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# Frederick's Chessboard: Domestic Institutions and the Origins of the Seven Years' War

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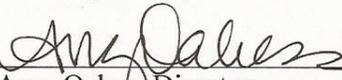
Frederick's Chessboard  
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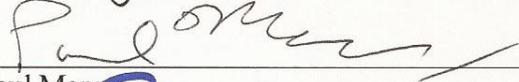
A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement  
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FREDERICK'S CHESSBOARD  
DOMESTIC INSTITUTIONS AND THE ORIGINS OF THE SEVEN YEARS' WAR

CAITLIN HARTNETT

On October 26, 1756, Frederick II, King of Prussia, wrote to one of his officers from a Saxony he had just conquered, “The enemy apparently made more mistakes than my officers, to the point where, this year, we have succeeded. However, this whole campaign is but the arrangement of the chessboard. This coming year, the game will begin and it is a difficult task that I have proposed to myself to be wise still.”<sup>1</sup> The news of the invasion of Saxony two months prior by 70,000 trained Prussian soldiers with Frederick at their head had quickly reached and enraged the courts of Vienna, Moscow and Paris, swiftly turning what had become a race of diplomatic meetings and military mobilization into a war that would engulf the world. However, the game had begun far before Frederick had led his army into Saxony in August.

By its own merit and by the legacy it left behind, the Seven Years’ War was truly the first world war. From the frontiers of British and French North America and the contested plains of Silesia, the fighting would spread across the globe through skirmishes across India and West Africa. This particular chess game, as Frederick refers to it, would come to be known as the Seven Years’ War, though the many spheres of the conflict would acquire different names. In English-speaking North America, it would be called the French and Indian War while their French-speaking counterparts in Canada and France would refer to it as the War of the Conquest. The conflict in India would come to be known as the Third Carnatic War; in Sweden, the Pomeranian War; in the German states, the Third Silesian War.

By the end of the war, though not apparent on the unchanged map of Europe, the balance of power would be substantially altered and the map of North America would be changed

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<sup>1</sup> Translated from original French: “Les ennemis ont apparemment fait plus de fautes que mes officiers, de sorte que, cette année, nous avons réussi. Mais toute cette campagne n'est que l'entablement au jeu d'échecs. L'année qui vient, la partie commencera, et c'est une rude tâche que je me suis proposée d'être sage toujours.” Frederick II, *Œuvres de Frédéric le Grand*, ed. J.D.E. Preuss (Berlin: Imprimerie Royale, 1846), accessed April 15, 2015, <http://friedrich.uni-trier.de/fr/oeuvres/20/128-o2/text/>.

forever. This was not just another war between princes and kings with limited objectives and aims, the likes of which had plagued the European continent for much of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In Europe, Frederick's Prussia would come dangerously close to annihilation, but would instead ensure its spot at the table of Great Powers.<sup>2</sup> As such, the war would solidify the contest between Austria and Prussia for dominance of the German states that would not be settled for another century. Russia would emerge as a formidable political and military force, if still considered uncivilized by its European counterparts. With Britain's victory in North America, France would lose its Canadian territories and give Louisiana to Spain as compensation for Spain's loss of Florida to Britain. The 1763 Treaty of Paris would end the struggle for dominance of eastern North America overwhelmingly in Britain's favor, but would also set the stage for the American Revolution just over a decade later.<sup>34</sup>

There were many chances throughout the chain of events that led to the outbreak of the Seven Years' War where peaceful negotiations could have settled rising tensions. Why then did the states involved in the Seven Years' War choose to go to war with each other in 1756? Despite both the governments of Britain and France being exhausted from fighting and open to a period of peace, they did not officially recognize the spiraling conflict in their North American colonies. Instead of resolving the conflict through diplomatic communication, Britain declared war against France in May of 1756. Likewise, Prussia, Austria and Russia engaged in an arms'

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<sup>2</sup> As Scott describes: "In Prussia's case, the decisive event [in its becoming a great power] was Frederick the Great's ascension... This was essentially intellectual preparation for Prussia's full emergence as a great power during and after the Seven Years' War." H.M. Scott, "Prussia's Royal Foreign Minister: Frederick the Great and the Administration of Prussian Diplomacy," in *Royal and Republican Sovereignty in Early Modern Europe: Essays in Memory of Ragnhild Hatton*, ed. Robert Oresko et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 519.

<sup>3</sup> Gordon S. Wood, *The American Revolution: A History* (New York: Modern Library, 2002), 4.

<sup>4</sup> Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America: 1754-1766* (New York: Vintage, 2006), xvii-xix.

race that escalated both anxiety over and pressure for war, rejected peaceful negotiation and declared war following Frederick's invasion of Saxony in August of 1756.

The existing answers to this question focus on systemic or individual-level factors. These include the suggestions that the Seven Years' War was merely a continuation of previous hegemonic wars, that a shift in the alliance system led to war, that international rivalries caused inevitable conflict and that leaders' personalities would not allow for diplomatic resolution. The main problem with these arguments is that they do not explain how the outbreak of militarized conflict or the rejection of peaceful diplomacy was triggered. They can account for rising tensions, but otherwise leave the connection to actual state action to inevitability.

My thesis fills this gap between the rising tensions in Europe and North America prior to 1756 and the actual outbreak of the Seven Years' War. To do so, my thesis highlights the individual leader's role in the rejection of peaceful settlement between autocracies as well as the permissive condition played by domestic institutions in this regard. My thesis emphasizes the importance of domestic institutional structure in determining the level of impact the individual's preferences and decisions have on state action. The more freedom of action the leader is permitted by their domestic institutional structure, the more likely that state's actions are to match up with the leader's preferences. This freedom of action is determined by formal and informal checks on the power of the leader, such as the authority of legislative and advisory bodies or the leader's reliance on public opinion.

This paper will be organized as follows. The first section will explore the existing literature on the origins of the Seven Years' War and explain how my theory contributes to this research by considering the role of domestic institutions. The second section will present my theoretical argument. Finally, the third section will discuss the actions of Prussia and Britain.

The powers and the discussions of their leaders and domestic structures will be organized by level of freedom of action of the executive. First will be Prussia, which comes closest to being a true autocracy and where the leader's preferences translate most readily into state action. Second, Britain, where the decision-making process is the least centralized, will be explored.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of war and what causes it to occur is a large field of international relations theory and the answers to this question are as varied as they are numerous. First established by Kenneth Waltz's *Man, the State, and War*, a useful organizational framework for these answers is the three "images" of war or the levels of analysis framework that groups significant causal variables into three categories: the systemic level, the domestic level and the individual level. Systemic-level arguments focus on the structure of the international system and how states interact within it; domestic-level arguments focus on governmental and societal variables within states; finally, individual-level arguments focus on the decision-making process of political leaders.<sup>5</sup> This literature review will organize explanations for the Seven Years' War by levels of analysis.

The outbreak of the Seven Years' War in 1756 has largely been attributed to systemic-level factors and individual-level arguments revolving around the personalities of various leaders. At the systemic level, three main lines of argumentation emerge from the literature. These include (1) the upset of the balance of power following the War of Austrian Succession, (2) the shift in the balance of power after the Diplomatic Revolution and (3) the international

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<sup>5</sup> Jack Levy and William Thompson, *Causes of War* (Chichester, West Sussex, U.K.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 14-15.

rivalries between Britain and France, and Austria and Prussia. At the individual level, the historical literature attributes the war to the personalities of specific leaders, especially in regards to the individual idiosyncrasies of vengeance, militarism and honor.

### **System Level Factors**

In the international relations literature, the study of the causes of war on the systemic level involve the interactions of political states as key actors in an anarchic world. These states aim to secure their own power, wealth or security and thus, war can erupt either deliberately or inadvertently as states pursue their interests.<sup>6</sup> These arguments place importance on variables such as the number of powers in the system, the distribution of power and the structure of alliances.<sup>7</sup> In the case of the Seven Years' War, the international relations theory that is most clearly mirrored in the historical literature is the balance of power theory. This is reflected in the arguments that place the most causal weight on hegemonic warfare, alliance structure and historic rivalry. Some of these arguments are more compelling than others. Due to the lack of a clear hegemon in 1756, for instance, the hegemonic war argument is less compelling than the other two systemic explanations.

According to the balance of power theory, the survival of the state is the foremost goal of all states and the hegemony of other powers is a direct threat to this interest; therefore, states ensure the prevention of hegemony through the forging of alliances and the building up of internal military strength. In this way, the system remains balanced. A portion of the historical literature of the outbreak of the Seven Years' War reflects this theory by arguing that the war

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<sup>6</sup> Levy and Thompson, *Causes of War*, 28-29.

<sup>7</sup> Levy and Thompson, *Causes of War*, 15.

was simply a continuation of previous hegemonic wars within an unbalanced power system. This argument follows that the wars of the 18<sup>th</sup> century were conflicts of external balancing against a hegemon. In his description of the system established by Louis XIV's actions in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, Franz Szabo writes: "That pattern of international relations had seemed to crystalize a two-century evolution and to result in the development of a relatively clear-cut balance of power."<sup>8</sup> To fully unpack this explanation, scholars examine the other major conflicts of the 18<sup>th</sup> century: the War of Spanish Succession and the War of Austrian Succession.

The War of Spanish Succession (1701-14) was the first of these. The death of the heirless Spanish Habsburg king, Charles II, created a vacuum on the Spanish throne and the threat of the union of the French Bourbon and Spanish thrones became clear. As a result, the major European powers, headed by Habsburg Austria which was most threatened by this development, allied against a hegemonic France to maintain the balance of power.<sup>9</sup>

The War of Austrian Succession (1740-8) followed a similar pattern. Taking advantage of the death of Austrian Habsburg emperor Charles VI, whose only heirs were women and unable to take the throne, the upstart Prussian state, an emerging power on the great power stage, banded together with France, Spain and Bavaria, among others. Despite previously agreeing to the Pragmatic Sanction that would have allowed Maria Theresa to rule, these states contested her right to the Habsburg throne to combat the hegemony of the Austrian Habsburgs over Europe

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<sup>8</sup> Franz Szabo, *The Seven Years' War in Europe, 1756-1763* (Harlow, England: Pearson/Longman, 2008), 2.

