Two Definitions of Neutrality: Prussia, the European States-System, and the French Invasion of Hanover in 1803

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AT THE END of May 1803, twenty-five thousand French troops, under the command of General Édouard Mortier, marched virtually unopposed from northern Holland into the north German electorate of Hanover. When Hanover capitulated on 3 June by the convention of Suhlingen,[1] for the second time in a little over two years the electorate was occupied by a foreign state. The first time had been in March 1801, when Prussia invaded Hanover with the backing of Russia, Denmark, and Sweden, its allies in the second league of Armed Neutrality.[2] The sponsor of the league, which ostensibly aimed to combat British violations of neutral shipping in the Baltic, was the tsar of Russia, Paul I. As Prussia, lacking a navy, could not help the league at sea, it occupied Hanover in an attempt to threaten Britain, whose king, George III, was also elector of Hanover. At the same time, France, too, was threatening to invade Hanover as a means of striking at Britain. Thus, the Prussian army marched into Hanover in March 1801, partly to fulfil its treaty obligations to the league, partly to pre-empt a French invasion.

The invasion of Hanover came back to haunt Prussia two years later when the king, Frederick William III, was again faced with having to decide whether to invade Hanover himself or to stand by and watch the French. This time, despite Hanover's obvious military and strategic value to Prussia, he stood by. To understand this turn of events, one must first examine the unit actors in the international system; that is, the great powers involved, especially Britain and Russia. Of particular importance at

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1 F. von Ompteda, *Die Ueberwältigung Hannovers durch die Franzosen* (Hanover, 1862), pp. 126-7; Herbert L. Fisher, *Studies in Napoleonic Statesmanship: Germany* (Oxford, 1903), pp. 54, 61.

2 Philip G. Dwyer, 'Prussia and the Armed Neutrality: The Invasion of Hanover in 1801', *International History Review*, XV (1993), 661-87.

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this level of the system is the character of the sovereign and his confidential advisers, who often determined the direction of foreign policy in the eastern European absolutist states. The personal/dynastic component of eighteenth-century foreign policy-making is the primary one. To leave it out of a systemic analysis of the European states-system is to imply that the system had a life of its own, independent of the statesmen that ran it.

Dynastic politics must be located within a systemic analysis of balance-of-power politics, in this case in the changes that had come about in the relations among the great powers since the Prussian invasion of Hanover two years earlier.[1] One has to answer the question why, if northern Germany was of concern to all of the great powers, they were unable to co-operate, not only to prevent France from invading Hanover, but also to prevent France, as a result, from gaining a position of predominance in northern Europe. The question may, in one sense, be beside the point. It presupposes a French empire of which there had yet to be a sign and which nobody was expecting. The great powers were preoccupied with their regional interests, without regard for the European system as a whole, partly because they did not appreciate the nature and the implications of the French threat in Germany until it was too late. They were unable to respond adequately because they were more frightened of one other than of France.

The outcome of the crisis was more serious for Prussia than for any of the other great powers. One may dispute the claim that Prussia's failure in 1803 to prevent France from occupying Hanover represented a loss of status within the system that pointed the way to subservience to another stronger power, France and later Russia. The crisis did show, however, the degree to which Prussia had been pushed from the offensive on to the defensive. The sign was the redefinition by Prussia of its neutrality. Whereas, until 1803, Prussia had defined neutrality as a claim to protect a large area of northern Germany and to isolate it from the effects of war, during the crisis the region to be protected was redefined as Prussian territory alone. The question left to be answered was whether, after the invasion of Hanover, Prussia would be able to protect itself any more effectively than it had protected the rest of northern Germany.

The crisis began shortly after Napoleon Bonaparte sent a special envoy,

1 Paul Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics, 1763-1848* (Oxford, 1994), xi, xii, where he defines 'systemic analysis' as an attempt to determine 'not only how the game of international politics turned out and how the decisions, policies and actions of individual states led to that outcome, but also how these individual policies and actions were shaped and limited by ... shared rules and understandings'. See also Paul W. Schroeder, 'Historical Reality vs. Neo-realist Theory', *International Security*, xix (1994), 108-48. For a critique of his views see the special issue of the *International History Review*, xvi, no. 4 (1994).

General Michel Duroc, to Berlin in March 1803 to find out first, what Prussia would do if France and Britain went to war again and, second, to warn Prussia that France planned, in the event of war, to attack Britain on the Continent by invading Hanover.[1] Duroc's message could hardly have come as a surprise. Reports of Britain's refusal to carry out the terms of the treaty of Amiens and of an approaching rupture with France had been circulating since January.[2] Frederick William III's first response was consistent with the policy he had followed since coming to the throne in 1797: worried that the war would spread to northern Europe, he tried to avert it by arranging for mediation between France and Britain. Although the action might fit Paul W. Schroeder's category of 'transcending' – that is, devising an 'institutional arrangement involving an international consensus'[3] – it was coupled with a more aggressive response that was equally consistent with Prussia's definition of neutrality. Frederick William warned both Britain and France that if the mediation failed (and he knew how unlikely the British were to give way on the apparent causes of dispute – Malta and naval supremacy), he would occupy Hanover as compensation for the damage likely to be suffered during the war by Prussian merchant ships.[4]

Prussia, therefore, signalled that it had decided to pre-empt a French invasion, as it had done in 1801, by occupying Hanover itself. Two years earlier, however, circumstances had favoured Prussia. During the period leading up to the Final Recess (*Reichsdeputationshauptschluss*) of 1803, which secularized the ecclesiastical principalities and Imperial cities of Germany and which was arranged principally by Russia and France, the occupation of Hanover appeased both of them, as well as protecting

1 *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier: publié par ordre de l'empéreur Napoléon III* (Paris, 1858-70), viii. 6,629; Haugwitz to Lucchesini, 25 March 1803 [Berlin], G[eheimes] P[reussisches] St[aats]A[rchiv, Rep. 11] Frankreich/89, fasc. 387; *Diaries and Letters of Sir George Jackson*, ed. Lady Jackson (London, 1872), i. 131-2; Ludwig Häusser, 'Zur Geschichte des Jahres 1803', *Forschungen zur deutschen Geschichte* (1864), iii. 240.

