, which moved them by all means they could devise to affect and dispose their sovereigns respectively to open the intercourse again." Henry VII, no longer apprehensive about Warbeck, was receptive. "But that that moved him most was, that being a King that loved wealth and treasure, he could not endure to have trade sick, nor any obstruction to continue in the gate-vein, which disperseth that blood," and by the *intercursus magnus* of 1495-96 with the Archduke of Austria he negotiated the end of the trade war.<sup>33</sup>

Not so frequently stated as that power and plenty are properly joint objectives of national policy but undoubtedly a pervasive element in the thought of the period is the proposition that they are also harmonious ends, each reinforcing and promoting the other. The idea is expressed in the maxim attributed to Hobbes: "Wealth is power and power is wealth."<sup>34</sup> There follow some passages in which the idea is spelled out somewhat more fully: "Foreign trade produces riches, riches power, power preserves our trade and religion."<sup>35</sup> "It is evident that this kingdom is wonderfully fitted by the bounty of God almighty, for a great progression in wealth and power; and that the only means to arrive at both, or either of them, is to improve and advance trade . . ."<sup>36</sup> "For as the honesty of all governments is, so shall be their riches; and as their honour, honesty, and riches are, so will be their strength; and as their honour, honesty, riches, and strength are, so will be their trade. These are five sisters that go hand in hand, and must not be parted."<sup>37</sup> "Your fleet, and your trade, have so near a relation, and such mutual influence upon each other, they cannot well be separated; your trade is the mother and nurse of your seamen; your seamen are the life of

<sup>33</sup> See *The Works of Francis Bacon*, James Spedding, ed., London, 1858, VI, 95-96; 172-73. Cf. also *Considerations touching a War with Spain* [1624], in *The Works of Francis Bacon*, Philadelphia, 1852, II, 214, where he says that: "whereas wars are generally causes of poverty or consumption . . . this war with Spain, if it be made by sea, is like to be a lucrative and restorative war. So that, if we go roundly on at the first, the war in continuance will find itself." On the other hand, in his *Essays or Counsels* [2nd ed., 1625], *Works*, London, 1858, VI, 450-51, he makes what appears to be a clear-cut statement that the prestige of power ("grandeur") is more important than plenty.

<sup>34</sup> J. E. Barker, *Rise and Decline of the Netherlands*, London, 1906, p. 194.

<sup>35</sup> Josiah Child, *A Treatise concerning the East India Trade*, London, 1681, p. 29.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, *A New Discourse of Trade*, 4th ed. (ca. 1690), Preface, p. xliii.

<sup>37</sup> Andrew Yarranton, *England's Improvement by Sea and Land*, London, 1677, p. 6.

your fleet, and your fleet is the security and protection of your trade, and both together are the wealth, strength, security and glory of Britain."<sup>38</sup>

"By trade and commerce we grow a rich and powerful nation, and by their decay we are growing poor and impotent. As trade and commerce enrich, so they fortify, our country."

"The wealth of the nation he [the 'Patriot King'] will most justly esteem to be his wealth, the power his power, the security and the honor, his security and honor; and by the very means by which he promotes the two first, he will wisely preserve the two last."<sup>39</sup>

"De la marine dépendent les colonies, des colonies le commerce, du commerce la faculté pour l'État d'entretenir de nombreuses armées, d'augmenter la population et de fournir aux entreprises les plus glorieuses et les plus utiles."<sup>40</sup>

George L. Beer has commented, with particular reference to the statement from Lord Haversham quoted above, that "The men of the day argued in a circle of sea power, commerce and colonies. Sea power enabled England to expand and to protect her foreign trade, while this increased commerce, in turn, augmented her naval strength."<sup>41</sup> Circular reasoning this may have been, but it was not, logically at least, a "vicious circle," since under the circumstances of the time it was perfectly reasonable to maintain that wealth and power mutually supported each

<sup>38</sup> Lord Haversham in the House of Lords, November 6, 1707, *Parliamentary History of England*, VI, 598. Cf. also James Whiston, *A Discourse of the Decay of Trade*, London, 1693, p. 3:

"For, since the introduction of the new artillery of powder guns, &c., and the discovery of the wealth of the Indies, &c. war is become rather an expense of money than men, and success attends those that can most and longest spend money: whence it is that prince's armies in Europe are become more proportionable to their purses than to the number of their people; so that it uncontrollably follows that a foreign trade managed to the best advantage, will make our nation so strong and rich, that we may command the trade of the world, the riches of it, and consequently the world itself. . . . Neither will the pursuing these proposals, augment the nation's wealth and power only, but that wealth and power will also preserve our trade and religion, they mutually working for the preservation of each other . . ."