<sup>9</sup> In the words of McKay and Scott: "The windfall of Charles II's will seemed to have put France on the road to hegemony and universal monarchy. The danger from France to the other powers was now much more serious than before, when Louis had been striving for fairly limited territorial gains round France's borders." Derek McKay and H.M. Scott, *The Rise of the Great Powers, 1648-1815* (London: Longman, 1983), 57.

and the German states. “In fact,” explain McKay and Scott, “no better opportunity to destroy the Habsburgs completely had ever presented itself.”<sup>10</sup>

These authors present the Seven Years’ War as another of these hegemonic wars. However, a problem this argument faces is the identification of the hegemon in the Seven Years’ War. Hegemonic status in the Seven Years’ War was not clear-cut as it had been during the previous conflicts. In the War of Spanish Succession, the ascension of a Bourbon king to the Spanish throne would have marked France as the hegemon in Europe. Thus, the war broke out in anticipation of this development. In the War of Austrian Succession, the rise of Prussia challenged Austria’s hegemony over the German states and therefore a substantial area of the European continent. However, in the Seven Years’ War, it is difficult to identify a clear hegemon. In North America, France and Britain were deadlocked as far as dominance over the region was concerned. In Europe, Prussia’s successful acquisition of Silesia from the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle ensured that Austria was no longer the hegemon on the continent but did not grant Prussia hegemonic status either.<sup>11</sup> To overcome this deficiency in the hegemonic war argument, some scholars bring in other systemic variables to explain why these states went to war in 1756. They argue for the causal weight of alliance systems and international rivalries. Though these two variables are independent of one another, they can be viewed complementarily in discussions of the outbreak of the Seven Years’ War.

One of these more compelling explanations in the historical literature argues for the importance of shifting alliances within a balanced power system. Alliances are central to the balance of power theory in that states balance externally by forming alliances. However, some

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<sup>10</sup> McKay and Scott, *Rise of Great Powers*, 165.

<sup>11</sup> For more on the contemporary sentiment that the Seven Years’ War would “render the final verdict” on the subject, see Szabo, *Seven Years’ War in Europe*, 10.

international relations theorists argue that alliances are not only a tool to be used against an aggressor, but that alliances can also increase the probability of war by playing into conflict spirals.<sup>12</sup>

In his discussion of the Diplomatic Revolution of 1756, William Doyle explains the “complete realignment of the diplomatic constellation” that accelerated an arms race between Austria, Prussia and Russia.<sup>13</sup> The traditional rivalry between the French Bourbon royal house and the Austrian Habsburg royal house arranged the alliance structure such that Britain and Austria formed one side and Prussia, France and Spain formed the other. This had been the case during the War of Austrian Succession. The royal houses of the Bourbons and Habsburgs were widely considered at the time to be irreconcilable, but when Austria tired of Britain as an ally and Prussia’s attitude towards Britain left France feeling snubbed, the two came together as allies.<sup>14</sup> The Diplomatic Revolution of 1756 changed these traditional alliances such that Prussia found itself allied with Britain while France, Austria and Russia joined as allies. This allowed Austria and Russia to focus on oncoming offensive action against Prussia and vis-versa, thus worsening the conflict spiral on the European continent.<sup>15</sup>

In light of the underlying anti-Prussian sentiment in Austrian diplomacy with France and the conflict in North America that fueled Britain and France’s rivalry above that between the Habsburgs and the Bourbons, the theory that shifting alliances led to the Seven Years’ War provides what H.M. Scott refers to as a “superficially attractive” conclusion.<sup>16</sup> Though the rapprochement between Austria and France may have increased the likelihood of war in Europe

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<sup>12</sup> Levy and Thompson, *Causes of War*, 40-41.

<sup>13</sup> William Doyle, ed, *Old Regime France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 213.

<sup>14</sup> Doyle, *Old Regime France*, 213.

<sup>15</sup> Szabo, *Seven Years’ War in Europe*, 15, 17, 19.

<sup>16</sup> H.M. Scott, *The Birth of a Great Power System, 1740-1815* (Harlow, England: Pearson/Longman, 2006), 93.

and served as the basis of the anti-Prussia coalition evident in 1756, Scott argues, it did not make war inevitable.<sup>17</sup> In his words, “the Diplomatic Revolution had been driven forward by war,” instead of the other way around.<sup>18</sup> According to this argument, therefore, the shift in alliances did not lead to the outbreak of the Seven Years’ War. This reflects the disagreement over the causal weight of alliances in the world of international relations theory.<sup>19</sup> As such, other variables are needed to explain what transforms alliance-inducing tension into war.

The second of the more compelling systemic explanations allows scholars to examine the outbreak of war based on international rivalry.<sup>20</sup> International rivalry as a cause of war does not, like many other theories, assume that all states have the same propensity to go to war, all other things being equal.<sup>21</sup> Instead, this theory reveals how a history of conflict affects the likelihood of war between two states, independent of the balance of power and alliances. If two states have conflicted with each other before, the probability that they will do so again is higher. This probability increases with the number of disputes or crises that have occurred between these two states.<sup>22</sup> This theory can be seen in the historical literature of the Seven Years’ War that focuses on the impact of international rivalries. This argument relies on the rivalries between France and Britain over hegemony in North America and between Prussia and Austria over hegemony in the German states.

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<sup>17</sup> Scott, *Birth of a Great Power System*, 92-93.

<sup>18</sup> Scott, *Birth of a Great Power System*, 92.

<sup>19</sup> For exploration of how other conditions lead to both alliance formation and war, leaving alliances with little causal weight, see Levy and Thompson, *Causes of War*, 41.

<sup>20</sup> Levy and Thompson discuss rivalries on the dyadic interaction level that they introduce in *Causes of War*. Due to the systemic nature of this level, however, I have chosen to replace dyadic interactions under the umbrella of the systemic level.

<sup>21</sup> Levy and Thompson, *Causes of War*, 56.

<sup>22</sup> Levy and Thompson, *Causes of War*, 58.

In the first case, during each of the previous 18<sup>th</sup> century wars, France and Britain's European conflict had spilled over onto the North American continent. Each tried to dominate North America at the expense of the other and ensure the security of their trade and their North American colonies. "Anglo-French rivalry remained," write McKay and Scott, "and was apparent to all after 1748, and it was to trigger off the actual renewal of war between the powers [in 1756]."23

In the second case, as discussed by Palmer and Colton, Prussia and Austria dueled for dominance over the German states, a role traditionally filled by Austria as the Habsburg family had claimed the title of Holy Roman Emperor for many generations. The Prussian seizure of Silesia in the War of Austrian Succession would be the first event in a long line that would create the trend known to German historians as the *Deutcher Dualismus*, which would continue until the issue was settled once and for all by the unification of Germany in 1871 under Prussian leadership.

Again, however, increasing the probability of war does not make war inevitable; the international rivalries argument fails to explain the events that triggered the outbreak of violence. The British-French and Prussian-Austrian rivalries were fully in swing during this time period. The North American continent was in as much contention as it had ever been. Yet, both Britain and France leaned towards maintaining peace for the time being.<sup>24</sup> Silesia, still in Prussia's possession, was a sore spot for Austria's empress and advisors, as it had been since the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle had allowed Frederick to keep his prize. Though it is very helpful in explaining

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<sup>23</sup> McKay and Scott, *Rise of Great Powers*, 178.

<sup>24</sup> McKay and Scott, *Rise of Great Powers*, 178. Recovering from previous warfare and domestic problems were of more concern to the French government. The sentiment that war disrupted trade was influential in the British parliament and military spending was cut to keep land taxes low.

why tensions were high during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, this theory is unable to explain why the Seven Years' War broke out when and how it did in 1756. Other factors are required to account for why these rivalries turned to full-scale war instead of peaceful negotiations. Many historians recognize the shortcomings of systemic factors in explaining the Seven Years' War and look to the impact of the individual.

### **Individual Level Factors**

Contrary to the systemic level international relations theories of war that focus on the relations between states and their interests, those that focus on the individual level lend more emphasis to the way in which states make decisions and therefore on the individuals who make these decisions. These theories break away from the assumption that individual leaders simply choose the foreign policy that falls most in line with the state's national interest and pay closer attention to the internal processes that result in decisions. According to the individual level of foreign policy analysis, the ways in which individuals perceive their world impact the decisions they make and thus the policy that is implemented.<sup>25</sup> This category of thought also implies that had a different individual been in power, the actions taken by the state would have been different.<sup>26</sup> As a result, many of these theories analyze individuals' psychology to determine how individuals' unique preferences or perceptions impact foreign policy.

In their article, "Let Us Now Praise Great Men: Bringing the Statesman Back In", Byman and Pollack argue "that the goals, abilities, and foibles of individuals are crucial to the intentions,

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<sup>25</sup> Levy and Thompson, *Causes of War*, 128.

<sup>26</sup> Levy and Thompson, *Causes of War*, 133.)

capabilities, and strategies of a state.”<sup>27</sup> Some historians also argue that the cause of the outbreak of the Seven Years’ War can be found in the personalities and motivations of key leaders. The historical literature that focuses on individual leaders in the Seven Years’ War focuses on the personal goals and foibles of the main figures of the war, namely the Empress of Austria, the King of Prussia and the Tsarina of Russia. Three main individual idiosyncrasies emerge from the literature: vengeance, militarism and honor.

