WHIGS, TORIES AND JACOBITES DURING THE REIGN OF KING GEORGE I (1714-1727)

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Abstract: The Hanoverian Succession of 1714 brought about important changes in the political system of Great Britain. For example, the group of ministers responsible to the House of Commons (and also other British political institutions), appeared progressively and out of necessity. The cause was the absence of the king, which spent at least half of his time at his court in Hanover. Soon, and because of the same reason, the institution of the leader of the cabinet (the Prime-Minister) also appeared. What gave the British constitution a remarkable unity was that all the three branches of power and the local institutions were in the hands of the same class. This mixed constitution, whose central point still remained the pluralistic nature of the form of government, including many obstacles and means of moderation, qualifies under the definition of the republic. But because the head of state is a monarch and that the voters elect mostly aristocrats as their representatives in the legislature, the most appropriate description of the British political system after 1714 would be a "a crowned aristocratic republic". The point of this article, which uses mostly secondary sources, is analyzing the evolution of these political changes while also providing a view of the relationship between the main political parties, the Whigs – which were in full ascension during this period –, the Tories and the Jacobite rebels.

KEYWORDS: George I, Whigs, Tory, Jacobites, Westminster, Hanover

Motto:
"This royal throne of kings, this sceptred isle,
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,
This other Eden, demi-paradise,
This fortress built by Nature for herself
Against infection and the hand of war,
This happy breed of men, this little world,
This precious stone set in the silver sea,
Which serves it in the office of a wall
Or as a moat defensive to a house,
Against the envy of less happier lands,-
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England."
William Shakespeare (*King Richard II*)

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Introduction

At the elections of 1710, considered by some one of the more significant of the first half of the century[1], Queen Anne, due to her dislike for the Whigs, had offered her support to the Tories[2]. Surprisingly even the Church declared its outright loyalty to them as "incendiary sermons were preached from the pulpit"[3]. Under this hail of Tory propaganda, who mainly accused them of prolonging the war and burdening the people with high taxes[4], some Whig candidates "dared not appear upon the hustings"[5] as "violence went far beyond I had ever known in England"[6]. Not surprisingly the Whigs lost the elections, and few would have foreseen what would happen four years later. It seemed that, for the moment, the Tories and the Jacobites as well were set for good.

On August the 1st 1714, following the death of Queen Anne and according to the Act of Settlement, the crown of Great Britain was inherited by the House of Hanover. George I (1714-1727), the great-grandson of James I of England, Prince-Elector of the Holy Roman-Empire and Protestant, was first received by his new subjects with lack of confidence[7]. Just like his heir, George II (1727-1760), he also held the title of Duke of Hanover, an Electorate of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation[8], thus being unable to dedicate his full attention to his new Kingdoms[9].

The Rise of the Whigs

Because at the end of the reign of Queen Anne, only the Whigs had been "courting" the future King, their rise to power could be foreseen[10], but the King also employed a few Tory ministers until the Jacobite Rebellion of 1715[11]. George I and his German advisors felt little sympathy for the Tories, because

[1] William Thomas Morgan, *An Eighteen-Century Election in England*, in "Political Science Quarterly", vol. 37, No. 4, December 1922, p. 585.
[2] It is known that the Queen preferred politicians that were above party rivalries, such as Lord Treasurer Godolphin, and the Duke of Marlborough, Captain General, but she also appreciated the Tory loyalty towards the Stuart Dynasty.
[3] *Ibidem*, p. 592.
[4] Mary Ransome, "The Press in the General Elections of 1710", in *Cambridge Historical Journal*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1939, pp. 209-221.
[5] Cooke, *Bolingbroke*, I, p. 123, apud William Thomas Morgan, *op. cit.*, p. 593.
[6] Gilbert Burnet, *Memoirs*, p. 188, apud *Ibidem*.
[7] Nicholas Rogers, *Crowds*, *Culture and Politics in Georgian Britain*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1998, p. 22.
[8] The Electorate of Brunswick-Lüneburg, to be more precise.
[9] Wilfrid Prest, *Albion Ascendant*, *English History*, *1660-1815*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1998, p. 120.
[10] André Maurois, *Istoria Angliei*, Editura Orizonturi, Bucureşti, 2006, p. 476.
[11] Adrian Nicolescu, *Istoria civilizaţiei britanice*, vol. III., Institutul European, Iaşi, 2001, p. 11.

they remembered than in 1713 the Tories voted and passed the Treaty of Utrecht, which meant separate peace for England.[12] Even so, their expectancies were towards a mixed-party system ruled by a majority of Whigs. However appealing this project was, the King soon discovered, just like his two predecessors had, that party rivalries made collaboration impossible[13]. Two distinguished pro-Hanoverian Tories were asked to join the government in the autumn of 1714, but they actually refused, arguing that their party does not deserve only a mere token of representation, but at least equality with the Whigs[14].

Their surety came from the fact that after the last general election more Tories were elected as MPS than ever after the Glorious Revolution[15], and also, during 1701-1714 they had lost only 2 elections out of seven, without much help from the Crown besides 1710. Even so, most people believed that the two parties are on par; for example, Earl Cowper reminded this to King George I when asking him to offer his support to the Whigs: "the parties are so near an equality… that 'tis wholly in your Majesty's power, by showing your favour in due time (before the elections) to one or other of them, to give which of them you please a clear majority in all succeeding parliaments"[16]. The King's actions would be exactly opposite of those of Queen Anne before him, as he sought to remove all the Tories from offices and promote loyal Whigs instead.

