

Chapter four

Great Britain and the Spanish War of Succession

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Abstract

Britain's role in the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714) was as much a domestic matter as a foreign policy matter. The war produced tensions between Tories and Whigs, and solidified the Anglo-Scottish union at a time resurgent Jacobitism. English, and 'British' military participation in the war against the Bourbons in Spain helped forge the Anglo-Scottish military union. It also shaped British attitudes towards Spain, changing this from the 'Black Legend' towards a reputation for popular resistance and difficult campaigning. Militarily, the war ended largely victorious from a British perspective. But most importantly, Britain's success prevented the War of the Spanish Succession from turning into a War of British Succession, given foreign support for Jacobinism.

Keywords

Marlborough, Stanhope, Mordaunt, popular resistance, army, navy, Anglo-Scottish union, Jacobite, Tories, Whigs, memory, Almansa, Barcelona.

Context

The Spanish War of Succession is of particular interest considering how it recast Europe and European imperial relations. It is one of the classic 'cabinet wars' of the Early Modern era, the period between the horrors of the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) and the modern upheaval of the French Revolutionary wars. War was an uncontroversial method of diplomacy, as one royal dynasty protesting the advance of a rival would secure concessions as part of a peace treaty, and a power losing territory in one part of its realm would gain new territory somewhere else. As historian Jeremy Black observed, warfare before the French Revolution was 'litigation by other means'¹. Some of these wars could have global repercussions, such as the Seven Years' War (1756-1763). But no power sought to exorcise a 'false' religion, as before 1648, or to transform a defeated enemy's politics and society, as after 1792. Soldiers were expensive to arm and supply, so monarchies preferred to maintain a small cadre of long-serving professionals backed up by mercenaries, often foreign in origin. European generals sought wherever possible to avoid battle and to win their campaigns by manoeuvre. In the War of Spanish Succession (1700-1714) there were only about a dozen major battles, whereas during the Napoleonic Wars (1803-15) there were at least forty². Cabinet war strategy abhorred chance and risk-taking. As Maurice de Saxe wrote in 1732: 'war can be made without leaving anything to chance'³. Commanders were aristocrats and often old. They did not need to make their reputations in reckless actions. Armies were not even essential attributes for projecting power. During this era England, and even more, Scotland, survived without large standing armies. England's Royal Navy, which was founded in 1546, over a century before the army was formally constituted in 1660, was rightly called the 'senior service'. Naval power accordingly determined Britain's participation in the War of Spanish Succession more than for any power.

The War of the Spanish Succession and its historiography

When the childless King Charles II of Spain died in 1700, he offered his throne and possessions in the Netherlands, Italy

¹ HEUSER, Beatrice: *The Evolution of Strategy* (2010), p. 49.

² Esdaile, *Napoleon's Wars* (2008), pp. 9-10.

³ HEUSER, Beatrice *Evolution of Strategy* (2010), pp. 88-89.

and the Americas to Philip of Anjou. Philip was the grandson of Louis XIV, the king of France, Europe's greatest power. Other European powers were alarmed at the prospect of a Bourbon alliance of crowns, so England, Holland, the Holy Roman Empire and Prussia supported a rival claimant to the Spanish throne. This was Archduke Charles, the younger son of the Habsburg Emperor Leopold I. In 1701, along with a number of smaller German states, they formed the Grand Alliance, which was joined in 1702 by Bavaria and 1703 by Portugal. Iberia would be only one theatre of operations in this war, and often a secondary front when compared with the greater concentration of forces and battle along the Rhine and Danube.

The War of the Spanish Succession has recently been called a 'forgotten' world war⁴. The war certainly lacks the attention which has been lavished upon the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) or the Seven Years' War (1756-1763). Spanish historians, appreciating the way the Bourbon ascendancy to the throne fundamentally reshaped their country's political organisation, have afforded the war much greater attention. But even in their case there has been a tendency both to exclude the foreign entanglements produced by the war and to allow the national question to dominate analysis. Whilst a centralist right-wing analysis emerged in the nineteenth century, over the past decades a Catalan nationalist narrative has emerged in sympathy with contemporary regional nationalism. The result has been to tilt of historical attention research towards the Mediterranean littoral⁵. Certainly, the Habsburgs generally received support in the old Crown of Aragón and the Bourbons generally received support in Castile. Contemporaries were also struck by an apparent division in allegiance which went beyond the presence of contending armies. James Stanhope, commander of British forces in Spain, remarked in 1706 that the continent (*sic.*) of Spain is now divided into parties, as formerly into the crowns, of Castile and Aragón. All the latter we are possessed of; and, I believe, the provinces which compose it would be very well pleased to continue thus separated. But this is the thing in the world we ought to fear the most; since such a division would render Spain perfectly insignificant in the balance of Europe⁶.

⁴ Stefan Smid, *Der spanische Erbfolgekrieg: Geschichte eines vergessenen Weltkriegs (1701-1714)* (Cologne, 2011).

⁵ Angel Smith, *The Origins of Catalan Nationalism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2014), p. 30; Joaquín Albareda Salvadó, *La Guerra de Sucesión en España* (2010).

⁶ Lord Mahon, *The War of the Succession in Spain* (London: John Murray, 1836), pp. 201-202.