The desire for revenge as the key motivation and instigator of the Seven Years’ War is the first of these idiosyncrasies found in the historical literature. This argument focuses primarily on the Empress of Austria, Maria Theresa, and how her desire for revenge on Frederick II of Prussia led to Austria’s aggressive policies, including the build up of arms and a loss of patience with its traditional British ally. Schumann and Schweizer argue further that the Austrian empress’ drive for revenge instigated Frederick’s invasion of Saxony and the outbreak of the war in Europe; “[w]ith the help from ambitious and talented officials in her cabinet, the State Conference, [Maria Theresa] resolved to bend the international system of Europe to her will, rather than accept the loss of her Silesian domains and the corresponding diminution of her Imperial dignity.”<sup>28</sup>

After the War of Austrian Succession, which erupted following a coalition of powers breaking the previously agreed upon Pragmatic Sanction that would have allowed for a woman to take the Habsburg throne uncontested, Frederick’s Prussia managed to hold onto the rich, previously-Habsburg territory of Silesia through the peace negotiations. Characterized as a determined, strong-willed woman in a unique situation by virtue of her sex, Maria Theresa

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<sup>27</sup> Daniel Byman and Kenneth M. Pollack, “Let Us Now Praise Great Men: Bringing the Statesman Back In,” *International Security* 25, no. 4 (Spring, 2001): 109.

<sup>28</sup> Matt Schumann and Karl W. Schweizer, *The Seven Years’ War: a Transatlantic History* (London: Routledge, 2008), 6.

perceived her world differently as a result of her desire to retrieve her lost province and exact revenge on Frederick who had challenged her right to rule. According to this argument, therefore, this individual idiosyncrasy impacted the judgment of Austria's leader and led the state to push for war against Prussia and, thus, the outbreak of the Seven Years' War.

Similar scholars identify a second idiosyncrasy in the aggressive and militaristic character of the Prussian king as the main reason for the outbreak of the Seven Years' War. In this area of the literature, Frederick is cast as an inherently militaristic and aggressive warmonger, whose presence made it impossible for Europe to stay at peace. Butterfield writes of one such scholar, Max Lehman, "who agreed that there had been a conspiracy against Frederick, but tended to make light of it, while asserting that Frederick used it as an excuse for an aggressive policy of his own."<sup>29</sup> According to this argument, it was not paranoia based on international factors such as an arms' race or shifting alliances that led Frederick's Prussia to war, but Frederick's own aggressive character that formed not only his perceptions but also the actions of the Prussian state.

Finally, a third idiosyncrasy that emerges in this section of the literature is the question of honor. According to this literature, Elizabeth I of Russia saw herself as bound by honor to pursue aggressive policies against Prussia. As the heir of Peter the Great, Elizabeth felt that it was necessary to prove herself worthy of his legacy and her authority.<sup>30</sup> Since Elizabeth herself set the Russian War Conference's goals, this personal attachment to Russia's success motivated her

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<sup>29</sup> Herbert Butterfield, "The Reconstruction of an Historical Episode: The History of the Enquiry into the Origins of the Seven Years' War," in *Man on His Past: the Study of the History of Historical Scholarship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), 153.

<sup>30</sup> Kaplan describes Elizabeth's precarious situation: "If Elizabeth could deliver a blow to Brandenburg-Prussia as her father had done earlier to Sweden, she could then stand proudly as his daughter. To achieve this end she was willing to go to war." Herbert H. Kaplan, *Russia and the Outbreak of the Seven Years' War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 4.

desire to attack Prussia and curtail its rise to power. In turn, this motivated Russia's aggressive policies prior to the war and resulted in the outbreak of the Seven Years' War.

Though very useful in determining decision-making processes to explain how and why the war occurred when it did, arguments for the impact of personality do not explain how these personal idiosyncrasies influence their states' governments. Therefore, it is necessary to translate the individual's decisions into state action. This process is done through the state's domestic institutional structure. As Levi and Thompson explain in their discussion of the individual level, individuals with similar personality traits may impact their states' actions differently according to differences in the domestic institutional structures within which they operate. For instance, a highly centralized government may allow the individual's decisions to have more casual weight than a liberal democracy might.<sup>31</sup>

Thus, in order to explain the origins of the Seven Years' War through individual level arguments, it is necessary to extend each case by examining how the effect each personal idiosyncrasy and related policy preference was shaped by domestic institutional factors. As absolutist governments governed all of the major players of the Seven Years' War, it is easy to overlook the connection between a leader's personal motive and the state's institutions. That said, domestic institutional structure can play a significant permissive role in translating individual decision into state action. "Of course," write Byman and Pollack, "individuals matter more under certain circumstances. Individual personalities take on more significance when power is concentrated in the hands of a leader..." This variation in significance is key to the theory I will be applying to the case of the Seven Years' War.

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<sup>31</sup> Levy and Thompson, *Causes of War*, 134.

## DOMESTIC INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE AND DECISION-MAKING

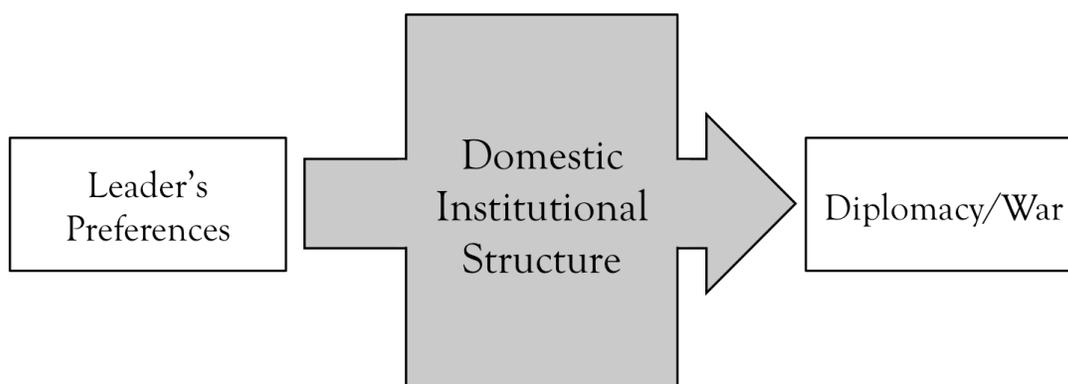
Does the individual leader holding the reins of power truly direct those reins or are they simply along for the ride? I argue that the individual leader does indeed direct their state's actions, but that the level of this direction is moderated by the state's domestic institutional structure. In other words, the domestic institutional structure determines the level of influence held over state action by the individual leader.

When interacting with other states to achieve an aim, a leader has two options: they may seek to achieve their goal through war or peaceful negotiations.<sup>32</sup> This combination of preferred outcome - the achievement of their aim - and willingness to go to war make up the leader's preferences. Thus, the leader decides to pursue either war or peaceful negotiations to achieve their aim. However, it is important to note that individuals do not wage war; war is a violent conflict waged between states. Therefore, the individual preference must be translated into state action. The level to which state action reflects the leader's preference is determined by the domestic institutional structure. If the domestic institutional structure is permissive, or allows the leader's preferences to influence the state's action, state action will reflect the leader's preference. If the domestic institutional structure is restrictive, or does not allow the leader's preferences to influence the state's action, state action may differ from the wishes of the leader.

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<sup>32</sup> War is here defined as, in the words of Levy and Thompson, "sustained, coordinated violence between political organizations." Levy and Thompson, *Causes of War*, 5. Peaceful negotiations are here defined as discussion between political organizations to resolve a conflict through non-violent means.

Graphically, this model can be depicted as:



### Operationalizing the Variables

The independent variable in my model is the leader's preference for war or peaceful negotiations. This variable is determined by identifying the aims of the leader and their willingness to go to war. Jeffrey Frieden explains preferences in that "an actor prefers some outcomes to others and pursues a strategy to achieve its most preferred possible outcome. [...] An actor's preferences rank the outcomes possible in a given environment. The actor's strategy is its attempt to come as close as possible to the outcome it most prefers."<sup>33</sup> In observing leaders to determine their preferences, therefore, it is necessary to determine their aims and the strategy by which they accomplish them.

The dependent variable in my model is the state's action—either a willingness to go to war or pursue peaceful negotiations. This variable is determined by examining the historical record before the war began.

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<sup>33</sup> Jeffrey Frieden, "Actors and Preferences in International Relations," in *Strategic Choice and International Relations*, ed. David A. Lake and Robert Powell (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 41.

The intervening variable in my model is the domestic institutional structure. This variable is operationalized as the freedom of action of the key decision maker. In other words, to what extent is the key decision maker able to dictate state policy? This is observable in the formal and informal checks on the key decision maker's power. The domestic institutional structure is a permissive condition in that it may either permit or restrict the key decision maker's freedom of action.

Formal checks may take the form of legislative or advisory bodies, such as a parliament, ministry or cabinet. These bodies may restrict the key decision maker's freedom of action through a variety of means, including approving the use of treasury funds or approving the passage of laws and policies. It may therefore be necessary for the key decision maker to receive the body's support in order to influence state action and, as a result, modify their proposals in order to facilitate support. These bodies can also report information to the key decision maker and thereby influence his or her preferences indirectly. In addition to whether these bodies are present in the structure of the state's government, their effectiveness in restricting the key decision maker's freedom of action must also be considered. A formal check may be ineffective if the body holds no actual authority and exists in name only.

Informal checks may take the form of the key decision maker's need to consider public opinion, reliance on the nobility or court elite, reliance on non-state-controlled monetary resources such as lines of credit, etc.

The implication of this argument is that leaders' preferences should influence the actions taken by their states and that this influence should vary depending on the countries' domestic institutional structures. The greater the level of autocracy within the domestic institutional structure, the more influence individual preferences should have on state action. The most

autocratic state should demonstrate the highest correspondence with the leader's stance and the action taken by the state. The least autocratic state should lead to individual preferences having less influence on state policy. Accordingly, other states should fall in line between these two extremes depending on their level of autocracy.