The Church reacted this time too as Tory propaganda - such as the "English Advice to the Freeholders of England", a pamphlet written by Francis Atterbury accusing the Whigs of heresy, creating a permanent army and the King of offering sinecures to his German favourites – was making its way through the country. The Whigs of course responded in their press and the King even set a bounty for finding the propagators of the pamphlet. Nevertheless, the slogan of "the Church in danger" seems to have been less potent that the one "the Succession in danger" of the Whigs, especially in this case when the Pretender had mailed a Declaration to a few people in November 1714, stating that the good relations between him and her sister, Queen Anne, were brutally halted by her death (just after aborting an invasion on Scotland in 1708). Just like in 1708, when the Whigs won because people feared the return of a Catholic King, now too this Declaration incident heavily added to the Whig cause[17].

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[12] Stoica Lascu, *Introducere în istoria modernă universală*, Universitatea „Ovidius" Constanţa, Constanta, p. 1-23.
[13] Wilfrid Prest, *op. cit.*, p. 121.
[14] *Ibidem*.
[15] W. A. Speck, "The General Elections of 1715", in *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 90, No. 356, July 1975, pp. 508-509.
[16] Lord Campbell, *Lives of the Lord Chancellors (1846)*, iv. 428-9, apud W. A. Speck, *op. cit.*, p. 507.
[17] *Ibidem*, pp. 507-522.

These elections of 1714, overwhelmingly won by the Whigs, had swept away any Tory illusions of grandeur. The Whigs acquired the dominance of the House of Commons by corruption and by controlling the rotten boroughs[18] too (also called "decayed boroughs", an extremely small electorate[19]; similar to a "pocket borough", which in turn is a constituency under the effective control of a single major landowner). The composition of the Parliaments of George I, both this one and the one from 1722, attest a relatively high degree of social mobility for this period[20].

The social position[21] of an important number of MPS (Members of the Parliament) was lower than the ranks of the traditional ruling elite[22]. Also, between the deputies there were members of the commercial dynasties from mainland Europe, especially descendants of Protestant refugees[23] seeking shelter in England after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes by King Louis XIV in 1685. A total number of 62 merchants were elected in the Parliament of 1715 (out of a total of 739 MPS), but 15 of them owned their status to their ruling class predecessors. The others, for example Sir William Daines and Joseph Earle (Bristol deputies), were provincial merchants and represented the interests the

[18] André Maurois, *op. cit.*, p 480.

[19] For example, by the beginning of the XIX century the Old Sarum constituency in Wiltshire had diminished to only 3 houses and 7 voters (sic!).

[20] Ian R. Christie, *British 'Non-Elite' MPS*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995, p. 38.

[21] The English society was divided in three main classes: the yeomen, small property owners, were usually part of the 40 shilling freeholders and thereby had the right to vote; the gentry, lower and middle nobles, usually with no privileges but active in the House of Commons; and the peers, the high nobility, privileged and serving in the House of Lords. The gentry had four ranks: Baronet, higher than the other three and was introduced in 1611 by James I in order to be sold, those who bought this rank obtained the hereditary privilege of being called "Sir"; the next rank in importance was Knight and was usually bestowed as a reward for serving the Crown; the last two ranks were the Squires and the Gentlemen and they could not be offered by the Monarch because, for example, being a gentleman requested not only wealth but also a specific lifestyle, without manual labour and with connotations that include defending one's honour, good manners &c. Some extremely wealthy gentlemen did not advance in rank because there was no automatic promotion to peerage. As a social group, the gentry traditionally lacked cohesion (John Cannon, *The Oxford Companion to British History*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1997, p. 405).

[22] The arrival in Parliament of a citizen based entirely on his merit was a rare event, but not unknown (Ian R. Christie, *op. cit.*, p. 17). There is documentation on the case of Thomas Brereton, MP for Liverpool for many years in the Parliaments of George II. His father had been an innkeeper and a saddler and his maternal grandfather a simple barber of the town. After he married a widow with a good situation, he made a fortune by investing in the "South Sea" Company and by inheriting his father-in-law. He spent the money wisely and even did business with Walpole, managing to maintain himself in well-paid jobs. One such case was exceptional, but it truly existed, although most non-aristocratic MPS would come from families where at least two or three generations before them accumulated wealth thereby ascending the social hierarchy (*Ibidem*, p. 18).

[23] Ian R. Christie, *op.cit.*, p. 38.

towns where they ran their business[24]. A number of 69 army and navy officers also activated in the same Parliament. As rank advancement had never been a matter of merit only, and as politics tended to influence every type of social interaction in England, it can be said that the Army and the Navy were also influenced by party rivalries[25].

The Tories and the Jacobites

The Tories already were pretty divided and demoralised: Viscount Bolingbroke was exiled and became a Jacobite, and Robert Harley[26] was imprisoned in the Tower of London[27]. Then followed their gradual removal from all government positions, both central and local, from the army and from the county peace committees. The participation of several Tory MPS and peers in the Jacobite revolt and its disastrous failure meant unprecedented and total political triumph for the Whigs[28].

The Jacobites were seeking the restoration of the Stuart Dynasty by installing James Francis Edward Stuart[29] on the throne of Great Britain[30]. After unsuccessful attempts in 1689 (back then their leaders were Viscount Dundee and Lord Balcaress), the Jacobites were somewhat inactive during the reign of Queen Anne. But now, some of the Tory peerage, especially John Erskine, the Earl of Mar,[31] appreciated the new political situation not only as a change to a total Whig ministry, but also as a dangerous revolution[32].