<sup>39</sup> Lord Bolingbroke, "The Idea of a Patriot King," in *Letters on the Spirit of Patriotism*, London, 1752, pp. 204, 211.

<sup>40</sup> Petit, a colleague of the French Foreign Minister, Choiseul, in 1762, as cited by E. Daubigny, *Choiseul et la France d'Outre-Mer après le Traité de Paris*, Paris, 1892, p. 176.

<sup>41</sup> *The Old Colonial System, 1600-1754*, New York, 1912, I, 16.

other, that they were, or could be made, each a means to the augmentation of the other.<sup>742</sup>

In contending that for the mercantilists power and plenty were regarded as coexisting ends of national policy which were fundamentally harmonious, I do not mean that they were unaware that in specific instances economic sacrifices might have to be made in order to assume national security or victory in an aggressive war. But as a rule, if not invariably, when making this point they showed their belief that such economic sacrifices in the short run would bring economic as well as political gains in the long run. The selfishness from a patriotic point of view of taxpayers resisting wartime impositions for armament or for war was always a problem for statesmen in the age of mercantilism, and sometimes the parsimony of monarchs was also a problem. It was also necessary at times for statesmen to resist the pressure from merchants to pursue petty commercial ends which promised immediate economic gain but at the possible cost of long-run military security and therefore also of long-run national prosperity. The mercantilist, no doubt, would not have denied that if necessity should arise for choosing, all other things would have to give way to considerations of the national safety; but his practice might not rise to the level of his principles, and his doctrine would not lead him to recognize that such choice was likely to face him frequently. It is not without significance that it was an anti-mercantilist economist, Adam Smith, and not the mercantilists, who laid down the maxim that "defence is more important than opulence." A typical mercantilist might well have replied that ordinarily defense is necessary to opulence and opulence to effective defense, even if momentarily the two ends might appear to be in conflict.

<sup>42</sup> Edmond Silberner, *La Guerre dans la Pensée Économique du XVI<sup>e</sup> au XVIII<sup>e</sup> Siècle*, Paris, 1939, concentrates on the search for attitudes toward war, idealizing or pacific, rather than on the motivations of foreign policy, but it presents a rich collection of extracts from the contemporary literature which in so far as it is pertinent to the present issue is, I believe, wholly confirmatory of my thesis. Cf. also, by the same author, *The Problem of War in Nineteenth Century Economic Thought*, Princeton, 1946, p. 286: "In the protectionist view, there is a reciprocal action between the economic and war: industrialization facilitates the conduct of war, and military victories increase the possibilities of industrialization and of economic prosperity. This point of view recalls that of the mercantilists: wealth increases power, and power augments wealth." The thesis presented in the text above is also supported not only by the title but by the contents, if I understand his Italian aright, of Jacopo Mazzei's article, "Potenza Mezzo di Ricchezza e Ricchezza Mezzo di Potenza nel Pensiero dei Mercantilisti," *Rivista Internazionale di Scienze Sociali*, XLI (1933), 3-18.

Queen Elizabeth was notoriously parsimonious and one of her diplomatic agents, Buckhurst, in reasoning with her in 1587 when the safety of England against the menace from Spain appeared to call for rearmament, anticipated Adam Smith's maxim:

And alwaies when kinges and kingdoms do stand in dout of daunger, their safetie is a thing so far above all price of treasure, as there shold be no sparing to bring them even into certainty of assurans.

He accordingly advised Elizabeth to

unlock all your cofers and convert your treasure for the advauncing of worthy men and for the arming of ships and men of war, that may defend you, sith princes' treasures serve only to that end and lie they never so fast nor so full in their chests, can no waies so defend them.<sup>43</sup>

Statesmen frequently found it necessary to warn against endangering political ends by unwise pursuit of temporary or petty commercial gains in response to pressure from business interests. This was especially true in connection with the relations between England and France during the Seven Years' War, which to many contemporaries seemed to be conducted with too much attention to economic considerations of minor importance. Just before the outbreak of the conflict, when it was still being debated whether the issue between the two countries should be settled by economic or military means, Lord Granville was reported as "absolutely against meddling with trade—he called it, vexing your neighbours for a little muck."<sup>44</sup> And in the face of the struggle itself, Mirepoix, the French Ambassador to England, is said to have commented "that it was a great pity to cut off so many heads for the sake of a few hats."<sup>45</sup> In the course of controversy over the Newfoundland fisheries after the ending of hostilities, in 1763, Choiseul appealed to Halifax: "mais pour l'amour de Dieu, ne laissons pas des querelles de pêcheurs dégénérer en querelles de nations."<sup>46</sup>

<sup>43</sup> "Correspondentie van Robert Dudley Graaf van Leycester," Part II, *Werken uitgaven door het Historisch Genootschap*, Utrecht, 3rd Series, No. 57 (1931), pp. 239, 240.