The Spanish historiography is certainly more developed than that originating abroad. The lacuna is somewhat puzzling, considering the war's vast impact: the establishment of a Bourbon dynasty in a more centralised Spain, political changes in Italy and the Low Countries, and the Anglo-Scottish union which sealed Great Britain's rise to European great power status⁷. Britain's alliance with Austria gave London a leading role in Mediterranean operations, the product of which was the most enduring 'rock of contention' in Anglo-Spanish relations, namely the British retention of Gibraltar in the Treaty of Utrecht and thereby naval control of the Mediterranean Sea⁸. The strategic benefits of London's alliance with Austria was often lost on James Stanhope, who frequently complained of the German courtiers' overbearing and militarily illiterate behaviour at the court of the pretender Charles III in Valencia⁹. Despite the enduring British gain of Gibraltar, and shorter-lived gain of Menorca, the English-language historiography has mostly concentrated on two features of the war. It has concentrated first on the dazzling successes of John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, along the Rhine and Danube, and second on the ways in which the war accelerated Britain's 'fiscal-military' state and domestic political divisions. The Whigs were more enthusiastic in their prosecution of the war against Louis XIV, whereas the Tories, who had a minority Jacobite wing, were more ambivalent. The Tories who won the general election of 1710 with the aim of ending the war by accepting Philip V as a *fait accompli*. This policy attitude which doomed the pro-Habsburg Catalans whose resistance depended on Britain's naval support. The Tories ended Britain's participation in the war, but in doing so they lost control of its posterity. The Whig view – that the war was justified as a bid to halt French king Louis XIV's ruthless expansion – was accepted by subsequent historians, mostly markedly by the great historian, George Macaulay Trevelyan. And Marlborough's heroic role continued to attract appraisals, including by Marlborough's descendant, Winston Churchill. Churchill wrote an extensive biography of the man during the 1930s, in a context of a rising threat from Nazism in Europe which led the British statesman to draw parallels with the Europe of Louis XIV¹⁰.

⁷ Hamish Scott, 'The War of the Spanish Succession: New Perspectives and Old' in Matthias Pohl and Michael Schaich (eds.), *The War of the Spanish Succession: New Perspectives* (Oxford, 2018), pp. 29-30.

⁸ For a classic study of Anglo-Spanish rivalry concerning Gibraltar, see George Hills, *Rock of Contention: History of Gibraltar* (London: Robert Hale, 1974).

⁹ Lord Mahon, *The War of the Succession in Spain* (London: John Murray, 1836), p. 219.

¹⁰ George Trevelyan, *England under Queen Anne (1702-1714)*, 3 vols.; Winston Churchill, *Marlborough: His Life and Times* (Chicago, 2002), 2 vols.

Otherwise, the English-language historiography remains sparse. The popularity of 'Great Man' biographies in the nineteenth century kept studies of Marlborough and, to a lesser extent, Stanhope, in print, especially during times of renewed war in Spain involving foreign armies and interest¹¹. When Lord Mahon published his classic study in 1836, he dedicated the volume to the Duke of Wellington, Generalísimo of Allied forces in Spain during the Peninsular War of 1808-1814, and made repeated references to that more recent struggle¹². He asserted that the Spaniards in the early eighteenth century were 'a brave people with a wretched government ... the same observation holds good with respect to the last Peninsular War'¹³. A foreign history of the dynastic Carlist War (1833-40) made reference to the 'first war of succession' of 1702-13. The late-nineteenth century historical novelist, George Henty, included the War of the Spanish Succession in his nationalistic repertoire of British fighting in Spain¹⁴. The polarised ideological environment of the Spanish Civil (1936-39) also brought renewed outside interest in Spain's apparent historical propensity for internecine strife¹⁵. Franz Borkenau, an Austrian Marxist who in 1937 published a famous work on the Republican zone in the Spanish Civil War, celebrated the War of Succession as the «juncture at which the Spanish people arose as historical actors independent of their nobility and higher clergy»¹⁶. Modern historical analysis had to wait until 1969, when Henry Kamen produced a classic monograph-length study. In 2013 the Spanish Embassy in London hosted an academic symposium dedicated to the tricentenary of the Treaty of Utrecht, whose stipulations concerning Gibraltar remain a stone in the shoe of Anglo-Spanish relations to this day¹⁷. The most impressive recent study is

¹¹ Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (London, 1840).

¹² Lord Mahon, *The War of the Succession in Spain* (London: John Murray, 1836), pp. 85, 95.

¹³ Lord Mahon, *The War of the Succession in Spain* (London: John Murray, 1836), p. 85.

¹⁴ George Alfred Henty, *The Bravest of the Brave: or With Peterborough in Spain* (London, 1887).

¹⁵ William Bollaert, *The War of Succession of Portugal and Spain, from 1826 to 1840* (London: Edward Stanford, 1870), II, p. 12; Franz Borkenau, *The Spanish Cockpit* (London: Faber and Faber, 1937), p. 1.

¹⁶ Franz Borkenau, *The Spanish Cockpit* (London: Faber and Faber, 1937), p. 1.

¹⁷ Henry Kamen, *The War of Succession in Spain, 1700-1715* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1969); the papers of the 2013 symposium are published in Trevor J. Dadson and J. H. Elliott (eds.), *Britain, Spain and the Treaty of Utrecht, 1713-2013* (New York: Legenda, 2014).

an edition comprising diplomacy, global history, warfare and its representations¹⁸.

Cultural and political context of the War of the Spanish Succession

European attitudes amidst the Enlightenment liked to typecast Spain as an obscurantist counterpoint. Spain's outsized colonial expansion in the Americas seemed less a symptom of Spanish vitality and more of a cause of Iberia's political and economic decline¹⁹. Seventeenth-century Spain was characterised by a weak central government and overbearing aristocratic blue-bloods, and little changed until Carlos III (1759-1788) bore down on the feudal privileges of Church and nobility²⁰. The forbidding spectacle of Spain's baroque royal and Church architecture, designed to overawe rather than enlighten, seemed to symbolise this. Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws* argued that climate, religion, laws, government and popular customs forge national character. Whereas warm Spain placed its character in some ways in the positive realm vivacity, passive and sociability, unlike the dull and drunken northern Europeans, other signs were ominous. Montesquieu deemed Spain an Inquisition-prone and priest-addled country, and example of what 'goes wrong' when monarchs refuse to embrace the Enlightenment²¹. Eighteenth-century writers liked to dwell on the decline of empires: the idealised Ancient Greek and Roman empires attracted growing fascination throughout the century. But foreign writers were less charitable about the decline of Spain. Abbé Raynal's 1770 study of European trade with the Indies criticised Spain for its backwardness, as part of a wider Enlightened critique of Spain's empire as leaving no great economic, intellectual, cultural or scientific legacy²².

¹⁸ Matthias Pohligh and Michael Schaich, 'Revisiting the War of the Spanish Succession' in Matthias Pohligh and Michael Schaich (eds.), *The War of the Spanish Succession: New Perspectives* (Oxford, 2018).