The Earl of Mar landed in Scotland where he proclaimed the "Old Pretender" as King James III.[33] At Saint-Germain, the Court in exile already had a preset strategy for landing in England in case of a major uprising, but Mar's movement was extremely hasty, surprising even the Court. The result was expected, lack of coordination between the Jacobites in England and those on

[24] *Ibidem*, pp. 38-40.
[25] John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*: *War*, *Money and the English State 1688-1783*, Unwin Hyman, London, 1989, pp. 45-46.
[26] Better known as Lord Oxford.
[27] André Maurois, *op*. *cit*., p. 480.
[28] Wilfrid Prest, *op*. *cit*., p.121.
[29] The Roman-Catholic son of James II and Mary of Modena, also known as "the Old Pretender", even though he was only 27 years old (Adrian Nicolescu, *op*. *cit*., pp. 11-12).
[30] John Cannon, *The Oxford Companion to British History*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1997, p 523.
[31] Costel Coroban, „Sweden and the Jacobite Movement (1715-1718)" in *Revista Română de Studii Baltice şi Nordice*, vol. 2, no. 2, p. 132.
[32] Eveline Cruickshanks, Howard Erskine-Hill, *The Atterbury Plot*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2004, p. 8.
[33] Costel Coroban, *Politică şi alegeri în Anglia de la Glorioasa Revoluţie la Marea Reformă 1688-1832*, Editura Pim, Iaşi, 2010, p. 63.

the mainland[34]. James III arrived too late in Scotland to be able to help Mar, who despite being a very intelligent politician, proved to be a weak military leader[35]. Even though the Jacobite rebellion of 1715 received much enthusiasm from the discontented, it was a wasted opportunity, or at least an opportunity that could easily had been exploited better. Those who were not fully convinced of the Stuart cause, feeling threatened by harsh reprisals, chose to lie and be wary on the future. The ones left to draw the lesson were the sworn Jacobites[36].

Having won the elections, the Whigs acted swiftly to strengthen their victory and also took repressive measures against the Tories[37]. Among the first legislative actions of the new Parliament is the "Riot Act" (1st of August 1715), in light of the recent riots and caused by a series of anti-Whig street protests in London, Bristol and Midlands[38]. By this act any group of 12 or more persons refusing to disperse after more than an hour since local officials (a Mayor, the Bailiffs or a Justice of Peace) ordered them so, became guilty of felony punishable by death[39]. Guarantees were provided for those participating in the crowd dispersal, but the law had limited success, because officials were reluctant to read the proclamation, and soldiers often hesitated to open fire[40].

It should be noted in this context that public holidays were of great importance. Their purpose was to sanctify the political order, to commemorate the main events in its creation and to allow the ruling class to show liberality during the street celebrations[41]. The year began with the solemn commemoration of the martyrdom of Charles I (30th of January), then there were three festivals dedicated to Queen Anne (her birthday anniversary on February 6th, the ascent to the throne on the 8th and the coronation on April 23rd. In May they celebrated the birthday of King George I but also the Restoration. Unofficial and even explosive was the anniversary of the "Pretender", in June. The 1st of August was the feast of the throne ascent of the Hanover Dynasty and it was followed by other Hanoverian or Protestant celebrations: on 20th of October the coronation of King George I, then on the 30th, his son's birthday, on the 4th October the birthday of William III of

[34] Eveline Cruickshanks, Howard Erskine-Hill, *op. cit*., p. 8.
[35] Adrian Nicolescu, *op. cit*., p. 12.
[36] Eveline Cruickshanks, Howard Erskine-Hill, *op. cit*., pp. 8-9.
[37] Wilfrid Prest, *op. cit*., pp. 121-122.
[38] "Ordered, nemine contradicente, That leave be given to bring in a Bill for preventing Tumult and riotous Assemblies; and for the more speedy and effectual punishing the Rioters." (*Journal of the House of Commons*, 1 July 1715, /apud Adrian Randall, *Riotous Assemblies*: *Popular protest in Hanoverian England*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2006, used as motto/)
[39] Julian Hoppit, *A Land of Liberty*?: *England 1689-1727*, Oxford University Press Premium, New York, 2000, p. 393.
[40] John Cannon, *op. cit*., p. 808.
[41] Nicholas Rogers, *Crowds*, *Culture*, *and Politics in Georgian Britain*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1998, p. 23.

Orange, on the 5th his landing at Torbay and finally, the birthday of Queen Elizabeth[42].

Under this timetable the Whigs and Tories competed for public space, each trying to display their own symbols in every feast in order to gain more public support[43]. The Royal Oak had long symbolized Charles' II miraculous escape from the Battle of Worcester in 1651. Oak branches and green ribbons we worn by Tories especially during the Restoration Day. Their favourite song was "The King shall enjoy his own Again". Conversely, the favourite colour of the Whigs was orange, and they used it primarily on the 4th and 5th of November, together with their most common symbol, the Sweet William[44] and with their favourite song, "Lillibullero". As for the Jacobites[45], they usually were not different from the Tories and sometimes could be heard singing prohibited songs like "Jemmy, dear Jemmy" or be seen weaving white roses on the Pretender's anniversary[46].

The Duke of Newcastle, Thomas Pelham, relying on his famous Whig Mug-houses (political clubs where they actually drank from mugs decorated with the king's image), organized anti-Jacobite processions during which they suggestively burned papal symbols[47]. The Tories and the Jacobites used to burn effigies of Jack Presbyter or Oliver Cromwell, by which they accused the Whigs of religious fanaticism and of republican sympathies. In other cases, they would wave pairs of horns and turnips, mocking the episode of King George I repudiating his wife after she had an affair with the Swede Königsmarck. Popular Jacobitism would come out to light in this symbolic, ceremonial and dualist political context. It was a product of the intense rivalry between the two

[42] *Ibidem*., p. 24.
[43] *Ibidem*.
[44] A species of pink clove, *Dianthus barbatus*.
[45] The Jacobite movement, as a whole, was impressive: within 72 years they were responsible for three major uprisings, seven foreign invasions against Britain (in only two of them foreign troops actually landed on the British Isles), and between seven and ten conspiracies against the King (H. T. Dickinson, *op. cit*., p. 83). On average, between 1689 and 1722 an important event regarding the Jacobites occurred every one or two years, while between 1740 and 1760 the same to occur every three or four years. This frequency disassembles the widespread and persistent myth of historiography that the British political system had been very stable. In no other European country, other than Poland, the "old regime" was subjected to such strong ideological and dynastic challenge by dissenting members of its own society (*Ibidem)*.

