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The Role of National Defence in British Political Debate, 1794-1812

This thesis examines the role of national defence in British parliamentary politics between 1794 and 1812. It suggests that previous analyses of the late eighteenth-century political milieu insufficiently explore the impact of war on the structure of the state. Work by J.E. Cookson, Linda Colley, J.C.D. Clark, and Paul Langford depicts a decentralised state that had little direct involvement in developing a popular “British” patriotism. Here I argue that the threat of a potential French invasion during the wars against Revolutionary and Napoleonic France provoked a drive for centralisation. Nearly all the defence measures enacted during the period gave the government a much greater degree of control over British manpower and resources. The readiness of successive governments to involve large sections of the nation in the war effort through military service, financial contributions, and appeals to the British “spirit”, resulted in a much more inclusive sense of citizenship in which questions of national participation and political franchise were unlinked. National identity was also affected, and the focus on military defence of the British Isles influenced political attitudes towards the regular army.

By 1810, however, the nation was disillusioned by the lengthy struggle with France. The result of lingering political weakness was that attention shifted from national defence onto domestic corruption and venality. The aftermath of the Irish Act of Union, too, demonstrated the limits of attempts to centralise the policy of the whole United Kingdom. Significantly, however, the debates over the relationship between the centre and the localities in the 1830s and 1840s, and the response to a new French invasion threat in the 1850s and 1860s, revived themes addressed during the 1790s and 1800s. The political reaction to the invasion threats between 1794 and 1812 ultimately had more in common with a Victorian state bureaucracy than an eighteenth-century ancien régime.
THE ROLE OF NATIONAL DEFENCE IN BRITISH POLITICAL DEBATE,
1794-1812

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This dissertation is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
This thesis is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration, except where specifically indicated in the text.

Jacqueline Faulkner
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Abbreviations

Auckland Correspondence: The Journal and Correspondence of William, Lord Auckland, ed the bishop of Bath and Wells (London, 1862)
BL Add MSS: British Library Additional Manuscripts
Castlereagh Correspondence: Correspondence, Despatches and Other Papers of Viscount Castlereagh (London, 1851)
Colchester Diary: The Diary and Correspondence of Charles Abbot, Lord Colchester (London, 1861)
Cornwallis Correspondence: Correspondence of Charles, First Marquis Cornwallis, ed Charles Ross (London, 1859)
Correspondence of George III: The Later Correspondence of George III, ed A. Aspinall (Cambridge, 1967-8)
Court and Cabinets: Memoirs of the Court and Cabinets of George III (London, 1853-5)
Ehrman II: John Ehrman, The Younger Pitt: The Reluctant Transition (Stanford, 1983)
PD: Parliamentary Debates from the Year 1803 to the Present Time (London, 1812)
PH: Parliamentary History to 1803 (London, 1818-20)
Rose Diary: The Diaries and Correspondence of the Rt. Hon. George Rose, ed the Rev. L. V. Harcourt (London, 1860)
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Introduction

On 27 January 1794 the *Times* reported ‘very great preparations at Havre de Grace, for a descent in this country’. Fifty thousand men were rumoured to be taking part in this expedition, which marked the beginning of a series of invasion scares that dominated the course of Britain’s war effort against Revolutionary and Napoleonic France between 1794 and 1812. These were swiftly heightened by the long periods of diplomatic isolation during which Britain could neither count on the help of continental allies to repel assault, nor on a European campaign to distract the enemy. Without a regular army strong enough to defend the home base or prosecute the war abroad, and with the prospect of lengthy campaigns as far afield as India, Africa, and South America, the politicians were for many years unable to undertake any major offensives against France without leaving some part of the British Isles exposed to invasion. National identity, ideological assumptions, and the structure of the state were all affected by the long struggle which, until the Peninsular War started bringing in victories from 1809 onwards, remained almost entirely defensive for nearly fifteen years.

Britain had entered the war in February 1793 because of an interesting mix of strong ideological convictions and pragmatic responses to French expansion. Since Britain was a monarchical power, she was as much threatened by the propagation of revolutionary principles as by France’s assault on the Austrian Netherlands. Edmund Burke, in particular, denounced the French revolution’s ‘spirit of proselytism’ and warned his audience against the ‘dry rot’ of reform and internal revolt. The ‘truly patriotic, free, and independent spirit’ of the British people, he urged, had to employ itself ‘in guarding what they possess, from violation’. Such an anti-revolutionary attitude saturated early political responses to the war effort. Initial domestic policy

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1 *Times*, 27 January 1794, 3(a).
was accordingly geared towards halting the growth in Britain of French democratic principles, referred to in political parlance as ‘Jacobinism’. Originally a term which came from the name of Robespierre’s supporters in France, it acquired social and moral overtones as the war progressed. This flexibility of meaning meant that opposition to Jacobinism acted as a rallying-cry for people of a variety of political persuasions. Punitive measures such as the suspension of Habeas Corpus, the redefinition of the treason laws, the prosecutions for sedition, and the treason trials of the early 1790s, were justified by the fear that Jacobinism might have taken root in the hearts of lower-order Britons. Domestic unrest in the 1790s and 1800s, particularly the naval mutinies of 1797, the scarcity riots in 1795 and 1800, and the Despard conspiracy in 1802, provided evidence for such a belief.

As the conditions of the war changed, however, British policy came to prioritise pragmatism over principle. Emma Vincent McLeod’s argument that British political life continued to be neatly divided between radical reformers and loyalists until 1802 is simplistic. The Pitt government was reluctant to call unequivocally for the restoration of the French Bourbon monarchy, and showed itself willing to bury its differences with the Directory when peace seemed attainable in 1795, 1796 and 1797. It was not averse to harnessing the ideological debate for its own purposes, either by capitalising on the appeal of the monarch or by discreetly supporting the growth of Loyalist associations on the model of the Association for the Preservation of Liberty and Property, but both these expedients demonstrated the difficulties of relying on highly politicised symbols. The monarch could just as easily be used as an anti-ministerial symbol, while the Loyalist movement — which R. Dozier estimates may have involved between a quarter and a third of adult males at its peak — was

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5 As Clive Emsley notes, there were fewer than 200 prosecutions for sedition and treason during the 1790s: Emsley, ‘An aspect of Pitt’s “Terror”’, 174. Many more men were arrested, of course, but only one in three cases ever came to trial because of the paucity of evidence: Dickinson, British Radicalism and the French Revolution, p. 39.
6 McLeod, A War of Ideas, pp. vii, 2, 4, 5, 8, 201, 202-3, 204. The same goes for J.E. Cookson’s bipolar division between Dissenters and Liberals on the one side and ministers and churchmen on the other: Cookson, The Friends of Peace, pp. 2-7, 11, 258.
too difficult to control.\textsuperscript{8} Although admired by individual ministers, Burke’s call for a royalist crusade against France was never whole-heartedly adopted by the government. This was probably because it realised that a general appeal to constitutional liberty was likely to catch more Britons in its net than the emphasis on one particular ideological position.

Ideology sank even further into the background as the war became increasingly perceived as a struggle for survival. Despite active participation in the First Coalition campaign, along with her allies Austria, Russia, Holland, and Prussia, Britain never managed to get much of a foothold on the continent. She suffered a string of defeats in Flanders, Holland and in Toulon, where a short-lived Royalist revolt had placed the town in British hands. There were some costly successes in the colonies, particularly the West Indies, India and Egypt, and the British Navy did manage to gain some credit from the Glorious First of June in 1794, the Battle of St Vincent in 1797, and the Battle of the Nile in 1798, but these did not contribute to success in the continental struggle. As Britain’s allies dropped away, moreover, and after Holland became the French-controlled Batavian Republic in 1795, the prospect of an invasion of Britain became more likely.\textsuperscript{9} The first real fright came in December 1796, when a French squadron of seventeen vessels broke out of blockade at Brest and made for Ireland. Only extreme bad weather prevented a landing in Bantry Bay.\textsuperscript{10} A report that the French fleet was subsequently sighted off Beachy Head was dismissed as a signalling error, but on 27 February 1797 a small detachment of the enemy managed to land at Fishguard in Wales. This was followed almost immediately by a run on the banks and the suspension of cash payments. The months that followed were filled with alarm as the First Coalition fell apart on the continent, peace attempts failed, and potential invasion forces were sighted everywhere.\textsuperscript{11}


\textsuperscript{9} \textit{Times}, 19 February 1795, 2(b-c).

\textsuperscript{10} \textit{Times}, 3 January 1797, 2(b).

\textsuperscript{11} \textit{Times}, 22 February 1797, 2(b); 11 April 1797, 4(a); 15 August 1797, 2(d); 14 November 1797, 2(b).
Bereft of allies and facing the Armée d’Angleterre of over 200,000 men on the opposite shore, Britain was seriously exposed.\(^\text{12}\)

In May 1798, Ireland — always a magnet for unrest — burst into rebellion, which led to an effort to attach her more permanently to Britain under the terms of the Act of Union in 1801. These events took place against a backdrop of rumours that the French were, once again, planning invasion. Even the short-lived continental campaign of the Second Coalition, and the Peace of Amiens in 1802, provided little respite. Henry Addington’s government knew that one of France’s first priorities in the event of a new war would be to renew her invasion preparations, which was indeed exactly what happened when war broke out again in May 1803. In July 1804 a memorandum estimated that a hundred and forty-five thousand men might come from Flushing, Boulogne, Brest, and Le Havre.\(^\text{13}\) The following year invasion seemed even more likely when the French fleets at Toulon and Rochefort broke out of the British blockade and joined forces with the navy of Spain, now France’s ally, at Cadiz. This campaign ended with the battle of Trafalgar in October 1805 and the destruction of Napoleon’s Franco-Spanish fleet, without which he could not guarantee the safety of the hundred and fifty thousand men he counted to bring onto British soil. Former first lord of the admiralty Henry Dundas, Viscount Melville, found it ‘impossible to calculate the manifold Benefits to this Country which He [Nelson] accomplished by his Dying atchievement [sic]’\(^\text{14}\).

Did Trafalgar end the threat of invasion once and for all? Many historians have supposed this to be so. A recent article argues that ‘Trafalgar destroyed the naval power that gave any remaining credence to Napoleon’s invasion threat’.\(^\text{15}\) Without Trafalgar, asserts another article, ‘there would have been little to prevent a French invasion of England and a crushing French domination of Europe’\(^\text{16}\).

\(^\text{12}\) Wheeler and Broadley, Napoleon and the Invasion of England I, 90.
\(^\text{13}\) ‘Memorandum as to Defence’, 15 July 1804, Kent RO, Camden MSS, U840/O211/2.
\(^\text{14}\) Melville to Mr. Thomson, 12 November 1805, National Maritime Museum, Middleton MSS, MID/1/54/8.
\(^\text{15}\) Lambert, ‘Nelson, Trafalgar and the Meaning of Victory’, 56.
\(^\text{16}\) Lichfield, ‘Chirac Meets his Waterloo’, 14-5. Apart from the above, see also: ‘The British Isles were finally safe’, Schom, Trafalgar: Countdown to Battle, p. 360; ‘Never again would Napoleon dare
the benefit of hindsight, however, contemporary opinion was less sanguine, and many saw no reason to modify their caution. The French fleet might have been destroyed, but there was always a chance that Napoleon would build another, and the collapse of the Third Coalition as a result of French victories at Ulm and Austerlitz had left Britain profoundly vulnerable: ‘We stand as on a little spot of elevated ground, surrounded with inundations’. Indeed, France’s naval defeat had so far limited her options that some believed invasion was her only chance to conquer her old enemy. At least one commentator expected that France would make ‘some desperate experiment upon this country’ around June at the latest. Exhausted politicians now placed the stress on survival rather than victory. If anything, the years that followed Trafalgar were even worse than those that had preceded it. The escape of the Rochefort squadron in 1808 provoked yet another panic, which escalated when the *Times* reported eight ships of the line fitting out at Flushing. As late as 1810 a British soldier travelling past Boulogne reported that ‘the Masts of Vessels laying in the Basin … appear’d over the Land like a Wood, not to be number’d’.

So long as France remained under Napoleon’s expansionist influence, and so long as Britain had no strategic foothold on the continent, the threat of invasion continued to hang over the heads of the policy-makers. They could be forgiven for

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18 Speech by General Tarleton, 17 March 1806, *PD* VI, 457.
19 *Times*, 26 March 1808, 2(d).
20 Robert Brownrigg to Alexander Hope, 3 September 1810, National Archives of Scotland, Hope of Luffness MSS, GD364/1/1205.
believing that the danger they faced was entirely unprecedented, even though the Seven Years’ War and the American War of Independence had brought to the fore defence issues strikingly similar to those which were explored in the 1790s and 1800s.\(^{21}\) The scale of the new conflict was difficult to compare with past experience for a number of reasons. France was aggressive, resilient, and fast expanding into a trans-continental empire, with a system of government that many considered to be incompatible with that of Britain. This conviction suggested a need for exertions beyond anything to which the nation had yet been accustomed. Politicians therefore spent much of their time devising new and effective ways of maximising military resources and preventing imminent attack.

The main problem which faced the string of governments controlling offensive and defensive policies during the 1790s and 1800s was how to arrange resources in a way that would protect both the home base and vital interests abroad.\(^{22}\) A landing in Essex or Kent was an obvious fear, Jersey and Guernsey were close enough to France to offer a foothold, territories in the West Indies, North America and India remained vulnerable, and Ireland was a politician’s nightmare, perpetually poised on the brink of insurrection. The issue was manpower. At the start of the war in 1793 Britain had just under 48,000 regular troops scattered around the globe. By 1814 this number had swollen to almost 320,000, but even these large numbers could not be wasted on a whim.\(^{23}\) Britain’s participation in continental warfare usually,

\(^{21}\) For example see Browning, The War of the Austrian Succession, pp. 101-2, 156-8, for early invasion scares in the 1740s; McLynn, France and the Jacobite Rising of 1745, pp. 3, 232-5; McLynn, The Jacobite Army in England, pp. 1-7, and Lenman, The Jacobite Risings in Britain, pp. 289-91, for the Jacobite invasion scares and their impact on British identity; Anderson, The Crucible of War, pp. 301-10, 380, for manpower issues during the Seven Years’ War; Middleton, The Bells of Victory, pp. 107-12, 125, which deals with the administrative problems in the same period; and also for the later period Conway, The British Isles and the American War of Independence, pp. 164-5, 347, 353-5. The latter identifies a number of themes during the American War of Independence, including the manpower shortage, volunteering, and the development of ‘Britishness’, which I have identified in the period 1794-1812, although Conway fails to see the development of strong central power as a move away from the locality-based polity of the eighteenth century.

\(^{22}\) Britain’s overseas holdings were not yet viewed as an empire: that term was largely reserved for describing the British Isles themselves, particularly before the Anglo-Irish Union of 1801. See, for example, Lord Lansdowne’s speech in 1798, which included Britain and Ireland but excluded India. Speech by Lansdowne, 22 March 1798, PH XXXIII, 1334-5.

\(^{23}\) For statistics, see Appendix I.
therefore, focused on areas which were easiest to reach and which did not leave vast tracts of territory undefended. Holland, Germany, the Mediterranean, and the Spanish Peninsula were the most obvious targets. The last three of these also benefited from offensive aid provided by the Navy, which had grown from a hundred and thirty vessels in total in 1793 to over a hundred and fifty ships of the line alone in 1810. Blockades of continental ports and confidence in the ‘wooden walls’ helped many Britons sleep more soundly, but the frequent escapes of blockaded French ships, the activities of privateers, the assaults on trade, and the possibility that a single devastating storm could clear the channel long enough to allow a French assault, kept anxiety on the boil.

In addition to the regular forces Britain also had auxiliaries. The number and variety of these bodies grew as the war progressed, but the most important were the militia and the volunteers. The militia’s original raison-d’etre, upon being formed in 1757, had been to articulate the right of propertied citizens to bear arms. In practice, it had diverged from its mission statement, and any propertied men who were balloted into the militia usually paid for a poorer substitute to serve in their place. The volunteers followed a similar path away from an emphasis on armed property. Called forth by a government circular in 1794, they were initially composed primarily of wealthy gentlemen from the towns who could clothe and arm themselves as a police force in times of unrest. They were not, however, simply vigilantes, and were often much more socially diverse than the government had envisaged. A second more broad-ranging call for volunteers was made in 1798, and a third in 1803 at the height of the Napoleonic invasion scare, by which time they were more explicitly military in character. Their policing duties were largely left to the Yeomanry, who retained much of the character of the volunteers as they had originally been intended in the 1790s.

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24 For statistics, see Appendix III.
25 As is demonstrated by a private memorandum by Pitt, possibly written at the time of the passage of the Volunteer Consolidation Act in early 1804, in which he envisioned the volunteer force acting in conjunction with the regulars while the yeomanry were to remain in their home counties to keep
This proliferation of auxiliary bodies certainly provided large numbers for defence, but unfortunately they also obstructed recruitment into the regulars. What this conflict revealed was a perpetual tug of war between the needs of a nation potentially fighting for its life and of a nation accustomed to viewing itself as profoundly anti-militaristic.\textsuperscript{26} Increasingly, the balance tipped towards a stronger regular force subject to greater governmental control. Appendix II shows a list of defence measures passed between the Volunteer Act of 1794 and the Local Militia Act in 1808. Two points emerge very clearly: firstly, the extension of national involvement, particularly in 1803 with the call for volunteers and the passage of the Levy en Masse Act; and secondly, a move to bind the auxiliaries more closely to the regulars, including the use of semi-regular drafts of militia volunteers from the end of the 1790s onwards. Appendix I, which provides a basic account of the variety and size of the forces available for defensive and offensive operations, confirms the impression that the need for numbers, and control of those numbers, had begun to overcome long-standing political prejudices against both large military bodies and strong central power.

All of this required a great deal of reorganisation, both within the central executive, and between the executive and the localities, particularly in the way these interacted. There was undeniably a movement towards a tightening of the system, as the ministers sought to bring local activity in emergencies more closely under their control. British society was built on a complex system of ties that linked the monarch, the gentry and the lower orders in a bond of mutual trust and duty. What the politicians hoped to do was not to destroy such a framework, but simply to make the local authorities more like what the centre would prefer: that is, mediators between the executive and the people, rather than independent bodies acting of their own accord. Such large bodies of men needed to be available at any point of the country at a moment’s notice, and their movements and control required the

\textsuperscript{26} For this struggle see Chapter Three.
government to have access to a great deal of information about the nation. By the 1800s this was largely the case. The system of taxation was growing more complex — the first introduction of an Income Tax occurred between 1797 and 1799, for example — and even established systems of collecting information, such as the militia lists, could be used to give the government a much better idea of the state of the country. Two defence censuses in 1798 and 1803, a national census in 1801, and various new returns from military bodies such as the Supplementary Militia, the Army of Reserve, and the Local Militia, all added to the store of knowledge.

In respect of the impact of the war on the structure of the British state, however, there is a surprising gap in the historiography. Certainly there is no shortage of secondary material on which to draw. The individual ministries between 1793 and 1815 — Pitt’s first government (until 1801), Addington (1801-4), Pitt’s second government (1804-6), the Ministry of All the Talents under Lord Grenville (1806-7), Portland (1807-9), Perceval (1809-12), and Liverpool (1812 onwards) — have all received much attention from historians, without even counting the number of comparative studies of ministerial policy during the war. However, apart from these blow-by-blow accounts, and John Brewer’s *Sinews of Power*, which stops in 1783, there has been little attempt to tie various themes affected by the war together — particularly the military impact of a long struggle, and its effect on the structure of the state and national identity. The result is a curiously disjointed, often contradictory picture of turn-of-the-nineteenth-century British political life.

This was, after all, the period in which Linda Colley argues for a growth of a united sense of ‘Britishness’, and in which patriotism (as opposed to the more radical ‘nationalism’) became a much more universal, less obviously politicised concept.28

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28 Colley, *Britons*, pp. 4-6; Colley, ‘Britishness and Otherness’, 316-7, 326-7; Colley, ‘Whose Nation?’, 104-5, 115; Colley, ‘The Reach of the State, the Appeal of the Nation’, 181; Cottrell, ‘The
Larger portions of British society, particularly among the emerging middle classes, were becoming able to stake a claim on active citizenship.\textsuperscript{29} Vast amounts of manpower, and new kinds of armed forces, were called upon to fight the French threat at home and abroad.\textsuperscript{30} It was the period of the Act of Union with Ireland, which created the United Kingdom, rearranged political structures on both sides of St George’s Channel and prompted a new sense of British self-identification.\textsuperscript{31} Long-term developments in the way the government operated had been progressing for some time, and acquired a significant boost from 1780 onwards. These included the consolidation of what Brewer has termed the ‘fiscal-military state’, or the central government’s acquisition of ‘growing powers’ as the result of a series of wars throughout the eighteenth century; a developing civil service which streamlined the government’s ability to make war; a much more up-to-date definition of the term ‘state’ in which a stronger central executive played a role; and, last but not least, the growth of a second British empire around the globe, which would not have been possible without such developments at home.\textsuperscript{32}

And yet our understanding of the political context in which all this occurred has remained strangely static. Although the British state did face a number of challenges throughout the eighteenth century, such as the coming-of-age of lower-class political societies, riots, famine, naval mutinies, and the growing demands for

\textsuperscript{29} Wahrman, \textit{Imagining the Middle Class}, pp. 35-6, 55-6, 138, 144.
\textsuperscript{30} For work on the volunteers, militia and other auxiliary forces, see Cookson, \textit{The British Armed Nation}; Gee, \textit{The British Volunteer Movement}; Beckett, \textit{The Amateur Military Tradition}; and Western, \textit{The English Militia}.
\textsuperscript{32} For the ‘fiscal-military state’ see Brewer, \textit{The Sinews of Power}, pp. xi, xv, xvii-xviii, xx, 250-1, and Simms, ‘Reform in Britain and Prussia’, 86-7, 99; for the civil service, see Aylmer, ‘From Office-Holding to Civil Service’, 91-7, 103-6, and Torrance, ‘Social Class and Bureaucratic Innovation’, 60-8, 70-2, 79-80. For the development of the ‘state’, see Steffen, \textit{Defining a British State}, pp. 2-3, 7-8, 97 158-9, 162. For the second British empire, see Bayly, \textit{Imperial Meridian}, pp. 2-11, 14, 250-1, 256.
reform and retrenchment, Ian Christie’s ‘story of a nation’s survival at peace with itself in an age of wars and revolutions’ pervades the literature.\textsuperscript{33} J.C.D. Clark has even described the state as an ‘ancien régime’, confessional in its reliance on the Anglican establishment and rigidly hierarchical in structure.\textsuperscript{34} Such a contrast between the rapid politicisation of the populace and the essential conservatism of a ‘federal’ state is, in some ways, only to be expected, since political reform was delayed till 1832, and extension of civil and civic rights to non-Anglicans until 1828-9. To this extent, the mechanisms of the eighteenth-century state remained in place long after the end of the war.\textsuperscript{35} J.E. Cookson depicts a highly decentralised framework for national defence in which disagreements and misunderstandings between the politicians and the local gentry were often ironed out through an efficient, decentralised system of compromise and conciliation.\textsuperscript{36} Similarly, Colley’s growth of a united ‘British’ identity occurred despite, rather than because of, governmental interest in creating one.\textsuperscript{37} The governments that decided British defence policy, and that implemented the ‘British Armed Nation’, are depicted as decentralised, deeply dependent on local initiative, and operating with a blind lack of information about the nation they were supposed to defend.\textsuperscript{38} Such a picture fits uneasily with Brewer’s fiscal-military state or Bayly’s burgeoning British empire. Can it be possible that the British state changed not at all between 1793 and 1815, in spite of a threat described as ‘an emergency of great public danger’?\textsuperscript{39}

This thesis aims to correct that impression. It has much in common with the positions advocated by Brewer and Bayly, since it suggests that the circumstances of

\textsuperscript{33} Christie, \textit{Wars and Revolutions}, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{34} Clark, \textit{English Society}, pp. 20, 25-6, 34. Henry Parris’s depiction of the state as traditional, rather than bureaucratic, until as late as the 1830s, fits in with this conclusion: Parris, \textit{Constitutional Bureaucracy}, pp. 16-18, 23-7 33-9, 40-5, 164, 281-3.
\textsuperscript{35} ‘Federal’ is the word used by Paul Langford and J.E. Cookson: Langford, \textit{A Polite and Commercial People}, pp. 688, 692-3, 697-8; Cookson, \textit{The British Armed Nation}, pp. 4-7, 15, 215, 236, 261-3.
\textsuperscript{36} Cookson, \textit{The British Armed Nation}, pp. 5-7, 236.
\textsuperscript{37} Kathleen Wilson sees the growth of political identity during the Seven Years’ War as a process in which the central government played little part. Wilson, \textit{The Sense of the People}, pp. 11. 18-9, 440; Colley, Britons, pp. 93-4, 317-8.
\textsuperscript{38} Black, \textit{The Politics of Great Britain}, pp. 22-4, 120.
\textsuperscript{39} By Grenville, in \textit{Times}, 24 December 1800, pp. 2(d)-3(a).
a defensive war against revolutionary and Napoleonic France acted as a catalyst for change, both in terms of structure and self-identification. This process was facilitated by a growing conviction held by many British politicians that the danger they faced was unprecedented. It reflected a deep-seated uneasiness in the official mind about the way the conflict seemed to strike at valued political assumptions. Roger Wells’ argument that Britain was poised on the brink of insurrection at the end of the 1790s is extreme, but it does draw attention to the fact that the survival of the political status quo was by no means thought to be a certainty. During the course of the war it became apparent that the social connections underlying almost all politicians’ assumptions about the way the nation worked were unravelling, and many of the changes made to the way in which the state functioned were designed to address and correct their concern.

Whereas Colley has seen the wars against France as encouraging in Britons a sense of self-satisfaction against a comfortably different ‘other’, a more significant truth is that it led to a profound questioning of what it was that made the nation great. In particular, the fight against a nation that proclaimed itself to be at the fountainhead of liberty forced the British to examine just what that concept — one that they were accustomed to thinking of as peculiarly their own — meant. As Stuart Semmel points out, Napoleon ‘blurred British conceptions of national identity’ and demonstrated by his effect on the French that national character was not by any means immutable. Yet the French example showed how dangerous it was for a country to change its character fundamentally. Rather, politicians sought a different

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40 Wells, *Insurrection*, p. 262. See also Bohstedt, *Riots and Community Politics*, pp. 3-5, 10-11, 203-5, 210-11, 221-2, and Western, ‘The Volunteer Movement as an anti-Revolutionary Force’, 603, for similar identifications of upper-class unease about the healthiness of relations within the political hierarchy.


42 Semmel, *Napoleon and the British*, pp. 16-7. E. Tangye Lean also draws attention to the attractiveness of Napoleon to a number of high-profile Britons in *The Napoleonists*, p. xii.
way of expressing traditional ideas of what it meant to be a Briton, with one eye on
the need to strengthen the nation’s sense of hierarchy, and the other on the need to
tighten central control over the mechanisms of national defence. The result was a
surprising amount of flexibility. The fluidity identified by Semmel as a matter of
dismay was in fact more often seen as a matter of defiance. The ‘nation of
shopkeepers’ could become a ‘nation of soldiers’, as a newspaper article emphasised
in 1803:

We have been ridiculed by France, as une Nation boutiquière, a
nation of shopkeepers; and Europe has in some measure assented to
the sneer: too long, indeed, have we been looked upon by Europe as a
people disposed to commercial pursuits, and [by] their concomitant
affluence to slothful, luxurious, and unwarlike habits.

The French threat struck directly at the way government was viewed by itself and by
others. This had consequent implications for national identity, and for the way in
which citizenship and its duties offered opportunities to participate. The need to
defend the nation, and the means by which this could be achieved, formed a prism
through which existing ideas of British constitutional and political identities were
constantly being refracted and reassessed.

The thesis begins with an examination of the structure of the late eighteenth-
century British state (Chapter One). The latter was ancien régime only in the sense
that it could be viewed as a hierarchical channel from the king down to his subjects
via the aristocracy. Such a system of social connection, however, was not
symptomatic of an absence of central control: as the governments recognised, it
could also work effectively as a centralising agent. The main problem facing the
executive was not how to harness such a mechanism, but the need to adapt to
wartime conditions by creating new offices and moving responsibilities from one
branch of the administration to another. There were serious clashes of interest as

43 As is recognised by Laurence Brockliss and David Eastwood in their Introduction to A Union of
Multiple Identities, p. 196.
44 Newspaper cutting, 31 December 1803, probably written by Hiley Addington, in the Sidmouth
MSS, Devon RO, 152M/C1803/OZ/199.
departments found their responsibilities overlapping, and this naturally affected the
degree to which an effective defence policy could be created. There were also
constitutional prejudices to overcome if national defence was to be brought more
closely under government control (Chapter Two). Moreover, as time went by,
attempts to accomplish the necessary changes became less and less successful owing
to the increased political weakness of governments, which affected their ability to
command support in and out of parliament.

The same measures that led to increased government control over defence
also contributed to new definitions of citizenship, new attitudes towards commercial
enterprise, and differing perceptions of the Army and Navy (Chapter Three). The
need for more manpower led to the Army becoming more popular, as politicians
sought to make military life more palatable to the ordinary man. The result of this
policy was an emphasis on the cultivation of the nation’s ‘military spirit’. At the
same time as this change in national identity was being undertaken, successive
governments also sought a way to relieve the pressures imposed upon them by their
own weakness and exacerbated by the unfavourable course of the war (Chapter
Four). They were aware of the need to boost morale by calling on widespread
involvement in defence, by putting a positive spin on financial problems, and by
heightening the bonds of trust that underpinned traditional relations between
governors and governed. Such efforts were, however, ultimately unsuccessful, as
each government discovered in turn that a defensive war provided few opportunities
to distract people from national woes. The example of Ireland, moreover,
demonstrated the difficulties attending plans to simplify the defence of the British
Isles as a whole (Chapter Five). The restrictions on the executive’s drive for
centralisation were starkly exposed in the aftermath of the Anglo-Irish Union of
1801. The limitations of national participation and the redefinition of Britain’s
identity were demonstrated by the failure of the attempt to incorporate Ireland, with
all her special problems — her Catholicism, her poverty, her domestic unrest — into
an explicitly British model. Crucially, her full integration was hampered by her lack
of a common social structure with Britain. However much the politicians wanted to
do so, they could not create a United Kingdom-wide defence policy without this point being addressed.

In the end, of course, neither revolutionary France nor Napoleon undertook a successful invasion of the United Kingdom. Nevertheless the threat hung constantly over the heads of its potential victims, and accelerated a slow but significant change in the way the state was structured and viewed. Although these developments did not last long beyond the end of the war, it is interesting to see that many ideas associated with the late nineteenth century — military patriotism, greater government involvement, pride in military victories, and so on — actually had their roots in the response to the threat of Napoleonic invasion. This thesis therefore reveals a very different facet of late-eighteenth-century British political debate from usual depictions. It argues that the structure of the state did not remain static between 1793 and 1815, and that the defence threat had a profound impact, both on the way politicians viewed and represented Britain, and on the way in which the authorities wielded power. The war was not one between a mutating, revolutionary state and an unchanging ancien regime; nor was it simply a case of Britain reacting to an external and comfortably alien ‘other’. Far from a series of compromises with the powerful local authorities, the government showed how much it was willing to shape its behaviour in accordance with the extent of the emergency, even at the expense of long-held political beliefs. What follows is an examination of why the decision to centralise was made, what was done, and why it failed.
Chapter One

The Structure of the State

Historians have commented on the late eighteenth-century political system’s resistance to change in the face of overwhelming pressure. This is partly because the campaign for parliamentary reform and the growth of radicalism had very little effect on the status quo. Similarly, and more pertinently for this thesis, the military requirements of the twenty-two year war with France seem on the surface to have left the system unscathed. According to Ian Beckett, official ideas about manpower and defence stagnated due to ‘a generally unspectacular war effort’.1 Jeremy Black asserts that ‘the experience of the Revolutionary-Napoleonic crisis did not alter fundamentally the British state’.2 A.D. Harvey adds further that ‘compared to 1914-18 and 1939-45 one may be astonished at how little Britain’s institutions reorganised themselves to meet the challenge of war in the years 1793 to 1815’.3 Even Linda Colley, who argues that Britain’s frequent wars with France and other countries between 1700 and 1815 impacted strongly on British political and social identity, agrees that the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars provoked no further political development. ‘There was no overwhelming need’ for such change: the state was already as strong as it needed to be in terms of manpower, taxation, policing, and colonial expansion.4

Other historians concur in this general view, and emphasise the turn-of-the-century state as static and locally-based. According to Paul Langford and others, it consisted of a variety of ‘federal’ interests competing with the central executive, which only infrequently interfered with the business of the county and parish.5

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2 Black, The Politics of Great Britain, p. 120.
3 Harvey, Collision of Empires, p. 187.
4 Colley, ‘Whose Nation?’, 106; Colley, Britons, p. 1; Colley, ‘Britishness and Otherness’, 316.
5 Langford, A Polite and Commercial People, pp. 692-3.
flexibility of this arrangement has been used to explain how the British political system weathered the storms of war and revolution with only minimal internal adaptation. Real structural legislation had to wait until the postwar resurgence of radicalism and party politics. If true, such a configuration had obvious connotations for the politics of defence. Likewise for J.E. Cookson, the squabbles between centre and periphery, particularly over the volunteers, demonstrated the influence of ‘the imperfect federation of local communities’ over its central counterpart. National defence ‘was inevitably localised because that was the world it encountered’.\textsuperscript{6} Austin Gee’s more recent work on the volunteer movement pushes Cookson’s argument even further. According to Gee, local networks kept Britain stable throughout the defence crisis: ‘the British state faced the threat of revolutionary ideology and mass armies not by itself reforming but by adapting existing institutions and employing existing local power structures’.\textsuperscript{7} Flexibility and superficial adaptation, rather than fundamental reform, allowed the ‘federal’ eighteenth-century regime, described by Langford, Cookson and Gee, to survive.

That regime’s resilience in the face of the twin threats of revolution and invasion is undeniable. C.D. Hall remarks that ‘the period contrived to retain hidden depths of stability’.\textsuperscript{8} Stable, however, is not the same as static, and my research has more sympathy with Brendan Simms’ conclusion that the search for ‘fundamental’ change in British eighteenth-century politics has obscured less obvious but nonetheless significant developments in thought and practice. Simms argues that ‘domestic change’ was ‘a direct result of external pressures’, and that these changes arose not only from the debates on reform but also from developments within ‘the decision-making apparatus’.\textsuperscript{9} This in turn echoes John Brewer’s argument that the threat and reality of war led to the bureaucratisation and professionalisation of the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{6} Cookson, \textit{The British Armed Nation}, pp. 236, 261; Cookson, ‘War’, 34.
\item \textsuperscript{7} Gee, \textit{The British Volunteer Movement}, p. 6.
\item \textsuperscript{8} Hall, \textit{British Strategy in the Napoleonic War}, p. 64.
\item \textsuperscript{9} Simms, ‘Reform in Britain and Prussia’, 81, 86-7.
\end{itemize}
eighteenth-century fiscal-military state. Indeed, politicians frequently sought to safeguard the state’s stability with measures that often involved profound change, the most obvious example of this being the Anglo-Irish Union of 1801. The government was perfectly happy to manipulate the political structure of Britain for its own ends — a fact strongly exemplified by the issue of national defence. A new emphasis on the hierarchical ties that bound the nation together allowed the government to create a model for centralisation that adhered to, rather than departed from, established political traditions.

Three terms that will be used frequently throughout this thesis require definition. These are ‘state’, ‘constitution’ and ‘central government’, each important and flexible terms that underwent constant reinterpretation by contemporaries. J.C.D. Clark, in keeping with his idea of an *ancien regime* headed by the monarchy, aristocracy, and church, argues that the term ‘state’ was the confessional equivalent of the more secular ‘kingdom’ or ‘realm’. Paul Langford, however, sees the ‘state’ as secular, represented primarily by parliament rather than the church. In the following chapters I shall follow Langford’s example rather than Clark’s by identifying the state as the embodiment of the political relations between the king, parliament, and nation.

The eighteenth-century constitution has proved more problematic to define. Its flexibility was such that, according to Herbert Atherton, it became ‘a totem … invoked with little thought as to its meaning or content’, loosely suspended over concepts of monarchy and the rule of law. It was certainly a highly versatile political device, and one that could be harnessed in a variety of different ways. Whigs and tories emphasised different aspects of it in their ideology, although both relied to an extent on similar ideas of liberty and property, the rule of law, and the

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predominance of an aristocratic system.\textsuperscript{14} The constitution also had religious significance. Talk of a ‘Protestant’ constitution echoed opposition to the full inclusion of Catholics into British political life, and a more Anglican emphasis further included Protestant Dissent in that tally.\textsuperscript{15} Radicals and reformers were also wont to refer to the ‘ancient’ constitution, in language that expressed their conviction that the Norman Conquest had ended a number of Saxon political liberties by introducing the reign of a corrupt aristocracy.\textsuperscript{16}

Such vagueness had become deliberate by the 1790s, when the government found a broad ideological position necessary to capture the middle political ground.\textsuperscript{17} This meant an appeal to Edmund Burke’s idea of the constitution, in which whig principles of mixed monarchy were mingled with tory emphases on prescription and the centrality of an Establishment Church.\textsuperscript{18} However, the constitution’s versatility meant that the Foxite Whigs and the radicals could also claim to defend it against the ministry’s incapacity, incompetence and corruption. Finally, ‘central government’ has proved so problematic a term to define that Jeremy Black has abandoned it in an eighteenth-century context ‘because of its modern connotations’.\textsuperscript{19} Yet there was an administration appointed by the king with ultimate control over the social, diplomatic, and military departments of the war effort. These were kept informed about national developments through a system of local networks, which were improved and extended during the war years to ensure a constant stream of information. The highest point of that network is what I will refer to as the ‘central government’: the cabinet, and its connections with parliament and the monarch.

\textsuperscript{14} Dickinson, \textit{Liberty and Property}, pp. 158, 308-9.
\textsuperscript{17} Characterisation of Pitt as a ‘High Tory’ (by, for example, J.E. Cookson) is a simplification of the broad ideological position adopted by Pitt’s government, which allowed a variety of political beliefs to shelter beneath the aegis of governmental approval. Cookson’s definition of ‘High Toryism’, that order in society depended on controls operated through the state, church and aristocracy, could include most aspects of the ideology of the whig settlement of 1689, and was in any case adhered to dogmatically by only a few members of Pitt’s government. Cookson, \textit{The Friends of Peace}, pp. 259-60.
\textsuperscript{18} Morris, \textit{The British Monarchy and the French Revolution}, pp. 54-5; Dickinson, \textit{Liberty and Property}, p. 301.
\textsuperscript{19} Black, \textit{The Politics of Great Britain}, p. 23.
This chapter will discuss the way in which the war with France acted as a catalyst for a rearrangement of the political structure that had been established in Britain during the eighteenth century. The circumstances of a long defensive war increased the central government’s need to gather information, impose its authority and implement policy, although local county meetings and petition campaigns remained the only real ways for parliamentarians to connect with non-voters.\textsuperscript{20} The result was not political change: the development of central authority was meant to protect rather than alter the state, and was not intended to have a massive practical impact. In practice, however, the issues raised by the requirements of defence touched on political relationships and questions of national identity. The importance of the executive’s need to be aware of, and to control, military and defence resources galvanised a process of centralisation that was not restricted to Britain and Ireland but, as C.A. Bayly has argued, also impacted on the government of the burgeoning British empire.\textsuperscript{21}

\textit{Central government and local networks}

The parish and the county reflected the importance of social networks in British politics, but the continuing importance of the localities did not necessarily mean that the central government was marginalized. Nor did it indicate that Britain remained an \textit{ancien regime}, to use Clark’s term.\textsuperscript{22} If harnessed effectively, these factors could only limit, not prohibit, centralisation of the defence effort. The stability derived from a property-based social hierarchy linking ordinary men to the monarch via the church, gentry, and aristocracy engendered a confidence that explained the willingness to indulge in potentially dangerous experiments, such as the implementation of the British ‘armed nation’. In this somewhat paternalistic view of society, each level of the hierarchy had a reciprocal duty to the other: the labourers owed their superiors respect, obedience, and military service, while the aristocracy

\textsuperscript{22} Clark, \textit{English Society}, p. 20.
owed their inferiors protection and good governance. ‘The connection which subsists between the various ranks and classes of men … and the division of property … render us less likely to be disturbed by internal commotions than other nations,’ declared William Morton Pitt, a prominent Dorset gentleman and defence theorist, in 1797.23

Local political networks formed the basis of the whig constitution, which stressed the connections that bound governors and governed and defined the aristocracy as the natural leaders of society.24 At the bottom of the scale was the parish, the most basic political unit. There were about 10,000 in Britain, and they were the nearest most people would experience to political representation.25 Supported by a network of churchwardens, constables, and surveyors, the parish oversaw local welfare, maintenance, and police, which included a large proportion of the activity against radicalism in the 1790s. Above the parish was the county. The lord lieutenant, usually a prominent aristocrat appointed by the Crown, enjoyed the support of a deputy lieutenant and various other officials from the magistrate to the local sheriff. Property requirements concentrated the higher positions, such as Justices of the Peace, in the hands of the landowners. The county’s responsibilities included poverty relief and county policing, and a country-wide network of magistrates dealt with law and order issues. These were only too happily delegated by the central government, although the increased threat from republican principles suggested a greater need for control over the activities of suspected Jacobins. A Police Bill, which had been passed to this end in 1792, established a system of magistrates in the London area paid by and responsible to the government.26 In addition to this, the Alien Act of 1793 created an Alien Office within the department of the home secretary. During the course of the war it was not only closely involved

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23 Morton Pitt, Thoughts on the Defence of these Kingdoms, pp. 60-2.
24 A significant part of the Foxite justification for parliamentary reform was the need to restore the confidence of the people in the hierarchical system. Smith, Lord Grey, p. 11; Willis, “An Handful of Violent People”, 249; Black, The Politics of Great Britain, pp. 22-3.
25 Frank O’Gorman estimates that fewer than one in ten included more than 1000 people: O’Gorman, The Long Eighteenth Century, p. 137.
in the tracking of republicans and foreigners, but also developed a network of spies at home and abroad.²⁷ Despite these developments, the lack of an official nationwide police force ensured the importance of local initiatives in the imposition of law and order.

The important point was that these local political networks bound the landowners and the poor together within a common system, a fact that was strongly reflected in the traditional arrangements for national defence. The militia in particular, at least in the form established in 1757, carried the civilian connection between landowner and labourer over into the military context. Militiamen were drawn from the lower orders and officered by their local superiors.²⁸ However, though rooted in the locality, the militia was not proof against central interference, which many believed was required to correct its defects. Originally an institution in which the rich had served while the poor were excluded, by the end of the century the militia had become a body in which the poor were conscripted, while the rich bought themselves out of direct service by purchasing a substitute. This reluctance of landed men to serve, which led to a relaxation of the property qualifications for office, suggested a deep-rooted problem within the social hierarchy.²⁹ The bond between the rich and poor, supposedly reinforced by the militia, was in fact damaged by the ballot, since the substitute system meant the wealthy were not subject to it in practice. This taught the poor to think that the militia existed only ‘for the protection of property against an invasion’, and that it imposed ‘the burthen of defending property most heavily on those who have the least’.³⁰ Seeking militiamen among the lower orders, however, did have one very important effect: it accustomed politicians to the idea of men without property or social standing bearing arms.

²⁸ A property qualification for office, which ran from a requirement of £50 for an ensign to £800 for a colonelcy, ensured that the correct hierarchical structure would be maintained. Beckett, The Amateur Military Tradition, p. 67.
Although the role of the militia in political life was changing, it continued to be viewed by the local aristocracy in its original form, paid for and maintained by the gentry as a counterbalance to a standing army. Lord Carnarvon spoke for most militia colonels when he defined the militia as

the Garrison of England paid by the Land occupier for his own domestick Security from local Invasion & rebellion & of course limited in its number & not transferable into service, commanded by officers of local qualification & stimulated by local Zeal & Interests not by Professional views.  

The government, on the other hand, increasingly took advantage of the militia’s departure from its original principles by relying on it to provide trained manpower for the Army. In this way, despite rooted opposition from the localities, the militia began to acquire the status of a recruiting-ground for regulars. The government’s initial attempts to allow the militia to volunteer directly into the line in 1795 and 1798 failed, but persistence eventually won out. In 1799 over 10,000 militiamen were drafted to Holland as part of the Second Coalition campaign. Thereafter, remaining resistance was slowly overcome. Between 1807 and 1812 74,000 men transferred into the regulars. This militarisation of the militia led to a further loosening of local connections. In March 1803, a clause in the Militia Officers Bill that allowed half-pay Army officers to take militia office without fulfilling the property qualification caused great acrimony in parliament. Similar protests were made against Windham’s 1806 proposal to replace the militia ballot with a recruitment bounty in the style of the line. Canning argued that such a measure would alienate the poor and undermine the local base of the militia still further: its ‘main characteristics’ and ‘its connection with the property of the country, its local distinction will be entirely lost’.

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31 Carnarvon to Fitzwilliam, 15 April 1802, Northampton RO, Fitzwilliam MSS, Box 1802.
32 Western, The English Militia, p. 233.
33 For more information on drafting see below, p. 79. Gates, ‘Transformation of the Army’, 136.
34 Times, 23 March 1803, 2(b).
35 Speech by Canning, 30 April 1806, PD VI, 974.
The government may have been eager to take advantage of the shortcomings of the militia’s local basis, but this did not mean that it considered the social networks to be unimportant. In a war against revolutionary principles government officials were just as worried about the loosening of paternalist connections as were local notables. This was part of the reason why the volunteers were so popular with politicians. The thought that the volunteer structure mirrored that of society was comforting to Grenville, who felt that social connections gave Britain its strength, and that training to arms would help maintain them by placing the lower classes under the natural command of their social superiors:

There seems no subject in which division, arrangement, & a regular chain of subordination are so necessary, both to prevent evil, & to promote good, as that of training arms, in such a state of civil society as ours, the great body of a People: and I know not how these principles can be better pursued than by the gradation … from the Crown to its Lords Lieutenants, & from them to the principal Nobility & Gentry of the Counties, & so downwards to the leading inhabitants of the Parishes.

In practice, of course, volunteers were frequently officered by men of the artisanal classes, a fact that worried those who ‘wish[ed] to see the use of arms confined to those hands, which are under authority & discipline, & … [have] some property to defend’. Supporters of the volunteers sought to reassure the doubters by arguing that these ‘democratic’ units were aberrations. Everyone had a stake in the social order, as an article in the Anti-Jacobin Review explained:

The rich and the poor, … the high and the low, the governor and the governed, the monarch and his subjects, the prince, the peer, and the peasant, have but one common interest, and must be found, if it be necessary to defend that interest with our blood, fighting in the same ranks, some in one station and some in another, as brethren and friends.

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36 According to Austin Gee, the volunteer movement ‘became an agency by which existing social connections were reinforced’. Gee, The British Volunteer Movement, pp. 9-10, 116.
38 Marquess of Titchfield to Hobart, 6 July 1803, Buckinghamshire RO, Hobart MSS, D/MH/H(war office)/Bundle G/1105.
Cookson’s argument, that the volunteers broke down the barriers between classes because of their predominantly urban and artisanal makeup, would have surprised politicians who saw them as the best way to bring the upper and lower orders into contact.\(^{40}\) As far as they were concerned, the volunteers had quite the opposite effect. Military prowess and social hierarchy would be achieved in one stroke.

The government was so convinced of the value of cultivating the connections within society’s ranks that it tried to extend the same structure to the military. Most of the parliamentary Acts that focused on manpower after 1803 were inspired by the way in which the militia mirrored the hierarchy of the county. As a result, the manpower Acts emphasised the importance of maintaining the connection between those local bodies and the regular army regiments which, in turn, were attached to a particular area of the country. The Army of Reserve was made up of locally-officered regiments on the militia model, and the Additional Force Act made use of ‘Civil Agents’ with ‘Personal Property’ and ‘Local Influence’ to recruit men who were subsequently placed in new county-based battalions.\(^{41}\) Windham’s Training Act aimed to extend this reliance on local influence to boost recruiting by establishing ‘a connection … between the Army and the mass of the people’.\(^{42}\) The Local Militia Act went one step further still: an official Horseguards memorandum recommended that each unit adopt the local regular regiment ‘as part of itself’, in order to foster ‘a real and useful Connexion between the different Branches of the Military Force of the Country’.\(^{43}\) The local networks, which had originally given the militia its independence from central government, were now expected to answer the executive’s immediate need for increased manpower.

None of this, of course, should be exaggerated. During the period of the French wars, governments wanted no more (in Pitt’s words) than ‘to connect the

\(^{41}\) Notes by Castlereagh on the Additional Force Act, April 1806, PRONI, Castlereagh MSS, D3030/2394.
\(^{42}\) Memorandum by Windham, 27 March 1806, Correspondence of George III IV, 416-9.
\(^{43}\) Memorandum on the military force, 6 February 1809, PRONI, Castlereagh MSS, D3030/2984.
different departments of executive authority, that upon orders issued from
government to the lord lieutenants of counties, the people might be immediately set
in motion’. They were well aware of the limits imposed on them by constitutional
doctrine, as vaguely defined as that constitution was. Circumstantial factors also had
an impact on available options. A very good reason was required to justify strong
measures, particularly when the government was unpopular. ‘You must produce
evidence of actual danger, or you will not prevail on country gentlemen to stir a step
to assist you,’ Pitt was warned in 1796. The government was also reluctant to draw
too much power to itself. Centralisation was all very well for mobilising the defence
effort, but ministers were often quite happy to leave certain matters in the hands of
the local authorities. Beset by internal divisions, and anxious to uphold the principles
of free trade by interfering as little as possible with national markets, the Pitt
government limited its response to the scarcity in 1800 to importing grain, regulating
the amount of flour to be used in baking (the Brown Bread Act), and suggesting
potatoes as an alternative to bread. At the same time the home secretary, the duke of
Portland, emphasised the importance of local initiatives such as soup kitchens and
relief subscriptions. Home Office correspondents got nothing more than a regretful
but categorical assertion that everything that could be done, had been done:

Every means that were thought practicable for obviating this Crisis by
lessening the consumption and encouraging the importation have been
resorted to under the sanction of the Legislature; and I am sorry to be
under the necessity of adding that all resources therefore in the power
of Government are wholly exhausted.

In times of scarcity, the government was more inclined to protest its impotence than
grasp at power.

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44 Speech by Pitt, 18 July 1803, 1643-4.
46 Portland to William Baker, 24 August 1800, National Archives, HO 43/12 ff. 78-82. For alternative
suggestions about how the local government should go about relief, see Portland to Viscount
Kirkwall, 17 February 1800, National Archives, HO 43/11 ff. 365-6; Portland to R.B. Haden, 14 May
1800, National Archives, HO 43/11 ff. 485-7; and Portland to A. Bracebridge, 20 September 1800,
National Archives, HO 43/12 ff. 150-1.
And yet some form of centralisation was necessary if only to control the number and variety of auxiliary corps spawned by invasion. The lack of central authority over matters pertaining to defence could be frankly embarrassing. In 1795 Pitt’s government had been forced to dodge specific questions about volunteer logistics because the War Office only kept records for the small number of units that were not kept up by private subscription.47 Windham complained some years later that a decentralised defence effort delayed the response to an invasion because of its staff, which was often inexperience and too concerned with local issues:

To throw as much as possible upon individuals without the intervention of Parliament, they had set up their grand system of lord lieutenants, deputy lieutenants, lieutenants of divisions, inspectors of divisions, superintendents of parishes, etc etc, persons very proper to be appointed, and to be held in readiness, but very improper for much of the work on which they were employed, namely, that of getting the country into a state of military defence … at what rate must that business proceed, which had for its office a county?48

The many practical obstacles to centralisation sometimes had to be overcome in an emergency, and there were plenty of those between 1794 and 1812. A.D. Harvey’s statement that Britain ‘fought the war according to the principles of the market economy, without unified control, with all the relevant factors, all the participating sectors, left to find their own mutual relations’, underestimates the degree of centralisation that took place.49 As the scarcities of 1795 and 1800 showed, the government’s position on free trade was not dogmatically committed to *laissez-faire*, and the same was true of its attitude to greater involvement at times of national crisis. Evidence of its conviction that an emergency warranted more government intrusion can be found as early as 1795, when treason was redefined to include plots against parliament, thus integrating the executive more closely into the state and making further centralisation possible.50 Political attitudes to poor law reform

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47 *Times*, 21 November 1795, 2(b).
49 Harvey, *Collision of Empires*, p. 162.
50 Steffen, *Defining a British State*, pp. 3, 7, 99-100, 117-9, 158.
similarly sought to move the spotlight more firmly on the centrality of government and parliament in matters that had formerly been left to local control. The stated purpose of Pitt’s short-lived attempt at poor reform in 1796 was to allow labour to find its own value ‘by unfettering the poor from their restraints under the present law of settlement’, and to allow them to take their labour anywhere around the country — effectively breaking the social, paternalistic ties that bound them to their locality, and placing the whole system under the inspection of parliament.\textsuperscript{51} Samuel Whitbread’s 1807 poor law reform proposals also aimed to liberate the poor from the influence of parish relief. Whitbread proposed to restore their independence through a system of parish schools, saving banks, part-ownership of cows, and rewards for families that subsisted without parish help.\textsuperscript{52} Either measure would have emphasised parliament’s overseeing role and minimised the poor’s reliance on local paternalism.

The process of centralisation was, however, complicated by much more than official reluctance or constitutional convention. The development of a network of information and control with its apex at Whitehall was hindered by the need to reconfigure the arrangement of offices within the cabinet and its associated departments. The government’s attempts to modify its internal structure reflected the difficulties it would encounter in its desire to establish greater control over the defence process. There were additional problems, too, which arose as a result of independent political circumstances, but which had important ramifications for policy. The cabinet squabbles of the 1790s were not merely personal, but had their roots in a situation that was to last for nearly the whole remainder of the war.

\textit{The cabinet: structure and stability}

Nominally, the cabinet adapted swiftly to the demands of conflict. It grew from eight members prior to 1791 to fourteen by 1805, of whom seven — the home, foreign, and war secretaries of state, the first lord of the admiralty, master general of the ordnance, secretary at war, and commander in chief — had direct responsibility

\textsuperscript{51} 12 February 1796, Colchester Diary I, 31.
\textsuperscript{52} Fulford, Samuel Whitbread, pp. 177-8.
over some aspect of national defence.\(^{53}\) Cabinet meetings also increased in frequency: between 1797 and 1800, 106 cabinet meetings were held, in contrast with only 66 between 1784 and 1790.\(^{54}\) This did not, however, reflect internal cohesion, a very rare feature in political circles after the mid-1790s. Despite the knowledge that the control of military and naval affairs was spread between several offices, official briefs were hardly ever specific enough to avoid confusion. Decisions on defence policy by the Home Office, for example, frequently required ‘references to the Ordnance, the War Office or the Admiralty’.\(^{55}\) Lack of communication, jealousy, and quarrelling created an atmosphere of incompetence that visibly damaged the credibility of the government in the formation of a central defence policy.

Many of these problems could have been avoided by a stricter partition of the different defence responsibilities in cabinet, but this was complicated by questions of seniority. Richard Glover exaggerates when he argues that the prime minister was ‘inevitably … chief Minister of Defence in wartime’.\(^ {56}\) Despite the patchiness of his war record, Pitt had boosted the importance of the premiership by 1800, but this was the result of personality and not convention. Clearly someone had to dominate, and Dundas saw Pitt as the only member of the cabinet able to conciliate the variety of departments jockeying for power due to his ‘overriding ascendancy in the conduct of Publick Affairs’. The need for such an ascendancy was acute, in military and defence matters along with everything else: ‘Yourself as far as a General Superintendence is necessary must take that into your own hands’.\(^ {57}\) In 1803 Pitt, with eight years of bitter wartime experience behind him, admitted ‘that there should be an avowed and real Minister possessing the Chief Weight in council, and the principal Place in the confidence of the King’, with ‘no rivalry or division of Power’. If the cabinet could not agree on policy, ‘the Sentiments of the Minister must be allowed and understood

\(^{54}\) Ehrman III, 452-3.
\(^{55}\) Hobart to the bishop of Durham, 21 September 1803, Buckinghamshire RO, Hobart MSS, D/MH/HH/Bundle F/N41.
\(^{56}\) Glover, Britain at Bay, p. 30.
\(^{57}\) Dundas to Pitt, 9 July 1794, National Archives, Chatham MSS, PRO 30/8/157/1/160-7.
to prevail’. The fact that Pitt needed to express such a sentiment reflected his experience in the 1790s, when he himself had not automatically prevailed. Pitt’s immediate successors after 1806 did not, in any case, follow his advice. As first lord of the treasury in the Ministry of All the Talents, Grenville hesitated to put pressure on either his followers or those of Fox with whom he was in cooperation. ‘I have no pretensions to be … the master of the Government I act with,’ he confessed. With no automatic or direct control over the military, the best any prime minister could do was to adjudicate between the disputes of rival departments.

Given the large number of offices with military responsibility, quarrels of competence were frequent. On top of their own separate organisations in Horseguards and the admiralty, the Army and Navy also had cabinet contacts. The first lord of the admiralty, in charge of the Navy, and the master general of the ordnance, in charge of artillery and ammunition, both held cabinet office, as did the commander in chief until 1795. Not surprisingly there were clashes of authority, and the situation was aggravated by the fact that the boundaries of each position could change at a moment’s notice. As a result of his alliance with the Portland Whigs in 1794, Pitt raised the secretary at war, responsible for military finance and the movement of men and materials, to cabinet rank. A new secretaryship of state for war was also created, which took some — but not all — of the foreign and home secretaries’ military responsibilities. This reflected both the need to find more cabinet seats for Portland’s followers and the increased importance of war policy in

38 Melville to Addington, 22 March 1803, Devon RO, Sidmouth MSS, 152M/C1803/OZ/326.
39 Grenville to Lord Wellesley, 16 October 1806, Dropmore MSS VIII, 389.
60 For a chronological list of such offices, see Appendix IV.
61 Despite the naval or military responsibility that came with these positions, they were mostly held by civilians, although a few cabinet members did have some military experience (Houlding, Fit for Service, p. 153). When he accepted the Ordnance in 1795 Lord Cornwallis, a general with years of service under his belt, noted that he would be taking on himself ‘almost the whole military responsibility in Council’. He was forgetting Lord Chatham, although Chatham’s military expertise was slender. Unlike the other members of the cabinet, however, Chatham had seen service in Canada, Gibraltar and the West Indies (Cornwallis to Colonel Ross, 26 January 1795, Cornwallis Correspondence II, 282).
62 The Home and Foreign Affairs departments had themselves been divided as recently as 1782. The foreign secretary’s main remit was to look after Britain’s secret and diplomatic presence abroad, while the home secretary was concerned with domestic law and order and policing. Gates, The British Light Infantry Arm, pp. 36-7.
cabinet affairs. However, the imperfect division between the duties of the war secretary, the secretary at war and the commander in chief, particularly with regard to the allocation of military resources and the disposition of the troops, elements of which came under the remit of all three offices, provoked a series of disputes in which the monarch himself occasionally became involved.\textsuperscript{63} Pitt thought the divisions were amply justified by ‘the different details arising out of an extensive War’ and ‘the internal state of the Kingdom’, but his Solomon-like solution caused friction and may in fact have been illegal under the terms of Burke’s 1783 Economical Reform Act, which prohibited the proliferation of cabinet offices for patronage reasons.\textsuperscript{64} Even Dundas, the new war secretary, predicted ‘constant wrangling’ between ‘the various executive Boards’ in control of war policy, and proceeded to fulfil his own prophecy by complaining that the division of the home secretary’s powers had been made at his expense.\textsuperscript{65} Four years later, in 1798, he still felt ‘crippled on land in preparatory measures from the distribution of business between the Duke of Portland’s office and mine’.\textsuperscript{66}

The failure to simplify the formation of defence policy by splitting the secretaryship of state three ways was obvious from the official contortions over the militia and the volunteers. Officially these were under the remit of the Home Office, which was responsible for receiving militia and volunteer returns and for calling them into action. The creation of the War Office, however, with some control over military and defence policy, threw everything into confusion. No-one now knew which of the two departments had ultimate authority over the auxiliaries. Even the two secretaries of state themselves were unsure. Dundas, swamped with misdirected mail on the militia and volunteers, was furious:

\textsuperscript{63} For more information see below, p. 45.
\textsuperscript{64} Pitt to Portland, 5 July 1794, Cambridge University Library, Pitt MSS, Add Ms 6958 Box 8 no 1451; debate on the office of the secretary of state for the war department, 7 November 1797, PH XXXIII, 963-77.
\textsuperscript{65} Dundas to Pitt, 9 July 1794, National Archives, Chatham MSS, PRO 30/8/157/1/160-7. Wheeler and Broadley referred to it more colourfully as ‘a case of too many cooks spoiling the broth’: Wheeler and Broadley, Napoleon and the Invasion of England, I, 105.
\textsuperscript{66} Dundas to Grenville, 5 January 1798, Dropmore MSS IV, 79.
I have no correspondence with the Lieutenants of any County nor with the Colonels of any one Militia Regiment, nor with the Commanders of any one Yeomanry or Volunteer Corps. From the name my Department bears many of them are daily led to write to me under any difficulty which occurs to them, & this error is of course much increased by their observing that I am in the habit of moving the Bills in Parliament on those subjects, not advertsing that it is owing to the Duke of Portland being in the other House of Parliament. This confusion must be put an end to, & the publick responsibility must be fixt in some way or other.67

He had a good point when he insisted that the responsibility for defence policy ought to be clear, particularly during a defensive war. As a result he was often angry at Pitt’s habit of taking advice on defence matters from members of the cabinet without a specific military remit, such as Lord Westmorland, the Lord Privy Seal.68 The problem had not been solved, however, by the time Dundas resigned in 1801.

