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LORD BOLINGBROKE'S THEORY OF PARTY AND OPPOSITION*

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ABSTRACT. *Bolingbroke has been overlooked by intellectual historians in the last few decades, at least in comparison with 'canonical' thinkers. This article examines one of the most important but disputable aspects of his political thought: his views on political parties and his theory of opposition. It aims to demonstrate that Bolingbroke's views on party have been misunderstood and that it is possible to think of him as an advocate of political parties rather than the 'anti-party' writer he is commonly known as. It has been suggested that Bolingbroke prescribed a state without political parties. By contrast, this article seeks to show that Bolingbroke was in fact the promoter of a very specific party, a systematic parliamentary opposition party in resistance to what he perceived as the Court Whig faction in power. It will also be argued that Bolingbroke at no time envisaged a final end to political conflict and that his opposition party should not be interpreted as a party to end all parties.*

I

Britain in the Augustan Age was notorious for its party strife. Voltaire observed in his *Letters concerning the English nation* (1733–4) that the prevalence of the spirit of party in the country meant that '[o]ne half of the nation [was] always the enemy of the other'.[1] Political parties had yet to become accepted in British political discourse, however, and they were often described as pernicious. This article will investigate the contribution of Henry St John, 1st

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* I have benefited from comments by Adrian Blau, Tim Hochstrasser, Paul Keenan, Robin Mills, and Paul Stock, as well as conversations with Richard Bourke, J. C. D. Clark, and Quentin Skinner at various stages of this project. I would also like to thank the *Historical Journal*'s anonymous reviewers for their feedback. As usual, however, the buck stops with the writer. I presented an earlier and shorter version of this article at the inaugural Early Modern Intellectual History Postgraduate Conference at Newcastle University in June 2015. Eighteenth-century spelling has been kept in quotations throughout as have inconsistencies in spelling. All changes and additions are marked by square brackets. New style rather than old style has been employed with regards to dates, i.e. where necessary years have been adjusted to start on 1 January rather than on 25 March.

[1] Voltaire, *Philosophical letters, or, letters regarding the English nation* (Indianapolis, IN, and Cambridge, 2007), p. 92. The work was first published in English in 1733 and then in French the following year.

Viscount Bolingbroke (1678–1751) to the eighteenth-century debate about the role of parties in the political process, a subject which has not been at the forefront of recent Bolingbroke research, including that of Adrian Lashmore-Davies and David Armitage.[2] In the process, the commonplace caricature of Bolingbroke as the paradigmatic anti-party writer of the eighteenth century will be challenged.

Bolingbroke has influentially been portrayed as the 'standard anti-party writer' and the 'fountain-head of anti-party thought'.[3] It has also often been suggested that he tried but failed to illustrate an idea of a non-party state.[4] By contrast, the aim of the present article is to demonstrate that Bolingbroke's views on party have been misrepresented, and that, in important respects, it is possible to think of him as an advocate of political parties rather than the anti-party writer he is commonly known as. This article seeks to show that Bolingbroke was in fact the promoter of a very specific party, a systematic parliamentary opposition party in resistance to what he perceived as the Court Whig faction in power. When this political party has been acknowledged in existing literature, it has almost exclusively been construed as 'a party to end all parties', as recently by such political theorists as Nancy Rosenblum and Russell Muirhead.[5] Moreover, Bolingbroke has been associated with the anti-party catchphrase 'not men, but measures'.[6] I intend to demonstrate not only that these slogans were never used by Bolingbroke but also that they are arguably incompatible with his political writings.[7]

[2] Adrian Lashmore-Davies, 'Viscount Bolingbroke and the moral reform of politics, 1710–1738' (D.Phil. thesis, Cambridge, 2004); David Armitage, 'A patriot for whom? The afterlives of Bolingbroke's *Patriot king*', *Journal of British Studies*, 36 (1997), pp. 397–418. Armitage has also written the introduction to the Cambridge edition of Bolingbroke's *Political writings* (1997). Christine Gerrard's masterly study of the patriot opposition to Walpole has the identification of a *patriot* opposition distinguished from Tory as its main focus and not strictly Bolingbroke's party thought, see idem, *The patriot opposition to Walpole: politics, poetry and national myth, 1727–1742* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 12, 16, passim.

[3] Richard Hofstadter, *The idea of a party system: the rise of legitimate opposition in the United States, 1780–1840* (Berkeley, CA, 1970), pp. 10, 18; Terence Ball, 'Party', in Terence Ball, James Farr, and Russell L. Hanson, eds., *Political innovation and conceptual change* (1989) (Cambridge, 1995), p. 170. There are exceptions, however, to the prevalent view of Bolingbroke as an anti-party thinker, e.g. Kurt Kluxen, *Das Problem der Politischen Opposition: Entwicklung und Wesen der Englischen Zweiparteienpolitik im 18. Jahrhundert* (Munich, 1956), esp. pp. 103–19.

[4] Caroline Robbins, '"Discordant parties": a study of the acceptance of party by Englishmen', *Political Science Quarterly*, 37 (1958), p. 507; H. N. Fieldhouse, 'Bolingbroke and the idea of non-party government', *History*, 23 (1938), pp. 41–56.

[5] Nancy L. Rosenblum, *On the side of the angels: an appreciation of parties and partisanship* (Princeton, NJ, 2008), pp. 35–6; Russell Muirhead, *The promise of party in a polarized age* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 2014), p. 39.

[6] Harvey C. Mansfield, *Statesmanship and party government: a study of Burke and Bolingbroke* (Chicago, IL, and London, 1965), p. 179.

[7] On the one occasion I have found Bolingbroke using 'men' and 'measures' in the same sentence, he spoke of their inter-relation: 'do not drop your protest against the *men & the measures* that ruine it [the country]', see Bolingbroke to Wyndham, 18 Nov. 1739, in Adrian

This article will consider Bolingbroke's theory of opposition, which is closely linked to his views on party. It can be argued that his advocacy of organized opposition represents a watershed in the intellectual history of party in the eighteenth century, since no formal opposition party existed at the time and opposition was widely seen as illegitimate.[8] This is not to suggest that Bolingbroke conceived of an organized opposition as something akin to a 'modern' opposition party, enshrined in the constitution. It is necessary to bear in mind that Bolingbroke could only have been familiar with eighteenth-century parties, which were less organized and systematic than those of the present day. For similar reasons, it would be anachronistic to investigate whether Bolingbroke anticipated a two-party system or party government.[9]

As a caveat, we have to recognize that Bolingbroke was not a consistent political philosopher. He was often imprecise in his employment of terms and concepts, but he nonetheless had a profound impact on writers widely perceived as greater minds than himself, for example David Hume and Montesquieu.[10] What this article will seek to reflect is that many scholars and commentators have arguably been too confident when portraying him as an anti-party thinker. They do have strong textual evidence in their favour, not least all the times Bolingbroke said he disliked parties, both in public and private.[11] This article will demonstrate, however, that there is ample evidence – both textual

Lashmore-Davies, ed., *The unpublished letters of Henry St John, First Viscount Bolingbroke* (5 vols., London, 2013), v, p. 249 (hence: *Unpublished letters*).

[8] This interpretation differs widely with that of J. A. W. Gunn, who has argued that Bolingbroke's writings on the subject 'contributed little to the understanding of party conflict'; see idem, *Factions no more: attitudes to party in government and opposition in eighteenth-century England* (London, 1972), p. 95. It is also starkly different from the reading of Alexander Pettit, who dismisses what 'Bolingbroke and his fellow travellers imagined the opposition [to be]' in favour of 'what the opposition really was'; see idem, *Illusory consensus: Bolingbroke and the polemical response to Walpole, 1730–1737* (Newark, NJ, 1997), p. 25. As Herbert Butterfield reminded us half a century ago, 'a great proportion of the existence of party lies in the realm of human thought', see idem, *George III and the historians* (1957) (London, 1988), p. 223.

[9] G. M. Trevelyan's attempt to write the history of the eighteenth century as a two-party struggle between Whig and Tory has long been demolished by Sir Lewis Namier and his followers; see G. M. Trevelyan, *The two-party system in English political history* (Oxford, 1926), p. 6, passim; Lewis Namier, *The structure of politics and the accession of George III* (1929) (London, 1963), p. xi. It is important to note, however, that Namier later came to the conclusion that the forerunners to modern parties were to be found in the factions vying for power in parliament in the eighteenth century, see Namier, 'Monarchy and the party system' (1952), in idem, *Crossroads to power: essays on eighteenth-century England* (London, 1962), p. 234. The view of the present author is simply that the concept of party in the eighteenth century has to be understood on its own terms and should not be conflated with the ideas of a two-party system and party government.

[10] For Hume's critical engagement with Bolingbroke, see Duncan Forbes, *Hume's philosophical politics* (1975) (Cambridge, 1985), esp. pp. 192–222. It has long been established that Montesquieu learned about British politics from Bolingbroke's writings in the *Craftsman*, see Robert Shackleton, *Montesquieu: a critical biography* (Oxford, 1961), pp. 54, 126–7, 297–301.

[11] See, for example, Bolingbroke to Jonathan Swift [Aug. 1723], in George Sherburn, ed., *The correspondence of Alexander Pope* (5 vols., Oxford, 1956), II, pp. 187–9.

and contextual – pointing in the opposite direction. It will also reflect that he was read as a party thinker rather than an anti-party thinker by his contemporaries and immediate posterity, and his contribution to the intellectual history of party should therefore not be neglected.

