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► **To cite this version:**

Guillaume Hanotin. Trade and Men of Trade in the Conduct of Louis XIV's Diplomacy. Matthias Pohlig; Michael Schaich. The War of the Spanish Succession: new perspectives, Oxford University Press, pp.85-99, 2018, Studies of the German historical institute London, 978-0-19-881112-1. hal-02521533

HAL Id: hal-02521533

<https://hal.science/hal-02521533>

Submitted on 5 Dec 2023

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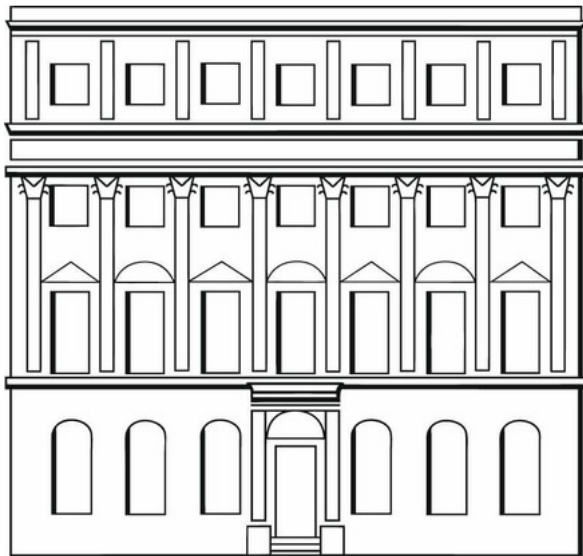
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Diplomacy

in

MATTHIAS POHLIG AND MICHAEL SCHAICH (eds.), *The War of the
Spanish Succession : New Perspectives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018)

pp. 85-99

ISBN: 978 0 19 881112 1



**German
Historical
Institute
London**

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Trade and Men of Trade in the Conduct of Louis XIV's Diplomacy

GUILLAUME HANOTIN

Ideas of 'power', 'hegemony', and 'balance' have long shaped thought in the field of international relations during the reign of Louis XIV. Paradoxically, however, commerce and the economy in the broader sense have been somewhat overshadowed, except for particular periods, such as the years of Colbert's ministry. For example, the French king's foreign policy has been interpreted as the policy of a 'king of glory' (Joël Cornette) who was able to mobilize large armies and whole sectors of society (John Lynn, Guy Rowlands) in the service of clear territorial objectives.¹ On a larger scale, connections between the development of warfare and the emergence of 'states' ('fiscal–military state') have been similarly discussed.² The appearance and organization of permanent armies have been analysed in parallel with the development of increasingly effective fiscal instruments. Thus military and continental considerations have rather obscured maritime and economic issues.

The role of commercial and economic preoccupations in the

This essay was translated into English by Moya Jones.

¹ Joël Cornette, *Le Roi de guerre: essai sur la souveraineté dans la France du Grand Siècle* (Paris, 1993); John A. Lynn, *Giant of the Grand Siècle: The French Army, 1610–1715* (Cambridge, 1998); Guy Rowlands, *The Dynastic State and the Army under Louis XIV: Royal Service and Private Interest, 1661–1701* (Cambridge, 2002).

² Richard Bonney, *The King's Debts: Finance and Politics in France, 1589–1661* (Oxford, 1981); id. (ed.), *The Rise of the Fiscal State in Europe, c.1200–1815* (Oxford, 1999). Johannes Burkhardt has developed a theory of the role of bellicosity in the forming of the modern state: 'Die Friedlosigkeit der Frühen Neuzeit: Grundlegung einer Theorie der Bellizität Europas', *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung*, 24 (1997), 509–74; Olaf Asbach and Peter Schröder, 'War, the State and International Law in Seventeenth-Century Europe', in eid. (eds.), *War, the State and International Law in Seventeenth-Century Europe* (Farnham, 2010), 3–13, at 11; Benno Teschke, *The Myth of 1648: Class, Geopolitics, and the Making of Modern International Relations* (London, 2003). See also Jan Glete, *War and the State in Early Modern Europe: Spain, the Dutch Republic and Sweden as Fiscal–Military States, 1500–1600* (London, 2002).

conduct of foreign policy has, accordingly, been little studied, especially in French history.³ To be sure, the place of the American continent in maritime and colonial issues has been reassessed, most effectively in the work of Charles Frostin and James Pritchard.⁴ But only works by Georges Scelle on the *asiento de negros*, Erik Dahlgren on navigation in the South Seas, and Lucien Bély on Nicolas Mesnager have addressed this topic in relation to the end of Louis XIV's reign—that is, for the period corresponding to the War of the Spanish Succession.⁵ These studies have made clear the role of the slave trade and the South Sea trade in relations between Louis XIV and Philip V, and so have shown how inseparable economic questions were from relations between the two courts, and how large they loomed in the sovereigns' foreign policy.