The question of divided responsibility over defence went into abeyance during the period of the peace of Amiens, but resurfaced after the redeclaration of war and the revival of the volunteer movement. An effort was finally made to sort through the mess in August 1803, when a circular to the lords lieutenant stated categorically that all ‘correspondence on the subjects of the Militia & Volunteers were in future to be addressed to the Secretary of State for the Home Department’. The result of cutting the Gordian knot was a great relief to Lord Hobart, Dundas’s successor as secretary of state for war, who described the volunteer business as ‘the greatest Plague & trouble that ever was inflicted upon Man’.69 Charles Yorke, Addington’s home secretary, on the other hand, was less pleased, and after a month asked for two extra clerks to deal with all the enquiries regarding the militia, volunteers and Yeomanry which had flooded in.70 Fixing responsibility for the volunteers, however, had only solved one of the difficulties that had troubled Dundas

67 Dundas to Pitt, 10 February 1798, Cambridge University Library, Pitt MSS, Add Ms 6958 Box 12 No 2300.
68 Dundas to Pitt, 31 May 1798, Cambridge University Library, Pitt MSS, Add Ms 6958 Box 12 No 2356.
69 Hobart to Lord Lowther, 27 August 1803, Buckinghamshire RO, Hobart MSS, D/MH/H(war office)/Bundle G/C231.
70 Yorke to the Lord President, 7 October 1803, National Archives, HO 43/14 f. 241.
and his successors. The duties of the secretary of state for war remained nebulous. Since 1802 he had been given responsibility for the colonies, in order to justify keeping the position during the peace of Amiens. Addington had told Hobart ‘that the business of the country he had no doubt would require a third Secretary of State’, but after the volunteers had been taken away from him there seemed to be little else for him to do.\textsuperscript{71} By 1804 the position was viewed as an unenviable task precisely because it was so ill-defined. Hobart’s successor Lord Camden complained that his only job of note was to keep ‘the different Departments over which the Secretary of State has not the control, in good Humour together’.\textsuperscript{72} Camden felt that the war secretary had to have a greater power ‘in actually originating measures’, which suggested that Dundas’s worry about the office being superfluous had not been entirely unfounded.\textsuperscript{73} It was not until the prime minister himself stopped taking direct charge over important military policy that the war secretary truly came into his own. This was the case under Grenville and Portland, under whom Windham and Castlereagh respectively played a prominent role in the formation and implementation of defence measures.

Although many of these problems could be traced to the lack of any marked distinction between offices, they were strongly aggravated by the rapid expansion of the cabinet under Pitt. The coalition with Portland in 1794, in particular, sowed lasting seeds of dissension among Pitt’s followers, which would affect the political scene for the next twenty years. Part of the problem was that Pitt himself had developed a habit of restricting major cabinet decisions to a small group of trusted colleagues. His attitude to cabinet meetings was simple: he preferred to avoid them if possible.\textsuperscript{74} The ‘Inner Triumvirate’ of Pitt and his secretaries of state for war and

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  \item \textsuperscript{71} ‘Minutes of a conversation with Mr Addington, Lord Auckland, Mr Pitt, and the Marquis of Buckingham’, by Hobart, 10 February 1801, Buckinghamshire RO, Hobart MSS, D/MH/H(war office)/Bundle B/C328.
  \item \textsuperscript{72} Camden to Pitt, 1804, Kent RO, Camden MSS, U840/C209/3.
  \item \textsuperscript{73} Camden to Pitt, 1804, Kent RO, Camden MSS, U840/C209/3.
  \item \textsuperscript{74} To pick only one example, on one occasion in November 1799 Pitt wanted some military issues to be sorted out between him and the foreign secretary, Grenville, in order ‘to avoid a Cabinet’. Pitt to Grenville, 22 November 1799, \textit{Dropmore MSS} VI, 36.
\end{itemize}
foreign affairs, Dundas and Grenville, oversaw most of the wartime policy of the 1790s, while the other cabinet members were only occasionally consulted. Prior to 1794 the system had worked well enough. Each of the three ministers had his own small informal circle of contacts who helped him on a variety of different affairs. After 1794, however, the informal cabinet system began to strain at the seams. Dundas continued to defend its existence because, being ‘a pretty large society of men’, the full cabinet was ill-equipped to make the kind of quick decisions a defence emergency required: ‘It is pretty obvious that on this subject as little as on any other it is likely we should not always agree’. The reality was, however, that the ‘inner ministry’ worked only so long as the men who composed it were able to form a good working relationship, and after 1794 this was rarely the case. Although on the face of it the Portland following integrated well, in reality they brought an influx of ideas about the war which exaggerated incipient rifts within Pitt’s inner circles. Boosted by the ideological preference of the Portlandites for a Bourbon restoration, Grenville increasingly favoured a continental war, whereas Dundas preferred a defensive, colonial struggle in diplomatic isolation. Pitt, meanwhile, had made little effort to involve the members of Portland’s following more than necessary: full cabinet meetings were usually badly recorded, and the minutes were only occasionally circulated. ‘I have never known distinctly what the sort of minutes were that were kept of the proceedings of Cabinet,’ Windham, a particular victim of Pitt’s neglect, complained in 1799. As a result, once the inner cabinet collapsed, there was nothing to fall back on because their other colleagues had already been alienated.

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77 Dundas to Pitt, 31 May 1798, Cambridge University Library, Pitt MSS, Add Ms 6958 Box 12 no 2356.
78 Contrary to Richard E. Willis’s assertion that the Portland whigs ‘rapidly became assimilated to Pitt’s particular methods of governing’: Willis, ‘Cabinet Politics and Executive Policy-Making’, 7.
Addington recalled in November 1801 that ‘there never had been a more divided Cabinet’ than Pitt’s.\textsuperscript{82}

After the coalition with Portland, neither Pitt, nor any of his successors, was able to devote their whole attention to the war because of cabinet divisions and weakness. Pitt’s own vulnerability was masked by a strong performance in the lobbies. The 1796 general election had produced a strong majority of 424 supporters for the government, a gain of 182, set against 95 Foxites and 39 independent; moreover, as of 1797, the Foxites themselves seceded from parliament almost entirely in protest against the conduct of the war.\textsuperscript{83} These were, however, little more than numbers, and the same weakness which would become obvious after 1801 was already discernible behind the decline in Pitt’s reputation. Loss of confidence in the government as a result of failed peace initiatives, the invasion of Fishguard and the run on the banks provided an opportunity for alternative opposition groups to come forwards and claim the middle ground. In early 1797 Sir John Sinclair formed a Third Party with a platform targeted at disillusioned MPs: ‘1) to vote for Economy; 2) For Peace; 3) Against Mr. Pitt’s Bank measures; 4) Against Mr. Fox’s motions for repeal of the Acts against Treason and Sedition’.\textsuperscript{84} Sinclair’s challenge to the government’s authority came at a time when Pitt was particularly exposed: the mercantile classes had lost faith in him since the bank crash, and before the end of April the king had received twenty-six petitions for a change of ministry.\textsuperscript{85} Lack of interest from the king killed the project, but the government may not have been strong enough to withstand a more concerted attack.\textsuperscript{86} The disagreements within the cabinet, both in its formal and informal guise, already foreshadowed the political havoc to come.

When Pitt eventually did fall, these latent divisions broke open and created a confusing situation that affected the ability of all governments to legislate until the

\textsuperscript{82} Glenbervie Diaries I, 5 November 1801, 278.
\textsuperscript{83} Jupp, ‘Britain and the Union’, 205.
\textsuperscript{84} Colchester Diary, I, 9 March 1797, 91. Lord Moira, too, a friend of the Prince of Wales, was a possible alternative ministerial candidate: Ehrman III, 44.
\textsuperscript{85} Ehrman III, 39-40.
\textsuperscript{86} Smith, Lord Grey, pp. 69-70.
end of the war. The debates over the peace of Amiens between 1801 and 1802 revealed the instability inherent in the political scene. With Pitt refusing to exert leadership, his former followers scattered in several directions. Significantly, those who had been most vocal within Pitt’s ministry since 1794 formed a group apart from their former leader. Windham was one of the first to break, and Grenville ended up leading most of Portland’s following into open opposition to Addington (labelled ‘New’ to distinguish them from the Foxites, now rechristened the ‘Old’ opposition). The result was political chaos, in the midst of which the government struggled to find a stable majority. The parliamentary layout could change at any time. ‘I long for a division in either House, that people may know where they are,’ Lord Harrowby wrote as late as January 1805.87 Sheridan referred in May 1802 to ‘the strange division of parties’ and reported rumours of twelve or thirteen different groups, possibly even more.88 In 1803 Fox reported ‘three, or rather four distinct Parties’, his own followers and those of Grenville, Addington, and Pitt.89 At the same time Pitt’s disciple Canning divided the opposition to Addington into four, not counting Foxites: Grenvilles and Windhams, followers of Lord Fitzwilliam, Pittites, and ‘Stragglers’.90 At the outset of Pitt’s second ministry in 1804, Charles Long and George Rose estimated that, of 658 members in the house of commons, 79 were Foxites, 68 followed Addington, 41 belonged to the Prince of Wales, 23 were Grenvilles, and 29 were doubtful (which, excluding Pittites and ministerialists, was already a five-way split, with 240 against the ministry).91 The situation improved a little after Fox and Grenville consolidated their forces in January 1804, but the volatile political situation continued to have a strong impact on government policy and reputation.

Indeed, the effect of these parliamentary contortions was so obvious that several politicians, mostly in opposition, feared the domestic situation would distract from the bigger issues of invasion and Napoleonic expansion. After the renewal of

87 Harrowby to Lord Bathurst, 31 January 1805, Bathurst MSS, pp. 44-5.
88 Speech by Sheridan, 14 May 1802, PH XXXVI, 817.
89 Fox estimated that he would muster 69 votes, Pitt 58, Grenville 36, ‘and all the rest Ministerial’. Fox to Lord Holland, 6 June 1803, British Library, Holland MSS, BL Add MSS 47575 ff. 29-30.
90 Sack, The Grenvillites, p. 69; Correspondence of George III, IV, 103-4 n 2.
91 Harcourt, Rose Diary II, 119.
war Britain had been threatened with a French invasion more or less constantly between 1803 and 1805, and again periodically between 1806 and 1810. Napoleon, virtually unopposed after 1806, had been making great strides across the continent. Political weakness could not have come at a worse time. Sheridan thought it ‘lamentable’ to see the house of commons of 1802 ‘all split into miserable parties, when your great enemy is uniting every possible means of extending his power’.92

Three years later, with Addington (now Viscount Sidmouth) and his followers on the brink of leaving Pitt’s second government, Lord Carlisle questioned the ministerial strategy of prioritising internal ministerial dissension over national defence:

Instead of being employed in considering how the country was to be extricated from its difficulties, almost the whole time of ministers was known to be taken up in endeavouring to reconcile disputes which were continually taking place. … He could not meet a person on the street that he knew, but he was asked who’s in, and who’s out? – He could only answer I don’t know, but the Rochefort squadron have been out, have done great mischief to our West India possessions, and have returned home unmolested; the Toulon squadron is out, and gone God knows where, or what mischief it may do.93

By 1806, in fact, government weakness had become so much a part of political life that cabinet instability was perceived even when the case was otherwise. Structurally sound governments, such as the Ministry of All the Talents, found themselves suffering in their attempts to gain political credibility because of widespread belief in their imminent collapse. The Talents’ awkward composition of Foxites and Grenvilles, who had only been in political cooperation for two years at the time of coming to office, made the ministry seem particularly open to internal dissension. The opening of negotiations with France in the spring of 1806 increased the speculation. Fox had called for peace several times in the 1790s, whereas Grenville had famously broken ranks with the Pittites on the issue in 1802. Surely the two allies could not agree now? ‘Rumours … are afloat, of existing differences in the Cabinet on the subject of peace with France’, The Anti-Jacobin Review reported

92 Speech by Sheridan, 14 May 1802, PH XXXVI, 818-9.
93 Speech by Carlisle, 20 June 1805, PD V, 471.
hopefully, but this was wishful thinking, for in fact the ministry was remarkably harmonious, discounting a few initial hiccoughs over patronage.\textsuperscript{94} Even so, further disagreements were foreseen between the Grenvilles and the Foxites after Fox’s death in September 1806, and it was difficult for the government to make a mark when its collapse was expected at every turn.\textsuperscript{95} The same was true of the Portland ministry which followed the Talents. The rumours about cabinet divisions were much more accurate in this case: the duel between Canning and Castlereagh in September 1809 was merely the most dramatic example of the disharmony within the ministry, and the parliamentary situation aggravated the problem. The 1807 general election produced virtually a hung parliament with 216 pro-government MPs, 154 independents who tended towards government, 71 independents who were more against, and 213 opposition.\textsuperscript{96} The Perceval government similarly appeared unstable, an impression reinforced by several close shaves and a couple of defeats in the lobbies over the disastrous expedition to Walcheren in early 1810. Liverpool’s government in 1812 resigned and had to be re-appointed before forging ahead. The days when the government could confidently rely on a majority of between three and four hundred votes were long gone.

Significantly, of course, none of these governments was in fact as weak as it seemed. In the same way that a huge majority had masked the Pitt government’s internal problems, those of its successors were exaggerated by their weakness in the lobbies. Of the six governments between 1801 and 1815 only one, Addington’s, fell because of parliamentary weakness.\textsuperscript{97} The important point is that, however stable they were in reality, they did not promote political confidence, which was lowered still further by the long, draining invasion scares and the inability to make headway.

\textsuperscript{94} Anti-Jacobin Review, XXXIII, IV (April 1806), 446.
\textsuperscript{95} Farington Diaries IV, 3 October 1806, 25.
\textsuperscript{96} Harvey, Britain in the Early Nineteenth Century, p. 203.
\textsuperscript{97} Pitt’s second government might have fallen in 1806 as a result of the failure of the Third Coalition and Sidmouth joining Fox and Grenville, but Pitt died before this could be put to the test. The Ministry of All the Talents resigned in protest in 1807 when the king sought a pledge against Catholic Emancipation. Portland resigned in 1809 due to ill health. Perceval was assassinated in 1812. Liverpool, after a shaky start, remained in office for fifteen years.
against Napoleon on the continent. Ministries which were constantly on the brink of extinction simply could not turn the attention required to the national defence. Sidmouth, who could reasonably claim to have headed what was, comparatively speaking, the most cohesive cabinet since 1794, had by 1810 given up hope of a strong government capable of defending the country. Union and authority were required ‘without which Government is but a Name’, but this was ‘hopeless’: the Portland and Perceval governments were a ‘Tragic Farce’.

Ironically, however, it was the ideal to which Sidmouth and other politicians looked in the dark days of continental isolation and political vulnerability — the Pitt government of the later 1790s — that had sown the seeds of the divisions that followed. Much of the cabinet chaos, political rivalry, official weakness, and resulting breakdowns in communication between governors and governed, could be traced to the problems which followed the Pitt-Portland coalition in 1794.

**The king**

On top of their own internal problems, all governments had another important element to consider in the defence process: the monarch, who retained considerable influence over the formation of war policy. As Jonathan Clark argues, over the course of the eighteenth century the monarchy had become ‘the keystone in the arch of the hereditary and providential system which churchmen had constructed’, and was also the focal point for portrayals of the social structure of the political state.

As such, the Crown was an important weapon in the battle against Paineism and, since the war had begun as a crusade against republican principles, the monarch automatically acquired a symbolic role in the struggle. Part of his role was to provide an opportunity for pageantry and a focus for patriotic fervour. George III played a pivotal role in the Thanksgiving services for victories and in the peace festivals of 1801–2, and the 1809 jubilee celebrations were likewise an excellent way

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98 Sidmouth to Buckinghamshire, 24 September 1809, Devon RO, Sidmouth MSS, 152M/C1809/OZ.
100 Dozier, *For King, Constitution, and Country*, p. 25.
to parade royal splendour in front of the people.\textsuperscript{101} The connections which bound the lowliest peasant to the Crown were stressed at every turn through stories that reflected the king’s humanity, religiosity, and common touch. However, the king still had enormous political responsibilities and was much more than simply a national icon. Constitutionally, the Crown was invested with the power of calling out as many as three million men in case of invasion.\textsuperscript{102} Enshrined in the Levy en Masse Act of 1803, which endeavoured to convert the principle into practice, Crown prerogative served as a basis for the Training and Local Militia Acts which followed, and indeed lay behind most of the defence proposals drawn up by government members and independent advisers from 1798 onwards.

To most politicians, indeed, the Crown’s role in defence was axiomatic. ‘That it was the ancient prerogative of the Crown, to command the services of all who were capable of bearing arms for the defence of the country, could not be doubted,’ declared Yorke in 1803.\textsuperscript{103} Even Fox, one of the strongest opponents of excessive Crown prerogative, supported Windham’s Training Act, which used Crown prerogative as its basis.\textsuperscript{104} There were, of course, some problems of definition and interpretation. Pitt called the Crown prerogative ‘as old as the Constitution itself’, and some others cited Saxon precedents. Addington, however, traced it back no further than his own Levy en Masse Act of 1803, while several oppositionists argued that appeals to an ‘ancient’ prerogative were exaggerated or even totally fictitious.\textsuperscript{105} Lord Carnarvon raged that ‘he would rather put a pistol to his head than submit’ to the Levy en Masse, and ‘denied’ the Crown’s ‘inherent right’ invoked in that Act.\textsuperscript{106} These opinions were, however, very much in a minority. Crown prerogative

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\textsuperscript{102} William Morton Pitt, ‘Observations on the Military Establishment’, undated, National Archives, Chatham MSS, PRO 30/8/167 f. 204.
\textsuperscript{103} Speech by Yorke, 18 July 1803, PH XXXVI, 1624.
\textsuperscript{104} A.D. Harvey claims that one of the strongest divisions between parties was based on prerogative, but this was not strictly true in the case of defence. Harvey, Britain in the Early Nineteenth Century, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{105} Speech by Pitt, reported in the \textit{Times}, 21 July 1803, 2(b); Speech by Sidmouth, 10 August 1807, PD IX, 1116.
\textsuperscript{106} Speech by Carnarvon, 27 March 1804, PD I, 1026-7.
\end{flushright}
remained a very useful conceit for both government and opposition. For the government, it kept the spotlight firmly on Britain’s monarchical basis and centred the defence effort around the king himself, since the Crown was named as the only institution with ultimate power over the lives and allegiance of his subjects. For the opposition, supporting defence measures based on Crown prerogative allowed them to parade their support of the state while simultaneously withdrawing it from the government.

The disadvantages of relying on prerogative, at least from the government’s point of view, was that it handed the king a direct as well as symbolic power in national defence. The fact that he traditionally had some influence in military appointments made this even more applicable. In 1807, Colonel Craufurd, one of Windham’s military correspondents and political supporters, declared that if the Crown was not permitted to give its opinion on how to defend the constitution, it ‘would become a cipher, a mere dead letter of the constitution, and our legislature would no longer consist of king, lords and commons, but lords and commons only’. 107 This complicated the situation for governments which were already trying to sort through their own internal divisions of authority in military matters. Involving the monarch too closely could be embarrassing. George III was bad enough: although he was not afraid of interfering to discomfit a ministry he did not like, for the most part he knew his limits in political matters and kept to them. Nevertheless, it was best for ministries to play it safe. Dundas warned Pitt against giving the king’s favourite son, the duke of York, the post of commander in chief in 1794, since this would automatically give the king a new channel for military interference: ‘Placing him in that Situation will entail a debt of incalculable trouble on you during the whole of the King’s life’. 108 If Pitt could not stop the king’s direct interference in military matters, then he would be well advised not to extend it.

107 Speech by Craufurd, 9 April 1807, PD IX, 298-300.
108 Dundas to Pitt, 29 April 1794, Cambridge University Library, Pitt MSS, Add Ms 6958 Box 8 no 1433.
Dundas’s reluctance to increase the king’s leverage over military policy proved well-founded. The king was loath to relinquish the little control he retained, and he became more intractable the less he found his ministry agreeable to work with. This growing disillusionment with Pitt’s handling of affairs towards the end of the 1790s even led to an uncharacteristic attempt to thrust his oar into matters of strategy, which were technically not his domain. In 1800, when the cabinet was considering sending an expedition to Ferrol, the king objected to a cabinet minute on the subject on the grounds that he disapproved of the proposed use of the armed forces. A disgruntled Pitt considered ‘begging His Majesty to find servants whose judgements he can trust more than ours’. As a result Dundas sent the king a polite letter in which he reminded him that the ministers alone were ultimately responsible for the deployment of troops.\(^{109}\) The monarch’s influence in military matters was to be ignored at the government’s own peril.

The king’s tendency to interfere against a disliked ministry in any area where he felt himself able to do so was most strongly demonstrated by his behaviour towards the Talents’ military policy in 1806. He took the most direct way of asserting himself by letting Windham know, in no uncertain terms, that he disapproved of the ministry’s military proposals for the recruitment and regulation of the regular army. Although he eventually gave his assent to the plans, rumours about his disapproval of them were rife throughout the first half of 1806.\(^{110}\) As far as the government was concerned, indeed, the king held his cards very close to his chest. During a conversation on defence and military administration with him on 1 February 1806, Grenville pledged that the government would not force any measures on him so long as he, in turn, left them alone over matters ‘on which the safety & actual existence of the Country might … depend’. The only result was that ‘H.M. dismissed me, saying that the subject required farther consideration’.\(^{111}\) Windham saw the king on the same night, made the same offer, and met with much the same

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\(^{109}\) Pitt to Dundas, 25 July 1800; Dundas to king, 27 July 1800, Correspondence of George III III, 383 n 1, 386; Mackesy, War Without Victory, p. 131.

\(^{110}\) Rose Diary II, 315.

\(^{111}\) Grenville to Sidmouth, 2 February 1806, Devon RO, Sidmouth MSS, 152M/C1806/OZ.
response: ‘We battled this over & over again for near an hour, & as we got no farther He at last dismissed me’. ¹¹² Two days later, the king reasserted his ‘undoubted right of deciding on the measures which may be proposed to him respecting the military service, or the administration of it, both with reference to the prerogatives of the Crown, and the nature and expediency of the measures themselves’. ¹¹³ This was, of course, a private political disagreement between the monarch and his ministers, but was widely publicised when the king sounded out the available Pittite alternatives to Fox and Grenville’s ministry. The effect on the Talents’ credibility was potentially disastrous.

The outcome of this battle of wills was a triumph for the king, who successfully asserted his role in the defence process. To save face, the government had no choice but to give in to the monarch’s private irritation, particularly after the duke of York created public ‘difficulties … in some ways not very usual’, ostensibly in his father’s name. ¹¹⁴ Fox, not unnaturally for him, saw the whole business as a dispute between the Crown and the authority of parliament, and thought that ‘if we give up [on Windham’s military proposals] I shall consider all as lost … If we yield … we shall never be free agents again’. ¹¹⁵ In this case, however, Fox’s judgment was skewed by nearly thirty years of opposition. The king saw military issues as his turf, and meant his ministers to recognise it. He may also have been irritated by Windham’s rather haphazard attitude towards keeping him briefed on military affairs: ‘I have never talked to the King upon any of these points since our first communication … Is it necessary?’ ¹¹⁶ By persistent pressure, however, he made sure that Windham overcame this reluctance to keep him involved. When the king protested against the proposals to limit service in the Army to a renewable term of seven years, which he described as a measure ‘which may endanger the future existence of the State and cannot hereafter be recalled’, Windham responded

¹¹² Windham to Grenville, 2 February 1806, British Library, Windham MSS, Add MSS 37847 f. 11.
¹¹³ King to Grenville, 3 February 1806, Dropmore MSS VIII, 8.
¹¹⁴ Grenville to William Elliot, 24 April 1806, Dropmore MSS VIII, 116.
¹¹⁵ Fox to the duke of Bedford, 13 May 1806, Correspondence of George III IV, 441 n 3.
¹¹⁶ Windham to Grenville, 28 May 1806, Dropmore MSS VIII, 162.
favourably and included a clause to extend limited service in wartime by two or three years, with additional benefits for longer service.\textsuperscript{117} These concessions were effectively an admission that the monarch did have a role in military affairs.

Even worse than George III’s tendency to interfere in military policy, however, was his recurrent mental illness. This impacted even more on the government’s stability than the need to keep the monarch informed about matters that affected his prerogative. In 1801 and again in 1804, and finally in 1811, the question of a regency returned to disturb the political agenda when the king became too ill to govern. Because his apparent ‘madness’ did not inspire confidence in the longevity of his government, each mental attack added to the problems that already beset whichever ministry was in office at the time. As a result, the king’s health became a vital part of defence policy itself. International credibility and government stability played a part, but the fact that the fortunes of the nation had been so overtly bound up with the monarch’s person and prerogative meant that the importance of his state of health was clear at a time when invasion loomed large on the horizon. At the end of 1804 Charles Long wrote to Lord Redesdale that a privy council, intended to prorogue parliament until 3 January 1805, was much to be desired because it allowed the government to publicise the fact that ‘the K[ing] is perfectly well’.\textsuperscript{118} So long as the monarch was perceived to be so, then the political nation — and the nation at large — could also be portrayed as healthy. These considerations led some, such as Dundas (now Viscount Melville), to wonder whether the king should not be convinced to retire from all major responsibilities attached to his position. He wrote to Pitt in 1804:

Every thing at the present moment depends on the Appearance of a steady and permanent Government, and is it possible that either this Country or foreign nations can have any such Feeling when they know the King at the head of our Government is at any moment liable to the severe Calamity which now afflicts him?\textsuperscript{119}

\textsuperscript{117} King to Windham, 29 March 1806, Correspondence of George III IV, 420-3; Windham to the king, 29 May 1806, Windham Papers II, 309-10.
\textsuperscript{118} Long to Redesdale, 4 November 1804, Gloucestershire RO, Redesdale MSS, D2002/3/1/21.
\textsuperscript{119} Melville to Pitt, 19 February 1804, National Archives of Scotland, Melville MSS, GD51/1/64/5.
Melville was not alone in his thoughts on the impact of the king’s illness. Camden, too, felt that the political scene would not stabilise unless the king was persuaded to take a lesser role. The problem was compounded in Camden’s eyes by the government’s political weakness, and by the lack of any prospect of a continental offensive to detract from it.\footnote{Camden to Pitt, 15 October 1804, Kent RO, Camden MSS, U840/C30/9.} The king’s potential to go mad at a moment’s notice certainly did nothing for his government’s strength. When he went mad for the last time in October 1810 the Perceval government had not yet managed to overcome its internal rifts and it was unclear for a long while whether or not the Prince of Wales, as Regent, would turn to the Pittites or the Whigs to govern.

Solving the issue of the king’s health by appointing a Regent in his place, however, merely resurrected the old need to keep the monarch’s military interference to a minimum. With the prince regent, particularly, this was no easy task. As argued above George III had normally respected the grey area of responsibility between Crown and government, but his son was less discriminating. This made life even more difficult for the Perceval ministry, since the Prince had to be dissuaded from overstepping his boundaries without being offended. The delicacy of the problem became quickly apparent in 1811 when the Regent became involved in the long-standing and still unresolved problem of the roles of the commander in chief, the War Office and the secretary at war.\footnote{See above, p. 31.} The overlap between these positions had never quite been sorted out, and the War Office was now accused of issuing orders to the Army directly without consulting Horseguards first. The conflict, small-scale as it was, probably would have been sorted out in the usual way had the prince regent not sought to settle it himself. He declared, in a long memorandum, that ‘the Powers vested in the Commander in Chief are supreme over the whole Army’, which was not strictly true, since control of ammunition, resources and finance lay elsewhere. The Prince insisted that the secretary at war ‘has been, and must always be deemed and considered subordinate to the commander in chief in all matters connected with the
Government of the Army’, and that he should stick to the financial details alone. As if this wasn’t bad enough, the Prince proceeded to criticise an Act passed in the previous parliamentary session which gave the secretary at war ‘a despotic power’ over the provision of military clothing.

Perceval was deeply embarrassed. Not only had the Prince sent his objections directly to the War Office without bothering to notify the secretary at war (Lord Palmerston) first, but he had woefully misunderstood the complicated division of power between the military and civilian branches of the service, and — worse still — directly attacked an Act of Parliament. This was at best an implied snub against his government, at worst a breach of parliamentary privilege. If the memorandum could have been tactfully forgotten all would have been well, but the Prince had specifically asked for his views to be placed on record. ‘What am I to do with it?’ Perceval despaired of the memorandum. Eventually the method chosen to defuse the situation was to write to the Prince gently censuring whoever may have advised him to write the memorandum, although Perceval suspected such an adviser did not in fact exist.122 It was a tactful solution to a serious problem: the Prince was well within his rights in tackling a military matter, but had overshot the boundaries. The issue, however, exemplified the delicacy of involving the Crown in the military and defence process. Neither the monarch nor his representative could be edited out of it, no matter how much simpler life would be for the government without them. By insisting on Crown prerogative as the basis of the defence measures, the government had irretrievably connected the person of the monarch with the defence effort; nor could it afford to ignore him, since he could make its political life very difficult indeed. The best that could be hoped for in case of a disagreement was to limit the damage to the government’s reputation, and Pitt, Grenville, Windham, and Perceval could all bear witness to how distracting and troublesome that could be.

122 For the incident, see the Memorandum from the prince regent, 28 February 1811, with annotations in pencil by Perceval, and the letter from Perceval to the Prince, March 1811: Cambridge University Library, Perceval MSS, Add Ms 8713/XIII/18 and 31.
Scotland and Ireland

Internal disputes over departmental divisions and the role of the Crown occupied much political attention, but ministers could never afford to forget the broader picture. Unfortunately, that picture was often broader than the government, with its close focus on England and the English social networks, liked to consider. As has been argued above, the structure of the English political system offered a means of centralisation by harnessing the county and parish networks, but England was only one part of Great Britain, and an even smaller part of what became, after 1801, the United Kingdom. A defence strategy was required which would apply equally to all parts of the British Isles, including Scotland and Ireland. Unity was key in a war of survival against French principles, but what worked for England would not necessarily work elsewhere. The result was an attempt to strike a balance between three very different perspectives of the war.

Both Scotland and Ireland had different defence mechanisms, and this complicated any attempts to cover their defence under legislation created for England alone. Neither country had a militia when war broke out in 1793. Ireland received one in 1793, Scotland in 1796. These militia forces generally served only on their own soil, although an interchangeable United Kingdom militia was recognised as a good way to strengthen the ties between the three countries. When a number of English militia regiments volunteered to serve temporarily in Ireland after the 1798 rebellion, Castlereagh noted to Pitt how important it was to demonstrate that Ireland and Britain relied on each other for their security: ‘It is particularly fortunate that Gt. Britain is enabled at present to detach so large a force to Ireland, not merely as securing the British Interest in this Country, but as marking distinctly, that it is to her interposition we are altogether indebted, for our safety’. 123 The problem was that each force was raised on slightly different principles. The Irish militia, for example, was mostly recruited by bounty, unlike its English and Scottish counterparts, since the country was considered too volatile for the implementation of a ballot. This

123 Castlereagh to Pitt, 7 September 1798, Cambridge University Library, Pitt MSS, Add Ms 6958 Box 12 no 2385*.
meant that the establishment of a united militia was highly unlikely without a serious reform of the system throughout the United Kingdom, although it was never given up as an ideal.

One of the main reasons why the English, Scottish and Irish defence structures had to be kept separate was that neither Scotland nor Ireland had the kind of social network which was established in England. Without such a structure, the various defence Acts which relied on it for implementation could not be used. This became less relevant for Scotland, which was given a county and lord lieutenant structure more in line with its English counterparts during the course of the war.\footnote{Lord lieutenants were introduced in Scotland after 1793, following the abandonment of the Scottish Militia Bill. According to Michael Fry, their purpose was mainly to allow the government to implement a Scottish militia any time in the future: Fry, \textit{The Dundas Despotism}, p. 232. In a similar vein Jennifer Mori dismisses the formation of a Scottish Lord Lieutenancy as an ‘exercise in administrative empire building’: Mori, \textit{Britain in the Age of the French Revolution}, p. 84. Given that politicians were concerned with the fostering of local connections throughout the British Isles, however, it seems likely that the Scottish policy was an important reflection of a more general fear for the health of Britain’s social ties.}

Partly this was because Scottish interests were prominent right at the centre of the Pitt government through Dundas, who looked upon his role in the creation of local Scottish political organisation as one of his finest achievements: ‘I trust it has been in my Power in the Course of my Political life to be of Service to my Native Country in more particulars than one, but I value myself upon none more, than the Introduction in Scotland of that respectable and useful Office of Lieutenancy under the Crown’.\footnote{Dundas to Alexander Dirom, 7 August 1797, National Archives of Scotland, Melville MSS, GD51/1/888/2.}

Despite his best efforts, however, Scotland lagged far behind England in the development of county networks. Though unquestionably better off than Ireland, both were targeted by a plan submitted to the duke of York in January 1804, which suggested that eight regiments of infantry might be raised for general service, two in Scotland and six in Ireland, with the subsidiary aim of cultivating social ties by placing ‘Men of Consideration & Influence in their respective Countries’ at the head of each. These men were to be chosen based on their influence rather than their military prowess, and if they were not already soldiers they were to be given
temporary commissions.\textsuperscript{126} The plan was not put into effect, but its political as well as military intentions were clear.

It was Ireland rather than Scotland which caused the most problems in the search for a national defence policy suitable for the whole British Isles. Her social networks were markedly much weaker than anywhere else in the United Kingdom. Although based on the county, the Irish aristocracy was considered to be too scattered, and Ireland herself too poor and too Catholic, for effective networks and parish structures to be erected.\textsuperscript{127} Like England, Ireland had her own system of JPs and magistrates, but there the similarities ended. In Ireland they had a much lower reputation — they were, as an 1804 memorandum regretted, ‘too frequently partisans rather than judges’.\textsuperscript{128} The result was a reliance on central authority to an extent which did not exist in Britain. Because of the weakness of the local officers and the frequency of widespread disturbances, the central government was often supported by military rather than civil might. Not coincidentally, Ireland was also the only part of the United Kingdom in which martial law was actually enforced. Perceval was told by a correspondent in 1807 that only ‘the strong hand of the military’ could keep her quiet.\textsuperscript{129} Relying on military might to solve Ireland’s social problems proved too easy, and the possible consequences of tinkering with the system as it stood were too great. The Talents did make a small attempt to initiate a review of the Irish magistracy by requesting peers and privy councillors to report individuals considered unsuitable for the task, but only two counties had been dealt with by the time the ministry was dismissed. Thereafter little was done until 1817.\textsuperscript{130}

This reliance on Ireland’s central government meant that the lord lieutenant was expected to be extremely hands-on in his approach. ‘The Tranquillity of the Country is alone preserved even in the degree in which it exists, by the perpetual intervention of the hand of Government exercising the most Summary powers’, a

\textsuperscript{126} Memorandum from the cabinet submitted to the duke of York, 25 January 1804, PRONI, Castlereagh MSS, D3030/1885.
\textsuperscript{127} Macdonagh, Ireland: The Union and its Aftermath, pp. 33-4.
\textsuperscript{128} Memorandum on the state of Ireland [1804], PRONI, Castlereagh MSS, D3030/1972.
\textsuperscript{129} Lord Manners to Perceval, 4 December 1807, Gloucestershire RO, Redesdale MSS, D2002/3/1/23.
\textsuperscript{130} McDowell, Public Opinion and Government Policy in Ireland, pp. 79-82.
memorandum on the Irish situation declared.\textsuperscript{131} The viceroy’s position was not analogous to that of a lord lieutenant of a county, since he was effectively the king’s deputy in Ireland and, as such, invested with executive powers. He was essential to keep power out of the hands of the Irish aristocracy, who had as low a reputation as the county magistrates. The Home Office in September 1801 was informed by the lord lieutenant, Hardwicke, in no uncertain terms that

the inevitable consequence of rendering the office of Lord Lieutenant inefficient will be the transfer of the powers of Government to some of the principal individuals or families in Ireland, whose local passions and interests particularly disqualify them, however honourable in character, from governing their countrymen.\textsuperscript{132}

Local influence in Ireland was simply too dispersed and too partisan. This, of course, made the collection of information much more difficult than in England. When the militia was reorganised in 1802 new quotas were considered for the Irish counties, but the only people who could be reasonably expected to give coherent information on the subject were assumed to be ‘the most intelligent Members of Parliament, who are Militia Colonels, or otherwise intelligent in county business’.\textsuperscript{133} This was in stark contrast to the case in Britain, where a wide variety of local notables, from the lord lieutenant to the parish constables, could be relied on for information.

The low reputation of the Irish aristocracy was worrying to the policy-makers who laid such a stress on the need for healthy social networks. Without a respectable governing class, a coherent county structure on English lines was impossible. ‘How the country can ever be at rest & steadily governed while there is so little connexion between the Landlords & their tenants … I know not,’ Pelham despaired in 1795.\textsuperscript{134} The Anti-Jacobin considered that the weakness of Ireland’s rulers was at the root of Britain’s problems with the sister island: the Irish were more susceptible to French principles because of absentee proprietors, as a result of which there was no ‘link and

\textsuperscript{131} Memorandum on the state of Ireland [1804], PRONI, Castlereagh MSS, D3030/1972.
\textsuperscript{132} Instructions to Colonel Littlehales, August-September 1801, \textit{Colchester Diary} I, 313-4.
\textsuperscript{133} \textit{Colchester Diary} I, 299.
\textsuperscript{134} Pelham to Sheffield, 28 May 1795, East Sussex RO, Sheffield MSS, AMS/5440/249.
connection between the Higher and Lower Classes of Society’. The government reacted to this aristocratic insufficiency by trying to foster respect for the upper classes through the militia and volunteer forces, in much the same way as these had been intended to strengthen already existing social ties in England. In March 1798 Pitt urged Irish gentlemen ‘to aid the Military by their own Exertions’ and by establishing an Irish volunteer system, a goal he considered ‘more Political than Military’. Evidently the concern here was to show that, as had happened in England, the Irish upper classes were fulfilling their social role by taking the field against invasion in volunteer and other independent corps. Four years later, Hardwicke, Addington’s lord lieutenant, wanted to avoid dismissing the Irish militia after the signature of the Peace of Amiens because it offered ‘the advantage of bringing the gentry of Ireland into a more intimate connection with the lower classes of their countrymen, and creating a reciprocal good will between them, from the continual experience of protection on the one part and fidelity on the other’. Hardwicke wrote to the attorney general that the militia had produced ‘the best effects … from the connexion of Interests & good offices between the description of persons composing the private Militia men, & the gentlemen of the Country’. Such high praise for the activity of the Irish aristocracy was, however, rare. Generally, the mood was more depressing, and attempts made to encourage them to take a more direct role in stimulating the loyalty of their tenants were frustrated by ‘the spirit of party which prevails between one set of gentlemen & another’.

Of course Ireland was not completely bereft of the kinds of social networks that the government wished to exploit. If anyone had mustered the courage to tap into Ireland’s religious networks, they would have discovered sturdy local connections through which to transmit information and enforce laws. The problem was, of course, that her particular sectarian problems made the government understandably reluctant

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137 Abbot to Pelham, January 1802, Colchester Diary I, 399-401.
138 Hardwicke to the attorney general, 5 June 1802, Hampshire RO, Wickham MSS, 38m49/5/10/46.
139 Hardwicke to Redesdale, 4 April 1803, Gloucestershire RO, Redesdale MSS, D2002/3/1/16.
to call on these networks for help. This was not simply a reaction to the fact that Ireland was predominantly Catholic. The government also viewed the militantly Protestant Yeomanry with a jaundiced eye, despite the fact that, as Allan Blackstock points out, it involved obligations of military service that helped reinforce traditional ideas of community paternalism of the kind Pitt had hoped to foster through the volunteers.\footnote{Blackstock, \textit{An Ascendancy Army}, p. 297.} The difficulty was, of course, that the Yeomanry was only a partial solution to Ireland’s lack of a social network and ran the risk of alienating the Catholic community. Since the danger of Irish disaffection arose largely from Catholics and Protestant Dissent, a predominantly Anglican Yeomanry with close connections with the Orange order was not the ideal solution.

Had the government dared to do so, it would have found that the Catholic Church itself provided a broad and fairly reliable social network. This was recognised even by politicians who were staunchly against Catholic Emancipation, such as Lord Westmorland, lord lieutenant of Ireland until 1794. Westmorland urged Pitt in February 1794 to confer a further step in the peerage on the Catholic Lord Kenmare, since ‘such a distinction to this Loyal & meritorious old Gentleman would very much gratify all the respectable Catholics, & would be very useful at this time’.\footnote{Westmorland to Pitt, 18 February 1794, Cambridge University Library, Pitt MSS, Add Ms 6958 Box 8 no 1404. It seems, however, that there were some difficulties: see Westmorland to Pitt, 29 July 1794, Cambridge University Library, Pitt MSS, Add Ms 6958 Box 8 no 1463.} Westmorland’s successor, Lord Fitzwilliam, went much further, and argued that the active support of the Catholic hierarchy could be used to keep the peace in Ireland: ‘The whole united strength of the higher [orders] may be necessary to controol & keep the lower in order & due allegiance’.\footnote{Grenville’s notebook containing extracts from Fitzwilliam’s letters to Portland, Kent RO, Camden MSS, U840/C112/1A.} There were, however, serious disadvantages to relying on a Catholic local structure, precisely because of what it was. According to the opponents of Catholic Emancipation, giving the Catholics a stronger political voice was dangerous because their church establishment gave them ‘a more absolute & more extensive power of acting as one
Body than men of any other religious persuasion’. The idea of a Protestant government having to rely on Catholic loyalties was anathema to those who doubted that the king had replaced the pope at the top of their hierarchy. So long as Ireland’s special religious problems could not be laid aside, Catholic networks could not be used to their full potential, and without them it seemed that Ireland would never break out of the cycle of rebellion and martial law, which many were prompt to ascribe to her lack of social structure. Without Irish participation, centralisation of the defence effort remained necessarily incomplete. Small wonder, therefore, that the politicians preferred the comparatively unproblematic task of dealing with England’s defence, rather than legislating for the United Kingdom as a whole.

**Conclusion**

Historiographical opinions of the stability of the British polity between 1793 and 1815 should not obscure the impact of war on the state. Survival in the new conditions of post-French Revolutionary Europe required adaptation, and the British state was well structured for limited evolution to be permissible. Such evolution was often far from obvious, given the survival of so many ancient jurisdictions and local power struggles, but this was all to the good, given that what was being sought was flexibility rather than revolution. The immediacy of the invasion threat meant that compromise between the centre and the localities was not a viable option; the central government had to manoeuvre itself into a position in which it could be as free from local interference as possible in an emergency. This required very little that was novel in the make-up of the British state. Instead of the county lords lieutenant all sharing responsibility for defence with the government, the social structure was subtly altered so as to become a vertical chain of command from the people in the parish to the monarch at the top, with the parliament, and the government, acting as intermediaries. Though limited by government instability, the overlap of

143 Memorandum on the Catholics, undated [1800], Cambridge University Library, Pitt MSS, Add Ms 6958 Box 14 no 2814.
144 For a more in-depth investigation of the problems involved in legislating for Ireland, see Chapter Five.
departments, and the unsolved problem of how to include peripheries such as Scotland and Ireland, the practical result of such a reconfiguration was to assert the government’s primacy in all matters which affected defence.

The fact that no deep-seated change took place, therefore, did not mean that the British state was incapable of adapting to new circumstances, or that the need for such adaptation was considered unnecessary. The amount of ground the government had to give up to opposition to its strengthened authority should not be overestimated. In his overview of the eighteenth-century polity, Jeremy Black makes a startling statement about the limitations of the central government working in a highly decentralised political milieu. It ‘lacked the mechanisms to intervene effectively and consistently in the localities,’ he argues. ‘The reality of power was decentralised’, and therefore, ‘consensual’. The smooth running of the political system was ensured by giving local notables ‘the instructions that they wanted’.

As the next chapter will show, however, Black’s analysis is clearly inapplicable to the 1790s, when the pressure of Britain’s defence requirements stimulated by a rethink of the operation of the social and political networks, led to a stronger assertion of central control. The reason such alterations were so subtle, however, and even on occasion abortive, was to be traced to the conservatism of the public and political mind, the adverse circumstances of a war fought primarily on a defensive, and a series of ministries torn apart by internal divisions. The experiment was more limited in scope than the politicians had initially hoped, but, significantly, it was nevertheless made.

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Chapter Two
Centralisation and its problems

If Britain’s social structure offered opportunities for a tightening of political control, then an increasingly defensive war provided the motive. The prospect of a French invasion first seriously arose in January 1794. An attempt was made to land in Ireland in December 1796, followed two months later by an actual descent in Wales. A further invasion in Ireland following the Irish rebellion in 1798 in hindsight proved the last French assault on the British Isles, but to contemporaries the threat only seemed to escalate. 1803 witnessed the beginning of the worst invasion scare of the whole period. The failure of the Third Coalition left Napoleon in full possession of the continent, with nothing to distract him from an assault on British soil, and even Trafalgar did not significantly heighten the mood. Only a successful continental offensive or an impenetrable barrier of domestic defence measures could guard against the dangers, and since Britain was isolated on the continent, only the second option was available.

A sound defence policy, therefore, was vital for any government which sought to deal with a threat regarded as unprecedented. The character of the enemy seemed very different from any which Britain had faced during the long, war-torn eighteenth century. A conviction that France was more determined and ideologically committed led to a surprising degree of willingness to bend the rules among stalwart opponents of constitutional change. Looking back in 1803 on the achievements of Pitt’s first ministry, for example, Lord Camden admitted that ‘events without precedent’ had ‘oblig’d Government rather to make new [constitutional arrangements] than follow those which cou’d not answer times unknown before’.

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1 *Times*, 27 January 1794, 3(a); Dozier, *For King, Constitution and Country*, p. 130.
2 Memorandum by Camden, 1803, Kent RO, Camden MSS, U840/O116.
Camden still felt the need to apologise for what he referred to as ‘trifling alterations’, but by 1803 the threat of invasion had rendered adaptation absolutely vital in the minds of many politicians. Pitt himself noted that

the scale of our exertions could not be measured by those of former times … Some system far more vigorous and effectual … would be found necessary, both in our finance, and in the preparations for national defence.³

By this time the length of the war and Napoleon’s consolidation of a new French dynasty suggested that the temporary crises of the 1790s had become a permanent condition, and that ‘it is obviously necessary that in Peace, as well as in War, we must place our chief reliance on a large regular Force’.⁴ In other words, national defence policy could no longer be formed on the basis that war might only last a few more years. Long term safety was required. Such attitudes persisted until 1811, when successive Peninsular War victories finally dispelled the fear of invasion.

The perceived length, urgency, and novelty of the threat suggested that appropriate policy responses would have to depart from the norm. John Brewer’s ‘fiscal-military state’ was at least a century old by this time, but it now became more ambitious and uncompromising in response to continental isolation and repeated invasion attempts.⁵ Sir George Shee, an Under-Secretary in the Home Department, wrote that

a Contest with a powerful Nation of Conquerors situated almost at our doors and under a Government purely military … exhibits a new case — if our preparations to meet the difficulties incidental to that case should not pass beyond the limits of old Routine we may have to lament when too late that we had disregarded the salutary lesson which the Fate of our Neighbours had afforded.⁶

³ Speech by Pitt, 23 May 1803, PH XXXVI, 1396-7.
⁴ Sidmouth to Windham, 26 February 1806, Devon RO, Sidmouth MSS, 152M/C1806/OM/10.
⁶ Memorandum by Shee on Irish defence, Pelham MSS, BL Add MSS 33119 ff. 86-102.
A ‘methodised and combined Plan’ was required, and for this the government needed to acquire more control over the nation’s varied manpower and material resources.\(^7\) This became increasingly urgent as the British defence force expanded. Dundas stressed that Britain’s ‘Salvation’ relied on the various ‘Descriptions of force being speedily collected, arranged, and distributed so as to form one general Combination of efficient Strength’.\(^8\) New information networks had to be found, and the existing ones had to be tightened, to make this possible.

The fundamental question was not \textit{whether} the government could become stronger, but \textit{how} this could be achieved, and how far it could go, and there were of course limits beyond which politicians were loath to explore.\(^9\) The war had initially been justified in part by the need to uphold the status quo at home and abroad, and politicians were acutely aware of the constitutional boundaries within which they operated. Many of the stronger defence measures depended on particular emergencies and were unenforceable when these lapsed. Especially after 1801, governments were often too weak to pursue harsh measures, although that did not prevent them from trying, and the same weakness in turn sharpened the need for greater control — hence the palpable sense of urgency shown by most politicians in national defence whenever the role of the central authorities was challenged. In an emergency insubordination could not be tolerated, and the official tone became more and more strident. ‘To destroy the confidence of the people in their rulers, in their armies, or in their resources, were the very worst species of treason,’ declared a pro-government pamphlet in 1803.\(^10\) The ‘compromise’ that J.E. Cookson suggests existed between centre and locality would have worried men who felt that France

\(^7\) Memorandum by the duke of York for Hobart, 25 August 1803, National Archives of Scotland, Melville MSS, GD51/1/982/1.
\(^8\) Dundas to Pitt, 10 February 1798, National Archives, PRO 30/8/157/2, ff. 217-26.
\(^9\) As Paul Langford notes, there was intense debate about the strength of the British government whenever there was some sort of crisis. The last time it had happened was in 1780 at the time of the Gordon Riots. Langford, \textit{A Polite and Commercial People}, pp. 688-9.
\(^10\) [Bentley], \textit{A Few Cursory Remarks upon the State of Parties}, pp. 71-2.
could only be defeated by a nation that had observed the mechanisms of her success, and resolved to imitate them.¹¹

**Limited measures and constitutional precedent: the 1790s**

Admittedly, the government had not always been so fixated on increasing its control, and the threat from the French loomed larger as the war itself lengthened. During the first few years of the war the Pitt government’s attitude to defence was conditioned by an assumption that hostilities would be short-lived. At this stage Britain still enjoyed strong continental connections through the First Coalition, and was more concerned with overseas offensives than defence. Between 1794 and 1796 the official reaction to the threats of French invasion and domestic unrest followed traditional political patterns, firmly rooted in precedent and designed to meet temporary requirements as they arose. Ministers sought to preserve the status quo, and, while they acknowledged that many of their law and order measures undermined traditional British liberties, they justified them as regrettable necessities of short duration. The suspension of Habeas Corpus from 1794, the Two Acts of 1795, and other measures designed to boost Britain’s defensive and offensive forces, all followed the same pattern. Not until the collapse of the First Coalition in 1797, and the onset of forced British diplomatic isolation, did a change occur in political perspectives on the nature of the war and the measures proposed to deal with it.

While radicals denounced the government’s emergency measures against insurrection, and coined the phrase ‘Pitt’s Terror’ to describe them, Pitt and his ministers were extremely anxious to distinguish their policies from those of the Jacobin Republic. France was tyrannical, despotic, violent, in other words everything that was contrary to the British character. Ironically in view of later events, one government supporter castigated the French *levee en masse* as a system which would ‘disturb the happiness of every private family … involve all the inferior classes of the people in misery and ruin … suspend every act of honest industry … and … expose all who remain in the country, to the complicated calamities of indigence and

¹¹ Cookson, *The British Armed Nation*, pp. 6, 261.
famine’. Pitt echoed the point: French military successes were ‘the result of a system of restraint and oppression, the most terrible and gigantic that has, perhaps, ever existed’. The steadiness of the Briton, buttressed by a political system that guaranteed him liberty and property, contrasted strongly with the impoverished, half-starved French conscript who fought for false principles. Put simply, the difference between the two countries was liberty: France had none, and Britain had plenty. It would obviously not benefit the government to propose measures that were incompatible with British constitutional liberties.

Pittites, therefore, stressed the temporary nature of their early policies as well as the necessity, and took care to ground them firmly in historical precedent. During the mid 1790s, most of the stronger defence measures were designed to lapse with peace. Practical as well as constitutional boundaries limited what the government felt capable of doing. Pitt’s healthy majority over the rump of the Foxite opposition meant that he neither needed, nor wanted, to be too creative. However, the government’s sizeable parliamentary support did not translate automatically into assent for all proposals, and the excuse of ‘necessity’ could only be used sparingly. John Ehrman points out that measures which Pitt sponsored personally often failed (a notable example of this being his poor relief bill of 1796), as a result of which he often preferred not to introduce anything too daring. As long as there was a prospect of the war ending, sticking to the rules was often the wisest option. When the impetuous Windham declared in 1795 ‘that ministers were determined to exert a vigour beyond the law … as exercised in ordinary times and under ordinary

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12 Speech by Mornington, 21 January 1794, PH XXX, 1191-2.
13 Speech by Pitt, 21 January 1794, PH XXX, 1282.
14 Ehrman argues that the transition between the peacetime and the wartime Pitt was a slow process owing to his instinctive adherence to constitutional values: Ehrman II, ix-x.
15 William Elliot to French Laurence, 8 December 1801, Northampton RO, Fitzwilliam MSS, Box 1801.
16 As a young MP, Pitt himself had famously declared necessity to be ‘the argument of tyrants, and the creed of slaves’: he lived to regret it when, in May 1805, oppositionist Lord Carnarvon twisted Pitt’s words to combat the Militia Enlistment Bill. Speech by Carnarvon, 4 April 1805, PD IV, 198.
17 Ehrman III, 482.
circumstances’, he did his government no favours.\textsuperscript{18} The opposition picked up on the phrase with relish, as did many of the newspapers, and Windham spent much precious time explaining it away.

The government’s reluctance to tamper with constitutional precedent showed clearly in its attitude to the suspension of Habeas Corpus from 1794 onwards. Proposed to deal with a suspected republican conspiracy, the interruption of one of the most fundamental British liberties, the right to immediate trial by jury, was undoubtedly one of the stronger measures adopted in the 1790s, yet it was hardly innovatory, and was also by its nature temporary. The government was more keen to stress the limitations of suspension than it was to exert the powers it had acquired through such an expedient.\textsuperscript{19} It was justified by the circumstances of the times, and because it was a way to deal with the dangers of domestic distraction at a time when the major emphasis was on the war abroad. Automatically limited in scope, it was ‘a measure of safety to the State, and such as the times exacted’.\textsuperscript{20} The emphasis was very much on the six-monthly renewable aspect of the measure, and both Pitt and Addington were eager to reassure their audiences that it would cease on the coming of peace.\textsuperscript{21} They also strained to establish the measure’s orthodoxy. Dundas pointed out that the Habeas Corpus Act had been suspended nine times between the revolution of 1688 and 1794, and Pitt reminded the house of commons that it was by suspension that ‘the House of Orange, in the first instance, and the House of Brunswick in the second had been maintained upon the throne’.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{18} Speech by Windham, 23 November 1795, \textit{PH} XXXII, 386.
\textsuperscript{19} The powers of imprisonment without trial were used, but only infrequently, and the government usually preferred to convict through a jury rather than allow many offenders to languish in jail. Wells, \textit{Insurrection}, p. 154.
\textsuperscript{20} Speech by Pitt, reported in the \textit{Times}, 19 May 1794, 3(c).
\textsuperscript{21} The fact that Addington allowed the Habeas Corpus suspension Act to lapse when it came up for renewal in 1802 did not betoken a distinct change of policy following Pitt’s resignation, as some historians have argued: for example Fedorak, \textit{Henry Addington}, pp. 98, 101-2. It was simply a recognition that the measure had been dictated by the specific circumstances of the 1790s, which were no longer applicable in peacetime.
\textsuperscript{22} Speech by Dundas, reported in the \textit{Times}, 19 May 1794, 2(b); speech by Pitt, 23 January 1795, \textit{PH} XXXI, 1187-8.
The Seditious Meetings Act and the Treasonable Practices Act, known collectively as the Two Acts and passed in November 1795, operated under similar constraints. They were introduced in response to a spate of food-rioting following the failure of that year’s harvest, and also to an alleged assassination attempt on the king during the opening of parliament. The continental background was also relevant, since Britain’s increasing isolation was forcing her to look to her own security. Admittedly, T. Philip Schofield argues that the Acts were viewed in a strictly internal context because by 1795 the war had largely lost its ideological slant, and because domestic sedition could no longer rely on French assistance, but this seems unlikely. The First Coalition was breaking up, and there had been a spate of invasion scares over the months preceding the passage of the new legislation. Surely the government must have taken these factors into account when assessing the degree of ‘emergency’. Accordingly, the Acts were a little more innovatory than previous measures, since they expanded the meaning of treason to include plots against parliament, but both measures still remained temporary and subject to renewal after a fixed term.\footnote{Schofield, ‘British Politicians and French Arms’, 198-9; Steffen, Defining a British State, pp.117-9; Hanger, Military Reflections on the Attack and Defence of the City of London, p. 16; Times, 19 February 1795, 2 (b-c), 14 January 1796, 2(d).} The \textit{Times} stressed that, far from encroaching on liberty, they simply extended the scope of networks that already existed for the apprehension of the state’s enemies. Parliament acquired ‘\textit{no additional power whatever}’, and the Two Acts would automatically lapse once ‘that spirit of sedition and treason’ which had called them forth ‘shall have subsided’.\footnote{Times, 23 November 1795, 2 (c).} Later, in October 1796, Pitt too stressed that ‘they were passed in a moment of alarm and turbulence; and have been found admirably calculated to meet the emergency of the time.’\footnote{Speech by Pitt, 6 October 1796, \textit{PH} XXXII, 1203.} Such language did not point towards a desire to undermine the nation’s liberties in the long term, but rather indicated a willingness typical of this early stage of the struggle to tackle problems as they arose.
This *ad hoc* approach can be illustrated by reference to other measures, for example the government’s attempts to tackle the growing manpower problem through short-term recruitment boosts. Thus the Quota Act of 1795 was designed to provide the means to raise a large body of seamen in a short time: twenty thousand men were to be taken from merchant vessels and ten thousand men via a levy on the parishes under pain of a fine. A second Act in 1796 was passed to find a further 15,000 for both naval and military service. Opposition spokesmen denounced both as yet more nails in the coffin of British liberty. The *Morning Post* thought Robespierre himself could not have been prouder. Like many of the measures passed at that time, however, the Quota Acts did not introduce anything particularly novel to the recruitment process. They simply extended the old practice of the naval impress to the inland towns and imposed a quota. They were in any case temporary expedients and proved deeply unsatisfactory because of the low quality of the men produced, most of them being county vagrants. Nor did the government have any ulterior motive when it decided to target different sections of society from those normally affected by impressment. Extending the reach of naval recruitment inland was a reflection of necessity rather than premeditation, and Pitt was anxious to avoid controversy as much as possible. As a result he was prepared to be flexible. When merchants complained that the Act of 1796 affected their livelihood, Pitt took notice and a compromise was reached.

The government’s initial decision to call upon an auxiliary force of gentlemen volunteers at the height of the invasion crises in 1794, 1797 and 1798 was likewise conceived in terms of temporary expediency. Whatever the volunteers were to become later, from 1794 until 1798 they were deeply traditional in concept. Dundas argued that they ought to ‘have a View chiefly to the internal security of the Country,

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26 Speech by Pitt, reported in the *Times*, 3 February 1795, 2(c).
27 Speech by Pitt, 18 October 1796, *PH* XXXII, 1209-10.
28 *Morning Post*, 29 June 1795, 2 (c).
30 *Times*, 31 January 1795, 2(c), 18 February 1795, 2(b), 19 February 1795, 2(c).
and must be formed on that basis’. To him, the volunteers were needed most in large towns, and ought preferably to be subject to property qualification: they were effectively to be a propertied complement to the militia. 31 Such an emphasis on wealth and status was indeed crucial at this early stage. J.H. Rose claims that Pitt did not ‘call the nation to arms’ before 1798 because it was too dangerous to arm potential troublemakers, but this is misleading. 32 Many of the older politicians who advised Pitt were in fact optimistic about the loyalty and ability of the lower orders in an emergency. Dundas, for example, had little problem with arming the people, partly because he remembered ‘the late contest in America where the choicest Troops in the World were baffled by the armed Burghers & Peasantry of the Country’. 33 The main reason for holding back from widespread arming as in France was more practical. While the threat from French invaders remained only one part of a wider European struggle, it would be inexpedient to take men from their normal pursuits, and so ruin ‘all our trade, all our commerce, all our manufactures’. 34

The Pitt government in the mid-1790s was, then, keen to restrict itself to temporary measures well-grounded in political precedent. Despite the apparently dangerous novelty of the character of revolutionary France, the government’s reaction to the threat remained guarded. Habeas Corpus suspension and the Quota Acts were justified not only because of the extraordinary circumstances, but also because of the fact that they were temporary and had established historical pedigrees. The main focus of attention was elsewhere: so long as there was a prospect of defeating France on the continent, invasion scares were worrying but not yet overly alarming.

The maintenance of constitutional norms only worked, however, so long as there was an immediate prospect of an end to the struggle. The instability of France’s government at first held out hopes that the war might end swiftly, but by the time the

31 Dundas to Alexander Dirom, 7 August 1797, National Archives of Scotland, Melville MSS, GD51/1/888/2.
32 Rose, William Pitt and the Great War, p. 278.
33 Dundas to Pitt, 31 May 1798, Cambridge University Library, Pitt MSS, Box 12 no 2356.
34 Speech by Mr Lushington, reported in the Times, 24 October 1794, 2(c).
First Coalition collapsed this hope was faint, and the attitude of British politicians began to change considerably. In 1795 one MP’s warning that France had ‘become a great and warlike nation, and is likely to remain warlike for ever’ had been disregarded, but by 1797 the government was beginning to agree with his point of view. As Pitt was told by the bishop of Llandaff, ‘I am in the present situation of the country an Enemy to palliates & temporary expedients’. With the rise of Napoleon in 1799, politicians fully embraced the possibility of a state of warfare which might last for generations, and placed the emphasis on measures which would permanently alter the fabric of political relations. Lord Minto argued in his notes for a speech in support of Habeas Corpus suspension in 1799 that the constitution had to be flexible to survive:

> If the Crown were in permanent possession of all those powers which the exigence of extraordinary occasions requires they would be too strong for liberty; & if the Crown is limited to those powers which are safe in ordinary times, they will be too weak for defence in moments of temporary peril. … An exception is indeed no part of the rule from which it is an exception, but it forms no less than the rule itself, part of that larger rule in which the particular rule is included.

Even the treaty of Amiens in 1802 did not change this opinion that relations with France might never be fully peaceful again. Before the redeclaration of war in 1803 Sir George Shee urged that if defence measures could ‘not be accomplished without trenching on constitutional principles, the principles of the Constitution ought, as far as they affect the case, to be changed’. Government policy now sought to realign existing political networks in order to channel as much control as possible to the centre.