2 Lucchesini to FW, 18 March 1803, GPStA, Frankreich/89, fasc. 387; Jackson to Hawkesbury, 22 March 1803 [Kew, Public Record Office], F[oreign] O[ffice records] 64/63; *Preussen und Frankreich von 1795 bis 1807*, ed. Paul Bailleu (Leipzig, 1887), ii. 124, 126; *Jackson's Diaries*, i. 121. For recent studies of the renewal of the war, see Simon Burrows, 'Culture and Misperception: The Law and the Press in the Outbreak of War in 1803', *International History Review*, xviii (1996), 793-818 and Edward Ingram, 'The Geopolitics of the First British Expedition to Egypt – IV: Occupation and Withdrawal, 1801-1803', *Middle Eastern Studies*, xxxi (1995), 317-46. All dates are given according to the Gregorian calendar. The Julian calendar, in use in Russia, was twelve days behind.

3 Schroeder, 'Historical Reality vs. Neo-realist Theory', p. 117.

4 FW to Napoleon, 25 March 1803 [Paris], A[rchives du ministère des Affaires] É[trangères, Correspondance Politique] Prusse/227: 'comme l'expérience ne nous a que trop appris combien l'Angleterre répugne à se désister envers qui que ce soit de la suprematie maritime qu'elle s'est arrogée, je crois ne devoir pas différer de lui donner à connaître que faute d'autre objet de sûreté, il ne me resterait au besoin de m'en tenir aux états germaniques du roi d'Angleterre pour l'observation exacte des principes que je lui demande de suivre à l'égard de mon pavillon.'

Prussia's own interests. The presence of a Prussian army in Hanover gave a clear sign that Prussia would not tolerate outside interference in northern Germany. Although acting under duress, it behaved as a great power should. By comparison, Prussia in 1803 was indecisive and ineffective. Between March, when Frederick William III seemed determined to take action, and May, when the French marched into northern Germany unopposed, both Britain and Russia had refused his requests for support.

* * *

When the Prussian ambassador at London, Baron Jacobi-Kloest, warned the British minister for foreign affairs, Lord Hawkesbury, on 10 April that Prussia might occupy Hanover as a guarantee for the security of its trade,[1] Hawkesbury's uninterested reply on the 12th typified the attitude of the British government towards George III's personal possessions on the Continent: 'Hanover would much deserve our pity in the case of an invasion, but the British government will never take [it] into account when deciding the direction of its policy.'[2] Nonetheless, a few days later Jacobi tried again. This time making an offer rather than a veiled threat, he told Hawkesbury that Prussia was willing to occupy Hanover to protect it from France in return for British recognition of maritime rights. This was something that the British were not willing to concede. Jacobi came away from the meeting convinced, however, that although Britain would not officially sanction Prussia's occupation plans, it would not try to prevent the occupation nor take reprisals against Prussian shipping.[3] The occupation would prove an effective lever on Britain.

The role of Hanover in British foreign policy during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars has received scant attention from historians other than Brendan Simms, who has tried to put the 'Hanoverian dimension back into the political history of Britain in the early 1800s'.[4] Simms concludes, nonetheless, that 'on not one occasion did Britain commit herself to Hanoverian interests for the latter's own sake throughout the second

1 Haugwitz to Jacobi, 28 March 1803, GPStA, England/73, conv. 177 A; Jacobi to FW, 8, 12 April 1803, GPStA, England/73, conv. 177 A.

2 Jacobi to FW, 12 April 1803, GPStA, England/73, conv. 177 A: 'Le Hanovre serait extrêmement à plaindre dans le cas d'une invasion mais ... le gouvernement britannique n'en prendra jamais connaissance pour la direction de ses mesures politiques.' Further attempts made by Jacobi on 19 and 29 April fell on 'deaf ears': Häusser, 'Zur Geschichte des Jahres 1803', p. 245.

3 Declaration to Hawkesbury, 16 April 1803; Jacobi to FW, 13 May 1803, GPStA, England/73, conv. 177 A.

4 Brendan Simms, '"An Odd Question Enough": Charles James Fox, the Crown, and British Policy during the Hanoverian Crisis of 1806', *Historical Journal*, xxxviii (1995), 567-96 and *The Impact of Napoleon: Prussian High Politics, Foreign Policy, and the Crisis of the Executive, 1797-1806* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 230-8.

half of the eighteenth century,' apart, that is, from 1806, when Britain placed an embargo on Prussian vessels in March after Prussian troops occupied Hanover, and followed it in June by a declaration of war.

Simms's statement is only true up to a point. Britain did not commit itself, but it did exert leverage on Prussia and it did impose economic sanctions. Although British and Hanoverian foreign policies were supposedly distinct, Britain intervened in Hanoverian affairs on three occasions: in 1801, during the Prussian occupation; in 1803, during the events leading up to the French occupation; and finally, in 1806, during the second Prussian occupation. Such intervention marks a departure from the established policy of refusing to be drawn into Hanoverian affairs. When Britain took steps to compel Prussia to withdraw from Hanover in 1801,[1] it not only aligned its foreign policy with Hanover's, it set a precedent for the events that followed.

Given the ambiguity surrounding the British government's attitude to Hanover, it is not surprising that Jacobi's appraisal was overly optimistic. The British seem, in fact, to have been in two minds about Hanover. On the one hand, they were insisting on their right to interfere in Continental affairs and, by implication, to defend Hanover for George III.[2] On the other hand, given Britain's inability in practice to intervene militarily on the Continent, the British may have considered a *joint* Franco-Prussian occupation to be preferable to outright French or Prussian annexation: it would limit the rapine and pillage of the French. Jacobi reported from London: 'J'ai lieu de croire que cette occupation *commune* serait regardé ici comme un moyen désirable pour garantir le nord de l'Allemagne de l'envahissement de ces derniers [the French].'[3] Some British officials may even have hoped that Prussia would do Britain the favour of occupying Hanover without asking for Britain's agreement, which the British cabinet would not be able to give.

The behaviour of Hanoverian officials stationed in London added to the confusion. George III, who held different views from some of his ministers, Hanoverian as well as British, about how to protect Hanover, sent an aide-de-camp, Major Johann von der Decken, to Berlin with instructions to bring about a Prussian occupation.[4] The Hanoverian minister at London, Ernst von Lenthe, on the other hand, was a determined opponent of Prussia who feared that a Prussian occupation would be permanent,

1 Dwyer, 'Hanover in 1801', p. 685.
2 Jacobi to FW, 31 May 1803, GPStA, England/73, conv. 177 B.
3 Jacobi to FW, 27 May, 3 June 1803, GPStA, England/73, conv. 177 B; emphasis added.
4 Ompteda, *Ueberwältigung*, p. 85; Gerhard Aengeneyndt, 'Die Okkupation des Kurfüstentums Hannover durch die Franzosen im Jahre 1803', *Zeitschrift der Historische Vereins für Niedersachsen*, lxxxvii (1922), 36 and n. 108.