Also, some historians argue that indeed Whig Jacobites existed, but this view is much disputed (*cf*. Clyve Jones, *1720-1723 and All That*: *A reply to Eveline Cruickshancks*, in "Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies", vol. 26, No. 1, Spring 1994, pp. 41-53).
[46] Nicholas Rogers, *op. cit*., pp. 24-25.
[47] Wilfrid Prest, *op. cit*., p. 121.

great parties, of their struggle for the public space and for the loyalty of the people, each of them exaggerating in rhetoric and parody[48].

New Developments

Returning to the legislature, a real blow for the long-term plans of the Tory was the "Septennial Act", voted by the House of Lords on the 10th of April 1716 and by the Commons on the 26th [49]. This law extended the maximum duration of a Parliament from three years (as stated in the "Triennial Act" of 1694) to seven years, meaning that the next general elections would take place in 1722 [50]. The Tories were definitely against this law, 147 of them voting against it in the Commons, but also this law question the principles, the unity and the political integrity of the Whigs. Less frequent elections meant eluding the voters and increased chances to maintain power by other means than political struggle. Paradoxically, in the previous century, they were the very promoters of frequent elections as a mean of upholding the "popular will" [51] against the king's power, while now their argument was that "their Frequency produces insufferable Expence to the Gentlemen of England"[52]. The Tories rightly responded in their publications that spending in an election is by no means an obligation[53]. Even so, this law also had positive effects, especially together with the extinction of religious disputes, namely the stabilization and tranquilization of political life[54].

This period also provided important changes in politics, for example the group of ministers responsible to the House of Commons (and also other British political institutions), appeared progressively and out of necessity. The cause was the absence of the king, which spent at least half of his time at his court in Hanover. Soon, and because of the same reason, the institution of the leader of the cabinet (the Prime-Minister) also appeared[55]. The first Prime Minister was Sir Robert Walpole (Earl Orford) and it is considered that his mandate started in 1721. Other Whig ministers who could be informally considered as leaders of the cabinet until the elections of 1722 were James Stanhope, Viscount Charles Townshend (Secretaries of State), and Charles Spencer (Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal)[56].

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[48] Nicholas Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 25.
[49] Wilfrid Prest, *op. cit.*, p. 122.
[50] John Cannon, *op. cit.*, p. 853.
[51] Julian Hoppit, *A Land of Liberty*?: *England 1689-1727*, Oxford University Press Premium, New York, 2000, p. 398.
[52] Apud Owen C. Lease, "The Septennial Act of 1716", in *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 22, no. 1, March 1950, p. 42.
[53] *Ibidem*.
[54] Julian Hoppit, *op. cit.*, p. 383.
[55] André Maurois, *op. cit.*, p. 480.
[56] Adrian Nicolescu, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-13.

Sir Robert Walpole's rise followed the first split among the Whigs in 1717, which occurred when not only the party had become too broad to be able to satisfy all its members, but also because the problems in question were quite important[57]. Initially, Lord Stanhope had won; his government had its merits but he also committed errors, for which he was not spared. Namely he used England's resources to support the interests of Hanover and George I and had the idea to allow dissenters to take offices in the state[58]. Then he tried passing a bill ("The Peerage Bill") which would take away the king's right to appoint new peers, thus giving the lords political independence. Even the Whig MPS who voted in favour of the "Septennial Act" considered that he has gone too far and rejected the bill. The measure would have indeed helped consolidate the power of the Whigs, but it would have also thrown the political stage off-balance by leading to infinite conflicts between the two Houses of the Parliament[59].

Although this "schism" ended quickly, its end did not bring a period of political harmony. London was seized by the frenzy of the "South Sea Bubble" affair[60]. The "South Sea Company" had been created in 1710 by Robert Harley and it proved to be a speculative enterprise tied to the outcome of the War of Spanish Succession (1710-1714). The project was based on the premise that by the following peace treaty the company would obtain permission from Spain to trade slaves (the "asiento"[61]) in the New World. Eventually the company would prove to be only partially profitable but thanks to the interference of three cabinet members (John Aislabie, Lord Sunderland and Charles Stanhope) and of the two mistresses of the king, it will obtain the assumption of the national debt after the war. Thus, in 1720, the value of its shares increased from 128 pounds in January to 1000 pounds in August, to decrease back to 124 pounds by December, hence ruining most of the investors and enriching the speculators[62].

The outrage caused by the affair also resulted in the forming of an opposition "party" in Parliament, where "country" Whigs and Tories under the leadership of Cowper would stand against the Whig ministries accusing them of corruption. As it was the first time an opposition would be allowed to protest unchecked in pamphlets and newspapers, this moment is also considered the beginning of "the concept of loyal opposition as an acceptable part of British political life"[63].

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[57] H. T. Dickinson, *A companion to eighteenth century Britain*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 2002, pp. 63-64.
[58] *Ibidem*, p. 64.
[59] André Maurois, *op. cit.*, p. 481.
[60] Julian Hoppit, *op. cit.*, p. 404.
[61] Charles Arnold-Baker, *The Companion to British History*, Routledge, London, 2001, pp. 1156-1157.
[62] *Ibidem*.
[63] Clyve Jones, "The New Opposition in the House of Lords, 1720-3", in *The Historical Journal*, vol. 36, No. 2, June 1993, pp. 309-329.