II

Like Machiavelli, one of Bolingbroke's favourite authors, Bolingbroke turned to writing in enforced political exile. Having been a prominent member of the Tory administration of 1710–14 and the chief negotiator of the Treaty of Utrecht, Bolingbroke fled to France shortly after George I, the elector of Hanover, ascended the British throne in 1714, an event which instigated what he would later describe as the millenarian year of Whiggism.[12] His decision to take up a position at the court of James III, the Stuart Pretender, whom he served for less than a year, prevented him from returning to Britain until the mid-1720s. When he was eventually allowed to return, he remained barred from taking up his seat in the House of Lords. Deprived of a political voice in parliament, he launched the *Craftsman* journal with the opposition Whig William Pulteney in 1726. Bolingbroke and the *Craftsman* were part of a wider intellectual opposition against Walpole and the new political and economic order that emerged in the early Hanoverian era, an opposition comprising such intellectual luminaries as Jonathan Swift, Alexander Pope, John Gay, Dr Arbuthnot, and Henry Fielding.[13]

Almost all of Bolingbroke's political writings are historical to a greater or lesser degree, and vice versa. History for Bolingbroke was 'philosophy teaching by examples', and party and faction were always at the heart of his historical enquiries.[14] His first ostensibly historical writing, *Remarks on the history of England*, was serialized in the *Craftsman* from June 1730 to May the following year. It abounds with references to contemporary political disputes, as when he called ministerial writers who defended the maintenance of a standing army in peacetime as 'doctors of slavery'.[15] Being actively engaged in opposition

[12] Letter addressed to an unnamed Lord [c. 1750], printed in *Unpublished letters*, pp. 304–10. Unlike Lashmore-Davies, I believe that this letter should be regarded as a draft of a political essay, probably not intended for wider publication, rather than a piece of correspondence. In terms of tone, style, spelling, and grammar, it is much closer to Bolingbroke's political writings than his private correspondence. Bolingbroke's political writings usually took the form of letters. I will henceforth refer to it as ['Reflections on Walpole'].

[13] J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian moment: Florentine political thought and the Atlantic republican tradition* (1975) (Princeton, NJ, and Oxford, 2003), pp. 477–86, passim; Isaac Kramnick, *Bolingbroke and his circle: the politics of nostalgia in the age of Walpole* (1968) (Ithaca, NY, and London, 1992), pp. 205–35.

[14] Bolingbroke, *Letters on the study and use of history* (1735), in idem, *The works of the late Right Honourable Henry St. John, Lord Viscount Bolingbroke* (5 vols., London, 1754), II, p. 9 (hence: *Works*).

[15] Bolingbroke, *Remarks on the history of England* (1730–1), in *Works*, I, p. 490 (hence: *Remarks*). For the ministerial press, see Reed Browning, *Political and constitutional ideas of the*

at a time when such activities were regarded as morally and legally dubious, Bolingbroke's perhaps most important intention in the *Remarks* was to show that oppositional activity had historically not been factious but had on the contrary been necessary for liberty, which for him meant the survival of the free and mixed constitution.[16]

Bolingbroke conceived of the history of England as an epic battle between the spirit of liberty and the spirit of faction. Although party and faction were often used interchangeably in the period, faction in this context should not be confused with the concept of party as Bolingbroke made a distinction between the two terms. A distinction between party and faction had been expressed as early as 1717 by William Paterson, the founder of the Bank of England, who argued that parties were usually tame and 'capable of Good, as well as Hurt, of Love as well as Hatred', unlike factions, which 'hate, but love not, are hurtful in their Nature, and chiefly produces Enmity'.[17] Bolingbroke's own journal, the *Craftsman*, in 1739, during Bolingbroke's second exile in France, defined party as 'a national Division of Opinions, concerning the *Form* and *Methods of Government*, for the benefit of the *whole Community*', and faction as 'a Set of Men arm'd with *Power*, and acting upon no one Principle of *Party*, or any Notion of *Publick Good*, but to preserve and share the Spoils amongst *Themselves*, as their only Cement'.[18]

Bolingbroke's distinction between party and faction runs along similar lines. In his ironic dedication to Sir Robert Walpole prefixed to the publication of his *Dissertation upon parties* in book form in 1735,[19] Bolingbroke said that '[t]here may be such a conduct, as no national party will bear, or at least will justify. But faction hath no regard to national interests. Factions therefore will bear any thing, justify any thing.'[20] Factions struggle for power, not principle, Bolingbroke argued.[21] Numbers are a good benchmark for whether a cause is national or factional: '[p]rivate motives can never influence numbers. When a nation revolts, the injury is national.'[22] Bolingbroke's favourite

Court Whigs (Baton Rouge, LA, and London, 1982); Simon Targett, 'Government and ideology during the Age of Whig Supremacy: the political argument of Sir Robert Walpole's newspaper propagandists', *Historical Journal*, 37 (1994), pp. 289–317.

[16] For Bolingbroke's linkage between liberty and the preservation of the integrity of the constitution, see Bolingbroke, *A dissertation upon parties* (1733–4), in idem, *Political writings* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 169 (hence: *Dissertation*).

[17] William Paterson, *An enquiry into the state of the union of Great Britain...* (London, 1717), p. 45.

[18] *The Country Journal, or the Craftsman*, 674, 9 June 1739.

[19] Bolingbroke referred to the work as his 'Epistle to Sir Rob', see *Unpublished letters*, v, p. 123.

[20] Bolingbroke, *Dedication to Sir Robert Walpole* (1735), in *Works*, ii, pp. 14–15 (hence: *Dedication*). See also idem, ['Reflections on Walpole'], in *Unpublished letters*, v, p. 307.

[21] Bolingbroke, *Dissertation*, p. 76. See also ['Reflections on Walpole'], in *Unpublished letters*, v, p. 308.

[22] Bolingbroke, *Dissertation*, p. 86.

historical example of a national party that had degenerated into faction were the Whigs under Queen Anne, who, in Bolingbroke's biased rendition, had initially adhered to the Protestant Settlement out of honourable zeal for the nation's liberty and religion, but this 'national interest became soon a secondary and subservient motive' and they started to care more about the establishment of their own administration rather than a peaceful settlement of the House of Hanover.[23]

The message was that Walpole was not the leader of a national party but a court faction – a very different beast. According to Bolingbroke, a national party 'will always retain some national principles, some regard to the constitution', which meant that 'a national party will never be the instruments of completing national ruin', unlike a faction.[24] Accordingly, 'the minister who persists in so villainous a project…will be found really at the head of a faction, not of a party'.[25] For Bolingbroke, 'the difference between one and the other is so visible, and the boundaries where party ceases and faction commences, are so strongly marked, that it is sufficient to point at them',[26] even though a faction will always seek to hide 'under the name and appearance of a national party'.[27]

The spirit of faction is thus the prioritizing of private interest at the expense of the public good, whereas the spirit of liberty denotes a willingness to do whatever it takes to put the common good first. The former was a preoccupation for Bolingbroke from his earliest political writings, as he was concerned 'that private interest [had] become the criterion, by which judgments are formed upon public affairs'.[28] The two spirits 'are not only different, but repugnant and incompatible: so that the life of either is the death of the other'.[29] Bolingbroke was a great admirer of Queen Elizabeth, whose reign he described as a golden age, and he never tired of praising her for uniting the kingdom.[30] Throughout history, however, the spirit of liberty often found its outlets in opposition to powerful monarchs. This jealous spirit of liberty was something he sought to reinvigorate in his contemporaries, but directed at the chief minister rather than the monarch. In his historical writings, he often drew attention to unpopular ministers and court favourites in the past, e.g. the duke of Buckingham under James I, and James II's Thomas Clifford, who is alleged to have begun the practice of corrupting parliaments.[31]

[23] Bolingbroke, *Of the state of parties at the accession of King George the First* (1739), in *Works*, III, pp. 137–8 (hence: *State of parties*).
[24] Bolingbroke, *Dissertation*, pp. 99–100.
[25] Ibid., p. 100.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Bolingbroke, *Dedication*, in *Works*, II, p. 15.
[28] Bolingbroke, *The occasional writer in the Craftsman*, 2, 3 Feb. 1727, in *Works*, I, p. 147.
[29] Bolingbroke, *Remarks*, in *Works*, I, p. 292.
[30] Ibid., pp. 390–423, passim. For the Elizabethan cult in the 1730s, see Gerrard, *The patriot opposition to Walpole*, pp. 150–84.
[31] Bolingbroke, *Remarks*, in *Works*, I, p. 513; Bolingbroke, *Dissertation*, p. 27.

Being in opposition to the Court Whigs, Bolingbroke had to explode the belief that faction was only to be found in opposition to the court and demonstrate that it could equally be found *at* court. His favourite tactic was to associate the ministerial position against 'factious opposition' with absolutist theories, of which he saw James I as an exponent.[32] '[H]e, who confines his notions of faction to oppositions made to the crown, reasons, in an absolute monarchy, in favor of the constitution', he wrote in the *Remarks*.[33] He sought to show that the reign of James I, and that of his son Charles I, demonstrated how the spirit of faction *at* court could lead the country wayward. It was not solely the royalist faction that was responsible for pushing the country into civil war at mid-century, but Bolingbroke believed that '[t]he faction of the court tainted the nation, and gave life and strength, if it did not give being, to the factions in the state'.[34] Opposition could thus be a counter-factional measure: 'If there had not been an early and honest opposition, in defence of national liberty, against King James, his reign would have sufficed to establish him in the seat of arbitrary power.'[35]

The key move made by Bolingbroke was thus that he associated opposition to the court with the spirit of liberty. He began the *Remarks* by setting out that 'liberty cannot be long secure, in any country, unless a perpetual jealousy watches over it'.[36] This jealousy has to be 'permanent and equal'.[37] The reason is straightforward: Bolingbroke viewed the love of power as natural and insatiable.[38] Consequently, liberty was always 'in some degree of danger under every government'.[39] The fear of losing liberty is common to all and 'may become a general principle of union'.[40] This perpetual jealousy, if well grounded, 'may have the good effect of destroying a wicked minister, of checking a bad, or of reclaiming a misguided prince'.[41] James I was an exemplar of the latter and Walpole of the former.