whereas a French occupation would be temporary. Without telling George III, he instructed the Hanoverian envoy at St Petersburg, Count Ernst von Münster, to try to discredit Prussia by portraying its definition of neutrality as a threat to the stability of northern Europe.[1]

Although Münster probably had little influence, he did submit a memoir to the Russian chancellor, Count Aleksendr Vorontsov, on 12 May 1803 sharply criticizing Prussia for threatening to occupy Hanover and asking for Russian help to prevent it. The British ambassador at St Petersburg, Rear-Admiral Sir John Borlase Warren, undoubtedly had greater influence.[2] The British had, in fact, been trying to detach Russia from Prussia for some time. The threat of the occupation of Hanover was used to illustrate the British claims that Prussia's state-building in north Germany threatened Russia's dynastic interests; that Prussian revisionism had been shown in Frederick William III's willingness to recognize the French annexation of Piedmont, without stipulating, as Alexander I had done, that the king of Sardinia should receive adequate compensation.[3]

Britain, which had always looked to Russia to control Prussia, continued to do so in 1803. Three days after Britain declared war on France, for example, Hawkesbury told the Russian ambassador at London, Count Semyon Vorontsov, that Russia had a crucial role to play in galvanizing Prussia and Austria to stand up to France.[4] Similarly, whereas Britain tried as early as 1 February to build a coalition around Russia and Austria,[5] not until June, well *after* the French had occupied Hanover, did Hawkesbury authorize the ambassador at Berlin, Sir Francis Jackson, to seek an alliance with Prussia. Britain offered a subsidy of £250,000 to be paid as soon as Prussia committed its army, to be followed by a second payment of the same amount as soon as France had been driven out of Hanover and back across the Rhine.

1 Goltz to FW, 13 May 1803, GPStA, Russland/152 A; Heinrich Ulmann, *Russisch-Preussische Politik unter Alexander I. und Freidrich Wilhelm III. bis 1806* (Leipzig, 1899), pp. 31, 48-9; Aengeneyndt, 'Die Okkupation des Hannover', p. 21. For Lenthe's mistrust of Prussia, see Ernst von Lenthe, 'Aktenmässigen Darstellung meines Verfahrens in der Zeit wie unser Land mit der nachher würklich erfolgten französischen Invasion bedroht wurde', *Zeitschrift des historischen Vereins für Niedersachsen* (1856), pp. 169, 173-5.

2 Ompteda, *Ueberwältigung*, pp. 139-40; Aengeneyndt, 'Die Okkupation des Hannover', pp. 38, 43, and note.

3 Charles John Fedorak, 'In Search of a Necessary Ally: Addington, Hawkesbury, and Russia, 1801-4', *International History Review*, xiii (1991), 236. Prussia was soon to find out about these approaches. See Aengeneyndt, 'Die Okkupation des Hannover', p. 57.

4 C. D. Hall, 'Addington at War: Unspectacular but not Unsuccessful', *Historical Research*, lxi (1988), 313; H. Beeley, 'A Project of Alliance with Russia in 1802', *English Historical Review*, xlix (1934), 498.

5 Two attempts were made to conclude a defensive alliance with Russia and Austria. See Hartmut Gembries, 'Das Thema Preussen in der politischen Diskussion Englands zwischen 1792 und 1807' (Ph.D. dissertation, Freiburg, 1988), p. 52. For Britain's emphasis on relations with Russia to the detriment of Prussia, see Fedorak, 'Necessary Ally', pp. 221-45.

The British, however, were hoping to be able to compel Prussia rather than to have to induce it. 'A proposition of this nature,' Hawkesbury explained to Jackson on 28 June, 'accompanied by the notification of the blockade of the Elbe, and supported by the encouraging language of the Court of St Petersburg, may have the effect of awakening the king of Prussia.'[1] If sleeping Prussia was not entirely written off in Britain's Continental equation, it was never more than an afterthought and was always meant to be forced into war by its stronger neighbours. Jackson, who saw little chance of the offer being accepted, did not trouble to present it.[2]

* * *

Although Prussia did seek Britain's approval, implicit or otherwise, for the occupation of Hanover, the Prussians, like the British, knew that Alexander I's attitude would determine the outcome of the crisis. Jackson told Hawkesbury: 'the greatest anxiety exists in the Prussian Cabinet ... to learn of the sentiments of the Court of Petersburg, by which this court will ultimately be guided.'[3] There were two reasons for the deference to Russia: first, the Prussian foreign minister, Count Christian von Haugwitz, assumed that Bonaparte would think twice if confronted by Prussia and Russia acting together;[4] and second, the appeasement of Russia had been one of the foundations of Prussian foreign policy since the reign of Frederick II.[5] Placed between three potentially hostile states – Russia, France, and Austria – Prussia was obliged to be on good terms with at least one of them. Given that Prussia's rivalry with Austria was almost constant throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Prussia turned to either France and/or Russia for support.

Haugwitz is one of the least understood and most neglected political figures in late eighteenth-century Prussian/German history. Often held responsible for the catastrophic defeat of the Prussian army at Jena-Auerstädt in 1806 and the collapse of the Frederickian state that followed, he is also portrayed both as a staunch supporter of neutrality – he did publicly describe neutrality as the best system for Prussia[6] – and criticized

1 Hawkesbury to Jackson, 28 June 1803, FO 64/63; Hall, 'Addington at War', p. 313.
2 Jackson to Hawkesbury, 16 July 1803, FO 64/63; Schroeder, *European Politics*, pp. 193, 244.
3 Jackson to Hawkesbury, 2 April 1803, FO 64/63.
4 Alopeus to Vorontsov, 25 April 1803, *V[neshniaia] P[olitika] R[ossii XIX inachala XX veka: Dokumenty rossiiskogo ministerstva inostrannykh del]*, ed. A. L. Narochnitskii et al. (Moscow, 1960), i. 424.
5 Schroeder, *European Politics*, pp. 24-5; H. M. Scott, 'Aping the Great Powers: Frederick the Great and the Defence of Prussia's International Position, 1763-86', *German History*, xii (1994), 293.
6 Memo, Haugwitz, Dec. 1797 [Historical Manuscripts Commission: *Report on the Manuscripts of J. B. Fortescue, Esq., Preserved at] Dropmore* (London, 1892-1927), iv. 41-2.

for it.[1] Many contemporaries thought that he alone stood between the king of Prussia and an anti-French alliance.[2] In fact, Haugwitz was the only Prussian statesman who realistically assessed Bonaparte's character and aims and opted in favour of intervention against France. Not only was he responsible for Prussia's entry into the second league of Armed Neutrality in 1801, he had advised Frederick William III to join the Second Coalition in 1799 and gave him similar advice in 1803.[3]