<sup>44</sup> *The Diary of the Late George Bubb Dodington*, new ed., London, 1784, pp. 344-45.

<sup>45</sup> [William Knox], *Helps to a Right Decision*, London, 1787, p. 35; cf. also a slightly different version in *Letters Military and Political from the Italian of Count A. Algorotti*, Dublin, 1784, p. 129. The hats were involved, of course, because beaver skins were the main prize of the American fur trade, and the hair from these skins was the basic raw material for the men's hats of the time.

<sup>46</sup> Cited in *Mélanges d'histoire offerts à M. Charles Bémont*, Paris, 1913, p. 655.

To some extent this point of view may have been a reflection of a certain disdain for trade in general which was beginning to affect the aristocratic class who conducted the foreign relations of the time. It would be a mistake, however, to explain it in terms of basic disregard for economic considerations, rather than as belief that the pursuit of temporary and minor economic benefits should not be permitted to dominate foreign policy. Such is the position of John Mitchell, who makes clear elsewhere that "power and prosperity" are the proper ends of policy:

It is well known, that our colonies in America are rather more under the tuition and influence of the merchants in Britain, than the government perhaps, and that all public measures relating to them are very much influenced by the opinions of our merchants about them. But the only things that they seem to attend to are the profits of trade . . . This, it is true, is necessary to be considered likewise, but it is not the only thing to be attended to. The great thing to be considered by all states is power and dominion, as well as trade. Without that to support and protect our trade, it must soon be at an end.<sup>47</sup>

While mercantilist doctrine, moreover, put great stress on the importance of national economic interests, it put equally great stress on the possibility of lack of harmony between the special economic interests of the individual merchants or particular business groups or economic classes, on the one hand, and the economic interest of the commonwealth as a whole, on the other. Refusal to give weight to *particular* economic interests, therefore, must never be identified with disregard for the national economic interest as they conceived it, in interpreting the thought of the mercantilists. In human affairs, moreover, there is always room for divergence between dogma and practice, be-

<sup>47</sup> *The Contest in America between Great Britain and France*, London, 1757, Introduction, p. xvii. Cf. also *A Letter to a certain Foreign Minister, in which the grounds of the present war are truly stated*, London, 1745, p. 6: "That we receive great benefits from trade, that trade is a national concern, and that we ought to resent any attempt made to lessen or to injure it, are truths well known and out of dispute, yet sure the British people are not to be treated like a company of merchants, or rather pedlars, who, if they are permitted to sell their goods, are to think themselves well off, whatever treatment they may receive in any other respect. No, surely, the British nation has other great concerns besides their trade, and as she will never sacrifice it, so she will never endure any insult in respect to them, without resenting it as becomes a people jealous of their honour, and punctual in the performance of their engagements."

The occasion for this outburst was a Prussian "rescript" insisting that Britain should not intervene in quarrels between German states, since they had nothing to do with British commerce.

tween principles and the actual behavior of those who profess them. It is doctrine, and not practice, which is the main concern here. The task of ascertaining how much or how little they corresponded in the age of mercantilism, and what were the forces which caused them to deviate, is the difficult duty of the historian, in whose hands I gladly leave it.

It was the common belief in France, however, that commercial objectives and particular commercial interests played a much greater role in the formulation and administration of British than of French foreign policy, and some Englishmen would have agreed. There was universal agreement, also, that in "Holland" (*i.e.*, the "United Provinces"), where the merchants to a large extent shared directly in government, major political considerations, including the very safety of the country or its success in wars in which it was actually participating, had repeatedly to give way to the cupidity of the merchants and their reluctance to contribute adequately to military finance. Whether in the main the influence of the commercial classes, where they had strength, worked more for peace or for war seems to be an open question, but there appears little ground for doubt that with the merchants, whether they pressed for war or for peace, the major consideration was economic gain, either their private gain, or that of their country, or both.

The material available which touches on these strands of thought is boundless, and there can here be cited only a few passages which give the flavor of contemporary discussion. We will begin with material relating to the influence of the merchant and of commercial considerations on British policy.