In 1709 Louis XIV declared that trade with the Indies was the main concern in the War of the Spanish Succession.⁶ How was it that Louis could write that this war 'was undertaken for commercial reasons alone'? Was the king of France suddenly preoccupied with a field in which history had long judged him to be uninterested,⁷ or was it only a matter of a particular slant in his analysis? Study of diplomatic business conducted with the court of Versailles as will be presented here shows the extent to which Louis XIV increasingly paid attention to economic questions, or, more broadly, how com-

³ This does not apply to other countries, as is shown by the idea of the 'economic reason of state' put forward by Jan Hartman and Arthur Weststeijn in 'An Empire of Trade: Commercial Reason of State in Seventeenth-Century Holland', in Sophus A. Reinert and Pernille Røger (eds.), *The Political Economy of Empire in the Early Modern World* (Basingstoke, 2013), 11–31. It is useful to take note of an article by Gijs Rommelse, 'Y a-t-il eu une révolution de la guerre navale au début de l'époque moderne? Les relations entre la raison économique d'État et la guerre sur mer', *Revue d'histoire maritime*, 14 (2011), 239–57, at 241. For the early seventeenth century see Erik Thomson, 'For a Comparative History of Early Modern Diplomacy: Commerce and French and Swedish Emissarial Cultures during the Early 17th Century', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 31 (2006), 151–72.

⁴ Charles Frostin, *Les Pontchartrain, ministres de Louis XIV: alliances et réseau d'influence sous l'Ancien Régime* (Rennes, 2006); James Pritchard, *In Search of Empire: The French in the Americas, 1670–1730* (Cambridge, 2004).

⁵ Georges Scelle, *Histoire politique de la traite négrière aux Indes de Castille: contrats et traités d'asiento, étude de droit public et d'histoire diplomatique puisée aux sources originales et accompagnée de plusieurs documents inédits* (Paris, 1906); Erik Dahlgren, *Les Relations commerciales et maritimes entre la France et les côtes de l'Océan Pacifique* (Paris, 1909); Lucien Bély, *Espions et ambassadeurs au temps de Louis XIV* (Paris, 1990), 577–97.

⁶ 'Le principal objet de la guerre présente est celui du commerce des Indes et des richesses qu'elles produisent': Louis XIV to Amelot, 18 Feb. 1709, in *Correspondance de Louis XIV avec M. Amelot, son ambassadeur en Espagne, 1705–1709*, ed. Auguste de Girardot, 2 vols. (Paris, 1864), ii, 121.

⁷ Inès Murat, *Colbert* (Paris, 1983), 227.

mercial considerations were taken account of in the management of the kingdom and in foreign policy. Business circles and their links with the spheres of power play a key role from this point of view.⁸ However, I do not want to re-examine the questions that have shaped research on the *élite négociante*, especially the debate as to whether or not they were mercantilists.⁹ Instead, I intend to assess how far Louis XIV took account of their wishes, and what implications this might have had for the conduct of affairs. In other words, was his diplomacy amended or modified in the light of commercial or colonial imperatives? Was his taking mercantile interests into account a reflection of men of business having access to the sovereign and being able to convey their wishes to him, or was it merely that Louis XIV paid more regard to commerce towards the end of his reign?

In addressing this question it must first be understood that during the War of the Spanish Succession, relations between the kingdom of France and the Spanish monarchy of Philip V were close. This relationship was designated a 'Union of the Crowns', a vague enough expression, but one which became a political maxim for relations between the courts of Versailles and Madrid.¹⁰ It embodied the desire to bring the two courts and the two monarchies together by highlighting the close family relationship between Louis XIV and his grandson. It was synonymous with peace for certain of the elites and for Spanish society. By contrast, this union haunted the members of the Grand Alliance, rapidly joined by the king of Portugal,¹¹ and the duke of Savoy, who saw a threat in it. For

⁸ Frostin, *Les Pontchartrain*; André Lespagnol, *'Messieurs de Saint-Malo': une élite négociante au temps de Louis XIV*, 2nd edn., 2 vols. (Rennes, 1996); Thomas Schaeper, *The French Council of Commerce, 1700–1715: A Study of Mercantilism after Colbert* (Columbus, Ohio, 1983), 32–6.

⁹ This debate has been pursued in the following works by Clark, Rothkrug, and Schaeper: Schaeper, *French Council of Commerce*, 53–66; Lionel Rothkrug, *Opposition to Louis XIV: The Political and Social Origins of the French Enlightenment* (Princeton, 1965); Henry C. Clark, 'Commerce, the Virtues, and the Public Sphere in Early-Seventeenth-Century France', *French Historical Studies*, 21 (1998), 415–40. In his essay on commerce in Bordeaux, Jonathan H. Webster, for example, exposes the contradictory views of the Bordeaux traders who wanted a liberalization of the wine trade with northern countries but resolutely rejected any overture or concession about the Dutch trade with the sugar islands during the War of the Spanish Succession: Jonathan H. Webster, 'The Concerns of Bordeaux's Merchants and the Formation of Royal Commercial Policy for the West Indies', *Proceedings of the Western Society for French History*, 2 (1974), 12–20.