When Haugwitz instructed the ambassador at St Petersburg, Count August von der Goltz, late in March 1803 to inform Alexander I of Prussia's intention to occupy Hanover, if Britain refused to promise not to interfere with Prussia's seaborne trade, Frederick William III assumed that Alexander I shared his outlook.[4] Any foreign invasion of Hanover, whether by Prussia or France, would upset the arrangements leading to the Imperial Recess in which Russia had played a leading role. At the least, therefore, Alexander I would hold Britain responsible, by its refusal to evacuate Malta, for the crisis in Anglo-French relations and would offer his good offices to prevent war from breaking out. In addition, Haugwitz left the Russian ambassador at Berlin, Maksim Alopeus, in no doubt that Prussia was counting on Russia's support if Britain rejected Prussia's proposals.[5]

Such assumptions overestimated both the goodwill and the involvement of Russia. Russo-Prussian relations, unsettled since the Armed Neutrality, had been further strained during the negotiations leading up to the Imperial Recess. At a meeting between Alexander I and Frederick William III at Memel in June 1802, the Russian foreign minister, Count Victor Kochubei, explained on behalf of Hanover its wish to exchange Osnabrück for Hildesheim. Although the king of Prussia's cabinet councillor, Johann

1 Piers Mackesy, *Statesmen at War: The Strategy of Overthrow, 1798-9* (New York, 1974), p. 30; Guy Stanton Ford, *Hanover and Prussia, 1795-1803: A Study in Neutrality* (New York, 1903), pp. 123, 131, 141; Hans Haussherr, 'Friedrich Wilhelm III', in *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, v. 560-1; Johann Gustav Droysen, *Das Leben des Feldmarschalls Grafen Yorck von Wartenburg* (Leipzig, 1850), pp. 103-4, who condemns the 'cowardly and greedy' (*feige und habgierige*) policy of Haugwitz; Rudolf Usinger, 'Napoleon und der nordische Bund', *Preussischer Jahrbucher*, xiv (1864), 2, speaks of the 'shameful Haugwitz'. For exceptions to this historiographical tradition, see Hermann Hüffer, *Die Kabinetsregierung in Preussen und Johann Wilhelm Lombard* (Leipzig, 1891), pp. 94-5; Paul Bailleu, 'Haugwitz und Hardenberg', *Deutsche Rundschau*, xx (1879), 271, argues that Haugwitz was not as lacking in courage and determination as the historical tradition would have it.

2 Starhemberg to Grenville, 4 April 1798, *Dropmore*, iv. 155.

3 Panin to Krüdener, 3 Nov. 1799, *Materialy dlia zhizneopisaniia grafa Nikity Petrovicka Panina (1770-1837)*, ed. Aleksandr Brückner (St Petersburg, 1888-92), v. 192.

4 Haugwitz to Goltz, 28 March 1803, GPStA, Russland/152 A; FW to Lucchesini, 22 April 1803, GPStA, Frankreich/89, fasc. 387; Reden to George III, 2 April 1803 [Hanover], N[iedersächsiches] H[aupt]St[aats]A[rchiv], Hannover/92, XXXVII A II b Nr. 2.

5 'Projet de dépêche du chancellier à M. d'Alopeus à Berlin', 10 April 1803, *VPR*, i. 418-19; FW to Lucchesini, 29 April 1803, GPStA, Frankreich/89, fasc. 387.

Lombard, replied that the king agreed to the exchange, Frederick William later denied that he had agreed. The misunderstanding led to tension that lasted until the crisis the following year.[1] Haugwitz fought an uphill battle, therefore, in his efforts to persuade Russia to acquiesce in his plans. If all three of the reasons for his failure are dynastic and personal, that does not make them less systemic.

The first reason was the outlook of Alexander I himself. After coming to power in March 1801 following a palace coup that led to the murder of his father, Paul I, Alexander I withdrew Russia from involvement in European affairs. Inexperience, pacific inclinations, the influence of his advisers, and the unrest in Russia led him to abandon Paul I's ambitious foreign policy.[2] Kochubei, placed in charge of foreign affairs in October 1801, limited Russia's relationships with the other great powers to trade agreements, a course continued when Aleksendr Vorontsov succeeded him in September 1802.[3] In the spring of 1802, Alexander I had seemed as if he were changing tack. He met Frederick William III in Memel in June 1802, to the dismay of Kochubei, and the same month, he signed a convention with France for territorial changes in Germany.[4] Nevertheless, he planned to remain neutral in the event of another European war, and he turned down in 1802 a British proposal for an alliance.[5] Goltz warned Haugwitz in February 1803 that Alexander I was unlikely to involve himself in European politics in the near future: 'à moins qu'il ne survienne des événements qui ne sont ni à calculer ni à prévoir dans ce moment-ci, il faut croire qu'en évitant d'entrer en collision avec la France, son système politique sera purement passif.'[6] The most he might do was act as mediator between France and Britain in an attempt to prevent a rupture.[7]

1 Ulmann, *Russisch-Preussische Politik*, pp. 40-1.

2 Patricia Kennedy Grimsted, *The Foreign Ministers of Alexander I: Political Attitudes and the Conduct of Russian Diplomacy, 1801-25* (Berkeley, 1969), p. 75; Janet Hartley, *Alexander I* (London, 1995), 63-5; W. H. Zawadzki, 'Prince Adam Czartoryski and Napoleonic France, 1801-5: A Study in Political Attitudes', *Historical Journal*, xviii (1975), 245.

3 Grimsted, *Foreign Ministers,* p. 94. Vorontsov was so ill, however, that foreign affairs were, for all intents and purposes, in the hands of his assistant, Adam Czartoryski (Hartley, *Alexander I*, pp. 65-6). For Alexander's foreign policy in the early years of his reign, see also Uta Krüger-Lowenstein, *Russland, Frankreich und das Reich, 1801-3* (Wiesbaden, 1972), pp. 43-63.

4 Schroeder, *European Politics*, p. 237; Krüger-Lowenstein, *Russland, Frankreich und das Reich*, pp. 104, 106.

5 H. Beeley, 'Alliance with Russia in 1802', pp. 497-502; Krüger-Lowenstein, *Russland, Frankreich und das Reich*, p. 121. On Alexander's refusal of a British proposal in 1802 to jointly guarantee the Ottoman Empire against French aggression, see John M. Sherwig, *Guineas and Gunpowder: British Foreign Aid in the Wars with France, 1793-1815* (Cambridge, Mass., 1969), p. 144.