Sir Francis Bacon, in reporting a discussion in Parliament, in the fifth year of James I's reign, of the petition of the merchants with regard to their grievances against Spain, makes one of the speakers say that: "although he granted that the wealth and welfare of the merchant was not without a sympathy with the general stock and state ["estate?"] of a nation, especially an island; yet, nevertheless, it was a thing too familiar with the merchant, to make the case of his particular profit, the public case of the kingdom." The troubles of the merchants were partly their own fault: they so mismanaged their affairs abroad that

“except lieger ambassadors, which are the eyes of kings in foreign parts, should leave their sentinel and become merchants’ factors, and solicitors, their causes can hardly prosper.” Wars were not to be fought on such minor issues. Another speaker was more sympathetic to the merchants, who were “the convoy of our supplies, the vents of our abundance, Neptune’s almsmen, and fortune’s adventurers.” Nevertheless, the question of war should be dealt with by the King and not by Parliament, presumably because the merchants wielded too much influence there. Members of Parliament were local representatives with local interests; if they took a broader view it was accidental.<sup>48</sup>

Allies or potential allies of England sometimes were troubled by England’s supposed obsession with commercial objectives as making her an unreliable ally where other interests were involved. In September, 1704, a minister of the Duke of Savoy issued a memorial which the English representative at that Court reported as holding that England and Holland, “the maritime powers, (an injurious term, I think, which goes into fashion,) were so attentive to their interests of trade and commerce, that, perhaps, they would . . . abandon the common interests of Europe” in the defeat of France in the war then under way.<sup>49</sup> When Pitt declared to Catherine the Great of Russia that no Russian conquest could give offense to England, she was skeptical, and replied: “The acquisition of a foot of territory on the Black Sea will at once excite the jealousy of the English, whose whole attention is given to petty interests and who are first and always traders.”<sup>50</sup>

Montesquieu and Quesnay both thought that in England, unlike France and other countries, the interests of commerce predominated over other interests:

D’autres nations font céder des intérêts de commerce à des intérêts politiques; celle ci [i.e. England] a toujours fait céder ses intérêts politiques aux intérêts de son commerce.<sup>51</sup>

en Angleterre . . . où les lois du commerce maritime ne se prêtent point aux lois de la politique; où les intérêts de la glèbe et de l’État

<sup>48</sup> *The Works of Sir Francis Bacon*, Philadelphia, 1852, II, 193-99.

<sup>49</sup> *The Diplomatic Correspondence of the Right Hon. Richard Hill*, London, 1845, I, 479; see also II, 751.

<sup>50</sup> Cited by Edward Crankshaw, *Russia and Britain*, New York, no date (ca. 1943), pp. 45-46.

<sup>51</sup> Montesquieu, *De l’Esprit des Lois*, Book XX, Ch. 7.

sont subordonnés aux intérêts des négociants; où le commerce des productions de l'agriculture, la propriété du territoire et l'État même ne sont regardés que comme des accessoires de la métropole, et la métropole comme formée de négociants.<sup>52</sup>

The history of British policy and practice with respect to enemy and trade with the enemy during war provides abundant and occasionally startling evidence that considerations of plenty did not always automatically give way to considerations of power. There is much in British history, as in the history of Holland, of France, and of Spain, to support the statement of Carl Brinkmann that: "The history of war trade and trade war is a rich mine of interest to the economic and social historian just for the peculiar ways in which the autonomy of business connexions and traditions is seen cutting across even the sternest decrees and tendencies of political *ultima ratio*."<sup>53</sup>

That in Holland commercial interests predominated was taken for granted in both France and England when foreign policy was formulated. Thurloe commented, in 1656, that all proposals "of alliances of common and mutual defence, wherein provision was to be made for the good of the Protestant religion" failed "in respect the United Provinces always found it necessary for them to mingle therewith the consideration of trade . . . The Hollanders had rather His Highness [Oliver Cromwell] be alone in it than that they should lose a tun of sack or a frail of

<sup>52</sup> *Oeuvres Économiques et Philosophiques de F. Quesnay*, Auguste Oncken, ed., Paris, 1888, p. 429. Quesnay is referring here specially to Britain's policy with respect to the trade of the colonies. Adam Smith's comment on the monopolistic aspects of this policy was more acid: "To found a great empire for the sole purpose of raising up a people of customers, may at first sight appear a project fit only for a nation of shopkeepers. It is, however, a project altogether unfit for a nation of shopkeepers; but extremely fit for a nation whose government is influenced by shopkeepers." *Wealth of Nations*, Cannan, ed., II, 114.