¹⁹ Matthias Pohligh and Michael Schaich, 'Revisiting the War of the Spanish Succession' in Matthias Pohligh and Michael Schaich (eds.), *The War of the Spanish Succession: New Perspectives* (Oxford, 2018), p. 25.

²⁰ Henry Kamen, *The War of Succession in Spain, 1700-1715* (London, 1969), pp. 25-41.

²¹ Joseph Clark, '«The Rage of Fanatics»: Religious Fanaticism and the Making of Revolutionary Violence', *French History*, Vol. 33, Iss 2 (June 2019), 236-258.

²² Antonio Feros, *Speaking of Spain* (Harvard, 2017), p. 172.

Only comparatively recently has the Spanish empire gained a more positive appraisal²³.

Spain occupied a 'black legend' in Britain in the wake of successful Protestant reformations in both England and Scotland. The threat of Spanish invasion in 1588 was answered by popular rumours about Catholic Spanish brutality. Subsequent generations believed the myth that a successful Spanish invasion would have led to Protestant adults being killed and their children branded with 'L' for 'Lutheran'²⁴. The Spanish military organisation of 'tercios' was much envied and feared by English observers, given their decisive performance in such battles as the White Mountain in 1620 and Nördlingen in 1634²⁵. The seventeenth century saw Spain overtaken by France as chief Catholic challenge to British liberties. But Catholic Spain in decline reaffirmed Britain's Protestant self-image more assuredly than Catholic France on the rise. The fifth of November became doubly sanctified as an anniversary both of the failed Catholic gunpowder plot of 1605 and the landing of the Dutch Protestant invasion (or 'liberation') of England in 1688, the so-called Glorious Revolution. Once the war over the Spanish crown began, Protestant print and religious culture continued the 'black legend' by attributing to Spain itself the cause of its ills. One English sermon preached in January 1705 reflected little on the immediate cause of the war, preferring instead to preach the historic 'cruelty' of Spain as witnessed in the Inquisition and its behaviour in the Indies as causes of the civil war²⁶. A nineteenth-century history of the War of the Spanish Succession asserted the decline of the Spanish monarchy since the time of Phillip II, owing to 'bigotry, despotism ... and one long unbroken train of losses, humiliations and disasters'²⁷.

Catholic Spain thus continued to be depicted as a cultural and political 'other'. Even so, the domestic impact in Britain of the War of the Spanish Succession also heightened tensions within Protestantism, as well as military reform and the political

²³ e.g. David Ringrose, *Spain, Europe and the 'Spanish Miracle', 1700-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

²⁴ William S. Maltby, *The Black Legend in England: The development of anti-Spanish sentiment, 1558-1660* (North Carolina, 1971), pp. 3, 12.

²⁵ Parker, '»Military Revolution«', p. 205.

²⁶ Andrew C. Thompson, 'War, Religion, and Public Debate in Britain during the War of the Spanish Succession' in Matthias Pohligh and Michael Schaich (eds.), *The War of the Spanish Succession: New Perspectives* (Oxford, 2018), pp. 190-191, 195.

²⁷ Lord Mahon, *The War of the Succession in Spain* (London: John Murray, 1836), p. 1.

settlement between England and Scotland. Despite England's recent Glorious Revolution, the religious question still underlay disputes between Tory and Whig factions. On the venerated date of 5 November 1709, Henry Sacheverell, a Tory Anglican clergyman launched an incendiary sermon which spent very little time condemning the old enemy (Catholicism) and a great deal condemning dissenting Protestants who were challenging the religious monopoly of the Church of England. The sermon was a thinly veiled attack on the Whigs. Riots swept the country targeting dissenters, and some of the ten thousand Calvinist war refugees from Germany, amidst a general discontent caused by the high taxation and impressment for the war in Spain. The seemingly endless war caused disquiet amongst elites, too. The National Debt rose from 14 million pounds in 1702 to 36.2 million by the end of the war, and the anguished Tory faction supported withdrawal from Spain in return for concentration on naval warfare. Raiding enemy vessels brought prize money, which defrayed the costs of war and blockaded enemy trade in a manner which boosted British commerce. Whig attempts to prosecute Henry Sacheverell increased the tension to such an extent that in spring 1710 the Tories won a landslide in that year's general election, and Queen Anne replaced her Whig administration with one led by Tories²⁸.

The War of the Spanish Succession transformed the recruitment of the English army. The English army was small by continental standards (unlike its navy), and poorly regarded by a society which was opposed to standing armies in the wake of the Glorious Revolution (1688-89). More even than in Spain, society in England was inclined to see soldiers as criminals and burdens on the community. These popular attitudes were confirmed when over 50,000 soldiers were demobilised between 1697-99 in the wake of the Nine Years' War, which led to a crime wave across England²⁹. In 1704 the Westminster parliament introduced the first law allowing the press-ganging, or forced enlistment, of men into the army. Repeated laws to this effect were passed until 1712, owing to the costly operations in Spain, and press-ganging of some sort remained legal in Britain until 1780. Unemployed,

²⁸ Manuel Castellano García (2020), 'Construyendo la paz de Utrecht: las negociaciones secretas entre Francia y Gran Bretaña y la firma de los preliminares de Londres' in Cuadernos de Historia Moderna, Vol. 45, No. 1, 199-232, pp. 202-206.

²⁹ John Childs, 'War, Crime Waves and the English Army in the late-seventeenth century' in War and Society, Oct.1997, Vol. 15, Issue 2, 1-17.

vagrant and imprisoned young men tended to be targeted for enlistment, and even these often absconded upon release from prison or on their way to ships³⁰.

Even though the War of the Spanish Succession barely shifted domestic attitudes toward the army, it did finalise the military union of England with Scotland. The British neighbours had already been united via the union of the crowns of 1603. Once England established a standing army in 1660, its poorer and smaller royal neighbour languished without a developed officer corps and without a militia. Ambitious Scots thus sought service in English regiments, like during the Nine Years' War, which meant that the English and Scottish officer corps was already partly integrated before the Act of Union of 1707³¹. The Scots Greys, an elite cavalry regiment, served in Spain and took a leading role suppressing a Jacobite rising in Scotland after that war³². English and Scottish veterans of the war in Spain became 'British', and by defeating the Jacobite rising of 1715 they ensured that it did not turn into a War of the British Succession.