In the case of the Seven Years' War, I will conduct a structured-focus comparison of Prussia and Britain, two of the five major powers involved in the war. These cases are ideal for such an analysis because, though they are similar in many ways, they vary the most in regards to the freedom of action of the executive. For instance, Britain and Prussia had a history of rivalry with two of their opposing powers and shared similar goals on the European continent. However, their domestic institutional structures and the effect they had on the role of the individual were very different. In the case of Prussia, Frederick's government was so close to true absolutism that his personal motivations almost perfectly translated into state action. The domestic institutional structure in Britain was less centralized and therefore more restrictive in regards to the influence of leader's preferences. The chart below summarizes the relevant variables of each state.

| <i>Case</i> | <i>Domestic Variable</i> | <i>Leader's Preference</i> | <i>Outcome</i>      |
|-------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|
| PRUSSIA     | Permissive               | War                        | Reject<br>Diplomacy |
| BRITAIN     | Less<br>Permissive       | Diplomacy                  | Reject<br>Diplomacy |

This thesis does not hypothesize that more autocratic states are more likely to reject diplomacy. Though it may be the case that a more autocratic state may choose to reject diplomacy, this is the result of the individual leader's preferences and not inherent of the

domestic institution. It is also possible for a less autocratic state to still reject peaceful negotiations as a viable option of state policy. The focus of this thesis is the process by which state action is decided. In the case of a very autocratic state, the outcome of state policy is heavily influenced by a single opinion, usually that of the political leader. In the case of a less autocratic state, the outcome of state policy is often a compromise among many individual opinions, each of which contributes to state policy to the extent delineated by the domestic institutional structure.

## **DOMESTIC INSTITUTIONS AND THE SEVEN YEARS' WAR**

The literature dedicated to the North American sphere of the Seven Years' War has paid some attention to the domestic institutional structures of Britain and France and their colonial governments, unlike the structures of Prussia, Austria and Russia, which as we have seen, are too often oversimplified. According to this section of the literature, the clash between French and British colonists over the Ohio River Valley led to the eruption of war between France and Britain. However, the argument does not extend to the wider conflict or the European sphere. This is potentially because British and French governance of their colonies changed notably during the war.

Prior to the Seven Years' War, conflict in North America between the French and English colonies was predominantly in response to conflict in Europe. The Wars of Spanish Succession and Austrian Succession, for example, were also fought in the colonies under the names of Queen's Anne's War and King George's War (along with the War of Jenkin's War and the First Carnatic War in India). These wars were predominantly leakage from the European

continent. The colonies fought each other due to the already existing conflict between their metropolises. This came to be coined by some historians as the Doctrine of Two Spheres, an unofficial agreement between France and Britain in which their European conflicts may spill into the colonies but never the other way around.

The Seven Years' War, however, went against this established tradition. The conflict between Britain and France began in North America before the conflict in Europe and contributed to the rising tension between Britain and France. Even leaders like Frederick acknowledged that the conflict had begun in North America, not in Europe, despite having no attachment to the North American continent.<sup>34</sup> This changed the relationship between London, Paris and their colonies, and this change had a great impact on developments after the Seven Years' War, including the American Revolution, which has generally received more scholarly attention and to which the Seven Years' War is often cast as a mere backdrop.<sup>35</sup>

My analysis of the domestic institutions of the major powers of the Seven Years' War will differ from previous analyses. First, it will include not only the domestic institutions at work in the North American sphere of the conflict, but also those at work in the European sphere. Domestic institutions in the European sphere have been largely overlooked. This is most likely because of the highly autocratic nature of governance among the European powers. As a result, it is easy to collapse domestic institutions under the category of their respective individual leaders, as we have seen in the existing individual-level arguments in the literature. These institutions, however, played an important role in deciding the level of influence their leaders and their preferences had on state action. Despite all being autocratic governments, the nuances that separated the great powers had considerable impact on the process by which the war began.

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<sup>34</sup> Theodor Schieder, *Frederick the Great* (London: Longman, 2000), 116-7.

<sup>35</sup> Anderson, *Crucible of War*, xvii.

Second, my theory uses the variable of domestic institutional structure as an intervening variable. Domestic institutional structure alone is insufficient in explaining the outbreak of the war. Similarly, a leader's preferences alone are insufficient to explain state action. Together, preferences moderated by domestic institutions can explain the actions of the major states that led to the outbreak of the Seven Years' War.

## PRUSSIA

In *L'Anti-Machiavel*, an essay first published shortly after Frederick II's ascension to the throne, Frederick describes three types of war that he finds to be justified: "There are defensive wars, and these are without objection the most just. There are wars of interest, that kings are obliged to make, to uphold their rights that are being questioned; they plead with weapons in hand and the battles decide the validity of their reasons. There are wars of precaution that princes are wise to undertake. They are offensive in truth, but they are no less just."<sup>36</sup> In the last of these examples, the monarch is justified, in Frederick's opinion, to go to war preemptively in order to not lose the advantage of starting on their own terms, should they discover that their enemies are conspiring to undergo military action against them.<sup>37</sup> Less than two decades later, Frederick would find himself in the position to make such a decision: to preemptively strike against the

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<sup>36</sup> Translated from original French: "Il y a des guerres défensives, & ce sont sans contredit les plus justes. Il y a des guerres d'intérêt, que les Rois sont obligez de faire, pour maintenir eux-mêmes les droits qu'on leur conteste; ils plaident les armes à la main, & les combats décident de la validité de leurs raisons. Il y a des guerres de précaution, que les Prince sont sagement d'entreprendre. Elles sont offensives à la vérité, mais elles n'en sont pas moins justes." Frederick II, *L'Anti-Machiavel, ou Essai de Critique sur le Prince de Machiavel* (Amsterdam, 1740), 383-4.

<sup>37</sup> Christopher Clark, *Iron Kingdom: The Rise and Downfall of Prussia, 1600-1947* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), 199.

anti-Prussian conspiracy he saw forming around him, a decision that would translate nearly directly into the Prussian invasion of Saxony in 1756.<sup>38</sup>

The question at hand in this case study is not whether Prussia's preemptive invasion was justified or why Frederick wanted war, but rather to examine how Frederick's individual willingness to go to war translated into the Prussian state's decision to go to war in 1756. How did the preference for war of a single individual, modified by domestic institutional structure, impact Prussian state action?

To answer this question, first, I will examine the leader's preference. For this, I will be focusing on the preferences of Frederick II, King of Prussia, his aims and his willingness to go to war.<sup>39</sup> Next, I will analyze Prussia's domestic institutional structure, examining the formal and informal checks on the freedom of action of the executive, in order to determine how permissive this variable was in allowing individual preferences to impact the state's action. Finally, I will outline how this contributed to the outcome. In the end, the permissive nature of the Prussian domestic institutional structure would allow Frederick's preference for war to push Prussia into war in 1756.

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<sup>38</sup> There is debate in the historical literature about why Frederick wanted war in 1756. Some attribute it to a particularly war-mongering personality while others attribute it to his paranoia. Frederick himself attempted to justify his actions in his memoir after the Seven Years' War by placing the blame on others, namely the Empress of Austria, and citing that he had no choice but war. This thesis does not seek to answer why Frederick wanted war, but instead how his decision to go to war was translated into Prussia's invasion of Saxony in 1756. For more on this debate: Butterfield, "Reconstruction of an Historical Episode," 143-4, 153.

<sup>39</sup> In the Prussian case, I have selected to focus on Frederick for the individual preference variable because of the level of involvement he had in Prussian foreign policy in 1756. In addition to being commander in chief of the army, Frederick also personally oversaw all communication to Prussian agents abroad. In this way, his preferences were reflected in both diplomatic and militaristic endeavors.

## Leader's Preferences

Jeffrey Frieden defines an actor's preferences as "the way it orders the possible outcomes of an interaction."<sup>40</sup> Actors then select the strategies that are most likely to achieve these outcomes, or aims. For the leaders of this case study, the most preferable of these strategies, that is peaceful negotiation or war, is the one that achieves their aims. For example, in 1756, Frederick's aims for Prussia included achieving great power status, defending the Silesian territory conquered in the War of Austrian Succession, and ensuring Prussia's survival. The available strategies to achieve these aims were the pursuit of peaceful negotiations or the initiation of conflict. Frederick was willing to go to war.

When Frederick came to power, Prussia was far from a great power, but Frederick saw a potential for its rise. In 1740, when Frederick ascended the throne, Prussia was "a kingdom in name, but an electorate in fact."<sup>41</sup> In other words, though Prussia held the title of kingdom, which elevated it above the status of the other states in the Holy Roman Empire, it did not exert more authority than the other electorates, ruled by prince-electors who deferred to the Holy Roman Emperor.<sup>42</sup> Though the most populous German territory after the Habsburg empire and one of

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<sup>40</sup> Frieden, "Actors and Preferences," 42.

<sup>41</sup> Philip Dwyer, *The Rise of Prussia, 1700-1830* (Harlow, England: Longman, 2000), 153.

<sup>42</sup> With the exception of Bohemia, the states of the Holy Roman Empire were not legally allowed to be kingdoms as they were under the overarching authority of the Emperor. These electorates were thus named because their rulers, the prince-electors, cast their votes on who would have the position of Holy Roman Emperor. Brandenburg-Prussia was an odd case in which the state was a personal union between the Margraviate of Brandenburg and the Duchy of Prussia (i.e. Brandenburg-Prussia). In 1701, Frederick I made use of both favors earned through Prussia's military prowess in the War of Spanish Succession and the loophole that the territory known as Prussia, unlike Brandenburg, was not geographically within the confines of the Holy Roman Empire to advance his position. Thus, the Elector of Brandenburg and Duke of Prussia became the King in Prussia. Though this technically would have placed Prussia above its fellow German

the more powerful states in the Holy Roman Empire, Prussia was a second-rank power at best, only playing a significant role within the Holy Roman Empire and not Europe at large. As far as potential for great power status, Prussia lacked both demographic and economic resources, as well as a unified territory. When the great powers of Europe in 1740 boasted such population figures as 25 million inhabitants in France, 23 million in Russia and 14 million in the Habsburg empire, Prussia's population was around 2.25 million, which paled in comparison. Likewise, Prussia was hampered by a largely rural economy, poor soil and a harsh climate. Lastly, its territorial holdings were scattered across northern Europe, from the Rhineland to East Prussia. Though this was a problem faced by many of the great powers of Europe, it only served to heighten the problem of Prussia's lack of resources. The few assets Prussia did have upon Frederick's ascension were its army and its coffers, both of which Frederick's predecessor, Frederick William, took immense care to strengthen and expand.<sup>4344</sup>

The many obstacles Prussia faced did not dissuade Frederick from the desire to achieve great power status. In his words, "I intend to either assert my [great] power status or see everything go to ruins so that the very name of Prussia will be buried with me."<sup>45</sup> By 1756, he had demonstrated his resolve and ambition in this matter before—during the War of Austrian Succession.