<sup>53</sup> *English Historical Review*, CLIII (1924), 287. There is not space here to elaborate on this theme, but reference to one striking instance will serve to bring out the nature of the evidence available. In the 1740's, during the War of the Austrian Succession, English marine insurance companies insured French vessels against capture at sea by the British navy, and Parliament, after protracted debate, refused to make the practice illegal. Cf.: *Parliamentary History* (Cobbett, ed.), XII, 7-26 (for 1741); [Corbyn Morris], *Essay towards Illustrating the Science of Insurance, particularly whether it be Nationally Advantageous to Insure Ships of our Enemies*, London, 1747; Admiral H. W. Richmond, *The Navy in the War of 1739-48*, Cambridge, England, 1920, III, 248-250; C. Ernest Fayle, "The Deflection of Strategy by Commerce in the Eighteenth Century," and *ibid.*, "Economic Pressure in the War of 1739-48," *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution*, LXVIII (1923), 281-294, 434-446; Charles Wright and C. Ernest Fayle, *A History of Lloyds*, London, 1928, pp. 80 ff.

raisins.<sup>54</sup> A French naval officer, writing to Colbert with reference to the failure of the Dutch to provide the fleet which they had promised for the Levant, said that he was not at all surprised: "les Hollandais n'agissent en cette occasion que par leur propre intérêt; et comme ils ont peu ou point de bâtimens en Levant, et qu'en leur pays ils ne regardent qu'au compte des marchands, ils n'ont garde d'envoyer et de faire la dépense d'une escadre de ce côté-là."<sup>55</sup>

In the summary given in Cobbett's *Parliamentary History* of the principal arguments made in Parliament in favor of moderating the peace settlement to be made with France to end the Seven Years' War, a contrast was made as to the policy proper for England and that for a country like Holland. The economic value of the British conquests of French colonies in America was great. Nevertheless it was to be remembered:

... that the value of our conquests thereby ought not to be estimated by the present produce, but by their probable increase. Neither ought the value of any country to be solely tried on its commercial advantages; that extent of territory and a number of subjects, are matters of as much consideration to a state attentive to the sources of real grandeur, as the mere advantages of traffic; that such ideas are rather suitable to a limited and petty commonwealth, like Holland, than to a great, powerful, and warlike nation. That on these principles, having made very large demands in North America, it was necessary to relax in other parts.<sup>56</sup>

There was general agreement that in France economic considerations played a lesser role in foreign policy than in England and Holland. In part, this was to be explained by the lesser importance even economically of foreign trade to France

<sup>54</sup> Cited by F. M. Powicke, "The Economic Motive in Politics," *Economic History Review* XVI (1946), 91.

<sup>55</sup> A. Jal, *Abraham Du Quesne et la Marine de son Temps*, Paris, 1883, I, 470.

<sup>56</sup> *Parliamentary History of England*, XV (1813), 1271-1272 (for December 9, 1762). For similar views as to the propriety of a country like Holland confining her foreign policy to commercial matters and to defense, without attempting to participate otherwise in *Haute Politique*, see the instructions prepared in 1771 by the French foreign office for the French Ambassador to Holland, *Recueil des Instructions Données aux Ambassadeurs et Ministres de France*, XXIII, Paris, 1924, 308.

For the comments of the Anglophile Prince of Orange in the course of his attempts to keep Holland neutral during the War of the American Revolution, which proved unsuccessful because of both pressure from France and the financial ambitions of the commercial classes in Holland, see *Archives ou Correspondance Inédite de la Maison d'Orange-Nassau*, 5th Series, F. J. L. Kramer, ed., Leyde, 1910, I, 607 ff., 618, 635 ff., 677 ff., et passim.

and by the lesser role of French merchants in French politics. George Lyttelton, an English observer at the Soissons Congress of 1729, where the question of the maintenance of the alliance with England was at issue, reported to his father:

Affairs are now almost at a crisis, and there is great reason to expect they will take a happy turn. Mr. Walpole has a surprizing influence over the cardinal [Cardinal Fleury, in charge of French foreign policy]; so that, whether peace or war ensue, we may depend upon our ally. In truth, it is the interest of the French court to be faithful to their engagements, though it may not entirely be the nation's. Emulation of trade might incline the people to wish the bond that ties them to us were broke; but the mercantile interest has at no time been much considered by this court. . . . The supposition, that present advantage is the basis and end of state engagements, and that they are only to be measured by that rule, is the foundation of all our suspicions against the firmness of our French ally. But the maxim is not just. Much is given to future hopes, much obtained by future fears; and security is, upon many occasions, sought preferably to gain.<sup>57</sup>

Frenchmen in the period occasionally professed readiness to yield to Britain predominance in maritime trade if Britain would give France a free hand on the Continent,<sup>58</sup> but it would be a mistake to conclude that this reflected a readiness to concentrate on political objectives alone. Even on the Continent there were economic prizes to be won, though less glittering ones than those naval power could win overseas.

Historians, moreover, may have been too ready to find sharp differences in kind between the rôle of economic considerations in the making of foreign policy in England and France, respectively, in the age of mercantilism. The differences, though probably substantial, seem in the matters here relevant to have

<sup>57</sup> *The Works of George Lord Lyttelton*, G. E. Ayscough, ed., 3rd ed., London, 1776, III, 243-44.