Britain's role in the war in Spain

The Allied war effort opened with an unsuccessful Allied attack on Cádiz in 1702. Some 14,000 Dutch and English troops were embarked on a total of 160 ships. But not for the last time the Allies squabbled, impeding their coordination, as there was no unified command. Captain-General of Andalucía, Francisco del Castillo, maximised the slender and run-down forces at his disposal. These forces were boosted by a levy of peasants throughout western Andalucía. These recruits were dismissed by Stanhope as 'rascally foot militia'³³. But they freed up defending cavalry squadrons to attack the disembarked Allied troops. Even though the Allies captured Puerto de Santa María, the looting and defacing of churches by soldiers alienated the population, ending all hopes that an invasion might promote popular support for the Habsburg cause. Attempts by the Allies to entrench themselves

³⁰ Arthur N. Gilbert, 'Army Impressment during the War of the Spanish Succession' in *The Historian: A Journal of History* Volume: 38 Issue 4 (1976), 689-708.

³¹ Hew Strachan, 'Scotland's Military Identity' in *The Scottish Historical Review*, Oct., 2006, Vol. 85, No. 220, Part 2 (Oct., 2006), pp. 315-332, 320.

³² Victoria Henshaw, *Scotland and the British Army, 1700-1750: Defending the Union* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 89-90.

³³ Lord Mahon, *The War of the Succession in Spain* (London: John Murray, 1836), p. 51.

around the coast were ineffective, and on 30 September 1702, five weeks after the disembarkation, the Allied troops withdrew to sea once more³⁴.

The Anglo-Dutch effort to establish 'Carlos III' was proving difficult beyond coastal areas of Spain where the Allies' naval superiority could be brought to bear. After having been repulsed at Cádiz, the Anglo-Dutch fleet scored a resounding victory at the Battle of Vigo Bay on 23 October 1702. A huge Spanish treasure fleet was captured and the entire French and Spanish fleet either captured or destroyed. British-led forces captured Gibraltar in 1704. The strategic value of this rock on the Andalucía coast was not fully appreciated by either side at this time. The Allied assault which began with a bombardment on 2 August 1704 was opportunistic and the Spanish garrison commanded by Diego de Salinas amounted to only one hundred men. Despite Salinas offering stiff resistance, English troops managed to scale the rock on its unguarded eastern face and to overwhelm Salinas's small force. After Salinas surrendered with full military honours, the Allies left behind a garrison of two thousand troops and sailed in search of more targets³⁵.

Popular resistance

A unified Allied command finally arrived in April 1705, when Charles Mordaunt, third Earl of Peterborough, was made commander of Anglo-Dutch land forces in Spain. But Mordaunt was criticised for slowness in caution, both during the siege of Barcelona in 1705 and in the half-hearted support he gave to Lord Galway's march on Madrid in 1707³⁶. His campaign against Barcelona was hampered by faulty intelligence. The defending garrison turned out to be almost equal in size to his own, and Mordaunt was torn between the pleas of Charles III to besiege the city without delay, and the more cautious counsel of his Austrian allies³⁷. An Allied attempt to take Barcelona in 1704, after all, had been repulsed.

³⁴ Lord Mahon, *The War of the Succession in Spain* (London: John Murray, 1836), pp. 52-60.

³⁵ Lord Mahon, *The War of the Succession in Spain* (London: John Murray, 1836), pp. 63-64, 99-101.

³⁶ Galway was a French Huguenot in the English service who had commanded Allied forces in Portugal since 1704.

³⁷ John Friend, *An Account of the Earl of Peterborough's Conduct in Spain* (London: W. Wise, 1707), pp. 4-7.

Also, Mordaunt had been sent to lead Allied forces in Iberia in May 1705 with only vague instructions from Queen Anne. Her guidance advised Mordaunt to take whichever actions he deemed fit and to collaborate with other Allied forces, who, in the case of Portugal, proved reluctant to commit to offensive action in Andalucía³⁸. Also, Mordaunt noted from the outset that the Allies' attempts to control Castile were contested by widespread episodes of popular resistance. As he confided to Stanhope in 1706, «Assure yourself that in Castile there is a most violent spirit against us, which appears to a degree that could not be believed»³⁹. Mordaunt was eventually recalled to England and charged with incompetence amidst allegations that he had failed to pay the Allied garrison at Valencia. The kingdom of Valencia had been in turmoil even since the anti-seigneurial rising of the *maulets* in 1704. Mordaunt's occupation of the city of Valencia on 4 February 1706 was a form of counter-revolution, as a pro-noble Viceroy accompanied his troops to replace the pro-peasant, Juan Bautista Basset y Ramos⁴⁰. Soon afterwards Mordaunt was recalled to England, his reputation tarnished by suspicions that he was out of sympathy with the Habsburg cause in Spain. His downfall became a proxy for partisan rivalry between dovish Tories and hawkish Whigs. Mordaunt's replacement by James Stanhope was accompanied by animosity between these two men who had previously been friends.

Mordaunt's unease at the indifference, or outright hostility, the Habsburg cause attracted in Castile, was not helped by the Spanish use of irregular tactics. In fact, Spain's enduring reputation as a seat of guerrilla warfare begins with the War of Succession, not the more famous Peninsular War (1808-1814). To a large degree irregular warfare was a product of Spanish geography. The arid and underproductive nature of the Spanish meseta was different from fertile France, and campaigns in Iberia suffered accordingly. Henri IV (1553-1610) remarked how «large armies invading Spain starve whereas small ones are swallowed up by a hostile population»⁴¹. The Victorian small

³⁸ Julio Luis Arroyo Vozmediano, 'Francisco de Velasco y los catalanes. Sitio y capitulación de Barcelona, 1705' in *Hispania*, 2014, vol. LXXIV, nº. 246, enero-abril, 69-94, pp. 76-80.