6 Goltz to FW, 12 Feb. 1803, GPStA, Russland/152 A.

7 Alexander I to Vorontsov, 10 April 1803, *VPR*, i. 409-11. It is possible that this suggestion was never even put to the British. See Hawkesbury to Jackson, 3 June 1803, FO 64/63, in which he states that 'His Majesty has not yet learned from the court of Petersburg that the Emperor has had it in contemplation to offer his mediation.'

The second reason for Haugwitz's failure was the outlook of Russian officials. Despite Alexander I's personal goodwill towards Frederick William III, not a single high Russian official saw the crisis leading to the outbreak of war from a Prussian perspective. This was true not only of officials based at St Petersburg but also of Russian diplomats serving abroad. At St Petersburg, Aleksendr Vorontsov, whose Anglophilia was obvious to everyone, was impatient with Prussia's efforts because he knew that Britain would never comply with Prussia's proposals.[1] The same could be said of Alexander I's influential private secretary, Nikolai Novosiltsev, while Prince Adam Czartoryski, who became de facto foreign minister in early 1803, was antagonistic towards Prussia for what he saw as its aim of continual aggrandizement.[2] Abroad, the chancellor's brother, the ambassador at London, who had lived in England for so long that he had become more English than Russian; the ambassador at Paris, Count Markov; and the ambassador at Vienna, Count Razoumovski, all worked hard to stymie Prussia. From Berlin, Alopeus sent home dispatches implying that Prussia, lacking firmness, would waste its energies in pointless negotiations. When the ambassadors received instructions with which they did not agree, they ignored or refocused them.

The third reason for Haugwitz's failure was the perception among Russian officials of both Prussian and French aims. Prussia's reputation suffered owing to its perceived obsequiousness: its propositions were interpreted as implicitly favouring France. Indeed, Vorontsov argued that by offering to occupy Hanover, Prussia had become 'l'exécuteur de la volonté de Bonaparte'.[3] Goltz reported that this idea was widely held in St Petersburg. It was also held by members of the diplomatic corps in Paris (especially the legations from Bremen and Hamburg) where it was assumed that Prussia and France had made a secret deal governing northern Germany.[4]

The threat of a French invasion of Hanover was not taken seriously by the Russians. As Haugwitz told Goltz on 23 May: 'Il parait que les ouvertures dont je vous ai chargé ... n'ont pas été interpretées à Pétersbourg dans leur véritable sens et j'en suis vivement affecté.'[5] The Russians may even have doubted whether the crisis between France and Britain would lead to the renewal of war. When Goltz explained Prussia's fears to

1 Vorontsov to Alopeus, 6 June 1803, GPStA, Russland/152A.

2 Saul, *Russia and the Mediterranean*, pp. 173, 183; Patricia Grimsted, 'Czartoryski's System for Russian Foreign Policy, 1803', *California Slavic Studies*, v (1970), 28.

3 Vorontsov to Alopeus, 6 June 1803, GPStA, Russland/152 A; Ulmann, *Russisch-Preussische Politik*, pp. 61-2.

4 Goltz to FW, 19, 26 April 1803, GPStA, Russland/152 A; Lucchesini to FW, 20 May 1803, GPStA, Frankreich/89, fasc. 388.

5 Haugwitz to Goltz, 23 May 1803, GPStA, Russland/152 A.

Vorontsov, all he was offered in reply were vague assurances: 'soyez tranquille, la Russie saura faire fort bien ce qui lui reste à faire.'[1] Markov's reports from Paris only confirmed Vorontsov's opinion that France had every reason to avoid war and that somehow the crisis would be resolved peacefully.[2]

Although Russia responded to the threat of the renewal of war between Britain and France by offering at the beginning of May 1803 to arbitrate, the offer was unrealistic.[3] Alexander I was essentially asking Bonaparte to give up French control of Germany, Switzerland, Holland, and Italy. Bonaparte, who wished to separate Russia from Britain, therefore played for time. At first he accepted the offer; suggested that Russian troops should garrison Malta; and even implied that he might be willing to attend a congress on European security. By the end of May, however, his lack of interest was plain to see. It prompted a swift, angry, and surprising response from Alexander I.[4]

Alopeus received on 30 May new instructions to arrange for a combined Russo-Prussian force to occupy Hanover and to protect the neutrality of northern Germany.[5] The instructions were accompanied by a personal letter from Alexander I to Frederick William III offering his help.[6] This radical swing away from the foreign policy Alexander I had been following – that is, isolation, mediation, and a rapprochement with Britain – has been overlooked by diplomatic historians: Schroeder, for example, does not mention it. The reasons for the change, however, are not easily fathomed. W. H. Zawadski suggests that Alexander I may have been both disheartened by the lack of progress in reforming the government and improving the lot of the serfs and worried about the threat from France to the peace of Europe. According to Heinrich Ulmann, the perception of a

1 Goltz to FW, 9 May 1803, GPStA, Russland/152 A; Goltz to FW, 2 May 1803, GPStA Russland/152 A; also Goltz to FW, 9, 13 May 1803, in which he reiterates the view that Russia was not persuaded that war was inevitable.

2 Goltz to FW, 2 May 1803, GPStA, Russland/152 A.

3 Alexander to Bonaparte, 22 April 1803, *Diplomaticheskiia snosheniia Rossii s Frantsiei v epokhu Napoleona*, ed. Alexandr S. Trachevskii (St Petersburg, 1890-3), lxxvii. 100; Harold C. Deutsch, *The Genesis of Napoleonic Imperialism* (London, 1938), p. 156.

4 Markov to Alexander I, 1 May 1803, *VPR*, i. 426; Vorontsov to Alexander I, 19 May 1803, *VPR*, i. 435; Schroeder, *European Politics*, p. 246.

5 Alopeus to Haugwitz, copy, 19 May 1803, *VPR*, i. 434. A first set of instructions dated 18 May were followed by a second set dated 24 May 1803; F. F. de Martens, *Recueil des Traités et Conventions Conclus par la Russie avec les Puissances Étrangères* (St Petersburg, 1874-1905), vi. 313; Haugwitz to FW, 3-4 June 1803, GPStA, Russland/152 A; Jackson to Hawkesbury, 31 May 1803, FO 64/63; on 10 June, and again on 4 July, Russia sent belated offers to Prussia to send an allied army to drive the French out of northern Germany. See the 'Projet de concert à établir entre sa majesté l'empereur de toutes les Russies et sa majesté le roi de Prusse', *VPR*, i. 442-4, 463-5.