There is little doubt that Bolingbroke's motivation was the destruction of Walpole whom he perceived as a nefarious minister.[42] Bolingbroke has wrongly been associated with the 'not men, but measures' opposition slogan,

[32] Bolingbroke, *Dissertation*, p. 120; idem, *The idea of a patriot king* (1738), in *Political writings* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 243 (hence: *Patriot king*).
[33] Bolingbroke, *Remarks*, in *Works*, I, p. 439.
[34] Ibid., pp. 460–1.
[35] Ibid., p. 492.
[36] Ibid., p. 278.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid., p. 279. Bolingbroke admitted in private that 'I have been fond of power', see *Unpublished letters*, V, p. 236.
[39] Bolingbroke, *Remarks*, in *Works*, I, p. 284.
[40] Ibid., p. 282.
[41] Ibid., p. 288.
[42] Bolingbroke to Wyndham, 25 Jan. 1740, in William Coxe, *Memoirs of the life and administration of Sir Robert Walpole, earl of Orford, with original correspondence and authentic papers, never published before* (3 vols., London, 1798), III, p. 554. See also H. T. Dickinson, *Bolingbroke* (London, 1970), p. 173, passim.

as by Harvey Mansfield.[43] While Bolingbroke never used this catchphrase in his public writings, it is true that he paid lip service to similar lines of thought, as when he discussed the Wars of the Roses in the *Remarks*. He described the war between the House of Lancaster and the House of York as a conflict about who should govern rather than how they should be governed, and he argued that the latter was worth contending for, as in the civil war preceding *Magna Carta*, whereas the former 'ought always to be looked upon with great indifference'.[44] However, almost certainly with Walpole in mind, Bolingbroke added a crucial qualification: 'except in cases where [the personnel] has so immediate and necessary a relation to the [measures of government], that securing the first depends, in a great measure, on settling the last'.[45]

Bolingbroke understood the controversial potential of his argument about the necessity of a perpetual jealous spirit of liberty, and he felt compelled to add the caveat that 'I do not mean to recommend your seditious, rebellious spirit, which will create a perpetual scene of tumult and disorder.'[46] It is clear, however, that Bolingbroke believed that we have to accept a degree of tumult and disorder: 'We must be content…to bear the disorder I apprehend from that ferment', he argued, 'which a perpetual jealousy of the governors in the governed will keep up, rather than abandon that spirit, the life of which is the life of liberty.'[47] In the ministerial press, the jealous spirit of liberty was equated with 'opposition' and 'contention' and was described as a '*dreadful State*'.[48]

It is not without significance that Bolingbroke at this point in the *Remarks* refers to the works of Machiavelli, who had notoriously argued that tumult in the Roman Republic between different orders in the state had been a blessing rather than a curse.[49] Bolingbroke does not draw attention to this controversial strand in Machiavelli, but instead refers to another lesson from Machiavelli's *Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio* (c. 1513–17), namely that the best governments are such 'which by the natural effect of their original constitutions are frequently renewed or drawn back…to their first principles'.[50] The fact that the state has subsisted is sufficient evidence that its first principles are sound. In other words, the purpose of Bolingbroke's opposition would not be to

[43] Mansfield, *Statesmanship and party government*, p. 179.
[44] Bolingbroke, *Remarks*, in *Works*, I, p. 336.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid., p. 278.
[47] Ibid., p. 287.
[48] *London Journal*, 570, 4 July 1730.
[49] Machiavelli, *The discourses*, in idem, *The chief works and others* (3 vols., Durham, NC, 1965), I, pp. 202–4 (Book I, ch. IV). Montesquieu advanced a similar argument in *Considérations sur les causes de la grandeur des Romains et de leur décadence* (1734); see Melvin Richter, *The political theory of Montesquieu* (Cambridge, 1977), p. 161; Paul A. Rahe, 'Montesquieu's anti-Machiavellian Machiavellianism', *History of European Ideas*, 37 (2011), pp. 129–30.
[50] Bolingbroke, *Remarks*, in *Works*, I, p. 289. See also Machiavelli, *The discourses*, in idem, *The chief works and others*, I, p. 419 (Book III, ch. I).

innovate but to reform the state by drawing it back to its foundation, by which he meant the Revolutionary Settlement of 1688–9, which he, unlike some ministerial writers, viewed as a reassertion of ancient liberties rather than a new beginning.[51] His oppositional theory, which will be discussed at greater length below, is thus related to his belief in the myth of the ancient constitution.[52] At this point in time, it was self-evident that opposition had to take the form of 'zeal for the constitution' rather than 'zeal for this or that party'.[53] This elucidates why he spent so much of his later *Dissertation upon parties* (1733–4) on attempting to explain the British constitution, which was far from unambiguous. Universally described as a mixed constitution – combining monarchy, aristocracy and democracy – the constitution was uncodified and there was no unanimity as to how the mixture ought to work in practice.[54]

Bolingbroke was guarded about associating himself with Machiavelli, and he felt obliged to qualify his reference by saying that he 'would not advise you to admit the works of MACHIAVEL into your cannon of political writings; yet…in them, as in other apocryphal books, many excellent things are interspersed'.[55] One of those excellent things was Machiavelli's argument about first principles, and it was also considered a safe reference in an age where innovation was widely seen as evil and zeal for the revolutionary settlement – whether conceived as a new beginning or a reassertion of ancient liberties – was mainstream.

In the third letter of the *Remarks*, Bolingbroke hit out at the ministerial writer James Pitt, who wrote for the *London Journal* under the pseudonym of Francis Osborne.[56] On 4 July 1730, Pitt had claimed that 'a Man of Sense…had much rather have liv'd under the Pacific Reign of *Augustus*, tho' cloath'd with all Power, than under *a Mob Government*, always quarrelling at *Home*, or fighting *Abroad*', referring to the 'perpetual Struggles between the *Senate* and

[51] For the ministerial counter-argument, see [Lord Hervey], *Ancient and modern liberty: stated and compar'd* (London, 1734), pp. 4–5, passim.

[52] For Bolingbroke's ancient constitutionalism, see *Dissertation*, pp. 81–2, 114–15. His views on the ancient constitution were of a peculiar kind: on the one hand, there was no need to look further back than 1688–9; on the other, the Glorious Revolution had been a reassertion of ancient liberties, see J. G. A. Pocock, *The ancient constitution and the feudal law: a study of English historical thought in the seventeenth century: a reissue with a retrospect* (New York, NY, 1957, 1987), pp. 231–2. This is the appropriate context for Bolingbroke's party thought as opposed to the unhistorical approach of Isaac Kramnick, who, by reading Bolingbroke through the prism of Harold Macmillan, Rab Butler, and Quintin Hogg, argues that 'Bolingbroke set forth the Tory theory of party that still holds today [in the 1960s]', i.e. the idea of a national 'status quo' party whose *raison d'être* was to oppose change, see idem, *Bolingbroke and his circle*, pp. 157–9.

[53] Bolingbroke, *Dissertation*, p. 122. See also idem, *Dedication*, in *Works*, II, pp. 24–5.

[54] David Lieberman, 'The mixed constitution and the common law', in Mark Goldie and Robert Wokler, eds., *The Cambridge history of eighteenth-century political thought* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 317–46.

[55] Bolingbroke, *Remarks*, in *Works*, I, pp. 164–5.

[56] Targett, 'Government and ideology during the Age of Whig Supremacy', p. 290, passim.

the *People*', which had been defended by Machiavelli.[57] Bolingbroke recommended to Pitt Thomas Gordon's 'excellent' discourses, prefixed to his translation of Tacitus, in which he portrayed Augustus as a tyrant.[58] For all Gordon's sneers at parties and factions, he nevertheless held that 'a free State the worst constituted, as was that of Florence, is, with all its disorders, factions, and tumults, preferable to any absolute Monarchy, however calm'.[59] Gordon was also a careful reader of Machiavelli, and it is the tradition that found tumult and discord preferable to the calmness of absolute states to which the present author would suggest that Bolingbroke belongs, rather than in the anti-party tradition of holism in which he is placed by Nancy Rosenblum.[60]

Bolingbroke's next central opposition tract, *A dissertation upon parties*, serialized in the *Craftsman* between October 1733 and December 1734, is very historical in nature, as its explicit intention is to make 'an enquiry into the rise and progress of our late parties; or a short history of Toryism and Whiggism from their cradle to their grave, with an introductory account of their genealogy and descent'.[61] The kernel of Bolingbroke's argument is that Tory and Whig had become redundant as national parties as there was no disagreement about the fundamentals of the British constitution, at least not among those he regarded as honest Whigs such as his political ally Pulteney. When they came into being during the Exclusion Crisis of 1679–81, there had been real differences at stake, with the Tories espousing divine right, lineal succession and passive obedience to the monarch whereas the Whigs sought to exclude the Catholic duke of York from the succession to the throne.[62] The Glorious Revolution of 1688–9, which was carried out by a coalition of parties, 'was a fire, which purged off the dross of both parties; and the dross being purged off, they appeared to be the same metal, and answered the same standard'.[63] The Whigs and Tories had no need to fear each other after the revolution, as they both had purged themselves of their extreme doctrines, republicanism and divine right theories respectively. While the real essence of the parties had been destroyed, the names had survived for factious purposes and continued to haunt and divide the political nation like ghosts, Bolingbroke argued.[64]

[57] *London Journal*, 570, 4 July 1730.