<sup>58</sup> An instance in point is in a despatch by Louis XIV to his ambassador in London, in 1668: "Si les Anglais voulaient se contenter d'être les plus grand marchands de l'Europe, et me laisser pour mon partage ce que je pourrais conquérir dans une juste guerre, rien ne serait si aisé que de nous accommoder ensemble." Cited by C.-G. Picavet, *La Diplomatie Française au Temps de Louis XIV*, Paris, 1930, p. 171.

About a century later, in 1772, George III of England, alarmed by the coalition of Austria, Prussia, and Russia to partition Poland, expressed sympathy for the idea of an alliance between Britain and France despite their traditional enmity: "Commerce the foundation of a marine can never flourish in an absolute monarchy; therefore that branch of grandeur ought to be left to England whilst the great army kept by France gives her a natural pre-eminence on the Continent." (Sir John Fortescue, ed., *The Correspondence of King George the Third*, London, 1927, II, 428-429.)

been differences in degree rather than in kind. In particular, the extent of the influence which commercial interests in France could in one way or another exercise on policy has been seriously underestimated by many historians, and both in theory and in practice absolutist government was not as absolute in power nor as non-commercial in motivation as the school textbooks have taught us. French records have been misleading in this regard because the older generation of historians were not interested in economic issues and tended to leave out of their compilations of documents matter of a markedly economic character, and French historians seem for some time to have been moving toward a reconsideration of the role of economic factors in the formulation of foreign policy under the Ancien Régime.<sup>59</sup>

There may have been monarchs who recognized no moral obligation to serve their people's interests, and there were no doubt ministers of state who had no loyalties except to their careers and perhaps to their royal masters. Frederick the Great is said to have declared, with brutal frankness, that "Je regarde les hommes comme une horde de cerfs dans le parc d'un grand seigneur et qui n'ont d'autre fonction que de peupler et de remplir l'enclos," and there is little in the King's voluminous writings which makes this incredible.<sup>60</sup> Some monarchs were, to modern taste, childish in the weight they gave to the routine symbols of prestige and protocol.<sup>61</sup> The personal idiosyncrasies

<sup>59</sup> For representative contemporary evidence in support of these points, see: *Mémoires de Louis XIV*, Jean Longnon, ed., Paris, 1927, p. 73; a proclamation of Louis XIV reprinted in P. M. Bondois, "Colbert et l'industrie de la dentelle," *Mémoires et Documents pour Servir à l'Histoire du Commerce et de l'Industrie en France*, VI (1921), 263; Vauban, "Description Géographique de l'Élection de Vézeley" [1696], in A. de Boislisle, *Mémoires des Intendants sur l'État des Généralités*, Paris, 1881, I, 738-49; G. Lacour-Goyet, *L'Éducation Politique de Louis XIV*, 2nd ed., Paris, 1923, pp. 341 ff. For reconsiderations of the traditional views by modern historians, see A. Jal, *Abraham du Quesne et la Marine de son Temps*, Paris, 1883, II, 352-53; P. Muret (a book review), *Revue d'Histoire Moderne*, IV (1902-3), 39-43; J. Hitier, "La Doctrine de l'Absolutisme," *Annales de l'Université de Grenoble*, XV (1903), 106-113, 121-31; Charles Normand, *La Bourgeoisie Française au XVII<sup>e</sup> Siècle, 1604-1661*, Paris, 1908, pp. 195, 279-287; Henri Hauser, *La Pensée et l'Action Économique du Cardinal de Richelieu*, Paris, 1944, pp. 185 ff.; Philip Dun, "The Right of Taxation in the Political Theory of the French Religious Wars," *Journal of Modern History*, XVII (1945), 289-303.

<sup>60</sup> Frederick the Great did recognize, however, at least in principle and in his better moments, that the economic well-being of his people should be one of the major objectives of a monarch. See his "Essai sur les Formes de Gouvernement et sur les Devoirs des Souverains," of which he had printed a few copies only in 1777, *Oeuvres*, IX (1848), 195-210.