Another of Frederick's aims was to retain Silesia, the rich territory he had conquered from the Habsburg empire in the previous war. Retaining Silesia would boost not only Prussia's

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states, this distinction meant very little in reality for Prussia's international authority. Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 67-77.

<sup>43</sup> Dwyer, *Rise of Prussia*, 153-156.

<sup>44</sup> Schieder writes, "Mirabeau is deemed to have coined the *bon mot* that 'Prussia was not a state, but simply the territory on which the Prussian army subsisted.'" Schieder, *Frederick the Great*, 43.

<sup>45</sup> Szabo, *Seven Years' War in Europe*, 4.

international reputation, but also its economy. After the acquisition of Silesia, Prussia gained a reputation as a force to be reckoned with both militarily and politically. By toppling the hegemony of the Habsburg empire, Frederick had proven his state a candidate for great power status, but in order to become a full member of Europe's elite, Prussia would have to continue to demonstrate its power.<sup>46</sup> In addition, Silesia was a great source of revenue for resource-deprived Prussia. For instance, Frederick managed to support his entire large army for a year solely on Silesian revenues.<sup>47</sup> Frederick was ready to risk war with the Austrian empress and her empire to retain Prussian Silesia.

As tensions rose across the continent, Frederick became aware that Austria, France and Russia were maneuvering to balance against Prussia, leading to the third of his aims: to check the alliances and arms that were being gathered against his state.<sup>48</sup> This goal was Frederick's main concern. It most directly affected his decision to go to war in August of 1756 and was also his first defense of his actions in September when his invasion of Saxony outraged the courts of Europe.<sup>49</sup> Russia and Austria had renewed their alliance as early as 1746 and the fear that Vienna and Moscow were plotting together against Prussia haunted Frederick. When negotiating the

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<sup>46</sup> Schieder describes Frederick's situation: "He was defending not only Silesia, but also his right to be a member of the charmed circle of great powers." Schieder, *Frederick the Great*, 123.

<sup>47</sup> Szabo, *Seven Years' War in Europe*, 24.

<sup>48</sup> There has been debate over the legitimacy of Frederick's concern about Austria and Russia working together against Prussia. Some scholars claim that Frederick was paranoid of anti-Prussian conspiracy. Historical evidence of some kind of conspiracy against Prussia emerged in 1870, with the publication of Austrian documents that implicated Austria and France in maneuvering against Prussia. "[From 1870 onwards,] it was impossible for any serious historian to question the existence of a conspiracy to make war on the Prussian king sooner or later." Butterfield, "Reconstruction of an Historical Episode," 152.

The 1912 publication of Russian documents similarly reinforced that Russia was also involved in this alliance. Thus, Frederick's aim to check the power being gathered against him was not paranoia, but a correct perception of international politics at the time. Butterfield, "Reconstruction of an Historical Episode," 143, 157-8.

<sup>49</sup> Butterfield, "Reconstruction of an Historical Episode," 143.

Convention of Westminster with the British, Frederick repeatedly required assurances about Russia's intentions.<sup>50</sup> He was similarly suspicious of Austria. If Frederick was ever even to attain great power status for Prussia and retain Silesia, Frederick needed to protect his state and the monarchy. As such, Prussia's survival was of utmost importance to Frederick.

Having identified Frederick's aims for Prussia, one must next determine whether Frederick was willing to initiate a conflict that could escalate to war to achieve these aims. One of Prussia's only true advantages lay in its military force, and war had proven fruitful before for Frederick's Prussia. Through military action, Prussia had acquired international prestige and a resource-rich territory. Philosophically, Frederick was not opposed to war, finding instances of it to be morally justified, but he also saw it as an effective tool of foreign policy. In 1755, he wrote in one of his essays that one should only enter into war if there was a good chance conquest. In other writings, he wrote of ideal examples of such conquest, citing Saxony as the most useful for its geographic location. "Frederick's determination at that moment [in July 1756] to go to war," writes Schieder, "was unshakable and no amount of argument could persuade him to abort his plans."<sup>51</sup> By 1756, Frederick was willing to go to war to achieve his aims.

### **Domestic Institutional Structure**

War is "sustained, coordinated violence between political organizations," but states, not individuals, wage war.<sup>52</sup> Therefore, the next step in an in-depth analysis of the Prussian case is to

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<sup>50</sup> Butterfield, "Reconstruction of an Historical Episode," 156.

<sup>51</sup> Schieder, *Frederick the Great*, 122.

<sup>52</sup> Levy and Thompson, *Causes of War*, 5-6.

analyze how the leaders' preferences are translated into state action. This is done by analyzing the domestic institutional structure.

The government within which Frederick operated was monarchical and absolutist. Though the domestic institutional structures of the major powers in Europe in 1756 seem quite similar at first glance, the difference between Prussia and Britain's institutions vastly altered the ability of their leaders to execute their preferred strategy to achieve their desired outcome.

In the case of Prussia, its domestic institutional structure was so near to that of a true autocracy that one scholar remarks that "the government departments of the central administration [...] were less ministries in any modern sense of the word and more secretariats to carry out the king's will."<sup>53</sup> This situation existed despite the fact that many formal checks were in place in Prussia's government to limit the freedom of action of the executive. A cabinet of ministers called the Kabinettsministerium, or simply the Kabinet, served as an advisory body to the king, shared responsibility over foreign policy with the king and handled all important negotiations.<sup>54</sup> This body should have served as a formidable formal check on the executive's influence. However, Frederick's government and the way Frederick himself wielded his authority meant that this Kabinet's responsibilities and powers over state action existed in name only during his reign. Similarly, informal checks on the king's influence, notably the *esprit de corps* instilled in the Prussian nobility and the supremacy of military discipline, were also permissive in allowing Frederick's preferences to translate directly into state action.

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<sup>53</sup> Szabo, *Seven Years' War in Europe*, 23.

<sup>54</sup> Scott, "Prussia's Royal Foreign Minister," 503.

### *Formal Checks*

Frederick launched administrative reforms following his ascension, but few changes were made to the formal structure of Prussia's government.<sup>55</sup> While the institutional structure and administrative agencies were largely left unchanged, however, the king severely curtailed their roles and authority. The significance and swiftness of this change can be seen in the difference in the writings of Frederick William, Frederick's father and predecessor, and Frederick himself.

Under Frederick William, the ministers of the Kabinet held considerable power over the state's decision-making process. The king sought their advice before any important decisions. In 1722, Frederick William wrote:

“I beg my successor to take no decision in the affairs of state without first considering everything fully with your Ministers for Foreign Affairs. If you spend a year listening to your Ministers speak and report on affairs, you will soon learn and understand the subject and where your own interests lie.”<sup>56</sup>

Under Frederick, this relationship between monarch and ministry changed dramatically. When he came to power, Frederick expressed his opinion on his reign clearly to one of his father's esteemed advisors: “...I have become king; my intention is to discharge the functions [of this position] and to be the sole person to have authority.”<sup>57</sup> Where previously the king's decisions were heavily influenced by advice from ministers, all state decisions were now made directly by Frederick. The responsibilities of the ministers of the Kabinet had effectively been

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<sup>55</sup> Frederick abolished torture, a symbol of his dedication to imparting Enlightenment values into the Prussian government. He also created a fifth department of the General Directory in charge of trade and commercial development. Scott, “Prussia's Royal Foreign Minister,” 501.

<sup>56</sup> Scott, “Prussia's Royal Foreign Minister,” 510.

<sup>57</sup> Translated from original French: “...je suis devenu roi; mon intention est d'en faire les fonctions et d'être le seul qui ait autorité.” Ernest Lavissee, *Le Grand Frédéric avant l'avènement* (Paris, 1893), 281.

reduced to minor domestic issues and the day-to-day communication of Frederick's instructions to foreign diplomats.<sup>58</sup> Though their titles had not changed, with Frederick's ascension, their role had been relegated to that of glorified royal messengers.

Two major changes implemented by Frederick reduced the formal checks on the executive's freedom of action: the use of French as the language of political correspondence within the Prussian government and the direct correspondence between Frederick and Prussian agents abroad. Because the Prussian monarch was more at ease with French than he was with German, the use of French for all political correspondence allowed Frederick more personal control over diplomacy and made it easier for him to write his own decrees.<sup>59</sup> In addition to the use of French, Frederick also centralized his authority over foreign policy by requiring all communication go through himself and his team of secretaries who traveled with him — rather than through his ministers in Berlin. By monopolizing the collection of information from Prussian agents abroad, Frederick frequently left his ministers in the dark, to the point where some speculated that his chief secretary was more informed than any of the members of the Kabinet.<sup>60</sup> As a result of these changes, the ministers were stripped of their authority over domestic and diplomatic communication and thus their authority as a formal check on Frederick's freedom of action.

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<sup>58</sup> Scott, "Prussia's Royal Foreign Minister," 508.

<sup>59</sup> This change in language is also notable in that the use of French reflects Frederick's desire for great power status. In using French, Frederick's Prussia adopted the widely accepted language of international diplomacy for its domestic communication. Scott, "Prussia's Royal Foreign Minister," 511.

<sup>60</sup> Scott, "Prussia's Royal Foreign Minister," 512-4.