³⁹ Lord Mahon, *The War of the Succession in Spain* (London: John Murray, 1836), p. 202.

⁴⁰ Carmen Pérez Aparicio (2009), 'Don Juan Bautista Basset y Ramos. Luces y sombras del líder austracista valenciano', *Estudis: Revista de Historia Moderna*, 35, 133-164.

⁴¹ Edward Callwell, *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice*, p. 41.

wars expert, Charles Callwell, explained how the mobility of an army was in inverse proportion to its size, and that «the moral effect produced on the enemy by the occupation of wide stretches of territory, and in the influence that the appearance of hostile bodies on all sides must exert on a people who know how to turn the situation to account»⁴². The inability to sustain large armies over protracted times made irregular tactics like ambush more attractive. An Allied attack at Villena in February 1707 during the offensive towards Madrid was frustrated by a brilliant ambush laid by the Bourbon forces commanded by Marshal Berwick, as an eyewitness recalled⁴³:

I had placed a regiment of cavalry in an advanced post as the fittest officer in the army to give me proper intelligence he received advice that a large convoy destined for the troops that were in the Vale of Castalla was to be sent from Alicante upon which he placed himself in ambuscade at half a league's distance from Alicante with fourscore select troops. Instead of the convoy, he saw an English battalion come out of the city, which he suffered to approach within 50 paces of him; perceiving then that the battalion was marching in a column with their arms slung, and without any suspicion of him, who was concealed in a bottom surrounded with trees he sallied out on a sudden and forced his way at full speed into the midst of the battalion which had neither time to recollect itself nor to form. He killed 100 of them and took the remaining 400 with their baggage. He had not more than four of his horsemen killed or wounded.

As Lord Stanhope's descendant and biographer remarked in the 1830s,

In Spain it was shown in the War of the Succession, and again more lately in our own times that the possession of the chief city is of scarcely any avail either to the foreign enemy or to the native partisan twice did the archduke Charles three times did Joseph Bonaparte advance in triumph towards Madrid and as often did they learn that it is one thing to seize the Castle in capital and another thing to subdue the Castilian people thus what in France is the consummation of conquest with the Spaniards is hardly its commencement and thus under every possible disadvantage

⁴² Charles Callwell, 'Lessons to be Learnt from the Campaigns', *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution*, Vol. 31, p. 367.

⁴³ cit. James Falkner, *Marlborough's Wars: Eyewitness Accounts 1702-1713* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2005), p. 220.

from wretched armies wretched generals wretched laws and wretched governments they have maintained will continue to maintain their independence⁴⁴.

During the Allies' retreat from Madrid Castilian villagers grew alienated by the army's demands for provisions. Allied forces, like so many in the Early Modern era, depended upon private contractors for their supplies⁴⁵. Private interest persisted. Colonels owned their regiments, controlling pay, recruitment and discipline, and even profits given that logistics depended on private contractors⁴⁶. This military enterprise system worked well in prosperous areas of Europe, and in the case of the French army was at its most developed during the War of the Spanish Succession⁴⁷. But in marginal agricultural areas, like most of Castile, contractors failed to source sufficient local supplies. The pillaging of armies thus produced a major backlash that expressed itself in the outbreak of a savage guerrilla war. At the village of Campillo enraged locals massacred wounded soldiers from the Coldstream Guards. The Allies inculpated the local priest, hanging him at the door of his own church⁴⁸. Officers shared an identity based on honour, sociability with peers and on public esteem. Civilian violence towards them threatened military honour and denied the perpetrators the right to mercy⁴⁹.

While the Allies campaigned across a despondent Castilian countryside, Philip V's Spanish realm faced financial turmoil. The loss of the treasure vessel at Vigo, combined the cost of war, led Philip V to rely increasingly on French arms and money for Spain's defence. 1706 had thus marked an *annus horribilis* for the Bourbon cause in Spain, with cities across Catalonia, Aragón and Valencia having fallen to the allies. To the loss of Gibraltar in 1704 was added Barcelona in 1705, and Alicante, Ibiza and Mallorca in 1706. Bourbon attempts to recapture Barcelona were

⁴⁴ Earl Philip Henry Stanhope, *History of the War of Succession in Spain* (London: John Murray, 1836) pp. 393-394.

⁴⁵ For a positive appraisal of this system, see David Parrott, *The Business of War* (Cambridge, 2012).

⁴⁶ Herfried Muenkler, 'Clausewitz and the Privatisation of War' in Hew Strachan and Andreas Hergerg-Rothe (eds.), *Clausewitz in the twenty-first century* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 226-227; Anderson, *War and Society in Europe* (1988), pp. 47-48.

⁴⁷ Parrott, *The Business of War*, pp. 21-22.

⁴⁸ Daniel Defoe, *Memoirs of Captain Carleton* (London: E. P. Dutton, 1929), pp. 149-151.

⁴⁹ Owen Brittan (2017), 'Subjective Experience and Military Masculinity at the Beginning of the Long Eighteenth Century' in *Journal for Eighteenth-century Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 2, 273-290, p. 276.

defeated. An English captain George Carleton managed to rally some retreating troops outside the city, reinforcements and supplies flowed incessantly into the city, and even a solar eclipse on 12 May 1706 was celebrated in the city as 'the demise of the Sun King' (Louis XIV)⁵⁰.

But 1707 marked an *annus mirabilis* for the Bourbons. An English attempt to seize the southern French port of Toulon failed. Even though the French were forced to scuttle most of their warships in order to prevent the Allies from seizing or burning them, granting the Allies naval control of the Mediterranean, this domination mattered little in terms of conquering land-locked Castile. Even though British naval control of the eastern Spanish seaboard guaranteed a safeguard for an Allied presence of some sort in Spain for the rest of the war, there were no navigable rivers permitting the landing of supplies and men in Castile.