6 Copy, Vorontsov to Alopeus, 26 May 1803, GPStA, Russland/152 A; Vorontsov to Alopeus, 12 May 1803, Martens, *Recueil des Traités*, vi. 314.

threat may also have arisen from a dynastic impulse: the wish to protect Holstein and Mecklenburg.[1] Both of them were ruled by relatives of the house of Romanov, who had been asking Alexander I for protection. They did not need it as long as Alexander I did not expect war.

Although, as Schroeder argues, Russia was the only state that could have barred France from Germany, its change of alignment occurred too late to be of help to Prussia: it occurred at the same time as the French troops set out from Holland for Hanover. Russia did not act decisively before the French invasion because it misread the situation. It rejected Prussia's pleas for help and British overtures for an alliance in the belief that it could maintain peace in Germany by agreement with France, as it had done in 1802-3 during the Recess.

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The role of Austria in the north German crisis can be dealt with cursorily. Austro-Prussian rivalry in Germany had receded with the treaty of Reichenbach in 1790 and the third partition of Poland in 1793, to flare up again when Prussia withdrew from the First Coalition by the treaty of Basle in 1795. The treaty divided Germany into two spheres of influence and drew a line north of which the German states were obliged to accept Prussia's protection in return for neutrality. Although the Habsburgs, feeling betrayed, launched a vituperative pamphlet campaign condemning Prussia's action, Austria and Britain eventually recognized the line. Austria was left to control south Germany while Prussia controlled neutral north Germany. The treaty of Basle, therefore, not the Recess of 1803 or the foundation of the Confederation of the Rhine in 1806, marks the death of the Holy Roman Empire.

After 1795, Austria lost interest in the fate of the Empire and, as a result, during the process leading to the secularization of the German states in 1803, Austria and Prussia surrendered the initiative to France. Not only were the Habsburgs not concerned in 1803 about the invasion of Imperial territory, they were pleased to see the position of Prussia, their traditional rival in Germany, weakened. Neither Austria nor Prussia was prepared to co-operate with the other against France: when either was threatened by France, the other tried to profit. The French domination of Germany that resulted can only partly be explained, however, by the Austro-Prussian rivalry. Austria was looking eastwards to French activity in eastern Europe and, according to Schroeder, would have tolerated French hegemony in western Europe in return for self-restraint in the Near East.[2]

[1] Zawadzki, 'Czartoryski', p. 249; Hartley, *Alexander*, p. 56; Ulmann, *Russisch-Preussische Politik*, p. 69; Martens, *Recueil des Traités*, vi. p. 313; Aengeneyndt, 'Die Okkupation des Hannover', p. 63.

[2] Schroeder, *European Politics*, pp. 234, 241; Häusser, 'Zur Geschichte des Jahres 1803', p. 251 and

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The effect on Prussia of Britain's and Russia's stance towards Hanover is best illustrated by two interviews between Frederick William III and Decken, who had been sent to arrange for a Prussian occupation, in the weeks preceding the French invasion. The first took place on 10 May when Decken was invited to join the king at dinner at Potsdam. Frederick William stated that he could not help Hanover, despite wishing to, because 'England was behaving so "unpolitisch"' and because Russia lacked energy. This is just what the Russians said of him. Decken added that the king looked worried and was displeased by the behaviour of the British. Evidently, he was resigned to a French occupation.[1]

The second interview, which took place a week later on the evening of 17 May, reveals Prussia's unwillingness to face France alone. Frederick William III explained that, at the outbreak of war, his decisions would be based on the advice (*Vorschläge*) he received from the French government. He added, without having mentioned the idea first to his advisers, that perhaps the French could be bought off. Decken replied that Hanover would be willing to pay a subsidy in return for being allowed to remain neutral.[2]

The king's remarks were echoed by Haugwitz at a meeting with Decken on the 24th. Haugwitz criticized Hanover for trying to prevent a Prussian occupation out of fear of annexation.[3] He added that Prussia, deserted (*verlassen*) by Britain and Russia, could not protect Hanover; that it would not try to prevent a French occupation, however unpleasant (*unangenehm*), but would try to make it as harmless as possible. When Decken mentioned the subsidy, Haugwitz stipulated that Prussia should offer it to France on Hanover's behalf, to avoid giving France a pretext for involvement in Hanover's affairs. Haugwitz had no alternative strategy to suggest. He was admitting that the battle was lost.

That lack of support from Russia and Britain should persuade Prussia to shy away from standing up for its rights under the terms of the treaty of Basle reveals Prussia's place in the European international system. Although Prussia had been recognized as a great power during the reign of Frederick II, its status had always been tenuous: it had always to be careful

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n. 1. For French policy towards the Ottoman Empire during this period, see Vernon J. Puryear, *Napoleon and the Dardanelles* (Berkeley, 1951), pp. 2-15.

1 Ompteda, *Ueberwältigung*, pp. 92-3; Aengeneyndt, 'Die Okkupation des Hannover', p. 40. This is confirmed by Alopeus to Vorontsov, 14 May 1803, in Martens, *Recueil des Traités*, vi. 311.

2 Haugwitz to Goltz, 31 May 1803, GPStA, Russland/152 A; Martens, *Recueil des Traités*, vi. 311-12; Ompteda, *Ueberwältigung*, p. 99. There was a precedent. Portugal had apparently averted a French occupation in 1801 by offering a sum of money.

3 The report is in Ompteda, *Ueberwältigung*, pp. 116-23.

not to offend more than one of the other great powers at the same time. In 1801, Prussia had occupied Hanover with the backing of Russia and the implicit support of France. Two years later, Russia would not support an occupation and France would resist one by force.

It had become clear to Prussian officials around the beginning of May that war between France and Britain was inevitable; the Prussians had started making military preparations as soon as Duroc returned to Paris in March.[1] By late April, Frederick William III knew that Prussia's proposals for the occupation of Hanover had been rejected by both Britain and Hanover, and by the beginning of May, that Russia would not help.[2] Frederick William III, aggrieved that other states assumed that Prussia was more interested in annexing Hanover than in protecting it from the French, was inclined not to resort to arms, or not immediately. The response is understandable given that two years earlier many contemporaries had considered Prussia's participation in the Armed Neutrality a pretext to further its territorial ambitions. Count Nikolai Panin, formerly Paul I's foreign minister, had accused Prussia of counting on Russia's support for annexation.[3] Although many Prussian officials may have had this goal in mind, nothing could have been further from Frederick William's thoughts. His actions throughout the events leading up to the French invasion in 1803 can be explained by his desire to avoid repeating the experience of 1801, when Prussia was obliged to withdraw its troops under threat from Britain and Russia. He was determined not to place himself in such a predicament again. A French occupation of Hanover was a lesser peril than offending Britain and Russia at the same time.