This crisis was soon followed by another, the Jacobite Plot of Francis Atterbury, Bishop of Rochester. It took place before the 1722 general elections and the intention was to exploit the popular dissent that followed after the recent crisis of the government. Some viewed it as even more profound than the crisis of 1659-1660 thus thinking it seemed a good moment for a new Restoration[64]. Still, the Earl of Mar's betrayal led to the arrest of the main suspects and the baffling of the whole plan. Atterbury was showed as an example and exiled after the ensuing trial, which the government had won by questionable means[65].

Sir Robert Walpole, the First Prime-minister

Walpole's appointment to the position of Chancellor of the Exchequer on April 27th 1721 marked the beginning of his political rule; furthermore, by the summer of 1722 he had already become the dominant force in British politics[66]. Even though the position of "Prime Minister" did not officially exist, he remained in the memory of the British as the first person to hold it also thanks to his title of First Lord of the Treasury (King George I had transformed the Treasury into a Committee, in order to avoid endowing a single Lord Treasurer with excessive power).

One of the best definitions of the attributes of the Prime Minister is given by Clayton Roberts: 'He monopolized the counsels of the King, he closely superintended the administration, he ruthlessly controlled patronage, and he led the predominant party in parliament' (Roberts 1966:402)[67]. Although initially politicians avoided using the term of Prime Minister, because it reminded of the French Prime Ministers who usurped the power of their Kings, by 1730 the term would be widely employed by both the opposition as well as the political allies[68].

Walpole also held other positions in the government thus becoming the most prominent cabinet member, and this thanks to his plan to restore the public finances after the crisis of the "South Sea Bubble"[69]. Also, the first years of his administration (from 1721 until 1730) were characterised by harmony between the Crown and the Parliament, only occasionally disturbed by small frictions[70].

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[64] Eveline Cruickshanks, Howard Erskine-Hill, *op. cit*., p. 238.
[65] *Ibidem*., pp. 240-242.
[66] Julian Hoppit, *op. cit*., p. 407.
[67] *Apud* Robert Eccleshall, Graham Walker, *Biographical Dictionary of British Prime Ministers*, Routledge, London, 1998, p. 2.
[68] *Ibidem*, p. 3.
[69] Eveline Cruickshanks, Howard Erskine-Hill, *op. cit*., p. 240.
[70] S. E. Finer, *The History of Government from the Earliest Times*, vol. III, Oxford University Press, New York, 1999, p. 1353.

The greatest opportunity of his career was baffling Atterbury's plot, who despite being ready to leave the country in exile, was not allowed to without a trial. Walpole preferred to obtain, by any means, a conviction against Atterbury, to serve as a warning to other Jacobites. Arguably, the Whigs invented the "show trial", as they also used it after the Sacheverell riots in 1710, when a priest is arrested, tried and found guilty after delivering a vehement sermon against the Whig government[71].

Despite the recent scandal, the general elections of 1722 did not lead to the rejection of the Whigs nor of Walpole[72]. The scenario in which the elections were held was the same old corruption under the blessing of the Crown. The King would appoint cabinet members or other senior officials, and after their appointment they would create their own clientele[73]. The Treasury especially, which controlled departments such as the Post Office or the Customs and Excise Office, had thousands of jobs ready to be "distributed". Also the Admiralty offered a lot of jobs for dock-workers, not to mention it settling a lot of business contracts. This influence will be used by the senior officials in order to win the elections, and the system lasted for quite some time, because from 1715 to 1830 no Prime Minister in power ever lost the elections[74].

Certainly during these elections there were many appeals, even more than during other general elections held at the beginning of the XVIIIth century, but only 170 Tories (out of 673 seats in total[75]) were elected to the House of Commons[76]. Despite this fact and even though winning the majority in Parliament was a necessary premise for political stability, it was not sufficient. During these early times parties were not that united, so even if the MPS, for example, called themselves Whigs, they were rather private persons representing their constituencies and their businesses[77].

In the series of the Riot and Septennial Acts now followed the City Elections Act of 1725 and it too reveals the Whigs abandoning their former radicalism in favour of maintaining their political power at any costs[78]. There have been discussions whether it is just lust for power or a consequence of the fact that from 1714 until the 1770's the Court-Country cleavage has been predominant over the Whig-Tory division (of course implying that the Tories were left with no "court" wing as they have been removed from all offices,

[71] Eveline Cruickshanks, Howard Erskine-Hill, *op. cit*., pp. 240-243.
[72] Julian Hoppit, *op. cit*., p. 408.
[73] S. E. Finer, *op. cit*., p. 1354.
[74] *Ibidem*.
[75] John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*: *War*, *Money and the English State 1688-1783*, Unwin Hyman, London, 1989, p. 45.
[76] Julian Hoppit, *op. cit*., p. 408.
[77] S. E. Finer, *op. cit*., p. 1354.
[78] Nicholas Rogers, "The City Elections Act (1725) Reconsidered", in *The English Historical Review*, vol. 100, No. 396, July 1985, p. 604.

while within the Whigs the cleavage still applied[79]). In this case, what is the explanation of the intensity of political rivalry between the Whigs and Tories during the reign of William and Mary and the reign of Queen Anne? Most sources indicate that nostalgia caused by the peaceful accession of George I has brought back some of the pre-1660 political system[80].

The bill increased the power of the Council of Aldermen (decisively Whig in composition) and allowed it to veto the decisions of the Common Council. Some may argue that all they wanted really was to reduce bureaucracy thus improving the administration of the City, in a selfless act. No matter the point of view, it is indeed a bill in favour of the magnates and the aristocracy. Still, the tradition of freedom was not to be so easily silenced, as in 1728 Colonel Samuel Robinson, an opponent of the bill, was elected City Chamberlain[81].

