

# The Hanoverian State and the Jacobite Threat

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Various source media, State Papers Online



The succession, under the terms of the Act of Settlement (1701), of the Elector of Hanover (George Augustus) to the throne of Great Britain and Ireland, on 1 August 1714, was lawful but deeply contentious because he was not the immediate hereditary descendant of James II and VII (1685-88, died 1701). That status was held by James's only surviving son, 'James III and VIII' (1701-66), who was deemed legally incapacitated from succeeding because of his Roman Catholicism. Though living in exile in Lorraine on the death of his half-sister, Queen Anne, 'James III' posed a serious security risk to the new Hanoverian dynasty, because of his own extended following in Britain and abroad, his uses to foreign governments antipathetic to George I, and the way he and his advisers had constructed a Jacobite ideology that went some way to offsetting his Catholicism through the breadth of its appeal. Then there was the question of Jacobitism's relation to the Tory party that had been in government from 1710 to 1714. During the political wrangling in and out of Parliament the Whigs had been insistent that the Tories' commitment to the Protestant (i.e. the Hanoverian) Succession was disingenuous and that the party was not to be trusted. And yet the General Election of 1713 had confirmed the popularity of the Tories with the propertied public. In short, the predominantly Whig régime that the new king sanctioned in 1714-15 faced a formidable security challenge if it was to contain and defeat the Jacobite challenge.

There was, then, the real risk of a war of the British Succession along the lines of the Spanish Succession that had just ended (1702-14). Though there was no immediate invasion attempt on George's accession, ministers had to ensure that a watch was placed on

foreigners entering English ports and that magistrates and troops were in a state of readiness to deal with a wave of Jacobite protests and minor riots across England in 1714-15. These exhibited a degree of popular Jacobite activism that, fortunately for the new régime, was never seen as intensively again. Scotland was the primary security weakness of the British state in the 1710s. It was there that James III had attempted to land during his abortive 1708 invasion, and the nation's resentment (shared among the political elite and ordinary subjects) over the Union and its negligible economic benefits turned the country into a hotbed of Jacobite sympathizers that the hapless Scottish Secretary, the 1st duke of Montrose, (his hands tied by the Cabinet) was powerless to buy off. Since it was largely a question of when, not if, a Jacobite coup would be attempted, it came as little surprise when John, 22nd earl of Mar, Montrose's predecessor, raised the Jacobite standard at Braemar in September 1715.

Mar was one of the members of the Oxford government (1710-14) who had been cold-shouldered by the incoming Hanoverian dynasty. He reacted to his exclusion after a few months, as did Bolingbroke and Ormonde, by eventually declaring his loyalty to "James III" as the only feasible way back to office and preferment. The new Whig government acted promptly to forestall an English rising either in advance of Mar's or to coincide with it. While the offices of Oxford, Bolingbroke, Sir William Wyndham and other Tories were sealed off and searched for incriminating papers, there was a general security crackdown centred on the west of England: troops were moved to centres of sedition, real or actual (including Oxford, the principal high Tory powerhouse), suspected Jacobites were arrested and a watch kept on the ports for suspicious

activities. There were understandable fears that France would send a military expedition under Ormonde to enhance Jacobite hopes of success, but the death of Louis XIV in August 1715 calmed Whig anxieties. The incoming Regent of France, Philippe, duc d'Orléans, was primed to fight a War of the French Succession on behalf of his own claim, should, as seemed distinctly possible, his five year old nephew, Louis XV, expire. In those circumstances, he could not risk easily alienating the Hanoverians.

Mar may have made a unilateral decision to raise the standard of revolt in Scotland, but the whole resources of the British state needed to be activated in order to contain the threat. Mar had gathered a strong force but his strategy was confused and his handling of his array was dilatory giving ministers in London the time to send north such troops as they had available, commanded by John, 2nd duke of Argyll. The duke was a seasoned commander and liked by his men. Though heavily outnumbered, he prevented Mar making a strategic breakthrough at the battle of Sheriffmuir near Stirling in November 1715. Similarly, a Jacobite incursion into northern England was arrested when their army was forced to surrender after a clash at Preston.

The Protestant Succession had been successfully defended on the battlefield but ministers thereafter had to decide how leniently to behave in its aftermath. Large numbers of Jacobite prisoners had fallen into government hands. The worst were transported, the majority allowed to return home on promises of good behaviour, cases of capital execution were relatively few and those mainly the leadership taken south to the Tower of London, such as the earls of Kenmure and Derwentwater. Such apparent leniency was only part of the response. The Whigs brought about personnel

changes at most levels of the government service in 1716 designed to strengthen further their exclusive grip on the British state. The Jacobite rising was used as the occasion to dismiss the last Tory members of the Townshend/Sunderland ministry from their posts, and at a local level, its counterpart was a further purging of the Commissions of the Peace of surviving Tory JPs on the basis that they were a security liability. The removal of suspect personnel in Scotland was even more draconian.

Despite the setback of the '15, Jacobitism remained a formidable threat to the persistence of the new Anglo-Hanoverian state. Being deprived of French assistance still left other foreign polities willing to hold out hopes of aid to the exiled Stuarts. Sweden, Hanover's Baltic rival, was one such power. When the Swedish ambassador's papers were seized by the British government in early 1717, it was the culmination of months of observing Jacobite intrigue in London centred on Count Gyllenborg. Britain and Spain were at war between 1718 and 1720, and Philip V was ready to use the Jacobites as a way of retaliating against George I. Spain was a major naval and military power as she showed when she landed a diversionary force under the Earl Marischal (storms wrecked Ormonde's main expedition sailing from Cadiz) to bolster the small-scale rising in the Scottish highlands of 1719 that collapsed quickly after it was subdued by government forces at Glenshiel in June.