A council to decide what to do about Hanover was held on 28 May 1803 at the village of Körbelitz. Guy Stanton Ford and Paul Bailleu suggest that the meeting decided the fate of Prussia for a long time to come.[4] In effect, Prussia was abandoning its claim to act as protector of northern Germany

[1] Jackson to Hawkesbury, 23, 25 March, 16 April 1803, FO 64/63; *Jackson's Diaries*, i. 132-3; Haugwitz to Goltz, 28 March 1803, GPStA, Russland/152 A.

[2] Declaration to Hawkesbury, 16 April 1803, GPStA, England/73, conv. 177 A; Alopeus to Vorontsov, 25 April 1803, *VPR*, i. 423; Haugwitz to Goltz, 23 May 1803, GPStA, Russland/152 A; Ompteda to regency, 31 May 1803, NHStA Hannover/92, XXXVII A II b Nr. 2; Münster to Ompteda, 24 May 1803, in Ompteda, *Ueberwältigung*, p. 105 n. 1. Dissatisfaction with Russia had been expressed in Berlin as early as 30 March: *Jackson's Diaries*, i. 137.

[3] Ford, *Hanover and Prussia*, p. 214, and n. 220. Panin's reproach is reported by Duroc in Beurnonville to Talleyrand, 3 June 1801, AE Prusse/229.

[4] Ford, *Hanover and Prussia*, p. 306; Bailleu, *Preussen und Frankreich*, ii. xxxiii, 145. The original Prussian documents concerning the conference at Körbelitz no longer exist. One has to rely on reports from the French, Russian, and Hanoverian ambassadors. For details of the conference itself, see Thomas Stamm-Kuhlmann, *König in Preussens grosser Zeit. Friedrich Wilhelm III. der Melancholiker auf dem Thron* (Berlin, 1992), pp. 182-3; Alopeus to Vorontsov, 21 July/2 Aug. 1803 in Martens, *Recueil des Traités*, vi. 319; Ompteda, *Ueberwältigung*, pp. 137-43.

for a new definition of neutrality restricted to Prussia's own territory. The decision not to try to forestall the French in Hanover had, by implication, however, already been taken. The week preceding the conference was marked by 'many warm and agitated discussions between the King of Prussia and the persons in his immediate confidence on the subject'.[1]

There are indications that the Prussian government was divided on the issue. Besides Haugwitz, 'several ministers of distinction', along with the army, were unanimously in favour of preventing the French from occupying Hanover.[2] Among them were Field Marshal Wichard Möllendorff; the minister of trade, Karl August von Struensee; cabinet minister Count Gebhard von der Schulenburg; and General Ernst von Rüchel. Opposing them were the cabinet councillors, Lombard and Count Karl Friedrich von Beyme, and the king's confidant, Karl Leopold von Köckritz.

Haugwitz was the strongest supporter of unilateral action because he alone among Prussian officials believed that France would eventually devour Prussia.[3] Haugwitz's influence, however, was limited. The king admitted his preference for non-intervention when the duke of Brunswick, who served as a Prussian field marshal, failed to speak in support of Haugwitz, as he had promised to do. Before the meeting, Haugwitz had shown Brunswick the draft of a dispatch to the ambassador at Paris, the marquis de Lucchesini, announcing the partial mobilization of the Prussian army. Brunswick expressed his approval of the step and promised to recommend it to Frederick William III. His failure to speak was decisive, because Frederick William had made a decision to occupy Hanover contingent upon Brunswick's approval.[4]

This about-face on the part of Brunswick was not unusual in Prussia. Rarely would an official adopt a policy that went against the wishes of the king. Simms argues that Prussian officials almost always subordinated their views to considerations of personal political survival: to oppose the king was to court disfavour and, ultimately, marginalization.[5] The habit was encouraged by Frederick William III to safeguard his authority against a challenge from his councillors. As a result, decisions were always based on second-guessing the king's wishes, which is probably what happened at Körbelitz.

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[1] Jackson to Hawkesbury, 24 May 1803, FO 64/63. Jackson, however, was convinced that no decision had yet been made.

[2] Jackson to Hawkesbury, 24 May 1803, FO 64/63.

[3] See Alopeus to Vorontsov, 7 May 1803, Martens, *Recueil des Traités*, vi. 310, in which he records Haugwitz's complaint: 'Nous serons les derniers à être mangés; voilà la seul avantage de la Prusse.'

[4] Jackson to Hawkesbury, 28 May 1803, FO 64/63; Martens, *Recueil des Traités*, vi. 319.

[5] Simms, *Impact of Napoleon*, pp. 155, 221.

Two days after the meeting at Körbelitz, the Russian proposal for combined action to keep France out of northern Germany arrived at Berlin. It drove Haugwitz, who complained that Alexander I should have changed his mind two weeks earlier, into a state of 'surexcitation'. He waited for four days before he told Frederick William III.[1] He added that, although it was too late to anticipate the danger in which the approach of French troops by way of Hanover had placed Prussia, an alliance between Prussia, Russia, Saxony, Hesse, and Denmark would prevent graver peril and preserve Hamburg. This attempt, and those that followed, came too late to move Frederick William, who simply reaffirmed his new more restrictive definition of neutrality: Prussia would not take up arms unless Prussia's own territory was attacked by the French.[2]

This definition was consistent with both the king's attitude and the Prussian government's traditional stance in international affairs. Frederick William III sought peace and the maintenance of neutrality in northern Germany. Jackson reported that if Alopeus had received his new instructions before Frederick William left for Körbelitz, a different decision would have been taken with very different results.[3] A pre-emptive strike against Hanover would probably have dissuaded Bonaparte from sending in troops, as he would have already attained his ultimate objective: trade between northern Europe and Britain would have been interrupted and Britain might, in return, declare a blockade of the rivers Elbe, Weser, and Ems. To act *after* the French invasion had taken place, however, would have led to a clash between Prussian and French forces, if not to outright war, something Frederick William was determined to avoid.

Another reason for inaction was suggested by Louis von Ompteda, a Hanoverian diplomat posted at Berlin, who reported to the regent, the duke of Cambridge, that Haugwitz could not persuade Frederick William III owing to the injury to the king's pride from his rejection by Britain and Russia.[4] If one should not exaggerate the significance of such factors, one should also not ignore them. Reputation and one's own estimate of one's reputation is crucial to the working of the international system, especially in an era of dynastic politics. Writing much later about Prussia's decision not to intervene in Hanover, Frederick William admitted that he had been swayed by the tone of the reports from London and St Petersburg. He told Jacobi: 'Vous savez que ce furent les resolutions negatives de

[1] Haugwitz to FW, 3-4 June 1803, GPStA, Russland/152 A; Alopeus to Vorontsov, 31 May and 1 June 1803, in Martens, *Recueil des Traités*, vi. 314; Alopeus to Vorontsov, 10 June 1803, *VPR*, i. 441.