35 Speech by Joseph Jekyll, 19 May 1795, PH XXXI, 1535.
36 Bishop of Llandaff to Pitt, 1 April 1797, Cambridge University Library, Pitt MSS, Box 11 no 2123.
37 Notes by Lord Minto for a speech on the suspension of Habeas Corpus, January 1799, National Library of Scotland, Minto MSS, MSS 11206 f. 21.
The search for a permanent solution: the 1800s

The peace of Amiens in 1802 and its aftermath confirmed the impression that tension with France might be permanent. Britain surrendered all her conquests in India, South America and the West Indies except for Ceylon and Trinidad, whereas Napoleon used the peace to consolidate his hold on Holland, Italy and Switzerland.39 So long as France continued to dominate the continent Britain’s peace establishment had to be maintained at strength. ‘The question of our internal defence and preparation must indisputably be very different from what it was formerly’, explained Charles Yorke, who was first Addington’s secretary at war and then his home secretary.40 This conviction was reinforced by Napoleon’s immediate escalation of invasion preparations along the French and Dutch coasts following the redeclaration of war in May 1803. As continental coalitions and peace initiatives alike failed, Addington, Pitt and their successors heralded the need for ‘some great, general, and permanent system, equal, not only to the present danger, but equal to that danger which may continue to threaten us, and which may not be terminated by the present war’.41 By 1806 politicians had almost ceased to distinguish between the states of war and peace, at least as far as the armed forces were concerned. Sidmouth warned Windham after the collapse of the Third Coalition ‘that in Peace, as well as in War, we must place our chief reliance on a large regular Force’.42 Even Fox acknowledged that there was ‘no rational prospect of any peace that would exempt us from the necessity of watchful preparation and powerful establishments’.43 Without any possibility of a continental campaign all politicians could do was strengthen the home base and hope for the best.

Ironically, considering how different the two nations were supposed to be, the best model for a British defence effort came from France. In 1794 she had successfully repelled an allied invasion, a fact which intrigued the politicians

40 Yorke to Abbot, 16 July 1801, Colchester Diary I, 363-4.
41 Speech by Pitt, 29 February 1804, PD I, 621-2.
42 Sidmouth to Windham, 26 February 1806, Devon RO, Sidmouth MSS, 152M/C1806/OM/10.
43 Speech by Fox, 3 April 1806, PD VI, 715.
responsible for framing Britain’s defence policy. ‘It is only by taking a lesson even from our Enemies … that we can expect absolute Security,’ Dundas was told in 1796.44 Instead of simply expressing disgust at France’s despotic methods of conscription, politicians began to be fascinated by them to the point of emulation. A.D. Harvey argues that they were oblivious to the resemblance between the French measures and their own, but this is to underrate their perception and misunderstand their motivation.45 In fact, they were highly conscious of the parallels, and did not shy away from them. The French *levee en masse* which had been so deprecated in 1794 was used as the conscious model for the Levy en Masse Act of 1803, and the need for more manpower to satisfy both defensive and offensive requirements moved British policy closer and closer to conscription. Windham noted in 1803 that, although the physical force of the country had been used by France to subvert other nations, Britain would harness hers ‘for a very opposite purpose’, that is to preserve her own identity intact.46

This change of emphasis from temporary to permanent defence measures was facilitated by an increase in the extent of information at the government’s command. As established in Chapter One, most historians of the late eighteenth century argue that Britain’s lack of bureaucratic structure made political centralisation difficult if not impossible. It would certainly have been awkward to command the growing variety of defence forces, or to implement the widespread arming of the nation, without reliable information about manpower and resources. However, the government did have a number of means by which it could acquire statistics, and it lost no time in providing itself with new means to suit new needs. Contrary to Jeremy Black’s assertion that the eighteenth-century state operated in ‘an information void’, by 1815 the means at its disposal had in fact become quite sophisticated.47 From traditional methods such as militia lists to the novelty of a

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44 Memorandum on defence by Mr. Anstruther, 27 August 1796, British Library, Melville MSS, BL Add MSS 43770 ff. 58-73.
45 Harvey, *Collision of Empires*, p. 27.
national census, by the end of the war the government possessed an impressively broad picture of the country it governed acquired from a wide variety of sources.

The acquisition of information was most obviously helped by the establishment of a government-sponsored spy network. The Home Office, Post Office and Foreign Office all liaised to keep tabs on domestic radicals and suspicious characters, and after 1793 the Alien Office kept track of foreigners resident in, entering and leaving the British Isles. After 1798 foreigners were subjected to an even stricter arrangement of licences and passport controls. The Alien Office was also the hub of a system funded by the Home Office with agents all around the world, described by Elizabeth Sparrow as ‘the prototype from which modern secret service has evolved’. Of course it took time for this to gather momentum, and even members of Pitt’s first government doubted the efficiency of their own intelligence services. George Rose, former under-secretary of the Treasury, complained in 1801 to Pitt that ‘the Miscreants on the other side of the Water know what we are doing just as well as we do … while we are in considerable ignorance of their motions’. Rose was not, however, au fait with Addington’s arrangements, and certainly the government’s secret service record after 1802 was — with the exception of the Emmett insurrection in Dublin in 1803 — extremely successful. Its intelligence network caught Colonel Despard and his conspirators in December 1802 after having tracked them patiently for several months, and kept a close watch on the French naval armaments from 1803 onwards. The development of this secret service was a good example of the way in which the government felt a certain degree of centralisation, however surreptitious, to be necessary in the fight against revolutionary France.

49 Sparrow, Secret Service, p. xi. Even before Sparrow’s eye-opening book was published Roger Wells described the intelligence network that grew up during the 1790s as ‘on a scale hitherto unappreciated’: Wells, Insurrection, pp. 42-3.
50 Rose to Pitt, 9 August 1801, Cambridge University Library, Pitt MSS, Box 15 no 2878.
51 Memorandum on the Despard Conspiracy, National Archives, Home Office MSS, HO 42/66 ff. 33-4; for the scrutiny of the French armaments see, for eg, Hobart to Sidney Smith, 24 September 1803, Buckinghamshire RO, Hobart MSS, D/MH/H(war office)/Bundle C/C288.
More transparent methods of acquiring information for defence purposes included the use of existing militia lists and taxation records. Legislation of 1762 had required each county to submit annual returns to the privy council of all men aged eighteen to forty-five for the fixing of the militia ballot.52 These lists provided the government with a reasonably accurate picture of the nation’s manpower potential. Further up-to-date lists were drawn up under the terms of the Militia Act of 1802, the Training Act of 1806 and the Local Militia Act of 1808.53 Registration and tax returns were also a good way of acquiring information, and the government was not shy of using such means to their fullest extent. In 1794 Pitt admitted that the tax on births and burials ‘had been imposed … more with a view to information than revenue’.54 Similarly, the Triple Assessment in 1797 was proposed in part as ‘a General Inquisition into the state of every man’s dealings and affairs’, a principle followed by the Income Tax a year later.55 The government could put out feelers to find out not only how wealthy its taxpayers were, but also other useful information which might have been considered intrusive if collected through other means.56

Militia and taxation records were certainly useful for gauging national resources, but the data that could be drawn from them was fairly restricted. As a result, the government often preferred to create its own methods of collecting specific information when traditional means fell short. Part of the General Defence Acts of 1798, for example, involved a mini-census of Britain’s available resources, including wagons, carts, horses, and other means of transportation in preparation for moving the nation’s people, goods, and food inland in case of invasion. Bakers were required to give detailed accounts of the amount of bread they could produce to provision the armed forces which would be needed to combat the enemy.57

53 Memoranda on the execution of the Training Act, British Library, Windham MSS, BL Add MSS 37891, ff. 264-5.
54 Speech by Pitt, 5 February 1794, PH XXX, 1359.
55 Anonymous article on finance, Anti-Jacobin, No 5 (11 December 1797), 36-8.
56 The government also had the option of using baptismal records, as advised by Westmorland, but hardly ever did so: December 1807, Castlereagh Correspondence VIII, p. 116.
57 Proposals for rendering the Body of the People instrumental in the General Defence, pp. 15-23.
object of the bill is to have the power of knowing, in the case of emergency, who are ready to appear in arms … and to enable those who are so inclined, to be put into that situation which may be most answerable to giving effect to their inclinations,’ Dundas explained.58 The information collected under the terms of the Act could easily be expanded as necessary: in 1803, for example, the Transport Board recommended that an additional list be kept of vessels offered for government service by merchants and owners of private craft, in case they should be needed.59 The gathering of these statistics was an essential prerequisite if the politicians were to achieve their aim of establishing an armed nation under central control.

By far the most valuable source of information acquired by the government, however, was the national census, which first took place in 1801. This had originally been proposed as a means to monitor the state of grain and other provisions following the scarcity of 1800, but when Charles Abbot presented Pitt with the idea the prime minister quickly spotted ‘its ulterior uses in matters of War and Finance’.60 The census established more reliably than ever before that there were eleven million Britons in 1801, a number which rose to twelve and a half million by the time of the second census in 1811 (with an additional five million in Ireland).61 It was now possible to make tolerably accurate estimates of potential numbers that could be mustered against an invasion, and politicians were not slow in harnessing these facts to back up their defence proposals. Melville told Castlereagh to check against ‘those Tables of Population which contain a Statement of the number of Males of every Age from One to One Hundred Years’ when forming his defence plans of 1808.62

None of the information available to the politicians was, however, quite flawless, and some of it may have been incomplete or falsified. This particularly applied to taxation records, which were obviously most likely to be misleading. Fox pointed out that Pitt’s use of Window Tax records to set quotas for each coastal

58 Speech by Dundas, 27 March 1798, PH XXXIII, 1357.
59 Transport Office to Yorke, 4 August 1803, National Archives, Home Office MSS, HO 42/72 f. 436.
60 Colchester Diary I, 209-10.
61 Hall, British Strategy in the Napoleonic War, p. 1.
parish under the terms of his 1795 Quota Act was an ‘extremely fallible’ way to implement such an important measure. Deliberate non-compliance was also common, and several counties never returned information under the terms of the Defence Acts of 1798 and 1803. In mid 1804 three Scottish counties and two Welsh counties had not yet responded to the government’s queries. This sort of behaviour was not always deliberately obstructive: a Chelmsford meeting in 1796 decided that it was unnecessary to undertake a required inventory of local cattle and livestock because ‘the farmers and other inhabitants on the coast were so zealously disposed to remove’ them in case of an invasion anyway. Without the means to check every single record submitted, the government had to take their accuracy on faith. Despite these setbacks, however, the information at the government’s fingertips by the turn of the nineteenth century was vast. Even if several returns were missing, inaccurate or deliberately falsified, the government faced French invasion from 1800 onwards with a reasonably confident picture of the country’s resources. Its reaction to the invasion threat was thus liberated from the constraints of guesswork. All that now had to be decided was whether the situation was serious enough to unleash Britain’s maximum force.

A change in attitude towards the ‘armed nation’, the volunteers, and the need for a means of controlling the auxiliary forces provided the first hint that the requirements of defence were changing. As argued above, the volunteers in the mid-1790s had largely consisted of a body of independent gentlemen who largely clothed and armed themselves. By 1798, however, the force was becoming more inclusive and more widespread. Partly this was because the threat of republican revolution had become less immediate, but it seems likely that the politicians would have wished to trust the people with weapons in any event. Some argued that it made no sense to try to save Britain from invasion if she was rotting from the inside anyway: ‘If there be

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63 Speech by Fox, reported in the Times, 3 February 1795, 2(c).
64 Colley, Britons, pp. 289-90.
65 Reported in the Times, 29 November 1796, 4(a).
any danger in [arming the people], all plans will be equally futile’. 66 Inflated numbers, however, meant an increased need for central control, particularly if the volunteers were to be brought together swiftly to meet an invasion. As a result, the volunteers of 1803 were very different from their predecessors in 1798 or 1801, let alone 1794. They were much more numerous (450,000 at their peak in 1804), and much more varied in background. More importantly, politicians now took a direct interest in the way they were raised, clothed, paid, and deployed, whereas before many of these decisions had been left in the hands of the localities. Castlereagh noted that the ‘authority of the Crown’ and the ‘interposition of Parliament’ in volunteer affairs was justified and necessitated by statute. 67 A series of confusing and often contradictory political Acts and decrees governing their behaviour was succeeded in March 1804 by the Volunteer Consolidation Act, which definitively laid down the rules for the force. It was evident to many that the only way the volunteer system could meet the new circumstances of the war was by their being subsumed under the authority of the Crown. Unfortunately this made it difficult to distinguish them clearly from more regular bodies such as the militia or, even more ominously, the Army.

This change in the way the volunteers were conceived was clear from the attitude of two of their foremost political supporters. Addington was in power in 1803 when the volunteers were reformed and had significant input into the new arrangements. Pitt, although out of office, had presided over their 1790s incarnation, and latched onto their cause with relish from 1803 onwards. Both men agreed that arming even a broad cross-section of the people was perfectly safe, and that the volunteers ought to be capable of fighting alongside the regular force in case of invasion. 68 Their methods of implementing this vision, however, differed markedly. In part this was because of their different experience: Addington was dealing with a wartime situation for the first time, whereas Pitt had already faced the

67 Notes by Castlereagh on the volunteers, May 1806, PRONI, Castlereagh MSS, D3030/2432.
68 Speech by Addington, 9 December 1803, PD I, 1745.
disillusionment of forcing deeply unpopular measures past uncooperative local bodies. As a result, Addington was more likely to emphasise cooperation, personal zeal, and limited government intervention, whereas Pitt was much more uncompromising. His vision of the volunteers was positive, but hinted at the direction in which government policy would move after Addington’s fall in 1804; that is, away from voluntary service, and closer to compulsion. As Pitt himself explained, although ‘voluntary services were certainly preferable to any which were to be obtained by compulsion in any shape’, a mixture of both was the only way to make the volunteer system permanent.\textsuperscript{69} Even more than Addington’s, Pitt’s vision of the volunteers was of a hybrid body, part regular and part civilian, which would make a much greater sacrifice of its time and independence than had been the case in the 1790s. ‘Under the command of proper officers and with a proper degree of discipline’, the volunteers would form a force he described as ‘great’, ‘respectable’, and ‘useful’.\textsuperscript{70} It was partly because he felt that Addington’s government was not doing enough to legislate for the volunteers that Pitt emerged into open opposition in 1803. Of course he also had other political reasons, but his choice of issue reflected a growing conviction that volunteering by itself was not an adequate way to repel an invasion.

That the volunteers were too widely dispersed, too undisciplined, and too ephemeral to deal with a Napoleonic invasion had become apparent to many other politicians, although Pitt would not have gone so far himself. Many felt that they could not be relied on because they had offered their services out of a momentary enthusiasm, which meant that they could withdraw them at any time.\textsuperscript{71} Dundas, for one, continued to see the system of the 1790s, independently funded and commanded by local gentry, as the ideal, and thought the only real permanent volunteer establishment ought to be limited in numbers and based on property.\textsuperscript{72} As the prospect of a long-term invasion threat became increasingly likely, the political

\textsuperscript{69} Speech by Pitt, reported in the \textit{Times}, 21 July 1803, 2(b).
\textsuperscript{70} Speech by Pitt, 22 July 1803, PH XXXVI, 1659.
\textsuperscript{71} Mulgrave to Pitt, 24 January 1805, Kent RO, Stanhope MSS, U1590/S5/O3/7.
\textsuperscript{72} Melville to Addington, 29 July 1803, Devon RO, Sidmouth MSS, 152M/C1803/OZ/323.
pendulum swung more firmly against the volunteers and in favour of a more permanent professional force. Windham, as secretary of state for war in 1806, placed the thrust of defence policy back on a combination of the regular army and a reinvention of the Levy en Masse. He allowed the volunteers ‘to relax their discipline’ and removed their source of state funding, which effectively returned them to their 1790s position.\(^{73}\) When Castlereagh succeeded Windham he too was reluctant to rely on a force that he described as ‘a fleeting and inapplicable mass’.\(^{74}\) Although he initially pledged ‘to revive the Zeal and discipline of the Volunteers’, this was mainly because the failure of the Training Act meant there was no significant defence body to rely on other than a much-reduced militia.\(^{75}\) His subsequent defence policy showed that his attitude to volunteers was, in reality, little different from Windham’s.

The growing need for an effective, centralised and long-term defence plan united the friends and the opponents of the volunteers. Whatever one felt about over-reliance on them, something needed to be done to strengthen Britain’s ability to withstand an invasion both now and in future. This conviction accelerated the move towards a mixture of voluntary service and compulsion, in stark contrast to the defence policy of the 1790s. Pitt may not have spoken for everybody when he expressed faith in the volunteers, but he echoed a growing concern when he declared that it was

\[\text{impossible to trust continually to the operation of the volunteer spirit} \]

\[\text{... The volunteer system was founded upon the conviction of immediate danger; if that cause should cease, it is not at all extraordinary that the effect should cease also. If that is the case, it becomes the duty of Parliament to do that for the country which spontaneous zeal cannot do.}\(^{76}\)

Instead of focusing on the prospect of an immediate French assault, new legislation had to be able to cope with all eventualities, including the reopening of offensive

\(^{73}\) Speech by Windham, 3 April 1806, \textit{PD} VI, 682.

\(^{74}\) Hinde, \textit{Castlereagh}, p. 130.

\(^{75}\) Notes on volunteers by Castlereagh, May 1806, \textit{PRONI}, Castlereagh MSS, D3030/2471.

\(^{76}\) Speech by Pitt, 29 February 1804, \textit{PD} I, 622-3.
opportunities on the continent. Five measures were passed with this view in mind: the Army of Reserve Act and the Levy en Masse Act in 1803, the Additional Force Act in 1804, the Training Act in 1806, and the Local Militia Act in 1808. In the time it took to pass these Acts, four different ministries had come and gone, each strongly aware of what its predecessor had not achieved and of the difficulty of the task that lay before it.

Planned to provide a force of 50,000 men ‘for the Defence of the United Kingdom, as well as for the Systematick Recruiting of the Regular Infantry’, the Army of Reserve was designed to be more controllable than the volunteers and to be a source of long-term recruitment into the regulars. It was not, therefore, as some thought, simply a way of providing a large disposable army, although Hobart exaggerated when he said the Reserve would be ‘wholly defensive’. To many politicians, the measure was particularly popular because it allowed the soldiers of the Reserve to volunteer into the regulars, a clause that allowed the new force to adapt to a change in international circumstances. Melville called the Reserve ‘the very best expedient ever devised for keeping up the regular army through the medium of a ballot, which it cannot be in any other mode’. Despite a promising start, however, the force never reached its full potential, and had produced only 37,000 effectives by May 1804. It was hampered, too, by the much-criticised decision to exempt volunteers from its ballot. Although a template for future measures that experimented further with the new ideas about the relationship between defensive and offensive bodies, in the first instance the Army of Reserve was considered to have failed.

The Levy en Masse Act, passed around the same time as the Reserve, was more defensive in intention but more vital in asserting the central government’s role in defence. The Act vested the ultimate responsibility for summoning and deploying

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77 See Appendix II for additional details on these Acts.
78 Fortescue, The County Lieutenancies and the Army, pp. 29-31, 72-3; speech by Yorke, 18 July 1803, PH XXXVI, 1627; Glover, Peninsula Preparation, p. 230; speech by Yorke, 20 June 1803, PH XXXVI, 1664; Cookson, The British Armed Nation, pp. 114-5.
79 Speech by Hobart, reported in the Times, 5 July 1803, 2(a).
80 Melville to Castlereagh, 16 July 1807, Castlereagh Correspondence VIII, 78-80.
the maximum military and civilian force of the nation in the monarch, who was enabled to use ‘his ancient and undoubted prerogative, in commanding the assistance of all his subjects fit to bear arms, for the purpose of repelling an invasion of a foreign enemy’. It was bold and novel in several respects, mainly because of its explicit commitment to arm the whole nation, and it served as the basis for nearly all subsequent legislation. Ironically, the Act itself was never put into operation, since it included a clause by which it was automatically suspended if enough volunteers came forward to make it unnecessary. This clause had been intended to frighten volunteers into offering their services, but some were disgusted by such blackmail. Lord Sheffield was scandalised by a measure which, he felt, could only be meant ‘in terrorem & never could have been carried into execution’. In any case, making the Levy so explicitly dependent on volunteering seemed to perpetuate the idea that the emergency would be of short duration, and by 1803 such a belief was out of date. Like the volunteers, the Levy was, as Melville pointed out, ‘more calculated for the pressure of the moment, than as a digested system’. Ultimately, the combination of the volunteer system, the Army of Reserve and the Levy en Masse proved unsatisfactory. Something stronger, more unequivocal, and more long-term, was required.

The measure which was proposed to answer these requirements was the Additional Force Act, which, although ultimately unsuccessful, demonstrated the shift away from volunteering and towards greater control from above. It was the first measure with the word ‘permanent’ as part of the official title, and its parallels with the regulars were even starker than those of the Reserve. One of Pitt’s friends informed him that he liked the plan because it provided ‘a home defence as well officered as any part of the Army’. The Act created a new ‘Additional Force’,

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81 Morton Pitt, Thoughts on the defence of these Kingdoms, Part III, p. 103.
82 Letter from Sheffield, 16 December 1803, East Sussex RO, Sheffield MSS, Box 2 (North Pevensey Legion).
83 Memorandum by Melville, undated [1804], National Archives of Scotland, Hope of Luffness MSS, GD364/1146/2.
84 Ehrman III, 708 n 3.
85 J.C. Villiers to Pitt, 20 February 1805, Cambridge University Library, Pitt MSS, Box 17 no 3443.
whose members were encouraged to volunteer into local battalions affiliated to regular army units.\textsuperscript{86} The sharp focus on regular forces was further demonstrated by the reduction of the British militia to 48,000 men and the integration of the Army of Reserve and Supplementary Militia into the new force. The Additional Force’s aberrant departure from the system of balloting, however, and its reliance instead on a quota of men to be raised on pain of a £20 fine, proved its downfall. As was the case with the Quota Acts in the 1790s, this policy simply meant that the parishes picked the worst men or preferred to pay the fine. The Act’s reputation was not improved by the slowness of its implementation. After his death Pitt’s supporters tried to justify the Act by claiming it had not been in effect long enough to succeed, but this argument simply underlined the dislocation between the need for a permanent measure and one that would meet immediate requirements.

Unfortunately this problem was not addressed by the Training Act, another measure described as ‘permanent’ and designed to operate over a long period of time. It divided the nation’s able-bodied men into three classes and provided for the balloting of two hundred thousand men to be trained by rotation over a three-year period. Though the Act included elements from several of its predecessors — it kept the second battalions created by the Additional Force, and was described by Windham as ‘a new edition’ of the Levy en Masse\textsuperscript{87} — it broke new ground by placing the emphasis on recruitment into the regulars rather than defence. It came as part of a package that aimed to create a new, revitalised regular army by introducing limited service for renewable terms of seven years, a rise in soldiers’ pay, and better pension schemes for veterans and widows. The Act was politically unpopular, however, partly because Windham took the opportunity provided by his restructuring of Britain’s defence system to attack the auxiliary forces. His proposed 200,000 strong ‘armed peasantry’ was intended to replace the volunteers in their role as assistants to the regulars in the event of an invasion. The Act also reduced the size of

\textsuperscript{86} Memorandum on recruitment since 1803, 31 January 1805, Kent RO, Stanhope MSS, U1590/S5/O3/3.

\textsuperscript{87} Windham to Grenville, 1 April 1806, British Library, Grenville MSS, BL Add MSS 58930 ff. 77-8; Windham to the king, 27 March 1806, Correspondence of George III IV, 416-9.
the militia, and Windham’s proposal to do away with the ballot and replace it with a limited bounty more or less turned it into a regular army on home service. It all made for too great a step, and was approached too bluntly. Indeed, the fact that the Training Act was intended to provide long-term rather than immediate results sealed its fate, and without a visible improvement in either recruitment into the regulars or in the size of the defence force the plan was abandoned by Windham’s successors. His failure to produce anything but a new list of men eligible to be balloted after a year suggested that, as with the Additional Force, one imperfect system had simply been replaced by another.

The first initiative to be acclaimed as a true success was Castlereagh’s 1808 Local Militia Act, which continued to move away from a locally-based volunteer and militia system towards a centralised defence network. It was the first measure that managed to meet both temporary and future needs, and was thus probably also the first that fully deserved the epithet ‘permanent’: ironically, it did not use it. Its purpose was simply to make ‘more effectual provision’ than the Training Act for educating the nation in the use of arms. Castlereagh attacked Windham’s ‘armed peasantry’ as ‘a disarmed Rabble, too numerous and too undisciplined to be made use of in the existing Regiments with effect, and wholly incapable in itself of rendering Service’. He proposed instead to provide for a force of 200,000 men balloted to serve for four years, a proportion of whom would be encouraged to recruit to the regulars in return for a bounty. Like Windham, Castlereagh placed the stress on providing a body of men from which the regulars would be able to recruit. The Local Militia could thus trace its ancestry directly from the Army of Reserve and the Training Act. The plan’s main asset was that it could be altered according to any

88 Speech by Windham, 3 April 1806, PD VI, 686.
90 Notes on the Training Act by Castlereagh, April/May 1806, PRONI, Castlereagh MSS, D3030/2428.
91 Bartlett, Castlereagh, p. 58.
92 Notes on the ‘Sedentary Militia’, PRONI, Castlereagh MSS, D3030/1980. As J.E. Cookson notes, the Local Militia was the closest Britain ever came to outright conscription. Cookson, The British Armed Nation, p. 88; Western, The English Militia, pp. 240-1.
future change in circumstances. Indeed, despite some flaws, such as its tendency to
draft into the regulars overlarge numbers of men who could not easily be replaced in
a hurry, the Local Militia adapted well to the new conditions that opened up after the
Peninsular War began in Spain and Britain regained the offensive. It remained in
force until the peace in 1814 and was thus the most long-lived, and successful, of all
the defence measures.

Even more importantly, the Local Militia marked one of the most significant
changes in government defence policy. Until 1808 drafting from the militia into the
regulars had only been resorted to on a temporary basis, and even then was
smothered in floods of apologies. The fact that Castlereagh had openly made it the
basis of his Act signified the culmination of the route from a combination of
volunteers, militia and regulars to a centralised system closely bound to the Army.
Indeed, his vision of the ultimate defence force was of a Local Militia combined with
a body ‘composed in a greater Proportion if not entirely of second Battalions of the
Line’. 93 Historians have fallen into the trap of taking the term ‘local militia’ at its
face value and, given Castlereagh’s reputation as a reactionary, have characterised
his Act as ‘a conservative riposte’ to radical views. 94 Castlereagh himself lent
credence to this belief, since he went to great lengths to justify his measure as a
return to a more familiar structure of British defence. He announced that

he had … avoided every thing that appeared mighty ingenious,
because he knew very well, that on all subjects, and especially on
military subjects, these ingenious and complicated theories, though
they might look extremely well on paper, were found to be sadly
deficient when attempted to be put into practice. 95

One should not, however, take his words at face value, intended as they were as a dig
at the Training Act and meant to reassure those listeners who disagreed with it. Any
measure which codified the use of the militia to feed the regulars was hardly
conservative. In any case the Local Militia Act was not really a militia in the

93 Memorandum by Castlereagh on the army, 12 May 1807, PRONI, Castlereagh MSS, D3030/2481.
94 Cookson, The British Armed Nation, p. 85.
95 Speech by Castlereagh, 22 July 1807, PD IX, 863.
traditional sense. Nor was it designed to replace the militia that already existed. Castlereagh meant the two forces to be distinct, and referred to the new force in his notes as ‘an additional militia’. Like the Army of Reserve, the Additional Force, and the Training Act before it, the Local Militia created a body of men who were explicitly linked to the regulars rather than to the existing militia; like them it also aimed to bring the implementation of defence plans more closely under central control.

These developments were devastating to the old auxiliary forces. Although the volunteers had experienced a spectacular revival during 1803-5, the withdrawal of state funding in 1806 led to a decline hastened by Castlereagh’s reluctance to do anything further for them after 1807. The militia, too, suffered greatly. Unlike the volunteers it continued to exist, but its role changed significantly as a result of the government’s attitude. Once portrayed as the constitutional buttress of the nation and a guarantee against a strong standing army, the tide of political opinion had turned towards the need for a significant armed body under the control of the executive. Militiamen were balloted and trained for up to five years with a reasonable amount of discipline, and it therefore made sense for the politicians to look to the militia to provide large trained drafts of men in emergency situations. By 1803 the original militia principle had already become seriously outdated, and subsequent drafts of men into the regulars further compromised its integrity. The Local Militia Act of 1808 legalised a practice which had long chipped away at the concept of a decentralised militia.

Prior to 1808 the draft had been problematic because the militia’s deep political and symbolic significance meant that any attempts to transform it into a recruiting ground for the Army encountered resistance. ‘The word “Militia” in its operations on Lord-Lieutenants & Country Gentlemen is like the fabulous effect of music on persons stung by the Tarentula [sic]’, wrote Lord Auckland wryly. The

97 Auckland to Dundas, 15 September 1799, Scottish National Library, Melville MSS, MSS 9370 ff. 36-7.
Pitt government was understandably reluctant to force a show-down, particularly as many of the militia colonels were, in Cornwallis’s words, ‘formidable as a political as well as a Military body’.\textsuperscript{98} In 1794, 1796 and 1798 Pitt made sure to meet up with lords lieutenant, magistrates, mayors and officers to discuss legislation that had the potential to affect the constitution of the militia.\textsuperscript{99} As its military needs escalated, however, the government was more inclined to adapt it to the new wartime circumstances willy-nilly. By the time of the passage of the 1798 Defence Act, political fortunes had begun to swing against a decentralised force based in the counties, and relations between the government and the militia colonels began to strain. The dispute over a proposal to form special ‘flank companies’ commanded by regular officers forced a wedge between the government, its military advisors, and the militia colonels, all of whom wanted different things from the force as it stood. Dundas reported to Grenville that several militia officers were strongly against it, and that Pitt was undecided, while the military men were ‘all clamorous on the subject’. He further complained about ‘the disagreeable state in which Government is placed by any measure in Parliament relative to militia’.\textsuperscript{100} A compromise was eventually hammered out, but the need to fight off attacks from the government’s own supporters was not appreciated at a particularly delicate juncture of the war.

If having to stand up to militia colonels was bad enough, then caving in to their demands was worse. The reaction of several officers and county lords lieutenant towards even the smallest of ministerial concessions was to act as though a moral victory had been secured. In the wake of the dispute over the ‘flank corps’, one of the lords lieutenant, Carnarvon, concluded that the government always backed down when faced with a considerable and organised opposition. Dundas had ‘respected the minority who opposed him so much, as to renounce’ a previous project: ‘He will now

\textsuperscript{98} Cornwallis to Dundas, 27 March 1799, National Archives of Scotland, Melville MSS, GD51/1/331/11.
\textsuperscript{99} Times, 5 March 1794, 2(b-c); Times, 12 October 1796, 2(c), 17 October 1796, 2(b); Ehrman III, 125.
\textsuperscript{100} Dundas to Grenville, 17 April 1808, \textit{Dropmore MSS} IV, 169-70.
do the same, if he is met with firmness & unremitted perseverance’. The impression that unpopular measures would be discarded if a reasonable amount of extraparliamentary pressure was organised was exactly what the government wanted to avoid. Carnarvon’s tactics did work with the flank companies, and Dundas agreed to restore them to their original regiments, but ministers were not willing to submit so easily again. After 1798 ministers were increasingly unwilling to sacrifice the broad picture in order to placate local criticism. Small wonder, therefore, that Addington’s government was often less likely to compromise than Pitt’s. In 1803, when the duke of Gloucester reported the city of Liverpool’s belief that government had neglected its defences, the duke of York testily replied that Gloucester should ‘impress upon the mind of the Public that view of things which the exigency of the State may render necessary or which the Opinion of the Government may deem most wise’. Similarly, although Addington’s attempts to establish a reciprocal militia between Britain and Ireland in 1804 drew another impassioned protest from Fitzwilliam, Carnarvon and several other lords, the urgency of the need for manpower had made the government more daring about interfering with the militia.

By the 1800s, in any case, the character of the militia had changed. The government’s attempts to connect it to the regular army — with which it was often bundled in official statistics — was partly due to the impression that it had diverged from the ideals that had led to its creation in 1757. Windham argued that ‘the word

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101 Carnarvon to Fitzwilliam, 11 January 1799, Northampton RO, Fitzwilliam MSS, Box 1799.
102 Letter from Dundas, 22 June 1799, Northampton RO, Fitzwilliam MSS, Box 1799; Carnarvon to Fitzwilliam, 6 August 1799, Northampton RO, Fitzwilliam MSS, Box 1799.
103 York to the duke of Gloucester, 6 October 1803, Devon RO, Sidmouth MSS, 152M/C1803/362.
104 ‘Resolution, unanimously adopted, of a meeting of Lords Lieutenant & Members of Parliament, holding Commissions in the Militia of Great Britain’, 10 April 1804, Northampton RO, Fitzwilliam MSS, Box 1804.
105 Ian Beckett is correct to argue that ‘the wartime experience had undermined both the militia’s independence and its respectability’. The centre could not afford to be periodically stabbed in the back by the militia officers every time it proposed an unpopular measure. Beckett, The Amateur Military Tradition, p. 122.
Militia was now a mere term, which had in it nothing but its original signification'.

Substitution, which allowed the rich to pay their way out of the militia ballot, had ruined the original idea that the militia should be a force of armed gentry. The Militia Act of 1802 had set the seal on this deviation by confirming its legality. Since substitutes were usually the kind of poor, workless men targeted by recruitment into the regulars, and since governments sought to end the competition between the two branches of the armed services, it made sense to see the militia as a nursery for soldiers. By 1803 Pitt, wiser no doubt after his years of painful diplomacy with the county officers in the 1790s, declared that too many men were swallowed up by the militia when a more flexible, less purely defensive force was needed to deal with any emergency at home or abroad. ‘A war that should be completely defensive, would, in his opinion, be both dishonourable and ruinous’; as a result, the most effective defence body would be one which could meet either need. The only way this could be achieved with the militia would be by introducing the draft, which had been illegal since 1767. This, like all attempts to bring the militia closer to the regulars, promised to be an acrimonious affair.

Drafting was the only viable way to make the militia the kind of flexible force the war required, short of abolishing it completely, which no-one in charge of defence policy was prepared to do. Short-term attempts were made to draft bodies of men from the militia to the regulars in response to specific crises in 1798, 1799, 1805, and 1806, but these temporary shifts were unsuited to the growing need for permanence and usually passed with great difficulty in the teeth of heated opposition. Some ministers thought it was simply not worth the effort. Addington complained that the draft was ‘entirely contrary to the liberty of the subject, and the feelings of the nation’. Weak governments were, moreover, unsure about provoking backbench rebellions on the issue. When he proposed to transfer 17,000 men from

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107 Speech by Windham, reported in the Times, 24 March 1803, 2(b).
108 Speech by Pitt, 6 June 1803, PH XXXVI, 1578.
110 Memorandum on the regular force by Castlereagh, March 1803, PRONI, Castlereagh MSS, D3030/1769.
111 Speech by Addington, 23 June 1803, PH XXXVI, 1623-4.
the militia to the regulars in 1805, Pitt passed it off as a militia reduction rather than a draft.\footnote{Speech by Pitt, 21 March 1805, \textit{PD IV}, 84.} Melville, however, felt that a militia draft was the answer to the government’s manpower problems: ‘let it never be forgot when I brought forward the measure of admitting Volunteers from the Supplementary Militia, it produced in the course of three Months, not less than 33,000 excellent Recruits’.\footnote{Memorandum by Melville, undated, [1804], National Archives of Scotland, Hope of Luffness MSS, GD364/1/1146/2.} To be beneficial a draft had to become a regular and expected process, and by the time Melville wrote, in 1804, this had already begun. The Army of Reserve, the Additional Force and the Training Act all paved the way for the Local Militia, which enshrined drafting as part of the government’s policy for securing manpower. By the time of the Local Militia Act, resistance to it had been worn away by the scale of the emergency, and to an extent by custom.

There were still, of course, some who thought drafting was a step too far on the road to direct conscription into the regular forces. As it happened they need not have worried, because the process of centralisation stopped short of it. This may seem surprising since the conscriptive principle was enshrined in the ballots of the militia and Army of Reserve, and the compulsion of the Levy en Masse and the Training Act.\footnote{Full conscription was not implemented in Britain until 1916. Beckett, \textit{The Amateur Military Tradition}, p. 62.} Several European countries including France and Prussia used it, the Royal Navy had long relied on it, and a sort of military impressment had already been resorted to in Britain between 1702 and 1712, over 1745 and 1746, 1756 and 1757, and even as recently as 1778.\footnote{Brewer, \textit{The Sinews of Power}, pp. 49, 61. H.V. Bowen also notes the precedents: Bowen, \textit{War and British Society}, p. 15; Cookson, \textit{The British Armed Nation}, p. 14; Childs, \textit{Armies and Warfare in Europe}, p. 57.} It would have been the ultimate expression of central power, and would have solved all Britain’s manpower problems at a stroke. And yet it was a road which few politicians were prepared to take. A full discussion of the issue, however, properly belongs in the next chapter.\footnote{For more on conscription see below, p. 116.}
Opposition to government policy

The fact that no government in power during the war with France implemented direct conscription is a reminder that none of them was independent of political realities and so did not have an entirely free voice in defence. Although measures became stronger and more far-reaching as the war dragged on, governments had to react to domestic developments as well as to events abroad. Unfortunately, between 1801 and 1812, none was able to establish itself on stable grounds. Addington, Pitt, Grenville, Portland, and Perceval all suffered in this way, and in all cases the perceived weakness of their defence policy became an acceptable stick with which to beat them. By 1806 defence and military reform had become, as Grenville acknowledged, ‘among the very first [measures] which our duty would require from us’, and this imperative remained at least until there was a positive chance of offensive action in the Peninsula. Ministers were constantly torn between demands for strong-arm measures and criticism whenever they proposed any. Advice, solicited and unsolicited, flooded in from all quarters. The official correspondence of ministers more directly responsible for defence issues overflowed with memoranda drawn up by concerned soldiers, experts, politicians, militia colonels, and local notables. In parliament, politicians from all sides pushed for a more comprehensive defensive system and advanced their own ideas on how it should be managed.

The most obvious challenge came from the parliamentary opposition, but it was unable to press its advantage despite government weakness. This did not of course mean that it was completely impotent, and Christopher Hall surely exaggerates when he argues that the Whigs were ‘never able to project themselves as a credible alternative to those in power’. Obviously, this had been the case before

117 Even before 1801 the Pitt government, generally strong in parliamentary numbers, had run into some worrying opposition. Between May and June 1797, for example, a ‘third party’ in parliament under Lord Moira had been created as an alternative to Pitt’s leadership. Smith, Lord Grey, pp. 69-70; Ehrman III, pp. 43-5.
118 Grenville to Windham, 7 March 1806, BL Add MSS 37847 ff. 27-30.
119 Hall, British Strategy in the Napoleonic War, p. 59.
Pitt’s resignation in 1801, since the Pitt-Portland coalition in 1794 had left Fox at the head of a ‘lobby group’ of only forty or fifty supporters, very loosely directed.\textsuperscript{120} Quite apart from their numerical weakness in the division lobbies, which eventually led to their decision to secede from parliament, the Foxites could not agree on just how great the danger was. Fox himself was openly scornful: ‘All this story about an invasion is a mere pretence to gain the consent of the people to’ the government’s measures, and to mask the deplorable internal state of the country.\textsuperscript{121} Sheridan, on the other hand, often supported the government on matters of national urgency, such as the naval mutinies of 1797 and the Defence Act in 1798.\textsuperscript{122} All in all, the parliamentary opposition seemed incoherent and irrelevant.

Between 1802 and 1806, by contrast, the opposition played a vital role in challenging the official line on defence and other matters. Following Pitt’s resignation, Grenville, Windham, Spencer, and others split off from their former leader and emerged into open opposition to Addington on the issue of the peace of Amiens. The resumption of war in 1803, and evidence of Napoleon’s palpable intentions to invade, enabled both the ‘New’ and ‘Old’ oppositions to put past disagreements behind them and start afresh. Fox and Grenville formed a ‘cooperation’ in January 1804. This not only meant stronger numbers in the lobbies, but also an accession of expertise on defence policy, particularly in the person of Windham. As a result, the newly-coalesced opposition was able to propose a coherent defence platform that heavily undermined the Addington and second Pitt ministries. All of a sudden the government could no longer claim exclusive control over national defence. The opposition had officially staked its claim to govern through the presentation of an alternative agenda.

\textsuperscript{120} L.G. Mitchell’s term: Mitchell, Fox, p. 136. Also see above, p. 35.
\textsuperscript{121} Speech by Fox, 18 October 1796, PH XXXII, pp. 1219, 1222-3; Fox to Grey, 17 June 1803, British Library, Fox MSS, BL Add MSS 47565 f. 140. The Morning Chronicle echoed Fox’s claims that the invasion scare had been fomented for political purposes: to prevent opposition enquiry, 17 February 1794, 2(a), and to mask opposition to the Triple Assessment, 12 January 1798, 2(b).
\textsuperscript{122} Quotation from speech by Sheridan, 11 November 1800, PH XXXV, 539. Moore, Life of Sheridan II, 200; Colchester Diary I, 150; Correspondence of George III III, 49; speeches by Sheridan, 2 June 1797, 22 April 1798, PH XXXIII, 801, 1426-7.
Moreover, several opposition MPs went to great lengths to associate themselves with the issue of defence, with Windham the most obvious example. Building on his past experience as Pitt’s secretary at war, he consciously set himself up as an expert from the opposition benches. He was prominently involved in organising resistance to invasion in his parts of Norfolk, spoke frequently in parliament, and authorised an edition of his speeches on defence to drive home the point.\textsuperscript{123} When he took office under the Talents in February 1806, the \textit{Anti-Jacobin Review} declared that his appointment to the War Office was ‘perfectly appropriate; his mind has been directed of late years, in a particular manner, to military affairs’.\textsuperscript{124} Windham’s success in associating himself with defence led to him being allowed to set the opposition’s agenda. Between 1803 and 1805 he detailed a number of ‘spear-head’ proposals (such as limited service for regulars and the training of the population to arms) that represented the germ of the Training Act in his mind.\textsuperscript{125} Fox, for one, much approved of the three main components of Windham’s plans: the dislike of the volunteers, the preference for a rising \textit{en masse}, and the wish to diminish the militia in size. These accordingly became the hallmarks of the opposition’s defence agenda from 1803 onwards.\textsuperscript{126}

Another of the most significant planks of their platform was the call for the establishment of a council of Britain’s foremost military minds to oversee war policy. This proposal had originally been mooted in March 1795 by Lord Suffolk, and had been the subject of an independent motion by Colonel Wood in 1797.\textsuperscript{127} Although Fox and Sheridan had spoken in support, the opposition did not adopt it as

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\item[\textsuperscript{123}] The Substance of the Principal Speeches of the Rt. Hon. W. Windham delivered in the House of Commons in the late and present Sessions of Parliament, on measures connected with the Defence of this Country ... (Norwich, 1804).
\item[\textsuperscript{124}] Anti-Jacobin Review XXXIII, II (February 1806), 222.
\item[\textsuperscript{125}] Speech by Windham, 20 June 1803, \textit{PH} XXXVI, 1606-1620; speech by Windham, 9 December 1803, \textit{PD} I, 1700-2; Windham to Grenville, 27 February 1805, British Library, Grenville MSS, BL Add MSS 58929 ff. 164-7.
\item[\textsuperscript{126}] Fox to Grey, 29 January 1804, British Library, Fox MSS, BL Add MSS 47565 ff. 110-1; speech by Fox, 29 February 1804, \textit{PD} I, 617-8.
\item[\textsuperscript{127}] Speech by Suffolk, 30 March 1795, \textit{PH} XXXI, 1440-1; debate on Colonel Wood’s motion for appointing a board of naval and military officers to inquire into the defensive state of the country, 28 March 1797, \textit{PH} XXXIII, 195-205.
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official policy until 1803, when its front-benchers backed a series of motions by Colonel Craufurd in July, August and December. Craufurd proposed a council presided over by the commander in chief and comprising the master and lieutenant general of the ordnance, as well as

officers of great experience and acknowledged abilities, who would devote the whole of their time to the mature investigation of every means, that might be proposed by others, or should occur to themselves, for increasing our military strength, digesting and combining the whole into one great and comprehensive system.  

There were after all many precedents for the creation of such a body, starting with the fact that Queen Elizabeth had ordered one formed ‘of the most intelligent and experienced military and naval officers’ at the time of the Armada. A military council was not, however, as innocuous as it first sounded, and the government was not duped. Craufurd’s proposals effectively accused the government of being unfit to transact military and defence policy. It was also a slap in the face of the duke of York, then commander in chief, and the other professional soldiers with whom the government corresponded. As the Times indignantly pointed out, such a council ‘would have taken the military regulations out of the hands of the Executive Government’. This versatility of purpose, however, was what made the military council so valuable for the opposition. On the one hand, it allowed a dig at government policy. On the other, it was a statement that the opposition had a serious contribution to make to defence.

As an opposition argument the idea of a military council was all very well, but it proved nearly impossible to enact in office. Because of the implied attack on the duke of York, Fox, Grenville and Windham could not hope to propose it as a serious part of their policy when in government, unless they were strong enough to overcome the king’s wrath, which was certain to be roused by any attack on the integrity of his son. That the Talents had originally intended to implement their

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128 Speech by Craufurd, 12 December 1803, PD I, 1781-3.
129 Reflexions on the Invasion of Great Britain, pp. 5-6.
130 Speech by Yorke, 22 July 1803, PH XXXVI, 1657.
131 Times, 25 April 1804, 3(b).
council policy was evident from the way Windham insisted on ‘a military council for the conduct of military operations & arrangements for defence’, even before taking office.\textsuperscript{132} Once installed, however, the ministry did not have the strength to dismiss royal opposition. Rumours flew among the Pittites that the king had initially refused to deal with Fox and Grenville because of their previous insistence on this very issue.\textsuperscript{133} Whether this was the case or not, the Talents never did insist on the point in office.

As the Training Act showed, however, forcing through the most unpopular aspects of a platform first formed in opposition could have disastrous consequences for a government. Its passage and delayed implementation, along with the more general failure of the ministry’s military policy abroad, fatally damaged the Talents’ reputation. Over-focused as they were on defence, their overseas ventures in the Mediterranean, Turkey and South America appeared little more than random, opportunistic expedients.\textsuperscript{134} This strategy reflected the fact that continental involvement was out of the question following Prussia’s defeat at Jena in October 1806, but its lack of success even given such narrow objectives was damning, and gave Grenville’s followers a bad name in military matters that followed them back to the opposition benches.\textsuperscript{135} Although they secured an extremely strong position in the general election of 1807, they were never able to reconstruct the commanding position they had occupied in opposition from 1803 to 1806, despite — or perhaps, in the wake of the Training Act, because of — the presence of Windham in their ranks.

These major setbacks, and the decline in the opposition’s effectiveness after 1807 must not, however, obscure its prominent role in the defence debate between

\textsuperscript{132} Windham to Grenville, 1 February 1806, Windham to Grenville, 27 February 1805, British Library, Grenville MSS, BL Add MSS 58930 ff. 9-10.
\textsuperscript{133} The bishop of Lincoln to his wife, 27 January 1806, Suffolk RO, Pretyman MSS, HA119/T99/26.
\textsuperscript{134} This may have been partly because, as C.D. Hall argues, the Talents could not agree on a viable continental strategy: Hall, \textit{British Strategy in the Napoleonic War}, p. 147. However, this argument would not apply to the period after the fall of the Third Coalition, when even Grenville acknowledged the futility of continental coalition campaigns.
\textsuperscript{135} Roberts, \textit{The Whig Party}, p. 3.
1803 and 1806. Defence was not only topical: it was also the only question on which ministers could not afford to dismiss opposing arguments. The Talents’ subsequent experience in office only reinforced the fact they had themselves discovered, that attacking government defence measures was of benefit to an opposition that might otherwise have been divided and purposeless. With their own defence agenda worked out, oppositionists could not easily be dismissed as meddlers with dubious motives. On the contrary, the onus was now on the government to propose a better plan. Handled well, the question of national defence hit vulnerable ministries where it hurt.

Even more worrying for the government than the attacks of the parliamentary opposition was the need to cultivate the support of the military and naval professionals. The advice of these men, usually current or former officers, was highly prized and was also needed in order to give the defence policy formulated by civilian politicians credibility. A.D. Harvey argues that the ministries between 1793 and 1815 hardly ever sought such guidance, but this is certainly an exaggeration founded on his belief that the cabinet ought to have approached military men officially as a body.\(^\text{136}\) What Harvey seems to forget is that cabinet meetings were not the only way to make official decisions, since there were a number of alternative routes for the government to consult military expertise. The most obvious was for individual ministers with defence responsibilities to correspond with the commanders of Britain’s various military districts. These not only had specialist local information but could also give broader tactical advice as well. Other more personal contacts were equally valuable. Dundas received much feedback from friends and family such as General David Dundas and Sir Alexander Hope, and Windham had connections with Colonel Craufurd, General Money and a variety of other military men. Many members of the cabinet — not just those with military duties — had also served in the armed forces. Lord Chatham (master general of the ordnance over three ministries), Lord Mulgrave (foreign secretary in Pitt’s second ministry), and Lord

\(^{136}\) Harvey, Collision of Empires, pp. 114-6.
Hobart were only a few of the ministers who had seen active service. Nor were politicians shy about calling on professional advice to buttress their arguments in parliament. When Pitt proposed his motion to indict Lord St Vincent’s naval administration in March 1804, he tried to get Captain Sir Home Popham specially elected for the occasion. Addington, on the other hand, could count on the arguments of Sir Edmund Pellew to repel Pitt’s attacks in the house of commons.\textsuperscript{137}

The support of these men was the more particularly to be sought because their opposition, backed up as it was by a wealth of experience, could be damning. The problem was that, although ready to give advice if approached, many professionals had little confidence in the politicians’ military sagacity. Cornwallis criticised the various theories bandied about in parliament over the summer of 1803: ‘Pitt wants to make the volunteers more of soldiers than their constitution can possibly admit; and Fox on the contrary, so little of soldiers as to be entirely useless’.\textsuperscript{138} Professional men did not, as a rule, share the same agenda as the politicians, and they often failed to appreciate the politics that underlay some decisions, especially on matters which touched on the militia and the volunteers.

Understandably, the military men had a much better opinion of the regulars than the militia or the volunteers, whom they felt to be unreliable. The government, therefore, had to implement the advice they were given in a way that would meet both military and political needs without angering its supporters or the advisors themselves. It was a delicate balance to strike, and inevitably, if a military man went into obvious political opposition, the government would have a very knowledgeable and dangerous opponent to contend with. Sometimes such opposition was traceable to party, as was the case with the duke of Richmond, an ex-soldier who had once been Pitt’s colleague but had since fallen out with him politically, and was now highly critical of his defence measures.\textsuperscript{139} The same was true of Windham’s foremost

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[137]{Rose to the bishop of Lincoln, Suffolk RO, Pretyman MSS, HA119/T108/45/2; Breihan, ‘The Addington Party and the Navy’, 173.}
\footnotetext[138]{Cornwallis to General Ross, 18 December 1803, Cornwallis Correspondence III, 509.}
\footnotetext[139]{Richmond to Sheffield, 24 January 1806, East Sussex RO, Sheffield MSS, Box 2 (North Pevensey Legion). Richmond also wrote an anonymous pamphlet on defence, Thoughts on the National}
\end{footnotes}
military contact, Robert Craufurd, who opposed the Addington and Pitt ministries on
the subject of the Army of Reserve, the Volunteer Consolidation Act, and Ireland.140
Other more independent attacks could not, however, be tarnished with a party label.
The thorn in Windham’s side on military matters was General Banastre Tarleton, a
former Foxite, whose blistering attack on the Talents’ military measures was
buttressed by a career which dated back to the American war in the 1770s.141 This
independence, along with his military standing, gave Tarleton’s arguments a cachet
the civilian politicians lacked.

Conflict between ministers and their military advisers on the matter of the
volunteers and militia, as well as other topics, echoed the broader problem that, as
the government’s defence plans became more and more stringent, it moved further
and further out of touch with the opinions of the men who normally supported it in
parliament. The attempts by government to centralise the defence process often
encountered obstacles created by well-meaning individuals who, acting from a local
or independent perspective, tried to push official policy down an opposite path. Most
notably, the government disagreed with many of its correspondents on the role of
individuals in the creation, as well as the implementation, of defence measures. As
far as the government was concerned, policy formation was one thing that ought to
be under complete central control: ‘all questions … of this nature were supposed to
originate with His Majesty’s Ministers’.142 Grenville, whose opposition behaviour
was tainted by his nearly twenty-year long experience in government, emphasised
that in matters of national urgency right ideas ‘should be executed, & to talk of their
being unpopular would be disgraceful & unmanly’.143 As far as everyone else was
concerned, however, the message given out by the policy of arming the nation was

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140 He also proposed a new plan for army recruiting which got the general support of both Pitt and
Fox, 29 February 1804, PD I, 581-2. For Craufurd on other issues, see 22 July 1803, PH XXXVI,
1647-56; December 5, 1803, and 22 March 1804, PD I, 1623-4, 964-6; May 28 1805, PD V, 132.
141 10 March 1806, 17 March 1806, PD VI, 367, 456; 21 May 1806, 11 July 1806, PD VII, 310, 1110.
142 Speech by Hawkesbury, 7 February 1804, PD I, 1029-30.
more mixed. ‘This war is the war of the public’, an anonymous pamphleteer declared in 1804 in an open letter addressed to Windham.\footnote{Facts Better than Arguments, p. 2.} Several of the public agreed: ‘A British subject is warranted by the Constitution to give his Sentiments upon publick affairs. In certain exigencies he is in some degree bound to do so … and in proportion as his Country appears to be in danger that duty becomes imperative.’\footnote{Robert Crowe to Addington, 28 July 1803, Devon RO, Sidmouth MSS, 152M/C1803/OZ/299.} The expectation that all men would come forward to defend their king and country seemed to give the public a licence to deliver their unsolicited opinions on national defence.

In principle this did not have much of an impact on government policy, and most of the letters from all directions that caused the ministers’ private letter boxes to overflow were probably little more than an annoyance. Occasionally, however, genuinely disturbing opinions were expressed on the relationship between government and people, including some by men whose political ideas were comfortably conventional, such as the Dorset gentleman William Morton Pitt. His detailed plans for national defence, published in the 1790s and revised, on Addington’s request, in an unpublished form in 1803, were not on the face of things very controversial, and have even been mistaken for the work of his distant cousin, prime minister William Pitt.\footnote{By Cookson, The British Armed Nation, p. 36, who refers to it as the only memorandum by Pitt on armed mobilisation. Morton Pitt, Thoughts on the Defence of these Kingdoms, Parts 1 and 2; ‘Further Considerations on the Plan for a general Enrolment and Array of the People’, 1803, Devon RO, Sidmouth MSS, 152M/C1803/OM15. There is another version of the same document in the Pelham MSS, BL Add MSS 33120 ff. 135-7. Both are clearly endorsed ‘W.M. Pitt’.} What made Morton Pitt’s plan particularly uncomfortable reading for the government was his insistence on the need to keep the nation informed of developments affecting defence policy. His reasoning was that official plans were ‘more likely to be acceptable, & eagerly embraced by the people, provided it be previously and judiciously explained to them’.\footnote{Morton Pitt, ‘Further Considerations on the Plan for a general Enrolment and Array of the People’, Devon RO, Sidmouth MSS, 152M/C1803/OM15.} This had more than a flavour of censure about it, since by this interpretation a government that did not keep the people abreast of events did not deserve their confidence. This was clearly
an attack on government secrecy and an assertion of the rights of the individual as being more important than the safety of the community as a whole.

Morton Pitt proceeded to touch on another delicate issue which, already contentious before the French Revolution, had become even more so afterwards: the right to bear arms. ‘It should ever be remembered that, by our constitution, by Magna Charta, &c, the right of possessing arms is inherent to every British Subject’, he wrote. The reason this issue was controversial was that it directly related to definitions of political representation. As H. T. Dickinson points out, it had an established whig pedigree, but was primarily limited to the landed interests, who had a direct stake in the survival of the polity. It had always been subject to both practical and legal interpretations, with the emphasis usually on ‘bearing’ rather than ‘owning’. The idea of the armed nation revealed the dichotomy between the rights of the propertied and of the unpropertied. All men were now entitled, and encouraged, to bear arms, a practice that flew directly in the face of the old conventions. Talk of ‘rights’ was in any case politically unfashionable following the French revolution. It was only one step away from the ‘right to bear arms’ to the ‘right of resistance’, another part of old whig ideology that had mostly lapsed by the end of the century. One or two correspondents did take that step, and although the ‘resistance’ in question was not against a corrupt government but against a French invasion, some came a little too close for comfort: ‘one of the first principles of a free Government’ was to establish ‘a power of resistance in the people to every attempt against it either foreign or domestic’. Understandably, such language was not likely to play a significant role in government justifications of its own policy.

149 Dickinson, Liberty and Property, p. 106.
150 For a discussion on the limitations of the right to bear arms, in this case in post-colonial America, see Cress, ‘An Armed Community: The Origins and Meaning of the Right to Bear Arms’, 23, 34.
151 For the right of resistance, see Hole, Pulpits, Politics and Public Order, pp. 19-21, 50-53, 110-1; Clark, English Society, pp. 259, 282; Morris, The British Monarchy and the French Revolution, pp. 68-9; Dickinson, Liberty and Property, pp. 57-8, 78, 130-1.
152 My italics: memorandum by Mr. Anstruther, 27 August 1796, British Library, Melville MSS, BL Add MSS 43770 ff. 58-73. The Anti-Jacobin Review discussed a pamphlet which came dangerously
More conservative arguments were just as likely as radical ones to conflict with official views. Medieval feudalism was one of the most common models for national defence harnessed by government correspondents who wished to stress the connections between the landlords and their tenants.\textsuperscript{153} Many politicians were indeed sympathetic to such a view, which, after all, seemed to accord so closely with the government’s own emphasis on the importance of the social hierarchy. ‘I have long been partial to the revival as far as Circumstances would permit of something like the feudal Principle in this Country for the support of the Monarchy’, wrote Sir George Shee.\textsuperscript{154} An eighteenth-century adaptation of feudalism was not, however, in step with the government’s defence plans. The government expressed its disapproval of this contemporary revival of the feudal principle when it turned down the offer of the duke of Northumberland to arm a thousand of his tenants.\textsuperscript{155} It was after all hardly an ideal solution for a government seeking top-down control, since it had the potential to break the nation’s defence forces down to its smallest components by relying on disparate groups raised and armed by individuals. Because of its emphasis on the ancient obligations between the lords and the king, feudal principles were no longer thought by many in government to provide the right sort of framework for binding Britons together.

However, such lukewarm official responses did not stop plans being formed on the basis of a resurrection of feudalism, and one was even implemented in the form of the North Pevensey Legion. In its practical form, the Legion was a volunteer unit commanded by Lord Sheffield, with the assistance of former soldier and Indian nabob Sir John Macpherson. In its theoretical form, it was described by Macpherson close to using the language of resistance, although still in the context of invasion: this was Dr. Barrow’s sermon on ‘The Right of Resisting Invasion’. \textit{Anti-Jacobin Review} XVII, III (March 1804), 274-6. Another pamphlet did hint at using the right of resistance against arbitrary government in the context of resistance against the Additional Force Act in 1804, since ‘to punish men for not doing what is impossible, has always been reckoned one of the peculiar privileges of arbitrary power’: \textit{Observations on the Character and Present State of the Military Force of Great Britain}, p. 104.\textsuperscript{153} Childs, \textit{Armies and Warfare in Europe}, p. 4.\textsuperscript{154} Memorandum on defence by Sir George Shee, 16 March 1803, British Library, Pelham MSS, BL Add MSS 33120 ff. 104-9.\textsuperscript{155} Eldon to Hobart, 1803, Buckinghamshire RO, Hobart MSS, D/MH/H(war office)/Bundle B/I 121.
as a ‘Return to the feudal System of Defence against the Invasions of Renewed Barbarism’, and as ‘the Heureka [sic] for the preservation of order government & Property’. His plan, which he detailed to everyone who would listen at home and abroad, involved stalling the French across Europe with units modelled on the North Pevensey prototype, buttressed by the strength derived from local ties and aristocratic leadership. In England, however, the proposal failed to find widespread support, causing Macpherson to complain that it was ‘better understood at Vienna Dresden Berlin & Madrid than at London’.

No doubt this was because the Legion did not at all fit into the government’s schemes. It eschewed ‘aid from Government except for Arms’ and was limited to defending its local territory, both of which clauses had been made illegal by Addington’s volunteer legislation. Had the Legion been accepted as a prototype, its stipulation of property as a qualification for defence would have placed a practical limitation on the range of options at the government’s disposal in providing the strongest and most comprehensive defence force possible in the event of an invasion. Taken to its logical extreme, the Legion’s feudal basis meant that proposals to arm the entire nation by rotation, or even by ballot, were out of the question. These were expedients the government was unwilling to forego, as proved by the terms of the Army of Reserve, the Additional Force Act, the Training Act, and the Local Militia Act. Eventually, and somewhat ironically, the Legion fell victim to the march of political events. It was finally killed by the withdrawal of government funding under the terms of Windham’s Training Act. Too expensive to maintain, it disbanded in September 1806.

156 Macpherson to Hobart, 24 December 1803, Buckinghamshire RO, Hobart MSS, D/MH/H(war office)/Bundle G/I244; Macpherson to Sheffield, 1804, East Sussex RO, Sheffield MSS, Box 2 (North Pevensey Legion).
157 Macpherson to Sheffield, 1804, East Sussex RO, Sheffield MSS, Box 2 (North Pevensey Legion); Macpherson to Pitt, 7 May 1804, Cambridge University Library, Pitt MSS, Box 16 no 3037.
158 Charles Abbot to Sheffield, 16 August 1803, East Sussex RO, Sheffield MSS, Box B (North Pevensey Legion).
159 Letter from Sheffield, 22 September 1806, East Sussex RO, Sheffield MSS, Box 2 (North Pevensey Legion).
The government’s victory over this and other attacks on its defence policy from independent political commentators was, however, tempered by its growing weakness. The ‘balkanisation of the old Pittite alliance’ that followed Pitt’s resignation had created a confusing situation in which Pitt and Addington opposed each other, while Grenville and Fox joined forces.160 These occurrences seemed unnatural to contemporaries, who were deeply alarmed by them. An anonymous paper written in early January 1806 pointed out that Napoleon had achieved so much on the continent in part because of ‘the Disunion of Parties’ in the states he had invaded.161 For the Addington, Pitt, Grenville, Portland, and Perceval governments, political instability had more immediate implications. Several government defence measures, particularly the Additional Force and Training Acts, were damaged by wrangling that had more to do with political circumstances than with the immediate danger. Britain’s international reputation, too, seemed likely to suffer from successive governments’ loss of credibility at a time when politicians desperately sought a new continental alliance. One reason why defence measures became stronger and more uncompromising was simply that ministers were stung by repeated accusations that they were not doing enough to protect the nation.