[58] Bolingbroke, *Remarks*, in *Works*, I, p. 310. In the following issue of the *London Journal* on 18 July, Pitt defended and repeated his claim but toned it down by removing the phrase 'mob government' as a description of the Roman Republic.

[59] [Thomas Gordon], *The works of Tacitus. Containing the annals. To which are prefixed political discourses upon that author* (2 vols., London, 1728–31), I, p. 60.

[60] Rosenblum, *On the side of the angels*, p. 36. The association of Bolingbroke with this holist tradition is arguably misguided for many reasons, not least that he was such a staunch advocate of the mixed constitution, which is a separate tradition in Rosenblum's account, a tradition that accepted pluralism without accepting parties; see ibid., pp. 81–9.

[61] Bolingbroke, *Dissertation*, p. 12.

[62] Ibid., p. 5.

[63] Ibid., p. 65.

[64] Ibid., pp. 70, 61.

More specifically, he accused the Court Whigs in power for having turned into a faction that sought to keep alive artificial party distinctions for their own benefit.[65]

The claim that Whig and Tory had become redundant was not new but little more than a repetition of that in *Cato's letters* more than a decade earlier.[66] It was a powerful tool for Bolingbroke's polemical purposes, however, as it allowed him to portray Walpole as a divider.[67] As mentioned in the introduction, Bolingbroke has often been portrayed as an anti-party writer. This is certainly true if we take it to mean a denial of the relevance of the Whig and Tory labels in the context of the 1730s. Bolingbroke's criticism of Whig and Tory should not, however, be construed as an attack on party per se. For all his scorn of party passion, he is fairly consistently, as we have seen, differentiating between a national party seeking to address a national grievance and a faction interested in maximizing its power. Indeed, his attack on Whig and Tory was reported by ministerial pamphleteers as a partisan rather than an anti-partisan position.[68]

As the old parties had long been irrelevant, a national union had become a possibility, Bolingbroke argued. The political nation was still divided, however, and instead of Whig and Tory Bolingbroke believed that 'new combinations force themselves upon us', namely the Country and Court parties.[69] It is to these parties that this article must now turn.

III

The *Dissertation upon parties* abounds with anti-party comments, as when Bolingbroke speaks of the 'spirit of party' (not faction, this time) as a spirit that '[i]nspires animosity and breeds rancour, which hath so often destroyed our inward peace, weakened our national strength, and sullied our glory abroad'.[70] He also makes a distinction between moral and party justice, with the former being based on reason, while the latter 'takes its colour from the passions of men, and is but another name for injustice'.[71] The historical example of

[65] Bolingbroke, *Dedication*, in *Works*, II, p. 12.

[66] John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, *Cato's letters* (1720–3), ed. Ronald Hamowy (4 vols., Indianapolis, IN, 1995), III, p. 65 (no. 80, 9 June 1722).

[67] Bolingbroke, *Dissertation*, p. 3. See also idem, *Dedication*, in *Works*, II, p. 13.

[68] [William Arnall], *Opposition no proof of patriotism: with some observations and advice concerning party-writings* (London, 1735), p. 18.

[69] Bolingbroke, *Dissertation*, p. 5. An historical debate raged in the latter half of the twentieth century – with J. H. Plumb, William Speck, and J. C. D. Clark among the protagonists – about whether Court and Country or Tory and Whig best described political realities in the 1714–60 period. This is not the place to resuscitate that debate; it suffices to say that for Bolingbroke's polemical purposes, it was necessary to promote the Court–Country polarity and play down the significance of Tory–Whig in the context of the 1730s.

[70] Bolingbroke, *Dissertation*, p. 6.

[71] Ibid., p. 17.

the Whigs following the accession of George I in 1714 is probably the precedent closest to Bolingbroke's heart. Bolingbroke writes that he wants 'to change the narrow spirit of party into a diffusive spirit of public benevolence'.[72] He is invoking the memory of George Savile, 1st marquis of Halifax, also known as the great Trimmer, as someone who tried to 'allay this extravagant [party] ferment'.[73]

And, yet, it is clear that Bolingbroke was not simply trying to narrate that Britain was divided into Court and Country parties but that he was trying to promote the latter.[74] He divided the political landscape into three camps: (1) those who were enemies of the government but friends of the constitution, i.e. his own Country party; (2) those who were enemies of both, i.e. the Jacobites; (3) those who were friends of the government but enemies of the constitution, i.e. the Court Whigs.[75] He claimed that he was only interested in the first and the third division since the Jacobites were so few and insignificant.[76] Bolingbroke was far from neutral when he argued that the first division 'might hope to unite even the bulk of the nation to them, in a weak and oppressive regime', in opposition to the third, around which 'our greatest and almost our whole danger centres'.[77]

In sharp contrast to the Court party, '[a] Country party must be authorized by the voice of the country'.[78] Such a party had the potential to unite Whigs and Tories, as '[i]t must be formed on principles of common interest. It cannot be united and maintained on the particular prejudices, and more than it can, or ought to be, directed to the particular interests of any set of men whatsoever.'[79] The Country party was an opposition party whose *raison d'être* was to defeat what was perceived as Walpole's system of corruption. Bolingbroke used corruption to denote executive influence over the legislature as well as in the Machiavellian sense of degeneration of civic *virtù*. The Country party had a distinct ideology that emphasized the importance of the independency of parliament from crown influence, support of the landed, and sometimes the traded interest in opposition to the moneyed interest, and a preference

[72] Ibid., p. 6.

[73] Ibid., p. 48. For Halifax's writings on party, see Gunn, *Factions no more*, pp. 41–5. See also Klaus von Beyme, 'Partei, Faktion', in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland* (7 vols., Stuttgart, 1972–92), IV (1978), pp. 689–90.

[74] Bolingbroke, *Dissertation*, pp. 61, 187.

[75] Ibid., pp. 85, 177.

[76] Bolingbroke's utterances on Jacobitism in the 1730s should not be viewed as statements of facts; J. C. D. Clark has shown that dynastic politics remained a crucial aspect of politics up until mid-century; see idem, *Dynamics of change: the crisis of the 1750s and English party systems* (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 24–5; idem, *English society, 1660–1832: religion, ideology and politics during the ancien regime* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 107, 362–3. See also Eveline Cruickshanks, *Political untouchables: the Tories and the '45* (London, 1979), passim. The significance of the dynastic dimension along with his own past made it all the more important for Bolingbroke to play down the significance of Jacobitism.

[77] Bolingbroke, *Dissertation*, pp. 85, 86.

[78] Ibid., p. 37.

[79] Ibid.

for a citizen militia and a strong navy as opposed to the standing army.[80] Both the Whig and Tory parties had had Country elements since the Glorious Revolution, but they had usually only collaborated on specific issues, e.g. the standing army question in 1697–8.[81] Bolingbroke wanted to turn this occasional Country coalition into a permanent political force and this was the aspiration of his joint enterprise with Pulteney.[82]

The Court Whigs under Walpole had moved closer to the Church of England, as they felt they could count blindly on the support of the Dissenters, and Walpole had put an end to further favours to Dissenters.[83] Between 1723 and 1736, Walpole formed a formidable alliance with Edmund Gibson, the bishop of London. Bolingbroke sought to convince Protestant Dissenters, who were the natural enemies of high church Tories and an important ally of the Whigs, that they had nothing to fear from this new Country platform, even if it contained a strong Tory element: 'The principal articles of your [the Dissenters'] civil faith, published some time ago, or, to speak more properly, the civil faith of the Old Whigs, are assented and consented to by the Country party.'[84] Bolingbroke was here referring to 'Commonwealthmen' such as James Harrington, Robert Molesworth, Walter Moyle, John Trenchard, and John Toland, many of whom he had read and quoted in his political writings, especially in his criticism of the maintenance of the standing army in peacetime.[85] Bolingbroke told the Dissenters that there could be no doubt about which side they should espouse, as the principles they believed in were 'manifestly pursued' by the Country party whereas the Court party pursued 'those which they have opposed, or others equivalent to them in their effect'.[86]

[80] H. T. Dickinson, *Liberty and property: political ideology in eighteenth-century Britain* (London, 1977), pp. 163–92.

[81] Julian Hoppit, *A land of liberty? England, 1689–1727* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 155–61.

[82] David Mallet, who edited Bolingbroke's collected works, believed that the idea of a coalition of parties originated with Robert Harley (later the earl of Oxford), who was a leading figure in the Country opposition to the standing army in the 1690s, see David Mallet, *Memoirs of the life and ministerial conduct, with some free remarks on the political writings of the late Lord Viscount Bolingbroke* (London, 1752), p. 337. Bolingbroke began his parliamentarian and ministerial life, in 1701 and 1704 respectively, as an ally of Harley, but they became bitter rivals during the course of the 1710–14 Tory administration. For their relationship, see Sheila Biddle, *Bolingbroke and Harley* (London, 1975).

[83] Jeremy Black, *The politics of Britain, 1688–1800* (Manchester and New York, NY, 1993), p. 66.

[84] Bolingbroke, *Dissertation*, pp. 8–9.

[85] Bolingbroke, *Remarks*, in *Works*, I, pp. 350–1; idem, *Dissertation*, p. 69. For Bolingbroke's use of Old Whig political arguments, see Quentin Skinner, 'The principles and practice of opposition: the case of Bolingbroke versus Walpole', in Neil McKendrick, ed., *Historical perspectives: studies in English thought and society in honour of J. H. Plumb* (London, 1974), pp. 93–128. For the so-called commonwealth tradition, see Caroline Robbins, *The eighteenth-century Commonwealthman: studies in the transmission, development, and circumstances of English liberal thought from the restoration of Charles II until the war with the thirteen colonies* (1959) (Indianapolis, IN, 2004).