¹⁰ See my 'Au service de deux rois: l'ambassadeur Amelot et l'Union des Couronnes (1705–1709)', 2 vols. (Ph.D. thesis, Sorbonne University–Paris IV, 2011).

¹¹ 'The Portuguese are much in the same situation the States are in, as to the

instance, the English and the Dutch feared that the union would deprive them of their trade with the Spanish territories.¹² How it was seen varied with the actors and the context.

In order to analyse the role of trade in French foreign policy in more depth, it will be useful first to go back to the period of the Treaty of Ryswick, during which a new emphasis on economic questions by the king of France can be detected, as if he wished to accord them greater significance. The next section will show how commerce ensured financial resources for the French crown and so became one of the key factors in decision-making during the War of the Spanish Succession. Finally I shall seek to demonstrate how Louis XIV came to rely on men linked to commerce, who came from that sphere, or were familiar with the world of trade.

The Forgotten Period Following Ryswick

For a full understanding of the stakes in the War of the Spanish Succession it is helpful to look back at the preceding conflict and especially its conclusion in the Treaty of Ryswick. It has often been emphasized that the War of the League of Augsburg, or Nine Years War (1688–97), was very testing for France. The years of conflict, when Louis XIV faced a huge coalition against him, were characterized both by military operations and by a serious supply crisis affecting the kingdom between 1693 and 1694.

The conflict affected commerce and the national economy by weakening them. If the years before the death of Colbert in 1683 had been marked by initiatives favouring commerce, a sustained desire to increase production and to redress the commercial balance,¹³ the years of the League of Augsburg were defined by the conflict that

danger from the union of France and Spain': Manchester to Stanhope, 15 Apr. 1701, in *Historical and Political Memoirs, Containing Letters Written by Sovereign Princes, State Ministers, Admirals, and General Officers, &c. from Almost All the Courts in Europe, Beginning with 1697 to the End of 1708, Illustrated with Treaties, Memorials, Decrees, Resolutions, Representations, Speeches, Answers, Instructions for Ambassadors, and the Most Important Transactions of Each Nation in that Time: Collected by Christian Cole, Esq; Some Time Resident at Venice* (London, 1735), 360; cited in Frances Gardiner Davenport (ed.), *European Treaties Bearing on the History of the United States and its Dependencies*, 4 vols. (Washington, 1917–37), iii. 29.

¹² Dale Miquelon, 'Envisioning the French Empire: Utrecht, 1711–1713', *French Historical Studies*, 24 (2001), 653–77, at 653.

¹³ The links between commercial and political interests have been analysed for the first part of the seventeenth century, while they emerge truly in the second half. See Richard Bonney, *Political Change in France under Richelieu and Mazarin 1624–1661* (Oxford,

was covering a good part of seventeenth-century Europe in blood. The shelving of economic questions was also expressed in modern historians' lack of interest in Colbert's successor, Claude Le Peletier. Historiography's silence on him emphasizes how from that time the king of France's policy was aligned with the war and a policy of glory that was incompatible with a quest for prosperity.¹⁴ Besides, recent studies interpret the surprise resignation of this minister in 1689 as a warning to the king that he should take note of the gravity of the economic situation in the majority of his provinces.¹⁵

From the end of the War of the League of Augsburg and the conclusion of the Treaty of Ryswick in 1697, however, a real will to stimulate commerce can be observed. This was seen as a means of regenerating the kingdom's economy and the king's finances. That is certainly the impression left by an examination of the difficult issue of establishing new tariffs with the Dutch.¹⁶ The negotiations which ended in a new tariff regime in 1699 demonstrate the primacy which the king accorded to vigorous trade and exports. The recovery of interest in economic issues is evidence of his weariness with the war, but also of a wish to secure 'abundance', to use a contemporary term, for the population. Far from being secondary in the king's priorities, his interest in commerce was demonstrated in his establishment or, rather, re-establishment of the Conseil de Commerce (the French Council of Commerce). This body became a site for discussion and exchange, offering businessmen an opportunity to expound their views to the king's ministers.

Although familiar from the work of Pierre Bonnassieux and Thomas Schaeper, the Conseil de Commerce is an official body neglected by historians,¹⁷ doubtless because it did not issue decrees: that is to say, it did not issue regulatory documents, even if it was consulted during their formulation. Even so, its renaissance served the construction of the king's image, as shown by the medal that

1978); Murat, *Colbert*; Jean Meyer, *Colbert* (Paris, 1981); Rommelse, 'Y a-t-il eu une révolution?', 243.

¹⁴ Mathieu Stoll, *Servir le Roi-Soleil: Claude Le Peletier (1631–1711), ministre de Louis XIV* (Rennes, 2011), 149.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 160–1.