The Times’ insistence that the nation and the politicians should put ‘confidence’ in the government without asking too many questions, since certain information simply had to remain secret in wartime, was no different from the kind of argument Pitt might have used in the 1790s. However, it no longer fitted the political conditions.162 Opponents agreed that the state had a right to be supported in a crisis, but they argued that the low standing of ministers made this harder to achieve. ‘Men will doubt the success even of well digested and efficient measures in unskilful hands; they will be backward in offering suggestions, if they find their

162 Times, 22 March 1803, 2(d). Pitt himself rather unfairly attacked Addington’s call for confidence as ‘a dangerous and alarming confidence; a confidence which benumbs our senses, and lulls us to sleep, while the enemy is at our gates’. Speech by Pitt, 15 March 1804, PD I, 923-4.
plans marred or confused in the execution’.\(^{163}\) A Foxite pamphlet drove in the point: ‘Allegiance and protection are reciprocal terms’.\(^{164}\) Without the large parliamentary majorities of the 1790s, the ministers found it difficult to maintain the principle that the people had a duty to support them willy-nilly. Instead of relying on confidence, their reaction was to make national defence even more of a priority than it had previously been. All four governments between 1803 and 1807 put it at the top of their list of concerns. As soon as war broke out in 1803, Lord Hobart told the king that

> The necessity of immediately providing for the defence of Your Majesty's United Kingdom by an augmentation of Your Majesty's army is so universally felt and acknowledg'd that any delay in bringing forward a measure for that purpose might be productive of the most serious consequences.\(^ {165} \)

Such concern did not merely reflect the immediacy of the invasion threat, and particularly not after 1805 when Napoleon withdrew his Armée d'Angleterre from the coast. From the government’s perspective, the most pressing problem of all was to prove itself worthy of support. Addington fell after a parliamentary censure of his defence policy in 1804, and, had he not died, Pitt would probably also have fallen in 1806. By that time, indeed, it had become clear that a government’s first duty was to establish security. ‘That is the best ministry which will best succeed in putting the country in a good state of defence’, Windham wrote.\(^ {166} \)

And yet the very weakness that made defence measures a priority also meant that they were very difficult to pass. Without a sizeable majority, governments were trapped in an endless cycle of debilitating debates that lent credence to accusations of incompetence and gave their measures an unpleasantly political sheen. The ‘catch-

\(^{163}\) [Courtenay], A Plain Answer to the Misrepresentations and Calumnies contained in the Cursory Remarks, p. 80.
\(^{165}\) Hobart to the king, 17 June 1803, Correspondence of George III IV, 107-8.
\(^{166}\) Windham to Thomas Amyot, 23 January 1806, Windham Papers II, 283-4; Grenville to Windham, 7 March 1806, British Library, Windham MSS, BL Add MSS 37847 ff. 27-30; Windham’s Diary, p. 459.
22’ nature of the situation was summarised by Camden, secretary of state for war in Pitt’s second ministry:

> What probability is there of being able to do more than scramble thro’ the Business of the Country & yet unless some strong Measures are taken, on military subjects we are not doing our duty but I scarcely think they will be carried in the H. of Commons.\textsuperscript{167}

The fate of the Additional Force Act was a case in point. Unfortunately for Pitt, its introduction offered the newly united Fox-Grenville opposition, along with Addington’s separate force, a chance to try their strength against his new government. ‘It was the first trial of strength of the contending parties,’ one observer noted. The result, a majority of only about forty for the government, was not unexpected, ‘but has occasioned and too naturally much uncomfortable speculation’\textsuperscript{168}. Addington reported to Yorke that ‘every Exertion, I am told, was made’ to procure a majority, but with very little to show for it.\textsuperscript{169}

Having passed with difficulty, the Act’s bad reputation, and the political circumstances under which it was approved, impeded its implementation. Only about half the number of men Pitt had expected to materialise in the first three months of operation had been raised after a year and a half. Several testy government circulars blamed ‘the Supineness and Inactivity of the Parish Officers’, and there was a suggestion that this ‘inactivity’ was deliberate.\textsuperscript{170} There may have been some grounds for such an insinuation. Addington was told by one of his correspondents that ‘there is not here (any more than everywhere else, I believe) an Idea of raising a single Man’, which suggested boycotting as much as inability to comply.\textsuperscript{171}

\textsuperscript{167} Camden to Pitt, 15 October 1804, Kent RO, Camden MSS, U840/C30/9.
\textsuperscript{168} Farington Diaries II, 249; Glenbervie Diaries I, 378.
\textsuperscript{169} Addington to Yorke, 13 June 1804, Devon RO, Sidmouth MSS, 152M/C1804/OZ/9. On 15 June 1804 the Pitt government was actually in a minority in a minor division on the Additional Force Act. Arthur Marsden to Redesdale, 18 June 1804, Gloucester RO, Redesdale MSS, D2002/3/1/22; Evan Nepean to Hardwicke, 17 June 1804, Correspondence of George III IV, 194 n 1; Colchester Diary I, 519.
\textsuperscript{170} Government circular, 31 December 1805, East Sussex RO, Sheffield MSS, Box 2 (North Pevensey Legion).
\textsuperscript{171} Thomas Le Mesurier to Addington, 7 November 1804, Devon RO, Sidmouth MSS, 152M/C1804/OZ/140.
Act’s failure was also ascribed to the scale of opposition it had encountered. Castlereagh stated categorically that it had been unsuccessful because of ‘the Circumstances of Contest under which it pass’d and the Efforts made for its Repeal’.172 Whether the Act failed primarily because it was a bad measure, or because of the controversy surrounding its passage, was unclear to contemporaries.173 What was obvious was that national defence had become ‘a subject on which Pitt is particularly vulnerable’, particularly since he had helped overthrow Addington on that very issue.174

Similar problems attended the passage and enactment of the Training Act two years later. In this case, Windham’s bad reputation obstructed his own Act’s success.175 Although the political tide had been turning against the volunteers for some time, his tactless comments on their usefulness had, as Perceval gleefully reported, made him ‘extremely obnoxious’.176 His own colleagues recognised that he was something of a liability. Grenville’s brother, the marquess of Buckingham, suggested that ‘we should prevail upon Windham to assist Government by going into opposition’.177 To the new Pittite opposition, still trying to reconcile themselves to the fact that their former colleague Grenville now headed a Foxite ministry, Windham’s open hostility to the Additional Force Act — ‘Mr. Pitt’s favourite measure’ — made his Training Act fair game.178 They used the occasion to pull

172 Notes by Castlereagh on recruiting, April 1806, PRONI, Castlereagh MSS, D3030/2393.
173 A more serious issue of political authority arose when the Act was repealed in May 1806. The outstanding fines owed by the parishes that had not returned their quota of men stood at £1.8 millions and were written off by Windham. As Castlereagh noted, this move could be interpreted as a blow against ‘the general authority of Parliament’.173 The Anti-Jacobin Review went further still: the author of an article on the Talents’ military policy felt that the commutation of the fines held ‘out a temptation in future to disobey the acts of the legislature, when it may be found inconvenient to obey them’.173
174 Lord Holland to Fox, 30 December 1805, British Library, Holland MSS, BL Add MSS 47575 ff. 209-10.
175 He had always been prickly: an observer had described him in 1795 as ‘subtle, unguarded, fretful, and totally unapt for the transaction of public business in a public assembly’. Colchester Diary I, 22.
178 Jupp, Lord Grenville, p. 369; Canning to Bootle Wilbraham, 8 April 1806, Bagot, George Canning and his Friends I, 230-1; Canning to Lord Lowther, 8 April 1806, Lonsdale MSS pp. 181-2; Gray, Spencer Perceval, p. 62; Harvey, Britain in the Early Nineteenth Century, p. 180.
together as a body for the first time since their leader’s death. In this they were considerably helped by the fact that the Act turned out to be difficult to implement and also expensive, costing at least £240,000 a year. Embarrassingly, Windham was reduced to defending his Act on the same lines that Pitt had previously used to defend his Additional Force: that it needed time in which to work, and that it had been stunted by an opposition which had destroyed ‘all confidence in what was left [of the Act], and all reliance on what was to happen in future’. Again, whether the Act would have been more successful had the political circumstances which surrounded it been otherwise was anybody’s guess. The immediate result, however, was to add to the impression of the Talents’ incompetence as defenders of the nation.

Such a bad reputation also had an impact on Britain’s international relations, since most governments sought at one time or another to reopen the continent by creating a coalition against Napoleon. Their country’s reputation abroad was already not particularly good. Apart from the obvious problems most European powers had with negotiating with a non-autocratic, parliamentary state, they resented Britain’s colonial dominance and her control over trade, and disliked the fact that she often shied away from continental commitments. Her standing, therefore, already needed work, and rumours of government stupidity did not help. The politicians were strongly aware of this factor. When Pitt wrote to the king to explain his open opposition to Addington in April 1804, he took care to note that one of his motives was to improve ‘the Chance of taking advantage of any favourable Circumstance to establish … a cooperation abroad’. On the occasion of the impeachment of Melville, first lord of the admiralty in Pitt’s second ministry, the foreign secretary had to reassure the Russians that his government was sound and not about to fall. Even with a continental coalition in negotiation, Pitt could not be sure that his

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180 Speech by Windham, 22 July 1807, *PD IX*, 901.
182 Pitt to the king, 21 April 1804, Cambridge University Library, Pitt MSS, Box 16 no 3018.
183 Various letters from Mulgrave to Granville Leveson-Gower, 15-18 April 1805, National Archives, Stafford MSS, PRO 30/29/384.
political weakness would not have a serious impact on his foreign as well as his domestic policy.

The inevitable result was that unstable governments shied away from controversy, both in parliament and within their own ranks. Grenville’s refusal to indict Pitt’s record, despite being pressured by Fox to do so, meant in practical terms that the Talents were never able to break away from the trend that Addington and Pitt had previously followed.184 After the debacle of the Training Act, Grenville was even less inclined to experiment. This was consonant with advice he was given from friends who advised him ‘to avoid all unpopular measures’, but it simply confirmed the impression that his ministry had nothing really new to offer.185 The Talents’ successors also acknowledged that novelty was not always useful in a delicate political climate. Upon coming to office in March 1807, Castlereagh reluctantly decided that any measures of éclat were inappropriate for the weak Portland government. He advised the other ministers that he could not, ‘without involving the government in Parliamentary difficulties propose to his Colleagues any very decisive Measure’.186 From the opposition benches, Hiley Addington (Henry Addington’s younger brother) shrewdly interpreted the initial reluctance to overturn Windham’s military measures as an admission of Portland’s weakness: ‘It was probably … thought discreet to proceed step by step, and to avoid any thing that might have the appearance of a strong Measure, for which the Public Mind is hardly ripe’.187 Until the government could acquire stability there was little alternative but to play safe.

‘Buonaparte may come or not as he pleases,’ one spectator wrote sarcastically of the priority given in political circles to the ins and outs of ministers at a time of great national danger. ‘It will make little sensation here at present, Every one being occupied with the more important concern of what is to happen in the House of

184 Grenville to Fox, 19 April 1806, Dropmore MSS VIII, 107-8.
185 Auckland to Grenville, 4 December 1806, Dropmore MSS VIII, 457-8.
186 Memorandum by Castlereagh for the cabinet on the state of the armed forces, March 1807, PRONI, Castlereagh MSS, D3030/2471.
187 Hiley Addington to Sidmouth, 4 May 1808, Devon RO, Sidmouth MSS, 152M/C1808/OZ.
The ministers themselves were, of course, desperate to break the deadlock. On one occasion Addington was so harassed by claims and counter-claims that he had not provided well enough for the defence of the country that he snapped. Whatever he proposed, he could not win:

What has been the uniform subject of complaint, from the benches on the other side, but that, since the commencement of the hostility, we have never sufficiently provided for the internal security, and that we have wholly neglected the means of increasing the disposable force; yet most unfortunate it is, that whatever plans are suggested for those purposes, they have to encounter opposition from the same quarter.

His complaint was heartfelt. If the opposition really meant what they said when they called for a solid national defence policy, then they ought to allow the government to do its job. Without adequate political strength, however, Addington could not get himself a fair hearing. Part of the problem which beset his and other unstable governments lay in the fact that attention had shifted from temporary to permanent measures. Once it had been acknowledged that the war with France might last for years, the tendency was to forget that the invasion threat required short as well as long-term measures. When the *Times* complained that the Additional Force Act would take ‘ten years at least to carry … into complete effect’, it emphasised the difficulty of finding a measure capable of meeting both future and current requirements. Sidmouth identified the same issue when he noted that the Training Act ‘has hitherto done nothing: it is not on that Account to be laid aside: but Measures of certain, Immediate Efficacy should be adopted without Delay.’ The trouble lay in finding expedients which would function in the long term while reaping immediate results.

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188 James Pulteney to Sheffield, 23 April 1804, East Sussex RO, Sheffield MSS, Box 2 (North Pevensey Legion).
189 Speech by Addington, 11 April 1804, PD II, 93.
190 *Times*, 27 April 1803, 2(c).
191 Sidmouth to Hiley Addington, 30 November 1806, Devon RO, Sidmouth MSS, 152M/C1806/OZ.
**Conclusion**

Continuing checks to the Liverpool government’s political authority after 1815 might suggest that the executive emerged from twenty-two years of war still comparatively weak within a decentralised political system, but this conclusion does not adequately take stock of the impact of the war on the state. True, successive governments had striven to locate their measures within a broader context of constitutional and historical legitimacy, aware that in fighting a revolutionary power, Britain should take care not to become one herself, but this did not preclude alterations from taking place within the existing constitutional boundaries. By 1798 it was clear that the danger from France might outlive the war, and that temporary and precedent-bound measures were no longer sufficient. Frequent diplomatic and military isolation, and the establishment of Napoleon’s regime, meant that the prospect of Britain returning to her pre-1793 state was unlikely. Politicians would have preferred to work within the system, but since that was not sufficient, then the urgency of the situation excused a number of political sins. The result was a thorough and practical exploration of what was and was not possible in terms of national defence. Windham noted this when he defended his conduct in attacking the Additional Force Act in 1806:

> None of the measures that had been successively tried … had been rejected in consequence of any idle desire of change, and still less of any mean and envious spirit of jealousy on the part of persons newly succeeding to the government … In fact, the measures were most of them changed without any change of ministry, and by the very same persons who had brought them in. They were changed, either because they were found impracticable, or objectionable.¹⁹²

Unfortunately for the politicians, the highest point of the invasion scares coincided with a sharp increase in political instability. The fact that defence measures had to respond to continental circumstances effectively prevented national defence from being harnessed to the party wagon, but the government was always uncomfortably aware that its actions were under public scrutiny, both in and out of parliament.

¹⁹² Speech by Windham, 22 July 1807, *PD* VIII, 890-1.
This weakness did not, however, prevent a number of new developments. The unfavourable continental circumstances had ushered in a new way of looking at the armed forces in the context of national defence. With more and more people participating in military bodies of one kind or another, and with the increased need to defeat France either on British soil or on the continent, a perceptible change operated in the political mind with regard to the way Britain was portrayed as a national entity. Fears of large standing armies and the need to counterbalance the power of the centre with the power of the localities were now out of date. General military service was now regarded by the politicians as desirable, even essential. The extent to which these developments rocked the foundations of British identity will be the subject of the next chapter.
Chapter Three
Citizen-Soldiers and ‘Military Spirit’

Growing reliance on a more regular body of troops firmly placed under central control did not merely impact on defence policy. It also had an obvious effect on the way that politicians portrayed the nation. It was widely believed that France had become a military country and could only be checked or defeated using like methods. The upshot of this was that Britain’s traditionally anti-militaristic stance came into question. The growth in the number of auxiliary defence bodies and the increased reliance on military power was clearly at odds with Britain’s once predominantly commercial and naval sense of itself.

As part of this process, several political terms that had been current in the eighteenth century were re-conceived to fit the new circumstances. Two of the most prominent — ‘citizen-soldier’ and ‘military spirit’ — reflected the increased importance of the Army for defence, and demonstrated the shift that was taking place in the portrayal of Britain’s national and political character. Once associated with the creation of the militia and expressing radical fear of standing armies and despotism, they were employed less often by radicals than by policy-makers.1 ‘Military spirit’ was something they found increasingly desirable to foster in the nation, convinced that it would lead to a greater number of recruits for the regular army. Its inculcation therefore went hand-in-hand with the rehabilitation of the Army itself, even before the first victories came in from the Peninsula. As for the ‘citizen-soldier’, once at the vanguard of freedom from military despotism, he now became ensnared in the semantic battles of post-French Revolutionary political language. Discussion about what exactly made a citizen and a soldier, and how the two could be put together,

were profoundly revealing about the way the defence debate helped shape the politician’s view of Britain’s identity.

**A shift in balance: Army versus Navy**

Between 1793 and 1803 the balance in the armed forces moved from a reliance on naval to military power. In 1793, Britain was emerging from a decade during which the development of the Navy had taken priority over that of the land forces. The regular army had numbered only 47,395, 28,000 of whom were stationed in Britain and Ireland, whereas the Navy had counted 145 ships of the line alone in 1790, three years before the war began. In January 1803, by contrast, the Navy had stood at a total of only 196 vessels, although by July this had grown to a force of 361, including 72 ships of the line and 100 frigates. The Army, on the other hand, had not been much reduced from the 150,000 regulars reported on 1 January 1802. In March 1803 it stood at 128,000, and was later backed up by the several auxiliary bodies called out or created over the course of the war. In addition, the militia, when fully embodied and added to the Supplementary Militia created in 1796, provided 70,000 for national defence. Addington’s government also renewed the call made during the 1790s for volunteers. These, added to the well-to-do Yeomanry, which acted as a police force, numbered 400,000 men at their peak. The Levy en Masse, Army of Reserve, Additional Force, Training Act, and Local Militia increased the nation’s manpower still further. By the end of the war in 1815, about 3-4% of the population had served in Britain’s land-based armed forces.

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2 Statement of effective troops in Britain, 1793-1804, 1 February 1804, Castlereagh MSS, PRONI, D/3030/1886; Effective Strength of the British Army exclusive of Artillery on 1 January of the first four years of the present and last war, Sidmouth MSS, Devon RO, 152M/C1806/OM/7; Baugh, ‘The Eighteenth Century Navy as a National Institution’, 123.

3 An Account of His Majesty’s Ships in Commission 1793-1804, 15 March 1804, Sidmouth MSS, Devon RO, 152M/C1804/ON; Account of the Ships and Vessels in Commission, 22 July 1803, Sidmouth MSS, Devon RO, 152M/C1803/ON/8; Report on the State of the Navy, 1793-1804, Castlereagh MSS, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI), D/3030/1903.

4 Memorandum on the Regular Force, March 1803, Castlereagh MSS, PRONI, D/3030/1769; return of the land forces 1801-1808, Sidmouth MSS, Devon RO, 152M/C1808/OM.

5 Fedorak, Addington, p. 162.

This boost to the importance of the armed services reflected the circumstances of a predominantly defensive war. The Army’s poor offensive record over several decades had certainly contributed much to the decline of its reputation, despite a brief flourish during the Seven Years’ War between 1756 and 1763. Moreover, Britain’s ‘revival’ after her defeat in America in 1783 was based on her commercial and maritime, not military, prowess.\(^7\) The opening campaigns of the war with France did little to overturn this emphasis: military defeats in France, Flanders and Holland, and naval victories at Ushant, St. Vincent, Camperdown, and the Nile between 1794 and 1798, underlined the point. Cornwallis mourned ‘over the British Infantry, once the pride of my heart and the horror of our enemies, and now … reduced to a state which I am ashamed to mention’.\(^8\) Britain’s main contribution to the war consisted of naval operations and financial subsidies to the continental powers which, apart from brief interludes in 1799 and 1805, provided almost all the military clout in Europe till 1807.\(^9\) Eventually, however, the realities of a war fought in a state of frequent continental isolation against a power which repeatedly threatened invasion began to take its toll. The Navy was all very well as an offensive force, and the occasional resounding victory helped maintain its reputation, but as a defensive force it was deeply flawed. Its main role in defence was to keep the French and their allies blockaded in their ports all along the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts, but this strategy was not a complete success. The French managed to escape at least seven times from Brest alone between 1794 and 1802.\(^10\) The Times remarked ironically in 1798 upon ‘so many repeated instances of the good luck of the French in

\(^7\) See Kathleen Wilson for the impact of the Seven Years’ War: Wilson, \textit{The Sense of the People}, pp. 25-6. David Gates argues that ‘the British army sank into dereliction’ between 1783 and 1793: Gates, ‘The Transformation of the Army’, 133. Jeremy Black cautions against overestimating the failure of the British army in the 1770s, but cannot deny the effect of the lacklustre campaigns of the 1790s on its reputation: Black, \textit{Britain as a Military Power}, pp. 43, 194. For the commercial revival, see Bayly, \textit{Imperial Meridian}, pp. 2-3, 252-3; Colley, \textit{Britons}, p. 144; Wilson, \textit{The Sense of the People}, p. 184.

\(^8\) Cornwallis to Dundas, 26 June 1800, Melville MSS, National Archives of Scotland, Edinburgh, GD51/1/331/28.

\(^9\) Sherwig, \textit{Guineas and Gunpowder}, pp. 3-4. However, Sherwig also points out (p. 354) that subsidy payments formed only 8% of the total war expenditure between 1793 and 1815.

\(^10\) Memorandum on Instances of the Escapes of the French from Brest during the Blockade, undated, Melville MSS, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, MEL/3.
escaping the vigilance of our squadrons’.

Keeping blockade depended, too, on the vagaries of the weather. Portland reported that a squadron possibly intended for Ireland had taken advantage of ‘a thick Fog’ to break blockade at Brest in 1799, and at the turn of the New Year in 1804 a storm dispersed the Channel fleet and left Britain vulnerable for a space of three or four anxious days.

Given the vulnerability of the naval blockade system, it is understandable that the Army should have benefited strongly from the heightened fear of invasion. Its vital role in defending the home base reduced the unsavoury political connotations associated with a large standing force. This issue had not vanished from political discourse, contrary to what Lois Schwoerer and Paul Langford have suggested.

By now, however, it was being used differently. Radicals such as Sir Francis Burdett still harked back to the dangers of an alliance between the standing army and the Crown, but living under the shadow of invasion caused what had once been an ideological debate to be fought in more practical terms. In 1802 Castlereagh argued that

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\text{altho’ we have lately happily got rid of many idle prejudices on the subject of our Army … neither the feelings, nor the finances of the Country are prepared to support such a force in Peace, as will place us in security at the outset of a War, without a powerful body of Militia in both Islands.}
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There was another aspect to the concerns expressed over the country’s lack of military muscle. Invasion scares in the past had drawn attention to the effect of commercial ‘luxury’ and ‘effeminacy’ on the character of the nation and the new emphasis on military service reflected this long-standing concern. Various remedies

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11 *Times*, 24 September 1798, 2(a).
12 Portland to Cornwallis, 1 May 1799, Castlereagh MSS, PRONI, D/3030/756/a; Thomas Steele to Pitt, 3 January 1804, Pitt MSS, Cambridge University Library, Add Ms 6958 Box 16 f. 2995. The same thing happened at the beginning of February: *Times*, 2 February 1804, p. 2 col. b, 4 February 1804, p. 2 col. b.
14 Lois Schwoerer argues that the standing army debates ‘ceased to be the burning issues that they had been’ after the Glorious Revolution, and Paul Langford declared the cause ‘dead’ by 1780. Schwoerer, ‘No Standing Armies!’ pp. 189-90; Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People*, p. 50, agrees.
15 Castlereagh to Wickham, 18 November 1802, Wickham MSS, Hampshire RO, 38m49/6/17.
had been proposed to combat this pernicious influence in the 1750s and 1770s, even by Adam Smith, who feared that Britain’s increased commercial power would both attract foreign envy and atrophy the nation’s ability to defend itself against attack.\(^\text{16}\) What was new in the 1790s and 1800s was not the rhetoric, but the practical application and the extent of the debate.

France had redefined the terms on which Britain would fight her war. ‘Our best expectations in this state of hostility are, that we may be able successfully to repel an invasion of Great Britain or Ireland, if it should be attempted,’ wrote George Rose in his diary.\(^\text{17}\) It was obvious by 1806 that Britain and her allies were very unlikely to defeat France militarily. What the country needed to do instead was to learn how to defend herself in the event of her navy being neutralised and her defences broken. An 1804 pamphlet which Addington thought very influential argued, ‘at a time, when it is so much insisted upon, that the independent states of Europe are obliged to become more military in consequence of the more formidable state of France … England must conform’.\(^\text{18}\) So long as France remained militarily potent, politicians would have to relax old attitudes towards the Army in order to allow Britain a chance to match her.

**A commercial nation at war**

The long periods of military stagnation during which the war was (from the British point of view) being fought almost entirely defensively left room for speculation about why Britain was unable to turn the tide. Two answers suggested themselves. Firstly, with the threat of invasion from 1794 onwards the war had become one of national survival. Britain’s strategic options were therefore


\(^\text{17}\) Rose Diary II, 139.

\(^\text{18}\) Yorke, *Proposals tending to augment the Force of this Country, and encourage the Martial Spirit of the People*, p. 2. Addington wrote to his brother that he had read Yorke’s pamphlet ‘with Admiration, & Satisfaction’: Addington to Hiley Addington, 17 June 1804, Devon RO, 152M/C1804/OZ/65.
constrained by the need to secure the home base. As Castlereagh noted, if anything happened to the offensive force abroad ‘we should be destitute of any considerable Proportion of effective Regular Infantry for Purposes of Home Defence’.\textsuperscript{19} Secondly, the sinews of war — finance and commercial enterprise — were profoundly affected by the length of the conflict in an apparently unprecedented manner.

In a way the nation was paying the price for the past century’s success in trading and colonial expansion. That expansion had not only stretched slender military and naval resources to breaking point, but had also damaged her international reputation, fostering the mistrust of potential continental allies who suspected that Britain simply wanted to exploit the war with France for commercial and colonial advantages. The events of the 1790s exacerbated these suspicions, particularly the limited commitment of British troops on the continent while tens of thousands of men were sent to the West Indies and the Mediterranean. Sir John Macpherson, who had strong continental connections, regretted the ‘jealousy in every Court in Europe, even in those of our allies, against our grasp of dominion in the East & West & on the Ocean’.\textsuperscript{20} Their distrust was amply reciprocated by many Britons, who feared that they were being used by the allies as a bank from which to draw subsidy money for their own (not necessarily war-related) purposes. However, given that the allies were necessary to defeat France, it was alarming that so few of them trusted Britain, and that so many of them even regarded her as a hostile power, second in acquisitiveness only to France.\textsuperscript{21}

Worse still, the circumstances of war were unfavourable to British commerce and enterprise. A succession of trade disputes — from the Armed Neutrality of 1800 which shut off supplies of Baltic timber, to the War of 1812 with the United States, not to mention the vulnerability of convoys subject to frequent attacks from privateers — greatly increased fears that Britain’s economic might was precarious.

\textsuperscript{19} Memorandum as to Defence, 15 July 1804, Camden MSS, Kent RO, U840/O211/2; Castlereagh MSS, PRONI, D/3030/2481.
\textsuperscript{20} Macpherson to Pitt, 4 October 1794, Pitt MSS, Cambridge University Library, Add Ms 6958, Box 8, f. 1503.
\textsuperscript{21} Sherwig, Guineas and Gunpowder, p. 13.
Contemporaries saw worrying signs that a long war would be particularly damaging to a commercial country like Britain.\textsuperscript{22} The financial crises of 1797 and 1809-11 raised the spectre of national bankruptcy.\textsuperscript{23} The Continental System of 1806-7, moreover, ushered in by the Milan and Berlin decrees, effectively blocked British exports to almost all of Europe and seriously damaged several industries, particularly textiles.\textsuperscript{24} Hiley Addington noted the country’s commercial vulnerability in a letter to his brother, Sidmouth: ‘At present perhaps, his [Napoleon’s] mean game will be, to be content with \textit{clipping our Wings}; and so close, that it will be difficult long to survive the Operation’.\textsuperscript{25} Just as serious was the fact that protecting trade in wartime was a distraction for the already-overstretched Navy.\textsuperscript{26} Under attack for not providing enough convoys, Pitt emphasised that there would have to be a change in priorities:

\begin{quote}
Though it could be proved that the trade was not fully protected, yet this would not be a matter of crimination. Great as the commerce of this country was, yet it was not so great an object as war was now. … He would [not] consent [that] this bulwark of our strength should be frittered down into convoys to carry ships to Ancora or the fairs of Salerno.\textsuperscript{27}
\end{quote}

In other words, defence had to be placed above commercial development as a political priority.

Napoleon’s increasing hold over Europe, and the consequent decline in Britain’s trading position, led some to argue the need to seek new markets abroad. However, a side-effect of the prioritisation of defence over commerce was the need to avoid further expansion and over-extension. ‘I cannot but think that we are in a difficult dilemma as to the prosecution of Foreign Conquests,’ Hiley Addington

\begin{footnotes}
\item Hiley Addington to Sidmouth, 1 December 1806, Sidmouth MSS, Devon RO, 152M/C1806/OZ.
\item The blockades of the French harbours took up an increasingly large proportion of the Navy’s efforts: Morriss, \textit{The Channel Fleet and the Blockade of Brest}, pp. 11-2, 241-2.
\item Speech by Pitt, reported in the \textit{Times}, 19 February 1794, 1(c)-3(a).
\end{footnotes}
wrote to his brother. ‘The exclusion from Europe seems to render the acquisition of other Markets necessary, while the means which we are obliged to employ to open them are exhausting those of home-defence, and exhibiting us weak and vulnerable in all points’. The American war in the 1770s, and the war of 1812, suggested that Britain was unequipped to fight an extensive, far-flung colonial battle. The conflicts in India during the 1790s and 1800s were relatively successful because of the use of the East India Company forces and local auxiliaries, but elsewhere Britain had to rely more on regular garrisons, which meant that colonies became liabilities rather than assets. The failure of highly-publicised attempts at expansion (such as the Buenos Aires campaign in 1806 to open up South America for British goods) suggested that the risk of seeking alternative markets was too great at a time when attention needed to be focused on the home front. Sheridan commented in 1795 that ‘he entertained great doubts of the policy of enlarging our West India possessions, which could only serve to drain what we could least spare — men’. It seems safe to conclude, therefore, that imperialism was not the driving force behind the considerable territorial expansion that occurred during the war. The main purpose, as the Times noted, was to seek ‘indemnity for the expences of the war, and of our equivalent for her [France’s] own acquisitions in Europe’. After all, the war could not ultimately be won in the colonies.

With this in mind, some social theorists argued that there was nothing for it but for Britain to adapt to a hostile world, and that the only way to do this was to move away from the colonial, commercial, and latterly industrial path taken during the eighteenth century. William Spence’s Britain Independent of Commerce (1807) advocated a return to the agrarian economy of the pre-industrial days. Spence and other ‘physiocrats’ (as they were known) were not simply arguing for a retreat into an insular past. Such a position was particularly relevant to a generation which had

28 Hiley Addington to Sidmouth, 1 December 1806, Sidmouth MSS, Devon RO, 152M/C1806/OZ.
29 Speech by Sheridan, 29 October 1795, PH XXXII, 160-1.
30 Times, 9 February 1796, 3(b). A.D. Harvey concludes that ‘as the war prolonged itself talk of annexation and colonisation became increasingly audible’, but seems not to trace the reason for this to the need to counterbalance French influence. Harvey, Collision of Empires, p. 22.
lived through the two near-famines of 1795 and 1800. On both occasions grain had been imported from overseas, which suggested a worrying lack of self-sufficiency that Napoleon’s Continental Blockade could only make worse.\textsuperscript{31} The arguments of the physiocrats represented in part an ideological response to the French revolutionary challenge. They were also in line with political trends which advocated a return to chivalric notions of behaviour and a medieval hierarchical structure.\textsuperscript{32} Ultimately, however, though the physiocrats included men like Thomas Chalmers, most of those in power wanted to move away from the decentralised, agricultural past and so were more likely to listen to arguments from the opposite scale, advanced by men such as David Ricardo, who looked instead to overseas contacts and industrial growth.\textsuperscript{33}

To some, however, there was an even more serious problem than the decline of commerce, and that was its effect on the national character. Trade, and the boldness and enterprising spirit that came with it, had helped make Britain great, but it could not defeat France. For that, military strength, rather than commercial enterprise, was required, and the two were seen as opposites. In \textit{The Wealth of Nations}, an influential work read and approved by most of the politicians of the period, Adam Smith indicated the disparity between the commercial and martial mind:

> Unless very particular pains have been taken to render him [the labouring Briton] otherwise, he is equally incapable of defending his country in war. The uniformity of his stationary life naturally corrupts the courage of his mind, and makes him regard with abhorrence the irregular, uncertain, and adventurous life of a soldier.\textsuperscript{34}


\textsuperscript{32} See Chapter Two’s discussion of the revival of the feudal principle in British political debate, p. 94 above.

\textsuperscript{33} Semmel, \textit{The Rise of Free Trade Imperialism}, pp. 8-9, 48-9; Fontana, \textit{Rethinking the Politics of Commercial Society}, pp. 49-52, 128-9. Spence’s pamphlet in any case provoked a lively debate on the subject in which conflicting ideas of Britain’s commercial or industrial status were aired.

\textsuperscript{34} Smith, \textit{Wealth of Nations}, p. 382a-b.
France herself was a perfect exemplar. Her military success had been bought at the price of commercial stagnation, since all her male citizens from 18 to 26 had been ‘forced to become a soldier’ and therefore ‘taken out of the habits of industry, and of social and civilised life’. Presumably, a militarised Britain would experience the same phenomenon. There was a growing feeling, however, that this might not necessarily be a bad thing. Commerce throve on free thought; military strength throve on discipline. Commerce and liberty went hand in hand; military strength was associated with despotism. However, commerce was also associated with bankruptcy and financial uncertainty, whereas military strength increasingly became associated with public sacrifice, duty, and national involvement. French sneers about ‘effeminacy’, too, brought back old fears that Britain, in abandoning herself wholesale to commercial activity, had forgotten how to fight. ‘We are become a Nation of Merchants and Shopkeepers, and have lost all Military Spirit,’ lamented the duke of Buccleugh. Celebrations of the British volunteer, British spunk, and British spirit were all responses to an underlying paranoid fear that, in the event of invasion, the nation would not be up to the challenge.

‘Military Spirit’, conscription and the manpower problem

This combination of circumstances — the war, the decline of commercial supremacy, and the doubts provoked by the connection between commerce and effeminacy — resulted in a drive to raise the ‘military spirit’ of the nation. This was not an entirely novel reaction: throughout the eighteenth century, whenever invasion was threatened or military defeat loomed, the need to increase ‘military spirit’ had been invoked by radical theorists who feared the feminisation of the nation through

35 Times, 20 July 1803, 3b.  
37 Duke of Buccleugh to Dundas, 31 March 1797, Melville MSS, Scottish National Archives, GD51/883.
commerce and luxury. The difference in the 1790s and 1800s was that the same fear was now also found at the top of the political hierarchy, including government members. As expressed in parliament and the press, the concept of ‘military spirit’ echoed the ideas of Britishness held by its exponents: it was inclusive, it was deferential, and it vaguely accorded with ideas about the national past, though this vagueness ensured that it continued to retain some of its old radical connotations. In general, however, turn-of-the-nineteenth-century ‘military spirit’ was conservative and above all practical. It proposed a solution to the manpower problem by raising the profile of the regular army.

Even more importantly, ‘military spirit’ was a defiant expression of the nation’s ability to adapt to new continental circumstances in a way that would complement rather than destroy her commercial character. ‘In time coming we must be a Compound Mixture of Merchants, Manufacturers, Farmers, and Warriors, and I have no doubt these various occupations may be so arranged as rather to improve than injure each other’, wrote Dundas. Most advocates saw it simply as a channelling of Britain’s commercial energies in a different direction: ‘We were not mere merchants who could traffic, but could not fight; not mere soldiers who could fight, without excelling in other arts’. Significantly, also, it addressed the need to transmit some new image to take account of the fact that there was now a union of Great Britain and Ireland. John Robertson and J.E. Cookson have argued that military spirit reflected Scotland’s ‘distinctive martial heritage’, but this was not how the matter was seen by politicians anxious to stress national unity in the face of an external threat. Thus, the Anti-Jacobin Review deliberately drew attention to the combined Scottish, Irish and English spirit which had secured victory at Alexandria.

38 Wilson, The Sense of the People, pp. 165, 188; Robertson, The Scottish Enlightenment and the Militia Issue, p. 135.
39 Dundas to Alexander Dirom, 7 August 1797, Melville MSS, Scottish National Archives, GD51/888/2.
40 Speech by Lord Limerick, 22 November 1803, PD I, 1527.
41 Cookson, ‘Military Scotland and Tory Highlandism’, 60, 73; Robertson, The Scottish Enlightenment, pp. 1-2 (in which he discusses Scotland’s ‘distinctive martial heritage’). See also Mackillop, ‘More fruitful than the soil’, pp. 207, 232, in which he argues that military involvement reinforced Highlanders’ local identity.
in 1801, ‘when Sir Ralph Abercromby was seconded by Lord Hutchinson, and aided by Sir Sidney Smith!’ If the ‘military spirit’ campaign left out any part of the United Kingdom it was Ireland, which was always viewed ambivalently whenever issues of arming the people or encouraging military ardour were concerned, but even so her large contribution to recruitment into the regulars put paid to any doubts about the military prowess of Irishmen. Military spirit was not exclusively Scottish, though it continued to be a favourite with Scotsmen. It was common to all Britons, whether descended from Highlanders or the victors of the Spanish Armada.

Ultimately, however, the great advantage of the ‘military spirit’ idea was its role in sustaining the high levels of manpower required to fight a defensive and an offensive war simultaneously. The need for a strong regular army which could fulfil both of these roles was widely acknowledged. Even concentrating purely on defence would require large numbers. The issue was simple: ‘It has now indeed become self-evident, even to the great Body of the People, that the period has at length arrived, when Great Britain must either become a Nation of Soldiers, or cease to be a Nation at all.’ To this end, almost everyone could agree on the need to promote the nation’s military spirit. The real problem was, how to make it practical.

The most obvious solution would have been to imitate France and impose conscription, but, as noted in Chapter Two, this was not done. The reasons for such reticence had nothing to do with novelty or the lack of the requisite bureaucratic framework. The politicians who felt confident enough to pass the Levy en Masse Act, and who had access to a variety of information provided by the census and other sources, were unlikely to be fazed by a step which would simply have meant continuing what they had already been doing, albeit at a higher level. It would have required little more than an adaptation of the naval impress, which had been

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42 Anti-Jacobin Review, XVI, 1 (September 1803), 101.
43 Major William Stewart to Castlereagh, 8 April 1808, Castlereagh MSS, PRONI, D/3030/2622.
44 Chandler, The Oxford Illustrated History of the British Army, pp. 134-5; Black, Britain as a Military Power, p. 272; Hall, British Strategy in the Napoleonic War, p. 2; Western, The English Militia, pp. 290-1.
undertaken successfully for years under admiralty control.\textsuperscript{45} As a political commentator noted at the time, ‘the government which forcibly seizes the sailor’ was hardly in a position to ‘mount into the sublime regions of the rights of mankind, and thence looking down … to exclaim, O! the horrid injustice of taking the soldier!’\textsuperscript{46} To those who argued against conscription on constitutional grounds, the Times pointed out that all such scruples could and should be overcome ‘in such an alarming and dangerous crisis’.\textsuperscript{47} Many politicians urged the need to match France in the manpower stakes. Grenville, who had experienced the difficulties of finding men in the 1790s, reluctantly conceded that there was no alternative to some form of mandation: ‘I heartily wish it were possible to avoid any compulsory recruiting for the army, but I know not how it could be done, & an army some how or other to be sure we must have’.\textsuperscript{48} Windham, of course, was even more outspoken, declaring in 1803 that ‘he would not court popularity, nor discredit his own judgment by decrying [compulsion] as unconstitutional’.\textsuperscript{49}

These were powerful recommendations; moreover, direct conscription into the regulars would have helped overcome a number of the issues associated with the competition for recruits between the Army and the auxiliaries. The men recruited to substitute for principals balloted into the militia were frequently those who would otherwise have entered the Army: ‘Hardly one [man] serves [as a militia substitute] who is not taken from that class from which the regular army is recruited’.\textsuperscript{50} It is also clear from the evidence that the cabinet seriously discussed the possibility of

\textsuperscript{45} A special Impress Service had been created to coordinate the short-term initiatives that had been taken from time to time in most British ports. Lewis, \textit{A Social History of the Navy}, pp. 103-4, 139; Hill, \textit{The Oxford Illustrated History of the Royal Navy}, pp. 134-5, 137.
\textsuperscript{46} Worthington, \textit{An Address to the Rt Hon William Windham}, pp. 46-8. Castlereagh agreed with this, noting that since ‘Compulsion’ was ‘the Soul of the Navy’, there was no reason for ‘abdicating it with respect to the Army’. Notes by Castlereagh on the Training Act, April/May 1806, PRONI, Castlereagh MSS, D3030/2393.
\textsuperscript{47} \textit{Times}, 25 June 1803, 3(a).
\textsuperscript{48} Grenville to the marquess of Buckingham, 19 June 1803, Huntington Library, California, Grenville MSS (photocopies), f. LIV-83.
\textsuperscript{49} Speech by Windham, 9 December 1803, PD I, 1701-2.
\textsuperscript{50} \textit{Anti-Jacobin Review}, XIX, 2 (October 1804). This was also pointed out by the anonymous author of \textit{A Vindication of Mr. Windham’s Military Plans}, p. 41, and by Lord Sheffield in an undated note: ‘I should be very sorry to see more than 40,000 Militia locked up from more general service’; Sheffield MSS, East Sussex RO, Box 1 (North Pevensey Legion).
conscription. The reason why it was not implemented seems to have been simply that ministers were concerned about the quality as well as the quantity of troops. Several advisors drew Addington’s attention to this point when they discussed conscripting men for service anywhere in the world. Yorke acknowledged the utility of conscription, but thought it would be impractical:

A mixture of Men like these, with trained soldiers, unless in a limited proportion, and time was given to form & discipline them, (a supposition which is inconsistent with that stated of a sudden emergency), might only tend to introduce confusion & disorder, & to impart weakness instead of reinforcement.

Two years later, the duke of York explained that what made crimping ‘the most baneful of practices’ was the introduction into the Army of ‘a number of persons perfectly unacquainted with the Military profession and in many instances ineligible in point of Character’. It was not the prospect of impinging on liberty that troubled York and Yorke, but the prospect of mixing tried and untried men in battle. It seemed much wiser to draft trained men from the Reserve, Additional Force, and Local Militia than to pluck them directly from the farms and cities. These bodies were, however, quite small, especially the first two, and it was therefore requisite somehow to make the British more accustomed to the idea of military service and more likely to join up. If the whole population of Great Britain were already trained to arms, then, as Windham recognised, the lower orders would represent ‘an inexhaustible fund to recruit from’. Along with other politicians, he was moving away from the old idea that a strong standing army signified despotism, and towards the view that militarism was a sign of national strength.

The eagerness of the politicians to harness ‘military spirit’ illustrated how the war with France had shaped their perceptions of what made the nation great. Service in defence of the nation was to be considered one of the first duties of the citizen.

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51 Memorandum by Westmorland, February 1802, Buckinghamshire RO, Hobart MSS, D/MH/H(war office)/Bundle G/I46.
52 Yorke to Hobart, 14 February 1802, 19 February 1802, Buckinghamshire RO, Hobart MSS, D/MH/H(war office)/Bundle B/I43, I45.
53 York to Addington, 27 February 1804, Devon RO, Sidmouth MSS, 152M/C1804/OM/5.
54 Speech by Windham, 3 April 1806, PD VI, 676-7.
Dundas was one of many who considered a form of national service, in which all young men would experience military service between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one, as the best way to instruct Britain’s youth in loyalty to their nation: ‘If this plan is adopted we then become in reality an armed nation, & every individual when he enters into life by his arrival at Manhood, does it with the sentiment implanted in his breast that the defence of his country, as it was almost his earliest education, so it is his first duty’. During this period several military academies were founded for the education of future officers, and the more ‘martial’ characteristics of the nation — its love of pugilism and ‘manly sports and exercises’, its belligerent xenophobia, its patriotism — were praised in its youth. Windham, for example, praised ‘those qualities of body and mind of which we were inclined at all times to talk so boastingly, and on which we were now, it seems, to place our chief dependence’, which were fed by bull-baiting and ‘those athletic sports and hardy contests, which heretofore made the delight of the common people, and which … trained them … to every generous and manly sentiment’. Dundas’s plan was particularly useful because it created ‘a Nursery for the recruiting every other branch of the Military Service’, which encouraged recruitment into the armed services by familiarising youth with military duties. The attempt to inculcate military spirit, therefore, was not only based on the need for more conscription, but was designed to make army life so central to the normative values of Britons that they would come to see military service as a respectable way of life.

**Patriotism, the ‘Citizen-Soldier’, and the duties of citizenship**

The need to reconcile military spirit with traditional British ideas of liberty, and the attempts to portray republican France as Britain’s inveterate enemy,
politically, commercially, and morally, also led to a refinement of concepts such as patriotism and, more particularly, citizenship. Political language dramatically portrayed the struggle between the two nations as a duel to the death, particularly during periods of continental isolation.59 Lord Temple declared in an especially apocalyptic speech that ‘the suns of England and France can never shine together in the same hemisphere … The cry of the armies, of the Directory, of the councils, and of the people [of France], is still “Delenda est Carthago”’.60 These opinions did not subside with the fall of republican principles, since French politics were now seen as ‘despotic’ rather than republican. Depicting the war as a struggle for survival made it possible for the politicians to foster an inclusive version of patriotism and citizenship in which most Britons could play a part.61

Both of these were profoundly affected by the influence of the French Revolution and its impact on political language. ‘Patriotism’ in particular had, by 1803, moved away from its more radical, oppositionist roots and been adopted by supporters of the establishment in a way that echoed a growing inclusiveness within the British political tradition. The oppositional meaning of patriotism was still in use in 1805 when Lord Carnarvon used the term to describe the parliamentary process of protecting the rights of the people from the government’s encroachments, and Canning also used it to justify his opposition to Addington between 1801 and 1804.62 By this time, however, as John Dinwiddy argues, the government’s tapping into the mid-eighteenth-century oppositional language of liberty had allowed patriotism to

59 Some historians have depicted the Napoleonic Wars as a narrow battle between the British and the French. In 1904, the French historian Pierre Coquelle concluded that Napoleon’s ultimate aim in the 1800s was to humiliate Britain: ‘Abaisser d’abord l’Angleterre, l’humilier et traiter en suite: tel était son but’. Coquelle, Napoleon et l’Angleterre, pp. 290-2.
60 Speech by Temple, 10 November 1797, PH XXXIII, 992-3.
61 For the historiographical tradition of portraying Napoleon as a unifying enemy see Broadley and Wheeler, Napoleon and the Invasion of England, I, 197, II, 248-50; McLeod, A War of Ideas, p. 204; Glover, Britain at Bay, p. 44. For the riposte, see Spence, Romantic Radicalism, pp. 22-3; Semmel, Napoleon and the British, p. 6.
62 Speech by Carnarvon, 4 April 1805, PD IV, 198; Lee, “A New Language in Politicks”, 477, 483. However, Hugh Cunningham argues that patriotism was still primarily a justification for oppositionist or radical behaviour at the beginning of the nineteenth century, despite government attempts to appropriate its related discourse. Cunningham, ‘The Language of Patriotism’, 8-12, 15-18.
become associated with loyalist forces.\(^{63}\) Pitt, too, as Michael Duffy points out, could credibly lay claim to a patriotic tradition.\(^{64}\) He could even be scathing about opposition attempts to do the same, which he dismissed as ‘what is called patriotism … nothing more than an aim at temporary popularity’.\(^{65}\)

As these different responses suggest, the language of patriotism was highly flexible. J.E. Cookson identifies several different kinds during the wars with France, including radical patriotism which was opposed to the war, ‘liberal’ patriotism which was ready to accept defensive war, and ‘Evangelical’ patriotism which sought to interpret the fortunes and misfortunes of war in terms of divine judgment. For Cookson himself, the most prominent version of wartime patriotism was based on ‘national defence’, was largely unpolitical and was largely local in basis.\(^{66}\) The problem with this approach is that it ignores the amount of interest expressed by politicians in patriotism, and their recognition that a good deal of capital could be drawn from it. Patriotism was held to be an essential ingredient for a successful armed nation, since it proclaimed the ideal of a united nation fighting against a common enemy. It gave everyone something to fight for, and the strength to fight in person, should the need arise.

If patriotism was to be the motivation, then the duties of citizenship provided a guide for action. This concept was, however, complicated even more than patriotism by the fact that the French Revolution had reinforced its connection with radicalism and democracy. ‘Citizen’ in the 1790s meant something completely different from what it had meant in the 1750s or 1770s, when defence had last been a priority. The knock-on effect of this was a certain wariness of the term in some circles after 1789. The Anti-Jacobin Review pronounced a book to be ‘jacobinical’ partly because it made use of the term ‘fellow-citizens’.\(^{67}\) ‘Subject’ was reckoned by

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\(^{63}\) Dinwiddy, ‘England’, 69.


\(^{65}\) Speech by Pitt, 23 January 1799, PH XXXIV, 248.

\(^{66}\) Cookson, The British Armed Nation, pp. 8, 10, 25, 212, 220.

\(^{67}\) Anti-Jacobin Review, III, 2 (June 1799), 185-8.
some to be a more pertinent term to describe the political status of Britons, who lived in a deferential and monarchical society where the vote was depicted as a privilege rather than a right.\textsuperscript{68} Several historians have fallen into the same trap of identifying citizenship with the franchise, among them Linda Colley and Robert Dozier. The latter goes so far as to argue that the majority of the people were outside the constitution, and that Pitt’s first government had to create an ‘informal’ one in order to involve them at all in defence.\textsuperscript{69} In much the same vein, Kathleen Wilson argues that ‘the people’ mostly existed outside political structures, and were therefore as much distinct from ‘the citizens’, who were largely propertied, as they were from ‘the mob’.\textsuperscript{70}

Such narrow definitions of political participation were not, however, ones which eighteenth-century politicians would necessarily have recognised. If participation was limited to the parliamentary vote, as Colley, Dozier and Wilson suggest, then only around 320,000 Britons could qualify as full citizens, but not having the franchise did not mean exclusion from the political process. Most local governments were fairly open and allowed Anglicans at least a say in public affairs.\textsuperscript{71} The concept of ‘virtual representation’, moreover, ensured to the satisfaction of many opponents of reform that all the Crown’s subjects were represented in parliament, even if they did not have the privilege of a direct vote. Members of parliament represented interests, such as manufacturing or commerce, rather than simply the boroughs for which they were elected. There was thus a distinction between direct and indirect representation rather than a keenly defined line between the enfranchised and the disenfranchised.\textsuperscript{72} This differed markedly from more radical ideals of civic

\textsuperscript{68} For example, Andreas Fahrmeir’s book \textit{Citizens and Aliens}, pp. 43-4. Although Fahrmeir’s book is primarily about the legal definition of citizenship rather than the political, his analysis of the difference between a citizen and a subject is traditional.

\textsuperscript{69} Dozier, \textit{For King, Constitution and Country}, p. 177; Colley, \textit{Britons}, 370-2; Colley, ‘Whose Nation?’, 113; Colley, ‘The Reach of the State, the Appeal of the Nation’, 181.

\textsuperscript{70} Wilson, \textit{The Sense of the People}, pp. 18, 71-3, 280.

\textsuperscript{71} Eastwood, \textit{Government and Community in the English Provinces}, pp. 47, 107-9, 188.

rationalism in which the individual’s role in the polity took precedence over that of the community, but it still allowed most men to participate at various different levels. There were also other ways in which the people acquired a more direct voice in politics. Petitioning, for example, remained a path between both directly and indirectly represented citizens and parliament. Even rioting was a valid, if violent and undesirable, form of expression for the disenfranchised. As John Bohstedt points out, ‘Clearly [the rioters] did think of themselves as citizens with rights and claims’. Less controversially, membership in clubs, including volunteer corps, was a means of participating at a local level. The reciprocal nature of taxation and citizenship helped to define the latter’s boundaries. It had famously played a role in the loss of the American colonies, and had led many to argue that those who paid taxes ought to have a direct investment in the state. ‘He who is taxed without being represented is a slave’, the Public Advertiser had declared in 1766. By the 1790s, as Dror Wahrman argues, taxation had become a means for the middle classes to lay claim to a stronger position in society. Pitt’s innovatory financial measures, including the Triple Assessment and the Income Tax, spread the burdens of payment further and prompted new social groups to find their political voice.

In its broadest sense, therefore, citizenship was far from exclusive. Nor was its terminology abandoned by politicians eager to distance themselves from revolution and radicalism. On the contrary, it experienced a defiant renewal as politicians sought to reinterpret it under the new international circumstances. Real citizenship was not a matter of wanting more than it was practicable to give, but of

73 Miller, Defining the Common Good, pp. 1, 17, 268. Roberto Romani refers to this as a ‘whig’ rather than a radical tradition: Romani, National Character and Public Spirit, p. 221.
74 Langford notes that a number of petitions against the India Bill in 1783-4 came from places which were not directly represented in parliament, such as Leeds, Halifax, Manchester, Bolton, and Wolverhampton: ‘Property and “Virtual Representation”’, 115. John A. Phillips noted that this sort of thing also happened in 1734 and 1741: ‘Participatory Politics in Hanoverian England’, 227.
75 Bohstedt, Riots and Community Politics, pp. 39-40, 219, 221-2. One example of political rioting was the OP riots of 1809, covered by Marc Baer, Theatre and Disorder in Late Georgian London, pp. 3, 84-6.
76 Clark, British Clubs and Societies, pp. 2-7, 93-5, 460, 469, 471.
77 Brewer, Party Ideology and Popular Politics, p. 211.
78 Wahrman, Imagining the Middle Class, pp. 35-6, 108-44 (esp. pp. 122-3, 138, 141-2, 144).
accepting one’s place in the political system and the willingness to take arms to
defend it. The result was a concept of citizenship that echoed traditional values at the
same time as it allowed continental circumstances to shape old ideas of Britishness.
It was this new version of citizenship that now applied to the term ‘citizen-soldier’,
in a way that reflected the change in conditions wrought by a long, defensive war
against a revolutionary and despotic power.

Originally, ‘citizen-soldiers’ had been found almost exclusively in the ranks
of the militia formed in 1757. The term invoked the image of the well-to-do man
who stood forward to defend his country against foreign invasion and the domestic
tyrranny of Crown influence exemplified by a large standing army. Since, however,
late eighteenth-century citizenship was not as exclusive as that, the politicians
recognised that the people called upon to defend the nation would not necessarily be
those who possessed the franchise or owned property. As the ideological raison
d’être of the war faded, and as the threat of invasion became more immediate than
that of insurrection, it became more common to call on a broader base of support
than in the early 1790s when the volunteers had been devised as a police force and
had therefore been recruited solely among the middle and upper classes. This
inclusiveness was a matter of pride for many men who might not have been expected
to view wide participation with approval. ‘I am no ways afraid of the general bugbear
of arming too many people,’ Dundas argued. ‘I am much more afraid of their
inertness & want of military feeling the moment the pressure of danger is past’. Greater involvement was not simply ‘a calculated risk’ on the part of the government
that the lower orders would not demand too much in the way of political returns for

79 Contrary to what Austin Gee argues, the term ‘citizen-soldier’ did not specifically refer to the
French army, though it could be used in that sense: Gee, The British Volunteer Movement, pp. 170-1;
80 Memorandum by Westmorland, December 1807, Castlereagh Correspondence VIII, 113. J.R.
Western refers to the volunteers ‘a natural nucleus … of the “party of order”’: Western, ‘The
Volunteer Movement’, 607. Ian Beckett notes the emphasis on policing in the 1790s: Beckett, The
Amateur Military Tradition, p. 80.
81 Dundas to the duke of Montrose, 15 November 1796, Melville MSS, Scottish National Archives,
GD51/876/2; speech by Pitt, December 1803, PD I, 1644.
their efforts.\textsuperscript{82} It showed the people that the government made an effort to defend them, and it showed the government that the people were happy with the status quo.

Duty was an integral part of both active and inactive citizenship. In times of national peril, indeed, the citizen’s duties became more important than his rights, and politicians recognised that Britain’s social hierarchy was extremely useful for instructing people in what these were. This was not simply a case of the upper classes allowing the more loyal of the lower orders to fight for them. Strategic references to the networks that linked the king, the upper levels of society, and the people at large, reinforced the important message that they were all connected and that everyone had a stake in the survival of the whole system. Pitt, for one, was confident that all Britons knew exactly what was expected of them: ‘We always admitted the zeal of the country, and applauded its noble and patriotic devotion’.\textsuperscript{83} The fact that the lower orders could be trusted with arms said a lot for the resilience of the nation in the face of the French revolutionary threat. The people had not been seduced by the spectre of democracy.

This was a very optimistic view of the British nation, and it is no accident, perhaps, that Pitt — the perennial optimist — was its foremost exponent.\textsuperscript{84} No doubt many radicals and reformers did latch onto participation in defence as a means to extract concessions from the government. In 1795 Major John Cartwright, the political reformer, wrote that ‘arming the people and reforming Parliament are inseparable’.\textsuperscript{85} By and large, however, the men who formulated defence policy did not consider this to be a major problem, which is surprising, perhaps, given the prevailing political opinion against reform, but it reveals a great deal about the way politicians viewed the extent of citizenship and national involvement. The modern implications of citizenship did not yet exist: there were still no passports and no

\textsuperscript{83} Speech by Pitt, 18 June 1804, PD II, 738.
\textsuperscript{84} Pitt’s optimism was notorious: ‘Pitt, who you know always hopes for the best…’ wrote Lord Carrington to Camden in 1796, Camden MSS, Kent RO, U840/C97.
\textsuperscript{85} Quoted in Rose, William Pitt and the Great War, p. 280.
official definition of what it meant, in state terms, to be British.\textsuperscript{86} ‘Citizenship’ in Britain was only partly a method of self-identification. Above all, it was a defiant statement that, unlike the French Jacobins, the British knew the boundaries of their rights and were happy with them. It was therefore a surprisingly inclusive term, and when Pitt used the term ‘fellow-citizens’ to describe the volunteers he did not simply mean the propertied, but all those ‘who have rushed forward to the post of danger, when the safety of their country was menaced’.\textsuperscript{87}

Significantly, the bastion of propertied citizen-soldiery, the militia, had almost completely altered by the time Napoleon mustered his \textit{Grande Armée} in 1803. As Chapter Two has argued, it was no longer a counterpoint to the regular army, or an expression of the power of the localities over the centre. By 1803 it was mostly subject to central control and viewed as a pool for recruitment into the regulars.\textsuperscript{88} Lord Selkirk felt that ‘the original idea of the militia … is now completely lost. The present militia has no resemblance whatsoever to the species of force which it was intended for’. Lord Sheffield agreed: ‘Nothing like a Militia principle is left except the appointment of officers by the Lord Lieutenant and the limitation of Service within England’.\textsuperscript{89} Because the practice of substitutes allowed the rich to buy themselves out of direct service, the militia ranks, once intended to be manned almost entirely by the propertied, were now composed almost entirely of the lower orders. As a result, the social base of the Army and the militia had become fairly similar. This facilitated the process of drafting, which was finally legalised by the Local Militia Act in 1808. By this time, indeed, the militia was described as ‘what it

\textsuperscript{86} Fahrmeir, \textit{Citizens and Aliens}, pp. 16-7.

\textsuperscript{87} Speech by Pitt, 27 February 1804, \textit{PD} I, 1155. The \textit{Leicester Journal} also used the term ‘fellow-citizens’ to describe the distressed poor: quoted in Steppler, \textit{Britons, to Arms!}, p. 73. The \textit{Times} also referred to ‘\textit{Volunteer Citizens}’, 7 November 1803, 2(d).

\textsuperscript{88} Western, \textit{The English Militia}, pp. 205, 229. For more on the change in attitude towards the militia see above, pp. 22, 79.

\textsuperscript{89} Sheffield, notes, undated, Sheffield MSS, East Sussex RO, Box 1 (North Pevensey Legion); Selkirk, \textit{On the Necessity of a more effectual system of National Defence}, p. 138.
ought constitutionally to be, the Basis of our National Force’. The days of the exclusively propertied citizen-soldier were over.

By 1803, therefore, the term ‘citizen-soldier’ no longer referred exclusively to the militia, or to an armed property. Like patriotism, it lost its radical connotation as politicians sought a solution to the recruitment problem and lighted on popular military participation. ‘Mankind are creatures of habit,’ argued Pitt.

Attention to military affairs begets a military spirit, and perhaps … it is fortunate for this nation that the spirit for a military life rises in proportion to the extent of those dangers by which a military life is rendered necessary in society.

It became, in short, a symbol of the change the nation underwent in the face of the Napoleonic threat: Britain the commercial country, dependent on its Navy and deeply suspicious of standing armies, had, by 1812, 254,500 regular infantry and cavalry and had a much higher opinion of the value of those forces in general. As the next section will show, however, these changes in terminology were not unproblematic. In the period following the French Revolution, deep-seated changes in political and national identity were not easy for politicians to swallow without a few qualms.

Problems of adaptation

The main problem with these changes in terminology was that they largely reacted to similar changes in the French revolutionary vocabulary. Terms like ‘citizen-soldier’ and ‘military spirit’ had been in common political usage for some time, and there was no accepted definition for any of them. For some, ‘citizen-

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90 Memorandum by ‘JH’, 6 February 1809, Castlereagh MSS, PRONI, D/3030/2984. A similar principle was defended by Canning, 27 July 1807, PD IX, 948-50. In 1799 Dundas had already argued that ‘the necessity of so large a defensive force had been gradually wearing away’, and urged that the militia be used as a recruiting body for the Second Coalition campaigns: speech by Dundas, 26 September 1799, PH XXXIV, 1184.

91 Speech by Pitt, 29 February 1804, PD I, 625. Interestingly, Pitt may have been fundamentally mistaken. At any rate, Gee argues that the fact that the volunteers were not military was their greatest attraction (Gee, The British Volunteer Movement, p. 153).