[86] Bolingbroke, *Dissertation*, p. 8. See also ibid., p. 187.

When it looks as if Bolingbroke is fairly unequivocally defending this particular form of political *party*, i.e. the Country party, he feels obliged to qualify his case: 'A party, thus constituted, is improperly called party. It is the nation, speaking and acting in the discourse and conduct of particular men.'[87] Be that as it may, he then continues to call it a party, as when he refers to the episode when the Court–Country polarity was substituted for Tory and Whig under Charles II: 'The dissolution of this *party* [i.e. the Country party], and the new division of the nation into Whig and Tory, brought us into extreme danger.'[88]

Bolingbroke concluded the *Dissertation* by arguing that both sides should agree 'to fix upon this principal and real distinction and difference; the present division of parties; *since parties we must have*; and since those which subsisted formerly are quite extinguished, notwithstanding all the wicked endeavours by some men…to revive them'.[89] Just as nothing could be more 'ridiculous' than to preserve the nominal division of Whig and Tory when the difference of principles no longer existed, 'so nothing can be more reasonable than to admit the nominal division of constitutionists and anti-constitutionists, or of a Court and a Country party, at this time, when an avowed difference of principles make this distinction possible'.[90] Bolingbroke leaned on the Country party ideology and held that this Country–Court polarity would be applicable as long as there were people 'who argue for, and who promote even a corrupt dependency of the members of the two houses of Parliament on the crown'.[91] The Court party had to be opposed by the Country party, for if the independency of parliament was lost, the constitution would be a 'dead letter'.[92] The rationale for and the nature of this opposition party will be further explored in the next section of the present article.

IV

Already in the *Remarks*, Bolingbroke had spelled out what he regarded as the proper characteristics of the business of opposition: opposition had to be commenced early and vigorously if the fundamentals of the free constitution were being attacked. He conceded that it was factious to oppose measures 'which are of no material consequence to the national interest'.[93] At the same time, he argued that 'it is likewise faction, and faction of the worst kind, either not to oppose at all, or not to oppose in earnest, when points of the greatest importance to the nation are concerned'.[94] In one of his earliest political writings in

[87] Ibid., p. 37.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid., pp. 185–6 (my italics).
[90] Ibid., p. 186.
[91] Ibid., pp. 186–7.
[92] Ibid., p. 187.
[93] Bolingbroke, *Remarks*, in *Works*, I, p. 492.
[94] Ibid.

the *Craftsman*, Bolingbroke in fact attacked neutrality per se, when he referred to ancient Athens where the citizen who took no side 'was branded for his infamous neutrality'.[95] Bolingbroke believed that '[o]ur duty must oblige us in all public disputes to take the best side, and to espouse it with warmth'.[96]

The main enterprise of the *Dissertation*, besides demonstrating the redundancy of the names of Tory and Whig and the relevance of a Court–Country division, was to specify why it was necessary to oppose Walpole, or the 'prime, or sole minister' as Bolingbroke mockingly referred to Walpole at a time when the office of prime minister had no official place in the British constitution.[97] As we saw in the previous section, Bolingbroke made use of the Country ideology to legitimize opposition. Justifying the need for opposition was a much harder task than it may seem, and Bolingbroke bemoaned that anyone who declared opposition to the administration was accused by the ministerial press of being either a Jacobite or a republican.[98] Walpole and the Court Whigs posed as the only ones who could be trusted as custodians of the Glorious Revolution of 1688–9, the Act of Settlement of 1701, and the Hanoverian succession of 1714, and the Tories had by and large been proscribed after George I's accession in 1714.[99] Bolingbroke had to find responses to all three points.

First, Bolingbroke argued that Walpole and the Court Whigs had not lived up to the principles of the Glorious Revolution. More specifically, Bolingbroke saw it as a chief end of the revolution to secure the nation against corruption, by which he meant a dependency of parliament on the court. The revolution was thus incomplete since the means for this technical sense of corruption (or influence) had increased massively in the decades after 1688–9, because of the larger revenue of the crown and the proliferation of government offices and employments, which had led to higher taxes and national debt.[100] In short, Bolingbroke was an enemy of the so-called financial revolution, which had seen the erection of the Bank of England and sovereign debt in the 1690s, and the creation of what he saw as a moneyed interest in opposition to the landed interest.[101] He believed that landowners and traders had to bear

[95] Bolingbroke, *The occasional writer in the Craftsman*, 3, 13 Feb. 1727, in *Works*, I, p. 180.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Bolingbroke, *Dedication*, in *Works*, II, p. 8.
[98] Bolingbroke, *Dissertation*, p. 49.
[99] See, for example, [Lord Hervey], *The conduct of the opposition and the tendency of modern patriotism...* (London, 1734), pp. 37, 40, passim. It would be wrong, however, to equate proscription with the erection of a monolithic one-party political landscape. Linda Colley has shown that the Tory party continued as a vigorous opposition party in the age of Whig ascendancy; see idem, *In defiance of oligarchy: the Tory party, 1714–1760* (Cambridge, 1982), p. 7, passim.
[100] Bolingbroke, *Dissertation*, pp. 84, 174, 177, 180; in Letter XII of the *Dissertation*, Bolingbroke replied to an article in the *London Journal* on 28 Sept. 1734 (issue 796) which defended this type of influence; see ibid., p. 121. See also ibid., p. 185.
[101] Bolingbroke, *Contributions to the Craftsman*, ed. Simon Varey (Oxford, 1982), pp. 34, 57–8; idem, *Some reflections on the present state of the nation, principally with regard to her taxes and her*

the cost of the ever-expanding state. One of the reasons why his Country platform was such a fierce opponent of the proposed excise scheme in 1733 was that the scheme would increase the number and powers of revenue officers and thus increase the number of people in the government's pay and consequently the government's reach.[102] Moreover, the revolution had provided for frequent parliaments and elections, but this had partly been overturned by the Septennial Act of 1716.[103] In a sentence, Bolingbroke wanted to show that the opposition could be better trusted to cherish the legacy of the Glorious Revolution, as 'the settlement then made is looked upon by the whole Country party as a new Magna Carta'.[104]

Secondly, Bolingbroke repeatedly argued that the Jacobite party had become an inconsiderable faction in the state, and that Jacobitism had nothing whatsoever to do with either him or his Country platform, as when he ridiculed the writings of the Jacobite Charles Leslie.[105] This was an essential move by Bolingbroke, as he had served the Pretender in 1715–16, and Walpole and the ministerial press never tired of portraying him as a Jacobite and a traitor.[106] Already in his vindication of 1716, he said that he was as anti-Catholic as any sensible Englishman and that he had tried to convince James III to convert to Protestantism.[107]

Thirdly, although the revenue of the crown had increased, Bolingbroke argued that the present royal family had not been net gainers under Walpole. In his dedicatory letter to the *Dissertation*, Bolingbroke argued that the security of the House of Hanover depended on the full completion of the Glorious

debts, and on the causes and consequences of them (1749), in *Works*, III, p. 174, passim. See also P. G. M. Dickson, *The financial revolution in England: a study in the development of public credit, 1688–1756* (London, 1967), pp. 18–28.

[102] Bolingbroke, *Dissertation*, p. 175; William Pulteney, *A review of the excise scheme...* (London, 1733), pp. 53–4. Excise was a question which could unite Whigs and Tories, since tradesmen and shopkeepers of both persuasions were strong opponents; see Paul Langford, *A polite and commercial people: England, 1727–1783* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 28–33.

[103] Bolingbroke, *Dissertation*, pp. 101–10. Frequent elections meant that 'there is not sufficient time given, to form a majority of the representatives into a ministerial cabal'; see ibid., p. 104. Bolingbroke recommended annual or at least triennial parliaments.

[104] Ibid., p. 9.

[105] Ibid.; see also ibid., pp. 5, 198; idem, *Remarks*, in *Works*, I, pp. 277, 299. These views were by and large consistent with those Bolingbroke expressed in private; see Bolingbroke to Wyndham, 25 Jan. 1740, in Coxe, *Memoirs of the life and administration of Sir Robert Walpole*, p. 555. However, Pulteney co-operated occasionally with William Shippen, the leader of the Jacobite rump, in the opposition activities in the Commons; see Archibald S. Foord, *His majesty's opposition, 1714–1830* (Oxford, 1964), p. 120. See also n. 76.

[106] Walpole's speech on the Excise Crisis in Lord Hervey, *Some materials towards memoirs of the reign of King George II* [1733–7], ed. Romney Sedgwick (3 vols., London, 1931), I, pp. 183–4; [Hervey], *Remarks on the Craftsman's vindication of his two honourable patrons* [Bolingbroke and Pulteney], *in his paper of May 22, 1731* (London, 1731), pp. 6, 28, passim; [Hervey], *The conduct of the opposition and the tendency of modern patriotism*, pp. 57–8; [Arnall], *Opposition no proof of patriotism*, pp. 17–18.

[107] Bolingbroke, *Letter to Windham*, in *Works*, I, pp. 90–1, 104–5.

Revolution.[108] Just as the violence of the Whigs had turned the Tories into Jacobites, the proscription of Tories and other political enemies had created unnecessary enemies for the royal family, and this was particularly ill-fated in a free government, as 'to hang up the tables of proscription, without the power to send the centurions to cut off every head that wears a face disliked at court, would be madness in a prince'.[109] The message was that George II could effectively kill off all remnants of Jacobitism within the Tory party by ending proscription.