¹⁶ Philippe Sagnac, 'La politique commerciale de la France avec l'étranger de la paix de Ryswick à la paix d'Utrecht (1698–1713)', *Revue historique* (1910), 265–87, at 267; William T. Morgan, 'Economic Aspects of the Negotiations at Ryswick', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 14 (1931), 225–49.

¹⁷ Pierre Bonnassieux, *Conseil de commerce et bureau de commerce (1700–1791): inventaire analytique des procès-verbaux* (Paris, 1900); Schaeper, *French Council of Commerce*.

was struck illustrating the Council of Commerce. The Conseil de Commerce was re-established in June 1700 in response to a desire to secure the recommendations and advice of experienced merchants for the Controller General of Finance and the Secretary of State for the Navy. The Council's composition shows that from the outset the emphasis was on maritime trade, in particular the Atlantic trade. Indeed, eight of the thirteen deputies came straight from the kingdom's great port cities. This over-representation of maritime commerce shows how much attention Louis XIV's entourage paid to it. Interpretation of the Council's activities, especially based on the minutes which Bonnassieux published in the nineteenth century and which Thomas Schaeper used in his study, makes it clear that the deputies were first and foremost experienced merchants, and that their preoccupations were rooted less in economic theories than in the practice of trade. The Council thus served as a sounding-board for the freeing up of trade favoured by a section of the circle of merchants.¹⁸ Familiarity with the deputies made the ministers Chamillart and Pontchartrain more sensitive to the difficulties which stood in the way of commercial activities in France at the end of the seventeenth century. As commerce provided one of the primary sources of the tax revenues required by warfare, ministers were increasingly willing to listen. This was especially the case during the War of the Spanish Succession, when the king's credit was so compromised that it was becoming important to protect the world of trade.

Trade in the Service of War

In Colbert's France the term 'money war' was not just an empty slogan. Rather, it described a policy in which trade was another means of waging war. The policies France pursued in the years 1660–70 were shaped by the notion of conquering the market by snatching the opportunities from other traders, who were defined as commercial adversaries. The tariff war was the perfect embodiment

¹⁸ Warren C. Scoville, 'The French Economy in 1700–1701: An Appraisal by the Deputies of Trade', *Journal of Economic History*, 22 (1962), 231–52, at 234. Scoville's interpretation has been refined by Schaeper, who argues that mercantilist ideas were always present within the Conseil de Commerce: see Schaeper, *French Council of Commerce*. He stresses that the merchants were alternately advocates of a form of liberalization and at other moments opposed to regulation; these positions were in their own good interests and could change with the context.

of this. Similar ideas were current in other countries during the latter part of the seventeenth century.¹⁹ For example, the discussions between William III and Tallard, Louis XIV's ambassador in London, on the subject of the Spanish succession foundered in 1698 on the issue of the fate of the Spanish Mediterranean ports to which the English wanted access.²⁰ Far from being a subsidiary issue, commerce was a major strategic goal, as the rest of the war would equally demonstrate.²¹ Commercial imperatives at the centre of Anglo-French rivalries thus slowed down negotiations on matters of principle. The impact of economic questions on relations between princes underlines how hard it is to omit the commercial dimension from a study of diplomacy.

The commercial stakes in the conflict were also obvious from the way in which declarations of war were so rapidly followed by trade prohibitions.²² These were classic measures promulgated from the very outbreak of hostilities.²³ In 1701 Louis XIV issued an ordinance forbidding all trade with the English and the Dutch. In a similar spirit the Madrid court also took reprisals. On 22 July 1702 a decree of the Marquis of Bedmar, Philip V's representative in the Spanish Netherlands, forbade all trade with the subjects of the emperor, the king of England, and the Dutch.²⁴ Dutch properties were confiscated by a second decree of 8 August 1702.²⁵ Similarly, Philip V took reprisals, for example, against the Italian consuls in 1711 when several republics (Genoa, Venice, and Lucca) recognized the Archduke Charles as the king of Spain.²⁶ Thus

¹⁹ George N. Clark, 'War Trade and Trade War, 1701–1713', *Economic History Review*, 1 (1928), 262–80; Rommelse, 'Y a-t-il eu une révolution?', 245.

²⁰ Hermile Reynald, *Louis XIV et Guillaume III: histoire des deux traités de partage et du testament de Charles II d'après la correspondance inédite de Louis XIV*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1883), i, 100–6.

²¹ See the contribution by Christopher Storrs in this volume, and his book *The Resilience of the Spanish Monarchy, 1665–1700* (Oxford, 2006).

²² On trade as a motive for initiating war see Jean O. McLachlan, *Trade and Peace with Old Spain: A Study of the Influence of Commerce on Anglo-Spanish Diplomacy in the First Half of the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1940), 33.