### *Informal Checks*

The formal structure of the Prussian government failed to restrain the king's influence over state action, and the informal checks were similarly permissive. One such informal check was a strong service ethic, *esprit de corps*, which was instilled in the nobility during Frederick William and Frederick's reigns. The *esprit de corps* made interference from the military elite unlikely. In this way, Frederick was able to act with little regard for the opinions of not only his political advisors but also the nobility that could have otherwise objected to his decisions.

Under Frederick and his predecessor, the nobility served as a core of military strength rather than political power. In many other European courts, the nobility formed an informal check on the monarch's freedom of action by imposing their preferences on the monarch through their political weight; this was not the case in Prussia. The nobility made up the majority of the officer corps and commanded the military. As such, they answered to the state and thus to the king.<sup>61</sup> For Frederick, military discipline was achieved by instilling a strong *esprit de corps* and the importance of ambition in the officer corps. Ambition and glory through military achievements replaced virtue as the center of the nobility's code of conduct.<sup>62</sup> Military service became the career of choice for young noblemen rather than more traditional pursuits, such as ecclesiastical careers. Cadet schools furthered the military as a *métier d'honneur* and imparted a sense of duty to their graduates. Thus, the nobility were bound to the King of Prussia and his decisions through their military service and their honor.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Schieder, *Frederick the Great*, 43-44.

<sup>62</sup> Schieder, *Frederick the Great*, 45.

<sup>63</sup> Schieder, *Frederick the Great*, 47.

In addition to the nobility's position as a military elite in the service of the king, Frederick II was also commander in chief of his army. He directed his army both from the throne as well as in the field, leaving little room for miscommunication between his decisions and their implementation.<sup>64</sup> There were no intermediary generals to misinterpret the king's orders, either purposefully or accidentally. Combined with the *esprit de corps* instilled in the officer corps, this again reduced the military elite's ability to influence state action on foreign policy. In this way, Frederick held full authority in regards to his advisors as well as the Prussian nobility over the declaration of war or the pursuit of peace.

### **Contribution to Outcome**

Though Prussia's invasion of Saxony did not occur until August 1756, Frederick's decision to go to war was solidified by July. "The war manifesto justifying his actions was [...] already drafted in July, but Frederick delayed his attack until the end of August," writes Szabo. "By then it would be too late in the campaign season for either France or Russia to come to Austria or Saxony's aid[...]."<sup>65</sup> How then did Frederick's decisions translate into state action?

In the Prussian case, both formal and informal checks on the freedom of action of the executive were permissive. Frederick's decision-making process was unhampered by ministers, who had little authority, and therefore there was little room for other individuals to influence Prussia's foreign policy. Informal checks on Frederick's power that may have originated from the Prussian military aristocracy were also rendered permissive by the societal norm of the nobility's duty to the king as the officers of his army. The permissive quality of this check was

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<sup>64</sup> Szabo, *Seven Years' War in Europe*, 23-4.

<sup>65</sup> Szabo, *Seven Years' War in Europe*, 19.

reinforced by Frederick's position as the head of the army both on the throne as well as in the field.

Through a report by Frederick's advisor, Podewils, and letters from the time, we can see how Prussia's domestic institutional structure was unable to restrict Frederick's freedom of action in 1756. On July 22, Podewils attempted to reason with the king and delay any military action, arguing that aggression would only cause France and Russia to "[fulfill] their defensive obligations."<sup>66</sup> Instead, Podewils suggested diplomatic measures to strengthen Prussia's position in Europe from what Podewils referred to as Prussia's "current miserable [diplomatic] situation."<sup>67</sup> To do so, Podewils recommended "[making] overtures to France and England to engage in peaceful negotiations."<sup>68</sup> Frederick's response was as definite as it was succinct: "Farewell, Monsieur timid politics!"<sup>69</sup> A month later, state action would fall perfectly in line with the choice made by the key decision maker—Prussia would invade Saxony.

## **BRITAIN**

In May 1754, two years prior to Frederick's invasion of Saxony, a young British officer by the name of George Washington led a small company of untrained soldiers into the contested Ohio territory at the behest of the Royal Governor of Virginia. With the Native American Chief Tanaghrisson and his men as their guides, the group encountered a camp of Frenchmen under the command of Ensign Joseph Coulon de Villiers de Jumonville. Washington's ambush of the

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<sup>66</sup> Schieder, *Frederick the Great*, 122.

<sup>67</sup> Szabo, *Seven Years' War in Europe*, 19.

<sup>68</sup> Schieder, *Frederick the Great*, 122.

<sup>69</sup> Translated from original French: "Adieu, Monsieur de la timide politique." As quoted in Schieder, *Frederick the Great*, 122, and Szabo, *Seven Years' War in Europe*, Szabo, 19.

French camp in the early daylight hours would result in not only the deaths of one of Washington's men, fourteen Frenchmen and all but one of their wounded, including Jumonville, but also the renewal of the conflict between French and English colonists.<sup>70</sup> The news of Washington's defeat at Fort Necessity, only a few days after the encounter with Jumonville's men, enraged British Prime Minister Newcastle back in London. In his July memorandum to the king, Newcastle wrote, "We must assist the Northern Colonies from Hence - the French must be Drove Out."<sup>71</sup> Despite the escalation of these conflicts, including Braddock's later ill-fated march on the French Fort Duquesne, Britain would not formally declare with France until 1756, when the French attacked Minorca.

As in the Prussian case, to explain Britain's actions leading to the outbreak of the Seven Years' War, we must explain how a single individual's preferences, modified by domestic institutional structure, impacted British state action. First, I will examine the leader's preferences. In this case, I will be focusing on the preferences of Thomas Pelham-Holles, Duke of Newcastle, the leading voice in Parliament prior to and during the Seven Years' War. Next, I will examine Britain's domestic institutional structure and explore both the formal and informal checks on Newcastle's freedom of action that shaped the permissiveness of Britain's institutional structure—that is, the extent to which the key decision maker was able to determine state action. Lastly, I will outline how this domestic institutional structure contributed to Britain's decision to go to war in 1756. In the end, despite Newcastle's desire to maintain peace, Britain's domestic institutional structure allowed other opinions—which preferred war to peace—to influence Britain's state action, leading to Britain's eventual declaration of war in 1756.

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<sup>70</sup> Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 5-7.

<sup>71</sup> Daniel Baugh, *The Global Seven Years' War, 1754-1763* (Harlow, England: Pearson Education Limited, 2011), 79-80.

## Leader's Preferences

An individual's preferences over outcomes, or aims, can be ranked from most to least preferred. After selecting a preferred aim, an individual then decides whether peaceful negotiations or the initiation of a conflict will achieve this aim. In 1756, Prime Minister Newcastle sought to drive the French out of the Ohio territory in defense of Britain's North American colonies, which were, in his opinion, unable to defend themselves against this encroachment. However, Newcastle judged that it would be better to maintain peace with France and achieve this aim through peaceful negotiation. As such, Newcastle was not willing to go to war in 1756.

Unlike in the Prussian case, where I focus on the absolute monarch, in the British case, I focus on the preferences of Newcastle, who served as both Prime Minister and Secretary of State for the Northern Department, the position in charge of handling foreign relations with Protestant Europe and Russia.<sup>72</sup> This choice was made with two considerations in mind: (1) King George II, nearing the end of his life, had largely retired from politics by 1756; and (2) Parliament and the Newcastle administration were largely in charge of foreign policy.<sup>73</sup> Though the monarch still ranked higher than the ministers as king and the Parliament needed monarchical approval for foreign policy measures, the Parliament was largely in charge of the decision-making process. Further, though the position of 'prime minister' was still ill-defined, "the overall tendency in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was toward a single individual at the head of a parliamentary government."<sup>74</sup> Starting in 1754, this individual was Newcastle. Finally, Newcastle alone carried a great deal of

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<sup>72</sup> Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 33.

<sup>73</sup> Baugh, *Global Seven Years' War*, 17.

<sup>74</sup> William E. Burns, *A Brief History of Great Britain* (New York: Checkmark Books, 2010), 129.

political weight by both having the king's favor and a large degree of support from the House of Commons by way of patronage.<sup>75</sup> As the head of Parliament and personally quite politically powerful, Newcastle is the key decision maker in this case study.

The defense of the Ohio territory was one of Newcastle's chief aims from 1754 to 1756 in regards to Britain's foreign policy. Like many others in Britain, Newcastle believed this contested territory rightfully belonged to Britain and that the presence of the French was an outrageous encroachment on and a real threat to British territory.<sup>76</sup> The French desired the Ohio territory because it would connect their Canadian and Mississippi holdings in a manner most efficient for trade. British Virginia and Pennsylvania also claimed the territory as an area of land for future settlement as the British colonial population grew, making expansion desirable. The Ohio territory was also valuable in the balance of power between France and Britain on the North American continent. Physical occupation and direct control was infeasible for both powers due to the expense of such an operation in the large and remote Ohio territory; however, whichever power indirectly controlled the Ohio territory controlled the balance of power in America. French control of the Ohio territory would boost France's economic and political power as well as lock the British colonies against the seaboard, extinguishing any hope of expansion both demographically and commercially.<sup>77</sup> In addition, Newcastle and others believed that French encirclement of the British colonies would not only cut off expansion but also

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<sup>75</sup> Newcastle was able to obtain the king's support with his inclination towards protecting Hanover, the German province the king of England also ruled over. He also used his enormous wealth to control about 17 seats in the House of Commons, a considerable accomplishment that allowed him great influence over the parliamentary balance. Baugh, *Global Seven Years' War*, 18.

<sup>76</sup> Baugh, *Global Seven Years' War*, 81.

<sup>77</sup> Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 17-18.

threaten the very existence of these colonies.<sup>78</sup> Thus, the Ohio territory and the French presence there was a commercial, political and security concern to both Britain and Newcastle.