Walpole's primacy will last until 1742, thereby exceeding the time of the death of King George I (11th June 1727). His "rule" was based on the control of the Parliament, using the majority of the Whigs but also a certain personal political clientele[82]. For example, in the House of Lords, the Ministerial influence over the Lord Bishops, obtained mostly by moving his men from poor bishoprics to rich ones, would bring him 26 votes. This kind of influence was very helpful to him especially in 1733 [83], when he managed to prevent England's participation in the War of Polish Succession. The Lords Bishops, in contrast to the "Lords Temporal", who were members of the House of Lords in honour of the titles they received, attended only based on their ecclesiastical office[84]. Religious reform had also reduced the influence of the Bishops in the House and their number remained constant although new bishoprics were founded, while the number of the peers increased constantly. Namely, in 1719 there were 194 Lords, 26 of which were Bishops, as shown above. By analyzing their attendance at the Parliamentary sessions it seems that the Bishops took their jobs a lot more seriously than their lay colleagues[85], especially in the case of religious debates. As servants of the Anglican Church, whose ruler was the King, they have shown great loyalty towards the policies of the King and his Cabinet. Bishop Gibson of London even came to be called "Walpole's Pope" [86].

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[79] J. C. D. Clark, *A General Theory of Party*, *Opposition and Government*, *1688-1832*, in "The Historical Journal", Vol. 32, No. 2, June 1980, p. 303.
[80] B. W. Hill, "Executive Monarchy and the Challenge of Parties, 1689-1832: Two Concepts of Government and Two Historiographical Interpretations", in *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 13, No. 3, September 1970, p. 387.
[81] Nicholas Rogers, *op. cit.*, pp. 604-617.
[82] H. T. Dickinson, *op. cit.*, p. 64.
[83] *Ibidem*.
[84] R. W. Davis, *Lords of Parliaments*: *Studies*, *1714-1914*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1995, p. 9.
[85] *Ibidem*, p. 10.
[86] Julian Hoppit, *op. cit.*, p. 410.

But there were also cases during the full political dominion of the Whigs when they opposed[87] government legislation[88].

However, despite Walpole's later success, one should be cautious not to exaggerate the importance of his early career, which is set during the Whig ascension. Carteret[89], the Secretary of State, was an important rival of him, but he managed to get him "promoted away" to Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. Also George I did not want to give all the power to just Townshend or Walpole. Townshend held the superior office of Secretary of State and even if he was a good friend of Walpole he controlled matters or foreign policy and religion. Still Walpole had an advantage to add to the scales, he was a confident of the Duchess of Kendal, the King's mistress. Therefore, some historians have preferred to describe this period even as a duumvirate[90].

For as long as he held power, Walpole's policy was simple because he sought to strengthen British rule by increasing the prestige of the new dynasty. This objective could be achieved in the simplest way by just winning time[91]. He kept peace with France in particular, which in turn allowed him to keep taxes low; he continued to monitor the Jacobites to prevent their alliance with the Church of England and did all his best to politically discredit the Tories[92]. In the House of Commons he would address the Whigs presenting them the government's policy before each session. He spoke bluntly and vigorously while finely observing the MPS reactions in order to predict their behaviour[93]. The adoption of these moderate policies, policies that are rather found in the Tory doctrine, led to the avoidance of controversy that could again divide the Whigs, or even result in the forfeiture of the Cabinet[94].

The 1720's

[87] R. W. Davis, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-11.
[88] Such as the cases of the Quaker Tithe Bill in 1736 and later, the Bill for Disarming the Scottish Highlands in 1748.
[89] The Earl of Granville, an important political figure of the times, previously served as Lord President of the Council (the fourth position in the British political hierarchy /Charles Arnold-Baker, *op. cit.*, p. 1163/). During Walpole's administration he was almost always part of the opposition and enjoyed the confidence of the King because he could fluently speak German. He was regarded as a man of high morals and beyond the petty political designs (André Maurois, *op. cit.*, p. 486) successfully employed by Walpole and thus remained a trusted advisor of the King for a long time. Being also involved on the continent he has drawn sharp criticism, especially on the part of William Pitt the Elder, who would later repeat the same mistake (Charles Arnold-Baker, *op. cit.*, p. 250).
[90] Robert Eccleshall, Graham Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 5.
[91] André Maurois, *op. cit.*, pp. 482-483.
[92] *Ibidem*.
[93] Julian Hoppit, *op. cit.*, p. 409.
[94] Wilfrid Prest, *Albion Ascendant*: *English History*, *1660-1815*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1998, p. 127.

From a political perspective the years since Atterbury's plot to the King's death did not bring any outstanding events, and not because the bills passed were unimportant, but because they did not provoke national controversy. If during the 1690s it was not uncommon for the Parliament to reject more than half the draft legislation under debate, at the end of the reign of George I, the ratio had fallen to about one quarter. Legislative activity was so well organised now that there was no more need for meetings to be held on Saturday, and also the fact that House of Commons had the same Speaker (Spencer Compton) from 1715 to 1728 is relevant[95].

Bolingbroke[96], having returned from his exile in France in 1726, associated with the ever-discontent Whig William Pulteney and launched a weekly newspaper called "The Craftsman" (a broad hint to the political conduct of Prime Minister Walpole). Belonging to the opposition in Parliament but also outside of it, this publication aimed to expose the fraud, which as its chief editor wrote in the first issue "has crept into the camp as well as the court; prevailed in the church as well as the state; has vitiated the country in the same manner that it has poisoned the City, and worked itself into every part of our constitution"[97].

This was the start of a campaign against the Court, the executive, the Whig oligarchy, campaign reminiscent of the old "Court" and "Country" factions[98] during the early Stuarts. Their work continued through other publications, pamphlets, ballads, and plays (the most famous remaining the "The Beggar's Opera" by John Gay). Still Walpole did not give up[99], he even

[95] Julian Hoppit, *op. cit.*, p. 413.