²³ Viviane Barrie, 'La prohibition du commerce avec la France dans la politique anglaise à la fin du xvii^e siècle', *Revue du Nord*, 59 (1977), 343–64; Schaeper, *French Council of Commerce*, 109–12.

²⁴ *Liste chronologique des édits et ordonnances des Pays-Bas autrichiens, de 1700 à 1750* (Brussels, 1851), 22–3.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 24.

²⁶ Marcella Aglietti, 'The Consular Institution between War and Commerce, State and Nation: Comparative Examples in Eighteenth-Century Europe', in Antonella Alimento (ed.), *War, Trade and Neutrality: Europe and the Mediterranean in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Milan, 2012), 41–54, at 42–5.

the consuls rapidly paid the price for the hostilities between their princes. Overall, however, actions intended to stop all trade between belligerents were not effective. If, from the outset, the Dutch were the most reluctant to take such measures, the English and the French also renounced them fairly rapidly.²⁷ Thus, trade in wartime posed a real dilemma. Waging war on an enemy, a prince was tempted to impose reprisals, issue prohibitions, and arm his ships with a view to paralysing trade. The need to find markets for his own traders and the desire not to block his own trade, however, obliged him to go back on his decisions. Compromises, different kinds of trade arrangements, and the idea of neutrality were all building in the background in Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.²⁸ Neutrality highlights the fact that rulers were ever more aware of the importance of commercial exchange, and the king of France was no exception.

The integration of economic interests and diplomacy does not appear solely in decisions made by sovereigns to prevent or, on the contrary, to guarantee a minimum of trade in time of war. It is also found in the writings of pamphleteers, who used this argument to defend the legitimacy of one or other of the protagonists in a conflict.²⁹ It is a sign of the times that trade became a subject for discussion and an argument for facing up to an adversary.³⁰ French trade, for example, was the object of many criticisms, as was evident in the *libelles*, pamphlets, and speeches that circulated among supporters of Charles III:³¹ the French were accused of pillaging Spain's precious metals. In contemporary minds, the financing of

²⁷ Andrew Lossky, 'International Relations in Europe', in J. S. Bromley (ed.), *The Rise of Great Britain and Russia, 1688–1715* (Cambridge, 1970), 154–92, at 172; Schaeper, *French Council of Commerce*, 225; Éric Schnakenbourg, 'L'indispensable ennemi: le gouvernement français et le commerce hollandais pendant la guerre de succession d'Espagne, 1702–1713. Approche politique et diplomatique', *Revue du Nord*, 91 (2009), 85–101.

²⁸ Jean-François Chanet and Christian Windler (eds.), *Les Ressources des faibles: neutralités, sauvegardes, accommodements en temps de guerre (XVI^e–XVIII^e siècle)* (Rennes, 2009).

²⁹ Pedro Losa Serrano and Rosa María López Campillo, 'La guerra de sucesión española y la opinión pública inglesa', in Francisco García González (ed.), *La guerra de sucesión en España y la batalla de Almansa: Europa en la encrucijada* (Madrid, 2009), 133–67.

³⁰ Archives Nationales, Paris (henceforth AN), Marine, B⁷ 248, *libelles* found in Consulat papers, 1707, fos. 954–61.

³¹ Recent historiography has taken more interest in the religious arguments of these pamphlets; see David González Cruz, *Une guerre de religion entre princes catholiques: la succession de Charles II dans l'Empire espagnol* (Paris, 2006); and id., *Propaganda e información en tiempos de guerra: España y América, 1700–1714* (Madrid, 2009).

the war was strongly associated with the role played by the French in trade. On the other hand, the agreement signed on 10 July 1707 between Charles III and the representatives of Queen Anne was denounced by the supporters of Philip V. It was a trade treaty which conceded important commercial privileges to the English in recognition of the support they had given the archduke. There were numerous copies in circulation and there was nothing confidential about it.³² Trading rivalries thus featured in the pamphlets, the *libelles*, and the various types of printed material produced by the two candidates for the Spanish throne.³³

The economic issues raised by trade, however, were not restricted to speeches and declarations by different sovereigns or their supporters. They structured the way the war evolved by influencing, for example, the decisions made by Louis XIV and his grandson Philip V. Relations between the courts at Versailles and Madrid cannot be analysed satisfactorily if the continual negotiations centred on trade are not taken into account. Without going into the detail of these talks, the role of the Compagnie Royale de Guinée as banker to Philip V, the issuing of certificates of safe conduct for foreign ships, and the wool trade allow an understanding of how the Bourbons' foreign policy was organized around commercial interests.