Even worse for the Allies, on 25 April 1707, five months before their naval success at Toulon, their armies suffered a decisive defeat at Almansa. The Bourbon victory at Almansa in 1707 rescued Philip's cause. The Duke of Berwick used his cavalry brilliantly. Even though an English-led counterattack against the Spanish right flank almost succeeded, the Bourbons carried the day. The defeated Allied infantry could not keep pace with its cavalry in retreat, and barely 800 escaped death or capture. The Allies also lost all their baggage and all their twenty-four cannon⁵¹. The defeat was politically controversial in Britain. The Westminster parliament debated why only 8,000 British troops were available to fight at Almansa, even though Parliament had approved an army of 29,000 to be sent to the Iberian Peninsula⁵². Unlike Marlborough's campaign in Germany and Low Countries, the Spanish theatre was seldom at the forefront of public attention, a situation created as much by the existence of far faster and more reliable postal communications with northern Europe as by Marlborough's undoubted military genius⁵³. News arriving from

⁵⁰ William Hazlitt (ed.), *The Works of Daniel Defoe: with a memoir of his life and writings* (London: John Clements, 1841), Vol. II, p. 21.

⁵¹ Lord Mahon, *The War of the Succession in Spain* (London: John Murray, 1836), pp. 231-234.

⁵² Arthur N. Gilbert, 'Army Impressment during the War of the Spanish Succession' in *The Historian: A Journal of History* Volume: 38 Issue 4 (1976), 689-708, p. 704.

⁵³ Matthias Pohl, 'Speed and Security: Infrastructuring the English Postal Service to the Low Countries during the War of the Spanish Succession' in Matthias Pohl and Michael Schach (eds.), *The War of the Spanish Succession: New Perspectives* (Oxford, 2018), pp. 343-349.

Spain of radical changes in fortune thus generated more impact. Militarily the defeat was disastrous for the Habsburg cause in Spain. Within a month of Almansa the Duke of Berwick cleared virtually all of Valencia and Aragón of Habsburg control. The Bourbons began the task of imposing Castillian law onto these territories, at the same time as a peaceful union between England and Scotland was established which respected the latter's different legal system⁵⁴. Meanwhile, only the fortified towns of Denia, Alicante and Xàtiva held out for the Allies. Whereas the former two could be resupplied by sea, Xàtiva was overwhelmed after a bitter siege and a brutal onslaught. The indiscriminate killing of both civilians and surrendered English soldiers was noteworthy even at a time in European history when stormed cities were considered 'fair game' for atrocities by enraged troops⁵⁵. Xàtiva was destroyed at Berwick's express orders and its surviving civilians expelled. Even its name was extinguished and replaced with San Felipe in honour of the victorious Bourbon cause⁵⁶. To this day a local museum in restored Xàtiva hangs a portrait of Philip V upside-down in memory of the historical insult.

After Almansa it was largely only Catalonia that remained in Habsburg hands. But threats to Louis XIV's eastern borders caused the withdrawal of Bourbon troops, especially during 1709, which gave the Habsburg forces a second wind. This opportunity was exploited by James Stanhope, Mordaunt's replacement as commander of British forces in Spain. Stanhope, first Earl Stanhope, had been born in Paris as the son of a prominent diplomat, and had spent his youth in Madrid. As he was the grandson of England's ambassador, he got acquainted with Spanish language and culture⁵⁷. In 1706 Stanhope was appointed British plenipotentiary to Habsburg Spain, which enabled him to promote British commercial interests. He tried to emulate the advantages which Britain had secured in Portugal in 1703, most importantly via access to Spain's American markets.

But Stanhope was most effective at his forward policy in Spain and in the Mediterranean. In September 1708, Lieutenant-

⁵⁴ The Act of Union between Scotland and England commenced on 1 May 1707.

⁵⁵ Michael Bryant, *A World History of War Crimes: From Antiquity to the Present* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), pp. 74-77.

⁵⁶ Lord Mahon, *The War of the Succession in Spain* (London: John Murray, 1836), pp. 237-240.

⁵⁷ Earl Philip Henry Stanhope, *History of the War of Succession in Spain* (London: John Murray, 1836) pp. 177-178.

General James Stanhope captured Menorca. But Louis XIV's troubles on France's eastern borders allowed Stanhope the chance to avenge the Allies' disaster at Almansa. In the summer of 1710 Stanhope led an Allied advance on Madrid. The city had been occupied once before – by the Portuguese in 1707 –but neither this occupation of the Spanish capital, nor its repeat in 1710, could persuade Castilians to yield to the Habsburg claim. Stanhope would discover, like many other conquerors before and since, that capturing Madrid could never induce the sort of despair in the country that the capture of Paris or London might in France and England respectively⁵⁸.

The second attempt: the Allied march on Madrid, 1710

During the spring of 1710, James Stanhope visited London where he urged a greater British effort in Spain. By the summer Allied forces in Catalonia finally matched those of the Bourbons, and offensive operations resumed. On 27 July 1710, at the Battle of Almenar, the Bourbons were ousted from Catalonia. The Allies occupied a more elevated position with the sun at their backs on a very hot afternoon. The battle involved about 30,000 troops on both sides, as well as the presence of both claimants to the Spanish throne. Stanhope's victory allowed his cavalry to pursue the Bourbon retreat to Madrid⁵⁹. Stanhope accused his subordinates of waiting too long to support his cavalry thrust that day, and of frustrating his plan to destroy the Bourbon field army⁶⁰. But his campaign progressed nonetheless, capturing Zaragoza on 21 August 1710 and clearing Aragón of Bourbon control. Stanhope had hoped that the civilian population would now rally to the Habsburg cause. But this was not to be. As he complained in a letter of 4 July 1710: «We expected an insurrection in Aragón, and that the enemies would have followed us, and marched out of the country; but neither happening, and on the contrary, the enemies applying their thoughts to intercept our convoys ... and I am sorry to say that we have very few deserters, and of those few

⁵⁸ Lord Mahon, *The War of the Succession in Spain* (London: John Murray, 1836), pp. 351-352.