92 Statistics from Fortescue, The County Lieutenancies and the Army, p. 260. Along with volunteers and militia Fortescue estimates the total British force at 500,000 at this time.
soldier’ still meant either an armed property or the militia on the lines of its 1757 establishment, constitutional dislike of standing armies, and a blending of the military and the civilian. Likewise, ‘military spirit’ could still mean a distrust of commercial luxury, and there doubtless were many reformers who hoped national involvement in defence would lead to great political change. Although the need to defend the nation against invasion did not provoke political divisions, and the arguments for an ‘armed nation’ were advanced by a variety of different people including Pitt, Fox, Windham, Addington, Castlereagh, and Dundas, it is a mistake to argue that the issue had no political impact.93 Some were happy to embrace the changes in British political life heralded by the new international circumstances, but others were less sure. How far should Britain be allowed to alter in response to the conflict, and should the new situation be allowed to dictate her new identity? The main issue in dispute revolved around the role of the much-enlarged armed force that was required to combat a French assault. Did a large standing army now represent ‘the only defence of any modern & civilised state’, or was ‘the Austrian or Prussian system which has failed on the Continent’ best avoided altogether?94

As argued above, there were some who held the opinion that Britain, a commercial and naval nation, could not become predominantly dependent on its military might. They felt that Britain should use her existing strengths to combat France, rather than adapt herself in a manner that was probably incompatible with her true character. ‘It is by commercial pursuits and resources that we must attempt to compensate for the aggrandizement of our ancient rival,’ urged Fox.95 Taking men away from trade, commerce and agriculture was also considered unacceptable at a time when the nation was suffering commercially because of the war and Napoleon’s blockades. Government energy would be better spent if it kept a small but efficient regular force to defend British holdings around the globe, and if it returned to the

93 As does Cookson, The British Armed Nation, pp. 215, 220, 243.
94 Buckingham to Pitt, 28 March 1798, Pitt MSS, Cambridge University Library, Add MS 6958, Box 12, f. 2319; Henry Brougham to Wilberforce, 17 July 1804, Pitt MSS, Cambridge University Library, Add MS 6958, f. 3129.
95 Though he later came to change his mind: speech by Fox, 3 November 1801, PHXXXVI, 81.
original basis of the 1757 militia at home. The Navy would do the rest. In short, Britain should not allow the war to change her character: such a mutation would be ‘delusive’ and would no doubt lead to ‘a sudden & dreadful Calamity’.

On the other side of the debate was a growing body of opinion which held that Britain should be wholeheartedly re-invented as an armed and military nation. Many government ministers embraced this position, with varying degrees of caution. Among them was Yorke:

Such is the state and condition of the human race, that it [military science] must be cultivated, to enable us to defend ourselves effectually against the ambition, the malice, and the envy of other nations. Little would it avail a nation to be eminent and flourishing in all the arts of peace; to excel in agriculture, manufactures, and commerce, and in the sciences connected with, and producing these advantages; to abound in wealth; to possess all the comforts and conveniences of civilised life, if it did not at the same time possess the skill and the knowledge, as well as the power and the spirit necessary to protect itself.

Circumstances had changed and Britain had to move with the times to survive. If this meant a complete redefinition of the national character, then so be it. Advocates of this position scoffed at the arguments that taking men from the fields at harvest-time would lead to famine. Melville, for one, felt that opposing invasion was more important than maintaining the annual farming cycles: ‘What will the Harvest signify if we allow an Enemy either to reap or destroy it[?] If we neglect our defence for the purpose of saving our Corn, … those who stay at home to reap may not be permitted to enjoy’. Many future generations might also have to live with the French menace, and it made no sense to pretend that everything would ever return to the way it had

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96 See Morton Pitt, Thoughts on the Defence of these Kingdoms, pp. 1-2; the marquess of Buckingham to Fitzwilliam, 1 June 1799, Fitzwilliam MSS, Northampton RO.
97 Undated memorandum addressed to Lord Chichester (formerly Pelham) on the defence of the country, after 1804, with particular reference to alterations in naval defence, Pelham MSS, British Library, London, Add MSS 33120, ff. 208-10.
98 Speech by Yorke, 8 June 1801, PH XXXV, 1447-8.
99 Melville, ‘Plan for rendering more effectual the Services of the Yeomanry Cavalry in the internal Defence of the Kingdom’, 1803, Hope of Luffness MSS, Scottish National Archives, GD364/1/1136/3.
been before the war. Britain had been permanently changed by the struggle, and it was time she recognised the fact.

Of course any suggestions of change, at a time when change had such negative connotations in political circles, invited parallels between the French situation and the British. After all, the fact that Britain had hitherto avoided a bloody revolution on the French model was put down to the difference in character between the two nations. Comparisons between them usually found in favour of the former on a variety of counts. This was not unnatural, considering that they were written by Britons, but the points which they selected for purposes of contrast were significant. Alexander Hope described the French as ‘in prosperity full of fire and activity; in adversity desponding and cowardly’, as well as ‘impetuous’ and more reliant ‘upon stratagem than valor’. The British, on the other hand, were ‘sanguine, animated and persevering’, and ‘of a nature too bold and generous to seek conquest by stratagem’.100 Such a sense of ‘otherness’ has provided the backbone for Linda Colley’s argument that Britain’s eighteenth-century identity was forming with the French menace in mind, an argument echoed by a number of other historians.101 And yet there was one aspect of this fascination with the ‘other’ which does not fit Colley’s argument — the tendency, in a war which many considered to be a death-struggle, to select characteristics which contributed to France’s success and adapt them to the British mentality. Charles Dibdin wrote to Addington about attempts to rouse the patriotic spirit of the nation:

The French have always infused a spirit, an evanescent one perhaps, but still a spirit, into their countrymen by the advantage of their national vivacity. At their theatres the spectators join in chorus. I want to produce this effect … [and] to improve ‘ça ira’ into ‘God save the King’.102

In essence, the approach was to learn from the enemy in order to defeat him.

100 Alexander Hope, ‘Military Memoir for the Defence of the Eastern District’, 1797, Hope of Luffness MSS, Scottish National Archives, GD364/1/1083/1 ff. 27-8.
101 Colley, Britons, p. 6; Colley, ‘Britishness and Otherness’, 316, 323, in which she refers to ‘the spectre of the Other’. See also Macleod, A War of Ideas, p. 205; Pittock, Inventing and Resisting Britain, p. 173; Cottrell, ‘The Devil on Two Sticks’, 267.
102 Charles Dibdin to Addington, 6 July 1803, Sidmouth MSS, Devon RO, 152M/C1803/OM/343.
The question was, how apt a pupil Britain should become in the art of warfare. Not everyone was comfortable with the attempts to keep up with the military developments of France, since these had transformed her ‘into a military despotism, which acknowledged no law but the sword’. Would Britain follow the same route if she adhered too closely to her enemy’s example? ‘Shall the mighty beacon, which has been blazing in France for thirteen years, blaze only to attract us to its gulph?’ wrote an anonymous pamphleteer in 1806. ‘I grieve to think, that while the military despotism of France exists, every nation must rely, for the protection of its liberties, not on its civil constitution, but upon its military force,’ regretted an MP in 1803. This fear instilled a degree of caution into successive governments’ approach towards questions that affected the constitution and national character. What was approved in theory did not necessarily translate into practice. Conscription was dismissed as impractical; martial law was considered but only as an emergency measure; even the Levy en Masse Act was suspended because of mass volunteering, though vigorously defended as constitutional in parliament. Yet this was also the period in which the government became more desperate to find comprehensive solutions to the defence problem. Risks were worth taking because the situation was more dangerous, and were also necessary because over-caution could be bad for the government’s image. As a result measures became bolder, the comparisons with France more and more overt, even as successive governments grew weaker and weaker.

The politicians knew what they were doing when they made these parallels. It was a gamble, of course, precisely because Britain had always been paraded as being everything that France was not. France was an aggressive, expansionist, despotic nation. Britain, on the other hand, was traditionally libertarian, defensive, and

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104 Thoughts on Changing the System of National Defence at the Present Moment, p. 27.  
105 Speech by Mr. Burland, 22 November 1803, PD I, 1539. Grenville made a similar point about the connection between military service and despotism in France on 27 March 1804, PD I, 1040.  
concerned about maintaining the balance of power. However it was not forgotten that France herself had successfully repelled an invading force in the 1790s: nor was it lost on observers that the French, as an ‘armed nation’, had been successful in all their undertakings.

Were a French army to land in this country, declaring that they would make no peace with us, till we renounced our constitution and accepted of a form of government according to their fancy, who would deny that every man capable of serving against them ought to be compelled to service, and that every sacrifice must be made by individuals to repel the common danger? Such acts in such cases, instead of tyranny, become a virtue. 

So argued Fox in 1794. The government hoped to achieve much the same effect in the 1800s by a levy en masse on the French model or, failing that, by instilling the conviction that the nation was worth dying for in the minds of ordinary Britons. The difficulty lay in convincing political opponents and observers that the polity could take a little militarism in order to oppose a much greater militarism.

**Military versus civilian**

A more serious issue, however, had arisen as a result of the redefinitions of military spirit and citizenship. The desire to instil a profound respect for the military in the minds of the British people had led to the attempts by Windham and others to restore the reputation of the regular army. At the same time as Britons were being encouraged to defend their country, a parallel opinion was forming that deemed it dangerous to oppose a potential French invasion with anything but a highly disciplined, trained soldiery. The result was an effort to develop a concept of a professional soldier in which the amateur ‘citizen-soldier’, or a citizen who was also a soldier, had no place. This marked the most obvious move away from the citizen-soldier’s radical heyday, when he had stood as a counterbalance to standing armies.

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108 Speech by Fox, 30 December 1794, PH XXXI, 1051.
and Crown influence — a position which, by 1803, had been relegated in parliament to isolated radicals.

The barracks debate cut to the heart of this shift in attitude. Barracks were not, of course, a novelty in the period of the French Revolution. There were over forty barracks in the British Isles in 1792, but these were largely in Scotland and Ireland, or concentrated around the naval centres at Portsmouth, Plymouth and Sheerness, and most of these (with some exceptions during the Jacobite rebellions of 1715 and 1745) had been constructed prior to 1689.109 The growing fear of large standing armies, particularly after the civil war and the Glorious Revolution, led to the military force being dispersed as much as possible. The Mutiny Act of 1689 accordingly provided for the billeting of soldiers all around the country in public houses.110 One of the main advantages of this arrangement was that the soldiers would continue to live among civilians and would, therefore, be much less likely to become oppressive tools in the government’s hands. This position survived into the 1790s, but following the French Revolution the mood turned against the older view that saw no distinct separation between soldiers and people. ‘Jacobinical principles’ seemed to be rife, and the government’s greatest fear, fed by Colonel Oliver DeLancey’s 1792 report on the poor disposition of soldiers billeted in manufacturing areas, was that they would infect the Army.111 Allowing the soldiers to come into daily contact with civilians, many of whom might be influenced by such nefarious doctrines, was potentially dangerous. Besides, as Dundas noted, the crisis offered an unparalleled opportunity to revise outdated constitutional prejudices which could only hinder wartime mobilisation: ‘the Iron should be struck when it is hot’.112 A new Barracks Department was created, with DeLancey as Barrack Master General, and a string of new barracks was sprinkled across the north, east and south, with

109 McGuffie, ‘Billets and Barracks,’ 105; Douet, British Barracks, pp. 5, 7-8, 15; Hewitson, A Soldier’s Life, pp. 9, 12.
110 Douet, British Barracks, pp. 16-7.
112 Dundas to Pitt, 12 November 1792, National Archives, Chatham MSS, PRO 30/8/157/1 ff. 144-53.
further concentrations in the troublesome manufacturing districts. The naval mutinies of 1797 seemed to confirm the Government's suspicion that there was reason to fear the spread of Jacobinism in the armed forces, and the building proceeded apace. By 1797 there were over 80 barracks in Britain, and by 1805 there were over 160, with the capacity to house up to 130,000 troops.

This triumph over constitutional fears of barracking was not effortless, however, and there were a number of acrimonious debates on the issue in parliament. The Foxites took the old ground that barracks represented the first step on the road to tyrannical military rule. They introduced ‘an invidious distinction between a citizen and a soldier in this country, a thing at all events to be avoided, because it was on the union of the two characters that every thing excellent in our military depended’. However, the Foxites were out of step with general public opinion, which (not entirely unexpectedly) was extremely supportive of any attempts to relieve the local population of the need to maintain the soldiery. Despite a Foxite call for nationwide petitions against the building of barracks, none was received. On the contrary, several towns promptly petitioned for barracks to be built in their area. More significantly still, political trends had now moved away from the emphasis on barracks as a threat to liberty. The government’s response to Foxite arguments did take into account the practical relief barracks would give to the billeting public, but it also stressed the change in domestic and international circumstances that made them vital. Windham was, as usual, the most outspoken on the dangers of allowing citizens and soldiers to mix: ‘if they thought that there were men who night and day were preaching up bad doctrines in this country, was it unconstitutional in the government to withdraw the soldiery from being infected by them?’ He was supported by his colleagues in more restrained, but nonetheless significant, terms. Pitt echoed

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113 Douet, British Barracks, pp. 68-9.
114 Childs, Armies and Warfare in Europe, pp. 22, 25; Bowen, War and British Society, pp. 45-6; Johnson, From Bailey to Bailey, p. 2; May, Military Barracks, p. 9.
115 Speech by Mr. Courtenay, 22 February 1793, PH XXX, 485.
117 Speech by Windham, 8 April 1796, PH XXXII, 935.
Windham’s doubts about contact with the undisciplined public leading to insubordination among the military: it was appropriate to segregate citizens and soldiers ‘at a time when the most ill-disposed parts of the community might, with success, instil into their minds sentiments of the most pernicious tendency’. Even more interestingly, Pitt emphasised that constitutional priorities had changed. Foxite arguments against barracks did not address ‘what we ought to do’, but rested ‘merely’ on the fact ‘that the opinion of Mr. Justice Blackstone was against standing armies’. The short-term threat from the French was much more important than maintaining an obsolete political tradition.

As Pitt and Windham acknowledged, barracks did not in any case take soldiers completely out of society. Officers continued to play a role in local affairs, soldiers usually attended the local parish churches on Sundays, and there were numerous cases of intermarriage between the barracked men and local women, not to mention the fact that some billeting continued. Despite this, general discipline was almost certainly improved by the increased use of barracks, which fostered communities in which the rituals of military life dictated everyday activities. As several historians have noted, indeed, the important point was that the rooted political opposition to barracks, and all that they stood for, had been broken. By the 1820s, hardly any of Britain’s remaining domestic force was billeted on the public. The fear that Jacobinism would find its way into the armed services had changed both the constitutional and practical attitude to the quartering of the British army.

The natural corollary to this was that the encouragement of military training throughout the population might put weapons, and the ability to use them effectively, into the hands of republicans and revolutionaries. Such a position was most often expressed by politicians who were not in government, and who worried about the

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118 Speech by Pitt, reported in the Times, 23 February 1793, 2(a)-3(a).
119 Speeches by Windham and Pitt, reported in the Times, 9 April 1796, 1c.
120 Dietz, Garrison, pp. 12-3; Breihan, ‘Barracks in Dorset’, 12; Breihan, ‘Army Barracks in Devon’, 151-2;.
121 Breihan, ‘Army Barracks in Devon’, 151-3; Douet, British Barracks, pp. 1, 34.
extent to which the ‘armed nation’ relied on the goodwill of the people. They were unlikely to have agreed with the assessment of sanguine men like Pitt, who felt that from an army to consist of the round bulk of the people, no man who knows the British character could have the least fear — if it even were to include the disaffected; for, they would bear so small a proportion to the whole, as to be incapable of doing mischief.123

The popularity of the volunteer movement, which encouraged ordinary men to bear arms without being subject to regular army discipline, was deeply troubling to many such observers and did nothing to assuage their doubts about the wisdom of military training. The prospect of implementing the Levy en Masse Act, under which all men regardless of status were to receive such instruction, was even worse. ‘I hope that the Number of Volunteer Offers of Military Service will be so great that there will be no necessity to have Recourse to the arming the People en masse, which may do very well in some Parts of England but I am sure would be most dangerous in others,’ wrote Lord Arden to Lord Redesdale.124 Sir John Macpherson agreed: once the invasion was over ‘it might be asked whether the poorer class so armed would return again cheerfully to their former Labours & Clothing? Whether the Taxes could be easily & regularly raised from a People in Arms?’125 These doubts were fed by the behaviour of the volunteers during the famine of 1800, when many units refused to follow orders to attack their rioting fellow citizens. In Devon and Cornwall several units joined the riots themselves.126 It was an uneasy reminder of the danger of entrusting arms to a nation just emerging from the suspension of Habeas Corpus and a string of other oppressive measures designed to maintain control from above.

123 Speech by Pitt, December 1803, PD I, 1644.
125 Macpherson to Hobart, 1 September 1803, Hobart MSS, Buckinghamshire RO, D/MH/Hiwar office)/Bundle G/1191.
Under these circumstances, the traditional associations between the ‘citizen’ and the ‘soldier’ unravelled even further.

At the same time as the connection was being loosened between soldiers and citizens, the professionalisation of the regular soldier was experiencing a significant boost. The practical reasons behind the unwillingness to implement conscription made the government eager to increase voluntary recruitment into the Army by improving the image of the regular force. The series of Army reforms undertaken by Windham in 1806, and by the duke of York as commander in chief from 1794 to 1809, were an integral part of this process. Until 1806 soldiering was effectively for life, or until a soldier could be pensioned out of the Army at the end of his useful career, but the Army’s low reputation meant that they were often viewed as lesser creatures, ‘vagabonds, and even criminals from the jails’, ‘collected from the dregs of the people’, who were in any case unfit to be citizens.\textsuperscript{127} One of the priorities of the campaign to raise the stock of the Army was to change this attitude. Although no longer recruited exclusively for life, soldiers were encouraged to continue with the lure of greater bounties and stronger pension schemes at the end of an extended career. With Windham’s backing, the solution to the manpower problem became ‘a general improvement of the conditions of the service in such a way as should not be attended with too great an expence, nor be inconsistent with the discipline and well-being of the army’.\textsuperscript{128} As he explained, ‘the general principle is to raise the value and estimation of the service, and to attract the soldiers to it, as well by the credit in which he sees it held, as by the advantages which he may expect to find there’.\textsuperscript{129} The profile of the armed services may have been damaged rather than improved by continuing military defeat and continental isolation, but from 1792 onwards the professionalisation of the service was increased by the regularisation of the

\textsuperscript{127} Dirom, Plans for the Defence of Great Britain and Ireland, p. 127; Worthington, An Address to the Rt. Hon. William Windham, p. 69; Morton Pitt, Thoughts on the Defence of these Kingdoms, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{128} Speech by Windham, 22 July 1807, PD IX, 893. A similar plan had been considered in 1803, by which ‘a better sort of men will enter into the service’: memorandum, 27 February 1803, Chatham MSS, National Archives, London, PRO 30/8/243 ff. 118-23.
\textsuperscript{129} Memorandum by Windham, 27 March 1806, Correspondence of George III IV, 416-9.
drillbooks, compiled by tried and tested Army officers and bearing the official cachet of the commander in chief.\footnote{Spence, \textit{The Birth of Romantic Radicalism}, pp. 118, 123. For the drillbooks, see Houlding, \textit{Fit for Service}, pp. 242-51.}

A consequence of this increase in military expertise, however, was that armed service was placed out of the reach of ordinary citizens. The volunteers, and even the militia, were increasingly viewed with contempt because of attempts by the politicians to pass them off as ‘real soldiers’ when they could never be anything more than ‘a sort of \textit{military carnival}’.\footnote{Worthington, \textit{An Address to the Rt. Hon William Windham}, pp. 108-9.} In some ways this was ironic, since some of the Army reforms seemed to be designed to strengthen the bond between soldiers and citizens. Windham had even envisioned giving old soldiers the franchise as a reward for life service, which suggested a direct link between soldiering and political participation of the kind traced by Colley and others.\footnote{‘I should have liked that we could have considered the question of allowing among our privileges to soldiers a right of voting in their county’: Windham to Grenville, 1 April 1806, Dropmore MSS, British Library, London, Add MSS 58930, ff. 75-6. Brigadier General Stewart had made a similar proposal in his \textit{Outlines of a Plan for the General Reform of the British Land Forces}, p. 31.} Yet Windham had been one of the foremost exponents of separating soldiers and civilians during the 1790s. What he was trying to do in the 1800s was not to foster the original idea of a citizen-soldier but to accustom the population to the idea of soldiering as a career, and to give them added incentives to pursue it. His proposals were, in fact, in tune with a growing assumption from 1803 onwards that citizens could not be soldiers by definition.

The nation’s experience of volunteering was part of the reason why its critics, including Windham, found such a separation attractive. One of the great debates over the usefulness of volunteers touched on the ability to discipline them, since they were not subject to martial law except in cases of invasion or rebellion. There were frightening tales of volunteers resigning in mass, refusing to implement unpopular orders, using their meetings to discuss political events, and electing their own officers.\footnote{For example there was an incident in 1804 in Melton Mowbray when a whole corps of volunteers refused to obey an incompetent officer, for which they were dismissed as a body: Steppler, \textit{Britons}, to}
obvious, that they must occur to the most ordinary understanding,’ The Anti-Jacobin Review stated.\textsuperscript{134} Grenville was beside himself:

> The project, contained in the papers circulated to the Lords Lieutenants, that of inviting day labourers & working manufacturers ... to arm themselves ... under leaders chosen by themselves from among themselves, was received in this County ... with ... marked disapprobation — nor can I conceive how there can be two opinions on the subject, out of that wise assembly called His Majesty’s Cabinet Council.\textsuperscript{135}

Windham in particular opposed the kind of volunteering that mixed soldiering with politics. He fulminated against ‘bodies of armed men, subject to no regular authority, governed by committees and sub-committees, and having more the character of debating societies than schools of military discipline’.\textsuperscript{136} The experience of the 1790s, in which lower class political debate had been actively discouraged by government policy, was not forgotten, and the volunteers were frequently drawn from the lower class and manufacturing towns. To have armed bodies deliberating was the politician’s worst nightmare. What was needed to defeat the French was not large bodies of civilians who were free from central control, but a regular army that was not politically active and responded to strict rules of discipline.

Real soldiers were therefore better than volunteers and perhaps even militia because their exclusion from the rights of citizens made them more reliable and easier to control. Although they had to abandon their own citizenship in order to be subject to martial law, they defended the country on behalf of those who could themselves never truly be soldiers. Naturally enough, the military men were most adamant on this point. A pamphlet written by one argued that ‘the creation in time of danger of an amphibious force partially partaking of the military character, but incessantly maintaining the nature, and appuying [sic] itself on the rights of the

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\textsuperscript{Arms}\textsuperscript{1}, pp. 74-8; Fortescue, \textit{The County Lieutenancies and the Army}, p. 199; Bohstedt, \textit{Riots and Community Politics}, pp. 50-1.
\textsuperscript{134} \textit{Anti-Jacobin Review}, XVI, 3 (November 1803), p. 333.
\textsuperscript{136} Speech by Windham, 9 December 1803, \textit{PD I}, 1691.
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citizen, is … a body affording no real protection to the state’. Because martial law and discipline played such a strong role in creating the soldierly mind, citizens could never really be soldiers. This dichotomy had already appeared at the time of the naval mutinies in 1797, when the Morning Post had reported of the petitions sent in by the seamen, ‘Upon reading them we are led to suppose they are the production of Citizens deliberating their rights as Members of Society, rather than as the production of men armed for war, and necessarily put under martial law’. Volunteers could never be effective military men

because they ever must continue half labourers, half farmers, half mechanics, half tradesmen, half gentlemen, &c — and they can never be so adroit, and so productive as they would otherwise be, in these latter capacities, because, they are besides obliged to be half soldiers.

The debate over what made the regular better than the auxiliary gradually led to the emergence of the ‘perfect soldier’. He was no vagabond peeled off the streets: if he ever had been, he had since cleaned up his act.

Firmness, steadiness, perseverance, endurance: these are the characteristics of the British soldier; zeal, alacrity, and enterprise; these are the characteristics of the British officer; common to both are loyalty and fidelity without a stain, combined with the most fearless and determined courage; the ancient and hereditary bravery of the British and Irish nations; ‘the unconquerable mind, the spirit never to submit or yield’.

The perfect soldier acquired his prowess by a number of means which were out of reach for the volunteer and militiaman: service abroad, exposure to danger, and the habit of obedience. Windham described him as follows:

There is, moreover, a sort of soldier character, arising from a thousand causes, and acquired insensibly in the course of regular service, which will easily be distinguished by discerning eyes, and

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137 Wilson, An Enquiry into the Present State of the Military Forces of the British Empire, p. 10.
138 The Morning Post, 22 August 1797, 2b.
140 Speech by Yorke, 8 June 1801, PH XXXV, 1449.
will furnish in general a marked discrimination between the militia soldier, and the soldier of the line. \(^{141}\)

This character, in essence, was what prevented the militia and the volunteers from being of any practical use at all. As a citizen police force they might serve well enough, but as an armed force they lacked the ‘character’ the Army had acquired in abundance through discipline and service. Volunteers were commanded by ‘no community of habit or sentiments, but that of the general danger’. They were simply taught ‘a sort of mimicry of military evolutions’: they lacked ‘the military character’. The same was true of the militia: Cornwallis thought that ‘the same sense of subordination, and an equal zeal and energy, cannot be expected from the officers in general of troops of this description, as may be naturally looked for amongst those who have chosen the army as their profession’. \(^{142}\)

The emphasis on discipline and obedience, indeed, suggested that to transform a citizen into a soldier at all was to question the British constitution’s basis of liberty and freedom. ‘A sacrifice of a greater portion of the personal liberty of individuals is necessary in the profession of a soldier, than in any other of the employments of civil life; for without that sacrifice the army could not for a moment be kept together,’ said the Anti-Jacobin Review. \(^{143}\) The soldier was compelled to obey, whereas the citizen cherished his independence of thought. The implications of this were significant. If citizens could not be soldiers, then it was pointless to encourage volunteering and to continue expanding the militia. Military spirit raised the profile of the Army and accustomed people to the idea of joining it, but it failed in its purpose if it encouraged citizens to believe that they could dispense with the Army altogether. The best solution under these circumstances was to maintain the militia and volunteers on the basis of property — effectively their original foundation — and to encourage the growth of a professional soldiery by recruitment, ‘the most

\(^{141}\) Speech by Windham, 20 June 1803, PH XXXVI, 1612-3.

\(^{142}\) Cornwallis to Portland, 1 November 1800, Cornwallis Correspondence III, 299-300; Stewart, Outlines of a Plan for the Reform of the Land Forces, p. 13; Reflexions on the Invasion of Great Britain, p. 14.

\(^{143}\) Anti-Jacobin Review, VI, 3 (July 1800), 265-6.
valuable portion of our military force'. This was the path pursued by Windham and, eventually, by Castlereagh.

Perhaps the closest one could come to a real citizen-soldier was the light infantryman, who mixed the citizen’s independence and quickness of thought with the soldier’s disciplined action. The light infantry were expected to think, unlike most other soldiers who were just expected to follow orders. It was no accident, perhaps, that most of the professional soldiers who considered the subject of the volunteers preferred to train them up as light infantry rather than to act alongside soldiers of the line, since such training was supposed to be more fitting for their character as a force. ‘I hope then to see the men taught all the duties of light troops … as well as to act with steadiness and correctness in extended lines and deep columns,’ wrote a supporter of the volunteers in 1806. The qualities of the light infantryman were considered perfect for the citizen who wanted to become a soldier, as it placed the emphasis on individuality rather than on working as part of a highly-disciplined body. This was presumably also why the development of a regular light infantry force was politically controversial, particularly since it required a much stronger move in the direction of the French Revolutionary style of skirmish fighting than the British Army, brought up on Prussian drill, was ready to undertake.

This move towards reliance on a stronger regular force, and the downplaying of the auxiliaries, did have one particularly unpleasant consequence. The growth of a large professional army obviously entailed problems for demobilisation once the war was over. Sooner or later the military man would have to be rehabilitated into society, and a strict separation between soldiers and citizens would be an economic

\[147\] A Defence of the Volunteer System, p. 34.
disadvantage in this case. The soldier was ‘as little fitted, or rather as much unfitted, by his habits, for any other profession, as he who has been bred a weaver is for the trade of a shoemaker or a carpenter’.\footnote{A Vindication of Mr. Windham’s Military Plans, p. 64.} The need to deal with a sudden influx of professional fighters after 1815, who were largely unskilled to deal with everyday tasks, was one of the more serious problems faced by the postwar government. Perhaps these issues could be ascribed to lack of forethought on the part of the policy-makers, but they could not be expected to foresee the eventual defeat of Napoleon on the continent, not while potential European allies held aloof. The peace of Amiens had already shown that a large professional force would probably be needed even in peacetime. In 1806 a memorandum recommended that the organisation of the regulars ‘ought to be formed with a view to Peace as well as War’.\footnote{Westmorland, memorandum on the armed forces, February 1802, Hobart MSS, Buckinghamshire RO, D/MH/H(war office)/Bundle G/I46; notes on the army, probably 1806, by Castlereagh, Castlereagh MSS, PRONI, D/3030/2049.} In theory, Britain might always need a large fighting body, as a result of which the economic question might never arise. The prospect of future unemployment for the vast army that was being created was a secondary problem for politicians who saw it as their main task to find a solution to the immediate manpower problem. From their vantage-point, the future seemed to call for military, rather than industrial or commercial, prowess. Their policies for Britain’s defence, and their language on the subject, reflected this conviction.

**Conclusion**

Crucially, none of the objections to the political defence programmes challenged the idea that Britain had to become more militaristic in the face of the French threat. There might be differences over how military spirit was to be encouraged in practice, but the need to cultivate it was not in doubt. ‘The question is not now whether we shall become a military nation,’ an anonymous pamphleteer wrote in 1806: ‘that is already decided: but what sort of military nation?’\footnote{A Defence of the Volunteer System, p. 57.} Very few
politicians denied that the character of the nation had changed, or ought to change, while Napoleon still threatened invasion. As subjects, all Britons had a duty to defend their monarch and their country from attack. As citizens, they also had a duty to protect the political system which permitted them a limited degree of involvement at several different levels. There was, however, no consensus about the kind of defence to be provided. Continental circumstances, and the creation of different kinds of military service, raised the profile of the regular forces to the point at which they could be advanced as the only viable means of self-defence. By 1809, when the defence threat receded due to the achievement of several victories in the Peninsula, the Army had improved both its importance and its reputation. The result was a recasting of ideas about the armed services, British identity, and the practical application of citizenship. ‘The true character of the English People is not only egregiously mistaken by the Enemy, but is even misapprehended by some amongst ourselves,’ reported the Times at the height of the invasion scares of 1803.

We seem to be regarded as a Nation corrupted by wealth, and immersed in luxury; depraved by sensuality; and by indulgence and vanity rendered totally effeminate. There can, however, be no greater mistake. It was always the character of the Englishman, to love his domestic comforts; but no man knows better when and how to resign them. It is true, we are a wealthy, but still we are a moral nation, and are neither sunk in sloth nor sensuality. The courage of Britons has never been found deficient, either by sea or land.\footnote{Times, 18 July 1803, 2d-3a.}

The results of the debate over military spirit, however, were not always clear-cut, particularly since the sensibilities of the government’s supporters could not be trampled wholesale and rough-shod. Political circumstances as well as identities were also changing. After 1801 individual ministries were frequently too weak to push their particular interpretation of how Britain should respond to the invasion threat, and continued military stagnation did not help. The result was that unstable governments found it alarmingly difficult to impose central control at a time when the international situation was deeply worrying. Objections to policy could not
simply be overridden, and yet compromises were often too costly. Part of the solution lay in trying to convince the political nation that the government, rather than anyone else, had the country’s true interests at heart. National defence was a very public concern; ministers recognised this by calling for volunteers, and by reiterating the constitutional doctrine that defence was a duty owed by all members of the state. The fact that politicians clung to the volunteers for so long after the professionalisation of the regulars became more desirable showed how keen they were to emphasise this policy of inclusion. In the end, one of the strongest weapons in their armoury was public opinion. By manipulating this a government could make coercion seem like a compromise and justify strong measures or controversial policies by appealing to the wider audience of the nation. The means by which this was achieved will be the subject of the next chapter.
Chapter Four
Morale and the ‘national spirit’

Britain’s frequent diplomatic isolation between 1797 and 1810 necessitated a predominantly defensive war, a fact which brought the question of national ‘spirit’, or morale, to the front of political debate. Without strategic opportunities on the continent, and persistently threatened with the prospect of a French invasion, the politicians were strongly aware of the ‘call for Extraordinary expedients to animate Public Confidence’ in order to counteract growing dissatisfaction with the aims, length, and conduct of the war.¹ J.R. Western has argued that the government — ‘an active minority surrounded by an indifferent multitude’ — was threatened with mass desertion from groups that traditionally supported it, particularly the county aristocracy and gentry.² It was thus faced with a number of questions which deeply affected the formation of defence policy. How could general confidence be maintained when the war was going badly? How could the government gain sufficient strength to deal with the strong measures it felt were necessary, and how could it persuade a reluctant country to submit to them?

For the politicians the situation was far from ideal. Jeremy Black has argued that, had they confined their war aims to naval and colonial warfare and to preserving the integrity of the British Isles, successes would have been much more marked and low morale would not have been so much of an issue.³ What Black does not seem to realise is that this was precisely the situation the government was keen to avoid.

² Western, ‘The Volunteer Movement as an anti-Revolutionary Force’, 603. Paul Langford and Roger Wells have come to a similar conclusion with particular reference to the circumstances of famine and social unrest, and Hugh Cunningham refers to periods of apathy or even hostility against government which occurred between the bursts of patriotic fervour. Wells, Insurrection, p. 255; Langford, A Polite and Commercial People, pp. 692-3; Cunningham, ‘The Language of Patriotism’, 63.
³ Black, Britain as a Military Power, pp. 288-9.
‘Nothing can tend so much to discourage a nation, to lower their spirit, to damp their expectations, and to defeat their hopes, as a mere war of defence,’ maintained the Anti-Jacobin Review in 1803.4 Yet Britain was on the defensive whether she wanted to be or not. Without any strategic openings on the continent the only way to turn that situation around was for the French to invade, and some were of opinion that this was the best thing that could occur: not only would the deadlock finally have been broken, but the nation would also have been given an opportunity to prove its valour.

‘I don’t like to gasconade on the subject, but I am confident … an attempt to invade us two months hence is an event devoutly to be wished,’ Dundas wrote to Grenville in 1798. ‘Without such an attempt the relative strength of the two countries, and the independence and invulnerability of Britain never will be sufficiently ascertained either to our own satisfaction, or to that of the enemy, and the rest of the world.’5 Pitt echoed the sentiment in a toast attributed to him as Colonel of the Cinque Ports Volunteers in 1803: ‘A speedy meeting with the enemy on our own shores!’6 No-one spoke of the possibility of defeat, of course.

A large part of the politics of national defence, therefore, focused on the domestic mood. The result was an emphasis on issues such as participation and trust. This may seem surprising considering the dread with which ministers contemplated the spread of revolutionary ideas within Britain. Nevertheless, they went out of their way to stress the inclusiveness of the political system, a strategy that it was hoped would increase national confidence and defuse any protests against high-handedness and wartime blundering. Their emphasis on involvement becomes less startling, perhaps, when one recalls how many politicians were convinced that Britain’s citizenry was profoundly attached to a polity that guaranteed them an integral place in the social hierarchy. Military participation — volunteering, for example — was only part of a bigger picture of national endeavour, and those who could not themselves take up arms in defence of their country were encouraged to channel their

4 Anti-Jacobin Review, XVI, 3 (November 1803), 335.
5 Dundas to Grenville, 5 January 1798, Dropmore MSS IV, 48.
6 Bryant, Years of Victory, p. 67.
enthusiasm in other ways. This quintessentially British ‘spirit’, it was hoped, would enable the nation to oppose the French to the last breath, and would eventually allow more offensive strategies to be undertaken abroad by fostering confidence on the home front. Meanwhile, the lack of continental opportunities meant that any excuse to extol Britain’s spirit of bravery, enterprise, loyalty, or self-sacrifice was exploited to the full. According to Sheridan, ‘the spirit of the people’ was ‘above all’ an expression of national might. The picture that emerged from parliamentary debates, periodicals and private correspondence was of a country capable of great things if only it could forget its political and social differences. Despite occasional twinges of pessimism, the picture was outstandingly upbeat. The difficulty lay in finding a scheme of defence which was sufficiently inclusive to override the effects of growing government weakness and increasing doubt about the course of the war.

The first half of this chapter will deal with the ways in which governments between 1794 and 1812 sought to maintain the national ‘spirit’. Pitt’s fostered a broadly inclusive version of national defence in which most social groups — and on occasion both genders — could take part. This vision of defence was buttressed by a system of propaganda through the medium of reported speeches, officially sanctioned papers, prints, pamphlets, periodicals, and energetic efforts (which sometimes backfired) to blacken political opponents as much as possible. Although there were very few military victories in the period, the government drew attention to successes at sea and in the colonies, while even abortive offensives closer to home — such as the frequent attempts on the French coast, and attacks on the invasion flotilla at Boulogne — were mined to their full potential. Finally, the government’s talent for making the best of a bad situation was nowhere better exemplified than in the treatment of the public finances. Despite the uncertain impact of war on the national economy, and despite the bank crash of 1797, the annual budget speeches provided an excellent opportunity to reassess the nation’s strength, and even heavy taxation
was used to demonstrate the indomitable spirit of the British in the face of overwhelming odds.

The second part of the chapter will examine the limitations of these attempts to raise morale during a long, costly, and exhausting war. Though the cultivation of national ‘spirit’ was enough to carry Pitt and Addington through some difficult patches, declarations of trust from about 1803 onwards were alarmingly one-sided due to growing instability and the rise of domestic problems that distracted attention from the war effort. The occasional foray against the French coast could not conceal the fact that defensive warfare was a draining experience, and there was little opportunity to turn attention away from political weakness. Addington’s and Pitt’s inability to harness the continental situation effectively, the Talents’ decision to husband resources, and Portland’s and Perceval’s shaky grip on the political scene, all drew attention to the exaggerated simplicity and insufficiency of attempts to buoy up national sentiments. Neither government nor opposition could shake off a lingering feeling that the social system was straining at the seams, despite boastful declarations in parliament of the mutual bond between governors and governed. The politicians had effectively lost their hold over the national mind, and dissentient thoughts began to be expressed through a resurgence of radicalism. The lack of any headway against Napoleon, when combined with near-bankruptcy, famine, social unrest, invasion scares, and corruption at high levels, fostered the suspicion that Britain was being punished for her sins. This damaged the government’s case to lead the nation almost beyond repair. The consequence was that, even when victories started to roll in from the Peninsula, the Perceval and Liverpool governments found it extremely difficult to regain credibility.

**Propaganda, trust and national involvement**

No ministry could survive so many military defeats and diplomatic setbacks without an effort to turn bad situations to its advantage, and both Pitt and Addington quickly became adept at this. In 1797, Pitt managed to rouse the house of commons into a rendering of ‘Britons Strike Home’, even while fending off accusations of
dishonesty and incompetence brought up by the failure of the latest peace negotiations.\(^8\) His government attempted to cultivate a similar spirit in the nation through the periodical and pamphlet press, partly through printing speeches, influencing press reports, releasing information selectively, and blackening its political opponents. In addition, it attempted to counter accusations of incompetence and high-handedness by giving all citizens a palpable role to play in national defence. This was difficult in the early 1790s, when the threat of revolution was constantly present, but after 1796 it became more acceptable, and by 1803 it was commonplace. By being encouraged to defend itself, the nation would not only discover its ability to resist the French, but would also find that the government had no serious plots to undermine British constitutional freedoms. ‘How could the people entertain any suspicion of a design against their liberties on the part of a government, which did exactly what a treacherous and designing ruler would be most afraid of doing?’ asked Lord Selkirk in 1807.\(^9\)

The press offered one of the best and most obvious ways to influence the nation’s thoughts about the war, particularly since it had already developed a wide readership during the course of the eighteenth century. By 1811 there were 60 papers published in London, 112 in the provinces, 40 in Ireland, and 27 in Scotland. Of the 53 London papers, 17 were pro government, 18 hostile, 15 neutral, and 3 characterised as ‘wavering’.\(^10\) Despite this apparent weighting towards the opposition, the government was in a much better position to convey useful and authoritative information since many of the periodicals in its pay received privileged information, and because of its access to secret service funding. About £5000 a year was spent on hiring a number of pamphlets and periodicals, among them the Times, the Sun, the True Briton and the Morning Herald.\(^11\) In the 1790s the Pitt government

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\(^8\) Ehrman III, 109.
\(^9\) Speech by Selkirk, 10 August 1807, PD IX, 1131.
\(^10\) Gray, Spencer Perceval, pp. 132-3.
\(^11\) Aspinall, Politics and the Press, pp. 68-9, 78-81. The Sun and the True Briton were set up in 1792 under direct Treasury interest. Gayle Trusdale Pendleton breaks that sum down further: £2800 was spent on newspapers, £1000 on press-related expenditures and £875-1637 on individual writers. Pendleton, ‘English Conservative Propaganda’, p. 49.
had a further advantage over the opposition due to the innovatory nature of its journalism. The Anti-Jacobin, for example, was an overt attempt by some of the junior members of the ministry to win support for the war through humour, well-written articles, and the merciless lambasting of Pitt’s opponents. The first issue was published on 20 November 1797 and pledged to reveal the ‘falsehood’ of the Foxite press, which it proceeded to do in a series of misleading but often hilarious articles. The opposition simply could not find a way to respond effectively. ‘I wish as much as you do that some paper were set up against the Anti-Jacobin but do not know whom to spirit up to it,’ Fox lamented to his nephew Lord Holland.¹² In its last issue, published on 9 July 1798, the Anti-Jacobin claimed to have sold 2500 papers which, assuming that some copies of the paper were lent out to neighbours and friends, produced an estimated readership of between 35,000 and 50,000 people.¹³ It was primarily kept up by George Canning, George Ellis and J.H. Frere, but also ran frequent contributions by other subordinate members of the government, and benefited from a number of financial articles written by Pitt himself.¹⁴

Both government and opposition were accustomed to using the press as a means of finding a wider audience for their parliamentary speeches. Rousing orations made at times of great stress were reported in the newspapers, albeit with varying degrees of accuracy. In addition, on very special occasions, a member of parliament would correct a speech especially for pamphlet publication. Once again, the government had the upper hand because of its access to special funds. Ten thousand copies of Pitt’s speech on 31 January 1799 were printed in Ireland at a cost of £5000 from the secret service fund, with the intention of persuading the Irish that a Union

¹² Fox to Holland, 4 March 1798, British Library, Holland MSS, BL Add MSS 47573 f. 21. Until 1794 the Foxite opposition had been able to rely on the organisational skills of Portlandite William Adam, who had secured the Morning Post and the Morning Chronicle for their cause as well as subsidised a number of pamphleteers. O’Gorman, The Whigs and the French Revolution, pp. 15-22.
¹³ Anti-Jacobin 36, 9 July 1798, 282. John Ehrman notes that the average daily (the Anti-Jacobin was a weekly) paper sold only 3-4000 copies, so the Anti-Jacobin readership was quite robust: Ehrman III, 112. Jeremy Black puts the average circulation of a London daily paper at 1500 in 1794, with a total sale of 550,000 per year. Black, The English Press in the 18th Century, pp. 104-5.
would be in their best interests.\textsuperscript{15} The opposition, however, was not behind in pamphleteering. Windham, in particular, had strong connections with the press. He corresponded with pamphleteer Francois d’Ivernois in the 1790s, persuaded Cobbett to back the Grenvillite ‘New’ opposition for a while in the early 1800s, and helped to organise a system of shares to fund the \textit{Weekly Political Register}, which began printing in January 1802. Through these connections Windham was able to have his speeches on defence published several times. In February 1805, for example, he published his speech on the repeal of Pitt’s Additional Force Act, in which he discussed an embryonic form of what would later become the Training Act.\textsuperscript{16}

Despite the fact that such practices were widely accepted, not everyone was completely convinced that the press was useful for the circulation of pro-government information. Once in the public domain, words spoken were difficult to take back and easily misinterpreted. In 1799 Grenville suggested that parliament ought to exert more control over printing ‘for the security of the government, and the preservation of the constitution’. He called the uncontrolled press ‘this intestine ulcer … [preying] on [its country’s] vitals’.\textsuperscript{17} The government did move towards a certain amount of censorship, although at first this was limited to the radical papers. Acts in 1798 and 1799 required printers and publishers to register their names and addresses and to record them on each paper.\textsuperscript{18} These measures allowed the weeding out of some of the more obviously disloyal publications, but did not stop frequent press leaks of vital secret information, obviously a consideration in a war for survival. Many politicians recognised the seriousness of the issue. Yorke complained to Sidmouth in 1806 about the ‘most scandalous & dangerous insertions in the Publick Papers of every movement both Naval & Military, which is made or even ordered, in any of our

\textsuperscript{15} Geoghegan, \textit{The Irish Act of Union}, p. 71; Smyth, \textit{Revolution, Counter-revolution and Union}, p. 154. Another occasional recipient of secret service money was the pamphleteer John Bowles: Vincent, ‘John Bowles and the French Revolutionary Wars’, 394.
\textsuperscript{16} Windham to Grenville, 27 February 1805, British Library, Dropmore MSS, BL Add MSS 58929 ff. 164-7.
\textsuperscript{17} Speech by Grenville, 4 January 1799, 170-1.
\textsuperscript{18} Black, \textit{The Politics of Great Britain}, p. 117; Aspinall, \textit{Politics and the Press}, pp. 38-9. It seems the Act of 1799 was directed primarily at the London Corresponding Society and the United Britons, but that the measure affected all printers.
Ports, or Stations’. His suggested solution was to ‘prohibit all such Publications, in time of War, with the exception only of the usual mercantile Intelligence’.\(^{19}\) Outright censorship does not, however, appear to have been implemented.

The politicians’ ambivalence towards the press was exemplified by the experience of Grenville, who preserved doubts about the dangers and inaccuracy of parliamentary reporting long after the war ended. He complained in 1818 that speeches were taken to be ‘fair representations of the opinions & arguments which they purport to convey’, but this was ‘quite erroneous’, ‘destructive of the truth of history’, and ‘highly injurious to public men’. Grenville believed this was because the reporters misunderstood fundamental issues and acted under the influence of political bias. In such a case, he concluded, it was in fact ‘impossible that such reports can be even substantially accurate’.\(^{20}\) And yet he was heavily involved in the press, first under Pitt, then as head of the opposition, and finally in the Ministry of All the Talents. Ivon Asquith argues that Grenville’s dislike of the press contributed to the Whig party’s disorganised and abortive attempts to gain more printed support after 1810, but Gayle Pendleton points to Grenville’s prominent role in the publication of several government pamphlets in the 1790s. Despite his reservations about speech reporting, many of his speeches on foreign affairs were prepared for publication. In 1801, moreover, he anonymously wrote a series of letters for Cobbett’s Porcupine on the subject of the Armed Neutrality.\(^{21}\) Perhaps it was this first-hand experience which convinced him of the dangers of the press later in life. As great as those risks were, however, Grenville’s example showed that they were obviously worth taking.

Easier to control (although not necessarily more effective) than the use of the press was the government’s habit of portraying the political opposition in an unfavourable light. The Foxites’ numerical weakness in the 1790s, coupled with

\(^{19}\) Yorke to Sidmouth, 28 November 1806, Devon RO, Sidmouth MSS, 152M/C1806/OZ; Hill, The Oxford Illustrated History of the Navy, p. 159. It seems Sidmouth had already considered Yorke’s advice when prime minister, in 1803: Aspinall, Politics and the Press, p. 34.


tactical errors and their association with the reform question, laid them open to attack. The opposition press, particularly the *Morning Chronicle* and the *Morning Post*, was labelled ‘the *Jacobin Papers*’ by the *Anti-Jacobin* and accused of being in the pay of Camille Jourdan.\(^{22}\) Government-sponsored prints went further, and were quick to characterise Fox and his followers as actively traitorous. Gillray, who received a government pension between 1797 and 1801, liked to portray Fox as a *sans-culotte*, either firing at a target which represented the constitution or simply welcoming a French invasion on the shores of England.\(^{23}\) Nor were the Foxites safe in parliament itself, where they were frequently accused of being in the pay of the French, sometimes more or less directly. Opposition arguments were decried as little less than invitations to invasion, which led Fox to complain that this left his followers no role at all in the political process:

> If I complain that one part of the country is weak, I may be told — Take care; you are doing that which is dangerous; you are communicating to the enemy which is the least defensible point of the empire. To whom, then, am I to make the complaint? I wish to know whether ministers are the only persons to be permitted to give advice?\(^{24}\)

Numerous errors of judgment did not help. The eagerness of the opposition’s front-benchers to defend Arthur O’Connor, a notorious advocate for a French invasion of Ireland, at his trial in 1798 was deeply embarrassing. ‘If there is a lower political hell than any we before have witnessed, I think the opposition have found it out for themselves, by their connection with O’Connor and such worthies,’ Lord Carlisle gossiped to Auckland.\(^{25}\) Most damningly of all, the Foxites were unable to respond effectively to such challenges between 1797 and 1802 because of their

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\(^{22}\) *Anti-Jacobin* 18, 12 March 1798, 141.

\(^{23}\) George, *English Political Caricature* I, 3, 35; George, ‘Pictorial Propaganda’, 16; Dickinson, *Caricatures and the Constitution*, p. 17. It should be noted that most cartoons had fairly low print runs: the most successful ones sold no more than 1500, and the average was between 200 and 500. Some were cheaply distributed, however. Dickinson, *Caricatures and the Constitution*, pp. 13-5.

\(^{24}\) Speech by Fox, 3 March 1797, *PH XXXIII*, 20.

\(^{25}\) Carlisle to Auckland, 30 August 1798, *Auckland Correspondence* IV, 51-2; Patterson, *Sir Francis Burdett*, I, 55-6. Roger Wells has suggested that O’Connor may have sounded out the Foxite Whigs on their opinions of a French invasion of Ireland: Wells, *Insurrection*, p. 126.
secession from parliament. The practical message of this secession — that parliament no longer represented the people — had a flavour of treason about it, and this did not go unnoticed with Pitt, who called it ‘as near akin to rebellion as in its most classical use’.26 Although a visible snub against the credibility of the government, the upshot of the secession was that it was easier to characterise the opposition’s intentions as sinister when they were not present to defend themselves, and when their absence itself could lend substance to the taunts. The government took full advantage of this situation.

To some extent, of course, the accusations against the Foxites were nothing more than rhetoric, since aristocratic Whigs seemed highly unlikely to countenance any direct involvement with democratic principles. ‘I do not see how they can well go on together’, Dundas pointed out.27 Despite this, the allegations of opposition ‘Jacobinism’ did have a serious dimension. The names of the people who attended a Scottish birthday dinner for Fox in January 1796 were recorded and sent to Dundas, so clearly the government was eager to know who thought the celebrations worth attending.28 Following Fox’s toast to the sovereignty of the people at a similar dinner in 1798, and for which his name was struck from the privy council, Pitt seems to have become convinced that Foxites and radicals were engaged in a tactical alliance.29 Roger Wells has in fact argued that Pitt was right, and that the opposition was directly connected with the cause of radicalism.30 Whether this was so is questionable, but clearly the government felt the need to watch the opposition’s every move, although it wished to do so without causing an open fuss.

The strategy of attacking its opponents was not, however, without risks for the government, and it occasionally came off worst from direct confrontations.

26 Pitt to Auckland, 11 October 1798, Auckland Correspondence IV, 60; Mitchell, Charles James Fox, p. 142.
27 Dundas to Camden, 29 December 1795, Kent RO, Camden MSS, U840/C235/1.
28 List in the Scottish National Library, Melville MSS 7, f. 100.
29 Ehrman III, 115-6.
30 The lack of any evidence to this effect is, for Wells, a reason for believing it to be the case. In his opinion, Whig papers were ‘weeded’ in order ‘to obscure the certain links between revolutionaries and Whig members of the British Commons and the Irish Lords to avoid a major political explosion’. Wells, Insurrection, pp. 42-3.
Wanton misuse of the term ‘Jacobin’ was likely to be reflected back on those who employed it. Even Pitt was not immune. Sheridan accused him of ‘mimick[ing] the Jacobins’ in 1794, and in 1797 Lansdowne declared that ‘he knew of no such practical Jacobins as His Majesty’s ministers’.

Government members who subsequently passed into opposition suddenly found themselves running the gauntlet of abuse they had themselves meted out only a few years previously. Grenville, who had lambasted the Foxites in the 1790s for their secession, carefully distanced himself from the same accusations in the 1800s when he urged that his ‘New’ opposition only attend parliament on the most important questions. He also found himself accused of near-treason in much the same terms that he had once used with regard to Fox. The Addingtonian ‘Near Observer’ castigated Grenville’s strategies in 1803 as ‘popular and factious’ attempts ‘to intercept the resources of the exchequer’ and spread ‘discouragement and despondency’. ‘Every cry, and every artifice is adopted to discredit the measures of government, and destroy the confidence of the country.’

Unfortunately for Addington, however, the circumstances that had allowed Pitt’s government to benefit from blackening its political opponents were past. A stronger opposition and a weaker parliamentary majority meant that Addingtonian imputations of factiousness were often more harmful to the accusers than to their targets.

By this time, however, the government was less concerned with making itself look good in contrast to its parliamentary opponents. During the last years of the 1790s Pitt had gradually expanded involvement in defence by calling for a range of voluntary subscriptions to finance the war effort, and by expanding participation in the volunteers beyond the rich and propertied. Part of the effect of this broadening of national inclusion was psychological: trusting the people to arm against the external enemy made them feel good about themselves and their place within the hierarchy.

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31 Speech by Sheridan, 28 March 1794, PH XXXI, 107; speech by Lansdowne, 27 March 1797, PH III, 194.
32 Grenville to the marquess of Buckingham, 1 February 1803, Huntington Library, California, Stowe MSS, LIV-12.
33 A Few Cursory Remarks, p. 75.
particularly following the atmosphere of suspicion and paranoia which had existed in the early 1790s.\textsuperscript{34} In any case, by the end of the decade there seemed to be no reason to fear public disaffection any longer. Dundas informed the cabinet that there was less reason to keep regular troops at home because ‘the public spirit [had been] weaned from despondency and disaffection, to a more just confidence in the resources of the Country & in the Character of the Government’.\textsuperscript{35} He hoped that arming the nation would foster a sense of loyalty where it did not already exist. ‘If any man felt the love of [his country], he ought to be put in a situation to defend it. Men got the means of doing so, and he was convinced, that they on that account learned to value their country.’\textsuperscript{36} To make ‘every Man feel that he is bearing a share in the defence and Security of his Country’ was, Dundas felt, just as important as repelling an invasion.\textsuperscript{37} Addington was, however, able to reap the fruit of this revival of trust more than Pitt, whose government was too closely associated with the suspension of Habeas Corpus, the Two Acts, and other harsh measures for such a strategy to be fully convincing.

This did not prevent Pitt from trying new avenues to foster national interest. In addition to arming a broader cross-section of the nation, he was keen to encourage more direct involvement in the government’s financial policy through public subscriptions. The war had greatly increased the level of taxation, and this had obvious implications for social unrest, particularly in the circumstances of the mid-1790s. Pitt was aware of this fact when he suggested to the readers of the Anti-Jacobin that his exemption of the poor from the Triple Assessment was ‘one of its

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  \item According to David French, who writes with one eye on the influence of war in the present, trust is an essential ingredient in the recipe for obtaining public support on matters of defence. French, \textit{The British Way in Warfare}, p. 239.
  \item Secret memorandum by Dundas, August 1800, National Archives of Scotland, Edinburgh, Melville MSS, GD51/1/725/1.
  \item Speech by Dundas, reported in the \textit{Times}, 22 December 1798, 3(b).
  \item Melville to General Vyse, 14 July 1803, National Archives of Scotland, Hope of Luffness MSS, GD364/1/1136/2.
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great recommendations’ as a measure. A more practical way to mitigate the impact of these wartime disasters, he decided, was to encourage all the king’s subjects to subscribe as large a proportion of their income as possible, preferably between a quarter and a seventh, to a ‘Loyalty Loan’ of £18 millions, and in return to receive a favourable rate in the government stocks. This expedient not only recognised the taxpayer’s stake in the polity, but also gave him the opportunity to contribute personally towards the war effort. The Loan was something of a gamble, since it could easily be characterised as yet another means of extorting money from the already heavily-taxed nation. The oppositionist Morning Post admired Pitt’s guts in aiming to extract up to £10,000 from the richest incomes, but concluded that this ‘forced loan’ could only be achieved by compulsion. It was, however, a success without resorting to that. The Times reported that within three hours of the books being opened £8 millions had already been subscribed. To Grenville’s astonishment, even the duke of Bedford, nominal head of the Foxite Whigs, subscribed £100,000. Only three days later, nearly £17 millions had been subscribed, and the books finally closed at eleven o’clock with a total of £18 millions having been achieved. For ministerial supporters, the success of the experiment showed that the gamble had paid off: despite serious financial and military problems, a broad section of the nation was still willing to follow the government’s lead in a crisis.

More importantly still, by encouraging the great and the propertied to exert their leadership, the Loan had shown that Britain’s political hierarchy still worked

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38 The exemptions, Pitt said, would ‘probably include Two or Three Millions of the industrious and laborious part of the Community, Artizans, Manufacturers, and Labourers, who live by their daily earnings’. Anti-Jacobin 5, 11 December 1797, 36-8.
39 Contributors would theoretically receive £122.10s.0d for each £100 subscribed in 5% stock, although in practice this did not occur. Interestingly, John Ehrman notes that Pitt initially toyed with the idea of a forced loan on incomes above a certain level, but abandoned the idea because he did not have access to the kind of data which made the Income Tax possible a year later. Ehrman II, 639-40.
40 Morning Post, 29 November 1796, 2(a-b).
41 Times, 3 December 1796, 2(b).
42 Grenville to the marquess of Buckingham, 2 December 1796, Court and Cabinets II, 351-2.
43 Times, 5 December 1796, 2(c), 6 December 1796, 2(c).
well in spite of the challenge of the French Revolution. It reflected the ideal vision of the social system: the king and the aristocracy leading the way, and the subaltern classes eagerly following. As Pitt recognised, ‘The extent of such a contribution will in a great degree depend upon the effect of Example’. The stress on this kind of national involvement, in which all classes followed the example of the great, was emphatic. The Anti-Jacobin exulted in the fact that

the \textit{Menial Servants of Families} have voluntarily offered a large proportion of their moderate earnings, for the Defence of a Cause in which all Ranks are interested. The \textit{MECHANIC} and the \textit{LABOURER} have proved, that they will exert their slender faculties, and contribute, for the sweat of their brow, to maintain a System which protects their Industry, and secures to them the Fruits of their Labour. The highest and lowest among us, seem actuated by one Principle.\footnote{Anti-Jacobin 14, 12 February 1798, 105.}

By publicly volunteering large portions of their salaries, the ruling classes showed how little they valued pecuniary gain when compared to the well-being of the nation. Aristocrats had shown that they were not simply out to drain the nation of its money by voluntarily giving up the profits they stood to make, either from office or from the war itself. They had also demonstrated their recognition that the war was partly fought to defend their privileged status.\footnote{Times, 3 December 1796, 2(b).} The Loyalty Loan was thus a means to redress a social balance upset by the tenets of the French Revolution.

The Loan’s success moved the government to repeat the experiment in early 1798. This time Pitt encouraged all men in public stations to give ‘not less than one fifth of each Man’s whole Annual Income completed on the largest Scale’ to a fund that was christened the Voluntary Contribution.\footnote{Pitt to Camden, 31 January 1798, Kent RO, Camden MSS, U840/O190A/2.} The triumph of 1796 was not, however, repeated. The \textit{Times} regretfully reported that nobody at all subscribed on

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\item[44] Pitt to the Governor and Deputy Governors of the Bank of England, 30 November 1796, Cambridge University Library, Pitt MSS, Add Ms 6958 Box 10 no 2018. A similar opinion on the role of the upper classes was expressed in regard to volunteering. The \textit{Times} urged the nobility to lead the volunteer movement in 1798 ‘as we know that example is better than precept’: \textit{Times}, 12 April 1798, 2(a-b). An anonymous pamphlet argued in 1803 ‘that it is by the example of the rich, and the courage of honourable men, the country will acquire fresh glory’: \textit{The Country in Arms}, p. 1.
\item[45] Anti-Jacobin 14, 12 February 1798, 105.
\item[46] Times, 3 December 1796, 2(b).
\item[47] Pitt to Camden, 31 January 1798, Kent RO, Camden MSS, U840/O190A/2.
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the first day.\footnote{\textit{Times}, 17 January 1798, 2(d).} A month later only £730,000 had reached the books.\footnote{\textit{Times}, 17 February 1798, 2(c).} By mid March the total had crept to just over £1 million.\footnote{\textit{Times}, 13 March 1798, 2(b).} The \textit{Morning Post} was delighted that the Contribution appeared to be stillborn. ‘How different the present from the mobbing scene of the Loyalty Loan!’ it crowed. ‘Where now the hundred thousand, and the fifty thousand men who so eagerly pressed for admittance? Where now the disappointed hundreds on the completion of the eighteen millions loyalty subscription?’\footnote{\textit{Morning Post}, 18 January 1798, 2(a), 22 January 1798, 2(c).} Part of the reason for the failure was that the Contribution seemed less voluntary to many than its name would suggest. Pitt spent much time and effort trying to convince various government members, including the king, to contribute generously, and many took offence. Grenville wrote to his brother Buckingham that he was against ‘the idea of raising public supplies by voluntary contributions, and still less by contributions soi-disant voluntary, but in reality extorted by popular clamour and prejudice’. Buckingham himself worked himself up into one of his periodic furies at Pitt’s proposal that he should give up his wartime sinecure emoluments for the national cause.\footnote{Grenville to the marquess of Buckingham, 2 February 1798, \textit{Court and Cabinets} II, 387-8.} Although the money required was eventually raised, the Contribution was less effective than the Loyalty Loan, not because it created less of a financial return but because it failed to bring forward a willing aristocratic body to set an example of self-sacrifice.