In *A letter on the spirit of patriotism* (1736), Bolingbroke would elaborate on his oppositional theory. The text was originally not written for general distribution but for a smaller readership and this presumably gave him more freedom. The *Letter* is in one sense pessimistic in tone, which is not strange considering that Bolingbroke had a year earlier felt obliged to go into a second exile in France, partly because of the revelation of his closeness to the French government and partly because the opposition had 'failed' both during the excise crisis of 1733 and the general election of the following year.[110] He is not holding back when describing the gravity of the state of Britain, which he thinks had 'lost the spirit of [its] constitution' and become an oligarchy in the hands of '[o]ne party [the Court Whigs, which have] given their whole attention, during several years, to the project of enriching themselves, and impoverishing the rest of the nation'.[111] Bolingbroke expresses disappointment with the Country Tory–Whig coalition he had forged with Pulteney in 1726, which had missed two golden opportunities to bring down Walpole in 1733 and 1734. 'I expect little from the principal actors that tread the stage at present', he said, 'these men have been clogged, or misled, or overborne by others; and, seduced by natural temper to inactivity'.[112]

While Bolingbroke appears to have given up his coalition with Pulteney – he did indeed say in 1736 that he was 'quits with [his] friends, party friends I mean' – the *Letter* is far from defeatist.[113] 'I turn my eyes from the generation that is going off, to the generation that is coming on the stage', he wrote, referring to Lord Cornbury, the addressee of the *Letter*, along with the other 'boy patriots', a group of young opposition politicians which included William Pitt and George Lyttelton, who would later create an opposition group centred

[108] Bolingbroke, *Dedication*, in *Works*, II, p. 11.

[109] Ibid., p. 14.

[110] In a sense, the excise crisis was a success for the opposition, since Walpole decided to give up the excise scheme. In the longer run it was a failure, however, as Walpole manged to cling onto power after the general election of 1734, albeit with a reduced majority, see Dickinson, *Bolingbroke,* pp. 233–6, 240–6; idem, *Walpole and the Whig supremacy* (London, 1973), pp. 90, 96–8.

[111] Bolingbroke, *A letter on the spirit of patriotism* (1736), in idem, *Political writings* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 206, 198 (hence: *Spirit of patriotism*).

[112] Ibid., pp. 207–8.

[113] Bolingbroke to William Capel, 3rd earl of Essex, 30 May 1736, in *Unpublished letters*, V, p. 168.

around Frederick, the prince of Wales.[114] These young men, especially the young nobleman Cornbury, were destined to be 'the guardian angels of the country they inhabit'.[115] It was the duty of such people 'to oppose evil, and promote good government'.[116] Bolingbroke emphasized again and again that this opposition had to be strong and persistent. This is because he believed that not even the worst thinkable minister could do harm unless others supported him in his mischief, and, importantly, unless those who oppose him were 'faint and unsteady' in their conduct.[117] He argued that there was 'little difference…between opposing faintly and unsteadily and not opposing at all'.[118]

For all his talk about retirement, we learn from Bolingbroke's correspondence that he remained concerned about the business of opposition in parliament. In 1736, when Tory–Whig divisions were opened up over the Quakers Tithe and Mortmain Bills and the proposed repeal of the Test and Corporation Act – precisely the sort of debate as we saw above that Bolingbroke was eager to avoid with the Dissenters – Bolingbroke berated his brother-in-law Robert Knight, an opposition Whig and member of parliament for Great Grimsby: 'if you have broke the coalition by stating high whig points, whilst Torys have been kept so long from their old follys that they are weaned almost from 'em, the damage is great, & such as I apprehend it will be hard to repair'.[119]

Bolingbroke equated opposition with duty to one's country. His greatest fear was that many undertook opposition 'not as a duty, but as an adventure'.[120] These people 'look[ed] on themselves like volunteers, not like men listed in the service'.[121] It is clear that Bolingbroke sought to encourage these young noblemen to view opposition as an even higher duty than office. It was a tangible worry in the period that able opposition politicians were bought by bribes, government positions, and sinecures, since the executive had a great deal of patronage at its disposal. He asked rhetorically: 'To what higher station, to what greater glory can any mortal aspire, than to be, during the whole course of his life, the support of good, the control of bad government, and the guardian of public liberty?'[122] It was the duty of every politician 'to promote good, and to oppose bad government; and, if not vested with the

[114] Bolingbroke, *Spirit of patriotism*, p. 208. Baron Lyttelton was a political writer in his own right, perhaps best known for *Letters from a Persian in England to his friend at Ispahan* (1735), inspired by Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* (1721).

[115] Ibid., pp. 193, 195.

[116] Ibid., p. 197.

[117] Ibid., p. 198.

[118] Ibid., p. 200. See also *Unpublished letters*, p. 210.

[119] Bolingbroke to Robert Knight (later Lord Luxborough and earl of Catherlough), 25 June 1736, in *Unpublished letters*, v, p. 171. See also ibid., p. 185. For a review of the episode from the administration's perspective, see Stephen Taylor, 'Sir Robert Walpole, the Church of England, and the Quakers Tithe Bill of 1736', *Historical Journal*, 28 (1985), pp. 51–77.

[120] Bolingbroke, *Spirit of patriotism*, p. 201.

[121] Ibid.

[122] Ibid., p. 202.

power of a minister of state, yet vested with the *superior* power of controlling those who are appointed such by the crown'.[123]

One obvious objection to the centrality of Bolingbroke's theory of opposition to the intellectual history of party is that he may have meant opposition by individual members of parliament and that he was as opposed as anyone to concerted opposition. Towards the end of the *Letter*, however, Bolingbroke goes beyond everything he had written about opposition thus far. He refers to the widespread idea 'that opposition to an administration requires fewer preparatives, and less constant application than the conduct of it [the administration]'. This way of thinking is as a 'gross error' and a 'false notion of opposition', he thinks.[124] '*Want of concert*… [and] want of preliminary measures' would lead to disappointment in the business of opposition, he warns.[125] Opposition is not to be undertaken in a haphazard way: '[e]very administration is a system of conduct: opposition, therefore, should be a system of conduct likewise'.[126] As Edmund Burke was to do more than three decades later, Bolingbroke compared the struggle between opposition and administration to military combat.[127] The moral of this metaphor is straightforward: oppositions and governments are like armies with generals, in other words, they are like parties and not made up of free-rangers.

Bolingbroke stressed that opposition needed to be as systematic as a government, and suggested that an organized party is acceptable to achieve concerted action: '[t]hey who engage in opposition are under as great obligations, to prepare themselves to control, as they who serve the crown are under, to prepare themselves to carry on the administration, *and that a party formed for this purpose*, do not act like good citizens nor honest men, unless they propose true, as well as oppose false measures of government'.[128] At the end of the *Letter*, Bolingbroke says that he has demonstrated 'the duty of an opposing *party*', and that such 'a party who opposed, systematically, a wise to a silly, an honest to an iniquitous scheme of government, would acquire greater reputation and strength, and arrive more surely at their end, than a party who opposed occasionally…*without any general concert, with little uniformity*'.[129]

Further evidence that Bolingbroke was thinking of opposition in terms of concerted activity is to be found in his private correspondence. For example, he wrote the following to his close friend Sir William Wyndham, the leader of the Tories in the House of Commons, in May 1737, after the opposition had supported Frederick, prince of Wales, over his request of an increased allowance: 'when your Party appeared lately in the Prince's cause, I took it for granted, as I do still, that this step was part of a *scheme*, and the *scheme* that

[123] Ibid., pp. 215–16 (my italics).
[124] Ibid., p. 215.
[125] Ibid. (my italics).
[126] Ibid.
[127] Ibid.
[128] Ibid., p. 216 (my italics).
[129] Ibid. (my italics).

might follow it, & be built upon it, easily occurred to my mind'.[130] The episode had frightened Walpole, who had felt compelled to produce a compromise over the prince's allowance.[131] Bolingbroke believed that the bad health of George II, fifty-five years old at the time, had rocked Walpole's confidence. In a later letter, Bolingbroke continued to press for an organized opposition centred around Prince Frederick: 'this affair would have alarmed, and have done more than alarm them, in what ever state the Kings health had been, if it had been the first measure of a scheme of conduct wisely formed, and *concerted among all those that stand in opposition to the present administration*'.[132]

The second obvious objection to the importance the present article places on Bolingbroke's conception of an oppositional Country party in the genealogy of political party in the eighteenth century is that the Bolingbrokean party was meant to be a party to end all parties.[133] It is important to note, however, that Bolingbroke never used a phrase corresponding to this evocative and oft-repeated slogan. Although he was sanguine about what the Country party could achieve, he never expressed any belief in a final end to political conflict. On the contrary, he said that although the constitution was near-perfect, people could never allow themselves to sit down without watchfulness.[134] Bolingbroke appears to have accepted continued political conflict in a limited monarchy such as the British, where the 'struggle between the spirit of liberty and the spirit of dominion…always hath subsisted, and…must always subsist'.[135] Such conflicts could even in the future encompass the overthrow of a monarch as in the Glorious Revolution, as long as all parties recognized the overall constitutional framework: 'Better ministers, better Kings, may be hereafter often wanted, and sometimes found, but a better constituted government never can.'[136]

Finally, it is also worthwhile to draw attention to one of Machiavelli's teachings that Bolingbroke firmly believed in: the natural mortality of states, which is closely linked to the argument about first principle discussed above.[137] 'The best instituted governments, like the best constituted animal bodies, carry in them the seeds of their destruction', Bolingbroke wrote.[138] 'All that can be done, therefore, to prolong the duration of a good government, is to draw it back, on every favourable occasion, to the first principles on which it was founded.'[139] Consequently, Bolingbroke must have accepted that even if

[130] Bolingbroke to Wyndham, 11 May 1737, in *Unpublished letters*, v, p. 204.
[131] Langford, *A polite and commercial people*, pp. 236–7.
[132] Bolingbroke to Wyndham, 9 June [1737], in *Unpublished letters*, v, p. 211 (my italics).
[133] Rosenblum, *On the side of the angels*, p. 36; Hofstadter, *The idea of a party system*, p. 18.
[134] Bolingbroke, *Dissertation*, p. 84.
[135] Ibid., p. 91.
[136] Ibid., p. 86.
[137] Machiavelli, *The discourses*, in idem, *The chief works and others*, i, pp. 196–9 (Book i, ch. ii). See also Pocock, *The Machiavellian moment*, pp. 217–18.
[138] Bolingbroke, *Patriot king*, p. 252.
[139] Ibid.

his opposition party successfully had rolled back Walpole's allegedly corrupt regime and managed to bring the state back to first principles, decay and decadence would have returned at some stage, as all states contain the seeds of their own destruction. There could therefore never be a party to end all parties and the rationale for opposition could not be forever eradicated.