<sup>61</sup> To a letter from Louis XIII in 1629 proposing closer commercial relations, Czar Michel Federowitz of Russia replied favorably, but complained about the manner in which he had

of rulers and, above all, dynastic ambitions, exerted their influence on the course of events. Occasionally religious differences made the course of diplomacy run a little less smoothly by injecting an ideological factor into the range of matters out of which disputes could arise or by which they could be sharpened. But it seems clear that predominantly diplomacy was centered on and governed by considerations of power and plenty throughout the period and for all of Europe, and that religious considerations were more often invoked for propaganda purposes than genuinely operative in fashioning foreign policy. Even the cardinals, who in some degree monopolized the diplomatic profession on the Continent, granted that religious considerations must not be permitted to get in the way of vital national interests, and even genuine missionary enterprises could get seriously entangled with the pursuit of commercial privileges. When Louis XIII in 1626 sent an emissary to Persia with the primary purpose of promoting the Catholic religion, he instructed him at the same time to seek special privileges for French trade as compensation for the diplomatic difficulties with the English and the Dutch which would result from a French attempt to catholicize Persia. "Sa Majesté pensait qu'on ne pouvait éviter cet inconvénient qu'en se rendant maître du commerce du pays, lequel, outre le gain des âmes, qui est celui que sa Majesté recherchait, offrirait encore à son royaume de notables avantages."<sup>62</sup>

been addressed: "Mais nous ne savons à quoi attribuer que notre nom, nos titres et nos qualités aient été oubliés à la lettre que vous nous avez écrit. Tous les potentats de la terre . . . écrivant à notre grande puissance, mettre notre nom sur les lettres et n'oublent aucun des titres et des qualités que nous possédons. Nous ne pouvons approuver votre coutume de vouloir être notre ami, et de nous dénier et ôter les titres que le Dieu tout-puissant nous a donnés et que nous possédons si justement. Que si, à l'avenir, vous désirez vivre en bonne amitié et parfaite correspondance avec notre grande puissance, en sorte que nos royales personnes et nos empires joint ensemble donnent de la terreur à tout l'univers, il faudra que vous commandiez qu'aux lettres que vous nous récrirez à l'avenir toute la dignité de notre grande puissance, notre nom, nos titres et nos qualités soient écrits comme elles sont en cette lettre que nous vous envoyons de notre part. Nous vous ferons le semblable en écrivant tous vos titres et toutes vos qualités dans les lettres que nous vous manderons, etant le propre des amis d'augmenter plutôt réciproquement leurs titres et qualités que de les diminuer ou retrancher." *Recueil des Instructions*, VIII (1890), 29.

<sup>62</sup> G. deR. de Flassan, *Histoire Générale et Raisonnée de la Diplomatie Française*, 2nd ed., Paris, 1811, II, 396.

In 1713 Charles XII of Sweden wrote to Queen Anne demanding that England, in conformity with her treaty obligations, give him assistance in regaining his territories in the Germanic Empire. "It was not possible," he said, "that Anne could allow her mind to be

The role of the religious factor in Cromwell's foreign policy has been much debated. The literature of historical debate on this question is voluminous, but it is not apparent to the layman that any progress toward a definitive decision has been made, unless it is that Cromwell was a complex personality on whom economic, religious, and power considerations all had their influence, but in varying degrees and combinations at different times. George L. Beer quotes Firth as saying about Cromwell that: "Looked at from one point of view, he seemed as practical as a commercial traveller; from another, a Puritan Don Quixote," and gives as his own verdict that "It was 'the commercial traveller' who acted, and the 'Puritan Don Quixote' who dreamt and spoke."<sup>63</sup> Other historians have given other interpretations.<sup>64</sup>

I have unfortunately not been able to find an orthodox neo-Marxian study dealing with these issues for this period. If there were one such, and if it followed the standard pattern, it would argue that "in the last analysis" the end of foreign policy had

influenced by the sordid interests of trade; the protectress of the Protestant religion could not fail to support the Protestant power of the north," as against Russia. But Russia at the time was seeking admittance into the Grand Alliance against Louis XIV, and England, alarmed at the ambitions of both monarchs, made no choice. See Mrs. D'Arcy Collyer, "Notes on the Diplomatic Correspondence between England and Russia in the First Half of the Eighteenth Century," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, New Series, XIV (1900), 146 ff.

<sup>63</sup> Cromwell's Policy in its Economic Aspects," *Political Science Quarterly*, XVII (1902), 46-47.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. John Morley, *Oliver Cromwell*, New York, 1901, p. 434; Guernsey Jones, *The Diplomatic Relations between Cromwell and Charles X. Gustavus of Sweden*, Lincoln, Neb., 1897, pp. 34-35; Frank Strong, "The Causes of Cromwell's West Indian Expedition," *American Historical Review*, IV (1899), 245; M. P. Ashley, *Financial and Commercial Policy under the Cromwellian Republic*, Oxford, 1934; [Slingsby Bethel], *The World's Mistake in Oliver Cromwell* [1668], in *The Harleian Miscellany*, London, 1810, VII, 356-57.