Like the Loyalty Loan, what the Voluntary Contribution did achieve was to encourage a broader cross-section of society to participate in defence. The fact that women, for example, were actively encouraged to donate was significant. Colley has argued that a broader kind of participation evolved during the period of the French Revolution in which women could be included, since definitions of citizenship had moved away from an emphasis on owning land or bearing arms (the latter an exclusively male domain).\footnote{Colley, \textit{Britons}, pp. 273-4.} Women were, of course, still barred from joining the volunteers and were not encouraged to bear arms even at a domestic level, although
the women of at least one town petitioned Addington to allow them to be armed with pikes to protect their children and homes from invasion.\textsuperscript{54} Financial contributions, however, were another matter altogether. The \textit{Times} called in 1798 for the opening of a special book to receive ‘\textit{Female Voluntary Contributions}’, by which means ‘our fair Countrywomen’ could ‘without quitting their fire-sides … contribute to the defence of their country’.\textsuperscript{55} Whether women were able to participate in the Voluntary Contribution or not, they were certainly encouraged to donate to Lloyd’s Patriotic Fund, which opened a special subscription on their behalf (though it limited the contribution to two guineas each).\textsuperscript{56} If they could not yet take up arms to defend their country, financial contributions to aid the war effort provided an opportunity for marginal groups, including women, to assert their role in national defence.

Ultimately, both the Loyalty Loan and the Voluntary Contribution fulfilled their immediate purpose. When Pitt reviewed the finances of the 1798 parliamentary session in an anonymous \textit{Anti-Jacobin} article, he noted that a £15 million loan had been undertaken on the security of the proceeds from the Triple Assessment combined with £1.5-2 million from the Contribution.\textsuperscript{57} More importantly, a precedent had been created of appealing to the whole nation, not just to the aristocracy or the propertied, in times of stress. Retrospectively, the two subscriptions were taken as indications of national support of government policy. Yorke’s notes in defence of the war against revolutionary France, drawn up in 1802, noted that ‘the Nation at large supported it by pecuniary Subscriptions’.\textsuperscript{58} Even if these contributions did not translate directly into support for the war, the success of the Loyalty Loan, and to a lesser extent the Voluntary Contribution, seemed to show that the nation was willing to shoulder enormous burdens when the monarch and the aristocracy showed the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{54} Petition from the women of Neath, 19 September 1803, Devon RO, Sidmouth MSS, 152M/C1803/OZ/94.
\item \textsuperscript{55} \textit{Times}, 24 February 1798, 3(b).
\item \textsuperscript{56} \textit{Times}, 15 August 1803, 2(d).
\item \textsuperscript{57} \textit{Anti-Jacobin} 35, 2 July 1798, 273-6. According to Ehrman, the total was in fact just over £2 millions: Ehrman III, 107-8.
\item \textsuperscript{58} Address to the Freeholders of the County of Cambridge, 20 July 1802, British Library, Hardwicke MSS, BL Add MSS 35687 f. 174.
\end{itemize}
way. This was an extremely comforting notion for the governing classes throughout a long war, particularly since British victories were few and far between.

**The impact of victory**

Pro-government propaganda was worth very little without periodic military or naval victories to buttress the national mood, and by the time of the Voluntary Contribution in 1798 the Pitt government had become uncomfortably aware that a defensive war provided very few opportunities to raise morale and faith in official policy. Such a war was not all bad, of course. It at least focused on matters dear to the hearts of Britons, whereas an overseas war was popular only if the victories came pouring in, and this was not generally the case prior to 1809. Pitt himself was strongly aware of the benefits of focusing on domestic matters at times of diplomatic isolation. He wrote to Grenville in April 1798 of his doubts about rushing too precipitately into another continental campaign at the height of a fresh invasion scare:

> I think I see many symptoms of the spirit of the country awakening so much on the idea of meeting and defeating invasion, that I doubt much whether they would like to exchange the prospect of that conflict for a remote and perhaps lingering war, supported for a longer period and without a decisive issue, at our expense.\(^ {59}\)

If victory was desired, however, the government could not afford to look inwards all the time. The balance between defence and offence was a delicate one to strike. Defeat could be disastrous, but the government could only benefit from the effects of a well-publicised victory. Dundas regretted the need ‘to husband the resources of the Country’ in a war that was ‘almost exclusively ... for the defence of Great Britain & Ireland’. As a result, he was unable as secretary of state for war to propose any offensives that were likely to produce any éclat.\(^ {60}\) Relying purely on defence was most likely to attract opposition accusations that the government was

\(^{59}\) Pitt to Grenville, 7 April 1798, Dropmore MSS IV, 167.

\(^{60}\) Dundas to Pitt, 10 February 1798, Cambridge University Library, Pitt MSS, Add MS 6958 Box 12 no 2300.
too weak, or too foolish, to pursue a more offensive strategy. Addington’s ministers were attacked for resting ‘their reputations upon their devotion to security’, the ‘idol’ to which they had supposedly ‘sacrificed’ too many opportunities for killing blows.\(^{61}\) A pamphlet written in 1806 attacked Pitt’s government for the same sin: ‘They seem to have considered the attainment of a precarious security, as the utmost boundary of their humble ambitions’.\(^{62}\) The problem was how to keep the nation’s spirit from draining away into apathy, without relying too much on unattainable campaigns or being over-cautious.

Britain’s difficulties in fielding an armed force anywhere on the continent meant that, until 1809, the value of any victories was offset by the fact that they were often of small strategic importance with regard to the war in Europe. This was particularly the case with naval victories, which confirmed British superiority on the seas but achieved little else. Fox agreed with Pitt that the Navy’s efforts were ‘glorious’, but struck a note of realism: ‘with respect to the continental War [they] will, I suspect, have no influence whatever’.\(^{63}\) Colonial victories were similarly limited in impact, particularly in the West Indies, India and the Mediterranean. The string of successes in the West Indies in the mid-1790s were mined to their full potential, but could hardly distract attention from the deadlock on the continent.\(^{64}\) Nor could colonial successes counterbalance the effects of defeat, as the disastrous South American expedition to Buenos Aires in 1806 demonstrated all too well. Because of this, naval and colonial victories had much more of an impact on morale than on strategy. This was not necessarily a bad thing, particularly at times of continental isolation. ‘I look upon the fact of a military victory obtained by numbers which cannot have been very superior, as much more important than even the reconquest of Egypt,’ Grenville declared to his brother Thomas following the news of the victory at Alexandria in 1801. ‘I trust that all these successes will give

\(^{61}\) [Ward], A View of the Relative Situations of Mr Pitt and Mr Addington, pp. 84-5.


\(^{63}\) Fox to Fitzwilliam, 11 November 1805, Northampton RO, Fitzwilliam MSS, Box 1805.

\(^{64}\) See, for example, the king’s Speech, 6 October 1796, in which the colonial victories were acclaimed while the continental fortunes were dismissed as ‘various’. PH XXXII, 1175.
stoutness where we fear the want of it’. Victories were usually so scarce that whenever they occurred they often made a stronger impact than was warranted by their importance.

The politicians fully recognised the value of any French defeat, even when they had no long-term strategic significance, and made several efforts to commemorate them. A political decision to commemorate military and naval heroes in St. Paul’s in 1795 had produced the commission of twenty-six statues by 1816. Holger Hoock has argued that the government aimed to foster patriotism and a desire to emulate military and naval heroes through the construction of public monuments, from the military ‘pantheon’ in St. Paul’s to an (unimplemented) ‘Dome of National Glory’. This ‘state concern with display of national cultural prowess’ was, Hoock goes on, an extension of the war ‘by different means’. Ministers were certainly keen to place value on military and naval service. Part of the 1811 Regency Act, which prevented the prince regent from immediately creating peers, had a loophole which permitted him to raise naval and military men to the Lords, a fact which both reflected the value placed on their service and the political kudos to be gained from recognising it. One of the most significant ways in which victories played a part in the raising of morale, however, was the opportunity to put on lavish ceremonials. Scott Myerly points out that the Victorian use of military pageantry to inculcate a sense of national pride and patriotism had its roots in regular, militia and volunteer parades during the Napoleonic Wars. The Thanksgiving celebration in St Paul’s in December 1797, to commemorate the battle of Camperdown, was an excellent example of the way in which ceremony could be used to reduce national despondency at low points of the war. ‘One of the great objects [of the celebration] is

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65 Grenville to Thomas Grenville, 2 May 1801, Buckinghamshire RO, Stowe MSS, D56/1/114.
66 David Bindman has noted that the government used the opportunity provided by military and naval victories to emphasise its ability to defend the nation effectively, with the celebrations of the Glorious First of June as a prime example. Bindman, The Shadow of the Guillotine, p. 65.
68 Hoock, The King’s Artists, pp. 13, 276-80.
69 Rose Diary II, 465.
70 Myerly, The British Military Spectacle, pp. 9, 140, 150, 167-8.
the raising people’s spirits,’ Grenville remarked. The Thanksgiving also stressed the fact that Britain needed no allies on the continent to achieve her goals. As an article in the Anti-Jacobin pointed out, Britain had obtained victory at Camperdown without assistance. The First Coalition had collapsed, but Britain fought doggedly on: ‘In that part of [the contest] in which we have stood alone, our Success has been uniform’.72 Outright continental victory might be out of the question, but at least Britannia still ruled the waves.

Without allies, however, the prospect of a long defensive war, in which the French seemed more keen to exhaust than invade the British, remained discouraging. Under these circumstances the politicians came to favour a pre-emptive strategy by which a number of small-scale assaults were undertaken on the enemy coast closest to British territory. Raids on French soil were not a new idea: they had been resorted to whenever Britain and France were at war at least since the 1690s, when the Royal Navy had bombarded the French ports along the coast between the Channel and the Bay of Biscay. The tactic had been resumed in the Seven Years’ War, during which attacks were undertaken against Rochefort (in 1757) and Cherbourg (in 1758).73 With the return of war in the 1790s, such attacks once again became highly desirable. A large continental war was obviously the best way to distract France from her invasion plans, but, failing that, limited coastal raids could prevent her from consolidating her forces for an assault on British soil. Terrorising their shore would occupy the French and would keep the Royal Navy active and alert. Such activity was distinct from the British offensives on behalf of the Bourbon monarchy during the 1790s, including the capture of Toulon in 1793, the landing of French Royalist forces in Quiberon in 1795, and an abandoned proposal to fund a further Royalist invasion in 1800. Although Windham remained convinced that ‘a radical cure of the disorder can … never be effected but in France itself’, the ideological statement made by such action was too bold for many of his colleagues, and, at least at the end

71 Quoted in Ehrman III, 109.
72 Anti-Jacobin No 7, 25 December 1797, 49.
of the 1790s, provoked a great deal of cabinet dissension whenever it was brought up.\textsuperscript{74} Coastal raids undertaken purely in self-defence were much less problematic and thus more attractive to politicians who remained unsure about the wisdom of the French Bourbon connection, but nevertheless recognised the need to do something. ‘A demonstration of offensive operations is the best mode of Defence for this Country’, a naval officer told Lord Melville in 1803.\textsuperscript{75}

Upon returning to office as first lord of the admiralty in 1804, Melville informed Pitt of the wisdom of anticipatory strikes against the enemy. He emphasised that they were necessary to prove ‘almost to a moral certainty’ that Napoleon’s project ‘of Invasion from Boulogne by means of a great collection of small armed Vessels assembled there’ was ‘impracticable’.\textsuperscript{76} Pitt agreed, and added that a failed attempt on the enemy coast was almost as good as actual success. He spoke of the ‘highly satisfactory’ attack on Boulogne harbour in 1804 ‘which as an Experiment … tho’ not very important in its immediate Effects is highly so in Impression, and in the Consequences to which it leads’.\textsuperscript{77} In Pitt’s view, it did not matter whether the expedition succeeded or not, so long as the impression was made that Britain was capable of fighting back against French insults.

This emphasis on effort rather than outcome was necessary because so many attempts were made with so little success. One of the first assaults was made on Ostend and Le Havre in May 1798, shortly after the start of a new invasion scare. Although the expeditions were abortive, the Times acclaimed them for demonstrating that Britain had ‘sufficient strength to attack the enemy’s ports, and also to defend

\textsuperscript{74} See also p. 34 above. Windham to Grenville, 17 May 1798, Dropmore MSS IV, 207-8; memorandum by Dundas for the cabinet, 31 March 1800, National Archives, Chatham MSS, PRO 30/8/243 ff. 76-95. The issue of the French monarchy was still undecided as late as 1814-5, when Liverpool’s cabinet hesitated over whether or not to endorse a Bourbon restoration as a part of the peace process. Muir, Britain and the Defeat of Napoleon, pp. 311-2.
\textsuperscript{75} Home Popham to Melville, 6 July 1803, National Archives of Scotland, Melville MSS, GD51/1/68/2.
\textsuperscript{76} Melville to Pitt, 14 October 1804, National Archives, PRO 30/8/157 ff. 272-4.
\textsuperscript{77} Pitt to Sir Alexander Hope, 4 October 1804, National Archives of Scotland, Hope of Luffness MSS, GD364/1/1137/35.
itself'.\textsuperscript{78} Even the opposition papers were inclined to applaud the initiative, however unsuccessful it had proved to be. Another expedition to Ostend in May 1799 drew a rather back-handed compliment from the \textit{Morning Post}, even though a large proportion of the force sent out was captured:

> We shall never shrink, as long as any vestige of a free press remains, from blaming the Minister, where he appears really blameable. But the present measure appears to us to have been boldly conceived, as well as most gallantly executed. … Every wise and vigorous measure for national defence shall command our honest and cordial applause, especially every measure for that most effectual species of defence which consists in annoying and crippling the threatened invader. When we consider the great importance of such enterprises, not only in weakening the enemy, but in supporting our own national spirit, we shall not be disposed to censure them without strong appearances of gross and scandalous misconduct.\textsuperscript{79}

The Ostend campaign’s failure, however, was only the first of many. An assault on Brest took place in August 1801, but reports that Nelson had destroyed French gunboats in the outer harbour were found to have been exaggerated.\textsuperscript{80} Sir Sydney Smith led another attack in November 1805 but once again early reports of his success were rapidly contradicted.\textsuperscript{81} A final attack took place in October 1806, and was equally unsuccessful.\textsuperscript{82} In addition to these efforts there were also several unimplemented plans to destroy the Boulogne invasion flotilla. Melville’s Admiralty papers were full of ideas on the subject, ranging from the mundane — fireships and bombardments — to the distinctly whimsical (windmill-propelled boats, sulphur bombs to burn the invaders’ lungs, balloons to drop lighted matches into the boats).\textsuperscript{83}

\textsuperscript{78} \textit{Times}, 26 May 1798, 2(d).
\textsuperscript{79} \textit{Morning Post}, 25 May 1799, 2(a).
\textsuperscript{80} The bishop of Lincoln to his wife, 4 August 1801, Suffolk RO, Pretyman MSS, HT119/T108/45; \textit{Times}, 6 August 1801 2(b), 18 August 1801 2(a).
\textsuperscript{81} \textit{Times}, 12 October 1805, 2(b), 20 November 1805, 25 November 1805.
\textsuperscript{82} \textit{Times}, 13 October 1806, 2(b).
\textsuperscript{83} All these ideas can be found in MEL/7, Greenwich National Maritime Museum. The sulphur bomb idea was proposed by a C.A. Smith on 30 November 1804. The balloon idea came from an Alexander Gordon, 18 December 1804. A proposal to destroy the Boulogne fleet with rockets was not put into practice, but rockets were used at Copenhagen in 1807 (and in America in 1812). Castlereagh to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, 16 October 1805, Greenwich National Maritime Museum, MID/1/179/10.
Despite all the brainstorming, however, the French invasion fleet remained largely unmolested.

Unsurprisingly, given the high rate of failure, not everyone agreed that this desultory method of attacking the French was desirable. An undated memorandum referred to lightning attempts on the French ports as piracy, ‘the Extreme base of Cowardice’.\(^{84}\) Cornwallis thought such petty warfare, so frequently mismanaged, lessened ‘the awe in which our powers at sea have been held’. Lord Barham, Melville’s successor at the Admiralty, complained that the Navy’s efforts were wasted in ‘this romantic kind of Warfare’, and the king himself doubted the efficacy of the pre-emptive strategy.\(^{85}\) Clearly, also, the opposition had changed its mind since the Morning Post’s acclamation of the Ostend attempt in 1799. Fox thought that Pitt was mad to send an expedition to Boulogne in 1804.\(^{86}\) Disaster could indeed be highly risky for the governments undertaking the experiment. An attack on Walcheren had been meditated for several years before finally being put into action in 1809, but, despite the tactical sense in clearing the Dutch coast of French shipping, the well-publicised failure of the campaign almost proved too much for Portland’s weakened ministry.\(^{87}\) Most politicians continued to believe that offensive warfare, however small-scale, was worth all the potential political and tactical risks entailed. One of Castlereagh’s priorities as secretary of state for war in 1807 was to keep ‘a large Body of Troops and Transports … prepared for service to alarm the Enemy’ at all times, even though it involved an obvious drain on manpower and resources.\(^{88}\)

\(^{84}\) Memorandum submitted to the earl of Chichester, British Library, Pelham MSS, Add MSS 33120 ff. 208-10.

\(^{85}\) Lord Barham to Pitt, 18 November 1805, Greenwich National Maritime Museum, Middleton MSS, MID/240/47; Melville to Pitt, 14 October 1804, Cambridge University Library, Pitt MSS, Add Ms 6958 Box 16 no 3194.

\(^{86}\) Fox to Richard Fitzpatrick, September 1804, British Library, Fox MSS, BL Add MSS 47581 ff. 159-60.

\(^{87}\) For previous discussion of a Walcheren campaign see the memorandum by Dundas, 31 March 1800, National Archives, Chatham MSS, PRO 30/8/243 ff. 76-95, and a letter from Canning to Pitt, 29 November 1805, National Archives, Chatham MSS, PRO 30/8/120 ff. 257-8.

\(^{88}\) Memorandum by Westmorland, undated [1807], PRONI, Castlereagh MSS, D3030/2567. Castlereagh attacked the Talents for diminishing the number of transports available during the year in office from 380 ships with a tonnage of 87,717 tonnes to 73 ships with a tonnage of 16,468 tonnes. British Library, Windham MSS, BL Add MSS 37891 ff. 268-70.
Sometimes, it seemed, it was better for the government to do something badly than to do nothing at all.

**Financial policy and morale**

A less obvious but nonetheless vital, and in some ways less risky, way of rousing the national spirit was through the medium of financial policy and budget speeches. At first glance this appears unusual, since at many periods during the war the financial picture was distinctly gloomy: the bank crash in 1797, the mounting tax burden, and the economic slump around 1810, all seemed more likely to depress than to raise morale. These very factors, however, made it even more vital for the government to raise faith in national solvency, and to convince the nation that it could afford to continue the fight despite such setbacks. It was not a printing error when the *Anti-Jacobin* included Pitt’s plan for redeeming the Land Tax in a list of defence measures compiled at the height of the invasion scare in 1798. The cost charged to the country had to be pitched so as to remain both affordable and sufficient to sustain the increased needs of a defensive war. Rose feared that the steep increase in taxation during the war meant that the country would ‘hardly be brought to bear [new taxes] patiently’. Auckland reminded Pitt in 1796 that the financial situation depended largely ‘on the dispositions of the people to undertake those burdens’. It was thus important to maintain confidence in national resources, and to rouse the people to such indignation against the French that they would happily face steep increases in the demand for revenue. In return, the government had to show that it was dealing with the nation’s finances in an effective and responsible way.

Budget speeches were an excellent platform to turn financial statistics into a matter for national self-congratulation and Pitt, particularly, was a master at making the numbers work for, rather than against, his government. Behind the scenes the

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89 *Anti-Jacobin* 21, 2 April 1798, 161.
90 George Rose to the bishop of Lincoln, undated [1796], Suffolk RO, Pretyman MSS, HA119/T108/44.
91 Auckland to Pitt, November 1796, Cambridge University Library, Pitt MSS, Add Ms 6958 Box 10 no 2021.
government might have been desperately searching for a recipe for survival, but in parliament Pitt’s budget speeches were an excellent occasion for him to give an optimistic spin on the state of the nation. In 1796, for example, he managed to turn symptoms of the imminent cash scarcity into an example of the nation’s financial health: ‘the extent of our trade … had increased a demand for money for the purposes of additional speculations … and had called for a large quantity of medium’. His early approach to war finance was distinctly ad hoc, and it was only around 1797-8 that he ceased to finance the conflict solely through large loans, and attempted to balance these with higher taxation. Such flexibility did, however, give an outlet to Pitt’s creative side, and his financial acumen was one reason why his government maintained political support in spite of harsh measures, the unsuccessful war effort, and backbench rebellions, even after the bank crash in February 1797. The diarist Joseph Farington noted in 1799 that ‘the confidence of Commercial people in Mr Pitt from the high idea they have of his financiering talents is very great’.

Even Pitt’s more unpopular plans gave him an opportunity to appeal to sentiments of national pride and self-sacrifice. These relatively innovative attempts to keep up with the needs of the war took heed of Rose’s and Auckland’s warnings about forcing contributions from those who were not capable of paying. The Triple Assessment, for example, was a sort of proto-income tax which took the amount each person paid under the terms of the assessed taxes as an indication of their income. Pitt took his defence of the measure to an audience outside parliament, and argued in an Anti-Jacobin article that it was ‘most likely to shorten the War, and bring our proud Enemies to reason’. It was, he was convinced, ‘the most effectual and prudent

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92 Speech by Pitt, reported in the Times, 19 April 1796, 2(c).
93 P.K. O’Brien points out that between 1793-8 only 11% of the revenue required for the war came from taxes: O’Brien, ‘Public Finance in the Wars with France’, 181. Richard Cooper suggests that the reason for Pitt’s change of system was high interest rates: Cooper, ‘William Pitt, Taxation, and the Needs of War’, 99.
94 Farington Diaries I, 5 January 1799, 259.
measure that could be suggested at this crisis for the general preservation’. He similarly defended his 1798 Income Tax as a measure created by the circumstances of a defensive war rather than as a mere money-making venture. It had been ‘adopted at a time when the gloom of despondency hung over the minds of the most firm, and when fear and apprehension was to be found among the most loyal’. The consequence of the new Tax, he argued, was ‘that subsequently to its adoption the spirit of the country grew up with rapidity and vigour, its triumphs extended, its good fortune, as it were, revived’. Its disappointing financial returns did not matter to Pitt as much as the fact that it had raised the nation’s confidence in itself.

This idea that a measure was successful even if it made little financial sense was exemplified even more strongly by the Sinking Fund. The purpose of the Fund, created in 1786, was ‘to prevent a farther accumulation of Permanent Debt, such as might depress the Credit and cripple the exertions of the Country’. A £1.2 million revenue surplus was set aside annually to purchase stock, the interest of which gradually chipped away at the national debt. From 1792 an additional sinking fund was established, which used taxes equal to one per cent of the capital of each new loan to cancel it within forty-five years. The Fund had obvious morale implications because its very existence went to prove that the British nation was capable of supporting even the heaviest burden of debt accumulation, and this mitigated fears that the war effort involved the creation of a debt far too large to repay. In practice, however, the Fund relied too much on an annual surplus which evaporated in times of war. It forced the government to rely on further loans to top it up annually, which of course added to the debt it was meant to repay, often at a higher rate of interest. Despite this seemingly obvious flaw, Fox seems to have been one of the only critics in parliament to note that ‘if the revenue fails, the charm of the sinking fund vanishes.

96 Anonymous articles in the Anti-Jacobin, presumably by Pitt, Nos 2 and 3 (20 November, 27 November 1797), 3, 14.
97 Speech by Pitt, 5 July 1803, PH XXXVI, 1664.
98 Anti-Jacobin 10, 15 January 1798, 74.
into nothing’. Even Tierney, the opposition’s main financial expert, attacked Addington in 1802 for apparently deviating from Pitt’s original plan. No-one wanted to be the first to break with it.

In fact the Fund’s single greatest flaw, the political determination to stick with it no matter what, was at the same time its greatest selling point. It was so attractive because it represented a pledge not to throw the responsibility for debt onto future generations, and thus provided taxpayers with a feeling that their money was going towards a visible and defined object. Even though the Fund could not initially pay off the national debt entirely, its very existence would encourage lenders to continue lending, make the interest payments more manageable, and eventually reach a state of parity in which the debt would remain static. Pitt bound his reputation up with the Fund, which he promised to maintain as long as possible, in a speech reported in the Times:

Whatever degree of exertion the urgency of the moment might require for our own safety, for the general interests of mankind and the security of prosperity, … they were not even in that urgency by any possible pressure, to lay aside the necessity of adhering inviolably to that system which was connected with the preservation and security of the country.

The impact of a long war on interest rates, and the lack of the annual surplus formerly used to feed the Fund, did not faze him, since he saw it as the basis of a system for paying off war debts in all future wars. He assumed that the impact of the Fund on debt would raise interest rates and increase the speed with which it could be paid off in peace. Combined with an assumption that the national wealth would double over the following ten years, Pitt concluded that ‘In fifty-six years the whole

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100 Speech by Fox, 25 March 1801, PH XXXV, 1147.
101 Speech by Tierney, reported in the Times, 4 June 1802 2(a).
103 Speech by Pitt, reported in the Times, 12 May 1793, 2(a); Langford, A Polite and Commercial People, p. 643.
old Debt must be discharged’. It was this foreseeable freedom from debt which made the Sinking Fund so valuable, and which persuaded politicians to maintain it.

After Pitt’s death even his political enemies conceived the Fund to be his finest achievement. Backbenchers sometimes went into raptures over it, and one of them acclaimed it as the measure ‘to which the country owed all its prosperity’. The Talents ‘determined religiously to respect’ it upon taking office in 1806, although this came as no great shock to those who observed them embracing the Pittite financial system of balancing loans and increased taxation ‘with zeal’. Even the New Plan of Finance in 1807, which postponed the creation of new taxes for a three year period and fixed the annual war expenditure at £32 millions, preserved Pitt’s wartime finance system more or less intact, including the strategy of attaching new sinking funds to new loans. The Talents’ decision to respect Pitt’s financial memory was partly tactical, since a number of Pittites still saw Grenville as Pitt’s natural successor, but it also reflected the ministry’s mixed ancestry. Ironically it was Perceval, a Pittite, who first altered the Sinking Fund in 1810 when it was discovered that the amount of money raised each year by loan was unlikely to fall below £16 millions. Perceval got rid of the mini-sinking fund that came with each new loan, and provided for their repayment from the war taxes and a secondary loan, each with its own sinking fund attached. The spirit of the system, however, remained, as a symbol of how much more stock the government set by effect rather than result.

104 Memorandum by Pitt on the sinking fund, April 1796. Cambridge University Library, Pitt MSS, Add Ms 6958 Box 10 no 1950; memorandum by Pitt on the sinking fund, undated, Cambridge University Library, Pitt MSS, Add Ms 6958 Box 17 no 3706.
107 Grenville to Auckland, 2 December 1806, Dropmore MSS VIII, 456.
108 Part of this strategy paid dividends. At least one pamphlet, Thoughts on Changing the System of National Defence, evidently written by a Pittite who saw Grenville as Pitt’s successor, praised the Talents for having the wisdom not to attack Pitt’s financial system: Thoughts on Changing the System of National Defence, p. 6.
Continental isolation

The propaganda discussed in the first half of this chapter could, however, only take governments so far. Without any significant victories to back up glowing accounts of the nation’s finances or appeals to national spunk, the likelihood was that Britain would have to maintain the long and exhausting struggle for the foreseeable future. This was an understandably depressing prospect, and it is small wonder that by 1804 many politicians were weary of Pitt’s seemingly unfounded optimism. They preferred Addington because he ‘disdained to trifle with the feelings of the people, by imposing on them a fallacious account of the condition of our finances’. If the government was to avoid the disillusionment involved in a defensive war, the lethargy induced by long periods of inactivity had to be countered.

The problem was that the circumstances of the war meant that defence was a more realistic military option than offence, and not just because the French had an invasion flotilla constantly at the ready. Pitt may have emphasised that in matters of offensive war the attempt was more important than the result, but not everybody was in agreement. Cornwallis, for example, pointed to the ‘enormous’ expense of expeditions, and drew attention to ‘the disgrace attending upon ill success’. A diplomatically isolated Britain was unable to achieve anything beyond her own temporary security, and attempts to achieve anything more ran the risk of making conditions worse for already unstable governments, as demonstrated by the aftermath of Sir Arthur Wellesley’s victory at Vimeiro in 1808. Upon receiving news of the victory the government ordered the guns to be fired at the Tower and there were celebrations in London, where people sang ‘God Save the King’ and ‘Rule Britannia’ in the street. The next day, however, came the news of the Convention of Cintra, by which the French soldiers had been evacuated on British ships with permission to serve again. Wellesley had, it seemed, allowed the French to escape their defeat scot-free. The government got through with great difficulty and survived a

110 Facts Better than Arguments, p. 29.
111 Cornwallis to Dundas, 7 September 1800, National Archives of Scotland, Melville MSS, GD51/1/331/33.
112 Gray, Spencer Perceval, p. 181.
parliamentary enquiry only by making a scapegoat out of Wellesley’s superior officers. In the following year the failure of the Walcheren showed how devastating the ‘disgrace’ of defeat could be for a weak ministry. The new prime minister, Perceval, was defeated in a full house (the first occasion on which this had happened since 1805) on a motion for a committee of enquiry into the expedition, although he later defeated a subsequent motion of censure by a comfortable margin of 48. With the consequences of such defeats in mind, it is little wonder that defensive strategies were more commonly pursued, even discounting the threat of invasion.

Britain’s lack of continental allies was another reason for the emphasis on defence. Diplomatic relations went through several troughs between 1797 and 1799, 1801 and 1805, and 1806 to 1809, or roughly half the time Britain was at war. These troughs usually coincided with the highest danger of invasion, since France had less to distract her elsewhere if Britain’s allies had made peace. Lord Mornington told Camden in 1796 that an invasion was ‘certain, if the French by a separate Peace with Austria, should be in possession of a large disposeable land force, & by bullying & bribery, should become Masters of the Marine of Spain’. It was equally recognised that the threat of a French assault declined during Coalition campaigns. A memorandum on the state of the Army in 1804 remarked that if Britain could manage to cobble together a continental alliance, ‘the Invasion of England in force must be abandoned & a considerable force will be released’. Successive governments fell into a circular situation in which offensive operations were desirable to relieve the pressure on defence, but impossible to undertake while so many troops were required to secure the home base. The frustrations attending this situation heightened a growing feeling that Britain owed little to the continental powers and would be better off defending herself from outside encroachment, or pursuing her own colonial interests. At the end of 1798 Dundas reminded Pitt of the

113 Gray, Spencer Perceval, pp. 183-5.
114 Harvey, Britain in the Early Nineteenth Century, p. 268.
115 Mornington to Camden, 16 August 1796, Kent RO, Camden MSS, U840/C121/2.
116 Memorandum on the state of the army, 1804, Kent RO, Camden MSS, U840/O227a.
risks of a European struggle at a time when the nation felt that ‘every shilling expended is for British security and for British purposes’. By 1806, indeed, Britain’s instinct for isolation seemed to have emerged uppermost, and for two years her politicians pursued a purely defensive strategy. The Third Coalition was considered by the Talents to be the last throw of the dice on the continent. Napoleon’s victories at Ulm and Austerlitz, Austria’s separate peace at Pressburg, and the invasion of Hanover by Prussia, all convinced Grenville that Europe was out of bounds. Although he continued to maintain that a continental war was the only way ‘of getting in any tolerable way out of the difficulties of the contest’, he added ‘that hope must now be renounced’. His policy was to send only small detachments wherever an impression might be made, such as Sicily, Naples, or Turkey, and otherwise to ‘husband’ British financial, commercial and military resources in the expectation of ‘the influx of that overwhelming tide’ from Napoleon-dominated Europe, which in March 1807 Grenville anticipated within two months. The succeeding Portland ministry’s attitude to offensive and defensive warfare seemed at first to bear out Grenville’s assessment that continental warfare was no longer an option. When the issue of an offensive alliance came up the government regretfully decided that it was ‘more advisable, for the interest of the common cause, to remain in force at home’, either to harass the French coast or to defend against invasion. With Austria’s defeat at Wagram in 1809, Britain’s separation from the European powers was complete. There was no formal contact again until 1812-3, by which time Napoleon had begun to falter and the war had

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117 Dundas to Pitt, December 1798, *Dropmore MSS* IV, 433-5.
118 Grenville to Fox, 3 December 1805, British Library, Fox MSS, BL Add MSS 47565 ff. 155-7.
120 Memorandum on military and naval policy, [1807], *Castlereagh Correspondence* VIII, 67-8.
acquired a rather different complexion. Until then, ‘husbanding’ resources and defence took up most of Britain’s wartime energy.

**The spectre of bankruptcy**

There was good reason for this emphasis on resources. Although J.L. Anderson asserts that, far from damaging Britain’s financial health, the war actually maintained employment levels and stimulated development, Jeffrey G. Williamson has argued that a large war debt led to the ‘crowding out’ of capital saving and inhibited industrial growth. Long-term effects aside, the early nineteenth-century financial picture was certainly disturbing to contemporaries. More than £1500 millions were raised in loans and taxes to pay for the wars between 1793 and 1815. Of this amount, nearly £66 millions had been spent on allies, mostly between 1810 and 1815. Expenditure had begun to outstrip revenue. According to Christopher Hall, £29.78 millions was spent on the war in 1804, with a gross revenue of £40.07 millions, whereas in 1813 £70.53 millions was spent on the war set against a gross revenue of £76.69 millions. The total outgoing costs in 1813 approached £95 millions, by which time 25% of the national income was absorbed by government spending. By 1815, despite a limited trade revival, expenditure had risen to £113 millions, and the national debt had grown from £245 millions in 1793 to £834 millions. By 1810 this meant raising £1,350,000 in taxes just to pay off the interest of new loans. Unsurprisingly, from the mid 1790s onwards many feared that the

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121 Sherwig, *Guineas and Gunpowder*, p. 182.
122 Anderson, ‘A Measure of the Effect of British Public Finance’, pp. 611-18; Williamson, ‘Why was British Growth so slow during the Industrial Revolution?’, pp. 687, 689-90, 710-2. Williamson includes a model in which he imagines what British growth might have looked like without the war from 1793 onwards, which is of course completely fanciful. For a review of the financial debate see Bowen, *War and British Society*, pp. 63-4.
124 Hall, *British Strategy in the Napoleonic War*, pp. 15-6. Jeremy Black points out that Britain’s revenue growth was excellent compared with that of, say, Austria, and that it enabled Britain to survive Napoleon’s blockade: Black, *Britain as a Military Power*, p. 269.
real aim of the French was not invasion but ‘keeping us in a state of enormous expenditure’.\textsuperscript{127}

The knock-on effects of financial distress became obvious just before the bank crash of 1797, particularly among the financiers of the City, most of whom supported Pitt’s government. ‘Everybody desponding, & feeling the absolute impossibility of raising a Loan for the next Year’, the banker Lord Carrington wrote to Camden. ‘In short there seemed a Panic, & it was likely to get worse’.\textsuperscript{128} The bank crash itself damaged the government’s parliamentary support, already low after four fruitless years of war and several abortive peace attempts. ‘The attendance is much relaxed & a great many of those who have hitherto supported Government I fear are wavering’, Carrington lamented. Pitt as usual showed remarkable ingenuity in wriggling out of the attacks on his government. Lord Bathurst marvelled at his ability to deflect criticism, but was under no illusions as to the immensity of the problem he faced: ‘I think they are difficulties which Pitt will get over, but which I am satisfied nobody else would’.\textsuperscript{129} There was after all a limit to his verbal dexterity, and Carrington dreaded the day when Britain would discover that Pitt had glossed over one unpleasant fact too many. ‘It will be found I fear that the expences of the year were much understated in the Budget before Christmas’, he fretted in 1796.\textsuperscript{130} The \textit{Morning Post} acclaimed Pitt’s talent of concealing the nation’s real financial situation in a fake letter of congratulation:

\begin{quote}
Although the real situation of the Country may be truly alarming, yet the bulk of mankind shall not be able to perceive that so it is … This I look upon as a master-stroke of Policy, for next to being in a secure state, it is of the utmost moment, that a country should appear to be so.\textsuperscript{131}
\end{quote}

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\textsuperscript{127} Moira to Tierney, 23 September 1801, Hampshire RO, Tierney MSS, 31m70/52(a).
\textsuperscript{128} Lord Carrington to Camden, undated [1796], Kent RO, Camden MSS, U840/C97.
\textsuperscript{129} Lord Bathurst to Camden, 29 March 1797, Kent RO, Camden MSS, U840/C224/4.
\textsuperscript{130} Lord Carrington to Camden, 20 March [1797], Kent RO, Camden MSS, U840/O153/12.
\textsuperscript{131} \textit{Morning Post}, 10 July 1794, 3(d).
\end{flushright}
But even Pitt’s skill could not turn obvious financial disasters like the 1797 cash shortage to his advantage. His survival was ascribed as much to luck as to ability, and neither Pitt, nor any other prime minister, could always be lucky.

The government did have one major advantage in financial affairs, which was that its opponents did not have access to up-to-date figures. Opposition groups were only as well informed about the nation’s finances as anyone else who paid attention to the published accounts, and only a few members made any effort to become better acquainted. ‘Pitt talked very confidently about the state of the Revenue and Commerce, but from his own statement I think it impossible he can feel so,’ Fox told his nephew Lord Holland, but of course this was only guesswork. The lavish wartime spending, however, was too good a weapon to abandon, and both Grey and Tierney made efforts to master enough financial detail to launch a strong opposition attack. The Foxites’ brief experience in office as part of the Ministry of All the Talents in 1806-7 gave them a better insight into Britain’s financial capabilities. It convinced them so fully of the need to husband resources that for years afterwards many were unwilling to accept that any offensive war, even in the Peninsula where victory might be possible, could lead to anything but total ruin. With the circumstances of continental isolation in mind the leading oppositionists, particularly Grenville and Grey, became more and more convinced that the only way to survive the war was to end the government’s ‘system of improvidence, imbecility, and impotence’ by severe retrenchment.

The need for this was increased by the impact of the Continental Blockade, imposed in 1806 under Napoleon’s Milan and Berlin decrees. Along with Britain’s retaliatory Orders in Council and the American Non-Intercourse Acts, the blockade

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133 In 1796 Grey launched a motion against government waste in which he claimed that £68,800,000 had been spent on the war in the three years since it had begun. Speech by Grey, 10 March 1796, PH XXXII, 907. Thirteen years later, in June 1809, he tried again, pointing out that the annual public expenditure of government had risen from £16 millions to £85 millions in seventeen years. Smith, Lord Grey, p. 173.
had a strongly negative impact on British trade and inflation. According to Wendy Hinde, by 1808 ‘international trade had been practically brought to a standstill’.\(^{135}\) Although this is an exaggeration, many contemporaries thought the same. The effects of the blockade unfortunately coincided with economic depression, social unrest, and the revelation that the Peninsular War would be much more expensive than had initially been thought.\(^{136}\) William Huskisson, using information from his time as Secretary of the Treasury (until 1809), recommended that Britain ought to cut £6.5 millions from her wartime expenditure, and Rose added that such a reduction was ‘positively necessary, and most essential to the security and peace of the country’.\(^{137}\) Although an invasion was by now a less immediate concern, politicians doubted Britain’s ability to withstand a long siege if the problems faced by her low credit rating were ignored.

By 1810 Huskisson was convinced that a choice had to be made between offence and defence, since both were not financially viable. He was not alone in this, as demonstrated by the debates over whether or not to return to the gold standard, suspended since 1797. A committee sat from February to April 1810 to discuss whether or not the scarcity of bullion was directly traceable to the proliferation of paper money and the resulting high prices.\(^{138}\) The debate over the Bullion Report, which recommended that cash payments be resumed in two years, revealed a suggestive rift between those politicians who felt that continued suspension was vital to continue the offensive war in the Peninsula, and those who felt that, since the Spanish campaign was unlikely to put an end to the war, the emphasis should be shifted onto reviving British credit at home. It also pointed to a growing difference between men who saw the war as a war of survival, and men who placed Britain’s status as a moral nation above the needs of war, and it was this division that cut across established party lines. Perceval and Castlereagh defended the paper currency,

\(^{135}\) Hinde, *Castlereagh*, p. 145.
\(^{136}\) In 1811 the war was already three times as expensive as the government had calculated: Gash, *Lord Liverpool*, p. 86; Hall, *British Strategy in the Napoleonic War*, pp. 17-8.
\(^{137}\) Gray, *Spencer Perceval*, pp. 342-3; Muir, *Britain and the Defeat of Napoleon*, pp. 111-2; Rose *Diary II*, 23 October 1809, 413-4.
which they claimed was vital to the war effort and not subject to inflation.\textsuperscript{139} Huskisson and Canning, however, threw their lot in publicly with the bullionists.\textsuperscript{140} They argued that the monetary system operated according to specific laws that acted independent of wartime circumstances, which put them into direct opposition to Rose, Vansittart and Castlereagh, who responded that financial politics ought to be pragmatic in times of struggle.\textsuperscript{141} On the one hand was the obvious need to restrain government spending during a war which could conceivably last another five or ten years, and on the other, recognition that wartime conditions required higher levels of spending. Had the bullionists carried the day, Britain’s offensive abilities would have been even more severely crippled than they already were, and her strategy from 1812 onwards would probably have been very different. It was the same vicious circle that had plagued the government since the start of the war, and it was nowhere near being solved.

\textit{A lack of trust: famine and insurrection}

An even more serious problem than continental isolation and imminent insolvency was a growing suspicion that the social bonds, which made the British polity so resilient, were straining at the seams. As argued above, the broadening of national involvement had been intended to strengthen the status quo by giving every subject something to defend and a role in defending it. The response to the invasion threat not only stressed deference to authority, but also encouraged the aristocracy to demonstrate their concern for their lower class charges. In practice, however, the social bond often seemed little more than rhetoric. Despite official initiatives towards extending the people’s involvement in defence, many politicians grew increasingly doubtful about the nation’s loyalty. The opposition pointed out that Habeas Corpus suspension in the mid-1790s was hard to square with the simultaneous call for a nationwide volunteer movement, since it suggested that the people of Britain were

\textsuperscript{139} Derry, \textit{Castlereagh}, p. 135.
\textsuperscript{140} Gray, \textit{Spencer Perceval}, p. 374.
\textsuperscript{141} Fontana, \textit{Rethinking the Politics of Commercial Society}, pp. 121-3.
not to be trusted. ‘If the present system continues, who is to defend the country?’ asked Thomas Erskine. ‘Who, but the insulted people whom you calumniate?’.

Then again, there was a suspicion that the French Revolution might have made that country an object of attraction to the lower orders. To Rose, the ‘absolute Certainty’ that ‘a considerable Number’ of Britons would be ‘willing to see the French landed & considering them as Auxiliaries’ ought to be a vital part of any defence planning.\textsuperscript{143} Such an attitude indicated an ambivalence in the ruling orders towards the men they professed to see as the nation’s defenders.

In addition to this, the spectre of Jacobinism remained despite the eagerness of several high-profile politicians, including Pitt, to stress that ordinary Britons could be trusted with weapons. Although French Jacobinism proper had subsided with the downfall of Robespierre, and had vanished almost completely with the rise of Napoleon, the term was still commonly used to refer to sedition and republicanism, and the politicians continued to fear the spread of ‘Jacobinical’ principles in the armed forces above all places. Grenville declared that inciting mutiny ‘was so nearly allied to high treason, as to be equally dangerous in its effects and consequences’\textsuperscript{144}.

The naval mutinies of 1797 were widely ascribed to revolutionaries.\textsuperscript{145} ‘There is no doubt but that the spirit of insurrection, which has manifested itself in our navy … is entirely owing to the dark intrigues of our foreign enemies, and of our domestic foes,’ the\textit{Times} declared.\textsuperscript{146} Would French principles ever spread to the Army? The possibility was hardly to be countenanced. When Colonel Despard attempted to attack the Tower of London, the Bank and St James’s in 1802, he ‘was uniformly
represented as the most active Partizan in corrupting the Soldiers’. Similar rumours of attempts to infiltrate the Army of Reserve ‘for the express purpose … of instilling sedition into the Army’ were reported to the Home Office as late as September 1803.‘This fear of the contamination of the military by republican elements justified adding an oath of loyalty to several defence Acts. Such an oath sent a mixed message: on the one hand it could have been a reminder to the people of the ties that bound them together, but on the other it could also be interpreted as an insulting assumption that not all Britons were loyal to the Crown. When Yorke moved to include one in the Training Act in 1806, it was opposed by Windham because he ‘apprehended that the proposition … might excite alarm among the more ignorant part of the community’. The oath was, however, retained, despite the argument that the disaffected could perjure themselves just as well as anyone else. Fear of the spread of sedition within the armed forces appeared stronger than the need to tighten the bonds of trust that underpinned the defence effort.

The fear of Jacobinism was aggravated by a series of increasingly serious food riots that seemed to bring Britain close to revolt. The average price of wheat per quarter rose dramatically from 49s 1d in 1792 to 101s 4 ½ d twenty years later. The connection between want and radicalism was well known and feared: in 1792 Dundas had already dreaded a ‘wofully [sic] deficient’ harvest in Scotland, a buzzing hive of radicalism. Near-famines in 1795 and 1800, indeed, coincided worryingly with a startling rise in radical activity. In September 1800 a burst of food riots in Yorkshire, Lancashire, Derbyshire, London, the Midlands, and even the west,

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147 Memorandum on the Despard Conspiracy, National Archives, Home Office MSS, HO 42/66, ff. 33-4.
148 Ralph Fletcher to Yorke, 10 September 1803, National Archives, Home Office MSS, HO 42/73, ff. 448-50.
149 John Mitford, Pitt’s solicitor general, even recommended ‘a general Administration of the Oath of Allegiance to all persons above the age of 18’. Mitford to Pitt, 3 May 1798, Cambridge University Press, Pitt MSS, Add MS 6958 Box 12 no 2340.
150 6 July 1806, PD VII, 922-3.
151 Fortescue, The County Lieutenancies and the Army, pp. 170-1.
152 Harvey, Britain in the Early Nineteenth Century, pp. 337-8.
153 Dundas to Pitt, 12 November 1792, National Archives, Chatham MSS, PRO 30/8/157/1 ff. 144-53.
provoked what Roger Wells has referred to as ‘the September hyper-crisis’. Wells feels that this marked the closest point Britain came to insurrection at the turn of the nineteenth century, and he would certainly have found a lot of sympathy for that view among the ruling class at the time.

The food riots were not always politically motivated, of course, as some local magistrates recognised, but it became increasingly difficult to distinguish between local and political demonstrations. Their nationwide nature was particularly alarming to political spectators. John Bohstedt portrays the disturbances of 1795-6 and 1800-1 as nothing more than a challenge against the failure of local paternalism, to the extent of dismissing a leader of the Modbury riots styling himself ‘General Bonaparte’ as ‘a kind of “counter-theatre” to the pretensions of the gentry’, but the gentry themselves probably interpreted it differently. In April 1800, for example, a Devonian crowd marched to the local clergyman’s house to protest against tithes while carrying ‘a bloody flag’ and ‘calling out Liberty Equality and no Tythes’. This was deeply worrying because of its use of revolutionary symbolism, and it was not an isolated incident. Local disturbances were also liable to be hijacked by radicals, and the activity of the United Englishmen during the 1800 scarcity was well noted. Inevitably, many local officials succumbed to the panic. ‘You may depend upon it that the most desperate & abandoned Jacobins are now taking advantage of the discontent of the People in consequence of the high Price of Corn’, Lord Romney, Kent’s lord lieutenant, told Portland in September 1800. "The coalition between

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154 Ehrman III, 293-5.
155 Wells, Insurrection, pp. 183-4.
156 The disturbances among the weavers in Wiltshire and Yorkshire were at first considered to be a ‘conspiracy’ by Addington’s Home Office, but, although the ability of the Jacobins to take advantage of the disturbances was not ruled out, the dispute was eventually dealt with as a local problem. Pelham to Fitzwilliam, July 1802, National Archives, Home Office MSS, HO 42/65, ff. 416-8; Fitzwilliam to Pelham, 28 July 1802, National Archives, Home Office MSS, HO 42/65, ff. 487-90; Pelham to John Jones, 29 July 1802, National Archives, Home Office MSS, HO 43/13 ff. 359-60.
157 Bohstedt, Riots and Community Politics, p. 37.
159 Note to Lord Eldon, 8 March 1800, National Archives, Home Office MSS, HO 42/49 f. 295.
160 Lord Romney to Portland, 19 September 1800, National Archives, Home Office MSS, HO 42/51, f. 278.
Jacobinism & Distress is really alarming,’ another correspondent wrote two months later.\textsuperscript{161} Rumours flew of an insurrection around Manchester that was due to take place around Christmas or the New Year.\textsuperscript{162} Another scarcity in 1811-2, combined with an economic slump and Luddite activity in Nottinghamshire, Lancashire, and Yorkshire’s West Riding, led to a further strengthening of the powers of local magistrates, although by this time the government had acknowledged that such rioting was not usually revolutionary in purpose.\textsuperscript{163} Even so, the possibility remained that political groups might take advantage of the widespread dissatisfaction.

The scarcities and the demonstrations associated with them dealt a strong blow to the ideal of a British political system in which every man knew and cherished his place. Bohstedt traces the inability of city magistrates to control crowds to the lack of the old local support structures in the new big towns, but it also indicated another problem that was more significant to contemporaries: repeated famines were destroying the networks on which the social system relied.\textsuperscript{164} The scarcity in 1800 showed that all was not well. Many of the government’s correspondents complained that the shortage of food was not due to the harvest but the fact that grain was hoarded by farmers, who wanted to drive prices up artificially. ‘I am sorry to say, the people do not complain without reason,’ Fitzwilliam told Portland.\textsuperscript{165} Sometimes such rumours provoked outright violence between the lower classes and their superiors. Clearly something was amiss. The defence measures that attempted to inculcate a sense of trust were partly addressed to correct this impression, but their impact was blunted so long as that trust remained half-hearted.

\textsuperscript{161} Thomas Bancroft to Portland, 18 November 1800, National Archives, Home Office MSS, HO 42/52, f. 255.
\textsuperscript{162} Thomas Bancroft to Portland, 19 November 1800, National Archives, Home Office MSS, HO 42/52, ff. 365-6; Thomas Bancroft to Portland, 15 December 1800, National Archives, Home Office MSS, HO 42/55, ff. 89-90; Thomas Coke to Portland, April 1801, National Archives, Home Office MSS, HO 42/61, f. 474.
\textsuperscript{163} Hinde, Castlereagh, p. 181; Hall, British Strategy in the Napoleonic War, p. 71; Muir, Britain and the Defeat of Napoleon, pp. 158-9. Muir feels that the impact of the Luddites on the war was ‘slight’, but does not mention how the rioting might have affected confidence at home.
\textsuperscript{164} Bohstedt, Riots and Community Politics, p. 94.
\textsuperscript{165} Fitzwilliam to Portland, National Archives, Home Office MSS, HO 42/51, ff. 32-5.
The limits of participation

A further problem was that the concept of national participation on which most of the government’s defence measures relied was highly questionable. Encouragement of such participation was, in practice, often limited to a much narrower section of the public than the politicians liked to make out. For example, a great deal of the xenophobic propaganda put out on the government’s behalf was as liable to attack the Scots, Welsh and Irish as the French, a fact which hardly helped to foster a sense of national unity. But it was religious affiliation, more than anything else, that limited the extent of the nation’s involvement in defence. Catholics and Protestant Dissenters were excluded from full participation in British political life by the Test and Corporation Acts, which restricted where and how they could serve in a public capacity. In 1800 there were about 129,000 Catholics in Britain, a number that had risen from 80,000 in 1780, and Ireland was of course predominantly Catholic. Catholic Emancipation, or the repeal of the Acts which blocked the political progress of non-Anglicans, was therefore vital if Britain was to unite against the common enemy. The need for it was particularly critical in Ireland, given the series of French invasion attempts in the 1790s and the two rebellions in 1798 and 1803. As Grey noted in a remarkably understated manner in 1807, ‘If circumstances of discontent were seized hold of by the enemy, the consequences might be importantly injurious’. The actions of the various governments, however, remained ambivalent on the issue. A few moves were made, and a Catholic Relief Act was passed in 1793 for Irish Catholics, but apart from this Emancipation did not pass the discussion stage until the 1820s. Feelings on the issue ran extremely high. Two governments fell directly on the question — Pitt’s in 1801, Grenville’s in 1807 — and several others, including Portland’s, benefited from the backlash against it.

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166 Duffy, The Englishman and the Foreigner, pp. 20-2; Pittock, Inventing and Resisting Britain, pp. 54-5.
167 Gibson, Church, State and Society, p. 144.
168 Speech by Howick, 26 June 1807, PD IX, 626.
169 For more information see Chapter Five.
To many, Catholics automatically disqualified themselves from any right to participate by professing loyalty to the pope rather than to the king. Hawkesbury asked parliament in 1806 whether Catholics would receive ‘political power of every description, at a time when they refuse to acknowledge the complete authority of the state’. 170 During the 1790s republican France’s espousal of atheism had driven formerly pro-French Catholics back into the British fold, but while they had no attachment for republicanism they were also conceived to have no particular fondness for monarchy either. 171 Napoleon’s Concordat of Bologna with the pope simply resurrected the old Protestant suspicions. An anonymous paper noted that ‘since Bonaparte has restored the Roman-Catholick Persuasion, as the National Religion of France ...the Pope is now the mere Tool of His Ambition’. 172 Once this was accepted it was only a short jump to the assumption that Catholics were pro-French. 173 Nor was this view held simply by the politically uninformed. Lord Redesdale, Ireland’s lord chancellor after the Union, kept Addington, Perceval and others constantly informed about his opinions of the dangers of repealing the penal laws against the Catholics. 174 Hawkesbury, too, referred to the connection between the Catholics and the French in a speech representing the Pitt government’s point of view against Emancipation in 1805:

'Whoever reflects, that almost all catholic Europe … is in subjection to France; whoever contemplates the absolute dependence of the pope on the will of France … whoever gives due weight to the considerations arising out of the nature of the connection subsisting between the catholics of Ireland and the pope, and will attend to the circumstance that the catholic church of Ireland is under the controul and superintendence of a college of cardinals at Rome; must be convinced,  

170 Speech by Hawkesbury, 10 May 1805, PD IV, 680.
171 Memorandum on the Catholics, 1800, Cambridge University Library, Pitt MSS, Add Ms 6958 Box 14 no 2814.
172 Anonymous paper, March 1807, Scottish National Archives, Melville MSS, GD51/1/347/2.
173 Interestingly, requests in the 1780s for repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts had been limited to Protestant Dissenters only, and ignored Catholics. Henry Beaufoy, who moved the repeal in 1787, wanted to replace the Test Act with an anti-Catholic oath, since Catholics were too intimately connected with ‘the Court of Rome’ to be allowed to be full citizens. Until they could prove they had severed all ties with the pope, they should not ‘be admitted to the civil and military service of the State’. Speech by Beaufoy, 28 March 1787, PH XXVI, 805-6; 8 May 1789, PH XXVII, 3.
174 Redesdale to Addington, 30 July 1803, Devon RO, Sidmouth MSS, 152M/C1803/OZ/68.
that there never was a moment more unfavourable for augmenting their political power.\(^{175}\)

Because of this, the danger of alienating the Catholic population of the United Kingdom appeared to some to be less than the danger of allowing them full participation.

Protestant Dissenters made up another ‘dangerous’ section of the community. Despite Britain’s long history of anti-Catholicism, Dissenters fared much worse during the early years of the French wars because they were suspected — for the most part unjustly — of leaning towards democratic principles.\(^{176}\) Some nonconformist sects, indeed, such as the pacifist Quakers, attracted accusations of disloyalty by their abjuration of violence. The Quakers’ refusal to take part in loyal subscriptions for the upkeep of volunteers led the *Anti-Jacobin Review* to label them the ‘most dangerous members of the community’, on which grounds they ‘ought, on the paramount principle of self-preservation, to be silenced or expelled’.\(^{177}\) The Methodist connexion, which had recently seceded from the Church of England, was also suspect because most of its members were drawn from manufacturing areas and from the politically-aware artisanal classes that caused the government so much uneasiness.\(^{178}\) In general, however, despite its opposition to the established church, Methodism steered clear of radical pitfalls during the 1790s and 1800s, and made much of the beliefs and traditions it shared with Anglicanism.\(^{179}\) Other varieties of Dissent were similarly keen to keep their heads down and to avoid attracting too much attention. Most Dissenters showed themselves willing to defend their country if only they could be permitted to do so. Several ministers published sermons

\(^{175}\) Speech by Hawkesbury, 10 May 1805, *PD* IV, 682-3.

\(^{176}\) As the *Times* pointed out, 6 May 1795, 3(a); Gibson, *Church, State and Society*, pp. 50-1; Gibson, *The Church of England*, p. 104.

\(^{177}\) *Anti-Jacobin Review* XXXIII (IV), April 1806, 433.


\(^{179}\) Methodism’s rooted opposition to Catholicism also helped raise its political credit in some circles. For more on Methodism see Hempton, *Methodism and Politics in British Society*, pp. 48-9, 99-100, 102-3, 141, 227; Hempton, *Religion and Political Culture in Britain and Ireland*, p. 34; and Hempton, *The Religion of the People*, pp. 88-9, 128-9.
exhorting their parishioners to put aside all political feeling and take arms in defence of King and Country:

We wait with patience till a liberal and enlightened policy shall grant that which has been asked in vain; and in the mean time, the protestant dissenters, of every denomination, will show that they are not a whit behind their brethren of the established church in love to the country and the king, and in defense of the British constitution. 180

Despite its political marginalisation, Dissent was able to muster some significant strength in opposition to Sidmouth’s bill to register nonconformist ministers in 1812. 181 Like Catholicism, however, it was always on the periphery of the national defence effort, tolerated only so long as it behaved itself, and vulnerable because of widespread suspicion of its republican sympathies.

The government’s stance on arming Catholics and Dissenters along with the rest of the country was, consequently, as ambivalent as its attitude to their position within the polity. Predictably, in a war which led to a larger proportion of adult men serving in the armed forces than ever before, the issue was not long in surfacing. The manpower shortage temporarily overrode some peoples’ reservations, and in 1793 Catholics were finally permitted to serve in the regular services. Otherwise, little changed. A new property requirement limited the right to carry weapons to the wealthier members of the Irish Catholic community. 182 The reactions of the government to Catholic offers of volunteer service similarly reflected lingering doubts about their loyalty. In 1794 Lord Fife recommended that Dundas deny them permission to form a Fencible Regiment because he felt that the Catholic community ‘had till lately some allowance from foreign Societys [sic]’. 183 In January 1797, a group of Irish Catholics who offered to enrol as volunteers were informed that ‘they

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180 For example, Rev. Thomas Broadhurst’s Britains [sic] Exhorted to the Defence of their Country (1803), Nathaniel Philipps, British Liberty Considered with respect to its Origins, its Progress, and its Defense (1803), and Rev. David Rivers, A Discourse on Patriotism, on the Love of our Country (1803). The quotation comes from Philipps, p. 21.
181 Rutz, ‘The Politicising of Evangelical Dissent’, 188.
182 Times, 20 May 1793, 3(d). Interestingly, Lord Farnham moved an amendment to stop Catholics enrolling in the army, but was forced to withdraw it.
183 Lord Fife to Dundas, 7 October 1794, Scottish National Archives, Melville MSS, GD51/1/831/
would be accepted in no other form than embodied in the corps already formed by their fellow Citizens’, in other words diluted in existing Protestant bodies.\footnote{Times, 3 January 1797, 2(b).} A proposal to allow Roman Catholics to substitute a special oath for the standard tests, in order to allow them to serve in the Supplementary Militia and Provisional Cavalry, was rejected as the first step on the road to Emancipation.\footnote{Times, 12 July 1797, 1(d).}

By 1803 the cause of allowing Catholics to help defend Britain seemed hopeless. When the militia was called out in March of that year, Lord Stanley suggested that they should be permitted to serve as officers, but ‘no answer was made to this suggestion’.\footnote{Speech by Stanley, reported in the Times, 24 March 1803, 2(b).} The Addington government was further embarrassed by the request of Lord Petre, a prominent Catholic aristocrat, to raise a volunteer corps. The government’s refusal, despite a recommendation of good character from Viscount Braybrooke, provoked outcry because it seemed to represent an official refusal to allow even the most respectable Catholics to bear arms.\footnote{Petre to Braybrooke, 24 July 1803, Buckinghamshire RO, Hobart MSS, D/MH/H(war office)/Bundle G/I 119; Braybrooke to Hobart, 8 August 1803, Buckinghamshire RO, Hobart MSS, D/MH/H(war office)/Bundle G/I 144; Edward Cooke to Camden, 13 September 1803, Kent RO, Camden MSS, U840/C104/5.} However, it is not surprising that Addington should have been reluctant to create a precedent by arming a Catholic regiment, given that he had only come into office because Pitt had stumbled on the issue of Emancipation. Ultimately, the ideological aspect of Emancipation and Test Act repeal outweighed the practical benefits that could be drawn from maximising available manpower and uniting Anglicans, Catholics and Dissent against a French onslaught.

**Morality and national sin**

Several factors which were outside the government’s control therefore counteracted official attempts to cultivate British spirit. Continental isolation and stalemate, near-bankruptcy, famines, insurrection, and an ultimately exclusive participation in defence, all undermined the vaunted relationship between the
By 1810 the result of this lack of trust had become seriously worrying. The fact that Britain appeared to be foundering under the burden of a long, interminable war suggested that the nation’s slipping morals, combined with perceived incompetence and corruption at the highest levels of government, had alienated God’s favour. The series of weak ministries, outright accusations of corruption, and the scandal of the duke of York’s affair with Mary Anne Clarke fanned the flames further. Gradually, concern for the domestic state of the nation overtook the fear of invasion. The scene was set for a resurgence of radicalism, which marked definitively the moment when the government lost the initiative in a fight for the mind and heart of the nation.

Morality had been a part of the struggle against France from the start. Britain’s fervent Protestantism was portrayed as one of her greatest strengths, and the fact that she had remained untouched from continental scenes of destruction confirmed her privileged status. ‘Surely the state of England, at this time, amidst all the Hurly Burly, is very striking!’ Pitt’s friend the bishop of Lincoln was told in 1796. ‘Let her be grateful for the protection afforded to her as the principal Protestant Nation’. God would never abandon the one country which had put up such a staunch resistance to atheism, militarily and morally. Since ‘immorality’ was ‘the principal weapon of Jacobinism’, Britain was sure to triumph over France in the end. As the war continued, however, doubt crept into such a brash self-analysis. By May 1797 the outlook was gloomy: Ireland had been attacked and Wales invaded, the banks had crashed, the Navy had mutinied, most of Britain’s allies had disappeared, and the French commanded the continent. With these circumstances in mind it is hardly surprising that an opposition member claimed that the enemy’s ‘successes were such, that they appeared almost to exhibit the effects of divine retribution’. Did the series of invasion scares, continental defeats, disturbances,

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188 Mrs Pretyman to the bishop of Lincoln, 29 December 1796, Suffolk RO, Pretyman MSS, HT119/T108/45/5.
189 Anti-Jacobin Review VI (II), June 1800, 235.
190 Speech by St Andrew St John, 18 May 1797, PH XXXIII, 577.
and jacobinical conspiracies mean that God had turned his back on his once-favoured nation?