The outcome most preferred by Newcastle, then, was to push back French encroachment in the Ohio territory; his preferred strategy was to do so peacefully. In 1754, when the conflict in the western North American colonies began to flare up, Newcastle constructed a plan with the earl of Hardwicke, Britain's Lord Chancellor and Newcastle's closest advisor, to send British officers to the American colonies with money, arms and ammunition to strengthen the defense of the colonies. Despite Hardwicke's disapproval, Newcastle extended the plan to include sending British regulars to the colonies as well.<sup>79</sup> Though it involved the use of armed forces, Newcastle believed that this plan of action would be limited; the entire operation "as cheap and as inoffensive as [they could] consistently with doing it effectually."<sup>80</sup> After the French were expelled from the Ohio territory, Newcastle planned for a pause for peaceful negotiations back in Europe, during which Britain and France would settle their differences without resorting to war.<sup>81</sup> As Clayton writes, "Newcastle only believed in the desirability of using force at such a time and in such a manner that a resumption of general war might be avoided. Newcastle was a realist, not a hawk: indeed he disliked war."<sup>82</sup> Thus, in 1756, though he was willing to use limited violence as a diplomatic tool, Newcastle was not willing to go to war to achieve his aims. Why then did Britain go to war in 1756?

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<sup>78</sup> T.R. Clayton, "The Duke of Newcastle, the Earl of Halifax, and the American Origins of the Seven Years' War," *The Historical Journal* 24, no. 3 (September, 1981): 572.

<sup>79</sup> Baugh, *Global Seven Years' War*, 80.

<sup>80</sup> Newcastle to Murray, 28 September 1754, as quoted in Clayton, "Duke of Newcastle," 593.

<sup>81</sup> Baugh, *Global Seven Years' War*, 81.

<sup>82</sup> Clayton, "Duke of Newcastle," 573.

## Domestic Institutional Structure

Having established the leader's preferences, the next step in determining the effect Newcastle's preferences had on Britain's decision to go to war in 1756 is to examine Britain's domestic institutional structure. This structure determines the freedom of action of the key decision maker, in this case, Newcastle, and translates decision-making at the individual level into state action.

In 1756, Britain, like its counterparts involved in the Seven Years' War, was a monarchy, but it stood apart from the other European monarchies in the limits that had been placed on the power of the monarch in 1688, during what is commonly referred to as the Glorious Revolution. Following King James II's religious tolerance of Catholics in Britain, many Protestant political leaders in Britain felt threatened by the idea of James's newborn Catholic son assuming the throne. Members of Parliament thus invited William III of Orange, James II's brother-in-law and the husband to James's first daughter, Mary, a Protestant who was to be heir until the birth of James's son in 1688, to take the throne. It was declared that James had abdicated by fleeing the country and William and Mary were crowned the next monarchs of Britain. However, Parliament insisted on a compromise before the coronation: the new monarchs had to recognize the Bill of Rights, which severely curtailed the power of the monarch. Britain was now a limited monarchy, in which the Parliament made the laws and the King was bound to and enacted the law.<sup>83</sup> It was in this domestic institutional structure that Newcastle operated in 1756.

Despite the authority of Parliament over the monarch afforded by the Bill of Rights in 1688, formal and informal checks restrained Newcastle's freedom of action and thus his ability

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<sup>83</sup> Burns, *Great Britain*, 121-4.

to affect state action. Formal checks resulted from the structure of Parliament and included the need for both royal and parliamentary support in order to enact foreign policy decisions. These limits would both restrict Newcastle's ability to influence state action. Informal checks both aided and hindered Newcastle's freedom of action. On one hand, Newcastle gained influence and support through the patronage system, though not enough to surmount the obstacle of gaining sufficient support in Parliament; on the other, public opinion restricted Parliament's ability to renege on public statements without losing face, a problem Newcastle would face during Parliament's deliberations.

### *Formal Checks*

The factor that most restricted the influence of Newcastle's preferences on state action was the fact that the prime minister was forced to work with others to determine state policy. Though he held a great level of influence and was the key decision maker, Newcastle could not dictate state policy single-handedly. In order for Newcastle to translate his decisions into state action, he required the support of the king and the Parliament, both of which were formal institutional checks on his freedom of action.

The first dilemma Newcastle faced in enacting his plan to send regiments into the Ohio territory was getting George II's approval for the measure. Despite foreign policy being largely in the hands of the Parliament, the king still retained the ability to veto policy measures. As such, it was necessary for Newcastle to ensure George's support of his plan. Though the king liked Newcastle's plan, he refused to give Newcastle the regiments he asked for. Therefore, in order to convince the king to approve, Newcastle chose instead to work with the king's favorite son,

William Augustus, the Duke of Cumberland and the captain-general of the British military.<sup>84</sup>

Though Newcastle believed Cumberland to be dangerous given his preference for military action over diplomacy, he knew that his support was necessary to win over the king.<sup>85</sup> Cumberland

drew up a plan along the lines of Newcastle's vision and received his father's approval.

However, this first iteration of the plan already deviated from Newcastle's desire to push the French out of Ohio with limited military action and then defer to peaceful negotiations.

Cumberland's plan did call for two regiments to be sent to the North American colonies and join the provincial forces already there. However, instead of stopping at Ohio, this force was to continue to the Lake Champlain area, take back Crown Point and push the French out of the Acadian isthmus. With the amendment that the military operation be paused after taking Ohio to allow for negotiations, Newcastle accepted this plan.<sup>8687</sup>

The second formal check that hindered Newcastle's ability to determine British state action was that he also needed the Parliament to vote in favor of his plan in order for it to be enacted. Once again, this allowed other minister's opinions and preferences to influence and morph the state's eventual action. The original plan that Newcastle approved soon became more aggressive. Cumberland's plan evolved: the assaults on the Ohio territory, Lake Champlain and the Acadian isthmus were to happen simultaneously. This revised plan ruined Newcastle's chance for peaceful negotiations with France. Newcastle opposed this plan, fearing it would lead to the war he so desperately wished to avoid. Though members of Parliament like Hardwicke were equally wary of war, the plan gained momentum as the Earl of Halifax, president of the Board of Trade, added to the plan, recommending the extension of the assault on Ohio to include

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<sup>84</sup> Clayton, "Duke of Newcastle," 592.

<sup>85</sup> Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 67.

<sup>86</sup> Baugh, *Global Seven Years' War*, 80-1.

<sup>87</sup> Clayton, "Duke of Newcastle," 593-4.

the capture of Niagara.<sup>88</sup> Britain's domestic institutional structure demanded that the opinions of other members of Parliament be included in the creation of British foreign policy and thus restricted Newcastle's freedom of action.

### *Informal Checks*

Factors outside the formal structure of Britain's government also impacted Newcastle's freedom of action and the level of influence his preferences had over state action. These informal factors included the patronage system and public opinion. The first proved to be a permissive factor for Newcastle's decision-making; however, the relatively minor influence it gave him would not overcome the restrictions caused by formal checks and the informal check of public opinion.

The system of patronage, which was employed by both the king and wealthy nobles, was a mainstay of British politics during the Newcastle administration and allowed Newcastle some freedom of action. Patronage was used both directly and indirectly to win parliamentary support for the government. Royal patronage was one of the king's main tools to influence voting in the Parliament and thus influence Parliament's decisions even after its authority had transcended the king's in 1688. Because he followed policies beneficial to the protection of Hanover, Newcastle was granted authority over a significant amount of royal patronage. He supervised how royal patronage was used and who was to receive patronage; thus, he was able to influence what kind of support the government would receive. In addition, Newcastle, a man of considerable wealth, was himself a source of patronage. Through the use of his wealth and property, he controlled

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<sup>88</sup> Baugh, *Global Seven Years' War*, 81-2.

about 17 seats in the House of Commons, giving him significant political weight.<sup>89</sup> Knowing that he commanded a certain level of support in Parliament thus granted Newcastle a degree of freedom of action. However, this support was not enough to allow him to override the opinions of other members of Parliament or gain the approval of the king.<sup>90</sup>

Public opinion operated as a significant check on Newcastle's freedom of action. This informal check severely restricted Parliament's ability to waver publicly on policy stances. As a result, it was difficult for ministers who disagreed, even influential ones such as Newcastle, to change Parliament's course once it was made public.

Typically public opinion constrains the actions of elected officials, who must maintain their constituents' support to stay in office; however, in this case, it is not the opinion of the electorate that worried Newcastle and Parliament, but rather the wider public—much of which did not have the right to vote.

Positions in the House of Lords, the most powerful house, were mostly inherited. Members of the House of Lords also made use of their family connections and patronage to influence elections. As a result, they were unlikely to be voted out of office. The House of Commons was an elected body; however, the franchise was only extended to adult males who owned land worth at least 40 shillings. By excluding women and non-property-owning men, the electorate comprised only a small portion of the entire population. Furthermore, electoral districts varied widely in their enforcement of property requirements. In some cases, most adult men could vote, whereas in others the boroughs were so small that a single landowner could select the winning candidate.<sup>91</sup> That said, maintaining the support of the general, non-voting

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<sup>89</sup> Baugh, *Global Seven Years' War*, 18.

<sup>90</sup> Clayton, "Duke of Newcastle," 593-4.

<sup>91</sup> Burns, *Great Britain*, 128.

public was a priority. In a society where fear of despotism bred hostility, public opposition often took the form of rioting.<sup>92</sup><sup>93</sup> As Gilmour describes the tradition of rioting in Britain from the 1600s to the 1800s: “Although ‘resistance was not closely defined - it could mean anything from full-scale rebellion to a riotous demonstration designed to bring pressure on the government - there was [...] a right to resistance which had been properly exercised against James II. [...]T]he right of resistance remained part of constitutional theory[....]”<sup>94</sup>

In a society where its legitimacy could be so easily challenged, Parliament could not afford to be seen as incompetent to the British people. As Parliament debated the aggressive Cumberland plan, Henry Fox, the secretary-at-war and a Cumberland supporter, published a notice in *The Gazette* summoning the officers to be sent to North America.<sup>95</sup> Following the publication of the notice, resentment and anger towards France’s encroachment in the colonies in the press made it clear that public opinion sought an aggressive military response. As a result, Newcastle’s position was further weakened, and Parliament was forced to commit to a larger military expedition than Newcastle wanted.<sup>96</sup> Vacillation on public political stances would make Parliament appear weak in the public eye, to both the British people and the other European great powers. With the press clamoring for action against French aggression in the colonies, Newcastle’s ability to steer the state towards peaceful negotiations was largely reduced. Thus, public opinion was a restrictive informal check on his freedom of action.