The commercial interests at stake during the War of the Spanish Succession are well known, especially the *asiento de negros*. They cannot, however, be reduced to the issue of the slave trade, important though that was. The signing of the *asiento* treaty on 27 August 1701 by the French negotiator Ducasse and the Spanish representative Manuel de Bustamente demonstrates Louis XIV's desire to support French traders in Spain. The concession of the *asiento* treaty alarmed the English and the Dutch, who feared that the king of France's subjects would steal the trade with Spanish America and therefore monopolize all the wealth that it produced. Yet the monopoly on

³² Archives du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Paris (henceforth AMAE), Correspondance Politique, Espagne (henceforth CPE), t. 173, fos. 96–125. We can find different editions in Guillaume de Lamberty, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire du XVIII^{ème} siècle, contenant les négociations, traités résolutions, et autres documents authentiques concernant les affaires d'État; liés par une narration historique des principaux événements dont ils ont été précédés ou suivis, & particulièrement de ce qui s'est passé à La Haye, qui a toujours été comme le centre de toutes ces négociations*, 2nd edn., 14 vols. (Amsterdam, 1725–40), iv. 592–4; Alejandro del Cantillo, *Tratados, convenios y declaraciones de paz y de comercio que han hecho con las potencias extranjeras los monarcas españoles de la Casa de Borbón* (Madrid, 1843), 48–52; Davenport (ed.), *European Treaties*, iii. 123.

³³ González Cruz, *Une guerre de religion*, 138–43.

the introduction of black slaves into Spanish America did not bring profit only to the traders of the Compagnie de Guinée. It was also a precious financial tool for Philip V. In fact, this company's capital was divided into three parts: one third was financed by the king of France; the second by Philip V; and the third by merchants. Moreover, for every imported slave, 33 livres tournois were paid into the Catholic king's treasury. In a document dated 1734 which shows the company's accounts, it appears that the company paid out 1,700,000 livres tournois, which is about equal to the initial stake and the product of the tax paid for the introduction of the number of slaves stipulated in the contract.³⁴

These advances made by the Compagnie de Guinée to Philip V do not represent huge amounts, but they allowed him to settle several outstanding debts, such as the wages of his bodyguards and payment for military equipment in Barcelona and Milan. They even gave him the opportunity to spend 300,000 livres tournois during his dangerous flight from Madrid in summer 1706. We can therefore say that the *asiento* company played the role of Philip V's banker by paying for some of his expenses: it provided an immediately available cash fund. In this light, the Compagnie de Guinée appears as a financial instrument creating a degree of independence from the grandees and the councils of the Spanish monarchy. Moreover, the king of France's ambassadors in Madrid acted as intermediaries. This is true of Amelot de Gournay, who was ambassador to Philip V between 1705 and 1709. His correspondence reveals that he was concerned with the details of financial transactions that dealt with supplying troops during the war, and with decisions about how to spend funds brought in by the *asiento*. A sign of his influence is that most bankers, financiers, and suppliers turned to him for reimbursement of the sums they had advanced. The *asiento* company, therefore, was not just one element in trading relations between Versailles and Madrid but a true financial instrument in the service of Philip V's new kingship. In this case, the slave trade served to further the Bourbons' political interests in Spain, even though the sums concerned were modest.

The activities of ministers at Versailles also reveal how much importance Louis XIV attached to questions of trade and finance. In working meetings with the king, ministers dealt on a routine basis

³⁴ Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes, Madrid, ambassade, A, n° 1, 'Mémoire des sommes versées par la compagnie de l'Asiento à S. M. C.'

with the correspondence from Madrid. They also had the chance to raise particular problems. In the scant holdings that remain of the General Finance Ministry, annotations made by the *contrôleur général des finances* in the margins indicate that he was given time to read out to the king extracts of the letters he had received, in order to put him in the picture more precisely. Thus, Louis XIV knew about Amelot's initiatives in Madrid, especially those concerning finances.³⁵ The king was well informed about economic and trade questions when his ministers deemed it necessary. The image that is emerging is one of a sovereign who was aware of financial difficulties, which is not in line with the stereotype of a monarch concerned solely with what happened on the battlefield.

The interaction between commercial interests and the conduct of diplomacy, however, cannot be reduced to the slavery treaty alone. The king of France's ambassadors were also responsible for negotiating trade privileges, such as exemption from inspection for ships belonging to his subjects, or obtaining facilities on entering ports in Spanish America. Trade with Spanish Flanders was also reorganized. The idea was to increase and ease trade on both sides of the kingdom's northern frontiers. A treaty entitled *Articles convenus pour faciliter le commerce entre les sujets d'Espagne et de France* was signed in Brussels on 15 March 1703.³⁶ In this agreement, Louis XIV renounced certain customs rights with a view to promoting exchanges between France and the possessions of his grandson and family in the Spanish Netherlands. Foreign policy thus married perfectly with the thinking behind the development of trade. Little known though it is, it illustrates the desire to organize trade by taking advantage of the new political relationship between the courts at Versailles and Madrid. The links between the two monarchies included increasing their economic exchanges.

The wool trade was also the object of negotiations which were often overlooked, but interested the ministers closest to the king.