⁵⁹ José Cepeda Gómez, 'La historia bélica de la Guerra de Sucesión Española' in *En nombre de la paz: La Guerra de Sucesión Española y los Tratados de Madrid, Utrecht, Rastatt y Baden 1713-1715* (Madrid: Fundación Carlos Amberes, 20 December 2013-23 February 2014), pp. 119, 132.

⁶⁰ Lord Mahon, *The War of the Succession in Spain* (London: John Murray, 1836), pp. 302-304.

hardly any are Spanish; and, from all that we can learn, we have good reason to be persuaded that the Castilians in general, and this army more particularly, are so firmly riveted in the Duke of Anjou's interests. That nothing but force can dispossess him»⁶¹.

Even though the Allies rallied in 1710 with a new offensive through Aragón into Castile, the civilian population remained hostile. The Allies' capture of Madrid in 1710 was the high point of the Habsburg campaign in Spain. The presence of even the pretender Charles III could not raise much public spectacle beyond the natural curiosity of the capital's street-children. The hostility of elites increased once Charles III expelled from the capital nobles who refused to switch their allegiance. The announcement of the death penalty for any expellee returning to the capital, combined with news of outrages committed by 'heretical' troops at religious sites, lost the Allies any hope of collaboration⁶². This poor impression, combined with the Allies' undoubtedly overextended supply lines, caused a crisis in the Allied command. Stanhope demanded an aggressive campaign to link up with his Portuguese allies in the west. The Bourbon forces, he concluded, were still off-balance, and even the worst damage they could inflict – a march to cut the Allied supply lines along the Pyrenees – posed little risk given that the rigours of winter were in any case forcing the Allies to live off the land. The Portuguese forces lay around 200 hundred kilometres west, at Almaraz. If Almaraz could be reached, and its key bridge across the Tajo secured, then the Allies would achieve the link-up with Portugal and cut Bourbon Spain in two.

But by the time that Stanhope could convince Guido Staremberg, commander of the Austrians in Spain, to join the endeavour, the Bourbons had manoeuvred against this threat. The Duke of Vendôme seized Almaraz and its bridge, pushing the Portuguese into retreat towards their own frontier, and Charles III ordered a general retreat from Madrid. At Brihuega part of the Allies' retreating force, the part commanded by Lord Stanhope, was defeated and forced to surrender. While the British troops rested in the town, they were suddenly surrounded by Vendôme's vastly superior troops, and a relief force commanded by Staremberg arrived too late to change the events of the 6 December. The

⁶¹ Lord Mahon, *The War of the Succession in Spain* (London: John Murray, 1836), pp. 298-299.

⁶² Cristina Borreguero Beltrán, 'Imagen y propaganda de guerra en el conflicto sucesorio (1700-1713)' in *Manuscripts*, 21, 2003, 95-132, pp. 123-124.

British fortified the town, but they had no artillery, and the wall around the town was dilapidated. Vendôme's troops used artillery to batter the walls and storm the town. The British repulsed the first attack and Vendôme's troops suffered heavy losses. A second attack succeeded when the British troops, having spent all their ammunition, tried desperately to defend their position with stones and missiles⁶³. The surviving British troops surrendered, just a day before Staremburg's vanguard arrived at Villaviciosa de Tajuña, only five kilometres from Brihuega, and mauled Vendôme's army. Vendôme suffered about 4,000 casualties and several guns. But the Allies could not hope to keep the field in the wake of Stanhope's disaster. Staremburg salvaged what remained of the Habsburg army – some 8,000 men – and set on a general retreat to Catalonia. He had no draught animals to carry away the French guns, which instead were spiked and abandoned⁶⁴.

Stanhope negotiated generous terms for capitulation, but these terms were violated, as surrendered soldiers ended up being separated from their officers and dispersed in unwelcoming Castilian villages. There was nothing in the international laws of war or custom to prevent the Bourbon behaviour. Since the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 prisoners of war had the right to return home after hostilities without being subjected to a ransom. But no international laws regulated the treatment of prisoners of war during their captivity until the turn of the twentieth century. In this case the English captives were exchanged for Franco-Spanish captives the following year⁶⁵.

The Allies' retreat thereafter was relentless. A strong Allied position in Catalonia at the very least might have held indefinitely. The British navy controlled the Mediterranean in the wake of Toulon, and the Catalans saw in the Allied side their best hope for preserving their autonomy. But the death of the Habsburg emperor on 17 April 1711 changed strategic calculations. As the pretender, 'Charles III of Spain', was now also heir to the Habsburg crown in Vienna, the Allies ran the risk of replacing a domineering Franco-Spanish Bourbon monarchy with an overbearing Austro-Spanish Habsburg

⁶³ Richard Cannon, *Historical Record of the First or The Royal Regiment of Dragoons: From Its Formation in The Reign of King Charles the Second and of Its Subsequent Services To 1839* (London: William Clowes, 1836), p. 51.

⁶⁴ James Falkner, *Marlborough's Wars: Eyewitness Accounts 1702-1713* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2005), p. 227.

⁶⁵ Lord Mahon, *The War of the Succession in Spain* (London: John Murray, 1836), pp. 321-322, 340-341.

version. With the ascendant Tories in Britain keen on a compromise peace and secret peace feelers to the exhausted French bearing some fruit, the stage was set for Allied disengagement from Spain. During the peace talks of 1711 the French dominated Spanish affairs, thinly disguising their interest by claiming that Philip V's resolve in protecting his Spanish crown in war would be honoured also in peace. But by 1711, Spanish troops were forming the lion's share of the effort against the Allies in Spain⁶⁶.