Though thwarted once again, Jacobite hopes remained buoyant. George I's efforts to prevent the Polish Princess Maria Clementina from accomplishing her journey to Rome in 1719 and marrying 'James III' were abortive and, a year later, she provided her husband with a male heir, Charles Edward Stuart. Taking up

residence at the Palazzo Mutti in the city, the "royal family" had their own fully fledged, if slightly threadbare, permanent court in the city. The palace became a focus for British intriguers, malcontents, and just the plain curious, but they all potentially needed watching by government spies and informers. This was at a time when the Hanoverian régime was at the nadir of its popularity following revelations about the extent of royal involvement in the affairs of the South Sea Company that went so spectacularly bankrupt in 1720. In its aftermath, the Jacobites were ready to attempt a coup that would combine large scale domestic uprising(s) with foreign assistance. The lynch pin of a Plot this time was Francis Atterbury, Bishop of Rochester, the talented and disgruntled Tory prelate. He was outmanoeuvred by a united Whig administration under Robert Walpole, a politician whose political ruthlessness and careful intelligence gathering was set off by executive skills of the highest kind. Plans for a landing in the south-east and a seizure of the Tower of London or even of the king's person were betrayed to ministers by informers and preventative and punitive action taken in good time. Atterbury himself was forced out of all his offices in the Church under a controversial Bill of Pains and Penalties and took refuge in France, while the king showed himself more publicly than usual in 1722-3 on occasions that often included troop reviews.

The failure of the Atterbury Plot was a token of how adept ministers had become in their pre-emptive planning to contain the Jacobite threat. That continued to be the case throughout Walpole's long administration (1721-42). As Premier, he never underestimated the security needs of the early Hanoverian state or its relative insecurity. Every agency of domestic

government (including the Treasury) had its role in ensuring that the 'Pretender' and his agents were stymied in their design of a Jacobite restoration, and if characterising his Tory opponents in both Houses of Parliament as Jacobites was an exaggeration, it reinforced the supremacy of his own party. Significantly, it was only after Walpole had left office that the Jacobites again attempted a restoration of the Stuart monarchy.

The outbreak of the War of Austrian Succession (1740-48) brought home to the subjects of George II the continuing vulnerability of his family's grip on the British throne. At war again with France, and with most regular troops serving overseas, the country was dangerously exposed to invasion. The Jacobites seized their opportunity in the person of "James III's" charismatic eldest son, Prince Charles Edward Stuart, who was impatient to claim his father's inheritance, and was initially encouraged by Louis XV's ministers. Unluckily for him, the ships and the men assembled in French ports for an invasion in 1744 were broken up by storms and the Royal Navy, leaving the Prince to land in Scotland in August 1745 with minimal resources. Nevertheless, he assembled a formidable fighting army, took possession of Edinburgh, and invaded England getting as far south as Derby before retreating back to Scotland again. The Prince's army suffered a crushing defeat at Culloden in April 1746 at the hands of the king's second son, William, Duke of Cumberland, and he spent the summer on the run in the highlands before being rescued by a French frigate.

Confronted with the '45, the British government was able to draw on decades of experience in how to counter the threat. Magistrates and officials in the counties were required to keep watch on Roman

Catholics and report suspicious individuals and occurrences to the Secretary of State's office, while Lord Lieutenants and their deputies were obliged to muster the militia at short notice ready to resist the invader (this was especially demanded of those in the midland and northern counties) and to encourage volunteering. Most counties also set up loyal Associations acclaiming the lawfulness of the Hanoverian dynasty and inviting propertied individuals to take an oath accordingly. In the background, the bishops and clergy of the established Church (with some significant exceptions) called from the pulpits on their parishioners to rally to the throne. These expedients operated with partial effectiveness: there were some doubts about whether raising the militia required further specific statutory warrant and army transport was hampered by legal restrictions on commandeering men, horses, and vehicles. Whatever popular disdain for the Whig political elite in England, a readiness to stir in support of the "Young Pretender" was almost non-existent.

The '45 famously ended in the military occupation and punitive submission of the Scottish highlands. For those arrested for having served (or suspected of having served in the Prince's Army) there was widespread use of transportation as a punishment and reliance on an Order in Council (23 July 1746) under which prisoners were 'to draw Lots', so that every 20th man went forward to trial and due punishment. About 120 men, including four Scottish peers, were executed. Much land (and some titles) was forfeited under the Act of Attainder (1746) and Heritable Jurisdictions in Scotland were abolished the following year. Though the British authorities remained alert (up to and into the Seven Years' War, 1756- 63), Jacobitism ,as a viable

dynastic alternative to Hanoverian kingship, was effectively finished as the decision in 1747 of Prince Charles's younger brother, Prince Henry Benedict, to accept a cardinal's hat and an ecclesiastical career, showed very clearly. A combination of good fortune, sound intelligence, an alliance with France and English unwillingness to see the country devastated by warfare, as it had been in the seventeenth century, preserved the Hanoverian monarchy and the politicians whose power depended on its continuance.

# CITATION

Aston, Nigel: "The Hanoverian State and the Jacobite Threat." *State Papers Online, Eighteenth Century 1714-1782*, Cengage Learning EMEA Ltd, 2013

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