³⁵ AN, G⁷ 1093, Amelot to Desmarests, Madrid, 15 Oct. 1708. In the margin the minister added: 'I have read his letter to the King who was most content concerning the diplomatic contacts that he had had with the Court of Spain to obtain for Frenchmen financial terms of payment of only one per cent.' Pontchartrain made similar annotations in his correspondence; see e.g. AN, AE, B¹ 770, Amelot to Pontchartrain, Madrid, 14 Oct. 1705; AN, Marine, B² 203, fo. 634; Pontchartrain to Amelot, 26 Oct. 1707.

³⁶ Jean Dumont, *Corps universel diplomatique du droit des gens, contenant un recueil des traités d'alliance, de paix, de trêve, etc. qui ont été faits en Europe depuis le règne de l'empereur Charlemagne jusqu'à présent*, 8 vols. (Amsterdam, 1726–31), viii/1. 125–7.

Ambassador Amelot was charged with obtaining from the court at Madrid an agreement which would divert Spanish wool bound for Holland or England to French manufactories. The negotiations were long and difficult because Louis XIV's ministers wanted to reserve 6,000 bales of wool for the kingdom, whereas Spanish merchants preferred to sell the wool to the Dutch or the English. In return, the king of France freed the wool carried through the kingdom of France and bound for the Spanish Netherlands from customs duties. The tax system was thus used as a means of diverting Spanish trade from the Dutch and the English, its usual customers. After complex negotiations a deal was finally struck: a decree of Philip V dated 12 October 1705 fixed the conditions of the wool trade and wool exports. The reorganization of the wool trade thus helped to turn commerce into a weapon of war and strengthen the links between the two countries.

We can also see this interaction between financial and commercial matters and the conduct of Louis XIV's diplomacy in the world of navigation. In effect, the French navy was several times called upon to escort returning convoys of precious metals.³⁷ These convoys were difficult to set up and the ships sent out were never able to put into practice the ambitious plans worked out at the courts of Madrid and Versailles. This notwithstanding, the few ships that did arrive safely ensured the transport of Philip V's *quinto real* ('royal fifth') tax and several cargoes of precious metals.³⁸ These returns were rather poor, but they meant that those who had lent funds could be offered a small compensation so that they would commit to further advances of funds or supplies in the future.

What is more, trade helped to extend the family links uniting the courts of Versailles and Madrid. It seemed like a touchstone of the new relationship established between the kingdom of France and the Spanish monarchy. While trade may have been a factor in initiating the War of the Spanish Succession, it also fostered a policy of rapprochement between the two realms. Its influence on

³⁷ Philippe Hrodej, 'Marine et diplomatie: les vaisseaux français, un outil au service du Bourbon de Madrid et de l'empire espagnol d'Amérique (1700–1713)', in Christian Buchet (ed.), *La Mer, la France et l'Amérique latine* (Paris, 2006), 27–43.

³⁸ On 11 Mar. 1706 the galleons sailing for America were escorted by six boats belonging to ship owners from St Malo (AMAE, CPE, t. 163, fos. 330–1: Amelot to Puyzieulx, 24 Mar. 1706). In 1708 Ducasse made sure the fleet returned to the port of Pasajes (AMAE, CEP, t. 186, fos. 137–43). In 1709 Louis XIV thus recovered 700,000 livres tournois on returning frigates commanded by Chabert (AMAE, CEP, t. 195, fo. 275).

'international relations' nonetheless remains ambiguous and open to interpretation according to circumstances.

Taught by past experience, ministers such as Pontchartrain and Chamillart did not wish to ban all trade. The Bordeaux merchants engaged in the wine trade with the north, for instance, insistently demanded certificates of safe conduct for foreign ships which came to buy their produce. They congratulated themselves on the alleviation of a highly prohibitive policy which had been introduced in 1704 and 1705.³⁹ They then sought to guarantee their exports, including those to England, and regularly obtained certificates of safe conduct protecting the Dutch ships that came to Bordeaux. When the certificates were revoked in 1710 they complained about this measure to Pontchartrain. They rebelled against the ravages that the privateers inflicted on their trade to the north. And their complaints did not go unanswered. It is an indication of the merchants' influence that Louis XIV's ministers in effect solicited through the king's ambassador at Madrid a decree suspending the Biscay privateers, who were well known for this activity. Every six months Chamillart, like Pontchartrain, notified the ambassador Amelot de Gournay that he should get from the Spanish authorities the decree banning subjects of the Catholic king from seizing ships bearing a certificate from the king of France. The French ministers viewed securing Bordeaux's exports as particularly important. They were aware of the dangers of a total disruption of trade. Instead of banning trade altogether, they tried to reorganize it in order to ensure an adequate circulation of goods while simultaneously penalizing the enemy. This was a complete change from the time of the absolute prohibitions, which had been so common during the War of the League of Augsburg.