[2] Haugwitz to FW, 4 June 1803, in Bailleu, *Preussen und Frankreich*, ii. 152-4; FW to Haugwitz, 9 June 1803, ibid., ii. 159-61.

[3] Jackson to Hawkesbury, 16 July 1803, FO 64/63.

[4] Ompteda to regency, 31 May 1803, NHStA, Hannover/92, XXXVII A II b.2 Nr. 2.

la cour de Londres et les sollicitations de la Russie qui me déterminèrent il y a trois ans à ne pas m'opposer de force à l'invasion du Hanovre par les français, que je n'avais pu prévenir par la voie des négociations.'[1]

Frederick William III had reason to feel bitter about the refusal of other states to trust Prussia and to come to its aid. Given his peaceful disposition and his preference for neutrality, and given Britain's decision not to intercede on behalf of Hanover, Russia's decision not to support Prussia, and Austria's rejoicing at Prussia's dilemma – all of which left Prussia isolated – he had either to let the French invade Hanover or to fight them alone. To fight alone would have been unrealistic for any European power other than Britain (which could hide behind its navy) and Russia (which could fight a limited war) and was not consistent with the established principles of Prussia's foreign policy. The Prussian army, designed 'as a deterrent force in the context of a multi-power international system', was not designed to fight the army of another great power single-handedly.[2]

Although the great powers responded in various ways to the renewed threat of war on the Continent, each of them disregarded northern Germany and relied on the others to prevent the French from occupying Hanover. The invasion illustrates the attitudes prevalent among the great powers that allowed France and Bonaparte to dominate the European continent for so long – mutual suspicion, lack of communication, and lack of co-operation.

Bonaparte and France were not seen, however, as the only threat to the European states-system. The Armed Neutrality showed that most of the continental states were more antipathetic towards Britain than towards France. In 1800, Jackson reported from Berlin that Britain was causing more alarm and jealousy than France.[3] The French threat in Germany and the danger to which it could lead were not appreciated, nor could they have been until after the invasion had taken place. Historians inclined to perceive Bonaparte as a threat to the European system from the coup of Brumaire in 1799 onwards read history with the advantage of hindsight. The history of foreign policy is the history of attitudes and perceptions as well as of acts. The smaller German states feared France less in 1803 than they feared Austria and Prussia. Bonaparte and France were perceived to be a menace only by Britain and by isolated statesmen such as Haugwitz.

1 FW to Jacobi, 30 April 1806, GPStA, England/180 C. See also Haugwitz to Jacobi, 6, 18 June, Schulenburg to Haugwitz, 22 May 1803, GPStA, Braunschweig-Lüneburg/140, C 2, vol. I: 'Die Schuld fällt wirklich allein auf England'.

2 Dennis E. Showalter, 'Hubertusberg to Auerstädt: The Prussian Army in Decline?', *German History*, xii (1994), 332.

3 A. D. Harvey, 'European Attitudes towards Britain during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Era', *History*, lxiii (1978), 356-65; Michael Duffy, 'British Diplomacy and the French Wars', in *Britain and the French Revolution, 1789-1815*, ed. H. T. Dickinson (London, 1989), p. 137.

By not occupying Hanover in 1803, as it had done in 1801, Prussia failed to maintain the neutrality of northern Germany. It accepted a narrower definition of the infringement of neutrality as an attack on Prussian territory. By extension, one could argue that the greatest mistake Prussia made during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars was to evacuate Hanover in 1801. Either way, a conflict between France and Prussia over northern Germany became inevitable. The lack of decisiveness in Prussia is to be attributed, however, more to the lack of international support than to the character of Frederick William III.

Britain's attitude during the Hanoverian crisis of 1803 is indicative of its general stance towards European affairs. Britain has, and always did have, trouble formulating a concept of Europe.[1] It did not take seriously the military-strategic concerns of other states and more often than not expected Russia, Austria, and Prussia to fight on its behalf. The schemes concocted by Lord Grenville in 1798 offer a good example.[2] Britain would eventually revert to blockades and also subsidies, its traditional modes of opposition to French hegemony on the Continent and offered to both Austria and Prussia in 1803. But it was slow to try to form an anti-French coalition, perhaps because Hawkesbury, like Grenville before him, expected the Continental powers to dance whenever Britain whistled a tune.

In the formulation of great-power politics between the treaty of Lunéville and the breakdown of the treaty of Amiens, a number of realignments took place. Russia made a rapprochement with Britain, reversing the policy of Paul I,[3] while continuing to seek a working relationship with France. Britain sought a rapprochement with Russia and Sweden, while continuing its hostility towards France, although in a more veiled form. Britain preferred to deal with Russia than with Prussia, mainly because Russia 'would not try to make Britain act in areas or solve problems Britain wanted nothing to do with'.[4] In doing so, however, it was implicitly conceding to Russia dominance over central and eastern Europe, a short-sighted policy that nonetheless may have revealed Britain's lack of choice.[5] Britain feared that once Prussia had occupied Hanover a second time, it would never leave; or that it would be much more difficult than France to evict during negotiations for a general European peace. Lastly, France

1 Schroeder, *European Politics*, p. 193.
2 Schroeder, 'The Collapse of the Second Coalition', *Journal of Modern History*, lix (1987), 271-82.
3 For Russian foreign policy under Paul I, see Hugh Ragsdale, 'A Continental System in 1801: Paul I and Bonaparte', *Journal of Modern History*, xlii (1970), 70-89 and 'Russia, Prussia, and Europe in the Policy of Paul I', *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, xxxi (1983), 81-118; Ole Feldbaek, 'The Foreign Policy of Tsar Paul I, 1800-1: An Interpretation', *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, xxx (1982), 16-36.
4 Schroeder, *European Politics*, p. 193.
5 Fedorak, 'Necessary Ally', p. 245.

sought a rapprochement with Russia and attempted to divide Russia from Britain.

In all of these combinations, Prussia, and for that matter Austria, was simply ignored. Too often, it was assumed that not only would 'Russian pressure and French aggression' force Prussia and Austria to join the fray, but that they would do so under British and Russian supervision.[1] Only after the French invasion of Hanover in 1803 did Russia and Britain make efforts to obtain the co-operation of both Austria and Prussia, efforts that would culminate in 1805 in the Third Coalition. Is it any wonder that there was no serious challenge to French hegemony in Germany?

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1 Schroeder, *European Politics*, pp. 193, 244.