On balance, the evidence presented above appears to suggest that it is an overstatement to view the Bolingbrokean opposition party as a party to end all parties. This interpretation stands in sharp contrast to that of Shelley Burtt, who reads Bolingbroke as a thinker who rejected 'the inevitability of conflict'.[140] Burtt's analysis hinges on *The idea of a patriot king*, as she sees the patriot king as someone who 'can and will govern in such a way as to transcend the usual adversarial nature of government'.[141] The *Patriot king* is indeed the text commonly used to demonstrate that Bolingbroke believed that absolute unity and harmony without party political conflict was both feasible and desirable. This article must thus turn to this important but enigmatic text.

V

Many of the readings of Bolingbroke as an anti-party writer, and as a political thinker in general, are heavily based on *The idea of a patriot king* (1738). It is indeed in this text that we find some of Bolingbroke's most negative comments about political parties, e.g. that they are political evils, and such statements should not be ignored. It remains clear, however, that Bolingbroke has not abandoned his distinction between party and faction: 'faction is to party what the superlative is to the positive: party is a political evil, and faction is the worst of all parties'.[142] Meanwhile, he is now maintaining that '[p]arties, even before they degenerate into absolute factions, are still numbers of men associated together for certain purposes, and certain interests, which are not, or which are not allowed to be, those of the community of others'.[143] Bolingbroke believes that he is himself particularly suited to understand the inner workings of political parties, for '[a] man who has not seen the inside of parties, nor had opportunities to examine nearly their secret motives, can hardly conceive how little a share principle of any sort, though principle of some sort or other be always pretended, has in the determination of their conduct'.[144] These statements show that Bolingbroke was not consistent in his employment of concepts as he is more negative about party than in his

[140] Shelley Burtt, *Virtue transformed: political argument in England, 1688–1740* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 96. For a similar and earlier interpretation, see Wolfgang Jäger, *Politische Partei und parlamentarische Opposition: Eine Studie zum politischen Denken von Lord Bolingbroke und David Hume* (Berlin, 1971), pp. 152, 269.

[141] Burtt, *Virtue transformed*, p. 95.

[142] Bolingbroke, *Patriot king*, p. 257.

[143] Ibid., p. 258.

[144] Ibid., p. 268.

previous writings. They also reflect his disillusionment about the Country party platform at this stage in his life. As we shall see, however, this state of mind did not lead him to reject the inevitability of conflict and prescribe a non-party state.

The *Patriot king* is an education book for princes, modelled on Machiavelli's *Il principe* (c. 1513).[145] It has commonly been read as an abstract political text, as fairly recently by Christine Gerrard.[146] In contrast, the present author thinks it should be read as a highly topical oppositional tract written for a small circle consisting of Frederick, the prince of Wales, and his advisers at a time when the prince was seen as a figurehead of the opposition. The main objective remains the replacement of Walpole, who bears the full responsibility for the corrupt state of the nation, 'since he has been so long in possession of the whole power' and has so long 'corrupt[ed] the morals of men'.[147] Bolingbroke's wish was that '[a] wise and honester administration may draw us back to our former credit and influence abroad'.[148] If we are to believe the author himself, he never wanted to publish the *Patriot king*, but only did so in order to correct an unauthorized version printed and distributed by his friend Alexander Pope.[149] The *Patriot king* is perhaps rightly considered as Bolingbroke's most utopian writing, e.g. he calls the patriot king 'the most uncommon of all phenomenon in the physical or moral world' and even a 'standing miracle' – possibly as attempts to inspire Prince Frederick – but I do not think it contains sufficient textual evidence to support the claim that Bolingbroke in it rejected the inevitability of political conflict.[150]

Like Elizabeth, the paradigmatic patriot princess, the patriot king will be a unifier and a healer.[151] The patriot king has a duty 'to govern like the common father of his people…he who does otherwise forfeits his title'.[152] He (Bolingbroke uses the masculine pronoun, although he thinks that the greatest

[145] Herbert Butterfield, *The statecraft of Machiavelli* (1940) (London, 1960), pp. 149–65; Jeffrey Hart, *Viscount Bolingbroke: Tory humanist* (London and Toronto, 1965), pp. 83–143. Bolingbroke's choice of genre was not idiosyncratic in the context of the 1730s; Fénelon's mirror for princes *Les aventures de Télémaque* (1699) had been published in several translations and editions in early Hanoverian Britain, notably Charles Forman's *Protesilaus: or, the character of an evil minister. Being a paraphrase of the tenth book of Telemachus* (1730). Like the book form of Bolingbroke's *Dissertation*, Forman's adaptation of Fénelon was dedicated to Walpole and part of the literary patriot opposition to the Court Whigs; see Doowhan Ahn, 'From Idomeneus to Protesilaus', in Christoph Schmitt-Maaß, Stefenie Stockhorst, and Doohwan Ahn, eds., *Fénelon in the Enlightenment: traditions, adaptations, and variations* (Amsterdam and New York, NY, 2014), pp. 99–128.

[146] Gerrard, *The patriot opposition to Walpole*, p. 186.

[147] Bolingbroke, *Patriot king*, p. 219.

[148] Ibid.

[149] Bolingbroke to Lyttelton, 15 Apr. 1748, in Robert Phillimore, ed., *Memoirs and correspondence of George, Lord Lyttelton, from 1734 to 1773* (2 vols., London, 1845), II, pp. 429–30. For the complicated printing history of the *Patriot king*, see Giles Barber, 'Bolingbroke, Pope, and the patriot king', *The Library*, 19 (1964), pp. 67–89.

[150] Bolingbroke, *Patriot king*, pp. 221, 251. See nn. 140 and 141.

[151] Ibid., pp. 271–3.

[152] Ibid., p. 257.

patriot monarch of them all had been a woman) would not 'be exposed to the temptation, of governing by a party; which must always end in the government of a faction'.[153] It is important to remember, however, that Bolingbroke has a very specific precedent in mind. In *Of the state of parties at the accession of George I* (1739), written a year after the *Patriot king* and published together with it in 1749, with the explicit intention to complement the sections on party in the *Patriot king*, he attacked the policy of George I, a policy of which he had himself been a victim and was still suffering.[154] Upon George I's accession in 1714, Bolingbroke was shocked to find that the king would 'immediately let loose the whole fury of party, suffer the queen's servants, who had surely been guilty of no crime against him, nor the state, to be so bitterly persecuted, and proscribe in effect every man in the country who did not bear the name of whig'.[155] Bolingbroke is contrasting this conduct with that of Charles II upon the Restoration in 1660, and that of Henry IV of France, who 'not only exercised clemency, but shew[ed] favour to those who had stood in arms against them' after coming to the throne.[156] He believed that the accession of George I and the subsequent violent behaviour of the Whigs drove the Tories into rebellion, a direct effect 'of maintaining divisions in a nation, and of governing by faction'.[157]

Bolingbroke concluded the *State of parties* by saying that 'division has caused all the mischief we lament, [and] that union can alone retrieve it'.[158] By 'union', however, he meant the ascendency of 'the coalition of parties, so happily begun, so successfully carried on, and of late so unaccountably neglected', i.e. the Country platform, combining Tories and opposition Whigs, which he forged with Pulteney in 1726.[159] Bolingbroke was explicit that this union would not incorporate the Court Whigs, and probably not even George II, who Bolingbroke at this point thought had turned into a party king in resemblance to his father: 'such a union can never be expected till patriotism fills the throne, and faction be banished from the administration'.[160]

[153] Ibid. John Toland wrote a pamphlet entitled *The art of governing by partys* at the beginning of the eighteenth century, in which he used language Bolingbroke may have tried to imitate, e.g. 'a King can never lessen himself more than by heading of a Party; for thereby he becomes only the King of a Faction, and ceases to be the common Father of his People'. See [Toland], *The art of governing by partys: particularly in religion, in politics, in parliament, on the bench, and in the ministry* (London, 1701), p. 41.

[154] Bolingbroke, *State of parties*, in *Works*, III, p. 129.

[155] Ibid., p. 139. Bolingbroke's friend Jonathan Swift, who had worked as a government hack for the Tory administration in 1710–14, ridiculed George I's approach to parties in *Gulliver's travels* (1726). On the island of Lilliput, although the Tramecksans, or the High Heels, were widely seen as being 'most agreeable to our ancient Constitution', the king only employed Slamecksans, or Low Heels. The king himself wore lower heels than anyone at his court. See Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's travels* (London, 2003), p. 47.

[156] Bolingbroke, *State of parties*, in *Works*, III, p. 139.

[157] Ibid., p. 140.

[158] Ibid., p. 141.

[159] Ibid.

[160] Ibid.