For the Allied powers, a Habsburg union of the Spanish empire with Austria seemed hardly preferable to a Spanish union with France. Britain, especially, was worried at the prospect of Habsburg domination in Europe and the Americas. By 1713 the Treaties of Utrecht ended the war between the Bourbon and Habsburg sides. British prisoners held at Burgos at the conclusion of peace could not believe that their government had agreed to a peace settlement which did not involve the Habsburg claimant taking the Spanish throne⁶⁷. Philip V was recognised as legitimate king of Spain and Emperor of Spanish America. But he relinquished his claim to the French throne and Spanish territories in the Low Countries and Italy. Portugal retained its colonies and Britain retained Gibraltar, Minorca, and significant trading rights with Spanish America. But the civil war in Spain was not yet over. The Allied abandonment of the Catalan cause led to rancour both in Barcelona and amongst pro-Catalan commentators, mostly Whigs, in Britain. One commentator, Michael Strubell, touched a nerve by publishing his *Deplorable History of the Catalans*⁶⁸. The Catalans fought on, despite the Anglo-French peace of 1713. The death of Queen Anne on 1 August 1714 came too late to effect a change in official British attitudes towards the Catalans. Even though Anne's Hanoverian successor, King George, Elector of Hannover, was more sympathetic, his attention was distracted by a renewed Jacobite attempt on the British throne in 1715⁶⁹. Barcelona was finally captured on 11 September 1714. The conquering Bourbons treated Barcelona harshly, if not bloodily, and stripped the city and the Principality of most of its autonomy.

⁶⁶ Lord Mahon, *The War of the Succession in Spain* (London: John Murray, 1836), pp. 347-353.

⁶⁷ Ilya Berkovich, *Motivation in War: the Experience of Common Soldiers in Old-Regime Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 203.

⁶⁸ Ricardo García Cárcel, *Felipe V y los Españoles* (Barcelona: Debolsillo, 2002), p. 115.

⁶⁹ Archibald S. Foord, *His Majesty's opposition 1714-1830* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), p. 44.

The legacy of the War of the Spanish Succession for Britain

The War of the Spanish Succession was in many ways a second war of the British succession. A British defeat would probably have led to the restoration of the Jacobite line and a likely protracted civil war. As recently as 1689, Britain had faced a major Jacobite revolt, and another followed peace in 1715.

But there are further parallels to be drawn with Spain. In both countries, the threat of regional backlash against centralisation was solved with the Anglo-Scottish Act of Union of 1707 and the Nueva Planta decrees of Philip V. The major difference was a paradoxical one. On the one hand, Scotland, unlike Catalonia, possessed a heritage of independent statehood⁷⁰. But on the other hand, Jacobitism in Scotland never achieved the degree of support that *austracismo* had managed in Catalonia and Aragón. Another parallel lies in the constitutional settlement of both countries. The accession of Bourbon Philip V was agreed with the proviso that there would be no union of the crowns of Spain and France. The death of the first and last Stuart queen of Britain, Queen Anne, in August 1714, bestowed the British with a diametrically opposed problem. As all surviving Stuart lines were Catholic, the closest heir to the British throne lay in the House of Guelph in Protestant Hanover. When in 1701 it had become clear that the next Protestant heir would be of the Guelphic line, the English Parliament passed what would become known as the Act of Settlement in 1701:

«That in case the Crown and imperial dignity of this realm shall hereafter come to any person, not being a native of this Kingdom of England, this nation be not obliged to engage in any war for the defence of any dominions or territories which do not belong to the Crown of England, without the consent of Parliament⁷¹».

The original intention was that Britain would never have to commit to the extension of Hanover's territory within the Holy Roman Empire, and so would avoid getting dragged into whatever squabbles should occupy the German Princes at any given time. Hanoverian Britain would not merge with Guelphic Hannover any more than Bourbon Spain would merge with France.

⁷⁰ John Elliott, 'The Road to Utrecht: War and Peace' in Trevor J. Dadson and J. H. Elliott (eds.), *Britain, Spain and the Treaty of Utrecht, 1713-2013* (New York: Legenda, 2014).

⁷¹ *mcit.* Jeremy Black, *Continental Commitment, Britain, Hanover and interventionism 1714-1793* (Oxford, 2005), p. 25.

The war helped to cement the Anglo-Scottish union of 1707. James Stanhope's son, Philip Stanhope, relished the union. He noted how Glasgow was being transformed from «a petty huckster of a town into a mart of manufacture»⁷². Scotland, whose disastrous attempts to establish a colony on the Panamanian Isthmus in the 1690s had squandered a fifth of all available Scottish capital, got to share its debt with England and to share access to its southern neighbour's growing empire. Thus, Britain's role in the War of the Spanish Succession bestowed Europe with a surprising legacy. England and Scotland were united even though Scotland's separate legal and religious structure was unaffected. Spain, as Henry Kamen argued, also emerged strengthened from its dynastic war, in contrast to the inertia and pessimism of its late seventeenth century⁷³. But the Bourbon victory in Spain suppressed much of Aragón's legal and political autonomy. It allowed the gradual militarisation of the Spanish monarchy, including a gradual increase in the intensity and regularity of conscription⁷⁴. The War of the Spanish Succession also left a modernising military impact in Britain. It helped the British regular army evolve from being little more than a royal bodyguard in 1660 into being a major 'continental' army.

Britain secured a strategic victory in the War of the Spanish Succession: possession of Gibraltar, the coveted 'asiento' monopoly on the slave trade with Spanish America, and an enduring great power status in continental diplomacy. Yet the stated aim of preventing a Bourbon occupying the Spanish throne eluded the Allies. Britain's campaigns in Spain, and especially the successes won by Earl Stanhope, helped to cement the new Anglo-Scottish union in symbolic ways. Standing armies were celebrated again, in contrast to the previous century's upheaval of civil war and revolution, and Britishness became more martial in nature. The name 'Marlborough' started to grace taverns throughout Britain, and both Marlborough and Stanhope were given lavish state in 1722 and 1721 respectively⁷⁵.

⁷² Cit. Allan I. Macinnes, *Union and Empire: the Making of the United Kingdom in 1707* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 36.

⁷³ Henry Kamen, *The War of Succession in Spain, 1700-1715* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1969), p. 381.

⁷⁴ José Jiménez Guerrero, *El reclutamiento militar en el siglo XIX: las quintas de Málaga (1837-1868)* (Málaga, 2001), p. 31.

⁷⁵ Michael Schaich, 'Standards and Colours: Representing the Military in Britain during the War of the Spanish Succession' in Matthias Pohligh and Michael Schaich (eds.), *The War of the Spanish Succession: New Perspectives* (Oxford, 2018), pp. 252, 262-263.