The result of such doubt was a conviction that, if Britons wanted to avoid the calamity of a French invasion, they had to reform their manners. The French were God’s tool for vengeance: the way to deflect an invasion was not through large armies or constant preparation, but repentance and religion. With the defeat of the Third Coalition and Britain’s diplomatic isolation in 1806, pamphleteer John Bowles argued that the only way to avoid calamity was to address what he referred to as ‘national sin’. This had turned God against the British nation, as a result of which a ‘national reformation …[was] the best means of NATIONAL SAFETY’. Bowles was not the only pamphleteer with this conviction. In 1807 a pamphlet entitled The Dangers of the Country recommended ‘reformation as an essential basis of national safety’. A year after that, another pamphlet claimed that ‘IMMORALITY’ was the greatest internal enemy against which Britain had to fight. The message was clear. Instead of training to arms, the nation should be falling to its knees.

This argument was fed by a suspicion that the government was going about national defence in the wrong way, not by its over-reliance on inferior bodies of manpower but simply by training the volunteers, the Levy en Masse, or the ‘Trained Peasantry’ on a Sunday. Normally this would have been a natural day for military training, since it was the only day on which ordinary labourers had a holiday, but to those already concerned by the nation’s growing lack of religious feeling, the idea of making people work on God’s day of rest was anathema. Pitt protested in vain that drilling on Sunday conformed with the Church’s tenets because national defence was ‘a duty of the most sacred and indispensable nature’. He could not overcome concern that Sunday training showed how fast Britain was slipping into the abyss. To the Anti-Jacobin Review, Sunday drilling indicated an alarming neglect of the proper

191 Bowles, A Dispassionate Inquiry, p. 108.
192 Anti-Jacobin Review XXVII (IV), August 1807, 379-80.
193 Anti-Jacobin Review XXIX (III), March 1808.
194 Speech by Pitt, reported in the Times, 21 January 1804, 3(a). It is interesting to note that when Pitt fought his duel against Tierney in May 1798, they were attacked — sometimes tongue-in-cheek, sometimes seriously — for fighting on a Sunday. Morning Post, 1 June 1798, 3(a).
religious sentiment in the men responsible for the framing of national policy. An even more serious problem was that it led the men ‘to drunkenness and debauchery’ and the officers ‘to profaneness and infidelity’. This dealt the final blow against ‘the sense … of moral and religious obligation’ which tied the two together. Sunday drilling led to a disregard for religion, and therefore increased the instability that already existed within the social hierarchy.

Ominously, a series of unfortunate continental and domestic problems further undermined faith in the aristocracy’s ability to govern, and helped accelerate a radical revival both inside and outside parliament. A series of short-lived governments encouraged the idea that politicians sought nothing but personal financial gain from office. Reform, as J.E. Cookson has argued, began to be seen as a sort of atonement for national sins. The government’s sanction of the attack on Copenhagen in 1807, during which the British fleet set fire to the harbour to prevent Denmark placing its fleet under French control, outraged some parts of the nation and fed the fears of national immorality. The bombardment of civilians was genuinely shocking, and this incident, combined with fears of government corruption and financial irregularity, encouraged many to look elsewhere for political guidance. The radicals were well-placed to benefit, since the parliamentary opposition was as much tainted with corruption as their government rivals. The Foxites had a reasonable track record on reform, but their allies the Grenvilles were both opposed to reform and notorious sinecurists. Any reformist platform put forward by an opposition that included the Grenvilles was unlikely to be greeted with anything but scepticism. The moderate oppositionists therefore lost ground to radicals. Sir Francis Burdett rose to the occasion, as did Lord Folkestone, who moved in 1807 to

195 Anti-Jacobin Review XVIII (III), July 1804, 308.
196 Anti-Jacobin Review XXXIV (I), 83.
198 Hinde, Castlereagh, p. 144.
200 The legacy of the debate on morals and national virtue, however, eventually played in the opposition’s favour. Lord John Russell’s Whig party used the morality question to draw the opposition agenda off the old Foxite emphasis on secular constitutional issues and onto national welfare, of the physical and spiritual variety. Brent, Liberal Anglican Politics, pp.15-6, 56.
investigate abuses in the Army and state departments. After 1809 the radicals launched attacks against the Victualling Board, abuse of Indian patronage, and the increase of public expenditure. The days when the Foxites had managed to tame backbench fervour on reform were over. Indeed many Whigs, including Tierney, found themselves frequently supporting the government against radical initiatives. The Whigs, like the Anti-Jacobin Review, deeply feared the impact of the radical resurgence on the national hierarchy.

The revelation that the duke of York’s mistress, Mary Anne Clarke, had been selling commissions in the Army strained the relations that bound governors and governed even further. The scandal not only embarrassed ministers and split the opposition, but also focused attention entirely on two points which had acquired considerable importance by 1809: corruption and moral reform. The attack on the Duke was accordingly championed by Colonel Gwyllym Wardle, an MP with radical connections. The affair proved to radical satisfaction that something was rotten at the heart of the state: parliament refused to punish the Duke directly, which gave strength to radical calls for a moral regeneration at the highest levels. More ominously still, the affair brought to light the scandalous behaviour of several other members of the royal family. Melville was warned that the Prince of Wales’s neglected wife and string of mistresses were alienating to the vast majority of moralistic Britons, who feared that a corrupt royal family would not be worth defending. ‘Nothing would so strongly insure our Success as a proper State of Public Morals which would induce every man to consider … His King, His Country and all its institutions as the stake for which he was fighting’. How could Britain hope for success in the war if the people only half-heartedly defended their monarch and aristocratic government?

201 Harvey, Britain in the Early Nineteenth Century, pp. 247-8.
202 Harvey, Britain in the Early Nineteenth Century, p. 244.
The most frightening aspect of this concern for national morality, and the resulting revival of radicalism, was thus the blow it struck at the roots of the social hierarchy. The mutual trust between governors and governed, of which Addington and Pitt had boasted in their plans to arm the nation, was seriously compromised by a growing suspicion, fed by government weakness, military impotence, and the misbehaviour of the royal family. If the aristocracy was too venal to lead Britain to victory, then the only remedy was a radical reform of the government. Peter Spence notes that ‘to support reform was thus to support the monarchy, the nation, the constitution, the romantic patria’, since it became seen as the only way to save the nation from divine retribution in the form of a French attack. Upper class immorality struck at the heart of the social network because it suggested that the aristocracy did not deserve their exalted status at its head. An article in the Anti-Jacobin Review identified the problem as a fundamental lack of respect: ‘Rank, to command respect, must first deserve it’. What was needed was ‘a strict conformity of conduct to situation’. The British citizenry had to be convinced that its government and monarchy were virtuous. In 1810, many feared that this was not the case.

Conclusion

By 1809 the politicians were so accustomed to defeat and stalemate that, when news of the first victories in the Peninsula arrived, many politicians continued to view the war in Spain and Portugal as nothing but an unwise distraction from the main defensive struggle. Lord Ellenborough wrote to Sidmouth about Talavera, ‘I am afraid it will be productive rather of glory to the British Army than of any material advantage to British interests’. Several historians have agreed that the victories in the Peninsula were, in fact, underrated in international terms. Significantly, however, the defeat of the French in Portugal and Spain showed Britons what they were capable of achieving if the French were ever to invade. The Peninsular struggle

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205 Spence, The Birth of Romantic Radicalism, p. 140.
206 Anti-Jacobin Review XXIX (III), March 1808, 256.
207 Ellenborough to Sidmouth, 15 August 1809, Devon RO, Sidmouth MSS, 152M/C1809/OZ.
208 For example, Fedorak, ‘Maritime versus Continental Strategy’, 177-8.
was easy to fashion into a parallel that must have brought the conflict very close to home: Lisbon’s surrender, a pamphlet remarked, ‘would give us a foretaste of the sensations which we should experience, if, from Lisbon, with strength and hopes augmented, the ravagers should proceed to Cork, Dublin, or London’.209 From the politicians’ point of view, the victories in the Peninsula started coming in at just the right time. As A.D. Harvey points out, the victory of Salamanca in the summer of 1812 coincided with signs of economic recovery in Britain, all of which contributed to a revival of the war’s popularity — a development which the new Liverpool government, struggling against crippling parliamentary weakness, must have welcomed.210 Most importantly of all, the war divided Napoleon’s forces in such a way that a British invasion became increasingly unlikely.211

As far as morale and defence were concerned, therefore, the Peninsular War was a major turning-point, even if it was not enough to earn Britain a prominent place at the peace table. During a long, exhausting conflict, victories such as those achieved in the Peninsula, or at Trafalgar, were a breath of fresh air to ministries stifled by instability and desperate for the means to restore their credibility. The advantages to be derived from them at a domestic level were incalculable. It is a mistake to suppose that such victories were pointless because they did not help restore the Bourbon monarchy or contribute to the ultimate defeat of the Napoleon. British war aims were rarely stated so categorically, and were apt to change according to circumstances and to what it was deemed practical to achieve. Victories in the Peninsula, at sea, and in the colonies were just as valuable as a decisive continental triumph because they strengthened Britain’s heart and mind. The same can be said of Waterloo, the only continental battle of international significance in which she played a determining part. As Rory Muir has pointed out, both the

209 Courtenay, A View of the State of the Nation, p. 156.
210 Harvey, Britain in the Early Nineteenth Century, p. 299.
Peninsular War and Waterloo ‘gave Britain a sense of uniqueness, an inner confidence, which lasted a full century until it was shattered on the Somme’.  

The importance of this national self-confidence in a predominantly defensive war was recognised by the politicians, especially Pitt, for whose government the series of continental disasters interspersed with invasion scares, scarcities, and the threat of insurrection were a real threat. The solution — to give the British a greater feeling of involvement in the defence of a nation that gave them so much to fight for — dove-tailed nicely into broader trends of national participation. This involved a strengthening of the top-down relations through the social hierarchy from the king down to the poorest peasant. The problem was that the politicians could not forestall the effect of a lengthening, expensive, and exhausting struggle on the British mind forever. No scheme for national involvement was inclusive enough, the aristocracy and royal family misbehaved, and a series of politically weakened governments set the stage for a resurgence of radicalism that had effectively taken the spotlight off national defence by the start of the 1810s. Significantly, however, the attempts to raise the national spirit showed how a series of governments between 1793 and 1812 viewed the structure of the nation in times of stress. If the picture in 1810 was gloomy, this was largely out of the control of the politicians, who were distracted by their own weakness. Other domestic issues — notably reform and retrenchment — had taken over from defence. With the continent consigned to Napoleonic influence, Britons now mainly looked in rather than out. Meanwhile, across St. George’s Channel, the case of Ireland remained as an example of the continuing political failure to find a defence policy suitable for the whole of the British Isles.

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Chapter Five
Ireland

People’s sense of national identity was not only conditioned by their response to a French ‘other’, since factors closer to home were just as likely to play a part in determining the extent to which politicians were prepared to strengthen their control over defence mechanisms. Ireland, in particular, held a dark mirror to Britain’s political, social and religious make-up. Predominantly poor and Catholic, she lacked the social hierarchy that drove the centrally-guided defence effort of her sister island. This, along with sectarian violence and agrarian disturbances, repelled British politicians. Windham spoke for many when he admitted that ‘he did not much like tampering with’ Ireland.1 The very difficulties that made her such a prickly neighbour, however, also made her the most vulnerable part of the British Isles. Radicals in the form of the United Irishmen, and other local or agrarian groups such as the Defenders and Whiteboys, were suspected (often correctly) of being in league with France. A failed French invasion attempt in 1796, an actual landing in 1798, two outright rebellions in 1798 and 1803, and almost constant social unrest, made Ireland vulnerable to enemy attack. Habeas corpus suspension and martial law were enforced for much of the period between 1793 and 1815. As long as she remained in this volatile state, the possibility remained that the French would use her as a base for an attack on Britain.

As such her importance to the British defence effort should not be underestimated. Linda Colley has argued that Ireland was too ‘alien’ and too Catholic to be integrated thoroughly into Britain, and that predominantly Protestant Britain treated her more as an inferior colony than as an equal partner.2 The Irish were certainly thought to have a ‘natural disposition’ to be ‘somewhat light, versatile

1 Speech by Windham, 13 August 1807, PD IX, 1210.
2 Colley, Britons, pp. 8, 369.
and sanguinary’ — characteristics that were considered to be more French than British.\(^3\) Unlike Colley, however, the governments led by Pitt, Addington, Grenville, and Portland did not have the luxury of ignoring Ireland’s special problems, and more recent work has acknowledged this. Murray Pittock, for example, asserts that ‘to write Ireland out of Britain is to risk serious misrepresentation of the nature of Britain and its identities’.\(^4\) Pittock is right to stress the connections between the two islands, since politicians were more likely to want to force Ireland into a British mould than treat her differently. After all, British and Irish political fates were inextricably linked by allegiance to the Crown, a common ideological heritage, and a number of Acts that made the Dublin parliament subservient to its Westminster counterpart. Significantly, also, Ireland’s character and Catholicism were not considered automatically to exclude her from a claim to ‘Britishness’. The Irish lord chancellor, Lord Redesdale, though vehemently anti-Catholic, thought that, if given ‘English minds & manners’, the Irish would eventually be fit ‘to receive all the benefits of the English Constitution’.\(^5\) Although this betrayed the strong English bias against Irish ‘primitiveness’, it also demonstrated the strong connection that politicians drew between the fates of the sister islands.

A contemporary observer noted that Ireland was ‘a ship on fire’ that ‘must be either cast off or extinguished’.\(^6\) Significantly, politicians chose to pursue the second option by strengthening the bonds between the two nations. The needs of a war of unprecedented scale excused the overriding of local autonomy, and the Anglo-Irish Act of Union in 1800 can plausibly be regarded as an extension of the centralisation that had gradually been implemented in Britain in response to the security problems of the 1790s. The political solution in both cases was identical, and involved

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\(^3\) Memorandum on Irish Defence by Sir George Shee, Pelham MSS, British Library, BL Add MSS 33119 ff. 86-102.
\(^4\) Pittock, *Inventing and Resisting Britain*, pp. 132-3. Tony Claydon and Ian McBride also question Colley’s argument: they point out that ‘Protestant’ Britain was more an ‘aspiration’ than a reality, and that a predominantly Anglican picture of British political life was complicated by denominational divisions and a lack of precise definition. Claydon and McBride, *Protestantism and National Identity*, p. 29.
\(^5\) Redesdale to Sidmouth, 19 April 1806, Devon RO, Sidmouth MSS, 152M/C1806/OI/8.
\(^6\) Carlisle to Auckland, 30 August 1798, *Auckland Correspondence* IV, 51-2.
establishing greater official control over defence policy, redefining citizenship, and searching for a better source of manpower. The Union’s aftermath, however, reflected the disadvantages of moving too quickly towards these goals in a country that had a much more complex system of social ties than that which existed on this side of St. George’s Channel. Difficulties arose, not because Ireland was treated differently from any other part of the United Kingdom, but because British policy-makers, acting from a British point of view and with British objects in mind, failed to take account of her special problems.

**Britain and Ireland before the Union: the ‘Sister Island’**

Prior to the Union the British government had encountered a number of difficulties with regard to Ireland, primarily because of the complex system of ties that connected the two countries. Nominally, Ireland had its own parliament of over four hundred lords and commoners sitting in Dublin, and its own administration, consisting of a first lord of the treasury, chancellor of the exchequer, lord chancellor, solicitor general, and other positions analogous to their British equivalents. It also had its own military and ecclesiastical arrangements.⁷ Despite these separate political arrangements, however, Ireland was by no means free from British interference. For most of the eighteenth century her parliament had existed under the terms of the Declaratory Act and of Poyning’s Law, both of which asserted Ireland’s almost complete subservience to British political dictates. The former decreed that the Westminster parliament could pass laws on Ireland’s behalf, and the latter that the Dublin parliament could not propose or amend bills, but could only approve or reject measures that had previously been approved by the Privy Council.⁸

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given Ireland some control over important military and naval policy, but this did not achieve as much as its supporters had hoped. Poyning’s Law remained largely in force, and Britain still retained the power to nominate the highest levels of the Irish executive and decide major elements of foreign policy.\footnote{Kelly, Prelude to Union, pp. 5, 235-6; O’Brien, Anglo-Irish Politics in the Age of Grattan and Pitt, pp. 29, 31.}

The most obvious result of the 1782 ‘settlement’, therefore, was that the British government now had to devote more attention to Irish affairs than it was willing to give. It somehow had to ensure that the Irish parliament passed measures congenial to British interests, and Dublin’s politicians showed an alarming tendency not to toe the line.\footnote{O’Brien, Anglo-Irish Politics in the Age of Grattan and Pitt, p. 63; Ward, The Irish Constitutional Tradition, pp. 23-4.} Although a combination of efficient management and the use of patronage generally kept relations smooth between the executive and the legislature, a crisis could upset everything. The most recent occasion on which Irish politicians had broken ranks had been during the Regency Crisis in 1788-9, when their parliament had voted in favour of a regent in direct opposition to the course taken by the government at Westminster.\footnote{Kelly, ‘The Origins of the Act of Union’, 236-7, 249, 261, 263; Johnston, Great Britain and Ireland, 6; McDowell, Ireland in the Age of Imperialism, p. 128.} British politicians were never able to forget that Ireland owed no direct allegiance to them. So long as this state of affairs existed Anglo-Irish political relations could only be tense.

Ireland’s only direct official link to Westminster was through the medium of the Crown’s representative, the lord lieutenant, who received his instructions directly from the home secretary.\footnote{For a list of lords lieutenant of Ireland, see Appendix V.} Many holders of the office also enjoyed close links to members of the government, and often the prime minister himself. Of the lords lieutenant between 1793 and 1810, Lords Westmorland and Camden were both personal friends of Pitt, and Lord Hardwicke was the brother of Charles Yorke, Addington’s home secretary. The office enjoyed supreme authority over patronage. Since the 1770s its military powers had been shared with a commander of the forces,
although the two posts were not infrequently combined in times of crisis.\(^{13}\) The lord lieutenant’s role was not directly affected by the 1782 reforms, but his importance as the main liaison between the Westminster and Dublin legislatures was increased by the growing need to ensure the Irish parliament’s continued good behaviour.\(^{14}\) He was assisted by the chief secretary, a sort of ‘Irish secretary of state’ whose main role was to transact official business in parliament and correspond with local notables on the lord lieutenant’s behalf.\(^{15}\) He in turn headed a sophisticated bureaucratic structure that evolved with the dual purpose of implementing policy and managing parliament. From 1777 two under-secretaries were appointed with the responsibility for civil and military affairs.\(^ {16}\) The men usually appointed to these positions had very high reputations for their knowledge of the workings of the Irish administrative system, as a result of which their advice and opinions were frequently sought by politicians in London as well as by the lord lieutenant or chief secretary.\(^{17}\) All these posts were usually held by British men, appointed in Britain, and charged with upholding British interests in Ireland.

A curious duality, therefore, existed in Dublin, and it complicated the relations between Britain and the sister island. On the one side was the Irish government and the Dublin parliament, nominally independent and liable to demonstrate the full extent of that independence if pressed. On the other was the lord lieutenant and Dublin Castle, charged to ensure that the Irish government continued to recognise its subservience to Westminster. At the core of the problem was the fact that important elements of Irish domestic policy, in particular some military and

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\(^ {15}\) Johnston, *Great Britain and Ireland*, pp. 34, 38-40; McDowell, *Ireland in the Age of Imperialism*, pp. 100-1. For a list of chief secretaries, see Appendix V.

\(^ {16}\) A third was added in 1797 with the responsibility for the yeomanry. McDowell, *Ireland in the Age of Imperialism*, pp. 101-2; McDowell, *Irish Public Opinion*, pp. 31-2; McDowell, *The Irish Administration*, p. 3.

\(^ {17}\) The most obvious example of an influential under-secretary was Edward Cooke, who held various official positions in the Irish administration from 1778 onwards before becoming under-secretary for both the military and civil departments in succession. Peter Jupp has described him as ‘the vital bureaucratic link between the Irish administration and the British government’. Jupp, ‘Edward Cooke, 1755-1820’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004).
defence arrangements on Irish soil, remained out of British hands. Ireland remained a potent problem for British politicians to deal with because it had to be carefully managed to obtain the right results, without those results ever being guaranteed. This was no trivial issue, and British politicians had been convinced of the unsatisfactory nature of the 1782 settlement for some time. A variety of unsuccessful alternatives had been proposed over the years, but it took the crisis of the war with France to bring any of those plans to fruition.

By the mid 1790s, indeed, it had become clear that wartime Ireland could not continue to be governed in such a precarious way. The sister island had long suffered from domestic unrest that not only made her a target for a French assault but also made her a potentially willing recipient of one, unlike England. In 1794 Westmorland reported to Pitt that, if the French invaded, ‘I fear the defending Army would be in an Enemy’s country’. Alarmingly, there seemed to be a tacit connection between France and the Irish radicals, and sporadic disturbances in Ireland during the mid-1790s were frequently traced by the newspapers to French sources. These rumours had considerable substance, because although they were sceptical about defeating Britain on Irish soil, as Marianne Elliott argues, the French recognised that fostering the spirit of Irish rebellion was an easy way to attack their old enemy. The radical connection with France seemed confirmed when the invasion attempt at Bantry Bay coincided with numerous disturbances in the north of Ireland during December 1796 and January 1797. Just over a year later, another invasion accompanied the rebellion of 1798. Although this was successfully repelled, Ireland remained unsettled and there was no guarantee that a third initiative would end so happily. As the weak joint in Britain’s armour, Ireland required constant vigilance, the more so given the unpredictability of her political system. When asked

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19 Kelly, Prelude to Union, p. 238.
20 Westmorland to Pitt, 18 July 1794, Cambridge University Library, Pitt MSS, Add Ms 6958 Box 8 No 1462.
21 Wells, Insurrection, p. 17.
23 Times, 29 November 1796 2(d), 28 January 1797 2(b).
who would succeed his father as lord lieutenant in 1801, Cornwallis’s son immediately replied, ‘Buonaparte’.24

What made this lack of direct control even more worrying was that British radicals were also deeply involved with Irish republicans. Any self-respecting government with an eye on domestic radicalism could not ignore this extra dimension to the issue, which, as Roger Wells has argued, hinted at a triangular alliance between British, Irish and French revolutionaries.25 The development in Britain of several organisations that echoed the structure and name of the United Irishmen, notably the United Britons, United Englishmen and the United Scotsmen, was tracked anxiously by government informers based in the London Alien Office.26 These groups were specifically targeted by government legislation following the 1798 rebellion, as a result of a Committee of Secrecy of the House of Commons Report published in March 1799.27 Migration to Britain was also closely monitored through a system of spies and passports, particularly after the rebellions of 1798 and 1803.28 Liverpool was often reported to be subject to swarms of Irish immigrants, but other northern towns, particularly Manchester, were not immune, and the Pitt and Addington governments recommended that local magistrates and other officials keep a watchful eye on their movements.29 Prior to 1801, however, the process of tracking the links between Irish and British disaffection was hampered by the complicated administrative arrangements that connected the two countries. If Ireland was a

24 15 February 1801, Glenbervie Diaries I, 170.
25 Ehrman III, 163; Wells, Insurrection, p. xiii.
26 T. Coke to Portland, 14 March 1801, Home Office MSS, National Archives, HO 42/61 ff. 220-1.
27 Ehrman III, 303-5.
28 ‘All persons leaving Ireland are at present required to obtain Passports … from the proper Officer appointed to grant them’: Yorke to Lord Hertford, 8 September 1803, Home Office MSS, National Archives, HO 43/14 ff. 185-6. See also the King’s Proclamation respecting persons coming from Ireland, 18 March 1799, PH XXXIV, 656-7.
29 Peter Brancker to Major General Gascoyne, 31 October 1801, Home Office MSS, National Archives, HO 42/62 ff. 535-6; Mr. Warren-Bulkeley to Pelham, 24 August 1803, Home Office MSS, National Archives, HO 42/68 f. 208; Ralph Fletcher to Pelham, 7 January 1802, Home Office MSS, National Archives, HO 42/65 ff. 182-3; Pelham to the Mayor of Liverpool, 30 July 1803, Home Office MSS, National Archives, HO 42/71 ff. 385-7; Benjamin Roberts to Pelham, 3 June 1803, Home Office MSS, National Archives, HO 42/71 f. 462; duke of Gloucester to Addington, 17 August 1803, Devon RO, Sidmouth MSS, 152M/C1803/79.
potential back door for French influence, the British government was not sure that it had enough authority to be able to close it.

_A drain on manpower_

Apart from the difficulties involved in controlling her legislature, post-1782 Ireland also remained a drain on British manpower. She had no regular force of her own, and few auxiliaries on which to rely. Both an Irish militia and an Irish yeomanry did exist, but her different war experience meant that they were raised, deployed and viewed in very different ways from their British equivalents. As a result, Ireland’s unsettled domestic state meant that she absorbed a disproportionately large proportion of Britain’s regular military force. The frequent French attempts to land on the Irish coast seemed to justify such an arrangement, and Ireland became accustomed to relying on the backbone of her British regular garrison. As the war progressed, however, and Britain lost her allies, the optimal balance of defence between the two islands became increasingly difficult to strike. It was difficult for the politicians in charge of troop deployment to judge the real state of the sister island’s defensive force, and perceived imbalances in Britain’s favour caused friction and ill will.

The weakness of the auxiliary forces was directly traceable to the British government’s anxiety not to lose complete control of the Irish situation. The Irish volunteer movement of the 1780s, formed in response to a previous French invasion scare, had shown how dangerous it was to sacrifice central control in return for armed numbers. At its height the Irish volunteers had numbered 89,000, but after the peace in 1783 they had remained embodied, while politicians focused on political issues such as freedom of trade and the campaign for legislative independence. Their increasing radicalisation had led to their suppression by the lord lieutenant, Westmorland, shortly after the declaration of war in 1793.30 Because of this bad experience Westmorland’s successor, Camden, resisted giving his approval to any Irish armed associations until 1796, when it became clear that a government-

approved Yeomanry was the only way to retain authority over the defence effort.\textsuperscript{31} By 1800 there were 54,000 yeomen, and this number barely declined during the peace of Amiens, rising to a peak of 83,000 in 1803.\textsuperscript{32} The Yeomanry was not, however, directly analogous to the British volunteers, and the Irish government remained fearful that maintaining it at strength would prompt an attempt to follow ‘the example of the former volunteers’ and ‘turn the armed Force to some political Purpose’.\textsuperscript{33} This fear that the Yeomanry would become over-politicised was increased when they became more and more militantly Protestant.\textsuperscript{34} The government was deeply reluctant to condone this deepening of Ireland’s sectarian differences, but the lack of feasible auxiliary alternatives forced it to rely on the Yeomanry as a defence force more than it would have liked.

The Irish militia, formed in 1793, might have appeared to be the obvious alternative, but its religious basis and questionable quality meant that it was unlikely to be much of an improvement. In contrast to the ultra-Protestant Yeomanry the militia was highly Catholic, and this led to fears that it might be infiltrated by agrarian-based troublemakers such as the Defenders.\textsuperscript{35} These doubts were matched by recognition of the Irish militia’s not entirely undeserved reputation for incompetence and cowardice. Officials recognised that it could not be relied on in an emergency. During the 1798 battle of Castlebar against the invading French force, the Kilkenny and Longford regiments of militia deserted to join the enemy, an act that prompted Lord Cornwallis to describe the whole as ‘good for nothing’.\textsuperscript{36} As late as 1803 Lord Redesdale described Ireland’s militiamen as ‘easily open to solicitation

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{31} Blackstock, \textit{An Ascendancy Army}, pp. 52-3; Blackstock, ‘The Social and Political Implications of the Raising of the Yeomanry in Ulster’, 234, 236.
\textsuperscript{32} Blackstock, \textit{An Ascendancy Army}, p. 114.
\textsuperscript{34} Blackstock, \textit{An Ascendancy Army}, p. 198.
\textsuperscript{35} Bartlett, “A Weapon of War Yet Untried”, 76; Wells, \textit{Insurrection}, p. 61. The Defenders were mostly sectarian and agrarian in emphasis, though they adapted French revolutionary rhetoric and were much more political than the explicitly agrarian Whiteboys. See Smyth (ed), \textit{Revolution, Counter-Revolution and Union}, pp. 7-8.
\textsuperscript{36} Cornwallis to Dundas, 6 December 1798, Scottish National Archives, Melville MSS, GD51/1/331/8; \textit{Cornwallis Correspondence} II, 391-3, 397.
\end{footnotes}
or corruption'. As a defensive force, therefore, the force was seriously under par. The only thing that could be done with it was to draft portions of it into the regulars, where the discipline of the Army might solve most of its problems. Drafting was consequently a less controversial process in Ireland than similar attempts to encroach on the English and Scottish bodies. The Irish militia gradually became little more than a resource for recruitment into the regulars when all else had failed. Several Irishmen were drafted in March 1805, Castlereagh toyed with a further transfer in November 1805, and Windham considered making the force entirely free to enter the line in 1806. Such decisions did not, however, solve the problem of Ireland’s lack of an adequate body of defence. Indeed, it simply made it worse.

It was consequently vital for Ireland to be manned by a sufficient number of regulars in addition to the militia, the staunchly Protestant Yeomanry, and the fencible units that were occasionally raised, but this force was usually small and too widely dispersed. Just before the rebellion in April 1798 a memorandum calculated that Ireland had a total of 42,390 troops, including militia, of which only 31,792 were effective and dispersed over an area of two hundred by one hundred and fifty miles. This body of men was enlarged because of the need to quell the 1798 rebellion, but by 1801 numbers had collapsed again to just over five thousand regulars, twenty thousand militia, and eleven thousand fencibles. Even in the wake of the 1803 rebellion Ireland remained exposed. The number of regular troops made available to her increased after Emmett’s revolt, with 16,000 men considered fit for duty, but these remained widely dispersed. The biggest force that Castlereagh was told could be gathered in any one place with less than twelve days’ notice was 20,000 (and this figure included a militia force of 15,000 effectives). It was manifestly not enough, particularly since the well-known insufficiency of the Yeomanry and militia meant that the bulk of defence would fall to the overstretched regulars. The fact that Ireland

37 Redesdale to Addington, 17 August 1803, Devon RO, Sidmouth MSS, 152M/C1803/82.
38 Castlereagh to Long, 6 November 1805, Castlereagh Correspondence, VIII, 13-6; 3 April 1806, Farington Diaries III, 177-8.
39 Memorandum on the defence of Ireland, 25 April 1798, Kent RO, Camden MSS, U840/O157/3.
40 Speech by Dundas, 25 March 1801, PH XXXVI, 1088-9.
41 Wickham to Castlereagh, 14 August 1803, Hampshire RO, Wickham MSS, 38m49/17/17.
had such a small regular garrison was particularly ironic considering that her poverty and over-population made her a prime recruiting ground for the Army. Recruitment there was cheaper because the Irish bounty rate was lower than in Britain, and as a result, the island provided a disproportionate number of recruits for Britain’s force (Lord Guilford asserted in 1795 that she had provided ‘not less than one third of the men for the service of the present war’). The problem was, of course, that they could hardly ever be used on their home soil because of fears of contamination from domestic disaffection. Recruits were most likely to be sent away to the continent or the colonies, so that Ireland did not directly benefit from her own high recruitment rate.

After all, the main decisions about troop deployment were made at Westminster. From here Ireland was a very long way off, and, not unnaturally, British concerns were frequently prioritised. Some lip-service was paid to the primacy of Irish claims on troops, particularly after the rebellion of 1798. When the Second Coalition plans for the joint Anglo-Russian expedition to the Helder were underway in 1799, Dundas reassured Cornwallis that he considered ‘the whole of our force as in reality applicable’ to the defence of Ireland, to which other objects ‘must all be Subservient & secondary’. In reality, however, unless the island was in the immediate grip of insurrection, the lord lieutenant was more usually asked to sacrifice his precious regulars for offensive purposes elsewhere. Over the summer of 1795 Pitt wrote to Camden to request ‘three Regiments for the West Indies’, plus a fourth regiment destined for the ill-fated Quiberon expedition. A month later he added a request for two companies of artillery and some cavalry. Camden’s successor Cornwallis complained dryly that he only ever heard from Dundas when the secretary of state for war wrote ‘to induce me to part with troops’. It was not, of course, all give on Ireland’s part. Politicians were aware that taking her armed

42 Speech by Guilford, 30 March 1795, PH XXXI, 1439; Castlereagh to Long, 6 November 1805, Kent RO, Camden MSS, U840/O219/2.
45 Cornwallis to Colonel Ross, 16 September 1799, Cornwallis Correspondence III, 130-1.
defence force away was not ideal, but they were hard pressed to discover a suitable alternative. One idea was to replace lost regulars with volunteer regiments from the British militia. This first happened after the 1798 rebellion, but it was not an unmixed success. Cornwallis was less than pleased with the quality of the men he received, whom he described as ‘sad hash’. Part of the problem was that the British government overestimated the value of the Irish militia and, therefore, of the Irish defence force in general. All Irish politicians were not, however, as understanding as Camden or Cornwallis. Yorke was threatened by Redesdale ‘with no less than an impeachment’ if reinforcements were not immediately provided for Ireland in October 1803. The difficulty lay in persuading politicians who saw nothing but Britain’s immediate need that Ireland, too, lay exposed to attacks.

This was in fact the main problem. The politicians making the decisions were, by and large, too far removed from Irish affairs and viewed them as little more than an unwelcome distraction. Cornwallis complained that Pitt’s cabinet was ignorant of Irish matters. This was a little unfair on a cabinet which, after 1798, comprised of three former lords lieutenant and one former chief secretary, but certainly Pitt and Dundas, who were, besides Portland, the most important decision-makers in Irish affairs, were woefully ignorant. Camden recalled that Pitt had ‘candidly acknowledged to me before I came hither that Ireland occupy’s [sic] little’ of his thoughts, and Dundas made no attempt to conceal his less-than-perfect knowledge of the country’s defence forces. In 1798 he admitted that he had ‘ceased to occupy my Mind upon the Subject’. The effect of this insouciance underscored by ignorance was widely visible, and rumours that the government had done nothing to prevent the attempted French landing in Bantry Bay in 1796 damaged Anglo-Irish

46 Cornwallis to Dundas, 16 May 1800, Scottish National Archives, Melville MSS, GD51/1/331/27.
47 Cornwallis to Dundas, 16 May 1800, Scottish National Archives, Melville MSS, GD51/1/331/27.
49 Cornwallis to Dundas, 26 June 1800, Scottish National Archives, Melville MSS, GD51/1/331/28.
50 The lords lieutenant were Portland, Westmorland and Camden. The chief secretary was Grenville.
51 ‘I am not possessed of an accurate statement of the volunteer force in Ireland’: speech by Dundas, 25 March 1801, PH XXXV, 1088-9. For Pitt see Camden to Pitt, 7 May 1796, Cambridge University Library, Pitt MSS, Add Ms 6958 Box 10 No 1955.
52 Dundas to Windham, 10 April 1798, Scottish National Archives, Melville MSS, GD51/1/912/2.
relations. Camden himself, in an uncharacteristic burst of bitterness, accused Pitt of unwittingly provoking ‘a great degree of Discontent’ and ‘an impression even amongst the best friends of England that the Country has not had all the attention of the Fleet which was to have been expected’.\textsuperscript{53} Ignorance it might be, but Pitt and Dundas’s neglect only fed suspicions that Britain would only stir if directly threatened herself.

A division of authority

The need to provide for Ireland’s defence, and its consequent drain on Britain’s manpower, was a source of trouble for a government that devoted little of its time to her affairs. Unfortunately for Ireland, too, the dual nature of her government and the terms of her legislative independence meant that the responsibility for her defence was not well enough defined to persuade British politicians of their ultimate responsibility, despite the obvious fact that Ireland remained fundamentally dependent on their help. This was not only the case in terms of manpower. Although London technically had no business interfering in her domestic affairs, Ireland’s straitened finances prompted frequent demands on Britain’s overstrained resources. More ominously, the Pitt government could not avoid the repercussions of attempts to suppress local disaffection, because any harsh measures imposed in Ireland provoked unseemly debate at Westminster. The root of these problems lay in the fact that the British cabinet had no way of influencing Irish policy except through the lord lieutenant, whose own powers to interfere in the country’s parliamentary politics were limited. The only solution to this problem of divided authority, which became more and more pressing as the 1790s progressed, was a rearrangement of the relationship between the two countries that would give the centre a greater degree of control.

However, the initial instinct was to distance British politics as much as possible from Ireland’s problems. Before 1798, politicians avoided tackling them head-on by hiding behind the claim that Westminster had no business interfering in

\textsuperscript{53} Camden to Pitt, 10 January 1797, Kent RO, Camden MSS, U840/O156A/7.
the domestic politics of the sister island. When Lord Moira attacked the government on the issue in 1797, Grenville protested that Britain had no ‘pretensions for watching over the safety of Ireland … This was the duty of its own parliament’.54 Such an attitude was all very well to fend off short-term attacks, but it angered Camden, who complained to Pitt that the lack of any coherent response to opposition slurs put his government in a very bad light.55 His indignation was not, however, enough to change the official response. The issue of divided authority was only really faced by Pitt after the rebellion in 1798, which demonstrated that the previous policy of fixing responsibility on the lord lieutenant and the Irish parliament had become unviable. In the meantime, opposition suggestions to the effect that Pitt ought to take Ireland more firmly in hand were dismissed as ridiculous and unconstitutional.

Unfortunately, not all problems could be dodged so easily, and many returned again and again to haunt the government in London. The recurring issue of Ireland’s poor cash flow, for example, was particularly pressing in the mid-1790s, at a time when the Pitt government was more preoccupied with the prospect of British than Irish bankruptcy. The height of Ireland’s crisis occurred between December 1796 and May 1797, at a time when her vulnerability had been cast in stark relief due to the invasion attempt near Bantry Bay. Her demands, however, coincided with the attack on Fishguard and the bank crash in England. Combined with the fact that there was no direct way to pump money and resources into Ireland without a parliamentary inquiry on one or other side of the water, Pitt was unwilling (or unable) to give as much aid as Camden wanted. It was only by portraying the financial situation in the blackest of lights (and then only repeatedly) that the lord lieutenant could get any attention from the prime minister at all.

Camden’s frantic letters detailed the dangerously low level of specie in the Irish bank, which meant an impending inability to pay Ireland’s armed forces. In late

54 Speech by Grenville, 22 November 1797, PH XXXIII, 1064.
55 Camden to Pitt, 3 November 1797, Cambridge University Library, Pitt MSS, Add Ms 6958 Box 11 No 2257.
1796 he warned that a £600,000 demand on the Irish Treasury could not be honoured, and that defaulting would probably draw French attention to Ireland’s vulnerability. Unless Ireland was given ‘a Sum as large as the means of Great Britain can furnish … the Troops could not march against the Enemy, if they should appear upon our Coasts’.

He further claimed that there were only 20,000 guineas left in the Bank of Ireland and asked for a loan of a million pounds on top of a sum of three hundred thousand pounds that had already been borrowed the previous November.

The French attempt to invade over the New Year increased the stakes, but unfortunately Pitt’s response to Camden promising only fifty thousand guineas did not take the corresponding change in situation into account.

Camden reminded him that ‘Ireland is now the advanced post thro’ which England is to be attacked’, and that it was ‘both becoming & politic in England to enable her to make such exertions as can alone render her situation tolerably secure’. In mid February Pitt agreed to raise the loan to one and a half million pounds, but the money had not arrived by mid-March and Camden prophesied imminent ‘mutiny’, ‘a most formidable Insurrection’ and ‘Civil War’ if a further three hundred thousand pounds was not provided to pay the regulars before June.

By July he was again pestering Pitt for money, and at the end of the year a new petition for £3.5 millions produced a promise of only one and a half. Ireland’s position on the knife-edge of bankruptcy did no good to the government’s standing in either country, but no long-term solution was available so long as the British and Irish treasuries remained separate.

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56 Camden to Portland, late 1796, Kent RO, Camden MSS, U840/C31/2.
57 Camden to Pitt, 30 December [1796], Cambridge University Library, Pitt MSS, Add Ms 6958 Box 16 No 3284; Camden to Pitt, 29 December 1796, Kent RO, Camden MSS, U840/O156A/5.
58 Pitt to Camden, 2 January 1797, Kent RO, Camden MSS, U840/O153/11; Camden to Pitt, 10 January 1797, Kent RO, Camden MSS, U840/O156A/7.
60 Pelham to Camden, 16 February 1797, Kent RO, Camden MSS, U840/C122/11; Camden to Pitt, 13 March 1797, Kent RO, Camden MSS, U840/O156A/13; Camden to Pitt, 6 May 1797, Kent RO, Camden MSS, U840/O156A/15. This had grown to a demand for £500,000 by 19 May: Camden to Pitt, 19 May 1797, Cambridge University Library, Pitt MSS, Add Ms 6958 Box 11 No 2158*.
61 Camden to Pitt, 5 July 1797, Cambridge University Library, Pitt MSS, Add Ms 6958 Box 11 No 2185; Pelham to Camden, 21 December 1797, Kent RO, Camden MSS, U840/O190/14.
The harsh measures enacted by the Irish government also caused problems for Pitt’s ministry. The Westminster opposition was apt to place responsibility for any apparent excess of power in Ireland at Pitt’s door, despite the fact that his ministry had no direct say in Irish defence policy. Any serious attempt to seize the bull by the horns in Dublin, therefore, ran the risk of forfeiting London’s support, since the conviction that Ireland’s problems justified strong measures was often overcome by the fear of a political backlash. The Irish Insurrection Act of 1796, for example, deeply shocked the cabinet, and Portland wrote to Camden to recommend caution in its implementation.\(^\text{62}\) The government was afflicted with a similar uneasiness at the violence exhibited by the Irish militia in suppressing northern disturbances in 1797. Camden explained that some militiamen had been tried for murder and other offences, but did not deny that his administration ‘meant to strike Terror’. He protested ‘that the dreadful state of this Country from the intimidation practised by the United Irishmen made it indispensable to take strong measures & to employ the Military without waiting for the forms attendant on their acting in quiet times’.\(^\text{63}\) The implication was that London, at a distance, was unable to gauge the Irish situation adequately. Clearly, however, neither Camden nor anyone else in Pitt’s ministry was entirely happy with the prospect of placing the responsibility for invoking martial law and the implementation of curfews and armed searches with local authorities.

From London’s point of view, the inability to control the direction of Irish domestic policy was particularly unfortunate. Ireland still remained the weakest part of the British Isles, and the events of 1798 seemed to indicate that her separate legislature could not deal effectively with the problems of war. She had now suffered an invasion attempt, a successful landing, and a rebellion to boot. Widespread disaffection remained long after the revolt had been put down and the French chased off Irish soil. In September 1799, a full fifteen months after the rebellion, reports in

\[^{62}\text{Camden to Portland, 14 November 1796, Kent RO, Camden MSS, U840/O154/4.}\]
\[^{63}\text{Camden to Pitt, 3 November 1797, Cambridge University Library, Pitt MSS, Add Ms 6958 Box 11 No 2257.}\]
the *Times* still spoke alternately of tranquillity and fear of renewed hostilities, while martial law remained in effect in Waterford and Tipperary.\(^{64}\) Given Ireland’s problems over the past five years — her near-bankruptcy, her independent mindset, and her drain on precious manpower, not to mention the embarrassment she represented to the government in London — all pointed to an urgent need for control. ‘The only remedy is union — union — union’, Grenville declared.\(^{65}\) By removing the Irish parliament, Pitt hoped at a stroke to simplify the communications between London and Dublin, break the Irish administration down to its barest elements, and concentrate policy-making for the whole British Isles in the cabinet room in Downing Street. To him, therefore, the Union was a defence measure, and one ‘which we cannot lose sight of, but must make the Grand & Primary object of all our Policy with respect to Ireland’.\(^{66}\) This reasoning justified the drastic steps taken, and all the secret service money spent, to persuade the reluctant Irish houses of parliament to vote themselves out of existence.

*B Britain and Ireland after the Union: the ‘United Kingdom’*

A Union between Britain and Ireland had been on the cards at least since the mid-eighteenth century, and Pitt himself had attempted to construct a commercial bond between the two nations in 1785. By 1798, however, the situation had progressed beyond piecemeal attempts at rapprochement. The fraught circumstances of the 1790s increased the need for a more secure legislative, commercial, financial, and political bond between the two islands. A full union would allow the British executive to check the uncontrolled violence with which Irish vigilantes had dealt with the disaffection of 1797 and the rebellion of 1798.\(^{67}\) It would also limit the overreaction of local authorities that had resulted from the 1796 Insurrection Act:

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\(^{64}\) *Times*, 24 September 1798, 3(a).

\(^{65}\) Grenville to Thomas Grenville, 7 August 1798, Dropmore MSS, British Library, BL Add MSS 41852 ff. 31-2.

\(^{66}\) Pitt to Lord Cornwallis, 26 January 1799, Cambridge University Library, Pitt MSS, Add Ms 6958 Box 13 No 2436; Geoghegan, *The Irish Act of Union*, p. 2; Blackstock, ‘The Union and the Military’, 333. See also Smyth (ed), *Revolution, Counter-Revolution and Union*, pp. 16, 19.

\(^{67}\) Memorandum by Castlereagh on the Union, 1800, PRONI, Castlereagh MSS, D3030/1530/2.
Castlereagh admitted to the future chief secretary William Wickham ‘the indispensable necessity’ following the Union ‘of submitting material Measures, as far as possible for consideration in England previous to their introduction here’.68 The administrative shake-up that would accompany the measure also offered an unparalleled opportunity to fix many of the problems the government had encountered during the 1790s. In short, union was the magic wand that would make all Britain’s Irish problems disappear. The emphasis was, above all, on centralisation: ‘the Administration of the two Islands must be one’.69

Crucially, however, the same selfishness that had often prompted British politicians to drain Ireland of her precious troops lay behind their reasoning on the Union. The British government remained hampered by its very Britishness.70 Although in public Pitt declared the Union to be the only way to bond British and Irish hearts, in private it was described as a method to ensure that Irish interests would not override those of the United Kingdom at large. After the initial upheaval created by the Union had subsided, its most obvious results seemed to be official chaos, departmental overlap, and a complete absence of system.71 This was not due to a premeditated desire to cripple Ireland for good, but was to an extent inevitable so long as politicians were unwilling to come to grips with the deeper issues. The union made no attempt to address the social problems that afflicted Ireland: welfare, education, policing, and economic policy all remained in local Irish hands.72 Once it was clear that Ireland’s financial and military problems would no longer obstruct the British defence effort, interest in Ireland’s problems clearly lapsed.

The promised benefits of the Union, particularly security and a more efficient central control of Ireland’s policy, did not materialise. To many this simply confirmed that the measure, though ‘one of the best measures that ever was carried’,

68 Though Castlereagh admitted this would depend on the scale of any emergency: Castlereagh to Wickham, 7 March 1799, Hampshire RO, Wickham MSS, 38m49/1/5/5.
69 Edward Cooke to Camden, 18 July 1800, Kent RO, Camden MSS, U840/C104/1.
70 According to Patrick O’Farrell, the Union was ‘a device to protect England from the consequences of Ireland’s problems’: O’Farrell, Ireland’s English Question, pp. 65-6.
71 As McDowell observes in The Irish Administration, pp. 19-20.
pointed ‘more to remote than to immediate advantages’.\(^\text{73}\) Part of the problem was that it had been passed in a hurry, and the implications of such a total reconstruction of the Irish government were not fully understood until after the fact.\(^\text{74}\) This had been foreseen in 1801 by Camden, who doubted ‘whether the sort of Establishment for the Business now made here will answer’.\(^\text{75}\) As soon as the Union had been passed, the old problems of neglect, miscommunication, and conflicts of interest resurfaced, since London and Dublin failed to see eye-to-eye on even the most basic elements of the post-union arrangement. The Peace of Amiens offered a short period of respite during which the practical problems could be ironed out, but there was little time to do much, and the new war with Napoleon brought even more serious problems of configuration into the open. The chaos that followed was clearly undesirable at a time when a French invasion was daily expected and Ireland was in danger of exploding into rebellion at any moment.

Ironically, the most significant obstacle in the way of forming an effective defence policy for the entire United Kingdom was that responsibility for Ireland’s government now lay in Westminster rather than Dublin. The first lord lieutenant after the Union, Hardwicke, emphasised the importance of giving his office ‘some latitude of Action … in any unforeseen Situation … on which he may be prevented by circumstances from receiving His Majesty’s Commands from England’, but in practice this was not easy. There was an obvious communications problem, in that orders from Whitehall took so long to reach Dublin that, by the time they arrived, the situation had already changed.\(^\text{76}\) ‘Whilst the rebel directory is absolute & on the spot, the King’s government is restricted, & under the guidance of a distant power,

\(^{73}\) Memorandum on Irish Defence by Sir George Shee, 1801, Pelham MSS, British Library, BL Add MSS 33119 ff. 86-102.

\(^{74}\) S.J. Connolly has pointed out that ‘it is difficult to resist the conclusion that Pitt and his ministers approached … the union in a spirit of undirected urgency … remaining far less clear on what exactly was to take [the old system’s] place’. Connolly, ‘Reconsidering the Irish Act of Union’, 404.

\(^{75}\) Camden to Edward Cooke, 23 January 1801, Kent RO, Camden MSS, U840/C205/3.

\(^{76}\) This had already been a problem in the 1790s. In 1794 General Robert Cunningham wrote to Sir William Fawcett that ‘we are literally groping in the dark, & official mandates travel so slow, that without private correspondence, they never can be effectually executed’. Cunningham to Fawcett, 16 March 1794, Cambridge University Library, Pitt MSS, Add Ms 6958 Box 8 No 1416.
necessarily ignorant of every thing which can guide instant decision’, complained Redesdale during the 1803 rebellion.77 The situation in Dublin was hard to gauge from a distance: Redesdale’s unequivocal opinion was that ‘the Secretary of State will know as much of the government of Ireland as of that of Kamschatka’.78 Removing the Irish parliament may have ended Ireland’s independence, but it meant that policies were now implemented from a distance by men who had little idea of the conditions on the ground.

Even if London had been able to make better informed decisions about Irish conditions, the lack of proper definition between the powers of the two executives would still have caused difficulties. This was obvious in September 1801, nine months after the Union, when Hardwicke sent an envoy to England on a mission to urge ministers to come to ‘some Definitive Arrangements’ with regard to the relations between the Home Department, the Treasury, the War Office, the Ordnance, and the commander in chief.79 Three months later, the powers of the lord lieutenant remained ‘unsettled’, and it began to dawn on officers that not very much had changed in practical day-to-day terms.80 In 1803 the Irish solicitor general decided that ‘His Excellency’s Patent accordingly gives exactly the same extent of Powers which were given to his Predecessor before the Act of Union’.81 In 1805 the new chief secretary, Charles Long, remarked that even four years after the Union nobody in Britain could tell him how the Irish government had changed: ‘They all seem to agree that the Union has operated some Change in their offices but to what extent does not appear to have been defined’.82 The question of whether Dublin was subordinate or equal to Whitehall, and on what issues, remained uncertain for many years and resurfaced as late as 1823, 1830 and 1844.83

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77 Redesdale to Addington, 25 July 1803, Devon RO, Sidmouth MSS, 152M/C1803/64.  
78 Redesdale to Abbot, 21 July 1804, Colchester Diary I, 523.  
79 ‘Instructions from His Excellency the Lord Lieutenant to Lt. Col. Littlehales’, 1 September 1801, Hampshire RO, Wickham MSS, 38m49/5/17b/2.  
80 ‘Irish Affairs’, January 1802, Hampshire RO, Wickham MSS, 38m49/5/17b.  
81 Memorandum by William Plunket, 23 December 1803, Hampshire RO, Wickham MSS, 38m49/1/55/5.  
83 Vaughan (ed), A New History of Ireland V, 4.
The circumstances surrounding Emmett’s rebellion on 23 July 1803 offered the most obvious sign that the Union had failed to deal adequately with the problems that had plagued British and Irish relations in the 1790s. The one-day rising in Dublin was swiftly suppressed and the leaders, including Emmett himself, mostly taken, but the Irish government had taken its time to respond, and had clearly failed to anticipate the attack despite the discovery of an illegal arms depot the previous week. The spontaneity of the rebellion, the killing of the Irish Lord Chief Justice (Kilwarden) in the melee, and a combination of bad luck and bad communication between departments which did not yet know for certain how they were supposed to interact, all seriously damaged confidence in the ability of the Irish government to deal with the kinds of domestic challenges the Union had been meant to address.

Had Hardwicke’s government been surprised when it learned about the preparations for revolt that had been going on right under its nose? The lord lieutenant himself admitted that the insurrection ‘was not suspected till the Morning’ of the 23rd, in spite of various hints that had been present since the 16th, but added that ‘it is now distinctly ascertained that it was only on that day that it was determined by the Leaders themselves that an attempt should be made’. 84 Few were convinced by this or by any other attempt to mitigate the impact made by the rebellion on the public mind. Addington and his ministers were inundated with despairing letters from politicians such as the chief secretary, Wickham, who deplored the ‘outcry and ill humour without End on the subject of the affair of the 23d’. 85 The prospect of an inquiry filled Hardwicke with even more foreboding that the opposition would harness the rebellion as a weapon against the governments in both countries. 86 Whatever the excuses, as Hobart was told by a correspondent, ‘The

84 Hardwicke to John Foster, 27 July 1803, Devon RO, Sidmouth MSS, 152M/C1803/294; Hardwicke to Yorke, 25 August 1803, Hampshire RO, Wickham MSS, 38m49/8/93/5.
85 Wickham to Addington, 12 August 1803, Hampshire RO, Wickham MSS, 38m49/1/45/27.
86 Hardwicke to Wickham, 17 December 1803, Hampshire RO, Wickham MSS, 38m49/5/30/121; notes by Castlereagh on the rebellion, 1803, PRONI, Castlereagh MSS, D3030/1799/1.
fact simply is — they were surprised — & it never will be forgiven — Confidence will never be restored in the Persons of our present Rulers’.87

This public outcry was deeply damaging to a government already struggling to assert its authority after the Union, which seemed to have rendered the lord lieutenant virtually powerless. Initially, the plan had been to replace the lord lieutenant with a secretary of state for Ireland based in Westminster.88 Once the decision had been made to keep him, the Pitt and Addington governments had clearly envisioned him as a slightly more powerful version of his English county counterpart. Accordingly, when Hardwicke was appointed, the civilian and military parts of the Irish government, formerly joined in the person of Cornwallis, were kept strictly separate.89 The bulk of the military powers were bestowed on a separate commander of the forces, and the rest were returned to their corresponding departments in London, notably to the Transport Board, Ordnance, and office of the commander in chief at Horseguards. This was in line with the need to centralise military policy for the United Kingdom in London, but created an awkward situation in which a good working relationship between the lord lieutenant and the relevant London departments was essential. Unfortunately, Hardwicke found it extremely difficult to get on with the latter, particularly the Ordnance, which seemed to look upon any attempt by him to procure even the most basic information as unwarranted interference.90

The lord lieutenant quickly found himself wondering what role he was supposed to play in the new arrangement. Even his channels of communication with London had become more straitened since Pelham, home secretary until summer

87 Mr. Cradock to Hobart, 16 August 1803, Buckinghamshire RO, Hobart MSS, D/MH/H(war office)/Bundle C/I164.
88 11 March 1801, Colchester Diary, I, 254; 15 March 1801, Colchester Diary, I, 257-8. Addington eventually discarded the idea of an Irish secretary of state since this would simply increase the confusion arising from the fact that there were already three secretaries of state in the cabinet.
89 Initially Camden had proposed another military man as the Union’s first lord lieutenant, preferably a man close to the prime minister: his suggestion was Lord Chatham, Pitt’s brother (Camden to Pitt, 1 August 1800, Kent RO, Camden MSS, U840/C30/6; Camden to Castlereagh, 30 June 1800, PRONI, Castlereagh MSS, D3030/1385). Addington, however, chose Hardwicke, a civilian.
90 Hardwicke to Wickham, 12 April 1803, Hampshire RO, Wickham MSS, 38m49/8/70/76.
1803, had informed him in no uncertain terms that contacts with any government members not directly affiliated to the Home Office could only be unofficial and ‘informal’. Inevitably, this caused friction. Redesdale was particularly angry that Hardwicke had been reduced to ‘the chief peace Magistrate of the Country’. The practical difficulties of this situation were illustrated by the strong dependence of Pitt’s second government on information received through the medium of the Irish chancellor of the exchequer and first lord of the treasury, John Foster. Hardwicke was enraged ‘that the Ministers in England are more willing to attend to the suggestions of assuming and interested Individuals respecting Ireland, than to the regular & legitimate authority to which the Government is confided’. His position was considerably weakened by the fact that although the British government was under no obligation to deal with Irish policy through him, he on the contrary was forced to reach the cabinet through official channels alone.

The most serious example of miscommunication between London and Dublin occurred as the result of a dispute over the authority of the lord lieutenant and the Irish commander of the forces, appointed by and responsible to Horseguards in London. Inevitably, this caused problems because Hardwicke could not see how Horseguards could be capable of judging the military conditions in Ireland well enough to give prompt and appropriate orders. His fears about the division of military authority were confirmed by the circumstances surrounding the Emmett rebellion. The commander of the forces at the time, General Fox, seemed to have ignored signs of the imminent disturbance, and had kept the troops in their barracks

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91 ‘Instructions from His Excellency the Lord Lieutenant to Lt. Col. Littlehales’, 1 September 1801, Hampshire RO, Wickham MSS, 38m49/5/17b/2; Hardwicke to Wickham, 28 April 1803, Hampshire RO, Wickham MSS, 38m49/8/70/84; Hardwicke to Wickham, 5 May 1803, Hampshire RO, Wickham MSS, 38m49/5/30/7; Hardwicke to Wickham, 24 May 1803, Hampshire RO, Wickham MSS, 38m49/5/30/21; notes by Abbot, Colchester Diary I, 277-8; Colonel Littlehales to Charles Abbot, 9 September 1801, Colchester Diary I, 316.

92 Redesdale to Long, 7 November 1804, Cambridge University Library, Pitt MSS, Add Ms 6958 Box 16 No 3215.

93 Hardwicke to Redesdale, 9 September 1805, Gloucester RO, Redesdale MSS, D2002/3/1/47.
until the rebellion was well underway. ‘Not a man was sent out until half after Eleven when the whole was over,’ lamented Wickham. Fox became the scapegoat for the Irish government’s failure to deal with the rebellion effectively, and the affair brought to a head Hardwicke’s frustration about the arbitrary division of viceregal authority following the Union.

Fox was forced to resign, but the situation only worsened when his replacement, Lord Cathcart, arrived in October 1803. His instructions, which confirmed that he was directly responsible to the commander in chief in Horseguards rather than to Hardwicke in Dublin, cut right to the heart of the problem — how to establish a centralised system in London without trespassing on the lord lieutenant’s ability to deal with special emergencies. ‘You will see at once that the Government of the country cannot be carried on at all unless it be distinctly understood where the supreme authority rests,’ Wickham informed Addington on Hardwicke’s behalf. He urged that it was vitally important that ‘the shew and semblance and the name of authority even in military matters should be entirely with’ Hardwicke, and that anything else would make the position of lord lieutenant impossible. When questioned, however, Addington remained firm in his insistence that the military and civilian parts of the Irish government ought to remain separate, related only in the same way that the king and the commander in chief were connected in Britain. This was not what Hardwicke wanted to hear, since this not only devalued his authority but failed to establish a back-up plan for situations in which there was no time to apply to London for orders.

94 Redesdale to Perceval, 16 August 1803, Gloucester RO, Redesdale MSS, D2002/3/1/20; Redesdale to Addington, 19 August 1803, Devon RO, Sidmouth MSS, 152M/C1803/83. Vaughan (ed), A New History of Ireland V, 15 agrees that Fox deserved most of the blame.
95 Wickham to Addington, 12 August 1803, Hampshire RO, Wickham MSS, 38m49/1/45/27.
96 Wickham to Addington, 25 December 1803, Hampshire RO, Wickham MSS, 38m49/1/48/6. Redesdale thought that if Cathcart attempted to implement the instructions he would ‘be guilty of High Treason’: Redesdale to Addington, 13 October 1803, Gloucester RO, Redesdale MSS, D2002/3/1/30.
These disputes over the lord lieutenant’s military and political authority pointed to a fundamental difference between London and Dublin in the interpretation of the lord lieutenant’s role in post-Union Irish politics. The problem was ideological as well as practical in scope since it demonstrated what the politicians in Ireland had long feared, that defence policy devised from a British point of view, for the whole of the United Kingdom, was unlikely to take Ireland’s special conditions into consideration. Clearly the two islands could not be governed in the same way. Whereas martial law was only applied in Britain as a last resource, for the last four or five years in Ireland it had been implemented at various times almost as a matter of course. Could Ireland, at almost constant risk of either rebellion or invasion, keep her military and civil governments apart in quite the same way as in Britain? The friction caused by the disputes over the role of the lord lieutenant was still present in November 1805 when Long reported that ‘passions’ were ‘so heated upon this and upon other points’ that it had deprived everyone of ‘all rational consideration of these Subjects’. It was difficult to avoid the conclusion that, as far as bureaucratic centralisation was concerned, the Anglo-Irish Union had caused more problems than it had solved.

**Ireland’s defence policy after the Union**

The Union was also unable to lay the basis for a United Kingdom-wide defence policy. This was ironic, since one of its justifications had been that it would allow a more efficient centralisation of the British and Irish defence efforts, but the circumstances were just not favourable for the experiment to be made. Many of the difficulties that had prevented the extension of British Acts to Ireland in the 1790s still existed after 1801. With the resumption of the threat of a French invasion after 1803, Britain moved further and further towards an ‘armed nation’ with volunteers, the levy en masse, and various balloted defence bodies. Ireland, however, could not follow the same path, and continued to be defended primarily by a traditional combination of regular forces, Protestant Yeomanry and militia. Nor did the Union

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98 Long to Camden, 7 November 1805, Kent RO, Camden MSS, U840/C242.
provide more effectively for Ireland’s defence: the same problems that had existed in the 1790s, when British politicians had repeatedly drained her of her defence forces, returned tenfold once Napoleon lined the Channel ports with his Armée d’Angleterre. Once again, the British bias in policy-making skewed the balance of the defence effort against Ireland.