The desire to reorganize trade did not stop there. In 1707 Louis XIV commissioned his ambassador to Madrid to obtain a 'commercial union treaty'.⁴⁰ This was a matter of agreeing the treaty and certain privileges in exchange for an exclusion of the French from the South Sea trade for the duration of the war. The idea was to make the English and the Dutch 'jealous' and to entice them to enter into negotiations. Trade thus figured as an instrument for obtaining peace and opening a dialogue. It was an asset and an opportunity. To win a war it was no longer enough to have a

³⁹ Webster, 'The Concerns of Bordeaux's Merchants', 13; Clark, 'War Trade', 274.

⁴⁰ AN, Marine, B² 207, no. 155; Pontchartrain to Desmarets, 11 Apr. 1708.

properly paid army: it was necessary to keep every advantage, as in a card game. The novelty was not that commerce was an objective of treaties but that it had become a bargaining chip in the conduct of war. The idea that trade and how it was organized influenced the prosecution of war as well as the preparation for an eventual peace ran throughout the war, for example, in the writings of Louis XIV's ministers. An 'opposition of aims' allotted to trade is also found, serving to promote war yet all the while opening avenues for the regulation of the conflict.

Traders and Negotiators

While historians have underlined the role of the members of the Conseil de Commerce with regard to decision-making on finance and trade, the Council was not restricted to a merely consultative status. Several of its members were included in negotiations. In his work on the Treaty of Utrecht, Lucien Bély emphasized the role played by Nicolas Mesnager.⁴¹ He took part in the negotiations, having completed an earlier mission to Madrid in 1706, and he was not the only one to do so. His colleagues on the Council, Anisson and Fénelon, helped to draw up the Anglo-French treaty of 1713.⁴² In Paris, an office was set up following the work of the plenipotentiaries in Utrecht, bringing together d'Aguesseau, another member of the Conseil de Commerce, and Amelot de Gournay. Alongside the negotiators from the Council, we must also emphasize the role of people such as Amelot and Jean Orry. Amelot, the ambassador at the court in Madrid, was special in that he was not only a member of the Conseil de Commerce but had also mastered questions of finance. He was responsible for administering the king of France's funds that maintained the troops in Spain, for the safe return of precious metals, for the expenses paid out of the *asiento* account, for supervising the policy regarding certificates of safe conduct, and for the export of wool. His ambition had long been to obtain a seat on the Conseil Royal des Finances, but he just missed out on being appointed a minister at the end of Louis XIV's reign. He was assisted by a financier who is remembered today mainly for the

⁴¹ Bély, *Espions*, 576–95.

⁴² Éric Schnakenbourg, 'Les interactions entre commerce et diplomatie au début du XVIII^e siècle: l'exemple du traité franco-anglais de 1713', *Histoire, économie & société*, 3 (2004), 349–65; Schaeper, *French Council of Commerce*, 81, 236, 238–9.

reform of the Spanish monarchy's financial administration: Jean Orry.⁴³ He began his career as an entrepreneur in glass-making, then moved into supplying arms before he became a councillor responsible for finances. He published a number of memoranda, prepared the setting up of the paymaster's office for the war in Spain, and ensured the transfer of substantial funds between Paris and Madrid. From 1702 there was also a naval chargé d'affaires in Madrid. This was Ambroise Daubenton, who worked for Jérôme de Pontchartrain, keeping an eye on anything that was related to trade and the navy. He drew up reports and memoranda, which are today kept in the National Archives in Paris. The arrival of people such as Amelot, Daubenton, and Orry at the court in Madrid and their association with numerous financial and trade decisions amount to an invitation to reconsider the years of the War of the Spanish Succession as a time of innovation and to explore new paths in the relationship between trade and diplomacy.

Thus, trade appears as a stake in both war and peace. Waging war through trade cannot be reduced to simply forbidding an exchange of goods since the belligerents rapidly got round the prohibitions proclaimed at the outbreak of hostilities. An examination of the role of trade in Louis XIV's foreign policy during the War of the Spanish Succession has revealed his dilemma, torn as he was between the wish to help his grandson Philip V and the need to preserve his kingdom. Since the end of the War of the League of Augsburg, it seems that he had become increasingly concerned with his country's economic condition and thus with the interests of traders. His initiatives, his decisions, and the men he chose to lead negotiations all reveal a desire to look after the interests of those who could supply him with the means to pursue the conflict. This interaction between commerce and Louis XIV's foreign policy therefore highlights a change in outlook regarding economic interests and the desire to be surrounded by and to consult those people in the kingdom who were the most closely linked to the world of trade. The War of the Spanish Succession must therefore be reconsidered from an angle that differs radically from the position taken by Louis XIV at the beginning of his reign.

⁴³ On Jean Orry see Anne Dubet, *Jean Orry et la réforme du gouvernement de l'Espagne, 1701–1706* (Clermont-Ferrand, 2009); and Guillaume Hanotin, *Jean Orry: un homme des finances royales entre France et Espagne (1705–1709)* (Cordoue, 2009).