I have not been able to find any systematic or comprehensive study of the role of the religious factor in power politics. The following references are a fair sample of the material bearing on this which I have come across: Leon Geley, *Fancan et la Politique de Richelieu de 1617 à 1627*, Paris, 1884, pp. 264-290; "Discours sur ce qui peut sembler estre plus expedient, & à moyenner au sujet des guerres entre l'Empereur & le Palatin," [1621], in *Recueil de Quelques Discours Politiques*, no place given, 1632, pp. 314 ff.; C. C. Eckhardt, *The Papacy and World Affairs as Reflected in the Secularization of Politics*, Chicago, 1937, p. 89; S. Rojdestvensky and Inna Lubimenko, *Contribution à l'Histoire des Relations Commerciales Franco-Russes au XVIII<sup>e</sup> Siècle*, Paris, 1929, p. 4; *Mémoires de Noailles*, Paris, 1777, I 126; Cheruel, "Le Baron Charles D'Avangour Ambassadeur de France en Suède" (1654-1657), *Revue d'Histoire Diplomatique*, III (1889), 529; [Jean Rousset de Missy], *The History of Cardinal Alberoni*, London, 1719, p. 105; W. E. Lingelbach, "The Doctrine and Practice of Intervention in Europe," *Annals of the American Academy*, XVI (1900), 17, note; "Les Principes Généraux de la Guerre," *Oeuvres de Frédéric le Grand*, XXVIII (Berlin, 1856), 50; C.-G. Picavet, *La Diplomatie Française au Temps de Louis XIV*, Paris, 1930, pp. 8, 160-166; Georges Pagès, *La Monarchie d'Ancien Régime en France*, Paris, 1928, pp. 67 ff.

been not power, and not power and plenty, but plenty alone, and plenty for the privileged classes only, and it would charge that members of these classes would always be there in every major diplomatic episode, pulling the strings of foreign policy-making for their own special benefit. Writing a few years ago in criticism of this theory as applied to more recent times, I ventured the following comment: "While I suspect that Marx himself would not have hesitated to resort to the 'scandal' theory of imperialism and war when convenient for propaganda purposes, I am sure that he would basically have despised it for its vulgar or unscientific character."<sup>65</sup> I was "righter" than I deserved to be.

Karl Marx studied the British diplomacy of this period, even making use of the unpublished records in the British Foreign Office, and discussed the role played by commercial objectives in British foreign policy. The ruling oligarchy needed political allies at home, and found them in some section or other of the *haute bourgeoisie*.

As to their *foreign policy*, they wanted to give it the appearance at least of being altogether regulated by the mercantile interest, an appearance the more easily to be produced, as the exclusive interest of one or the other small fraction of that class would, of course, be always identified with this or that Ministerial measure. The interested fraction then raised the commerce and navigation cry, which the nation stupidly re-echoed.

Eighteenth century practice thus "developed on the Cabinet, at least, the *onus* of inventing *mercantile pretexts*, however futile, for their measures of foreign policy." Writing in the 1850's, Marx found that procedure had changed. Palmerston did not bother to find commercial pretexts for his foreign policy measures.

In our own epoch, British ministers have thrown this burden on foreign nations, leaving to the French, the Germans, etc., the irksome task of discovering the *secret* and *hidden* mercantile springs of their actions. Lord Palmerston, for instance, takes a step apparently the most damaging to the material interests of Great Britain. Up starts a State philosopher, on the other side of the Atlantic, or of the Channel, or in the heart of Germany, who puts his head to the rack to dig out

<sup>65</sup> "International Relations between State-Controlled National Economies," *American Economic Review Supplement*, XXXIV (1944), 324.

the mysteries of the mercantile Machiavelism of "perfid Albion," of which Palmerston is supposed the unscrupulous and unflinching executor.<sup>66</sup>

Marx, in rejecting the economic explanation of British friendship for Russia, fell back upon an explanation of both a sentimental pro-Russianism in high circles in Britain and an unjustified fear of Russian power. It is a paradox that the father of Marxism should have sponsored a doctrine which now sounds so non-Marxian. I cannot believe, however, that the appeals to economic considerations which played so prominent a part in eighteenth-century British discussions of Anglo-Russian relations were all pretext, and I can find little evidence which makes it credible that friendly sentiment towards foreigners played a significant role in the foreign policy of England in the eighteenth century. Leaving sentiment aside, England's foreign policy towards Russia in the eighteenth century, like English and European foreign policy in general, was governed by joint and harmonized considerations of power and economics. That the economics at least was generally misguided, and that it served to poison international relations, is another matter which, though not relevant *here*, is highly relevant now.

<sup>66</sup> Karl Marx, *Secret Diplomatic History of the Eighteenth Century*, Eleanor Marx Aveling, ed., London, 1899, pp. 55-56. The italics are in the original.