[96] His pardon is rather an unique and bizarre event, as not many even survived impeachment by Parliament. It seems that he bribed the Duchess of Kendal (one of the King's mistresses), but even so, his restoration was only partial because even if he received his title and estates, he would be forbidden to sit in Parliament or to hold a public office (Henry L. Snyder, *The Pardon of Lord Bolingbroke*, in "The Historical Journal", Vol. 14, No. 2, June 1971, pp. 227-240).

[97] Wilfrid Prest, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

[98] With roots going back to the time of the separation of the Anglican Church – similar to the Ghibellines and Guelph's factions in Florence, here too a cause was a marriage, the one between Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn (Keith Feiling, *A History of the Tory Party 1640-1714*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1924, p. 13) – in the 1620's emerged two factions of MPS: The Court and The Country, the first supporting the government and the other representing the opposition. Each faction also had a rudimentary extra-parliamentary organization. Amidst the parliamentary agitations of the years 1679-1681, after the dissolution of the Knights Parliament, for the first time this cleavage would evolve into the Whig and Tory Parties, more distinctive and more accurate in terms of doctrine (Wilfrid Prest, *op. cit.*, p. 45).

[99] Although opposition propaganda had some effect, more would be needed to surpass the political prowess of Walpole. The opportunities would be given by his very own mistakes. In 1733 he tried to introduce a new tax on tobacco and wine (The Tobacco Excise Bill) in order to allow him to further decrease the taxes of the propertied class (Robert Eccleshall, Graham Walker, *op. cit.*, p 11). The people reacted as if Walpole wanted to abolish the "Magna

began his very own "public relations" campaign, spending about 50,000 pounds to found at least eight London newspapers, and then, by using governmental means, he limited the freedom of expression of his rivals[100]. As a feature of the era, whether it was a Whig, Tory or Jacobite publication, they all agreed that avoiding luxury meant greater political stability (a lesson the Kings of France will later learn), and accused each of extravagance and effeminacy (the attributes of tyranny and anarchy) in press[101].

A critical moment in Walpole's career[102] was the death of King George I in 1727, because it would have been very possible for him to fall into disfavour. Just like in the tradition of the German dynasties, George I and his son, the Prince of Wales, did not get along very well. Many believed that George II (11th June 1727 – 25th October 1760) would dismiss his father's Prime Minister, because it was known that he did not appreciate the King's Cabinet, but this was not the case[103]. We must realise that if Walpole would have been dismissed in 1727 his career would follow that of less important Prime Ministers, such as Stanhope or Sunderland[104]. It is ironic that the very death of his benefactor had settled him for the future[105], but the new King[106], just like his father before him, knew that few were as able as Walpole in manipulating the Parliament[107].

Charta" (André Maurois, *op. cit.*, p. 485). The rejection of this law in Parliament showed that, at least in this case, it still reflects popular will. As a result, at the general elections of 1734 the Tories gained seventeen chairs in the House of Commons (H. T. Dickinson, *op. cit.*, p. 65).

[100] *Ibidem*.

[101] David Kuchta, *The Three-Piece Suit and Modern Masculinity, England 1550-1850*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2002, p. 97.

[102] Another similar episode occurred in 1736, when the Quaker Tithe Bill was rejected by the Lords (Robert Eccleshall, Graham Walker, *op. cit.*, p 11), showing that the British were not yet ready to grant religious freedom to the dissenters. Just as before, once the "evil" had been removed (the bill being rejected), Walpole continued his administration.

It would have been very likely for him to maintain his Ministry until his death in 1745, if it were not for the following three events: in September 1737 history repeated itself and George II had an argue with his son making him leave the court, the Prince of Wales moved from St. James Palace to Leicester House rallying the Whig opposition and the Tories; two months later Queen Caroline, the strongest ally of Walpole in Court (Wilfrid Prest, *op. cit.*, p. 129), passed away; the last blow was what Walpole had always been trying to avoid, a war, an inevitable bringer of political dissensions and tax increases. The so-called "War for Jenkins Ear" (1739-1741), fought against Spain the colonies but without any major success, ended in a fair peace, of course denounced by the opposition as dishonourable (André Maurois, *op. cit.*, pp. 485-486).

At the general elections of 1741, Walpole lost his supporters in Scotland and Cornwall, thus being unable to manipulate the Parliament any longer. The Houses began rejecting his bills so Walpole realised that he is no longer useful to the King and quitted the Cabinet on 6th February 1742 (Robert Eccleshall, Graham Walker, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-12.).

[103] André Maurois, *op. cit.*, p. 484.

[104] Robert Eccleshall, Graham Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

[105] *Ibidem*.

The ensuing 1727 general elections[108] were easily won by the Whigs but more difficulties would arise at the next elections in 1734. The Prime Minister did all he could to ensure that his chosen favourites are elected. Therefore his clientele in the House of Commons arose to about 150 people (out of 684 deputies in total[109]), and even in the House of Lords he did not entirely rely just on majority of the Whigs[110].

The first years of the reign of George II brought the emergence of a social trend that would exist until the 1760s or even beyond. Bills voted in Parliament regarding property increased, especially those punishing the infringement of property. The lower classes were left with no easy means of protest, the tensions and discontent now being manifested by minor revolts or by voting the opposition candidates, even those suspected of Jacobitism. Taxes for the owning classes fell from four shillings per pound to only one because of the peace, but in the same time, the poor were burdened by a new tax on salt[111]. Another sign that oligarchy had made important steps since 1715 was the fact that this year has meant the end of electoral protests in quite an important share of boroughs: Pontefract, Brackley, Wigan, Stockbridge, Yarmouth, Horsham, Appleby, Buckingham, Dartmouth, Monmouth, Old Sarum &c[112].