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<sup>92</sup> Jeremy Black, *Eighteenth-Century Britain, 1688-1783* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 185.

<sup>93</sup> *The Longman Companion to Britain in the Eighteenth Century, 1688-1820* compiles a non-exhaustive list of “Popular disturbances in Britain (excluding Ireland), 1688-1830” listing a great number of these events, which were a frequent occurrence. Jeremy Gregory and John Stevenson, *The Longman Companion to Britain in the Eighteenth Century, 1688-1820* (London: Pearson Education Limited, 2000), 214-225.

<sup>94</sup> Ian Gilmour, *Riots, Risings and Revolution: Governance and Violence in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Hutchinson, 1992), 15.

<sup>95</sup> Clayton, “Duke of Newcastle,” 594.

<sup>96</sup> Baugh, *Global Seven Years’ War*, 82.

## Contribution to Outcome

From the first encounter in the Ohio territory between Washington, Jumonville and his men, Newcastle's stance did not change; he believed that decisive but restrained military action to push the French out of the Ohio territory would trigger peaceful negotiations and solve the problem of French encroachment onto British territory without risking war.<sup>97</sup> However, in order for his plan to be enacted, Newcastle required both royal and parliamentary support and, specifically, the help of Cumberland. "Thereafter," writes Clayton, "the 'Butcher' of Culloden [as Cumberland was known for his suppression of the Jacobite uprising of 1745] drew up a plan for operations in America of which Newcastle did not approve."<sup>98</sup> Both formal and informal checks on Newcastle's freedom of action served to weaken his political position and undermined his ability to oppose Cumberland's plan, "which he perceived made the preservation of the general peace more difficult, but which it would have been political suicide for him to obstruct."<sup>99</sup>

In the British case, formal and informal institutional checks, on balance, restricted the ability of the Newcastle to translate his preferences into state action. Because of Britain's parliamentary domestic institutional structure, the decision-making process required that both royal and parliamentary opinions be incorporated, necessitating compromise. The informal checks were both permissive and restrictive. Newcastle's command of a good portion of royal patronage and his own patronage was permissive in that it gave him support in the House of Commons, but it did not give him enough support that he was able to override the opinions of

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<sup>97</sup> Clayton, "Duke of Newcastle," 590.

<sup>98</sup> Clayton, "Duke of Newcastle," 591.

<sup>99</sup> Clayton, "Duke of Newcastle," 594.

other members of Parliament. Public opinion severely restricted Newcastle's freedom of action as it made it exceedingly difficult for Newcastle to moderate the aggressive plan for North America.

Despite his inability to restrain Britain's action in North America, Newcastle continued to work from 1754 to 1756 to create peace in Europe through diplomacy.<sup>100</sup> After the public opinion disaster of *The Gazette* notice, Newcastle wrote that he "[hoped war was] the furthest from Our Thoughts."<sup>101</sup> Even as the conflict between Britain and France escalated to naval movements, Newcastle still pushed for peaceful negotiations that could end the conflict before the two states declared war. "I should really hope," Newcastle wrote in 1755, "that measures in North America may produce a reasonable Peace next Winter."<sup>102</sup> After his defeat in the debate over the Cumberland plan, Newcastle sought to keep the option of peaceful negotiations on the table, for example, by opposing the attack of French ships in European waters and negotiating a neutrality treaty with Prussia in 1756 in an attempt to secure peace on the European continent.<sup>103</sup><sup>104</sup> In the end, Newcastle's attempts to guide Britain towards peace would not overcome the headwind of domestic institutional factors that restricted his freedom of action. Instead of achieving the peaceful settlement with the French that Newcastle desired, the aggressive policies set in place in 1754 would result in violence between Britain and France, ultimately leading to Britain's decision to go to war in 1756.

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<sup>100</sup> Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 125.

<sup>101</sup> Newcastle to Albemarle, 10 October 1754, as quoted in Clayton, "Duke of Newcastle," 595.

<sup>102</sup> Newcastle to Hartington, 23 May 1755, as quoted in Clayton, "Duke of Newcastle," 601.

<sup>103</sup> Clayton, "Duke of Newcastle," 602.

<sup>104</sup> Szabo, *Seven Years' War in Europe*, 12-13.

## CONCLUSION

In 1756, a war broke out between the great powers of Europe that would become the first truly world war. The Seven Years' War would dramatically shift the balance of power in Europe and set the stage in North America for the American Revolution. The question then is the following: Why did the states involved in this conflict choose to go to war with each other in 1756? In this thesis, I have focused on the role of individual, and, in doing so, I have investigated whether the leader holds the reins of power or is simply along for the ride.

I argue that key decision makers can shape decision-making, but the degree to which they can direct state action is determined by the domestic institutional structure within which they operate. I also argue that this model illuminates the decision-making processes of Prussia and Britain prior to the outbreak of the Seven Years' War. In both cases, formal and informal domestic institutions either enabled or constrained the ability of the key decision maker to translate their preferences into state action.

In the Prussian case, the domestic institutional structure played a permissive role by allowing the preferences of the key decision maker to influence state action. In this case, the key decision maker, King Frederick II was willing to go to war to acquire great power status for Prussia, defend Silesia, and check the alliances being formed against his state. In August 1756, Frederick directed his state's actions—Prussia invaded Saxony, risking war against Austria, Russia and France. Frederick's preferences were able to determine state action due to Prussia's domestic institutional structure. The permissive nature of both formal and informal checks gave Frederick great freedom of action. During the king's reign, the ministers of the Kabinet, the formal check on his freedom of action, were reduced from their role as an advisory and

diplomatic body to that of royal messengers and mouthpieces. The potential informal check of the nobility was also limited in Prussia in 1756, as they were bound to the king and his decisions through their role as a military aristocracy rather than an independent political elite. Military discipline and *esprit de corps* prevented this aristocracy from objecting to the decisions of their king, the commander both on the throne and in the field.

In the British case, the domestic institutional structure restricted the key decision maker's ability to influence state action. In this case, the key decision maker, Thomas Pelham-Holles, Duke of Newcastle and prime minister of Britain's Parliament, was unwilling to risk war to achieve his aim of pushing the French out of the disputed Ohio territory. In 1754, however, Parliament approved an overtly aggressive foreign policy against France that went against the key decision maker's preferences. Finally, in May 1756, despite Newcastle's continued attempts to preserve peace, Britain declared war on France. Unlike the Prussian case, formal and informal checks restricted Newcastle's freedom of action. The formal structure of British government required Newcastle to win support from both the king and other members of Parliament. Thus the prime minister was forced to work with others and make compromises to craft Britain's foreign policy. The patronage system was an informal check on the prime minister, and it gave Newcastle considerable influence in the House of Commons. However, this informal check was insufficient to overcome the formal check of needing to garner the support of the king and the Parliament. Finally, public opinion also limited Newcastle's freedom of action. In a country with a national tradition of rioting and amidst growing popular anti-French sentiment, Newcastle and Parliament were forced to stand by Fox's newspaper summons to British officers bound for North America, pushing Britain towards an aggressive foreign policy.

This model illuminates causes of the Seven Years' War that are overlooked in the extant historical literature. The two cases examined in this thesis allow for a structured-focus comparison due to their similarities, such as their geo-strategic goals and their history of rivalry with their opponents. Yet the differences between them in terms of domestic institutional structure explain why both states chose war.

The model could also be applied to other cases. The most obvious avenue for future research is to use this model to explain the decisions of the other powers of the Seven Years' War, namely Austria, France and Russia. Prussia and Britain, being the most and least autocratic powers of the Seven Years' War, represent two extremes, but the other three states fall between them based on their domestic institutional structures. The results of this further research would likely further demonstrate the utility of the model.

This thesis has additional significance for the study of history. In the historical literature on the Seven Years' War, "Prussia" and "Frederick" are used interchangeably and synonymously. In 1756, Prussia invaded Saxony; in 1756, Frederick invaded Saxony. Both of these statements are often made in the historical literature and both are correct. However, "Britain" and "Newcastle", or even "George II", cannot be used interchangeably. Instead, the British case requires the study of many different individuals, military and political, of varying importance. Partly, this phenomenon is due to the fact that Frederick commanded his army in the field as thus was quite literally present for the invasion of Saxony. But it also has greater implications. By claiming that Frederick invaded Saxony in 1756, the implication is not only that he physically led his army into Saxon territory, but also that he ordered the action. In the case of Britain's movements against France from 1754 to 1756, however, the origin of these actions

cannot be attributed to a single individual, but rather to the Parliament in its entirety. This difference underlines the importance of the domestic institutional structure.

The Prussian case exemplifies how a permissive domestic institutional structure allows the individual key decision maker to impose his or her preferences on state action. Thus, it is not inaccurate to state that Frederick and Prussia decided and acted in unison. Permissive conditions like domestic institutional structure can be easily overlooked; the causal effect of these factors can most easily be seen only when they restrict state action, as in the case of Britain and Newcastle. As such, discussions of domestic institutional structure are most common in the study of more recent eras, in which domestic constraints on the executive are widespread. However, as seen in this case study of the Seven Years' War, domestic institutional structure was no less important before the rise of representative government.

Individuals matter, but only to the extent that domestic context allows them. There is a reason that Frederick was able to arrange his chessboard and begin the game as he saw fit while Newcastle was unable to do the same — the domestic institutional structure.

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