A United Kingdom-wide militia force capable of serving anywhere in the British Isles was widely considered desirable to ensure that no part of it was left exposed to attack. Such a force would have particularly benefited Ireland, where the prevalence of domestic unrest tied down a large number of regulars. Given the Irish militia’s poor reputation, which was not improved by the Castlebar débacle of 1798, a joint force operating interchangeably could have improved the situation in Ireland, especially as her auxiliary force would have profited from being trained by British officers on British soil, away from local seditious influences. This would allow it to ‘be of real service, in a military capacity’, while the British militia ‘would be a certain security for the defence of Ireland’. At a stroke, such a United Kingdom militia would have achieved three important goals: it would have provided a stronger defence for Ireland, both against invasion and internal insurrection; it would, as Colonel Craufurd argued, have rendered the Union of England, Scotland and Ireland ‘more complete’; and it would have concentrated control of the militia force even more firmly in the hands of the central government.

Unfortunately such a ‘reciprocal’ militia service was not as easy to implement as some politicians had hoped. A precedent had been created by sending the British militia to defend Ireland in the wake of the 1798 rebellion, but this had required the passage of a parliamentary indemnity and had stirred up trouble between the government and the county lords lieutenant. Moreover, although an offer from the Irish militia in 1801 to serve reciprocally with its British counterpart suggested that the goal of a ‘Militia Force of the United Kingdom being liable to serve in all parts of it’ might soon be achieved, the peace of Amiens put an end to such hopes for the

99 Speech by Whitshed Keene, 17 March 1806, PD VI, 452-3.
100 Speech by Craufurd, 12 December 1803, PD I, 1789.
foreseeable future.\textsuperscript{101} The government was, in any case, all too happy to shelve the idea of further militia reform. Local magnates had already been angered by Addington’s 1802 Militia Act, as a result of which too much change all at once was not considered wise. Writing from London, Wickham admitted ‘that the system of establishing a Militia common to both Countries is not one which Government dare to propose at the moment’.\textsuperscript{102} The time to form such a united force seemed to have passed with the peace, causing Colonel Craufurd to regret that it had not been made an automatic part of the Act of Union. In fact a militia that was automatically capable of serving anywhere in the United Kingdom was not established until 1811.\textsuperscript{103} By then, however, it had become clear that the concept of a United Kingdom-wide defence policy was little more than a pipe-dream.

The reason for this was that the Union had not solved any of Ireland’s deep-rooted social and sectarian problems. She was considered too Catholic to arm voluntarily and too volatile for the implementation of the ballot, and this automatically excluded the country from most British attempts to acquire a larger defence force after 1803. Irish compulsion was more or less abandoned once the initial operation of the militia ballot in May and June 1793 had provoked serious riots in Ulster, Roscommon, Leitrim, Wicklow, Mayo, and Sligo.\textsuperscript{104} Since then the government had proved remarkably reluctant to renew the experience. Fear of rioting was not, however, the only reason to avoid a ballot: many politicians also hesitated to arm and train men whose loyalty might be uncertain. By the time the Union came into effect, the foolishness of raising armed Irish bodies by any way other than voluntary recruitment had become part of accepted political wisdom. Redesdale warned Addington that ‘all balloting I believe to be, except in a very few districts,

\textsuperscript{101} Colonel Brownrigg to Alexander Hope, 7 August 1801, Scottish National Archives, Hope of Luffness MSS, GD364/1/1127/5.
\textsuperscript{102} Wickham to Hardwicke, 13 April 1802, Hampshire RO, Wickham MSS, 38m49/8/42/30. The king disapproved of allowing the Irish militia to serve in Britain, though he approved of sending them to Jersey or Guernsey: Cornwallis Correspondence III, 80.
\textsuperscript{103} Speech by Mr. Lee, 19 March 1806, PD VI, 488; speech by Craufurd, 12 December 1803, PD I, 1789; Fortescue, The County Lieutenancies and the Army, p. 254.
\textsuperscript{104} Times, 4 June 1793 3(d), 7 June 1793 3(c), 8 June 1793 3(b).
unwise in this country’, and that the Irish were ‘used to have men raised by recruiting, & especially by Irish officers’. The ballot was consequently left out of Ireland’s 1802 Militia Act, which simply provided for voluntary enlistment by a bounty of two guineas per man. Most politicians would rather have had a small Irish defence force of impeccable loyalty than a large balloted body that incorporated disaffected elements and provoked countrywide rioting.

This tendency to avoid compulsion in Ireland stood out all the more because British defence policy was moving closer to the idea of a largely balloted domestic defence force in which the militia played only a part. In Britain, the Levy en Masse, the Army of Reserve, Windham’s ‘trained peasantry’, and the Local Militia all relied on balloting. These Acts were, therefore, clearly inapplicable to Ireland, and separate ones were required to tailor the requirements of defence to Irish conditions. Compulsion played a much weaker role in the legislation passed for the sister island. The Irish Army of Reserve Act, for example, provided for the substitution of recruitment by bounty for the ballot in any areas where a General Meeting deemed it too dangerous. The immediate peril of a Napoleonic invasion precluded its complete disposal, but wholesale balloting was only to be resorted to if voluntary enlistment had failed to produce the quota of men within six weeks. Similarly, the Levy en Masse Act was not immediately extended to Ireland because arming her population indiscriminately was considered to be more ‘dangerous’ than in Britain. This impression was reinforced tenfold by the Emmett rebellion, which reminded politicians of the untrustworthiness of the Irish, particularly if they were Catholic. By 1808 it had become normal to pass separate defence Acts that recognised Ireland’s social and political distinctness. Castlereagh preferred not to implement the Local Militia Act in Ireland in the first instance since ‘it is perhaps too hazardous either to

105 Redesdale to Addington, 30 July 1803, Devon RO, Sidmouth MSS, 152M/C1803/68.
106 Fortescue, The County Lieutenancies and the Army, p. 22.
108 Although Yorke urged the house of commons to recognise that in the present state of Europe ‘he would rather run the chance of his countrymen misemploying the arms entrusted to them, than that they should be obliged to submit to a foreign enemy’: speech by Yorke, 18 July 1803, PH XXXVI, 1630; Wickham to Castlereagh, 14 August 1803, Hampshire RO, Wickham MSS, 38m49/1/7/17.
train or arm the people of Ireland indiscriminately'. 109 The Irish Militia Consolidation Act of 1809 provided for a militia of roughly 24,000 men preferably recruited by voluntary enlistment, although the ballot was recognised as a last resort. 110 Clearly, such paranoia about balloting and arming the Irish population set her defence movement a long way apart from its counterpart in Britain, where a large proportion of the male population bore arms, and talk of widespread military training was common.

The Union did not, therefore, allow for Ireland’s full inclusion into a United Kingdom defence policy, any more than it stopped the habit of prioritising British defence interests that had caused so many problems in the 1790s. The government continued to take Ireland’s precious manpower away whenever Britain was directly threatened, even when the sister island was equally at risk. Castlereagh warned Wickham from England that he should ‘never cease pressing on all your Military Wants, as the reluctance to part with any thing from hence is strong in many Quarters’. 111 It was Ireland’s particular misfortune that the aftermath of the Emmett rebellion in 1803 coincided with Britain’s biggest invasion scare since the late 1790s. When Hardwicke requested two regiments of reinforcements, Addington explained that his reluctance to comply stemmed from the fact that ‘England, & not Ireland may be reasonably supposed to be the Object of an Attack in Force’ from the French. 112 In October Redesdale complained that, although a reinforcement of ten thousand men had been promised, only 1400 had been sent, while more than 1600 had been taken away. 113 England, he wrote regretfully to Addington, ‘seemed wholly occupied with her own safety’. 114 The popularity of the Union had begun to suffer because Britain remained reluctant to help the weakest part of the United Kingdom

111 Castlereagh to Wickham, 6 September 1803, Hampshire RO, Wickham MSS, 38m49/6/35.
112 Addington to Wickham, 19 August 1803, Hampshire RO, Wickham MSS, 38m49/1/48/5. Yorke, too, sheepishly explained to his brother that, since London was ‘the Heart and Vitals of the Empire’, England had to come before Ireland in terms of preparations against invasion: Yorke to Hardwicke, 23 October 1803, Hampshire RO, Wickham MSS, 38m49/8/93/9.
fight off either French invaders or domestic radicals. The most urgent defence problems that the measure had promised to address had been neglected. Nothing, it seemed, had changed, except that now Ireland was wholly rather than partially dependent on an uninterested Britain for her protection.

After the 1803 rebellion, indeed, she seemed to revert to the patterns of domestic unrest that had characterised the 1790s. The Union had not removed the fear that Ireland provided a back door for a French assault on Britain. William Elliot feared that Emmett had shown that Ireland remained ‘more vulnerable than it has ever been’ in terms of ‘organised conspiracy’. Although the United Irishmen lost their connection with France with the rise of Napoleon, who was less well-disposed towards their republican views, this distinction became clear only with hindsight, and the British (and some Irish) continued to believe in a direct connection between French and Irish radicals. In February 1804, half a year after the rebellion, King’s and Queen’s counties were still reported as likely to rise in favour of an invasion. A year later, the Times reported that the Brest fleet was due to sail to Ireland at the first notice of an insurrection. Whatever he felt about Irish republicanism it was not in Napoleon’s interests to deny the rumours, and in 1809 his declared intention to maintain communication with Ireland’s rebels provoked a call in Britain to renew the suspension of Habeas Corpus there. In late 1810 the fear that ‘a very general rising’ would coincide with a French invasion returned when new disturbances broke out in Tipperary, Waterford and County Down. By 1811 this unrest had subsided, but rumours that a French agent had visited Ireland, and that the Catholic Committee under John Keogh was in correspondence with the enemy, caused anxiety. ‘A rebellion, unconnected with any other circumstances, might be regarded as one of the

115 Elliot to Minto, 5 October 1803, Scottish National Library, Minto MSS, MSS 11139 ff. 157-60.
117 Sir Evan Nepean to John King, 6 February 1804, Liverpool MSS, British Library, BL Add MSS 38240 f. 141.
118 Times, 19 July 1804, 2(c).
120 W.W. Pole to Richard Ryder, 5 July 1810, quoted in Gray, Spencer Perceval, p. 416.
121 Vaughan (ed), A New History of Ireland V, 43.
greatest calamities to the empire,’ Moira warned the prince regent, ‘but we know that it could not be unconnected; we know that Buonaparte would not let slip the moment of our embarrassment’.  

Faced with this multitude of problems at a time when most attention was already distracted by political divisions in Westminster and the imminent prospect of a French assault, the reaction of the government was to return to the 1790s policy of repression. With only a brief respite under the Talents, Ireland was once again controlled by martial law and the suspension of Habeas Corpus. This return to the old policy which had so shocked the Pitt government in the 1790s was approved by Addington in a firm and uncompromising statement addressed to Redesdale: ‘Weaken’d Authority & Danger are synonymous Terms particularly in Ireland’.  

After many years of serious disturbances, even the political opposition began to view Ireland as a threat. By 1807 the Foxites were largely resigned to the fact that harsh measures were required to keep that country in check. Although Sheridan continued to oppose, Henry Grattan and Samuel Whitbread supported the Irish Insurrection Bill of 1807 on a temporary basis. In 1809 Grey wrote to Tierney on the Insurrection Acts, ‘I hate them as much as any body, but … after what passed in the last Session I could not vote for the repeal’.  

Even he had to admit that Ireland could not be governed in the same way as Britain.  

The popularity of the Union suffered greatly from these developments. Not only had the British government failed to plan an effective post-union structure for Ireland’s government, but the problems the Union had been meant to solve — dual responsibility for military and defence affairs, Ireland’s vulnerability to French assault, insurrection, and the search for a fairer balance of defence within the British Isles — remained as urgent after 1801 as before. The chaos that surrounded the 1803 Emmett rebellion confirmed the impression that the Union, still in the throes of implementation, had done more harm than good. As Redesdale feared, many

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122 Moira to the prince regent, 19 August 1811, quoted in Roberts, The Whig Party, pp. 91-2.  
123 Addington to Redesdale, 8 July 1804, Devon RO, Sidmouth MSS, 152M/C1804/OI/16.  
124 Times, 10 July 1807, 2(d).  
125 Grey to Tierney, 26 December 1809, Hampshire RO, Tierney MSS, 31m70/33/d.
Irishmen who had only been lukewarm friends of the Union were now turned firmly against it: ‘Since I have been in this country the Union has never been so unpopular, with thinking persons, as at this moment’. The return of martial law and other harsh measures marked an end to all hopes that Britain and Ireland could be governed in the same way. Ten years after its passage, the Union seemed to have changed very little about the way the United Kingdom was defended.

**Catholic Emancipation: a ‘real’ Union**

Ireland’s full integration into the British political, civil and defensive policy continued to be held at arm’s length, partly for practical reasons, but also because of a reluctance to grapple with the deeper issues that underscored Irish disaffection. Her Catholicism, in particular, brought issues to the fore that most British politicians would rather have left alone. Catholic Emancipation had the potential both to mitigate some of the deeper social problems at the root of Irish disaffection, and to solve the broader manpower shortage faced by the government, but full integration of Catholic Ireland would obviously be difficult at a time when many considered toleration to be the most that ought to be given to anyone not a member of the Established Church.

The British fear of Catholics as the natural enemies of the Protestant constitution, which had been a primary feature of political life since the fall of James II in 1688, seemed less pressing after the collapse of the House of Bourbon. Many, including Pitt, felt that the religious threat to the British establishment was negligible when compared to the much more relevant problems posed by atheist Jacobinism and Napoleonic expansion. ‘Mr. Pitt seems to think the Christian religion more in danger than the overthrow of Protestantism by Popery,’ reported Glenbervie in 1794. Surely now, when all of Europe, Catholic and Protestant, were united against the French republican menace, was the best time to make common cause with the Catholics for the sake of national unity. This attitude opened up several new

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126 Redesdale to Addington, 30 July 1803, Devon RO, Sidmouth MSS, 152M/C1803/68.
possibilities for placating Ireland. The granting of full citizenship to Catholics, both British and Irish, would not only help ensure their support of the status quo, but would also encourage a flood of Army recruits to join from Ireland. Emancipation would have the further advantage of settling the hearts and minds of the Irish Catholic majority.

The connections between Catholic Emancipation and the special needs of war were clear from the start. The declaration of war with France in 1793 coincided with the passage of the Catholic Relief Act, which provided for a limited restoration of Irish Catholic liberties. Catholics could now sit on juries, attend university, serve as magistrates, vote at the county level and in some boroughs, and serve in the armed forces up to the rank of colonel, although this only applied to Ireland. Further concessions were usually mooted at times when Britain experienced prolonged continental isolation. Fitzwilliam’s viceroyalty in 1795 coincided with the start of the collapse of the First Coalition, which boosted his desire to do something definitive for the Irish Catholics. He had only become lord lieutenant owing to the coalition between Pitt and Portland in 1794, and he was recalled in disgrace three months later after having flouted official orders by his public support for Emancipation. Despite the disapproval of his Portlandite colleagues and Pitt’s well-publicised fury, Fitzwilliam defended his actions as the necessary foundation for unity in the face of a heightened French threat: ‘Any distinction or difference that is suffered to exist, will not be simply the cause of disaffection & jealousy to the Catholics but it will continue to be what is ten times more mischievous, a cloak to the machinations of a very different nature’. He was not alone in remarking on the possible benefits of

128 Times, 18 May 1797, 2(c-d).
129 Derry, Charles, Earl Grey, p. 139.
130 Recorded in a notebook in Grenville’s handwriting entitled ‘Extracts of Lord Fitzwilliam’s Letters to the Duke of Portland’ [1795], dated 10 February. Kent RO, Camden MSS, U840/C112/1A. Pitt was so angry with Fitzwilliam that he thought ‘he actually ought to be hanged’: the bishop of Lincoln to his wife, undated [March 1795], Suffolk RO, Pretyman MSS, HA119/T108/45. The precipitate recall of Fitzwilliam did encourage the Irish to believe that the British cabinet stood staunchly by the Protestant order in Ireland; Dickson, Keogh and Whelan (eds), The United Irishmen, p. 108.
Catholic Emancipation at a time of national isolation. The issue returned to the political agenda in 1801 and 1807 under very similar continental conditions.

One of the major problems with it, however, was that many politicians viewed it as an ideological assault on the establishment. This made it difficult for politicians like Fitzwilliam, and, later, Pitt himself, to get a fair hearing when they urged the practical benefits of such a policy. By his own admission, Pitt ‘had never been a violent’ friend to the Test Act, and his devotion to anti-Catholic legislation was limited by the circumstances of the aftermath of the Union, and the collapse of the Second Coalition on the continent.\textsuperscript{131} He was more convinced of the danger of Jacobinism than Catholicism, and was ready to allow non-Anglicans full citizenship because what had previously been a Catholic majority in Ireland was now a Catholic minority in the United Kingdom.\textsuperscript{132} He saw no danger in replacing the sacramental oath with ‘a political test … distinctly levelled against Jacobin principles’, and which would ‘contain an oath of allegiance & fidelity to the King’s Government of the Realm, and to the established Constitution both in Church & State’.\textsuperscript{133} He laid the stress firmly on the advantages of Emancipation in a secular, non-ideological sense.\textsuperscript{134} Of course, this meant Pitt was happy to abandon his support of the issue if its practical benefits were blunted by strong opposition. As Patrick Geoghegan argues, when he saw that the furore over Emancipation prejudiced the Union and divided the political world, he dropped it.\textsuperscript{135} In his only real public statements on the subject in March 1801 and May 1805, he expressed himself in favour of

\begin{footnotes}
\item[131] Speech by Pitt, 10 May 1791, \textit{PH XXVIII}, 508.
\item[132] Vaughan (ed), \textit{A New History of Ireland} V, xlix.
\item[133] There was also a provision for tithe reform, and some suggestions to strengthen the established church from within. Grenville to the marquess of Buckingham, 2 February 1801, Huntington Library, Grenville MSS (photocopies), 39-41.
\item[134] Pitt’s previous track record on the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, and his pledge after 1801 never to reintroduce the subject during the king’s lifetime, suggested a lack of ideological commitment on the issue. Charles Fedorak, for instance, concludes that Pitt’s commitment to Emancipation was not strong enough for him to want to push it too strongly: Fedorak, ‘Catholic Emancipation and the resignation of William Pitt’, 52.
\item[135] Geoghegan, \textit{The Irish Act of Union}, pp. 94-5.
\end{footnotes}
Emancipation under certain conditions, but judged that there was ‘little chance, I should rather say I see no chance’, of it succeeding.\(^{136}\)

To Pitt, the transformation of Emancipation into an ideological issue had robbed it of its effectiveness. Nor was he alone in that conclusion. His growing lukewarmness was an indication of the way the political pendulum had swung. After his fall, few succeeding governments were willing to stake their reputation on such a difficult question. Distracted by the war effort and increasing internal weakness, they were more likely to adopt the easier route of embracing the Protestant interest at home and in Ireland than to face the ideological pitfalls of Catholic Emancipation. Both the Addington and second Pitt governments adopted this strategy, and ensured that Emancipation became an even more unlikely event. The last outright attempt to deal sympathetically with the Catholic problem prior to the end of the war was in 1807, when the heightened defence threat after the defeat of the Third Coalition increased the Talents’ desire to grapple with it.

The Talents’ attitude to Catholic relief had a strongly practical spin dictated by its political and military requirements. It took the opportunity of the need to forestall a new Irish Catholic petition in 1807 to turn the question to its advantage. Tithe and clergy reform, extra money for the government-funded college at Maynooth, and a government provision for the Catholic clergy, were proposed as concessions to the religious grievances.\(^{137}\) At the same time, the government proposed to remove all those remaining restrictions on Catholics in the Army and

\(^{136}\) Speech by Pitt, 14 May 1805, \textit{PD} IV, 1015-9. An open letter which purported to be from Cornwallis and Pitt was circulated to the Irish Catholic leaders after 1801 in an attempt to stop them causing a disturbance. Although not written by Pitt himself, it seems clear that this letter was based on a letter written by Castlereagh to Cornwallis, in Pitt’s presence and with his sanction. In this letter, Castlereagh explained that the king’s opposition had determined Pitt not to press the question any further, since he was now convinced that this ‘would only pledge people against it’, and that even if the measure did by some miracle get through the Lords the king would veto it. ‘Were the Question so carried, it would be deprived of all its benefits’. Pitt nevertheless allowed Castlereagh to urge Cornwallis to inform the Irish Catholic body that the former minister was still well-disposed and that they should be patient. This was, however, written before Pitt’s pledge to the king never to bring the subject up again, which cast his previous intentions into doubt. Castlereagh to Cornwallis, 9 February 1801, Cambridge University Library, Pitt MSS, Add Ms 6958 Box 15 No 2847.

Navy that had not been removed by the Catholic Relief Act of 1793. The proposed measure would have permitted all Catholics to serve in any rank, the benefits of which were obvious. It was a natural sequel to the Union, which had ‘imposed … the duty’ of fostering ‘a resolution to defend the country against all its enemies’ on all inhabitants of the United Kingdom. Emancipation was therefore justified ‘by every principle of self-defence’, since unity was called for in the face of imminent invasion.\textsuperscript{138} In addition, the Talents wanted to tap Ireland’s full, unexplored potential as a recruiting ground.\textsuperscript{139} A large number of volunteers might be procured for the Army who would otherwise have been reluctant to serve because of the restrictions on religious worship or promotion. As Fox noted, a conciliated Ireland ‘would present a nursery of brave and excellent soldiers’.\textsuperscript{140} Moira speculated that an unfettered Ireland might provide 100,000 recruits — forces that were now urgently needed.\textsuperscript{141} If ‘the superabundant population of Ireland’ could be coaxed ‘to enter into the army and navy’, then the twin problems of overcrowding and low manpower would be solved at a stroke.\textsuperscript{142}

Unfortunately for the Talents, this sensible proposal only politicised the Catholic question further. The idea of permitting Catholics closer involvement in the armed forces, and by extension in the United Kingdom at large, was swallowed up by the controversy over whether or not the king had been justified in demanding a pledge from his ministers against reintroducing the subject of Emancipation.\textsuperscript{143} A combination of royal disapproval and backstabbing within the cabinet caused the ministry to fall. Thereafter, Emancipation was too strongly connected with the Whig opposition to be considered acceptable, even if the political atmosphere had been more favourable to it to begin with. This politicisation harnessed the Catholic issue

\textsuperscript{138} Speech by Grenville, 10 May 1805, \textit{PD} IV, 660-1, 672.
\textsuperscript{139} Hardwicke had noted in 1805 that Ireland ‘from its population ought to furnish a much more considerable portion of Recruits to the British Army’: Hardwicke to Pitt, 12 January 1805, Cambridge University Library, Pitt MSS, Add Ms 6958 Box 17 no 3406.
\textsuperscript{140} Speech by Fox, 3 April 1806, \textit{PD} VI, 716.
\textsuperscript{141} Speech by Moira, 26 March 1807, \textit{PD} IX, 253.
\textsuperscript{142} Speech by Grenville, 26 March 1807, \textit{PD} IX, 237.
\textsuperscript{143} Jupp, \textit{Lord Grenville}, pp. 400-11; cabinet memorandum, 10 February 1807, Devon RO, Sidmouth MSS, 152M/C1807/OZ.
to a party platform, a fact that was reinforced by Grenville and Grey’s refusal to take office without it, and by the general election of 1807, in which opposition to ‘Popery’ became the rallying-cry for supporters of Portland’s new government. From 1807 onwards the ideological aspect of Catholic Emancipation emerged uppermost.

Catholicism’s reputation in any case suffered from rumours, however unfounded, that it had been prominently involved in the rebellions of 1798 and 1803. Redesdale constantly filled his letters to high political figures in Britain with warnings that the Irish Catholics were not to be trusted. Addington was told in 1803 that the priests ‘are continually exasperating them against the Protestants’ and that ‘R[oma]n Catholic Ireland will never form part of the British Empire’. Redesdale, and others, believed that the Irish Catholic would never naturally owe his first loyalty to the king. Only the pope could be certain of the Catholic’s goodwill, and, once Napoleon had signed the Concordat of Bologna with the Vatican, all Catholics were potentially connected directly with the Imperial Court in Paris. To many, therefore, the Catholics were more than ever a threat to the British establishment, in which case the Union could be welcomed as a way to block them from participation for good.

The extent of this prejudice was too great for a series of weak governments. Any ambitious politician had to bear in mind the rooted resistance of the king and the prince regent to any attempt to water down the Protestant establishment. Inevitably, more immediate problems took precedence. Ireland was never squarely at the centre of the political horizon, which was more likely to be dominated by the course of the war abroad, the prospect of imminent invasion, and the likelihood of a radical rising

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144 See, for example, the speech by Yorke, 5 March 1807, PD IX, 13-4.
145 For example Redesdale’s assertion to Abbot that the 1798 rebellion ‘was a Roman Catholic rebellion, a papistical rebellion, a Presbyterian rebellion’ as well as a Jacobin one: 15 August 1802, quoted in Mitford, Life of Lord Redesdale, pp. 71-2. Pitt was also subjected to Redesdale’s correspondence on the issue, but was unconvinced: ‘I have never hitherto met with a single person but yourself who views it in the Light in which you have stated it’. Pitt to Redesdale, 17 April 1803, Gloucester RO, Redesdale MSS, D2002/3/1/28.
146 Redesdale to Addington, 28 October 1803, Devon RO, Sidmouth MSS, 152M/C1803/OZ/39; Redesdale to Addington, 13 September 1803, Devon RO, Sidmouth MSS, 152M/C1803/OZ/91.
147 For more information see above, p. 187.
at home. Most of the early advocates of Emancipation ended up admitting that the time was not yet ripe for the measure. Both Pitt and Castlereagh justified their later opposition to it on those grounds.\textsuperscript{148} By 1810 even Grenville’s ardour had cooled, and though he continued to stand by Grey in public on the issue, he took the opportunity of his candidacy for the Chancellorship of Oxford University to publish a letter to the leading Catholic advocate, Lord Fingall, in which he distanced himself from it, and declared that the time was currently inauspicious.\textsuperscript{149} Ultimately, the fact that the Anglo-Irish Union was enacted from a British perspective ensured that British political considerations won out. As with everything else involving the Union, Emancipation would only be granted when the British, rather than the Irish, politicians saw fit.

\textbf{Conclusion}

The thinking behind the Anglo-Irish Union, its aftermath, its advantages, and its failures, all illustrated the broader British defence effort remarkably well. Ireland’s fate was tied inextricably to that of its sister island and, as such, it made sense for the British Isles to consolidate their resources as much as possible. However, the attempt to simplify the complicated relationship that had long existed between British and Irish executives led to a situation in which decisions were made by men who were too far from Ireland to judge her situation adequately. Like the attempts to centralise the British defence effort, the Union with Ireland was broad-ranging and highly ambitious, but was held back by bureaucratic confusion, deep-rooted conservatism, and a lack of long-term planning. The anticipated beneficial effects of the measure were swamped by political weakness, and by the government’s inability to maintain control. By 1810, the conviction that Ireland could only be effectively ruled by the sword was shared even by many who had previously denied it. Across St. George’s Channel, as in Britain, radicalism and social unrest gradually became a more immediate problem than the prospect of a

\textsuperscript{148} Castlereagh’s notes on the Catholics, 1807, PRONI, Castlereagh MSS, D3030/2583.
\textsuperscript{149} Jupp, \textit{Lord Grenville}, p. 426.
French invasion. The danger to the status quo from within now looked more pressing than the danger from without.
Conclusion

This thesis has shown that the British government’s response to the prospect of French invasion was to try to consolidate its military and civil authority as much as possible. Despite a widely held prejudice against central control, the scale of the emergency convinced many politicians to put aside their scruples and to legislate for a greater degree of state involvement at all levels of the defence process. They were not motivated by any startlingly new vision of the relationship between governors and governed, since the aim was to strengthen rather than destroy the nation’s hierarchical bonds, but nevertheless it had important implications for the nation's sense of identity. An increased emphasis on military rather than naval defence meant greater attention to the performance of the regular armies, while at the same time it is clear from parliamentary debates that the militia decreased in importance in political circles. These changes set in slowly during the 1790s, and only really took hold when the longevity of the war, poor international relations, and domestic troubles combined to create an impression of permanence after 1798. Thereafter politicians laid their plans more confidently, and intended them to have a long-term effect. One question, however, remains to be considered briefly, and that is whether the crisis left any permanent changes in the way that state and nation interacted.

Given the history of the peacetime years from 1815 to 1848, the answer has to be ‘no’. Whatever went on between 1793 and 1815, there is little to contradict the assertions of Black, Langford, Clark, Cookson, and others that the postwar political system was no more centralised in practice than its prewar counterpart. Despite an occasional return to a 1790s style of government (for example the suspension of Habeas Corpus in 1817 and the passage of the Six Acts in 1819), the pattern of postwar political life bore few scars from the heightened centralisation that had preceded it. Why this should have been the case requires some explanation. Part of the answer may lie in the circumstances in which the war ended. As has already been noted, successful British continental offensives, particularly in the Peninsula from...
about 1810 or 1811 onwards, helped to strike national defence off the political agenda. Even though Napoleon continued to threaten an invasion until shortly before he left for Moscow in 1812, defeat in Russia, the creation of a new continental coalition, and finally the re-establishment of the Bourbon monarchy in 1814-5, all put an end to the threat, and likewise to any need for the strong measures that had been passed with a revolutionary or Napoleonic France in mind.\textsuperscript{150}

This alone, however, cannot explain why there was such a complete change of heart in politicians who had previously insisted on the prudence of maintaining wartime attitudes in peace. The restoration of the French monarchy, which had yet to prove that it had learned any lessons from the past twenty-five years, should not have been enough to persuade these men to overturn the defence system they had been painstakingly constructing since the mid-1790s. Prior to and even more significant than the arrival of peace was the collapse of the government’s authority at home, thanks to internal weakness and a number of domestic political crises — the Convention of Cintra, Walcheren, the duke of York and Mrs. Clarke. This happened just at the point when Britain finally managed to achieve some successful continental offensives. The victory at Talavera in 1809 was the first of several in the Peninsula, a campaign which led to the invasion of France through Spain and the eventual reopening of diplomatic relations between Britain and the continental powers. Without this improvement in the international situation, the government’s critics might have been more restrained in their political attacks.

The most vociferous of those critics were the parliamentary radicals, the revival of whose agenda in 1807-8 had marked the beginning of the end of Britain’s centralising experiment. The radicals castigated the degree of centralisation that had taken place since 1793, and one the aims of their proposals for parliamentary reform was to correct the resulting imbalance of power between state and locality.\textsuperscript{151} Even more ominously, the rise to prominence of Sir Francis Burdett, Lord Cochrane, and other independent radicals who enjoyed widespread national popularity, was

\textsuperscript{150} Lean, \textit{The Napoleonists}, p. 8.

\textsuperscript{151} Miller, \textit{Defining the Common Good}, p. 230; Cookson, \textit{The Friends of Peace}, pp. 7, 9, 14-7.
particularly worrying for ministers because it suggested that the political initiative was passing to extra-parliamentary bodies. The formation of the Friends and Advocates of Parliamentary Reform in May 1809, which included Burdett, Cochrane, Colonel Wardle, and other notorious radicals among its members, created a situation that was alarmingly reminiscent of the early 1780s, when a countrywide reform network had virtually dictated domestic policy to the government. For a while the government was able to stave off short-term demands for reform by taking the initiative out of the hands of the local pressure groups. When the county MP John Christian Curwen brought forward a mild measure to combat electoral corruption in 1809, ministers took the bill out of his hands and amended it beyond recognition.152 However, such a tactic could not conceal the fact that the radical programme was undermining a crucial element in successive governments’ assumptions about society and politics, upon which the defence systems of the 1790s and 1800s had been built. The radical revival confirmed once and for all that governments could no longer boast about the smooth workings of the social hierarchy.

By 1810, therefore, ministers had already begun to lose their hold over the national mind. How strong this hold had ever been is, in any case, debatable. British society betrayed few signs that any of the political rhetoric about militarism had taken root outside parliamentary circles. Although the volunteer movement would never have succeeded as well as it did without widespread national participation, its peak membership of 400,000 men occurred over a very brief period in 1803-4 and declined rapidly thereafter. As A.D. Harvey notes, ‘the majority of British people experienced the war as an audience, not as participants’.153 And however loudly some politicians might have been arguing about the need to foster a martial spirit in the people, the fact remains that the literature of the period suggests a lack of general interest in military life. Jane Austen’s works, for example, do not give the impression that ordinary Britons were over-concerned about the war, and the occasional

153 Harvey, English Literature in the Great War with France, p. 15.
appearance in her novels of militiamen and naval officers is of romantic significance only. All too often former officers on half pay and pensions were represented in fiction as footloose and downwardly mobile social misfits. One is therefore forced to conclude that, without an external threat to necessitate the bearing of arms, there was no widespread interest in maintaining Britain’s newly-won identity as a military nation.

As time went on, indeed, British politics became even less centralised, and her identity even less militaristic. Whatever central control the executive had acquired in wartime seemed to have been lost for ever with the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in 1828, Catholic Emancipation in 1829, and the Reform Act of 1832. All three measures helped to create a much larger and more diverse political nation in which the old ideal of a strong, aristocratic government had little place. If the fiscal-military centralisation survived at all it was in the colonies, where — as C.A. Bayly argues — many former soldiers and displaced aristocrats attempted to build a more centralised, authoritarian imperialism. At home, however, the trend was moving in the opposite direction. Compared to the rest of the world, Britain in the 1820s and 1830s was remarkable for its lack of enthusiasm for all things military. Pacifism was a very widely adopted political position, especially among nonconformists — the main political beneficiaries of the legislation just referred to. Parliamentary radicals like Richard Cobden and John Bright vehemently opposed high military expenditure and strong central government alike. At the same time the profile of the military, which had risen during the war, fell back again. Scott Myerly points out that the army had become little more than a ‘spectacle’ designed to provoke feelings of patriotism in the nation. The return home of the demobilised soldiers, who were unemployable because of their lack of training for anything other than a military life, was an additional and unpleasant reminder of the social problems that came with having too large an army. Britain’s neglect of these veterans strongly

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154 Clark, English Society, p. 548; Colley, Britons, pp. 347-8, 361.
155 Bayly, Imperial Meridian, pp. 252-3.
156 Ceadel, The Origins of War Prevention.
suggested that neither Windham nor Castlereagh had managed to achieve their goal of overcoming national distaste for the military profession. Indeed it was the navy, rather than the army, which triumphed as an international symbol of Britishness in the postwar years. Men like Nelson were acclaimed as heroes, whereas Wellington’s entry into politics made him an extremely unpopular, and even hated, public figure.

It should in any case not be forgotten that, although this thesis has focused on the case for centralisation and an increase in military might, there were many politicians who never subscribed to such a view. Some expressed more support for a colonial, naval, and global vision of Britain’s role in the world, and in many ways it was this alternative vision that triumphed in the postwar years. As Chapter Three argues, Dundas and a number of other statesmen felt that it was still possible for Britain to develop both its military and naval capabilities, both its agrarian and commercial resources. To them, no hard choices had to be made, and therefore increasing Britain’s military potential could do no harm. By 1810, however, around the time of the Spence-Mill debate as to whether Britain should develop in an agrarian (physiocratic) or a commercial direction, a younger generation of politicians was becoming less comfortable with the idea of allowing defence to dictate Britain’s new identity.

One rising star in the political world, George Canning, was particularly impatient with the insular, inward-looking policies proposed by his contemporaries. When pushed to support a party line his views on defence were unremarkable, and he was clearly much more excited by the political ‘opportunity’ offered by opposition to the Training Act than he was by the issue itself. Perhaps Canning’s lack of interest stemmed from his vision of Britain as a proud moral power, justified (even compelled) by this circumstance to exert herself in global

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158 See the quotation on p. 115.
159 See above, p. 112.
160 Such as when he confessed to his wife that he ‘thought less’ of the differences between Pitt, Fox and Windham’s defence ideas than he did about the broader issues of getting Addington out of office: Canning to his wife, 10 December 1803, in Marshall, The Rise of George Canning, pp. 254-5.
161 Canning to Bootle Wilbraham, 8 April 1806, in Bagot, George Canning and his Friends I, 230-1. Wendy Hinde notes that Canning spoke much less in the debates on the Training Act than Perceval or Castlereagh: Hinde, George Canning, p. 146.
affairs. Far from endorsing the self-sufficient and, above all, military vision emerging from defence policy, Canning was much more sympathetic to the cosmopolitan, commercial and industrial attitude that characterised postwar Britain. His prominent role in post-war politics accordingly reflects the weakness of militarism’s long-term hold over the national psyche.

Clearly the experiment of a much more centralised and martial Britain, planned to counterbalance excessive French military power, was only transient. Nevertheless, despite the preference expressed for weak central government after 1815, and the almost obsessive localism of propagandists like Toulmin Smith, there continued to be occasional increases in the authority of the state. These were deeply reluctant responses by politicians to an internal, rather than an external, threat — the domestic unrest that arose from continuing industrialisation, and the poverty, hunger, and disease that came from postwar depression and urban sprawl. The result was a series of practical moves towards centralisation, approached in a roundabout way by men who often professed to dislike what they were doing. Yet it would be wrong to say that the strengthening of the state through health legislation, the establishment of police forces, and the passage of Poor Law reform reflected a completely new tendency in British political debate. The latter, in particular, was reminiscent of Pitt and Whitbread’s earlier proposals to take poor relief out of the hands of the local magistrates and place it under the remit of a central commission. In some ways the centralising trends of the 1830s and 1840s were unsurprising. As Peter Mandler points out, Grey and his followers may have deliberately intended the 1832 Reform Act to ‘strengthen the hands of the Executive’ by a form of ‘responsible aristocracy’, which would restore trust in a parliament governing with the support of a broader cross-section of the nation. Few of the politicians responsible for the Act would have interpreted their actions as closing the door for good on the old system, and developments in the two following decades may simply have reflected this fact.

162 This has already been hinted at in Chapter Four: see above, p 180.
164 Mandler, Aristocratic Government in the Age of Reform, pp. 2, 37-9, 39; Parry, The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government in Victorian Britain, pp. 72-3, 87; Ridley, Lord Palmerston, p. 206
Without an external threat to act as a catalyst, however, such processes were much less strongly driven than they had once been. The lack of interest in maintaining the changes recommended by wartime politicians has in fact led some historians, such as Edgar Feuchtwanger and William Philpott, to conclude that there was an ‘absence of any central machinery for making defence policy’ in the mid-nineteenth century. However, this is surely an exaggeration since, as this thesis has argued, the prolonged defensive warfare of the 1790s and 1800s had created just such a machinery. It is therefore particularly interesting to note that, when a sustained external threat returned in the early 1850s, mid-Victorian politicians immediately reverted to the precedents set by their Georgian counterparts.

During the course of the 1850s and 1860s, the British once more began to fear the possibility of a French assault on their soil. The danger had been mounting since the late 1840s, but Napoleon III’s seizure of something approaching absolute power in 1851 brought the anxiety to a head. When he attacked Austria during the war of Italian unification, British observers no longer doubted the similarities between uncle and nephew. Men who had experienced the war against the first Napoleon found the new situation particularly disturbing. To Palmerston, who had been Secretary at War from 1809 to 1827, Napoleon III’s entire raison-d’etre was to exact revenge on his uncle’s behalf: ‘his formerly declared intention of avenging Waterloo has only lain dormant and has not died away’.

Although Napoleon III was accepted as an ally against Russia in the Crimean War, it was felt that his greatest ambition was to accomplish what his predecessor had never managed: the invasion and subjugation of the British Isles. The opinion that ‘every Frenchman living dreamt both by day and by night of humiliating’ Britain remained prevalent. By the end of the 1850s, both politicians and people were once again agreed that France presented an immediate danger. ‘[An] attitude of armed watchfulness should

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166 Salevouris, Riflemen Form, pp. 2, 94; Koebner and Schmidt, Imperialism, p. 11.
be the only one possible for prudent states,’ advocated the Saturday Review in 1859.168

As a result of the experience of the war with the first Napoleon, the government had a broad range of defence Acts at its disposal, and indeed many of the measures of the 1850s followed a line of thought that Castlereagh, Dundas and Windham would have approved. The 1852 militia bill, for example, owed more of a debt to Castlereagh’s Local Militia than to the original militia system of the 1750s. Even more obviously, the government again made a call for volunteers under the terms of Addington’s 1804 Volunteer Consolidation Act. The Victorian ministries did not, however, limit themselves to drawing inspiration from the measures their predecessors had enacted. Many of the attitudes towards the regular army that had been absent over the intervening years of peace now returned. This was in part because the Navy had become even more overstretched in the post-1815 world than it had been previously. Disturbances in the Near East and India, and a border dispute with America over Canada and the West Indies, all emphasised the need for constant vigilance. Fears were expressed that Britain’s fleet was falling behind that of France in size and technological development. By 1859 France had her first ironclad, *La Gloire*, and was fast developing the use of steam power. Clearly, a ‘blind and entire reliance on the Channel and our navy’ was as perilous in the 1850s as it had been half a century earlier.169 The solution to the problem was the same as that which had been advocated by Windham, Castlereagh, and many others: the need for more manpower. ‘What we *most* want and what we grievously *do* want is *men*’, Palmerston was told as early as 1846.170 At one stage between 1857 and 1858 there were only 14 battalions of regulars left in Britain, most of the others having been sent

to deal with the Indian Mutiny. Politicians now became aware of the need to reverse the process of stagnation that had been affecting the army since 1815. The Derby government was informed in 1858 that of the 153,285 regulars available to Britain, only 42,000 of them were fit for duty. Some military men estimated that it would take up to six months to train any new regular recruits to face an invasion or similar emergency.\textsuperscript{171}

The manpower shortage once again provoked recognition of the need to increase the nation’s familiarity with, and fondness for, military life. This factor became even more important later in the century, with the rise of Prussia’s influence in continental affairs. To avoid lagging behind European military development, the Victorians emphasised the need to raise the moral and physical quality of the troops they recruited.\textsuperscript{172} They recognised that a citizen who had been exposed to military imagery and activity virtually from birth was more likely to become reconciled to the idea of the Army as a suitable profession. Accordingly, military hymn-singing and discipline were drummed into children from an early age in much the same way as Dundas, Windham and others had recommended national service a generation or two previously. As in 1798 and 1803, volunteering opened up the life of a soldier to a whole new national audience. Finally, the experience of the Crimea also allowed for the ‘Christianisation’ of the soldier and a corresponding militarisation of Christian groups at home (for example the Salvation Army), all of which raised the Army’s profile even further.\textsuperscript{173}

What is particularly interesting about these developments is that governments were much less afraid to go further than their predecessors in many areas of defence policy. No doubt the creeping centralisation on social policy that had taken place since 1832 made life easier for them, but it is equally clear that the politicians of the Victorian period had learned several lessons from the large, sprawling, locality-based volunteer movement of the Napoleonic era. Windham would have been delighted to

\textsuperscript{171} Beckett, Riflemen Form, pp. 9, 17-8.
see mid-to-later nineteenth-century governments relying more on a centrally-controlled militia than on the volunteers, which remained limited in size and local in emphasis. Not even Windham, however, would have dared do what the Cardwell Reforms did in 1870, which was to tie the organisation and training of the volunteer force more closely to that of the regular army. From that moment onwards the independent nature of the volunteers was lost, and they became much more obviously military in complexion. They were later made subject to the Mutiny Act and by 1872 had become a reserve rather than an auxiliary force.174

These were unpopular moves, but they were the logical development of ideas that had been forming in the minds of the politicians between 1794 and 1812. However, there was one crucial difference between the two periods, and this difference made the process of militarisation much easier than had been the case before 1815. By the second half of the nineteenth century there was a much more cavalier attitude towards the social networks that had been so important to politicians during the war against the first Napoleon. Of course this change was slow in gaining ground, and many older politicians still viewed the volunteers as a gauge of national loyalty in much the same light as, say, Pitt had done. Palmerston, in particular, was keen to emphasise that if the volunteer units did have to exist, then they ought to mirror traditional social hierarchies and emphasise the connections binding the people to the aristocracy.175 Likewise conservative commentators longed for the somewhat romanticised days when everyone had known and cherished his place in the order of things. Sir George Tomkyns Chesney, author of The Battle of Dorking, published in 1871, partly ascribed the success of a fictional invasion of Britain to this lack of social harmony:

Power was then passing away from the class which had been used to rule, and to face political dangers, and which had brought the nation with honour unsullied through former struggles, into the hands of the lower classes, uneducated, untrained to the use of political rights, and swayed by demagogues … The rich were idle and luxurious; the poor

174 Cunningham, The Volunteer Force, pp. 14-5, 153-5; Beckett, Riflemen Form, pp. 10, 12-3, 130-1260; Salevouris, Riflemen Form, pp. 130-1.
175 Ridley, Lord Palmerston, p. 665.
grudged the cost of defence. Politics became a mere bidding for Radical votes, and those who should have led the nation stooped rather to pander to the selfishness of the day, and humoured the popular cry which denounced those who would secure the defence of the nation by enforcing arming of its manhood, as interfering with the liberties of the people.\textsuperscript{176}

To Chesney, all preparations against an invasion were futile in the absence of the social networks that had previously united government and people in the defence effort. ‘Truly,’ he concluded ruefully, without them the ‘nation was ripe for a fall’. The fact was, however, that for all Chesney’s railing, since 1832 such paternalist conceptions of the state had gone into in decline.

This thesis has argued that the debate over national defence at the turn of the nineteenth century shows three things. Firstly, the eighteenth-century British political system was capable of a degree of centralisation that allowed the executive government to play a much stronger role in the defence process than many historians have supposed. Contrary to the opinions of Cookson, Colley, Langford, and Clark, who are united in their depiction of eighteenth-century Britain as a deeply traditional, decentralised society, the government tried to strengthen, and to a considerable extent \textit{did} strengthen, its central position through a combination of defence legislation and increased national participation. Declarations of mutual trust between governors and governed underpinned this official vision of the status quo, and most of the defence measures passed after 1798 emphasised the primacy of the executive. At the same time, developments in the gathering of intelligence, and practical attempts to restructure the upper levels of government, made this concentration of authority easier to implement. The result was not an overt change of direction towards nineteenth-century bureaucracy, but a more subtle development of existing trends galvanised by the needs of war on the model of Brewer’s fiscal-military state.

Secondly, the fact that the war against France was largely defensive affected the political portrayal of the nation. Since the war appeared likely to last for many years in a state of deadlock, Britain had to adapt to the likelihood of a long-term

\textsuperscript{176} Chesney, \textit{The Battle of Dorking}, pp. 47-8.
threat to her security. Too much constitutional change was obviously to be avoided, but as the danger mounted politicians became less and less afraid to face up to the need for serious developments with determination. The most obvious sign of this hardened attitude was the creation in 1801 of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and the subsequent, not always successful, attempts to seek a united defence policy for the British Isles as a whole. Less obvious but nevertheless important changes included the extent to which the threat of invasion altered the balance in defence priorities between the Navy and the Army, and between volunteering and compulsion. The growth of the professional soldier, and the increasing distinction between soldier and citizen, contributed to the unlinking of political participation from the issue of national defence. What emerged from this redefinition of identity and terminology was a picture of Britain as a united state, capable of a strong, focused, and national response to French encroachments.

The problem was that this picture was idealistic and did not reflect political reality. The third point of this thesis has been to argue that defensive war rested overmuch on the maintenance of national morale and trust in the government, and that these commodities declined as the war dragged on. Disillusionment in a long, defensive war, near-bankruptcy, depressions, and famines, all took their toll on the relationship between the nation and the executive. At the same time, the governments themselves lost credibility as they became weaker and weaker in the parliamentary lobbies. By 1804 governments had come to rely on defence measures to acquire legitimacy; by 1809, they were hardly even given a chance to pass any measures at all. Such instability was increased even further by the return of political radicalism, which took the spotlight off the defence effort and forced weakened governments simply to fight for their lives. After the tide began to turn against Napoleon on the continent between 1809 and 1812, defence disappeared almost entirely off the agenda, and did not reappear again until the threat of a French invasion returned in the 1850s and 1860s. By then, however, the political milieu in which Pitt, Addington, Grenville, Portland, Perceval, and Liverpool had legislated was fast disappearing. The decrease in the importance of the volunteers, the rise in militarism and the
further development of bureaucratic government, all moved Britain’s military and political mind closer to conscription, the one expedient no eighteenth-century politician had wanted to implement. The loss of the social network, relying upon which had been vital to make previous initiatives towards centralisation more tolerable to the eighteenth-century political mind, made the acquisition of further control much easier, but it also undid much of what politicians such as Pitt, Addington and Windham had wanted to do. It is ironic, therefore, that their plans could only truly succeed after the removal of the one factor they had considered to be so important.
## Appendix I
### British Regular and Auxiliary Forces 1793-1814

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date (global)</th>
<th>Date (war)</th>
<th>Army (global)</th>
<th>Militia</th>
<th>Volunteers</th>
<th>Army of Reserve</th>
<th>Additional Force</th>
<th>Local Militia</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1793 (peace)</td>
<td>1803 (peace)</td>
<td>47,395(^1)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1794</td>
<td>1803 (war)</td>
<td>105,054(^2)</td>
<td>32,000(^3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1795</td>
<td>1804</td>
<td>151,144(^4)</td>
<td>39,715(^5)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1796</td>
<td>1805</td>
<td>164,084(^6)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1797</td>
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<td>18,000(^7)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1798</td>
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<td>161,260(^8)</td>
<td>76,397(^9)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1799</td>
<td></td>
<td>148,222(^11)</td>
<td>72,946(^12)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1800</td>
<td></td>
<td>135,932(^13)</td>
<td>68,000(^14)</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>149,403(^16)</td>
<td>60,631(^17)</td>
<td>146,000(^18)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1802</td>
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<td>167,823(^19)</td>
<td>72,869(^20)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1803 (peace)</td>
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<td>95,375(^31)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1803 (war)</td>
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<td>101,791(^22)</td>
<td>63,047(^23)</td>
<td>335,109(^24)</td>
<td>34,336(^25)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1804</td>
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<td>134,899(^26)</td>
<td>85,519(^27)</td>
<td>324,568(^28)</td>
<td>38,708(^29)</td>
<td>5617(^30)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1805</td>
<td></td>
<td>145,013(^31)</td>
<td>89,809(^32)</td>
<td>360,814(^33)</td>
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<td>8288(^34)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1806</td>
<td></td>
<td>165,573(^35)</td>
<td>74,653(^36)</td>
<td>308,973(^37)</td>
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<td>23,720(^38)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1807</td>
<td></td>
<td>196,081(^39)</td>
<td>76,159(^40)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1808</td>
<td></td>
<td>222,876(^42)</td>
<td>67,677(^43)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1809</td>
<td></td>
<td>219,874(^44)</td>
<td>65,524(^45)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>195,161(^46)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1810</td>
<td></td>
<td>262,697(^47)</td>
<td>46,364(^48)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1811</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1812</td>
<td></td>
<td>272,446(^49)</td>
<td>103,000(^50)</td>
<td>68,643(^51)</td>
<td></td>
<td>240,000(^52)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1813</td>
<td></td>
<td>314,531(^53)</td>
<td>93,410(^54)</td>
<td></td>
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<td>193,912(^55)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1814</td>
<td></td>
<td>209,158(^56)</td>
<td></td>
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## Appendix II
### Defence and Recruitment Acts 1794-1813

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>ACT</th>
<th>DETAILS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 1794</td>
<td>Volunteer Act</td>
<td>Government calls for volunteers to be kept up by local subscription and under local control. Pitt describes their purpose as ‘to preserve internal tranquillity’ in case of invasion.(^{57})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March/April 1795</td>
<td>Quota Acts</td>
<td>Set district quota on parishes to recruit men for Navy (in addition to impressment). Scotland receives separate Act. Another Quota Act passed October 1796 to provide 15,000 seamen against invasion.(^{58})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 1796</td>
<td>Irish Insurrection Act</td>
<td>Provides for the disarming of Ireland in districts proclaimed to be in a state of rebellion. Arms to be registered or confiscated. Magistrates can impose a curfew between sunset and sunrise, conduct searches, break up suspected meetings. Also provides for suspects to be tried under martial law without suspending regular judicial operations.(^{59})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1796</td>
<td>Supplementary Militia</td>
<td>Provides for an additional 60,000 militiamen to be raised by ballot. Extra men not to be embodied immediately, but trained 20 days a year by rotation.(^{60})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1797</td>
<td>Scottish Militia Act</td>
<td>Introduces the militia ballot to Scotland, though ballot dispensed with where men volunteer in sufficient numbers. Lord Grenville describes it as an ‘experiment’. A number of militia riots result over the summer.(^{61})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 1798</td>
<td>Defence Act</td>
<td>Government undertakes a mini-census of the nation’s population and resources.(^{62})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1798</td>
<td>Provisional Cavalry</td>
<td>One man and one horse levied for every ten horses kept by gentlemen. Only six regiments Actually embodied, and mostly absorbed into yeomanry by 1800.(^{63})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1798</td>
<td>Government Circular</td>
<td>Calls for more volunteers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1798</td>
<td>Militia Draft</td>
<td>10,000 men proposed to be drafted from militia into Army, but this fails.(^{64})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 1799</td>
<td>Suppression of Rebellion Act</td>
<td>Following the 1798 rebellion in Ireland. Allows Irish Executive to take emergency measures without consulting British parliament first. Extends Irish Insurrection Act. Lapses with peace in 1802, but renewed July 1803 for six months following Emmett's rebellion.(^{65})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1799</td>
<td>Militia Draft</td>
<td>About 10,500 militiamen volunteer into line to serve in Holland.(^{66})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATE</td>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>DETAILS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1802</td>
<td>Militia Act</td>
<td>Restructures the militia. Provides for 50,000 ‘Old’ militia to be called out in case of war, and a further 25,000 ‘Supplementary’ militia in an emergency (75,000 total, including 15,000 from Scotland). Men aged 18 to 45 to be balloted on county quota system. Substitution permitted, Militiamen serve five years and forbidden to enlist in regulars.²⁷</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1803</td>
<td>Government Circular</td>
<td>Renews call for volunteers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1803</td>
<td>General Defence Act</td>
<td>Similar to 1798 Defence Act. Calls for returns from all able-bodied men aged 15 to 60 except those already in armed service. Additional details required on vehicles, horses, boats, cattle, food, forage, etc. Partly to prepare the country for ‘driving’, or the process of sending all necessary provisions, cattle, and people unable to fight as far away from invading forces as possible.²⁸</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1803</td>
<td>Army of Reserve Act</td>
<td>Three separate Acts passed for England, Scotland and Ireland. 50,000 men to be balloted, 34,000 from England, 6000 from Scotland, and 10,000 from Ireland. Substitution permitted. All men aged 18 to 45 eligible to serve for 5 years. To be officered by men on half pay, or East India Company officers, or fencibles who served in Ireland. Men encouraged to enlist into regulars. Act produces only 37,000 effectives by May 1804, and suspended.²⁹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1803</td>
<td>Levy en Masse Act</td>
<td>Lords Lieutenant of counties to produce lists of all men aged 17 to 55 divided into 4 classes depending on marital status, number of children, and age. The first three classes to be trained in arms for two hours a week between March and December. Depots of arms to be placed in all parishes.³⁰</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 1804</td>
<td>Volunteer Consolidation Act</td>
<td>Consolidates all legislation regarding volunteers. Limits volunteer exemptions and stops volunteers electing own officers.³¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1804</td>
<td>Additional Force Act</td>
<td>Combines Army of Reserve and Supplementary Militia into force 79,000 strong. Reduces British militia to 48,000. Each parish given a quota of men to raise for second battalions attached to local regular regiments, on pain of £20 fine.Fixes bounties for entering regulars.³²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1805</td>
<td>Militia Draft</td>
<td>9000 men taken for Army from Supplementary Militia (17,000 hoped for).³³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1806</td>
<td>Militia Draft</td>
<td>4000 men taken for Army from Irish militia.³⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATE</td>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>DETAILS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1806</td>
<td>Training Act</td>
<td>Part of a broader plan to increase recruitment. Divides able-bodied men into 3 classes and provides for balloting of 200,000 men aged 18 to 40 to be trained to arms for 26 days a year for three years. Diminishes militia and volunteers, who lose their government pay. Additional measures to improve recruitment include introduction of limited service for renewable terms of 7 years, a rise in salary, and better pension schemes for veterans and widows.⁷⁵</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1807</td>
<td>Militia Draft</td>
<td>27,500 militiamen taken for Army.⁷⁶</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1808</td>
<td>Local Militia Act</td>
<td>Provides for a maximum force of 320,000 men and 70,000 in Ireland (6x original militia, which is kept separate) either volunteered or balloted, who serve for 4 years and train 28 days a year. Encouraged to enlist in regulars. Volunteers allowed to decline as Local Militia expands.⁷⁷</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1808</td>
<td>Militia Draft</td>
<td>Act passed to allow a certain proportion of the militia to enlist into regulars, with new ballot to replace enlisted men. 28,500 militiamen enlist.⁷⁸</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1811</td>
<td>Militia Draft</td>
<td>11,500 militiamen enlist into regulars.⁷⁹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1812</td>
<td>Militia Draft</td>
<td>10,000 militiamen enlist into regulars.⁸⁰</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1813</td>
<td>Militia Draft</td>
<td>Act allows maximum of 30,000 militiamen to enter regulars.⁸¹</td>
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## Appendix III
British Naval Logistics 1793-1815

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TOTAL VESSELS</th>
<th>SHIPS OF LINE</th>
<th>FRIGATES</th>
<th>SEAMEN</th>
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<td>132</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>45,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>1794&lt;sup&gt;83&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>86,102</td>
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<tr>
<td>1795&lt;sup&gt;84&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>90,946</td>
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<tr>
<td>1796&lt;sup&gt;85&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>444</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>110,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>1797&lt;sup&gt;86&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>479</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>120,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>1798&lt;sup&gt;87&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>120,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>1799&lt;sup&gt;88&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>587</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>120,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>1800&lt;sup&gt;89&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>473</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>110,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>1801&lt;sup&gt;90&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>562</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>123,879</td>
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<tr>
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<td>561</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>70,000</td>
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<td>94</td>
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<tr>
<td>1803 (war)&lt;sup&gt;93&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>89</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>82,708</td>
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<tr>
<td>1804&lt;sup&gt;94&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>106</td>
<td>104,223</td>
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<tr>
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<td>535</td>
<td>96</td>
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<tr>
<td>1806&lt;sup&gt;96&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>590</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>130</td>
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<tr>
<td>1809&lt;sup&gt;97&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>1815&lt;sup&gt;101&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>85,000</td>
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### Appendix IV
Offices with responsibility for the armed forces, 1794-1814

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<tr>
<th>1794-1801</th>
<th>Prime Minister</th>
<th>William Pitt</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Home Secretary</td>
<td>Duke of Portland</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foreign Secretary</td>
<td>Lord Grenville</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>War Secretary</td>
<td>Henry Dundas</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First Lord of the Admiralty</td>
<td>Earl Spencer</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commander in Chief</td>
<td>Lord Amherst (until 1795) Duke of York</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secretary at War</td>
<td>William Windham</td>
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<tr>
<td>1801-4</td>
<td>Prime Minister</td>
<td>Henry Addington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Home Secretary</td>
<td>Duke of Portland (until July 1801) Lord Pelham (until August 1803) Charles Yorke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foreign Secretary</td>
<td>Lord Hawkesbury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>War Secretary (and Colonies)</td>
<td>Lord Hobart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First Lord of the Admiralty</td>
<td>Earl St. Vincent</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commander in Chief</td>
<td>Duke of York</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secretary at War</td>
<td>Charles Yorke (until Aug 1803) Charles Bragge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1804-6</td>
<td>Prime Minister</td>
<td>William Pitt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Home Secretary</td>
<td>Lord Hawkesbury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foreign Secretary</td>
<td>Lord Harrowby (until Jan 1805) Lord Mulgrave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>War Secretary (and Colonies)</td>
<td>Lord Camden (until June 1805) Lord Castlereagh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First Lord of the Admiralty</td>
<td>Viscount Melville (Dundas) (until May 1805) Lord Barham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commander in Chief</td>
<td>Duke of York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secretary at War</td>
<td>William Dundas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1806-7 (All the Talents)</td>
<td>Prime Minister</td>
<td>Lord Grenville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Home Secretary</td>
<td>Lord Spencer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foreign Secretary</td>
<td>Charles James Fox (until September 1806) Lord Howick (Charles Grey)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>War Secretary (and Colonies)</td>
<td>William Windham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First Lord of the Admiralty</td>
<td>Lord Howick (until Sept 1806) Thomas Grenville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Commander in Chief</td>
<td>Duke of York</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secretary at War</td>
<td>Richard Fitzpatrick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prime Minister</td>
<td>Home Secretary</td>
<td>Foreign Secretary</td>
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<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
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<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duke of Portland</td>
<td>Lord Hawkesbury (Lord Liverpool 1808)</td>
<td>George Canning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Secretary</td>
<td>Foreign Secretary</td>
<td>War Secretary (and Colonies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lord Ikington</td>
<td>George Canning</td>
<td>Lord Castlereagh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary at War</td>
<td>First Lord of the Admiralty</td>
<td>Commander in Chief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lord Castlereagh</td>
<td>Lord Mulgrave</td>
<td>Duke of York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1809-12 Prime Minister</td>
<td>Home Secretary</td>
<td>Foreign Secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spencer Perceval</td>
<td>Richard Ryder</td>
<td>Earl Bathurst (until Dec 1809)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lord Castlereagh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>War Secretary (and Colonies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Lord Liverpool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1812-5 Prime Minister</td>
<td>Home Secretary</td>
<td>Foreign Secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix V
Lords Lieutenant of Ireland and their Chief Secretaries, 1794-1814

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1794-1801</th>
<th>Prime Minister</th>
<th>Lord Lieutenant</th>
<th>Chief Secretary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>William Pitt</td>
<td>Earl of Westmorland (until Jan 1795)</td>
<td>Sylvester Douglas (until 1794)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Earl Fitzwilliam (until March 1795)</td>
<td>Viscount Milton (until 1795)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Lord Whitworth</td>
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