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[106] In order to survive this transition Walpole also relied on his influence over the new Queen, Caroline of Ansbach and gave George II more government finances through the Civil List (Wilfrid Prest, *op. cit.*, p. 128), but it is debatable whether a new Prime-Minister would not have offered the King more money too, while a good relation with the Queen was not that easy to obtain.

[107] *Ibidem*, pp. 11-12.

[108] Perhaps the most popular elections of the XVIIIth century were the 1754 Oxfordshire elections. The Oxfordshire constituency had the right to elect two candidates and the voters, the 40 shilling freeholders, were about four thousand. Initially the candidates tried to reach a compromise in order to avoid the costs of the electoral campaign plus the additional costs of transporting the voters to Exeter College, where the elections were held, and eventually of their bribing.

The Tory candidates were Viscount Wenman and Sir James Dashwood, while for the Whigs competed Viscount Parker and Sir Edward Turner. The local magnates were also divided in half Whigs and half Tories, so both parties could spend with liberality. The results were announced on 17th April 1754, when the officer declared both pairs elected because each candidate had obtained approximately 25% of the votes. The final decision would lie in the House of Commons as each side sent petitions asking for the disqualification of their adversaries. The MPS deliberated for months and inspected the legitimacy of many individual votes in an attempt to determine who won the majority, but in the end the decision was political, the Whigs were declared winner thanks to their numbers in the House of Commons. This also proves how, even after the times of their political ascension, the Whigs would still ruthlessly try to perpetuate their dominion.

[109] John Brewer, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

[110] Julian Hoppit, *op. cit.*, pp. 409-410.

[111] H. T. Dickinson, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

[112] W. A. Speck, *op. cit.*, p. 521.

The Constitution

In the political system that we have witnessed here it no longer mattered, like during the XVII[th] century, if the Parliament or the King had primacy, because the executive power now belonged to the Cabinet[113], whose power depended on its ability to coordinate the other two institutions. The Prime Minister could not directly have the Parliament or the King take a specific measure, being able only to advise in this direction. Instead, by manipulating the Parliament he could block an initiative of the King, or by influencing the King he could block the opposition in Parliament[114].

What gave the British constitution a remarkable unity was that all the three branches of power and the local institutions were in the hands of the same class. This mixed constitution, whose central point still remained the pluralistic nature of the form of government[115], including many obstacles and means of moderation, qualifies under the definition of the republic. But because the head of state is a monarch and that the voters elect mostly aristocrats as their representatives in the legislature, the most appropriate description of the British political system after 1714 would be a "a crowned aristocratic republic" [116].

Having observed these changes, it is also necessary to observe the evolution of the various political institutions and positions in contrast to their status in the previous century. During the first decade of the century, Queen Anne was the lest monarch who refused to amend a law passed by the Parliament and "veto"-ed it. After this moment, all the future monarchs accepted all the bills passed in the legislature[117]. The Monarch could still summon or prorogue the Parliament as he pleased; the Court remained at the top of the aristocratic hierarchy and without its support no cabinet member would be able to pass their legislative initiatives in Parliament. They were appointed by the King, and only after this they sought to win the support of a majority in Parliament, and no matter if they obtained it or not, they could still be dismissed at any time if they lost the Monarch's favour[118].

The Privy Council had ceased to be a governmental institution in the XVIII[th] century due to the emergence of the Cabinet of Ministers[119], but continued to have a ceremonial role. The most important cabinet decisions were discussed in a small circle, consisting of more or less six persons: the Lord of Treasury, the two Secretaries of State (one for the North of the country and one for the South), the Lord High Chancellor and the Lord President of the

[113] Wilfrid Prest, *op. cit.*, p. 133.
[114] Robert Eccleshall, Graham Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 9.
[115] S. E. Finer, *op. cit.*, p. 1357.
[116] *Ibidem*, p. 1358.
[117] H. T. Dickinson, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
[118] *Ibidem*, pp. 12-13.
[119] Charles Arnold-Baker, *op.cit.*, p. 1033.

Council[120]. The Prime Minister, although we have seen his duties earlier, it's important to stress that he did not choose his fellow Ministers, as it happens today. This lead to frequent disagreements between Ministers, who often competed in order to win the King by their side[121]. When the Prime Minister resigned or was replaced, it was not necessary for the entire cabinet to quit.

Epilogue – The Wider Society

Conversely, political mores did not show great signs of change. Society members, politicians and not only, met in Coffee Houses, pubs and in clubs (of which the most famous were the Whig Kit-Kat Club, Beefsteak Club, the Tory October Club). The people's pleasures were simple, regardless of class: the poor drank gin while squires and beyond preferred port wine. The Lords played cricket with their gardeners and drank with their courtesans, nor were the cabinet members ashamed to appear drunk before their Monarch[122]. A good sing was that duels tended to disappear, especially because of Richard "Beau" Nash, master of ceremonies at Bath, who prohibited visitors to wear swords[123]. Also, as competition for influence was characteristic of the high society, women were also part of the huge networks of favours and acquaintances, them too being important in the race for power. However, in the political arena, they often expressed frustration due to gender discrimination[124]. Referring to politics, the Duchess of Marlborough wrote in her diary: "I am sensible...that what I am going to write may seem impertinent, because my simple sex are not allowed to be judges in such matters" [125].

[120] H. T. Dickinson, *op. cit*., p. 13.
[121] *Ibidem*.
[122] André Maurois, *op. cit*., p. 494.
[123] *Ibidem*, p. 496.
[124] Ingrid H. Tague, *Women of Quality*: *Accepting and Contesting Ideals of Femminity in England*, *1690-1760*, The Boydell Press, Suffolk, 2002, p. 217
[125] *Ibidem*, p. 216.