To return to the *Patriot king*, while such a king, according to Bolingbroke's advice, was not at liberty to espouse or proscribe any party, '[h]e may favour one party and discourage another, upon occasions wherein the state of his kingdom makes such a temporary measure necessary'.[161] Needless to say, this implies that there would be the political parties under the patriot king and that he would not rule in a party-less state.

Personnel and measures remain intertwined in Bolingbroke's thought. The first action of the patriot king, who 'must begin to govern as soon as he begins to reign', would be 'to purge his court, and to call into the administration such men as he can assure himself will serve on the same principles on which he intends to govern'.[162] By this, he meant that Walpole and his Court Whigs, or 'the prostitutes who set themselves to sale, all the locust who devour the land, with crowds of spies, parasites, and sycophants…and the whole swarms of little, noisome, nameless insects' as he referred to them, would be banished.[163] Entire parties were not to be proscribed, however, and the patriot king must make a distinction 'between those who have affected to dip themselves deeply in precedent iniquitous, and those who have had the virtue to keep aloof of them'.[164]

There has been a tendency among readers of the *Patriot king* to focus on the sweeping statements about the patriot king's ability to unify and purify the nation.[165] The all-important qualifications have sometimes been neglected. For Bolingbroke, it is axiomatic that '[a] people may be united in submission to the prince, and to the establishment, and *yet be divided about general principles, or particular measures of government*'.[166] The reign of the patriot king would not entail an end to political debate or conflict. The people under such a reign 'will support or oppose particular acts of administrations, and defend and attack the persons employed in them; *and both these ways a conflict of parties may arise*'.[167] The patriot king must 'pursue the union of his subjects, and the prosperity of his kingdoms independently of all parties', but Bolingbroke recognizes that this in practice would mean that he would choose the best side rather than no side when two parties are clashing:

> When parties are divided by different notions and principles concerning some particular ecclesiastical, or civil institutions, the constitution, which should be their rule, must be that of the prince. He may and he ought to show his dislike or his favour, as he judges the constitution may be hurt or improved, by one side or the other.[168]

[161] Bolingbroke, *Patriot king*, p. 263.
[162] Ibid., p. 253.
[163] Ibid.
[164] Ibid., p. 254.
[165] Armitage, 'A patriot for whom?', p. 405.
[166] Bolingbroke, *Patriot king*, p. 259 (my italics).
[167] Ibid. (my italics).
[168] Ibid., pp. 259, 260.

Bolingbroke believed that under a patriot king 'the opportunities of forming an opposition…will be rare, and the pretences generally weak'.[169] Importantly, '[s]uch opportunities, however, may happen; and there may be reason, as well as pretences, sometimes for opposition even in such a reign…Grievances then are complained of, mistakes and abuses in government are pointed out, and ministers are prosecuted by their enemies.'[170] The patriot king 'knows that neither he nor his ministers are infallible, nor impeccable. There may be abuses in his government, mistakes in his administration, and guilt in his ministers, which he had not observed.'[171] On the rare occasions when an opposition is justified in such an illustrious reign, the patriot king will not 'treat those who carry on such prosecutions in a legal manner, as incendiaries, and as enemies of his government', as Bolingbroke and Pulteney had been treated in the ministerial press.[172]

To conclude this section, although the *Patriot king* is probably Bolingbroke's most anti-party piece of writing, he does not in it appear to conceive of a state without either parties or opposition. As we have seen, many of his anti-party comments have contextual explanations and can be seen as part of his general discontent with George I and George II, both of whom he regarded as (Court) Whig kings.[173] In case Prince Frederick would ascend the throne, Bolingbroke was eager to ensure that he would not be ensnared by Walpole and the Court Whigs, as had happened to George II upon his accession in 1727, when a great part of the political nation expected at least some change in the administration.[174] The calling of his paradigmatic ruler a *patriot* king was not an entirely neutral move, as Bolingbroke's earlier coalition of parties had sometimes been referred to as a patriot platform, and the new generations of politicians in Prince Frederick's circle were known as the boy patriots. This group included George Lyttelton, Frederick's secretary at the time of the *Patriot king*'s composition and originally intended as the dedicatee of the work. When the work was finally about to be published in an authorized version a decade later, Lyttelton wrote to Bolingbroke to turn down this 'honour', since he was no longer in Prince Frederick's service and in friendship with many of the late Walpole's close friends, meaning that he had joined Henry Pelham's ministry.[175] The episode demonstrates that the *Patriot king* was far from an abstract political text on how to avoid conflict and achieve harmony

[169] Ibid., p. 260.
[170] Ibid.
[171] Ibid., p. 261.
[172] Ibid.
[173] He also complained that Britain's interests abroad had been subordinated to those of Hanover since 1714; see Bolingbroke to Lyttelton, 4 Nov. 1741, *Memoirs and correspondence of George, Lord Lyttelton*, I, p. 196.
[174] Langford, *A polite and commercial people*, pp. 11–15.
[175] Lyttelton to Bolingbroke, 14 Apr. 1748, in *Memoirs and correspondence of George, Lord Lyttelton*, II, p. 428.

in a polity, but an oppositional tract and a contribution to the (party) political struggle of the day.

VI

Although we have to distinguish between Bolingbroke's intentions and his reception, it is not without significance that Bolingbroke was typically read by his contemporaries as a party writer and rarely if ever as an anti-party writer.[176] In 1750, Thomas Pownall wrote a noteworthy treatise which was largely a response to Bolingbroke. His major objection to Bolingbroke, and all writers wedded to the notion of mixed government, was the inevitability of conflict in this line of political thought. In the preface, he attacked what he perceived as an anti-Harringtonian message in *The idea of a patriot king*, which had the previous year been published in an edition authorized by Bolingbroke for the first time.[177] By encouraging the patriot king to make appointments based on talent rather than property, Pownall argued that 'the Measures recommended to the Patriot Prince, instead of healing, uniting and restoring, do seem more likely to run ALL into *Party*'.[178]

Pownall's main target, however, was the *Dissertation upon parties*, which had been printed for the seventh time in 1749, and more specifically he criticized Bolingbroke's firm belief in the mixed constitution.[179] In short, Pownall found it unsound to perceive of king and people as separate estates. '[I]t is of the very Essence of these Governments to subsist, and be carried on, by Parties and Opposition, as the noble Author of the Dissertation on Parties hath fully shown', he wrote.[180] He saw Bolingbroke's principles as essentially conflictual as they were 'calculated for an opposition' and 'incompatible with establish'd Power'.[181]

The present text has sought to reflect that Pownall's critical reading is in many ways closer to Bolingbroke's own intentions than those of most of his commentators in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Pownall was right to view the Bolingbrokean party as an opposition party, which is not necessarily the same as a party to end all parties. Bolingbroke's *raison d'être* as a political writer was opposition to Walpole and the Court Whigs. All his political writings extol the virtues of opposition. We have also seen that Bolingbroke conceived of

[176] See, for example, *Discontent; or, an essay on faction: a satire. Address'd to the writers of the Craftsman, and other party papers* (London, 1735), pp. 6–7.

[177] [Thomas Pownall], *A treatise on government: being a review and doctrine of an original contract. More particularly as it respects the rights of government and the duty of allegiance* (London, 1750), pp. 12–13.

[178] Ibid., p. 14. James Harrington had influentially stated that '[d]ominion is property' in *The Commonwealth of Oceana* (1656) (Cambridge, 2001), p. 11.

[179] One can thus argue that Pownall fits better than Nancy Rosenblum's anti-party tradition of holism (see n. 60).

[180] [Pownall], *A treatise on government*, pp. 22–3.

[181] Ibid., p. 32.

opposition as organized and concerted, to be undertaken by a party of political actors (who could be drawn from several parties in the sense of Whig and Tory) disciplined by leadership. He sometimes referred to this opposition as a Country party, which, in contrast to the Court faction, was a national party seeking to address national grievances and was equipped with principles, or, to use an anachronism, an ideology, which, unlike the Whig and Tory creeds, were fit for the political climate of the 1730s.

Bolingbroke had little to say about what would happen if and when this oppositional Country party was successful. Would it become a party of government, a new Court party? Some historians have speculated that Bolingbroke is likely to have followed a similar path as Walpole if he had been in power.[182] It did not fit his polemical purposes to spell out how the Country party would behave after the fall of Walpole and the Court Whigs. The closest we come to a description of a future political order in Bolingbroke's writings is the *Patriot king*. This text has often been read as a pie-in-the-sky attempt to abolish parties and political conflict as all political actors would unite in awe of the virtuous patriot king. The present article has shown that the *Patriot king* – which was initially not written for wider publication – was in itself an opposition tract and that the accession of such a king would generate something akin to a clean sweep in the administration; in short, Walpole and the Court Whigs would be substituted for those Bolingbroke considered his friends and patriots. Crucially, this article has demonstrated that Bolingbroke, even in this somewhat utopian text, is emphasizing that causes for opposition may arise even in the reign of the patriot king. It is explicit in Bolingbroke's account that parties divided over political issues would survive in such a reign, and while the patriot king would not govern by party – like Bolingbroke thought George I and George II had done – he would be at liberty to take sides in political disputes.

It remains true that Bolingbroke sometimes appeared to have damned party while condoning opposition, and evidence in favour of that view has not been concealed from the present analysis. The ambition has been, however, to explode the persistent myth of Bolingbroke as the paradigmatic anti-party thinker, because his views on these subjects are more multi-faceted. His writings were calculated to legitimize opposition and a very specific political party: the Country party. Finally, his writings on the Court and Country party division in British politics would provoke and influence writers for decades. Notably, David Hume used them as his starting point – and as targets of criticism – when writing his first batch of political essays in the early 1740s.[183]

[182] Dickinson, *Bolingbroke*, p. 192.
[183] See n. 10.